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### Allen, Gemma. The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England

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## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

**Allen, Gemma.**

***The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England.***

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. Pp. xi, 273 + 5 ill. ISBN 9780-7190-9977-9 (paperback) \$30.95.

In the sixteenth century, Mildred, Anne, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Katherine Cooke experienced a humanist education much like that of their brothers, but like that of few other English women, even among those drawn from a similar rank. These women form the familial network at the heart of a book about the larger networks (educational, social, religious, and political) that often amount to what we talk about when we talk about early modern England. In what might be called a relational case study, one which refuses to privilege a single figure—the most prolific, stylish, or influential, say—Gemma Allen surveys and analyzes the reading, learning, writing, counselling, patronage, and politics engaged in by these women in lifetimes spanning 1526 (when Mildred was born) to 1610 (when Anne, second eldest and the last survivor, died). As the lists of figures and topics built into this paragraph indicate, Allen sets an ambitious program; fortunately, she moves through it with clarity, concision, and an unflagging commitment to evidential probity, as well as the careful contextualization of the materials she treats. She does so in part to correct what she compellingly claims are errors embedded in both older and relatively recent treatments not only of the Cooke sisters but of learned women more generally. To take just one instance, she persuasively challenges views (early modern and current) about such learning having been without practical or public consequence by showing ways in which Anne Bacon's translation of Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* was of widespread and lasting national significance (even if Bacon's role was rapidly effaced).

Of the sisters, far less is known about Katherine and Margaret than about Mildred (married to and influential upon William Cecil from 1545, and thus throughout his rise under Elizabeth I), Anne (married to Nicholas Bacon, also prominent in Elizabeth's court), and Elizabeth (first married to Thomas Hoby, diplomat and translator of Castiglione's *Courtyer*, and then to John Russell before she became and remained a widow for her last quarter century). Through such strategic unions, the sisters were often very close to

England's centre of power. They operated on it in ways that Allen scrutinizes through a widespread array of documentation, including translations, funerary verse and monuments, dramatic interludes, and letters of counsel composed by the Cookes, all of which required and exhibit the unusual degree and kind of learnedness possessed and deployed by these women. They also require, of course, considerable learnedness on Allen's part in order to navigate such generic, literary, historical, and linguistic diversity.

Rather than permit herself or her reader the simplicity of a sister-by-sister, chapter-by-chapter treatment, Allen integrates their representation within each chapter. These are structured as studies of the sisters' reading materials, the basis of their education (chapter 1); the literary works they composed (chapter 2); their correspondence and the counsel offered in it (chapter 3); their decades of political networking and informal diplomacy, both domestically and abroad (chapter 4); their religious patronage and brokering throughout an especially tumultuous period in English church history (chapter 5); and, finally, their representations by others and the reputations these representations attached to the women, both in their own time and after (chapter 6).

Although shifting focus among so many figures at first requires stringent attention on the reader's part, simply in order to distinguish each individual, this is not, in the end, a case of too many Cookes; instead, the sum effect justifies aggregating both the family and the full range of documentary evidence that pertains to it, even if that evidence is unevenly distributed in both quantity and type: five of Mildred's letters survive, for instance, just one of Katherine's, and none by or to Margaret, compared with over a hundred written by Anne (the latter now separately edited by Allen). Allen never strains to impose artificial balance among her subjects but responds to their individuality—such as their divergent confessional orientations—as well as their diachronicity, showing especial sensitivity to their changing public status and power as they were successively wed and widowed in a patriarchal culture that, as much of the evidence assembled here suggests, often valued them primarily in terms of the access they could afford to the powerful men in their lives. Allen's project is thus quietly but effectively feminist in its redress of the disapproval some historians have expressed for the Cooke sisters, and also in her sense that more than mere panegyric is required for their examples to be fully understood in relation to the emergent picture of the practical value of female humanist education, and

the public as well as private influence of such learned women in early modern England.

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**Austern, Linda Phyllis, Candace Bailey, Amanda Eubanks Winkler, éd.s.**  
***Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Music Circulation in Early Modern England.***  
 Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 2017. xiv, 317 p. + 19 ill., exemples musicaux. ISBN 978-0-253-02482-4 (broché) US\$35.

Cette collection d'essais rassemble quinze études mettant en lumière comment les catégories fixes avec lesquelles les musicologues et musiciens ont l'habitude de travailler s'avèrent peu adaptées aux réalités musicales de l'Angleterre de la Renaissance à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le résultat d'ensemble montre que la musique et les musiciens y circulaient librement entre les milieux publics et privés, amateurs et professionnels, entre les pratiques orales et écrites, et entre les contextes sacrés et profanes, au point de remettre ces catégories en question. À ces couples de catégories viennent s'en greffer d'autres comme les musiques sacrées catholiques et protestantes, et les différents espaces de représentations tels que la scène, l'église, la cour, la maison et la rue. Les directrices de ce projet, Linda Phyllis Austern, Candace Bailey et Amanda Eubanks Winkler, annoncent en introduction un enracinement dans l'histoire culturelle, ce qui est effectivement le cas puisque la très grande majorité des essais n'entrent pas dans les aspects techniques des partitions, mais se penchent plutôt sur les pratiques et les réalités entourant le fait musical. Cet ensemble d'études, arrangé en ordre chronologique, est accompagné d'une introduction approfondie, d'une bibliographie sélective et d'un index.

Chaque essai correspond à l'étude d'un cas illustrant une circulation entre ces différentes catégories et milieux, montrant de cette façon que ces catégories sont inopérantes pour en effectuer une analyse adéquate. Pour ce faire, la majorité des articles se penchent sur un corpus musical imprimé ou manuscrit, soit lié à une personne, un répertoire, un genre ou un contexte éditorial, et examinent leur contenu et leur circulation. Deux auteurs, Katherine Steele Brokaw et Katherine R. Larson, passent par l'analyse de l'utilisation de