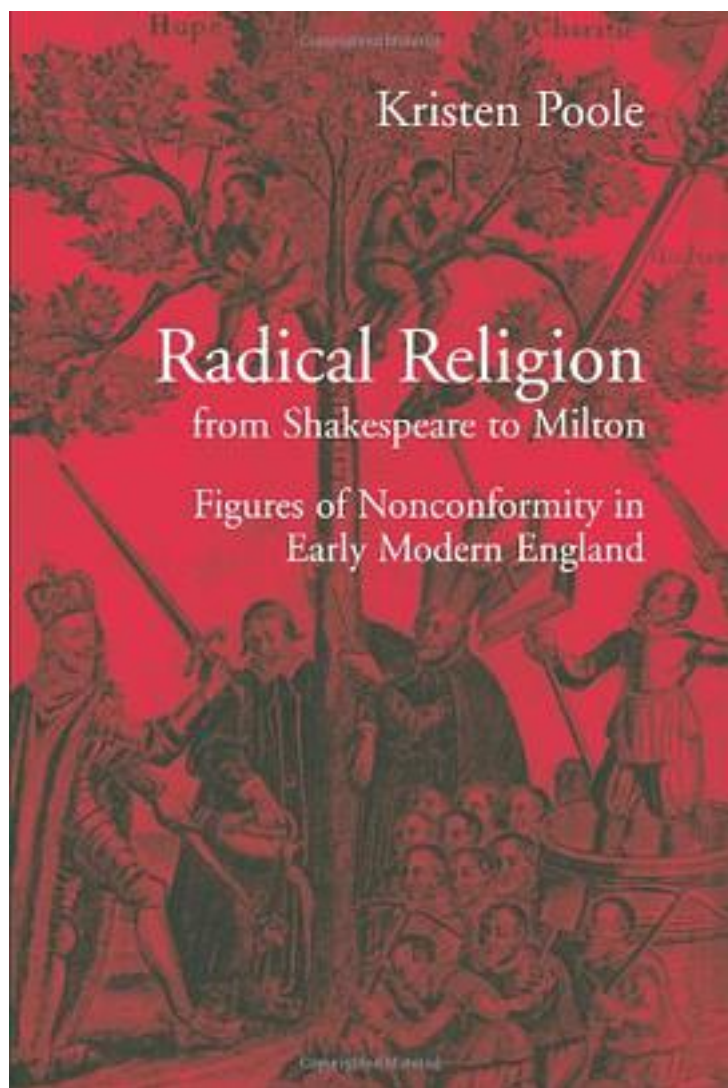


Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton



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The figure of the puritan has long been conceived as dour and repressive in character, an image which has been central to ways of reading sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history and literature. Kristen Poole's original study challenges this perception arguing that, contrary to current critical understanding, radical reformers were most often portrayed in literature of the period as deviant, licentious and transgressive. Through extensive analysis of early modern pamphlets, sermons, poetry and plays, the fictional puritan emerges as a grotesque and carnivalesque figure; puritans are extensively depicted as gluttonous, sexually promiscuous, monstrously procreating, and even as worshipping naked. By recovering this lost alternative satirical image, Poole sheds new light on the role played by anti-puritan rhetoric. Her book contends that such representations served an important social role, providing an imaginative framework for discussing familial, communal and political transformations that resulted from the Reformation.

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