reading the main text more incomplete than is usual in the case of other critical studies. A few topics that appear in the footnotes (luckily for the reader not in endnotes) include the Council of Trent, the legal aspects of the clandestine marriages, the Siete Partidas by Alfonso X, widowhood at the time, the visual in the Baroque, Bakhtin’s relevance, and — one of the most novel additions — Beatriz de Silva and the Conceptionist Order.

O’Brien also reveals her wealth of knowledge in allusions to other literary texts. To my knowledge, hers is the single most complete presentation of Zayas’s intertextuality to date. The reader can find not only references to Cervantes, Lope, La Celestina, Timoneda’s Patrañas, and Mariana de Carvajal but also to Sercambi, Christine de Pizan, Marguerite de Navarre, the medieval topos of the calumniated wife, and many others, making this work of interest not only to specialists but also to comparativists. The clear descriptions of the stories and the multiple literary references present the reader with a myriad of ideas for teaching María de Zayas in context.

My only criticism of this thorough piece of scholarly work relates to its theoretical framework: O’Brien’s choice of the lenses of narratology and psychoanalysis, even though they highlight the interrelations between the frame and the novellas, tend to constrain her conclusions and her voice, albeit subtly expressed at times, solely to the literary realm and the fictional world of Zayas.

YOLANDA GAMBOA
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY


With the arrival of this hefty paperback — nearly two inches thick — containing almost 700 years of women’s writings, I wondered: how would this huge tome ever be used? It was just slips of individual writings, but at the same time, there was way too much to digest. Having read most of the collection (I admit to not having read all), I realize my question was off the
mark. Instead it should be how can I use this remarkable work? What an extraordinary resource this is!

As the editors explain, the core texts chosen have already appeared in a 1997 volume of women’s writings: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans: Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550–1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar* (With and Without Laurels: Dutch and Flemish Women Writers 1550–1850, from Anna Bijns to Elise van Calcar), but this book benefits from new criticism, includes updated translations, and offers additional selections (over a hundred) from more than fifty women. The “Low Countries” of the title indicates that the authors of these selections were Dutch and Flemish. The book includes works of a religious, pious nature from the Middle Ages and a significant number of secular ones beginning with the Protestant Reformation, when women took advantage of their new-found voice and began to make an important impact. The introductory sections to the two main parts, divided into women’s writing between 1200–1575 and 1575–1875, reflect this shift. The religious selections include prayers and meditations, and the secular ones present medical knowledge and information on pregnancy, childbirth, midwives, husbands, servants, writing, and other women, among other topics.

The introduction (as well as the brief but well-written and lively biographies) yields a wealth of information on each writer and is, in itself, an important contribution to our understanding of women’s history, reputation, and writing. Indeed, these sections increased my curiosity about many of these female authors and fed my desire to read more of their works. The extensive bibliography, including a list of electronic sources on women’s writings, does its part to fill this need, at least for the nineteenth century and later. Earlier writers are usually less well represented in such electronic sources, and so this volume is a particularly valuable resource.

Each selection is printed on the left page in the original Dutch (and in the early section, in Middle Dutch) and on the right in English, translated by Myra Heerspink Scholz, Brenda Mudde, and Paul Vincent. This arrangement allows those conversant with Dutch to follow the nuances on their own. Numerous portraits of the writers or reproductions of manuscript and printed pages help provide the reader with a fuller relationship to the text and the authors.
The selections begin with the works of the Flemish Cistercian nun, Beatrice of Nazareth (1200–1268), and material from the far better known author, Christine de Pizan (1364-ca. 1430), represented here by the posthumous 1475 Flemish translation of *The City of Ladies*. The accompanying commentary explains that the early modern translator and editor of that book only grudgingly accepted that a woman penned it.

In addition, we learn the fascinating history of some early modern sisters who wrote together: Anna Roemers Visscher (1584–1652) and her younger sibling, Maria Tessleschade Roemers Visscher (1594–1649), as well as Rosalie Loveling (1834–1875) and her sister Virginie Loveling (1836–1923), who lived into the twentieth century. Anna Roemers Visscher is a name familiar to those acquainted with the scholarly literature on Dutch art but mainly because of her father’s work. Anna often receives mention only as a curiosity, linked to a shared contribution. The discussion of her work shows that Anna edited a posthumous publication of her father’s 1614 emblem book, *Sinne-Poppen*, in 1620, and added much material (identified by her initials). Much of Anna’s writing and that of her sister remained unpublished until the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, two more famous eighteenth-century authors, Elizabeth Wolff-Bekker (1738–1804) and Agatha Deken (1741–1804), refer to the Roemer Visscher sisters in discussing women’s education.

The breadth of these selections and the commentary about them are extraordinary. My sole criticism is that I wish the index were more detailed and nuanced so that one could use the book more effectively. The text is complemented by a cover image of Jan Vermeer’s *A Lady Writing*, ca. 1665 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), which conveys a sense of the literacy and literary ability of the woman represented and of her compatriots.

Frima Fox Hofrichter
Pratt Institute