Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature

Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature brings together key works in early modern science and imaginative literature (from the anatomy of William Harvey and the experimentalism of William Gilbert to the fictions of Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and Margaret Cavendish). The book documents how what have become our two cultures of belief define themselves through a shared aesthetics that understands knowledge as an act of making. Within this framework, literary texts gain substance and intelligibility by being considered as instances of early modern knowledge production. At the same time, early modern science maintains strong affiliations with poetry because it understands art as a basis for producing knowledge. In identifying these interconnections between literature and science, this book contributes to scholarship in literary history, history of reading and the book, science studies, and the history of academic disciplines.

Elizabeth Spiller is Associate Professor at the Department of English, Texas Christian University. She has published in a number of journals including Renaissance Quarterly, Criticism, Studies in English Literature, and Modern Language Quarterly.
Since the 1970s there has been a broad and vital reinterpretation of the nature of literary texts, a move away from formalism to a sense of literature as an aspect of social, economic, political, and cultural history. While the earliest New Historical work was criticized for a narrow and anecdotal view of history, it also served as an important stimulus for post-structuralist, feminist, Marxist, and psychoanalytical work, which in turn has increasingly informed and redirected it. Recent writing on the nature of representation, the historical construction of gender and of the concept of identity itself, on theatre as a political and economic phenomenon, and on the ideologies of art generally, reveals the breadth of the field. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture is designed to offer historically oriented studies of Renaissance literature and theatre which make use of the insights afforded by theoretical perspectives. The view of history envisioned is above all a view of our own history, a reading of the Renaissance for and from our own time.

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Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature

The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580–1670

Elizabeth Spiller
for Tim
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