For over a decade, the University of Notre Dame Press has been the proud publisher of the critically acclaimed REFORMATIONS: MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN book series.
For over a decade, the University of Notre Dame Press has been the proud publisher of ReFormations: Medieval and Early Modern

To commemorate this significant publishing event, we asked the editors of ReFormations—David Aers, Sarah Beckwith, and James Simpson—to comment on the series, which began in January 2009, with Against All England: Regional Identity and Cheshire Writing, 1195–1656 by Robert W. Barrett, Jr. The most recent volume, Festive Enterprise: The Business of Drama in Medieval and Renaissance England by Jill Phillips Ingram will be published in February 2021. We also included a comment by Stephen Little, the in-house acquisitions editor.

"When David, James, and I proposed this series to the University of Notre Dame Press over ten years ago we had a hunch that there was no obvious venue to publish monographs that worked across the long-entrenched, strongly embedded divisions between the Medieval and Renaissance fields. Even though scholars had been arguing for the longer duration for a while, such work is genuinely hard to accomplish. We are proud of the books we have curated by younger and established scholars and the difference it is making in our fields. We look forward to building on that work in the next decade." —Sarah Beckwith, Katherine Everett Gilbert Professor of English, Theater Studies and Religion, Duke University

"It remains true that diachronic work of the kind this series fosters is still obstructed by the way our profession remains replete with coteries, guilds and journals committed, often aggressively committed, to synchronic, even single-author study. Indeed, our diminished job market also discloses this feature. So we have indeed only begun the task!" —David Aers, James B. Duke Professor of English and Historical Theology, Duke University

"When we began this series more than a decade ago, we were persuaded that the chasm between the late medieval and early modern periods was the deepest in British cultural history. After more than ten years, and twenty-one splendid volumes published or forthcoming, we feel that our work is hardly begun: the area is so large, and its power of cultural illumination so extensive, that we look forward to working with very many more scholars." —James Simpson, Donald P. and Katherine B. Loker Professor of English, Harvard University

"The term ‘interdisciplinary’ has been thrown around so much it has lost much of its original force. It has been an honor, therefore, to share a role in the shaping of the ReFormations series over the last decade: for here is a place where literature, drama, and law; religion, business, and daily life; and the medieval, renaissance, and modern all come together to enrich each other. I look forward to the fruit the series will continue to bear in the next ten years." —Stephen Little, Acquisitions Editor, University of Notre Dame Press
Versions of Election
From Langland and Aquinas to Calvin and Milton
David Aers

Summary
Because of the way in which predestination and reprobation became central issues in
the Protestant Reformation (especially within Calvinist churches), these themes have
often been studied primarily in that historical context. In Versions of Election: From
Langland and Aquinas to Calvin and Milton, David Aers takes a longer view of these
key issues in Christian theology. With meticulous attention to the texts of medieval
and early modern theologians, poets, and popular writers, this book argues that we
can understand the full complexity of the history of various teachings on the doctrine
of election only through a detailed diachronic study that takes account of multiple
periods and disciplines. Throughout this wide-ranging study, Aers examines how
various versions of predestination and reprobation emerge and re-emerge in Christian
tradition from the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. Starting with incisive
readings of medieval works by figures such as William Langland, Thomas Aquinas,
and Robert Holcot, and continuing on to a nuanced consideration of texts by
Protestant thinkers and writers like John Calvin, Arthur Dent, William Twisse, and John
Milton (among others), Aers traces the twisting and unpredictable history of some
prominent versions of predestination and reprobation across the divide of the
Reformation and through a wide variety of genres. In so doing, Aers offers not only a
detailed study of election but also important insights into how Christian tradition is
made, unmade, and remade.

Versions of Election is an original cross-disciplinary study that touches upon the fields
of literature, theology, ethics, and politics, and makes important contributions to the
study of both medieval and early modern intellectual and literary history. It will
appeal to academics in these various fields, as well as clergy and other educated
readers from across a wide variety of denominations.

Contributor Bio
David Aers is James B. Duke Professor of English and Historical Theology with
appointments in both the English Department and in the Divinity School at Duke
University. His many publications include Salvation and Sin: Augustine, Langland, and
Fourteenth-Century Theology (2009) and Beyond Reformation?: An Essay on William
Langland’s Piers Plowman and the End of Constantinian Christianity (2015), both
published by the University of Notre Dame Press.
Fifteenth-Century Lives
Writing Sainthood in England
Karen A. Winstead

Summary
In *Fifteenth-Century Lives*, Karen A. Winstead identifies and explores a major shift in the writing of Middle English saints’ lives. As she demonstrates, starting in the 1410s and '20s, hagiography became more character-oriented, more morally complex, more deeply embedded in history, and more politically and socially engaged. Further, it became more self-consciously literary and began to feature women more prominently—and not only traditional virgin martyrs but also matrons and contemporary holy women. Winstead shows that this literature placed a premium on scholarship and teaching. Hagiography celebrated educators and scholars more than ever before and became a vehicle for educating readers about Christian dogma. Focusing both on authors well known, such as John Lydgate and Margery Kempe, and on others less known, such as Osbern Bokenham and John Capgrave, Winstead argues that the values promoted by fifteenth-century hagiography helped to shape the reformist impulses that eventually produced the Reformation. Moreover, these values continued to influence post-Reformation hagiography, both Protestant and Catholic, well into the seventeenth century.

In exploring these trends in fifteenth-century hagiography, identifying the factors that contributed to their emergence, and tracing their influence in later periods, *Fifteenth-Century Lives* marks an important contribution to revisionary scholarship on fifteenth-century literature. It will appeal to students and scholars of late medieval English literature and late medieval religion.

Contributor Bio
Karen A. Winstead is professor of English at the Ohio State University. She is the author and translator of a number of books, including *The Life of Saint Katherine of Alexandria* by John Capgrave (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).
Chaucer and Religious Controversies in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras

Nancy Bradley Warren

Summary

*Chaucer and Religious Controversies in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras* adopts a comparative, boundary-crossing approach to consider one of the most canonical of literary figures, Geoffrey Chaucer. The idea that Chaucer is an international writer raises no eyebrows. Similarly, a claim that Chaucer’s writings participate in English confessional controversies in his own day and afterward provokes no surprise. This book breaks new ground by considering Chaucer’s Continental interests as they inform his participation in religious debates concerning such subjects as female spirituality and Lollardy. Similarly, this project explores the little-studied ways in which those who took religious vows, especially nuns, engaged with works by Chaucer and in the Chaucerian tradition. Furthermore, while the early modern “Protestant Chaucer” is a familiar figure, this book explores the creation and circulation of an early modern “Catholic Chaucer” that has not received much attention. This study seeks to fill gaps in Chaucer scholarship by situating Chaucer and the Chaucerian tradition in an international textual environment of religious controversy spanning four centuries and crossing both the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean. This book presents a nuanced analysis of the high stakes religiopolitical struggle inherent in the creation of the canon of English literature, a struggle that participates in the complex processes of national identity formation in Europe and the New World alike.

Contributor Bio

Nancy Bradley Warren is professor of English at Texas A&M University. She is the author of a number of books, including *The Embodied Word: Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350-1700* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

“Nancy Bradley Warren’s study . . . singles out a series of moments in the history of Chaucer’s reception, using responses to various of his works as points of entry into investigation of forms of piety or of religious dissent.” —*The Times Literary Supplement*
Performance and Religion in Early Modern England
Stage, Cathedral, Wagon, Street
Matthew J. Smith

Summary
In Performance and Religion in Early Modern England, Matthew J. Smith seeks to expand our view of "the theatrical." By revealing the creative and phenomenal ways that performances reshaped religious material in early modern England, he offers a more inclusive and integrative view of performance culture.

Smith argues that early modern theatrical and religious practices are better understood through a comparative study of multiple performance types: not only commercial plays but also ballads, jigs, sermons, pageants, ceremonies, and festivals. Our definition of performance culture is augmented by the ways these events looked, sounded, felt, and even tasted to their audiences. This expanded view illustrates how the post-Reformation period utilized new capabilities brought about by religious change and continuity alike. Smith posits that theatrical practice at this time was acutely aware of its power not just to imitate but to work performatively, and to create spaces where audiences could both imaginatively comprehend and immediately enact their social, festive, ethical, and religious overtures.

Each chapter in the book builds on the previous ones to form a cumulative overview of early modern performance culture. This book is unique in bringing this variety of performance types, their archives, venues, and audiences together at the crossroads of religion and theater in early modern England. Scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, and those generally interested in the Renaissance will enjoy this book.

Contributor Bio
Matthew J. Smith is assistant professor of English at Azusa Pacific University.

"Matthew Smith's Performance and Religion in Early Modern England ranges widely andimaginatively over the landscape of late medieval and early modern performance, urgently blurring the boundaries between festival and secular theater, and between theater and sermons, ballads, and jigs. What emerges is a crucial imagining of the critical interplay of presence and representation, and of the critical porousness of early modern performance as well." —W. B. Worthen, Alice Brady Pels Professor in the Arts, Barnard College, Columbia University
Theater of the Word
Selfhood in the English Morality Play
Julie Paulson

Summary
In Theater of the Word: Selfhood in the English Morality Play, Julie Paulson sheds new light on medieval constructions of the self as they emerge from within a deeply sacramental culture. The book examines the medieval morality play, a genre that explicitly addresses the question of what it means to be human and takes up the ritual traditions of confession and penance, long associated with medieval interiority, as its primary subjects.

The morality play is allegorical drama, a “theater of the word,” that follows a penitential progression in which an everyman figure falls into sin and is eventually redeemed through penitential ritual. Written during an era of reform when the ritual life of the medieval Church was under scrutiny, the morality plays as a whole insist upon a self that is first and foremost performed—constructed, articulated, and known through ritual and other communal performances that were interwoven into the fabric of medieval life.

This fascinating look at the genre of the morality play will be of keen interest to scholars of medieval drama and to those interested in late medieval culture, sacramentalism, penance and confession, the history of the self, and theater and performance.

Contributor Bio
Julie Paulson is professor of English at San Francisco State University.

“Paulson views the English morality play and a selection of related Reformation dramas through the lens of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language as verbally and publicly performed constitutions of selfhood. . . . The analysis that follows illustrates this new approach to morality plays and related drama.” —Choice
Queen of Heaven
The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin in Early Modern English Writing
Lilla Grindlay

Summary
The belief that the Virgin Mary was bodily assumed to be crowned as heaven’s Queen has been celebrated in the liturgy and literature of England since the fifth century. The upheaval of the Reformation brought radical changes in the beliefs surrounding the assumption and coronation, both of which were eliminated from state-approved liturgy.

Queen of Heaven examines canonical as well as obscure images of the Blessed Mother that present fresh evidence of the incompleteness of the English Reformation. Through an analysis of works by writers such as Edmund Spenser, Henry Constable, Sir John Harington, and the writers of the early modern rosary books, which were contraband during the Reformation, Grindlay finds that these images did not simply disappear during this time as lost “Catholic” symbols, but instead became sources of resistance and controversy, reflecting the anxieties triggered by the religious changes of the era.

Grindlay’s study of the Queen of Heaven affords an insight into England’s religious pluralism, revealing a porousness between medieval and early modern perspectives toward the Virgin and dispelling the notion that Catholic and Protestant attitudes on the subject were completely different. Grindlay reveals the extent to which the potent and treasured image of the Queen of Heaven was impossible to extinguish and remained of widespread cultural significance. Queen of Heaven will appeal to an academic audience, but its fresh, uncomplicated style will also engage intelligent, well-informed readers who have an interest in the Virgin Mary and in English Reformation history.

Contributor Bio
Lilla Grindlay is the head of the English department at Sutton Valence School in Kent, England.

“This is a thoroughly stimulating volume, clearly written and helpfully sign-posted throughout that demonstrates Grindlay’s erudition as a literary scholar. It makes a helpful contribution to the field of English Reformation Studies and offers interesting insights for those studying gender in the early modern period.” — British Catholic History
Shadow and Substance
Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama across the Reformation Divide
Jay Zysk

Summary
*Shadow and Substance* is the first book to present a sustained examination of the relationship between Eucharistic controversy and English drama across the Reformation divide. In this compelling interdisciplinary study, Jay Zysk contends that the Eucharist is not just a devotional object or doctrinal crux, it also shapes a way of thinking about physical embodiment and textual interpretation in theological and dramatic contexts.

Regardless of one’s specific religious identity, to speak of the Eucharist during that time was to speak of dynamic interactions between body and sign. In crossing periodic boundaries and revising familiar historical narratives, *Shadow and Substance* challenges the idea that the Protestant Reformation brings about a decisive shift from the flesh to the word, the theological to the poetic, and the sacred to the secular. The book also adds to studies of English drama and Reformation history by providing an account of how Eucharistic discourse informs understandings of semiotic representation in broader cultural domains.

This bold study offers fresh, imaginative readings of theology, sermons, devotional books, and dramatic texts from a range of historical, literary, and religious perspectives. Each of the book’s chapters creates a dialogue between different strands of Eucharistic theology and different varieties of English drama. Spanning England’s long reformation, these plays—some religious in subject matter, others far more secular—reimagine semiotic struggles that stem from the controversies over Christ’s body at a time when these very concepts were undergoing significant rethinking in both religious and literary contexts.

*Shadow and Substance* will have a wide appeal, especially to those interested in medieval and early modern drama and performance, literary theory, Reformation history, and literature and religion.

Contributor Bio
Jay Zysk is assistant professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

“Drawing on an impressive range of theological and dramatic writings, this deeply researched and elegantly written book thereby offers a new model both for the reading of medieval and early modern drama and for thinking about the periodization of literary history.” —*Early Theatre*
Volition's Face
Personification and the Will in Renaissance Literature
Andrew Escobedo

Summary
Modern readers and writers find it natural to contrast the agency of realistic fictional characters to the constrained range of action typical of literary personifications. Yet no commentator before the eighteenth century suggests that prosopopoeia signals a form of reduced agency. Andrew Escobedo argues that premodern writers, including Spenser, Marlowe, and Milton, understood personification as a literary expression of will, an essentially energetic figure that depicted passion or concept transforming into action. As the will emerged as an isolatable faculty in the Christian Middle Ages, it was seen not only as the instrument of human agency but also as perversely independent of other human capacities, for example, intellect and moral character. Renaissance accounts of the will conceived of volition both as the means to self-creation and the faculty by which we lose control of ourselves. After offering a brief history of the will that isolates the distinctive features of the faculty in medieval and Renaissance thought, Escobedo makes his case through an examination of several personified figures in Renaissance literature: Conscience in the Tudor interludes, Despair in Doctor Faustus and book I of The Faerie Queen, Love in books III and IV of The Faerie Queen, and Sin in Paradise Lost. These examples demonstrate that literary personification did not amount to a dim reflection of "realistic" fictional character, but rather that it provided a literary means to explore the numerous conundrums posed by the premodern notion of the human will. This book will be of great interest to faculty and graduate students interested in medieval studies and Renaissance literature.

Contributor Bio
Andrew Escobedo is associate professor of English at Ohio State University and co-editor of Spenser Studies.

"An excellent study, Volition’s Face is the most sophisticated account to date of the trope known as prosopopoeia, personification, as it developed from Classical times through the Christian Middle Ages to the Renaissance." — Religion and Literature
**Tropologies**

*Ethics and Invention in England, c.1350-1600*

Ryan McDermott

**Summary**

*Tropologies* is the first book-length study to elaborate the medieval and early modern theory of the tropological, or moral, sense of scripture. Ryan McDermott argues that tropology is not only a way to interpret the Bible but also a theory of literary and ethical invention. The “tropological imperative” demands that words be turned into works—books as well as deeds. Beginning with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great, then treating monuments of exegesis such as the *Glossa ordinaria* and Nicholas of Lyra, as well as theorists including Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Martin Luther, and others, *Tropologies* reveals the unwritten history of a major hermeneutical theory and inventive practice. Late medieval and early Reformation writers adapted tropological theory to invent new biblical poetry and drama that would invite readers to participate in salvation history by inventing their own new works. *Tropologies* reinterprets a wide range of medieval and early modern texts and performances—including the Patience-Poet, *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer, the York and Coventry cycle plays, and the literary circles of the reformist King Edward VI—to argue that “tropological invention” provided a robust alternative to rhetorical theories of literary production. In this groundbreaking revision of literary history, the Bible and biblical hermeneutics, commonly understood as sources of tumultuous discord, turn out to provide principles of continuity and mutuality across the Reformation’s temporal and confessional rifts. Each chapter pursues an argument about poetic and dramatic form, linking questions of style and aesthetics to exegetical theory and theology. Because *Tropologies* attends to the flux of exegetical theory and practice across a watershed period of intellectual history, it is able to register subtle shifts in literary production, fine-tuning our sense of how literature and religion mutually and dynamically informed and reformed each other.

**Contributor Bio**

Ryan McDermott is assistant professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh

"[Tropologies] takes the reader on a fascinating journey of religious exegesis and the moral sense of scriptures. . . . McDermott’s sites of inquiry are poetry, religious literature, and drama, showing how these different types of text ask the reader to reconsider the scriptures leading to salvation and the ways in turn these manuscripts transforms the reader’s perception and support and active contribution to the field of tropological exegesis.” —*Sixteenth Century Journal*
Civic Cycles
Artisan Drama and Identity in Premodern England
Nicole R. Rice, Margaret Aziza Pappano

Summary
The civic religious drama of late medieval England—financed, produced, and performed by craftspeople—offers one of the earliest forms of written literature by a non-elite group in Europe. In this innovative study, Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano trace an artisanal perspective on medieval and early modern civic relations, analyzing selected plays from the cities of York and Chester individually and from a comparative perspective, in dialogue with civic records. Positing a complex view of relations among merchants, established artisans, wage laborers, and women, the two authors show how artisans used the cycle plays to not only represent but also perform their interests, suggesting that the plays were the major means by which the artisans participated in civic polity. In addition to examining selected plays in the context of artisanal social and economic practices, Rice and Pappano also address relations between performance and historical transformation, considering how these plays, staged for nearly two centuries, responded to changes in historical conditions. In particular, they pay attention to how the pressures of Reformist governments influenced the meaning and performance of the civic religious drama in both towns. Ultimately, the authors provide a new perspective on how artisans can be viewed as social actors and agents in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

"The Civic Cycles is an outstanding take on the urban dramas of medieval York and Chester, complementing previous historicist scholarship on these plays while expanding the political frame of reference. This volume is poised to become a major book in early English drama studies, a text that coordinates and assimilates all of the revisionary historicist work on the cycles from the previous two decades even as it takes that historicism to the next level of complexity." —Robert Barrett, Jr., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano present the most powerful argument to date about the ways that cycle plays allowed artisans to perform their changing socioeconomic identities in English towns over several centuries. Their impressive and detailed knowledge of the craft cultures of both towns supports a fascinating new comparison between York's and Chester's versions of biblical history." —Kathleen Ashley, University of Southern Maine

"Suitable for undergraduates and advanced scholars alike, this lucidly written and solidly documented analysis of the Chester and York cycles offers a welcome return to questions of urban commerce and social identity in civic religious drama. It convincingly shows the central place of artisanal aspirations and concerns and the complex and, at times, combative relationship of the artisan companies with their mercantile superiors, on the one hand, and the underclass of unskilled laborers and urban poor, on the other. Rice and Pappano offer a fresh reappraisal of the decline and cessation of the cycles, taking an original approach to economic factors (e.g., new poor laws) intersecting with political and religious opposition. The book is an important contribution to early English drama studies." —Paul Whitfield White, Purdue University

Contributor Bio
Margaret Aziza Pappano is associate professor of English at Queen's University. Nicole R. Rice is associate professor of English at St. John's University. She is the author of Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature.
Unwritten Verities
The Making of England’s Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463-1549
Sebastian Sobecki

Summary
In Unwritten Verities: The Making of England's Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463-1549, Sebastian Sobecki argues that the commitment by English common law to an unwritten tradition, along with its association with Lancastrian political ideas of consensual government, generated a vernacular legal culture on the eve of the Reformation that challenged the centralizing ambitions of Tudor monarchs, the scriptural literalism of ardent Protestants, and the Latinity of English humanists. Sobecki identifies the widespread dissemination of legal books and William Caxton's printing of the Statutes of Henry VII as crucial events in the creation of a vernacular legal culture. He reveals the impact of medieval concepts of language, governance, and unwritten authority on such sixteenth-century humanists, reformers, playwrights, and legal writers as John Rastell, Thomas Elyot, Christopher St. German, Edmund Dudley, John Heywood, and Thomas Starkey. Unwritten Verities argues that three significant developments contributed to the emergence of a vernacular legal culture in fifteenth-century England: medieval literary theories of translation, a Lancastrian legacy of conciliar government, and an adherence to unwritten tradition. This vernacular legal culture, in turn, challenged the textual practices of English humanism and the early Reformation in the following century. Ultimately, the spread of vernacular law books found a response in the popular rebellions of 1549, at the helm of which often stood petitioners trained in legal writing. Informed by new developments in medieval literature and early modern social history, Unwritten Verities sheds new light on law printing, John Fortescue's constitutional thought, ideas of the commonwealth, and the role of French in medieval and Tudor England.

"Sebastian Sobecki's lucid and lively study seeks to address a major lacuna in the current understanding of English vernacularity from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries: English common law. This huge body of knowledge and practice, written and unwritten, awaits focused attention from historians and literary historians, particularly in the light of new scholarship on Anglo-French vernacularity in this period. Sobecki's ambitious, original, and deeply considered account includes such figures as John Fortescue, John Rastell, and Christopher St. German and their investments in and influence on early Tudor commonality. The range and intelligence of his approach to this material, his ability to think beyond period and disciplinary boundaries, and his alertness to the complex bilingual condition of English intellectuals add a compelling dimension to the debate on the linguistic and political shapes of insular identity in these centuries." —Ardis Butterfield, John M. Schiff Professor of English, Yale University

"As readers of Sobecki’s earlier works already know, he is a very clever writer: both his general arguments and his asides are full of rich ideas. His literary analysis . . . is always clear and convincing. Indeed, it is an achievement to have written a book about literature that legal historians would find useful. . . The book [has] enduring value as a sharp explication of the textual and ideological complexities at work in the late-medieval and early modern common law.” —Speculum

Contributor Bio
Sebastian Sobecki is professor of medieval English literature and culture, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.
Mysticism and Reform, 1400–1750
Sara S. Poor, Nigel Smith

Summary
The apparent disappearance of mysticism in the Protestant world after the Reformation used to be taken as an example of the arrival of modernity. However, as recent studies in history and literary history reveal, the “Reformation” was not experienced in such a drastically transformative manner, not least because the later Middle Ages itself was marked by a series of reform movements within the Catholic Church in which mysticism played a central role.

In Mysticism and Reform, 1400-1750, contributors show that it is more accurate to characterize the history of early modern mysticism as one in which relationships of continuity within transformations occurred. Rather than focus on the departures of the sixteenth-century Reformation from medieval traditions, the essays in this volume explore one of the most remarkable yet still under-studied chapters in its history: the survival and transformation of mysticism between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.

With a focus on central and northern Europe, the essays engage such subjects as the relationship of Luther to mystical writing, the visual representation of mystical experience in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art, mystical sermons by religious women of the Low Countries, Valentin Weigel’s recasting of Eckhartian gelaßeneit for a Lutheran audience, and the mysticism of English figures such as Gertrude More, Jane Lead, Elizabeth Hooten, and John Austin, the German Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg, and the German American Marie Christine Sauer.

Contributor Bio
Sara S. Poor is associate professor of German and director of the Program in Medieval Studies at Princeton University.
Nigel Smith is the William and Annie S. Paton Foundation Professor of Ancient and Modern Literature at Princeton University.

“This capacious and stimulating collection brings together scholars working on texts from across Northern Europe and the colonial New World and spanning more than 300 years. Despite the range of these essays, they are united in their conviction that the mysticism that flourished during the High Middle Ages did not disappear with the advent of Protestantism.” —Renaissance Quarterly
Writing Faith and Telling Tales

Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More

Thomas Betteridge

Summary

Thomas More is a complex and controversial figure who has been regarded as both saint and persecutor, leading humanist and a representative of late medieval culture. His religious writings, with their stark and at times violent attacks on what More regarded as heresy, have been hotly debated. In *Writing Faith and Telling Tales*, Thomas Betteridge sets More's writings in a broad cultural and chronological context, compares them to important works of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century vernacular theology, and makes a compelling argument for the revision of existing histories of Thomas More and his legacy. Betteridge focuses on four areas of More's writings: politics, philosophy, theology, and devotion. He examines More's *History of King Richard III* as a work of both history and political theory. He discusses *Utopia* and the ways in which its treatment of reason reflects More's Christian humanism. By exploring three of More's lesser known works, *The Supplication of Souls*, *The Confutation*, and *The Apology*, Betteridge demonstrates that More positioned his understanding of heresy within and against a long tradition of English anti-heretical writing, as represented in the works of Hoccleve, Lydgate, and Love. Finally, Betteridge focuses on two key concepts for understanding More's late devotional works: prayer and the book of Christ. In both cases, Betteridge claims, More seeks to develop a distinctive position that combines late medieval devotionalism with an Augustinian emphasis on the ethics of writing and reading. *Writing Faith and Telling Tales* poses important questions concerning periodization and confessionalization and will influence future work on the English Reformation and humanist writing in England. "*Writing Faith and Telling Tales* is an exciting study poised to resituate Thomas More as a late medieval thinker, revealing his as a corpus of work at odds not only with emergent Protestant writing and practices but with the confessional logic of the Reformation in general. Thomas Betteridge delivers a vivid and compelling picture of Thomas More, a picture that will act as a point of departure for future conversations on this interesting and important author. In addition, this study will serve as an influential survey of early Tudor genres and authors." —Russ Leo, Princeton University

Contributor Bio

Thomas Betteridge is professor of theatre at Brunel University. He is the author of a number of books, including *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* and *Shakespearean Fantasy and Politics*.

"Thomas Betteridge’s desire to break down these [humanist writer, Lord Chancellor, and saintly martyr] divides in *Writing Faith and Telling Tales* is to be fulsomely lauded. . . His analysis of More often reveals intriguing insights, especially as to More’s view of the relationship between truth and fiction." — *Modern Philology*
Transforming Work
Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry
Katherine C. Little

Summary
Pastoral poetry has long been considered a signature Renaissance mode: originating in late sixteenth-century England via a rediscovery of classical texts, it is concerned with self-fashioning and celebrating the court. But, as Katherine C. Little demonstrates in *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Medieval Poetry*, the pastoral mode is in fact indebted to medieval representations of rural labor.

Little offers a new literary history for the pastoral, arguing that the authors of the first English pastorals used rural laborers familiar from medieval texts—plowmen and shepherds—to reflect on the social, economic, and religious disruptions of the sixteenth century. In medieval writing, these figures were particularly associated with the reform of the individual and the social world: their work also stood for the penance and good works required of Christians, the care of the flock required of priests, and the obligations of all people to work within their social class. By the sixteenth century, this reformism had taken on a dangerous set of associations—with radical Protestantism, peasants' revolts, and complaints about agrarian capitalism. Pastoral poetry rewrites and empties out this radical potential, making the countryside safe to write about again.

Moving from William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the medieval shepherd plays, through the *Piers Plowman*–tradition, to Edmund Spenser’s pastorals, Little’s reconstructed literary genealogy discovers the “other” past of pastoral in the medieval and Reformation traditions of “writing rural labor.”

Contributor Bio
Katherine C. Little is associate professor of English at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"*Transforming Work* is a valuable contribution not just to the study of premodern poetry and its multivalent representations of labor, but also to the growing body of work attesting to the urgent necessity of reading across the artificial medieval–early modern divide.” —*Renaissance Quarterly*
Traditionally, Christian martyrdom is a repetition of the story of Christ’s suffering and death: the more closely the victim replicates the Christological model, the more legible the martyrdom. But if the textual construction of martyrdom depends on the rehearsal of a paradigmatic story, how do we reconcile the broad range of individuals, beliefs, and persecutions seeking justification by claims of martyrdom? Observing how martyrdom is constituted through the interplay of historical event and literary form, Alice Dailey explores the development of English martyr literature through the period of intense religious controversy from the heresy executions of Queen Mary to the regicide of 1649. Through close study of texts ranging from late medieval passion drama and hagiography to John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, martyrologies of the Counter-Reformation, Charles I’s *Eikon Basilike*, and John Milton’s *Eikonoklastes*, *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* traces the shifting constructions of the martyr figure across Reformation England. By putting history and literary form in dialogue, Dailey describes not only the reformation of one of the oldest, most influential genres of the Christian West but a revolution in the very concept of martyrdom. In late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, she argues, martyrdom develops from medieval notions of strict typological repetition into Charles I’s defense of individual conscience—an abstract, figurative form of martyrdom that survives into modernity. Far from static or purely formulaic, martyrology emerges in Dailey’s study as a deeply nuanced genre that discloses the mutually constitutive relationship between the lives we live and the stories we tell.

"'Martyrdom is not a death but a story that gets written about a death.' From this simple yet profound premise, Alice Dailey takes us into a tour de force of historical formalism. Martyrdom, as Dailey brilliantly and delicately unpacks it, sits at the nexus of story and the material world. It works through both the suffering of the flesh and the shifting contours of narrative form. In a study that reaches across time (medieval to postmodern) and confessions (Protestant and Catholic), Dailey herself masterfully crafts a compelling story about the life of narrative. This book will naturally be of great value to students of early modern religion, but it will also fascinate anyone interested in how human lives—and the meanings of those lives—are shaped by, and lived through, narrative forms."—Kristen Poole, University of Delaware

**Contributor Bio**

Alice Dailey is associate professor of English at Villanova University.

"The strength of this book is not just that Dailey discusses the traditions of martyrology. She also discusses the ways in which these traditions changed over time. . . . Her careful and insightful reading of contemporary texts and the thoughtful conclusions she draws from this reading will be of great interest not just to historians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but to anyone interested in how the modern world was, and is, constructed and how we both create and re-create the stories of the past.” —*Journal of British Studies*
Miserere Mei
The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England
Clare Costley King’oo

Summary
In *Miserere Mei*, Clare Costley King’oo examines the critical importance of the Penitential Psalms in England between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. During this period, the Penitential Psalms inspired an enormous amount of creative and intellectual work: in addition to being copied and illustrated in Books of Hours and other prayer books, they were expounded in commentaries, imitated in vernacular translations and paraphrases, rendered into lyric poetry, and even modified for singing. *Miserere Mei* explores these numerous transformations in materiality and genre. Combining the resources of close literary analysis with those of the history of the book, it reveals not only that the Penitential Psalms lay at the heart of Reformation-age debates over the nature of repentance, but also, and more significantly, that they constituted a site of theological, political, artistic, and poetic engagement across the many polarities that are often said to separate late medieval from early modern culture.

*Miserere Mei* features twenty-five illustrations and provides new analyses of works based on the Penitential Psalms by several key writers of the time, including Richard Maidstone, Thomas Brampton, John Fisher, Martin Luther, Sir Thomas Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Sir John Harington, and Richard Verstegan. It will be of value to anyone interested in the interpretation, adaptation, and appropriation of biblical literature; the development of religious plurality in the West; the emergence of modernity; and the periodization of Western culture. Students and scholars in the fields of literature, religion, history, art history, and the history of material texts will find *Miserere Mei* particularly instructive and compelling.

Contributor Bio
Clare Costley King’oo is assistant professor of English at the University of Connecticut.

“King’oo’s study distinguishes itself among other excellent scholarly works on the Psalter for its carefully considered focus on the unique textual tradition of the Seven Penitential Psalms. . . . Given King’oo’s training as a literary scholar, her attention to the Penitential Psalms’ form, genre, language, and even the material texts in which they were available yields exciting interpretations of their nuanced revisions and their implied audiences.”—*Church History*
Island Garden
England’s Language of Nation from Gildas to Marvell
Lynn Staley

Summary
For centuries England’s writers used the metaphor of their country as an island garden to engage in a self-conscious debate about national identity. In The Island Garden: England’s Language of Nation from Gildas to Marvell, Lynn Staley suggests that the trope of Britain as an island garden catalyzed two crucial historical perspectives and thus analytic modes: as isolated and vulnerable, England stood in a potentially hostile relation to the world outside its encircling sea; as semi-enclosed and permeable, it also accepted recuperative relationships with those who moved across its boundaries. Identifying the concept of enclosure as key to Britain’s language of place, Staley traces the shifting meanings of this concept in medieval and early modern histories, treatises, and poems. Beginning with Gildas in the sixth century, Staley maintains that the metaphor of England as the island garden was complicated, first, by Bede in the eighth century and later by historians, polemicists, and antiquarians. It allowed them to debate the nature of England’s identity in language whose point might be subversive but that was beyond royal retribution. During the reign of Edward III, William Langland employed the subjects and anxieties linked to the island garden metaphor to create an alternative image of England as a semi-enclosed garden in need of proper cultivation. Staley demonstrates that Langland’s translation of the metaphor for nation from a discreet and royal space into a communally productive half-acre was reformulated by writers such as Chaucer, Hoccleve, Tusser, Johnson, and Marvell, as well as others, to explore the tensions in England’s social and political institutions. From the early thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, English treatments of the biblical story of Susanna capture this self-conscious use of metaphoric language and suggest a perspective on law, individual rights, and conscience that is ultimately crucial to England’s self-conception and description. Staley identifies in literary discourse a persistent argument for England as a garden that is enclosed yet not isolated, and that is protected by a law whose ideal is a common good that even kings must serve. The Island Garden is a fascinating and focused exploration of the ways in which authors have developed a language of place to construct England’s cultural, social, and political identity.

Contributor Bio
Lynn Staley is Harrington and Shirley Drake Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English, Colgate University.

"... it is good to have Lynn Staley's study, which charts how the nation was conceived and imagined and reminds us of this long history. For Staley the conception of Britain as an island garden was not an imagined identity but a 'trope with a set of available ideas or anxieties' principally about safety and isolation. ... The Island Garden is an impressively conceived and substantial book. ..." —Times Literary Supplement
Embodied Word
Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350-1700
Nancy Bradley Warren

Summary
In The Embodied Word: Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350-1700, Nancy Bradley Warren expands on the topic of female spirituality, first explored in her book Women of God and Arms, to encompass broad issues of religion, gender, and historical periodization. Through her analyses of the variety of ways in which medieval spirituality was deliberately and actively carried forward to the early modern period, Warren underscores both continuities and revisions that challenge conventional distinctions between medieval and early modern culture. The early modern writings of Julian of Norwich are an illustrative starting point for Warren's challenge to established views of English religious cultures. In a single chapter, Warren follows the textual and devotional practices of Julian as they influence two English Benedictine nuns in exile, and then Grace Mildmay, a seventeenth-century Protestant gentrəy woman, "to shed light on the ways in which individual encounters of the divine, especially gendered bodily encounters expressed textually, signify for others both personally and socio-historically." In subsequent chapters, Warren discusses St. Birgitta of Sweden's Imitatio Christi in the context of the importance of Spain and Spanish women in shaping a distinctive form of early modern Englishness strongly aligned with medieval religious culture; juxtaposes the fifteenth-century mystic Margery Kempe with the life and writings of Anna Trapnel, a seventeenth-century Baptist; and treats Catherine of Siena together with the Protestant Anne Askew and Lollard and Recusant women. In the final chapters she focuses on the interplay of gender and textuality in women's textual representations of themselves and in works written by men who used the traditions of female spirituality in the service of competing orthodoxies. "In five interwoven chapters, Nancy Bradley Warren expands upon her distinguished previous work to explore the enduring symbolic and political importance of women's religious models in the 'secular' as well as the 'religious' realms. By highlighting the interrelation of religious and political themes in a diverse group of women's lives and writings, Warren brilliantly demonstrates how women shaped cultural connections between England and the Continent during these tumultuous centuries." --Nicole Rice, St. John's University

"A pioneering cross-period, cross-confessional, transnational study of religious Englishwomen and their extraordinary physical-textual corpus. Highly recommended." --David Wallace, University of Pennsylvania

Contributor Bio

"The power of Warren's book to contest orthodoxies is perhaps best encapsulated in these remarks: it leaves the reader wanting to know how far posing the question from these new starting-points actually transforms old verdicts, as well as performing a valuable service in encouraging greater analytical precision in all researchers." — English Historical Review
Maudlin Impression
English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550-1700
Patricia Badir

Summary
Patricia Badir's *The Maudlin Impression* investigates the figure of Mary Magdalene in post-medieval English religious writings and visual representations. Badir argues that the medieval Magdalene story was not discarded as part of Reformation iconoclasm, but was enthusiastically embraced by English writers and artists and retold in a wide array of genres. This rich study bridges the historical division between medieval and early modern culture by showing the ways in which Protestant writers, as well as Catholics, used the medieval stories, art, and symbolism related to the biblical Magdalene as resources for thinking about the role of the affective and erotic in Christian devotion. Their literary and artistic glosses protected a range of religious devotional practices and lent embodied, tangible form to the God of the Reformation. They employed the Magdalene figure to articulate religious experience by means of a poetics that could avoid controversial questions of religious art while exploring the potency and appeal of the beautiful. *The Maudlin Impression* is a literary history of imitation and invention. It participates in the "religious turn" in early modern studies by demonstrating the resilience of a single topos across time and across changing Christian beliefs.

"In this historically rich and theoretically informed study, Patricia Badir argues that the medieval figure of Mary Magdalene serves as a 'site of memory' for early modern writers, enabling them both to reflect on what has been lost in the aftermath of the Reformation and to fashion their own Protestant and Counter-Reformation models of piety, repentance, mourning, and holiness. Drawing from poems, plays, sermons, homilies, biographies, and paintings, Badir convincingly demonstrates the remarkable resiliency and flexibility of the Magdalene trope in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Her fascinating narrative traces the evolution of the Magdalene from the Reformation to the Restoration and raises provocative questions about the mnemonic function of religious art, the power of beautiful images in an iconoclastic culture, and the place of affect, longing, and embodiment in a Protestant poetics." --Huston Diehl, University of Iowa

"In the aftermath of the Reformation, the English wrote about Mary Magdalene. Sometimes she belongs to a specifically Protestant poetics: the gaudy Catholic whore turned Reformed penitent. Yet most post-Reformation Magdalenes resist Catholic-or-Protestant pigeonholing; instead, all unexpectedly, Badir's quick-eyed scholarship discloses continuities, convergences, recuperations. . . . [Her] book luminously teaches the all-important lesson that the Reformation fought in polemics was not necessarily the Reformation found in poetry." --Debora Shuger, University of California, Los Angeles

"The final chapter—on the Magdalene's afterlife in decadent Restoration art and drama—is dazzlingly provocative. It reads like the destination toward which the entire book has been leading, and it provides an entirely new perspective on the character of Angellica Bianca in Behn's The Rover." —*Modern Philology*

Contributor Bio
Patricia Badir is associate professor of English literature at University of British Columbia.
Against All England
Regional Identity and Cheshire Writing, 1195-1656
Robert W. Barrett, Jr.

Summary
Against All England examines a diverse set of poems, plays, and chronicles produced in Cheshire and its vicinity from the 1190s to the 1650s that collectively argue for the localization of British literary history. These works, including very early monastic writing emanating from St. Werburgh’s Abbey, the Chester Whitsun plays, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, seventeenth-century ceremonials, and various Stanley romances, share in the creation and revision of England’s cultural tradition, demonstrating a vested interest in the intersection of landscape, language, and politics. Barrett’s book grounds itself in Cestrian evidence in order to offer scholars a new, dynamic model of cultural topography, one that acknowledges the complex interlacing of regional and national identities within the longue durée extending from the post-Conquest period to the Restoration. Covering nearly five centuries of literary production within a single geographical location, the book challenges still dominant chronologies of literary history that emphasize cultural rupture and view the “Renaissance” as a sharp break from England’s medieval past.

“Robert W. Barrett, Jr., makes a number of contributions to our understanding of medieval and early modern English culture. He joins other scholars like David Wallace, James Simpson, and Sarah Beckwith in seeking to understand medieval culture less as a distinct unit than as a series of texts, issues, and rhetorical moves that continue well into the early modern period and, indeed, nourish it. . . . Barrett’s study is timely and will be received with great interest.” —Lynn Staley, Harrington and Shirley Drake Professor of the Humanities and Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Colgate University

“Rob Barrett’s study of pre- and early modern Cheshire makes a welcome contribution to the literary and historical rethinking of the medieval/Renaissance divide. Against All England presents a compelling argument for the crucial place of regional cultures in the increasingly prominent scholarly narrative of an emergent English nation. This lively and learned book deserves a broad readership across disciplinary and historical borders.” —Theresa Coletti, University of Maryland

“This is an ambitious scholarly book that will reward its readers not just because it provides a complex and subtle discussion of Cestrian writing but also because it is an engaging model for a nimble, spatially oriented literary history that asks us to reconsider every paradigm we hold dear.” —Speculum

Contributor Bio
Robert W. Barrett, Jr., is associate professor of English and medieval studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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