



# Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700 (Oxford World's Classics)

*Paul Salzman*

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In a famous passage in *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf asked 'why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age'. She went on to speculate about an imaginary Judith Shakespeare who might have been destined for a career as illustrious as that of her brother William, except that she had none of his chances.

The truth is that many women wrote during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and this collection will serve to introduce modern readers to

the full variety of women's writing in this period from poems, prose and fiction to prophecies, letters, tracts and philosophy. The collection begins with the poetry of Isabella Whitney, who worked in a gentlewoman's household in London in the late 1560s, and ends with Aphra Behn who was employed as a spy in

Amsterdam by Charles II. Here are examples of the work of twelve women writers, allowing the reader to sample the diverse and lively output of all classes and opinions, from artistcrats such as Mary Wroth, Anne Clifford and Margaret Cavendish to women of obscure background caught up in the religious ferment of the mid seventeenth century like Hester Biddle, Pricscilla Cotton and Mary Cole. The collection includes three plays, and a generous selection of poetry, letters, diary, prose fiction,

religious polemic, prohecy and scientificficic speculation, offering the reader the possibility of tracing patterns through the works collected and some sense of historical shifts and changes. All the extracts are edited afresh from original sources and the anthology includes comprehensive notes, both explanatory and textual.

**ABOUT THE SERIES:** For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the widest range of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, helpful notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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