

Joel Benabu

“Shakespeare Beyond Words: Immersing the Spectator”

In accordance with the seminar’s aim to excavate evidence of the techniques by which Shakespeare sought to manage and orchestrate the effects at his disposal, my paper discusses the subject of audience immersion in the context of Shakespeare’s dramaturgy. It does so by revisiting some of the remarks I have recently made in an article entitled, “Shakespeare’s Technique of Opening” (2013), which attempts to define openings in the context of Shakespeare’s dramaturgy. I begin by supplying observations about openings that are supported by an approach to reading the play-text that privileges theatrical over literary parameters of analysis, a useful alternative to approaches rooted in literary studies. Thereafter, I demonstrate my arguments by examining summarily the evidence provided by the opening of *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and by a detailed study of the opening of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Heidi Brayman Hackel

“Wonder at this show”: The Dumb Show in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*

As part of a larger inquiry into early modern muteness, this seminar paper will think about the dumb show that seems to open “A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe” in *Midsummer Night’s Dream* both on its own terms and in relationship to its analogue in *Hamlet*. These two dumb shows, as Dieter Mehl recognized 50 years ago, share several characteristics. By placing them in conversation with each other, this paper will explore noise, silence, and gesture in Shakespeare’s plays, and it will take up the varying typographic conventions of representing dumb shows in early modern playtexts and a range of responses to these moments by playgoers and readers.

Anthony Burton

‘Who you gonna believe, me or your own eyes?’ Reconsidering Shylock’s Conversion.

Certain implied stage directions in *The Merchant of Venice* seem to demand specific gestures, and in my view have the effect of casting an unexpectedly discordant and contradictory light on the spoken text as generally and literally understood. I will examine the case of Shylock, for whom the indicated gestures invert the nature of the trial scene and his conversion to Christianity. By engaging the audience’s powers of hearing and visual observation simultaneously but to apparently conflicting effect, Shakespeare transforms the conversion into a satirical taunt that challenges the Christian audience to ask themselves the thematic question “Which here is the merchant and which the Jew?” The drama thus becomes for the reflective members of the audience – the wiser sort - a participatory exercise in self-examination over and beyond a merely entertaining diversion to sit back and consume.

Alan C. Dessen

Lost Images and Configurations

My elusive goal as a theatre historian has been to recover what the original playgoers actually saw at the Globe or Blackfriars. In this paper I focus on several problems in such a pursuit. My examples include Falstaff and his cronies sharing the booty at Gadshill; Joan de Pucelle's appeal for help from fiends in *1 Henry VI*; cushions in *Coriolanus*; Cassandra's appearance in the Trojan council scene; Caius Ligarius' kerchief; and Bertram's velvet patch in *All's Well*. Each of these moments has the potential to set up images or links to configurations elsewhere in the play in a fashion that would have been italicized then but is easily missed today. My working question is: to what extent have hit-the-playgoer-over-the-head images, actions, or configurations in the 1590s and early 1600s been lost or blurred? Are we missing now what would have been obvious then?

Emma Firestone

Imogen, Kinship, and Privacy

It seems self-evident that dramatic characters, being fictional representations of human beings, make their most salient qualities 'present' to audience. Even Hamlet and Iago, characters famously articulate about harboring qualities which they cannot / do not make perceptually manifest, nevertheless make the fact of this 'obscured' dimension of self an important component of spectators' experience of them as dramatic entities. Does it ever make sense to speak of 'private' characters, characters whose most dramatically efficacious qualities remain concealed, fundamentally beyond conscious appraisal -- 'beyond words'?

In this short essay, I propose that Shakespeare indeed created characters so thoroughly resistant to representation that their identities live only in spectators' intuitions: in innate knowledge, exercised unawares. I suggest that Imogen of 'Cymbeline' is such a character. And I show that research from across cognitive-scientific fields may be used both to describe the origin and substance of these intuitions and to speculate on how they might affect our reception and understanding of what we perceive. I focus on kinship and the phenomenon of kin-recognition, and discuss how knowledge of kin and kin-relations informs our perceptions of Imogen and her complexity

William Germano

Unwording Shakespeare

My current book project is a study of operatic adaptations of Shakespeare. The complexity of Shakespeare's work requires that composers perform what often feel like acts of violence on his texts. Reading and listening across the wealth of operatic adaptations of Shakespeare's works it's easy to think that most poets and composers took the plays as fundamentally

stories in need of simplification or a series of episodes that could be cherry-picked for musical interpretation.

Another way to approach the question, however, is to see the operatic adaptation of Shakespeare not as the bastardization of a treasured text but as a form of slow listening. This is paradigmatically true of Shakespeare on the operatic stage, where words are slowed down and repeated to make room for musical ideas. In other words -- and opera is always about being, in some sense, "in other words" -- this essay argues for a sort of paradox, namely that the extralinguistic power of music drama is uniquely able to reveal the unspoken within spoken language. While transformations of a text out of one language into another can be called translation, the adaptation of a text into a musical setting in another language is a more complicated act. I would suggest that we might think of that process as *de-versing* and *re-versing*. To do so I will look at examples of 18th century operatic settings of Shakespeare's plays.

Angela Heetderks

Witless Boys and Their Noise: Fooling in Song and Solfège

Wager's late morality play *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* depicts its central fool, Moros, as utterly bereft of his wits. The character Wrath describes Moros succinctly: "He is as very a fool, I dare say, / And as stark an idiot as ever bare bable" (ll. 674–5). Yet, for the bulk of the play, Moros' witlessness is *not* signaled through such visual cues of folly as the fool's bauble, motley coat, or cap-and-bells. Rather, his witlessness is indicated by his habit of breaking into song. His folk-singing utterly fails to meet the standards of his didactic interlocutors, and at one point he breaks into a song that combines solfège with nonsense syllables. This performance is clearly portrayed as evidence of his stark idiocy. My project considers the role of this extra-verbal, nonsensical singing as both indicator and product of Moros' folly. In it, I suggest that these extra-verbal dimensions of the drama offer new insight into early modern attitudes about cognitive function and failure.

Catherine Loomis

Walk this Way: Taking Gender in Stride on the Early Modern Stage

Before Katherine Minola can learn to be a tame wife, Bartholomew the Page has to learn to be a lady. The advice he is given is perhaps of more use to the boy actors than Hamlet's advice to the adult players: for Bartholomew's command performance as Sly's wife, the page is told to "Dress... all in suits like a lady"; he is given lines to speak; he is instructed to model his behavior on the "honorable action . . . he hath observ'd in noble ladies / Unto their lords"; to use a "soft low tongue"; and to employ "kind embracements, tempting kisses," a "declining head," and onion-induced tears. Three factors—the "voice, gait, and action" of a woman—will be enough to convince his audience-of-one that he is female. In this essay I will look at one of these factors—the gait—to try to determine how early modern actors played the woman's part without words. Mark Rylance's much-noted glide as *Twelfth Night*'s Olivia permits the examination of some aspects of the female gait—the physical limitations imposed by the costume, for example. Others aspects are found in Shakespeare's

stage directions and in his descriptions of women. That an actor's gait can signify not only gender but social status demonstrates that the physical vocabulary of the early modern theater can not only reinforce but can sometimes contradict the playwright's words.

Terry Prendergast

The Limits of Speechlessness in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*

Dumb show; elaborate procession; dance; visionary moment; elaborate stage directions; these are among the many attributes that we associate with Shakespeare's romances, attributes which, for many critics, are drenched in mythical and symbolical resonances which trace the meeting of the rational and articulate with the transcendent and gestural. Yet this last characteristic is all-but-missing in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, despite the dominance of wordless expression in the play. With the exception of Catherine's vision of angelic figures in Act Four, the play's dumb shows are notoriously and stubbornly untranscendent; instead, wordless moments initially promise transcendence, only to have such moments become circumscribed by lies, illusion, or political machinations, yielding to the dominance of historical plots over divine transcendence. My working argument is that such moments of illusion/dis-illusion are closely associated with the play's loss of its initial mother figure and conjugal ideal—Catherine of Aragon—who is killed by political machination, hence denying the play, and England, the romance pattern of the recovery of mothers—or the promise of motherhood, and hence future generations, via marriage.

Rachel Prusko

“Untalked of and unseen”?: Youth and Privacy in *Romeo and Juliet*

As part of a dissertation project on self-fashioning teenaged characters in Shakespeare, this essay will consider how the staging of private space develops the playwright's representation of a particular youthful subjectivity in *Romeo and Juliet*. Exploiting, perhaps, his culture's growing unease with the idea of inner, hidden selves, Shakespeare raises the unsettling possibility of a private teenaged self, insinuating unstable ideas of youth into a culture already worried about secret subjectivities. I will argue that the play's staging both reflects and reveals the guarded interiority of its young protagonists, establishing pockets of private space in which they constitute themselves as subjects.

Leslie Thomson

“Inexplicable Dumb Shows”?: Stage Directions and the Performance of Wordless Action

Perhaps no aspect of early modern performance is more literally “beyond words” than dumb shows and other extended action without dialogue. This paper looks at a selection of stage directions that describe such business – from the relatively simple to the quite complex – to ask what they might tell us about early modern performance practices. In particular: for whom were these directions written? how were they implemented? is their language primarily

formulaic or specifically practical? In addressing these questions, topics to be considered include: timing signals, off- and onstage management of action, the use of music, entrances, descriptions of the action by a Chorus, the need (or not) for rehearsal.

Paul Yachnin

Into the Open: *Cymbeline* and the Visual Field

How does *Cymbeline* stage seeing and being seen? In this short paper, I consider the performance of looking relations in *Cymbeline*, how vision becomes freer and more mobile over the course of the play, how the play reconfigures the stage and the playhouse itself as a space of untrammelled looking, self-presentation, and community-making, and how the play's opening of the theatrical visual field might have affected the political spaces and visual field of early modernity.

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