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## EMIT SOCIETY'S PANELS AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RSA NEW YORK, 27-29 MARCH 2014

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### **Early Modern Text and Image I- Don Quijote and Calderon in Film and TV Renditions**

Organizer: Barbara Simerka, Queens College

Chair: Juan Pablo Gil-Osle, Arizona State University

#### **Barbara Simerka, Queens College**

Don't They Know It's the End of the World": Emotional Contagion in *Don Quijote* and *Ally McBeal*

*Ally McBeal* is a legal comedy-drama television series best known –and controversial—for its exploration of legal cases concerning sexual harassment and marriage contracts. The narratives the clients brought to the courtroom served as allegories for the relationships of the main characters; both served as foils to the sentimental discourses of “true love in contemporary culture. Most episodes use the sentimental pop ballads of the 1960s in order to evoke and to demystify the contemporary version of courtly love culture, in ways that present surprising homologies to the tactics that Cervantes deployed 400 years ago in order to ridicule chivalric and pastoral models of sentimentality. This paper will use the cognitive model of emotional contagion in order to explore the ways in which both TV series and the novel scrutinize the functions of anachronistic but nonetheless enticing sentimental discourses within their respective moments of cultural transition.

#### **Bruce R. Burningham, Illinois State University**

The Unbearable Simulacrum of Being: Staging Ontology in Calderón de la Barca's *El gran teatro del mundo* and Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche New York*

In his best-known *autosacramental*, Calderón de la Barca invokes the metaphor of the world-as-stage in connection with his baroque defense of Catholicism in Counterreformation Spain. Nearly four centuries later, Charlie Kaufman revisits this world-as-stage metaphor in *Synecdoche New York* as part of his own postmodern exploration of the intersection between life and art. Both texts are haunted by the specter of death, and both posit a kind of overlapping ontology. In Calderón's case, his mortal actors inhabit a provisional world where they wait to be summoned into a larger one that exists just “off stage.” In Kaufman's case, his metatheatrical actors inhabit a space of infinite regress that is, nevertheless, not quite infinite. Through a comparison of these two texts, this paper will unpack the philosophical conceit of the world-as-stage, highlighting the

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transformation of Calderón's notion of a "higher reality" into Kaufman's (almost Baudrillardian) sense of a "hyperreality."

**Christopher Weimer**, Oklahoma State University

Memory, Dementia, and Selfhood in *Don Quijote* and *Robot and Frank*

In the 2012 film *Robot and Frank*, the protagonist gives the librarian he loves an obviously symbolic gift: a rare edition of *Don Quijote*. In this futuristic tale of an elderly cat burglar's partnership with a literal-minded robot to rebel against both encroaching social strictures and his own aging, we repeatedly encounter echoes of the escapades and friendship of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza. A comparative analysis of the novel and film reveals how the intertextualities between the two narratives are underpinned by the relationships between their respective eras' theories of memory, dementia, and selfhood. This study will counterpoint Cervantes's literary inscription and exploitation of early modern models of the mind's faculties and their disorders with scriptwriter Christopher Ford and director Jake Schreier's cinematic representation of contemporary "computationalism", or the conceptualization of the brain as a computer.

## **Early Modern Image and Text II - Landmark Recreations in Granada, Potosi, Cascata delle Marmore**

Organizer: Claudia Cornejo Happel, The Ohio State University

Chair: Lisa Voigt, The Ohio State University

**Patricia Likos Ricci**, Elizabethtown College

*The Rediscovery of Virgil's Literary Landmark*

A pilgrimage to the Cascata delle Marmore near Terni was on the itinerary of grand tourists, writers and artists for more than 200 years. They journeyed through the Apennine wilderness to behold the spectacular waterfall described by Virgil in *Aeneid* VII as the "*locus horrendus*" where the Fury Allecto returned to the underworld after inciting war. Virgil's contemporaries would have known that his furious cataract was not the work of gods but of Roman hydraulic engineers. Fourteenth and fifteenth-century humanists reconstructed the history of the artificial waterfall, transforming its significance from a gloss on an ancient text to a landmark in the founding of the Roman Empire. The utilitarian and aesthetic functions of the geographic site were restored: papal engineers assumed management of the flow of the Cascata delle Marmore to safeguard Rome from inundation, while poets and landscape painters reintroduced the raging torrent as a *topos* of the sublime.

**Jessica Weiss**, University of Texas at Austin

*Tales of the Alhambra: Renditions of Reconquest in Renaissance Spain*

The successful conquest of Granada in 1492 altered the political and cultural geography of Renaissance Spain. As the symbolic heart of the Nasrid Emirate, the luxurious palace complex of the Alhambra represented the sophistication of the Grenadine court as well as the foreign threat

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posed by the Muslim political structure to the Christian kingdoms. My paper will explore the representations of the Alhambra created after the conquest of the city of Granada by Christian artists and writers in order to reconstruct the conceptualization of the palace in Renaissance Spain. I will argue that the alterations to the structure as well as the context of the descriptions propelled the architecture beyond site specific associations of place. Instead, the palace was transformed into a multivalent symbol that was manipulated by the Castilian monarchy to express political power, cultural dominance, and eschatological significance of successful crusade.

**Claudia Cornejo Happel**, The Ohio State University  
*Potosí's Cerro Rico: An Iconic Landmark of Wealth and Power*

The colonial mining boomtown of Potosí has fascinated the world since Spaniards first discovered it in 1545. Adventurers flocked to this “center of all the Indies” during the colonial period in search of the mythical American riches that in this place, finally, had become a reality. Based on a variety of early modern textual and visual representations of Potosí's Cerro Rico, I discuss how the rich mountain was presented as an iconic landmark of material wealth and power in texts produced in the Spanish colonial territories as well as in Spain and beyond – even including several manuscripts and printed texts edited in early modern Constantinople – all of which advanced the fame of the Cerro. My presentation explores how texts and images propagated the iconic image of the rich mountain of Potosí, which evoked the idea of wealth and power in almost mythical proportions, in a transatlantic context.

**Early Modern Image and Text III – Friends, Fiends, and Monsters**  
Organizer: Juan Pablo Gil-Osle, Arizona State University  
Chair: Barbara Simerka, Queens College

**Juan Pablo Gil-Osle**, Arizona State University  
*Imperial Gifts, Transoceanic Trifles, and Commercial Friendship*

By turns, accounts of colonial exchanges resemble fairy tales, ridiculous actions, or unspeakable horrors. They can convey the subtle meaning of interactions, or the utter destruction of identities and cultures. The totalitarian quality of gift exchange between unequal societies—metropolis, colony—is expressed in the first Spanish play concerned with America. A cacique in *Las cortes de la muerte* (1557), by Carvajal, states that in exchange for “Christian” salvation, the colonists demand the totality of native lands, goods, bodies and spirits. The colonial project is uncompromising, with nuanced messages regarding the treatment of newcomers into the *republica*, a western concept of civility. This paper analyzes nuances and varieties of exchange systems in representations of encounters in America and Asia, as described by a number of authors, such as Colón, Caminha, Cortés, Pigafetta, De Léry, Saint Francis Xavier, Cabeza de Vaca, and Ixtlilxochitl.

**Ana Laguna**, Rutgers University, Camden  
*Philip II Gets Played: Othello and the Spanish Intertext*

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Literary criticism has long considered Othello as a foundational reference for the emergence of early modern racial consciousness. Few have studied, however, the play in reference to the creation of England's first and most "natural" enemy: Spain. By examining significant literary and visual evidence, this presentation shows the intimate association of two bodies of criticism that rarely comment on one another: Othello's racial awareness and Spain's ethnic political demonization. Using as a general framework how the idea of a Moorish Spain ("tawny Spain," as Love's Labour's Lost puts it [1.1. 171]) evolved from a favorable ally to a racialized antagonist, this talk explores the political fables and anti Spanish propaganda that associated Spanish king Philip II with Othello at the turn of the century.

**Nicolás M. Vivalda**, Vassar College

The Monster of Ravenna as a Dual Prodigy: Teratology and Symbolic Representation in Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*

Symbolic speculation surrounding the meaning of the so-called "prodigy of Ravenna" and its peculiar anatomic characteristics fascinated both illustrators and writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While writing his picaresque novel *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Mateo Alemán explored different anatomical models that derived from the early descriptions of the Ravenna monster, and he eventually became enthralled by the moral and religious implications of its "physiological design." In the same sense, I argue that the predominant allegorical structure of the novel (the life of Guzmán as an *exemplary redemption*) is virtually inaugurated by the author's rich teratologic characterization of the monster. The purpose of my paper is to trace the rich history of the image while, at the same time, paying close attention to Alemán's comments, in order to demonstrate that the rhetorical core of the novel is carefully anticipated by his metaphorical use of the monster's symbolic legacy.

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