

PERIODIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS:  
MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PATHWAYS IN LITERATURE  
FOLGER INSTITUTE SEMINAR FALL 2011

Director: Theresa Coletti  
Department of English  
University of Maryland  
College Park MD 20742  
[tcoletti@umd.edu](mailto:tcoletti@umd.edu)  
W: 301 405 7853

In recent years, the study of English literary and cultural texts has embraced the impulse to examine the borders between medieval and Renaissance. Scholars have scrutinized the terms as designating both historical periods and conceptual categories; they have examined the assumptions and analytical frameworks that these terms have invoked and sustained. Their work bears fruit in new accounts of relationships between literary texts and cultural practices that move beyond notions of difference and dependence, rupture and continuity, to underscore a more complex historiography, one that pursues diachronic notions of repetition, reinvention, appropriation, renewal, revival, survival, and reciprocity. Assuming neither the foundational status of the medieval nor the cultural superiority of the early modern, this new literary historiography investigates how pre- and early modern texts mutually animate each other. Early readings will focus on theories of periodization. Participants will then examine topics, genres, and reading strategies that chart pathways between medieval and early modern.

**Schedule:** Thursdays, 1 – 4:30 p.m., 22 September through 8 December 2011, excluding 27 October and 24 November.

At present, this syllabus primarily includes those materials that we'll consider as core or essential readings for each session. This list is subject to revision as all of us discover new materials, and as our conversation turns in particular directions.

The document site provided for our seminar by the Folger Institute will contain all or virtually all of the secondary readings that I'm designating as required. In a few cases, the document site will also contain primary readings. For the most part, though, seminar participants will be responsible for acquiring or finding access to the primary readings from their own personal or institutional libraries. The primary readings that I've identified, with one or two exceptions, are canonical and therefore readily available. Generally, specific editions of the primary works will not be a matter for concern. There will be a reserve shelf for our seminar in the Folger Library; this will include usable and/or standard (not rare) editions of all of the primary works that currently appear on the

following list. For each of our seminar sessions, we will make use of the wonderful resources of the Folger collections, examining items germane to the topics and readings for the day.

There will be no writing assignments for this seminar. Participants will make presentations on their current research, as it relates to the main topics of the seminar.

The brief overview of each session provided below is meant simply to suggest possible directions for investigation and discussion. I encourage additional suggestions for issues we might pursue.

## **Session 1**

### **Sept 22 Introduction: Why Periodization?**

How and why do scholars imagine the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (yes, we'll consider terminology) as historical periods and conceptual categories? Where does the interest in these matters come from? Why do these questions matter?

Margreta De Grazia. "The Modern Divide: From Either Side." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007): 453-67.

Debora Kuller Shuger. *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1990. Selections.

Walker, Greg. "When did 'The Medieval' End? Retrospection, Foresight, and the End(s) of the English Middle Ages." In *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), Pp. 725-38.

Ramsey, Nigel. "'The Manuscripts flew about like Butterflies': The Break-Up of English Libraries in the Sixteenth Century." *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity*. Ed. James Ryan. New York: Palgrave, 2004, 125-44.

Matthews, David. "The Medieval Invasion of Early-Modern England." *New Medieval Literatures* 10 (2008): 223-44.

C.S. Lewis. "De Descriptione Temporum: Inaugural Lecture from the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature Cambridge University, 1954."

## **Session 2**

### **Sept 29 Liturgies**

How has liturgy figured in medieval and early modern literary studies and how can the examination of liturgy shape our conceptions of med/Ren periodization? What are the relationships between liturgy and literary production?

#### **Primary Works:**

John Skelton, "Phyllyp Sparowe"

Sir Phillip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*

*The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: The Elizabeth Prayer Book.* ed. John Booty.  
Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 1976. Selections.

**Secondary Reading:**

Holsinger, Bruce. "Liturgy." In *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2007). Pp. 295-314.

Timothy Rosendale. *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Introduction; selections ch. 3 ("Representation and Authority...").

James Simpson. *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2. 1350-1547*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Pp. 1-33.

**Session 3**

**Oct 6 Hybrid Forms**

This session will focus on an examination of rare materials, especially service and prayer books from the Folger collections that illustrate the liturgical entities and themes discussed in session 2. Some possible foci: the mixing of religious ideologies (traditional and reformed); materialities (manuscript/print); languages (Latin/English). Reading assignments will be relatively light for this session, to catch up from the previous week and/or get a head start on significant reading for the next two sessions.

**Primary Works:**

*The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: The Elizabeth Prayer Book.* ed. John Booty.  
Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 1976. Selections (if you didn't have a chance to read this for week 2).

**Secondary Reading:**

Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick, eds. *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*.  
Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. "Introduction: Script, print and history." Pp. 1-26.

William Sherman. *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. Preface (xi-xx); Ch. 1, "Introduction," 3-24; Ch. 5, "An Uncommon Book of Common Prayer," 87-109.

**Session 4**

**Oct 13 Antiquarians I: English Language and English History**

How do early modern antiquarians like Matthew Parker contribute to conceptions of historical and literary periodization? How do the material labors of recovery and preservation make the 'medieval' possible, especially in the case of England's Anglo-Saxon past? How does awareness of that past figure in imaginative literature of the sixteenth century?

**Primary Works:**

Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calendar*: Epistle of E.K; “The General Argument”; and the May and September Eclogues

**Secondary Reading:**

Jennifer Summit. *Memory’s Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England*.

Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2008. Ch. 3 “Reading Reformation: The Libraries of Mathew Parker and Edmund Spenser,” 101-35, 279-91.

Siân Echard. *Printing the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Ch. 1, “Form and Rude Letters: The Representation of Old English,” 21-59, 223-34.

Hannah Crawforth. “Strangers to the Mother Tongue: Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calendar* and Early Anglo-Saxon Studies.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41 (2011): 293-316.

Andrew King. *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2000. Ch. 1 “Approaching Spenser’s Medievalism,” 1-11.

Andrew Escobedo. *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004. Ch. 2 “Antiquarian History: Dee, Spenser, and the Tudor Search for Arthur,” 45-80.

For this session, the seminar will welcome visiting scholar William Sherman, Professor of English at University of York (UK) and a Folger Library Fellow.

**Session 5****Oct 20 Antiquarians II: Compilation, Evidence, Saints’ Lives**

How do habits and persuasions of early modern antiquarians like Robert Cotton create the English Middle Ages? What kinds of sources count in that endeavor? What happens to medieval narratives of saints? How might antiquarian modes of discerning England’s medieval past apply to artifacts like the Chester plays? (This last question provides a segue to our next session.)

**Primary Works:**

Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*. The Folger has the 19<sup>th</sup> century 9 vol. edition by Rev. Joseph Rawson Lumby for the Rolls Society (DA25 .B5 no. 41). The first volume of this edition is available and downloadable from Google Books—probably your simplest point of access. Since this edition contains Higden’s Latin text with two facing page English translations, it is not the easiest thing to read in electronic format. Skim the editor’s introduction and read the first chapter (skim chapter 2 if you have time)

Saints’ Lives, Medieval and Early Modern: For the medieval, please read a few lives from the *South English Legendary* (your choice) appearing on the TEAMS online archive: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm>

The saints' lives on this site can be found in these collections: *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (ed. Reames) and *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections* (ed. Whatley with Thompson and Church). Since we will be focusing on female saints' lives, read the life of St. Frideswide in Reames—and, if you have a chance, the life of Mary Magdalene in the same collection. But the lives of male saints in the Whatley collection are suitable too.

Life of Saint Winifred from Folger MS V. b. 224

*Chester Mystery Cycle*, Late Banns; in R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills. *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Essays and Documents*. U of North Carolina Press, 1983. On reserve.

### **Secondary Reading:**

Jennifer Summit. *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England*.

Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2008. Ch. 4 "A Library of Evidence: Robert Cotton's Medieval Manuscripts and the Generation of Seventeenth-Century Prose," 136-96. (In two parts on document site)

Catherine Sanok. "The Lives of Women Saints in Our Contrie of England: Gender and Nationalism in Recusant Hagiography." In Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley, and Arthur Marotti, eds. *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame Press, 2007. Pp. 261-80.

C. E. Wright. "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquarians and the Formation of the Cottonian Library." *The English Library before 1700*. Ed. Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright. London, U of London, Athlone Press, 1958, 176-212. (This selection is not on the document site under this name; it appears at the end of the file for C.E. Wright, "The Dispersal of the Libraries...").

Simon Horobin. "Politics, Patronage, and Piety in the Work of Osbern Bokenham." *Speculum* 82 (2007): 932-49.

## **Oct 27 Free Week**

### **Session 6**

#### **Nov 3 Performing the Bible**

How do traditional and evangelical conceptions of the Bible and biblical reading inform the production of scripturally-based theater in the sixteenth century? How does theater function as a form of vernacular scripture? How do different relationships between text and performance speak to modes of scriptural reading?

### **Primary Works:**

*Chester Mystery Cycle*, Post-Crucifixion plays (Harrowing of Hell, Resurrection, Emmaus, Ascension, Pentecost; and if you have time Prophets of Antichrist, Coming of Antichrist, and Last Judgment)

*The Resurrection of Our Lord*. Ed. J. Dover Wilson and Bertram Dobell. London: Oxford UP for Malone Society Reprints. 1912. (Copy available on document site).

**Secondary Reading:**

David Lawton. "Englishing the Bible, 1066-1549." In *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. 454-82.

David Scott Kastan. "'The noyse of the new Bible': Reform and Reaction in Henrician England." In *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. 46-68.

Debora Kuller Shuger. *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California Press, 1994. "Introduction," 1-11, 205-6.

Theresa Coletti and Gail McMurray Gibson. "The Tudor Origins of Medieval Drama." In *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright. Chichester UK, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Pp. 228-45.

**Session 7**

**Nov 10 Performing Allegory**

What happens to allegorical drama across the med/Ren period, and how is our understanding of this change complicated by unique witnesses such as the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Respublica*? What non-dramatic sources and influences can help us to ask new questions about these works?

For this session, the seminar will welcome visiting scholar Gail McMurray Gibson, Professor of English at Davidson College and Folger Library Fellow.

**Primary Works:**

*The Castle of Perseverance*

*Respublica*

Sackville and Norton, *Gorboduc* (selections)

Thomas Middleton, *The World Tossed at Tennis*

**Secondary Reading:**

Henry Spelman. *The History and Fate of Sacrilege*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London, 1895. Chap. 1, section one; chap. 6 (on Norfolk monasteries).

Frank Towne. "Roister Doister's Assault on the *Castle of Perseverance*." *Research Studies of the State College of Washington*. 18 (1950): 175-80.

Stewart Mottram. *Empire and Nation in Early English Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge UK: D.S. Brewer, 2008. Ch. 5 "Commonwealth in Crisis: Nicholas Udall's *Respublica*." Pp. 170-208.

**Session 8**

## Nov 17 Performing Saints I

How does biblical saint Mary Magdalene encode ideologies of feminine devotion and of religious and theatrical embodiment across the med/Ren period? What are the implications of such ideologies for the histories of spirituality and of theater?

### Primary Works:

Digby *Mary Magdalene*

Lewis Wager, *Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (in White, *Reformation Biblical Drama*—on reserve)

### Secondary Reading:

Debora Kuller Shuger. *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California Press, 1994. Ch. 5 “Saints and Lovers ...” 167-91; 251-58.

Theresa Coletti. *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. Ch. 5 “Bodies, Theater, and Sacred Mediations,” 190-217, 284-91.

Patricia Badir. *The Maudlin Impression: English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550-1700*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame, 2009. Ch. 1 “The Look of Love,” 21-57, 227-35.

Gary Kuchar. “Gender and Recusant Melancholia in Robert Southwell’s *Mary Magdalene’s Funeral Tears*.” In Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley, and Arthur Marotti, eds. *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame Press, 2007. Pp. 135-57.

## Nov 24 Thanksgiving

### Session 9

## Dec 1 Performing Saints II

What constitutes gendered sanctity and martyrdom across the med/Ren period? Why do virgin martyrs matter? How does theater reinvent the medieval virgin martyr for early modern audiences? In what ways do dramas of the saints perform the different confessions?

### Primary Works

Osbern Bokenham, “Life of Saint Dorothy.”

Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger, *The Virgin Martyr*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, with Intro, Notes and Commentary by Cyrus Hoy. Cambridge UP 1980. Vol. 3 (on reserve)

### Secondary Reading:

Karen Winstead. “Sainly Exemplarity.” In *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2007. Pp. 335-51.

Janel Mueller. "The Saints." In Cummings, Brian and James Simpson, eds. *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010). Pp. 166-87.

Catherine Sanok. "Performing Feminine Sanctity in Late Medieval England." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. 32.2 (2002): 269-303.

Nova Myhill. "Making Death a Miracle: Audiences and the Genres of Martyrdom in Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr*." *Early Theatre* 7.2 (2004): 9-31.

Peter Womack. "Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.1 (1999): 169-87.

## **Session 10**

### **Dec 8 Presentations; Wrap-up and Directions for the Future**