Professor Judith H. Anderson, Indiana University

Wonder and Nostalgia in *Hamlet*

My main concern is with the beginning of *Hamlet*, more especially with the emotional content of its opening scene and even more especially with the emotions of wonder and nostalgia in it. Expressions of wonder occur repeatedly in the first Act; the word "wonder" itself occurs in the initial scene and is then reinforced by the cognates "wonderful" and "wondrous" in the fifth scene and by the synonyms "admiration" and "marvel" in the second. The wondrous appearances of the ghost and the wondering responses it evokes frame Act I. Not surprisingly, the topic of wonder in *Hamlet* has attracted a good deal of modern commentary from the mid-twentieth century to the present, with inevitable variations. The most recent has treated the bearing of wonder on the relation of the body to the mind, the flesh to the spirit, and these to the soul. I want to review the background of wonder but not before introducing the more novel subject of nostalgia, which intersects with wonder in the first Act and returns, again with wonder, at the end of the play.

Ms. Shani Bans, University College London

'How the senses muffle common sense' – Early Modern Cognition and *Lingua*

This paper examines the problematics of cognition in Thomas Tomkin's *Lingua* (1607). Focussing on the relationship between external and internal senses in the play, I explore the ways in which Lingua uses 'the senses [to] muffle common sense', turning to early modern physiological and psychological discussions of cognition, particularly at dubious relationship between the eye and the imagination.

Dr. Brent Dawson, University of Oregon

Herbert's *Ataraxia*: Materialism and Cognition

This paper studies the importance of classical notions of *ataraxia*, and the meditative practices surrounding them, to Herbert's *Temple*. While recent scholarship has made progress toward understanding the influence of ancient materialist philosophy on the Renaissance, there has been insufficient examination of how materialism shapes early modern theories of cognition. In the larger project toward which this paper is an early step, I argue that materialist ideas of *ataraxia* offers less dualistic accounts of mind than those we tend to associate with the period's inward turn, for example in Descartes' *Meditations*. While such accounts idealize cognitive superiority and mastery, theories of *ataraxia* offer a rich vocabulary of balance and peace for understanding the relation of mind to the material world from which it emerges.

Herbert, I argue, affirms a devout yet materialist *ataraxia* in *The Temple*, what his pastoral treatise *The Country Parson* similarly describes as "the stupefying... of all the clamorous powers of the soul." I will briefly sketch the availability of notions of *ataraxia* to Herbert through Seneca, Cicero, and theologians like Joseph Hall. Turning to *The Temple*, I will suggest that readers have

mistakenly tended to conflate its desire for inner peace with that of self-sacrifice. Stanley Fish, for example, argues that in order to achieve tranquility, Herbert's speaker aims "finally to stop, to cease to be." Yet Herbert's poetry frequently dramatizes the impossibility of such spiritual self-annihilation, accepting peace instead within an inner life of ceaseless irresolution. Such spiritual states of peace are characteristically compared by Herbert to drifting stuff, whether the gliding petals of "The Flower," the floating dust of "The Temper (1)," or the falling leaves of "The Answer." These are not only metaphors, I argue, but an expression of continuity between the mind's irresolution and the larger mutability of nature. Herbert's poetry thus places on emphasis on tranquility achieved not in a moment of utter self-destruction or transcendence but in the continuing embrace of a world defined by variety and change.

Professor Mary Floyd-Wilson, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Scanning Macbeth's Slaughterous Thoughts

Early modern Protestants viewed it as a necessary routine to sort out one's own thoughts from Satan's thoughts—a practice that demanded both careful scanning and vigilance—as discussed in Thomas Cooper's *The Sacred Mysterie of the Government of Thoughts* (1626), Thomas Goodwin's *The Vanity of Thoughts Discovered* (1638), and several texts by William Perkins. It was widely understood that Satan "injects" evil, corrupt, and foreign thoughts into all minds on a regular basis. Writers warn readers of the almost physiological process by which demonic thoughts can meld with the heart, and then direct the victims towards sin. Without the effort required by constant scanning, prayer, and internal spiritual discernment, people could become fiend-like. I argue that the opposing perspectives offered by Banquo and Macbeth, and their resulting fortunes, can be understood in this framework. Whereas Banquo accepts that he must beg "merciful powers" to "restrain . . . The cursed thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose" (2.1.14-15), Macbeth repeatedly refuses to think before doing: "Strange things I have in head, that will to hand / Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd" (3.4.138-39). Macbeth feels, upon meeting the witches, that "function is smothered in surmise" (1.3.159), and his infected cognition has material consequences. Ultimately, this reading will provide the context for interpreting the demonic nature of Lady Macbeth's "spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts."

Dr. Peter T. Hadorn, University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Structured Thinking in Shakespeare's Sonnets

In the sonnets, Shakespeare presents a mind thinking (I take the speaker to be a created persona). To be sure, many of the sonnets should be read as speech-acts, designed to produce a certain response from its primary audience: for the first 126 sonnets, a young man; for the remaining 28, a woman. However, these poems (I focus on the Young Man sonnets) also present a mind preoccupied by several concerns: will love endure? will his poetry successfully eternize the beloved Young Man? can his verse capture the essence of the beloved? As the sonnets unfold, this mind, almost certainly on an unconscious level, grapples with these issues in divergent ways that display a common pattern or structure that I call "associative thinking." Associative thinking

is not a kind of extended metaphor (e.g., metalepsis), because the effect I am discussing does not work in a single sonnet, but across sonnets. Specifically, although not exclusive to these sonnets, 44 through 64 repeat a pattern of thinking that displays a kind of "forth and back" structure, which ultimately reflects his larger concerns. For example, thoughts and desire departing and returning to the speaker (44) and the shore and the sea alternately growing and shrinking (64).

Professor James Kearney, University of California, Santa Barbara

Unknowable Shylock and Reason's "Decisional Impotence"

Following Kierkegaard, Derrida pursues in his late work the idea that the instant of decision is an instant of madness. In this essay, I attend to the mad event of decision in a few of Shakespeare's plays (*Antony & Cleopatra, Macbeth, Coriolanus*) in order to explore Shakespeare's staging of "undecidability" and the limits of calculation. Histories of decision often begin their inquiry in the seventeenth century with figures like Descartes and Pascal and tend to read that history in relation to larger narratives of modernization and secularization. This essay muddies the waters of such histories by proposing that the ubiquitous conversion narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offer an extensive early modern archive of texts that dramatize and theorize decision in relation to both reason and affect in consequential ways. In the proposed essay, I will use the work of both Derrida and Brian Massumi to pursue an inquiry into the relation of affect and reason in both the early modern conversion narrative and Shakespeare's staging of ethical acts in extreme situations.

Mr. Scott O'Neil, University of Rochester

The Kings of Subjects: Licensed Confinement and the Inversion of Authority in *Love's Labour's Lost*

This paper uses the ideas of physical space and authority in order to attempt to explain why a seemingly unimportant character—Holofernes the schoolmaster—has such a prominent role in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Most theatrical representations of schoolmasters show them to be idiots—not because they don't have a good understanding of their subjects, but because they are almost universally depicted as trying to exercise their scholarly authority *outside* of their classrooms. Holofernes appears, at first glance, to be just one more example of this theatrical trope. My paper suggests that Holofernes is something a bit different. At the beginning of the play, the King of Navarre and his closest friends swear to each other that they will spend three full years engaged in a scholarly life. By essentially making the entire kingdom a schoolhouse, the king inadvertently places himself under the authority of the schoolmaster, Holofernes. My paper, through a spatial analysis and a detailed history of professional authority, offers a new reading of the events of the play, particularly the need for the conclusion—a harsh rebuking of Holofernes by the entire court during a play within the play.

Professor Giulio J. Pertile, Claremont McKenna College

Epileptic Cognition in Shakespeare's *Othello*

Othello's swoon at the beginning of Act 4, described by Iago as "an epilepsy" (4.1.47), has long been neglected in both performance and criticism of *Othello*. In this paper, I situate Iago's diagnosis in the context of ideas about epilepsy from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance. I focus in particular on the Swiss physician Paracelsus's notion of the epileptic aura as a form of cognition distributed across the macrocosm, in which "weather modifies the animal understanding and weakens it." The storm in Act 2 and Cassio's drunkenness provide prototypes for this form of self-apprehension that takes place not through detached representation of inner states, but rather in an experience of bodily and cosmic immanence that only triggers awareness to the degree that such detachment is undermined. I then use Paracelsus's account of the epileptic aura to argue that in Othello's trembling and subsequent swoon, consciousness can be seen as a network of physical events in which bodily changes apprehend themselves rather than as an experience of self-aware interiority. This is a concept of consciousness which the highly embodied acting of Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was singularly capable of expressing, and which was erased by the swoon's subsequent omission from performances of the play.

Mr. Robert B. Pierce, Oberlin College

Understanding Decisions in Shakespeare

Can we read Shakespeare's plays for insight into how human beings make ethical decisions and how they (and we) might make such decisions better and more wisely? Skepticism about Shakespeare as a fount of wisdom and about our capacity to understand the inner workings of other minds has long since shaken any easy faith in the educative power of literature, yet as literary critics and educators we go right on studying Shakespeare and asking our students to do likewise. To justify my own recent writings and an obviously popular seminar on Shakespeare and early modern modes of cognition, I want to attack excessive skepticism about our critical enterprise for this specific area.

In particular, arguments that we cannot inhabit other minds quite different from our own and so cannot understand how an early modern prince or Windsor housewife thinks and makes decisions are based on a fallacious criterion of what counts as understanding other minds. On the other hand, seeking the magic key that can make sense of all human behavior is equally fallacious. The recent deployment of cognitive science in criticism is an example showing how such magic keys, for all their usefulness, oversimplify what counts as understanding Shakespeare.

Dr. Pauline Reid, University of Denver

The Brain as Womb in Shakespeare's Invention

This paper will explore the figuration of the brain as a womb in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Throughout his work, Shakespeare figures the process of invention as one of conception. The creation and imagination of ideas in Shakespeare carries with it associations of

generation, pregnancy, and labor. The brain, the seat of invention, sense, and motion, is configured as a womb. The symbolism of invention as conception, and brain as womb, demonstrates the gendered nature of mental generativity in Shakespeare's era, and enacts a displacement of (female) generative powers of the womb onto (male) generative powers of the mind. Mental generativity is shown to be potentially both fruitful and disordered, displaying the fraught and dualistic nature of Renaissance thought about the womb and conception.

Mr. Jonathan Glenn Reinhardt, Cornell University

Chasing Apt Matter: The Hunt as an Early Modern Cognitive Metaphor for *Inventio* in Shakespeare's *Othello*

"My invention comes from my pate as birdlime does from frize," Iago complains to Desdemona, employing the imagery of hunting birds to describe one of the five canons of rhetoric. *Inventio* is a defining concept of the Early Modern period. It is also a defining concept for theories of cognition. Like Iago, Thomas Wilson, in his 1551 logical manual *Rule of Reason*, likens finding "apte matter" and "thynges likely" to "prove any cause, and … teach thereby the truth" to flushing out foxes on a hunt. Comparing knowledge-making to the chase originates at the highly literary medieval Sicilian court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. The emperor composed a treatise on falconry, *The Art of Hunting with Birds*, in which he rejects Aristotelian authority and likens his own method of knowledge-gathering to a hovering hunting falcon, who "sees things as they really are." Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz would later posit that sovereignty necessitates "driving facts into a corner" to allow the king to see his kingdom "at one glance." On stage and at court, the Early Modern concept of inventive cognition is a lively one, echoing with the noises of the wild chase, and ringing with the hunting horn. Desdemona's fate is at the heart of it.

Professor David Carroll Simon, University of Chicago

What the Prank Knows: Comic Cognition in *Twelfth Night*

This essay develops a theory of the prank as an instrument of understanding, juxtaposing the fate of the "Haute Dame de Paris" (or "Great Lady of Paris") in Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1532) and that of Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601). What is it that the prankster wants to know, and how does the practical joke answer that desire? In pursuit of these questions, I draw a distinction between a comic atmosphere that encourages skepticism (Rabelais) and a skeptical attitude that licenses comedy (Shakespeare). Though pranks of course serve many different purposes, these two are starkly persecutorial, drawing our attention to the moral stakes of interpersonal inquiry. Ultimately, I offer an unfamiliar account of skepticism in early modern culture that parts ways with both extant intellectual history (e.g. Richard Popkin) and contemporary philosophy (e.g. Stanley Cavell). Literary skepticism, I argue, is often a question of emotional atmosphere: the one the work invites its audience (whether readers or spectators) to inhabit. I also show that the mood of the comic scene depends on attitudes about gender, desire, sexuality, and conviviality that also set the moral and intellectual course for the

prankster's conduct.

Professor Travis D. Williams, University of Rhode Island

Second-Guessing Cordelia: Ethics, Arithmetic, and Imagination in *King Lear*

This paper presents initial work on a project that links the famously inexact mathematics of *King Lear* with the play's dodgy ethics. My purpose in this linkage is to suggest that the play's action and language have significance (in the literal sense of that term: sign making, meaning bearing) only in the context of particular cognitive states conjured in the audience by the play precisely for the purpose of *frustrating* any coherence or resolution one might try to bring to an experience of the play. The mathematics of the play gestures towards contemporaneous theories of mathematical cognition and creation, which treat imagination as a fecund but (counterintuitively) inexact realm. With this in mind (quite literally), we may then reconsider the famous examples of ethically questionable behavior—Lear's treatment of his daughters, Cordelia's stubbornness, and Edgar's treatment of Gloucester on the "cliff" are just a few—as moments when the play asks, if only for the thousandth part of a minute, that we consider the answers to questions such as: What should Cordelia have answered instead? Up to what point might Goneril and Regan be justified in their treatment of Lear? Does trifling with despair really cure it, and why do we (do we?) accept Edgar's assertion? Through a minute rereading of the Dover cliff scene, I try to show that Edgar (and Shakespeare) treats the audience as unethically as he treats Gloucester, with the result that the cognitive means for experiencing the theatrical event are so continuously scrambled that any ability to assess the ethical behavior *inside* the play is also constantly preempted. Another formulation of this dynamic with which I am toying is that the bad ethics on display in the play are reciprocally constitutive of the scrambled cognitive capacities of an audience at a performance of *King Lear*. The common term in these two relationships (persons in the play; the play with the audience) is a mathematically inexact mode of imagination.