

1640-1714" (192).

The final section on persecution begins with Alexandra Walsham's account of how speech frequently remained "essential in authenticating and mediating texts to a body of auditors" (212). Of special interest is the observation that for Quakers, who spent long periods in custody, "books were an important replacement for communal interaction" (220). The reverse is considered as well, for when religious communities achieved a position of monopoly and dominance, "they had less need for manuscript and printed texts" (232). Thomas S. Freeman turns attention to the Marian Protestants, who tended to rely "more heavily on the written than the printed words as a means of communicating with their followers" (235). This leads to a careful examination of the conditions of incarceration, for "a Marian prison was only as secure as its gaolers" (239). Ann Hughes contributes to our understanding of Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena* (1646), seen as an exemplar of the power of print in mid-seventeenth-century England, which vividly demonstrates how it could "define, persuade, and mobilize" (257).

Taken together, this collection provides useful insights into "noisy reading" in the wake of so much recent scholarship on silent reading (278), as well as about how the handwritten page provided opportunities for circulating works among known groups for a variety of reasons, as has been observed by literary historians most notably regarding Shakespeare's sonnets and the publication of poems by Marlowe and Donne (282). Above all, this volume must make the historian and literary critic pause and consider the myriad uses of memory, speech, script, and print which tended to overlap and intermingle in important—and sometimes overlooked—ways.

Nancy E. Wright, Margaret Ferguson, A. R. Buck, eds. *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. ix + 304 pp. \$65.00. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England, an interdisciplinary examination of women's legal status and property relationships, directs attention away from the "well-known narrative about women's legal disabilities in the common law regime" and toward women whose actions "shift" established parameters to "indicate the letter of the law was neither

definitive nor irremediable” (4). Editors Nancy E. Wright, Margaret Ferguson, and A. R. Buck collected thirteen important essays, each with its own attention to interdisciplinary analysis and multi-genre texts, in order to foreground the less studied “competing narratives of property told by and about women as subjects and agents in commercial and domestic economies” (5). Women’s lived experience, as revealed through case study, literature, letters, and legal documents, emerges in these essays that articulate selfhood and active agency.

Part One: “Credit, Commerce, and Women’s Property Relationships” examines the shaping of women’s roles by law and by discourses of commerce, contract, and credit. Patricia Parker investigates commercial and contractual promissory language in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*. Her concentration upon the reproductive metaphors of pregnancy, gestation, or delivery of “issue” also includes usury (lending on the basis of credit) for new insights between the temporal and the legal in interpersonal relationships. Customary tenure, which allowed women to inherit property and thus insert themselves into the commercial arena, is the subject of Christine Churches’s “Putting Women in Their Place: Female Litigants at Whitehaven, 1660-1760.” Using archival letters from the estates of Sir John and James Lowther, Churches illuminates an understudied issue. Recording women as formidable litigants—as landowners or part owners of ships, lenders seeking payment for debts or goods and services provided (52-53)—Churches makes clear the differences among multiple jurisdictions that might influence property settlements in the early modern period. In an essay that speaks to the Consistory Court as protecting women and defending their sexual reputation or “propriety” in order to secure their marital or marriageable status, David Lemmings addresses the crucial nature of such courts for the “ordinary women who could not afford to pursue suits in equity” (75). Defending one’s sexual honor applied to prostitutes as well; Laura Rosenthal analyzes two popular biographies of the notorious prostitute Sally Salisbury and explores ways in which her “ownership of, and property in, the body” created an estate. Her whorish “combination of avarice and prodigality—or getting and spending—epitomizes the mobile and imaginary qualities of property itself in the emergent capitalist economy” (113).

In Part Two, “Women, Social Reproduction, and Patrilineal Inheritance,” essays address family property distribution and its multiple legal boundaries. Mary Murray’s argument, the single male-centered essay in this volume, sug-

gests the ancient practice of primogeniture as “resurrective,” since the immediate property transfer links the dead, the living, and the yet unborn (121). Symbolically, inheritance confers immortality through renewal of property rights; an “act of birth albeit of social rather than biological life” the “economic generation” (128,129) belongs to men and keeps the dead alive within the community. Women’s status in *Measure for Measure*, according to Natasha Korda, becomes repositioned from broken nuptials of impoverished gentlewomen to “propertied brides” (153). She argues that the play relieves society of its “placeless single women as a threat to economy” (138). Heiresses Elizabeth Wiseman and Lady Anne Clifford, wealthy propertied women who refuse to become merely commodified assets, inform Mary Chan and Nancy E. Wright’s examination of the “liberty” (162) both women act to retain legal rights as property owners and maintain their personhood. While confronting the legal system, both held to their belief that “alienable property, is an attribute of a person which cannot be sold or exchanged” (163). Ownership and identity became synonymous, and through protracted battles, letters and diaries reveal efforts to define an individual life. The final essay in this section explores the post-Restoration legal developments that protected aristocratic estates by preventing fraudulent transactions and preserving legitimate titles. A. E. Buck foregrounds aristocratic property and the consequences for women and notes the change in women’s legal status as evidenced by Shakespeare and Nahum Tate’s *King Lear*. Inheritance fails for Cordelia in Shakespeare—“all is lost” (190)—but Tate illustrates that the “land-family nexus” has been worked out through inheritance; Cordelia’s legitimacy as a wife and daughter “allows for the perpetuation” and landed family (191).

Part Three’s section, “Women’s Authorship and Ownership: Matrices for Emergent Ideas of Intellectual Property,” contains several notable essays that reevaluate the interconnectivity of selfhood and literary property. Jennifer Summit’s “Writing Home: Hannah Wolley, the Oxinden Letters and Household Epistolary Practice” argues for women’s letters as an “alternative model of property—one whose defining characteristic is not individual ownership but the state of ongoing negotiation and exchange to which the letters owe their existence” (203). Sample letters of Wolley’s provided in her work of instruction, *Supplement to the Queen-like Closet*, furnish models for gentlewomen’s discourse and provide a “shaping role” to young women preparing for domestic life (210). The self as property emerges in the Oxinden household

where questions of property and ownership that “revolved around courtship, marriage, and service, found appropriate rhetorical form in letters” (210). Katherine Oxiden, as Mistress of the household, provides the “female education and surrogacy she experienced as ward in Oxinden family” (216) and privileges the letter writing practice. Personal property exists after death, as Lloyd Davis’s essay on women’s wills suggests. Wills, which women wrote or dictated, were shaped by and subsequently shaped the testator’s legacy, and although authorial intention and voice conformed to formulaic legal discourse, wills evidence “elite” and ordinary women’s involvement in producing texts and representing themselves. The published wills of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Jocelin, and Elizabeth Richardson, according to Davis, reveal “discursive agency” (233) in their critiques of patriarchal inheritance and property laws.

Modern day intellectual property laws owe a debt to the Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai, as Claire Walker describes in her essay. The Cambrai asserted their right to retain as “spiritual property” manuscripts derived from collaboration in the writings of Augustine Baker. Baker acknowledged that the nuns advanced his spiritual method and enlisted them to disseminate his writings (244, 246), but when they promoted other methods as well, Baker sought recovery. Through this stance, the nuns helped to define “what property was and in whose name it could be secured, alienated, and/or transmitted to posterity” (17). Personal property also applies to names, as Eleanor Shevlin’s analysis of female surnames in titles of eighteenth-century fiction shows. She investigates two noncanonical novels, *The History of Betty Barnes* (1753) and *The Memoirs of a Magdalen: The History of Louisa Mildmay* (1767), and argues that the laws governing property rights mark the relationships between property and gender in these texts. Paul Salzman’s “Early Modern (Aristocratic) Women and Textual Property” offers an intriguing look into the ways Lady Anne Clifford and Margaret Cavendish determine private ownership and control over their writings, and influence audience reception. Clifford’s diaries and *Great Books* express “defiance of attempts to silence her” (283), and Cavendish, while seeing herself as an author, “manipulated the reader’s first experience of one of her books” with engraved frontispieces and introductory poems to reinforce the “legitimacy of her ventures” (289). This volume’s “Afterward” by Margreta DeGrazia offers fitting closure in its treatment of the common law of coverture. With its bar on women owning,

inheriting, or purchasing property; the gendered law deprived personhood, but as this collection reveals, women did find ways to obtain or have conferred upon them agency long before their full right to private property. DeGrazia also notes that men did not enjoy absolute power to retain and dispose of their property as wished; marriage was to benefit both parties rather than any one individual.

Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England furnishes fresh insights and clear analysis of the era's most intriguing social and legal practices. Renaissance and Restoration scholars as well as modern and legal historians will relish each essay's scope and diverse resources and students of gender relations especially will note the vital link between women's active agency—often dismissed or diminished—and property law.

Stefano Villani, ed. *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by those Two Faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers: La vicenda di due quacchere prigioniere dell'inquisizione di Malta*. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2003. xiv + 366pp. + 4illus. €30.00. Paper. Review by JULIE D. CAMPBELL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

In the introduction to his edition of *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by those Two Faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers*, Villani documents the experiences of Evans (ca. 1618-1692) and Cheevers (ca. 1608-1664) during their missionary journeys. In the process, he provides an overview of Quakerism during this period, beginning with its inception ca. 1647 with the followers of George Fox. Making excellent use of archival sources from Rome, Pisa, Malta, Florence, Venice, the Vatican, and the British Library, as well as numerous other sources, Villani constructs an engaging narrative that traces the paths of Evans and Cheevers from their earliest connections with Quakerism to their ill-fated voyage to Alexandria, which was curtailed by their incarceration by the Inquisition from 1659-1662 on Malta. He also describes their liberation, their return to England, and the travels that they undertook afterwards, undeterred by the hardships that they had suffered.

Beginning with Evans's personal history, Villani describes how Thomas Murford of Inglesbatch heard the charismatic Quaker preacher John Audland at Bristol and brought him to Inglesbatch in 1654. One result of his preach-