

“Theorizing Repetition: Text, Performance, Historiography”

Thursday, March 28 @ 3:30-5:30

Seminar Leaders: Erika T. Lin (George Mason University) and Marissa Greenberg (University of New Mexico)

Abstracts (listed alphabetically by author)

Patricia Badir

University of British Columbia

“Pageanting for Pleasure”

*And with ridiculous and awkward action,
Which, slanderer, he imitation calls,
He pageants us.*
-- Ulysses, *Troilus and Cressida*

My paper will look at three instances of repetition: Ulysses long speech in *Troilus and Cressida* in which he recounts how Patroclus, in the company of Achilles, has been mocking the great Greeks by mimicking them; Cleopatra’s vision of the staging of her “Alexandrian revels” in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Gaveston’s account of the pageants he will perform for the king in *Edward II*. These instances of reported (or presupposed) action constitute a particular kind of metatheatricality; they are accounts of intimacies that become, by means of figurative language, public theatre. My exploration of these sequences will ask how the narrative rehearsal of never-to-be-seen performances acquires such extraordinary liveliness in the on- and off-stage spectators’ minds. These narratives are arguably these play’s most memorable moments and the plays’ theatrical success depends, to a great extent, upon the speakers’ ability to enliven a performance, in the imagination of the listeners, of something that that never was (or never will be). A couple of preliminary observations will be my starting point: each of these narratives is recounted with a certain amount of attitude, sometimes scorn and ridicule, but also possibly disgust. And in every case the pageant described is an erotic one that presupposes the queer gaze of its intended audience (private or public). My paper will attempt to draw a number of threads together – figurative language and theatrical vivacity; the affects of desire and scorn; the stakes of privacy and publicity – in an attempt to gauge the thrills but also the risks of pageanting for pleasure.

Andrew Bozio

University of Michigan

“The Performativity of Space in Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*”

Bartholomew Fair opens with a metatheatrical complaint. According to the stage-keeper, the performance so little resembles the annual fair in Smithfield that “you were e’en as good go to Virginia” as expect to see the fair in Jonson’s play. But while the stage-keeper bemoans this mimetic failure, the book-holder counters that the Hope Theater aptly recalls the site of Bartholomew Fair, the playhouse “being as dirty as Smithfield and as stinking every whit.” In early modern performance,

embodied experience provided the foundation for reconstituting space within the playhouse. Smells, sights, and sounds enabled the bare stage of the public amphitheater to become a dramatic setting. In this essay, I turn to Judith Butler's theory of performativity to ask what citational practices, what reiterative strategies, govern this production of space within the early modern playhouse. How does the performance of *Bartholomew Fair* cite its spatial referent, and how does memory, specifically the memory of Smithfield, help the play to supplement its own efforts to recreate that space? If the Induction figures this process as a kind of performativity, where memory and experience gradually transform the shape and significance of space, then the play's representation of Smithfield recreates this performativity onstage. The contrast between Cokes' continual movement through the fair and the static booths of Ursula, Joan Trash, and Leatherhead shows how memory and experience can accumulate within a particular site, effectively transforming it. In this manner, I argue, *Bartholomew Fair* reveals that repetition and remembrance can define the contours of space.

Alice Dailey
Villanova University
"Repetition, Recuperation, and Real Presence"

This paper uses the concept of real presence to theorize the relationship between the human body and memory, suggesting that the body's mnemonic function in our constructions of *is* and *was* is a consistent feature of historical memory. The paper illustrates this claim of in relation to three disparate discursive sites. The first is Andy Warhol's *Little Electric Chair* (1963), a green-washed silkscreen generated from a newspaper image. Here, the haunting potency of the image resides in the material presence of the human body—not the spectral, electrocuted body but the laboring, living, sensing body that shapes the execution chamber and its artifacts: turned-wood table leg, wooden chair, sign admonishing SILENCE. The second is the reference in *2 Henry IV* to the blood of Richard II, "scraped from Pomfret stones" (1.1.205) to serve as a corporeal mnemonic for an alternative, anti-Henrician memory of England's past. The third is the public conversation around the recent recovery of the body thought to be that of Richard III. The unfolding debate about this body's meaning dismisses longstanding notions of Richard's deformed-body-as-identity at the same time that it refers to the exumed remains as a site of historical certainty.

Stephen Guy-Bray
University of British Columbia
"Auto-Allusion"

In this paper, my concern is with a kind of repetition that I call auto-allusion, in which a writer quotes from something that he or she wrote. The result is something that is both the same as the earlier phrase or passage—insofar as it is composed of the same words—and different from it—insofar as it has a new context and meaning that are not reducible to the meaning it had in its first appearance. As a result, auto-allusion usefully highlights the extent to which sameness and difference can coexist, something that has been of great interest to a number of contemporary

philosophers. One example is Ricoeur, who wrote in *Oneself as Other* that ‘Only a discourse other than itself ... is suited to the metacategory of otherness, under penalty of otherness suppressing itself in becoming the same as itself.’ As well, we can see auto-allusion as exemplifying the ‘différance’ of which Derrida wrote and Heidegger’s discussion of being and difference, on which Derrida drew. My literary example is from Shakespeare. In *King Lear*, Goneril, contrasting her husband with her lover, says ‘O, the difference of man and man’; a few years later, Shakespeare and his collaborator John Fletcher have the Jailer’s Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* exclaim ‘Lord, the difference of man.’

Judith Haber
Tufts University
“Shakespeare’s sadism: The case of Gloucester’s eyes”

Lear. Read.
Gloucester. What, with the case of eyes?
--*King Lear*

What is a pair in this case?
--Derrida, *Truth in Painting*

I wish to approach the question of repetition (and especially of doubling and balancing) in *King Lear* by (re)considering Gloucester’s eyes, especially the brief episode in which Albany learns of his blinding. During the blinding itself, Regan characteristically pushes her husband’s sadistic actions one step further by appealing grotesquely to his sense of balance: “One eye will mock another; th’other too” (3.7.71). This is recalled in a most disconcerting way when Albany, who knows nothing of the event, is told that Cornwall was slain “going to put out/ The other eye of Gloucester” (4.1.71-2). Albany’s exclamation of surprise-- “Gloucester’s eyes?”--is then followed by a brief scene that plays maddeningly (and I would say sadistically) with our desire for balance, closure—and sense. I will consider this scene through a Derridean lens, drawing on Derrida’s comments on pairs (and eyes) in western Christian culture. And I will glance at the balances, repetitions (and puns) in *King Lear* as a whole, considering the difference between embodied and verbal forms of these, which the play (even as a text) repeatedly calls to our attention.

Dan Keegan
UC Irvine
“The Synetic Prophecies: Remediation, Syncopation, and Shakespeare”

Washington, DC’s Synetic Theater produces Shakespeare as “physical theater,” silently restaging *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth* through a repertoire of dance moves and visual effects. In *Macbeth*, this leads to a curious phenomenon: when the performers attempt to remediate the prophecies through Synetic’s theatrical technology, narrative tips into pantomime and theatrical time

slows. Utterances requiring seconds of speech balloon into minutes of gesticulation. In this paper, I take up the slo-mo unfolding of the Synetic Prophecies as a symptom of the exigencies of theatrical repetition, reading this moment as an elaboration of Joseph Roach's brief but suggestive evocation of theatrical remediation as a succession of "Orphic blunders." For Roach, Orpheus' failed turns (toward Euridyce, away from the Thracian woman) evoke a performer's improvisatory, unstable, virtuosic interaction with the "authorizing" material, invented or not, that she (re)iterates. In the prophecies, Orphic operations collide with an array of affordances and agencies as they struggle to pick their way across the theatrical terrain. Not only the content of the turn but the syncopated, distended struggle to turn impinges on the performance. I read these Orphic syncopations back into Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, asking whether the Synetic Prophecies might serve not only as a symptom of adaptation but also as a diagnosis of the play's theatrical texturings. I find that the play's cosmic and political contests are accompanied by, inflected by, and played out through a duel over Orphic syncopations as two political-performance technologies (Macbeth's, Malcolm's) struggle to network the play's theatrical-Scottish terrain.

Paul Menzer
Mary Baldwin College
"In the event of fire..."

In its modern institutional form, theatre convenes all the resources necessary so that anything might happen and then takes all possible pains to ensure that nothing does. This is the odder, since the "liveness" of performance is often predicated upon unpredictability, the different-every-night appeal of the unrepeatable performance – an appeal that is, in any event, unverifiable by the very constituency alleged to be its beneficiaries, the audience. What is true for most theatrical events is doubly so for the Shakespeare and performance industry, where every performance is a "re-performance" and implicated within the economy of repetition.

"Reperformance," the re-creation of past performance phenomena, has lately emerged in several arenas. In 2010 Marina Abramović declared, "Reperformance is the new concept, the new idea!" as she launched a retrospective of her performance works at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Historical re-enactments at "living history" museums are familiar instances of this phenomenon, and recreations have intensified during sesquicentennial commemorations of the American Civil War. Meanwhile, avant-garde theatre companies including The Wooster Group, Les Freres Corbusier, and the Rude Mechanicals have applied reperformance techniques to the recreation and reframing of avant-garde theatre. Works by Jerzy Grotowski, The Performance Group, Mabou Mines, and others have recently been recreated on stage. At Stanford, Branislav Jakovljević has even attempted to re-create "happenings," seemingly the most allergic of all theatrical forms to "re-performance."

"In the event of fire" examines contemporary Shakespeare performance against the background of this emergent performance interest and, in particular, attempts to understand the work of the Globe and the Blackfriars and other reconstruction theatres in the wider performance context of re-performance.

Nova Myhill
New College of Florida

“Which many here did see performed indeed’: Repeating the Scaffold Speech in Print, on Stage, and on the Scaffold”

Judicial execution in early modern England was a public event that generally conformed to a ritualized set of conventions that substantially governed the behavior of the participants of the event. However each individual execution might play out, the expectations that governed it were pre-established to the extent that copies of the victim’s scaffold speech might be printed and sold in advance of the execution itself. Further, the conventions of the scaffold speech and in some cases the printed speeches themselves found their way onto the early modern stage, where they were re-embodied by a new set of actors. All of these rehearsals of the scaffold speech are, among other things, rhetorical constructions, performed for an audience that will create their significance through further repetition.

Through its repetition in multiple media, some more reproducible than others, the early modern scaffold speech offers a way to think about the position of bodies and of text in Schechner’s idea of “restored behavior.” The same script can be played with new actors on the stage and a new audience in the playhouse. But for the execution, no matter how similar the speeches may be and no matter how functionally equivalent the victim is in the ritual, each body can only be used once. The printed or performed scaffold speech, however, is infinitely reproducible. If the onstage death marks the inevitable failure of mimesis, the moment at which the body of the actor and the body of the character are performing distinctly different actions, the execution marks the failure of individuality, the moment at which all of the scaffold’s victims become functionally identical. In both cases, the separation of the performed speech from the somehow insufficient body opens an interpretive space that allows for the value of singular performance. In this paper, I will use the scaffold speeches in two domestic tragedies, the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women* and Robert Yarrington’s *Two Lamentable Tragedies* to consider the relationship between repetition and singularity in the reception of print and performance.

Marissa Nicosia
University of Pennsylvania

“*Craftie Cromwell*: Pretenders and Succession in the Serial Newsbook Play”

Early modern news was not confined to the newsbook, the coranto, or the cryer. Marchamont Nedham, alias Mercurius Pragmaticus, and London’s other leading mid-seventeenth-century “Mercurys,” produced newsbook plays alongside their biweekly newsbooks. Nedham’s newsbook plays are informative and fictional, polemical and literary: They stage current events in five-act dramas that are eight to sixteen pages long. In this paper, I study Nedham’s *Craftie Cromwell* series (1648), to draw connections between the newsbook play and the early modern history play. The *Craftie Cromwell* series dramatizes Cromwell’s rise to power and speculatively satirizes his reign as King. By focusing on the *Craftie Cromwell* plays, I ask: What is the relationship between literary depictions of Oliver Cromwell and a figure like Perkin Warbeck, that notorious pretender brought

to life by John Ford's eponymous play? How is succession troubled by upstarts and pretenders in the newsbook play and the history play? Does the serial publication of newsbook plays relate to the serial nature, or serial performance, of history plays? The *Craftie Cromwell* plays draw their cues from Shakespeare's history plays and the pretender plays of the 1630s and map these tropes onto pressing matters of the day. On the one hand, newsbook plays share the serial character of weekly newsbooks: On the other hand, the sequential structure of newsbook plays participates in the drama of succession. While the *Craftie Cromwell* series lampoons Cromwell's ambition, satirizes his actions, and imagines his rule as a travesty, this critique is enabled by the expectations of serial history.

Carmen Nocentelli
University of New Mexico
"The Dutch Black Legend"

The textual record of seventeenth-century England is rife with insults and accusations against the Dutch. The Dutch were Mammon-worshipers who would rather live without virtue than without profit. They were perfidious, cruel tyrants who had made themselves "hatefull to all"--and treated both friends and foes worse than "ever Turks used Christians, or the Spanish Inquisition... those they called Hereticks."¹ Even their ethnicity was at best suspect; for although their bodies looked European, their hands and faces were "Hellish Aegyptian."² By the end of the century, it had become commonplace among English polemicists to ascribe the Dutch an abiogenetic origin that effectively excluded them from the ranks of humankind.

It would be tempting to dismiss this rabid Hollandophobia as mere jingoism: after all, between 1652 and 1674 England and the Dutch United Provinces fought one another in no less than three wars. And yet, anti-Dutch discourse in England both predates and postdates the Anglo-Dutch wars by several decades, appearing fully formed at least thirty years before the beginning of these conflicts. What is more, this discourse developed as self-conscious repetition of the Spanish Black Legend—a transnational construct to which the Dutch themselves had contributed in no small proportion—and hence as a reiteration of its central topoi of religious barbarism, tyrannous cruelty, and racial degeneracy.

Focusing on political pamphlets, travel narratives, and merchant accounts, "The Dutch Black Legend" asks what we may gain from thinking about anti-Dutch discourse in England as a repetition of pre-existing anti-Spanish topoi. On the one hand, Hispanophobia defined the contours (and the limits) of anti-Dutch discourse throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. On the other hand, the formation of a distinctively Hollandophobic discourse retroactively inflected the way that anti-Spanish topoi could be understood. Given the relevance of Hispanophobia to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century narratives of English identity, it may be not too far off the mark to suggest that out of this process of repetition there emerged not only new objects of discourse but also a new subject of enunciation.

¹ Thomas Mills and John Milward to the EIC President at Surat, 1622 (BL - IOR G/36/102), f. 10v; *Quaeries: or a dish of pickledberring...* (London, 1665), 4.

² Owen Felltham, *Batavia, or, The Hollander Displayed* (London, 1672), 17.

Q. Sarah Ostendorf
New York University
“Reproduction and Same-Sex Desire in Shakespeare and Lanyer”

This paper considers reproduction as a kind of repetition, focusing on the relationship among desire, reproduction, and futurity in poems by Shakespeare and Aemilia Lanyer. The homoerotic undercurrent of Shakespeare’s sonnets parallels that of Lanyer’s country house poem, “The Description of Cooke-ham;” I argue that in both works the foreclosure of homoerotic desire is connected to themes of reproduction and immortality. The speaker in Shakespeare’s sonnets insists simultaneously on the young man’s obligation to procreate and on the immortality he will enjoy through the sonnets regardless of whether or not he meets this obligation. This paradox positions the speaker as a champion of human reproduction who is excluded from its activities, participating instead in a mode of literary or textual reproduction. Similarly, in “The Description of Cooke-ham,” the speaker’s thinly veiled erotic desire for her patrons, Anne and Margaret Clifford, is foreclosed, though the relationship is textually productive—not only in the form of Lanyer’s poetry, but also in the form of Anne Clifford’s many letters and diaries. Same-sex erotic desire in these poems is channeled away from human reproduction and into literary reproduction, marking the poems as metaphorical offspring of frustrated desire, whose endurance is guaranteed by literary merit. The repetition or reiteration of human subjects in poetry that claims to make them immortal offers access to the future for subjects who cannot or do not participate in it through heterosexual desire and human reproduction, with its promise of future generations.

Simon Palfrey
Brasenose College, Oxford
“Repetition Play”

Every play-form, large and small, is in part a repetition of an action or image that has already happened. Think of a cue, a metaphor, a scene, a character, a plot: they always appeal, in part, to something seen before. This is true of their instrumental purpose; and of their qualifying attributes, which will in part resemble previous instances. Such recurrence can be understood as a kind of substitution: implying a chain of replicas, belonging to more than one historical moment simultaneously; looking backward and forward; ghosted by past possibilities. But each such event is equally an annexing or irruptive performance, directed by an agent-at-the-moment - playwright, character, situation, the discharge of a single word or action. But this in turn is preparing for, indeed producing, its own future *and present* repetitions. Subsequent performances might not happen, but the play doesn’t exist without prehending their possibility. And so the action of performance, or of reading, is always actively recovering this basic morphology: a repetition that is always unique, and also in some basic way *not* lacking. This is the life.

What then of repeat attendance? Someone is seeing it precisely because they have seen it before. The witnessing promises a certain progress, and this progress is delivered. Repetition is essential rather than accidental: satisfaction depends upon it. The witness gives themselves to a

sequence that is already composed; to a punctualism they can do nothing but submit to. Their supervening consciousness is both in and ahead of the action, temporally ghosting, yet still necessarily waiting for the phenomenon to unfold as it always must, in due order. Equally, repetition is the experiential condition, onstage and offstage, as witness and sufferers endure the events over and over.

Should this give us pause? If repetition is the experiential condition, mustn't it also screen the experience from feeling? Might the return to a site of another's trauma entail affective and ethical bypass? If it didn't entail such a bypass, how on earth could we return as we do? And what kind of lives might be made by, or indentured to, a physics/technology so defined by repetition?

Chelsea Phillips

Ohio State University

“Carrying All Before Her: Repetition and Pregnancy on the 18th Century Stage”

Sarah Siddons and Dorothy Jordan reigned, respectively, as the queens of tragedy and comedy at Drury Lane in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Both women demanded high salaries, secured free benefit performances, and exerted control over their repertoire of performed roles. Both were strongly associated with Shakespeare's heroines: Charles Lamb once wrote of Mrs. Siddons, “We say Lady M when we mean Mrs. S,” while Jordan was known for breeches roles and occasional forays into tragedy, namely her appearances as Ophelia. Both Siddons and Jordan also performed their popular roles as Shakespeare's heroines while visibly pregnant.

My interest lies in the impact of pregnancy on audience perception and interpretation of a fictional role already familiar from previous performances by the same actress. Specifically, I explore the following questions: if their performance of a particular role, such as Viola or Lady Macbeth, is to some degree repeatable, what does it mean if the repeating body is visibly pregnant? Does it or must it inherently change how the audience perceives the role or the actress' performance? Early biographies of Jordan and Siddons emphasize the stability and repeatability of their performances as their primary virtue, how, if at all, are their pregnancies reconciled with this desire for stability?

In this paper, I will use a historiographical approach to analyze contemporaneous accounts of Jordan and Siddons' repeated performances of Shakespeare's heroines.

Amy Rodgers

Mount Holyoke College

“Endless Impact: Iteration, Affect and Violence in Shakespeare's Romances”

Five of Shakespeare's plays end with a promise of a storytelling event, a reiteration of the narrative to which the play's audience has been witness.¹ Shared narrative seems a particularly apt form of closure for these plays: fractured families, couples, lineages and cultures attain reunion and reintegration via the creation of a surrogate pastiche narrative that will become a type of communal

¹ These are *TGV*, *MV*, *MM*, *Per*, *WT*, and *Tem*.

memory engaged in by the characters to connect their disparate experiences and pasts. While this device may seem in line with both comedy's and romance's ending conventions (marriage, rebirth, reunion, and (re)establishment of community), they contain another, more tenebrous, resonance. For when characters in these plays recount past events, these iterations often take the form of relentless and unexpurgated memories; in other words, such narrative repetitions almost always center on traumatic experience.

While other critics have begun exploring the relationship between the early modern stage and the period's understanding and articulation of trauma, they have principally focused on the theater as a site where certain kinds of cultural traumas could be represented and (possibly) processed.² In this paper, I want to follow another line of inquiry and explore these moments of narrative repetition as a uniquely *theatrical* expression of trauma as an experience that commentators upon and writers for the theater understood to be inherent in the experience of theatergoing itself. Rather than drawing primarily on contemporary theories of trauma (such as those articulated by Freud, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Ruth Leys), I seek to historicize the idea of spectatorial trauma itself. By looking at repetitive recounting of particular narratives in two of Shakespeare's romances (*Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*), I explore how early modern playwrights interpreted and expanded on Aristotle's theory of catharsis as a sort of psychic violence inflicted on the spectator.

² See, for example, Thomas P. Anderson's *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006) and Patricia A. Cahill's *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).