



## **Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women As Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works**

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Traditionally hailed as a liberating force for women, the Reformation did encourage education for English women - but only so that they could read, translate, and meditate on the Bible and the approved commentaries, not so that they could speak or write any original thought. The court replaced the convent as the milieu most likely to encourage scholarship for aristocratic women, but the enforced rhetorical ignorance of women was maintained; court ladies, learned though they may have been were commonly admonished to hold their tongue in all the tongues they knew. The essays in this collection argue that the policy of permitting Tudor women only religious discourse had two primary results. The first result, as those in authority no doubt intended, was that the wealth, energy, and learning of a substantial number of noblewomen made possible the rapid dissemination of partisan religious works, which were predominately Protestant. The second result, which they did not foresee, was that women occasionally subverted the text, even in translation, in order to insert personal and political topics. Although these English women were relegated to the margins of discourse - to patronage, translation, dedications of translations, epigraphs, letters, and private devotional meditation - they did find their own voices through their proclamations of the Word of God.

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