

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## RETHINKING HISTORICISM FROM SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON

Reading literary texts in their historical contexts has been the dominant form of interpretation in literary criticism for the past thirty years. This collection of essays reflects on the origins of historicism, its present usefulness as a mode of literary analysis, its limitations, and its future. The volume provides a brief history of the practice from its renaissance origins, offering examples of historicist work that not only demonstrate the continuing vitality of this methodology, but also suggest new directions for research. Focusing on the major figures of Shakespeare and Milton, these essays provide important and concise representations of trends in the field. Designed for scholars and students of early modern English literature (1500–1700), the volume will also be of interest to students of literature more generally, and to historians.

Ann Baynes Coiro is Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Robert Herrick's Hesperides and the Epigram Book Tradition* and has published many journal articles and book chapters on seventeenth-century poetry, Milton, book history, court culture, and English theater.

Thomas Fulton is Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. He is the author of *Historical Milton: Manuscript, Print, and Political Culture in Revolutionary England*, as well as journal articles and book chapters on the cultural intersection of politics and religion, problems in rhetoric and generic form, and the history of the book.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

RETHINKING HISTORICISM  
FROM SHAKESPEARE  
TO MILTON

EDITED BY

ANN BAYNES COIRO

*Rutgers University*

THOMAS FULTON

*Rutgers University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107027510](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107027510)

© Cambridge University Press 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2012

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*  
 Rethinking historicism from Shakespeare to Milton / [edited by]  
 Ann Baynes Coiro, Thomas Fulton.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02751-0

1. Historical criticism (Literature) 2. New historicism. 3. English literature –  
 Early modern, 1500–1700 – History and criticism – Theory, etc.  
 I. Coiro, Ann Baynes, 1951– II. Fulton, Thomas (Thomas Chandler)

PN98.H57R48 2012

801'.95–dc23 2012012616

ISBN 978-1-107-02751-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*for Annabel Patterson*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## *Contents*

<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Introduction: Old, New, Now <i>Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton</i>	1
I: HISTORICISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS	
1. Has Historicism Gone Too Far: Or, Should We Return to Form? <i>Andrew Hadfield</i>	23
2. Theory and Practice in Historical Method <i>Michael McKeon</i>	40
3. Limiting History <i>Marshall Grossman</i>	65
II: HISTORICISM AND THEOLOGY	
4. The Politics of Renaissance Historicism: Valla, Erasmus, Colet, and More <i>Thomas Fulton</i>	87
5. Historicizing Satisfaction in Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i> <i>Heather Hirschfeld</i>	113
III: DRAMATIC HISTORIES	
6. The New Presentism and Its Discontents: Listening to <i>Eastward Ho</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Tempest</i> in Dialogue <i>Paul Stevens</i>	133

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Contents*

7. In Great Men's Houses: Playing, Patronage, and the Performance of Tudor History <i>Lawrence Manley</i>	159
IV: MILTON AND THE PROBLEMS OF HISTORY	
8. Medea's Dilemma: Politics and Passion in Milton's Divorce Tracts <i>Sharon Achinstein</i>	181
9. Milton, Foucault, and the New Historicism <i>Martin Dzelzainis</i>	209
V: GENDERING HISTORICISM	
10. "You shall be our generalless": Fashioning Warrior Women from Henrietta Maria to Hillary Clinton <i>Laura Lunger Knoppers</i>	237
11. Wartimes: Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing and Its Afterlives <i>Erin Murphy</i>	257
Afterword <i>Nigel Smith</i>	283
<i>Index</i>	295



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Contributors*

SHARON ACHINSTEIN, Professor of Renaissance Literature at the University of Oxford and a Tutorial Fellow in English at St Edmund Hall. Author of *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (1994) and *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (2003) and coeditor of *Milton and Toleration* (2007). She is currently preparing an edition of Milton's Divorce Tracts for Oxford University Press.

ANN BAYNES COIRO, Associate Professor of English, Rutgers University. Author of *Robert Herrick's Hesperides and the Epigram Book Tradition* (1988) and many articles and book chapters on subjects in seventeenth-century literature, including Milton, dramatic poetry, court literature, and poetry and print culture in the English revolution and Restoration.

MARTIN DZELZAINIS, Professor of Renaissance Literature and Thought, University of Leicester. Author of a range of articles, collections, and editions, including *Marvell and Liberty* (1999), coedited with Warren Chernaik, and an edition of Marvell's two-part prose satire, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672, 1673) in *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell* (2003). He is one of the editors of the new Oxford complete Milton, and he edited Milton's *Political Writings* (1991).

THOMAS FULTON, Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. Author of articles on Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, and other medieval and early modern writers, and of *Historical Milton: Manuscript, Print, and Political Culture in Revolutionary England* (2010).

MARSHALL GROSSMAN, late Professor of English at the University of Maryland. Author of *The Story of All Things: Writing the Self in English Renaissance Narrative Poetry* (1998) and "Authors to Themselves": *Milton and the Revelation of History* (1987); edited volumes include *Aemilia*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

*Contributors*

*Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon* (1998) and *Reading Renaissance Ethics* (2007).

ANDREW HADFIELD, Professor of English at Sussex University. Author of *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (2004); *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain* (2004); *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (2005); and *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (2012).

HEATHER HIRSCHFELD, Associate Professor of English at the University of Tennessee. Author of *Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater* (2004) and articles on Shakespeare and Renaissance drama.

LAURA LUNGER KNOPPERS, Liberal Arts Research Professor of English at the Pennsylvania State University. Author of *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton's Eve* (2011); *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print, 1645–1661* (2000); and *Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England* (1994); edited volumes include, most recently, *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing* (2009).

LAWRENCE MANLEY, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at Yale University. Author of *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (1995) and *Convention, 1500–1750* (1980) and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of London* (2010) and *London in the Age of Shakespeare: An Anthology* (1986).

MICHAEL MCKEON, Board of Governors Professor of Literature at Rutgers University. Author of *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England* (1975), *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987, 2002), and *The Secret History of Domesticity* (2005). He also has edited *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (2000).

ERIN MURPHY, Associate Professor of English and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Boston University. She has published *Familial Forms: Politics and Genealogy in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (2011) and several essays on seventeenth-century literature. She is also the coeditor, with James Keith Vincent, of "Honoring Eve," a special issue of *Criticism* on the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

NIGEL SMITH, William and Annie S. Paton Foundation Professor of Ancient and Modern Literature at Princeton University. Author of *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contributors*

xi

*Religion 1640–1660* (1989); *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (1994); *Is Milton Better Than Shakespeare?* (2008); and *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (2010), he has also edited the Ranter tracts, George Fox's *Journal*, and Marvell's poetry (Longman AEP series), and he coedited with Nicholas McDowell *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (2009).

PAUL STEVENS, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Early Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Toronto. Former President of the Milton Society of America and Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, his publications include *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare in Paradise Lost* (1985), *Discontinuities: New Essays on Renaissance Literature and Criticism* (coedited, 1998), and *Early Modern Nationalism and Milton's England* (coedited, 2008). He currently holds a 2012–2013 Guggenheim Fellowship.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Acknowledgments*

A collection of essays is an inherently collaborative process, and we have had the best of collaborators in our essay writers. Our profound thanks to our contributors for each of their outstanding essays and for their willingness to open their essays to conversation with each other. Very sadly, Marshall Grossman died in March 2011 after a brief illness. His vivid intellectual presence in this volume is testimony to the theoretical sophistication, ethical concern, and unabashed passion for literature he brought to early modern studies. We are all graced by his presence here.

The ideas explored in this volume began their life at a symposium on historicism at Yale University in 2006. We would like to thank the many participants whose ideas and conversation contributed substantially to this project, including: Paul Alpers, Alastair Bellany, Kathy Eden, Stanley Fish, Blair Hoxby, Victoria Kahn, David Kastan, James Kearney, Arthur Kinney, Al Labriola, David Loewenstein, Steven Mentz, Molly Murray, Lori Newcomb, Annabel Patterson, Steven Pincus, David Quint, Ayesha Ramachandran, John Rogers, Kevin Sharpe, John Staines, Richard Strier, Ramie Targoff, and Nicholas von Maltzahn. Support for the symposium was made possible by the Whitney Humanities Center, the English and History departments at Yale, Renaissance Studies, the Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Fund, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

We are also extremely grateful for the input of our colleagues and students at Rutgers University. The Medieval-Renaissance Colloquium took a lively and provocative interest in the questions the volume explores and helped sharpen its focus. We are fortunate to be part of a diverse and intellectually generous community at Rutgers that has consistently enriched our thinking; we owe particular thanks to Emily Bartels, Miriam Diller, Stacy Klein, Ron Levao, Jackie Miller, and Henry Turner.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02751-0 - Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton

Edited by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---