ABSTRACTS

‘Renaissance Footprints: The Material Trace in Print Culture’
Andrew Gordon (Aberdeen)
This paper explores the neglected meanings of the footprint, a cultural form whose ‘embeddedness' anthropologists have associated with located forms of knowledge. The rich fabric of devotional and communal symbolisms that late Medieval Europe invested in the footprint took on new significance with the rise of print, and would becoming an important object within reformation print culture. Exploring the metaphors of the footprint as appropriated and contested in the products of the late sixteenth century press, suggests new ways of engaging with the material trace in early modern poetry.

‘Flow and Fire in Early Modern Drama: The cultural geography of the hearth’
Julie Sanders (Newcastle)
My talk will use the site and space of the household fireplace as a starting point and as a means to think through the importance of fuel and energy cultures in the early modern period. I am interested in the mobility of resources and natural materials and the stories that can be told through an attention to the movement of coal and wood from the regions to the expanding metropolis. Shakespearean texts such as The Merry Wives of Windsor and the Henry IV plays and Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside and Michaelmas Term are placed alongside less familiar plays such as Chapman's May Day and Barclay's The Lovesick King to trace the presence, operations, and meanings of Newcastle coal and Kentish firewood in early modern drama. The theoretical and critical intersection of early modern food studies, material history and the spatial and geographic turn in recent early modern scholarship will (hopefully) be explored en route.

‘Moving Media, Tactical Publics: The English Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England.’
Patricia Fumerton (Santa Barbara)
This talks draws on Fumerton’s forthcoming book by the same name, ‘Moving Media, Tactical Publics: The English Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England,’ in tackling a transient, multi-media, and mass-marketed artefact of the early modern period, which was also geographically, aesthetically, emotionally, and formally moving and used tactically. Employing Assemblage Theory and the theories of Tactical Media and Making Publics, Fumerton grapples with the multifaceted, protean nature of this most popular of early modern cultural forms—literally the most published and consumed artefact of the early modern period. Her talk concludes with a case study of a rare and unique broadside ballad of the 1640s that illustrates the book’s thesis about the impact of moving media and use of tactical publics: a ballad written in the midst of England’s Civil War, ‘Alas poore Trades-Men what shall we do?’