

Brett Hirsch and Sarah Neville

Teaching Textual Studies in/through Shakespeare

Correspondence with participants

Email 15 Oct. 2015, “Teaching Textual Studies in/through Shakespeare”

Dear Seminararians –

We’re thrilled to have confirmed emails/affiliations for all of you, and are looking forward to our time in New Orleans. Attached you’ll find the updated list of participants; our forthcoming assignments and due dates are below. FYI, our seminar abstract is also included below, in case you need a little inspiration when considering what you want to write about!

18 December 2015: 150–300 word abstracts due to the seminar leaders (Sarah and Brett); these will be collated by us and then sent to the entire group

12 February 2016: 2,500–3,000 word essays (including notes) with revised abstracts, sent via email to the entire group

26 February 2016 (or before): sub-groups of 3–4 participants assigned by seminar leaders

9 March 2016: 300–500 word responses sent via email to other sub-group members, cc’d to seminar leaders

23-26 March 2016: SAA in New Orleans, LA. Date/time of our seminar still TBD

Best,
Sarah and Brett

Teaching Textual Studies in/through Shakespeare

After the ‘textual’ and ‘material’ turns, textual studies and bibliography remain perceived as marginal, if not subservient, to literary criticism as practiced by most Shakespeare scholars. And yet close reading, arguably the principal tool of the literary critic, is also at the heart of editorial practice and teaching. This seminar welcomes papers investigating the role of pedagogy in bridging the gap between Shakespearean textual studies, bibliography, and literary criticism, from case studies and histories to explorations of wider theoretical, institutional, and disciplinary concerns.

12 Feb. 2016, “SAA 2016: Deadline”

Dear seminarians (and virtual eavesdroppers),

Greetings from the future! Well, between 13 and 16 hours in the future, depending on where you're based in North America...

Just a friendly reminder that your papers (2,500–3,000 words) and revised abstracts (150–300 words) are **DUE TODAY**. (Charles has submitted both already — thank you, Charles!)

The SAA requires me and Sarah to confirm participants and drop-outs by Monday. Given the convenient time difference with Australia (and my attendant fear of venturing outdoors in this heat), I'm happy to accept late submissions over the weekend if necessary. **Please email both your abstract and paper to the entire group, including Sarah and me.**

You're welcome to read every abstract/paper submitted, of course. However, our plan is to break you into sub-groups of 3-4 participants by 26 February, allowing sub-group members to exchange 300–500 word responses by 9 March.

Some clear themes have emerged from the abstracts already, and we're eager to see them developed in the full papers. We're confident the seminar will provoke interesting debate and stimulate lively discussion, and thank you all again for contributing!

Best wishes,
Brett and Sarah

20 Feb. 2016, “SAA 2016: Next Steps”

Dear seminarians,

Sarah and I have read your papers, and have partnered you up as follows:

Conlan and Urkowitz
Hansen and Lyons
Drew-Bear and Morris
Nance and Walkowicz
Bourne and Kelly/Plehn

By **9 March 2016**, you are to:

- (1) Write a **300–500 word response to your partner**, copying Sarah and me into the email; and,
- (2) Locate **1–2 philosophical questions** raised by another essay in the seminar (i.e., *not* your partner’s). Please **email these questions to Sarah and me directly**, not to the group or the author of the selected paper.

If you haven’t already, this second task will force you to venture out and read the other papers, making for informed discussion and debate in New Orleans. For your convenience, we’ve compiled the papers into a single PDF booklet (attached).

Sarah and I will assemble all of the responses and questions received into a master agenda for the seminar. We’ll also liaise with the guest respondent(s), who have been purposefully left off this and subsequent group emails to allow them to formulate their responses independently.

Please get in touch if you have any queries or run into any trouble. Otherwise, we look forward to reading your paper responses and questions by 9 March!

Best wishes,
Brett (and Sarah)

[PDF of collected participant papers attached]

27 Mar. 2016, "SAA 2016: Thanks"

Dear Seminararians,

I'm sure you'll agree that the seminar was a resounding success. Sarah and I were really pleased with the fascinating papers we received, as well as your insightful questions and the engaging discussion that followed. We were equally delighted to see so many auditors!

We're looking into the possibility of assembling a collection for the MLA Teaching series on the subject, so we may be in touch about that in due course. In the meantime, thank you all again for making "Teaching Textual Studies in/through Shakespeare" such a great experience.

Best wishes,
Brett and Sarah

2. Seminar “set-list”*

**Note: Sarah and Brett split the announcements, introductions, and questions 50/50.*

Housekeeping

1. Thanks ...
2. Auditors: copies of the abstracts are available: <http://notwithoutmustard.net/SAA/>
3. In case of emergency ...
4. Format
 - a. Opening remarks/introduction (5 mins)
 - b. Questions directed by us from responses and papers at the sub-groups (10 mins each x 5 = 50 mins)
 - c. Toilet break for those with small or shared bladders (5 mins)
 - d. Respondent paper (15 mins)
 - e. Larger “philosophical” questions drawn from those posed by participants (25 mins)
 - f. Open up discussion to auditors (20 mins)

Introduction

Writing in 1996 and the heyday of the McGann–McKenzie ‘sociology of the text’ model, David Holdeman argued that pedagogy would bridge the gap between textual studies and literary criticism. “If students, hungry to find original topics for their seminar papers and dissertations, could be made to share that feeling of wild surmise,” according to Holdeman, “we no longer would have to worry about the gap [...]. They would rush to bridge it.”

In 2009, David Bevington urged Shakespeare scholars to appreciate how “the pleasure and intimacy of close reading are at the heart of teaching and of editorial practice” and “also close to what it is that actors and directors do in the theatre.” In 2012, with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia established its Fellowship of Scholars in Critical Bibliography program, designed to reinvigorate bibliographical studies within the humanities.

In 2016, twenty years after the publication of Holdeman’s call-to-arms, this seminar asks, “Where are we?” “Where are we going?” and “Where should/could we go?” in teaching textual studies and scholarly editing in the Shakespeare classroom.

Our proposed seminar was aimed at – and attracted responses from – SAA members who teach, or are interested in teaching, textual editing in their Shakespeare syllabi. Participants offered case studies of particular pedagogical strategies as well as explorations of larger theoretical, institutional, and professional issues relating to the instruction of Shakespeare students in bibliography, the history of the book, and textual studies.

Targeted Questions for Sub-Groups

To facilitate directed discussion, we divided the participants into thematic pairs and triples: James Conlan and Steve Urkowitz; Lara Hansen and Tara Lyons; Jesse Nance and Anne-Marie Walkowicz; Annette Drew-Bear and Cass Morris; and Claire Bourne, Charles Adams Kelly, and Dayna Leigh Plehn.

1. In their papers, James Conlan and Steve Urkowitz explore how editorial decisions mask or create critical opportunities. Conlan's discussion focused on the ways that editors have inadvertently obscured precise legal relationships and distinct situations of facts at law in their adoption of particular variant readings, citing examples from *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. As editorial horse-courser, Urkowitz describes a strategy for introducing students to the wilderness of Shakespearean textual variation through the use of parallel columns and commentary to open up discussion about competing readings.

I found Conlan's examples striking, and agree with Urkowitz that an *Idiot's Guide to Feudal Obligations, Social Practices, and Odd Linguistic Forms* would have been a handy editorial resource. As useful as such domain-specific resources may be, the papers in this subgroup raise a broader question about the role of the editor: Given that Shakespeare's works are full of logical and factual inconsistencies – there is no coast of Bohemia, for example – is factual accuracy a defensible or desirable principle for the adoption of textual variants? Is “correcting” factual error really far removed from other editorial processes in establishing a text? [10 mins]

2. Lara Hansen and Tara Lyons share an investment in the intersections of pedagogy and digital resources in their papers. Hansen's paper relates the experience of introducing undergraduate students to textual variation by setting the Indian/Judean crux in *Othello* as a practical problem-based exercise, using EEBO and the OED to identify contemporary uses of both terms and to further contextualize the materiality of these early printed texts. Lyons addresses this issue of materiality in more detail, reminding us that digital texts have a materiality as well, using the print and digital publication of the Norton 3rd edition as a case study.

In both papers, the use of particular digital resources raises issues that are often obscured by the perceived immateriality and apparent inexhaustibility and “unboundedness” of electronic media – the authoritative presentation of “first instances” in the OED, for example, or the temptation to treat full-text searches of EEBO as somehow representative of the whole corpus (rather than only those texts which have been transcribed) and/or as representative of early modern English print culture in its entirety (rather than as only a representative sample of a much larger whole). The papers also raised interesting questions about the divisions – real and imagined – between literary and textual studies. In her response, Lyons asks “what would happen if we (initially) did not introduce our students to ‘textual studies’ as an approach distinct from ‘literary studies’?” I'd like to pick up on and add to this question, asking what role the introduction of digital resources in the classroom means for this kind of work? [10 mins]

3. In their papers, both Jesse Nance and Anne-Marie Walkowicz consider the ways that textual variation provides quick and easy opportunities for students to refine their abilities in close reading, particularly in ways that enable exploration of social and cultural issues. By bringing students' attention to the materiality of printed books, the papers implicitly raise questions about early modern marketing strategies, thereby encouraging students to consider how the publishers of books made particular rhetorical appeals to their anticipated readers. Anne-Marie's paper explores how the title page of the 1622 *Othello* quarto can quickly enable her students to see at a glance Othello's conditional, relative state – he is a Moor AND from Venice, or is he a Moor only when he is IN Venice? Jesse Nance's paper reveals how she asks students of the *Tempest* to consider the variants between engravings in the second edition of Harriot's Report on Virginia, and the watercolours that the engravings were based on; so doing, students are able to see how variants in textual transmission affect not only words, but also images.

Both papers seem to use textual variation as an efficient means of getting to a discussion of larger theoretical issues – in this case of race and colonialism. In this approach, getting students to see the differences between states of a text (or two intertexts) implicitly forces students to acknowledge questions of ethos, audience, and larger textual purposes. Is this one of the practical upsides you see to textual work? As a simple springboard for discussing the application of theory? [10 mins]

4. While Anne Marie and Jessie's papers demonstrated how attention to variants can facilitate broader discussions of early modern culture, the papers of Annette and Cass's papers are united by a shared interest in the ways that textual scholarship offers a means of giving students "ownership of a text". Annette's paper offers a series of suggestions for classroom activities that draw students attention to the fact that the materiality of texts is an ongoing/contemporary concern – their very textbooks are material artifacts that mediate the way they understand Shakespeare's words and dramaturgy. Cass's paper similarly seeks to 'demystify the culture of early modern playmaking and printing' in order to demonstrate that the process of editing is an 'active and visceral' series of choices made by an editor that can be observed or undone by a reader or player.

Both papers seem to go beyond textual variation to demonstrate issues of CHOICE are central to both editorial work (what ends up on the page) and performance work (what ends up on the stage). My question for you both is whether or not you see this focus on choosing a text for either editorial or performance purposes as central form of experiential learning? Does teaching textual scholarship inherently teach students to be skeptical of received wisdom?

5. In their papers, Claire Bourne, Charles Adam Kelly and Dayna Leigh Plehn engage with the ways that tiny elements – whether typographical symbols, words, or phrases – add up to a meaningful theme and how the printed form of Shakespearean play-texts intersects with performance.

Given that collation and textual notes typically attend to textual variation at the level of the word or, in the case of lineation, the line, is it time to rethink this conventional editorial apparatus? What might its replacement look like? [10 mins]

Toilet Break

Y'all come back now, y'hear? [5 mins]

Respondent

We're absolutely thrilled that Peter Shillingsburg agreed to act as a respondent for this seminar. Peter has taught at Mississippi State University and the University of North Texas, at De Montfort University where he was director of the Center for Textual Scholarship, at the Defense Force Academy campus of The University of New South Wales, and most recently at Loyola University Chicago where he held the Svaglic Chair in Textual Studies. He was a Guggenheim Fellow, and general and textual editor of the *Works of W. M. Thackeray*. In addition to three groundbreaking books and numerous articles on textual studies, Peter has served as coordinator, committee member, and chairman of the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions and as president of the Society for Textual Scholarship. We are delighted that in his retirement he has decided to go incognito as a Shakespearean. [15 mins]

Philosophical Questions

In addition to formulating questions within each sub-group, participants were asked to propose two or more larger "philosophical" questions for the entire group. From these, we've selected a number to consider for the next 25 minutes.

- (1) What are we teaching when we teach students to "read Shakespeare"?
- (2) How have textual studies been affected by the move to a cultural studies focus in many English departments, in which the payoff of lessons and research is often neither a literary or textual discovery but a cultural one?
- (3) Several of the papers explore the ways that textual scholarship can support other work (cultural, material, etc) – but should we be taking more pains as teachers to emphasize the value of textual scholarship with its own right?
- (4) How should we assess the learning of textual studies in Shakespeare courses?
- (5) Can or should we, as teachers, connect early modern textual transmission and its instability to our students' modern experiences of text as paradoxically ephemeral and eternal, such as with Twitter posts?

Auditors

We'd now like to open up discussion to the auditors. [20 mins]

Thanks and closing