



## 'Documents of Shakespearean Performance: Stage, Page, and Manuscript in Early Modern England'

Organised by The Open University's Book History Research Group and the Institute of English Studies, University of London

Venue: Room 234, Senate House, Malet St, London, WC1E 7HU. Tel: 0207 8628675

Time: Mondays, 5.30-7.00pm (dates below)

**About the series:** since the publication of Tiffany Stern's ground-breaking *Shakespeare in Parts* (2007) and *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (2009), the question of *how* Shakespeare's plays were transmitted from manuscript to print has re-emerged as central to discussions of Shakespeare and the book. This series will assess Stern's ideas from a range of perspectives, and discuss such issues as: how did early modern manuscript practices affect the transmission of Shakespeare's plays? How did the idea of a "Shakespeare apocrypha" emerge, and what relationship did this idea have with early modern play-writing practices? How mobile were individual pieces of text (songs, for instance) *between* plays in the early modern theatre, and what material remains have these instances of textual mingling left behind?

**Monday 29 October 2012: Prof. Tiffany Stern (University College, Oxford)**

"'In their Tables': *Hamlet* Q1 and its Audience"

What is *Hamlet* Q1 -- and why is its text so strange? For years scholars have traced the text of *Hamlet* Q1 to a 'pirate actor'. Yet that explanation is highly problematic: the 'pirate' gets his cues wrong, misremembers his own lines, and is strangely accurate when characters he plays are offstage. This paper will put forward a different explanation for the text. Exploring 'noters' in audiences and congregations alike, it will examine how plays might be put together by a group of observers -- and will ask what that means for the text of *Hamlet* Q1 as we have it.

**Monday 5 November 2012, Dr. Lucy Munro (University of Keele)**

"Casting, Evidence, and the King's Men"

This paper will explore the casting of leading roles in plays performed by the King's Men in the Jacobean and Caroline periods, focusing on Shakespeare's *Othello*, Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII* and Massinger's *Believe as You List*.

**Monday 26 November 2012, Dr. Edmund King (Open University)**

"Interpreting Early Modern Co-Authorship in the Eighteenth-Century Shakespeare Edition"

In the decades between 1709 and 1821, a series of textual critics helped consolidate what we now think of as the "Shakespeare canon": an edited set of "complete works" appearing under the heading of a single author: Shakespeare. The Shakespeare edition as book had become synonymous with the man himself. Yet this textual presentation hid the extent to which the contributions of other agents—actors, revisers, collaborators—appeared within that supposedly unified textual body. This paper will look at how eighteenth-century editors facilitated this process of canonical "unification." What did they know—or think they knew—about the activities and working practices of early modern collaborators and revisers? How far did they think collaboration extended within Shakespeare's plays? How did these assumptions and beliefs shape the way they treated apparently collaborative material within the canon?

**Monday 3 December 2012, Dr. Sonia Massai (King's College London)**

“A Never Writer to an Ever Reader”: Framing Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama in Print

My talk develops current theories and ideas about Shakespeare's attitude to dramatic publication and the rise of Shakespeare's popularity in print in light of the broader context of framing devices and presentational strategies which I have come across while co-editing a new edition of *The Paratext in English Printed Drama to 1642* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2013).

**7 January 2013, Dr. Sarah Neville (West Virginia University)**

“Reassessing the Reprint in the Early English Book Trade”

Literary scholars have long assumed that a survey of the surviving evidence of book production provides evidence of customer demand: the more frequently a book was reprinted, the more “popular” it was with early modern readers. But though the repeated publication of plays such as *Mucedorus* (9 editions in 25 years) or *Doctor Faustus* (8 editions) corresponds with what we know of their popularity with contemporary playgoers, the repeated publication of other plays such as *Merchant of Venice* (3 editions) might be evidence only of their publishers' hopeful speculation in the marketplace. “Reassessing the Reprint” reconsiders evidence for playbooks' popularity in light of the multiple contingencies that influenced booksellers' conceptions of economic viability.

**Monday 14 January 2013, Dr. Peter Kirwan (University of Nottingham)**

“Gathering Shakespeare: Consolidating the Apocrypha”

From the middle of the seventeenth century, a disparate group of early modern plays began to appear together in collections with increasingly regularity, their gathering justified only by the plays' dubious associations with the name of Shakespeare. As a result, much modern scholarship continues to treat the plays of the ‘Shakespeare Apocrypha’ as a relatively homogeneous group, subject to the same narratives of piracy, forgery, accident or authorship despite their heterogeneous origins. This paper separates out the genuinely unifying features of the early disputed plays from their specific, unique aspects, and in doing so challenges the presumptions of standardised practices that govern Apocrypha-formation narratives. Engaging with the form and purpose of early collections of disputed plays, the paper suggests new ways for reading the Apocrypha within print culture.

**Monday 21 January 2013, Prof. Gabriel Egan (De Montfort University)**

“Early modern play manuscripts and their licensing”

This paper will survey surviving early modern play manuscripts and the problems of their classification. What can the manuscripts tell us about the activities of the Masters of the Revels? Are they, perhaps, evidence for a licensing regime that never quite managed to fulfil the functions it was created for?

**Monday 4 February 2013, Dr. M. A. Katritzky (Open University)**

“Shakespeare's Bottom: Printed Sources for Monsters and Marvels in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*”

**11 February 2013, Dr. Kate Ellis (Bath Spa University)**

“‘More wittily penned, then wysely staged’: Middleton and the Spanish Match”

In August 1624, the King's Men performed Middleton's *A Game at Chesse* at the Globe Theatre. The play, a thinly-veiled allegory of the previous year's failed Spanish match between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta, was controversial in its representation of current affairs of state, as well as its depiction of two living monarchs, a portrayal strictly forbidden in theatrical productions. However, the play did not sit outside the events it portrayed. Due to the way in which news circulated through early modern society, Middleton was able to draw upon a rich tapestry of source material, oral, written and printed and, in turn, the immediacy of the play's creation and performance to the events it reflected led it to become part of the same communicative network. This paper will explore *A Game at Chesse*'s place in a cultural framework comprising theatrical performance, oration, libel, manuscript and print, operating in a very specific political climate in 1624-25.

**Book History at the Open University:** <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/english/book-history/index.shtml>

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