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Schutte, Valerie. Princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and the Gift Book Exchange

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[See table of contents](#)

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Schutte, Valerie.

Princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and the Gift Book Exchange.

Gender and Power in the Premodern World. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press-ARC, 2021. Pp. iii, 97. ISBN 978-16-4189-354-1 (hardcover) €69.

Before becoming queen, Elizabeth Tudor presented a number of translations as gifts to royal family members, four of which are still extant: an English translation of a devotional work in French by Marguerite de Navarre that was given to Katherine Parr in 1545; an English translation of a French treatise by John Calvin that was given to Parr in 1546; a trilingual translation of Parr's *Prayers and Meditations* into Latin, French, and Italian that was given to Henry VIII in 1546; and a Latin translation of an Italian sermon by Bernardino Ochino that was given to Edward VI during his reign. This slim volume aims to shed new light on Elizabeth by situating the dedicatory prefaces of these translations in relation to the translations of her sister Mary and, more generally, to the gift culture of the mid-Tudor court. Although numerous studies have previously discussed these works, Schutte's volume demonstrates that this well-worked vein of scholarly inquiry still contains a few nuggets worth extracting.

As Schutte explains in the introduction, her approach does not involve examining Elizabeth's translation choices. Instead, Schutte aims to provide new insights into these pre-accession translations by analyzing their dedications on their own terms. Arguing that book dedications deserve to be recognized as a separate genre, Schutte responds both to recent interest in early modern paratexts as well as to the turn towards book history in early modern translation studies; for example, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, eds., *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), and Marie-Alice Belle and Brenda Hosington, eds., *Thresholds of Translation: Paratexts, Print, and Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Britain (1473–1660)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). In considering both manuscript and print paratexts, Schutte breaks new ground in a field that has primarily focused on the intersection of translation and print.

Each of the five chapters provides a slightly different framework for considering Elizabeth's manuscript paratexts. In the first chapter, Schutte gives an overview of the books dedicated to Elizabeth and Mary while they were princesses. Noting that Elizabeth received fewer dedications than Mary, Schutte concludes that this disparity reflects Mary's more settled position at court,

particularly as Catholic subjects viewed her as both a legitimate princess and heir. The second chapter covers Mary's pre-accession translations: an English translation of a short prayer by Thomas Aquinas that circulated in manuscript at court, and a partial English version of Erasmus's paraphrase on John that was printed in 1548 in support of the Edwardian Reformation. Schutte contends that while these works became politicized later, neither one contained a dedicatory preface from Mary because their original composition had no political agenda. A sharp contrast between the two princesses' translations then emerges in the third chapter, which analyzes Elizabeth's dedications in relation to her situation at court. Schutte carefully outlines how Elizabeth calibrated each dedication and choice of source text to use her advanced education as a means of currying favour with her powerful relatives. The fourth chapter offers additional evidence of the ways that Elizabeth employed personalization to make her gifts more meaningful. While Mary generally purchased New Year's gifts for her family, Elizabeth often made hers by hand. Finally, in the fifth chapter, Schutte turns to the print history of Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre's *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, tracing it through the previously studied editions of John Bale (1548), James Cancellor (1568), and Thomas Bentley (1582) to the little-known edition of Roger Ward (1590) and an early seventeenth-century manuscript copy by Thomas Blunvile.

The scope of this book is necessarily narrow since its primary case studies consist of just four short dedications, and the chapter on the print history of Elizabeth's translations seems a bit tangential as it does not centre on the princess's participation in the Tudor culture of gift exchange. Yet, despite the slightness of the material, Schutte resourcefully fleshes out the cultural and literary context of Elizabeth's translations by considering gift rolls, book dedications, and Mary's translations. In its meticulous attention to the microcosm of the Tudor princesses' translations, this book might be fruitfully compared to the genre of microhistory. By taking a small slice of Tudor culture and analyzing it from different angles, Schutte develops several key insights that contradict lingering Whiggish narratives of Tudor historiography that prioritize Elizabeth over Mary. First, Schutte persuasively demonstrates that Elizabeth held a more precarious position at court than her elder sister. Second, she shows that Elizabeth's translations should be viewed not only as bravura displays of learning but also as calculated and canny ploys to survive the perils of the Tudor court.

Although *Princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and the Gift Book Exchange* contains a rather limited set of case studies, it should appeal to a fairly large audience. This book will be essential reading for scholars interested in Tudor queenship, the Tudor court, early modern translation, and early modern book history.

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