

DISTORTION: Stanford Text Collegium 2015

Elizabeth Tyler (University of York) is Professor of Medieval Literature at the University of York and co-directs the Centre for Medieval Literature, a Danish Centre of Excellence based jointly at Odense and York. She is an expert in the literary culture of England from the ninth to the twelfth century. Her books include *Old English Poetics: the Aesthetics of the Familiar in Anglo-Saxon England* (2006) and *England in Europe: English Royal Women and Literary Patronage, c.1000 – c.1150* (forthcoming from Toronto University Press).

Tom O'Donnell (Fordham University) is Asst. Professor of English at Fordham University. He studies English literary history from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. This year he is a Stanford Humanities Fellow and is completing a monograph on concepts and practices of community in the literature of high medieval English monasteries.

“Distortion in Valenciennes 150 – Between Barcelona, Speyer, and Paris”

We will be exploring the concept of distortion in textual transmission through a discussion of the contents of a single ninth-century manuscript. This book, now known as Valenciennes, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 150, has featured significantly in the national literary histories of Germany and France, because it contains the earliest surviving secular German poem in rhyme, the *Ludwigslied*, and the first French poem, the *Séquence de sainte Eulalie*. We argue that the early reception of these poems, side-by-side, suggests a significant connection between the earliest French and German written poetry, which is specific to the later ninth century. The early inscription and preservation of these poems involves a series of alterations in context and meaning that might be considered kinds of distortion. Later literary history has obscured the full significance of these poems' early connection and early reception through an over-reliance on discourses, first, on the national identity and now on European integration. We conclude by considering how literary history always constitutes a kind of distortion, both for good and for ill.

Timothy Powell is the Director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research at the American Philosophical Society, where he oversees a project that has returned thousands of pages of digitized manuscript material, audio files, and historic photographs to more than 100 indigenous communities across North America. Tim is also a Senior Lecturer in the Religious Studies department at the University of Pennsylvania and a Consulting Scholar at the Penn Museum.

“Positive and Negative Valences of Textual Distortion: Returning the Franz Boas Papers to the Indigenous Communities of Origin”

This paper will explore how stories from the Kwakwaka'wakw communities on the Northwest coast have been “distorted” in the process of being collected by the

anthropologist Franz Boas. The analysis will then turn to the question of whether it is possible to “undistort”~ or perhaps distort in a positive way~ the stories by returning them to the communities of origin by means of digital reprography. These questions will be addressed by following the transformation of Kwakwaka’wakw “texts” from the oral to the written tradition and then back again to the oral tradition over the course of more than one hundred years.

Sarah Ogilvie is Lecturer in Linguistics and Digital Humanities Coordinator at the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis and the Humanities Center at Stanford University. She was editor on the Oxford English Dictionary for many years, and Chief Editor of Oxford Dictionaries, Australia. Her publications include *Words of the World: a global history of the Oxford English Dictionary* (2013, Cambridge University Press).

“Dictionary Distortions”

Lexicography has a rich history of people objecting to a dictionary’s contents, be it the exclusion of a word, the inclusion of a word, or the definition of a word. Lexicographers may strive to describe actual usage; but the public often wants them to prescribe and to present a sanitized version, or distorted version, of usage that suits their agenda. This paper explores issues of distortion inside dictionaries and across dictionaries, focussing on a case of distortion from the author's own experience as an editor on the Oxford English Dictionary.

Paul Fyfe is an assistant professor at North Carolina State University in the English Department and the Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media (CRDM) program, and an Andrew S. Mellon Fellow in Critical Bibliography at Rare Book School. His publications include articles in *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Victorian Culture*, and he has just published a monograph, *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (2015). His current research projects include text mining a corpus of digitized historical newspapers, and “Victoria’s Lost Pavilion”~a virtual model of an art-filled pavilion extant in Buckingham Palace gardens during Queen Victoria’s reign.

“Radiant Virtuality”

This talk explores current projects in 3D textual modeling and visualization, considering the dynamics of distortion and fidelity in cultural heritage work. Specifically, it focuses on efforts to model lost historic structures, effectively producing “editions” of a place. These digital projects expose abiding problems of representation, source material, and citation for cultural heritage visualization as well as the scholarship they hope to facilitate. While such projects are sometimes celebrated as experiential time machines, they ought to expose their sources and critical conjectures as much as they appeal to the historical imagination with immersive representational fidelity. What results is “radiant virtuality,” linking innovative

work in immersive environments to our scholarly legacy of curating and interpreting the cultural past.

Giovanni Scorcioni is a professional bookseller specializing in facsimile editions and founder of FacsimileFinder.com.

His comprehensive knowledge of facsimiles; from production, to distribution, to academic use, has earned him the trust of libraries across the globe, which depend in his services to enrich their collection of fine facsimiles.

“Distortion in Facsimile Production”

Distortion plays a key role in the production of printed facsimile editions. It's simultaneously both a negative and positive phenomenon, and has deep implications for the perception of manuscripts as physical objects. My survey will explore the different forms of distortion, and what is needed to avoid falling victim to its deceptive qualities.

Colin Reeves-Fortney is a course producer for the Office of the Vice Provost for Online Learning. A filmmaker and media production expert, he is well versed in production and post-production techniques, including writing, shooting, editing and post production workflows. As a course producer, Reeves-Fortney supports faculty in translating their learning objectives into compelling video content. Prior to coming to Stanford, Reeves-Fortney was a freelance camera operator, editor and producer, creating video for a range of different audiences and markets, including public television, commercial television broadcast, the commercial film industry, as well as independent filmhouses. Previously, he was at UC Santa Cruz, his alma mater, where he served in a leadership role as a broadcast advisor for the student-run cable television stations. “As a course producer,” says Reeves-Fortney, “I want the material to look good. But more than that, I want to make video content that is accessible and relevant to both faculty and students. Innovation in online learning will only come from the effective implementation of technology to support the ecosystem of education: access and learning.

Emma Cayley (DPhil Oxon) is Head of Modern Languages and Associate Professor of Medieval French at the University of Exeter, UK. Her research interests extend across medieval literary studies; digital humanities; manuscript studies and the history of the book; text-editing; and gender studies. Her major publications include *Debate and Dialogue: Alain Chartier in his Cultural Context* (Oxford University Press, 2006); *Chartier in Europe* (D. S. Brewer, 2008) with Ashby Kinch; *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe 1350–1550: Packaging, Presentation and Consumption* (Liverpool University Press, 2013) with Susan Powell, and *A Companion to Alain Chartier* (Brill, 2015) with Daisy Delogu and Joan E. McRae. She is currently working on two critical editions of fifteenth-century French debate poetry for Garnier and MRTS respectively; a study: *Debate Culture in Medieval Europe* (University of Florida Press); and a manuscripts app.

“Through a glass darkly’, or, rethinking medieval materiality: a tale of carpets, screens, and parchment.”

This paper approaches the topic of distortion from a recuperative angle. The epigraph in the title, from 1 Corinthians 13:12, is that most famously reprised quotation, cited out of context in a hundred different songs, TV shows, films and poems. Its perhaps questionable reception forms the starting point for our investigation of the reception and/or distortion of medieval texts, from the moment they emerge in written form, to their modern manifestations under foot or digitally translated and transformed. From an initial focus on Old English, Old and Middle French examples, I move to the reception history of a single medieval French poem that will act as a testing ground for my hypothesis.

In the anonymous fifteenth-century French debate poem, *Le Songe de la Pucelle* (The Dream of the Virgin), and its medieval English translation, the female figures of Love and Shame appear in a dream to a young girl eager to learn about love and its ways. Each attempts to persuade the Pucelle (Virgin) of the folly of the other’s path, and the benefits of her own. Shame advises purity and caution; while Love urges the Pucelle to take on multiple lovers. There are nine extant manuscripts of this very popular poem, and numerous early printed copies. The manuscript tradition invariably collects the poem with other fifteenth-century debates and moral texts while the early printed copies tend to be monotextual. I investigate this curious divergence in the transmission pattern of the manuscript and printed versions of the *Songe*, and seek possible explanations in the very different sets of images accompanying the text in manuscript and printed exemplars, and in the narratives of use, reuse, and reception, or ‘distortion’ of these copies.

Greg Walker is Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. Before that he was Masson Professor of English at Edinburgh, and Professor of early-modern Literature and Culture at the University of Leicester. He works primarily on the literature, drama, and history of the late medieval and Tudor periods, but also has unhealthy interests in the film industry of the 1930s and the progressive rock music of the 1970s. His most recent books are: *Writing and Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (OUP, 2005), *Reading Literature Historically: Drama and Poetry from Chaucer to the Reformation* (Edinburgh UP, 2103), and *The Oxford Anthology of Tudor Drama* (OUP, 2014). He co-edited the *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English* (OUP, 2010) with Elaine Treharne, and *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (OUP, 2013) with Tom Betteridge. He co-edits the Oxford Textual Perspectives monograph series with Elaine Treharne, and is currently completing a book on early-modern theatrical spectatorship: *The Imagined Spectator: From the Mysteries to Shakespeare* with John J. McGavin.

“The Uncanny Reformation: Revenant Texts and Distorted Time in Henrician England”

I will look in this paper at a group of texts written in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries which were initially circulated in manuscript as contributions to the ‘Lollard’

debates about church wealth and clerical morality in that period. They were then printed in the early 1530s (and reprinted in the 1560s and '70s) as contributions to similar debates a century and more later. Drawing on notions of the untimely or anachronistic artefact (Jonathan Gil Harris, and Nagel and Wood) and of the uncanny, I will consider the ways in which they distort our sense both of the history of religious reform and the sense of time more generally, rewriting the history of the English reformation not as a decisive break with the past but as a series of uncanny, untimely repetitions.

Mark Algee-Hewitt is an Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities in the department of English at Stanford University and the Associate Director for Research of the Stanford Literary Lab. His work predominantly centers in eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature as he combines literary critical approaches with quantitative textual analysis to explore the early intersection between literature and aesthetic theory. His current project seeks to explain the sudden rise and even more rapid fall of the sublime in the long eighteenth-century. In the Literary Lab, he leads a diverse range of projects, which include investigations into the textual basis for the experience of suspense, the emergence of genre in the eighteenth century, the narrative aspects of climate change legislation in the US Supreme Court, and the history of poetic form.

“Data Driven Deformations: Producing Knowledge in the Digital Humanities”

While remediation, and, more generally deformation, is fundamental to literary and textual study, the introduction of digital or quantitative methodologies into the field radically changes the kind of deformations that are possible. Large corpora of books become single, intricate images, while single words become lists of numbers. The common denominator of these deformations is the transformation of information into data. In this paper, I want to ask what happens when we take the information schema native to the humanities (that is, anecdotal and narrative) and recast it as data. What new questions or operations are possible? What new kinds of limitations arise? Working from the emerging methods of the Digital Humanities, I will explore how the translation between data and knowledge is fundamentally reshaped (or deformed) by these new technologies.

Benjamin Albritton is the Digital Manuscripts Program Manager at Stanford University Libraries. He oversees a number of digital manuscript projects, including *Parker Library on the Web*, Stanford University's digitized medieval manuscripts, and a number of projects devoted to interoperability and improving access to manuscript images for pedagogical and research purposes. His research interests include the intersection of words and music in the fourteenth century, primarily in the monophonic works of Guillaume de Machaut; the uses of digital medieval resources in scholarly communication; and transmission models in the later Middle Ages.

"Fidelity as Fiction: Distortion and Digital Manuscripts"

From the earliest examples of manuscript facsimiles in the 17th-century until the present day, there has been an uncomfortable relationship between the original object and its various reproductions. Technologies to produce visual surrogates of medieval materials have been linked closely to the questions being asked of those materials by researchers, with the result being a focus on resolution of the details of, primarily, textual features for human consumption. The last decade has seen a rapid proliferation of available high-resolution manuscript images as many of the large repositories of Europe and North America bring their content online. As consumers of these images we are delighted with the abundance, and yet we crave more: more content, higher quality, better software, a "truer" experience of the physical object. Barring the capture, in perfect fidelity, of the physical object, and the immersive digital environment that would allow us to experience it, how do we start to ask questions of the less-than-perfect reproduction? This paper explores some of the ways we are beginning to take advantage of the wealth of material of varying quality available to us now, even when it does not give us a perfect experience of the original.