Group One: Theatrical Space, Time, and Place

Adhaar Noor Desai
"George Peele's *The Old Wives Tale* and the Art of Interruption"

My paper argues that George Peele's *The Old Wives Tale* (1595) provides modern readers means for better apprehending the compositional logic – and compositional legibility – of early modern theatrical performance. Focusing on the play's series of staged interruptions, which occur as speech acts, embodied movements, and, at significant moments, as both, I argue that Peele's multimodal dramaturgy taps into a habits of composition and reception that drive the Elizabethan theater's transformation from housing "playing," the recreational activity, to presenting "plays" as crafted aesthetic artworks. To explain how the technical aspects of Elizabethan dramatic craft and their attendant protocols of representation shape the contours of audience response, I turn to writings on early modern Elizabethan architecture, which I find relies upon homologous principles of artificial craft. In my paper, I think through how Elizabethan architects saw their work as a self-conscious melding of humanistic theory and material practice, of "design" and implementation, with the aid of Jacques Derrida's notion of the "architecture of the event," which considers built environments as a form of writing via the shared centrality of "spacing." Alongside this discussion, I consult recent scholarship by Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, Henry S. Turner, and Evelyn Tribble on early modern practices of playing in order to present Peele's play as a text unfolding over time, and its dialogue as palpably pre-written lines. I read *The Old Wives Tale* as a reflection on theatrical artifice itself by imagining it as building to be contemplated at once as a total composition and also as a navigable space that thrusts forward its crafted particulars, which it marks via intervening interruptions and self-consciously performative speech acts.

Erika T. Lin
"Holiday Charity and Spare Change: Festive Inversion in *The Merchant of Venice*"

This paper explores how the rules of playing in early modern theatres were connected to the rules of playing during seasonal festivities. Holidays in Shakespeare's era were often celebrated with paratheatrical roleplaying games. Churchwardens, dressed as Robin Hood, sold livery badges to incorporate wearers into a band of merry men, and morris dances featured characters such as Maid Marian. Whereas parish games served as local fundraisers that enhanced collective identity, roleplaying in the commercial theatres demanded very different emotional and financial investments. This paper analyzes how the exchanges—both affective and material—implicit in festive roleplaying circumscribed what counted as socially efficacious performance in the playhouse.

In particular, I examine holiday livery practices to better understand the function of festive inversion on the commercial stage. Focusing on *The Merchant of Venice*, I attend especially to the liminal zones when "jest" became "earnest": festive inversion, I argue, was socially central not as a reinscription of proper hierarchy but as an act that produced communal identification through the leveraging of audience affect. Commercial theatre functioned as a holiday game in which playgoers themselves were participants, enabling stage costumes to function as a form of

festive livery. By integrating holiday practices into its own semiotics and actor-audience dynamics, early modern theatre enabled not only the dramatic *representation* of livery practices but also their socially efficacious *enactment.* Festive inversion was thus a game meant in earnest. Playing, that is, was a mode of social literacy, a game whose play structure was predicated on the shared assumption that what it represented was not real, but whose affective effects were consequential—indeed, constitutive—of communal life.

Steven Mullaney
"The Architectonics of Theatrical Feeling: *The Merchant of Venice* and its Theatrical Apparatus"

As a recent, unresolved spat (in the letters' column of NYRB) between two eminent Shakespeareans reminded, *MV* remains an unresolved yet fascinating, even compelling, puzzle. It doesn't so much resist a contained or definitive interpretation as encourage too many of them. The result is not a muddle by any means; my essay explores why, seeking to articulate a performative understanding of its cognitive, affective, and phenomenological points of view. Performance history has provided a necessary, crucial, but limited account of the play's "protean" character, addressing the role of directors, actors, and historical contexts in the production of the play's—ambiguities? ambivalences? In addition to such common, accurate, and never-quite-satisfactory terms, I'll introduce the *dimensionality* of Elizabethan performance. Or rather, the dimensionality of Elizabethan production, since the theatrical apparatus, necessary to the play as a mode of production and an act of theatrical publication, includes the auditors, spectators, and their literal as well as cognitive and affective points of view. A theatrical performance is produced—a play becomes a play, rather than a script or book—in the entire experiential and material space of the theater and is not limited to what is enacted on stage. What I am hoping to offer is not a solution to this play's quandaries but a kind of materialist phenomenology of Elizabethan amphitheater drama: a consideration of the ways in which the non-mimetic and spatial dimensionality of the play in performance, as well as the cognitive, affective, and theatrical dimensionality of its reception in performance, might provide insights to which the semiotics of performance is blind. Ultimately, *MV* serves as a case study rather than a singularity: a specific and particular example of how Elizabethan theater (and perhaps, theater in general) functioned as a mode of production in which "the audience" produced the play(s) at the same time that it consumed them.

William N. West
"In Between are the Doors"

> There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors...
> —Aldous Huxley, with variations attributed to Jim Morrison, Ray Manzanek, and William Blake

One of the most important means by which the institution of playing codified its distinctive position (or imposition, or disposition) in the England of the 1580s and 1590s was through one of the physical boundaries that it established and that in a literal sense defined it: the circle of the playhouse. What Shakespeare famously called the "wooden O" separated the playing world

from the real one as inside from outside, and to enter that charmed circle was to subject oneself to the rules of playing. Between these places inside and outside were the doors. Of course playgoers did not deposit their beliefs, habits of thought, or customary practices at the playhouse doors like their pennies in the gatherers' sealed money-boxes. But by passing through them they did enter a space that signaled to them the onset of new ways of behaving, thinking, responding. To extrapolate from archeological and documentary evidence, passage through the playhouse doors and across the physical *limen* of the playhouse seems to have been fraught with significance as a kind of affective tipping point, with erotic and violent emotional charges. In this essay, I will look at what it may suggest to us that playhouses were imagined as containers with a narrow and particularly vexed passage between the world of playing and the world of reality—the doors.

Group Two: Theatrical Conventions: Accretion, Evolution, Mutation

Jane Hwang Degenhardt
"Comic Form and the Rules of "Accident" in *The Merchant of Venice*"

Following directly upon the return of the rings in Act 5 of *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia informs Antonio of the unexpected return of three of his argosies which are thought to have been irrevocably lost. After observing that her on-stage audience is "amazed" by the rings' return, Portia offers the news of Antonio's ships as though presenting a further source of amazement. She plays up the wonder of the news by characterizing her receipt of it as accidental and withholding the specific circumstances of this "accident": "You shall not know by what strange accident / I chanced on this letter." What is the effect of this unexpected news and of the fact that it is learned by "accident"? How might the mysterious circumstances surrounding this accident—withheld from both characters and audience—produce both wonder and skepticism? My interest lies in how this "accident" functions as a theatrical device in relation to the comic form of the play. More specifically, I want to foreground the significance of conjoining a comic intervention with an accident—a move that aligns this intervention with the role of fortune and chance in the world. Accidents at sea and the unreliable reporting of these accidents in the context of early modern global trade and travel raised a new awareness of the role of accidents in the world, as well as of the role of interpretation in drawing from accidents a providential meaning. As Michael Witmore has shown, accidents thus functioned as narrative devices that disclosed hidden forms of order. I demonstrate how the accidental news of Antonio's ships functions as a semiotic device that calls attention to the relationship between theatrical intervention and comic resolution, but that also reveals the contingencies that facilitate comic or tragic turns to hinge on unreliable information and interpretation.

Kim Huth
"Pain, Devotion, and Dialogue: Revising Lyric Conventions of Love for the Early Modern Stage"

This paper explores how passion, specifically the passion of love, is depicted on the early modern stage. Petrarchan poetry seems to offer a protocol for conventional depictions of the emotional experience of love through physical imagery—a protocol that could easily provide directions for staging this emotional state. The *playing* of passion on stage is, in many ways, heavily dependent on the cultural discourses of *displaying* passion elsewhere. Yet the temporal nature of drama, the interplay of multiple sociocultural pressures, and the discordant voices of other characters (especially of the "scornful mistress" herself) all complicate the institution of these conventions on stage.

To analyze how the "rules" of depicting the passion of love drew from lyric traditions but also, and necessarily, interrogated those traditions in the translation to a more dialogic medium, this paper will turn to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This play, the period's quintessential romantic tragedy, employs a familiar Petrarchan rhetoric of love, writing devotion onto the bodies of Romeo and Juliet through the representation of their love as pain. The play attempts to establish an identification of the lovers *through* (rather than *with*) pain as they develop a mutual

state of romantic passion. Their enactment of Petrarchan discourse, however, is disrupted by the demands of theater. The "rules" for displaying love provided by the sonnet tradition are a poor fit to a more dialogic literary form in which the perfect equivalence of two characters is impossible to achieve. Despite their employment of a bodily rhetoric of love, Romeo and Juliet fail to be a perfect "match," in either marriage or in devotional suffering for the beloved.

Nate Leonard
"Codifying the Revenge Tragedy: Metatheatre, Liminality, and Genre in *The Spanish Tragedy*"

There are few dramatic genres that actively embrace formal expectations with the same enthusiasm as the English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy. While there are certainly a number of root causes for the genre's investment in staging variations on a relatively standard set of tropes, the influence of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is high among them. That is not to say that *The Spanish Tragedy* is particularly original or that it is the primary source for a set of genre-specific rules. Instead, this paper will posit that Kyd's great foray into the genre utilized metatheatrical conventions as a means to stabilize cultural taboos inherent in Classical Revenge Tragedy by using reflexive tropes to mitigate the potential political ramifications of private revenge. *The Spanish Tragedy*'s use of metatheatre to create liminal layers within the play's virtual world gave later Elizabethan and Jacobean writers of Revenge Tragedy a strategy for navigating the delicate issues inherent in the genre, which led to works that found ways to explore Revenge Tragedy by playing on Kyd's reflexive approach.

Jeremy Lopez
"Early Modern Drama: Beginning and End"

This paper represents some exploratory work on a simple but large question: does early modern drama change in any fundamental way between the advent of commercial playing in London and the closing of the theatres in 1642? The ready answer this question provokes is "Yes, obviously"—an answer easily supported by the pervasive and convenient critical narrative of early modern drama's evolution from declamatory pastiche to derivative decadence by way of Shakespearean individualism. But as anyone knows who has ever written an undergraduate lecture on how '*Tis Pity She's a Whore*'s rewrites *Romeo and Juliet*, the line separating the beginning and the end of early modern dramatic creativity gets blurrier the harder you look at it.

The large question might be made more manageable if rephrased in terms of *convention*: what are the essential conventions of the earliest commercial drama, what of the latest? Do recognizable changes in these conventions amount to something that could accurately be called *evolution*, or merely to an adaptation of theatrical idioms? Are identifiable conventions constitutive of, or merely supplementary to, a play's formal and historical identity? In order to start thinking through some of these questions, I will discuss two plays, George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* and Richard Brome's *A Jovial Crew*. I think that Peele's play is perhaps the first play that really "looks like" early modern commercial drama as we have come to know it; Brome's play seems, by the author's own account, to have been the last play performed at the

Cockpit before the closing of the theatres. Both are quasi-pastoral plays but, usefully for the work I hope to do on them, they do not have (like Ford and Shakespeare) any obvious intertextual relationship.

In the simplest terms, I will try to figure out whether these plays belong to the same theatrical world, or to two different ones.

Stephanie Moore
"*The Conflict of Conscience,* Playing Conventions, and the Moral Interlude in Print"

This paper analyses dramatic conventions in Nathaniel Woodes's *The Conflict of Conscience* (1581), a late Tudor interlude based on the life of notorious Protestant apostate Francesco Spiera, and best known for its alternate versions: one ending with its protagonist's damnation, and another ending with his eleventh-hour salvation. David Bevington has analyzed the play as a source for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, but I will discuss its relation to *its* sources: the moral plays of the mid-sixteenth century, which Woodes seems to have been familiar with through print and not performance. As Bevington shows, Woodes imitates the moral play's formal conventions apparently without understanding their basis in the logistics of performance, and he often gestures toward conventional stage business without showing much interest in it. He even includes generic elements that cannot be realized on stage as written—for instance, the witty asides for the Vice Hypocrisy, which are placed in the margins without any indication of when or even *if* they are to be spoken. The printed text seems less like a working playbook and more like the staging of an imaginary performance on the page, with the Vice's commentary literally to *the side.* Indeed, rather than reading these features as failures and using them only to establish Woodes's ignorance of playing conditions, this paper presumes that Woodes has a coherent project, based on a coherent notion of "performance" as a special mode of *reading*. In fact, his distance from the material conditions of performance allows him to formulate a new logic for the moral play's conventional elements, such as its use of personifications, its doubling patterns and its alternation of serious and comic scenes, which in turn transforms the conventions themselves—an innovation to which Marlowe may owe a debt.

Stephanie Pietros
"The Willow Song and the Comedy of *Othello*"

Critics often regard the Willow Song in *Othello* 4.3 as a moment of heightened drama, one designed to increase audience sympathy for the unfairly maligned Desdemona. The song, like many of those used in early modern plays, is not original but rather a popular ballad lightly modified by Shakespeare. Consequently, much like the contemporary experience of hearing a popular song in a sitcom or a commercial, an audience member might recognize such a song and recall unique personal memories and associations with it that affect her perception of the scene. As well, the song's context in the play would no doubt inflect future occasions in which the audience member heard the song. While it is impossible to know the full range of associations with the Willow Song that a given audience member might bring to a performance of *Othello*

when it was first performed in 1604, in this paper I will explore two possibilities—two plays performed by boys' companies in the years just prior to *Othello* that reference or parody the song. In both Middleton's *Blurt, Master Constable* (1601-1602) and Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601-1603), the Willow Song is invoked in a comic satire of a lovesick man, around whom each play enacts a light-hearted critique of the conventions of Petrachan love poetry. I will consider how these very different contexts for the song might color the scene in *Othello*, producing a sense of cognitive dissonance for an audience member when the tragedy of the play is tinged with comedy and perhaps in turn highlighting other comic elements of the play.

Group Three: Audiences, Authors, Actors

Tom Cartelli
"'The citizens are mum': The Speaking Silence of Citizens in *Richard III*"

It would seem counterintuitive to assume that the effect on Elizabethan spectators of Richard of Gloucester's swaggering presentation of himself and his plans would be anything less than criminally compelling. But the play itself arguably turns on the "fact" that the *onstage* witnesses of Richard's *coup d'etat* are rather more intimidated and coerced into submission than enthralled or seduced by Richard's *coup de théâtre*—in other words, that the *dramatic* or onstage world of *Richard III* operates within a different performance dynamic than does the *theatrical* interchange between charismatic performer and pleasure-seeking audience. Shakespeare's challenge is to bridge that difference by disarming Richard of his theatrical charisma, and by disenchanting the offstage audience of the hold Richard has on its imagination. Shakespeare negotiates this process by using the reported resistance of otherwise silent citizens and the few words spoken by their representatives onstage as prompts for the offstage audience to register the waning of Richard's performance appeal, and thus rescue their subjectivity from subjection within the space-time of the declining play.

Lacey Ann Conley
"'the boundless hate / Of a confused audience': Day, Beaumont, and Audience Intervention"

John Day's *The Isle of Gulls* (1606) and Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) have many things in common. They were both performed by the boys at Blackfriars, they are both rather better known for the controversy surrounding them than their level of commercial success, and they both feature attempts from the "audience" to control the content and style of the play. These similarities are significant; however, the focus of this paper is to investigate the differences within those similarities in order to find what we can learn about the authors' attitudes toward plays and the playwriting profession. For instance, when faced with "audience" intervention, Beaumont's Prologue becomes distracted and all but abandons his role, while Day's persists and retrieves control of the performance. Beaumont is entirely unapologetic, even didactic, in the few lines his Prologue manages to get out, while Day's Prologue vacillates between bold assertion and frustrated worry about audience approval. Further, in *Gulls*, the Gentlemen appear on stage first, and their attempt to control the action is met with appeasement, while in *Pestle,* the Citizen interrupts the play in progress, and the Wife's attempts to interact with the gentlemen amongst whom she has inserted herself are met with total silence. While Beaumont's attitude seems, in some ways, more confrontational toward his audience, it is Day who fills his play with such politically charged content that the playing company faced serious consequences of incarceration and loss of the Queen's patronage. The differences between the form and content of Beaumont's and Day's confrontations can help us to understand the relative positions of these dramatists within their profession, and consequently, we gain insight into the reasoning behind their disparate levels of willingness to be identified with playwriting and to hazard the risks and rewards of achieving notoriety as a dramatist.

Jeff Doty
"Theatrical and Political Popularity in *Henry V*"

One rule of playing—obvious, but worth stating—was to consistently please audiences, enough so that the company could continue staging plays profitably. Plays failed for being too complex, dull, experimental, or derivative. Yet Shakespeare rarely thinks about artistic failure in these terms. Instead he fears giving audiences *too* much of what they want. In *2 Henry IV* Falstaff complains that "it was alway yet the trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing, to make it too common" and indeed his creator echoes this concern when he promises, in the epilogue, to bring back Sir John for another play—but only "If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat" (1.2.194; epilogue). Shakespeare fears overindulging audiences on what they (think) they want. Shakespeare explores the political version of this fear throughout the Henriad. Henry IV scolds Hal for being too much in common view, quite opposite to his own tactic of whetting the popular appetite by rarely appearing in public. Dramaturgy and effective kingship each aim at popularity; in both cases, Shakespeare imagines audiences/the people as predisposed to turn against what they once loved. His most common trope for political popularity, in fact, is overeating and then vomiting. Shakespeare treats popularity as incredibly difficult to maintain, and far more than being loved by the people. It requires not performance but a sequence of performances, each one listening and adapting to audience response.

This essay explores the relationship between Shakespeare's challenge to keep Henry entertaining in a third play and Henry V's labor to win over the peerage without diminishing his popularity among the commons. Does Henry keep political success in harmony with (the Lord Chamberlain's Men's) theatrical success? Or do the intertwined political and theatrical pressures of popularity overwhelm the play, cloying the appetite?

Nina Levine
"Taking Place in City Plays"

My paper will consider the place of the spectator in relation to city plays and to our own presuppositions about the intersections of theater and political life. Jacques Rancière offers a resonant opening into these questions, beginning with his challenge to the assumption that theater is "an exemplary community form." Rancière's point is not so much to reject theater's collective capacities but rather to turn attention to the processes by which spectators exercise these capacities. If these processes entail a fundamental equality, as Rancière claims, we might think of city plays as marking out an especially powerful space within which spectators practice equality—by claiming their own visibility, by observing and interpreting, say, or by improvising their own stories. According to Rancière's logic, the local performance of city plays would thus afford a space for the redistribution of the visible or sensible. Jonson's *The Staple of News* offers a provocative test of this claim. As in *Every Man Out of His Humor,* Jonson relies on an onstage chorus, but in place of an urbane moderator like Cordatus, *The Staple of News* presents a quartet of outspoken gossips, the very opposite of discretion and good judgment. The play has been said to mark "the end of theatre as the only secular mass medium, the end of the playhouse as the

principal forum of public debate," and one could argue that Jonson's vociferous gossips are the very epitome of Plato's disruptive "theatrocracy." But in its literal staging of spectators shifting their places within the theater so as to exercise a certain equality, however unrecognized or unwelcome, *The Staple of News* gives a kind of proof to Rancière's claims for "the emancipated spectator," presenting an urban population not only aware of but actively practicing its visibility.

Kirk Quinsland
"'The silliest stuff that ever I heard': Staging Antitheatricalism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*"

What would it mean if the early modern era's theories of drama and performance came primarily from the pens of antitheatrical writers? I argue that the on-stage audience's evisceration of the Mechanicals' version of *Pyramus and Thisbe* demonstrates Shakespeare's awareness of, engagement with, and adoption of the rules of performance—and of drama as a medium—established in antitheatrical writing. The fundamental assumption of antitheatrical performance theory is that audiences go to the theater expecting to be presented with models of action that they can imitate in their own lives, and built on this assumption to conclude that audience members would invariably imitate the worst actions they saw performed. Playwrights responded not by disagreeing with the fundamental assumption, but rather by using various forms of metatheatricality, including plays-within-plays, to point out those more virtuous actions that audiences *should* imitate. Through the abjection of the "bad" play-within-a-play by the on-stage audience, Shakespeare is able to create a conditioned response in his in-theater audience: by providing his audience with a negative example of how not to behave in the theater and how not to critique a play, he hopes to control not only audience behavior, but also works to forestall some potential aesthetic criticism of his own play.