

Medieval English Theatre Conference: Bodies, Embodiment, and Early Theatre

1 April 2023, University of Birmingham

CALL FOR PAPERS

'In the theatre, the body bears the brunt of performance; it is the material... [the] text works on, works through.' (Carol C. Rutter).

Bodies are central to the experience of live theatre, both those of audience members and those of the performers themselves. Performing bodies, as Rutter suggests, 'bear' the performance, both in the sense of suffering it, and bodying it forth. They submit to its effects and rigours. They display particular attire, they move in particular ways, they may represent particular aspects of a narrative or a state. They may inscribe and enforce boundaries between performance and spectators, or they may seek to efface those boundaries. Likewise, they may establish and enforce binary structures and concepts (e.g. female/male, soul/body, life/death), or dissolve and complicate them. Without bodies as 'material' through and on which to work, theatre, in Rutter's formulation, is simply 'text'. Performing bodies may, moreover, shape this text as they perform it, and they may also be shaped *by* it. This year, the Medieval English Theatre conference invites delegates to consider bodies and embodiment in relation to any aspect of early theatre. This might include (but is not limited to):

- The body gendered
- The body visualised
- The body adorned
- The sexual body
- The suffering body
- Spectating bodies / spectators as a body
- Bodies and boundaries
- The soul v. the body
- The dead and dying body
- The allegorical body
- The corpus
- Our bodies of knowledge and their construction

We invite proposals for **20-minute papers** from scholars at any stage of study or career. Please send abstracts of max. 250 words to the conference organiser, Dr Liv Robinson (O.Robinson.2@bham.ac.uk) and the METH Chair, Prof. Elisabeth Dutton (elisabeth.dutton@unifr.ch). If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch via email to discuss informally. **Proposal submission deadline: 9 December 2022.**

The conference will be held in person at the University of Birmingham. We are exploring the possibility of holding a session of papers delivered via Zoom: please let us know when you send your abstract if this is something that would interest you, and whether it would be a preference or a requirement.

For over forty years the Medieval English Theatre conferences have offered an opportunity for intellectual collaboration and the journal has presented some of the best scholarship that has resulted from the vibrant intellectual network that is METH.

More details and registration information will be posted here: [Medieval English Theatre](#)