

# Early Theatre

**2025 Prize for Best Interpretive Article, Volumes 26–27**

**Jillian Snyder**

University of Notre Dame

‘Fear and Trembling: Performing the Protestant Conscience  
in Thomas Middleton’s *The Lady’s Tragedy*’

*Early Theatre* 26.1 (2023), 73–92

<https://doi.org/10.12745/et.26.1.5190>

In this meticulously researched and often witty article, Jillian Snyder explores the affective world of early modern English Protestantism through the weird and wonderful prism of Middleton’s *Lady’s Tragedy*. Beginning from a lucid definition of affect as a form of ‘embodied meaning-making’, Snyder engages a rich archive of sources – from scripture to sermons and beyond – to demonstrate the trembling body’s role in Protestant social scripts of the awakened conscience. Snyder then draws upon these scripts to illuminate Middleton’s tragedy of a chaste lady, her timorous husband, and a necrophiliac tyrant, arguing that it works both to affirm and to challenge dominant Protestant positions. Admirably sensitive to the nuances of early modern theatrical and religious performance, Snyder’s work sheds new and valuable light upon ‘the complex negotiations of bodies and souls within the culture of reformed English Protestantism’.