participation in a community of transgressive speakers protect them in some ways from the hostility directed at the scold and the witch? Were the prophetic cries of Quaker prophets appropriated by the playwrights of the Restoration in the same or similar ways as scolding and witch-speak were in the earlier part of the century?

Words Like Daggers concludes with a brief epilogue about Margaret’s curses in Shakespeare’s first tetralogy. Margaret, Stavreva argues, illustrates the intertwining of male and female, power and powerlessness, revealed by attention to women’s violent speech. The turn back to the late sixteenth century in the epilogue may have been a missed opportunity to consider the full historical trajectory of women’s violent speech in the seventeenth century, but it does bring the argument back to the book’s primary concern with early modern drama as a space where women’s speech is taken up, transformed, and rewritten, but often in such a way that the creative agency of historical women — like those discussed in this book — is elided.

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Taken from a letter by John Donne considering whether the Countess of Bedford would be a “proper Mediatrix” to “present his case to the necessary people” (1), the term “mediatrix” signifies more than an intermediary; its honorific application to the Virgin Mary invests this function with special agency. This term is used to represent four women — Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke; Margaret Dakins Hoby; Lucy Harington Russell, Countess of Bedford; and Mary Sidney Wroth — as “politically and culturally powerful, but with an edge of oppositionalism; at once a patron to be honored and a force to be reckoned with; a maker of texts and a maker of careers” (2). Crawford foregrounds the importance of their literary and cultural contributions primarily within the political domain dominated by the militant Protestantism of the Sidney–Herbert faction. Each exerted influence through her estate — Wilton, Hackness, Twickenham, and Loughton respectively. Rather than “idealized retreats” (22), these properties served as
centers of political activism promoting the rights of the nobility in opposition to absolute monarchical rule. This perspective is important; just as important, however, is the high value Crawford places on collaboration. These women actively engaged in the production of texts not only through their own writing, but also in their roles as patrons, dedicatees, and readers. They exerted formative influence over the literary works that were written or circulated on their estates.

Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, presents the best case for agency in collaboration. As demonstrated by the presence of her name in the title of *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* and further revealed in her 1593 edition, Mary Sidney Herbert played an active role in the composition and circulation of her brother’s romance. In her translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*, she enacted a different form of agency in the presentation of Cleopatra as a constant woman. As suggested in its title, “Female Constancy and The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia,” this is in fact the focus of the chapter, and the political meaning associated with female constancy represents one of the most interesting arguments of the book. Exposing a political analogy between women and political subjects, the constancy of Philoclea and Pamela in the revised *Arcadia* represents coded advice for persons of either gender living under an absolute monarchy. Rather than the quietism or (worse) masochism attributed to female constancy, Crawford draws on the Christianized neostoicism of Justus Lipsius to represent constancy as “an active achievement of will, and thus as a statement of power” (45). The rape of the princesses advised by Cecropia to Amphialus figures as monarchical tyranny, and the princesses’ equilibrium in the face of death creates female constancy as “the supreme representation of aristocratic virtue” (77). Moreover, the “deciphering imperative” (37) points to a contemporary political domain. Asserting the structural importance to the *Arcadia* of topical connections between its characters and historical figures, Crawford uses contemporary identifications between Philoclea and Pamela to Penelope Rich and Dorothy Percy, respectively — the sisters of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex — to contextualize Sidney’s romance within the militant Protestantism of the Essex faction.

Defending the reading of printed texts as “an active form of literary production,” the chapter “How Margaret Hoby Read her De Mornay” takes a new tack. After the deaths of her husbands Walter Devereux and Thomas Sidney, Margaret Dakins married Thomas Posthumous Hoby and relocated to recusant Yorkshire, settling on her estate of Hackness, gained through her marriage to Walter Devereux. Serving as a regional headquarters, Hackness was, according to
Crawford, “more than a godly household in the recusant north — it was an outpost of one of the most powerful political alliances in England” (88). While her husband employed violent measures against Catholics, Margaret Hoby engaged in persistent gentle persuasion, introducing “Presbyterian-minded puritanism” (101) to the area through social interactions — visits, long conversations, and especially through the communal reading of godly books with her household, neighbors, and visitors. Her reading was strategic. As indicated by the heavy annotations, apparently hers, in De Mornay’s *Fowre Bookes of . . . the Eucharist*, she used her reading as preparation to argue more effectively for stands taken by puritans against the established church; she showed interest, for example in the fact that the early church, unlike Anglicans, did not use vestments. She spent considerable time with “radical, unbenefficed, and often divested, preachers” (113). In London, she attended sermons by Stephen Egerton, later silenced by James I in 1604 for his puritan views. Many of these activities are recorded in her diary, kept from August 1599 to July 1605. Interestingly, Crawford takes issue with critics who regard Hoby’s diary as reflecting the “self-imposed career of puritan saint” or the record of “a private Elizabethan lady” (88). For Crawford, the diary was more likely “something of a public act — the record less of a private individual than of a collective, social, religious, and political struggle” (120).

In literary circles, Lucy Harington Russell, Countess of Bedford is perhaps best known for her patronage of John Donne from 1608 to 1614. Donne addressed verse letters to her employing theological terms for patronage as election, as Bedford’s friends as saints, and Bedford herself as “God’s factor” or agent. Critics have regarded these terms as flattery or perhaps as a witty intellectual engagement. Crawford perceives them instead as an intellectual dialogue encompassing differences between Bedford who, as a puritan-leaning Calvinist believed, for example, in election, and Donne, who understood “indifferent things” (128) such as election as fragmenting unity between Christians. Donne’s association with her had political overtones, as well, for Bedford’s estate at Twickenham operated as a counter-court promoting an anti-Spanish, pro-Protestant alliance against the policies of King James, including his non-intervention in the loss of the Bohemian monarchy by the Protestant monarchs Elizabeth (daughter of James) and Frederick to Catholic forces. Bedford worked with William Herbert, the son of Mary Sidney Herbert, to garner support for restoring their regime and the return of Protestantism to Bohemia. The development of the faction
surrounding the Countess of Bedford into something like a party is suggested by a contemporary satire representing Bedford House, her London residence, as a “puritan shrine” where votaries offered up sacrifices to “St. Luce” (159).

The cabinets in the title of chapter four, “Wroth’s Cabinets,” include the closets and private spaces where women, and especially Wroth, kept their secrets. But in their very nature, secrets demand to be told, and Crawford vigorously defends the “deciphering imperative” by which characters in Wroth’s romance *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* refer to actual persons as a “central aspect of Wroth’s romance” (161). Her representation of William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, as Amphilanthus highlights her intimate relationship with him; the representation of Susan de Vere and Mary Sidney Herbert, as Urania and the queen of Naples respectively, reveals the importance of female friendships, as well. Crawford focuses primarily, however, on the political implications of Wroth’s romance in its support of militant international Protestantism and, related to this, the rights of the nobility to work effectively with the king to determine the policies of England. The kingdoms of Morea, Naples, and Pamphilia figure the estates of Penshurst, Wilton, and Loughton; together they make up a cooperative alliance of families united by their common support of Protestant causes. The book returns in a satisfying full circle to its opening argument valorizing female constancy as a political as well as personal virtue. Arguing against critics describing unwavering love as destructive masochism, Crawford asserts that Pamphilia’s constancy “signals the enduring legacy and triumphant return of constant women as the cornerstone of the Sidney alliance’s mode of political critique” (175–76).

This monograph has clearly accomplished its stated goal, “to see their [women’s] lives and work as central rather than peripheral to English political history” (215). Crawford’s organizing insights — the political role assumed by these women as well as the widening of agency to include the collaborative — are not startlingly new. A number of recent books and essays have represented the political implications of writing by early modern women. The rise of book history has brought new awareness of the various collaborations necessary for the production of a book. But Julie Crawford has advanced these perspectives considerably further, and with more nuance and acumen, than previously done. Her discussion of the constant woman as figuring neostoic values associated with aristocratic dissent from the rule of absolute monarchy is certainly an original contribution that is, to my mind, quite brilliant. This is a book that deserves to be widely read
not only by those of us who work with early modern women’s writing but also by scholars of early modern literature and history more generally.

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In her most recent book, Susan Doran, a prolific, wide-ranging historian of Elizabethan England, has performed a remarkable act of integrative interpretation. Surveying Elizabeth Tudor’s lifespan from birth to death, Doran organizes her narrative as an overlapping sequence—a “circle” of relationships comprising three broad groupings: kin, courtiers, and councilors. “Kin” are addressed in four opening chapters: “Parents and Siblings,” “The Suffolk Cousins,” “Mary Queen of Scots,” and “James VI of Scotland.” The next four chapters focus on the “Courtiers”: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester; Sir Christopher Hatton; Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex; and, in a surprising and illuminating turn, on the select group of ladies of the bedchamber and the privy chamber who attended to Elizabeth in such intimate matters as dressing her, serving her meals, and sleeping with her in her chamber. The final three chapters examine the “Councillors”: Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Sir Francis Walsingham; and Sir Robert Cecil.

It becomes apparent, as Doran’s narrative progresses, that these groupings are anything but mutually exclusive. Rather, they are facets of an encompassing social and political dynamic that situated well-born, propertied individuals in a network of relationships that interconnected family and monarchy. An analogy originating in classical philosophy undergirded the interconnections: a well-run state would operate like a well-run household. In Tudor England the ramifications of this linkage of family and polity are conspicuous, most notably in the vexed ongoing problem of the royal succession, in which Edward VI figures both as son to Henry VIII and brother to Mary and Elizabeth, who are both sisters and political antagonists. Mary, Queen of Scots likewise figures as Elizabeth’s second cousin and her most prominent rival for the throne. Kinship is also the factor (together with religion) that determines James VI of Scotland, Mary’s son, as the successor to the Virgin Queen. But, as Doran observes more broadly, “the family connectedness” of the “elite women” who served in Elizabeth’s bedchamber