

“New Generations in ‘The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text’”

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Organizers: Cyrus Mulready (SUNY New Paltz) and Kurt Schreyer (U of Missouri-St. Louis)

Seminar Abstracts

Rebecca Ann Bach, University of Alabama-Birmingham

“Their conceits have wings” or Quills Make Humans Fly

This paper is an attempt to think through the materiality of Renaissance writing with quills to the birds and bird-human relations from which the quills derived. I will begin to answer some questions: How might the metaphorical connections of voice and imagination to flight be embedded in the complexity of Renaissance bird-human relations? Is it possible to use cyborg theory to read writing with a quill as enabling a winged human?; and how useful is animal studies theory to reading Renaissance bird-human relations? Also, what do Shakespeare’s texts have to say about the Renaissance transition from warrior to humanist masculine identities as figured in the uses of feathered arrows and quills? I will show how in Renaissance England and Europe, the practices associated with writing connected writing with birds, specifically with bird beaks and wings. The connections are both material and metaphorical, and they point in many directions: to the ubiquity of birds in the “nature/culture” of early seventeenth century England (Bruno Latour); to the easy distinctions humans made between kinds of birds; to the powers of birds that humans wished to emulate: song, voice, flight; to the analogical link between the violence of war and the violence enabled by words. We can see all of these directions pointed to in writing manuals and in Shakespeare’s texts.

Erika Boeckeler, Northeastern University

Rewriting the Family Script: Handwriting and the Royal English Family

A surprising number of references to handwriting occur in the correspondence between Henry VIII’s children and their parents. In mid-sixteenth century England, a quiet revolution in penmanship marked a generational shift: Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward were the first royal English children trained exclusively in the italic hand. This paper argues that the children used this shift in Tudor family handwriting practices to establish physical and psychological family resemblances in an unorthodox and volatile royal family structure, whose mothers Henry had forcibly divorced or beheaded and replaced with stepmothers. Conversation about handwriting and strategic manipulation of letterforms became a means of generating intimacy.

Claire M. L. Bourne, Virginia Commonwealth University

Dramatic Typography and the Shakespearean Text

This paper focuses on approaches to dividing the text of printed plays in sixteenth-century England. It suggests that experiments with pieces of symbolic type (especially the pilcrow) in plays printed during the first half of the century show stationers endeavoring to establish conventions for dramatic *mise-en-page*. The practice of marking the beginning of a new section of *text* with a pilcrow was a well-established scribal convention by the turn of the sixteenth century. But the question of what constituted a section or “paragraph” of a *playtext* had yet to be answered. I argue that stationers deployed pilcrows, as well as fleurons and manicules, to make the formal qualities of early English plays legible to readers. For example, Richard Pynson’s edition of *Everyman* (c. 1519) was designed to be read as a single debate, as evidenced by the use of a pilcrow to mark the start of every new speech; John Walley and William Copland’s edition of *A Play of Love* (1550) was designed to be read as a sequence of scenes performed by different configurations of characters, with fleurons marking each new speaker, pilcrows marking each new speech, and most notably, manicules marking the start of each new unit of action; and finally, William Griffith’s edition of *Gorbuduc* (1565) was designed to be read—because styled with pilcrows marking only the descriptions of the dumb shows preceding each act—as a classical five-act tragedy. The paper concludes by reading Edward Allde’s use of printer’s ornaments to divide the text of Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) as a further experiment in making dramatic form legible to readers.

John Green, University of British Columbia

Shame and Injury in Performance and Print of *The Comedy of Errors*

In this essay I work through an analysis that favors, perhaps strangely, both psychoanalysis and textual criticism equally -- as a way to interrogate the *generative* possibilities that the “textual turn” still enables in queer, disability, and performance studies. By using these more recent discourses that are indebted to “Materiality” and its resolve to confront, or *look at*, a text from a radically different perspective, I suggest a critical mode that queers causal pathways and temporal correlations specifically so that alternatives might emerge to that crucial choice (near-ultimatum) de Grazia and Stallybrass gave us between either looking “through” or “at” a text. In this paper I broadly suggest ways that early modern dramatic productions conceptualize and represent human bodies that are wounded, scarred and deformed, and how, generally, these bodies can help us comprehend the state of the embodied playtext. My contribution to this seminar focuses on the jailed, bound body of Antipholus of Ephesus, which is indistinguishable from his twin’s mirrored image except for the fact that it bears a hidden scar that stems from

prior service in war and that the play discloses only in the fifth act. Psychoanalysis is crucial here (in fleshing out the evidence of penetration) as I illustrate the twin's marginal position in Ephesus, reading the narrative's insistence on his vacillation between pride and shame and retention and purgation. I relate the scarred, mistaken, and queered body of the resident Antipholus to the 1623 Folio text of the play, where erroneous typographical notations of the speaking Antipholus mar its textual body. I suggest that *one* body, in its relative and relational configuration of familial twinship – Antipholus of Ephesus's - is *twice* displaced by another (his brother's) on the stage and on the page.

Jessica Rosenberg, University of Pennsylvania

Unloosing Men's Minds: Miscellaneity and the Politics of Material Reading

This paper examines the complex function of materiality in “The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text” as both an incitement and a constraint on reading – a starting point as well as a limit. In particular, I examine the place of formal and semantic multiplicity in the version of materiality that the authors articulate, asking how the question of readerly freedom has been historically and theoretically tied to miscellaneity and different genres of textual collection. Focusing on the central place of the vegetable kingdom in early modern articulations of textual materiality, I begin to sketch a genealogy of this association between formal miscellaneity and readerly liberty, in hope of understanding de Grazia and Stallybrass' method in the context of particular ecologies, histories, and systems of cultural production and consumption.