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0521558190 - Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects

Edited by Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dympna Callaghan

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How did the events of the early modern period affect the way gender and the self were represented? This collection of essays attempts to respond to this question by analyzing a wide spectrum of cultural concerns – humanism, technology, science, law, anatomy, literacy, domesticity, colonialism, erotic practices, and the theater – in order to delineate the history of subjectivity and its relationship with the postmodern fragmented subject. The scope of this analysis expands the terrain explored by feminist theory, while its feminist focus reveals that the subject is always gendered – although the terms in which gender is conceived and represented change across history. *Feminist readings of early modern culture* not only explores the representation of gendered subjects, but in its commitment to balancing the productive tensions of methodological diversity, also speaks to contemporary challenges facing feminism.

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*Self-Portrait at the Easel*, Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1556).

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# FEMINIST READINGS OF EARLY MODERN CULTURE

*Emerging subjects*

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**CAMBRIDGE**  
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## *Preface*

As *Feminist readings of early modern culture* makes its way through the publishing house and out into the world, the editors wish to acknowledge some of the circumstances of its production. In the first instance, we were impelled to come together out of a sense of excitement over our collective scholarly projects. The authors included in this volume are not gathered here solely for the purpose of this volume; we have a history of intellectual and personal camaraderie and, in various combinations, have had a self-consciousness of ourselves as each others' best critics.

In the second instance, we are part of a generation that has benefited from the efforts of the academy to diversify itself. The contributors to the volume are lesbian, heterosexual, African-American, Indian, Jewish, WASP, publicly and privately educated in the United States, Britain, and India. We recognize the complex, and sometimes contradictory, constellation of factors – from global capitalism to transnational feminism – that have contributed to our own sense of intellectual possibility.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge that we are all women. In this we emphasize not an essential womanhood or shared sisterhood, but the significant similarities we share as female subjects involved in North American institutions of higher education. These factors are not just the empirical dimensions of our working lives; they also structure our institutional, political, intellectual, and personal engagements.