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# A Review Of "A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by those Two Faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers: La vicenda di due quacchere prigioniere dell'inquisizione di Malta" by Stefano Villani

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inheriting, or purchasing property, the gendered law deprived personhood, but as this collection reveals, women did find ways to obtain or have conferred upon them agency long before their full right to private property. DeGrazia also notes that men did not enjoy absolute power to retain and dispose of their property as wished; marriage was to benefit both parties rather than any one individual.

*Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* furnishes fresh insights and clear analysis of the era's most intriguing social and legal practices. Renaissance and Restoration scholars as well as modern and legal historians will relish each essay's scope and diverse resources and students of gender relations especially will note the vital link between women's active agency—often dismissed or diminished—and property law.

Stefano Villani, ed. *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by those Two Faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers: La vicenda di due quacchere prigioniere dell'inquisizione di Malta*. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2003. xiv + 366pp. + 4 illus. 30,00. Paper. Review by JULIE D. CAMPBELL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

In the introduction to his edition of *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by those Two Faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers*, Villani documents the experiences of Evans (ca. 1618-1692) and Cheevers (ca. 1608-1664) during their missionary journeys. In the process, he provides an overview of Quakerism during this period, beginning with its inception ca. 1647 with the followers of George Fox. Making excellent use of archival sources from Rome, Pisa, Malta, Florence, Venice, the Vatican, and the British Library, as well as numerous other sources, Villani constructs an engaging narrative that traces the paths of Evans and Cheevers from their earliest connections with Quakerism to their ill-fated voyage to Alexandria, which was curtailed by their incarceration by the Inquisition from 1659-1662 on Malta. He also describes their liberation, their return to England, and the travels that they undertook afterwards, undeterred by the hardships that they had suffered.

Beginning with Evans's personal history, Villani describes how Thomas Murford of Inglesbatch heard the charismatic Quaker preacher John Audland at Bristol and brought him to Inglesbatch in 1654. One result of his preach-

ing there was “almost certainly” the conversion of Murford’s wife, her brother John Evans, and his wife Katherine (4). Villani posits that Katherine’s missionary activities began before 1656, when she was forced by the authorities to leave the Isle of Man. He notes that from there she went on to Ireland where she “had an encounter” with Henry Cromwell, the second son of Oliver Cromwell. We are told that Evans, true to form, attempted to convert Henry to Quakerism (7). After meeting with trouble in Ireland, Evans returned to England, where her problems continued. Villani traces the violent encounters and incarcerations experienced by Evans and numerous other Quakers working in the same areas during this period. Especially in his section on “Missioni Quacchere a Roma e a Gerusalemme,” Villani examines the activities of John Perrot, John Luffe, George Robinson, and others who undertook extraordinary journeys to Rome and the Holy Lands (15-20).

Regarding Cheevers’s early years, Villani notes that less is known about her first encounters with Quakerism than is known about Evans’s. However, since Cheevers came from the same region in England as Evans, it is quite likely that their experiences were similar. Although sources suggest that the two met in London in February of 1658, Villani speculates that “è infatti molto probabile che le due donne avessero partecipato insieme ad alcune assemblee quacchere” [it is in fact very probable that the two women had participated together in some Quaker assemblies] in or near Bath before 1658, since their homes were in Inglesbatch and Slaughterford, respectively (22).

Speculation about their first encounters aside, Villani’s discussion of their voyage and incarceration together is comprised of interesting details gleaned in part from commentaries by Catholic authorities that document their time in Italy upon arriving in Livorno 24 November 1658, their arrival on Malta on 21 December 1658, and their ensuing imprisonment. Regarding Malta in particular, Villani includes items ranging from records of their inability to communicate in Italian or Latin with the nuns they encountered (although they gave the nuns a tract in Latin by George Fox) to comments on their clothing (described as being a bit like that of monks), to details of their interrogations and descriptions of the priests and monks with whom they interacted (27-44). In his sections “Una visita” and “Il ritorno a casa,” Villani covers the visit of the London Quaker Daniel Baker to Evans and Cheevers in prison and their eventual release and return to London aboard *The Sapphire* in 1663 (61-

68). Finally, in "Di nuovo in viaggio," he traces the last missionary journeys the two women undertook before their deaths.

Also in the introduction, Villani examines the publication history of documents associated with Evans and Cheevers, including Daniel Baker's work based on information from them, *This is a short Relation of some of the Cruel Sufferings (For the Truths sake) of Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers in the Inquisition of the Isle of Malta* (1662); *To all People upon the face of the Earth: A sweet Salutation and a clear Manifestation of the True Light, which lighteth every one who cometh into the World* (1662) by Sarah Cheevers; and *A brief discovery of God's Eternal Truth* (1662) by Evans, as well as *A True Account...*, written mostly by Evans.

The second part of Villani's volume is his edition of *A True Account...*, based on the 1663 edition printed in London for R. Wilson. Like the 1663 edition, Villani's also contains *A short Relation from George Robinson, of the Sufferings which befel him in his Journey to Jerusalem; and how God saved him from the hands of Cruelty, when the Sentence of Death was passed against him*. It should be noted that *A True Account...* is comprised of numerous short works, including Daniel Baker's "Epistle to the Readers," Evans's account of prison experiences, letters from both women to family and friends, and songs of praise. Additionally, Villani's volume contains Evans's *A Brief Discovery...* and Cheevers's *To all People...*

The third part of this volume contains transcriptions of the Italian and Latin interrogation documents written during Evans and Cheevers's incarceration, as well as a bibliography of Evans's and Cheevers's manuscripts. The whole of Villani's volume is copiously footnoted, with care given to documenting the biblical sources of Evans's and Cheevers's writings. To that end, Villani includes a special index to the biblical passages cited in the work.

In general, this volume would be of great interest to scholars of Quakerism, as well as to those who are especially interested in the activities of Evans and Cheevers. Many such scholars would welcome an English translation of the introduction. Villani's work provides a compelling look at the experiences of Quakers during this period, as well as gathering key texts pertaining to Evans and Cheevers into one well-annotated volume.