

TELLTALE WOMEN

Chronicling Gender in Early Modern Historiography

ALLISON MACHLIS MEYER

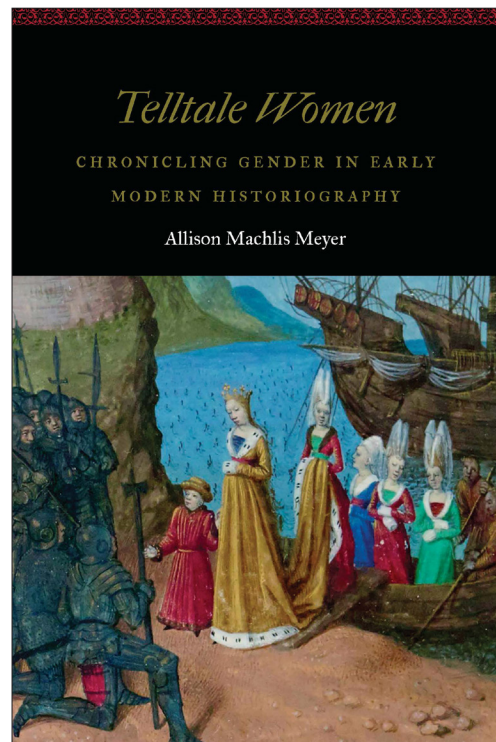
"Allison Machlis Meyer's thoughtful and compelling book has in effect given the field two studies it needs badly: an analysis of women's political roles in early modern narrative historiography and a new examination of how these roles are transformed—and limited—in dramatic representation."—Dan Breen, associate professor of English at Ithaca College

"Meyer's historically alert and rhetorically savvy argument introduces a novel approach to source studies. Lucidly and engagingly she attends to long-term developments of the early modern chronicle and historical drama genres while richly delineating the contexts of the early authors' political and personal allegiances and rivalries. Students of gender and book history alike will benefit from this insightful study of the shaping of cultural attitudes toward the political agency of royal women and their use for the consolidation of a citizen-centered English nation."—Kirilka Stavreva, professor of English at Cornell College and author of *Words Like Daggers: Violent Female Speech in Early Modern England*

Telltale Women fundamentally reimagines the relationship between the history play and its source material as an intertextual one, presenting evidence for a new narrative about how—and why—these genres disparately chronicle the histories of royal women. Allison Machlis Meyer challenges established perceptions of source study, historiography, and the staging of gender politics in well-known drama by arguing that chronicles and political histories frequently value women's political interventions and use narrative techniques to invest their voices with authority. Dramatists who used these sources for their history plays thus encountered a historical record that offered surprisingly ample precedents for depicting women's perspectives and political influence as legitimate, and writers for the commercial theater grappled with such precedents by reshaping source material to create stage representations of royal women that condemned queenship and female power.

By tracing how the sanctioning of women's political participation changes from the narrative page to the dramatic stage, Meyer demonstrates that gender politics in both canonical and noncanonical history plays emerge from playwrights' intertextual engagements with a rich alternative view of women in the narrative historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Allison Machlis Meyer is an associate professor of English at Seattle University.



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