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“A touch more rare”: Acute Sensation and Numbness in *Cymbeline*

This paper considers Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* alongside Innogen’s sensual experience of love in *Cymbeline*. As Burton describes the effects of love on the senses, he suggests two seemingly contradictory experiences. At times, love heightens sensual awareness while, at others, the lover experiences numbness or a dulling of the senses. Though Burton tends to warn his readers against the dangerous effects of lovesickness, he is playfully ambivalent throughout the text. Love, he argues, is an illness; yet, it is also one that enlivens the body.

I argue that Innogen takes pleasure in a bodily experience of love that embraces acute sensual awareness and numbness simultaneously. She attempts to recreate this cotemporaneous acuteness and numbness first through her servant, Pisanio, and, somewhat later, as she imagines her reunion with Posthumus. Although this paper is in its very early stages, I attempt to shed light on the complicated phenomenological experience of love as understood by early moderns.

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“Hadst thou sway'd as kings should do”: Affect, Influence and Authority

In my paper, I will consider 'sway' as a form of affect, with special emphasis on its appearance in Shakespeare's *Henriad* and his Roman tragedies. This is part of a longer project on 'Shakespeare's Moving Language', in which I am investigating the relationship between motion and emotion. I start from the observation that Shakespeare uses the language of moving in two different ways in his plays: it refers primarily to the arousal of the passions ('Are you not moved?'), and only occasionally is used to describe abstract spatial motion. Although these two sorts of movement are connected in Aristotelian natural philosophy, in linguistic practice they are generally distinct—at least so long as motion remains abstract. However, passionate feeling is often connected to specific bodily motions, such as stirring, shaking, and swaying. This vocabulary of feeling gives us a way to address what Brian Massumi describes as affect—although the term is problematic in early modern historical context. For the seminar, I will discuss how sway usually denotes affective influence associated with authority, and as such is neither positive nor negative, but rather contextual: its valence depends on when and how it is used, and whether those able to sway others have the right to command them. In relation to the seminar's concerns, I hope to investigate the range of use to which this affective description is put, and to distinguish between affect that is positive in and of itself and affect that is only positive in context.

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Wives and Well-Being in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

By focusing on how it operates as a socially powerful emotion category in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, this essay makes the case that merriness resembles twenty-first century notions of well-being in a number of important ways. Merriness, like well-being, is imagined to do productive social work, building group cohesion through generating positive exchanges between group members in Windsor. Merriness is also constructed as a particularly embodied emotion, beyond even the basic humoral foundation that categorizes most emotions in the English Renaissance. Finally, and most interestingly for creating comparisons between this Renaissance emotion and our own definitions of well-being, merriness is associated with women's work and highly gendered emotion scripts, such as those attached to companionate marriage and cuckoldry. We witness in the play an early theorization of socially productive emotion, with the emphasis placed on the ways affective social ties must be upheld and vigilantly policed through narratives of gender. Overall, reading the emotion of the play closely reveals the ways merriness as an emotional regime is both productive of positive affect and politically deployed to construct a more inclusive Windsor community. *Merry Wives* can be read as a window onto a central Elizabethan affective node and an important intellectual backdrop to our current cultural obsession with well-being and happiness in American culture.

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From Skeptical Laughter to Holy Joy: Positive Affect in the Works of John Donne

Despite his reputation as the "Monarch of Wit," few studies have considered the role that laughter plays in the poetry and prose of John Donne. By attending to laughter, as opposed to more formal categories like paradox, comedy, or satire, this paper prioritizes affect in early modern literature before traditional considerations of genre criticism. In particular, I suggest that Donne utilizes laughter's implication in humanist debates concerning classical philosophy and ethics as well as its association with the purgation of melancholy humors to challenge the ascetic tendencies latent in much of early modern culture. Whether laughter celebrates sensual pleasure as in Donne's erotic poetry or holy joy as in his sermons, it enables us to reconsider the relationship between sacred and secular throughout Donne's oeuvre while also enriching our understanding of early modern intellectual and devotional life.

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Satisfaction in Revenge Tragedy: Hieronimo's struggle

Tragedy has been coupled with grander and stronger emotions such as fear, anger, jealousy and pity. Against this coupling, I argue that "satisfaction" is a crucial affect in revenge tragedy

through a closer look at Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. More specifically, I will examine two different levels of satisfaction in the genre: obligatory satisfaction and emotional satisfaction. Revenge tragedy scholarship has been concerned narrowly with obligatory satisfaction. Thus, revenge has been interpreted and equated with either justice or injustice. Similarly, revengers also have been reduced to either heroes or villains. In order to go beyond the tendency to link revenge to justice, I claim that obligatory satisfaction should be placed at the structural level of the genre only, while emphasizing emotional satisfaction in relation to the character development of the avenger. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, we can see Hieronimo, who is initially captivated with obligatory satisfaction, gradually shifts his focus to emotional satisfaction. His endeavor to achieve and maintain this satisfaction, however, is at odds with the genre's energy pushing for the obligatory kind of satisfaction. I contend that the penultimate scene captures this dynamic. The audience members of Hieronimo's play-within-a-play follow the logic of obligatory satisfaction and desire for justice not to be served, as the genre is supposed to be. In turn, Hieronimo desperately attempts to keep his emotional satisfaction intact by biting his tongue out. In sum, through a textual analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy*, I intend to present a new conflict between obligatory dissatisfaction and emotional satisfaction, as well as the formal structure and the content of the character development.

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Positively Affective? The Failure of Music in *Cymbeline*

It appears in such Shakespearean plays as *The Winter's Tale*, *King Lear*, *Pericles*, and *Julius Caesar*. It can alter the emotions, soothe the mind, and cure the body. Indeed, the presence and power of music therapy in Shakespeare's plays is both ubiquitous and remarkable. And yet, in *Cymbeline*, music fails at the very moment it seems most necessary. Believing her to be dead, Arviragus and Guiderius perform the funerary rite for their sister, Innogen. Arviragus suggests they sing the funeral dirge they had sung as children for their mother, but Guiderius balks. Instead, he tells his brother, he will "word it with thee" (4.2.241). The two men then speak the words of the dirge that was listed as "Song" in the first folio. The scene is an odd one, especially when compared to music elsewhere, both in *Cymbeline* and in other plays by Shakespeare. In other plays, music is overwhelmingly acknowledged and performed as a potent affective tool, for Shakespeare was clearly aware of the rich tradition of music therapy in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English musical, medical, and philosophical treatises. My paper will interrogate the apparent failure of music and positive affect in Act 4, Scene 2 of *Cymbeline*. Why does music not soothe the hearts of Arviragus and Guiderius and cure the body of Innogen? Why not here? Why not now?

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"I have not another tear to shed:" Laughter, Positive Feeling and Affective Economy in *Titus Andronicus*

This paper examines an unexpected moment of laughter in *Titus Andronicus* in order to consider positive affect in response to tragedy. Titus learns that his effort to ransom his sons with his own amputated hand has failed when the hand is returned to him along with the sons' decapitated heads. To the horror and incredulity of his remaining family, he breaks off his earlier lamentation with an outburst of laughter.

In thinking about the work inappropriately positive emotions do, I am influenced by Sara Ahmed, who describes emotions circulating between subjects, objects and texts within an affective economy. Ahmed imagines affective value to increase continually through such a process of circulation. But *Titus Andronicus* suggests we actually need to consider not just how emotions are exchanged, but also how they are used (or sometimes used up). Titus's laugh responds to the failure of an affective economy structured around the accumulation, expenditure and consumption of tears and blood. In its place, his laughter points towards a new way of structuring emotions. Sixteenth century medical tests suggest laughter in the face of pain could be interpreted either as a symptom of mania or as a strategy for healing the physical and the social body. Titus's laugh might be a manic rejection of an untenable reality. Or it might be a strategy for managing opposing impulses of joy and sorrow and attempting to exchange them for one another. In either case, it suggests possible responses to trauma that strive to locate and use positive feelings therapeutically while still acknowledging the suffering inflicted on bodies.

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“Happy Objects” in Thomas Traherne’s Poetry

My paper examines the seventeenth-century English poet Thomas Traherne's tenacious commitment to locating natural sources of happiness in the material world rather than merely in a religious afterlife. Contemporary affect theorists like Sara Ahmed have suggested that we might define happiness and other positive affects as “orientations” toward objects we believe are likely to cause happiness. Historians such as Keith Thomas have attempted to tease out some of these culturally specific objects of fulfillment for the inhabitants of early modern England, identifying social goods ranging from wealth to friendship to military honor. What happened, however, when political or material circumstances made it difficult for early moderns to access goods that were culturally defined as means of happiness? In this essay, I argue that Traherne views literature as a tool that can help readers obtain happiness by modifying their inherited cultural orientations toward specific objects. While Traherne is not unique in using devotional poetry to critique earthly systems of value, his method of doing so significantly departs from that of his contemporaries. Rather than urge believers to substitute the hope of heaven for earthly goods, Traherne's poetry locates happiness and bliss in the widely accessible pleasures of the natural world and the human body. In conclusion, I argue that Traherne's poetry should be of especial interest to scholars of positive affect because it complicates a dominant history of emotion that links personal, individual, and immediate models of happiness to the rise of post-Restoration secular thought and political theory.

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The Politics of Contentment in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

My paper examines the significance of contentment and its political import in Shakespeare's pastoral comedy, *As You Like It*. Literary critics and contemporary theorists have equated contentment with passivity, resignation, and political stagnation. In my research, however, I excavate an early modern understanding of contentment as dynamic, protective, and productive. While this concept has roots in classical and medieval philosophy and literature, contentment became newly significant because of the tremendous social and intellectual changes that accompanied the Reformation in England. Through sermons, theological treatises, and biblical translations, writers explored contentment as a means to preserve the self in times of crisis, preparing the individual to endure and engage the outside world. For a variety of reasons, pastoral proved to be an especially productive *literary* mode through which Renaissance authors could enter these broader historical discussions. Shakespeare's *As You Like It* participates in this Renaissance conversation by exploring the relationship between individual, interpersonal, and political contentment.

In my paper, I contextualize Shakespeare's depiction of communal contentment in *As You Like It* with reference to Reformation concepts of contentment and, in particular, the different political ideals to which those concepts could be attached in late Elizabethan England. However, Shakespeare's politicization of contentment differs from contemporary Reformers by emphasizing the affective bonds between subjects. For Shakespeare, contentment is not simply about the psychology or physiology of the single self, but the relationship between selves. The state of collective contentment enables subjects to withstand outside forces, including political oppression, and it provides an affective foundation for stable communities, as in Duke Senior's pastoral society. Moreover, while contentment ostensibly suggests a passive state, characters affiliate it with active political virtues of liberty, counsel, and consent. Shakespeare does not naively rhapsodize contentment, community, or pastoral, but he does explore the merits of each for his artistic engagements with the political theories and realities of Renaissance England.