



Political Economy and the States of Literature in Early Modern England

Aaron Kitch, Bowdoin College, USA



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Crossing the disciplinary borders between political, religious, and economic history, Aaron Kitch's innovative new study demonstrates how sixteenth-century treatises and debates about trade influenced early modern English literature by shaping key formal and aesthetic concerns of authors between 1580 and 1630. The author's analysis concentrates on a commonly overlooked period of economic history—the English commercial revolution before 1620—and, utilizing an impressive combination of archival research, close reading, and attention to historical detail, traces the transformation of genre in both neglected and canonical texts. The topics here are wide-ranging but are presented with a commitment to providing a concrete understanding of the religious, political, and historic context in literary thought. Kitch begins with the emerging wool trade and explosion of economic writing, Spenser's glorification of commerce and the Protestant state as presented in *The Faerie Queene*, and writers such as Thomas Nashe who drew on the same economic principles to challenge Spenser. Other topics include the reaction to the herring trade in prose satire and pamphlets, the presentation of Jewish trading nations in Shakespeare and Marlowe, and the tension between the crown and London merchants as reflected in Middleton's city comedies and Jonson's and Munday's pageants and court masques.

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Introduction; Spenser and the 'right vsauce' of wealth; Love's exchequer, or the uses of pleasure in the English epyllion; Fishing for gold: the political economy of Nashe's *Lenten Stufe*; Shylock's 'sacred nation': commerce, statehood, and the figure of the Jew in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*; Character, credit, and belief in Middleton's city comedies; Britain's Burse: Jonson and the rival forms of entertainment; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

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