Redell Olsen

The sequence 'A Newe Booke of Copies', from which this anthology's extracts have been chosen, exists on the page and as a live performance with video. Whether as text or as performance, this sequence offers frames and statements that can only be glimpsed in extracts and in ways that make any accompanying statement of its poetics necessarily partial. This said, it is also true that 'A Newe Booke of Copies' writes through a number of sources and materials relating to penmanship, needlework and their conflicting histories. The interest of such sources and materials is not merely historical, but suggests a clothing for the concerns of a 21st century poetics. One obliquely relevant source is an Elizabethan Writing Book also entitled *A Newe Booke of Copies*, first published in 1574. This book highlights rules and directions for correct handwriting in a variety of hands or styles. The first book of its kind to be printed in movable type, it marks a shift in power from the biblio-calligrapher to the printer. Medieval scribes, like embroiders, are mostly lost to anonymity. They usually did not sign their work. The individuality of the writer or seamstress is caught or glimpsed in the flourish of the decorative pattern, in the margin or on the collar of a garment. By contrast, perhaps the earliest dated British sampler to have survived was by Jane Bostocke in 1598. Her sampler is from a period of transition in the practical use of embroidery. Contemporary with such shifts, the ruff is taken by many people to epitomize Elizabethan high fashion. Ruffs were often covered in embroidery and seemed to have enacted an extremity of ornamentation which marked the status of the wearer. Given shortages of paper, damaged clothes were recycled into the rags used to make pulp for paper. This new copy of 'A Newe Booke of Copies', from which the extracts are taken, creates conflictual and conceptual flicker across these varied contexts already authored by diverse hands. Unattributed illuminations and rough copies in whitework are re-sampled. This new copy proposes a recutting of quills into new habits and a readdress to any "neat historical shirt". The emergent texture proposes a needlepoint to question and complicate its fastenings, rearranging its partlets for events as yet unknown.

from A Newe Booke of Copies

the ruff is the least parte of
itself surface stitchery never
merely flowers flaunt I is
assured curve strong to coil
of flickes and velvets calling
carnations pansies oak leaves
water monotone black silk
on white linen thin cambric
lighter lawn of stuff wrought in
black silk I of *Anatomie of Abuses*
geometric pattern outlines
easily copied in stem
chain back and double-running
from bookprint ruffle wearing
made out of England forbidden
to those under the degree
of baron and to women
below a knight's wife wrought
open worked down own middle
geegawes an other alphabet
of awful size worn starching
trimming-houses set up for
these devils cartwheels to use

a man wishes musical must know
tunes or how contingencies chose

in good steel or sharp towards no
proper control avoids too hollow

bodies cut off an inch above part
plant in wing remove feather I

I say marrow the cut should be
made away from the groove fork

formed thumb index then pare
down to beak of ploughshare

or sparrow symmetrical cut on
inner angle to point tiny piece

angles not on right bevels flow
freely divisible two more than

properly tempered whetted keen
thimble against colour to skin

correct manner shoulder points
taken from the right wing day

istrian galls soaked in wine
sieved through thickest linens

charged ink-horn blacker letters
ragged and faint for wishing

lays down rules graven errors
held with first and second rest

third middle fingers brake tilt
full body or edge alone cut

according to size letters against
backgrounds of coloured paper

bec at the nib and mouth calls
compels to bark not proper yet

protofeathers presence quill

knobs on posterior forearm

secondary feathers anchored

to bone follicular by ligaments

feathered dinosaurs made for

writing as currerbellellisacton

sandeliot or
gorge larson colours thread

Jane Bostocke metal
thread pearls beads
silk on linen back
chain ladder button
hole detached cross
arrowhead interlacing
pattern couching coral
cross-stitches speckling
bullion and French knots

ALICE LEE WAS BORNE

the lover has been greatly
simplified and the lady has
assumed vegetable form

mark move toward
looped-up chains
place calles partlet
stand collar to caul

a bunch of cherries
latticework white
with a bone sleeve
face ribbone across

stayned black beset
bodys upperbodies
encrusted chinnes
ornamental line or

pearls tied draped
bows husband smock
project wings setting
buskpoints unknown

slits aglet to decorate
puffed sects spangells
underlayed pad casing
feet fold mask of hem

inserts bell before
falling vertical lawn
ship sooner rigged
as arrowing trained

whalebone inserts
hanging in attention
circumferance doubt
casings tied of gold

in symmetry two
stiffen paddings
white with hooks
to disappear body

whole waist wired
rushes parts stays
sleeves of smock
slashes to show

adorn puff detach
small pinnes comfit
many cuts laced or
strings cut placing

usually starched us
as the underlying
marigold or daisy
this visible studded

pleats to the head
her ear the pinned
jewels quatrefoils
forepart detachable

partlets set pattern
matching as made
not a closed one
slits frill in attach

unmarried blackwork
patterned vine low
turned back impair
proportions huge

pleat so choicely
tied so desire hath
I might rest mine
arms on it suckling

difficult to say many
hours at starch and
pleat an unknown
farthingale tabbed

self border busks
and stiffening say
hath not some ruff
elegance knotted

this blood stained
cuff details shapes
cut work gossamer
fine white drawn

shirt survivor smock
damage at pinning
gape neck gusset
bows now missing

two insertions wide
linen stay tape face
strain on the point
of dear held display

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Redell Olsen is a poet and visual writer whose work includes performance, writing and installed texts. Her publications include *Book of the Fur* (Cambridge: rem press, 2000), *Secure Portable Space* (London: Reality Street Editions, 2004) and, in collaboration with Susan Johanknecht, *Here Are My Instructions* (London: Gefn Press, 2004). She is the editor of the online journal of *HOW2* (How2journal.com) which publishes modernist and contemporary innovative poetry by women, as well critical writing about such work. She is a senior lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London and the course director for the MA in Poetic Practice.