

This book provides an account of the uniquely important role of the Bible in the development of female interpretative and literary agency, as well as in the expression of female subjectivity in early modern England. In the later sixteenth, and throughout the seventeenth, century women's religious writing diversified in genre and entered increasingly into a public literary sphere. The book shows that the Bible was at the heart of female reading culture, and women can be seen to participate in multiple modes of reading it, which, in turn, foster various kinds of literary writing.

The sources used in this book to reconstruct reading practices, and trace their connection to religious writing, are drawn from diverse archives, to include the annotations, biographical writing, commonplace books, letters, treatises, and other literary writings in print and manuscript of both prominent early modern women well known to us, and women who have so far remained obscure. The book argues that the increased circulation of the Bible in English fostered reading practices that enabled a growth in female interpretative and literary agency.

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