



The Work of Form: Poetics and Materaility in Early Modern Culture

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The Work of Form: Poetics and Materiality in Early Modern Culture explores the resurgent interest in literary form and aesthetics in early modern English studies. Essays by leading international scholars reflect on the legacy of historicist approaches and on calls for a renewal of formalist analysis as both a tool and as a defence of our object of study as literary critics. This collection addresses the possibilities as well as the challenges of combining these critical traditions; it tests and reflects on these through practice. It also establishes new lines of enquiry by expanding definitions of form to include the material as well as theoretical implications of the term and explores the early modern roots of these connections. The period's most famous poets such as Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Jonson appear alongside Anne Southwell, Thomas Campion, and many anonymous poets and songwriters.

The Work of Form brings together contributors from literary history, historicism, manuscript study, prosodic theory, the history of music, history of the book, as well as print and manuscript culture. It represents avowedly political historical work, alongside aesthetic and theoretical frameworks, work bridging literature and music, and cognitive poetics. In bringing together these diverse commitments, it addresses urgent questions about how we can understand and analyse literary form in a historically-rooted way, and demands rigorous discussion about the status of formal and aesthetic considerations in editing, in literary criticism, and in teaching.



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