

**Poetry Books in Multiple Versions: Editorial, Critical, Pedagogical Issues**

Organizer and chair: Juliette Utard (U. Paris-Sorbonne)

Most poetry books exist in various often strikingly different versions (e.g. *Leaves of Grass*). These internal reshufflings and outward transformations deeply affect the content, shape, and reception of the poems themselves. This panel would like to address the editorial, critical and pedagogical implications of these multiple versions. Together with a one-day conference scheduled later this year in Paris, the panel will aim to foster sufficient transatlantic discussion as to open a new field within poetry and poetics, at the intersection of textual practice, book history, and digital education.

**Michelle Taylor** (Harvard U.) will address the topic primarily through its editorial angle. The publication of Christopher Ricks's and Jim McCue's new edition of T. S. Eliot's *Collected and Uncollected Poems* (November 2015) has provided, she argues, a map to a *new* T. S. Eliot. The volume's textual histories point to a recombinative poet, who revised his poetry not only across multiple drafts but across multiple publications as well. Ricks's and McCue's appendices interestingly complicate our understanding of this iconoclastic Modernist and equally orthodox conservative Christian. Nowhere are these two Eliots more apparent than in the two versions of his 1920 collection of poetry, the well-known *Poems 1920* and the obscure *Ara Vos Prec*. Taylor's paper, "**Will the real T. S. Eliot please stand up? *Poems 1920* vs. *Ara Vos Prec*," will analyze the two volumes' significant differences to show that the two T. S. Eliots that emerge are almost opposites of each other. While *Poems 1920* is chaotic, fragmentary, ludic, agnostic, *Ara Vos Prec* is orderly, architectural, orthodox, and, for all its satire, blisteringly sincere. Although a reader might be tempted to read *Ara Vos Prec* as the expression of the true T. S. Eliot, Taylor will argue that in realizing the validity of the Eliot's multiplicity, the reader embraces the precariousness of poetry as something always already versioned, polyphonic, and various. The existence of multiple versions, then, validates, rather than frustrates, our many and varied reading practices.**

**John K. Young** (Marshall U.) will investigate the topic from a critical, multimodal perspective, focusing on "**Violence and Memory in the Multiple Versions of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*."** As Claudia Rankine's 2014 collection *Citizen* shifts from racialized microaggression to police and other white violence against African Americans, the text makes artful use of blank space, with a verso page reading simply "November 23, 2012 / In memory of Jordan Russell Davis" and the recto page bearing only the words "February 15, 2014 / The justice system" along the top. (Davis, a teenager, was killed at a Jacksonville gas station; the white shooter was eventually convicted of murder after an initial mistrial.) The second printing added Michael Brown's murder in Ferguson to the verso page. Subsequent printings have included more names and eventually sixteen more memorials, including Tamir Rice and Freddie Gray, with a fading stream of "In memory" stretched across the remainder of the page, and with the recto reading, "because white men can't / police their imagination / black men are dying." As a result, Young's paper traces the *post-publication variants* in *Citizen* as an index of the book's attempts to *remake itself* in response to new tragedies. Following Pierre-Marc de Biasi's sense that post-publication variants yield "equally definitive textual versions of the 'same' work," he will explore the multiple iterations of *Citizen* through Daniel Ferrer's distinctions between variant and variation, finding Rankine's work an exemplary case of the ways in which, as Kinohi Nishikawa has recently argued, "race is not an a priori category to be read *into* literature, but a complex effect of distinct social, cultural, and textual mediations."

Textual mediation and cultural transmission are also central to the talk proposed by **Julie Blake** (Oxford U.), "**Poetry Books, School Anthologies, and Cultural Transmission.**" Building on her expertise in the field of school anthologies in the UK, Blake will look at the way poems by American poets such as Dickinson, Frost and Plath have appeared in England's school curriculum over the last 30 years. Attending to the methods of multimodal analysis, ideas about the materiality of texts and about the processes of poetry anthologisation, she will explore a range of paratextual features such as image, typography, poem formatting, titling, notes, line numbering, page layout, anthology structure and cover design. How do these features construct the selected poems in ways that have critical, editorial and especially, in their context, pedagogical consequences? How is "poetry" reconstructed in the context of mass education where its study has become mandatory? Of particular interest will be the way the printed "versions" of the poems have been commonly adapted by pupil-readers in accordance with—and sometimes in opposition to—pedagogical guidance, through the addition of marginal notes and annotations, drawings and inserted texts. Drawing on examples from "damaged" school anthologies, Blake will explore the idea that highly idiosyncratic new "versions" have much to tell us about the critical and evaluative processes entailed in the cultural transmission of poetry through the mechanisms of mass education. Her case studies will draw particularly on Anne Ferry's work on poetry anthologisation, the work of multimodalists such as Gunther Kress and Carey Jewett, and Asif Agha's work on cultural transmission.

This special session was partly inspired by a panel entitled "Books in Multiple Versions" that was run by the Society for Textual Scholarship at a previous MLA convention. Taking the topic in a slightly different direction, however, this one proposes to focus specifically on "poetry books", inviting a plurality of perspectives on a poetic form seldom regarded as a literary genre in its own right. The three papers that were eventually selected delineate original and mutually enriching ways of addressing the topic. How does the poetry collection, itself a plurality, make way for its multiple versions? How do these multiple versions challenge our assumptions about poetry, and redefine our reading practices in the digital age?