

# Editorial

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Guest edited by Helen Ostovich, this special issue of *Early Theatre* shares key insights arising from the March 2019 Toronto production of John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* and the symposium that accompanied it. Building on a recent surge of interest in Marston's career and in his best-known play, this group of articles attends to issues of gender, sexuality, religion, and linguistic or cultural difference operating in Marston's play-text — and in performances inspired by it. Along the way, the contributors offer keen insights about Performance as Research as a methodology: what it teaches us about early plays in light of their original historical contexts, and what questions it opens up about early theatre in our own contemporary moment. In addition to the ten essays on Marston presented here along with the guest editor's Introduction, readers of this journal issue will find a small selection of book reviews, the first to be curated by our new book reviews editor, Georgina Lucas. As always, we hope this work calls attention to (and inspires further) thought-provoking, innovative research.

Work on this issue of the journal has taken place under particularly challenging circumstances. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to cancel a planned farewell party to honour our founding editor Helen Ostovich at the Shakespeare Association of American annual meeting in April 2020. The global public health crisis has forced us into isolation and physical distancing, yet we hope that *Early Theatre's* readers can still experience a sense of scholarly community as they read the work that Helen and her contributors are sharing with us. In the midst of what is otherwise a time of great uncertainty, we are immensely grateful to our book reviewers, for the time and effort they invest in helping to amplify the reach of important new work in our field; we thank our authors for the trust they place by submitting their research to the journal; and we remain indebted to our anonymous peer-reviewers, whose expert advice helps to strengthen the quality of the work we publish.

A number of medieval and early modern English plays and performances, including *The Dutch Courtesan*, were written and performed in decades that witnessed unexpected social and economic upheaval in the form of famine, war, and, of course, plague. Reading such texts reminds us that we are not the first to have our lives unexpectedly disrupted by public health emergencies. In addition to a

sense of historical context, attention to early theatre also reminds us how people even at the worst of times have found creative ways to come together to share ideas, to make new work, and even to be entertained. This sense of connection to the past and of common purpose in the present sustains the ongoing work of *Early Theatre*.

THE EDITORS