

**SAA, TORONTO 2013
CLASS AND EMOTION IN SHAKESPEARE
ABSTRACTS**

Laura Aydelotte

‘The Nebulous Fool and Empathy in King Lear’

While the fool in *King Lear* has attracted his fair share of critical attention, including interpretations based on historical research into the role of the fool in court and on the stage in Shakespeare’s own time, there has been surprisingly little study directed toward understanding Lear’s fool in light of his medieval roots. At the start of his study of the fool in the English court across the medieval and early modern periods, John Southworth notes that many of the earliest European documents alluding to the position of fools designate the fool’s social standing as *nebulo*, that is, that the fool possesses, for better or for worse, an ambiguous or uncertain social position. It is this nebulous position that enabled historical fools in the middle ages to sometimes transgress otherwise firmly established social boundaries, and potentially to create an emotional bond, even if transitory and subject to the shifting whims of a monarch, between two people of vastly different social rank. The proposed paper will examine the fool in Lear in light of his roots in medieval conceptions of the social status of a fool as *nebulo*, and will then explore the dimensions of empathy between Lear and his fool as well as the question of whether, through this nebulous relationship and the blurring of class it suggests, Lear himself can be said to be developing a capacity for empathy as he begins to contemplate the “loop’d and window’d raggedness” (3.4. 31) of his subjects following his own social downfall.

Barbara Bono

“Bright metal on a sullen ground”: The Foil of Class in Shakespeare’s *I Henry IV*

I am now out of all humours that have shown themselves
 humours since the old days of goodman Adam to the pupil age
 of this present twelve o’clock at midnight.

(*I Henry IV*, Prince Harry, 2.5.86-88)

Shakespeare’s Hal makes this extraordinary claim in the midst of a densely interactive scene at the Boars’ Head Tavern in which he not only composes himself out of the four traditional Galenic biomedical humours, but also enacts a rise from the “bass-string of humility” to a rehearsal of his own future kingly position that is simultaneously an historical review of several dramatic styles that go into the making of Shakespearean drama at “this present twelve o’clock at midnight.” In the process he also plays with the emotional habitus of several classes in his kingdoms: with the “three or four loggerheads amongst three or fourscore hogsheads,” with every “Tom, Dick, and Francis,” with “Percy, and that damned brawn . . . Dame Mortimer his wife,” with the “base comparisons” of Falstaff, with the huff-and-snuff of “King Cambyses’ vein” and rhetorical analogies of Euphuism, with the morality play imitation of his father the king and the intimation of himself, the once and future King. This paper will trace and test the extent and intent of this class emotional play, pointing ahead to its climax before the battle at Agincourt in *Henry V* and its complement in the bottom-up economic and stylistic argument of Thomas Dekker’s contemporaneous *The Shoemakers’ Holiday*.

Piers Brown

“‘The wrongs that I have done thee stir / Afresh within’”: Motion and Emotion in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*

My paper uses *The Winter’s Tale* as the site for a discussion of the relationship between motion and emotion in early modern thought. The late-seventeenth century shift from the discourse of the passions and affections to one of emotion is prefigured by a long-standing connection between feeling and motion. Most obviously – and predominantly in Shakespeare’s plays, as in most other writers – the verb ‘to move’ and the process of ‘moving’ is used in a rhetorical sense of experiencing or inducing emotion. This Latinate term, which was rarely used in the modern sense of abstract movement, existed alongside a more expansive, and more concrete Anglo-Saxon vocabulary of affective change registered on the surface of the body by movement. Here, I am interested in two problems: first, how this problem that originates in philosophy and rhetorical theory is related to vernacular and popular understandings of emotion. Second, how the discourse of ‘stirring’ registers the fragile and obscure origins of feeling, which depends not on Galenic humoral theory, but on Aristotelian natural philosophy. This approach reveals the connection between the problematic moment early in the play when Leontes first becomes agitated, and the emotional final scene, the statue of Hermione moves for the first time, and those watching her – both characters and audience – are themselves moved.

Sandra Clark

‘Women, class, and the language of madness: Ophelia, Lady Macbeth and the Jailor’s Daughter’

It seems to me that in early modern England, for all its rigidity of social differentiation, temperaments are not socially conditioned; the psychopathology of the emotions, or, as they were then known, the passions, was the same for all classes. Madness in *King Lear* is ‘a sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch / Past speaking in a king’, but this is because Lear’s condition impacts not just on his own body but also on the body politic. ‘Never alone / Did the king sigh, but with a general groan’, as Rosencrantz puts it. In this paper I want to examine how madness or disorderly feeling is represented in women of different social classes: Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and the Jailor’s Daughter in *TNK*. This is not a matter of differentiated language – prose for abnormal states of mind, blank verse for reason. What aspects of their representation are socially differentiated, if any? Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* considers lower class working women (‘an hired servant, a poor handmaid. . . a coarse country wench’) to be less prone to melancholy than ‘noble virgins, nice gentlewomen’, but locates the prime cause of this in a physically active lifestyle. Perhaps Douglas Bruster is right in saying that prior to *TNK* madness was ‘a psychic property of the aristocracy’, and it is true that the Jailor’s Daughter is a radically new kind of character whose representation is part of the play’s critique of aristocratic practices, such as the code of chivalry. But the disordered language of these three socially varied female characters shares common characteristics: it is licentious and anarchic; and it is a kind of performance in which ‘matter and impertinency’ are mixed, that draws on idioms associated with popular discourse and folkloric sources - ballads, nursery rhymes (‘the thane of Fife had a wife’), bawdy double- entendres, irreverent word-play, references to what is taboo or forbidden. Used by women, this language licenses the breaking of class as well as gender boundaries.

Jeffrey Doty‘Compassion as Political Thought in *Macbeth*’

In “Invisible Bullets,” Stephen Greenblatt argues that Shakespeare’s plays, for all their rehearsal of radical ideas, ultimately contribute to an aristocratic, monarchical ideology of power by producing politically docile subjects. How do the plays enforce a passive acceptance of asymmetrical power and economic relations? By arousing feelings of empathy and compassion for princes even as they behave immorally. In this view, the experience of compassion disables critique. My essay takes the opposite position: compassion does not smother political thinking but rather is, for Shakespeare, politically productive and even constitutive of political thinking itself. One of the most important aspects of Shakespeare’s theater, in my view, is that it offered non-elites a space to practice political critique. (Furthermore, drama gave a bird’s-eye-view of political scenarios that were more educative and comprehensive than any other form of writing or performance in the period.) The theater, then, induced playgoers into political analysis that could be applied to real situations. In this it is part of a pre-history of the bourgeois public sphere in which regular people exercised “rational-critical thought.” But for Shakespeare, the extirpation of emotion is not a precondition for making political judgments, nor can emotion be so easily removed from critique. My essay uses the moving empathy of a non-aristocratic character—Lady Macbeth’s doctor—to illustrate how compassion deepens and legitimates, rather than disables, political critique.

Jennifer Feather

“that base-born tyrant Tamburlaine”: Class, Terror, and Pity in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine Parts I and II*

Scholars have long-discussed the centrality of emotional control to the construction of elite masculinity in the early modern period. Clearly, texts such as Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and courtesy manuals such as Elyot’s *The Boke Named The Governour* recommend the virtue of moderation. Moreover, courtesy manuals suggest at least the possibility of performing this idea of masculine virtue regardless of social rank, implying a pervasive valorization of masculine emotional control. However, recent work suggests that certain kinds of excess may in fact have been central both to elite and working forms of masculinity. Drinking contests, for instance, seem to serve the function of demonstrating the masculine prowess through the control one maintains in excess. Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* is famously a figure of excess. While his foes underestimate him because of his rustic status as both a Scythian and a shepherd, he aims at a sort of total conquest that becomes the definition of overreaching ambition. However, while he famously strikes fear in the hearts of others and uses bloody spectacles to manipulate the emotions of his enemies, he does not by and large show a very large affective range. Centrally, *Tamburlaine* fails to show pity even as those around him consistently urge him to do so. This essay uses the figure of *Tamburlaine* to examine the classed nature of pity and its place in early modern constructions of masculinity. Does pity belong properly to elite men or working men? How is it related to the more traditionally elite virtue of self-restraint?

Kristine Johanson

“‘Worse Than Senseless Things’”: Class and Nostalgia in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*

This paper explores the relationship between political action and the invocation of nostalgia in *Julius Caesar*, asserting that social difference collapses in the face of the invocation of an idealized past. The plebeians of *Julius Caesar* have long held critical attention, as their apparent fickleness and rampant, senseless violence contrast with the calculated violence of the conspirators and the Stoicism of their leader, Brutus. In the plebeians, we can see the irrationality that often forms the foci of critical examinations of how Shakespeare writes class and social difference. However, this paper proposes that attending to class response to nostalgia can problematize how we understand class difference in the play. As a political rhetoric, the articulation of the idealized past appeals to all classes in *Julius Caesar*, and its potency lies at the root of the play’s political action. From the tribunes’ initial remonstrances of forgetting Pompey to Cassius’s invocation of republican Rome to Antony’s idyllic construction of Caesar, the past is invoked to influence action through emotion. Consequently, my paper asks: is nostalgia a collective emotion in Shakespeare? Is it one accessible to all? How, if at all, does class affect the use of, and response to, nostalgia in early modern drama? Does class difference determine different representations of the idealized past?

Mary Ellen Lamb

‘Thinking about Class and Emotion in Shakespeare: Mirages, Raunchy Sexuality, and Arguing in Front of the Servants’

My paper will fall into two or possibly three parts. First, I would like to present a little historical background on the stratification of the classes occurring in the sixteenth century that does, I believe, affect the representation and possibly even the experience of emotion. While modified, Peter Burke’s declaration still generally stands: in 1500 “popular culture was everyone’s culture; a second culture for the educated and the only culture for everyone else. By 1800 the clergy, the nobility, the merchants, the professional men—and their wives—had abandoned popular culture to the lower classes.” In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this withdrawal was well underway but far from complete. The increasingly wide cultural and economic divide between social groups generated a need for the middling sort and the elite to define themselves in terms of the lower social groups to generate forms of social distinction inextricably linked with the legitimation of personal and political power. However inaccurate about the lower sorts these group definitions undoubtedly were, the self-proclaimed distinctions reveal a great deal about those who produced them. For elite and middling groups, representations of the lower sort were an essential part of the narratives they told themselves about who they were. While a popular “low” often defines by contrast an elite or middling “high,” the lines between them were also apt to become blurred, creating a form of cultural hybridity within the elite or middling subject. In Shakespeare’s time, this withdrawal was still in process, so that social definitions were both more rigid (because more was at stake) and more fragile (because they were not yet secure). This may be why in general I find the representations of the lower sorts in Shakespeare to be so disappointing, often closer to caricature than to mimesis; they say much more about the middling and elite sorts for whom they were created. As an example, I am disappointed by Dogberry (am I alone in this?), possibly because I feel such affection for him; I want him to be more than a caricature of a lower sort. His emotions are so motivated by his desire to be important, especially to the upper sort.

Second, that said, what is most interesting to me are the moments when the classed emotions start to break down: the mad Ophelia’s momentary descent into vulgarity (“young men will do’t if they come to’t,/ by Cock they are to blame”) even in the midst of her elite melancholy and flowery femininity. I wonder if Gertrude’s obtrusive and so unnecessary distinction between what young maids and liberal shepherds call “long purples,” among the flowers Ophelia was collecting, catches both the need to distinguish and the underlying (lower class) sexuality that erodes class difference? Jack Cade’s sudden eruption into iambic pentameter; Caliban’s profound aesthetic appreciation of the music of Prospero’s island; Iago’s sheer evil genius in his desire to utterly destroy (is Iago considered lower class?): these moments and others catch me off guard, disturbing my own expectations (and apparently Othello’s) of class representation.

Perhaps third: what are our own investments in the emotions displayed by characters of the lower sort? Do they represent a freedom from upper class constraints, a liberating participation in the joys of “merry England,” as I suspect C.L. Barber was evoking? Or are they more like the proletariat gravediggers described so well by Michael Bristol, suggesting the carnival of a plebeian culture fully aware of the social conditions that oppress it? Or might our investments be tied up in classed gender definitions, both male and female, as we work out sources for our own complex sexuality? Or do we want to see a democratic Shakespeare, who (ideally, like us) refused the classism of his time? Personal testimonials encouraged!

Judith Owens

‘The Fellowship of Scholars’

My paper approaches the question of “class and emotion” by focussing on *Hamlet* and exploring differences between the emotional community (a term I adapt from Barbara Rosenwein) of the aristocratic family and the emotional community of scholars. More specifically, I argue that in the aristocratic families of the play—most dramatically Hamlet’s family, of course—the links between emotions and moral imperatives have been sundered while in the friendship of Hamlet and the scholar Horatio those links are re-forged. It is in his relationship with Horatio that Hamlet is able to ground virtuous action in emotional attachment—as he famously cannot do in his relationship with his father (or mother).

Central to my argument, and to the question of “class and emotion,” is the under-remarked, maybe even *un*remarked, fact that Horatio is not simply a scholar: he is a “sizar,” that is, a poor student who, unlike the aristocratic Hamlet, has to work his way through university. When Horatio says repeatedly that he is Hamlet’s “servant always,” he means this in a more literal sense than is customarily supposed. Sizars performed a range of menial duties that might include waiting on the tables of Fellows—like Hamlet and, presumably, the play’s two other scholars, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. By casting Horatio as a sizar, Shakespeare makes as distinct as possible the difference in social class between Horatio and prince Hamlet; in so doing, he explores, and not skeptically, promises implicit in humanist schooling: to level out social difference, to make learning the new nobility, and to mount a challenge to a morally—and emotionally—bankrupt aristocracy.

Karen Robertson

‘Angry Maidservants’

The tempestuous quarrels of Dorothy Devereux and her husband Henry Percy, the battles over the marriage of her daughter between Lady Hatton and Edward Coke, the fury of Elizabeth Raleigh, called by an enemy “an angry Proserpina,” suggest that aristocratic early modern women did not restrict their emotional expression according to prescriptive models. It has been suggested that Sir Walter Raleigh was actually afraid of his wife’s anger. All three of these women while seeming to express anger horizontally to their mates, or even up the hierarchy at their husbands and superiors, actually seem to have considered their husbands as status inferiors. While such expressions of anger at inferiors may have been infrequently staged, such correction fits within the purview of the responsibilities of the superior. A Jacob Cats print of a mistress chastising the maid as the cat runs away from a dish knocked off the table depicts household turmoil and the appropriate anger of the mistress in controlling and reprimanding her servant. Yet what of the anger of the servant?

Early modern women, given their physiologically colder and moister bodies, were theoretically less disposed toward anger. Homiletic prescriptions repeatedly delegitimized the anger of inferiors. When we consider E. V. Spelman’s argument that the emotion of anger contains a component of judgment, then the anger of servant women is restricted from expression. Yet the domestic manipulations of women suggest the satisfaction of injuries and anger felt, even when anger remains overtly unvoiced.

In this paper I will examine three female servants and evidence for a muted expression of anger evident in a resentment that leads to action that expresses feminine judgment of a superior. Zanche in *The White Devil* actively hopes for marriage to Flamineo; hearing his contemptuous dismissal of her love she takes vengeance by betraying his secrets. Isabella Whitney in a poem of warning to her sisters in service in *A Sweet Nosegay* warns against the resentments of a maid servant who might be tempted to betray the household by failing to lock a door or window. Maria in *Twelfth Night* initiates the gulling of Malvolio through her forged letter. While her verbal insult “Shake your ears” may or may not be heard by him, the letter effects a revenge. These three household servants do not engage in a vociferous articulation of anger, yet they manipulate action to satisfy revenge. Vengeance proposed and taken points toward the anger virtuously unarticulated.

Rikita Tyson

My paper will examine the links between rhetoric and emotion in *Romeo and Juliet*. The two lovers in particular rely on oxymoron and Petrarchan similes to construct their passionate language; is this in keeping with what Renaissance rhetoric manuals have to say on the subject? What is the connection between the language of love in this play and the embodied passions? Is the language of the lovers a function of class, of age, or the intersection of the two? In short, what is the relationship between the word, the social role, and the body in *Romeo and Juliet*?

Kate Welch

‘[T]he poor will bury him in tears’: Mourning and Class in *Sir Thomas More* and *Edward II*

The propriety of mourning in the early modern period has typically been divided along gender lines, from Lear’s preference for ‘noble anger’ (2.4.276) rather than ‘women’s weapons, water-drops’ (2.4.277) to Malcolm’s counsel to Macduff, ‘Dispute it like a man...let grief / convert to anger’ (4.3.219, 228-9) rather than ‘play with woman with [his] eyes’ (4.2.230). Tracing the roots of this division back to classical tradition, we find Plato dismissing passages in prose and poetry ‘where eminent men weep and wail in mourning’ since wise men leave mourning to women or baser men, and Plutarch’s classification of the mourning hierarchy: ‘mourning is verily feminine, and weak, and ignoble, since women are more given to it than men, and barbarians more than Greeks, and inferior men more than better men’.¹ Here, mourning is not just relegated as women’s work, but something for ‘baser’ or ‘inferior’ men. This paper develops an analysis of mourning modulated by class divisions, focusing primarily on a play which only allows the poor to mourn (*Sir Thomas More*) and then briefly examining a play which emphasizes the unidirectionality of mourning between social classes (*Edward II*). More’s sympathetic response to the ‘poor Woman’ who enters and his gratitude to the weeping Lieutenant who leads him up to the scaffold provide a stark contrast to his alternately stoical, mocking and heartless responses to his mourning family. For Edward II, his failure to mourn his father and continued mourning of the ‘base’ Gaveston trigger the outrage in the nobles that leads to his horrible death.

¹ Katharine A. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 178; qtd. in Fred B. Tromly ‘Grief, Authority and the Resistance to Consolation in Shakespeare’ in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. David A. Kent and Margo Swiss (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), p. 25.

Rebecca Wiseman

“Nature, Reason, Use”: Cultivation and Class in *Euphues* and *The Winter’s Tale*

My paper will explore early modern debates about class, environment, and virtue, looking chiefly at two texts: John Lyly’s *Euphues* (1578) and Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale* (c. 1610). The paper will begin with a discussion of Lyly, whose *Euphues* is not only a highly stylized rhetorical performance, but also, I suggest, an investigation of the relationship between nature and nurture, virtuous potential and its cultivation. Arguing that rhetorical mastery was closely linked to anxieties about social advancement, I suggest that Lyly’s treatise expresses a productive uncertainty about the true basis of virtue and the limitations of high birth; Lyly himself was, after all, a socially ambitious courtier from a non-aristocratic background. The tension between the rhetorical sophistication of euphuism, a style that quickly became associated with elite circles, and *Euphues*’ own assertion that virtue is the product of “nature, reason, [and] use,” offers a highly suggestive picture of early modern ambivalence about the power of class to determine character. The second part of the paper will focus on *The Winter’s Tale*, a play that is deeply engaged in exploring the three principles of virtue outlined by *Euphues*. As a play that depicts the effects of pastoral “education” upon Perdita, a woman of high birth, *The Winter’s Tale* not only explores the power of rhetoric in reinforcing distinctions of gender and class, but also investigates the ways in which nature, “art,” and education can shape character and regulate behavior.