FEMALE EXPERIENCE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

SYMPOSIUM 6-7 November 2020

With generous support from the Alice Griffin Fund
Female Experience in Early Modern England

This symposium, with talks presented both in person and live via Zoom, is free and open to the public. Please register in advance at https://femaleexperience2020.wixsite.com/mysite. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email and we will be in touch with further information about joining the meeting.

The start time on 6th November is 9am New Zealand Time (GMT +13; 5 November at 3pm in New York; 5 November at 12pm in Los Angeles; 5 November at 8pm in London; 5 November at 9pm in Paris).

The start time on 7th November is 8:30am New Zealand Time (GMT +13; 6 November at 2:30pm in New York; 6 November at 11:30am in Los Angeles; 6 November at 7:30pm in London; 6 November at 8:30pm in Paris).

The talks will be recorded and will be edited and posted on The Female Experience in Early Modern England website at a later date.
Friday 6 November

9am: Welcome and Keynote

Welcome: Malcolm Campbell, Head of the School of Humanities
Chair: Professor Tom Bishop, English and Drama, University of Auckland
Respondent: Professor Dympna Callaghan, English and William Safire Professor of Modern Letters, Syracuse University
Speaker:

Sarah Ross, ‘Woe is She: “Female Complaint” and Women’s Songbooks in Early Modern England’

Morning Tea

10:45am: Fertility and the Female Pro-Creative Experience

Chair: Associate Professor Erin Griffey, University of Auckland
Respondent: Professor Mary Fissell, History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University

Speakers:

Tracy Adams, ‘Anne Boleyn: Anxiety and the Royal Heir’

Susannah Whaley, ‘Queens at the Spa: Catherine of Braganza and Mary of Modena at Bath and Tunbridge Wells’

Paige Donaghy, “‘My Mother Told Me It Was an Abortion’: Tracing Women’s Experiences and Perceptions of Pregnancy Loss in Early Modern England’

LUNCH

1:15pm: Women, Law and Diplomacy

Chair: Professor Jonathan Scott, History, University of Auckland

Speakers:

Jessica Ayres, ‘Women’s Petitions to London’s Court of Orphans, 1660-1740’

Mathilde Alazraki, ‘The Queen and the Sultana: An Example of Early Modern Female Diplomacy Between England and the Ottoman Empire’

Erin Newman, ‘Wretched Whores or Virtuous Victims: The Role of Women in Bastardy Crimes During the Civil War and Interregnum’

Zoe Jackson, ‘Female Testimony, Economic Responsibility, and Political Memory in East Anglia, 1660–1685’

BREAK

3pm: Bad Women

Chair: Professor Kim Phillips, History, University of Auckland

Speakers:

Mirabelle Field, “‘The Curse of Our Nation’: England Divided in the Image of Barbara Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland’
Emma Sadera, ‘More savage than a she-wolf’: Writing Bad Motherhood in the Street Literature of Early Modern England’

Emma Whipday, “‘I rest your pore troublesome sister’: Sibling Bonds, Familial Roles, and Female Authorship in Early Modern England’

Beatrice Righetti, ‘Feigning the perfect wife: economic practices and power relationships in seventeenth-century England’

Debra Parish, ‘Anna Trapnel: Prophetess or Witch? The female prophetic experience in England 1640–1660’

*AFTERNOON TEA*

5pm: *Female Bodies and Emotions*

Chair: Professor Tracy Adams, European Languages and Literature, University of Auckland

Speakers:

Bill Angus, ‘Female Madness in Early Modern Drama: Passive, Generative, Transformative’

Megan Shaw, “‘Either really or in show’: Performance in the Mourning Portraits of Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham’

Daniel Beaumont, ‘Melancholy and Despair among Early Modern English Women: A Case study of Hannah Allen’s Satan’s Methods and Malice Baffled (1683)’

Lindsey Cox, ‘Middling Sort Women and Portrait Miniatures in England c.1530–1650’
SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER

8:30am: The Dressed Body

Chair: Dr Jemma Field, Associate Director of Research, Yale Center for British Art

Speakers:

Jane Malcolm-Davies and Ninya Mikhaila, ‘Homespun Not Homemade: The Myth of the Self-Sufficiency in Early Modern Households 1485 To 1603’

Sarah Bendall, ‘Overcoming the Limitations of ‘Traditional’ Sources: Accessing Female Experience through Experimental History’

Ariane Fennetaux, ‘Pockets, materiality and privacy in early modern England’

Mirren Brockies, ‘Under and Over the Skin: Health Values and Dressing the Neck in Early Modern England’

MORNING TEA

10:30am: Authorship and the Female Writing Experience

Chair: Associate Professor Sarah Ross, English, Victoria University of Wellington

Speakers:

Paul Salzman, ‘Hidden in Plain Sight: Editing and (not) Canonising Early Modern Women’s Writing’

Edel Lamb, ‘Girlhood Experience in Early Modern England’

Valerie Schutte, ‘The Words of a Princess: Mary Tudor’s Pre-Accession Translations’
Alison Findlay, ‘Rewriting Female Experience through Performance: Lady Mary Wroth’s Love’s Victory’

Diana G. Barnes, ‘Traces of Early Modern Women’s Experience in Letters’

12pm: Introduction to Jane Lumley’s ca. 1553 translation of Euripides’ “Iphigenia in Aulis”

Speaker:
Deanne Williams

LUNCH

1:15pm: Reading of Jane Lumley’s ca. 1553 translation of Euripides’ “Iphigenia in Aulis”

Co-ordinator:
Tom Bishop

BREAK

2:45pm: Female Creative Experience

Chair: Professor Erin Carlston, English, University of Auckland
Respondent: Dr Sophie Tomlinson, Senior Lecturer in English and Drama, University of Auckland

Speakers:
Lisa Walters, ‘Epicurean Atomism: The Female Experience of Science and Philosophy’
Kimberley Connor, ‘Margaret Baker: A Life in Recipes’

Christine Jacob, ‘Nature’s Cordials and Confectionary: Poetry for Health in Pulter and Cavendish’

Brooke Little, ‘Katherine Parre: Born to Sit on the Highest Seat of “Musical Majesty”’

AFTERNOON TEA

4:30pm: Workshop: The Reality of her Endeavours: Experiencing Beautifying Recipes in Early Modern England

Speakers:

Erin Griffey
Victoria Munn
The highly fashionable poetic genre of “female complaint” in early modern England has been considered almost entirely in terms of Ovidian traditions, and mostly in terms of male ventriloquy. Lynn Enterline and others have emphasised the female character effect generated through humanist practices of imitation, schoolboys voicing woeful women such as Hecuba and Niobe in a transferral of identity across gender binaries. But how did girls and women learn to write and perform the voices of female complaint? How did their exclusion from the humanist schoolroom calibrate their exposure to the rhetorical conventions of Renaissance humanism?

This paper explores the contexts of early modern women’s complaint, and focuses on one extraordinary archive of complaint texts owned and performed by girls and women: manuscript songbooks. The songbooks of Elizabeth Davenant and Anne Twice in England, and Lady Margaret Wemyss in Scotland, among others, contain a range of complaint lyrics to which their owners literally gave voice, as part of their musical education. This paper examines these volumes as evidence of girls’ and women’s engagement in vernacular complaint traditions, and considers the vocality of early modern women’s complaint as practiced and performed in song.
Fertility and the Female Pro-Creative Experience

‘Anne Boleyn: Anxiety and the Royal Heir’

Tracy Adams, Professor, European Languages and Literature, University of Auckland

Scholarship over the past several decades has revised impressions of the experience of early modern women, showing how active many were in politics, commerce and the administration of estates. Within the family structure, women played a crucial role. Anne Boleyn has recently been regarded from such a perspective: an intelligent and charismatic woman who, in the words of her most famous biographer, “radiated sex,” she brought temporary glory to her family with her supposed strategy of holding off the besotted king until she had a ring on her finger. In this essay I first challenge this anachronistic narrative. Close readings of primary sources reveal that observers were stuck by Anne Boleyn’s “grace” and the evangelical piety that she acquired at the French court from such mentors as Queen Claude, queen mother Louise of Savoy, and royal sister Marguerite of Navarre. The king’s letters reveal that he was attracted by these qualities, not her “sex appeal,” and that he had to convince her to marry him. Modern notions of Anne Boleyn as a bombshell arise from the entirely predictable sexual insults that she received for usurping the role of queen and then disappointing the king’s belief that she was divinely destined to provide the Tudor male heir.

I then explore the uniquely female anxiety that this devout woman must have experienced as she gave birth to a girl and then miscarried, an anxiety induced by the king’s circular argument that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the royal heir, a premise whose proof required that she produce said royal heir. Drawing on scholarship on magical rites associated with fertility, I explore the reported statements of Anne Boleyn and others...
as it became clear that she would not immediately provide the eagerly awaited royal son. True, women who did not produce a male heir did not often suffer dire consequences. But the many rites, pilgrimages and prayers that aimed to produce one represent material traces of genuine anxiety. No matter how powerful, women could not control their own reproduction. Anne Boleyn, who in fact became pregnant twice in a space of three years, can be seen as the most extreme case of this anxiety and her fate as a particularly tragic version of the experience of women required to perform a duty that was completely out of their hands.

‘Queens at the Spa: Catherine of Braganza and Mary of Modena at Bath and Tunbridge Wells’

Susannah Whaley, PhD candidate, Art History, University of Auckland

In the seventeenth century, elite women throughout Europe took to the waters of spa towns and springs to ingest or to bathe in their healthful waters, particularly to engender fertility. I posit that as English Stuart queens consort Catherine of Braganza and Mary of Modena visited Bath and Tunbridge Wells from 1663-1688, they participated in a royal spectacle of dynastic display. I consider the experience of the queen in the water and in the towns’ rural surroundings, as well as the material and visual significance attached to the real and imagined sight of the queen bathing and drinking. An impression of her fertility, health and her suitability and agency as consort was shaped in part by the life-giving English waters in spa towns. Even once Catherine and Mary left, the waters continued to represent their images in name, monument, and common memory. As such, the waters take on meaning as politically charged spaces: Catherine of Braganza’s infertility led to plots to have her kidnapped, while the birth of Mary of Modena’s son, a Catholic heir to the English throne, sparked the Glorious Revolution. This paper considers the spectacle the queens at the spa presented, who had access to it, the space and experience of the spa and how the waters of Bath and Tunbridge Wells were used distinctly by Catherine and Mary in comparison with their husbands Charles and James.
Although up until the early 20th century many women spent much of their adult lives being pregnant, those pregnancies are rarely made apparent in surviving portraits. This paper will address 16th and early 17th century painted portraits of individual British women - portraits that were made at a time when they were with child, whether that is made visible in the image or not.

This paper advances the original research conducted towards my 2020 exhibition Portraying Pregnancy (and its accompanying book: *Portraying Pregnancy: from Holbein to Social Media* | paulholberton). It also builds upon the extensive (and international) responses to the show.

It became clear that my research represents just the tip of an information iceberg – and that some current ideas about Early Modern women’s activities need to be revised. Many elite women conducted very active public roles while pregnant, in spite of the attendant bodily changes and health challenges. This field of research thus offers a new lens through which to look at women’s history more broadly, and encourages us to rethink the context of many Early Modern female portraits.
Early modern English women’s experiences of pregnancy loss, whether through miscarriage, also called ‘abortion’, and the condition known as “false conception”, are difficult to trace in the archives. This may be one reason for the current historiographical lacuna that exists around women’s experiences and perceptions of pregnancy losses, for they were, sometimes, but not often, written about by women themselves in diaries or letters. Yet, such events were frequently recorded in medical texts, mostly by male physicians, surgeons and midwives, and they were discussed in legal cases like infanticide trials. While medical and legal men often wanted to capture women’s experiences for their own purposes, in doing so they documented, in great detail, women’s physical and emotional experiences of pregnancy loss, or women’s perceptions of such experiences. In this paper, I will discuss how reading medical and legal texts ‘against the grain’, offers us insights into women’s varied experiences of pregnancy loss, and women’s attitudes to these experiences. I will consider case studies from seventeenth- to eighteenth-century midwifery casebooks, as well as a famous eighteenth-century legal saga involving inheritance. Reading women’s experiences through these texts can reveal fresh insights into ideas about early modern motherhood, reproduction, and pregnancy loss.
The Court of Orphans - part of the City of London’s civic administration - functioned to protect the underage orphans of freemen after their fathers had died. While the Court was overseen by the mayor and aldermen, its administrative records show that women were involved at each stage of the Court’s proceedings, acting as executors of estates, guardians of orphans and as financial controllers over inheritances. However, these records only show the roles of women in an administrative capacity. They fail to provide qualitative details about how the role of the Court of Orphans was actually understood and experienced by the women using it.

This paper will focus on petitions submitted to the Court of Orphans by women - specifically widows, guardians and orphans - in order to reveal more about the complex relationship between the City, the orphans and their guardians. Often submitted in response to the breakdown of the Court’s process, these petitions also reveal how women conceptually understood ideas of citizenship, civic orphanage and the role of City administration. This paper aims to answer the question: what do these petitions tell us about how women experienced the Court of Orphans and understood its role?
In 1593, following the suggestion of her ambassador Edward Barton at the Porte, Queen Elizabeth I sent Safiye (c. 1550-1605), favorite concubine of Sultan Murad III and mother of his heir Mehmed III, a miniature portrait of herself. This first gift started a correspondence between the English Queen and the Ottoman Sultana which spanned over six years and included several expensive gifts being sent between London and Constantinople. This correspondence is unique in the field of diplomatic studies because it took place at a very specific time, when England was ruled by a Queen, which allowed her letters and gifts to be carried to the Ottoman harem, something which would have been forbidden for a male ruler. By fostering a good relationship with the Sultana, English diplomats in Constantinople were able to pass on their petitions to the Sultan through a peripheral means of communication, outside of the official channels of Ottoman advisors and out of reach of their European competitors at the Porte. A close study of Elizabeth and Safiye’s correspondence will help shed light on the role of female friendship in foreign diplomacy, a subject that is only recently coming under attention in gender studies of the early modern period.
Conflict, crime, and gender always sparks an interest, especially instances of sex and violence, of which there was plenty during the Civil War and Interregnum period. As such this paper examines, for this period in England, the crime of bastardy and women’s experience of this. Essentially, were women virtuous victims or wretched whores?

This paper seeks to give an overview for the East Midlands region, specifically the counties of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire - of: Who was committing this crime? When? And where? To address these questions a statistical analysis of Quarter Sessions records has been undertaken to determine any patterns or trends in the figures. Moreover, by analyzing stereotypes and tropes used, not only in the examinations provided by the women themselves but, in broadside ballads (traditionally written by men) this informs contextual ideas on women’s experience and representation when associated with bastardy cases.

For instance, women who bore bastard children where often depicted as bawdy, lewd women in dichotomy to the ideal of the maid; the wife; the widow. Yet they may also be presented as victims under certain circumstances. This study explores such notions by analysing if and how female criminal activity challenged these shared ideals of gender that were embedded within a patriarchal society.
In the latter half of the seventeenth century, female witnesses in the Court of Exchequer helped define the exercise of power in their communities, and beyond. Memory was a potent tool for women in this form of political participation. In this paper, I will focus on how the economic responsibilities of women in East Anglia connected them with knowledge about figures of local authority. Women were crucial to the domestic economy, and their activities brought them into contact with local and state officials. I will specifically explore the role of women in remembering tithe and tax collectors, showing how the economic knowledge and responsibilities women had in their communities facilitated their interaction with and ability to judge officials acting locally. In forming and sharing their opinions of these officers, these women helped to define the parameters of acceptable behaviour within their community, but they also represented the engagement of women with the state and their ability to limit extra-locally imposed burdens, thereby influencing the process of state formation. Their memories of the activities of the officers reinforced and articulated what was important to their specific communities, and how political power could be exercised there.
This paper will consider the self-imaging of Barbara Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland (1640-1709), the “most notorious” mistress of King Charles II of England (1630-1685). Barbara employed allegorical portraiture as a tool to offset her notoriously negative reputation as a “tyrant” who “commands” the King and to convey personal promotional strategies during the politically and socially turbulent period of British history that followed Charles’ restoration to the throne in 1660. By examining two key examples of Barbara’s portraiture, one from the beginning of her relationship with Charles and one from the end of her ‘reign’ as principal mistress, I will consider the perception of decline in the prospects of early modern women. Barbara has been immortalised as a wicked woman whose mysterious sexual hold over the king allowed her to manipulate the monarch during her time of youth and beauty, until her power steeply fell and she was cast aside. I will contend that this tale of ascendancy and decline is not an accurate one. New light will be shed on the misunderstood figure of Barbara Villiers, and the way in which the favour of the king allowed her to navigate her perilous position as a woman who existed outside of the boundaries of propriety.
In the early modern period, women’s lives were understood socially, often through primarily caring roles, rather than their subjective individuality. Perhaps no embodied, relational identity was as profoundly heavy with sociocultural expectations as that of mother. The weight of these expectations, however, generated equally weighty penalties for flouting maternal roles: women were caught between normative expectations of caring and nurturing as natural, and a hypervigilant policing of their unreliable bodies in fear of the disordered woman who defied her biology to commit the ultimate act of transgressive motherhood, infanticide. In this paper, I explore responses to these fears in a range of representations of infanticidal motherhood in popular culture, showing how women’s experiences were reimagined as both salacious stories and cautionary tales. I argue that street literature, including ballads, pamphlets and the Old Bailey Proceedings, played a pivotal role in defining bad motherhood for plebeian audiences, articulating and reinforcing discourses of natural and unnatural maternal experience, and their consequences for women.
In the early 1600s, Lettice Kinnersley writes a letter to her brother, Walter Bagot, a local Justice of the Peace, in which she complains of a marital crisis, and asks for her brother’s help. Lettice’s husband has taken away her household authority and confined her to her chamber, where she is spied on by her mother-in-law’s servants. The narrative she constructs in her letters explores her own failed transition between households: Lettice lacks authority as wife and mistress in her marital household because her mother-in-law already holds that authority, and so she is forced to look back to the family she has left in marriage for support, as embodied by her (powerful) brother, Walter Bagot.

This paper will discuss how the correspondence between Lettice and Walter presents a series of domestic crises in terms of disrupted familial roles, which stem from systems of domestic government (husband/wife, mother/son, brother/sister, mistress/servant) coming into conflict. In so doing, it will trace how Lettice, in letters to her brother, authors her own experience. While Lettice lacks domestic authority, her letters enable her to wield narrative authority; she constructs her own sufferings in relation to her brother’s munificence, ensuring his continued support.
This paper aims at addressing the figure of the ‘perfect wife’ as an instance of women’s manipulation of a male construct originally devised to support a patriarchal system. In seventeenth-century England, finding the fittest wife was no easy task: contemporary pamphlets, for instance, pointed to the dangers of marrying rich women since their wealthy condition may legitimize them to claim a more active role in family business. Such anxieties merged in the redefinition of men’s ‘perfect wife’ as the paradoxical figure of the ‘virgin widow’: blending two major female qualities, the ‘virgin-widow’ owns the widow’s economic wealth but it reduces her threatening power of negotiating family hierarchies by adding to this feature the virgin’s naivety and inexperience of life. Supposedly supporting patriarchal society, this representation would eventually prove lacking and, contrariwise, quite helpful to women who wanted to gain more than a roof over their heads from marriage. Our case study, the pamphlet The Case of Madam Mary Carleton (1663), shares Carleton’s experience as feigned ‘perfect wife’ and explains how appropriating and playing this ‘character’ could help women live a wealthy and independent life. The analysis of this pamphlet will mainly deal with its use of paradox as a rhetorical strategy as it lies at the heart of both Carleton’s ‘virgin widow’ character construction and argumentative writing more at large. However, Carleton did not introduce paradoxical writing, as it had already been used by earlier women writers who joined a century-old debate on women, namely the querelle des femmes. A comparison in the use of paradoxical writing between Carleton and some of her earlier colleagues may be helpful in highlighting the development of a rhetorical strategy that helped women writers exploit the breaches in a patriarchal system of thought and shape a safe place where to voice their thoughts.
Anna Trapnel: Esteemed prophetess or dangerous witch?
Trapnel achieved notoriety as a prophetess during the political and religious upheavals of the English Civil War period. She was at the height of her prophetic activity in the 1650s, attracting audiences as she fell into trances and acted as a spiritual conduit for God’s messages. Trapnel, unmarried and financially independent, followed a spiritual calling in 1654 to journey alone from London to Cornwall to expand her prophetic activity. Her prophetic journey led her into dangerous territory and she was arrested and accused of witchcraft in the courtroom at Truro, Cornwall.

Trapnel’s prophetic utterances were transcribed by eye-witnesses and later published. Trapnel also wrote her own account of her Cornwall journey and the witchcraft accusations. Some historians argue, that prophetic visionary displays could easily be confused by contemporary audiences as demonic or witchcraft. Others argue that accusations of witchcraft against a female prophet was a response to a woman overstepping her gender boundaries. My paper, however, examines the prophetic experiences and shifting identity of Trapnel from prophet to witch, within her immediate context of political and religious power division and contest.
This paper explores plays by William Shakespeare, Henry Chettle and John Webster that offer modes of female madness, or responses to madness, focusing on the manifestation of language in each case. The paper explores the idea that female passivity does not necessarily equal victimhood and the chaos of madness can be generative or even socially transformative.

In *Hamlet*, Ophelia becomes the victim of grief and abandonment, suffering madness and possibly paranoia driving her to her death. Her confession of vulnerability to both grief and the tricks of the world we may assume to be associated with loss of stabilising masculine figures, also possibly a child. In Chettle’s *Hoffman* meanwhile Lucibel’s mad verbal clarity meanwhile makes her a dangerous truth-teller in a world of secret intrigue and murderous intent. As both victim and symptom of the play’s social malaise she goes on to play a significant part in its demise. In Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, meanwhile, the Duchess offers a solid resistance to the madness she is offered and holds out to the death. Her suffering silence before the masque of madmen sent to disturb her sanity denotes her antithetical position to Ferdinand’s rank court. Ultimately as Ferdinand’s increasing madness consumes her, it is her active refusal to conform to its corruption that converts Bosola and ensures the mad court’s demise.
“Either really or in show”: Performance in the Mourning Portraits of Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham

Megan Shaw, PhD candidate, Art History, University of Auckland

Offering fresh insights into the emotional and visual display of widows at the Stuart court, this paper will explore how Katherine Villiers (née Manners, 1603-1649), Duchess of Buckingham, harnessed mourning portraits as a visual device for commemoration and self-preservation. Katherine was the wife and widow of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628), the royal favourite to both James VI & I and Charles I of England. Upon Buckingham’s assassination in August 1628, the court watched closely for emotional reactions to his death “either really or in show.” By examining three mourning portraits of the Duchess of Buckingham painted by Anthony van Dyck and Henri Beaubrun, I argue that she harnessed both emotional and visual performance to consciously and actively reconstruct her own identity while commemorating her husband. The presence of portrait miniatures in these mourning portraits conveyed a public message of her loss, and furthermore reinforced the political leverage of remembrance and the renegotiation – and indeed performance – of power that commemoration offered.
In a time where the psychological impacts of Covid-19 are being felt ever more strongly it is helpful to remember that perceptions of mental health are themselves historical constructions. This is particularly salient in the striking and disquieting narrative of Hannah Allen, who according to her pamphlet *Satan’s Methods and Malice Baffled* (1683), suffered from temptations by the Devil and a “deep melancholy” for much of her life. Amidst a field that remains largely dominated by research into works written by men, this female-authored pamphlet stands out. Allen’s text offers a rich opportunity to explore perceptions and experiences of melancholy amongst early modern women and their familial and social communities.

This paper presents two interconnected lines of investigation: the first examines the interpretive schemas through which Allen perceived her state of mind, as well as examining how she presented those schemas to the reader. The second explores her dynamic role amongst the social and emotional communities surrounding melancholy and mental distress, at both a local and familial level. If we wish to understand the place and conceptualisation of this “affliction” (as Allen describes it) among early modern English women and help legitimise mental illness on a broader level, such an investigation is essential.
To understand where and how middling sort women experienced portrait miniatures, I will examine the places and spaces where they both materially and imaginatively encountered the art form. I will uncover examples of largely unknown portraits and ask new questions of more familiar sources. To begin, I will briefly recap a couple of relatively well-known references to, and examples of, portrait miniatures concerning noble women and middling sort men. I will then explore the extent to which these specific encounters can be used to generalise about the experiences of under-explored middling sort women. There will be similarities between these different gender and social groups but there will also be departures and nuances.

I will adopt an interdisciplinary approach that examines sources including portraiture, diaries, printed books, probate inventories and dramatic texts. This will allow me to reinstate the importance of middling sort women as the interpreters and creators of meaning for portrait miniatures in Early Modern England.
The rural idyll of a family living off the land is a pervading image of the Tudor era. Evidence to support this notion often centres around food and clothing. A sheep provided sustenance (milk and meat) and the raw material (fleece) for functional dress. However, evidence from wills, inventories and accounts suggests that beyond animal husbandry, the domestic production of textiles was limited to spinning and sewing linens. Mean and middling women were not responsible for producing the clothes worn by their families – despite previous assertions to the contrary.

This presentation is drawn from research for *The Typical Tudor: reconstructing everyday dress* which will be published in early 2021. It is based primarily on a database of more than 55,000 garments and accessories from transcribed wills, accounts, inventories and court records. These documentary sources reveal insights into the acquisition of clothing for ordinary men and women. It also suggests to what extent women worked as professionals in the production of textiles and in tailoring.

The paper compares the evidence for homemade apparel with the output of professional workshops and itinerant workers during the Tudor period. It illustrates the network of relationships – both commercial and personal - which were crucial for the maintenance of a comely appearance for the mean and middling sort in society.

The presentation personifies the different perspectives of a 16th century ‘home maker’ and a ‘working woman’ to reveal the complexities in female experiences of home and work. The presenters will use the garments they wear to illustrate the variety of sources from which materials came, the
multiple makers involved in their production, and how owning ‘only the clothes on their backs’ actually made them rich in stored wealth and emotional currency.

‘Overcoming the Limitations of ‘Traditional’ Sources: Accessing Female Experience through Experimental History’

Sarah Bendall, McKenzie Fellow in History, University of Melbourne

How do you access the experiences of women in a period where the historical record dominated by men? This has been a core question that I have grappled with while researching the history of women and their dress in early modern Europe. Most sources – written and visual – that exist from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were authored by men. Many of these, particularly those relating to fashion and dress, are often moralising and tell us about what men think of women and women’s experiences – rather than representing the voices of women themselves. One way that I have sought to overcome these difficulties in my research is through experimental history, namely historical reconstruction.

Drawing on reconstruction as a research methodology and the recently named “embodied turn”, this paper will discuss the practice of experimental history to show that this research methodology is a valid approach to accessing information about embodied female experiences. Ultimately, it argues that well developed experiments using reconstructions enable us to account for the diverse ways that women could have experienced their dressed bodies, experiences that would otherwise be lost to us if we relied solely on the fragmented historical record.
Based on a book co-written with Barbara Burman and published with Yale University Press in 2019 (The Pocket. A Hidden History of Women's Lives 1660-1900, YUP, 2019), the presentation will explore the role of pockets in early-modern women's experience of privacy in the early modern period. At a time when women had little access to privacy and had no legal entitlement to property, women's pockets were part of the few containers whose access they could hope to control. Worn in close proximity to the body under their clothes, pockets offered many women a modicum of privacy. If not a room of their own, at least a small place of their own. Using archival as well as material sources to document this specifically female accessory, the paper will explore how it shaped and conditioned women's relationship to secrecy and possession.
This paper explores the relationship between female bodily experience and elite sartorial choices of neckwear from c.1550 to 1650. The success of fashionable collars during this period is not sufficiently explained by the motivation of status display alone. This paper argues that it is worth investigating how contemporary ideas about health, hygiene, and the body supported the evolving styles of collars and coverings. Drawing on medical treatises and health manuals, it examines how closely concerns regarding preventative dress, temperature, and cleanliness were intertwined with neck adornment. Why was this area of the female body dressed with particular textiles or colours? What material qualities were thought to regulate the internal workings of the upper body, or protect it from external dangers of disease? By considering both its practical and representational roles, this paper demonstrates neckwear's ability to articulate a visual rhetoric of care and maintenance of the body.
This paper explores some of the recent history of how early modern women’s writing was edited. The process of recovering and analysing that writing, in all its heterogeneity, has gone hand in hand with innovative approaches to editing. I explore a series of recent editorial developments that address three fundamental aspects of the positioning of early modern women’s writing in relation to current debates about the nature of texts and textuality: the return of the authoritative complete edition, a revitalization of teaching editions, and new approaches to digital editing. What is at stake when we attempt to understand early modern women’s writing, and how does editing contribute to that understanding? To illustrate this I look very briefly at the example of Katherine Austen’s reflections on the Plague in her Book M, which has been edited by the symposium’s keynote speaker, Sarah Ross.
While the early years of early modern women’s lives have been considered as part of their life trajectories, writings and experiences, particular attention to girlhood experience in this period is a new and emerging field. This paper will evaluate methodological and historical issues for the analysis of this distinct dimension of female experience – girlhood - via a case study of Lady Rachel Fane (1613-1680). Fane’s experiences as girl are represented in her educational exercises, religious notes, original dramatic texts and poems written in a series of notebooks in the 1620s and 1630s. While much work has been done on her dramatic writing, this paper will read her drama alongside her other texts, especially the poems ‘New Yeer’s Gifte to my Lady’ and ‘Upon the Death of my Sister Francke’, as sources for reading her life, her encounters with literature and the creative participation of early modern girls in literary cultures. Analysing Fane’s representation of herself as a ‘maker’ of texts, it will contribute to this symposium’s debates on authorship and experience and will explore the ways in which literature by girls can constitute a forum for negotiating family relations, mediating emotional experiences and exploring childhood identity.
While Elizabeth Tudor’s juvenile translations have been the subject of much scholarship, those by Mary Tudor have not received the same attention. There are two extant translations credited to Mary before she became queen, and neither exists in her own handwriting. One, she undertook as an eleven-year-old princess, the same age as Elizabeth when she offered her first translation to Katherine Parr. The other, she translated sometime between 1545 and 1547, the time in which Elizabeth gave Henry VIII and Katherine Parr New Year’s gift translations. What makes Mary’s translations noteworthy, is that neither had an accompanying dedication. Mary wrote these translations as part of her schooling or at the behest of her stepmother. She did not include a dedication for either because they simply were not necessary to convey a political message. However, both ended up serving a political purpose, quite possibly without Mary’s knowledge or consent. Whether she intended or not, Mary’s translations represented her lineage as the daughter and grand-daughter of kings and reinforced her legitimacy as Henry’s daughter.
My paper argues that the two manuscripts of Love’s Victory (c.1617-1621) represent Lady Mary Wroth’s use of theatre to reshape her experience and the family history of Sidney-Herbert coterie. Drawing my own experience of working on two stage productions (1999 and 2018) and editing the Penshurst Manuscript of Love’s Victory for Revels Plays (pub. Dec 2020), the paper will present new evidence to suggest that, in performance, Wroth’s drama creates a more complex network of emotional identifications between life and fiction than has previously been appreciated. I take Gary Waller’s most recent suggestion (in The Female Baroque) that Wroth’s baroque style involves actively fragmenting and elaborating aspects of her own life in her fiction. Instead of assigning a cast of real-life figures to specific dramatis personae, I show how the romantic plot is a prism through which real-life moments and feelings can be glimpsed, reviewed, and reworked under the controlling hand of the playwright. This allows for sympathetic identifications and recognitions which shift across genders and change from moment to moment in the play: for Wroth as playwright, for her contemporaries who read or performed it, and for modern readers, performers and spectators.
Letters are valued by historians, cultural critics and literary scholars because they provide documentary evidence of early modern women’s life experience. Indeed the most prevalent form of early modern women’s writing over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was undoubtedly the letter. Literate women wrote letters to maintain connection amongst family, friends and associates; and they also wrote letters to exert influence, to petition, or to recommend the carrier. Letter writing served a range of practical functions linking women into sociable communities and political networks, and providing a means of acting in the public world by proxy. Letter-writing manuals described the letter as the closest form of writing to face-to-face conversation, but they also provided copious detail on how to master the discourse and to deploy its effects to particular persuasive purposes. This theory was widely circulated in the frequently republished letter-writing manuals, but also in the teaching of *ars rhetorica*, which underpinned basic literacy as it was conceived in the early modern period. When considering letters as documents of early modern women’s experience, it is important to keep in mind that letter writing was a learned skill, and that an effective letter must seem to be natural, unstudied, off-the-cuff communication. Women crafted their letters carefully, drawing upon what they knew of the rhetorical arts, tailoring the tenets and conventions of the genre to their purpose. In this sense, then, although letters do document early modern women’s experience, they do not do so in a reliably direct and transparent fashion. These issues will be considered in relation to a range of examples of letters written by seventeenth-century women.
Introduction to Jane Lumley’s ca. 1553 translation of Euripides’ “Iphigenia in Aulis”

Deanne Williams, Professor of English at York University, Toronto

This brief introduction to Lady Jane Lumley’s Iphigeneia will describe the biographical, historical, and religious contexts of Lady Jane Lumley’s translation of Euripides’s Iphigeneia, which was the very first English translation of Greek tragedy, ever. I will touch on Lumley’s Catholic family, her classical education, and her marriage to John Lumley, the 1st Baron Lumley. Most importantly, I will describe her strategies of adaptation and translation that transform the play, moving it away from the genre of classical tragedy and updating it for a contemporary Tudor audience.
Reading of Jane Lumley’s ca. 1553 translation of Euripides’ “Iphigenia in Aulis”

Tom Bishop, Professor of English and Drama, University of Auckland

This reading will involve a cast of seven to eight actors and is coordinated by Professor Tom Bishop.
In the past twenty years, scholarship has increasingly been investigating the important role of the Renaissance revival of atomism in early modern culture. In particular, the Newcastle circle was instrumental in rekindling Epicurean atomism throughout Europe. Catherine Wilson explains that the Newcastle “salon in Paris in the mid-1640s, overseen by Margaret, her husband William, and his brother, the mathematician Charles Cavendish, was the center of a revival of Epicureanism led by Hobbes and Gassendi.” Wilson notes that English women such as Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson and Aphra Behn were drawn to Epicurean philosophy, yet the “attraction of women to Epicureanism is a topic that has been little explored and even less explained.” This paper traces the connections between the Newcastle circle and women arguing that Epicurean atomism may have specifically appealed to women, since it held significant implications for the ways that gender, marriage and sexuality were conceptualized during the Renaissance. This paper will argue that the Renaissance Epicurean revival was significant and influential in paving the way for women’s broader participation in science and natural philosophy.
The manuscript receipt, or recipe, books left by early modern women represent one of the largest corpora of women’s writing from this period and are important evidence for social networks, scientific and medical innovation, household management and female socialisation. Three seventeenth-century receipt books are attributed to a Margaret Baker (British Library Sloane MS 2485 and MS 2486; Folger Shakespeare Library V.a.619). But who was she? In spite of considerable academic interest in the cookbooks—which contain hundreds of medical and culinary recipes as well as intriguing extracts copied from surgical manuals—Baker’s identity remains unclear. In this paper, I use genealogical and bibliographical evidence about recipe contributors to argue that Margaret Baker was the daughter of Richard Baker the Chronicler and Margaret Mainwaring. This identification sheds light on previous hypotheses about Baker’s level of education, social networks and access to medical literature, while also prompting new questions about Baker’s social position, and the recipes she chose to record. In combination with close reading of the cookbooks themselves, this case study suggests the importance of receipt books as one way of accessing the individual life experiences of early modern women, particularly those outside the peerage.
In their respective verse writings, Hester Pulter and Margaret Cavendish muse over the vagaries of early modern science and fantasize about the wonders of the natural world. While their poetry lends itself to the lens of literature and science, this lens in literary analysis often results in a reductive cataloguing of scientific idiom. Rather than further anatomizing Cavendish’s atoms or Pulter’s astronomy (or vice versa), I propose an exploration of the way these writers’ materialist, scientific understandings of nature underpin their gender-conscious rationales for writing poetry.

This paper will therefore engage with the topic of female creative experience. For both poets, poetry emerges from the body and is consumed by the body. Pulter conceives of her sad poems as a “cordial,” fatally draining her but vitalizing others (“The Weeping Wish”). Cavendish’s description of her poetic fancies as culinary dishes made to be “eaten” likewise implies medicinal potential (“To Poets”). Focusing on poems and paratextual materials from Pulter’s oeuvre and Cavendish’s Poems and Fancies (1664), my paper will contemplate how poetry’s health-giving benefits might be literal and indeed natural, and how gender crucially influences this model of consumption.
Previous scholarship has neglected to acknowledge the integral role of music in the queenship of Katherine Parre, sixth and final wife of Henry VIII. This paper will examine surreptitious musical information and provide novel insights on the nature of public musical involvement for elite women in early Tudor England. New evidence has recently surfaced exploring Katherine’s role as lyricist for Thomas Tallis’ work Gaude Gloriosa Dei Mate. Her participation with the creation of this music, coupled with her extensively vocal Protestant declamations, contributed heavily to the accusations of heresy and an un-issued arrest warrant in 1546.

I will reconsider Katherine’s extensive musical involvement in queenship as well as her role in creating a cult of musical majesty. Her story reveals the tenuous core of a sixteenth-century woman’s affiliation with music. In the dangerous world of the early Tudor court politics, aristocratic women who failed to balance the former appropriately, garnered dire social or even physical consequences. Katherine Parre was able to utilize public musical performance in such a way that added status to her own queenship, and therefore ultimately enhancing the reputation of the crown. However, other instances of her musical entanglement were causes of suspicion, from which she would barely escape with her life.
Workshop: The Reality of her Endeavours: Experiencing Beautifying Recipes in Early Modern England

Erin Griffey, Associate Professor, Art History, University of Auckland
Victoria Munn, PhD candidate, Art History, University of Auckland

This workshop introduces participants to beauty culture in early modern England as recorded and experienced by women. We will provide an overview of beautifying recipe culture, highlighting the central role of women in practising – and, in many cases, recording – these treatments. The beauty ideals sought in the recipes, as well as the types of ingredients and processes used to make them, point to the influence of both Galenic and chemical medicine. Moreover, empiricism – experience – was essential in crafting, using and viewing the results of the recipes. This is demonstrated in Hannah Woolley’s preamble of *The Ladies Delight* (1672), in which she beseeches her readers ‘to try the Reality of [her] Endeavours’. Undertaking any recipe, Woolley writes, the reader will discover the efficacy of her self-authored ‘choice receipts’.
Drawing on recipes in printed and manuscript sources by and attributed to female authors including Alethea Talbot, Henrietta Maria and Hannah Woolley, participants will ‘try the reality’ of beauty recipes. We will create a small group of recipes for the face and hair, apply prepared mixtures, assess recipe textures and smells, and consider the readability and efficacy of recipes endorsed by writers.