

# Call for Papers

## ***Changing Histories: Rethinking the early modern history play***

King's College London, hosted by the London Shakespeare Centre

4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Confirmed plenary speakers:** Tracey Hill (Bath Spa University); Paulina Kewes (University of Oxford); and Emma Smith (University of Oxford)

**CFP deadline: 31 January 2019**



Detail from 'A True Chronology of all the Kings of England from Brute' (c.1635)

Critical accounts of the early modern “history play” have tended to use the classification of plays in Shakespeare’s First Folio to define the genre and align it with the dramatization of medieval English monarchical history. However, early modern dramatists, audiences, publishers, and readers looked far beyond these parameters. If our definition of the “history play” is expanded to incorporate a wider range of histories (including material that was believed to be historical), then the genre explodes both geographically and temporally. It would include, for example, classical history, biblical history, pre-Christian British history, European and Middle Eastern history, and recent history. This approach to the genre closely reflects how history was actually used, debated, and dramatized during the period, and draws attention to the connections and shared influences between plays engaging with very different historical subjects. It encourages a close examination of repertory patterns and evidence for lost plays (which have been overlooked in discussions of the history play) and raises crucial issues of reception, such as whether the agency for defining “history” ultimately lay with the individual spectators and readers of the plays. *King Lear* as an account of the lived past would appear very differently to a playgoer reliant on plays and ballads for their understanding for the past than it would to a reader of Camden’s sceptical *Britannia*.

Starting from this expanded definition of the “history play”, *Changing Histories* seeks to explore the application of the term “history” during the period, interrogate enduring critical views of historical drama, and examine the interconnections between texts representing a range of different pasts. One of the conference’s main objectives is to open up new critical approaches to early modern historical drama and encourage a productive exchange between theatre scholars and historians. As the list of possible approaches and topics below demonstrates, the conference welcomes an exciting and expansive range of responses.

We invite papers that examine history plays and/or ideas of history and historiography through a variety of approaches, including (but not limited to):

- The connections between history plays and non-dramatic texts, such as the influence of historiographical developments on the stage
- Intersections of history, myth, and fiction
- The influence of drama on perceptions of history
- The history play as part of theatrical repertoires and as a print genre
- The dramaturgy of staging the past
- Representations of the past in masques, royal entertainments, and civic pageants, and their influence on commercial drama
- The role of stationers in defining the history play
- The use of “lost plays” to reappraise the genre in repertory, print, and critical discourse
- Responses of early modern audiences and readers to historical drama and the question of who defined “the past”
- The popular and critical reception of the history play and the dominance of Shakespeare
- The usefulness of genre classifications and their problems

**To apply, please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short biography to the conference organizers, Dr Kim Gilchrist (University of Roehampton) and Dr Amy Lidster (King’s College London) at [changinghistories@gmail.com](mailto:changinghistories@gmail.com) by 31 January 2019.**

**A number of postgraduate and ECR bursaries will be available for covering conference registration fees and travel expenses. If you would like to apply, please submit an additional statement (of about 200–300 words), outlining how your research fits with the aims of the conference. We would particularly like to encourage BAME speakers and those who live outside the London area to apply.**

***Changing Histories* is generously supported by grants from the British Shakespeare Association, the Society for Renaissance Studies, and the London Shakespeare Centre. Find us online at <https://changinghistories.wordpress.com> and [@EarlyModernClio](https://twitter.com/EarlyModernClio)**

