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Jessica L. Malay. *The Case of Mistress Mary Hampson: Her Story of Marital Abuse and Defiance in Seventeenth-Century England*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2014. Pp. xv, 158. US\$65.00/\$19.95.

Jessica Malay's most recent work comprises an edition of *A Plain and Compendious Relation of the Case of Mrs. Mary Hampson* (London, 1684). The extremely rare seventeenth-century pamphlet—Malay records only three surviving copies—is a first-person account by Mary Hampson (née Wingfield, 1639–98) of her troubled and often violent marriage to lawyer Robert Hampson (1627–88). It is unique in accounts of early modern domestic violence. Malay finds that although marital dispute publications were not uncommon in this period, they usually took the form of single-sheet broadsides (18–19), making Hampson's "fully developed autobiographical narrative" something of an anomaly (19). Adding to its interest are hundreds of surviving documents in court and parish archives that detail the involvement of the church, community, and legal system in the Hampsons' marital problems. Malay employs these documents to contextualize the pamphlet

in the three critical chapters that follow her edition. She finds record of the involvement of over 170 individuals (family, friends, and court and church officials) in the course of the Hampson marriage (11).

The edition, which preserves original spelling but modernizes punctuation and capitalization, is sensibly organized, with introductory and supplementary material prefacing and Malay's critical discussion and conclusion following it. Malay's informative endnotes make the volume accessible to undergraduate readers, and the book would make an excellent addition to a syllabus on women's writing in the period. Malay's inclusion of supplementary material at the outset of the book is extremely helpful; these materials include a chronology of Mary Hampson's life and genealogies of the Wingfield and Hampson families (xiii-xvii). The introduction provides context for the legal and social framework governing marriage during the seventeenth century, with particular focus on women's rights and participation within the legal system. Though brief, the introduction is comprehensive, focuses on marriage as a legal institution, and contrasts the English system of "coverture," under which "the wife was covered or subsumed within the legal identity of her husband," with continental legal models (4). Malay characterizes the English system of coverture as paradoxical in that it was a "social mechanism . . . designed to encourage marital harmony" that nevertheless caused marital conflict and led to serious personal suffering for women (4). Malay's introduction frequently refers to contemporary examples of marital abuse, both physical and psychological, including the famous example of Anne Clifford's imprisonment and financial coercion (6-7). Malay also provides an interesting discussion of the means through which a family might attempt to reduce a woman's vulnerability in marriage through a trust, settlement, jointure, or other contracted financial arrangement before the marriage commenced (7-8).

The introduction is slightly narrow in scope; it concentrates on the legal framework of marriage and a preliminary summary of the contents of the pamphlet. Malay's work on early modern autobiography and, more recently, participation in a Leverhulme Trust project concerning Anne Clifford's Great Books might lead the reader to expect a fuller discussion of the implications of Mary Hampson's pamphlet as autobiography (a term Malay uses repeatedly) or the issue of how early modern autobiography fashioned identity. That said, the focus of this book primarily concerns the legal and social structures surrounding the institution of marriage, and indeed Malay's conclusion situates Hampson's pamphlet within the larger early modern discourse surrounding unhappy marriage, specifically through reference to John Milton's divorce tracts and his belief in the necessity for recourse to legal separation

and remarriage in the event that a couple found “themselves in a disastrous and destructive marriage” (Malay 118).

It would not be hyperbolic to describe the Hampson marriage as “disastrous and destructive”; Mary Hampson recounts that her husband, after encountering personal financial ruin, forced her to sell her jointure (the only financial safety net a woman of the period had in the event of her husband’s predeceasing her) and appropriated property left to her by her uncle. She also details the couple’s increasingly acrimonious relationship and relates various episodes of physical violence: in Robert Hampson’s residence at the Inner Temple, for example, “he layed violent hands upon me, striking and kicking me so cruelly that I believe he had killed me” (34). In later episodes Mary Hampson describes being threatened with a gun, dragged out into the street, threatened with confinement in Bedlam (London’s insane asylum), and subjected to mob violence (44–45). Mary Hampson lived periodically on the continent and experienced a continual and often unsuccessful struggle to induce Robert Hampson to pay her the alimony (£100 per annum) she was eventually awarded in an ecclesiastical court settlement.

The book simultaneously paints a disturbing portrait of the vulnerability of women in the English legal system and reveals Mary Hampson’s particular understanding of and determination to use the legal system to provide for herself and her family. The pamphlet’s tone is matter of fact and sometimes detached, though it is broken at various points by Mary Hampson’s defence of her piety and character and by moments that clearly show her to be cognizant of the workings of the legal system and Robert Hampson’s privileged position within it. These interesting moments of self-fashioning would benefit from further scrutiny. Malay’s careful archival work in the volume’s concluding chapters reveals nuances not readily apparent in the pamphlet that show Mary Hampson as a woman whose financial future and personal relationships were permanently and irreparably damaged through her years of marriage to and bitter separation from Robert Hampson. The volume makes accessible a tremendously important narrative of seventeenth-century marital violence and its social and legal repercussions and will be of particular interest to students and scholars of early modern women’s writing as well as historians of marriage, family, and law.

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