John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture

Inspired by the example of his predecessors Chaucer and Gower, John Lydgate articulated in his poetry, prose, and translations many of the most serious political questions of his day. In the fifteenth century Lydgate was the most famous poet in England, filling commissions for the court, the aristocracy, and the guilds. He wrote for an elite London readership that was historically very small, but that saw itself as dominating the cultural life of the nation. Thus the new literary forms and modes developed by Lydgate and his contemporaries helped to shape the development of English public culture in the fifteenth century. Maura Nolan offers a major reinterpretation of Lydgate’s work and of his central role in the developing literary culture of his time. Moreover, she provides a wholly new perspective on Lydgate’s relationship to Chaucer, as he followed Chaucerian traditions while creating innovative new ways of addressing the public.

Maura Nolan is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame.
This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c. 1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

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MAURA NOLAN
For my parents
Jack and Carolyn Nolan
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