International Conference

"CEMP: Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England"

ABSTRACTS

Sophie Baramidze (King's College)
"'There is nothing so certain as our continual uncertainty': Sir Philip Sidney and the Renaissance Culture of Paradox"

My research explores how the flowering of paradox in early modern literature, logic, philosophy, theology and law is both reflected and shaped by Sir Philip Sidney's texts. I will argue that Sidney deploys paradox in the sceptical tradition to interrogate ideas surrounding the interrelated acts of writing and desiring in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, *Astrophil and Stella*, and *The Defence of Poetry*. Most of Sidney's important *dramatis personae* are readers and writers of meta-poetry and metatheatre. Accordingly, I will argue Sidney presents many of his central speakers as lover and lyric poet in one, and these figures are defined by paradox. I will examine how Sidney innovates with various traditions of paradox, considering the classical genre of paradoxical praise, the medieval examination of semantic paradox, and the paradoxes of early modern theology. I will also explore how this tradition of paradox extends to drama by examining Mary Sidney Hebert's *Antonius*, which rewrites a female historical figure, Cleopatra, within the literary tradition of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*. As the Greek root word 'paradoxon' suggests, the Renaissance tradition of paradox signifies a radically sceptical questioning of the *doxa,* or opinion. The function of paradox surrounding the Sidney canon is, as it has always been, to undermine commonplace opinion, or the *doxia.* Sidney thus deploys paradox to undermine both specifically dogmatic views and the notion of single, stable, knowable truths. In this tradition, I will argue, true wisdom is not characterised by certainty, but doubt. This radical scepticism is registered by both expansive paradoxical encomiums and, also, the pithy logical paradoxes that permeate Sidnean texts. Reading with queer theory, I will show that paradoxes present the allegedly conventional as excessively rigid, strange, or absurd.

Michael Best (University of Victoria)
"'Do you see this?' Ambiguity and Paradox in *King Lear*"

At the climax of Shakespeare's *King Lear* the king believes that he sees some sign of life in his daughter Cordelia, and appears to die in that belief. It is a moment in the play that has generated intense discussion, with critics reaching widely diverging, paradoxically contradictory interpretations: Lear sees beyond this life into the next, where he is reunited with his beloved daughter; Lear is finally and once again bitterly deceived in appearances, as the play ends with something close to nihilism; or the ending is left open and unresolved. There is a further catch. The play is recorded in two widely differing versions, the Quarto (1608) and the First Folio (1623), and the line I quote in my heading appears only in the Folio—and in conflated editions until the later decades of the twentieth century. In contrast, the Quarto text is terse and omits this flash of seeing/deception completely. How does an editor deal with a text that so decidedly resists a single, authoritative reading, without imposing a limitation on the reader's response? Traditional scholarly structures tend to demote potentially stimulating instabilities in the text to footnotes and collations where they will cheerfully be neglected by most readers. *King Lear* is a useful test case in dealing with textual variants that effect interpretation, since Quarto and Folio diverge both in substantial passages and in many individual readings.

This paper will explore and demonstrate some editorial options for highlighting interpretive structures both in print and in online texts.

Federico Boschetti (CNR, Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale, Venice)
"Philologies and Digital Philology: Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Perspectives"
Philology is fragmented in many sub-disciplines (classical philology, biblical philology, German philology, etc.) with different methods, resources and instruments suitable for specific domains of knowledge. On the other hand, Digital Philology promotes standards and best practices for text encoding and annotation, or tools for text processing with variants, which often do not fit the needs of (or simply are not comfortable for) the humanists. This contribution discusses some actions to try sharing knowledge (theories, practices) and perspectives (disciplinary standpoints, adequacy to the FAIR principles).
Two case studies are addressed: the representation of diplomatic editions by Domain-Specific Languages, automatically converted in XML-TEI and the alignment of variants at different degrees of granularity (letters, words, text blocks) and according to different similarity matrices (graphical, phonetic, morphosyntactic, semantic similarity).

Fabio Ciambella (Sapienza University of Rome)
"Digital Archives and Early Modern English Spelling Fluctuation: Examples from CEMP"
In recent years the implementation of historical corpus linguistics methods, on the one hand, and the increasing number of digitized texts, on the other, have contributed to accurate and statistically relevant analyses concerning the fluctuation of early modern English spelling (see, among others, Giusti *et al.* 2007; Baron 2011; Archer *et al.* 2015). In this regard, the importance of such databases as EEBO-TCP, probably the best known and largest corpus of digitised texts ranging from the mid-1400s to the end of the seventeenth century, is undeniable as regards corpus-based explorations of the early modern English spelling (see Baron 2012; Mehl 2015; Hotta and Iyeri 2022).

Moving from these premises, this paper will consider spelling *variatio* in some of the paradoxes digitised as part of the CEMP research project, in order to understand how spelling changes and evolves in texts with more than one printed edition, and whose semidiplomatic versions have been digitised due to major variations from one edition to another. Small parallel corpora will be created with the support of corpus analysis software such as AntPConc and Sketch Engine. On the one hand, the analysis will present some case studies from the CEMP corpus and show how these texts may contribute to the understanding of spelling variation in the period under scrutiny. On the other hand, this study will shed some light on the exploration of historical digital archives through corpus linguistics software.

Rocco Coronato (University of Padua)
"The Paradox of honesty in *Othello*"
Paradox informs *Othello*, peaking in the volleys of jibes between Iago, Desdemona and Emilia, in Emilia's worldly words of advice, in Iago's web of lies and in Othello's paroxysms of passion. Most of them deal with honesty, a topic I will study in comparison with Castiglione and Ariosto.

Bryan Crockett (Loyola University, Maryland)
"Paradox in Performance"
At a crucial moment in the last act of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the imprisoned king muses on the thoughts that inhabit the little world of his cell. "The better sort," he tells himself, "As thoughts of things divine, are intermixed / With scruples, and do set the word itself / Against the word, as thus: 'Come, little ones,' / And then again, / "It is as hard to come as for a camel / To thread the postern of a small needle's eye" (5.5.11-17). The closer one comes to a crucial truth, King Richard at last understands, the more one is constrained to use the opposing terms of the paradox in order to express that truth.

The dual construct of the paradox—a term or idea set against an opposing one in a way that makes sense—is instantiated by the very nature of acting, of role-playing. The person on a theatrical stage is simultaneously an actor and a character. Particularly in early modernity, the stage becomes the site of not only of what we usually understand as enacted conflict and resolution of a dramatic presentation, a self-contained story, but also of what the anthropologist Victor Turner calls a social drama.

Early modern paradoxes achieve their force in part through their restatement of central Christian mysteries. The language of Christian thought is insistently paradoxical, from the sayings of Jesus to the epistles of Paul to the creeds developed in the ecumenical councils of the early church to the meditations of medieval

mystics to the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Renaissance Platonists to the language of Protestant reformers. My talk, "Paradox in Performance," will range fairly widely among such sources, touching especially on of few of Shakespeare's most evocative plays.

Francesco Dall'Olio (Verona University)
"I'm not bad, I'm just written that way": Paradoxical Praises of Tyrants as a Critique of Renaissance Political Theory
In the dedicatory letter to his translation of Xenophon's *Hiero* (1516), Erasmus states that the term 'tyrant' was originally a synonym for 'ruler', and only later took on the negative overtones associated with it. In his intentions, this historical note about the origin of the term was supposed to justify the use of the dialogue as a text for the education of princes; instead, it ended up giving birth to a deep crisis in Renaissance political theory. If 'tyrant' is actually a synonym for 'ruler', and all its negative associations are a product of subsequent political theory, then what is the real difference between a king and a tyrant? And if a tyrant can become a good ruler (as Xenophon's dialogue seems to suggest), then does this mean that the traditional humanist educational theory can be used to justify an usurpation? And who says that the virtues and values traditionally accepted are the only ones that truly guarantee good governance? Starting from these questions, some 'non-conformist' Renaissance authors engaged in writing works (mostly treatises, but there are also texts belonging to other literary genres) that offer paradoxical eulogies of certain tyrants of the literary tradition. In these texts, the overturning of the traditional perspective on these characters (also inspired by the reading of classical authors such as Xenophon or Lucian) serves to show how arbitrarily sovereigns such as Nero and Richard III have been condemned for no real reason; at times, the authors even go so far as to propose to see in them a more authentic model of a good ruler than the ones presented by official Humanist ideology. This paper aims to trace a history of these texts over a period of time between Erasmus' aforementioned translation and the printing of Cornwallis' *Praise of King Richard the Third* (1616), highlighting the links between these paradoxical eulogies, the traditional political theory they criticise and the political context the authors operated in.

Bianca Del Villano (Unievrsity of Naples 'L'Orientale')
"'This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof': Impoliteness and Paradoxical Language in Hamlet's Speech"
The aim of this study is to recognize and analyze the paradoxes used by Hamlet in his mad speech, in order to interpret them in the light of a pragmatic perspective.
In particular, working in the wake of my previous interpretations of Hamlet's linguistic strategy (Del Villano 2018), I will proceed along two lines: a) to demonstrate how Hamlet's paradoxes can be reframed in terms of *offrecordness*, a peculiar linguistic function emerging from Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory; b) to contextualize and read the outcomes of this analysis in relation to the cultural reading of the paradox launched by studies such as those of Rosalie Colie and Peter G. Platt, whereby it emerges not only as a rhetorical figure but also as a hermeneutical category, a key concept to understand the English Renaissance sign-system.

Andrew Hadfield (University of Sussex)
"The Digges Family and the Art of War"
Leonard Digges' fourth paradox in his posthumously published work, *Four Paradoxes, or Politique Discourses Concerning Military discipline* (1604), is surely his most provocative: 'That warre sometimes lesse hurtfull, and more to be wisht in a well governed State than peace.' In making this claim, Digges is consciously opposing Erasmus's famous and much cited maxim, 'Dulce Bellum Inexpertis' (war is sweet to the ignorant), as is suggested by his own Latin tag, 'Et multis vtile bellum.' Easmus's adage had already been challenged by the English poet, George Gascoigne, in his poem, 'Dulce Bellum Inexpertis'. Gascoigne, a soldier who had witnessed the terrifying siege of Antwerp, known as 'The Spanish Fury', robustly defended his profession in consciously adapting Erasmus's meditation on the horrors of war, arguing that war was worst when not carried out by the professionals who knew how to do it and left to fanatics and the untrained. In this talk I will explore the relationship between Digges' paradoxes and earlier debates on war and peace, showing how importantly different positions were outlined in attempts to think through the inter-related paradoxes that war was most enthusiastically supported by those who knew nothing about it, and the way to ensure lasting peace was to wage effective war.

Beatrice Righetti (Université de La Vallé D'Aoste)
"The Incidence of the Speaker's Gender on the Form and Function of Paradoxes in Shakespeare's Comedies"

In the broader research field of paradoxical writing in early modern England (Knight Miller 1956; Malloch 1956; Geraldine 1964; Colie 1976; Hyde 1979; Grimaldi Pizzorno 2007; Gabbay, Woods 2008), special attention has been given to the presence and role of paradoxes in Shakespeare's works (Vickers 1968; Platt 2009; Bigliazzi 2011, 2013, 2014; Coronato 2014). Within this scholarly framework, the present contribution aims to investigate the existence of a specific correlation between Shakespeare's dramatic writing and paradoxical tradition, that is the possible causal relations between the character's gender and the form and function of the paradoxes (s)he utters.

This research question stems from a preliminary analysis of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) which has highlighted how changes in the speaker's gender mirror changes in the type and role of his/her paradoxical expressions. In these comedies, male characters such as Petruchio and Claudio rely on paradoxes which follow rhetorical conventions and create one-sided narratives which prevent dialogical confrontations with and validate male discursive control over their female counterpart. On the contrary, female characters like Kate and Beatrice appropriate paradoxical rhetoric and bend its conventional genres and forms in a more dialogical and confrontational manner. In this light, paradoxes seem to change form and function according to the speaker's gender: when uttered by male characters, they appear in topical moments of the plays where they stand for male power and verbal mastery; while when voiced by female characters, paradoxes become rhetorical tools in a traditionally all-male arena rather than linguistic allies in topical moments.

Given such results deriving from the analysis of two of Shakespeare's best-known comedies, I would like to question the correlation between the speaker's gender and the form and function of the paradoxes (s)he utters in a broader corpus of plays which include all of Shakespeare's comedies.

Alessandra Squeo (University of Bari 'Aldo Moro')
"'It is a Happiness to Be in Deb'": Digital Approaches to the Early Modern Culture of Paradox"

Assuming the "the mutual importance of the 'digital' as a context that influences the study of Shakespeare and, conversely, the importance of Shakespeare as a case study to understand the developing nature of the digital world" (Carson-Kirwan 2014: 1), my talk will address some of the issues raised by the digital turn in Shakespearean textual studies. Attention will be drawn, in particular, to two key directions in the current scenario that have attracted increasing scholarly attention over the last few years (Carson 2006; Galey 2014; Estill-Silva 2018; Massai 2021): the development of interoperable digital resources on early modern drama that are burgeoning on the Web and the growing availability of online tools for computer-aided text analysis that have expanded the possibilities of digitally-assisted approaches to Shakespeare, in combination with more traditional methodologies.

Based on these premises, my talk aims to illustrate how an open-access digital archive like CEMP is particularly relevant to the study of early modern drama. More specifically, CEMP affords useful tools to lay bare Shakespeare's embeddedness in the Renaissance culture of paradox, as I will argue, showing the extent to which paradoxes provided the playwright "with a vocabulary and a conceptual framework for his presentation of a dizzying array of perspectives" on conventional thought and received truths, thus "paradoxing the orthodox" (Platt 2009). Focusing on one of CEMP's keywords ("debts") and on two of Sir William Cornwallis's texts – "That It Is a Happiness to Be in Debt" and "That Misery Is True Felicity" – as noteworthy cases in point, I will illustrate how 'searchable' and 'machine-readable' versions of Renaissance paradoxes, potentially interoperable with other web-based resources, may open up new hermeneutic horizons in the analysis of the discursive practices of 'debt' and 'credit' (Muldrew 1998; Sullivan 2002; Woodbridge 2003; Kolb-Oppitz-Trotman 2020; Kolb 2021) in *The Merchant of Venice*, a play profoundly imbued with the early modern culture of paradox from a wide range of perspectives (Platt 2009).

Alessandro Stavru (Verona University)
"The Paradox of 'Making the Worse Argument the Stronger': Kenneth Dover and His Reading of 'Right' and 'Wrong'"in Aristophanes' *Clouds*"

Sir Kenneth James Dover (1920–2010) was a distinguished classical scholar, knighted for services to scholarship in 1977. Dover was an eminent figure in twentieth-century British scholarship: he was the President of the British Academy, the head of the Corpus Christi college in Oxford, and the Chancellor of the University of St Andrews. His work focused on the stylistics of Greek prose, Greek sexuality, Thucydides,

Plato, but especially on Aristophanes, to whom he devoted two editions with commentary (on *Clouds* and *Frogs*) and a book aimed at a more general readership. In my paper, I will deal with Dover's reading of a much-discussed passages of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, namely the contest between two *dramatis personae* of the play—the "Stronger speech" and the "Weaker speech" (v. 889-1114). This part of the play has paradoxical features, since the aim of both contestants is to overturn the arguments of their opponent. The contest ends with the paradoxical triumph of the *weaker* speech and the defeat of the *stronger* speech: the stronger speech surrenders and goes over to the side of the weaker speech. This switch of identity has been perceived as paradoxical since Antiquity: in his *Apology*, written decades later than Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Plato recalls this play as the comedy in which Socrates "made the worse argument the stronger" (*Ap*. 18b-c). Kenneth Dover has brilliantly shown that the contest between the two speeches deals with two opposed models of education that are themselves paradoxical: the old vs. the new education. The old education propounds the age-old value of temperance (*sophrosune*), but its obsession for homosexual voyeurism makes it unable to stick to it; the new education differs strikingly from the ascetic education that is taught within Socrates' school, pleading for an unbridled life of pleasure. My paper is devoted to Kenneth Dover's reading of these paradoxical features. I claim that these features are essential for understanding key aspects of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, as well as the reception of this play among later authors (esp. Plato).

Robert Wardy (St. Catharine's College, Cambridge University)
"Agathon's Speech in Plato's *Symposium*: Gorgias Returns"
There is plentiful evidence for Gorgias' deep influence on both political rhetoric and political oratory in Athens during the 4th-century BC, and it is generally recognized that Agathon's speech is steeped in Gorgias. But justice is not done to the speech. My purpose is to redress that injustice. A close reading of the speech demonstrates its high quality, and armed with a corrected appreciation of it we shall find ourselves well-positioned to confidently assess the real life Agathon's impact on not only Athenian intellectuals, but also the city's wider culture. If my arguments prove persuasive, we shall have gained an enhanced understanding of why Gorgias is one of the founding figures of the Western tradition of paradox mongering.