

The book begins with an introduction by Charlotte Gray, author of the popular account of the lives of the Strickland sisters, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill*. In the following eleven chapters, Peterman takes the reader from the birth of the Strickland children in Suffolk, England at the end of the eighteenth century, through their marriages, emigration, struggles in Upper Canada, and finally their deaths towards the end of the century. Throughout the chronological narrative of the women's lives, Peterman deftly contextualizes their experiences throughout the nineteenth century, fitting their personal stories into the larger narrative, including events such as the Napoleonic wars, the waves of immigration to British North America, and the rebellions of 1837. As the book is not geared towards an academic audience, the references are predictably lacking. Footnotes are few, and the bibliography is limited. An additional nuisance is that if a reader wants to know where a particular quotation comes from, Peterman has only provided general information as to which book or collection of letters it comes from, and not the page number. However, this type of referencing is common in books intended for a popular audience, and does not detract from the book as a whole. One useful addition is the inclusion of several family trees which make following the family history much easier.

In *Sisters in Two Worlds*, Peterman does an excellent job of literally painting a picture of life in the backwoods, and this is where its value lies. Readers of Traill and Moodie will have surely tried to visualize it before, but it is a pleasure to have so many images laid before our eyes. There are over 200 colour illustrations printed on only 176 pages, which makes for a visually pleasing and image-dense book. It is also well designed, at times having the feel of a scrapbook with quotations overlaid on images. Peterman and the designers at Doubleday have beautifully put together a variety of

images, as well as quotations from the women themselves, which tell the story of their lives. The book is clearly exceptionally well researched. For example, there are portraits and photographs of both women and many family members, newspaper articles, copies of documents, the frontispieces of their books, photos of gravestones, letters, and maps as well as paintings and photographs of homes and regions where they lived. Peterman seems to have collected images of every home that the sisters ever lived in, and to have published so many images (previously scattered in archives and libraries across the United Kingdom and Canada) in one place is surely an accomplishment, if not a source of delight for his readers.

Peterman is ideally suited to have put together this book, as he probably personally inspected many of the documents and images for his previous publications. He is certainly one of the most important Strickland scholars, publishing multiple books on these women, including edited collections of letters, short stories, and monographs. It is clear that Peterman has some affection for the Strickland sisters (as do many scholars familiar with their stories). The book is really a celebration of their lives, struggles, successes, and contributions to Canadian literature and history.

*Sisters in Two Worlds* is a book that will surely be enjoyed by its readers for Peterman's thoughtful biographies, but probably more so because it is a pleasure to view.

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## A LITERARY HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WRITING IN BRITAIN, 1660-1789

Susan Staves  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006

### REVIEWED BY JUDITH ANDERSON STUART

I spent many pleasant hours in airports and bus stations over the December holiday with Susan Staves' literary history. Her insistence on the critical evaluation of women's literary merit, her contextualization of women's writings with the historical movements from which they arose, and her cross-generic approach are interesting and useful. Her book will engage scholars of feminist literature and feminist literary history.

Faced with the wealth of writing by women in her hundred and twenty-nine year period of study, Staves made hard choices about the women authors and their works to be included in this volume. Her literary history privileges those texts that she finds to be the "most original, most intelligent, best written, and most significant." Such an assessment is necessarily rather subjective, but Staves seeks to be selective rather than exhaustive. This is not to say that her history is unduly limited, however: the very scope of this text (430-plus pages, not including a copious bibliography and extensive notes) allows for the consideration of a great range of literary performances. In examining her subject texts across genres and time, she emphasizes women's varying responses to social influences and restrictions, in the process discovering a "rise of the woman author [which] is...bittersweet."

Each of Staves' seven chapters focuses on a specific period which is hinged to political influences on women's writing: 1660-89 (the Restoration to Aphra Behn's death); 1689-1702 (the reign of William and

Mary); 1702-14 (Queen Anne's rule); 1715-37 (Queen Anne's death to the passing of the Licensing Act and its attendant censorship of theatres); 1737-56 (the rise of sentimental culture, and up to the beginning of the Seven Years War); 1756-76 (up to the beginning of the American Revolution); 1777-89 (from the American Revolution to just before the French Revolution). Each chapter offers a little community of women writers, related by their tilling of literary fields in the era of study, and by either resistance or conformity to social pressures. Staves offers introductory and conclusory comments to each section, and these are helpful to the reader who wishes to contextualize women writers in their socio-historical moments.

If there is a slight weakness in Staves' survey, it is in her emphasis on the works of better-known women writers. Her first chapter, for example, focuses largely on Margaret Cavendish, Anne Bradstreet, Katherine Philips, and Aphra Behn. Staves does not merely cover old ground, however: she draws parallels between these and other, lesser-known women writers in terms of genre and of social influence. In this first chapter, Royalist Margaret Cavendish's 1667 Civil War biography of her husband William is paired with that of Puritan Lucy Hutchinson's *Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, written in the same decade as Cavendish's tribute. Even closer juxtapositions are made between Cavendish and Aphra Behn in a sub-section on their prose narratives *Blazing World* and *Oroonoko* (1666 and 1688 respectively); comparison is based on the two women's literary creations of imaginary and exotic worlds, with due explanation of some of the major political forces which shaped such writings.

Staves also casts much-needed light on some less familiar writers in each of her sections. Since traditional histories of art forms assume their audiences' familiarity with subject works, and since women's literary canon is an elastic and emergent

corpus, she offers what she calls "appreciative literary criticism," addressing the question of why these texts deserve readerly attention. She is leisurely in her approach to the works: especially when dealing with poetry, she not only gives a synopsis of content but frequently quotes passages at length in order that readers can examine the subject with her. Staves' attention to generic variety illustrates the ways in which her female subjects pursued a wide range of literary opportunities. In so doing, she continues the important work of feminist archaeology, bringing to light old works by and about women, and placing them in new juxtapositions.

The conclusion of Staves' final chapter, "Romance and Comedy, 1777-1789," challenges the modern reader to be critical in her assessment of the merits of women's literature. "Women writers," she says, "must be judged by what they have accomplished in their work." By her own criteria, Staves' *Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* accomplishes much, adding to the ongoing feminist discourse about the rise of women's literary contributions in this turbulent and productive period.

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## THROUGH LOVER'S LANE: L. M. MONTGOMERY'S PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL IMAGINATION

Elizabeth Rollins Epperly  
Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2007

### REVIEWED BY RACHEL HURST

Unbeknownst to many admirers of L. M. Montgomery, Montgomery was an avid photographer and enjoyed photographing the people and landscapes amongst which she lived. Elizabeth Rollins Epperly's *Through Lover's Lane: L. M. Montgomery's Photography and Visual Imagination* explores how Montgomery's photographs allow us to peer through a window into what she terms as Montgomery's "visual imagination." As Epperly solidly argues, Montgomery relied upon decidedly visual metaphors to convey emotion and situation in her work and the photographs visually illustrate these metaphors in an analogous fashion to the textual illustrations and processes of editing in Montgomery's work. Epperly combines the photographic with hermeneutic analysis of favourites such as the *Anne of Green Gables* and *Emily of New Moon* series, and biographical information to offer the reader a comprehensive analysis of the role of the visual in Montgomery's life and work. Arguing first that the visual metaphors and patterns of the bend or curve, the circle or 'keyhole,' and the arch are enduring throughout Montgomery's life and writing, Epperly explores Montgomery's photographs throughout the first four chapters. Epperly's text then takes us through major transformations in the manner through which Montgomery takes up the visual: the *Anne* series, the *Emily* series, and her