

Seminar: Wonder Books: Description and Abstracts

Seminar leaders: Rob Conkie and Jennifer A. Low

This seminar focuses on the material and visual properties of books and their power to inspire wonder. Wonder books might include artists' books, moveable books, and fabulously illuminated books. We invite discussion, theorization, comparison, and ekphrasis of these and other wondrous (Shakespeare-related, however distantly) books. Participants may pursue interests in aesthetics, cognition, pedagogies, or other approaches. We also invite the creation of wonder books, or fragments thereof...

Numerous artisans and craftspeople have responded creatively to a portion of Shakespearean text as a means of taking ownership of it; others (often the same ones) have engaged with the text as a means of participating in the Shakespeare industry, exploiting the canonicity of Shakespeare for profit or a rise in social status. In *The Politics of the Book* (2019), Da Silva and Vieira characterize books as material forms mediating and constituting meaning, arguing that the physical form of the book is "a primary site of struggle over its interpretation and legacy." Sujata Iyengar has written about certain *metaphors of bookness* and the book's "ability to instigate a dialogue or collaborative performance among artist, reader, viewer, artisan, and publisher." Many other Shakespeare scholars have become increasingly interested in creative responses to Shakespearean text, works of craft or art that have supplemented, encrusted, or been provoked by the printed word. These works include the artist's book, the *livre illustré*, the *livre de dialogue*, and samizdat.

As our seminar focuses on the materiality of the book and its power to inspire wonder, participants may pursue interests in aesthetic dimensions, populuxe properties (artifacts that commodify social prestige), pedagogical or Arnoldian projects. Seminar participants will be encouraged to focus on the *mentalité* of the maker or of the audience of such works, both as purchasers and as consumers. Looking to the third decade of the twenty-first century, the Gutenberg revolution has largely run its course, and yesterday's consumers of print have become consumers of images. The definition of print has moved away from craft and material product. The pleasures of print have largely yielded to that of flickering images. Recalling Burckhardt's argument that Renaissance culture ushered in the experience of subjectivity, we feel an urgent need to investigate the possibility of new subjectivities in material culture and the creative impulse. Is there a performative element in the *making* of such works? How is the emotional connection to the text reinforced by creative engagement? How consistently does the connection of the maker extend to rope in the viewer?

Anya Bertolet

Merging the Worlds: Tarot and Shakespeare

Our wonderful seminar leaders mention in their description, "yesterday's consumers of print have become consumers of images." In my contribution, I plan to examine a curious case of conversion where our contemporaries reimagine Shakespeare's text in visual terms. In this particular case, however, the visuality itself is heavily layered with (non-Shakespearean) texts and iconography, and the consumers are challenged to discover the meaning and interpretation that would satisfy both complex systems involved. The case in question is creation of Tarot decks based on Shakespeare's works (several modern versions exist). I propose that a Tarot deck

is a kind of a wonder book, a picture book whose pages are loose and arrangeable in an infinite number of patterns; but, no matter how scattered its leaves, a Tarot deck is always held together conceptually by its strict organizing principles and, at the end of the reading, the book is physically reassembled and put in a snug box, becoming a small, book-like, contained rectangular solid. In Fisher's terms, the wonder of a Tarot book lies in its new take on the familiar and in its existence, as it were, "on the border between sensation and thought" (6). When a reader encounters a Shakespeare Tarot, wonder is sparked in the visual realm. One is handed the Tarot lens to examine Shakespeare anew, and, with wonder, one hovers over the border between the images and concepts, seeking to make Shakespeare's stories once more intelligible in the fluid but systematic Tarot system.

I am eager to investigate how modern creators and readers amalgamate Shakespeare and Tarot in these expanding and contracting wonder books, and how the material nature of these objects determines or undermines their intelligibility.

Valerie Fazel

Shakespeare's Moveable Books as *Wunderkammern*

I dig into the history and development of the popup book (a genre of mechanical book) not only as a work of paper artistry, but also of pre-digital interactive story world building (or perhaps interactive story-world building or interactive story world-building, these fine distinctions might be worth considering). I am curious to learn about pop-up book history and development, and the logistics of their construction. This essay springs from my own delighted wonder with how pop-up books marry art and mechanical design (I own three Shakespeare pop-up books). I hope to have access to my university's rare books collection of pop-up books; I also plan to dig around to see what other popup book representations of the early modern period might be uncovered.

Ani Govjian

"for that must bee the grace of all your trickes": An Accounting of the Early Modern Juggling Book

My current plan is to discuss the specific trick props of "blow books," also called books of "waggery" and magic coloring books that street performers would flip through showing at first a series of blank pages and later different colored scenes or images. These popular items were also among the first commercial magic tricks one could buy or even make at home using instructions from texts like Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, and *Hocus Pocus Junior, The Anatomy of Legerdemain* (anon.). I'm interested in both the wondrous novelty of these objects as well as the degree to which said wonder persists once such an object can be made familiar through at-home handicrafts. Does the wondrous capacity relocate to the joy of creation or of surprising others, for instance? I am initially committing to discussion and ekphrasis of one or more examples that I might access digitally in this time of limited to no direct archival access.

N. Amos Rothschild

"yf thou seeke glory by booke": Book-objects and the Signification of Learning

This paper examines the use of book-objects as accoutrements to signify early modern learnedness. I consider first the deceptively simple use of books to convey the erudition of subjects in Tudor-Stuart portraits. A select analysis of the period's visual culture reveals that books often serve as visible metonyms for the learnedness of a portrait's subject, but that even as

they vouch for the incorporation/absorption of knowledge into the self, they also paradoxically threaten to undermine their own guarantee by evoking the separation of knowledge from the self. Turning next to the period's drama, we find that books used as prop-objects on the early modern stage, like books in portraits, often signify a subject's learnedness; however, their status as tangible and portable props in plays also emphasizes (whether advertently or not) their potential to bear false witness. Finally, the disdain for book collectors and anxiety about book collections expressed by the period's humanist writers suggests that the problematics of signifying learnedness with books only multiply in the world beyond the canvas and theater. Such writers work to stabilize the cultural significance of the books on which they conspicuously rely by crafting caricatures of bibliomania; in so doing, they strive to define both the proper use, and the misuse, of books, and to fashion thereby twinned visions of genuine and false learnedness.

Paul Salzman

Early Modern Books of Wonder

What was a wonder book in the seventeenth century? I am going to draw on the resources of the Emmerson Collection at the State Library of Victoria to explore this question. I want to think about what might be considered examples at two extremes: elaborately bound presentation volumes (the two I have in mind are a copy of *Eikon Basilike* with embroidered binding, and James I's presentation copy of his works for his son Charles), and almanacs, which amongst other things predict and interpret wonders, but which are physically far from wonderful in appearance until we start to see how they package wonder in a particular way for a popular audience. This topic relates (at some distance) to work I am currently doing on the Emmerson Collection as part of a large, interdisciplinary research project under the direction of Professor Rosalind Smith.

Molly E. Seremet

Wonder of Wonders: The Book(s) of Anne Green's Bod(ies)

I am interested in thinking about early modern anatomy books and their relationship to the human bodies they dissect, catalogue, and archive. I am leaning into the association of *wonder* with a quest for empirical evidence and the allayment of doubt, with particular emphasis on anxieties about the female body and the unruly threat posed by female sexuality. In their literal exposure of the human body, early medical texts like those by Vesalius, Boursier, and Pineau exhume the mysteries concealed under the skin, laying bare the inner workings of the body for examination and evaluation. I am of course interested in the ways that these books witness the interiority of the human body in minute detail. Of more fascination, however, is the way in which the language and discourse of the early modern anatomy theatre becomes embodied within the 'skins' of characters across early modern drama. Consider, for example, that when Jonson's Corvino strikes fear into his wife's heart in *Volpone*, he does so by conjuring the interior of the anatomy theatre: "But I will make thee an anatomy, dissect thee mine own self, and read a lecture upon thee to the city, and in public." Corvino believes that the interior of Celia's body will testify to her supposed sins and that her guilt will be written on the underside of her ribs. For Corvino, the book of Celia's body holds the true story, which will spill out to anyone who reads her by flaying her skin, cracking her ribs, and sorting through her inner parts. To bring this investigation into body-books full (disgusting) circle, I'm also interested in the

afterlife of some of these texts. After all, London's Wellcome Collection boasts a copy of Pineu's *De virginitatis notis, graviditate et partu* bound in the skin of a human woman, flayed and tanned by her own doctor as a grotesque memento vivere in codex form. This collision of content and form through the apparatus of anthropodermic bibliopegy binds the human anatomy book in the skin of the anatomized human with the sinew of awe-full wonder. In this way, the materiality of early modern anatomy books intersects with our seminar's interest in wonder because the pages of the texts become surrogates or prosthetic 'organs' of the bodies they anatomize. I'm not sure what form my contribution will take, though I can promise to avoid flaying full-stop. In my scholarly and performance practice, I work on performing objects, Shakespeare adaptation, object-oriented feminisms; anatomy and early modern medicine keeps cropping up for me.

Morgan Souza

Wonder and Monstrosity in the Works of Thomas Browne

While the scientific revolution and the broader development of natural philosophy toward science have been charged with killing wonder (an argument Park and Daston make), I'm interested in authors like Thomas Browne, who nevertheless revel in the strangeness and incomprehensibility of things while at the same time attempting to demystify and clarify phenomena and objects in nature. In his *Religio Medici* and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Browne is fascinated with the nexus of monsters, irregulars, errors, nature, and art. In *Religio Medici*, Browne claims that nature does nothing in vain, and further, that there are no "grotesques" in nature. The valences of "grotesque" include the common idea of hyperbolic, exaggerated, or deformed parts, but the reference also refers to "A kind of decorative painting or sculpture, consisting of representations of portions of human and animal forms, fantastically combined and interwoven with foliage and flowers" (OED 1.a). By using the term "grotesque," Browne presents a form of monstrosity that is also complex, beautiful, artistic, and theatrical. Grotesque art teases the mind, asking it to consider unimagined possibilities, such as a reed stalk for a column. Grotesques also can add whimsy to geometric, classically formed structures, and as Browne notes, are used to "fill up empty cantons, and unnecessary spaces." According to Browne, then, grotesque art is auxiliary, but not central, decorative without sense or meaning. It is this connotation of frivolity and chaos that Browne rejects in spite of the aesthetic pleasure of grotesque, which he embraces and sees in nature. The paper also examines Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (likely Ch. 24 of Book 3, which addresses "Grotesco delinations") in an attempt to untangle and establish what Browne is saying about the relationships between nature, art, monstrosity, irregularity, and error, and how wonder can persist for Browne in spite of PE's agenda.

Amy Tigner

Worlds of Wonder: Volvelles and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

As one of the first moveable devices in codices and early print books, the volvella was a tool that intensified the sense of wonder in the text, exceeding fixed diagrams, charts, and illustrations. Invented in the mid thirteenth century, the volvella comprises one or more layers of cut-out parchment or paper circles that overlap and are attached at the center by a string or rivet to a fixed leaf of the book. Thus, the circles can move independently from each other and the fixed

page. Vovellae appeared in early books of divination, in which the reader would spin the dial to tell one's fortune or fate. By the late sixteenth century, however, vovellae were employed in books of science and navigation, specifically in the Martín Cortés's book, *Breve compendio de la sphere y de la art de navegar* (Seville, Anton Alvarez, 1551) and then in Richard Eden's English translation, *The arte of navigation* (London, Richard Jugge's widow, 1584). Both the Spanish and English versions included models and cut-outs that the reader could then use to build astronomic instruments and vovellae, for the distinct purpose of aiding oceanic navigation. In this paper, I intend to juxtapose the vovellae with their dual usages for magical divination and scientific navigation, with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a play that sits between medieval magic and early science and technology, and that incidentally has sources connections with Eden's *The arte of navigation*.

Leslie Wexler

“These, these are they, in dream which Romans spied”

My name is Jan van der Straet (1523-1605), but people these days just call me Stradanus. I'm an entrepreneur who understands that imagery moves the world, and I know, because I've been in the business my whole life. As I reach my 70th birthday, I have a proven record of 60 years of unfailing success in understanding of how imagery drives progress, products and services. My name which has been translated into three languages, speaks for itself amongst the elite of this world. What do I do? I make exclusive designs, images, and intricate creations in print, oil and woven tapestries for clientele as diverse as Medici dukes or their long-held rivals the Pazzi family. I've worked for most noble Florentine families on the palazzo, the royal courts of the Augsburg art empire, and the kings of France and Spain. But in these late days, I've gone independent and offer myself and work to you. I've always dabbled in the dream of becoming my own marketer. I've decided to realize this dream as I approach my 70th birthday, a last gift to myself of sorts.

I've put together a little tour of some the best talent: Alamanni to add some intellectual heft; Galle and Coellart collaborating as engravers. 60 years of experience has gone into the *Nova reperta*, which offers a series of copperplate engraved prints designed for your consumption. “New discoveries” and/or “inventions” are the hallmark of *Nova reperta*, as book and as a visual experience to stimulate the necessary creative insight any artist. This seminar offers each participant the *Nova reperta* as an opportunity to share the expertise of my creative team and help you stay ahead of the curve. You see, each image is not a sole creative vision but offers our shared vision that will celebrate innovation and promote debates about the issues that most concern you: Can commercial projects yield a social good or simply capital accumulation? Can you put your faith in human innovation? How does get ahead of the trend and influence human progress? Can the expenditure of colonial enterprise finally convince us our human potential? We realized that our agency had captured the concerns of the greatest nations of Europe, and we seek to share that knowledge with you.

Following the title page that introduces the series, you'll find engravings seen [linked in the Newberry's album](#). Each image an astounding banquet of ancient wisdom reconceived into modern opportunity designed for you to flip through at your leisure. I want you to consider how you, personally, are reconceiving the past by looking at the future with each curl of the digital page, and how you might define that future at the same time. In the upcoming seminar section of our project, I'll focus attention upon the title page, before glossing the prints and then

investigating one particular print that tells an ancient mythic story of the Emperor Justinian, illustrious sovereign of Constantinople, and his personal interaction with images and visions of a future domestic silk industry in Byzantium, and how exactly we transform this ancient story and discovery into a “*nova reperta*.” Your collaborative input will become the next wave of influence in a newly created book chapter that searches the recesses of the ancients in search of the civilizing impulses that have shaped our current world.

I think we both know; we are living in a time where attention and share of mind are commodities. I’m here to innovate the field by fostering a return to the basics with easy-to-grasp storytelling that stands out through strong composition in images. While the engravings will always be an industry cornerstone it could never last as in the trending sphere unless the viewer continues to find inspiration. I’m a man who knows how to evoke wonder, and I remain the creative difference between being drowned out in the limited real estate of human attention and standing out from the crowd. By reading the trends and “riding the razor’s edge,” as they say in the industry, the motive for sharing our insights remains remaking the tarnished ideas of the past into the wonder books of the future.

Chloe Wheatley
A Book Where Wonders Compacted Lie: A Reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 106

What role can the compressive logic of lyric play in the recreation of an experience of wonder? This paper explores this question through a reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 106. The substance of this paper attends to how Sonnet 106 invokes the wonders of epic romance in order to set up the speaker’s shifting ideas about the relationship of beauty, wonder, and poetic expression. In an exercise designed to translate critical insight into artisanal object, I have printed out the texts of both Sonnet 106 and selected stanzas from *The Faerie Queene*, binding them together into a miniature book with a “dos-à-dos” binding. This binding structure connects two distinct book blocks “cheek to cheek” so that they each have their own spine but share a back board – a way of making materially manifest the intertextual, typological connections that I see Shakespeare establishing between his sonnet and his predecessor’s articulation of the relationship of beauty and wonder.