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Mary Sidney was the most important non-royal woman writer and patron in Elizabethan England. Without appearing to transgress the strictures against it, when Mary was fifteen she became the third wife of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, one of the richest men in England and an important ally of her father and of her uncle, the earl of Leicester. Although a 1578 letter to Leicester shows her struggling to please these two powerful earls, she quickly grew into her role as countess of Pembroke. Sometime in the early 1590s, probably while she was completing her Petrarch translation, the countess had begun the work for which she is known, her metric translation of Psalms 44-150 that completes and revises a project that her brother Philip had begun in his final years. 'More women: more weeping', Thomas Playfere reminded his congregation from the open pulpit outside St Mary's on Bishopsgate on the Tuesday of Easter week in 1595.¹ It would have been a prestigious event; he preached from a newly refurbished podium to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, who were gathered with their families in a recently constructed house, as well as to an assembled throng of teachers and pupils from St Christopher's dressed in their distinctive blue coats and red hats. The ceremony would hardly have unnerved Playfere, since he was an ambitious man who while he canvasses material that is now becoming quite familiar, even canonical, to scholars in the field, such as that of Mary Wroth, Mary Sidney and Anne Clifford, he brings to readers the work of other writers such as Eleanor Davies, Margaret Fell and Anna Trapnel. In other words, is women's writing containable in the category that describes it? As contributors advance various answers, it becomes clear that this question itself penetrates to the heart of the matter, enabling the essays to document a startling number of early modern "canonizations" of women writers, and to explore in detail the features of early modern women's writing itself and (more importantly) its publication, dissemination, and reception over the course of centuries that have.

Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. Educating English Daughters: Late Seventeenth-Century Debates by Bathsua Makin and Mary More. Tempe, AZ: ACMRS/ITER, 2016. Trapnel, Anna. The Work of Form: Poetics and Materiality in Early Modern Culture. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Campbell, Julie D., and Stampino, Maria Galli, eds.