

“Medieval Nominalism and the Literary Questions: Selected Studies”

Richard Utz, with the assistance of Terry Barakat

The process of collecting the titles for the following bibliography was begun during the late 1980s, when I researched the correspondences between late medieval philosophy and literature. This work led to the publication of my doctoral dissertation, *Literarischer Nominalismus im Spätmittelalter* (1990), the first two essay collection on the topic, *Literary Nominalism and the Rereading of Late Medieval Literature* (1995), and *Nominalism and Literature* (1997), and a series of essays and reviews.

Like few other topics in the academic study of medieval literature, the search for the possible parallels between philosophical and literary texts reveals the not always peaceful coexistence among the three basic approaches to the study of medieval literature and culture: While hard-core medieval philologists would not accept any claims for a “literary nominalism” unless direct textual dependence can be demonstrated, scholars in medieval studies and the comparative study of medieval literature have shown themselves more accepting of investigations which diagnose a certain nominalistic *Zeitgeist*, mentality, or milieu especially in late medieval culture; and scholars preferring presentist/postmodern approaches have wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to project their own mindsets into premodern matter. Within these three general methodological paradigms of scholarship, the following four areas of concentration can be established:

a) epistemology (specifically the ontological status of universals and particulars and the consequences for human cognition)

b) the problem of language (specifically its contingency)

c) poetic structure (specifically its inconclusiveness or indeterminacy)

d) the relationship between the human and the divine (specifically literary parallels with God’s absolute and ordinate power).

Although I cannot claim to have achieved anything approaching a comprehensive list of titles, I have little doubt that this compilation offers the largest bibliographic selection on the topic to date. Thus, it does not offer a grand (bibliographic) narrative, but rather one investigating subject’s perspective on this fascinatingly interdisciplinary subject of investigation. The bibliography has four sections: The first one, “Nominalism, Realism, and Related Philosophical Approaches to Medieval Literature,” presents a solid number of titles, especially from Chaucer studies, which appears to be the major field in which nominalist readings of medieval literature have been negotiated; the second one, “Nominalism and Medieval Culture (excluding literature),” embeds literary nominalism within the larger framework of philosophical and theological nominalism in the middle ages; the third section, “Nominalism, Literature, and Literary Theory (excluding Medieval Literature),” extends the scope of the bibliography to nominalist readings of postmedieval texts and systems of thought; finally, the fourth section, “Nominalism & Realism: Miscellaneous Studies,” provides examples displaying the polyphony of
semantic shadings of nominalism in theology and religion, philosophy, science, linguistics, logic, multiculturalism, legal studies, and semiotics from Plato through the present.

I would like to acknowledge the diligent work of my graduate assistant, Ms. Terry Barakat, who helped me verify numerous titles and establish a uniform bibliography according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

I. Nominalism, Realism, and Related Philosophical Approaches to Medieval Literature


Perspicuitas.
INTERNET-PERIODICUM FÜR MEDIÄVISTISCHE SPRACH-, LITERATUR- UND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT.
http://www.perspicuitas.uni-essen.de


• Fichte, Joerg O. “Man’s Free Will and the Poet’s Choice: The Creation of Artistic Order in Chaucer’s ‘Knight’s Tale’.” *Anglia* 93 (1975): 335-60.
• Griffin, Salatha Marie. “Chaucer’s ‘Troilus’ from the Perspective of Ralph Strode’s ‘Consequences’.” Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1978.
• ———. “The Clerk vs. the Wife of Bath: Nominalism, Carnival, and Chaucer’s Last Laugh.” In *Literary Nominalism and the Rereading of Late Medieval Texts: A New


• Munson, William F. “Self, Action, and Sign in the Towneley and York Plays on the Baptism of Christ and in Ockhamist Salvation Theology.” In *Nominalism and*


Perspicuitas.  
INTERNET-PERIODICUM FÜR MEDIÄVISTISCHE SPRACH-, LITERATUR- UND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT.  
http://www.perspicuitas.uni-essen.de
• Schlauch, Margaret. “Chaucer’s Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants.” *Speculum* 20 (1945): 133-56.


II. Nominalism and Medieval Culture (excluding literature)

Perspicuitas.
INTERNET-PERIODICUM FÜR MEDIÄVISTISCHE SPRACH-, LITERATUR- UND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT.
http://www.perspicuitas.uni-essen.de


• Nauer, Bernhard von. *Der kampf zwischen nominalismus und realismus nach entstehung und entwicklung bis auf Descartes*. Crefeld: Kramer & Baum, 1887.

III. Nominalism, Literature, and Literary Theory (excluding Medieval Literature)


Ihwe, Jens F., Eric Vos, and Heleen Pott. Worlds Made from Words: Semiotics from a Nominalistic Point of View. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Department of General Literary Studies, 2002.


Jones-Davies, Margaret. “Nabuchodonosor’s Dream or the Defining of Reality in Sir Thomas Browne’s ‘Conception of Language’.” English Language Notes 19, no. 4 (1982): 382-402.


——. English translation excerpt from “Le Texte du roman: approche sémiologique d’une structure discursive transformationelle” in “From Symbol to Sign,” translated


### IV. Nominalism & Realism: Miscellaneous Studies

*Perspicuitas.*  
INTERNET-PERIODICUM FÜR MEDIÄVISTISCHE SPRACH-, LITERATUR- UND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT.  
[http://www.perspicuitas.uni-essen.de](http://www.perspicuitas.uni-essen.de)
• Exner, Franz, Ueber Nominalismus und Realismus. Prague, 1842.


