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### **Early modern scholars and their hobby-horses: contextualized readings of Shakespeare and his age**

The appearance and global availability of online databases like *EEBO (Early English Books Online)* or the *Lost Plays Database*, as well as other emerging online scholarly collaborative projects have significantly changed the field of Shakespearean and early modern scholarship. Not only has the corpus of information grown exponentially but also viewpoints are shifting, enabling a re-visitation of long established concepts, often resulting in a re-configuration of our knowledge on early modern drama and theatre. Most recently, David McInnis's *Shakespeare and Lost Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) has called our attention to how academic tradition, focusing on extant and canonical plays distorts our appreciation of the theatrical landscape of the age, by disregarding a large part of the given cultural context, on which we now have information from previously neglected sources. Similarly, Tiffany Stern emphasizes the significance of non-theatrical sources as contextual information on theatre and drama, confirming that cheap print offers large untapped sources for theatre historians, whereas repertory studies by Lucy Munro and others focus on collaboration rather than on individual authors in early modern theatre. Indeed, studying contexts and print products of different status and genre in the London cultural world around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries shows more and more interrelated networks between playwrights, printers, career writers of cheap verse and prose pamphlets, all aiming at producing fast-selling products, as was shown in my monograph on the early modern hobby-horse (*Shakespeare's Hobby-Horse and Early Modern Popular Culture*, Routledge, 2021). In my paper I will demonstrate how the interrelatedness of playhouse and cheap print products, as well as their shared iconography appear in the decades when William Shakespeare was an active agent in the London cultural world. I will also speak about how other non-canonical 'cultural day-laborers', then popular but now forgotten, like Nicholas Breton, George Wither and John Taylor brushed shoulders with Shakespeare, Jonson, and other canonical authors, metaphorically or literally. Such focus on the networks of early modern popular culture offers new insights in general as well as potential re-evaluations of canonical works.