

NEW PHILOLOGIES, SAA 2020  
PAPER ABSTRACTS

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**Gorilla, Pongo, Ingena: *Troglodyte gorilla***

*Holly Dugan*

The last of the great apes to be “discovered” by modern scientists in the nineteenth century, gorillas are all but non-existent in most histories of the Renaissance. Yet, in their presentation of the species to the scientific community, Jeffries Wyman and Thomas Staughton Savage cite three earlier sources to bolster their argument for a new species of anthropoid Simiæ: Hanno’s periplus of his 5-6 century BCE voyage to Western, “The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell,” published in *Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625), and T. Edward Bowdich’s *Mission to Ashantee* (1819). Each of these sources provide a different name for the species (and point to a different moment in European histories of colonial exploitation of western Africa): reading the gorilla, pongo, and ingena together, Savage and Wyman argue for a scientific history of the species, presenting “troglodyte gorilla, a new species of *orang* from the Gabon river.”<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I return to these abandoned terms in order to untangle premodern taxonomies of harm<sup>2</sup> embedded within this nineteenth-century scientific history. Such terms may shift how we measure such ecological and social histories of harm, including the devastating and rapid decline of the species during the past 170 years and the long, slow history of European colonial violence of western Africa.

**Impotence and Idleness**

*Ari Friedlander*

This paper argues that Renaissance male sexual dysfunction is understood through the supposed moral and economic defects of those early modern England called “the impotent poor,” revealing links between disability, class, and masculinity. I begin with a philological analysis of “impotence” in early modern discussions of laboring and non-laboring impoverished people, demonstrating that “impotence” defines an early modern form of disabled identity. I then turn to what Hannah Lavery has called “impotency poems” by George Gascoigne, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, and the Earl of Rochester to show how Renaissance poets imagined impotence through a language of disability that draws not simply upon the “medical model” of symptom and diagnosis – the register in which these poems’ depictions of impotence is usually discussed – but a “social model” of disability in which impotence is associated with poverty, idleness, and dishonesty.

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<sup>1</sup> See Wyman and Savage, “Notice of the External Characters and Habits of Troglodyte Gorilla, a New Speices of Orang from the Gabon River,” *Boston Journal of Natural History* Vol. 5, Issue IV (1847): 417-443.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Adler and Joseph Tennis, “Toward a Taxonomy of Harm in Knowledge Organization Systems,” *Knowledge Organization* 40.4 (2013): 266-272

## **Straight Women, Queer Philology**

*Joseph Gamble*

This essay is about friction: sexual, racial, philological, and methodological. Drawing on Gonzalo Fernandes de Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias Occidentales*, Richard Eden reports in 1555 that the indigenous women of Santo Domingo, after having medically-induced abortions and thus having for "a few days abstained from the company of men," would "become so straight, as they say which have had carnal familiarity with them, that such as use them cannot without much difficulty satisfy their appetite." In this essay I will linger over Eden's use of the word "straight," and similar uses of that word in the English translations of Michel Millot's *L'escole des filles* (1680) and Nicolas Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica* (1740/16—?). In these texts, "straight" becomes a flashpoint for thinking both phenomenologically and philologically about sexual logistics—and, in the case of Eden's syntactically promiscuous "they," sexual *racism*. This flashpoint, though, only flares up under particular methodological conditions. Only when we bracket macro-level discursive concerns, I will argue, and instead zero in on not merely the *word* "straight" but the racial-sexual *grammar* contained in that word can we start to see the micro- and meso-level sexual and racial logics governing the practice of early modern ethnographers and translators.

## **Shakespeare's Prickwork and Nature's Manicure: Sonnet 20 and the Trans Handmade**

*Colby Gordon*

By taking advantage of the semantic field connecting "pricking" and "pointing," essay situates Shakespeare's master-mistress, belatedly "pricked out for women's pleasure," at the confluence of two scenes of material fabrication: gender transition and textual marking. I align Nature's pricking with the typographical practice that G.K. Hunter calls "gnomic pointing," the inclusion of marks to direct readers' attention. From this perspective, it is as if this feminine creator is bedecking the youth's body with manicures, fleurons, asterisks, and italics. As opposed to a singular episode of divine creation that fixes gendered embodiment for all time, this revised Genesis imagines a textual body subject to the ongoing and open-ended transformations of markup, revision, commentary, emendation, and editing. As such, this paper hopes to explore the ways that early modern textual technologies might contribute to contemporary work in trans studies on the handmade labor of crafting trans bodies and communities.

## **When Racial Mixing was “Miscegenation”: Terminology in Early Modern Studies**

*Kyle Grady*

Miscegenation is a racist term. It’s also a term that draws from early modern literary conventions concerning interracial relationships. This paper will explore the history of the word “miscegenation,” and it will consider that history alongside *Othello’s* representation of interracialism. It will engage this longer history as a way to interrogate the critical lexicon of early modern studies – a field, it’s important to note, that has both embraced and eschewed the word “miscengenation.” Broadly, this paper is interested in how we read and what we call early modern racial formations. Indeed, how do we describe racial mixing in a text like *Othello*, given that there is no term like “racial mixing” circulating in the early modern period? And how can attention to a longer history of race and racialized terminology help us better understand the past?

## **Desert of the Heart: Philology and Unsettling Space in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It***

*Derrick Higginbotham*

My paper unpacks the spatial politics that philology, specifically etymology, registers by reading two key terms in *As You Like It* historically: the repeated characterization of the forest of Arden as a “desert” to be settled (2.4.74; 2.7.115; and 3.2.127) and Rosalind’s allusion to the “South Sea” (3.2.200 – 201). By linking these readings to the frequent citation of animals and vegetation from various locations in the global south, I show the ways that this play evokes this broad yet decidedly southern geography. The play, as well, associates this evocation with Celia’s adoption of brownface, such that it signals both class—her status as no longer ‘noble’ in the forest of Arden—and race—her status as an undifferentiated racial other, linked to those lands distant from England in the global south. This approach illustrates the way that this comedy, via Celia, engages with a disfiguring appropriation of the native other and connects this appropriation to the politics of land and settlement in complex ways. Historical etymology’s investment in the symbolic density of words and phrases, then, can enable us to grasp the ways that a play like *As You Like It* speculates about early modern colonial politics.

## **Bethinking on the Early Modern Stage**

*Heather Hirschfeld*

The heart of this essay is a prefix that looks and sounds like one of Shakespeare's most studied words, "be." As a prefix, "be-" changes the meaning of a word in relation to time or space as well as in relation to degree, intensity, or frequency. It also forms transitive from intransitive verbs.

I begin with the coupling of this prefix and "think" to produce "bethink," now largely obsolete but used in the early modern period across various discourses to signify especially focused, dedicated kinds of calculating, memorializing, reverential or penitential mental activity. I then look at the reflexive use of this intensified form ("bethink thee," "if I bethink me"), which allows the object of "bethinking" to include the thinker along with any topic or idea. Finally, I consider a series of questions raised by explicit uses of the term on stage, particularly its capacity to invite characters as well as actors and audiences into scenes and postures of what we might call "self-thinking." What is the relationship between this "self-thinking" and what we conventionally call "self-speaking" or the soliloquy? How does the injunction to "bethink yourself," as Edmund says to Edgar, direct Edgar's mind and body? How does Sir Thomas Gresham, announcing he will "bethink thee, Gresham" in *If You Know Not Me, You No Nobody*, seize the locution for a mercantile sensibility? How does Hieronimo's "bethink thy self, Hieronimo," signal or prepare the audience for a specific form of tragic attention? Ultimately, what does the scripted use of "bethink" tell us about the ways in which early moderns thought about thinking and about selves in thought?

## **Being Counted: Lear and Numbers**

*Julian Lamb*

This paper is interested in numerical language, and a paradox to which its uses can fall prey. On one hand, in its role in language games of measurement, numerical language can play an important role in affirming the manifest presence of things which are intangible: the number of knights Lear has is a measure (and, thus, a tangible affirmation) of his authority, if not also his daughter's love. But, on the other hand, ascribing a numerical value to something can also be reductive, and often bears a profound transactional cost: Lear rages not simply against the number of his retinue, but the fact that his authority has been reduced to a number. I would like to explore the implications of this paradox first in the abdication scene, and then in the argument over the size of Lear's retinue. In both scenes, Lear seeks tangible, measurable confirmation of his value, and – as a consequence – reduces his value to that which can be expressed numerically. My principle theoretical debts are to Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy, especially his remarks on the foundation of mathematics. My principle literary critical debt is to Stanley Cavell's seminal essay, "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*," and the renewed emphasis it places on what characters mean, on what they do not intend to mean, and on what they struggle to mean in the words they use.

## Wasting Time: Queer Indecision and the Early Modern Body

James Mulder

This paper revisits an early modern literary text that is frequently treated as foundational to the queer canon: Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*. Edward tends to be read as queer as a result of his resistance to reproductive, heterosexual erotics; consequently, his tragic ending is usually thought to figure his position as the male-bodied object of penetrative sex. I argue, however, that an overvaluation of penetration as the paradigm for understanding Edward's death risks obscuring the ways in which dithering, deferral, and delay shape the erotic and affective economies of this text. Taking up a queer philological approach to Edward's labyrinthine poetics of indecision, I argue, affords interpretive strategies that attune us to the ways in which bodily matter resists the binarisms of mastery/subordination, activity/passivity, and even order/disorder that have previously shaped studies of early modern bodies and sexuality. By mapping the contours of Edward's repetitive, fragmentary vocabulary of indecision, I extend emerging methodologies within new philology to argue that Edward's queer corporeality is inextricable from his repeated recirculation of equivocal language.

## Performative Philology: Race in Early Modern "Gypsy" Lexicons

Noémie Ndiaye

This paper uses bite-size Roma lexicons embedded in early modern fictions or poetry collections as fertile sites to analyze the dialectics of race in the making. The three bite-size lexicons whose racial politics I study translate the vocabulary of Roma Europeans into Western European vernaculars. Those lexicons are embedded, respectively, in Péchon de Ruby's *La vie généreuse des mercelots, gueuz, et boesmiens* (1596), Juan Hidalgo's *Los romances de Germanía* (1609), and Richard Head's *The English Rogue* (1665). Across early modern Europe, the genre of the bite-size "Gypsy" lexicon articulated a rich meta-discourse on philology's racial traffickings. I argue that, in the genre of the bite-size "Gypsy" lexicon, literary frames expose—sometimes deliberately—early modern philology's investment in the fashioning of racial fictions, as well as its inseparability from performative practices of race-making that involve the world off-page. Ultimately, I seek elusive yet powerful moments of bodily connection across the page: moments when racial discourses that drive textual bodies start moving readerly bodies, when racial embodiment on-page prompts racial embodiment off-page, when philology and performance studies go, so to speak, hand in hand. My object, succinctly put, is *performative philology* and its participation in early modern racial formations.

## Character™: Word, Genre, Brand, Canon

*Harry Newman*

‘If I must speak the schoolmaster’s language,’ begins the knowing speaker of “What a Character Is” in the popular miscellany *Sir Thomas Overbury, His Wife* (10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1618), ‘I will confess that “character” comes of this infinitive mood, *kharassein*, which signifies to engrave or make a deep impression. And for that cause a letter (as A.B.) is called a character.’ Practitioners of ‘new character criticism’ have confessed (without the rack) as much and more about the history of the word ‘character,’ usually in order to demonstrate the difference between what character is and what character was, or to reinforce an ideological position on character. ‘One way of thinking of character is simply as part of the text’, writes Stephen Orgel, cuing his etymological observation: “This of course is the original meaning of the word...’ (“What is a Character?” 102).

Such philological gestures are perhaps necessary in the wake of materialist and postmodernist critiques of character as a critical category. In this paper, however, I want to consider the role of philology in character criticism in light of the philological self-consciousness that attended the rise of “character” in the early seventeenth century, as a key word in a shifting lexicon of selfhood and identity, as a new generic brand (the neo-Theophrastan “Character”), and as an increasingly coherent unit of value in early modern drama and theatre. In doing so, I argue that we need to look beyond Shakespeare’s canon for early-modern (and proto-modern) paradigms of character, not least because the schoolmaster’s language that we speak when defining, historicizing and theorizing “character” tends to be exclusively Shakespearean in colour.

## Subjunctive Etymologies in *Troilus and Cressida*

*Michael Saenger*

Shakespeare’s drama of the loss of love and Troy is consistently focused on issues of etymology. Such an interest was typical of Shakespeare’s time, which was characterized, on the one hand, by an exuberant exploration of the semantic and lexical possibilities of a recently valorized English vernacular, and on the other hand, by nagging doubts about the dangers of slipping too far into linguistic instability. In this essay I broaden my understanding of the term “etymology” to encompass more than just an authoritative account of the history of a word, and to include the way in which words are taken to be grounded, often in a poetic context. I focus on the relationship between such efforts and the idea of the subjunctive, a mood that in English is relatively rare, in its technical sense. This philologicistic work can be linked to the thematic content of the play, which focuses heavily on absolute things, and contingent and unstable assignations of value and meaning to them. Though the tension between absolutes, such as honor and love, and their material equivalents, such as war and erotic interchangeability, is particularly crucial in a play that takes place in the city that functioned as the mythic epitome of both.

## **Without Interpreters**

*Kathryn Vomero Santos*

What does it mean to write a history of a cultural practice by attending to the places where it is explicitly marked as absent or not occurring? What forms of knowledge about embodied and ephemeral processes are generated when they are strategically or remarkably avoided? These questions are inspired by a pattern I have observed in my research on early modern interpreting, or the act of live translation between speakers of different languages. While references to interpreters abound in travel narratives, colonial documents, diplomatic letters, and literary texts, the phrase “without interpreters” and its variants appear in the historical record with considerable frequency as early modern European writers attempt to grapple with the realities of linguistic diversity that shaped—and often impeded—their increasingly global business. Focusing on instances of this phrase in texts that range from epic poems to grammar manuals to monarchical monuments, this paper will reflect on the process of developing a philological approach to thinking about the real and imagined *absence* of interpreters as an essential complement to understanding their enduring presence in cultural, social, financial, political, and colonial arenas.

## **“Post” Philology**

*Christine Varnado*

In my approach to “new philologies,” I am interested in inverting the narrative of etymological change, which asks what time has done to words and their usages, to ponder instead what words do to time – how words construct positionalities in time, and/or posit temporal motion. My paper will focus on words we often skim over: conjunctions, prepositions, pre-fixes – the connector-words that set things in relationship to other things. I have a hunch that these words are often where we can find the most profound ontological and cosmological models of space, time, and matter posited (see!?) in a text – where a text shows how it imagines the material universe to work. My paper will explore this idea through the words “pre,” “pro,” and “post,” and words that derive from the Latin *ponere*, to put or place, particularly where they express propositions, positionalities, and motion. I want to analyze critical terms alongside the words in early modern texts. And I want to attend to how a word’s reception and use can produce convergences of association, outside the causality of verifiable etymological descent, for example how “impostume,” which means a prurulent abscess in the body and derives from the Greek for “separation,” acquires connotations of deathliness or death-in-life by being spelled and understood as “imposthume.”

## Sounds and Sweet Airs: Attuning Philology

*Adam Zucker*

*The Tempest* is likely Shakespeare's noisiest play. The roaring of thunder and of tortured servants, "Apes, that moe and chatter" (1623), crowing roosters, and, of course, a thousand twangling instruments are just a few of the sounds heard or conjured up in language over the course of the play. This complex aural environment includes direct contests over modes of speech, whether it be Miranda's talk of Caliban's putatively pre-linguistic "gabble," Caliban's own sense for the uses of the words he's learned from the colonizers of his island, or Ferdinand's wondrous and possessive assessment of Miranda's first words to him: "My language?" Editors of the play, too, stake claims of mastery over the printed language of the island's sounds and sweet airs. This paper focuses on two odd terms in the play – 'scamels' and 'twangling' – to argue briefly that philological work on the play might better orient itself around the nonsemantic or nonsensically constructive organizing powers of speech and sound. Drawing on a concept from Rebecca Lorimer Leonard's work on multilingual immigrant literacy in the contemporary US – "rhetorical attunement" – this essay will argue for a rethinking of editorial and glossorial practice pertaining to *The Tempest* that better accounts for its active aural politics.

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