

**Transforming Books**  
**A Symposium at McGill University**  
**October 6-7, 2017**  
Ballroom, Thomson House (3650 McTavish St.)

For a few decades now, the social and material life of books has been a central object of study among scholars of a wide array of disciplines. Thanks to the work of experts in the fields of critical bibliography, literary analysis, history, and media studies, we now have a sense of the crucial role of the material forms of texts – including their format, typography, illustrations, and other paratextual features – as well as the role of the context of production and circulation of those texts for their reception and the creation of meaning. In turn, recent scholarship has also aimed at better understanding how the mediation of texts in the public sphere helps foster different kinds of transformation that touches readers, writers, and publishers as well as the literary and material forms of books.

Building on this scholarship, the **Transforming Books symposium** aims to bring together the study of the transformative power of books (on individuals, communities, as well as in relation to large-scale social and political change) with the ways in which books are themselves transformed by the processes of production, dissemination, translation, transvaluation, and adaptation. A key focus will be the many ways that the material forms of books enable and transform the meanings and social agency of texts. The symposium aims to consider books in many forms, including electronic kinds of publication, and across a range of historical periods.



Transforming Books is a collaboration between McGill University's Department of English and the Early Modern Conversions Project, directed by Professor Paul Yachnin. Free and open to the public.

**Keynote speaker:**

**David Lee Miller** (Carolina Distinguished Professor, University of South Carolina)

**Spenser's *Libello*: Rewriting Petrarch "in harts close bleeding book"**

The Italian Humanist Francesco Petrarca is often said to have begun the Renaissance. He wrote in many forms, Latin and Italian, verse and prose, but by far the most transformative of his works was a collection of vernacular poems to which he gave the title *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmentum*, more commonly known as either the *Rime sparse* or the *Canzoniere*. With this sequence, Petrarch created both the modern lyric and the modern subjectivity it expresses. My approach to the topic of this conference will be to describe Edmund Spenser's transformation of Petrarch's transformative book in the 1595 octavo volume entitled *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, written to celebrate the poet's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle and their marriage in 1594. Spenserians have always known in a general way that Spenser's volume is Petrarchan and that its major innovation was to convert the unresolved worship of a woman the speaker can never have into a progress from wooing to wedding that celebrates the Protestant ideal of companionate marriage. Today I hope to show in some detail just how comprehensive and radical Spenser's engagement with Petrarch was. If Petrarch can be said to have inaugurated the literature of a distinctively modern subjectivity, then Spenser, I want to say, inaugurated for English literature a distinctive intersubjectivity whose full flowering would unfold in the marriage plots of the nineteenth-century novel.



**McGill**

**SSHRC**  **CRSH**  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

## Friday October 6

*Welcome & Coffee : 9:00-9:30*

### Session one : 9:30-11:00

- **Torrance Kirby** (McGill University)  
Pulpit and Press: Paul's Churchyard and the Culture of Persuasion in Early Modern London
- **Esther Richey** (University of South Carolina)  
"My faults are thine" : Converting Exchange in *The Temple*

*Coffee Break : 11:00-11:15*

### Session two : 11:15-12:45

- **Monica Popescu** (McGill University)  
Reading, Writing and Making the Revolution in Africa
- **Merve Emre** (McGill University)  
Reading for Empathy

*Lunch : 12:45-14:15*

### Session three: 14:15-15:45

- **Bradley Nelson** (Concordia University)  
Emblem Books and Medialogies: Scientific Obfuscation in the First Age of Inflationary Media
- **Fiona Ritchie** (McGill University)  
The Actress Transforms the Book: The Influence of Female Performers on Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespeare

*Coffee Break : 15:45-16:00*

### Session four: Keynote address : 16:00-17:30

- **David Lee Miller** (University of South Carolina)  
Spenser's *Libello*: Rewriting Petrarch "in harts close bleeding book"

## Saturday October 7

*Welcome & Coffee : 8:45*

### Session five : 9:00-10:30

- **Eli MacLaren** (McGill University)  
Chapbook, Deafness, Sacrifice: The Formation of the Canadian Poet
- **Joshua Calhoun** (University of Wisconsin-Madison)  
Archival Research in the Anthropocene: Donne's Books, A/C, and the Poetics of Decay

*Coffee Break : 10:30-10:45*

### Session six : 10:45 12:15

- **Mark Vessey** (University of British Columbia)  
Early Christian Transformations of or by the Book: History and Myth
- **Patrick Outhwaite** (McGill University)  
'Let us stay silent on abominable practices': Censorship of Medieval Recipe Books in the Osler and Wellcome Libraries

*Lunch : 12:15-13:45*

### Session seven : 13:45-15:15

- **Omar Qaqish** (McGill University)  
Translation, canonicity, and the case of the Arabian Nights
- **Marie-Claude Felton** (McGill University)
- Self-publishing and the material book in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

*Coffee Break : 15:15-15:30*

### General Discussion: 15:30-16:30

## Abstracts

**Torrance Kirby** (McGill University)

Pulpit and Press: Paul's Churchyard and the Culture of Persuasion in Early Modern London

England was exceptional in early modern Europe both for the concentration of instruments of government and in having a large informed population within a single location. The city also enjoyed a virtual monopoly of printing. Consequently, a sophisticated and active public opinion could be cultivated and engaged here. Throughout the sixteenth century sermons preached at the outdoor pulpit of Paul's Cross addressed important political assumptions, and contributed to the transformation of England's religious/political identities. Stationers' Hall and numerous publishing houses were in sight of the pulpit is Paul's Churchyard. The purpose of this proposed paper is to explore how this transformation identity contributed to generating an arena of public discourse. Our aim is to interweave questions related to 1) the reconstruction of 'religious identity' in Tudor England; 2) the conspicuous expansion of a popular 'culture of persuasion' as the principal means of this reconstruction; and 3) the consequent emergence from this process of an early modern 'public sphere' — all considered within the context of a symbiosis of pulpit and press at Paul's Cross.

**Esther Richey** (University of South Carolina)

"My faults are thine": Converting Exchange in *The Temple*

This paper will discuss how George Herbert engages in transforming the Geneva Bible's marginalia by reconceptualizing both reading practice and printing practice in two poems from *The Temple* ("Mary Magdalene" ("St. Mary Magdalene" in the first printing of 1633) and "Judgment.") This work comes from a chapter in Esther Richey's book, *The Redemption of God in Early Modern English Literature*.

**Monica Popescu** (McGill University)

Reading, Writing and Making the Revolution in Africa

I am interested in the intellectual history of the concept of revolution in the works of several African writers--Mongane Wally Serote (South Africa), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Ousmane Sembene (Senegal). What are the traditions of activism and revolutionary struggle with which they engage? What books do they read and draw upon in their fiction and essays? How do Marxist, Leninist or Fanonist models of revolution combine and become modified to respond to the exigencies of the respective struggles. While I will give an overview of various conceptions of revolution as reflected in African literature during the second half of the twentieth century, I will focus on Mongane Wally Serote's novel *To Every Birth Its Blood* (1981) and the formal transformations attending the author's switch from a Black Consciousness, Fanonist perspective to a Marxist-Leninist conception commensurate with the approach of the African National Congress.

**Merve Emre** (McGill University)

Reading for Empathy

What accounts for the recent emergence of post-disciplinary programs of literary pedagogy: the teaching of literary fiction in MBA programs, medical humanities initiatives, and law schools? This talk argues that these contemporary institutions of literary pedagogy professionalize the very humanist values--leadership, empathy, judiciousness--that literature departments largely abandoned in the 1970s, once the performance of theoretical rigor became entrenched as the "technobureaucratic labor" (to quote John Guillory) of literary-intellectual work. Using the example of medical humanities programs, I bring together dozens of course descriptions, syllabi, teaching exercises, and assignments to show how the idea of reading for empathy operates as a practice of medico-scientific professionalization. At the same time, I explore the rise of the contemporary medical memoir--the genre most often produced by program participants-- as an attempt to communicate the public, civic value of literature at a time when literary study is increasingly under attack as an autonomous discipline.

**Bradley Nelson** (Concordia University)

Emblem Books and Medialogies: Scientific Obfuscation in the First Age of Inflationary Media

In their recent book *Medialogies: Reading Reality in the Age of Inflationary Media*, David Castillo and William Egginton define the object of study of medialogy in the following way: "Media become inflationary when the scope of their representation of the world threatens the confines of their culture's prior notions of reality" (1). It is not difficult to see that the introduction and proliferation of printing presses in early modern Europe constitute just such a medialogy. And within this inflationary phenomenon, emblem books provide a fascinating case study of how rapidly changing

political and religious institutions both remake their own identities and intensify their engagement with the social and cultural worlds around them. As the medieval aura of the Word (and Scripture) is replaced by the visual image, an image that can now be manufactured en masse and disseminated to an exponentially expanding reading (and non-reading) public in the form of illustrated books, the early modern individual's understanding of and relationship with reality is radically transformed. Recognizing the potential of these new media to expand their cognitive and political power, as well as empower individuals with new knowledge and informational technologies, religious and monarchical authorities expend vast amounts of energy and capital in the deployment and containment of this same medialogical potential.

The goal of this paper is to analyze how emblem books are used in early modern Spain to contain the transformational potential of innovative theories of science, specifically the astronomical discoveries and theories of Copernicus, Galileo, Brahe, and others. A consideration of the Spanish diplomat Juan de Borja's *Empresas morales* will show how the allegorical framework that undergirds emblematics can be used to destabilize and re-channel modern science's increasing understanding of the physical world towards moral introspection and obedience through the apocalyptic mentality of *desengaño*, or disenchantment with the world.

**Fiona Ritchie** (McGill University)

The Actress Transforms the Book: The Influence of Female Performers on Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespeare

It is well known that the reopening of the playhouses in 1660 entailed a seismic shift in British theatrical practice as professional actresses took to the London stage for the first time. The period also saw another cultural transformation as dramatists rewrote Shakespeare's plays for performance. This paper will explore the intersection of these two phenomena. Firstly, the advent of the actress influenced the stage presentation of Shakespeare in the Restoration and eighteenth century. Then, as adaptations of Shakespeare made their way into print, actresses influenced the presentation of Shakespeare on the page as well. Once actresses became established in the theatre, adapters recognised their popularity and worked to enhance the possibilities for female performers by increasing the relatively small number of female characters in Shakespeare's plays and by expanding existing female roles in the canon, thereby giving women a prominent place in the theatre of the time. Perhaps most famously, Nahum Tate expanded the role of Cordelia in his version of *King Lear* (1681) so that, unlike her Shakespearean counterpart who is absent in France for much of the play, the character remains in England actively searching for her father, becoming more involved in the action of the drama. In comedy, John Dryden and William Davenant adapted *The Tempest* (1667) to introduce Dorinda, a sister for Miranda who is also unacquainted with the opposite sex, allowing for much naïve and risqué banter. I will consider to what degree, when published, these adaptations supplanted the original Shakespeare plays from which they were derived, arguing that actresses transformed Shakespeare on both stage and page.

**Eli MacLaren** (McGill University)

Chapbook, Deafness, Sacrifice: The Formation of the Canadian Poet

The experience of the Victoria writer, Eugenie Perry (1881–1958), offers a good view of the structural character of the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books, one of Canada's first and longest-running poetry series. The correspondence between the editor, Lorne Pierce, and Perry reveals the formation of an author who persisted against unfavourable economic conditions far enough to negotiate the complex opposition between romanticism and modernism and find her own poetic voice. Perry had a good record writing for newspapers and magazines and had self-published two books by 1940. In Pierce and his series she discovered a supportive framework in which to legitimate herself as a serious poet, but the crucial condition was her own willingness to finance her Ryerson editions through the bulk purchase of copies. Few readers will know Perry's poetry, but it is technically accomplished, conversant with the poetic issues of its day, and ground-breaking in its representation of a minority (the deaf and hard-of-hearing). Perry thoroughly became a Ryerson poet, to the point of tailoring her creativity to the forms that Pierce was capable of producing, and her case represents the potential of the Chap-Books as a channel of Canadian culture. The case also demonstrates Pierce's discovery of the royal road of Canadian literature, long before the advent of state sponsorship of the arts. In publishing sparsely, at a loss covered by other revenue, relying on the micro-agency of a handful of people, Lorne Pierce was inventing the subsidized small press.

**Joshua Calhoun** (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Archival Research in the Anthropocene: Donne's Books, A/C, and the Poetics of Decay

This talk takes seriously the sobering fact that if even the most optimistic climate change predictions prove true, printed books and manuscripts that have survived for over 400 years cannot possibly remain extant for 400 more. I consider the conditions of book survival—especially 16th- and 17th-century books—in present-day archives, where many of us find

ourselves warming our hands against the fridity of the reading room before exiting into the sweltering heat of the local climate. In such conditions, how might we reread something like John Donne's "A Valediction: of the Book," with its fantastic hope that a book might really be "as long lived as the elements"? Although I raise questions about air-conditioned archival microbiomes and environmental responsibility (Should we really be saving all of these books with energy derived from fossil fuels?), this talk is especially focused on what we lose when we do not lose books, on the aesthetics of biodeterioration, and on the poetics of decay.

**Mark Vessey** (University of British Columbia)

Early Christian Transformations of or by the Book: History and Myth

There has been a persistent tendency in modern scholarship—since roughly the middle of the twentieth century—to associate the emergence of Christianity as a cultural force in the "classical" world with innovation in the material forms of books and reading practices. Did Christian ideology and/or observance drive change in that area? Or was Christianity itself reshaped (even perhaps *converted*) by the ambient book culture of the (later) Roman Empire? As academic styles of "book history" developed initially for the print era penetrate further into periods of western culture before Gutenberg, these questions are becoming more interesting and more pressing. Stopping well short of answering them, my paper attempts to frame the issue.

**Patrick Outhwaite** (McGill University)

'Let us stay silent on abominable practices': Censorship of Medieval Recipe Books in the Osler and Wellcome Libraries

Recipe books are perhaps the most flexible and adaptable type of medical text. Unlike more formal medical manuals and treatises, medieval recipe books were often altered long after their production for the needs of their readership. Owners commented on the effectiveness of remedies and added new recipes to the existing material. However, readers occasionally felt the need to obscure certain passages in the interest of transmitting 'decency' and obscuring the 'obscene' – namely details of reproductive organs and vulgar language. This paper will explore the post-production lives of recipe books in the Osler (Montreal) and Wellcome (London) libraries, which register, through their censorship, a shift in taste and sensibility concerning the treatment of genitalia.

**Omar Qaqish** (McGill University)

Translation, canonicity, and the case of the Arabian Nights

This paper argues that the translational migration westward of the *Alf Layla wa layla* [The Thousand and One Nights] into France and from there to England in the eighteenth century marks a distinct epoch in the text's polyphonic evolution. Far from being a singular translational iteration of an original Arabic collection— as often is the idea in the Western literary imaginary, even today— *Les milles et une nuits*, and later on *The Arabian Nights*, is a local European production with a rich genealogy marked by multi directional authorship, a thousand year journey of continuous migration, rewriting, and forgery. While the text, along with its correlated mythology, has been the genitive source of stock oriental images and themes in European art and literature, it has also been the location of a dynamic cultural rewriting in which European artists, translators especially, have written into this orientalist canon even as they drew from it. As such, by localizing our readings of the *Nights* within their relevant material and discursive contexts, we can better understand this family of texts as domestic orientalist literatures. In this way, I argue, the *Nights* can contribute to current debates on the nature of translation as authorship and on the parameters of British canonicity.

**Marie-Claude Felton** (McGill University)

Self-publishing and the material book in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Writers who decided to keep the rights to their work and publish on their own in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Paris had to face many obstacles. Not only did they have to stand up to the Booksellers' Guild – who enjoyed a near-monopoly on the communication circuit, from the printing to the commercialization of books – but they also had to become acquainted with the very concrete and material realities of bookmaking. How did self-publishing authors find their way through the publishing process? How concerned were they with the material quality of their printed books? Did the authors' possibility to deal directly with the papermaker, the printer and the reading public have an overall impact on the materiality of their books? These are a few of the questions I propose to explore while looking at a few case studies, including Antoine Maugard's *Le Code de la Noblesse* and *Le Tourneur's* first complete translation of Shakespeare.