

THE SHAKESPEARE AUDIENCE

PENELOPE WOODS, ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF EMOTION AT THE
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This seminar asks what challenges exist for finding out about audience response and what approaches are - or might be - taken to address these. It invites considerations of methods either already tried or newly proposed for the study of audiences as well as the presentation of audience data that has been collected on specific productions or with particular theatres, festivals or companies. If the audience is the co-producer of the performance event how can researchers best account for the practice and significance of spectatorship?

ABSTRACTS

1. David Amelang University of Kent & Freie Universität Berlin

ATTENDING A PUBLIC THEATRE PERFORMANCE IN EARLY MODERN LONDON AND MADRID

In his 1980 seminal publication *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau alerts us to the tendency in many historical studies to discuss urban life from an omniscient perspective. Such an unnatural point of view distorts reality, since “the ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below’, below the thresholds at which visibility begins”. In league with this historiographical approach albeit never undermining the advantages of a panoramic point of view, this paper explores the ‘everyday’ operations involved in the practice of theatregoing in early modern London and Madrid, two of western Europe’s strongholds for early modern commercial theatre. With de Certeau’s insight in mind, I approach the concept of playgoing as an event -- a journey of sorts -- of spatial relocation from the theatregoers’ own neighbourhoods to and into the playhouse. The basic aim is to address questions regarding the strategies and tactics, connotations and stigmas involved in the practice of attending a commercial theatre performance in the capital of Elizabethan England prior to the opening of the indoor private theatres in juxtaposition with the Madrid of Cervantes and Lope de Vega.

2. M. G. Aune California University of Pennsylvania

CONSTRUCTING AUDIENCES: THEATER-GOERS AND FANS

When the Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada (as it was then known) was established in 1953, the founders were confident their slate of Shakespeare and classical theater would reliably attract audiences although Stratford was not a large urban center or an established tourist destination. In the intervening sixty years the Festival has largely prospered, despite the changes in entertainment media, the cultural value of Shakespeare, and the aging of its core audience. I am interested in how the Festival has managed to do this in the face of the rise of social media, the need to appeal to a youthful audience without alienating its traditional core audience, and, as always, motivating people to travel greater and lesser distances to attend the theater.

The Festival's social media presence includes a blog, a Twitter feed, a Facebook page, a Pinterest Page, a YouTube and a Livestream channel. To support these efforts, the Festival has expanded its marketing department to include social media marketing and digital media positions. The projects produced by the Festival have varied widely, including a series of short films, an app that gives viewers an extensive back stage tour, a Facebook version of *Romeo and Juliet* and even an online game designed to engage middle school age children. In this paper I consider how the last three might push Shakespeare across a line from, in the words of John Fiske "official culture" to "popular culture." This transgression occurs when the intended audience, theater-goers, are invited to become "fans". Rather than passive consumers of Shakespeare whose attendance at the Festival is part of their investment in their own cultural capital, fans are encouraged to a level of semiotic productivity. Traditionally, audiences for Shakespeare have been considered high culture and/or academic. They are expected to limit their participation to attending productions and ancillary events, or producing scholarly books, articles, and reviews. The Stratford Festival seems to be inviting its audiences to regard Shakespeare as participatory in new and potentially transgressive ways.

3. Henry Bell University of Hull

AUDIENCE/AUDIENCE INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN PROXEMICALLY INTIMATE, IN-THE-ROUND, STAGING OF SHAKESPEARE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

This will explore how architecture affects audience engagement – how the nature of Shakespeare in-the-round, with its visible audience, enables a heightened awareness of peer response, or, phenomenologically speaking, an augmented degree of audience/audience intersubjectivity. I will refer to the process of my practical research, in which pupils from three UK secondary schools attended a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at various locations in an in-the-round configuration. The data collected from audience members will be used to challenge and support existing notions relating to audience reception as well as original research conducted with UK practitioners of theatre in-the-round.

4. Valerie M. Fazel Arizona State University

THIS WIDE AND UNIVERSAL THEATRE: THEORIZING YOUTUBE'S PERFORMANCE SPACES

This seminar paper compares the spaces of performance on YouTube with Shakespeare's early modern theatre, seeking to underline analogies manifest in both performance cultures. Specifically, YouTube's interface frames function as analogs of the spaces of performance and reception in the professional theatre of Shakespeare's early career, where, Robert Weimann asserts, early modern drama invoked two intersecting modes of dramaturgy—imaginary (*locus*) and interactive (*platea*)—via an integration of oral, literary and popular performance cultures. This condensed essay encapsulates the two major goals of the larger project: one, it parses out the ways that interactivity between author, actor, and audience influenced theatrical performance during the dramatist's own lifetime, and then illustrates how a similar kind of interactivity, and influence, takes place via YouTube Shakespeare's interface; and two, it suggests terminology that identifies and theorizes the function of YouTube's interface components and labels the website's various activity frames in a manner that may provide digital performance scholars an interpretative vocabulary useful in future analyses.

Weimann, Robert. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare Theatre*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

5. Jennifer Low Florida Atlantic University

*"THE THING CONTAINED FOR THE CONTAINER":
AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE AND CONTROL OF THE ENVIRONMENT*

Going to the theater implies a willingness to submit oneself to spectacle; by contrast, watching a performance in a recorded or live-screen medium enables the watchers to decide more easily whether or not to detach themselves from the medium's attempt to dominate their attention. If the production can be contained and *moved* to a different environment, as in some digital or electronic media, the spectator may choose the environment in which he or she watches the performance. Theater welcomes the spectator in; it assimilates the spectator, who becomes part of the theater experience for others. In contrast, recorded performances in electronic media are possessions, controlled by the spectator and shared according to his or her choice. If those who attend performance in a theater constitute an audience by virtue of their gradual formation into a community, an audience may also be created as the result of private or solitary response to a play. In such cases, the degree of control over one's environment is an important part of the audience's experience of performance. Being part of a community is not necessarily what defines an audience member; however, the degree to which the experience of the performance is shared among a group or experienced in isolation is a crucial element of the total theatrical event.

6. John Mitchell Oakland Community College

RUDE MECHANICALS IN THE FOREST OF ARDEN: THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDIENCE FOR SHAKESPEARE

This paper is a small part of a larger project engaged in the ever-growing body of polemic emerging from the so-called crisis in the humanities and the political and economic (impossible to separate them these days) attacks on the very notion of college education for all. The larger project attempts to answer two broad questions: “Why should there be a place for Shakespeare at the two year college?” (and by implication, for all arts and humanities) and then, “What are the best practices, challenges, and joys associated with this endeavor?” This paper asks a smaller question: “Who is the community college audience for Shakespeare?” Community college students as a whole inhabit a liminal space between high school and selective four-year institutions, which requires the judicious use of approaches usually associated with K-12 pedagogy in addition to traditional undergraduate classroom practices to help them navigate their singular challenges. I begin by establishing a practical taxonomy of the students who make up this audience, with attention to those needing more extensive attention. The methodology uses various placement scores, first day surveys, and mid-term individual conferences. Then I develop a tripartite approach to better establishing these students – helping them with the cultural and historical context of Shakespeare’s work, the challenges and joys of Shakespeare’s language, and seeing themselves as both audiences of his plays and “poor players” engaged in performative studies as well.

7. Evelyn O’Malley Exeter University

‘LIKE SHAKESPEARE’S DAY’: AVANT-GARDE NOSTALGIA AND GREEN PLEASURE IN AUDIENCE RESPONSES TO SHAKESPEARE OUTDOORS

Between May and September 2013 and May and September 2014, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork at performances of Shakespeare’s plays in 15 different outdoor spaces, including Minack on the coast of Cornwall, the living Willow Globe in mid-Wales, green spaces managed by the National Trust, and public parks in England and Wales. Taking Penelope Woods’ research at Shakespeare’s Globe (2012) as a methodological starting point, 273 audience members were consulted in 156 interviews, before and after performances. A thematic analysis of the feedback has revealed that, although certain responses were particular to venues and/or performances, common themes also recurred across the range of contexts. In this paper, I address one of those common concerns.

Across the responses, there was some suggestion that the enactment of the plays in nature reminded audience members of ‘Shakespeare’s day’; that part of the pleasure of the performance, or the experience of the theatrical event, or the experience of ‘culture’ in ‘nature’, was akin to something that might have been experienced during ‘Shakespeare’s time’. I want to suggest, however, a context for nostalgia that incorporates not just a gazing back to an Elizabethan golden age but an ecocritical way of understanding the present context of Shakespearean spectatorship. I discover that rather than being inherently regressive, the lived experience of nostalgia, suggested

also the potential of an ‘avant-garde nostalgia’, as developed by Kate Soper (2011). Within these Shakespeare audiences, nostalgia meandered between ahistorical longings for a blurry but better Shakespeare’s time/space and, simultaneously, a desire for a more pleasurable and environmentally-engaged present.

8. Simon Smith University of Oxford

TO TRIFLE, OR TO CENSURE1: PLAYGOING, PLEASURE AND JUDGEMENT IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

This paper pursues two significant modes of early modern playhouse response: pleasure and judgement. Early modern subjects refer to both concepts regularly when describing responses to dramatic performance. In playbooks of the period, printed prologues and epilogues describe audience censure, invoking ideas of both aesthetic and legal judgement that seem to imply a degree of detachment from the performance itself. Yet, in contrast, Feste’s closing words in *Twelfth Night*, ‘we’ll strive to please you every day’ (5.1.404), seem to anticipate a relationship between audience and playgoer that is less about detached assessment, and more about imaginative engagement, fantasy and ‘play’. This paper takes Thomas Heywood’s *An Apology for Actors* (1612) as a test case, pursuing the versions of pleasure and judgement proposed in his text. In doing so, it also considers the relationships between whole and part in Heywood’s models of audience response, both in terms of who responds (audience/playgoer) and what they respond to (specific performance elements/drama conceived holistically). Whilst Heywood’s suggestions require careful handling, some of his ideas – about the nature of playhouse pleasure and its applicability to a range of genres; about self-reflexive playgoer judgement; about the inter-relationship of pleasure and judgement (two modes of response often framed as opposites); and finally, his productively fluid handling of individual and collective in various contexts – are nonetheless of value, I argue, to our own thinking about early modern playhouse responses.

9. Deb Streusand University of Texas at Austin

THE BEHAVIOR OF STAGE AUDIENCES AND THE AUDIENCE-PLAYER RELATIONSHIP IN SHAKESPEARE’S THEATRE

Love’s Labour’s Lost and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* stage disruptive audiences. However, these scenarios have marked class and economic differences from the performance situation of Shakespeare’s company. In these two plays, noble audiences disrupt amateur theatricals put on by people of a lower class. Staging disruptive audiences in a situation distanced from the immediate experience of Shakespeare’s audience would allow audience members to reflect on the actor-audience relationship without feeling directly attacked. In this way, the playtexts, while not directly portraying the relationship of audience to actors experienced by the Chamberlain’s Men, suggest the characteristics of that audience by showing Shakespeare in communication with

¹ Thomas Heywood, *The Silver Age* (1613), sig. K4^r.

them about their behavior. The stage audiences in these two plays can be read not as a straightforward representation of typical audience behavior, but as a pointed and exaggerated portrayal of it, designed to make audience members consider their own behavior in the playhouse. The texts also model nobler ways of behaving toward the players, suggesting how audience members could treat them if they wanted to look better than the churlish lords on stage. These portrayals of audience do not just suggest how early modern audiences acted but show a subtle attempt to transform that behavior by reflecting it back at them.

10. Olga L. Valbuena Wake Forest University

HAMLET AS SHAKESPEARE'S SOVEREIGN DILEMMA

Every spectator is expected to construct a narrative from “uneven bits of perceptual data” across dramatic time.¹ As a judge (by virtue of having paid his six pence, as Jonson quips), the auditor of *Hamlet* is called upon to evaluate the imperative that Hamlet bend purpose, memory, and passion to an act of revenge that he is notorious for resisting. Searching the reasons for Hamlet’s inability to decide on revenge, Carl Schmitt, formerly the “Crown Jurist of the Third Reich,” eventually isolates the Reformation as the play’s catastrophic background, and Mary Stuart’s ostensible guilt as the proximate event, that together “intrude” upon the creation and audience reception of *Hamlet* in “the common public sphere.”

Schmitt maintains that prior to the Reformation, the Church could comprehend or “embrace” all antitheses including God and Man, Edenic marriage and the fall, and man and woman in its complex of opposites, or *complexio oppositorum*.² We know from his extensive writing on politics and theology that this “embrace” of opposites requires their absolute ordering and opposition, as for example, when separating friend from enemy. But Schmitt opens with postlapsarian marriage as the linchpin of social, religious, and legal order. Representing “a whole hierarchy of mediation” for him the married pair reflects “the rhythm of the origin of the visible in the invisible God.”³ In this paper I review Schmitt’s ideas about the Reformation and Stuart family history as “intrusions” on aesthetic “play” in “the common public sphere.” Further, I test an aspect of Schmitt’s thought that has received less attention, namely, how Claudius and Gertrude’s marriage forms an incestuous *complexio* that, when examined against Schmitt’s writings on religion and politics, surfaces as the harbinger of modernity which the old order represented by Old Hamlet and Catholicism itself is undercut by the new *complexio* of sister and wife, uncle and father, nephew and son.

¹ Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 41.

² Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1996), 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 56.