

Seventeenth-century Prose Fiction
by English Women Writers:
Primary Sources and Recent Studies
(1977-97)

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ABSTRACT

This is a bibliography of prose fiction written by Englishwomen in the seventeenth century. It includes sections on general bibliographies, studies and anthologies, and on the various writers involved (Mary Wroth, Anna Weamys, Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn, Catherine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Delarivier Manley), each divided into primary and secondary sources.

In the last twenty years there has been a revision of literary history thanks to feminism, new historicism, cultural materialism and related critical trends. Consequently, a large number of texts and writers that had been ignored and even despised have been recovered and reassessed by means of new editions and critical studies. A good example of this is the long-forgotten tradition of female writing that has been reclaimed by feminist scholars over the last two decades. In the case of narrative, the work of Dale Spender, Jane Spencer, and Janet Todd, among others (see below), has been crucial.

Another example is the new approach to the history of prose fiction developed by male critics such as John Richetti (*Popular Fiction Before Richardson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. Repr. with a new introduction in 1992), Lennard Davis (*Factual Fictions. The Origins of the English Novel*. New York: Columbia U.P., 1983), Michael McKeon (*The Origins of the English Novel. 1600-1740*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1987) and J. Paul Hunter (*Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. New York: Norton, 1990). Their approach is more comprehensive than the traditional novel-centred view of English prose fiction. However, their focus is still mainly the eighteenth century. For a modern analysis of previous narrative we must refer to Salzman

1985 (see section 2. below), which includes all sorts of genres and pays due attention to the works of women writers.

Few Spanish scholars have previously worked on English prose fiction of the seventeenth century, and even fewer on that written by women. The reason may have been the difficulty of gaining access to primary sources. But nowadays most of the texts are available in modern editions, and there is no longer any reason why Spanish critics should not contribute to the revision of literary history.

This bibliography attempts to list the texts of prose fiction written by women in the seventeenth century and to make a brief comment on their genre and editorial history, including any recently published editions, if any. A list of recent studies on these texts is also added, which in the case of Aphra Behn is just a selection due to the large quantity of critical work her narrative has generated. Introductory sections on general bibliographies, studies, and anthologies are included as well. None of the available bibliographies deals specifically with all the works of prose fiction written by women writers of the whole seventeenth century. Part of my aim is therefore to provide a necessary database for those who may be interested in doing research on this subject.

Finally, it must be said that, apart from the printed material mentioned below, there are also electronic resources provided by the Brown University Women Writers Project, the Emory Women Writers Resource Project, *A Celebration of Women Writers*, *Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century: An Annotated Guide to Internet Resources*, the Margaret Cavendish Society, and the Aphra Behn Society, among others.

1. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

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3. GENERAL ANTHOLOGIES.

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- Trill, Suzanne, Kate Chedgzoy, & Melanie Osborne, *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Writing Women in England, 1500-1700*. London: Arnold, 1997.
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4. MARY WROTH (1586-1640).

4.1. PRIMARY SOURCES.

The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (1621). Written in imitation of Sidney's *Arcadia*, it was the first original full-length work of prose fiction published by an Englishwoman. But it had little success since the book entered in the Stationer's Register on 13 July and was withdrawn from sale in December. The reason was that Edward Denny, Baron Waltham and later Earl of Norwich, alleged that he and his family had been portrayed and slandered in one of the numerous inset stories. The continuation could never come out, and *Urania* was not republished until the present decade. The complete text was edited by Josephine A. Roberts in 1995, and Book I was included in Salzman ed. 1991: 3-208 (3. above).

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5. ANNA WEAMYS (fl. 1651).

5.1. PRIMARY SOURCES

A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" (1651). It had a second edition in 1690 according to *The Term Catalogue*, but no copies are known to have survived. The first appearance of the text since then was the 1994 edition by Patrick C. Cullen. Weamys continues the adventures of Sidney's masterpiece but, whether consciously or not, she wrote a clearer, more straightforward romance, with a less elevated style and a less complicated narrative structure. So it is difficult to accept that "the lively ghost of Sidney, by a happy transmigration, speaks through the organs of this inspired Minerva", as the "Stationer" claims (Cullen ed. 1994: 4) (5.1. below). From the second half of the seventeenth century on, this kind of romance became less and less popular, and only the *Arcadia* continued being reprinted.

5.2. RECENT STUDIES

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6. MARGARET CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE (1623-73).

6.1. PRIMARY SOURCES

Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life (1656). It was reprinted in 1671 and 1674. It is a miscellaneous work including tales in verse and prose (of all kind: comical, tragical, moral, romancical, philosophical, etc), dialogues, and an autobiography. There is no modern edition of *Natures Pictures*, but two of the prose tales ("The Contract" and "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity") can be found in Lilley ed. 1994: 1-43 and 45-118. (6.2. below).

CCXI Sociable Letters (1664). As Cavendish alleges in "The Preface", this time she attempts "under the cover of Letters to Express the Humours of Mankind and the Actions of Man's

Life". She depicts scenes taken from real life, and combines narration with reflection. For a recent edition, see Fitzmaurice ed. (1997) (6.2. below).

The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World (1666). It was reprinted two years later. First published as a fictional companion piece to her scientific treatise *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*. This utopian fantasy is Cavendish's most celebrated and studied prose fiction. Recent editions of this text are included in Lilley ed. 1994: 119-225 (6.2. below), and Salzman, P. ed. 1991: 251-348 (3. above).

6.2. RECENT STUDIES

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7. APHRA BEHN (c.1640-89).

7.1. PRIMARY SOURCES.

Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister (Part I 1684, Part II 1685, Part III 1687). The Third Part was published under the title of *The Amours of Philander and Silvia*. The First Part was completely epistolar, the other two mix letters and narrative. It was the fictionalised account of a well-known scandal of the time, and became very popular in the first half of the eighteenth century (more than ten editions by 1740). Ignored by the Victorians due to its dubious morals, *Love-Letters* was not published again until the 1987 edition by Maureen Duffy. It was later edited by Janet Todd in 1993 and 1996. (7.2. below).

The Fair Jilt, or The History of Prince Tarquin and Miranda, Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave, and Agnes de Castro, or The Force of Generous Love were published both separately and together (under the title *Three Histories*) in 1688, the latter edition being reprinted two years later. *Oroonoko* became extremely popular in the eighteenth century both in Britain and France, having various narrative and dramatic adaptations. *Agnes de Castro* was actually a translation of a French *nouvelle* by Mlle de Brillac published that very same year.

The History of the Nun, or The Fair Vow-Breaker and *The Lucky Mistake* came out separately in 1689.

The posthumous collection entitled *The Histories and Novels of the late Ingenious Mrs Behn* (1696) includes all the previous short narratives, except for *The History of the Nun*, and an imitation of Balthazar de Bonnewcourt's *La Montre*, which she had already published in 1686, but now appearing as two works: "The Lover's Watch, or the Art of Love" and "The Lady's Looking-Glass to Dress herself By: or, The Whole Art of Charming". It also included "The Life and Memoirs of Mrs Behn Written by One of the Fair Sex", and "Love-Letters to a Gentleman" (eight epistles, probably autobiographical, not to be mistaken with the fictional *Love-Letters* above). A second edition came out the same year.

All the Histories and Novels Written by the late Ingenious Mrs Behn (1698) contains the same works as the 1696 collection except for "Love-Letters", together with three new short stories: "Memoirs of the Court of the King of Bantam", "The Nun, or the Perjured Beauty" and "The Adventures of the Black Lady".

"The Unfortunate Bride, or The Blind Lady a Beauty", "The Dumb Virgin, or The Force of Imagination", and "The Unfortunate Happy Lady" were probably printed together in 1698, but remained unpublished until 1700. The same may have happened to "The Wandering Beauty" and "The Unhappy Mistake, or the Impious Vow Punish'd". These five stories were perhaps originally intended as part of a "Second Volume" of the previously mentioned *All the Histories and Novels*, but this was not done until 1700. Since the issue also included Behn's translations of Fontanelle, the title was changed into *Histories, Novels, and Translations, Written by the Most Ingenious Mrs Behn; The Second Volume*. (For more information, see O'Donnell 1979 and Todd ed. 1995).

The most complete and authoritative modern edition of Behn's shorter fiction has been done by Janet Todd in Volume 3 of *The Works of Aphra Behn* (1995). See also Duffy ed. 1986, Todd ed. 1992, Salzman ed. 1994, and Lipking ed. 1997 (7.2 below).

7.2. A SELECTION OF RECENT STUDIES.

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- Athey, S. & D.C. Alarcon. "*Oroonoko's* Gendered Economies of Honor/Horror: Reframing Colonial Discourse Studies in the Americas". *American Literature* 65, 3 (Sept. 1993): 415-43.
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8. CATHERINE TROTTER (1679-1749).

8.1. PRIMARY SOURCES.

Olinda's Adventures, or The Amours of a Young Lady first appeared in a two-volume miscellany entitled *Letters of Love and Gallantry and Other Occasions* (1693) which was several times reprinted. It is generally ascribed to Catherine Trotter, who was fourteen years old at the time of publication. *Olinda's Adventures* is a short epistolary novel which is reminiscent of Behn's narrative and heralds the sentimentalism and realism of the eighteenth century, but which has attracted little critical attention. It was edited by R.A. Day for the Augustan Reprint Society (Publication No. 138. Los Angeles: Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library) in 1969. Day also analyses this text in *Told in Letters. Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson* (Ann Arbor: U. Michigan P., 1966. 183-7 and *passim*).

8.2. RECENT STUDIES.

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9. MARY PIX (1666-1709).

9.1. PRIMARY SOURCES.

The Inhumane Cardinal, or Innocence Betray'd (1696) is a narrative of intrigue and corruption set in Rome, written in the manner of the French *nouvelles* of the time. A facsimile reproduction was published in 1984 (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints). Like *Olinda's Adventures*, this text continues to be largely ignored by the critics, who mainly focus on the dramatic works of these two writers.

9.2. RECENT STUDIES

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10. DELARIVIER MANLEY (1672-1724).

10.1. PRIMARY SOURCES.

Letters Written by Mrs Manley (1696) was her only narrative work published in the seventeenth century, but she had it withdrawn because it had come out without her permission. The book was reprinted posthumously in 1725 under the title *A Stagecoach Journey to Exeter*. It was an epistolary travelogue like Marie d'Aulnoy's *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* (1691), which is actually mentioned by Manley. These *Letters* were less popular and has received less critical attention than her other prose fiction. There is no modern edition.

10.2. RECENT STUDIES.

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