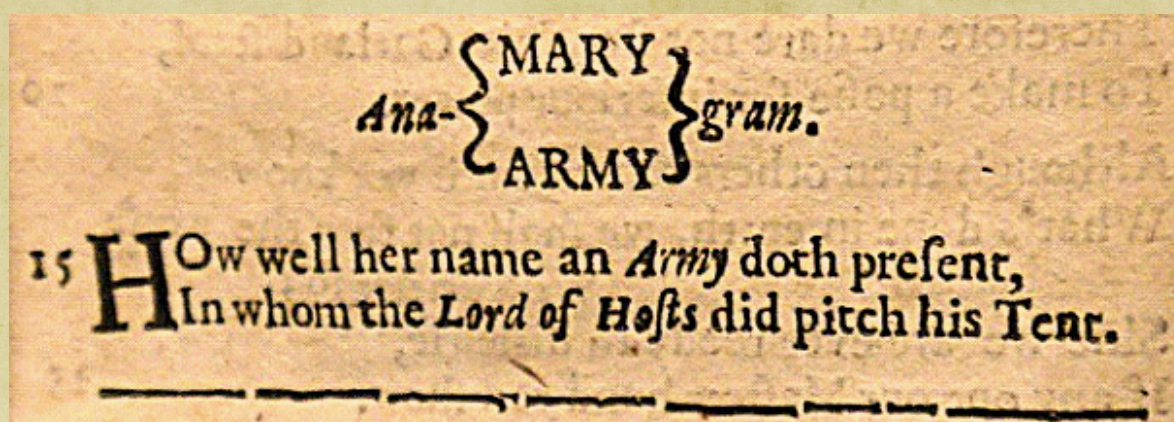


Of Anagrammatology: Decoding the Renaissance Text

William Sherman

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THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012

4:30 PM

Richter Library

Third Floor Conference Room

1300 Memorial Drive

We are not used to the idea that anagrams might have anything to teach us. For most of us, they are games we outgrow, and famous writers, from Ben Jonson to Samuel Johnson, and from John Dryden to T. S. Eliot, have dismissed their deployment in literature as trivial, empty, and even perverse--a twisted art, as Dryden described it in his satirical poem *MacFecknoe*, devoted to "tortur[ing] one poor word ten thousand ways." But Christopher Ricks has recently reminded us that Shakespeare's age was the veritable "heyday of the anagram," suggesting that the art of verbal recombination can be studied as "a true assistance to art" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In my illustrated lecture, I want to go further and suggest that anagrams deserve a central place in a larger history, one with broader textual, cultural, and intellectual dimensions.

William Sherman is professor of Renaissance and Early Modern Studies at York University. He was director of the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies (CREMS) from 2005 to 2011. During 2011-2012, he will be the Barbara Mowat Mellon Foundation Fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Dr. Sherman has published widely on the history of books and readers, Renaissance drama, travel writing, and textual editing. His recent publications include *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*; the Norton Critical Edition of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; and a special issue of the *Huntington Library Quarterly* on prison writings in early modern England (winner of the inaugural Voyager Award of the MLA's Council of Editors of Learned Journals).

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