During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, England grew from a marginal to a major European power, established overseas settlements, and negotiated the Protestant Reformation. The population burgeoned and became increasingly urban. England also saw the meteoric rise of commercial theater in London, the creation of a vigorous market for printed texts, and the emergence of writing as a viable profession. Literacy rates exploded, and an increasingly diverse audience encountered a profusion of new textual forms. Media, and literary culture, transformed on a scale that would not happen again until television and the internet. The twenty innovative contributions in *Gathering Force: Early Modern British Literature in Transition, 1557–1623* trace ways that five different genres both spurred and responded to change. Chapters explore different facets of lyric poetry, romance, commercial drama, masques and pageants, and non-narrative prose. Exciting and accessible, this volume illuminates the dynamic relationships among the period’s social, political, and literary transformations.

**Kristen Poole**, Blue and Gold Distinguished Professor of English Renaissance Literature at the University of Delaware, is the author of *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000) and *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (Cambridge, 2011). She is co-editor of *The Bible on the Shakespearean Stage: Cultures of Interpretation in Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2018) and of a forthcoming volume tentatively titled *Early Modern Histories of Time: The Periodizations of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*. Her research has been supported by the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Penn Humanities Forum.

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Early Modern British Literature in Transition offers a new way of reading more than 150 years of British literature and history. Concentrating on instances of transformation, the three volumes in the series do not present an empirical survey for the decades under discussion. Instead, they read across traditional demarcations – the Elizabethan age, the early seventeenth century, and the Restoration – and re-evaluate both previous scholarship and previous narratives of the relation between writing and culture. One of this series’ underlying premises is that literature actively engages with – expresses, shapes, subverts, questions, avoids, and is influenced by – the conditions in which it was composed and published. These engagements were especially important during the early modern period as writers coped with, among other things, the rise of print, the execution of a king, and the emergence of a national vision of empire.

Books in the Series

Gathering Force: Early Modern British Literature in Transition, 1557–1623 edited by Kristen Poole and Lauren Shohet


Emergent Nation: Early Modern British Literature in Transition, 1660–1714 edited by Elizabeth Sauer
GATHERING FORCE: EARLY MODERN BRITISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION, 1557–1623

Volume 1

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Cambridge University Press
www.cambridge.org
For Barbara Kiefer Lewalski
– KEP

For Scott Black
– LES
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Abbreviations


**OED**  *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*.


List of Abbreviations


Except where otherwise indicated, these are the sources for all the volume’s citations from these authors and works.