

Exhibiting the Early Modern: Gesture, Memory, Space

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Seminar abstracts

Cassie Ash, ‘There’s no crying in baseball’ and Other Expressions of Choleric Excess

Theatre practitioners have a platitude about modern and Early Modern acting styles: one is inside-out, the other outside-in. Certainly this applies to the American actors who, following the work of Strasburg, Adler, or Meisner, prioritize a psychological approach to creating character. Yet ‘outside-in’ acting includes both the imagined artifice of the Renaissance stage and the modern British actors who prioritize textual clues over personal experience. So, which style should actors turn to when playing humoral characters, who, by suffering internal imbalances, exhibit external symptoms that are commented upon and reacted to in the play text? I suggest movement-based work is the best approach: though humours were understood as affectation or mood as much as conditions of blood, phlegm, and bile by the surge of humours plays in the late 1590s, the drama still discussed humoral characters in terms of pathology, which can be observed through gesture.

A cursory understanding of Galenic humoral theory gleaned from editorial commentary frequently results in a dismissal of these textual indications as figurative when they might instead be read as literal, and therefore actionable, signs of character. This paper will explore how Rudolf Laban’s movement theory helps actors access the physiology of humoralism through their own physiologies. I will apply the Eight Basic Effort Actions – pressing, flicking, wringing,

dabbing, slashing, punching, and floating – to analyse displays of excessive cholera, from the ‘hare-brained Hotspur governed by a spleen’ in *1 Henry IV*, to Jimmy Dugan’s near apoplectic coaching moments in *A League of Their Own*.

Sally Barnden, ‘Photographing the past’: Charles Kean’s Shakespeare and the stereoscope

Among the earliest surviving photographic representations of scenes from Shakespeare’s plays are the photographs taken by Martin Laroche of Charles Kean’s antiquarian Shakespeare revivals of 1856-1859. Of these, ten survive as stereo-photographs. Stereoscopy was a popular drawing-room entertainment after Sir David Brewster’s improved prototype ‘created a sensation’ at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Looking at pairs of near-identical photographs through the stereoscope produced a 3D effect consisting of a series of flat planes of vision reminiscent of theatrical scenery. However, unlike stage representation, the stereoscope controlled the distance between the eye and the image, while also fracturing the relationship between viewer and photograph by presenting the effect of a single image to a viewer who knew that two were in fact before them.

In this paper, I will map the historical pretensions of Kean’s revivals against Brewster’s positivist priorities for the stereoscope. In the immediate aftermath of Brewster’s predictions about the effects of photography and stereoscopy on the future of history, Kean’s staging of Shakespearean history attempted to impose intractable stereo-photographic reality onto his medieval stories. Productions of *Richard II* in 1857 and *Henry V* in 1859 used Shakespeare as a window through which to see a history which was imagined not solely in the form of narrative, but in photographic realism, and in stereoscopic relief. Focusing on Laroche’s stereo-photographs, I will consider the effects of exhibiting the photographed past in a modern, ‘realist’ technology.

Amy Boesky, Monsters in Cases: Showing (and Writing) Heritable Difference in Early Modern Texts

What does hereditary difference look like? How does “bad blood” evince itself in bodily anomaly or difference? Just as bad breeding is expected to evince itself in corporeal defect, a missing or extra limb, a cleft palate or hunched back can be “read” backwards as proof of suspicious or flawed lineage. As Sander Gilman has argued, the body that is diseased or deformed all too easily becomes the body categorized as monstrous, abject or despised. As the crippled body of Richard III confirms, “character” is expressed in (and through) physical deformity.

In the early modern period, when “monsters” were collected in early modern *wunderkammer* or put on display in the marketplace, there was still considerable fluidity about what a monster was, what it meant, and whether it was cause for curiosity, celebration, or alarm. Writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Katharine Park’s research reveals, freely mixed romance and “science”, often in the same accounts. On the one hand, “monsters” (which included conjoined twins or children with significant birth defects as well as hermaphrodites, bearded women, or other bodies that somehow disturbed expected ideas of order and position) were seen as part of God’s universe, and hence, as Montaigne notes, objects of wonder, not castigation. On the other hand, deformed bodies might suggest villainy, as Bacon notes (“Of Deformity”). Such

bodies needed to be exhibited, recorded, and interpreted—‘incased’, as I suggest here. “Cases”—both literal, in the sense of the display cases of the *wunderkammer*—and narrative, in the emergent form of the case study—become critical to these acts of display.

My focus in this paper is on new attention in the early modern period to displaying aberrant bodies, evinced in a shift from romance to realism in medical writing about the etiology of corporeal “defects”. I look particularly to the “prodigies and marvels” collected by the French surgeon Ambroise Pare, whose narrative collection develops an early form of medical case study to present his material. In “Of Monsters and Marvels,” Pare focuses on the role of the eye (or eyewitness) in assessing bodily difference. The word “monster” was already associated in this period with visual display (*monstrer*, demonstrate) as well as with portents or omens, suggestively linked to political and/or natural portent. “Monstrous births” needed to be recorded with increasing precision in early modern Europe to assist in their interpretation—where the child was born, who his or her parents were, the exact time of birth—such details mattered to the officials whose task it was to determine the implications these births to the realm. Witnesses needed to study monsters with great attention, and carefully record what they saw. The “meaning” of mutants became a critical part of the wider body of wonder literature in the sixteenth century, evident in Montaigne’s studied investigation (“Of a Monstrous Child”), Bacon’s search for causes (“Of Deformity”), and Pare’s detailed catalogue of monsters and marvels, a text that went through multiple editions and became one of the most influential works in Europe for generations. Each of these writers uses narrative to “show” bodily difference—to trace the unsettling examples of “defective” physiology that threatened ideas of corporeal integrity. These investigations of malformed or deformed individuals were seminal to the development of the case study: a new narrative form that takes at its center a story of a person rendered abject through corporeal difference. Pare’s interest in cataloguing and classifying physical deformity led him to reprint detailed woodcuts that “show” corporeal difference with a proto-realism that marks an important representational turn. “Showing” bodies, however, does not work to personalize or individuate (there are no names, for instance, attached to each “case”), but instead to reinforce the integrity or “wholeness” of reader and writer achieved against these counter-examples of deviation.

Katherine Blake, *The Poetics of Space in Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra: Sonnets and Monuments*

There is much throughout Shakespeare’s corpus to suggest that he – perhaps reflecting a larger cultural consensus – harbors some ill will towards monuments. For instance, in *Much Ado About Nothing* Benedick pokes fun at the monument, saying, “If a man do not erect / in this age his own tomb ere he dies, / he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps” (5.2.72-5). This paper will examine the early modern monument in light of historian Peter Sherlock’s recent findings concerning the popularity of this art form; Sherlock provides evidence that despite the sharp rise in the number of monuments in England during this time, these structures were erected by a modest collection of individuals to disguise a troubled familial past. The representation of monuments in Shakespeare’s work suggests that the playwright was voicing an understandable criticism of transparent attempts to falsify history. But Shakespeare does not merely allow the issue to rest there. Rather, his monuments pose larger questions about how space constructs legacy, especially in relation to other legacy-producing entities such as

poetry. Through a discussion of the tombs in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet*, I will show that the question of how to build a proper legacy is, for Shakespeare, a matter of the difference between stabilizing memory and permitting it to be dynamic. With reference to Michel de Certeau's claims in *The Practice of Everyday Life* about the relationship between movement, space, and collective memory, I will argue that Shakespeare calls our attention towards the difference between what de Certeau would call "strategic" legacy (i.e. fixed in space) and "tactical" legacy (i.e. mobile) in order to argue for the centrality of performance and non-material modes of memory in the production of history.

Marissa Greenberg, "Performing the Form of Renaissance Revenge Tragedy"

In the Induction to the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women*, a personified Comedy mocks Tragedy for her histrionics and violence, which were already stock conventions of tragic performance by the 1590s. In addition to murderous tyrants and a "howling" Chorus, Tragedy invariably brings onstage "a filthie whining ghost" who "Comes skreaming like a pigge halfe stickt, / And cries *Vindicta*, revenge, revenge." These lines, which describe plays from Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* to Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* to D'Avenant's *The Cruel Brother*, call attention to the recursive quality of Renaissance revenge tragedy. Like other kinds of tragedy, revenge tragedy portrays the demands of the past on the present. What distinguishes this subgenre is the way these demands manifest as a return of lawless savagery upon the perpetrators of, and often in the same manner as, the initial offense. In this paper, I examine how this recursive quality becomes part of the performance dynamics of Renaissance revenge tragedy. In particular, I am interested in the way movement onstage, such as entrances and exits, other blocking, gesture, and use of properties, performs as embodied activity the narrative form of revenge tragedy. More broadly, my paper seeks to investigate if and how these performance dynamics shape the cultural work of Renaissance revenge tragedy over its *longue durée*. If tragedy concerns the relationship of past and present, to what extent does the recursivity that revenge tragedy enacts cut off the possibility of the future, not simply in the dramatic fiction but also in theater history?

Nicola M. Imbraccio, A Dead Man's Hand: The Dismembered Corpse as Stage Property in Seventeenth-century Dramas

This paper will consider the phenomenon of dismembered body parts as theatrical props in the seventeenth century dramas *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14), *The Changeling* (1622), and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1631). Like the staged corpses of Horatio, Bazajeth and Zabina, Julius Caesar, and others, the fragmented body part provides a focal point for the audience's attention. However, unlike those earlier theatrical corpses—which are staged, and imagined, as whole and intact—it is the severed members of corpses that enact and engage with the narrative energy of these plays, all the while referencing their absent hosts. In seventeenth-century dramas the severed parts of theatrical corpses are transformed into stage properties, and even more so, into narrative agents that cite their corporeal owners.

This paper will discuss how these severed body parts function in the theatre, not just as metaphors of psychological or social fragmentation, but as active agents used to implement schemes that produce tangible effects in the material world. In other words, the severed body part, although disassociated from its producing corpse, performs as a "free object" in order to

produce delayed, yet intended results. In this paper I will argue that when a theatrical corpse is dismembered—resulting in a fake hand, heart, or finger—the fragment, through its active nature as a stage property, challenges cultural notions over the integrity of the body after death and asserts the corpse’s potential dislocated efficacy.

Cary Mazer, *Annabella’s Bed and Juliet’s Chair*

For the most part, the way physical space, visual composition, gesture and physical objects are used in contemporary performances of Shakespeare and early modern plays follows from the interpretive or agendas of the directors or designers: the physical, visual, gestural, and spatial are ways of defining a directorial concept and of generating meaning. My interest is in the small but significant body of work of theatre artists for whom the physical language of performance, however meaningful, originates in the needs and methods of the actor. After a brief survey of such theatre work (Viewpoints, Tectonic Theatre’s “Moment” work, etc.), I focus on Declan Donnellan’s notion of the “target”: how it functions as a significant variant of traditional vocabulary of Stanislavski-based actor work, and yet still within the paradigm of psychologized “emotional realism”; and how Donnellan’s target work with the actor shapes Nick Ormerod’s designs for *Cheek by Jowl* and the meanings these generate.

Kathryn M. Moncrief, “Remembering Ophelia: Theatrical Properties and the Performance of Memory in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*”

Hamlet is a play obsessed with memory. From Claudius’s reminder that his listeners ought to “think on him/Together with remembrance of ourselves” (1.2.7) to Hamlet’s tortured “Must I remember” (1.2.143), to Polonius’s desire to impart “these few precepts in thy memory” (1.3.58) before his son departs, to Laertes’s insistence that Ophelia “remember well/ What I have said to you” (1.3.84-85), to the ghost’s injunctions that Hamlet must “remember me” (1.5.91) and “Do not forget!” (3.4.110), to Hamlet’s question to Horatio, “You do remember all the circumstance?” (5.2.2), remembering (and the consequences of forgetting), reverberate repeatedly throughout the play. The play is also conscious of the connection between material objects and memory. Books, as Peter Stallybrass et al. have shown, are intricately connected to memory. Ophelia’s rosemary “for remembrance” (4.5.175) is an obvious object of memory as is Yorick’s skull. While so many objects--books, writing-tables, flowers, skulls--are either designated in stage directions or indicated in dialogue, that another important object of memory remains unspecified is surprising. Ophelia’s lines, “My Lord, I have remembrances of yours/ That I have longed long to redeliver. I pray you receive them” (3.1.92-4), suggest that she gives (or attempts to give) Hamlet something but the Folio and Quarto texts do not provide additional information on what these “remembrances” are. This paper will explore both the choices and the implications of the object(s) of “remembrance” in performance. In addition to looking at the “remembrances” in 3.1., it will consider the connection to Ophelia’s corpse as a theatrical object of memory.

Mark B. Owen, ‘We died at such a place’: Exhibiting Agincourt in *Henry V*

This paper will explore connections among the rhetorical, memorial, and performative places and spaces in *Henry V*, paying particular attention to the events at Agincourt. Andrew Gurr writes that in folio *Henry V* “[t]he Chorus is a great painter of pictures, but they are never the pictures

shown on stage.” This observation is most evident in the disparity between the fourth Chorus’ recounting of Henry’s actions on the eve of the famous battle and what is dramatically represented thereafter. I will argue that the play positions the Chorus as unreliable curator and Agincourt as a site of historical and theatrical performance that simultaneously invokes and revises the collective memory and cultural imaginary of playgoers. Shakespeare does so by utilizing on- and off-stage space and juxtaposing persuasive speech with dramatic action. I will use theorizations of place and space by de Certeau, Foucault, and Edward Casey to explore the contested nature of Agincourt as scene location and cultural signifier. The disguised king’s confrontation with Williams, Court, and Bates highlights Agincourt’s ambiguous status, both temporally and spatially. For the soldiers, it is only “such a place,” yet to be named (by Henry) and emplaced in Elizabethan England’s historical consciousness. By comparing the 1623 folio *Henry V* against the 1600 quarto, the anonymous 1598 quarto *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and other figurations of Agincourt, including popular ballads and Hall’s and Holinshed’s chronicles, I will suggest how the folio version engages with and implicates the textual and physical aspects of performance in strikingly illuminating ways.

Joshua S. Smith, “‘Diverse Questions of a Dead Man’s Skull’: Identity in Renaissance Tragedy”

The relationship between skulls and dramatic tragedy is long-established, but too often scholars assume that the props are markers of the mode. My project takes the recent trend towards object theory to heart and extends it to genre studies, arguing that in performance, props are not only markers, but makers of dramatic mode. I examine the skulls brought onstage in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Dekker and Middleton’s *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore (Part I)*, and Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* in order to explore how these props actually help to comprise the genre of their respective plays. Skulls obviously appropriate the offstage cultural discourses in which they prominently figure: namely, the danse macabre, memento mori tokens, and ars moriendi texts, discourses that all tend to emphasize the universality and anonymity of death. On the stage, though, while skulls are acknowledged to be inherently anonymous objects, they are also ascribed an identity, whether it be specific (Yorick’s skull, for instance) or typical (“This might be the pate of a politician”). Renaissance drama uses skulls, in short, as a locus for the examination of the role of the material body in relation to personal identity. As a prop, then, the skull is both anonymous and individual, Death and a death, and in this incongruity the skull contributes a key component to enacted tragedy: even as it underscores the irrevocable anonymity of death, it encapsulates the non-identity of the self, so that each skull is an irreversible loss—a tragedy materialized.

Jenna Steigerwalt, *Mass Complicity: Original-Practices Audiences in Varying Spaces*

Although original-practices productions do not hand scripts to their audiences as they enter, the attendees nevertheless play a role, one that goes beyond the passive receptive spectator found at many contemporary performances of early modern plays. As at all performances, audiences for original-practices productions are affected by a complicated web of influences, including their preconceived expectations and the surrounding apparatus, such as playbills, presented by the theatre. For original-practices theatre, audience reception and behavior is also highly influenced by the performance space itself, since unlike at contemporary theatre spaces the audience is in the light as much as the actors are, and because typically original-practices spaces are sociopetal and lead to a more cohesive audience response than proscenium spaces, as spectators are aware

of each other, creating a self-conscious audience. This paper explores the differences extant in original-practices audiences, from the influence exerted by recreated spaces, such as the London Globe and Staunton Blackfriars, to the makeshift spaces used by traveling troops. Particular attention will be given to the 2013 Stratford, Ontario production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Globe veteran Tim Carroll, and the just opened remounted Globe productions on Broadway of *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III*, exploring the ways that the differences in space, away from the replica playhouse, influence audience behavior and create theatrical meaning.

Steve Urkowitz, *Gesture and Revision in Shakespearean and Editorial Practice: Henry Sixes, Two and Three*

For this seminar I would like to share some particularly vivid instances of textual variants that offer visually clear, physically robust, and authorially muscular manipulations of stage actions utterly distinct in the alternative early printed texts of (Lord-help-us) the ever-popular *Henry VI parts 2 & 3*. My overarching argument is that the 1594 quarto and 1595 octavo texts were earlier-composed versions of the plays printed in the Folio as *2 & 3 Henry VI*. Some juicy instances may be found in “‘If I Mistake in Those Foundations Which I Build Upon’: Peter Alexander’s Textual Analysis of *Henry VI Parts 2 and 3*,” in *ELR* 18 (1988), 230-56. Also see my piece from the 1986 World Shakespeare Congress proceedings volume, “Five Women Eleven Ways . . .” in W. Habicht, et al., eds., *Images of Shakespeare* (1988), 292-304, a jolly and gestic essay.

I will be looking at odd intersections of the editing and the visualizing of scripted stage action in these plays. I’ll also show some of the totally skewed train-wrecks where editorial imagination and practical theatrical possibilities crash and burn. Most of my examples have been unnoticed but should be celebrated by actors and teachers for their vivid illustration of Shakespeare’s audacious theatricality at its various and varying best. My continuing goal is to illuminate how Shakespeare manipulates the stage world to generate our emotional experience of the drama.