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Leader: Mario DiGangi, Lehman College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Respondents: Holly Dugan, George Washington University
Benedict Robinson, Stonybrook University

Averyl Dietering, University of California Davis

Movable Skin, Movable Type: Motion and the Reading of Emotion in the Forehead

Skin was often considered a nuisance in early modern anatomy, as it separated the anatomist from the divine knowledge of the body. As if to downplay the nuisance of skin, anatomies were often illustrated with images of dissected bodies with easily removable skin—even though flaying actual human skin was a complicated process, with some parts of the skin far more difficult to remove than others. The skin of the forehead, known as movable skin, was particularly challenging to flay because of its close connection to underlying muscle; yet at the same time, anatomists believed that this connection to muscle made the body's affections legible in the movable skin. This paper traces the cultural work of movable skin in early modern anatomies, showing how movable skin located affect in the body, creating a method of reading "humanness" that sought to distinguish human affections from animal emotions. By following movable skin through anatomies such as *Mikrokosmographia*, *The History of Man*, *The Manual of the Anatomy*, *Pathomyotamia*, and *Compendiosa*, I argue that movable skin was a particularly potent site for developing a method of reading the body's affects and for grappling with the body's ability to display un/human, in/appropriate affects.

Jennifer Feather, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Shakespeare's Illyria: Background and Queer Affect in *Twelfth Night*

While traditionally scholars have seen *Twelfth Night's* setting in Illyria as tantalizingly mysterious in its lack of specificity, recent work suggests the prominent early modern English associations with the play's setting. Illyria was not only a port city poised between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers of Italy and Austria but was also associated in classical myth with Cadmus, the legendary founder of Thebes, who was eventually transformed into a serpent. It called to mind fears of storms and piracy as well as a population both cruel and debauched. Illyria with both its contemporary sixteenth- and seventeenth-century associations and its classical associations was a space of ambiguity, and attention to this setting indicates how those affects relegated to the play's background shape the erotic alignments of the play. This paper argues that the play's setting is felt in ways that shape the desires and attachments of its various characters. Even as characters attempt to transcend these influences, Illyria's associations persist in disrupting lines of desire.

Joseph Gamble, University of Michigan

Is Homoeroticism a Queer Affect?

Valerie Traub has recently argued that "the concept of the 'homoerotic'...serves to designate something, but in point of fact *not too precisely*" and that it might "function, at least in part, as a

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cover for our confusion about the meanings of erotic desire." In this paper, I try to anatomize some of the conceptual haziness of "homoeroticism" by turning not to *desire* as its fundamental relational structure, but to *affect*. Offering a reading of the ugly feelings produced by Rosalind's misrecognition of Celia's desire in *As You Like It*, I propose that we take such feelings not as *evidence of* homoeroticism, but as homoeroticism itself. Homoeroticism is itself, I argue, an affect, and understanding it as such can help us reorient our understanding of the quotidian experience of historical sexuality—homo-, hetero-, or otherwise.

Mary Janell Metzger, Western Washington University

Edgar and Queer Affect in *King Lear*

The reception of *King Lear* persistently raises questions about the nature of human beings and the social constructions of community that secure their identities and pleasures. Whether considering the representation of humanity in *King Lear* in contrast to the nonhuman animal, the unreasonable other, or anticipating "the abstract, universal, representative human -- what we now tend to think of as a normal human," (Traub 67), much of this work is rooted in analyses of epistemologies relevant to our own moment. Such an ethical charge, I argue, is useful not only for grappling with the rhetorical and ideological violence of the play but for considering how Shakespeare's representation of Edgar queers the norms of the family qua nation as a site of reproductive expectation – not solely as Poor Tom but throughout.

Tracey Miller-Tomlinson, New Mexico State University

Queer Affects and the Kiss in *Henry V*

This paper takes up the question of how queer affects figure into the construction of community in *Henry V*. Narrowing is clearly required from the start: after all, one of the most noticeable patterns in the play is its proliferation of affective male triads—the three "brethren" of Eastcheap, traitors at Southampton, and soldiers huddled around the fire at Agincourt—all of which are first drawn in affective relation with one another and, later, with Henry. This paper will zero in on the gesture of the kiss, a meeting of lips and bodies that recurs persistently, yet always problematically, throughout the play, to explore its implications for thinking about the relationship between bodily and communal affects. The play's kisses are affect-laden social gestures that enact communal as well as private bonds, yet they are in every case misaligned, stolen, aslant, or deferred in a way that troubles and queers their signification as a "seal" of communal relations. The bonds they evoke, and yet defer, promise embodied participation in an abstract social communion—not only for the characters on stage finding a place in an incipient national community, but perhaps more importantly for the audience, whose desire for embodied experience of a shared national history, the impossible promise of the history play, is captured by the kiss. Through the lips' association at once with speech and affective touch, the kiss becomes a site in which the word meets flesh and print history meets embodied theatrical experience. If the history play traffics in such desires for embodied contact with the past—and, in particular, with a shared past constructed as the basis for a present national community, the play's kisses highlight the queer eroticism that binds the audience in its insatiable desire for the past.

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James Mulder, Tufts University

Seeing Sex in *The Revenger's Tragedy*

The Revenger's Tragedy is often considered in studies of the early modern stage to provide an opportunity to examine the anxious construction of masculinity and male sexuality. In this paper, I revisit penetrative readings of the play's erotics to argue that while scholarship on the play's erotics of masculine dominance and penetration offer productive discussions of anxious masculinity in the period, possibilities of queer meaning-making and embodiment that are otherwise available in the play's scenes of bodily contact remain understudied. I track the circulation of and contact between partial bodies and body parts, bodies that are fragmented, out of place, or in two places at once, in order to argue that the play's erotics defy oppositional logics of active/passive, open/closed, and inside/outside, which structure and stabilize sexual discourse. By seeing sex in *The Revenger's Tragedy* in this way, I hope to explore the ways in which the play queries the limits of sexual knowledge, queerly displacing scenes of sex even as it labors to produce them.

Kirk Quinsland, Fordham University

Negative Space

This exploration begins with Sara Ahmed's observation in *Queer Phenomenology* about the relationship between space and action: "It is not simply that we act in space; spatial relations between subjects and others are produced through actions, which makes some things available to be reached" (52). What actions, then, are produced/available in the negative space of early modern theater, as defined by antitheatrical writing? Starting from the assumption that antitheatrical writing produces a coherent theory of drama in which there is little or no distinction between actions and subjects, I am reading theater as a space in which hostility, negativity, disorientation, and insult create "an interior space of contradiction in which are found all difficulties a gay person will meet before being able to assume his or her identity" (Eribon 69). Taking the play-within-a-play in *Love's Labour's Lost* as my case study, I am arguing that insult serves as a critical component in the formation of a proto-gay identity that, to the early modern antitheatrical mind, is observable only as negative space (in the artistic sense) within a negative space (in the affective sense).

Nicholas F. Radel, Furman University

"Partners in all respects but the bed": Staging Sodomy in John Ford's *The Broken Heart*

In this essay on John Ford's *The Broken Heart* (1633), I employ ideas from affect studies—in particular Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman's call for understanding sex without optimism—to question and reformulate some of our present, utopian imaginings of the "queer" in early modern studies. Although *The Broken Heart* is often looked at in terms of its non-normative, heterocentric love plots, its male alliances are also not normative in the usual sense in which we understand that idea in early modern queer studies. I argue that a (or the) fundamental disruption explored in the play is that between Orgilus and Ithocles, and it is one that comes to several

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shockingly passionate consummations. Throughout the play, Ithocles's actions disrupt the normative flow of male desire, opening it to perverse inscription. It seems possible that Ithocles marries Penthea to Bassanes to prolong the erotics of battle that will keep Orgilus's attentions on him. In this sense, the play stages a conspicuous, indeed perhaps sodomitical, articulation of male desire over and against the usual, and normative, forms of male alliance (such as friendship and marriage). As Ford frequently does in representing heteroerotic alliance, in *The Broken Heat* he stages male desire within an affective imaginary promising no positive outcome but one that nevertheless embodies an affective spectacle of psychopathology not normatively represented on the Renaissance stage.

Stephen Spiess, Babson College

Feeling Impossible

What are the queer affects of "being impossible?" Through what social, conceptual, and affective frames are early modern lives rendered (im)possible onstage, by whom, and to what ends? What emerges when a specific early modern work thematizes relations of affect and social intelligibility? In this essay, I approach such questions by reading Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *THE Honeft Whore, With, The Humours of the Patient Man, and the Longing Wife* (1604) alongside Judith Butler's work on recognition and social intelligibility. This essay thus pursues two aims. First, I argue on behalf of an approach to, and understanding of, "queer affects" informed by Butler, a figure largely overlooked in contemporary affect studies. Such an eclipse, I argue, effaces not only the profoundly affective dimensions of Butler's thought, but also a range of analytic tools that can help facilitate queer approaches to early modern affects. For my purposes, these include what Butler has termed "frames of recognition": culturally-contingent narrative structures through which particularly lives are rendered, differentially, as (un)livable, (un)recognizable, (un)grievable, etc. Urging attention to the dynamic interplay between affectivity and discursivity, this concept furthermore, I contend, offers a means of navigating a critical impasse in present-day affect theory. Second, I suggest how this heuristic offers traction on issues of intelligibility, recognition, and affect as yet under-examined in the Dekker-Middleton collaboration.

Goran Stanivukovic, St. Mary's University

Flesh and Affection in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*

Beaumont and Fletcher's romance comedy *Cupid's Revenge* (written c1607-8, published 1615) is more interesting for dramatizing the repression of sexual craving than for the fact that it represents one of the most remarkable transformations of Sir Philip Sidney's prose romances, *Old and New Arcadia* into drama. Written "no doubt", Fredson Bowers asserts, for the Children of Her Majesty's Revels, this now almost forgotten play was performed, mostly of the Cockpit theatre, regularly until only a few years before the closure of the theatres in London in 1642. In rhetorically layered and discursively complex way, *Cupid's Revenge* debates the ambiguous and ambivalent relationship between body and mind, affections and eroticism, and social and political agency. The play puts pressure on the articulation and representation of social class, and on the notions of masculinity and femininity, in such a way that the it opens up a possibility to

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explore the early modern representation of the body that affects itself (the bodies of Bacha and Cleophila, of Leucippus and Ismenus are hungry for sex) in a fictional world that affects them by complicating that hunger through affective social institutions like marriage; the same fictional world also affects the play's characters by removing their sexual hunger in the process of rewriting the Hellenic erotic and pornographic romance, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, which is the deep source of Sidney's romance and thus of Beaumont's and Fletcher's re-imagining of it as stage drama. As a socio-affective place that provides satisfaction of sexual and amorous satisfaction, marriage is repeatedly questioned—Bacha, a young widow, calls her marriage “strange”—and the play, I argue, asks the audience to consider what the causes of the characters' affects are. I suggest that the play breaks away from any kind of conventional representation and expression of love and emotions across social ranks, displaying an anti-romantic and anti-Platonic world of sexual craving ruled by the argument against repression and honour rooted in chastity and temperance. By imagining a socio-libidinal world in which men and women of different social rank and political affiliation affect one another in a number of (sexual) ways, the play anticipates Spinoza's theoretical exploration of which affects work for the individual and which do not in a way that empower that individual. Men and women in *Cupid's Revenge* seek sexual liberty not so much as a form of transgression but as a route to self-empowerment.

Sydney Wagner, CUNY Graduate Center

Race, Sex, and Affect in Cleopatra's “Gipsy's Lust”

From artistic renderings to literary references, the figure of the Gypsy woman is an obsession in early modern English literature and culture. Portrayed as exotic, criminal, and wanton (all stereotypes surrounding Romani women that persist today), these representations were pervasive, even leading to the word “Gypsy” to be used to describe non-Romani women seen as too sexually promiscuous. In evoking the image of the Gypsy to describe Cleopatra's sensuality in *Antony & Cleopatra*, Shakespeare, similarly, illuminates well-known racialized ideas of wanton, enigmatic desire. Cleopatra's sexual passion, described as a “gipsy's lust,” becomes the paramount feature conjuring fanciful notions of exotic eroticism. I argue that non-white sexuality functions as inherently queer in early modern England in that it is continuously used as a foil for proper (and white) sexual behavior. Likewise, discourse about non-white sexuality is not limited to descriptions of deviant sex acts but described through affective language. In his contact with the “gipsy” Cleopatra, Antony goes through a rhetorical racial and gender transformation. Following scholarship on early modern race and sexuality, this paper explores how black and brown sexuality is represented as deviant, nonregulated, and explicitly contrary to England's white national project.