Recognizing our Religious Allegiances in Early Modern Literary Scholarship

Academic study, which is without preconceptions in the sense that it rejects any religious allegiance, likewise has no knowledge of miracles and revelation.

Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (1918)

The past hundred years of literary scholarship have seen a vigorous assault on the idea that *Wissenschaft* (the sciences and humanities) is objective and conducted in a preconception-free vacuum. We now use the first person in our books and articles, as well as regularly advertising our preconceived aims, for instance of amplifying traditionally marginalized voices. Despite this climate of increased self-awareness and honesty, scholars of early modern literature and culture are often quite reserved about our own religious or secular beliefs and backgrounds, how these shape which texts we choose to study and the questions we ask about them. This collection proposes to illuminate this aspect of literary scholarship, focusing on English literature written between 1560 and 1700.

These texts are emphatically religious, falling in different (sometimes dangerous) places within a wide and varied English Christian landscape. As such, they demand that we who study them consider the theological and ecclesiological distance—or lack of distance—between their authors and original audiences, and ourselves. Beginning with liturgical texts such as English Bible translations and the Book of Common Prayer, and subsequently turning to the drama, lyric poetry, and imaginative literature of the period, contributors to this collection will speak from a range of religious and irreligious positions, showing how such positions enliven our conversations with these early modern texts and authors.

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Timeline:
Agreement of Participation and Topic due 1 June 2023
Abstracts (250 words), keywords and short author CV due 1 September 2023
Chapters (7,000 words) due 1 September 2024

Texts/authors considered might include:

Liturgical Texts (Geneva Bible, KJV, BCP, Sermons)
Drama (Marlowe, Shakespeare, Cary, Behn)
Lyric poetry (Lanyer, Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Bradstreet)
Epic poetry (Spenser, Milton, Hutchinson)
Prose fiction (Cavendish, Bunyan)