



## Call for Papers

### *English and Irish Women Writers of the Long Eighteenth Century A Commemorative Conference*

**Pécs, 24-25 November, 2023**

The Department of English Literatures and Cultures in association with the Irish Studies Research Centre at the University of Pécs invite you to attend a commemorative conference on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the birth of Margaret Cavendish in 2023 and the 300th anniversary of the birth of Frances Sheridan in 2024.

We invite proposals for papers on a broad range of topics related to the conference theme. We also welcome approaches which deal with reception, or address transnational and cross-cultural subjects.

**Margaret Cavendish** (1623-1673) was an iconic public personage of the Restoration period. Derided by contemporaries as a “mad, conceited, ridiculous woman” (in renowned diarist Pepys’ words), the Duchess of Newcastle has been the subject of increased scholarly interest in the last couple of decades. Given the scarcity of published women writers in the era, Cavendish’s literary output was truly incredible both in terms of quantity and versatility. She made her first appearance in print with a collection of poetic pieces and essays (*Poems and Fancies*, 1653), produced an autobiography (*A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*, 1656), epistles (*CCXI Sociable Letters*, 1664), philosophical treatises (*Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, 1666), not to mention her work as a prolific experimental playwright with two printed collections of plays (*Plays*, 1662; *Plays, Never Before Printed*, 1668), which were never put on stage in her own lifetime. Her most famous work is *The Blazing World* (1666), a unique generic hybrid containing elements of romance, utopia, and drama. Recent scholarship recognises Cavendish’s achievement from many perspectives: some see her as a biographical and literary exile, some focus on her hidden literary debts and her unique techniques of mixing genres, while others are more interested in her self-representation techniques and her role as a public female intellectual involved in the philosophical debates of her time.



**Frances Sheridan** (1724-1766) was born in Dublin as the child of an Anglo-Irish Protestant family. She married actor and theatre director Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788) and in 1758 the couple moved to London permanently. Her literary career began with the writing of novels, the first of which was *Eugenia and Adelaide* (published only in 1791). In London she was introduced to Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and showed him her manuscript. Richardson encouraged her to pursue the writing of fiction. The influence of Richardson’s *Pamela* can be seen in her most successful novel, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761) which, like its model, is also written in diary form. Later she turned to the genre of drama and had two of her plays premiered in Drury Lane Theatre by David Garrick’s Company: *The Discovery* (1763) and *The Dupe* (1764). A third piece, *A Trip to Bath* (1765) did not make it to the stage at that time but English playwright Elizabeth Kuti (1969) adapted and re-titled it as *The Whisperers* in 1999; thus refashioned, the drama went into production by Rough Magic Theatre Company in Ireland. Frances and Thomas Sheridan’s son, Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), who later became a widely acclaimed playwright, wrote his first works drawing inspiration from his mother’s literary achievement.



Topics can include, but are not limited to:

- the works of Margaret Cavendish
- the life and writings of Frances Sheridan
- any aspect of women writers' history in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century
- women and the rise of the novel
- feminist approaches to the works of women writers in the long eighteenth century
- the reception of English and Irish female authors of the long eighteenth century.

Proposals of 250 words for 20-minute papers and a short CV (no more than 150 words) should be sent to Professor Mária Kurdi ([kurdi.maria@pte.hu](mailto:kurdi.maria@pte.hu)) by **31 May 2023**. Besides individual papers, we welcome proposals for joint panels of three papers. Please include a brief rationale for the panel along with an abstract and CV for each presenter.

We also invite proposals for complete panels and roundtables. Those wishing to organise them are kindly asked to contact the Organising Committee at [maczelka.csaba@pte.hu](mailto:maczelka.csaba@pte.hu) by 30 April 2023. A selection of the papers is planned to be published.

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