

Erika Carbonara
Wayne State University

Kinky Prosthetics and a Burgeoning Commercial Community

Anyone familiar with the discourse on kink, whether academic or otherwise, or with the kink scene itself will immediately recognize the inherent ties between capitalism and kink. Many kinky practices necessitate material items, which often carry an intrinsic value that equates to status within the community. This essay interrogates the ways in which kink identities are bound up in material items and purchasing power. Building on work about the costs and meanings of material fashion, ornament, and accessories in the early modern period, this paper examines the usage of props in kinky play within early modern literature. Additionally, through these literary representations of props, the colonialist and nationalist ideologies that are embedded within contemporary and early modern kinky practices become evident. Positing that early modern kink studies reveals the emergence of modern kink alongside emerging formations of both sexuality and materialist capitalism, I explore how the showcasing of material things functions in kinky play in the early modern period.

Mel Vipperman-Cohen
Seminar led by Derrick Higginbotham
SAA 2023
April 1, 2023

“There is no power in the tongue of man / To alter me: I stay here on my bond”
Usury, Gender, and the T(h)reat of Queer Practice

Robert Wilson’s *The Three Ladies of London* and William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* offer productive opportunities to examine the ways through which early modern usury both illuminated and challenged normative expectations of desire, class, race, and power. Usury, the contentious practice of lending money at interest, is a transaction that elucidates anxieties about queer generation, and it is simultaneously the site at which transgressive social and sexual acts may be harnessed in service to capitalist accumulation and circulation. This paper utilizes queer of color critique to disentangle the layered expectations that Lady Lucre and Shylock embody as combinations of gendered, economic, sexual, religious, and racial signifiers. Wilson’s queer, foreign, woman usurer, Lady Lucre, reveals how usury was thought to corrupt English sensibilities of gender and class. By contrast, Shakespeare’s Shylock and his masculine, Jewish usury reveal how Europe’s emergent capitalism is in fact itself queer, its function predicated on the homosocial and homosexual affective bonds of the male credit economy. Though their different genders create distinct opportunities and challenges for the characters, analyzing usury through the lens of gender reveals its inherent queerness and potential to disrupt heteronormative mandates of reproduction. Rather than demonize or punish queer formations, gendered usury perpetuates and celebrates queer connections between men. Despite its power, however, usury ultimately harnesses queer potential in service of capital accumulation.

Title:

“The Agency of the Dunghill: Surveillance Capitalism and Socio-ecological Transformation”

Using Marx’s notion of “metabolic rift,” a concept explaining the relation between capitalism and the natural world, this paper reads *King Lear* as a critique of emergent capitalist and nationalist rapacity. The rupture in nutrient cycling between rural and urban ecosystems that Marx takes note of is dramatized in the Gloucester sub-plot, specifically in Edmund’s attempts to gain power and wealth through surveillance and Edgar’s donning the disguise of a peasant after being disenfranchised by surveillance. Edmund’s appetitive surveilling evokes the *qui-tam* surveillant assemblage that arose in tandem with emergent capitalism and could be thought of as an instance of early modern surveillance capitalism in that it encouraged the pursuit of private gain through covert observation. Edmund’s surveillance also works within a crisis created by Lear and Gloucester. It is here that “metabolic rift” is so relevant: this concept helps to see the rift between ruling and ruled, core and periphery, culture and nature, and the rift created by Edmund’s capitalistic tendencies can be closed only through Edgar’s willingness to engage with the nutrient cycle directly. Oswald insults Edgar as “dunghill” before their duel, a slur that suggests the agency and redemptive potential of the dunghill by association with Edgar. In this way *Lear* may help theorize resistance to capitalist ecological degradation.

Jim Kearney
University of California, Santa Barbara

Poor Tom & Experiential Dispossessions

When Shakespeare's *King Lear* apostrophizes "houseless poverty," the character registers an enormous societal problem, one that speaks to "the socio-cultural turmoil" wrought by "deep economic transformations" that this seminar seeks to address. Enclosure and engrossment – classic examples of Marx's "primitive accumulation" – created significant populations of the displaced and dispossessed in early modern England. As it happens, the terms "dispossess" and "dispossession" seem to enter the English lexicon in the sixteenth-century, and it is not difficult to see how such terms might prove useful in a time when the large-scale societal effects of enclosure and engrossment were all too visible. In this paper, I suggest that when Poor Tom enters in *King Lear*, a certain kind of history comes rushing on stage, as he indexes all those "poor naked wretches" who must face the "persecutions of the sky" with their "houseless heads" and "unfed sides." Taking up the ideological workings of genre and the thought of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou on dispossession, I attempt to address the relation of *King Lear* to the experiential dispossession conjured in a figure like Poor Tom. My argument is that the double-barreled ethico-political sense of dispossession that Butler and Athanasiou theorize might be deployed both to acknowledge the ways in which Lear is undone by his encounter with "houseless poverty" and to bear witness to the historical violence done to figures like Poor Tom.

Possible Items for Bibliography

Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*
Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation*

Biographical note

Jim Kearney is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (University of Pennsylvania Press), and co-editor of a special issue of the journal *Criticism* on "Shakespeare and Phenomenology." He is currently putting the finishing touches on a monograph that pursues a phenomenology of ethical experience in Shakespeare's late plays. His next research project will address dispossession in the early modern period.

Emelye Keyser
Fort Lewis College

Who Cares for these Molehills? Shakespeare's History Plays and a Political Ethics of Proximity

At the 1647 Putney Debates, regarded as the first explicit attempt by English common-born men to seek representation in Parliament, Colonel Rainsborough made the radical argument that “every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government”. Countering him, Commissary General Ireton conservatively insisted that “no person has a right to [representation in Parliament] that has not *a permanent fixed interest* in this kingdom”. In his ensuing speech, Ireton worried what stake men who do not own land could possibly have in the prosperity of the kingdom.

It is well known that, for centuries, English political power was predicated on land ownership. In this paper, I close-read the Putney Debates and several of Shakespeare's history plays to explore the rhetoric and literary tropes that articulated and supported that criterion in the fifty years before it began to be challenged. As a new way into this issue, I draw on Ursula Heise's ethics of proximity—her term for the way that environmentalist writers ascribe their values to their intimacy with specific localities and then use that connection to inform strategies for engaging others in environmental work. I find in Shakespeare's plays that characters in power make comparable assumptions about who has an interest in (both meanings: material/financial and imaginative) and who can care for (tend to and love) the land. Finally, I hope to show that these underlying assumptions of early modern political theory have continuing ties to the way the Anglophone west implicitly measures individuals' investment in the ecological health of the land--and thus to current conversations happening in ecotheory and refugee studies.



Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu>

Re: Reminder about SAA Seminar "Transitions"

1 message

Katie Brokaw <kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu>
To: Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu>

Wed, Nov 30, 2022 at 8:04 AM

Hi Derrick,

Sorry for being late-ish on this! Here's mine:

Title: Just Transition, Environmental Justice, and Shakespearean Performance

This essay will consider how contemporary Shakespeare performance can address environmental injustices, including issues of just transition, and of the intersections of ecology, economics, and race. It will highlight recent performances and projects, including *Cymbeline in the Anthropocene* (led by Randall Martin), *Timone of Anaconda* (adapted by Gretchen Minton), and *Shakespeare in Yosemite* (directed by me).

In lieu of individual items for a bibliography, I hope it's alright to share these pages from the EarthShakes Alliance, a project I direct:

<https://earthshakes.ucmerced.edu/resources> — links to interviews; books; articles and essays; websites and podcasts; films and performances; and eco-resources for theatre companies

<https://earthshakes.ucmerced.edu/resources/books-shakespeare-and-environment> — direct link to books

<https://earthshakes.ucmerced.edu/resources/articles-and-essays> — direct link to articles

Thank you, Derrick!

Katie

Dr. Katherine Steele Brokaw
Associate Professor of [English](#)
University of California, Merced
UC Merced is located on the traditional homelands of the Yokuts and Miwuk people

Co-Founding Artistic Director,
[Shakespeare in Yosemite](#) [[Imogen in the Wild](#), an eco-film, out now]
Co-founder, [EarthShakes Alliance](#)

On Nov 30, 2022, at 9:37 AM, Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu> wrote:

Dear Enrollees in the SAA seminar "Transitions":

I hope that this note finds you all well as we are all rushing toward the end of the semester. This is a gentle reminder about the upcoming deadline of December 1--tomorrow!--for a title and brief abstract. Thanks to those who have already sent me this material.

Do remember that this first foray is just that: a draft of a title and a sketch of an idea for your paper. I am most certainly flexible if folks need more time to finish this task, given that everyone's schedules will vary. If you have a moment, let me know when you hope to send it to me; ideally, that would be by the end of December.

Below my signature is the information that I sent in my first announcement.

With best wishes,
Derrick

By December 1, please email a title and a brief abstract (a few sentences about the expected direction for your contribution will be enough) to me at deh2@hawaii.edu. It is not a problem if your work changes shape later on; at this stage, we are just oiling the gears.

By December 1 also, please contribute, if you wish, 1 – 3 items for a communal bibliography. Again, email this list to me, and I will build this bibliography in a shared Google document for the seminar. I also will include a few citations to books and articles that inform my interest in this topic. As a task, this is meant to be aspirational rather than prescriptive, and these contributions can be in any genre or medium and from any time period. I welcome suggestive and/or inspirational items (verbal, visual, auditory) in addition to scholarly interventions in more familiar forms.

If you have A/V requests, you must send them to me by **November 30th**; they are to be submitted to the SAA by December 1. Any requests for accommodations for persons with disabilities must be done **by January 31, 2023**, and again, just let me know so I can communicate that information to the SAA.

By February 10, you should send me, via email, your paper (3000 – 3500 words) and your methodological statement (no more than 500 words). While your paper offers space to argue about a text/object that captures your attention, the methodological statement can focus on a keyword and/or theoretical notion/text that encapsulates the way you want your audience to think about ‘transition’. These two documents can be braided together, so there may be some overlap between the two, although the methodological statement will help us to ‘see’ the different ways that we want to theorize ‘transition’.

The official deadline for the papers is **February 15th**, so the SAA can include your name in the program, which gives us a few days of wiggle room.

February 28th is the deadline for finalized abstracts, which the SAA will ask me to forward so that they can be made available for auditors at the seminar meetings.

By **February 28th**, I will create small groups of 2 participants. In those groups, people will read each other’s papers and send to me a written response (a paragraph or two) **by March 15th**. Collaboratively, each small group will craft one or two key questions that they want the bigger group to consider when we meet, and the groups should send these questions to me via email **by March 20th**.

At the same time, Professor Sharon O'Dair has generously agreed to act as a respondent to all the papers in this seminar. She will thus read all the papers and offer a response to everyone; she will also reflect on bigger insights that we generate as a group. She will share those responses with individuals before we meet on March 29, and in our seminar, she will share some of the broader implications of our work with us to enrich and expand our conversation.

March 29 – April 1st: meeting in Minneapolis! I will plan an informal get-together before our meeting so we can have the chance to interact before the seminar. I will update you on that plan when we are closer to the event.

Let me know if there are any questions, concerns, or suggestions at this stage. I also want to take this moment to remind you that the SAA asks seminar members to scrupulously respect academic integrity, as we embark on the process of sharing work in progress.

With excitement,
Derrick

Seminar Description:

Title: Transitions: Ecologies of Economic Life

Short Description for Bulletin:

Income inequality, global trade conflicts, booms in ecological extraction and consumerism, increased dispossession: economic forces intimately shape lives, individually and collectively, in both the past and present. How do early modern cultures reckon with the rapacity that drives economic transformations? Can the insights of queer theory, trans studies, ecocriticism, and critical race studies—especially when these methods overlap—reframe our conceptualization of early modern economic life?

Description of Objectives:

While scholars dispute exactly when and how capitalism emerged in early modern England, we agree that *something* happened, often framing it as a 'transition.' This seminar will concentrate on what this means, examining the ways that cultural phenomena facilitated, frustrated, or responded to distinctive changes that occurred in economic life. Is 'transition' the right framework to understand what happened? What might be other words and/or notions that capture the socio-cultural turmoil that deep economic transformations wrought, on either a small or large scale?

This seminar will enable scholars to consider whether methodological approaches like queer theory, trans studies, ecocriticism, and critical race studies can offer fresh perspectives on economic practices, values, and institutions in early modern cultures, both in England and abroad. While I do not want to exclude more traditional accounts like those grounded firmly in Marxism, I do want participants to think about what happens when that type of account with its emphasis on class struggle collides with other theoretical

approaches. If the onset of capitalism breaks up conventional social relations and dissolves long-held norms, then does it have a queering effect? Is that methodological approach productive or not? How might visions of gender that exceed the binary of man/woman help us to understand the impact of economic transformations? Can ecocritical investments in the agentic capacities of the non-human enable other accounts of the economy and its meanings? In what ways do notions of racial difference participate in the production of knowledge about the economy in this era?

List of Participants:

Katherine Steele Brokaw
University of California, Merced
kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu

Erika Lyn Carbonara
Wayne State University
elyncarbonara@gmail.com

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Kansas State University
hedrick@ksu.edu

James Kearney
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kearney@english.ucsb.edu

Emelye Keyser
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emkeyser@fortlewis.edu

Benjamin C. Miele
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miele@uiwtx.edu

Sharon O'Dair
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sodair@ua.edu

Melissa Vipperman-Cohen
University of West Florida
mvippermancohen@uwf.edu

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Derrick Higginbotham (he/him/his)
Department of English
Associate Professor of Medieval/Early Modern Literature
Director of the Graduate Program
Affiliate of the Women's Studies Department
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

12/30/22, 7:36 AM

University of Hawaii Mail - Re: Reminder about SAA Seminar "Transitions"

deh2@hawaii.edu



Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu>

Re: Reminder about SAA Seminar "Transitions"

1 message

Donald Hedrick <hedrick@ksu.edu>
 To: Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu>

Wed, Nov 30, 2022 at 5:15 PM

Hi, Derrick,

Here you go. A tentative title and something like a brief abstract. Thanks for organizing.

Don

Donald Hedrick, Professor of English, Kansas State U. Shakespeare Association 2023

“The Transition from Entertainment to Entertainment Value” (selection from MS in progress)

An unacknowledged or underacknowledged “revolution” of Shakespeare’s era was the transition from “entertainment” to “entertainment value,” concepts I wish to define in a somewhat more technical way. This transition constitutes familiar changes in the theater, both from increasing professionalization of actors and playwrights and pay-before protocols, as well as changes in drama itself (e.g., characterization, the star system, sequelization), along with many other elements. In the broadest historical-economic overview, we transition from the “open” entertainments of fairs and the street into the “pleasure enclosures” of theaters, with Shakespeare’s plays as only one relational part of what has often been considered “an industry,” in a sea-change reflecting the triumph of capital. I derive ten “axioms of entertainment value” along these lines.

best, Don

From: Derrick Higginbotham <deh2@hawaii.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2022 11:37 AM
To: Katie Brokaw <kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu>; Sharon O'Dair <sodair@ua.edu>;
 elyncarbonara@gmail.com <elyncarbonara@gmail.com>; Donald Hedrick <hedrick@ksu.edu>;
 kearney@english.ucsb.edu <kearney@english.ucsb.edu>; emkeyser@fortlewis.edu
 <emkeyser@fortlewis.edu>; miele@uiwtx.edu <miele@uiwtx.edu>; mvippermancohen@uwf.edu
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Subject: Reminder about SAA Seminar "Transitions"

best,

This email originated from outside of K-State.

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