

Patricia Pender · Rosalind Smith
Editors-in-Chief

The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing

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With 183 Figures and 1 Table

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Preface

When we were approached to be the general editors of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing*, we saw the project as an opportunity to continue, at scale, the collaborative work that we had pursued for over a decade in the form of publications, events, and networks. Drawing on the friendships and connections we had built through the Early Modern Women Research Network, we invited 23 section editors of 17 sections in total, together with the generous contributions of over three hundred scholars (Pender and Smith 2025). An encyclopedia differs from a handbook in that it seeks to cover the field, containing (as in the OED's definition) "extensive information on all branches of knowledge, usually arranged in alphabetical order," and that it is directed to broad audiences. Our encyclopedia is indeed extensive, with nearly 400 commissioned chapters.

Unlike the handbooks and companions to early modern women's writing, this is a living, digital reference work: entries are published live as they are submitted and approved, open to correction and addition, and connected through hyperlinked cross-references highlighted in the body of the text and listed at each entry's conclusion. The *Encyclopedia's* sections contain clusters of articles divided by period (early Tudor to Restoration), genre (poetry, prose, drama), materialities (print, manuscript, the material book), contexts (sites of production, cultural and international contexts), and approach (theories and methodologies). Entries range from 1000 to 10,000 words and each section has its own flavor and mix of entries, according to topic and the approach of the editor or editors. The Restoration section, edited by Suzanne Trill, Lisa Walters, and Natasha Simonova, is the largest in the *Encyclopedia*, with 81 entries, many devoted to individual writers; the Transmission section, edited by Jaime Goodrich, is one of the smallest, with just six long survey essays on broad topics such as Humanism, Transmission, Editing, and Song.

This diversity of approach and kind of entry is perhaps not what one might expect from an encyclopedia, and represents the editorial position that we took from the start: that this project might push at the boundaries of what an encyclopedia might be as a form, looking back to the thirteenth-century encyclopedias that, as Mary Franklin-Brown has argued, became "heterotopias" of knowledge-spaces where many possible ways of knowing are juxtaposed (Franklin-Brown 2012, 217). This encyclopedia also draws on the affordances of the digital environment to allow a new diversity of entries, unified by a set of formal constraints on the page, but flexible with regard to length, volume, and scope. Short entries on specific authors are supplemented

by the kinds of entries that one might find in a handbook, thinking through broader questions in the field such as authorship and attribution, race, or the value of manuscript and print sources as evidence, with entries in different sections approaching broader critical questions from specific formal, material, thematic, or methodological views. In this we borrow from digital humanities methodologies, which provide entry points into large datasets through facets that slice, order, and visualize data to allow users to browse and discover, scan, and glimpse (Whitelaw 2015, 3). In order to represent the current field, we needed to slice it into parts, parts that are then reassembled and ordered in the final digital and print products in old-school, alphabetized form. There is a tension here between the standardizing impulse and formal imperatives of an encyclopedia and a desire to represent the field in ways that mediate the micro and macro, one of many, sometimes uneasy, juxtapositions that this project has generated.

The results of this approach have proved surprising, even to us. Attempting to record an entry for all women writers in a period led to far more individual entries than anyone expected, especially for our editors working in the second half of the seventeenth century. The quantifying and accountable nature of the *Encyclopedia* reveals, for the first time, a field that we thought we knew to be more expansive and more diverse than we imagined. The sheer number of entries on individual writers (181) is itself startling; and the contexts in which they wrote—their formal, religious, political, and social engagements—have produced a complex network of cross-references that themselves tell new stories. The project of recovery, as well as methodological emphases within historicist and formal approaches, has at times prioritized the individual author, the case study, and the local, historical moment in ways that can narrow the critical gaze. Reference works such as the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Women's Writing* and this encyclopedia provide an opportunity to step back and reassess both the writing of individuals and wider questions in the field.

One of the most interesting examples of such a new perspective in the *Encyclopedia* is the International Contexts section edited by Martine van Elk, which provides entries on national traditions of women's writing outside England as well as accounts of transnational networks linking English women's writing to other traditions, male and female. Julie Campbell and Anne Larsen, for instance, show the importance of secular networks such as salons to French and English women; Nadine Akkerman explores border-crossing spy networks dependent upon women; and the Protestant and Catholic transnational networks described by Felicity Maxwell and Caroline Bowden, respectively, trace women's mobility and political and religious agency in England, Europe, and beyond. Amrita Sen's entry outlines women's involvement in international networks of trade, expanding upon their roles facilitating the movement of goods within and across national borders. This section also contains entries on individual border-crossing women, such as the neo-Latin poet Elizabeth Weston, and national traditions, where accounts of women that have been much examined in France, Spain, and Italy are

juxtaposed to more unfamiliar bodies of work by women from countries and regions such as Japan, India, China, Africa, and Russia. These entries also map transnational encounters and networks, figurative and material, and trace early modern women writers' engagement and complicity with colonialism and slavery.

This section troubles some of our critical orthodoxies around the uniqueness and universality of English women's experience in the early modern period, around the usefulness of periodization, and our focus on text over other kinds and traces of creative practice, including oral and material cultures such as beadwork and basket weaving highlighted in Marie Balsley Taylor's brilliant entry on North American Indigenous women. These entries unsettle models of authorship as single, stable, and fixed in favor of a more flexible and expansive idea of textual agency, and allow glimpses into non-elite women's textual production, including that of the enslaved. Because we have the luxury of volume, the *Encyclopedia* enables an accumulation of such national and transnational contexts and networks in ways that are new, illuminating, and easy to access, link, and compare.

Cumulatively, the sections of the *Encyclopedia*, and the new knowledge they enable, speak directly to wider studies in Renaissance literature and culture and its recent theoretical and methodological developments. The wider categories of genre and materialities are directly informed by scholarship in new formalism and the material history of the book, and entries within Danielle Clarke's Theories and Methodologies section address new developments in queer and trans studies, critical race studies, ecocriticism, and the digital humanities, approaches that are taken up—and can be followed through hyperlinks and keywords—across entries in multiple sections and (in the case of keywords) within the broader Springer reference library. The unprecedented scope and scale of this huge collaborative venture contributes to an assemblage with a heuristic value and potential uses that are yet to be fully explored. Even in its current state, however, the *Encyclopedia* is beginning to provide new perspectives on the period, and women's place within it, both at scale and in detail, zoomed out and in. It begins to provide evidence for some of the imperatives called for in the 2021 double special issue of *Criticism*, "The Futures of Early Modern Women Writers," especially in tracing women's complicity in "ugly history" and the forces of capitalism and colonialism (Goodrich and McQuade 2021, 11); amplifying the information we have about individual women's biographies and their networks; and emphasizing how women were engaged in the material cultures of textual production as producers, consumers, and authors. We have come a long way from the homogenized understandings of how women wrote, simple relationships between the gendered historical body and the gendered voice, and ideas of uniformly distinctive and binary gendered perspectives with which the field began; but we still have far to go. The entries across the *Encyclopedia* show women's textual production to be complex, diverse, widespread, and deeply imbricated in broader social and cultural movements—positive and negative—rather than sparse, isolated, and exceptional. We have intuited this, but now we have the reference works that demonstrate it; built through

extraordinarily generous, cumulative, and collaborative efforts of the many brilliant scholars working in this field.

Newcastle, NSW, Australia
 Canberra, ACT, Australia
 May 2026

Patricia Pender
 Rosalind Smith

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We began this project in 2020, and finished it in 2025. During this period, we faced the global COVID-19 pandemic, eroding institutional contexts globally for humanities scholarship, and significant personal illness. That we have emerged with a body of work that is so illuminating, brilliant, and expansive is even more of an achievement than it might seem, given the scale of these obstacles. The assistance of our family and friends in no small part allowed us to persevere with this project. Ros would like to thank Mark, Felix, Isobel, and Sophia for all their support, and Trisha would like to thank Anne, Gordon, and James.

We hope the *Encyclopedia* is just a first step toward broader, more intriguing and exciting scholarship in the ever-expanding field of early modern women's writing, and we hope it plays a small part in highlighting women's extraordinary writing and scholarship in the past and in the present.

Associate Professor Trisha Pender
 Professor Rosalind Smith

List of Topics

Cultural Contexts

Section Editor: *Mary Ellen Lamb*

Early Modern Englishwomen and Education	Jane Donawerth and Karen Nelson
Early Modern Women and Religion	Jaime Goodrich
Early Modern Women Writers and Science	Whitney Sperrazza
Early Modern Women's Writing and the Law	Rachel E. Holmes
Medical Contexts for Early Modern Women's Writing	Edith Snook
Politics, Literature, and Early Modern Women	Julie Crawford

Genres: Drama

Section Editor: *Ramona Wray*

Drama and Entertainments by Rachel Fane	Edel Lamb
Drama by Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea	Claudia Thomas Kairoff
Drama by Anne Wharton	Sara Read
Drama by Aphra Behn	Claire Bowditch
Drama by Elizabeth Cary	Aurélie Griffin
Drama by Elizabeth I	Aidan Norrie
Drama by Elizabeth Polwhele	Ann Hurley
Drama by Frances Boothby	Marguérite Corporaal
Drama by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley	Hannah Gregg
Drama by Jane Lumley	Lisa Hopkins
Drama by Katherine Philips	Patrick B. Tuite
Drama by Lady Mary Wroth	Alison Findlay
Drama by Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle	Melanie Simoes Santos
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Editing and Publishing Women's Drama in Modernity	Marion Wynne-Davies

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Women as Providers of Labor	S. P. Cerasano
Women as Theatergoers	Lillie Arnott

Genres: Poetry

Section Editors: *Sarah C. E. Ross and Jake Arthur*

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Epic Poetry	Wesley Garey
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Women's Occasional Poetry	David L. Orvis
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Genres: Prose

Section Editor: *Paul Salzman*

Arcadian Romance	Marea Mitchell
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Clifford, Anne, and Autobiographical Writing	Jessica L. Malay
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Early Modern Women's Spiritual Diaries	Raymond Anselment

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Early Modern Japanese Women Writers	G. G. Rowley
Early Modern Muslim Women of Spain	Reem Taha
Early Modern Nordic Women Writers	Anne-Marie Mai
Early Modern North American Indigenous Women as Authors and Publishers	Marie Balsley Taylor
Early Modern Polish Women Writers	Magdalena Ożarska
Early Modern Russian Women and Writing	Margaret Ziolkowski
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Early Modern Welsh Women Writers	Cathryn A. Charnell-White and Sarah Prescott
Early Modern Women and French Secular Networks	Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen
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Early Modern Women Writers from Spanish America	Sarah Finley
Early Modern Women Writers from the Southern Low Countries	Hubert Meeus
Early Modern Women Writers in German-Speaking Territories	Jill Bepler
Early Modern Women Writers in India	Sowmya Dechamma C. C.
Early Modern Women Writers in Ireland	Marie-Louise Coolahan
Early Modern Women Writers in Scotland	Kate Louise Mathis and Roslyn Potter

Early Modern Women Writers in the Dutch Republic	Martine van Elk and Lia van Gemert
Early Modern Women Writers of the British Atlantic World	Erin A. McCarthy
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Major Manuscript Collections for the Study of Women's Writing in the Early Modern Period	Georgianna Ziegler
Major Women's Manuscripts in English	Victoria E. Burke
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Manuscript and Women's Letters	Alison Wiggins and Jade Scott
Manuscript and Women's Life Writing	Julie A. Eckerle
Manuscript Exchange of Poetry and Sociability	Mary Ellen Lamb
Manuscript Legal and Financial Documents	Amy M. Froide
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Period: Caroline

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Lilburne, Elizabeth	Ann Hughes
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Pocock, Mary	Manfred Brod
Poole, Elizabeth	Manfred Brod
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Sutcliffe, Alice	Marion Wynne-Davies

Period: Early Tudor (1526–1557)

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Period: English Civil War and Interregnum

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Period: Jacobean

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Patricia Pender is an Associate Professor, English and Writing, at the University of Newcastle, Australia, where she coordinates the Gender Research Network and the Writing for Social Change Program. She is the author of *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (2012); *"I'm Buffy and You're History": Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Contemporary Feminism* (2016); and *Bibliophilic*, a chapbook of poetry (2018). She has edited *Gender, Authorship, and Early Modern Women's Collaboration* (2017), and co-edited, with Rosalind Smith, *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (2014) and *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing* (2026). She has been awarded fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the American Antiquarian Association, the Mellon Foundation, and the Institute of English Studies, University of London, as well as multi-year funding from the Australian Research Council. She is currently working on a memoir-in-essays, "Turn It Up to Eleven," and a play, "The Real Housewives of Henry VIII," which have been generously supported by residencies at Relais de Camont and Centre Pompadour in France and the Ann Moyal and Eric Dark Fellowships at Varuna Writers Centre in Australia.



Professor Rosalind Smith is Chair of English Literature and Director of the Centre for Early Modern Studies at the Australian National University. She has published widely on politics, gender, and form in early modern women's writing, and her books include *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560–1621: The Politics of Gender*, the co-authored *Early Modern Women and the Poetry of Complaint*, and the co-edited collections *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing*, *Early Modern Women's Complaint: Gender, Form, and Politics*, and *Early Modern Women's English Marginalia*. She has led several collaborative digital projects, including the award-winning *Early Modern Women's Complaint Poetry Index* <https://cems.anu.edu.au/complaintindex/> and the *Beyond the Book* digital exhibition <https://beyondthebook.slv.vic.gov.au>, developed in partnership with State Library Victoria. Her fellowships include a Future Fellowship from the Australian Research Council, the Alice Ball Bodley fellowship in Women's History from the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford, the Alice Griffin fellowship from the University of Auckland, and the Lloyd Davis fellowship from the University of Queensland, and she has been awarded over \$4 million in external research funding across her career. She is general editor, with Professor Sarah Ross, of the journal *Parergon*, and, with Associate Professor Trisha Pender, of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing*.

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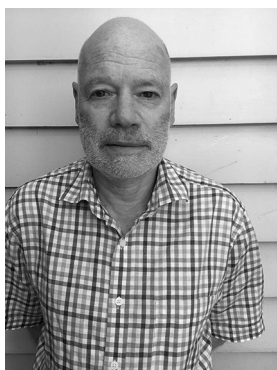
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throughout, notes on nineteen attributed sermons, approximately twenty-two first-person prayers, ten poems, three statements of faith, and at least 97 religious maxims.

The largest portion of the miscellany contains sermon notes (approximately 50 pages; see 46, 49, 51, 55, 59, 61, 64–5, 67, 69, 71, 74, 79, 83, 85–86, 90, 93, 96), which suggests the manuscript is a site “of focused, sustained, and sometimes iterative reception” (McCarthy 2018, 662). Most of these entries appear to be either notes from sermons preached at Wyvill’s parish church, or summarized from printed texts, although she does not always distinguish between the two. Many entries follow a similar pattern in which she identifies the speaker, relevant Bible verses, the structure of the sermon, and then summarizes the speaker’s main points, before ending with a related first-person prayer that often indicates serious reflection on the preceding text. She attributes sermons to the Church of England clergyman, Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) who was widely published in her lifetime (46; Perdita 2020, 1); as well as Mr. Burbich/Burbeck (unidentified); Mr. Jackson, perhaps Thomas Jackson (1570/1571–1646) or Abraham Jackson (1589–1646), both clergyman who were published (Sutton 2008, 1); Mr. Smith of Jegston (otherwise unidentified); Mr. Bonner (unidentified); Mr. Padgit/Padget, likely Ambrose Padgett, a clergyman appointed to serve in Klivington in York from 1633; and Mr. Anthony, likely Charles Anthony, who was appointed as a preacher for Catterick and Tunstall in York in 1662 (CCDE 2013, 1).

Of the ten poems included in the miscellany, four were written by Alexander Ross (100, 105–7, 1642, unnumbered pages), a clergyman and Aristotelian philosopher (Allan 2007, 1); one by William Birchley (John Austin, 113; Birchley 1668, unnumbered page), a religious writer who had converted to Catholicism (Blom and Blom 2015, 1); and one was published anonymously (104; Perdita 2020, 1). The other four are reworked versions of the same poem (Wyvill 1662, 112, 122, 134, 135), which appears to have been at least partially authored by Wyvill herself (Perdita 2020, 1). In its first iteration it reads as,

my Lord indue me with thy heavenly grace
& sweetly draw me to thy Holy place
there give me Leue to dwell to sitt & sing
praises to thee my Lord my god my King. (112)

In later versions, it begins with the rhyming couplet, “my soule to thee too poor an offering / who by one dying tooke from death the sting” (134, 135), which has since been identified as the closing lines of the poem “Mors christi” by her husband, Christopher Wyvill (1647, 24; Perdita 2020, 1). It is possible that this poem represents collaborative authorship between husband and wife. In its final manuscript iteration, the poem contains eight lines of rhyming couplets celebrating the sweetness of God’s heavenly grace.

The remaining maxims and prayers cover a variety of topics, including divine providence, vanity, the sin of excess, as well as a persistent refrain to the mercy and comfort of God. Additionally, Wyvill seeks solace for the loss of six children: “sorow is never well bestowed but upon sinn sorow will Cure noe other diseases I Lose my children & murn for it but sorow will not reuiue them” (105; see 74, 119, 120). Her writing also includes several instances of vivid imagery, such as a simile comparing her sins to hairs that “have growne ouer me Like a Loathsome Leprosy” (32).

Conclusion

Ursula Wyvill died on July 30, 1680. A poem included near the end of the manuscript, which the scribe attributes to Christopher Wyvill, expresses her husband’s grief at her death:

when my Deare Love sat on the flowrie side
of the delitefull Aire proud (then) to glide
neare so much beauty worth and all thats good
How often have I called to that flood
Tell her I’m cuming Aire tell her I cume. (137)

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Zins-Penninck/Zinspenning, Judith

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Abstract

Judith Zins-Penninck (1631–1664) was a Dutch Quaker woman whose reputation for preaching and publishing was such that she was well-known in the English Quaker community. She argued that more focus should be paid to enlightenment by the Spirit of God rather than earthly practices. Zins-Penninck's legacy was one that challenged social expectations by asserting the public role of women in the community and as faith leaders.

Keywords

Dutch · Mennonite · Preach · Publishing · Quaker · Women

Introduction

Judith Zins-Penninck (1631–1664) was a Dutch Quaker woman committed to her faith and spreading God's messages through preaching and publishing. Zins-Penninck (or Zinspenning) was the daughter of a Mennonite tradesman, Conrad Zins-

Penninck, and his wife, Catharina de Mol. In 1652, Zins-Penninck married Jacob Willemsz Sewel (also occasionally spelled Zeenwel), a local physician. Little is known about the early life of Zins-Penninck, but her passion for worship was recognized at a young age. Early on, she left the Flemish Mennonites for the Collegiants, a group of religious dissenters in the Low Countries who began their meetings in 1620 after breaking with the Dutch Reformed Church (Fix 1991, 23). However, Zins-Penninck soon found herself drawn to Quakerism after spending time with the missionary William Ames in 1657. After embracing Quakerism, Zins-Penninck and her husband became leaders in the community and their home was a popular spot for Quaker meetings: Zins-Penninck was the first woman in this community to lead worship services (Brown 2012, 38). She argued that more focus should be paid to enlightenment by the Spirit of God rather than earthly practices.

Background and Early Life

The role of women in the Quaker community was somewhat controversial in the seventeenth century. Female prophets and preachers were visible figures and were an open challenge to patriarchal ideals that the “weaker sex” should be silent, passive, and obedient: radicalism and conservatism existed in the same space (Gill 2004, 17). However, women like Zins-Penninck

asserted their equality in a culture where men were traditionally dominant. On the title page of her pamphlet *Some Worthy Proverbs Left Behind by Judith Zins-Penninck to be Read in the Congregation of Saints. Translated into English by One that Testifieth* (1663), Zins-Penninck wrote that “God is no respecter of persons, for whosoever worketh righteousness, and feareth him, of what Nation, Countrey, Tribe or Language soever he or she be, such find acceptance with the Lord.”

Zins-Penninck traveled to England in 1663 with William Caton, William Ames’s successor, and she became more deeply involved with the Quakers. She preached publicly and published several texts. During her return to the Netherlands, however, she fell victim to the plague in 1664. Nevertheless, she still inspired her son, William Sewel (1653–1720), who became a prominent Quaker historian and author, and published influential sources, including *The History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers* (1722; originally published in Dutch in 1717), in which he also included a loving tribute to his mother.

Preaching and Publishing

Zins-Penninck’s preaching and written work, along with those of her female peers in the Quaker community, was viewed as a threat to the established authority and learning of the clergymen. Valuing the spiritual talents of all was an essential part of Quaker theology, “hence women presumed that their challenges to social superiors were biblically justified” (Gill 2004, 19). Such assumptions regarding individuals’ spiritual talents can be seen in Zins-Penninck’s most well-known publication, *Some Worthy Proverbs* (1663), which originally emerged as a ten-page letter intended for distribution among the Chosen Generation in England. In this text, she asserts that her readers should “Love Righteousness and despise Infidelity, for she leads unto destruction ... Embrace Wisdom, and let her dwell in your inner Chambers, that she may preserve you in the time of tribulation ... Therefore put on Wisdom in her appearance, for she is the beginning of all

things” (Zins-Penninck 1663, 1). Gendering virtues as feminine was not unusual during the seventeenth century but this rhetorical choice becomes more significant when viewed through the lens of Quaker women actively pushing back against traditional notions of power, authority, and equality. Zins-Penninck’s controversial worldviews were reinforced in the work written by her son, William Sewel, several years after her death: he asserted that his mother,

being incumbred with the Cares of the Family, she was not so much at Liberty for performing religious Duties ... as she was before she was married; which made her wish sometimes she had never entred into Matrimony, and that she might live to enjoy again that Peace and Quiet which once she had ... In this State she was often seized with Grief and Sorrow, so that she counted herself the most miserable of Women; for neither Husband, nor Children, nor any outward Enjoyments, could afford her any Pleasure; but all her Desire was to attain to an undefiled State, in which she might live an unblameable Life, not only before Men, but also before God.

(Sewel 1722, 440–41)

Conclusion

Judith Zins-Penninck’s legacy was one that challenged social expectations, asserted the public role of women in the community and as faith leaders, and challenged traditional roles; thus, Zins-Penninck was among a new era of Nonconformist women who began redefining their roles at home, in the community, and within their faith.

Competing Interest Declaration The author(s) has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

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