

Giving Voice to Women: Teaching Feminist Approaches to the Mystery Plays

Katie Normington

Normington lectures in Drama at Royal Holloway College, University of London. She has published on contemporary productions of medieval drama.

If women appeared rarely in the medieval theatre this was not because it was thought shameful: rather was this so because of factors that were particular to the theatre of the Middle Ages. In the first place, responsibility for the organization of the Corpus Christi drama rested with bishops, canons, and city fathers: this exclusively male hierarchy then delegated executive responsibility to guilds, religious and commercial, that were open to men. Liturgical music drama, moreover, having relied for generations on choir-boys and junior clergy to take treble roles—provided an example to be imitated in the Corpus Christi drama. The quality of these voices suggests another and more practical reason for continuing to employ them rather than to recruit women—audibility in an open-air auditorium. (Wickham 1987, 93-94)

I quote at length from Glynne Wickham's *The Medieval Theatre* because it raises some interesting problems that are encountered when trying to formulate a feminist approach to the English mystery plays. In this article I would like to examine the challenges that are encountered when teaching feminist approaches to the mystery plays and offer some suggestions as to how classroom activities can provide a fruitful exploration of these issues. If women's activity is to be given a voice within the classroom, then it is essential that pedagogical methods take steps in order to nullify the crippling affect of Wickham's opening statement.

One of the first problems that must be overcome when teaching a feminist approach to the mystery plays is the lack of appropriate resources. Wickham is, in fact, one of the few authors of a standard college textbook to include references to women. The majority of course books in print, which an undergraduate might encounter when studying medieval drama, omit anything but a cursory reference to women. Even the *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, which contains an excellent bibliography, fails to offer anything other than a passing reference to women.¹ Recent scholarship has produced a handful of articles that explore the role of women within the plays, although these are not necessarily easily accessible for an undergraduate. When teaching medieval drama from a feminist perspective the first hurdle that must be overcome is the lack of appropriate resources.

Many of the challenges that must be faced when developing a feminist pedagogical approach are identified in Wickham's opening comments. He suggests three major reasons as to why women were excluded from the medieval stage. He first argues that the lack of female performance in the mystery plays was brought about by the production methods of the plays. The church, civic, and guild authorities responsible for bringing forth the dramas were male institutions. Wickham implies that this patriarchal control in effect excluded women from involvement with the dramas. Second, Wickham postulates that the model of performance established through the tradition of liturgical drama influenced the mystery plays. Church music drama was predominately performed by men, and it was thought that medieval theatre developed from this model of performance.² Finally, Wickham hypothesises that women did not perform in the English mystery plays because their voices were not as powerful as those of men, and that they would not have been audible in the open streets which formed the performance arena for the dramas.

Wickham's observations highlight some of the important methodological issues which shape teaching and research practices within the field of medieval drama. The majority of standard textbooks are still influenced by approaches inherited from the 1903 writings of E.K Chambers. Chambers's thesis views medieval drama as part of an evolutionary development from

Latin Church drama towards Renaissance theatre (1967, 126). However, the validity of this viewpoint has been questioned; Chambers's views are based on a Darwinian notion of evolution and progression.³ His emphasis on the importance of the influence of Church drama on the mystery plays has been vigorously questioned.⁴ Davenport, inspired by the 1933 work of Geoffrey Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, suggests that the cycle texts "before. . . were created by educated literary men in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries out of a combination of existing traditions of drama and religious material in sermons, instruction-books, scriptural summaries and paraphrases, commentaries, and lyrics" (1982, 1).

Recent academic thought has begun to explore the influence of other festive, civic and religious practices upon the development of the cycles. It is generally accepted that the plays developed from the Feast of Corpus Christi, held annually to celebrate the Eucharist and the act of transubstantiation.⁵ This rethinking has allowed a variety of new perspectives to be articulated. For example, Martin Stevens argues that it is more likely that "the drama of the church existed side by side with the Corpus Christi cycles performed in the heart of the city" (1987, 42). Wickham's hypothesis that the non-performance by women on the medieval stage was determined by the precedent set by liturgical drama is, therefore, tenuous.

The second reason that Wickham cites for the non-performance by women is their exclusion from the producing institutions. He argues that the cycles were authorised by "bishops, canons, and city fathers" which he concludes was an "exclusively male hierarchy." The plays were produced by guilds that were only "open to men." In other words, Wickham interprets medieval theatre by reference to the dominant hierarchies of the time: masculine institutions. Yet recent work by feminist historians has sought to re-evaluate the identity of social institutions and practices and has questioned to what extent women were excluded from medieval institutions.⁶ The role of women within the controlling organizations of medieval England was not as limited as Wickham suggests.⁷

Wickham's final argument as to why women did not appear on the medieval stage concerns the inaudibility of their voices on the open-air stages. Wickham's point does not seem to be watertight. Evidence from Europe suggests that women did in fact perform speaking roles in outdoor performances. Lynette Muir's research into performance records from France reveals that the 1547 Passion play at Valenciennes included four girls, one of whom played the Virgin (1985, 107). Further records show that girls performed speaking roles at Mons, and that adult women acted at Romans, Valence, Grenoble and Metz.⁸ If French women's voices were strong enough to perform outside, there seems to be little truth in the argument that English

women were too weak to be heard. I have explored the possible reasons for non-performance by women elsewhere.⁹ I will not revisit those arguments here; however, it is worth noting that Wickham's opinion is flawed and that similar assumptions, often revealed in standard textbooks, need to be properly challenged.

Recent research has reopened the debate as to how far women participated in the mystery plays. The publication of *Records of Early English Drama* provides a welcome addition to an area of research that suffers from a paucity of concrete evidence. Somewhat surprisingly, the *Records* do provide examples of women's participation within the mystery plays.¹⁰ Although they have not unearthed fresh evidence of performance, there are plenty of examples of women undertaking backstage work, such as sewing banners, washing, and mending costumes, and providing refreshments.¹¹ However, it is not remarkable that Wickham has overlooked this aspect of women's participation. These are all activities that remain invisible and silent unless particular strategies are utilised to read against the grain of dominant patriarchal ideologies.

I have outlined above some of the problems that are encountered when one tries to develop a feminist approach to teaching the mystery plays. In order to make the activity of women audible it is important that we give women a voice in the classroom. In this essay I will consider some of the ways that feminist approaches to the mystery plays can be engendered within teaching, and, in turn, I will suggest how experiments within the classroom can help to identify further directions that feminist research into medieval drama might take.

Teaching the Mystery Plays

The teaching strategies that I describe below draw on my personal research into women and the mystery plays and were developed through teaching an undergraduate course for third year students at Greenwich University, London. The unit was a module for English Literature students and was open as an elective to any students majoring in a humanities subject. The single-unit course lasted one semester and had a two hour teaching period each week. Students were very unfamiliar with medieval literature: the groups I taught included those with drama experience (some of whom had studied Renaissance and Shakespeare courses), some theological students, and some historians with knowledge of pre-industrial England. Some of my further observations are based upon subsequently teaching medieval drama at the Drama Department, Royal Holloway College, University of London.

The objectives of the course were to enable students to understand the relationship of medieval drama to society, analyse a text for performance indicators, understand the issues that surround the staging of a pageant, and to undertake individual research on an aspect of medieval theatre. The students were assessed through a group presentation, including an extract from a play and an oral paper on an issue raised by their pageant; a research essay of 2000 words; and an exam which comprised a timed textual analysis of an extract of a pageant. The teaching schedule introduced the subject through lectures on the cycles, video extracts of Tony Harrison/Bill Bryden's 1985 version of *The Mysteries* at the National Theatre, London, and included workshops on medieval documentation (the 1433 York Mercers' records for the Doomsday pageant, and *A Tretise Of Miraclis Pleyinge* make for a fruitful study).¹² Course textbooks were A.C. Cawley's *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, and S.H. Rigby's social history of the period *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*.¹³ After the introductory sessions the course was divided into blocks which explored a variety of issues: the dramatic techniques of the plays, women's representation, and theological concerns.

During the course students presented extracts from several of the pageants within Cawley's edition. These included the York *Fall of Man*, the Coventry *Annunciation*, the York *Resurrection*, and the Towneley *Second Shepherd's Pageant*. In most cases women played the female characters, and in some instances, because of the preponderance of women students, women represented the male characters. This selection of pageants covered a reasonable range of women characters. It included the dichotomous presentations of Eve and the Virgin, Mak's unruly wife, Gyll, and the three Mariés that are present at the Resurrection.

In exploring the issue of women's representation within the mystery plays it was important to take into account some recent developments within scholarly research: evidence from REED, analysis of the pageants through performance, the influence of the Corpus Christi feast, and recent scholarly interdisciplinary approaches to the plays, in this case, the intersections made between social history, medieval literature, and feminist theology. But it was also important to examine how the classroom situation itself might be used to enable a feminist approach.

In *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*, Patti Lather outlines some issues raised within the classroom. Lather suggests that in embracing a feminist pedagogy one foregrounds "those discourses/practices seeking to challenge the legitimacy of the dominant order" (Lather 1991, xv). But, as Lather observes, it is pointless to promote such an approach without addressing the dynamics of the classroom itself. It would be somewhat contradictory to encourage an oppositional approach to

reading the mystery plays, while maintaining a position that the teacher is the keeper of knowledge, and therefore, power. As Lather acknowledges, it is important to establish a pedagogy that is interactive and not just transmissive (Lather 1991, 15).

Particular difficulties in applying this pedagogical approach to teaching medieval drama are evident. As I have already mentioned, students who take such a course at undergraduate level have little prior knowledge of medieval history or drama. Textbooks offer limited approaches and useful sources are very fragmentary. One can misguidedly believe that the most effective way to teach such students is to develop a predominantly lecture-based course. In asking students to engage with a feminist approach to the mystery plays, I was suggesting that they deconstruct usual authorities. This process meant challenging the opinions of textbooks such as Wickham's, rethinking the constructs of power and authority in medieval England, and unearthing the invisible voices of women. In order for this process to succeed, I obviously had to ensure that within the classroom students felt their own voices to be empowered. A series of strategies encouraged this position. The workshops on documentation allowed students to discover and interpret the performance records for themselves. In particular, the analysis of the 1433 York Mercers' records in small groups is very beneficial. I asked students first to decode the records and then visualise and draw their interpretations of the Mercers' pageant wagon. They then had to present this to the rest of the group. This exercise empowers students to raise and consider issues about the nature of performance of medieval drama. In particular, I found that students had to debate the issue of how the York pageant wagons were used to stage drama. The wagons were most probably drawn by their narrowest end through the small streets of York. However if this side was used as the front of the stage then it offered the audience very poor sight lines.¹⁴ Students were thus forced to question the practicalities of exactly how pageant wagons were used for performance.

There are other ways in which an interactive pedagogy can be established within the classroom. Selected key articles on feminist interpretations of the mystery plays, feminist theology and social history enabled students to gain insight into and possession of the subject. The group performances of the extracts from the pageants, and the seminar presentations that followed, literally placed the students at the front of the classroom. Finally, the use of small group discussion and pair work within teaching sessions meant that a multiplicity of voices could be heard, in particular those that were not confident enough to participate in whole group discussions.

Studying Representations of Medieval Women

In addition to the pedagogical matters cited above many methodological issues are raised when one attempts to study the representation of women within medieval drama. The primary research tool is the texts themselves. However, researchers and students must be careful not to treat these texts as reliable or as stable sites for the construction of meaning. The existing copies are in manuscript form and may not be a very accurate record of the actual text used in performance. Some scholars have suggested that the manuscripts could be so far from the performance text that research should only be conducted from a literary, rather than a dramatic perspective (Stevens 1987, 12). Although the plays were performed for over two hundred years, that is between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, the manuscripts date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. How far the performance texts changed during the time of their enactment is difficult to ascertain. The fact that some manuscripts reveal later amendments suggests that revisions were made to the texts, and that they are in fact unstable records. This obviously presents a methodological problem for the scholar of medieval drama. The texts that are studied are a register, or at most, a record of a performance that happened during one point in the extensive life of cycle drama.

Another problem that faces the medieval scholar is that there are few eyewitness accounts of medieval drama and none that pertain specifically to the mystery plays. It is extremely difficult to reconstruct the plays with any degree of accuracy as to their acting and production style or the effect they held on the audience. Sheila Lindenbaum has demonstrated the unreliability in interpreting medieval records of performance. She examines the 1521 London Midsummer Watch through two different sources. First, an eyewitness account made by the visiting Ambassador of Venice suggests that the event played a part in "unifying" the community. However, evidence from some of the participants suggests another purpose to the event. The Drapers' records show that the spectacle was to honour the Mayor and the Sheriffs, in other words, "a celebration of Oligarchy" (1994, 179). It is difficult to interpret records and to pinpoint specific functions or meanings that the dramas may have held for their society.

Other methodological issues pertain specifically to the representation of women. Men controlled the literary presentation of women; the portrayal of womanhood was frequently manipulated so that it suited the purposes of the male authors. Nowhere is this clearer than within medieval conduct literature. For example, Geoffrey Tours de Landry's manual for his daughter or the clerical treatises "What the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter" and "The Thewis of a Gud Woman," overtly display their authors' concerns with shaping women's behaviour. The behavior that these manuals advocate is shaped

by male expectation and should not be relied upon as an indication of how women actually behaved. It is important that when the representation of women is studied within medieval literature, including the mystery plays, the correlation between their portrayal and reality is not assumed. As Gold has remarked, "the relationship between image, attitude, and experience is not always direct or casual" (1985, xvii).

Feminist Research

One of the most valuable resources for teaching feminist responses to the mystery plays is Theresa Coletti's 1990 essay, "A Feminist Approach to The Corpus Christi Cycles" published in Richard Emmerson's very helpful volume *Approaches to Teaching Medieval English Drama*. Coletti's work (1990, 1993, 1995) is one of a handful of readings that foreground the issue of gender in the mystery plays. Other studies include those by Clifford Davidson (1984), Kathleen Ashley (1987) and Ruth Evans (1992, 1994, 1997). All the approaches taken by these scholars assert that the mystery plays must have had some relevance for women members of the audience.¹⁵ For example, Coletti points out that:

A drama that commandeered the attention and the resources of many medieval people for a long period of time and that was deeply embedded in the culture's prevailing modes of social organisation, in its dominant myths, and in its ceremonial and festive life, must surely bear important relations to medieval thinking about gender (Coletti 1990, 79).

Coletti's argument convincingly suggests that there is an inherent relationship between society and the drama that it produces. This led me to begin the course on the mystery plays with a thorough exploration of medieval social history, and in particular to focus upon women's history. In order to understand the representation of women within the plays, it would seem imperative that women's position within the public and private spheres of medieval society be investigated. Fortunately, the medieval feminist teacher is aided by the recent publication of a number of source books which contain very useful extracts. Among these are Amt (1993), Blamires (1992), and Larrington (1995). I found that undergraduates were able to access these texts easily. Although the difficulties which surround the context of this material, the relationship between stage representation and reality, and students' willingness to treat evidence as stable mean these source books can be misused.

Theresa Coletti notes a number of problems that are encountered when attempting to read the representation of women within the plays. She suggests that the cycles themselves pose a problem: although women play an extremely important role in the salvation history the cycles present, the plays

have customarily proved resistant to oppositional reading focusing on gender and political interpretations of various sorts (1993, 68).

One of the central issues which restricts women characters is that God is placed in absolute authority, and, thus, a strong hierarchical model is at work within the cycles.¹⁶ The texts cannot easily escape the influence of such a strong male presence, particularly since they are built upon biblical traditions that are misogynistic in their portrayal of women. As Coletti observes, other than the figures of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, women play a relatively minor role within the biblical narrative (1993, 79).

Interpreting the representation of women within a hierarchical text such as the cycle dramas is difficult. As Sue-Ellen Case notes, two major approaches to the study of women's roles in theatre have traditionally been followed—either a “positive roles” focus, which assesses women for their independence, or a “misogynistic roles” study, which notes that women were assigned certain roles by men, for example witch, vamp, bitch, virgin/goddess (1988, 6-7). The dichotomous roles of the Virgin and Eve within the mystery plays lend themselves to such a response.¹⁷ Unfortunately these readings encourage a limited interpretation of women: they are, in effect either heroines or victims. This is an easy trap for feminist readings of the mystery plays. Indeed, Coletti's earlier work notes the negative and marginal portrayal of women within the plays, and emphasises the misogyny of the texts: The women who people the Corpus Christi cycles' texts and stages are helpmates and servants; they attest to events more often than they participate in them; they are, in many instances, marginal to the central action (1990, 80).¹⁸

Other critical studies have taken the converse path, and have sought to emphasise the positive role that women characters play. Davidson finds that the dramatization of the Virgin Mary foregrounds experiences which are “uniquely feminine” (1984, 109). He, therefore, recognizes a source of power in such a representation of womanhood.

Many recent feminist studies of the cycle drama have overcome the problem of reading women's roles through the positive/misogynistic dichotomy by examining the position of the cycles within the wider context of medieval society. Coletti's later work contextualizes the portrayal of Virgin Mary within the cycles by reading her alongside the public powers afforded medieval women. She deduces that “In the N-Town Trial plays, Mary's paradoxical body is deployed in order to upset institutions that order society” (1993, 82).¹⁹ Similarly, Evans's reading of Mrs Noah as a challenge to received sex-gender systems is accomplished through attention to the socio-economic status of medieval workers and in examining *Uxor* as subject rather than object (Evans 1992, 151, 153).²⁰ Likewise, Evans's reading of the gender encoding of bodies within the cycles transcends the limitations of binary

oppositions by exploring Caroline Walker Bynum's ideas on the "permeable boundaries" of gender (1991, 118), and the double-gendered body of Christ as a Foucauldian site for the demonstration of control (123).²¹

The work of Kathleen Ashley analyses the function of the dramas by drawing upon social and literary intersections. In "Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct," she argues that the cycle dramas communicated multiple and contradictory messages to their audience, and that one of their functions was to serve as a type of conduct book for female audience members. Ashley analyses the Towneley *Salutation of Elizabeth* and sees "the greeting, gossip, and leave-takings" between Mary and Elizabeth, as exemplifying model conduct (1987, 29). Likewise, J.A. Tasioulas assesses the significance of the Virgin to medieval womanhood. She argues that within the N-Town plays Mary is shown as "a model for all people . . . her life is a complicated blend of theology and domesticity which would have brought together the different elements of the female community for the great communal festival of the drama" (1997, 240).

Feminist critical readings of the plays suggest that a multiplicity of reactions towards the portrayal of women within the plays are (and were) possible. The limitations of Wickham's approach, which is shared by the majority of undergraduate textbooks, becomes evident when a study of the cycle play women is foregrounded. The differing feminist critical perspectives that are emerging show that Wickham, and many general undergraduate course books, are too limited in their assumptions. Coletti's article (1990) provides a useful starting point from which to analyse ways of demystifying the mystery plays within the classroom.

Teaching a Feminist Response

Coletti points to a number of teaching strategies that can be used to examine the cycles from a feminist perspective. In order to breakdown the positive/negative approach to the study of women, she suggests that classroom activity should begin by focusing upon the presentation of unruly women within cycles. These are the women who traverse the boundaries that are set for them by the patriarchal and hierarchical powers of the play-world. Within Cawley's selection of pageants there are four sets of unruly women in evidence. These include Mrs Noah and Mak's wife Gyll, who both do battle and plot against male authority. Other unruly women are to be found in the N-Town *A Woman Taken in Adultery* and the Mothers of the Innocents in the Towneley *Herod the Great*. The presence of so many unruly women within the plays makes for a fruitful feminist study, for these are the women who retaliate and who challenge the traditional roles assigned to women; the "women on top" as Natalie Zemon Davies would call them.

The students were introduced to the notion of rebellious women through other forms of medieval literature, in particular the Wife of Bath's prologue in which she describes her position as a woman on top: "I had them eating from my hand" and "I governed them so well and held the rein" (Chaucer 1952, 288).²² Within classes students presented extracts from a selection of pageants and investigated the possibility of the functions of the unruly women. Disappointingly the playing of Gyll in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Pageant* did not succeed in locating her beyond a comic topos. It might have been more beneficial to see a cross-dressed male actor attempt to play her, rather than a female student. However, it was notable that the desire to entertain the audience and to play the humour of the stereotypical character dominated the performance. The potential to utilise Gyll's unruliness as a form of revolt was not realised.

Some of the other presentations managed to explore the portrayal of the unruly women with more success. The presentation of Mrs Noah's character, like that of Gyll's, is susceptible to being read as repeating Eve's sin. For example, Rosemary Woolf sees in Gyll's derisive plotting in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Pageant* that she "to some extent casts herself as the second Eve" (1972, 191). Richard Beadle's interpretation of Mrs Noah extends the dichotomous reading of women: "Noah's recalcitrant wife on the one hand repeated the disobedience of Eve, but on the other was looked on as a type of virgin in her eventual submission to God's will" (1983, 51). Students highlighted these critical opinions in the short seminar presentations that accompanied the performances. In class performances of the figures of Mrs Noah and the Mothers of the Innocents were able to surpass this limitation of interpretation through evoking sympathy within the audience. For example, Mrs Noah in the Chester *Noah's Flood* pageant is presented with the dilemma of leaving her friends to drown while she boards the ark:

But I have my gossips every one,
One foot further I will not gone;
They shall not drown, by St. John,
And I may save their life. (Cawley 1990, 44. 1.201-04)

During this moment the actor playing Mrs Noah directly addressed the audience and seemed to gain their sympathy. Here her characterization surpassed a stereotypical presentation and instead her power as an independent woman was emphasized.

Similarly, the presentation of the Mothers of the Innocents received a sympathetic response from the audience. In Cawley's selection, the massacre of the Innocents takes place within the Towneley pageant of *Herod the Great*. The women retaliate against the soldiers who murder their infants, and are unrestrained in their vengeance. The second woman threatens a soldier: "thy

scalp shall I cleave!" (Cawley 1990, 123.1.353). But the heartfelt grief that the women express overrides their depiction as unruly women. Within the classroom presentation, the audience was noticeably moved as the women revealed their suffering:

Out! Murder-man, I say, strong traitor and thief!
 Out, alas, and welaway! My child that was me lief!
 My love, my blood, my play, that never did man grief!
 Alas, alas, this day! I would my heart should cleave
 Asunder! (Cawley 1990, 123.1.361-65)

It is interesting that the classroom enactment of these scenes demonstrated ways in which the unruly women are able to act as something beyond stereotypes of shrewish behavior and become identifiable models of female compassion and suffering. Most importantly, the student performances emphasised that the women characters do not conform to the behavior that is expected of them: they rebel and protest.

The presentation of these characters within the classroom can be supported by the study of different critical material. It is worth noting that recent feminist criticism has seen a variety of functions attached to these unruly women. Zemon Davies argues that the device of presenting such women on stage was used not only to keep women down, but that it "also helped change them into something different" (1978, 183). In other words, these rebellious women offer a glimpse of alternative modes of behaviour in which women might engage. Ruth Evans takes this reading further and suggests that in the case of the Towneley Mrs Noah we witness an "emergent individual" who, as a worker and spinner, might form part of the "specific economic threat to the received sex-gender system" (1992, 154). Meanwhile, in her study of the Mothers of the Innocents, Coletti sees that: "the plays transform biblical story into dramatic representations of the shifting balance of power among the generations and the sexes, depicting the pursuit of status in male ruling communities in terms of conflict with an anxiety about women" (1995, 247).

It is possible to take the issue of the depiction of unruly women further than Coletti suggests in her teaching approaches. I discovered that by testing out the playing of these characters within the classroom, and through supporting these ideas with reference to recent feminist scholarly writing (we looked at Coletti 1990 and Simeonova 1993), the women are revealed to be something more than a comic diversion. However, this is an area that requires continued exploration.

Coletti advocates that the figure of the Virgin Mary should also be studied. She advises that much rewarding debate can be had within the classroom by examining responses to the image of the Virgin, and this has been my experience.

rience (1990, 86). Students were able to identify the complexity of her iconography: she is at once a passive representation of an ideal woman and also a strong, independent projection of womanhood. She was felt by many students to be remote and inaccessible; this was a complicated background against which to examine her portrayal within the plays, as it marked the difference between medieval and contemporary audiences/readers.

The work of contemporary feminist theologians, such as Rosemary Radford Reuther, has raised issues about the way Mary is viewed. As Reuther points out, Mary's image "reintegrates humanity as androgynous personhood and redeemed body" (1975, 36). Reuther's writing was used as a starting point through which to re-evaluate our responses to Mary. Many of Reuther's observations support the views that Coletti offers within "A Feminist Approach to the Cycles." For example, Coletti draws attention to the Coventry Weavers' pageant *Presentation and Disputation in the Temple*, where Joseph refuses to procure the turtle doves that Gabriel has requested be presented at the Temple (1990, 83-84). This moment of domestic squabbling highlights the way in which Mary's portrayal "reintegrates humanity."

We discovered that studying the pageants that incorporate Mary builds a more complex image of her position and function. For example, the Coventry *Annunciation* seems to stress the relationship between Joseph and Mary rather than focus upon the religious miracle. Of course in choosing to emphasize this aspect the dramatist provided his medieval actors with a simpler task of representation; it is easier to depict the relationship between Joseph and Mary than it is to show an immaculate conception. In presenting an extract from this pageant, students identified the way in which the use of personal pronouns and the continuous switching of subject within the scene set up a dialectic between Joseph's concern with the views of the outside world (the suspicion that he has been cuckolded) and his devotion to Mary within their domestic sphere:

But, in faith, Mary, thou art in sin,
So much as I have cherished thee, dame, and all thy kin,
Behind my back to serve me thus.

All Old men, example take by me—
How I am beguiled here you may see—
To wed so young a child.
Now farewell, Mary, I leave thee here alone— (Cawley 1990, 75. l.130-36)

These incidents can be used to discuss the function of such scenes: it is a reminder that the cycle plays are not only the vehicle of the church. The dramatist has spent much time depicting the relationship between Joseph and Mary and this is important. The citizens who comprise the guilds are shown

to be instrumental in controlling the means of reproduction that dictated the cycles; here the plays reflect their domestic and social concerns. As Gail McMurray Gibson points out, “public literary texts like vernacular religious drama were not only shaped by local facts and expectations, but served an active function in shaping them as well” (1989, 40). The dramatist, in depicting the annunciation, has decided to focus upon the tensions that surround a marriage between an older man and younger woman. This is just one moment when the dichotomy of virgin/whore is swiftly displaced, and a more complex dialogue is set up for the spectator.²³

Recent scholarly research has focused upon further issues that surround the representation of the Virgin. Coletti draws attention to how the cycles represent the problem of Mary’s body. Coletti suggests that the plays “make dramatic capital out of the contradictions and the paradoxes that result from the idea of a virginal maternity and a perfect woman who is also fully human” (1990, 87). Other useful critical work on the representation of Mary’s body has been undertaken. Ruth Evans has studied the *Death, Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin* pageants from the York cycle. In particular, she analyses the encounter between Mary and Fergus’s bodies and suggests that recorded audience laughter at this moment indicates “a lack of ontological certainty about the body” (1997, 212). Evans proposes that Mary’s body served as a site whereby medieval spectacle could be used to explore uncertainties about the female body.

Staging the Texts

Wickham hypothesises that women did not generally perform in the mystery plays. I discovered that in asking students to present chosen extracts from the pageants a number of questions about female performance were raised. Students prepared their extracts through casting, rehearsing, making decisions about staging and gathering properties and costumes. They researched the background of the guilds that supported the original pageant and studied Cawley’s introductory notes that often detail extracts from production records included in REED.

In staging extracts from the pageants the organization of rehearsals caused students the greatest problems. Many of them had little time outside of class due to work or family commitments. The course contained a number of women who were mature students and many had child-care responsibilities; they found additional rehearsals difficult to attend. This is surely a problem akin to medieval times. How could women attend even a minimum number of rehearsals for the pageants?

However, those women who had difficulty in attending rehearsals were able to contribute significantly to the staging of the pieces through other

means. Often they were responsible for gathering costumes, drapes, and pieces of scenery. Their experience as homemakers meant that they were more skilled in these areas, and had greater resources to draw upon than their twenty-year-old peers.

What this process highlighted was the lack of attention that has been given to backstage duties that women undertook during medieval times. Wickham, like the majority of scholars, only analyses women's involvement through the visible avenue of performance. The backstage, invisible work is often neglected (women's medieval history suffers from the same problem). However, careful study of the REED entries shows women participating in a range of activities which supported the pageants. In 1568 the Chester Smiths, Cutlers & Plumbers' Records show that four pence was paid to "griff Yeuan's wife to pay for wessing the Curtens" (Clopper 1979, 85). The York City Chamberlains' Rolls of 1478 show that a seamstress, Margaret, was paid for mending the Corpus Christi banner (Johnston and Rogerson 1979, 2.782). Sometimes women's involvement with the production of the pageants went beyond backstage activity. Evidence from York shows women hiring the stations where pageants were performed: "And of 14s 8d received from the wife of John Tollerer for the third station."²⁴ Women were patrons to these events, hiring prestigious seating for their acquaintances. These entries suggest that women were more fully involved in the mechanisms of production than is commonly discussed. If women were making costumes and properties and were influential audience members, then their presence must have silently shaped the production of the mystery plays.

The picture of women's involvement in the mystery cycles starts to look somewhat different from that painted by standard textbooks. At the beginning of this paper I questioned Wickham's supposition that women played no part within the organization and producing forces that controlled the productions. In fact, this is not the case. Rigby points to evidence from the ordinances from Norwich and Exeter guilds that list their membership as "brothers and sisters." As he notes, it is likely that the "sisters" would be guild wives or widows.²⁵ Their influence was, however, limited: "Women might be members of craft guilds but they could not serve as wardens or officers of the guild" (1995, 277).

Women added to guild life in a variety of ways, including contributing to the "pageant silver" that was used to finance the production of the cycles. Pageant silver was collected via fines that were imposed for trading against the rules of the guild. At York the 1420 A/Y Memorandum Book (f.80) reveals that women were active traders:

it was confined and ordered on the 5th day of February in the year of our Lord 1419 that no person of the aforesaid craft, man or woman, shall here-

after within the aforesaid city open his shops to place or show for sale anything proper to his craft on any Sunday. . . . Any man or woman who henceforth shall have put up, or set up or joined a shop in the craft of ironmongery within the liberty of the city, must pay his 13s 4d, that is, one half to the chamber and the other half to the aforesaid craft in support of the pag-eant. (Johnston and Rogerson 1979, 1.720)

Studying these issues raises questions about women's involvement in the production of the cycles. If the reasons that Wickham cites for women's exclusion from performance are not valid, then we must explore some other factors as to why they did not appear on stage. It would seem that a mixture of factors, such as women's lowly position within the guilds, their responsibility to the home (and child-rearing), and as Sue-Ellen Case points out, male fear of the public display of women's bodies (1988, 20), contributed to women's non-performance. In undertaking classroom activity it is essential that students be asked to address this avenue. Students must be encouraged to explore women's silent participation within the production of the cycles so that their involvement can be made audible. In doing this, as was the case within my classes, students can begin to question some of the suppositions that are in evidence in standard textbooks on medieval drama.

Another avenue that was explored within the classroom was the figure of Mary Magdalene. Although Coletti hints that it may be a fertile area of study (1990, 89), she offers little analysis within her article. A performance of the York *Resurrection* raised issues regarding Magdalene's representation. The presentation focused upon Christ's Resurrection before Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Mary Salome. I had anticipated that the presentation would depict the women as a chorus who unite as one body to demonstrate their grief. However, the students insisted that each woman had a different set of motivations and reactions to their grief and that they should be shown as individual types, not as a chorus.²⁶ This served as a useful reminder that while characters within medieval drama are not naturalistic they still demonstrate "individual quirks of character" (Twycross 1994, 44).

The figure of Mary Magdalene forms a fruitful area of study. The student presentations were supported by reading the feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Reuther who suggests that:

The Mary who represents the Church, the liberated humanity, may, rather, be the repressed and defamed Mary of the Christian tradition, Mary Magdalene, friend and disciple of Jesus, the first witness of the resurrection, the revealer of the Christian Good News. (Reuther 1975, 59)

Reuther identifies the way in which Magdalene serves as a role model with a variety of functions. Within the class, students debated the ways in which Magdalene can be perceived; they displayed a great deal of sympathy

for her situation. Moreover they were convinced by Reuther's argument that she is a more important and inspirational figure than the Virgin.

The Corpus Christi cycles use the tripartite image of Magdalene (through linking her with Mary of Bethany, Luke's sinner, and witness of the Resurrection) to create an interesting paradox. Her ambiguous past, with its connotation of harlotry and her conversion to disciple of Christ, can be used to embody the sinner-saint narrative, and to raise issues about female socialisation and power (Dixon 1995, 221-44). The display of her frail, sexual body and her piety and repentance form a complex dialogue with the audience. She is a figure that challenges the limitations of the Virgin's representation. Because of her fallen position she is a more accessible figure than the Virgin. Importantly, as the first key witness of the Resurrection, Magdalene offers a powerful representation of womanhood. Her dramatization within the cycles highlights the issue of women's public voice. Within the cycles Magdalene is controversially afforded the right of public speech, something which few medieval women achieve.²⁷

The figure of Magdalene needs to be examined in the classroom. We looked at Reuther's writings and examined the York *Resurrection*, but this area needed further exploration. The subsequent co-teaching of a course on medieval drama at Royal Holloway College, University of London allowed for this. The study of Magdalene can usefully be supplemented by examining the Digby *Mary Magdalene Saint's Play*.²⁸ However, future feminist research could usefully explore the dramatic representation of Magdalene. She offers an alternative discourse to that of the Virgin, but as yet insufficient scholarly exploration has been undertaken in this area.

The final issue that was raised during the course was that of cross-dressing. Women were in the majority in the classroom, and it was easy to allocate women's roles while overlooking the fact that these parts were originally played by men. We did not have sufficient time or personnel to conduct experiments into the effects of cross-gender playing. But students can be usefully directed to study the observations that were made at the 1983 *Medieval English Theatre* conference held at Salford, England. In this experiment selected pageants were played first by women and then by cross-dressed men. Most of the participants found that men portrayed holy women more effectively than women were able to do, since the issue of sexual status seemed less apparent. However, they found that the portrayal of comic women resorted to stereotypical behavior which offered none of the ambiguities of interpretation which we discovered within our classroom portrayals of Mrs Noah or the Mothers of the Innocents.²⁹ Within the course, a cross-dressed male student played one of the Mothers of Innocents and interestingly, the issue of gender seemed to make little difference to the effect of the piece. Such was

the strength of the dramatic situation and the emotional tone, that gender seemed irrelevant. Students viewing the extract commented that after a few minutes they were unaware of the cross-dressing, and that their attention was absorbed by the dramatic situation.

This area of cross-dressing on the medieval stage (unlike the Renaissance) has hitherto received little critical attention and is obviously an avenue that would offer great potential for further scholarly investigation. The work being undertaken by Claire Sponsler is invaluable. In an article written with Robert Clark, she suggests that cross-dressing on the medieval stage offered a genuine opportunity to explore and negotiate the construct of gender: "the use of cross-dressing . . . results in queer moments which cannot be entirely undone by the ultimate return of culturally sanctioned sexual and status arrangements" (Clark and Sponsler 1997, 320). Watching a man play a woman forces the spectator to witness a complex portrayal of gender. This device can be used to highlight differences between the two genders, and it can make for a useful study both within the classroom and in future scholarly investigations.

Conclusion

In order to adopt a feminist approach to the mystery plays within the classroom there are a number of obstacles that must be overcome. I have cited the highly influential work of Theresa Coletti, who points out that the cycles do not easily lend themselves to such an interpretation. Her reasoning is that the material is often misogynistic and women characters are too easily open to interpretation through the Virgin/whore dichotomy. Coletti points students to a more rewarding ground of study: the unruly festive women and the alternative representation of the Virgin, which focuses upon her domestic and interpersonal relationships to build a more complex figure than we might suspect.

Other problems are encountered when engaging with a feminist study. The dominant critical discourse, found in standard textbooks, fails to interrogate women's activity within the production of the plays. I have suggested that through drawing on social history, the REED project and through practical enactment of the pageants, students can begin to realise a more probable vision of women's involvement.

However, I felt there were difficulties that were not completely overcome within the course. The research essays that the students undertook were diverse and often original (for example, one student researched the origins of the mystery plays performed at her local church). However, the essays tended to draw upon a limited range of sources, mainly those that had been

identified within the class. It was clearly difficult for students to confidently master an area that was so unfamiliar.

There were also aspects of the practical presentations that needed further attention. I have highlighted how issues surrounding the unruly, comic women were explored but these were far from conclusive. More substantial work was needed to get to the root of these representations. It is important that cross-dressing be investigated, and our class experiments fell far short of being able to tackle this matter. The matter was hindered by a lack of support from appropriate scholarly writing—it is an area that needs further critical attention.

Women's representation within the mystery plays needs to be read against some of the intersections which social history, literature, and feminist theology create. Of paramount consequence is the placing of the mystery plays in the context of their more likely theatre ancestry. This means that we need to divorce the plays from the ideas of E.K. Chambers that were formed nearly a century ago. Medieval drama is not necessarily part of an evolutionary progression from Latinate liturgical drama to the Renaissance stage. Instead, the significance of the feast of the Corpus Christi needs to be understood. In this light the mystery plays are no longer viewed simply as mouth-pieces of the Church and city fathers, but clearly resonate with the concerns of the individual citizens of the producing towns. We must then look at the importance of women in these towns: "that women were crucial to the fortunes of the household-based industries of English Medieval towns is suggested by the fact that most master craftsmen did not set up their own businesses until they were married" (Rigby 1995, 275).

If students are encouraged to investigate women's participation and representation within the mystery plays, then it is possible that women will become audible in an open-air auditorium.

Notes

¹ There are only two references to women within the index of *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*. Meg Twycross draws attention to the way in which male impersonators may have had a similar effect to that of Japanese Kabuki actors (1994, 43), and John Marshall discusses Twycross's use of cross-dressed male actors in modern restagings (1994, 309-10).

² There are records of female performance within Church drama in Britain. A Benedictine manuscript dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries shows women at Barking playing the three Marys in the *Visitatio* (cited in Woolf 1972, 19). There is other evidence that points to female performance within convents. Lady Katherine of Sutton, the Abbess of Barking from 1363 to 1376, arranged dramatic episodes for Holy Week, and Easter performances by sisters at her convent (Young 1933, 165). Female performance in convent drama in Europe was not uncommon as

the work of Hildegard of Bingen and Hrotswitha shows, although there is debate as to whether these convent dramas were performed (see Dronke 1984, 63).

³ See, for example, the work of Martin Stevens (1971, 448-64).

⁴ John Wasson has examined records of professional acting payments which reveal that Church drama existed alongside the performances of the cycle dramas (1994, 7). It is not possible that drama simply left the church and took to the streets, as Chambers suggests.

⁵ Miri Rubin places the feast's origins in the 1208 vision of a woman prioress, Juliana of Mont Cornillon (1991, 170).

⁶ See Kowaleski and Bennett (1989).

⁷ Although the cycles are, on first glance, the product of male institutions it is worth noting that these were not stable, fixed organizations, but "the sites of many competing discourses of piety and politics, subject to change over times, locations of conflict even within small communities" (Bartlett 1995, 27). The control that men held over the representations of women was therefore less stable than might be assumed. As Bartlett points out, "this process shapes female subjectivity in complex, sometimes self-contradictory ways and provides appealing alternatives to the traditional, and often misogynistic, identities constructed for women . . ." (28). The transmission and reception of the cycles was through a heteroglossic matrix, which included the female citizen—the pageants were not, and could not, be under the sole control of patriarchal forces.

⁸ See Muir, (1985, 107-190) and Clifford Davidson, (1984, 99-113).

⁹ See Chapter 3 of my PhD thesis, "Holy Women/Vulgar Women: Women and the Corpus Christi Cycles."

¹⁰ The documentation of women's performance within the Corpus Christi cycles is rare. The best known of the evidence is that of the Chester wives, whose participation was first recorded in 1499: "the wyfus of the town assumpcion beate Marie" (Clopper 1979, 22). The Chester Banns of 1539-40 elaborate on this entry:

The wurshipfful wyffs of this towne
ffynd of our lady thassumpcion
It to bryng forth thy bebowne
And mytere with all thyre might. (Clopper 1979, 31)

Both of these entries are ambiguous. Rather than being evidence of performance, these records could demonstrate that women were producers or sponsors of the drama. The evidence points to the wives bringing forth the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*, but does not show that they performed the pageant.

¹¹ See the examples cited later in this paper.

¹² Both these documents can be found in Peter Happé, (1993, 27 and 29-30 respectively).

¹³ These texts were chosen because Cawley's edition selects across a range of cycles and is within the range of a student budget. (For a further debate on the implications of choosing anthologies or single cycles see Emmerson 1990, 3-12). Rigby's book is more expensive, but offers a comprehensive social history of the late medieval times which focuses upon issues of class, status and gender.

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of the staging possibilities of the York pageant wagons see Beadle (1994, 98–99).

¹⁵ See also the observations made by the following: Ashley (1987, 26), Davidson (1984, 100), and Evans (1992, 116).

¹⁶ Interestingly in the N-Town plays where the emphasis lies on the Virgin rather than God, there are fewer misogynistic remarks.

¹⁷ It is important that these images of women are fully explored. Though the treatment of Eve within the cycles is somewhat scant, it is worth tackling some misconceptions. For example, the York *Creation of Adam and Eve* stresses their equality. Eve is made as a fere for Adam, and they will dwell together in paradise. In presenting this pageant students were particularly concerned with representing two issues: the fact that at Norwich the pageant was brought forth by the Grocers, and the embarrassment of Eve at discovering her mistake. For the extract, Adam and Eve were dressed in black jeans and T-shirts. Eve was tempted by a sumptuous bowl of fruit that Satan held. As she bit into the apple, Satan simultaneously slithered a shawl over her shoulders to signify the shame both of her nakedness and her misjudgement. Interestingly, within the York version of the Fall it is notable that while Eve is quick to admit her guilt and repent, Adam is eager for Eve to take the sole blame; the student presentation highlighted this fact. While it is interesting to re-examine the representation of Eve in this manner, these are minor points and do not comprise a convincing feminist reinterpretation of the cycles.

¹⁸ The representation of women within the plays as “helpmate or servant” is probably realistic: the majority of their work within the late medieval period was in the areas of domestic service, petty retail, prostitution, midwifery and parts of the wool and cloth trade (Bennett 1989, 12).

¹⁹ Elizabeth Witt in *Contrary Marys* disputes Coletti’s reading. She believes that Coletti’s ideas do not reflect a clear enough understanding of the significance of Mary in a Catholic country. Witt believes that “the divine as opposed to the human nature” of the Virgin is emphasised in the mystery cycles (1995, 51).

²⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum suggests a similar approach to the examination of the representations of medieval women which overcomes their marginality: “If one looks *with* women rather than *at* women, women’s lives are not liminal *to* women (1991, 47–8). Indeed, Richard Hillman takes this approach in his examination of Mary’s lament in the Chester cycle. He sees the shift between transitive and intransitive modes, and between self and object as enabling Mary to surpass “the self-image reflected by her crucified son” (1997, 243).

²¹ See Bynum (1991) for a full discussion on the double-gendered body of Christ.

²² Coghill’s translation is very accessible to students who may have no prior experience of medieval literature.

²³ Cindy Carlson argues that in the N-Town *Trial of Mary and Joseph* Mary is positioned alongside the experience of women in the late Middle Ages: “In the medieval play, Mary’s submission and silence have the potential to call into question

the public institution of the church and its legal systems, both run by men . . ." (1995, 358).

²⁴ York City Chamberlain's Rolls, 1475 (mb 2). Later records show the Lady Mayoress leased a station at York for free, and in 1522 two of the twelve stations were leased to women.

²⁵ Kowaleski and Bennett estimate that widows composed between two and five per cent of guild membership (1989, 15).

²⁶ For a fuller discussion of this moment see Normington (1996).

²⁷ The 1391 trial of the Lollard, Walter Brut reraised the issue of whether women should publicly instruct men (Blamires 1992, 250).

²⁸ Mimi Dixon Still provides an interesting reference for feminist approaches to medieval drama (1995).

²⁹ For a full response to the Salford experiment see Peter Happé and Others (1983, 110-22), and Meg Twycross (1983, 123-80).

Works Cited

- Amt, Emilie, ed. 1993. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Ashley, Kathleen. 1987. "Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct." In *The Ideology of Culture*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. New York: Methuen.
- Bartlett, Anne Clark. 1995. *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Beadle, Richard. 1983. "The Shipwrights' Craft." In *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. Paula Neuss. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer and Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble.
- _____. 1994. "The York Cycle." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennett, Judith, et al, ed. 1989. *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blamires, Alan, ed. 1992. *Women Defamed and Women Defended*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. 1991. *Fragmentation and Redemption*. New York: Zone Books.
- Carlson, Cindy. 1995. "Mary's Obedience and Power in the Trial of Joseph and Mary." *Comparative Drama* 29.3: 348-62.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. 1988. *Feminism and Theatre*. London: Macmillan.
- Cawley, A.C., ed. 1990. *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*. London: Everyman's Library, 1956. Reprint. London: J.M. Dent & Sons.
- Chambers, E.K. 1967. *The Mediaeval Stage*. Vol 2. 1903. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. 1952. *The Canterbury Tales*. Trans. Neville Coghill. London: Penguin.

- Clark, Robert, L.A., and Claire Sponsler. 1997. "Queer Play: The Cultural Work of Cross-dressing in Medieval Drama." *New Literary History* 28: 319-44.
- Clopper, L.M., ed. 1979. *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Coletti, Theresa. 1990. "A Feminist Approach to the Corpus Christi Plays." In *Approaches to Teaching Medieval English Drama*, ed. Richard Emmerson. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- _____. 1993. "Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles." In *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- _____. 1995. "'Ther be but Women': Gender Conflict and Gender Identity in the Middle English Innocents Plays." *Mediaevalia* 18: 245-61.
- Davenport, W.A. 1982. *Fifteenth Century English Drama*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer and New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Davidson, Clifford. 1984. "Women and the Medieval Stage." *Women's Studies* 11: 99-113.
- Davies, Natalie Zemon. 1978. "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe." In *The Reversible World*, ed. Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dixon, Mimi Still. 1995. "'Thys Body of Mary': 'Femynte' and 'Inward Mythe' in the Digby Mary Magdalene." *Mediaevalia* 18: 221-44.
- Dronke, Peter, ed. 1984. *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emmerson, Richard K., ed. 1990. *Approaches to Teaching Medieval English Drama*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Evans, Ruth. 1992. "Feminist Re-Enactments: Gender and the Towneley *Vxor Noe*." In *A Wyf Ther Was*, ed. Juliette Dor. Liège: Université of Liège, Département d'anglais.
- _____. 1994. "Body Politics: Engendering Medieval Cycle Drama." In *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson. New York: Routledge.
- _____. 1997. "When a Body Meets a Body: Fergus and Mary in the York Cycle." In *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lanton. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Galloway, David, ed. 1984. *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gibson, Gail McMurray. 1989. *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Latter Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gold, Penny Schine. 1985. *The Lady and the Virgin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Happé, Peter, ed. 1993. *English Medieval Drama*. 1984. Reprint. London: Macmillan.
- _____, et al. 1983. "Thoughts on 'Transvestism' by Divers Hands." *Medieval English Theatre* 5: 110-22.
- Harrison, Tony. 1985. *The Mysteries*. London: Faber.

- Hillman, Richard. 1997. *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama*. London: Macmillan.
- Johnston, Alexandra F., and Margaret Rogerson, eds. 1979. *Records of Early English Drama: York*. 2 Vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kowaleski, Maryanne, and Judith Bennett. 1989. "Crafts, Gilds and Women in the Middle Ages." In *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith Bennett. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Larrington, Carolyne, ed. 1995. *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe*. New York: Routledge.
- Lather, Patti. 1991. *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
- Lindenbaum, Sheila. 1994. "Ceremony and Oligarchy: The London Midsummer Watch." In *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Rogerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marshall, John. 1994. "Modern Productions of Medieval English Plays." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Muir, Lynette. 1985. "Women on the Medieval Stage: The Evidence from France." *Medieval English Theatre* 7.2: 107-19.
- Normington, Catherine. 1996. "Are the Mysteries Such a Mystery?" *Studies in Theatre Production* 13: 54-61.
- _____. 1999. *Holy Women/Vulgar Women: Women and the Corpus Christi Plays*. Ph.D. diss., University of Exeter.
- Reuther, Rosemary Radford. 1975. *New Woman, New Earth*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Rigby, S.H. 1995. *English Society in the Late Middle Ages*. London: Macmillan.
- Rubin, Miri. 1991. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simeonova, Kristina. 1993. "The Aesthetic Function of the Carnivalesque in Medieval English Drama." In *Bakhtin: Carnival and Other Subjects*, ed. David Shepherd. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V.
- Stevens, Martin. 1971. "Illusion and Reality in the Medieval Drama." *College English* 32: 448-64.
- _____. 1987. *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tasioulas, J.A. 1997. "Between Doctrine and Domesticity: The Portrayal of Mary in the N-Town Plays." In *Women in Their Communities*, ed. Diane Watt. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Twycross, Meg. 1983. "Transvestism in the Mystery Plays." *Medieval English Theatre*, 5.2: 123-80.
- _____. 1994. "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wasson, John. 1994. "Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance." In *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, ed. J. Leeds Barroll. An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism and Reviews. Vol. 1. New York: AMS Press.

Wickham, Glynne. 1987. *The Medieval Theatre*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Witt, Elizabeth. 1995. *Contrary Marys in Medieval English and French Drama*. Studies in the Humanities. Vol. 17. New York: Peter Lang.

Woolf, Rosemary. 1972. *The English Mystery Plays*. London: Routledge.

Young, Karl. 1933. *The Drama of the Medieval Church*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

