

# Secrecy & Surveillance

in Medieval and Early Modern England

---



New York Public Library MssCol 2557 (15th century)

---

**13-14 September 2018**

vonRoll, Fabrikstrasse 2e, Bern



The organizers would like to thank the following institutions for providing funds for this conference:

Schweizerischer  
Nationalfonds



FONDS NATIONAL SUISSE  
SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS  
FONDO NAZIONALE SVIZZERO  
SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Burgergemeinde Bern



Burgergemeinde  
Bern

University of Bern



---

<sup>b</sup>  
UNIVERSITÄT  
BERN

Prof. Dr. Annette Kern-Stähler  
Chair of Medieval English Studies, University of Bern

## PROGRAMME

### Wednesday 12 September

|       |                                     |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 19.00 | Conference warming: Altes Tramdepot |
|-------|-------------------------------------|

### Thursday 13 September

|             |   |  |
|-------------|---|--|
| 09.00       | Registration and Welcome:<br>Annette Kern-Stähler and Nicole Nyffenegger  |  |
| 09.30-10.30 | <b>Sylvia Tomasch: Surveillance/History</b>   |  |
| 10.30-11.00 | Coffee Break  |  |
| 11.00-12.00 | <p><b>Session 1a</b></p> <p><b>Kara Stone</b> (Penn State):<br/>Secretly Sinful Mothers and the Practices of Female Surveillance in <i>Sir Gowther</i> and the <i>Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wehtelyne</i></p> <p><b>Aleida Auld</b> (Geneva):<br/>Gendered Secrecy in Shakespeare's <i>Lucrece</i></p>   | <p><b>Session 1b</b></p> <p><b>Rahel Orgis</b> (Neuchâtel):<br/>Displaying Secrecy in George Gascoigne's <i>The Adventures of Master F.J.</i></p> <p><b>Jessica Thon</b> (Bonn): "Cum Privilegio Regali" – Literary Surveillance in Early Modern England</p>   |
| 12.00-14.00 | Lunch Break (board meeting and early-career roundtable)   |  |
| 14.00-15.30 | <p><b>Session 2a</b></p> <p><b>Sonja Fielitz</b> (Marburg):<br/>Remaining Catholic in Mind: Secret Hiding Places in Early Modern England</p> <p><b>Kilian Schindler</b> (Fribourg):<br/>Ben Jonson's <i>Sejanus His Fall</i> and the Secrets of Elizabethan Catholics</p> <p><b>Kader Hegedüs</b> (Lausanne):<br/>Poetics of Recusancy: Secrecy and Imaginative Spaces in Early Modern English Literature</p> | <p><b>Session 2b</b></p> <p><b>Samuel Rööfli</b> (Bern):<br/>Rhetoric of Hidden Meanings: Concealment in the Early Medieval <i>Bern Riddles</i></p> <p><b>Anna Maria Hartmann</b> (Oxford): Allegorical alter egos, or The Secret of Spenser's Genius</p> <p><b>Laurie Atkinson</b> (Durham):<br/>"Vunder coloure Idyuers bokes dyde make": Strategies of Obscurity in the Love Allegories of Stephan Hawes.</p> |

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 15.30-16.00 | Coffee Break   |
| 16.00-17.00 | <b>Paul Strohm: Conscience and Early Modern Self-Surveillance</b>      |
| 17.30-18.30 | Manuscript Viewing of the “Riddle Codex 611”,<br>Burgerbibliothek Bern |
| 19.00       | Conference Dinner, Kornhauskeller                                      |

## Friday 14 September

|             |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|
| 09.30-10.30 | <b>Richard Wilson: To Make the Fox Surveyor of the Fold: Foucault on Shakespeare, Sovereignty and Surveillance</b>   |  |
| 10.30-11.00 | Coffee Break   |  |
| 11.00-12.00 | <p><b>Session 3a</b></p> <p><b>Ricarda Wagner</b> (Bern):<br/>Assembling Secrets in the Old English <i>Elene</i></p> <p><b>Arvind Thomas</b> (UCLA):<br/>Narrative and normative functions of secrecy in late medieval hagiography</p> | <p><b>Session 3b</b></p> <p><b>Charlène Cruzent</b> (Montpellier): “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”: Pseudonyms and Secret Identities in Shakespeare’s Work.</p> <p><b>Katherine Kaleidis</b> (DePaul /National Hellenic Museum):<br/>Class and Secrecy: The Case of Robin Hood</p> |
| 12.00-13.00 | Lunch Break  |  |
| 13.00-14.00 | <b>Karma Lochrie: Under Surveillance: Margery Kempe and the Medieval Spectacle</b>   |  |
| 14.00-15.00 | SAMEMES AGM  |  |

## Abstracts

---

**Laurie Atkinson**, Durham University

“Vnder coloure I dyuers bokes dyde make”: Strategies of Obscurity in the Love Allegories of Stephen Hawes

The early Tudor court is afflicted by a preoccupation with secrecy and a scepticism towards truth that bears a curious affinity with our own. Approaching an administration whose jurisdiction is outwardly expanding, but where centres of power are increasingly enclosed, we encounter an all-too-familiar situation in which channels for personal advancement are frustratingly exclusive and covertly policed by factionalised forces beyond our control. For the poet Stephen Hawes, ‘somytyme grome’ to King Henry VII, but no longer so intimate within the new regime, secrecy is both an obstacle and an enabler to political and literary survival. In Hawes’s last known work, *The Conforte of Louers* (1510-11), an allegorical lover recalls his persecution by diverse enemies who bear a concealed grievance towards his lady’s father—for whom the aged King Henry is a suggested candidate. Fearing detection, ‘vnder coloure I dyuers bokes dyde make’ (93), yet the truth-teller’s writings are no less vulnerable to the ‘mysse contryuynge’ (187) of those already disposed against him. The *Conforte* has traditionally been read for its supposed political subtext, the secrets of autobiography and factional intrigue that Hawes’s allegory seems reluctant to expose. In this paper, I contend that Hawes’s strategies of allegorical obscurity yet open auto-citation are rather the product of deliberate literary design, a reprisal of the tenets of medieval composition theory. To be secretive is to demand closer scrutiny, yet to be ultimately indecipherable offers the perfect hermeneutic reprieve. Hawes’s work begs the question: is it better to withhold secrets, or to feign their disclosure ‘vnder coloure’? And to what extent do such strategies of obscurity prove politically and self-promotionally expedient in Hawes’s or our own day?

**Aleida Auld**, University of Geneva

Gendered Secrecy in Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*

There are few secrets in the early publishing history of Shakespeare’s narrative poem *Lucrece*. Unlike *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), which has many apocryphal poems, or the *Sonnets* (1609), which teasingly evoke real-life correspondences, *Lucrece* (1594) was carefully printed by authorial consent with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton signed ‘William Shakespeare’. Yet this straightforward textual history belies the issue of secrecy at the heart of the poem, and the charged ways it has been read throughout history. This paper offers a trifold critical, readerly, and authorial analysis on the intersection of gender and secrecy in Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*. I will argue that the text presents different capacities to conceal based on gender, and explore two little discussed instances in which readers seized upon the poem to intervene ambiguously on female sexual deviance in the

eighteenth century. Finally I will reflect on how this narrative poem offers a glimpse of Shakespeare's self-concealing authorship. By delving into *Lucrece* from all three angles – textual analysis, readerly responses, and authorial construction – I hope to activate our awareness of the ways that secrecy interacts with perception and gender, to both enabling and devastating effect.

**Charlène Cruzent**, University of Montpellier

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”: Pseudonyms and Secret Identities in Shakespeare's Works

“Sine nomine homo non est,” the Roman maxim goes, thus emphasizing the intrinsic link between someone's identity and their name. Shakespeare's plays are no exception: if without a name a man is nothing, then characters do need a name to exist, both for their peers and for the audience. While Silvia chooses not to tell Valentine the name of her friend in order to prevent the latter from identifying the former (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*), the secret identity of characters usually goes hand in hand with the use of names in Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, when personae want to hide who they really are, they often change their anthroponym and assume a new name: the pseudonym. Nominal elements thus seem to play a crucial role in the process of concealing and/or simulating one's identity, a fact which appears to be in contradiction with the initial function of names as identifiers. However, this apparent ontological paradox can be qualified as soon as one has a closer look at the various nicknames assumed since their very etymology and/or meaning point at whom the individuals are. Analyzing situations ranging from the Machiavellian disguise of the king in *Henry V* to the protective pseudonyms of the two ladies in *As You Like It*, this presentation will explore the way in which the self-bestowal of nicknames allows characters to hide their identity while remaining themselves for the audience. Pseudonyms are linguistic codes one needs to decipher in order to reveal the secret identity of their bearers, but how shall one proceed to do so?

**Sonja Fielitz**, Philipps-Universität Marburg

Remaining Catholic in Mind: Secret Hiding Places in Early Modern England

This paper wishes to engage with the suggested topic of secrecy, surveillance and religion, and here more specifically with the persecution and surveillance of (Catholic) Jesuits in (Anglican) early modern England. Anglican religion was imposed on its people through no national movement but rather by the violence and ambition of an impulsive and unbalanced man, that is, King Henry VIII, who happened to be the whole English government. He imposed Protestant religion by force and fear on an unwilling people, and Tudor and Stuart governments achieved their objects of securing Anglican religion only by the means of ferocious penal laws and an intense persecution and surveillance of, among others, Jesuit missionaries. Soon after the first Jesuit mission in the early 1580s, so-called priest-holes, that

is, ingeniously concealed hiding places in Catholic households, were built in order to hide Jesuit priests from the Sovereign's cruel priest searchers. Departing from Foucault's figure of the Panopticon as a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men, in which the subject understands him/herself as always surveilled, early modern Jesuits may serve as an example of transgressing agents who were not (as Foucault claims) unable to verify the ongoing exercise of power but rather saw themselves bodily confronted with daily persecution. Having worked in this field for a long time, I will in my paper focus on the less well-known hiding places and priest-holes in Worcestershire, Lancastershire, Yorkshire, and East Anglia.

**Anna-Maria Hartmann**, Corpus Christi College, Oxford  
Allegorical alter egos, or The Secret of Spenser's Genius

A standard Renaissance strategy to reconcile the lurid objectionableness of the ancient Greek gods to the noble ends of humanist education was to consider their horrid aspects and immoral deeds fictional covers for 'things, whose dignity deserves a veil, as when the secrets and mysteries of religion, policy, and philosophy are wrapped up in fables and parables' (Francis Bacon, 1603). Under the pressure of the mythographers' gaze, the three heads of Cerberus and the many rapes of Jupiter yielded up innumerable edifying truths. But sometimes, even mythographers had fun. This paper is about a unique and highly creative instance of mythographical merry-making that has, so far, gone unnoticed, and that might provide us with a new framework for reading Spenser's enigmatic figure of Genius in the Bower of Bliss. In order to explain how a specific set of six images of ancient gods came to harbour, under their fictional covers, serious philosophical insights as well as unerst alter egos, this paper follows them on their fascinating journey from Basel to London—via Herold's Heydenwelt (1554), Pictorius's Apotheosis (1558), and Batman's Golden Booke (1578), to, perhaps, Spenser's Faerie Queene (1590).

**Kader Hagedüs**, University of Lausanne  
Poetics of Recusancy: Secrecy and Imaginative Spaces in Early  
Modern English Literature

In a *Short Rule of Good Lyfe* (1596), the Jesuit priest Robert Southwell explains how recusants in England could cope with increased scrutiny and surveillance by imaginatively reshaping familiar spaces and places to practice their faith:

I must in every room of the house where I dwell, imagine ... a throne or chair of estate, and dedicate the same and the whole room to some saint ... . And thus ..., the whole house will be to me in manner a paradise. (68)



Historians of religion such as Frances Dolan, Lisa McClain, and Alexandra Walsham, have already explored through various written accounts how such directives led to very concrete practices throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They have showed, in particular, how recusants would develop an interiorized take on religious practices, and renegotiate an increasingly blurry distinction between public, and private spheres in the urban and natural environments.

Yet, these new modes of imagining space, secrecy, and faith have yet to be thoroughly explored by literary scholars. This paper argues that these practices encouraged the elaboration of what I will call a Poetics of Recusancy, which similarly plays on the spatial re-imagining of private and public environments by creating sacred and symbolic properties into otherwise secular objects and *loci*. I will in this regard explore poems not only written by known recusants writers, such as John Heywood or Robert Southwell, but also by canonical writers of the period who have been at some point, and for different reasons, sensitive to the Catholic cause, chiefly John Donne, Ben Jonson, and George Herbert

**Katherine Kelaidis**, DePaul University/National Hellenic Museum  
Class and Secrecy: The Case of Robin Hood

This paper will explore how class dynamics are enacted in the interest of secrecy and surveillance in *A Gest of Robyn Hood*. Printed between 1492 and 1534, the ballad is one of the oldest surviving accounts of the mythic outlaw. Throughout the lengthy account, characters regularly adopt cross-class false-identities in order to carry out surveillance, both in official and unofficial capacities. In this paper, we will explore the ways in which these “class disguises” might be used to understand the class politics of the poem and, perhaps, its medieval source material. In particular, we will explore how class-based identity shifts as a means of surveillance serves to undermine any notion of class transgression or resistance within the Robin Hood narrative and problematises a view of Robin Hood as a anti-elite figure and supports the view postulated by J.C. Holt that the Robin Hood myth developed within the context of the land gentry (Holt, J.C. *Robin Hood*. Third Edition. London: Thames and Hudson, 2011). Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to ask how the class and surveillance might be linked in this one important ballad and what extrapolation can be made from this relationship.

**Rahel Orgis**, University of Neuchâtel  
Displaying Secrecy in George Gascoigne’s *The Adventures of Master F. J.*

George Gascoigne’s *Adventures of Master F. J.* (1573/1575) is principally known for its devious handling of the ironic narrative voice and for the scandal its publication in 1573 supposedly caused due to being read

as a roman à clef. Presumably to some extent written with a view to recommend himself for government service and patronage, Gascoigne's text engages in a paradoxical display of secrecy, set in a court society characterised by ubiquitous surveillance. The concern for secrecy pervades the text on all levels, manifesting itself in the narrative's coded representation of sexual encounters, the exchange of anonymised letters and characters' indirect forms of communication through allegory, stories and poetry, for example. Moreover, the aspiration to secrecy extends to the elaborate fiction of production and publication of the narrative itself and its subsequent republication in 1575, thinly disguised as the translation of an Italian novella. Paradoxically, however, in order to be appreciated, by potential employers or patrons for instance, Gascoigne's art of secrecy simultaneously needs to be performed and displayed, resulting in a narrative in which meanings are both obscured and partly disclosed. This in turn aligns readers with the inquisitive characters of the text's courtly universe of surveillance. It invites them to assume the position of yet another voyeuristic observer while Gascoigne at once grants readers the satisfaction of decoding the narrative and suggests that there might still be more secrets to penetrate.

**Samuel Röösl**i, University of Bern

Rhetoric of Hidden Meaning: Techniques of Concealment in the Early Medieval *Bern Riddles*

This paper offers an exploration of the early medieval *Bern Riddles* both as a technique of concealment and as a way of learning about the secrets hidden behind the veil of concealing language. The *Bern Riddles* are a collection of Latin riddle poems dating back to, at least, the 7th century. In contrast to more widely studied collections such as the late Roman *Aenigmata* of one Symphosius, the Anglo-Latin *Enigmata* of Aldhelm, or indeed the Old English Exeter Book riddles, the *Bern Riddles* have been studied only marginally.

Latin Riddle poems, or *aenigmata*, were a prominent part of early medieval education, especially but not exclusively in Anglo-Saxon England. Their usage in schools pertained to language acquisition and to familiarising a particular kind of rhetorics. The riddle or *aenigma* in the grammatical and rhetorical works used or produced in the period appears as a sub-category of allegory, defined as "an obscure thought through a hidden likeness of things" (Donatus, *de tropis* GL 4,401), or "an obscure meaning" which is "represented through certain semblances" (Isidor of Seville, *Etymologiae* I.37.22.26). The obscured meanings of riddle poetry such as the *Bern Riddles* produce simultaneously concealment and revelation: they construct, as it were, a secret only to offer the key to reveal their own meanings.

**Kilian Schindler**, University of Fribourg

Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* and the Secrets of Elizabethan Catholics

This paper will address the subject of secrecy and surveillance in Ben Jonson's tragedy *Sejanus His Fall* (1603). Jonson was accused "both of popery and treason" for his dramatisation of the rise and fall of Sejanus, the favourite of the Emperor Tiberius. In light of Jonson's Catholicism at the time, his sympathetic portrayal of the disgraced Germanic faction at Tiberius' court has often been read as a critique of the increasingly severe persecution of English Catholics as Queen Elizabeth's reign drew to a close. In this paper, I will focus in particular on Jonson's depiction of a regime heavily invested in the surveillance and espionage of its supposed enemies within. *Sejanus* can thus be read as a critique of the Elizabethan regime's abandonment of its alleged policy "not to make windows into men's souls" and to tolerate private religious dissent. However, Jonson's vindication of a sphere of private thought and belief is paradoxically coupled with a critique of flattery and dissimulation at Tiberius' court. Likewise, his denunciation of the play's politics as a Machiavellian spectacle, in which appearances matter more than essences, stands in tension with Jonson's use of the medium of the theatre. Hence I will also consider how the play's ethical and political concerns are reflected in its meta-theatrical aspects and the highly idiosyncratic paratextual framework of the 1605 quarto edition of the play.

**Kara Stone**, Penn State Scranton

Secretly Sinful Mothers and the Practices of Female Surveillance in *Sir Gowther* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*

In many late medieval romances, the secretive world of female desire and sin occupies a central role. This preoccupation with female secrecy leads to a type of literary surveillance that seems to speak to a larger cultural fascination with controlling women's actions. Two particular late medieval romances, *Sir Gowther* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* depict the female characters as sinful with their transgressions happening outside of the bounds of societal control. For instance, in *Sir Gowther*, Gowther's mother has an illicit affair with a demon in the orchard outside of the walls of her husband's castle, and in *Awntyrs*, Guinevere's mother's ghostly apparition alludes to her secretly lustful and covetous nature while she ruled as a queen on earth. Both mothers' images and actions circumvent the traditional roles assigned to women in late medieval art and literature as nurturers and teachers. Instead, these mothers, whether through their physical manifestations or outward actions, illustrate a different type of femininity that implies danger to both the domestic sphere and to societal order. By examining these two examples of secretly sinful mothers, I will consider why female surveillance or the need to control improper female action is so important in the narrative structure of these popular romances. I will argue that these modes of literary surveillance reflect late medieval societal concerns and practices. Finally, I will analyze how the mothers' sins

and secrets affect their offspring from a gendered perspective and I will suggest that literary techniques of surveillance serve both to implicate the mothers for their indiscretions and to punish their offspring and future generations.

**Arvind Thomas**, University of California, Los Angeles

Narrative and normative functions of secrecy in late medieval hagiography

Late medieval hagiography is largely a product of the interplay of secrecy, silence, and speech. More often than not, the *Vita* (“life”) of holy women and men originates in continual exchanges between spiritual director and disciple in a forum governed by the seal of secrecy. At crucial points in the hagiographical narrative, secrets are shared, concealed, withheld, and revealed. Christina of Markyate lives secretly in a cell under a hermit’s charge and later exhibits the power to see into the secret thoughts of an abbot. Eadmer speaks of Anselm’s retreats into solitary spaces for the sake of writing and himself admits to have kept the writing of Anselm’s *Vita* a secretive enterprise. Margery Kempe reveals all to her confessor but keeps one sin a secret, and, in the judicial forum, maintains silence at significant moments.

This paper will shed light on the ways in which secrecy has at once narrative and normative functions in the hagiographical lives of St. Anselm (by Eadmer), Christina of Markyate, and Margery Kempe. The interplay of concealment and revelation at opportune moments is integral to the hagiographical plot: moments of secrecy, silence, and speech generate tensions between characters and raise expectations of conflict, and thereby drive the narrative forward. At the same time, such narrative effects of secrecy have historically specific normative significance: vows taken in secret, words spoken or withheld in confession, and secretive actions are shaped by and shape evolving canonical norms or monastic rules. In uncovering the narrative and normative functions of secrecy, I argue that “form” (not just “character”) has agency – one that can revise our understanding of the historical work done by and within late medieval hagiography.

**Jessica Thon**, Bonn University

“Cum Privilegio Regali” - Literary Surveillance in Early Modern England

Due to the dynamic increase in publishing business, 16th century English authorities were confronted with a growing number of heretic and seditious pamphlets, books, plays, ballads, etc. which became a potential threat to the power of Tudor monarchy as well as nobility. Therefore, a strict control of what could be published was needed, executed by royal officials such as the Stationers’ Company or the Lord Chancellor. By granting licences, government and church regulated the distribution of Early Modern

literature; a surveillance of media. This paper will concentrate on the practices of literary surveillance during the reigns of Queen Mary and Elizabeth I raising the question who decides whether a document benefits or impairs English aristocracy. In order to prove that the classification of literature in prohibited or permitted is a matter of interpretation, it is necessary to discuss the different notions both rulers had concerning potential threats to their sovereignty. The struggles of finally obtaining a printing licence will be exemplified by William Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrats* (1555) which perfectly demonstrates that an originally forbidden text can indeed become a celebrated piece of English identity under different rulership: Queen Mary's government understood Baldwin's lyrical collection of confessions, lamentations and self-reflections, presented through the voices of noble historical English figures, as harsh criticism pointing out the mistakes of aristocracy and insulting the ruling classes' ancestors whereas her successor conceived the laudatory accounts covered in this work as well as its positive impact on society.

**Ricarda Wagner**, University of Bern  
Assembling Secrets in the Old English *Elene*

The Old English *Elene* is a tale of deferral, of knowledge desired and denied. On her very overt quest to find the holy cross, Elene encounters considerable resistance from the local community of Jews, who defiantly guard the secret of where the cross is buried. Her search is all the more frustrating because the object of her desire, the material vestige of Christ's crucifixion, was already revealed to her son Constantine, but remains hidden from her. The poem painfully performs the lesson that disclosure and discovery do not always coincide. Elene's final unearthing of the cross and nails crucially depends on the interplay between persons who know and things that do. My paper takes its theoretical cue from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the assemblage, a dynamic grouping of forces and bodies whose combined agencies effect a change in the world. I argue that in *Elene*, the secret of salvation and sovereignty cannot be possessed or uncovered by any one person. Rather, it is constructed and negotiated by the assemblages of persons and things that form around it – in this case, an emperor hungry for approbation, a mother desiring a touch of the real, a Jew who remembers, resists and relents, a cross that resurrects, and nails that recycle well.

## **Addresses**

---

University of Bern, vonRoll  
Fabrikstrasse 2e  
3001 Bern

Altes Tramdepot  
Muristalden 6  
3006 Bern

Kornhauskeller  
Kornhausplatz 18  
3011 Bern