



## ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

### S49. Shakespeare's Language: Stylistic and Linguistic Approaches

Friday 1 September: 9.30-11.30am

Convenor: Mireille Ravassat (University of Valenciennes)

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Despite age-old discussions, Shakespeare's ever-renewed interest in the issue of language *per se* still requires investigation and new vistas of reflection. The seminar will take a particular, but not exclusive, interest in tropes as a way of considering Shakespeare at the intersection of stylistics and linguistics. One of the important issues at stake will be the isolated status of metonymy as an orphan figure too often upstaged by its eminent tropical counterpart, metaphor. All contributions drawing on the models and terminology provided by multifarious aspects of linguistics are relevant, e.g. discourse analysis, pragmatics, literary semantics, stylometry, corpus/computer text analysis etc.

#### **From the Philological Tradition to the Corpus-based Approach: A New Kind of Dictionary for Shakespeare's Plays**

Jonathan Culpeper (Lancaster University)

The language of Shakespeare's plays has received substantial treatment in various 'dictionaries', 'glossaries', 'lexica' and 'concordances'. A classic work is Charles T. Onions's *Glossary* (1986), written in the philological tradition that characterised the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), and providing pithy definitions and illustrative quotations. In my paper, I will deploy a number of case studies, in order to show how techniques developed in corpus linguistics can be used to produce a new kind of dictionary based on usage and frequency.

#### **Allusion and Double Meaning in Shakespeare's Language: The case of *The Comedy of Errors***

Isabel Ermida (University of Minho)

The ambiguity in *The Comedy of Errors* is patent at the micro-level of phonetics, grammar and lexicon, but it is also latent at the macro-level of global textual meaning. Its basic source is situated at a thematic and situational level, in such a way that the *errors* of the play are first and foremost referential errors of identity and interpersonal relationships. In this paper I will try to show, by means of various examples from the play, that language functions as a mediator of the profound changes which affect the characters, and that it

voices – through double meaning – the division and indefiniteness (or, the ambiguity) that characterise the identity of each and every one.

### **Shakespearean Poetics and the Culture of Symmetry**

Russ McDonald (Goldsmith's College, University of London)

My paper seeks to historicize the Shakespearean poetic line, to consider it as part of the history of surfaces. The visual counterparts of verse—Tudor and Stuart architecture, gardening, textiles, painting, and other fields of craft—are governed by the principle of symmetry, a passion for equivalence and balance that we see manifested, for example, in the interiors and exteriors of such Elizabethan houses as Knole and Hardwick Hall. We can also hear such values represented in the poetic repetitions and variations of the Shakespearean dramatic text, and to study these topics synthetically is to amplify our understanding of what gave pleasure to the early modern ear, eye, and mind.

### **Exploring Shakespeare's Vocabulary with the Help of Cognitive Linguistics: a Case Study**

José L. Oncins-Martínez (University of Extremadura)

This paper sets out to show how cognitive linguistics can be fruitfully applied to exploring certain aspects of Shakespeare's language. More specifically, it attempts to show how this relatively new linguistic discipline allows us to see from a different perspective what lies behind Shakespeare's wordplay—a topic of scholarly interest for a long time—, thus deepening our knowledge and understanding of the author's verbal art, and also—as this case study will try to demonstrate—, helping us elucidate new shades of meaning that might have passed unnoticed to editors and lexicographers so far.

### **Further Research on Shakespeare's Language**

Lene Petersen (University of the West of England) & Marcus Dahl (Institute of English Studies, University of London)

In 2003-04 Dahl and Petersen conducted a large-scale study of 257 early modern English playtexts. Shakespeare Folio and Quarto texts were compared to 22 contemporary author groups, using 75 tests for function words and 12 tests for other functional syntactical elements. Frequencies of features were submitted both to Principal Component Analysis and Discriminant Analysis. The Shakespeare group as a whole (incl. Folio and Quarto groups) had the best DA classification rate of all author groups, reaching 91.2% correct classification compared to Jonson (89.5%) and Middleton (88.9%). This paper addresses several questions raised by this study. (1) Why do function word tests appear to yield such high degrees of expected classification? (2) Why were other smaller canons found to be less consistently classified than Shakespeare? It also addresses the verse v. prose ratio in sample texts, which showed up in analysis. The paper draws on new research by Petersen into 'why function words work' as discriminators of authorial style; and on concordance-based research by Dahl into other textual variations that may distort/give indication as to a text's authorship, for example the repeated use of "yor" in *Thomas of Woodstock* / *Sir Thomas Moore*.

### **Figurative Systems as a Structural Factor in Shakespeare's *Sonnets***

Alexander Shurbanov (Sofia University)

The paper sets out to explore the system of figurative language underpinning the Fair Friend section of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and providing its thematic unity. It focuses on the subtle transformations of recurrent images and their meaningful interplay coming to a final summing-up in the coda piece of the series, sonnet 126. The study reveals a consistent and compact stylistic organisation of the larger part of Shakespeare's sequence suggesting its original conception as an autonomous poetic work. In this context, the much smaller Dark Mistress section, which fails to employ the same figurative language seems to be a later addition.