

Carnet Shakespeare Call for Papers - Topsy-turvy and the Early Modern Era

The Carnet Shakespeare is organizing its first online conference, aimed at PhD students, master students and young researchers on the theme Topsy-Turvy.

As we evolve in a world defined by uncertainty, challenged by political and environmental crises, the notions of chaos and disorganization seem particularly worth reflecting upon. Topsy-turvy refers to a world turned upside down, confused, and disorderly. The first known occurrence of the word dates back to the 16th century, referring simply to something being overturned, with its top where its bottom should be. More figurative meanings of the expression can also be seen during the 16th century¹. The emergence of this saying in the early modern period leads us to wonder about the meaning of topsy-turvydom. In which ways was the world turned upside-down in the early modern era and in early modern modes of expression? What was the significance of these images? According to Stephen Greenblatt, “Shakespeare’s plays are centrally, repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder”². The theatrical stage appears as a perfect place to turn the world upside-down and to explore the possibilities of topsy-turvy. Our reflection on topsy-turvy should not, however, be restricted to the stage only, as the expression is also more broadly associated with the carnival, and the subversion of hierarchy in society. Topsy-turvy is an ambiguous concept, as it might be explored through its capacity to create a new order, and to challenge an old established one, or on the contrary as a threat to order that requires immediate reaction.

This conference aims to explore the different aspects of topsy-turvy in the early modern period. Papers analyzing images of subversion, chaos and disorganization are welcome.

Papers might like to reflect on (but are not limited to):

- Carnival and popular culture
- Subversive performance / performing topsy-turvy on stage
- Norms, hierarchy and their reversal
- Gender subversion
- Political chaos, revolt
- Topsy-turvy adaptations on the contemporary stage
- Chaos and reversal as a creative strategy and inspiration
- Historical figures and topsy-turvydom
- Topsy-turvy as a philosophical view on the world
- Madness

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary: 1549 T. Chaloner (tr. Erasmus *Praise of Folie* sig. Aiiij) “Bothe holy and vnholy thyngs be tourned topset touruie” ; 1596 E. Spenser Second Pt. *Faerie Queene* v. viii. sig. T3 “At last they haue all ouerthrowne to ground Quite topside turuey”.

² Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), pp. 21-65.

The Carnet Shakespeare strongly invites master students, PhD students, and young researchers to present a paper. This will be a great opportunity for them to showcase their research and work with other early career scholars.

Submission process

Communications should be 15 minutes long and are expected to be in English. 300 words abstract accompanied by a short bio-bibliography should be sent to carnetshakespeare@gmail.com before September 15th 2023. The conference will take place on January 20th 2024.

Scientific committee;

Béatrice Chaix-Rouchon (Sorbonne Université),
Méline Dumot (Université Clermont Auvergne),
Clémence Lescoutre (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle),
Irène Vilquin (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle).