

2018 SAA Seminar: The Language of Tudor Englishness 1
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Claire Busse, La Salle University

**“The Commons of England Made this Song”:
Speaking through Ballads in Thomas Deloney’s Prose**

Throughout Deloney’s prose narratives, *Jack of Newbury* (1597), the two parts of *The Gentle Craft*, and *Thomas of Reading* (c.1597-1600) songs appear both as a means of direct conversation, created in the moment to communicate between individuals or express personal responses to events, and as the means through which popular sentiment can be disseminated to other places and other times—thus becoming a vehicle for the transmission of and legitimation of the values and perspectives of the commons. Song, however, is more than merely a form through which ideas are transmitted. In Deloney’s works, songs—particularly ballads—also function as the structure through which characters of the middling sort think, communicate, argue, and persuade. In other words, ballads function as the language through which the commons communicate and the form through which their values are transmitted within and beyond their immediate communities.

Alexandra Carter, Tufts University

**“Howsoe’r ‘tis strange”:
Cymbeline, rhetoric, history, romance**

Cymbeline is quite a strange play, or perhaps a play of strangeness and strangers. Because *Cymbeline* is a play about confrontations between nations and, at the same time, a play of extraordinary, indeed impossible, events, this paper reads the play’s persistent evocations of “strangeness” as the uniting force between its two dominant genres: history and romance. While critics can generally agree that *Cymbeline* straddles (at least) these two genres, making sense of that hybridity has proved more challenging. Working from this critical impasse, my paper proposes to examine one aspect of *Cymbeline*’s strangeness: wordplay. This reading thus works from the premise that wordplay itself is a strange thing, a sort of act of estrangement that dislocates tidy one-to-one correlations between words and meanings, truths and fictions. Indeed, I suggest, *Cymbeline* must be a play of both history and romance *because* it is a play about rhetoric, about the powers and perils of persuasive speech.

Nandini Das, University of Liverpool

**Everyday Strangeness:
The Stranger in *The Comedy of Errors***

The stranger is everywhere in early modern England. Some of them crop up on the stage in the 1580s and 90s, such as the Jews and the Turks, and the first and second generation continental Europeans, who appear in Robert Wilson’s *Three Ladies of London* (1584) and *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590). This paper, part of a larger project about perceptions of identity, human mobility, and belonging in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, examines Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* against the backdrop of such dramatic predecessors and contemporary social and legal discourses about ‘strangers’. How did you identify one? How long

2018 SAA Seminar: The Language of Tudor Englishness 2
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did one remain a stranger? And what happened when the stranger entered your everyday world, when ‘strangeness’, to borrow Geoffrey Hill’s evocative phrase, turned into ‘strange likeness’?

Catherine E. Elliott, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

**“Mongst strange eyes:”
Discourses of Difference in Thomas Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term***

What is the role of an alien on the early modern stage? What is expected of aliens? Who meets the imprecise and variable standards that concepts such as assimilation entail? I look to Thomas Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* to consider the transformative role of alien characters on the early modern stage and to consider the nuanced experience of im/migrants in the period. My paper will focus on the adaptive transformation of Sir Andrew Lethe (née Gruel), who is both outsider, and insider; whose ability to transform is both repugnant and desirable; and whose difference does not participate in the conventional narrative modes of subjugation, assimilation, or absorption. Rather, Lethe endures, vexingly, throughout the text as an irreducible, and pervasively different character. I argue that the adaptive transformation of alien characters allows them to inhabit various social and national spaces at once, destabilizing demarcations of difference, including status and national boundaries.

Heather Froehlich, The Pennsylvania State University

**Using the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary
in literary-historical analysis**

This paper will discuss how to mine the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary (Kay et al, 2015) for lexical terms. The Historical Thesaurus of the OED reorganizes the entirety of the Oxford English Dictionary into a hierarchal semantic system, allowing a researcher to identify historically-relevant semantically similar terms. This is therefore a hugely viable resource for literary-historical scholars. With the recent rise in interest regarding quantitative methods in the humanities, the HTOED also offers the ability to widen existing scholarship by letting researchers observe the use of a larger universe of semantically-linked terms in a wider range of texts than ever before, and observe their use across lots of texts. I will illustrate how this is viable by modeling how to conduct such an analysis of terms which explicitly mark a form of madness as a status issue in all of Shakespeare’s plays.

Amanda Henrichs, Amherst College

**Making English:
Borrowed Words, 1590-1610**

In the most English of English defenses of English poesy, Philip Sidney defends his vocation against its critics; most memorably, he argues for the value of poetic fictions, claiming that poetry can teach better than both philosophy and history. Perhaps in the spirit of arguing *in utramque partem*, however, he concedes that there can be bad poetry: poets can choose inadequate topics for their poems, but they can also write poorly. At one point he describes bad

2018 SAA Seminar: The Language of Tudor Englishness 3
Leader: Alan Stewart, Columbia University, ags2105@columbia.edu

poetic style as that which includes “courtisanlike” words, which cover over the respectable English “Matron Eloquence.” Sidney does not provide clear examples of what “courtisanlike” words might be; yet given the etymology of the word (Italian, with connotations both of whoring and papism) it is likely that “courtisanlike” itself is an example. But what other kinds of words might paint over good honest English poesy? This paper begins with puzzling over what constitutes Englishness, in the sense of how it is made; and I take Englishness quite literally, in that I am concerned with what makes a particularly *English* vocabulary. I further understand *making* in the sense that Sidney would use it, as a poetic enterprise. Thus, my question becomes: what words *make English*? In order to think about words which might be particularly English, I turn to words which are definitely not English, at least at the moment of their introduction; I look for other “courtisanlike” words. Ultimately, this paper is more descriptive than argumentative, though I will draw some tentative conclusions; namely, authors of sonnet collections published after 1598 might have shared an interest in John Florio’s Italian-English dictionary *World of Words*. Further, I suggest that John Davies of Hereford’s 1605 collection *Wittes Pilgrimage* is especially indebted to Florio’s dictionary.

Alysia Kolentsis, Saint Jerome’s University in the University of Waterloo

Shakespeare’s Common Language

My paper draws on the fluid semantic properties of the word “common” to help illuminate shifting perceptions of the English language during the sixteenth century. Just as the word itself accented the potential both to unite and to divide, the idea of a “common language” symbolized both promise and threat to citizens of Tudor England. Religious reformers and rhetoricians alike used the ideal of a “common tongue” as a launching point for arguments of universality and accessibility. The paper extends the discussion of “common” to consider the implications of Shakespeare’s common language, exploring some of the ways that Shakespeare highlights the English vernacular and subtly makes a case for the expressive potential of his common language.

Aileen Liu, University of California-Berkeley

**“Apprehended for arrival here”:
Travel bans, home, and identity in *The Comedy of Errors***

Home matters in *The Comedy of Errors*. But while Ephesian law invests birthplace with grave meaning—a travel ban that executes any Syracusian who comes to Ephesus—the play elsewhere portrays birthplace as a mere consequence of fortune, arbitrary and therefore meaningless. For the characters of *The Comedy of Errors*, home is not automatically defined by the fact of one’s place of birth. Instead, one’s “native home” can be actively claimed for oneself. In my paper, I trace the ways that the play dissociates birthplace from home, and offers in its place a way of thinking about home and identity that is rooted neither entirely in farce nor entirely in romance—the two rivalrous genres of the play—but somewhere in between.

2018 SAA Seminar: The Language of Tudor Englishness 4
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Lynne Magnusson, University of Toronto

**Modality on the Move:
Tudor English, Language Change, and the Literary Repertoire**

Recent developments in corpus linguistics and ready access to digital text analysis has meant that microhistories of language change are more readily explored. This paper looks at specific changes to the system of modal auxiliary verbs that can be tracked in Tudor English. It asks how these changes affect linguistic resources for construing possibility and potentiality and how they inflect the literary repertoire. As one example, the paper will explore the shifting semantic relation of “may” and “can.” In 1542, when the King’s new standardized grammar (*Lily’s Grammar*) translates *amem* (first-person singular present tense of the potential mood in Latin) as “I may or can loue,” are we to understand *may* and *can* as synonyms or alternative meanings? Lily’s Grammar hasn’t changed (at least in this regard) by 1603, but how have “may” and “can”? Does it matter to playwrights like Shakespeare and his contemporaries?

Kirsten N. Mendoza, Vanderbilt University

**“The common grief of all the land”:
A State of Dispossession in 2 Henry VI**

Shakespeare’s history plays of the 1590s participated in galvanizing a sense of responsibility to secure the external and internal well-being of the commonwealth, an obligation that belonged to every English subject. In 2 Henry VI, England violently spirals toward civil war. This chaos is precipitated by the royal marriage that costs the kingdom its territories in France, a dispossession that is mirrored within the commonwealth when subjects are likewise denied the right to maintain and protect their possessions. This essay suggests that the play provides keen insight to an evolving Elizabethan perception of the role of property in the formation of an English masculine identity.

Joseph M. Ortiz, University of Texas at El Paso

**“My good friend Hary-Osto”:
Harington and the Politics of Tudor Translation**

This paper focuses on Sir John Harington’s 1591 translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* in the context of the Elizabethan debates over English language and identity. Harington’s *Orlando* has often been described as a serious, moralizing work—and thus uncharacteristic of the notoriously prankish courtier. Certainly, Harington’s translation gives an impressive demonstration of his humanist credentials, particularly his fluency with classical Latin epic and Italian humanist criticism. At the same time, Harington brazenly exploits the ideology of *translatio imperii et studii* to promote his own vision of English identity. Taking full advantage of the material apparatus of humanist translation, Harington produces a version of Ariosto’s poem that is more about Elizabethan England than about Virgil’s Rome. Ultimately, Harington’s *Orlando Furioso* constitutes his attempt to construct a tradition of English humanist writing—and, not surprisingly, his own place in that tradition.

Joul Smith, University of Texas, Arlington

Tyndale's Domestic Bible

From 1525-1534, William Tyndale translated the Greek New Testament (Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum*) by relying on commercial printing, continental philosophy, and his own intrepid fine-tuning of formal and demotic registers. The resulting text, the first printed English Bible, made an Anglophonic space for biblical material to be appropriated and re-imagined. As a discursive locus for English reformers (Protestant and Radical), Tyndale's biblical English became the standard for subsequent translations like the Geneva and King James Bibles. Furthermore, it provided the license for various biblical representations in literary traditions, including those of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. In my presentation, I will trace one of the many ways Tyndale domesticated the biblical languages for a popular Tudor audience: prefixing living formatives to English and Latin radicals (linguistically). This tactic, I will show, opened a way for hermeneutical experimentation that engendered idiosyncrasies within Tudor English.

Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, Université de Neuchâtel

**"Englishes" against "Englishness":
Shakespeare's practice of synonymia**

This paper, which draws on my current book project, examines the stakes of Shakespeare's practice of the figure of synonymia, or 'variation of an English' (Hoskins c.1600) during the twilight of the Tudor era (1590-1600). This is where Sylvia Adamson locates the turn against the figure together with the value of 'copia' with which it is associated. Shakespearean instances celebrate the 'copia' of 'Englishes', but not as a court-centred Tudor aesthetic of ornament (McDonald). Rather this elite symbolic capital is self consciously redistributed to the broad constituency of a public theatre audience, liberating non-elite subjects as well as the vernacular from given lexical limits. If this suggests an alignment with the pedagogic agenda of non-elite cultural reformers, the practice is also set against an emergent post-reformation centripetal ideology of (the) English and an Englishness characterised by a unifying 'plainness' to be produced through exclusion of the elite practice of latinate forms as well as of regional 'varieties' of English.