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Wilcox, Helen. 1611: Authority, Gender, and the Word in Early Modern England

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Wilcox, Helen.

1611: Authority, Gender, and the Word in Early Modern England.

Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014. Pp. xvi, 253 + 4 ill. ISBN 978-1-4051-9391-7 (hardcover) CDN \$112.95.

Refreshingly liberated from both a theoretical imperative and any requisite jargon, Helen Wilcox's *1611* (not unlike James Shapiro's *Shakespeare-centric 1599*) frames itself instead around the textual culture produced during a single year in Jacobean London, freely drawing connections between the printed texts and various performances that, taken together, ostensibly characterize the historical zeitgeist. Largely overlooking the technical complexities of composition, manuscript circulation, revision, printing, performance, and so forth, Wilcox focuses on shared publication dates to establish connections between the materials she reviews. While scrutinizing the year's productions in roughly chronological order, starting with Jonson's New Year's Day court masque *Oberon* and concluding with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *1611* insists on the imbricative character of early modern textual culture—how the texts gathered under the rubric of 1611 reflect, in miniature, broad cultural concerns about representations of authority, gender, and the power of the word.

In her first chapter, Wilcox reviews the Jacobean court's celebration of the New Year via Ben Jonson's masque *Oberon* and its historical specificity, subsequently turning to Jonson's February offering, *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*, and its concern for language itself as potential obstacle or source of freedom. The chapter concludes by considering the cultural importance of music in 1611—its many locations, patrons, and publications. Chapter 2 analyzes the significance of Aemelia Lanyer's 1611 *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in relation to the culture's idealization of female silence, discussing the poet's appropriation of scripture in her "Apologie" for Eve, and her circulation of perhaps the first ever printed country-house poem, "The Description of Cooke-ham." Wilcox emphasizes the irony of Lanyer's poetic achievements in light of her work's emblemizing the ongoing injustices against women like the Countess of Cumberland, her young daughter Anne Clifford, and King James's cousin, Lady Arabella Stuart. *1611*'s third chapter treats the topic of travel, both in reality as well as in the imagination of playwrights and poets, beginning with how the idiosyncratic *Coryats Crudities* capitalizes on a growing market for travel writing focused on tourism rather than trade, or accumulated observation rather

than exploration per se, before turning to the commendatory collection that Coryate's text spawned later that year—*The Odcombian Banquet*—and a selection of contemporaneous satires, including John Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave*, John Davies of Hereford's *The Scourge of Folly*, and Thomas Middleton's stage play *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, or, *The Almanac*, which satirizes the rampant popularity of the predictive publication identified in its subtitle. In chapter 4, Wilcox turns to time, tyrants, and the questions of authority in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, considering its themes of political unrest in tandem with those explored in the year's other dramatic offerings, like Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* and Jonson's *Cataline His Conspiracy*. Wilcox also assesses Shakespeare's depiction of female authority in light of Lanyer's poetry, and his tragicomic personification of Time alongside Heywood's backward glancing *The Golden Age*, Richard Brathwaite's metaphysical *The Golden Fleece*, and Anthony Munday's pageant for the Lord Mayor's Show, *Chruso-thriambos*, and subsequent volume *A Brieffe Chronicle, of the Successe of Time, from the Creation of the World, to this Instant*. Here as throughout, Wilcox peppers her discussion of seminal texts with that of minor works, emphasizing the intertextual mutuality of topical concerns while grounding her claims in historical detail.

Turning in her fifth chapter to devotional culture, the author notes that the single most prominent genre of writing among the texts of 1611 is undoubtedly the sermon. Wilcox reminds her reader of the genre's rivalling poetry, masque, and theatrical performance with its immediacy, rhetorical skill, and dramatic impact. She begins by interrogating how a single word ("stone") forms the leitmotif of Lancelot Andrewes's Easter Day sermon before James at Whitehall, before broadening her purview to include the self-consciously word-centred devotional discourses and literatures of many of Andrewes's fellow preachers. Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* forms the focus of the book's sixth chapter, which seizes on the play's depiction of and engagement with its cross-dressing heroine Moll Cutpurse / Mary Frith as an appropriate emblem for the study of authority, gender, and the word in 1611. Like the book more generally, this chapter's strength lies in its heterogeneous engagement with intertextual contexts, while its weakness inheres in its tendency toward broad themes and familiar overviews. Claiming that there can hardly have been a more important year than 1611 in the history of English translation, the seventh chapter surveys the publications of the King James version of the Bible, two dictionaries, and George Chapman's translation of Homer's *Iliad* as

triumphant humanist emblems of Reformation orthodoxy and Renaissance scholarship unanimously concerned with accurate interpretation of the word, and past as prologue to the present. The book's eighth chapter regards John Donne's "An Anatomy of the World" (the "First Anniversary") and its hyperbolic commemoration of Elizabeth Drury's death in light of other alchemical remembrances of women penned that year in funeral sermons and memorials. The final chapter assesses the fundamental significance of language to virtually everything in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, thereby reemphasizing the centrality of the word to the entire year's textual production.

Prefaced with a detailed chronology of events and equipped with an appendix of the year's printed texts, 1611 offers readers a limited but intriguing glimpse of some of the thematic interconnections among a group of printed texts published in London over the course of a year. While it is unlikely to unsettle many received ideas or to satisfy readers craving a richer account of early modern English textual culture, 1611 offers an engaging primer for students and scholars interested in exploring the thematic connections among a temporally gathered grouping of texts.

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Wolfe, Jessica.

Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. Pp. xv, 607 + 10 ill. ISBN 978-1-4426-5026-8 (hardcover) \$110.

Focusing on the full range of the Homeric corpus, including texts incorrectly attributed to Homer—such as the mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia* and the collection of lyric encomiums, the *Homeric Hymns*—alongside more familiar works such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Jessica Wolfe's *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes* argues that Renaissance interpretations of Homerica were shaped by a diverse and conflicted set of responses to the representation of *eris* (strife, conflict, or discord); in other words, by sectarian, theological, and social conflicts. As the first two chapters of Wolfe's book show, for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists, Homer's depiction