

# Early Theatre

**2025 Prize for Best Note or Issues in Review Essay, Volumes 26–27**

**Nat Rivkin**

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‘Lely-wyte, clene with pure virginyté’:

The N-Town “Nativity”, the Virgin Mary, and Trans Misogyny’

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In this exhilaratingly original essay, Nat Rivkin offers a new reading of the Virgin Mary’s immaculate childbirth in the N-Town ‘Nativity’. Drawing on recent scholarship on trans misogyny, Rivkin reads Mary’s enduring virginity as a form of gender variance. By examining the ways in which Mary’s body is subject to the obstetric exams of midwives who doubt her claims of immaculate childbirth, Rivkin not only elucidates the misogyny that undergirds their scepticism but also posits a powerful parallel between the medicalized gatekeeping of Mary’s body and ‘the anatomical scrutiny too often evoked by contemporary trans femininities today’. Rivkin’s phrase identifying Mary as ‘trans-enough’ gives a witty sense of mother to all: Mary doesn’t exclude others; she accepts all. This essay is essential reading for all who teach and research medieval drama.