

## *Judgment: A Comparative Performance History*

University of Lausanne, Faculté des Lettres (Departments of French and English)

13-14 May 2022

### **Description**

Can we learn how judge by watching plays, listening to orators, or reading the news? If judgment is understood nowadays as an intellectual quality, in the late medieval and early modern periods it was an acquired skill. You could obtain and refine this skill in a range of ways: by attending grammar school, by going to theatrical events, by listening to speeches, or by reading and writing poetry. Judgment was part of a larger culture of communication and performance, a culture which was social and transactional, and which iterated itself through a variety of forms of speech and public action. How can we, as researchers, recover and study the traces of this performative literary culture today?

This will be the overarching question guiding the two days of work that comprise “Judgment: A Comparative Performance History.” The event will take the form of a series of discussion-based workshops featuring a group of invited international scholars and the research teams of two FNS projects: *Médialittérature: Poétiques et pratiques de la communication publique en français, XV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles* (French, dir. Estelle Doudet) and *Theater and Judgment in Early Modern England* (English, dir. Kevin Curran).

*Médialittérature* (Estelle Doudet, Benedetta Salvati, Natalia Wawrzyniak) sets out to show how between 1450 and 1550 the scholarly ideal of the orator and the practice of eloquence became popular among diverse social and intellectual circles, ranging from amateur writers and ordinary readers to *literati* and members of the upper echelons of society. The project undertakes the first exhaustive study of three forms of performative literature (*medialiterature*) in French, all of which link poetic composition and public communication: verse historiography, occasional poetry, and political theater.

*Theater and Judgment in Early Modern England* (Kevin Curran, Patrick Durdel, Céline Magada) explores how plays and entertainments disseminated techniques of judgment among a broad audience of playgoers and readers in early modern period in England. In recovering these processes of transmission, the project aims to change received critical narratives about both the history of judgment and the sociology of early modern English theater.

These two projects have a number of common questions and concerns. They both enter cultural phenomena from specific national and linguistic locales into conversation with larger European contexts; they are both interested in exchanges between so-called “high culture” and vernacular culture; and they both undertake to rethink traditional scholarly narratives of literary history. With these points of intersection in mind, and with a view towards further enriching their

thinking by welcoming perspectives from invited international scholars, the two teams propose four broad discussion points around which the workshops will be organized.

- **Rhetoric, Eloquence, and Public Judgment**

What links existed between the knowledge of rhetoric, the practice of eloquence, and the construction of public judgment (educational contexts, professional milieus, cultural practices, individual experiences)?

- **The Structure of Judgment: Thinking, Doing, Listening, Speaking, Writing**

Eloquence and judgment seem at first glance like qualities which are active and receptive, respectively. The former involving deliberate thought, composition, publication, and/or performance; the latter involving listening, processing knowledge, and decision. But in what contexts and through which agents might these qualities work together and interact?

- **Communication and Media: Textual and Oral Cultures of Judgment**

What forms of communication and persuasion were deployed in what type of media (orality, manuscript, print, etc.)?

- **Recovering Judgment: Archives, Methods, Approaches**

What do different approaches and methodologies afford us in our quest to understand performative literary cultures and judgment in Europe in the period c.1450 to 1700.

## **Workshop Organization**

The aim of the workshops is to reflect collaboratively on these four broad topics/questions, comparing different linguistic, generic, and historical corpora with a view towards discerning the multiple ways in which the “performance of judgment” took shape in premodern Europe. Our hope is to open new avenues for research through these discussions.

Each of the topics/questions above will have a dedicated workshop. The two which take place on Friday will run 1.5 hours each, the two on Saturday will run 1 hour each. The workshops will be set into motion by a series of **short interventions (5-10 minutes)** and **responses** presented by members of each research team and at least one invited guest. We will all participate in the general discussions that ensue.

Guests are invited to choose the workshop(s) in which they would like to present an example of their research (2 workshops maximum). Please let the organizers know by **1 May**. Please note that the language of the workshops will be French and/or English; guest are free to use the language most relevant to their research.