

Editorial

What is ‘early theatre’? Is there a specific date range that encompasses ‘early’? Can any kind of performance get lumped into the category of ‘theatre’? The broad, flexible, negotiable nature of this phrase serves as our journal’s mission statement, reminding us that we need to negotiate, renegotiate, and rediscover what counts as early and what we call theatre with every issue. This collection of articles and shorter essays is no exception.

Readers will find here careful consideration of what surviving play-texts and records (both familiar and newly discovered) reveal about early theatre. Charles Cathcart demands new considerations of the joint authorship and critical reception of *Eastward Ho!* by linking the play’s writers with the goldsmith’s apprentice William Marston (cousin of dramatist John Marston). The wide-ranging and rigorous consideration of onstage beds in early modern English plays by Leslie Thomson not only indicates exciting possibilities for how these large props might have been used but also tantalizes readers with how much we do not know.

The excitement of exploration sparked by uncertainty characterizes Gina M. Di Salvo’s discussion of prose saints’ lives like Thomas Deloney’s 1597 *The Gentle Craft* and commercialized civic performances of hagiography in the 1613 Wells Cordwainers’ pageant. She convincingly demonstrates that pageant records, prose sources, and other records constellating around related subject matter constitute scripts as worthy of our attention as any printed play quarto. A note by Matthew Steggle offers a related argument, showing how analysis of a play that no longer exists, the ‘Comedy of a Duke of Ferrara’, has much to say about extant German and English drama, including perhaps Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*.

Fresh approaches to more familiar plays appear in Cameron Hunt McNabb’s discussion of the Chester ‘Antichrist’ and Andrew Bretz’s analysis of Heywood’s *Rape of Lucrece*. The former hints at how much Lollard heterodoxy concerning signs has in common with more contemporary concerns about what constitutes the human as played out in countless zombie and vampire films. The latter makes apparent that a play’s use of singing might be not just a historical performance convention but also an attempt to represent the psychological aftermath of trauma. And Noémie Ndiaye’s essay on *Titus Andronicus* reveals the complex ways the early modern English both adopted and distorted early modern Spanish approaches to race, colour, slavery, and patrimony; the resulting argument will

significantly impact the way we read, teach, and perform Shakespeare's play. All of these articles make early drama speak to the concerns of our age.

And those who read the essays in our 'Issues in Review' on the subject of theatre and neighbourhood in early modern London will likely find their next city walk enlivened by the sense that they might be observing and participating in a complex social performance. Plays could stage events that took place in parishes, streets, and districts near a theatre just as a theatre's performances might reinscribe these places as full of dramatic possibilities. Christopher Highley and his contributors remind us that the 'imaginary constructs' called neighbourhoods were home to actors, dramatists, and audience members and thus served as a space that encouraged many kinds of play.

As 2016 comes to a close, this journal will enter its twentieth year of publication. This issue exemplifies our tradition of bringing to readers both new discoveries from the archives and innovative interpretations of familiar texts. Such scholarship lays the foundation for an ever more expansive and exciting sense of what constitutes early theatre.

THE EDITORS