



Putting History to the Question

Michael Neill

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Putting History to the Question marks a critical step beyond the orthodoxy of New Historicism. This collection of mutually enriching essays, hitherto scattered through a variety of journals and critical collections, represents a generous range of Michael Neill's critical writings. Together they constitute a singularly eloquent exploration of the ways in which literary texts engage the world around them. Putting History to the Question is the result of Neill's ongoing investigation of how literature provides a revealing portrait of nation, social order, and empire, and how the flow of literary discourse affects the progress of history. Covering dramatic works by Shakespeare, John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, and others?and reflecting upon subjects ranging from social attitudes toward racial difference and adultery to the politics of mercantilism and the hierarchy of relationships between masters and servants?the book reenergizes discussion of Renaissance drama and history.

In exposing the complex and fluid interdependence of literature and history, Neill avoids two common pitfalls of literary criticism, neither elevating literature above the world in which it is produced and read nor casting literary texts as mere barometers of political currents. For the many scholars and students accustomed to reading from tattered photocopies of Neill's seminal writings, *Putting History to the Question* will be a valuable addition to the critical library.



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