

Seminar 04: Beyond "Formal Limits": New Frontiers in Theater History

Co-leaders: Christopher Matusiak (Ithaca College) and Kara Northway (Kansas State University)

Abstracts

Douglas Arrell

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“The Marriage of Theatre History and Literary Criticism”

Theatre historians tend to view literary criticism as subjective nonsense. Literary critics tend to view theatre history as plodding and irrelevant. But to the extent that they refer to plays, theatre historians are doing literary criticism and to the extent that they refer to plays, which are inescapably theatrical documents, literary critics are doing theatre history. The failure to take into account the dual nature of plays can weaken the work of both kinds of scholars. One of the greatest works to attempt explicitly to marry theatre history and literary criticism is Alfred Harbage’s 1952 book *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*. This work divides the plays of the first decade of the 17th century into those written for the adult companies and those for the children’s companies and argues they reflect very different views of life. Harbage’s moral condemnation of the in-door theater plays reflects his tendency to treat plays as historical documents rather than as literature. The difference between the two bodies of plays is more like the difference between two genres than two world views. Many patrons enjoyed both forms and some playwrights wrote for both kinds of theatre. While Harbage understands the historical context of the plays very well, he does not fully understand them as literature. His book illustrates that the marriage of theatre history and literary criticism is not always an easy one.

Marlin E. Blaine

California State University, Fullerton

“The Quiney Copy of Erasmus’s *Apophthegmata*: Its Uses and Significance”

A copy of the 1552 sextodecimo Gryphius edition of Erasmus’s *Apophthegmata* bearing ownership inscriptions of several members of the Quiney family of Stratford adds to our understanding of Latin competency among members of the Shakespeare circle, complementing other evidence of their Latinity such as that found in their correspondence. While it is well known that the *Apophthegmata* played an important role in Elizabethan pedagogy, scholarly discussions of its influence on Shakespeare and his contemporaries often focus on English translations by Taverner (1539) and Udall (1542). The Quiney copy, on the other hand, bears witness through its underlinings and marginalia (also in Latin) that this family, so intimately associated with the Shakespeares, engaged with Erasmus in his original language. After a brief discussion of the history of this copy and the place of the *Apophthegmata* in sixteenth-century literary and rhetorical culture, I will analyze the annotations in the Quiney copy and connect them to what we know about the reading and compositional practices of Shakespeare and his Stratford associates. This book, passed along through generations of Quineys who left their marks upon it in various ways, adds a new, tangible source of material to the study of a topic of long-standing interest to Shakespeareans—namely, the knowledge, understanding, and use of Latin among the tradesmen of Stratford, from whose ranks Shakespeare himself emerged.

Liam Thomas Daley

University of Maryland

“A History Lesson for Queen Elizabeth? Performing *The Misfortunes of Arthur* at Court”

How might a well-intentioned subject stage a spurious British history in the presence of a living English monarch? Thomas Hughes’s Arthurian tragedy, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, employs a range of formal strategies to do exactly that. Performed at Greenwich Palace “betwixt Christmas and Shrovetide” 1588 for Queen Elizabeth and her guests, this strange theatrical experiment responds to the acrimonious, sixteenth-century debate concerning King Arthur’s historical authenticity—a question which, despite early Tudors’ claims of descent from Arthur himself, had been decided in favor of the skeptics by the end of Elizabeth’s reign. This paper builds both on E. K. Chamber’s research on the holiday entertainments at the Elizabethan court as well as the work of later scholars attuned to Elizabeth’s sensitivity to representations of her royal predecessors on stage. Written specifically for performance at court, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* adapts chronicle accounts into a variety of theatrical forms including a moralizing Senecan chorus, a series of lavish dumbshows, an appearance by the sixth-century British chronicler Gildas, and a prologue and epilogue spoken by quasi-historical ghost. All of these forms, I argue, gesture toward the royal (and, for the guests at Greenwich, unforgettable) presence of Queen Elizabeth in the audience. The drama is structured so that, even though she did not participate in the playing, the queen was still an important part of the play—suggesting that, for Hughes, the most important historical lesson of Arthur’s reign (whether it actually happened or not) is that it eventually leads to Elizabeth’s.

William Ingram

University of Michigan

“How Is Theater History Limited?”

In my paper I offer a quick bird’s-eye view of the stages through which our discipline has passed, from the Victorian quarrying of playtexts through the archival turn (finding data in documents) and then the linguistic turn (strategizing how to write what we’ve found), before commenting on some areas relevant to our research that are or that remain worthy of exploration. I try to make a case for my own hobbyhorse, the continuing importance of the economic bases not only of “theatre history” but of the larger project of Elizabethan performative entertainment.

Laurie Johnson

University of Southern Queensland

“Echo Chambers and *The Elizabethan Stage*, A Century of Following Suit”

The year of the Shakespeare Folio’s quadricentennial also marks one hundred years since the publication of *The Elizabethan Stage* by E.K. Chambers (1923), a monumental multi-volume work that delineated new terrains for scholarship in a field previously reserved exclusively, it seemed, for studies of Shakespeare and his plays. Although theatre historians have continued to add to the masses of evidence documented by Chambers and adjusted some of the abiding narratives of the rise of early modern English drama, the field continues to operate in several important ways within the terrain mapped out in these four volumes. This paper will examine the impact of earlier scholarship on Chambers, to argue that the formal limits put in place for theatre history by *The Elizabethan Stage* were in key respects a conscious effort to resolve an apparent set of contradictions between the works upon which Chambers constructed his own. In particular, I argue that Chambers draws heavily on the work of John Tucker Murray for his brief narratives of the early playing companies, enabling him to construct a division between distinct types of company activity (court performance and touring), strengthening his case for the court being the locus for change in early drama and the professionalisation of playing. Yet where Murray’s evidence contradicts this case, Chambers doubles down on talk of the role of the “monarchical polity” and falsifies the

historical record. Even as the REED project reveals more evidence of the types advanced by Murray, however, the limits imposed by Chambers continue to influence our understanding of that information.

Dave Kathman

Chicago, IL

“A Forgotten Elizabethan Playwright: Rowland Broughton and the London Theatre Industry of the 1570s”

Rowland Broughton was unknown to historians of the Elizabethan theatre until 1981, when R. Mark Benbow published an article about a 1573 Chancery lawsuit in which three professional players (Lawrence Dutton, John Dutton, and Thomas Goffe) sued Broughton for failure to deliver plays he had contracted to write for a new boys' company. Benbow found almost no useful information about Broughton, and since then only one additional tidbit has surfaced: Mark Eccles found that Broughton had published an elegy in 1572 for Sir William Paulet, Lord Treasurer. In the course of my archival research I have found a wealth of new information about Broughton, which paints a picture of a very interesting life. He was born in 1542 and apprenticed in London as a haberdasher, eventually gaining his freedom in the Haberdashers' Company and freeing an apprentice of his own (William Tidey, who was eventually attainted for high treason). Broughton subsequently worked in the household of Sir William Paulet until Paulet's death in 1572, after which Broughton published his elegy on Paulet and almost immediately contracted with the Duttons and Gough to write plays. A year or two later he finagled an honorary membership in the Inner Temple, Paulet's Inn of Court, and from then on usually described himself as “of the Inner Temple”, even though he made his living as a scrivener. A 1588 lawsuit connects Broughton with Phillip Henslowe, suggesting that he may have still been writing plays at that late date, or at least working in the theatre.

Roslyn Knutson

University of Arkansas, Little Rock

“What if E. K. Chambers had had the *Lost Plays Database* at his fingertips?”

In 1923 E. K. Chambers had access to repositories of governmental and provincial documents as well as a significant body of scholarship in theater history from Edmond Malone to W. W. Greg at his fingertips. Given these resources, he repeated (or made) a set of assumptions about theatrical commerce. As an editor of the *Lost Plays Database*, I think a lot about the contribution made to the field of theater history by that project, and I think a lot about its future. In this paper, I use Chambers' assumptions in *The Elizabethan Stage* as a frame of reference for recent scholarship that treats lost plays more nearly as the equal of extant ones.

Alan Nelson

University of California, Berkeley

“Two Books from the Quiney Family of Stratford-upon-Avon”

The personal library of Professor Marlin E. Blaine of California State University, Fullerton contains a previously unknown copy of the 1552 Gryphius edition of Erasmus's *Apophthegmata* inscribed with the names of Adrian and Richard Quiney as owners. Various evidence connects the book to the Quiney family of Stratford-upon-Avon. A second book inscribed with the name Richard Quiney, previously known but largely overlooked by Shakespeare scholars, survives in the library of St. John's College, Oxford. This book has been connected to Shakespeare's grandson, the son of Judith Shakespeare and Thomas Quiney. Blaine and Nelson will present coordinated seminar papers introducing the two

“Quiney” books. Nelson will present paleographical evidence concerning the exact identity of the Richard and Adrian Quineys referenced in the various inscriptions.

Kara Northway

Kansas State University

“The Letterwriting of English-Continental Actors on Tour”

The subject of English-Continental actors touring Europe has interested theater historians since the nineteenth century, but recent work by June Schlueter, Anton Bosman, as well as from the volumes on *Early Modern German Shakespeare* edited by Lukas Erne (2020, 2023), have energized modern scholarship on this particular subculture. With this expanding documentation of the existence of these acting troupes, their routes, their repertory, and their texts, focus now is needed on *how* exactly actors negotiated the work for their dramatic business in unfamiliar contexts abroad. My paper argues that letters these touring actors wrote while on the Continent shared similar functions with letters written by London actors touring England, although continental letters differed in content and style. In content, continental letters amplified actors’ skills, promoting plays more explicitly, argued more strongly for plays’ moral value, and showed greater attention to audience reactions and genre expectations. In terms of style, actors’ continental letters also adapted to fashionable European epistolary practice, using more honorifics and obsequious terms of politeness in order to show cultural sophistication. Furthermore, while some extant letters were composed by individuals, such as letters written by travelling actors Robert Browne and Richard Jones, many continental letters appear to be jointly written. Examining patterns in the more than fifty extant actors’ letters from Europe is important because it sheds light on the day-to-day professional strategies of actors, demonstrating their flexible rhetorical abilities—and even their self-definitions as artists/“Künstler.”

Gerit Quealy

New York, NY

“‘Fair Play’: Performing Women in Queen Elizabeth's Court”

King James's queen, Anne of Denmark, was famous for staging masques starring the ladies of her court. But was she the first one to employ this convention in the English court, or was she simply expanding upon an established practice? Queen Elizabeth had an acknowledged infatuation with Italian arts and culture, particularly early in her reign, when such customs were already taking hold in Italy. Drawing on Pamela Allen Brown's recently released *The Diva's Gift to the Shakespearean Stage* (OUP), Elizabeth Kolkovich's ongoing research into women involved in patronage, pageants, and performing poetic lotteries, and other sources, as well as unexplored archival material, this paper seeks to examine the possibility that Queen Anne was simply following in Queen Elizabeth's footsteps in fostering (private) performance of females on stage.

Richard Schoch

Queen’s University Belfast

“Syncopated Time: Staging the Restoration *Tempest*”

As part of the research project ‘Performing Restoration Shakespeare’ (2017-20), for which I was Principal Investigator, our research team staged scenes and songs from the Shadwell-Dryden-Davenant version of *The Tempest* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2017 and 2019. In my paper, I will reflect on how our scholar-artist collaboration in making performance functioned as sustained moments of what Rebecca Schneider (following Gertrude Stein) has called ‘syncopated time’ – in this instance, a collision of

textual/archival past and embodied present, in which each dimension punctured the other. I suggest that what can emerge through such syncopations are insights about the Restoration theatrical repertoire—including insights generated by audiences—that neither the recorded past nor the embodied present can fully apprehend on its own.

Héloïse M. Sénéchal

Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham

“The ‘dwelling howse on the Banckside’: John Heminges, Black Boy Alley, and the House Adjoining the Globe”

In the century following E.K. Chambers’ conjecture that the property adjoining the second Globe was the playhouse’s tap-house, evidence regarding the ‘the other Tenement’ has remained elusive. Exploring the neighbourhood networks affiliated to John Heminges and considering a 1630s dispute pertaining to the overlooked figure of his daughter, Margaret, has led to information that may offer some fresh insights. Not only did Heminges live in the sizeable house at the end of his life, a possibility first noted by Herbert Berry, but he and his family almost certainly spent most of the 1620s there. Following Heminges’ death in 1630, the house was briefly tenanted by his son, William. Analysis of the St Saviour token books reveals Black Boy Alley as a likely location for the property, whilst additional parish documents suggest something of its points of access and situation in relation to the Globe precinct.

Elizabeth E. Tavares

University of Alabama

“Sound Barriers: Or, Giggling as a Tudor Trumpet”

In his 1923 brief for *The Elizabeth Stage*, E. K. Chambers placed trumpeters at the center of ‘the period of the greatest literary vitality in the development of English drama’ because they bore the ‘main burden of the complaints raised by the Puritans’; ‘trumpets blew for the performances just as the bells were tolling for afternoon prayer’. In English theatre’s gradual and linear secularization, trumpets were left behind in the ‘medieval’ nave as theatre evolved at the Globe. That studies of music in early modern drama have focused on voice and the lute, with other instruments framed as special effects akin to gunpowder, suggests the lasting influence of Chambers’s framing. This essay re-appraises the work of trumpeters in Tudor public life across a variety of performance contexts to consider the kinds of dramaturgical effects they made available based on playgoers’ expectations. As the largest cohort of Court-salaried public servants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, trumpeters capture a particular Tudor socio-political concern with covert information management, usefully exemplified in two 1604/5 ‘period dramas’, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* and *When You See Me, You Know Me*.

Paul Whitfield White

Purdue University

“Mapping, Geopolitics, and the Fortune Playhouse”

GIS technology—think Google Maps—has impacted our lives in ways few imagined a generation ago. And the same can probably be said about its impact on historical research, more specifically in my case, researching a playhouse in early modern London. In this paper, I want to frame my topographical analysis of the Fortune and its surroundings by briefly discussing developments in historical mapping technology and scholarship, and then examine some of their implications, their benefits as well as some challenges for researching the Fortune.

Robert Yates

Graduate Center, CUNY

“Why is Premodern Care Studies Relevant to Theatre History?”

Care is a flexible term that encompasses relations between self, other, and environment.ⁱ Early modern English literary language around care frequently establishes relations of governance and ownership, which will matter to readers and scholars of early modern literature, particularly those concerned about colonialism and the study of premodern racial formation, as well as to those interested in the importance of liberatory forms of care in the present. The evidence I offer from William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* “presents and represents”ⁱⁱ care as a way to make legible subjects across lines of race, gender, and class, who might be turned into enslaved objects, if they have the potential to be blackened. *The Tempest* as a theatrical performance transforms the lexical uses of care into a form of what Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields call “racecraft” – the sleight of hand and tongue work that imposes a racial logic on bodies despite the illogic of race itself.ⁱⁱⁱ By tracing one of care’s genealogies, I invite us to think about the ways in which hierarchical understandings of care become so well-rehearsed as to continue down to the present day.

ⁱ In feminist philosophy, see Nel Nodding’s *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. Also, see Jean Keller and Eva Feder Kittay’s “Feminist Ethics of Care” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry et al. Routledge, 2017. Keller and Kittay, influential feminist philosophers, trace the development of care ethics since it was first articulated by Nel Noddings. Keller and Kittay highlight the growing importance of the “political and global dimensions of care” in this article. From a cultural studies angle, see Duke University Press’s syllabus “Care in Uncertain Times” (2020) <https://www.dukeupress.edu/Explore-Subjects/Syllabi/Care-in-Uncertain-Times-Syllabus>. Feminist philosopher Nel Noddings, the first to coin the phrase “ethics of care,” argues for care as a feminine ethics counter to male prioritization of abstracted moral deliberation in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought. Care, for Noddings, is a series of choices that form bodily experience and knowledge. As Talia Schaffer in *Communities of Care: The Social Ethics of Care in Victorian Fiction* (2021) writes, “care is an action, not a feeling.” Such theories of care draw important distinctions between care feelings and care actions, while noting that although they are “intimately intertwined, they are not the same, and we can’t always predict which will produce the other” (8).

ⁱⁱ Erika T. Lin in *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) writes “Interlocking puzzle pieces, representation and presentation are mutually constitutive citational practices that, taken together, impact the cultural attitudes and practices that give rise to the particular specificities of their relationship in the first place. Performance, then, ‘materializes’ (in Butler’s sense of the term) in two spheres at once: it cites particular cultural discourses related to specific semiotic transformations occurring within a play, and it cites affective and experiential dimensions of social life in its presentational effects (8-9).

ⁱⁱⁱ Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (New York: Verso Books, 2012). See Introduction.