

# Renaissance and Reformation

## Renaissance et Réforme



## Lives Uncovered: A Sourcebook of Early Modern Europe

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Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought  
Situier conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première  
modernité

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as a political and epistemological structure” (41), so that Chaos is dark and bedraggled while rays of pure light glow from the head of the queen. Snook also notes that *Salmacida Spolia* brings medicine onto the stage itself, foregrounding the queen’s fair beauty as the cure for the nation’s disorders.

In the section on hair and the culture of the head, Snook juxtaposes a discussion of the metaphorical and symbolic significance of hair as a key element in cross-dressing in fiction by Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish with an extensive and detailed analysis of Anne Clifford’s references to her own, real hair in her diaries, accounts, and the Great Books of Record. As a young woman, Clifford’s hair is an essential feature of her overall beauty, and her position as a member of the aristocracy gives her permission to be proud of it, to attend to it, and to purchase costly products for its care and dressing. In her later years, as a widow and a landowner, she begins to cover her hair in accordance with her age and position of authority, and ultimately to cut it off. At this stage of her life, the covering and then removal of her hair are both character markers, reflecting self-discipline, and spiritual acts not unlike tonsuring. Clifford, then, affords Snook a compelling illustration of her central argument—that the ideals of beauty in the period are associated with, and the practices enabled by, class privilege and assumptions about racial difference

Snook herself observes that this book “cannot be the final word on early modern women’s thinking about beauty” (8). Rather, and as the best scholars invariably do, she has established a number of lines of enquiry that may be pursued by herself and others to develop into a productive conversation. It is an important book.

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**Terpstra, Nicholas ed.**

***Lives Uncovered: A Sourcebook of Early Modern Europe.***

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. Pp. xi, 288 + 28 ill. ISBN 978-1-487594-51-0 (hardcover) \$59.95.

Collections of documents in translation have long been a staple in the undergraduate classroom. They allow students, lacking the linguistic abilities to

read primary sources in the original languages, to have access to the historical immediacy provided by original documents. Nicholas Terpstra has compiled a splendid collection of documents on early modern Europe, a collection that not only illuminates the nooks and crannies of the past but also reveals his own expansive take on this dynamic period of change and diffusion.

The majority of the documents are drawn from earlier collections, usually ones dedicated to narrower topics. Terpstra takes 150+ documents and redeploys them in new and interesting juxtapositions, weaving together a rich and engaging picture of early modern life. This will be an essential document collection in introductory early modern classrooms, as well as courses on social history and daily life.

One of the strengths of this collection is its breadth. It presents the long early modern period, with documents stretching from the late fourteenth century into the eighteenth; most are from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Similar breadth is found in the extensive geographic scope of the collection, embracing Western Europe and crossing into Algeria, Turkey, India, Brazil, and the Americas. Thus, Terpstra encompasses the whole of the then-known world as it expanded across three centuries.

Terpstra provides a wide range of sources drawn from over three dozen written and visual genres. Some of these are conventional early modern sources such as dialogues, medical and anatomical treatises, *ricordi*, and laws. Other sources illuminate alternative aspects of daily life such as a midwife's book, apprenticeship contracts, childrearing manuals, and advice about housekeeping. Perhaps the most intriguing and innovative examples include a series of documents that will interest modern readers because of the immediacy of the topics. These include discussions of new imports into Europe such as tomatoes and tobacco. Another document discusses the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption, while a cantata by Bach warns of the negative effects of excessive coffee consumption.

The book is divided into twelve thematic sections, arranged around the lifecycle and attendant matters of daily life and values. Each section comprises an average of ten to fifteen representative documents, accompanied by a brief introduction and followed by a set of reading questions. Two brief preliminary essays provide the reader with guidance on how to read primary sources and an overview of early modern life cycles. While quite brief, these chapters do provide a bare bones introduction for neophyte readers. The life cycles organization

moves from the human body through conception, childhood, work, marriage, sexuality, poverty, crime, Christian belief, migrations, and travel, and the end of life. The social, cultural, religious, and geographic margins are well represented not only by Jews and Muslims but also by Puritans and Quakers, prostitutes and witches, and documents from Algeria, Turkey, Brazil, and India.

The diversity of sources and world views is evident throughout each section. For example, twenty-two documents comprise the section on “Marriage: Making and Ending it.” Documents concerning marriage negotiations from Italy, Germany, France, and England sit side by side. Critiques of marriage are provided by an Englishman, a Dutch nun, a Venetian patrician woman, and the well-known eighteenth-century English woman of letters Mary Astell. These and other documents combine to provide an integrated and diverse perspective on marriage as both a legal and human institution. One of the few quibbles with this collection concerns one document in this section. It presents a court case about domestic assault from Scotland. This case is about a woman who is charged with physical assault of her husband. This document is not balanced by any of the myriad possible accounts from across Europe about male domestic violence. This seems discordant within the section and the volume as a whole. Given the possible sensitivities, classroom teachers may wish to exercise discretion when discussing this anomalous document.

Terpstra has opened up the past in a dynamic and invigorating way. Students will no doubt be enthralled by dipping into this collection. It brings out a new three-dimensional view of the history of this important period of cultural and geographic expansion. Nicholas Terpstra’s *Lives Uncovered* is an essential source with which to teach the social history of early modern Europe.

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