Sarah Elliott Novacich explores how medieval thinkers pondered the ethics and pleasures of the archive. She traces three episodes of sacred history – the loss of Eden, the loading of Noah’s ark, and the Harrowing of Hell – across works of poetry, performance records, and iconography in order to demonstrate how medieval artists turned to sacred history to think through aspects of cultural transmission. Performances of the loss of Eden blur the relationship between original and record; stories of Noah’s ark foreground the difficulty of compiling inventories; and engagements with the Harrowing of Hell suggest the impossibility of separating the past from the present. Reading Middle English plays alongside chronicles, poetry, and works of visual art, *Shaping the Archive in Late Medieval England* considers how poetic form, staging logistics, and the status of performance all contribute to our understanding of the ways in which medieval thinkers imagined the archive.

Sarah Elliott Novacich is an assistant professor at Rutgers University, where she specializes in medieval literature. Her research interests include poetry, drama, gender studies, and visual culture.
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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SHAPING THE ARCHIVE IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

History, Poetry, and Performance

SARAH ELLIOTT NOVACICH

Rutgers University, New Jersey
This book is for my dad, Stephen, who knows how to ask a good question, and my mom, Elizabeth, who recognizes art everywhere.
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5 *The Harrowing of Hell*. From an English psalter. England, first quarter of the thirteenth century. © The British Library Board, Arundel MS 157 f.11
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Most of all, I could not have written this book without Josh.
A Note on Citation Style

For Middle English quotations, I retain the thorn (ȝ) and yogh (ȝ), as well as v/u and j/i spellings. The endnotes offer author and title, as well as translator and editor when required; full citations are in the bibliography. All Middle English translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCCM</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, series latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Text Society (o.s., Original Series, e.s., Extra Series, s.s. Supplementary Series)</td>
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