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0521622549 - Writing, Gender and State in Early Modern England: Identity Formation and the Female Subject

Megan Matchinske

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The period running from the Reformation to the English Civil War saw an evolving understanding of social identity in England. This book uses four illuminating case studies to chart a discursive shift from mid sixteenth-century notions of an individually generated, spiritually motivated sense of identity, to civil-war perceptions of the self as inscribed by the state and inflected according to gender, a site of civil and sexual invigilation and control. Each study centers on the work of an early modern woman writer in the act of self-definition and authorization, in relation to external powers such as the church and the monarchy. Megan Matchinske's analysis illustrates the evolving relationships between public and private selves and the increasing role of gender in determining different identities for men and women. The conjunction of gender and statehood in Matchinske's analysis represents an original contribution to the study of early modern identity.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1998

Typeset in Times 10/12pt [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Matchinske, Megan.

Writing, gender and state in early modern England: identity formation and the female subject / Megan Matchinske.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Renaissance literature and culture: 26)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 62254 9 (hardback)

1. English literature – Early modern, 1500–1700 – History and criticism.

2. English literature – Women authors – History and criticism. 3. Women and literature – England – History – 16th century. 4. Women and literature – England – History – 17th century. 5. Women – England – History – Renaissance, 1450–1600. 6. Literature and state – Great Britain – History. 7. Identity (Psychology) in literature. 8. Gender identity in literature.

I. Title. II. Series:

PR113.M37 1998

820.9'9287 – dc21 97–27259 CIP

ISBN 0 521 62254 9 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

Cambridge University Press
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Louis Montrose for reading innumerable drafts of this project in its infancy, for offering generous and tactful suggestions in its regard, and for sharing with me his vast knowledge of the period. Throughout my graduate study, he gave me the greatest gifts that a teacher can give – encouragement and respect. Page duBois, Stephanie Jed, Cora Kaplan, Masao Miyoshi, and Kathryn Shevelow also deserve note here for their early support and advice; so too, Christina Accomando, Karen Hollis, and Maggie Sale. Many of the ideas put forward in this project would not have been possible without their initial participation in its making.

To my longtime friend, writer Lynn York, who has entered the pages of this book in more ways than she can possibly know. Your interest in this project reminds me that these women lived and breathed and that their stories need telling. To Reid Barbour, Alan Dessen, Anne Hall, Catherine Peyroux, and Keith Wailoo for their suggestions and support at various stages along the way. As my academic “double,” Reid has shown me again and again what exemplary teaching and scholarship are all about, and he has done so with grace, with friendship, and with humor. To John McGowan and James Thompson for reading pieces of this project when it was still very much a dissertation, for making me aware of its flaws in time to correct at least a few of them, and for showing by example that political commitment and academic scholarship can and should coexist. Each of you has enabled me to see in different ways and has demanded that I act on those insights in my work.

Within the larger community of scholars writing on early modern English women, I owe several additional debts of gratitude. Thanks are in order to Esther Cope, Barbara Lewalski, and the Folger Shakespeare Library. Having participated in two of many seminars offered at the library – the first, “Preachers, Prophets, and Petitioners in the Age of King Charles I,” in 1991, and the second, “Contextualizing Writing by Early Modern Women,” in 1994 – I cannot emphasize enough how such dialogues refresh and enrich academic scholarship. As seminar leaders,

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x Acknowledgments

Esther and Barbara illustrate profoundly that good teaching need not end with one's students. I am honored to have had the opportunity to experience first-hand their insights and to share with them in the continuing process of critical discovery.

Fran Dolan and Betty Travitsky have suggested sources and offered fact-finding advice at key junctures in this project; Betty Hageman and Sara Jayne Steen, counsel on academic etiquette and scholarly diplomacy. Olga Valbuena continues to provide contributions on all fronts; I value her scholarship and her friendship. I am grateful as well to the members of my writing group, the North Carolina Research Group for the Study of Early Modern Women. Their combined brilliance, inspired conversation, and exceptional cooking have remained reassuring constants throughout the trials and tribulations of revision and re-revision. Within that group Judith Bennett, Jane Burns, and Barbara Harris deserve additional and heartfelt thanks. All three have given me a sense of intellectual rapport that extends beyond the boundaries of my department. As friends and mentors they continue to provide me with support and encouragement, strategy and stamina. Their dedication to junior women across Chapel Hill's campus serves as a constant reminder of what an academic women's community really ought to mean.

This book would never have been possible were it not for the technical and scholarly expertise of several people. Thanks are in order to my readers at the Cambridge University Press for their tactful suggestions and politic nudges; this book is stronger thanks to their critical eye; Nandra Perry for her careful bibliographic work; Leigh Mueller for guiding me through the unfamiliar terrain of book production with ever the hope of coherent prose as an end; Josie Dixon for navigating the intricacies of press schedules and the like; and finally, Stephen Orgel for having faith in this project from the very beginning and the willingness to stick it out. I could never have finished without your combined and generous assistance.

On a personal note, I must ultimately pay homage to all of the friends and colleagues who have made Chapel Hill feel like home and my work worth pursuing. To Pam Cooper, Jane Danielewicz, Bethaney Dale, Robert Dowling, Ritchie Kendall, Susan Navarette, and Dale Traugott, I am grateful to have you in my life. And to my San Diego family, especially those who continue to press for my return, Eve Morris, Scott Rand, Valerie Steele, and Nan Sterman, thank you for your support of my academic passions even though they have carried me across the country. I want to thank my sister and best friend Melinda Thompson for offering me unflagging emotional and technical support on those many occasions when things have seemed too baffling to proceed, and

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my second mother, Margaret Brehmer, for scrutinizing my work with a keen critical eye and an unwavering moral ethos. Finally and most importantly, I want to thank my parents, Marilyn and Dolph Matchinske; it is your unparalleled faith in me, your absolute and unselfish acceptance of all that I do, that has given me the courage to trust in myself and to take risks that I have. The best parts of this book are your doing; the mistakes are all my own.

I dedicate this project to my partner, David Brehmer, who has weathered it all with humor and patience, who has spent more years with me than without, and who shares with me in the most important part of my life, our two daughters, Erin and Marin. The three of you make me complete. This book is yours.

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Portions of chapter 3 appeared in different form in “Legislating ‘Middle-Class Morality in the Marriage Market: Ester Sowernam’s Ester hath hang’d Haman,’” *English Literary Renaissance* 24: 154–83. © 1994. Reprinted with permission. An abbreviated version of chapter 4 appeared in “Holy Hatred: Formations of the Gendered Subject in English Apocalyptic Writing, 1625–1651,” *English Literary History* 60: 349–77. © 1993 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission.