

Performing the Humoral Body

This seminar considers how the humoral body was evoked, enacted, and embodied on the early modern stage by exploring the intersection of performance studies and humoral theory. Galenic naturalism applied the four humors—yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood—to explain the psychological and physiological apparatus throughout the early modern period. This medical framework offered physicians a discourse for describing and constructing interiority that was otherwise impenetrable to them.

Using somatic terminology to expound inward experiences highlights how humoral theory seeks to visualize and externalize inner processes. Our post-Cartesian ontology often uses the language of physicality to allegorize our distinctive inward selves, yet no such contrast between internal and external identities exists in humoral discourse. Galenic models are predicated on the porous nature of the body, defined by susceptibility to the surrounding environment, rendering all physical discourse not merely linguistic representation, but an exploration of the permeable self. In attempting to recover the performativity of the humors in this context, we can further explore the role the humors played in early modern playhouses.

Gail Kern Paster demonstrated how humoral theory can develop our understanding of affect in Shakespeare's canon, and this seminar draws on that work by exploring how the humors were represented in a theatrical space. The body of the actor physicalizes a conceptual awareness of the humors on stage, inviting the audience to interpret language and character in corporeal terms. His physical presence in front of the audience interrogates the body not as metaphorical or elusive, but material, carnal, and palpable.

This seminar is interested in the interaction between the invisibility of the humors and the visual medium that conjured them on stage, particularly in considering their impact on playgoers' reading of these theatrical moments. Papers are welcome on performing interiority, historical phenomenology of the humors, or the semiotics of humoral discourse on stage. Topics might include:

- How were the humors represented on stage?
- What was the relationship between the body of the actor and humoral discourse?
- How did actors theatricalize an inner state for an audience?

David Amelang, Freie Universität Berlin

Anatomical Shakespeare: Representations of Distress in Shakespeare and Early Modern Discourse

During his early years as a dramatist, Shakespeare wrote plays filled with violence and death, but the language of even his most afflicted characters did not lose its composure at the sight of blood and destruction; it kept on marching to the beat of the iambic drum. As his career progressed, however, the language of characters undergoing an overwhelming experience appears to become more permeable to their emotions, and in many cases sentiment takes over and interferes with the character's ability to speak properly. Frank Kermode persuasively defines this style of writing as 'turbulent thinking'; John Porter Houston refers to it as the 'turbulent inner monologue', which hints at this language's proto-*stream-of-consciousness* feel.

This paper analyses the fractured language of a variety of characters overwhelmed by emotions, that is, characters undergoing sudden shock and distress, in conjunction with period descriptions of manifestations of humoral

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Leader: Amy Kenny, University of California, Riverside, amy.kenny@ucr.edu

imbalance. In particular I will focus on three passages; Hamlet's first soliloquy, Othello's handkerchief rant and King Lear's final words over the corpse of his daughter. Understanding these representations of ungovernable passion as one of Shakespeare's singular literary achievements and for which he had practically no precedents, I intend to identify and illustrate some of the ways in which this dramatic innovation relates to broader contexts, and above all the discourse of madness and emotions in early modern English and European society.

Susan L. Anderson, Sheffield Hallam University

Strange Speech on Stage

This paper examines the voice as an expressive medium in terms of both semantic and non-semantic noise-making. The paper concentrates largely on stuttering (or "stutting") in order to examine how 'strange' forms of speech are used to convey meaning about character and state of mind. The paper starts by outlining a range of ways in which stuttering and non-normative speech patterns were accounted for within medical and rhetorical texts, as well as in prose fiction, including Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, and Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. These sources suggest a heterogeneous set of approaches to stuttering, in which the condition arises from both inherent humoral dispositions and emergent environmental stimuli. The paper then offers a preliminary discussion of several plays which represent forms of non-normative speech, most notably Marston's *What You Will*. Marston's play uses stuttering in the same way that its title avoids making a definitive statement. There is not room in the essay to explore fully the aporia literalised by stuttering in the play and its link to repetitions of the title phrase. However, examining non-normative speech patterns in this play and others demonstrates the reciprocity of performativity and corporeality, especially in terms of the ways that the manner of speaking is as meaningful as the verbal content of what is said.

Darryl Chalk, University of Southern Queensland

**Like Furnace:
Sighing on the Shakespearean Stage**

Sighs, sometimes accompanied by tears and groans, are everywhere in Shakespeare's plays and yet have received almost no attention in scholarship on the passions and early modern theatre. References to sighing are often taken as a commonplace rather than as potential cues to embodied action or clues to a character's emotional state and, yet, sighing had anatomical, humoral, spiritual, and pathological significances in early modern culture. "To love", suggests the smitten Silvius in *As You Like It*, "is to be all made of sighs and tears" (5.2.73-4). Constant sighing was viewed as a key external symptom of melancholic afflictions like lovesickness. To Francis Bacon, in *Sylva Sylvarum* (1627), sighing was the inevitable product of "griefe and paine ... caused by the drawing in of a greater quantity of breath to refresh the heart that laboureth: like a great draught when one is thirsty. Sobbing is the same thing stronger" (184-5). The raped and mutilated Lavinia's wordless exhalations ("Hark how her sighs blow") provoke a somatic response in Titus Andronicus ("Then must my sea be moved with her sighs") not dissimilar to that which might have been felt by an audience witnessing the performance of humoral bodies heaving with sighs on the Shakespearean stage (3.1.224-6). As Claudius suggests, "there's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves" (4.1.1), and thus, with such ideas in mind, this paper will explore the representation of sighing on the Shakespearean stage. Visceral, vital, non-verbal, and affective, sighing was more than merely metaphorical: its use in Shakespeare often signifies the physicality and theatricality of the passions as necessarily performative phenomena.

Andrew Loeb, Trent University

Andrew Loeb, Trent University

**“I was ne’er beaten to a tune before”:
Passionate Bodies, Music, and Masculinity in Thomas Middleton’s *The Nice Valour***

Have you ever been so angry you couldn’t help but burst into song? No? Well, the Passionate Lord, in Thomas Middleton’s *The Nice Valour* (1622?) has. In one of the weirdest moments in an already very weird play, the Lord beats a foolish gentleman, Lepet, while expressing his unquenchable rage in music. And the song is just one of many: the Lord suffers from a disorder that manifests in sudden shifts between extreme passions (lust, melancholy, anger, and mirth) and each is expressed primarily through singing. This paper seeks to understand the intersection between the passionate body, music, and masculinity in this play. Critics have noted that *The Nice Valour* interrogates masculinity and homosocial relations in order to reveal the disorders that result when they are found in excess. My paper will argue that music is fundamental to this process of interrogation because it is uniquely capable of representing simultaneous, competing, and conflicting ideas about masculinity—the Passionate Lord is both effeminized and hypermasculinized when he sings his violence—and extending them out from the fictional social world of the play and into the real social world of the theatre and its audience(s). Early modern discourses of music almost invariably stress the art’s power to profoundly affect the mind, body, and spirit of its listener. Putting the play’s songs into dialogue with these discourses, I will suggest that music engages the theatregoers viewing and listening to the play in an embodied experience of multiple, competing extremes of gender performance, allowing them to try them on, as it were, in a collective, social process of thinking through (and especially *feeling* through) the masculinity those extremes delimit.

Brice Peterson, Pennsylvania State University

**Staging Spiritual Rebirth:
The Body and Romance in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale***

When critics explore the performance of the body in *The Winter’s Tale*, they have understandably focused on Hermione’s “maternal body” and her mystical resurrection. However, they have yet to consider how Shakespeare’s play draws attention to the body as a means to perform the inward experience of spiritual rebirth or regeneration. Although rebirth entails the soul’s cleansing from the deleterious consequences of the Fall, early modern theological treatises also imagine spiritual rebirth in terms of *bodily* transformation. These treatises often describe how unbalanced humors and passions dominate spiritually “degenerate” bodies, evoking irrational, sinful behavior that needs to be mitigated through rebirth. Shakespeare engages with this discourse in *Winter’s Tale* when he dramatizes the inward, spiritual phenomenon of spiritual rebirth through the body’s struggle to achieve humoral and affective equilibrium. Leading up to Hermione’s “execution,” King Leontes’ body manifests his spiritual depravity: he is distempered with “hot” humors and “tyrannous passion[s]” (1.2.108, 2.3.28) that render the clear, rational powers of his soul “muddy” and “unsettled” (1.2.322). The king’s irrational behavior blurs the line between corporeality and spirituality: it reveals his salvific depravity for the audience to see. When Hermione “comes back” to life, she “awake[ns] . . . [Leontes’] faith” and transforms his “tyrannous passion[s]” into ethereal affections that “no settled senses of the world can match” (5.3.72). She enlivens his body and soul. Significantly, Shakespeare draws on the somatic terminology of rebirth for his own generic ends. “Awakening faith” that “settle[s]” riotous passions and humors dramatizes Hermione’s transformative powers, what Leontes calls the “magic in her majesty” (5.3.39). Here, Shakespeare weds Christian regeneration with Greek and Medieval romance. The regeneration discourse’s corporeal terminology allows actors to perform “magic”: Leontes’ bodily transformation, typical of Greek romance, and his miraculous healing at the hands of a lady healer, redolent of its Medieval counterpart.

Tanya Pollard, Brooklyn and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Burbage's Melancholy

Shakespeare's characters come to life and reach their audiences through actors' bodies. These bodies are variable and multiple, but in the plays' original productions the best-known was that of Richard Burbage, Shakespeare's star player. As colleague, friend, vehicle, and muse, Burbage played a central role in shaping Shakespeare's plays. Although he was known for his protean ability to shift between emotional states, he was recognized above all as a tragic actor. In particular, he was known for brooding male tragic figures such as Hamlet, linked with both interiority and melancholy. If, as theater historians have recently suggested, these characters were widely identified with Burbage himself, their characteristic melancholia raises questions about the humoral constitution – real, imagined, constructed – of Burbage's own body. How might Burbage's body have shaped Shakespeare's tragic imagination, and how might Shakespeare's imagination have shaped Burbage's body? This essay will examine the funeral elegy *On the Death of the Famous Actor, Richard Burbage*, in conjunction with passages from some of Burbage's most notable roles, in order to probe early modern understandings of Burbage's role in animating Shakespeare's tragic creations. In keeping with recent arguments about the collaborative contributions of clowns, company members, and offstage artisans to the making of early modern plays, I will suggest both that Burbage had a privileged role as Shakespeare's co-author, and that his identification with melancholy was crucial to the development of the genre we know as Shakespearean tragedy.

Michael Schoenfeldt, University of Michigan

Performing Pain

The Shakespearean corpus ceaselessly inflicts damage on the bodies and minds of those who cross the stage. And it has been something of a commonplace of early modern theatrical criticism to trace the influence of judicial punishments on the agonized spectacles of early modern theater. But we have not given a lot of thought to the ways in which the bodies of actors might exhibit their pain for an audience. These plays repeatedly call on the actor's skill at counterfeiting pain. By pain, moreover, I mean both emotional suffering and physical pain, since the vast lexicon of early modern agony made little effort to distinguish between the two realms (as in the phrase "grievous wounds"). Although the evidence of its physical damage can be apprehended through wounds and blood and distorted limbs and other props, pain is invariably a private sensation. We cannot see another's pain. The challenge for an actor, then, is to manifest an inherently private sensation in ways that others can apprehend. The plays are filled with hints about the ways this might have occurred, including stage directions and scripted howls of agony, but the actor must find physical correlatives of an internal impression. This paper will explore just what it might have meant to perform pain, and to observe the performance of pain by others, on the Shakespearean stage. The singular details of the performance of pain, I want to argue, may have depended in part on the early modern understanding of humoral physiology, which offered a vocabulary for describing inner states in physical terms. The purpose of this paper is to explore the possible relationships between the various suffering bodies and minds exhibited on the Renaissance stage and contemporaneous medical interpretations of the causes of and cures for pain.

Justin P. Shaw, Emory University

**"Amorous Pinches Black":
Shakespeare's Cleopatra and the Productivity of Melancholy**

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In this essay, which attends to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, I suggest that Cleopatra's simultaneous blackness, femininity, and sovereignty complicate established notions of humoral physiology and pathology in the period. Specifically, I want to look at the influence of melancholy in the performance of black female subjectivity in the play, and possible reactions to such performances in the early modern English imagination. While some critics have compellingly pointed out the centrality of melancholic grief and re-gendering of Antony in the play, I want to revisit the melancholy of Cleopatra to examine the ways in which her loss and grief are performed to more productive means in the play. Can Cleopatra be understood as melancholic, and if so, then what are the implications for the play and its reception? Following Lynda Boose's early argument that the reproductivity of the black woman transgresses the limits of early modern understandings of race, and Francesca T. Royster's claim that Cleopatra, in particular, ruptures the system of racial signification in the long history of criticism on the play, I hope to show the ways in which audiences of the play may react to the possibility of an Egyptian queen who imbues the melancholic disposition toward ultimately productive, not destructive, ends. As such, Cleopatra would challenge notions of what it means to be or to perform melancholia on the English stage. This essay builds on influential discussions by Gail Kern Paster, Mary Floyd-Wilson, and Carol Thomas Neely who, to varying ends, illuminate the complexities of considering the influences of humoral physiology on categories of gender and/or race in the period. My hope is that an attention to Cleopatra's melancholy will allow us to reread the simultaneous interstices of racialized female sovereignty and the humors in similar characters of early modern drama such as Dido, Mariam, and Quisara, for example.

Daniel Timbrell, University of Southern Queensland

**“When I am in game I am furious”:
Gaming and the Humoral Body in *Women Beware Women***

It is the Ward who provides *Women Beware Women* with its most overt example of a ‘humoral’ body in performance, while indicating that it is through games and gaming in this play that the world of these characters will be undone. Declaring “when I am in game I am furious” cannot help but mark him as a particularly grotesque case of one who is all too willing to give way to choleric excess. However, if the ‘humoral body’ indicates one's attempt to balance these particular substances to maintain bodily and emotional equilibrium, the risk is ever-present that one may be subject to the inconstant nature of these substances and thus prone to excessive and/or destructive acts in general. In this light, the Ward's openly monstrous example of imbalance is a mere prelude to the destruction that will follow. This paper will contend that the scenes of gameplay and gaming terminology provide the key to understanding a play where, regardless of supposed intent, most pursue the basest of their own desires to the exclusion of all other considerations. Furthermore, it is those characters engaging in games that emphasised the sort of conquest and domination felt to be essential for the early modern male who are the most willing and able to abuse such qualities. That the final masque's bloodbath eliminates the current sovereign and any realistic hope for succession is merely the apotheosis of this concept. It is not so much that those who show an aptitude for the cool thinking and planning imperative for proper conquest cannot escape the consequences of their debasement; it becomes clear that they are incapable of recognizing when such consequences are imminent.

Reto Thomas Edgar Winckler, Chinese University of Hong Kong

**“Foolish Rheum”:
Women, Tears, and Folly in Shakespeare's Plays**

Adust (that is, pathological) melancholy, according to early modern physicians, came in two phases, an excessively hot one and a subsequent cold one: The hot phase ‘maketh menne madde’, while the cold phase

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‘maketh menne fooles, forgetfull, and dulle.’¹ This quote suggests that madness and folly, while proceeding from the same underlying humoral condition, are conceived of as fundamentally different states in humoral medicine: madness is characterised by heat and excess, while folly is described as a state of coldness and deficiency of spirits and intellect. This implies a conceptual split along gender lines: while madness is often associated with male wrath, the emotional side of folly, including sadness, pity and mercy, is frequently gendered female in Shakespeare’s works. In this paper, I will focus on folly as a female quality, as exemplified by the common association of tears, women, and foolishness. As Elaine Showalter has remarked, ‘water is the organic symbol of woman’s fluidity: blood, milk, tears.’² These female tears are labelled foolish with remarkable frequency in the plays, especially by male characters who try to distance themselves from their own unmanly conduct. The prime example is Laertes in *Hamlet*, who conceptualises his grief over his sister’s death as a female flood which drowns his own more ‘fiery’, manly impulse to take revenge: ‘Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, / And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet / It is our trick – nature her custom holds / Let shame say what it will. [*Weeps.*] When these are gone / The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord, / I have a speech o’ fire that fain would blaze / But that this folly drowns it’ (4.7.183-189).³ In this paper, I will try to show how the female quality of folly is shown to permeate, through the porous, penetrable body of humoral physiology⁴, both the emotional life of characters and the environment in which they find themselves.

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- 1 Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helth*, London 1541, fol. 73R, quoted in Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, Michigan State UP, East Lansing, 1951, 34.
 - 2 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–198*, London, 1987, 11.
 - 3 The Arden Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Revised Edition, Bloomsbury, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney, 2006, 4.7.183-89.
 - 4 As described by Gail Kern Paster in *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, Chicago, 2004.