

Shakespeare, Performance and the Senses
Seminar Leader: Farah Karim-Cooper
Abstracts

Sylvan Touches and Empathy in *Titus Andronicus*
Roya Biggie, CUNY Graduate Center

By focusing on the relationship between Titus and his daughter, Lavinia, this paper considers the permeable boundary between human and non-human life, particularly in the face of suffering. Shocked by her brutal mutilation and rape, Titus and his brother describe Lavinia in botanical terms, transforming her into a human-plant hybrid figure. Though Titus initially bemoans his inability to express the extremity of his suffering, he forms a bond with his daughter, namely through the language of gesture and touch, as he attempts to create an outlet and language for what becomes a mutual pain. Drawing on Jean Ferrick's work on botanicals, I will examine how the play's depiction of Lavinia as hybrid plant-human allows us to understand the complex ecosystems reshaped by grief. This contextual background illuminates the new intersubjective possibilities that develop between human and non-human life. While Titus's bond with his daughter does suggest an inter-species connection, Lavinia's death at the play's end proposes a limit to this relationship. This paper, in part, raises questions about the limitations of empathy: To what extent can we feel for and with another? How do feelings of empathy both comfort and isolate the one in pain?

Sounding Interculturalism/Seeing Shakespeare: Oregon Shakespeare's 2011 *Measure for Measure* and 2012 *Romeo and Juliet*
Carla Della Gatta, Northwestern University

This paper examines the phenomenological experience of Latino culture in two recent productions, Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2011 production of *Measure for Measure* and their 2012 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Both starred Latino actors in the lead roles who spoke English without a Spanish accent and non-Latino actors in minor roles who spoke with a Spanish accent in order to signal their characters' ethnicity. In *Measure for Measure*, an all-female mariachi band was a physical presence onstage and provided the soundtrack for the production. In *Romeo and Juliet*, non-Latino cast members were encouraged to explore a range of accents to arrive at a Spanish accent "organically," and the accents heard from the stage ranged in authenticity and regional/national dialects.

Both of these productions raise the question of how Latino culture was conveyed to the audience. In *Measure for Measure*, the sound of Spanish signaled a marginalization, from the mariachi's relegation to the periphery both acoustically and spatially, to the character of Juliet who was separated linguistically (she spoke in Spanish and needed an interpreter). In *Romeo and Juliet*,

the Latino actor's body was deemed sufficient to convey a Latino character, but the non-Latino body portrayed its ethnicity through accent.

In both productions, Latino culture was announced through the aural. Looking to theories of cultural sound, I will address how a theatrical soundscape that includes early modern English, modern Spanish, accents, and music meet with the visual of the actors' bodies to contribute to a disjunctive portrayal of culture onstage.

Make me to see it: Embodied Difference and the Sensory Effects of Performance, Holly Dugan, George Washington University

Juliet's famous musing on the arbitrariness of language in capturing the smell of a rose relies on a theory of olfaction that is at once transcultural and transhistorical. Though her point is ultimately about identity, it relies on an implicitly shared sense of the damask rose's "sweet" scent. That it is still cited as a truism, despite scientific, historical, and literary arguments that argue against it, demonstrates how powerfully implicit our beliefs about olfaction are in constructing social meaning. In this paper, I begin with Juliet's faith in the transcendent power of rose perfume to cut across social divides in order to posit more broadly the role of olfaction in constructing them. Focusing on various characters' theories of sensation, particularly about the social meanings of olfaction, embedded in plays like *Romeo & Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Coriolanus*, *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, I isolate a phenomenological paradox at work in Shakespeare's plays between the imagined role of smell within them and its material presence in theatres. Connecting recent work on the history of the senses, affect, and space of the stage in early modern England, I argue that Shakespeare's sensorium offers a unique opportunity to examine how embodied difference could be both socially constructed and experienced as visceral and true by its audiences.

Montaigne and the Performance of Shame in *Othello*, Lars Engle, University of Tulsa

If Shakespeare read Montaigne in the second half of his career as a playwright, he seems in general to have reacted with skepticism about the luxuries of reflective leisure which allow Montaigne such an evolved relation to his own and others' social discomfort and performance anxiety. The ratio of anxious performance to serene reflection in Shakespeare is much higher than it is in Montaigne, even when one sets aside the specific issues involved in Shakespeare's writing for stage performance and looks at Shakespeare's sonnets, which are his most reflective writings.

Without proof positive, many Shakespeareans have intuited a connection between the plays Shakespeare wrote in 1603-4 and the essays of Montaigne. In particular, critics such as Arthur Kirsch, Stanley Cavell, and Janet Adelman feel that "Upon Some Verses of Vergil," Montaigne's long rich essay about sex, was on Shakespeare's mind as he composed *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, and *All's Well that Ends Well*, even as James Shapiro and others suggest that a first encounter with the essays influenced Shakespeare's thinking about self, mind, and world around 1599 when he was composing *Hamlet*. Recent close analysis of early printed texts of Florio's Montaigne by William Hamlin demonstrates that "Upon Some Verses of Vergil" received more marginal commentary than other essays (especially by physicians), though of course most of this annotation will have taken place after the composition of Shakespeare's plays. With "Of Cruelty" and "Of the Cannibals," the two essays Shakespeare borrows from in *The Tempest*, and "Of the relation of Fathers to Children," which seems to have influenced *King Lear*, "Upon Some Verses" counts as a major candidate for Shakespeare influence.

Like most of Montaigne's essays, "Upon Some Verses" illustrates how, by a process of free unconventional reflection, a bold alert mind, working on classical materials and available ethnographic ones as well as on personal experience, can think its way to a less shame-inflected relation to embodied life: in this case a less shame-inflected relation to sex, gender, and sexual performance. Again, as in most of Montaigne's essays, this emancipation comes about partly through a critique of convention, in this case critique of conventions governing female chastity and male expectations about women.

Unlike other tragedies in this phase of Shakespeare's writing, in which anxiety about selfhood is introduced almost instantly -- "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt," "He hath ever but slenderly known himself," "My thought . . . shakes so my single state of man / That function is smothered in surmise," *Othello's* first act succeeds in presenting Othello and Desdemona as two characters who are unusually at home in their bodies and lives, and willing to speak their inner selves with an almost Montaignean frankness. Then, of course, the play shows the fragility of their comfort with themselves and each other. My paper compares *Othello* to "Upon Some Verses of Vergil" as a treatment of the relations among shame, chastity, and marriage.

""Tasteful lips': Shakespeare's Stage Kisses and Sensual Imagination"

Jennifer Forsyth, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

In this paper, I would like to engage the question of how Shakespeare's audiences—both contemporary and modern—might respond to an iconic Shakespearean moment: the romantic kiss. This gesture may invoke, both through physical action and verbal signals, powerful sensory memories and imaginings. While evidence about early modern stage business and audience responses to specific elements of performance is notoriously sparse, I hope, at least in part, to reconstruct how the early modern audience understood the power of these instances as icons of similarity and difference by drawing upon early modern beliefs about the physiological effects of fancy and upon early modern doctrines of emotion and empathy. In addition, I would like to introduce recent evidence about neurophysiological mechanisms such as mirror neurons that determine what actually happens when we, as audience members, watch actors perform. *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* form the core of my initial explorations in this area.

A synesthesia of Eye and Ear: Thomas Ostermeier's Schaubühne Shakespeare **Benjamin Fowler, University of Warwick**

Benjamin Bennett calls the actor's body a 'semiotic explosive', whose disruptive potential 'sticks in the craw of hermeneutic space'. In asserting the revolutionary status of drama as a form, he opposes the conservative system of the literary text with the disruptive threat of the material body in performance. Meanwhile, Shakespeare scholars have recently sought to recover the sensory dimension of early modern performance as an *extension of textuality*, putting 'theatrical effects' in the context of 'the language of the plays' (Karim-Cooper/Stern). This paper scrutinizes the faultline between the sensual and the textual, through the lens of a contemporary German theatre director working on Shakespeare.

Thomas Ostermeier's training in 'biomechanics' undergirds the highly visual aesthetic of his Shakespeare trilogy of productions, foregrounding the actor's sensual body and creating a powerful affective dynamic. I aim to link the historical avant-garde experiments in biomechanics he draws

upon with Renaissance discussions of the ‘penetrative effects’ of sensual communication and its ability to reconfigure the ‘humoral body’. Positing these approaches as complimentary, I ask how they might help us evaluate the synesthesia of the visual and the verbal in Ostermeier’s *contemporary* (and foreign language) productions of Shakespeare in such a way that transcends familiar oppositions between the scripted (Shakespeare’s text) and the performed (the sensual, material realm).

“Looking with Ears, Hearing with Eyes: Visual and Aural Interaction in Cervantes and Shakespeare” José Manuel González, University of Alicante

Early modern culture found in the faculties of sight and hearing the highest orders of the senses. They were considered a key to explaining human perceptions, owing to the powerful way in which they can influence and disturb human life. Shakespeare’s and Cervantes’s treatment of them includes a full acknowledgment of their mental and bodily aspects and functions. As seeing and hearing do not come in a pure state, they mutually interact in the characters and in their responses, which are often contradictory. Since we are visually and aurally minded, it is worth inquiring into how, in Cervantes and Shakespeare, the eye and the ear are used and abused by the characters; how their interaction affects them as hearers and beholders who respond to what is happening by such processes as sympathy or antagonism; and how they make characters react in one way or another, as their actions and emotions depend on what they hear and see.

Smelling Civet & Smoke: Odoriferous Bodies on the Early Modern Stage, Colleen Kennedy, The Ohio State University

Holly Dugan’s assertion that the early modern “stage devoid of smells is anachronistic” is completely true. Nevertheless, many scholars of early modern drama focus more on the visual and aural aspects so that the importance of the olfactory imagination on the early modern stage is still relegated to the sensuous periphery. The sense of smell is as Helen Keller claimed, the “fallen angel... neglected and disparaged”; Jim Drobnick notes that smell is “mired in paradox,” as it is both considered animalistic and yet divine. Diane Ackerman claims, “nothing is more memorable than a smell” and Rachel Herz declares that, “more than any other sensory experience, fragrances have the ability to trigger our emotions: to fill us with joy and rage, to bring us to tears and make our hearts ache, to incite us with terror, and to titillate our desires.” Scholars such as Alain Corbin and Mark Jenner claim that in the pre-deodorized Renaissance, smells were both more common and stronger but also more pertinent to daily life. Nevertheless, very few Renaissance scholars have really studied this essential and varied sense, or the materials that produced such odors.

In this essay, I create a taxonomy of the types of odors encountered (which I refer to as 1. coincidental smells, 2. represented smells, 3. non-diegetic or coincidental smells that may become diegetic smells IF specifically addressed by characters within the drama, and 4. diegetic smells) and focus more closely on two key Renaissance odors—civet and tobacco smoke--that permeate these osmological classifications and boundaries. In the case of tobacco smoke, for example, Francis Beaumont’s experimental comedy, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, offers an example of how coincidental odors may become diegetic odors. The Citizen’s Wife climbs onstage and addresses the seated gallants (paying customers of the play and not actors) to chide them for their smoking:

Fie, this stinking tobacco kills men! Would there none in England. Now I pray, gentleman, what good does this stinking tobacco do you? Nothing, I warrant. You make chimneys o'your faces. (1.2.135-139)

In this example from *Burning Pestle*, the paying customers seated on the side of the stage smoke tobacco pipes smelt by other audience members and the actors. These gallants become unwilling players as their habits are critiqued; even their smoky scents become olfactory players. Their tobacco, which would normally be only a coincidental smell of the theatre, becomes a diegetic odor as the actors acknowledge that they smell the smoke and openly comment on it. Another example (here of a diegetic smell) would include Moll acknowledging the quality of the tobacco that the gallants (here these are actors playing gallants) smoke onstage at the tobacco shop in Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (2.1.178-210). As the characters within the play are actually smoking tobacco and not just speaking about it, the odorous property is represented verbally and staged. Audience members near the front of the stage may even be able to smell the smoke of the tobacco pipes at the very same time as Moll does.

These two odors, civet and tobacco, are also coded as immoral, newfangled, foreign luxury goods and were especially associated with courtiers and other upstarts. So, as I sniff through mentions of these odors on the early modern stage, I am especially hunting for moments that seem to be directed at such audience members. (I'm still working through the larger implications of this

Early Modern Playgoers and Sensorial Experience. Jennifer A. Low, Florida Atlantic University

My paper responds to references to tobacco smoking in Jonson's *The Alchemist* by considering the possible experience of pipe smokers in the audience during early performances of the play. Jeffrey Knapp may be the first literary scholar to treat tobacco in his 1988 article on the tobacco trade and *The Faerie Queene*; few have considered tobacco in the context of theatrical performance or theatrical experience.

Wayne Rebhorn's article "Jovy Boy: Lovewit and the Dupes in *The Alchemist*" calls attention to the fact that after Lovewit tells his butler to fill a pipe for him and Kastril to share, Kastril drops all his objections to the match between Lovewit and Dame Pliant and praises his future brother-in-law, commenting, "Slight, thou art not hide-bound! Thou art a Jovy boy! / Come, let's in, I pray thee, and take our whiffs." Inspired by a museum exhibit about the economies of tobacco at Jamestown, Virginia, I consider the experience of mirroring as actors smoked onstage and audience members smoked in the seating area at Blackfriars. Kastril characterizes smoking as an admirable performance and also as a shared experience; clearly, long before the colloquial expression "smoke the peace pipe," sharing a pipe of tobacco was a sign of friendship or hospitality. Smoking was also a pleasurable experience for those who engaged in it—something to savor. It was less pleasant, probably, for those nearby who disliked the smoke.

Prints and woodcuts picture Moll Cutpurse smoking, and it seems likely that smoking would have been enacted in *The Alchemist* as well as *The Roaring Girl*. I plan to look at James's *Counterblaste to Tobacco* and read up on the Virginia Company's trade in tobacco before I turn to consideration of smoking and audience experience.

**Sensing music in and around the early modern playhouse
Simon Smith, Birkbeck College, University of London**

Bruce R. Smith's seminal study, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999), places music at the heart of early modern subjects' everyday sense experiences. Yet even whilst tracing 'The Soundscapes of Early Modern England', Smith notes that music is not a solely aural phenomenon. Ballad performance, for example, is an embodied, tangible experience stimulating outward senses of hearing, sight and touch, as well as the inward sense of imagination (pp. 168-205). This is an important reminder that sense experiences mingle and overlap in practice: as Michel Serres asks in *The Five Senses* (trans. 2008), 'How could we see the compact capacity of the senses if we separated them?' (p. 305). Early modern subjects were well aware of the multiplicity of sense experiences available to performers and receivers of music, both in the playhouse and elsewhere. Printed music book paratexts ask prospective purchasers to taste their contents, or to hear them silently, whilst psalm composers imagine a 'heavenly consort' of ear, eye, finger and heart all sensing a psalm-setting together. In the playhouse, play-makers shaped their dramaturgy not only through the sound of music, but by showing or hiding musicians, by treating musical instruments as tactile staged properties, or even by using musical performance to stimulate the inward senses of imagination and memory. This paper explores multi-sensory experiences of music in early modern culture, taking commercial dramatic performance as its primary site of investigation. It seeks to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the idea of multi-sensory musical experience in early modern England, and to suggest the significance of some multi-sensory musical experiences to the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

“I have given thee blind mate twice”: Vision and Gaming Rape in Women Beware Women,

Daniel Trimbell, University of Southern Queensland

It is during the chess game which Livia is playing with the Mother (a stratagem to distract the Mother while her charge Bianca is lured into a rape that is played out concurrently with the game) that Livia mentions to her befuddled opponent, “I have given thee blind mate twice” (II.ii.392). Overtly a chess reference, it serves as an indication that it is through watching the game alongside the assault that Bianca's abuse and subsequent depravity can be understood as intrinsically intertwined with her polluted sight. By analysing the uneasy relationship in the Renaissance in regards to sight, that its capacity for visual and moral perception was only too susceptible to corruption, the ruin that a sexual assault could accomplish can be appreciated, especially when it is mirrored with the Mother whose eyes “begin to fail” (II.ii.393) when she is playing at chess. Further focus upon both the significance of the chess game in the period as both a source of conquest-centred sexual metaphor and as a location figured as a suitable cover for sexual liaisons highlights that the game of chess played onstage acts as the visual filter through which the hidden rape can be 'completed' in the eye of the viewer. Furthermore, the mirroring of Bianca's fate with that of the Mother forewarns a watching audience that Bianca's reaction to this outrage will be ultimately to embrace her corrupted sight and the debauchment that both feeds and is fed by the same.

Sensing the Audience: Impression and Apprehension in the Early Modern Playhouse
Penelope Woods, University of Western Australia

The dominant model of the modern audience – passively listening and looking on in the dark – is at odds with the positioning, activity and expectations of the early modern audience. Standing, milling, perching, sitting, sharing the same light as the stage early modern performance acted on the minds and senses of its audience in historically and culturally specific ways. In a special issue of *Criticism* (54.3, 2012) on historical phenomenology, Michael Witmore described the early modern playhouse as a 'sensorium'. Witmore highlights the role of 'fellow-feeling' in the production of shared sense between actor and performer and amongst the audience. The playhouses, especially the

amphitheatres, were porous containers. Elements (light, the audience, the performers, props, wind, rain, noise, smells, music) entered and circulated, disrupted and reformed balance, and existed in a fluid and dynamic state for the duration of the performance. The bodies of the early modern audience are microcosms of this playhouse sensorium practice. Words and images, sights, sounds and smells impressed themselves onto minds variously soft, receptive and retentive. The imaginations of the early modern audience were entered by sense impressions of the performance, theatre and other audience members that troubled or pacified their passions to different degrees. This fluid passionate state was shared or externalized in actions and facial expression, or through more ephemeral '*spiritus*', affecting (or infecting) the senses of other audience members. Jonson urges in the prologue to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614): 'every man here [must] exercise his owne Judgement, and not censure by Contagion, or upon trust, from anothers voice, or face'. This vain demand testifies, on the contrary, to the way sense impression, perception and judgment operated in the playhouse through the bodies of the spectators in ways that were not controllable, and did not obey social or educational hierarchies. I suggest instead that sense impressions and their contagion or circulation were produced by spatial and perceptual factors in the playhouse. This *situationist* reading of the shared operation of sense perception, contextualized by early modern theories of passions and contagion, underpins my understanding of the playhouse as 'sensorium'. In this paper I consider the complex sociality of the sensory activity of audiences in the spatial and perceptual contexts of the Fortune Theatre and the Second Blackfriars Theatre to interrogate the idea (and implications) of the playhouse as 'sensorium'.