



**Conference: Strangeness in Early Stuart Performances, 1603-1649  
Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, 3-5 Nov. 2016**

Keynote speakers

Lois Potter (University of Delaware)  
Susan Wiseman (Birkbeck, University of London)

Call for Papers

“[...] the last year I had an antimasque of boys; and therefore now devised that twelve women in the habit of hags, or witches, [...] should fill that part, not as a masque, but a spectacle of strangeness [...]”

(Ben Jonson, “The Masque of Queens,” *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 3:305)

Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Queens* (1609) is positioned at the beginning of a popular trend in English performative practices throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. While early Stuart society was riven by social, political and religious insecurities, Jacobean and Caroline performances partook in the search for and creation of cultural conformities. In the forty-six years spanning the reigns of James I and Charles I, a number of historical, political and socio-economic developments in England made it increasingly difficult to uphold perceived notions of selves, group identities and other(s). England’s role in the Thirty Years’ War, the expanding controversies between different forms of Protestantism, the emergent consumer society, the proliferation of political opinions in a burgeoning public realm, and the increasingly antagonistic factionism which would eventually lead to the outbreak of the civil wars – all of these created tensions that cut across the boundaries of classes, generations, and families. During these years, various performative practices make use of the notion of ‘strangeness’, of deviance from norms, in order to explore the shifting affiliations within English society. In plays, masques, ballads, and pamphlet plays, strangeness emerges as a category that upholds and transcends the binary of self and other, disclosing and questioning the increasingly complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that mark the early Stuart period. The people, things, and spaces marked as strange define and disrupt the texture of English society to which they as ‘strangers’ do and do not belong.

This conference proposes to discuss how performative practices explore notions of strangeness in and for early Stuart society. We invite papers of 30 minutes that engage with any aspect of strangeness across the range of performative practices from 1603 to 1649.

Papers could deal with, but are by no means limited to, the following topics:

- How is strangeness constructed in various early Stuart performative practices such as plays, masques, closet drama, ballads, and pamphlet plays?
- What are the ideological functions of settings and characters that are marked as strange?
- How do strange characters, objects, locales, and spaces serve to express and contain the cultural anxieties of early Stuart England?
- Which other categories beyond the established trinity of class, ethnicity and gender lend themselves to the negotiation of strangeness?

If you are interested in giving a paper at our conference, please send an abstract of no more than 200 words and a short biographical note to Joachim Frenk, Christine Moyrer, and Lena Steveker at [strangeness-conference@uni-saarland.de](mailto:strangeness-conference@uni-saarland.de). The deadline for abstracts is 27 May 2016. Information about the conference can be found online at [www.uni-saarland.de/strangeness](http://www.uni-saarland.de/strangeness). If you have any questions concerning the conference, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.