



# Learning and Literacy in Female Hands, 1520-1698 (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

*Elizabeth Mazzola*

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Focusing on the unusual learning and schooling of women in early modern England, this study explores how and why women wrote, the myriad forms their alphabets could assume, and the shape which vernacular literacy acquired in their hands. Elizabeth Mazzola argues that early modern women's writings often challenged the lessons of their male teachers, since they were designed to conceal rather than reveal women's learning and schooling. Employed by early modern women with great learning and much art, such difficult or 'resistant' literacy organized households and administrative offices alike, and transformed the broader history of literacy in the West. Chapters treat writers like Jane Sharp, Anne Southwell, Jane Seager, Martha Moulsworth, Elizabeth Tudor, and Katherine Parr alongside images of women writers presented by Shakespeare and Sidney. Managing women's literacy also concerned early modern statesmen and secretaries, writing masters and grammarians, and Mazzola analyzes how both the emerging vernacular and a developing bureaucratic state were informed by these contests over women's hands.

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