

## Medieval English Theatre Online Conference

Lancaster University | 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Environments

Performance location, playing space, and play world settings have always been important for analysing early theatre. Primarily, such aspects of theatre are understood in relation to human experience, but considering the *environments* of early drama also makes space for thinking about animals, plants, and the natural world, particularly as impacted by human activity, in early performance studies. The environments in which early drama took place, whether natural or artificial, could be productive for, disruptive of, or intrude upon performances. Equally, the kind of environment depicted in such drama both reflected and influenced medieval attitudes towards the non-human world. We are currently living in an epoch geologists and ecologists have termed ‘the Anthropocene’, in acknowledgement of the disproportionate impact of human activity on the world’s socio-ecological system. However, since March 2020, we have experienced varying levels and durations of lockdown due to a global pandemic – a set of circumstances in which an environmental factor beyond human control has severely inhibited humanity’s ability to function. With the growing urgency of environmental crisis and a global pandemic forcing us to re-evaluate our immediate environments, are we due a closer look at the environments of early theatre?

This conference seeks to bring such new perspectives to bear on medieval drama by asking how past experiences in and representations of the environment might inform current environmental debates. The conference also aims to explore the ways in which paying attention to environmental factors in medieval drama can produce new understandings of early performance and the medieval world.

**Topics** might include but are not limited to:

- Natural and artificial environments for performance; environmental factors affecting performance from disruptive elements to affirmations of a play’s content.
- Representations of natural or built environments in the play-world; for example, wildernesses, forests or fields and cities, streets or houses; imaginary environments; depictions of human/non-human relationships on stage.
- Representations of the weather, natural disasters, the atmosphere, alchemy, astronomy or astrology in early theatre.
- Environmental problems in early theatre, such as deforestation, enclosure, dearth and so on; ecocritical approaches; sustainability; conservation; the pastoral in early drama.
- Site-specific performance and practice-based research; material traces of early drama; archaeological evidence.
- Digital environments for early texts and modern performance; manuscript environments including the space and material of the page, as well as material conditions for manuscript production, consumption and storage.
- Critical environments; inclusivity, diversity and equality; global and international environments for early drama.

We invite proposals for **20-minute papers** from scholars at any stage of study or career; we very much welcome ‘**work in progress**’ papers or proposals for **discussion-based sessions**, especially in the current context. **Please submit your proposals by 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 to Clare Egan at [c.egan2@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:c.egan2@lancaster.ac.uk)**. If you would like to discuss ideas for work in progress or alternative session formats, please feel free to get in touch via email prior to submitting a proposal.

Further details and registration information will be posted soon at [Medieval English Theatre](#).