



pursuing natural knowledge in science, technology and medicine, no attention is paid to women in adjoining and essential occupations like teaching and library science. However, such topics are perhaps too much to ask of an already comprehensive volume.

The affordable paperback version allows an engaged reader to be able to dip in and out of the contributions or even to read it comfortably from cover to cover. Libraries may well invest in the hardbound volume in order to provide ongoing access for more intensive readership use, and faculty making occasional assignments may choose to take advantage of the open-access version. *Women in the History of Science* is a reader that offers a surprisingly comprehensive range of primary sources presented with additional resources that make them readily accessible for multiple readers at every level of education.

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Michelle DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh: The Incomparable Life of Robert Boyle's Sister*

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From her death in 1691 to the twentieth century, Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh, was largely forgotten. Now Michelle DiMeo has filled an important gap with this first book-length biography chronicling her remarkable life. DiMeo's book offers fascinatingly novel insights into one of the most important and influential female figures in seventeenth-century Britain and provides a fresh perspective on wider questions within the history of (women in) science. The book also makes significant methodological contributions, helping to advance research on other under-studied and sparsely documented women in science.

The book chapters proceed in chronological order, beginning with Ranelagh's early life. Chapter 1 provides useful context for understanding the intimate and mutually supportive relationship between Ranelagh and her brother Robert Boyle. In Chapter 2 we encounter Ranelagh as an agent whose work and influence were public rather than confined to the private sphere. It focuses on her active role in the Hartlib Circle, the correspondence network around Samuel Hartlib which discussed a wide range of matters around natural philosophy, religion and education. DiMeo also establishes the sociopolitical background of war- and revolution-ridden England and Ireland, revealing how Ranelagh built and used her network to exert political, religious and intellectual influence. The context established here is central to the analysis that follows.

Chapter 3 explores Ranelagh's work in natural philosophy and medicine. DiMeo reconstructs her influence on Boyle and the Hartlib Circle, examines the responsibility she assumed for her family's health, and studies her medical recipe trials and collections, tracing the exchange within her large and prestigious network. Chapter 4 investigates her time back in Ireland, focusing on the significant political influence she exerted through her international correspondence network and how she played a key and active role in

her brother's political endeavours. It also reveals further natural-philosophical projects she was involved in with the Hartlib Circle, such as the decimalization of the currency, 'physic gardens', practical botany and the study of prophetic dreams. Chapter 5 analyses how a key shift in the landscape of the scientific world towards the new institutionalized pursuit of knowledge impacted Ranelagh as a woman in science. In Chapter 6, DiMeo explores Ranelagh's role as an excellent medical practitioner who worked alongside distinguished physicians as plague swept through England. Finally, Chapter 7 treats the period during which she shared a house with her brother, Robert Boyle. This chapter reveals how their work was inextricably intertwined during these years. Ironically, the increased closeness and intensified collaboration made it more difficult for historians to identify any collaboration at all due to the siblings' shift from written to oral communication. DiMeo works around this difficulty by focusing on Lady Ranelagh's own biographical narrative and provides new insights on this important and incredibly productive period of their lives.

DiMeo masters the challenge of working with very little surviving material. The scarcity of sources documenting Ranelagh's life and work has been a significant obstacle to capturing her varied intellectual contributions. DiMeo's in-depth analysis of the extant fragmented manuscript material is key to overcoming this challenge. Importantly, she considers these manuscripts not just as texts, but as objects of inquiry in their own right. For example, she analyses how Ranelagh's letters were annotated, copied and circulated by Hartlib, showing that they were publicly and academically valued. DiMeo also focuses on details such as handwriting and stylistic tone to identify Ranelagh's contributions. She makes clever inferences about Ranelagh's work, even in the absence of her own writing. DiMeo draws heavily from the correspondence letters, notes and publications of Ranelagh's network, piecing together a complex puzzle of fragmented evidence to reveal the content of her work, how it was received and how her collaboration was demanded and highly valued by her male contemporaries. DiMeo elegantly combines close study of manuscript material with much wider contextualization of these sources, considering Ranelagh's intellectual and personal life as well as the sociopolitical context. Her methods deftly overcome the challenge of working with fragmentary source material and are a promising avenue for future research on women in science, whose textual records are often similarly fragmented.

In addition to offering a close analysis of Ranelagh's life and work, DiMeo does not shy away from broader questions: which strategies did women at this time employ that allowed them to be part of the scientific discourse? What impact did changes such as the increasing institutionalization of science during the seventeenth century have on them? Notably, she identifies piety as a key tool that enabled women in science to maintain their respectable reputation whilst overstepping traditional gender boundaries. The institutionalization of science and emerging organizations like the Royal Society have thus far been portrayed as significant factors that diminished the extent to which women could participate in science. DiMeo reconsiders this assumption through the case of Lady Ranelagh, making the compelling argument that, although Ranelagh's gender did affect the ways in which she communicated and exerted her influence, it did not inhibit her contributions. Crucially, DiMeo cautions the reader against imposing today's notions of public and private onto the past, highlighting that Lady Ranelagh's correspondence letters, notebooks and domestic exchanges were very much part of public scientific discourse in the seventeenth century. In this context, DiMeo urges historians to place more value on manuscript writing and domestic experimental practices so that forgotten women can be more firmly integrated into the history of science.