

SAA 2013 Seminar: Re-reading Shakespeare, Re-reading in Shakespeare
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ABSTRACTS

Vide Supplementum: Re-Reading the First Folio in the Seventeenth Century

Claire M. L. Bourne, University of Pennsylvania

My paper examines the heavily annotated copy of the Shakespeare First Folio, now housed in the Rare Books Department at the Free Library of Philadelphia. The marks are extensive (728 in total), and they exhibit multiple forms of readerly engagement with the book—with the plays' language, their spelling and punctuation, their ideas, their relationship to other texts, and their potential to be appropriated for other uses. Further, we can be sure on bibliographic grounds that the annotations in this copy of the Folio pre-date the Restoration, when the pages (and with them, some of the marginal notes) were trimmed to accommodate the book's current binding. This paper will focus on the annotations that I believe to be the most interesting of all the marks in the book—emendations to the texts of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. I will show that almost all of the reader's "editorial" interventions in the Folio texts of these two plays derive from quartos printed in 1637, fourteen years after the Folio was published. The reader's re-reading of the Folio texts of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* against each of the Q5 texts (or his "*supplementum*," as he calls his *Hamlet* quarto) was governed neither by a desire to recover "what once existed in the author's mind" (Tanselle) nor by an inclination to connect the printed texts to the theatrical tradition (Taylor and Wells, for instance), the two approaches that have dominated modern Shakespearean editing. Instead, his practice of selective collation shows an interest in demonstrating, but not necessarily resolving, both the textual and, crucially, the *interpretive* instability of key passages in these plays. In a number of striking instances, the reader's Q5-guided suggestions transform the terms of metaphors given in F1 and thus their contextual meaning. For instance, F1 gives us a Juliet who anticipates her own sexual pleasure in consummating her marriage ("when I shall die"); the reader suggests that she might focus instead on Romeo's ("when he shall die"). In F1, Hamlet insults Claudius' impotence ("blunt king") in contrast to the reader's quarto-sanctioned reading, in which the prince accuses his uncle of having an insatiable sexual appetite ("bloat king"). Horatio in F1 supplies the image of Bernardo and Marcellus struck motionless ("bestil'd") with fear, while the reader imagines that fear reduced ("distill'd") them to trembling masses. In the end, these provisional emendations show that the reader was not only familiar with the fictive world of each play, but more importantly, that he was interested in testing how a few small textual emendations could effectively reshape the contours of those fictive worlds.

"What think you on't?": Differing Responses to *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene i

Jackie Cameron, Saint Mary's University

A study of *Hamlet* not only reveals the extent of Shakespeare's genius, but also just how varied our responses to that genius have been. My paper is influenced both by a lecture I recently delivered to the English Society at my university as well as a monograph that I am currently working on that attempts to chart those varied responses and provide students with a focused survey of the history of Shakespeare criticism. This monograph aims to retain its focus by narrowing in not only on *Hamlet*, but on one scene in the play in particular, 3.1, a scene that is

used to demonstrate our many different readings of Shakespeare, his works, and the implications of those works. For this paper I aim to – or at least I hope to – narrow this focus further by zeroing in on a single line in that scene, a line that has been interpreted in a variety of ways, ways that suggest just how rich and various our responses to even a single line of Shakespearean text can be. Some of these responses are revealing, some as likely to be as misleading as Benedick’s response to Beatrice’s call to dinner, while others, to quote Cicero in *Julius Caesar*, may be simply “construe[d] . . . after” each critic’s “fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (1.3.34-35). Perhaps, if one is being honest with one’s self, no criticism can ever completely escape such construing or fashioning. In any case, all such readings – and hopefully many more – will be taken into account as I try to use this single line of 3.1 to test and probe my basic thesis.

Reading and Re-Reading in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Titus Andronicus*

Christopher Clary, Emory & Henry College

This paper begins by identifying *Midsummer* and *Titus*’ repeated emphasis on scenes on reading and re-reading (of texts, histories, and bodies), arguing that these moments work to disrupt the plays’ own presentation of sequential causality and deconstruct an easy narrative of their source-text causal relationship to one another.

Regarding the first part of my claim, in both plays, acts of reading and re-reading sit at the center of the plays’ dramatic cruxes. *Midsummer* begins with Theseus’ aggressive re-reading of his relationship to Hippolyta (and the literary history from which it is gathered) in order to transform captivity into affection, conquest into wooing, swords into words. The mechanicals repeatedly reassess and transform their Ovidian “scrip” in order to mitigate the real and imagined threats of performance. The Indian boy, central to the dispute in the faerie world and cause of the lovers’ and Bottom’s own transformations, has his own history repeatedly and persistently re-read and redefined. In *Titus*, Lavinia famously presents Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* on stage as a mechanism for discovering the identity of her attackers and the specifics of her rape and mutilation. What follows, however, is not a performance of reading from the text, but an opportunity for Titus, Marcus, young Lucius, and Lavinia to repeatedly re-read and revise Ovid’s text. Titus laments the difficulty of reading Lavinia’s body; he assesses Ovid as a parallel though non-identical account of Lavinia’s rape and as a model for exceeding the brutality of her attack in his revenge; and ultimately the text becomes a catalyst for Lavinia’s grotesque reenactment of her violation at the very moment she enacts her own textual production.

Regarding my second claim, both plays stage repeated and unsettling echoes of one another, and there has yet to be a satisfying explanation of their relationship to one another. It is unclear which play precedes the other, but I argue that this model of sequential source-text influence/revision is insufficient, and both plays work to unsettle this very pattern in their own contents. Furthermore, sequential influence/revision ignores the practice of continued, adapting theatrical performance in the early modern playhouse, and it ignores a playgoer and reader’s experience of both plays existing simultaneously in print and on stage. Finally, the combination of *Titus* and *Midsummer*’s repeated emphasis on re-reading and revision, the plays’ ambiguous relationship to one another, and the plays’ persistent echoes of one another serve to undermine and ultimately deconstruct a system of sequentially causality.

Books and Shakespeare’s Readers

Cyndia Susan Clegg, Pepperdine University

Several years ago, E. D. Hirsch framed the idea of cultural literacy in relationship to “what every American needs to know.” Cultural literacy consists of the books (reading experiences) held in common by a society to enable a cultural conversation. The relationship between Shakespeare and books has traditionally taken the form of source studies rather than an English cultural literacy for his own time. This paper considers how a play might be “read” based on the reading experiences of Shakespeare’s contemporary London audiences. For example, a reader today learns from an introduction or a note that Shakespeare drew on Ovid for Pyramis and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Reading Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (the whole text), however, is generally not part of our contemporary cultural literacy. This paper explores how the collective reading experiences of Shakespeare’s audiences may have influenced the reception of his plays. Reading is used here in several ways, including reading protocols, schoolbooks, reading aloud, and being read to. How, for example, may have the homily on adultery, frequently read from the pulpit, have shaped the reception of *Othello* or Antony and *Cleopatra*? How would the circulation of Calvinist sermons have affected understanding the problem of evil in *Othello* or *Macbeth*? As these questions suggest, this is larger than a seminar paper allows, but I am working with articulating a theoretical construct that might guide answering these questions.

Bring on the Bear: Reading *The Winter’s Tale* with Resistance Theory
Philip Goldfarb, University of Chicago

Antigonus in *The Winter’s Tale* is easily dismissed, his name forgotten, and his death remembered only for the stage direction “Exit, pursued by a bear.” Most readings of the play ignore him utterly. At best, they read him only as a foil to Camillo, placing the too-subservient servant who attempts a murder against the proper servant who rejects his king’s unjust commands.

In this paper I will re-read Antigonus, and *The Winter’s Tale*, in the context of Calvinist theories of resistance to immoral authority. These theories, organized by John Knox, Christopher Goodman, and many others, argued that a loyal subject had the right to disobey a ruler who issued commands that would lead to the subject’s damnation, such as forced conversion or murder. At the same time, they required that subject to take every means possible to obey any command short of the damnable, no matter how slight the difference might be, in order to avoid the sin of disobedience. Read in the light of these theories, Antigonus’ obedience is not condemnable but entirely correct. He is a model subject, and it is no accident that it is his actions, up to and including his death by bear, that unlock the happy ending to the play. By re-reading *The Winter’s Tale* in this particular light, I hope to illuminate an often overlooked part of Shakespeare’s careful design.

“Shakespeare’s best tragedy”: Nietzsche’s readings of *Julius Caesar*
Andreas Höfele, Munich University

My aim in this paper is a rather straightforward, theoretically unassuming one. I want to look at Nietzsche’s engagement with *Julius Caesar* as it evolved and manifested itself in the course of his intellectual development. Of all of Shakespeare’s plays *Julius Caesar* – not *Hamlet* – is the one that has the most enduring presence in Nietzsche’s writings. My question will be how the play connects with the larger ethical and political concerns of Nietzsche’s thinking. From a school essay written in May 1863 (‘A Character Description of Cassius from Julius Caesar’) to

his final stock-taking in *Ecce Homo* (1888), Nietzsche's view of the historical Caesar and the Caesarian legacy in European history is crucially shaped by Shakespeare's Roman tragedy.

Commonplacing, Editing, and Faking—or, Reading, Re-reading, and Misreading—Shakespeare

Adam G. Hooks , University of Iowa

The practice of commonplacing—of extracting choice phrases or sententious maxims from texts, to be used and re-used by readers for some practical purpose—defines and categorizes the textual field according to tactical or functional, rather than aesthetic or imaginative, criteria, challenging modern ways of valuing and constituting the “literary.” Commonplacing is also a variable and even unstable practice, as individual examples often fail to adhere to static theoretical models, thus challenging the presumed purposes of the practice, as well as critical generalizations based on it. This paper uses a seventeenth-century manuscript commonplace book from the Folger as a case study, showing the ways texts—and the practice of commonplacing itself—traversed the boundaries of print and manuscript, and of the fictive and factual. Drawing on the poetry and drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, an early compiler incorporated and juxtaposed a wide range of textual material that fails to conform to modern generic distinctions. The volume was subsequently owned by John Payne Collier, who replicated some of these practices, even as he misunderstood and misread the early extracts. Collier also repurposed the book in an attempt to create a literary history opposed to the preeminence of Shakespeare. By forging ballads that corresponded to entries in the Stationers’ Register, Collier invented a fictional literary history of popular literary fictions, authenticated by the heterogeneity of the volume. This fabrication and contestation of established literary categories forces us to rethink—and even serves as a model for—how we choose to constitute these categories and the evidentiary bases on which they depend.

My Kingdom for a Ghost: Counterfactual Thinking and *Hamlet*

Amir Khan, University of Ottawa

My reading, or re-reading, of *Hamlet* focuses on the ostensible interpretive correlates to be drawn not from Hamlet’s infamous delay, but rather, from Claudius’s confession. Stoll, perhaps most famously, reads Hamlet’s delay as necessarily occurring when it does out of conventional necessity. According to him, Hamlet delays near the end of Act 3 so a concluding bloodbath can take place at the end of Act 5. The delay, then, merely acts as a functional placeholder, put into the play by Shakespeare to create a more resounding and gratuitously violent tragic ending. Yet critics forget that the delay, i.e. its functionality, is tied directly to Claudius’s confession. Without the latter, that is, we would have no good reason to read Hamlet’s delay as particularly problematic at all. Once we as readers are assured of Claudius’s guilt, only then does the delay become problematic; but no one in the play hears Claudius confess. In order to ally ourselves more intimately with the world the characters in *Hamlet* actually inhabit, I propose reading the play *as though we never hear the confession*. Undertaking such a “counterfactual” reading brings to bear an understanding that Hamlet operates within a world of contingency—he is not doomed to suffer, say, the inner tragic necessity of a fate, as Bradley so famously championed. Only by delinking our certain knowledge of Claudius’s guilt from Hamlet’s delay (which *follows*, rather than precedes, the confession) can we impartially judge the value of Hamlet’s delay and subsequently, Hamlet’s character.

Re-reading *Othello*’s Handkerchief

Lauren Shohet, Villanova University

My paper will return to the oft-discussed question of the handkerchief in *Othello*, examining what it reveals about the dynamics of re-reading. The handkerchief's circulation illuminates the costs and benefits of adaptative re-reading. As the textile travels from place to place, genre to genre, and function to function, it sponsors and undergo remediations that press receivers (both of the handkerchief and of the play) into re-readerly practices. In particular, the handkerchief's travels reveal a looping polychronicity characteristic of re-reading. This paper essays both to record phenomenological reader/audience response to the handkerchief's provocations to re-read, and to examine how the handkerchief thematizes these processes.

Ben Jonson Reads *Julius Caesar*

M. L. Stapleton, Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne

H. H. Furness Jr., the editor of the 1913 New Variorum *Julius Caesar*, devotes his lengthiest note to the prospective dictator's somewhat bizarre pronouncement fifty lines before the conspirators strike: "Know, *Cæsar* doth not wrong, nor without cause / Will he be satisfied" (3.1.47-8 / 1254-5). The commentary occupies five fraught pages in eight-point type, the passage itself "affording in the opinion of many," as John Dover Wilson said, "the only known instance in the Folio of an alteration made in deference to literary criticism." This theory has been surmised because Jonson appears to have mocked the utterance in a play and in conversation with Drummond, yet remembered it in a form that differs from the 1623 text. This in turn has suggested to some that Shakespeare might have revised in response to his theatrical contemporary's withering scorn, albeit unsatisfactorily. As with many of the Folio cruces on which we Variorum editors are obliged to report, the attempt to explicate this one turned into a truly overwrought, multi-century controversy involving virtually every significant predecessor from Pope (1725) to Wilson (1949). My attempt to make some sense out of this critical conflagration allows me to explore why something relatively insignificant—even though it involved Shakespeare and Jonson—seems to have meant so much to so many, and for the purposes of our seminar, what reading and re-reading can entail. "Creeping Murmur and the Poring Dark': How Skewed Perceptions of Probability Impact (and Often Fail to Impact) Reception of Early Modern Drama."

Reprinting, re-reading and recreation: Shakespeare's books and early modern reading

Louise Wilson, University of St Andrews

My paper considers the reading and re-reading of Shakespeare's texts in early modern England in the context of the book trade and material evidence of readerly use, addressing the significance of print popularity, format, paratext, and readers' marks to our understanding of the practice of re-reading. Book-historical scholarship has influentially advanced the importance of studying marginal annotation, textual marking, and commonplacing as evidence of the active mode of reading advanced in the period; such marks reveal not only signs of reading but also the reader's anticipation of future purposeful re-engagement with the text. However, I also consider the matter of readers returning to a text for pleasure not profit and the difficulties of focusing on a mode of reading which generates fewer textual markers. My paper, therefore, seeks to move beyond the dominant paradigm of reading and re-reading for action to map out a fuller sense of early readerly interactions with Shakespeare.

Revisionary Disclosures: Re-reading in *Cymbeline*
Gretchen York, University of Virginia

One of the most striking moments of repetition in Shakespeare's romances occurs at the end of *Cymbeline*: the soothsayer rereads the entirety of Jupiter's cryptic tablet to an assembled public, inspiring characters' increased wonder at the sudden, miraculous intelligibility of events' riddled, seemingly senseless progress. The play juxtaposes the soothsayer's performance with an earlier act of rereading in which Posthumus's Milford Haven letter is repeated but inexplicably reworded. The two moments contradict each other: the latter deepens discord by compelling both Pisanio and Innogen to behave like objects; the former restores the characters to each other by replacing textual objects with persons. The fracture of Britain's court, signaled by Posthumus's banishment, leaves the couple with letters in lieu of an embodied spouse. Through its acts of rereading, the play diagnoses and then repairs reading strategies that substitute words for persons and mistakes fidelity to the straightforward demands of a particular text for fidelity to the complexities and uncertainties of a human author. In the final scene, Jupiter's prophesy overturns a culture of personal letters that measures love in obedience and offers instead a textual space for personal choice and communal action.