ERROR IN EARLY MODERN STUDIES, SESSION ONE
SEMINAR LEADER: ADAM ZUCKER, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

ABSTRACTS

Avi Mendelson, Brandeis University

The Comedy of Errors provides literary critics with an opportunity to ply their secondary trade as amateur psychiatrists. Not only can we locate the text's "anxieties" and fix its "problematics," *Errors* lets us bore into its major psychotic breaks. C.L. Barber's vague claim that the play is "a crazy situation" has morphed into Ruth Novo's more clinical assessment: "a schizophrenic nightmare" in which "identities are lost, split, engulfed, hallucinated, imploded." Whether Novo either is authorized to diagnose schizophrenia or understands the embodied experience of the disease enough to use it as a flip metaphor, I shall never discover. I'm curious, though: Does the play believe in schizophrenia (or, to be less anachronistic, "madness")? Often *Errors* blurs the mad/sane binary, both binding and gagging the crackpot doctor instead of the madman and fashioning "madness" as merely, yet eerily error.

Rather than diagnose the play, I argue that *Errors* ruthlessly critiques the diagnostic process by both rapidly multiplying madness' forms and dislocating it from particular bodies. Drawing from medical books and rhetoric manuals, this essay illustrates how the play's madnesses – demonic influence, waking dreams, and misidentification, among others – are matters of epistemological uncertainty and linguistic errancy rather than mental illness.

Alice Leonard, University of Warwick

What is 'Error' in *The Comedy of Errors*?

This paper will argue that the textual error in the earliest printed version of *The Comedy of Errors* reformulates the comic error of the play. In the First Folio the most prominent and confusing textual error centres around the characters' names, especially those given to the twin Dromios and Antipholi. Pragmatically, the function of the speech prefixes should be to distinguish between the identical twins but this is precisely what they fail to do. Both Antipholi are abbreviated to 'E. Anti'. In a play about muddled and mixed identity the twins effectively become the same person by mistake.

The Dromios and Antipholi are dramatic tools that produce the kind of confusion in the plot which also occurs in print. The comic theme of error—the confusion between wife and husband, the just missed-meetings, the strangely coherent conversations with the wrong twin—alters how we should interpret the play's textual errors. This paper argues that there is a direct relation between the incorrect printing of the speech prefixes of the two sets of twins and the dramatised slips, mistakes and confusions between them.

We must, therefore, reassess the category of error and the editorial practice of emendation that (silently) expands the speech prefixes to correct the 'error'.

Katherine Hunt The Queen's College, University of Oxford

Computation, combination, and error

In this paper I use an error to think about the task of comparison. The paper begins by comparing *The Comedy of Errors* to some work by Samuel Beckett, taking as the point of comparison the idea of permutation and combination in a mechanised, dehumanised system. Can the structure of Shakespeare's play be compared usefully to the exhaustive and mechanical combinations that pepper, and shape, Beckett's plays and non-dramatic work?

Probably not, as it turns out. This comparison is ultimately an error, but it sheds light on how comparison operates. *The Comedy of Errors* forms a frame through which to consider comparison: it is, after all, a play in which resolution is deferred until the sets of twins are finally compared in the final scene. I use two post-war Shakespearean critics, Jan Kott and Harry Levin, to interrogate what happens when we compare. Whereas Kott performed an audacious writing-together of Shakespeare and Beckett, Levin saw comparison as a way to shore up the value of the humanities in a new world into which mechanised computing threatened to intrude. Where does error lie in the comparative enterprise? In this paper, wandering and error-filled, I examine comparison itself.

Cordelia Zukerman   University of Michigan

"Reading and Error in *Twelfth Night*"

One of the characteristics of Spenser's Error is failing to digest reading material properly: among the many things she vomits are undigested books and papers. This essay examines the relationship between reading and error in early modern England, focusing on Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. It analyzes Malvolio's failures to "digest" the things he sees and reads, asking: what characterizes Malvolio's errors in reading? What might successful "digestion" of reading material look like? And what are the stakes in Shakespeare's creation of a character whose interpretive strategies are proved to be so wrong?

Malvolio's position as a steward does not, on its own, make him incapable of earning Olivia's love or advancing himself through cross-class marriage: the play depicts and even celebrates a cross-class marriage between Maria and Sir Toby Belch, and a purported one between Olivia and Cesario. This essay argues that Malvolio's mistake lies not in thinking that he can advance himself, but in thinking that he is authorized to do so by what he has read and seen. Moreover, Malvolio's significant errors in reading strongly correlate to his inability to raise his social position: it is not simply that he misinterprets

the letter and the situation, it is that his misguided interpretive strategies demonstrate his unworthiness for social advancement.

Walter Cannon   Central College

Abused, Baffled, and Crushed: Epistolary Error in *Twelfth Night*

Twelfth Night with its one-off, off-handed invitation to the audience to make of this "what [we] will" seems to encourage error and misunderstanding of all kinds. Borrowing insights from Alan Stewart (*Shakespeare's Letters*) about the function of letter-writing protocols on and off-stage, I want to focus on *Twelfth Night* and its fascination with letters as linguistic and dramatic sites for error. Rather than using letters in an Erasmian way to authenticate the veracity of a putative author, Shakespeare's use of letters in this play seems rather to exploit the possibility that the letter writer is absolutely disconnected from the letter. Indeed, all the letters in *Twelfth Night* (Stewart notes three, but I wish to add a fourth), suffer transmission errors as they are read out and reinterpreted by someone other than the letter writer. But it's more complicated than that.

Kimberly Huth   California State Dominguez Hills

"No Remedy": Reaching Closure through Non-Resolution in Early Modern Drama

This paper will explore what happens when a play ends not because an error has been resolved but because an error *cannot* be resolved. In particular, it will examine the role of the concept of "remedy" in early modern comedies and the formulaic deployment of the phrase "no remedy" in response to disappointing or unwanted turns of events. This idea exists at the intersection of the discourses of medicine, law, spirituality, and politics, shaped by the competing demands of personal desire and expedient compromise. Its frequent use in comedy indicates that dramatic closure derives from acceptance of undesirable circumstances rather than the correction of errors. After demonstrating the cultural and generic valences of "remedy" in comedy and, specifically, marriage plots in which children lack parental consent, this paper will then argue that this formula of no(n) resolution was ripe for manipulation in tragedy and "problem" plays such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

Steve Mentz   St. John's University

Error and Nature in *The Winter's Tale*

The famous exchange between Perdita and Polixenes about "great creating Nature" in *The Winter's Tale* (4.4) hinges on questions of stability, change, and identity. I propose

reconsidering this exchange, and also the larger romance-frame of the play, as an exercise in managing errancy. The central issue under debate, here and elsewhere in the play, is the extent to which an object can change and also maintain a semi-fixed identity. Bringing together practical considerations of error in early modern maritime cartography and reconsiderations of "nature" in twenty-first century ecotheory, I suggest that this play's "nature" represents a dynamism that strains notions of stable identity but, perhaps, may not entirely destroy these fictions. Looking also at the play's most drastic representations of loss – the shipwreck / bear scene – and recovery – the statue scene – I'll attempt to articulate a model of romance errancy that is also a theory of how human beings embed themselves in the natural world.

Donovan Sherman   Seton Hall University

Cymbeline and the Dramaturgy of Conspiracy

Errors accumulate rapidly in *Cymbeline*: misjudgments, apprehensive preparations, paranoid pronouncements, fatal misprisions. This paper proposes that these errors as a whole comprise a *conspiracy*, in the sense of a lurking series of plots, real or not, that loom over the more legible "plot" of the narrative—and also create that narrative. Such a doubleness of conspiracy as a mode of fiction and investigation into fiction has long supplied a critical trope in modernist and postmodernist studies. But Shakespeare has largely been overshadowed by more contemporary case studies. I aim to rethink scenes of conspiracy in *Cymbeline*, and in early modern literature more generally, as not only exemplary of psychological or political conditions but also as components of a dramaturgical mode. What might be gained in rethinking the play as structured by a poetics of conspiracy, and furthermore as a reflection of our own critical practices? How can we adapt the extensive literature on historical conspiracy into epistemological inquiry? *Cymbeline* invites, perhaps demands, a conspiratorial bond with its audience, and its incessant productions and elisions of knowledge nearly coerce the close reader into replicating its absurdly suspicious vision. We are asked to partake in error in order to decode it.

Scott Schofield Huron   University College, Western University

Heraldry can seem impenetrable. Begin a lengthy discussion on the meaning of chevrons, gules, sables, and the remaining encyclopedia of specialized heraldic terms, and your audience may quickly grow tired. Seen as such, the arcane symbols of an arcane language deserve to be exiled to the arcane margins of the past. But heraldry mattered immensely to Shakespeare and his contemporaries: a heraldic armorial, charge or badge was not simply a static mix of signs used to record family pedigree, but also a contentious site for representing identity. Early English printed books on heraldry suggest as much, for in them we encounter lengthy forays on the myriad ways of reading heraldic signs, arguments between antiquarians over individual cases, and even instances of readers supplementing and correcting the authorized accounts of famous arms with manuscript

annotations. Seen in this context, early modern heraldry was an iterative discourse subject to constant revision.

How might our understanding of heraldry in Shakespeare's plays and poems change when examined alongside the manuscripts, imprints, and other media devoted to the subject in this period? How does Shakespeare's use of heraldry as image, metaphor, or even gesture change when we think of the subject as unfixed, that is, when we see heraldry as part of a visual semantics prone to error? This paper will address these and other questions by drawing from a range of relevant examples from Shakespeare's plays and poems in conjunction with material evidence on heraldry from the period.

Jeanette Tran   Drake University

On Windbags: Idle Uses of Air in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The focus of my paper is a social and cognitive miscue: the error of talking too much. Windbag, gasbag, blowhard, bloviator, and pettifogger are all words that can be used to describe individuals who make idle use of air, or in other words, talk too much with little reason to do so. In learning to read Shakespeare, we are trained to focus on the significance of individual words and the intricate ways in which these words are arranged. How then should we approach characters whose (over)use of words signals to us that what they have to say is not only insignificant, but perhaps erroneous? My paper begins by examining the original windbag, the leather bag of wind Aeolus gifts to Ulysses in the *Odyssey*. Ulysses' men's idle chatter (speculation over what's in the bag) leads to the disastrous releasing of the winds, which blows the men further back, extending their journey. In my attempt to explore the intersection of words, weather, and error in the early modern period, I turn to Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* a play that features one of Shakespeare's most lovable windbags, Gonzalo, heated arguments about the value of possessing and wielding language, and Prospero, a man who creates a tempest to set into motion a revenge plot that concludes with the statement that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance."

Janine Harper   University of Toronto

My paper examines the portrayal of visual and testimonial error in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Brome and Heywood's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, two seventeenth-century witchcraft plays. These plays ask audiences to consider how one might distinguish the supernatural from the merely fantastical in report—not by questioning the existence of witches, which both plays indeed take for granted, but by examining the tenuous, potentially erroneous relationship between individuals' experiences of the supernatural and the reports that they produce of these experiences. Shakespeare and Brome and Heywood examine the problem of witchcraft as a rhetorical effect: their plays are eminently concerned with the descriptive practices of

those characters who see—or believe that they see, or wish to see—supernatural spectacles. In both plays, those individuals who discover and prosecute witchcraft often seem to be the ones who most readily create rhetorical fantasies of those supernatural spectacles that they claim to find. Whereas this creative process is largely solipsistic and is offered up to spectators' judgement in Shakespeare, his successors show an increasing interest in the methods by which witnesses, in persuasive testimony, convince audiences to adopt their perspectives and interpretive practices.

Nancy Simpson-Younger   Luther College

Diagnosing the Sleepwalker in *Macbeth*

"This disease is beyond my practice," says the doctor to the gentlewoman as they watch the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth (5.1.49).[1] First performed in 1606, the sleepwalking scene stages a (failed) attempt to diagnose the ailing queen by assessing her speech and actions during sleep. But what did it mean to diagnose a sleeper, from an early modern perspective? Could an observer really sound a sleeper's body, mind, and soul with equal precision? While the doctor in *Macbeth* shies away from these questions, saying "I think, but dare not speak" (5.1.69), seventeenth-century observers were asking them repeatedly in the aftermath of the Richard Haydocke affair. By April 1605, Haydocke had delivered hour-and-a-half long sermons, seemingly in his sleep, before audiences from Oxford students to Salisbury clergymen to James I. By reading *Macbeth* alongside Haydocke's *Oneirologia* (20 November 1605), I argue that the act of trying to diagnose a sleeper highlights early modern uncertainties about the scope and behavior of the rational soul, which may or may not be directing unconscious movements and speech. Ultimately, this uncertainty about the soul's agency gestures toward the need to reserve judgment about another person's actions—affirming that God alone is able to assess both conscious and unconscious behavior.

Mary Metzger Western Washington University

Negative Knowledge and Equivocation: A Reading of Epistemic Injustice in King Lear

I will consider negative knowledge and equivocation in King Lear as responses to epistemic injustice. "Negative knowledge" refers to metacognitive understanding of what not to do and is a crucial "non-viable heuristic" that strengthens one's bonds to and efficacy within a community (Gartmeier 89). Such knowledge entails a sense of self and context, raising the question of how epistemic power relates to justice as equity and as fairness to others with whom one shares "a common life" (Aristotle NE 5.6.25).

---

[1] Quotations from *Macbeth* are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al, second edition. They will be cited parenthetically.

Equivocation as mental reservation similarly entails questions of self, other, truth and knowledge in the negotiation of community (Butler 143). Lear's daughters employ negative knowledge and equivocation in responding to epistemic injustice implicit in their father's demand for love. In their exchanges with Lear, I will argue, Shakespeare presents epistemic injustice as the a priori discounting of a subject's capacity as knower, invites us to consider silence and semantic lack as means of acquiring negative knowledge, and suggests that equivocation as a form of assertive speech depends on senses of error.

SAA 2015

ERROR IN EARLY MODERN STUDIES, SESSION TWO

Seminar Leader: ADAM ZUCKER, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

ABSTRACTS

Nick Moschovakis

False premises and fallacies in Shakespeare

I will consider Shakespeare's handling of several key "topics of invention" from the classical traditions of rhetoric and dialectic: especially cause and effect, antecedent and consequent, and conjunct or adjunct. Much as these "common topics" (literally, "common places") of argument can be deployed in an oration or disputation with more or less valid and persuasive results, so they can be employed effectively or ineffectively in a dramatic action, to their user's profit or loss. In *Merchant,* for example, Morocco comes to grief by arguing that "Never so rich a gem/ Was set in worse than gold"—that no prize as highly valued as Portia could come as a consequence of choosing a lead or a silver object.

Modern criticism has typically regarded such mistakes as signifying (either to other characters, or to Shakespeare's presumed audience) that a character is captive to a larger error—beholden to *false premises.* The premises present themselves variously as flawed moral assumptions, political positions, discursive and ideological constructions, expressions of psychological formations, and so on, according to the theoretical inclinations of the critic expounding them. What happens if we instead approach failures of deliberation as, in the first place, just that: *fallacies,* or weak links in an argument?

The distinction between a false premise and a fallacy is at times a subtle one; it can depend on how the critic chooses to analyze a speaker's implied dialectical argument (by extrapolating more formal from less formal reasoning, and especially by inferring the role of suppressed premises). Yet it is an extremely significant distinction. It not only informs the difference between a revelation of character and a mere lapse of critical judgment; it also can further clarify how certain basic dialectical and rhetorical "topics" contributed to early modern dramatic innovations, and specifically to Shakespeare's ways of presenting dissension and agreement as arising from dynamics of probable inference and imperfect understanding.

Lauren Robertson   Washington University in St. Louis

"Most probable that so she died": The Evidence of Spectacle in *Antony and Cleopatra*

In the final lines of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Caesar enters to the evidence of Cleopatra's suicide; with it, he pieces together the cause of her death. The scene is peculiar not because Caesar misrepresents any facet of Cleopatra's death, but simply because it is redundant: moments before his entrance, the spectators of the play see for themselves the very spectacle to which Caesar points as he constructs, with the material evidence available to him, his narrative of Cleopatra's death. Why does Shakespeare end the play with this scene, and how does it revise, for spectators, the spectacle it seeks to explain?

Using post-Reformation evidentiary procedure in ecclesiastical and common law courts, I will explore in this paper *Antony and Cleopatra's* interrogation of the place of material evidence, even when made part of a coherent and factually true narrative, within the affective witnessing of spectacle on the stage. The evidence Caesar links to Cleopatra's suicide—"a vent of blood," "something blown," "an aspic's trail"—is both tonal and insignificant, rendering in its very invisibility to spectators the theatrical spectacle they have already witnessed as just beyond the bounds of sight. The result of this deliberate juxtaposition of spectacle and evidentiary fact-finding, I will argue, paradoxically reveals Caesar's correct conclusion as a failure of knowledge, one that points to, but is unable to capture, the full narrative of Cleopatra's spectacular death.

James P. Bednarz Long Island University

Shakespeare in the Theater of Quotation: Bad Evidence for the Late Dating of *Twelfth Night*

Evidence that Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Dekker quoted each other's performed drama in contemporaneous critiques of their interrelated plays during the Poets' War supplies crucial information about Shakespeare's artistic evolution at the turn of the seventeenth century. Capturing a ridiculous phrase from another playwright's recently staged drama became at this time a source of considerable comic entertainment that both united London's public and private theaters and divided them in competitive alliances. By focusing on these instances of theatrical self-reflexivity, scholars have uncovered Shakespeare's involvement in the period's most compelling debate on the nature and purpose of dramatic representation--a "throwing about of brains," as he terms it in *Hamlet*. The technique of historical intertextuality is nevertheless recurrently undermined by false identifications of the linguistic parallels on which its practice depends. Indeed, the problem is so daunting for this methodology that some scholars have even dismissed "internal evidence" of this kind as being wholly unreliable. While acknowledging the benefits that stem from the study of historical contextualization, this paper suggests that our current understanding of when *Twelfth Night* was first staged is largely based on the erroneous assumption that in it (at 3.1.57-8) Shakespeare applauds Dekker's mockery of Jonson's clichéd diction in *Satiromastix* (1.2.134-6, 1.2.186-8, and 5.2.324-7). Since

Satiromastix was produced by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe sometime between August and November of 1601, it follows, according to this argument, that *Twelfth Night* could not possibly have been staged before the second half of that year. A re-examination of the evidence contradicts that assumption and places the play's composition earlier in the year. This minor change has, I believe, major consequences both for our comprehension of Shakespeare's critical dialogue with Jonson and for our knowledge of the evolving shape of his career.

Michael West Columbia University

"Inexplicable Dumb Shows" and Communities of Ignorance

This essay considers the implications for early modern playgoing and theatrical practice of Hamlet's claim that dumb shows are "inexplicable." Internal evidence from a range of early modern plays, I argue, substantiates Hamlet's claim: audiences, or at least portions of audiences (Hamlet's "groundlings"?), often simply did not understand what was happening during dumb shows. As a theatrical technique that seems intended to communicate but so often fails to do so (nearly every dumb show is followed by a verbal explanation, and some are even preceded by one as well), the dumb show lays bare the potential divergence between theater's presentational and representational functions: what a performance does, and what a performance represents.

Though a reading of both *Hamlet*'s dumb show and the early-20th century critical controversy surrounding the dumb show (specifically, the question of whether Claudius was watching the dumb show and whether he understood what it meant), this essay suggests that early modern playmakers often deploy this device of confusion—the dumb show—to divide an audience into a group of "insiders" who understand what is going on and "outsiders" who do not. The dumb show, in short, generates specific kinds of temporary communities in early modern playhouses that can be grounded in either a common ignorance or a common knowledge.

Zachary Lesser University of Pennsylvania

Conscience Doth Make Errors

While researching a chapter in my book, *Hamlet After Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text*, I noticed that Hamlet's line about conscience in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy is one of the most frequently misquoted lines in Shakespeare. Repeatedly we are told that Hamlet says: "Thus conscience *doth* [instead of *does*] make cowards of us all."

Since 1800, the misquotation composes a high proportion of all usages of the line in the Google Books corpus, regularly about a third and often close to half of all instances:

This Google Ngram records "conscience *doth* make cowards" as a percentage of all instances of both the correct and the incorrect quotation. [*conscience doth make cowards* / (*conscience doth make cowards + conscience does make cowards*).[1]

The error is made all over the internet, as in this example from Yahoo! Answers[2]:

---

[1] Unfortunately, the results are case-sensitive, since Google Ngrams cannot combine case-insensitive searches with compositions/formulas. Running the same formula with capital C's yields an even higher percentage, for some reason. Running the same formula but adding "Thus" at the beginning yields a somewhat lower percentage, perhaps because people are more accurate when quoting the line in full?

[2] https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20110306135138AAf7vmH

This example will make most of us laugh, since the error is compounded by the idea that the line appears in *Macbeth* and by the earnest response that interprets it as if spoken by Lady Macbeth.

But the same error is made by some of the most sophisticated readers of Shakespeare in the history of criticism, including editors who were paying minute attention to the text in an attempt to establish accurately the words that Shakespeare actually wrote. Both Samuel Johnson and Edmond Malone, good candidates for the two greatest Shakespeareans of the eighteenth century, get the line wrong.

How can we account for the persistence of this error, across time, across educational divides, and across the boundary between "ordinary" and "professional" readers and quoters of Shakesepare? I'll attempt to provide some answers.

Julian Lamb – Chinese University of Hong Kong

Towards a Grammar of "Seems" in *Hamlet*

There might appear to be little incentive in flogging this dead horse: the concept of seeming in *Hamlet*. In a too much loved episode, Hamlet chides the world of Elsinore for feigning sorrow, and announces emphatically, "I know not 'seems'." "Seems" here is synonymous with dissimulation; it is distinguished by Hamlet from that which really is; and "that which really is" (as so many critics have argued) is here identified as an emotional, or cognitive, or psychological inwardness. This kind of seeming has attracted enormous critical interest, and I remain sceptical as to whether the world could genuinely benefit from further commentary upon it. My aim will therefore be quite different: to show that there are other quite different forms of seeming in the play. I hope to achieve this by showing that there are other quite different uses of the word "seems." For example: "this goodly

frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory." "Seems" here is not dissimulation, but is the name that Hamlet gives to his own unique perception of the world – a perception which is somehow truthful to his emotional and psychological condition. A word which can be used both to accuse the world of inauthenticity and to revere the self as formulating its own authentic vision of the world is surely one whose uses are worth looking at in some detail.

In all this, I aim to uncover part of what Wittgenstein would have called the "grammar" of the word "seems" and its cognates: the totality of their uses in a language. In so doing, I would like to suggest that "seems" plays the role of a grammatical pivot between our capacity for insight and our vulnerability to error. What such analyses perhaps inevitably expose is the certainty we invest in the grammars of words whose role it is to help us to negotiate our uncertain relations with the world around us.

Kent R. Lehnhof   Chapman University

Isaac's Error: Blessing the Wrong Boy in *Jacob and Esau*

The anonymous Biblical drama *Jacob and Esau* (ca. 1558) gives dramatic life to a perplexing patriarchal mistake wherein Isaac gives the birthright blessing to his younger son, Jacob, instead of his older son, Esau. A great many Tudor commentators found this episode unsettling and faulted Jacob for encouraging his father's error. The stageplay, however, exonerates the younger twin by suggesting throughout that he is the rightful heir--far more deserving that his faithless brother. Such an approach is theatrically satisfying but theologically tricky. Instead of casting blame on Jacob (for deceiving his father) or on Isaac (for blessing the wrong boy), the play tends to cast blame on God (for failing to ensure that the right twin was born first). In the epilogue, the play tackles this theological concern head-on, provocatively professing--not that God is above error--but that error is one of His primary modes of governance. In this way, the English stageplay echoes a Brazilian proverb, upholding the idea that "God writes straight using crooked lines."

Chloe Wheatley   Trinity College

"'I am confuted': Zeal's Conviction in *Measure for Measure* and *Bartholomew Fair*

This paper will examine acts of dramatic argument that culminate in forceful correction as they occur in selected texts of the early modern period, including Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. What connections or contrasts might we establish between Shakespeare and Jonson in terms of how they represent the nature of confutation? I will focus upon the zeal of Shakespeare's Isabella and upon the Zeal of Jonson's play, with particular emphasis on how Jonson in Act 5 of *Bartholomew Fair* represents the dispute between the puppet Dionysius and the Puritan from Banbury. Are

confutation's violent aspects simply chastening, or are they to be celebrated for their rehabilitative potential? How does Jonson's puppet show (three removes from its mythic origin) manage to provide the ultimate corrective to the errors of Zeal?

Melissa J. Jones, Eastern Michigan University

Errant Pedagogy in the Early Modern Literature Classroom, or Prodigious Misreadings in and of the Renaissance

Although first New Criticism and now presentism equally instruct us in the importance of adopting *some* flexibility in interpreting texts from the past, there's an unspoken agreement that this flexibility only stretches so far. In the classroom in particular, the instructor's role tends to be to help students to learn "right" versus "wrong" ways to read the text and its time. We would not, for instance, allow students to believe that Hamlet's big problem was that he was born a woman—in mind or body—yet was forced to act the part of a man in a man's world; we do, however, encourage students to tangle with the web of social and subjective questions that enmesh the male body acting the part of Ophelia on the all-male stage. But what, really, would be the harm – or the salve – in allowing students to misread, profusely and with gusto, such historically vested work? Using personal recollections, shared anecdotes, and general hearsay as my evidence, this paper takes seriously four different kinds of error in the early modern literature classroom: the errant ear in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a truant reading of Sidney's "Sonnet 69," an erratic pestle from Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and an awkward Freudian slip in the teaching of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Errors like these, I argue, illuminate new pathways into the texts and their multiple contexts, and I insist on the queerness of this pedagogical practice because of its radical impact on the text's circulation, on traditional classroom dynamics, and on ideals of productivity and authenticity.

Jessica Tabak   Brown University

Warping Weft: Affective Interpretation in the House of Busirane

When Britomart, the titular knight in *The Faerie Queene*'s Book of Chastity, enters the House of Busirane to rescue an imprisoned virgin, she encounters a series of tapestries depicting the many rapes that male gods commit against mortal women in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. These "arras of great maiesty" are accompanied by an adage: "Be bolde, be bolde … be not too bold" (11.28.2, 11.54.3, 8). By suggesting that sexual violence against women is inevitable, this dark art would encourage Britomart to abandon her rescue mission. But Britomart seems to miss the message: unsure "what sence" this allegorical tableau "figure[s]," she abandons it to free Busirane's prisoner (11.50.5).

Many modern critics argue that this outcome is the product of Brotomart's interpretive error. This paper will suggest an alternative possibility: rather than misreading Busirane's textiles, Britomart identifies an alternative message that "lurk[s] priuily" within their weft — one that reinforces not a violent patriarchal imperative but rather the painful sensations that Britomart experiences while viewing them (11.28.4). By affectively reading and responding to Busirane's tapestries, Britomart revises the enchanter's narrative of sexual violence, replacing it with one that prioritizes healing over harm.

Megan Cook   Colby College

Locating Error in 'Adam Scriveyn'

Chaucer's short poem 'Adam Scriveyn' takes as its subject scribal error and the inevitable limits of authorial control. In seven famous lines, the author-speaker threatens his hapless copyist with a scalp disease unless he amends his error-prone ways. As Seth Lerer has argued, when the poem was printed for the first time in John Stow's 1561 edition of Chaucer's works, its condemnation of the instabilities of scribal transmission became an implicit endorsement of the relative stability of print.

The manuscript used by Stow—in fact, the only known manuscript of 'Adam Scriveyn'— survives today, making it possible to compare his *editio princeps* with its source. When we do so, we see numerous differences—in title, orthography, and (potentially) metrics— between the two versions of the poem, suggesting that claims for print's stability might be, in fact, overrated. This paper asks: Are the changes in the later, printed version mistakes that belie print's promise of accuracy and fixity? Are they legitimate editorial interventions that correct for perceived errors in the source text? And furthermore, given the increasingly outdated quality of Chaucer's language in early modern England, can archaism itself become an error?

Dr Harry Newman   University of Kent, UK

'"[T]he Heauens themselves / Doe strike at my Iniustice": Playing Seriously with Error in the First Folio's *Winter's Tale*'

Although not available in print until more than a decade after it was first performed, *The Winter's Tale* is a play that concerns itself with the printed book trade. As well as presenting an encounter in which printed commodities – Autolycus' broadside ballads – are expertly flogged, Shakespeare uses print as a recurring metaphor. The characters' language of print is intertwined with the rhetoric of truth, accuracy and error, and the play engages with the discourses of textual illegitimacy and deformity which pervaded the prefatory materials to early modern printed

books, including the volume in which *The Winter's Tale* was first published, the Shakespeare First Folio.

As well as exploring the significance of literal and figurative references to print in *The Winter's Tale*, this paper considers the impact of experiencing the play in print as a reader of the Folio. It analyses the relationship between authorial, scribal and compositorial errors and the sexual, interpretive and psychological errors made and perceived by characters within the play. How do textual cruxes or errors inflect our understanding of the jealous Leontes' hermeneutic inflexibility (surely Hermione is a 'hobby-horse', not a 'Holy-Horse')? Can the editorial imperative to identify and correct errors be related to the processes by which Time 'makes and unfolds error' (IV.i.2) in the play? In addressing such questions, this paper seeks more broadly to investigate the potential of early modern playtexts' material forms to nuance and even enrich the reading experience.

Vimala C. Pasupathi

Hofstra University
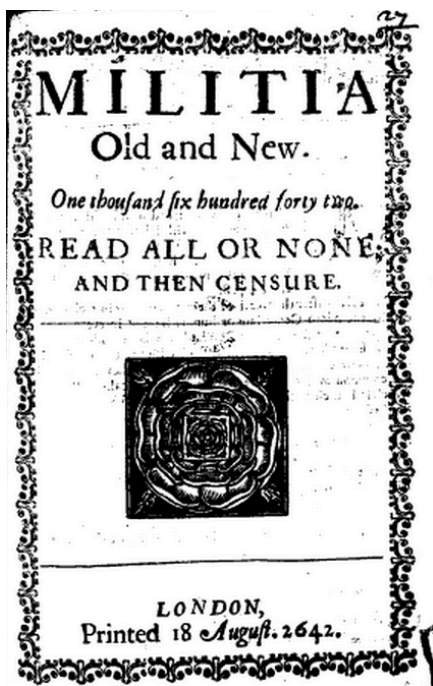
The Militia and/of the Future: London in 2642

This paper examines two works that, in the months leading up to civil war in England, took up the legality of Parliament's Militia Ordinance: Henry Ferne's *The resolving of conscience, upon this question. Whether [...] subjects may take arms and resist?*, and the anonymous *Militia old and new.* Printed and circulated in London in 1642, both texts feature a rather glaring error on their title pages: their year of publication is listed as 2642. The error registers most clearly as an error on *The Militia Old and New*, for below the "Old and New" in the main title we see the words "One thousand six hundred forty two." Written out this way, the year listed makes the "2642" all the more jarring. The two conflicting gestures that establish the text's relevance for a particular moment inflect the discussion of the "New" militia and its "Old" legal precedents within as well. This paper use these errors in dating to consider title page dates more broadly as well as the particular connections between the texts' content with a third work, *A briefe answer to Doctor Fernes booke tending to resolve conscience about the subjects taking up of arms*. Along with this additional text and changes in print culture in this time––marked by increased output and diminishing crown control––the 2642 texts offer a compelling case study in which to examine our conceptions of error and correction in bibliographical, temporal, and historiographical terms.