

Call for Papers

Practices of Collaboration in Early Modern Theatre: Authors, Actors, Printers, Playhouses, and Their Texts

(Susanne Gruss & Lena Steveker)

international conference, 02-04 December 2021, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany) *or* Université du Luxembourg (Luxembourg)

keynote speakers: Andy Kesson (University of Roehampton, London), Lucy Munro (King's College, London) and Tiffany Stern (Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham)

The culturally pervasive conception of dramatic authorship, which privileges the creative output of a single authorial mind, results from an oversimplification of the manifold practices of cultural production from which plays emerged in early modern England. These plays are in fact the products of a complex culture of collaboration which was pervasive in English theatre and theatrical culture in its formative years. While this is not a new insight – Gordon McMullan, for instance, argued that “collaboration is a much more appropriate model for textual production in general than is ostensibly ‘solo’ writing” as early as 1996 (438) – it is only more recently that critics have started to explore the various practices of collaboration that contributed to early modern theatre in more detail. Even though early modern collaboration is habitually referenced as a “normal activity” of playwrights (Vickers 2017, 7), academic interest remains largely restricted to collaboration as a form of authorial ‘teamwork’ in the works of repeat collaborators (Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher or Thomas Middleton and William Rowley – see Masten 1997, Hirschfeld 2004, Hutchings and Bromham 2008, Nicol 2012). More recent research in repertory studies has taken into view the collaborative practices within particular playhouses, for example between authors and playing companies (see Munro 2005 and 2020, Gurr 2009, Rutter 2017). Scholars have also started to investigate how the burgeoning print market facilitated the publication and marketing of plays as printed commodities at a time when the author did not yet loom large in the eyes of the public, and how printers contributed to our contemporary (mis)understanding of authorship (see Brooks 2000, Stern 2009 and 2020). And yet, recent editorial projects such as the *Oxford Middleton* (2007), the *Online Brome* (2010), the *Oxford Ford* (2011-), the *Cambridge Jonson* (2012) or the forthcoming *Oxford Marston* demonstrate that early modern drama is still widely conceived of (and marketed) in terms of the single-author play. This focus on the individual author as a marketable product, in particular, obscures the intricate interplay of numerous agents in the early modern dramatic arena: authors (and their respective playing companies), actors, printers, and playhouses.

With “Practices of Collaboration in Early Modern Theatre”, we would like to take into view the interrelation of all ‘players’ participating in the complex network of collaboration that characterizes early modern theatre. The conference aims to explore more comprehensive concepts of early modern collaboration and, consequently, of early modern authorship. We invite scholars at all career stages who are keen to discuss a spectrum of collaborative practices between various agents in the early modern dramatic arena, and to open up new perspectives on the practices of collaboration that shaped English theatre and theatrical culture. The conference is situated at the intersection of literary studies, cultural studies, and early modern history, and should be of interest to academics working in the humanities, especially in theatre and performance studies, history, repertory studies, book studies, and literary studies as well as cultural studies more generally.

Papers could focus on (but are not limited to) topics such as:

- the author/playwright as one agent among many

- early modern actors, playhouses, and repertories
- pageants, masques and other examples of early modern theatrical culture as collaborative practices
- costumes, props, and music
- theatrical documents
- early modern print culture, the role of printers in the composition and dissemination of plays

If you are interested in contributing a 30-minute paper, please send an abstract (max. 300 words) and a brief bio blurb to the organizers by **November 30, 2020**:

PD Dr. Susanne Gruss (Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main / FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg):
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Prof. Dr. Lena Steveker (Université du Luxembourg): [lena.steveker@uni.lu](mailto:lana.steveker@uni.lu)

Please note that we will apply for external funding for this conference and will be able to tell you the exact location of the conference (Germany or Luxembourg) once we have done so. Both Erlangen and Luxembourg are easily reachable via plane and/or train.

Works Cited:

- Brooks, Douglas A. 2000. *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gurr, Andrew. 2009. *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company, 1594-1625*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Masten, Jeffrey. 1997. *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McMullan, Gordon. 1996. "'Our Whole Life Is a Play': Collaboration and the Problem of Editing." *Textus* 9: 437-60.
- Munro, Lucy. 2005. *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Stern, Tiffany. 2009. *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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