

**Shakespeare and Cheap Print**  
**Seminar Leader: Simone Chess**

**ABSTRACTS**

*Respondent Group 1:*

Claire M. L. Bourne

Beaumont & Fletcher Illustrated: Thomas Walkley, Playbook Illustrations, and the Visual Logic of Bespoke Woodcuts.

In my essay, I take as my subject the trend of printing custom-made woodcuts on playbook title-pages. While theater historians have treated bespoke title-page woodcuts as evidence of early modern performance and staging practices, I examine the increasing use and evolving aesthetic vocabulary of these images through the 1610s in the context of the London book trade. Of course, printing playbooks with title-page images was not a new practice. However, earlier decorated playbooks were ornamented with generic woodcut figures that printers and publishers could have used on other forms of cheap print. Indeed, the emergence of customized, illustrated playbook title-pages was in keeping with the early seventeenth-century “trend toward a closer relationship between image and text” that Tessa Watt identifies in her study of illustrated broadsides. Although both kinds of illustration — generic and bespoke — offer important evidence for understanding the context(s) in which illustrated playbooks were produced and consumed in the print marketplace, this paper will focus on the latter. By describing the emergent practice in the 1610s of printing highly detailed, content-specific woodcuts on playbook title-pages and examining the appearance and later disappearance of illustrations from the title-pages of *A King and No King* and *Philaster*, I would like to suggest that bespoke woodcuts fundamentally transformed the materiality of the playbooks on which they appeared and encouraged a type of reading practice that heretofore has gone unrecognized.

Catherine Loomis, University of New Orleans

“The Lamentation of a Woman Being Wrongfully Defamed” : Transgressive Female Sexuality in Cheap Print Sources

Many anonymous or male-authored cheap print texts incorporate unusually detailed accounts of women’s social and domestic experiences. William Muggins’s *London’s Mourning Garment* (1603) includes an extended and painful account of breastfeeding; Richard Johnson’s “Isabella’s Complaint” is a first-person narrative about an unwanted pregnancy and consequent suicide; Tottel’s *Miscellany* includes “The Complaint of a Woman Ravished” as well as several poems narrated by women abandoned by their partners; in John Lyly’s “Pipenetta,” a female narrator addresses her maidenhead; John Heywod’s “Of a Husband Hanged” presents an unusual perspective on a public execution; and a handful of bawdy songs present a more robust picture of female sexuality than found in the average conduct book. This essay will survey some of these sources to demonstrate the range of female experiences found in these narratives, to consider some reasons why cheap print sources include such frank accounts of female experience, and to attempt to explain why such works are overlooked by editors of anthologies.

Susan O'Malley, CUNY Kingsborough

Is Custom an Idiot?: Montaigne's "Of Ancient Customes" and the Anonymous Pamphlet *Haec-Vir; or, The Womanish Man*

While annotating the anonymous 1620 pamphlet *Haec-Vir; or, The Womanish-Man* in the Folger Shakespeare Library for my book, "*Custom Is an Idiot*" *Jacobean Pamphlet Literature on Women* (University of Illinois Press, 2004), I discovered that much of the pamphlet was lifted from Montaigne's "Of Ancient Customes." Although there have been a number of excellent readings of the pamphlet, no one has recognized the debt of the anonymous author of *Haec-Vir* to Montaigne. But does our knowing of this borrowing change how we read the pamphlet? Why did the author not acknowledge Montaigne when s/he cites all of the other authors s/he uses? Would contemporary readers who recognized the Montaigne passages have read or interpreted the pamphlet differently from those who did not? Was the omission of Montaigne's name due to the author's haste in writing the pamphlet under pressure from a publisher to respond quickly to *Hic Mulier*, a pamphlet printed the previous week, or did s/he do it deliberately to editorialize or make a point?

Previously I have given papers on this at MLA and at RSA on a French panel, and have an article on *Haec-Vir* in the forthcoming book on anonymous edited by Barbara Traister and Janet Starner. Last summer I had a university grant to at the Huntington Library to research these questions. My paper for Shakespeare and Cheap Print will be my latest attempt to answer these questions incorporating my research from last summer.

I'm also interested in how cheap print/pamphlets enabled printing houses to survive given the quick turn around and profits from pamphlet printing as opposed to the laborious and time-consuming typesetting of longer works.

#### *Respondent Group 2:*

Adam H. Kitzes, University of North Dakota

"This Devil Here Shall Be My Substitute": Representing Popular Revolt on Stage and in Print

My interest for this essay is with an intersection between a particular instance of government propaganda writing, and one of the earliest known moments in Shakespeare's career as a playwright. I focus on the concerns that are shared by both the official pamphlet writer and the emerging playwright, as they attempt to make their way in an emerging marketplace for information and entertainment, in whatever combination it was possible to put them. In 1591, a false prophet named William Hacket was tried on the charge of plotting to commit treason against the monarchy, and then executed before the largest crowd that ostensibly had assembled for such purposes in the history of London. While the charge in itself was far-fetched, there was no secret that prosecutors wanted to use Hacket as a bait to catch bigger fish, namely Thomas Cartwright, Job Throgmorton, Giles Wiggington, all prominent Presbyterian figures. During the official propaganda campaign that followed, Hacket's execution was justified on the grounds that his actions, while ineffectual in themselves, nonetheless carried enough potential for widespread mayhem to warrant the legal punishment that the false prophet (and his accomplices) were made to suffer. In the most significant official statement, Richard Cosin's pamphlet *Conspiracie for Pretended Reformation*, Hacket's name was linked with several well-known instigators, the most notable being one Jack Cade.

Some few months following Cosin's pamphlet, there appeared performances of a new play, which chronicled the dynastic conflict between the houses of York and Lancaster, and

which featured a reenactment of the Jack Cade uprising as one of its more popular highlights. During this sequence the audience's attention is not only drawn in toward this complex figure, at once both festive and terrifying, but more important it is drawn away from the aspiring York, who for his own part hopes to exploit the Cade uprising as a preliminary to his own campaign against the king. In this respect, Shakespeare's play helps to dramatize one of the central arguments that circulated during the Hacket affair, namely that popular uprisings were dangerous not only for the mayhem they caused in themselves, but for their underlying connections with weightier factional struggles across church and state.

There is no indication that the play, now known as *Henry VI Part Two*, meant to respond to Cosin's pamphlet directly, or to the Hacket affair more broadly. That said, the mutual interest in Cade speaks to an underlying thematic concern, which was shared by the aspiring playwright and prominent ecclesiastical lawyer alike. As this essay argues, both playwright and propagandist display an interest in how such connections between menacing political factions and popular revolts can be established rhetorically. Likewise, both show similar interests in exploiting these connections in order to generate popular appeal for their respective projects. But in the end, each points to distinct, though equally important critical examinations of what Brents Stirling designates as the "populace" – specifically, the emerging roles that were becoming available to members of the population at large to participate in matters touching on church and state, which included, though were not limited to, witnessing public executions as entertainment, reading accounts of such events, even taking steps to fight off future uprisings, which were essentially expected to take place.

Nathaniel Amos Rothschild, Boston University  
Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, Paper, and the Magic of Preferment

In 1588, a German by the name of John Spilman established England's first enduring paper mill at Dartford, and secured letters patent "for the sole manufacture of white writing paper, control over the making of other sorts of paper, and a monopoly of the collection of rags and other papermaking materials within the kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Seventeen years later, Spilman was knighted when King James himself visited the mill.

Spilman's own story of preferment through paper resonates with the excitement and concern surrounding the material that his mill produced and representations thereof. This essay examines two works that offer commentary on Spilman's mill in particular and on paper in general: Thomas Churchyard's *A Discription and Playne Discourse of Paper* and William Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*. Both of these texts reveal (to different extents) an interest in English paper and papermaking, but they represent paper in very different ways. While Churchyard heaps praise on paper for its essential role in the process of preferment for the learned, Shakespeare's illiterate rebel Jack Cade attacks those that have been advanced through learnedness, and mystifies the medium that facilitated their rise as invested with magical power. Together, then, Churchyard's poem and Shakespeare's play offer fascinating insight into the late sixteenth century English discourse of paper, and its intersections with contemporary cultural conversations about literacy, social standing, and magic.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more details about Spilman and his mill, see A.H. Shorter's *Papermaking in the British Isles*, 15-22.

Blaire Zeiders, University of Wisconsin, Madison

The “New News At Court”: Disposable Mediums and Deposable Monarchs

A disenfranchised aristocrat is the subject of news in the first act of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*: Oliver asks Charles, “what’s the new news at the new court?” to which Charles replies, “There’s no news at the court, sir, but the old news: that is, the old Duke is banished by his younger brother, the new Duke...” In this scene, the “new/old news” is the removal of one duke by another, and by using the ephemeral “news” as the vehicle for representing such an event, this passage associates a dynasty (monumental by design) with concepts of novelty and change. This paper explores the extent to which the power and splendor of the monarch, as they become increasingly associated with ephemeral mediums—and particularly, as they manifest themselves in the printed masque—arguably begin to look like news—and perhaps even help to condition the revolution to come.

Although Shakespeare’s deployment of “news” was the impetus for this project, the text I use as my framework for examining intersections between news and royal image is Ben Jonson’s masque, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*. This masque, performed for King James in 1620, begins with a discussion between a Printer, a Chronicler, two Heralds, and a Factor (or news writer), who discuss the relative merits of each of their professions via a series of jokes made about one another. The Printer is driven by lust for profits, the Factor wants the next big story, and the Chronicler wants to pad his book with pages. In the end, the tradesmen’s (uniting) emphasis on producing commodities is made to look foolish in light of the Heralds’ poetic monument to the timeless virtues inherent in King James. Despite its clearly siding with poetic monument to royal power over the self-serving ends of the tradesmen, however, Jonson’s masque ultimately juxtaposes—and to some extent blends—the disposable words of the tradesmen with the monumental words of poets and kings. My considers the implications of this juxtaposition, asking whether the royal image, by coming into such close contact with ephemera, becomes more ephemeral—and therefore disposable—itsself.

The news-as-commodity/royal monument conflation that Jonson’s masque suggests on a thematic level I explore on a material level via the lens of the printed masque text. To some extent, printed masques share characteristics with royal proclamations and civic pageantry—the king’s spectacular power brought to the people—but I argue that the printed masque offers a unique opportunity for subversive reading, in that it alone is a document concerning the king’s power (and indeed produced according to his demands) that had a pre-print life with no public audience in mind. Unlike proclamations and pageants, printed masques, though they carried the monarch’s will, were not manifestations of royal power sanctioned by the king for public use, and therefore they gave readers an opportunity to obtain an unauthorized glimpse of a world to which they otherwise would not have had access. By granting the agency to appraise royal power on the reader’s—not the monarch’s—terms, printed masques gave consumers critical access to the splendor and the excess of the court in a vehicle strikingly similar to news. The possibilities inherent in this power are worth considering in light of the revolution and the “new courts” that followed.

*Respondent Group 3:*

Zachary Lesser, University of Pennsylvania

Structures of Popularity: Playbooks, Sermons, Dictionaries, and Medical Books

This paper forms some of the preliminary work on a chapter in a book that Alan Farmer and I are currently writing, *Plays, Print, and Popularity in Shakespeare's England*. This book focuses on the question, What did it mean for a book to be “popular” in Renaissance England? We aim to investigate the complex relationship between “popularity” as an economic and as a cultural concept, between financial success in the book trade and the imagined culture of “the people” as opposed to “the elite.” Part One of the book undertakes a macro-study of the economics of the book trade as a whole, and of the place of playbooks in that trade. Part Two shifts from the macro to the micro, analyzing some of the most popular printed plays of the period: *Doctor Faustus*, *Shoemakers' Holiday*, *Lingua*, *Mucedorus*, and several others. Why and how did these plays become best-sellers? And what can they teach us about the contested cultural meanings of “the popular” in early modern England?

This SAA paper will ultimately make its way into Chapter 4, “Of Making Many Books,” which asks, What was the range of different kinds of books that were stationers producing, and how did the popularity of playbooks compare to these other genres? We carry out this comparison through our theory of “structures of popularity.” As we described in a 2005 *SQ* essay, “structures of popularity” put into dynamic relation four significant indices of economic success in the book trade for a given category of books: the total number of editions published per year, the market share, the reprint rate (percentage of first editions reprinted within five, ten, and twenty years), and profitability (as driven by sheet-length of editions). Different types of books had different structures of popularity; they sold in different ways and elicited different strategies from publishers. To understand these structures, one must assess all four indices of popularity in relation both to relevant overall markets and to other types of books, because these indices tell different stories, illuminate distinct aspects of popularity, and do not always neatly align, either across classes of books or across time periods for a single class.

In this paper, I will compare the structures of popularity of four categories of books, first summarizing our findings about playbooks and sermon-books (both of which we discussed in 2005), and then going on to add two new categories: dictionaries and medical books.

Joel Slotkin, Towson University

Monsters and the Pleasures of Divine Justice in Early Modern Cheap Print

So-called monstrous births have been a subject of recent scholarly interest from both feminist and disability studies perspectives, and some recent critics, such as Julie Crawford, have focused on the relationship between religious developments in early modern England and the rhetorical uses of monstrosity. This paper examines the early modern appetite for ballads and pamphlets featuring monsters of various kinds, and it analyzes the religious implications of treating these monsters as signs of God's displeasure.

Broadside ballads and other popular print materials rely for their success on presenting monsters as objects of wonder and fascination. In tension with the idea of monsters as pleasurable spectacles is the ballads' insistence that monsters are instances of divine judgment, intended to inspire fear and repentance. They are not merely carnivalesque forms of entertainment, they are also, as the ballad-makers describe them, sermons. In this sense, the monsters are signs requiring interpretation, and the ballads are instances of what Helaine Razovsky calls “popular

hermeneutics.” But if the monsters are texts from God, then an analysis of how the monsters should be read not only reveals early modern hermeneutic practices, it also says something about their conceptions of God.

If God is an author who communicates through monstrous representations, what kinds of aesthetic sensibilities does he demonstrate, and what kinds of affective responses does he expect? To what extent is the pleasure and wonder of viewing monsters, or the use of monstrous aesthetics by human authors, a part of the religious piety advocated by the ballads?

This investigation also has interesting implications for the relationship between literary, religious, and popular culture. These representations of God as a monster-maker demonstrate the dissemination into popular culture of important literary issues about what kinds of artistic representations are legitimate sources of pleasure, and theological debates about divine punishment and God’s relationship to evil.

#### *Respondent Group 4:*

Kris McAbee, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Culture of Contagion: The Circulation of Ballads and Shakespeare’s Sonnets

Discussing the “resuscitability” of information in new media networks in her recent *Critical Inquiry* article, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun asks: “Why and how is it that the ephemeral endures? And what does the constant repetition and regeneration of information effect? What loops and what instabilities does it introduce into the logic of programmability?” My essay draws from these questions, alongside the investigations of other new media and pop cultural theorists, to ask how the repetition and regeneration of “ephemeral” verse forms like ballads have their own “logic of programmability.” Theories of the diffusion of cultural memes can inform our understanding of the proliferation of early modern short forms on all levels of the cultural spectrum, from Shakespeare’s purportedly courtly sonnets to the cheap print of popular ballads. The use of new media theory to analyze the dissemination of early modern printed verse offers the potential for further insight into what generic attributes are defined in sonnets or ballads and how they are propagated by the continued production and circulation of these short forms.

This essay endeavors to put the production and circulation of the courtly verse form of sonnets into dialogue with that of the more “popular” verse of ballads. Shakespeare’s sonnets offer a print history unique to sonnet sequences that may throw their relatively “high” nature into relief against a broader cultural spectrum of production and consumption typified by ballad culture. While I may tackle the “cultural economics” of the circulation of both Shakespeare’s sonnets and selected ballads, this essay will focus primarily on the pieces of information that are replicated through different instantiations of Shakespeare’s sonnets. For example, this essay suggests that the early appearance of Shakespeare’s sonnets 138 and 144 in *The Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599 intimates the memetic nature of sonnets (that is, the way in which these sonnets and their figures resemble the exchange of cultural information defined by memes). To ground this discussion, I will focus on the particular “memes” of reflection-imagery and the Narcissus myth, following the replication and mutations of these motifs—which themselves speak to a culture of contagion—in both Shakespeare’s sonnets and selected ballads.

Mark Rankin, James Madison University

“Traduced by odious ballads”: Shakespeare, Cheap Print, and the Conveyance of Meaning

My proposed title derives from *All's Well that Ends Well*, when Helen proposes that her reputation be sullied (“traduced”) in cheaply printed texts if she prove unable to affect the French king’s cure. The action of traducing conveys a sense of *conveyance*, of altering, rendering, or even reducing, in Helen’s case, her “maiden’s name” into a scorned form of print (2.1.171). Instead of ballads printed against Helen’s virtue, though, they emerge in celebration of her apothecary successes. *A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor* circulates and is read onstage in a manner that is far from explicitly odious (2.3).

This ballad’s description of Helen *the actor* is far from innocent. I am interested in this paper in fleshing out and analyzing selected instances among the many references in Shakespeare’s plays to cheap print as a type of dramatic metaphor. In particular, I will address ways in which Shakespeare’s plays *convey* meaning by assigning printing allusions a figurative function within the plays, one which explicitly cultivates and enhances audience expectation of discernable meaning. I hypothesize that explicit references to cheap print afford a particularly insightful—and perhaps neglected—approach to such dynamic interactions. Reading material in Shakespeare typically performs one of a least three distinct functions, each of which *convey* texts into dramatic dialogue and function metaphorically as signs of character. On one fairly straightforward and commonly understood level, Shakespeare frequently employs texts as stage properties, whether letters or longer books. Scholars have long been aware that Hamlet’s insistence to Polonius that he reads merely *words*, for example, affords insight into his distracted persona at that moment in the play. Richard certainly expects theatergoers to recognize in his prayer book a degree of facetious posturing, even if he assumes that the citizens below him will take the book as a sign of holiness at face value. A second way in which texts invite audiences to participate in the production of meaning involves explicit references in the plays to lengthy texts, which come to symbolize or even allegorize on-stage interactions. An example might be Innogen’s remark that she might easily abide outside of Britain, which “I’th’world’s volume” exists “of it but not in it” (3.4.137-38) in the manner of a shorter text removed from its corresponding longer book.

Such moments frame my investigation of the symbolic value of cheap print in the plays. I will be interested to determine the specific ways in which Shakespeare expects readers to approach characters and dramatic situations when he invokes ephemeral print as a figurative entryway to understanding the drama. When Benedick invites Don Pedro to “pick out” his “eyes with a ballad-maker’s pen” (*Much Ado*, 1.1.205) in the event that he proves to be a lover, Shakespeare demands that audiences, in fact, undertake the balladeer’s role. By describing such moments as essential components of Shakespeare’s dramaturgy, I hope to suggest ways in which greater understanding of Shakespeare’s immersion in and uses of the wider textual culture might ensue.

Alicia Tomasian, William Rainey Harper College

“Are These Not Fairies?”: Fairy Tricks in Pamphlets and Plays”

In this essay, I will be considering the use of fairy lore to perpetrate cons, the depiction of such cons in pamphlets, and the possible reference to such pamphlets in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Recent criticism has explored fairy belief in the context of religion, class, and allegorical representations of Elizabeth, but I wish to consider further the significance of such belief in city scams and their depictions in cheap print. I have previously examined this topic in a

reading of Doll Common's performance as the Queen of Fairies in *The Alchemist*. Pamphlets such as *The Brideling, Sadling and Ryding of a Rich Churle in Hampshire, by the Subtill Practice of One Judeth Philips, a Professed Cunning Woman, or Fortune Teller* (1595), *A Quest of Enquirie, by Women to Know, Whether the Tripe-wife were Trimmed by Doll Yea or No* (1595), and *The Severall Notorious and Lewd Cousnages of John West, and Alice West, Falsely Called the King and Queene of Fayries* (1613) feature women not unlike Mistress Quickly, claiming to either be or know the Queen of Fairies and using these claims to dupe city dwellers. While Judith Philips predates *Merry Wives*, the tactic seems to have worked just as well for Alice West in the early years of the seventeenth century, despite its parody in pamphlets and on stage. Yet even the earlier pamphleteers struggle to explain how such scams could work on urban populations. Falstaff is, of course, an obvious dupe, and this is significant. What was the relationship between theater going, pamphlet reading, and con artists operating in the city? Were the women perpetrating these schemes influenced by the theater? Did they influence the theater? What investment would Shakespeare's audience have in thinking only fools believe in fairies? How does the barrier of literacy function to define a potential dupe in these pamphlets? I am interested in the possibility that pamphlet authors might have considered the ability to read their products or the proximity to the printing of their products as important markers of a savvy, con-resistant public.