



Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England

Julie Crawford

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Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England considers the roles women played as literary patrons, dedicatees, readers, and writers in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, and the intimate relationship between these literary activities and what has often been called 'politically active' humanism. Focusing on the interrelated communities centered on Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke; Lady Margaret Hoby; Lucy Harrington Russell, the Countess of Bedford; and Lady Mary Wroth, *Mediatrix* argues that women played integral roles not only in the production of some of the most renowned literary texts in the period, including Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, John Donne's poetry, and Mary Wroth's *Urania*, but also in wider networks of intellectual, religious and political activism. Each of the communities discussed was concerned with the cause loosely identified as international or militant Protestantism and frequently mediated through the circulation of texts of all kinds. Illuminating women's constitutive involvement in everything from the genres of the texts produced -- romances, verse letters, texts of religious controversy -- to the places in which those texts were produced and circulated -- the estates of Wilton, Penshurst, Hackness, Twickenham, and Loughton -- and the conditions and hermeneutics by which they were read, *Mediatrix* offers an account of early modern English literary production with women at the center and political activism as one of its primary, rather than merely topical, concerns.

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