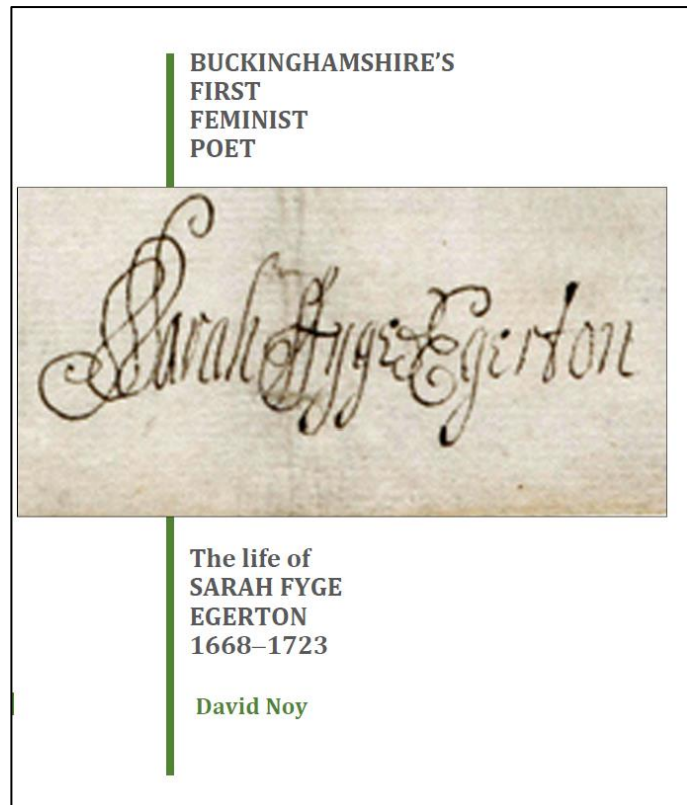


**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S FIRST
FEMINIST POET: THE LIFE OF SARAH
FYGE EGERTON 1668-1723**

by David Noy

**'My daring pen, will bolder sallies
make, and like my self, an uncheck'd
freedom take.'**

The writer of those words did her best to live up to them. She published a long feminist poem at the age of seventeen in defiance of her father – who then exiled her from her London home. Her life story reveals a woman struggling against the constraints imposed by family, gender and economic position, making bold stabs at independence and trying to establish herself in the literary world, but forced to settle for ultimately unsatisfactory compromises.



Sarah lived most of her life in Buckinghamshire at Shenley (now in Milton Keynes), Adstock and finally Winslow. Her unrequited love for a man she called 'Alexis' led her to make some rash decisions. Her second marriage, to a clergyman who was also her cousin, was notoriously unhappy, and her attempt to divorce him received unwelcome publicity. Newly discovered documents now enable her life to be understood much more fully: the circumstances in which she was writing, the problems she faced, her quarrel with fellow-writer Delarivier Manley, and the ways in which she hoped to be remembered.



Sarah's poetry, rediscovered in the 1970s, brings together her personal experience with rallying cries to her sex: **'Poor Womankind's in every State, a Slave'**, and hopes for their place in the world of literature under Queen Anne: **'Wits Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign'**. 'The Liberty' and 'The Emulation' now appear regularly in anthologies. Her pastoral writing as 'Clarinda' is less to 21st-century taste but was equally

important to Sarah herself as an expression of her inner feelings. In this book **David Noy** combines the autobiographical nature of the poetry with historical research to tell her life story.

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