

2017 SAA Seminar: Lost Plays and Their Contexts Abstracts
Leaders: Roslyn Knutson, University of Arkansas, Little Rock
David McInnis, University of Melbourne
and Matthew Steggle, Sheffield Hallam University 1

Professor Douglas H. Arrell, University of Winnipeg

**“What’s In a Name?:
Early Modern Titling Practices”**

Most titles of early modern plays straightforwardly point to the main content of the play. But there are some titles that are misleading. Quite often the character named in the title is only a secondary one, or the story referred to makes up only a limited part of the play. Titles can refer to the comic subplot in a play whose main plot is very serious. Titles can be ironic or oblique in their reference to the play. Some titles seem to have no clear relation to the play at all (look no further than *Twelfth Night*). Of particular concern are plays with “researchable” titles. These titles contain a name from history, literature or current events that one could investigate to try to reconstruct a lost play. I look at about a hundred extant plays between 1588 and 1625 whose titles seem researchable. So far I have found only about a dozen whose titles could be said to be somewhat or very misleading. While it seems that the conclusions one draws from early modern titles are generally valid, those seeking to recover a lost play and those referring to lost plays to support a thesis of about the drama of the period must always be aware of the possibility that some plays are not accurately described by their titles. I try to identify kinds of titles that are more likely to be misleading.

Professor Anston Bosman, Amherst College

“The Lost Play as a Book of Changes”

Can lost transcultural plays change our sense of how plays metamorphose? Lost dramas are often extrapolated from extant companion pieces (e.g., *Love’s Labor’s Won*) or continental analogues (*Titus and Vespasian*). This paper considers a play that invites both these strategies and has not yet been included in the Lost Plays Database: *The Tragedy of Thisbe and Pyramus* (Wiggins IV: 1249). The archives of the Bavarian town of Nördlingen contain a petition written on 20 January 1604 in which a “Company of Comedians” asks permission to perform any of a repertoire of ten “Anglo-German” plays, including: “6. vonn Thisbes vnnndt pyramo” and “7. vonn Romeo vnnndt Julitha.” What was play number 6? If number 7 is Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, what was the relationship between the two plays? Was *Thisbe and Pyramus* a version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*? Or is it more fruitful to set the Shakespearean lineage aside, focusing instead on continental Pyramus and Thisbe plays, such as the moralized Ovidian dramas of the Dutch rhetoricians, or the school plays of German humanism? Combining these two strategies—the English and the European—may yield a new model for how drama takes form in zones of intercultural contact.

Professor William Ingram, University of Michigan

**“Lost Plays and Other Lost Things:
Ways of Being Lost”**

I discuss the roles of rhetoric and narrative structure as they relate to a discussion of things that don't exist, and the risk of narratives about missing things hardening – in the absence of actual data – into positivist or essentialist metanarratives. I note that other things besides playtexts are lost, but that lost playtexts make for a more interesting field of exploration than, for example, lost information about early performances, despite performances being the reason for the texts having been written in the first place. The lives of those stage players who created the performances are also largely lost to us. I conclude with an example of my own research, an effort to discover something about an alleged stage player named George Hasell, and offer my results as an exemplum of how the data we find – despite our having found it and thus feeling proprietary about it – may in the end not add up to much. Things may still be lost even after we've found them.

Professor Laurie Johnson, University of southern Queensland

**“Thou goest about them all”:
The Twice Timely Hester at Newington Butts**

Philip Henslowe's list of performances by the Lord Admiral's Men and Lord Chamberlain's Men at Newington Butts in June 1594 begins with the lost *Hester and Ahasuerus*. It was performed a week later at the same venue, but four days later the two companies departed the venue. As the title does not appear among Admiral's Men's plays at the Rose thereafter, it is assumed *Hester* belonged to the repertory of the Chamberlain's Men. Importantly, this is also the first recorded performance by Shakespeare's company under this patron. A possible precursor, *Godly Queen Hester* (1561), does survive, and the timeliness of the play in relation to the execution of Roderigo Lopez has been observed (Knutson). Current research on the Newington Butts playhouse and the players who performed there offers fresh insights into this lost title (and potentially also *Bellendon* and *Cutlack*, other lost plays performed in this sequence). In particular, the death of the Earl of Derby provides additional topical subject matter for a revival of the *Hester* story in 1594 (and, indeed, of Proverbs 23, which had previously been associated with the Biblical Esther), and I propose new thoughts on staging and personnel for the performances at Newington Butts.

Mr. David Kathman, Chicago, IL

The Freeman's Honour, William Smith, and the Lord Chamberlain's Men

Only a handful of known lost plays are attributable to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, given that we lack any source for the company comparable to Henslowe's Diary. One of that handful is *The Freeman's Honour*, a play known only from the dedication to another play, *The Hector of Germany*, printed in 1615. In that dedication, the playwright, "W. Smith", tells Sir John Swinnerton, that "as I haue begun in a former Play, called the Freemans Honour, acted by the Now-seruants of the Kings Maiestie, to degnifie the worthy Compane of the Marchataylors, wherof you are a principall Ornament, I shall ere long, make choyce of some subiect to equall it." The reference to "the now-servants of the King's Majesty" implies that the company in question is the Lord Chamberlain's Men, thus dating the play to before 1603. Anything else we

can glean about this play depends largely on the identity of the playwright, "W. Smith". For many years, scholars have assumed that this is Wentworth Smith, the Henslowe playwright, and this assumption is maintained in the play's entry in the Lost Plays Database. However, a variety of fairly strong circumstantial evidence indicates that the W. Smith who wrote *The Hector of Germany* (and thus *The Freeman's Honour*) was William Smith (c.1550-1618), Rouge Dragon pursuivant in the College of Heralds. This paper will explore the implications of this attribution for the dating and possible contents of *The Freeman's Honour*.

Professor Roslyn L. Knutson, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

“Lost Plays, Theatrical Commerce, and the Chamberlain’s/King’s Men”

Theater historians now routinely assume that the Chamberlain’s/King’s men had lost plays in repertory, but I’m curious about when they started seeing those plays as legitimate members of company business. For this seminar, I plan a short survey of the major contributors to our understanding of theatrical commerce (starting with Malone, 1790) to see if I can identify when the Chamberlain’s/King’s lost plays transitioned from titles on a list of company holdings to participants in a repertory where “each play ... could in turn be informed not just by the others and by the exigencies of theatrical management but by the contemporary moment in the nation’s life and ... the status, fortunes, and interests of the company’s aristocratic patron” (Larry Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Lord Strange’s Men and Their Plays*, 8). In short, when did the Chamberlain’s/King’s lost plays begin to matter to theater historians as commercial offerings?

Dr. Jeanne McCarthy, Georgia Gwinnet College

“Lost Plays and the Special Case of the Children’s Chapel Court Performance Tradition”

Famous boy troupe authors like Udall, Lyly, Edwards, and Peele significantly reshaped the sources for their plays for a variety of reasons, whether for novelty, doctrinal emphases, flattery of a patron, or intentional revisions to expectations of classical/neoclassical genre. Such innovations complicate attempts to speculate about the genre and plot of a given performance piece, much less its relevance to later iterations, based on title alone. The arguments suggesting no relationship between Edwards’ lost entertainment, *Palamon and Arcyte*, performed at Oxford University for Queen’s Elizabeth’s visit in 1566, and Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Two Noble Kinsmen* illustrate many of these problems. The extent to which plays and play titles can be “lump[ed]” or “split,” to invoke John H. Astington’s terms, may depend on whether or not we are willing to consider a survival in more general terms, such as the partial circulation of treatments, the assignment of particular speeches to particular characters, the use of mask elements, incorporation of a comic subplot, conceptions of scenes as comic, or the incorporation of spectacle.

Professor David McInnis, University of Melbourne

“Coping with Loss”

Throughout our efforts to uncover and interpret documentary evidence for the lost plays of Shakespeare’s England, are we at least partially re-inventing the wheel? From the fragments of

Sappho's poems and Aristotle's lost second book of the *Poetics* to the lost drama of Aeschylus, Plautus and Euripides, working with substantial lacunae in the canon is a daily reality for students of Classical literature. How have these scholars addressed the challenge and what – allowing for the significantly different context – might we learn from their experiences?

Professor Alan H. Nelson, University of California, Berkeley

“Lost Plays and the Virginia Company”

Two London preachers were especially active promoters of the Virginia colony during the years leading up to and including 1610: these were Thomas Symonds, minister of St. Saviour's parish, Southwark; and William Crashawe, preacher in the church of the Inner and Middle Temples. While Symonds was relatively tolerant of plays and players, Crashawe was a fierce opponent. In a sermon of February 1610 he specifically accuses players of denigrating Virginia: "But why are Players enemies to this Plantation and doe abuse it?" From this passage I infer multiple plays on the subject of Virginia. One obvious candidate is *Eastward Ho!* Could Shakespeare's *Tempest* be another? More important for our seminar, might one or more "lost plays" have focused on the Virginia plantation? My purpose will include looking for other surviving plays which fit the bill. Does any member of the seminar know of complementary evidence for lost plays on Virginia?

Professor Kara Northway, Kansas State University

**“I haue lost it”: Epistolary Apologies, Justifications, and Benefits to Misplacing
The Wild-Goose Chase and Other Plays”**

Lostplays.org quite reasonably excludes John Fletcher's *The Wild-Goose Chase* (1621), as the script exists today. The play, however, was temporarily lost for at least five years. Paratexts referencing it, alongside similar public apologies, reveal attitudes toward theatrical loss and responsibility. In the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio, Humphrey Moseley's stationer's letter regretted omitting the play, "long lost, . . . for a *Person of Quality* borrowed it . . . ; therefore now I put up this *Si quis*, that whosoever hereafter happily meets with it, shall be thank-fully satisfied if he please to send it home." With the Blackfriars closed, "home" in this *de facto* lost-item flier was the printshop. After a nobleman "Retriv'd" the play, Moseley printed it in 1652 to benefit players John Lowin and Joseph Taylor. Despite acknowledging a "Crime," the actors' dedication delicately sidestepped both textual mismanagement by the King's Men, who earlier claimed to be "Trustees" "preserv[ing]" Beaumont and Fletcher's manuscripts, and the rediscovery by the nobleman, villain and hero. Instead, the actors laid blame indirectly on the theaters' closure. Loss figured here made *Wild-Goose Chase*—and by extension Fletcher, the theaters, and the acting profession—increase in reputation and "by burial, more glorious grovv."

Professor June Schlueter, Lafayette College

The Lost Love's Labor's Lost

Scholars agree that the 1598 Quarto of Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* shows signs of revision of an earlier play, presumably by Shakespeare. But there have been suggestions tying the play to French affairs, most notably John Phelps' 1899 proposal that its plot is linked to a 1578 meeting between Catherine de' Medici and her son-in-law, the King of Navarre, at Nérac. The names of Shakespeare's characters do reflect their historical counterparts, but little else supports Phelps' claim. Situations and characters in the 1572 siege of La Rochelle, however, and the subsequent 1574 English delegation to France resonate in the play. This paper pursues those connections and proposes a 1574 source play. When Roger North, Elizabeth's ambassador extraordinary, and his entourage visited the court in Lyon, the French presented unflattering sketches of Elizabeth and her father, Henry VIII. Might the English have styled a satiric riposte that not only recreated circumstances in French affairs but also mocked the Queen Mother's candidate for a husband for Elizabeth: her son, the Duke of Alençon, whose birth name was Hercules? The Ur-*Love's Labor's Lost* is now lost, but we may look to Shakespeare's 1598 version for vestiges of it.

Professor Matthew Steggle, Sheffield Hallam University

**"Known only by their teeth':
A paleontology of early modern drama"**

As Stephen Jay Gould notes, Charles Darwin famously compares the fossil record, fragmentary and incomplete as it is, to a mutilated and largely lost work of literature. This paper, on the other hand, reverses Darwin's metaphor from natural history back into literature. It argues that the language and conventions of paleontology can be helpful in thinking about the lost and extant texts of early modern drama. In particular, paleontology provides a vocabulary to address the methodological problems implicit in interpreting a whole early modern "media ecosystem" - as one might say - from its scattered surviving fossils.

Specifically, this essay will (1) explore the metaphorical possibilities of the observation that "soft parts" of animals largely leave no direct trace in the fossil record; (2) argue that printed playtexts themselves have some of the qualities of fossils - detailed and well-preserved ones, but fossils nonetheless; (3) look for the *lagerstätten* of early modern drama.

Professor Elizabeth E. Tavares, Pacific University

**"With Trompette, Cart, and Amozins:
The Dramaturgy of *Tamar Cham*"**

What can lost plays illuminate the relationship between play development and company house styles in the Elizabethan theatre industry? This essay focuses on 1 and 2 *Tamar Cham* as an example case of the ways paratexts of "lost plays" reveal markers of a troupe's house style. To do so, I combine analyses of the Lord Admiral's repertory schedule with the prop and casting requirements indicated by the printed copy of the now lost "plott of The First parte of Tamar Cham." Based on this evidence, the *Tamar Cham* serial troubles the perceived status, in terms of financial success and innovation, of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. I then introduce a hitherto unacknowledged narrative source for *Tamar Cham* that, corroborated by the backstage-plot, situates the play more clearly among its repertorial peers of Mediterranean tyranny. The case

of *Tamar Cam* contributes to the catalogue of material requirements that distinguished, for Elizabethan playgoers, Admiral's from their 1580s and 1590s competitors. The performance history of this play makes a case for mapping the dramaturgical features of playing companies—rather than trying to weave together a postulate of thematic concerns—to enliven the marketplace and industry practices in which William Shakespeare would come to train.

Professor Misha Teramura, Reed College

“Shakespeare’s Ruined Quires”

This paper develops Matthew Steggle’s observation that “All early modern plays are largely lost” by extending the idea of textual “lostness” beyond drama. My case study is one of Shakespeare’s most famous lines of poetry: “Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang” (*Sonnets* 73.4). Critics who have praised the line as a quintessential example of the richness of poetic ambiguity (Empson) or as a poignant glimpse of Shakespeare’s sympathies for lost English Catholicism (Duffy) tend to ignore the fact that the earliest textual instantiation of this famous line in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (1609) is astonishingly de-familiarizing:

Bare rn’wd quiers, where late the sweet birds sang.

With the nonsensical compositorial catastrophe of *rn’wd*, the word itself becomes a kind of ruin, a damaged material trace of the immaterial line of poetry that preceded its physical instantiation. This paper will look at the ways in which this “ruined” line of poetry serves as a comment not just upon the text of the 1609 *Sonnets*—a ruined *quire* that undermines its author’s visionary claims for the immortality of his disembodied text—but also upon early modern print more generally: Shakespeare’s oeuvre as we know it is all (potentially) ruined, despite scholars’ best efforts at textual emendation. Indeed, I argue that the traditional reading of Sonnet 73’s *rn’wd* as “ruined” is deeply problematic: demonstrating that our best bibliographic arguments about this passage are incoherent, I propose that this most celebrated line may, in fact, be damaged beyond repair. Fragmentation is not simply the condition of a select handful of “lost” works; rather, textual ruination is a fundamental condition of much early modern literature.

Professor Paul Werstine, University of Western Ontario

“Lost’ Playhouse Manuscripts”

W.W. Greg’s teaching that acting companies possessed, in addition to unusable “foul papers,” just single manuscripts of plays called “prompt-books” that were, on the one hand, censored, licensed, and signed by the Master of the Revels or his deputy and, on the other hand, fully regularized and marked up by a bookkeeper so as to guide performance was for a long time and continues to be influential. It is the basis, for example, for Andrew Gurr’s notion of maximal and minimal texts, which undergirds, among other writings, Lukas Erne’s particular conception of Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist. Even scholars who have recognized that the term *promptbook* and the kind of theatrical manuscript that it designates did not come into existence until long after Shakespeare’s time nevertheless continue to postulate that for every play some company once possessed just a single document very much of the sort Greg imagines, the licensed manuscript

marked up by the book-keeper—or the “valuable, unique, licensed manuscript,” “the playbook itself” (Terri Bourus, *Young Shakespeare’s Young Hamlet* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014], pp. 194-5). With this postulation necessarily comes another: that this document in the case of almost every play has been lost. There are three or four playhouse manuscripts that approximate Greg’s imagining, but, as my paper will show, most playhouse manuscripts are of a different order that calls into question the first postulation just described. My paper will examine some of these extant manuscripts with a view to exhibiting the variety of playhouse manuscripts and the likely plurality of such manuscripts for at least some single plays and thereby postulate some other lost manuscripts, in so far as we actually possess only a single playhouse manuscript of any particular play.

Professor Paul Whitfield White, Purdue University

“The Admiral’s and Worcester’s Lost Biblical Drama of 1602”

Henslowe’s Diary shows evidence in 1602 for seven biblical plays, six by the Admiral’s Men and one by Worcester’s Men. Scholars deem them extraordinary, since only fifteen or so biblical plays, including the only two extant texts, *A Looking Glass for London* and *David and Fair Bathsheba*, have been identified with professional playing since 1567. Expenses for these 1602 plays appear across the year; a “Judas” play book finished in December 1601 but costumes purchased a month later in January; a prologue and epilogue paid for “Pontius Pilate” the same month; payments for play books for “Jephthah” and “Tobias” in May and June, “Samson” in July (with a known September performance), and “Joshua” in late September; a play by Worcester’s Men featuring the hanging of Absalom in October. My objective in this paper is to examine the evidence in *Henslowe’s Diary* and a range of other relevant materials to determine which of these presumed plays were actual plays, what the plays were about, and what their significance is to the professional stage at the end of Elizabeth’s reign.