PERFORMING KNOWLEDGE ON SHAKESPEARE'S STAGE

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ABSTRACTS

Shakespeare's Auditory Shadows
Janine Harper (University of Toronto)

My paper uses *Measure for Measure* as a lens through which to examine the ethical and affective aspects of knowledge-making in staged moments when one character speaks as a deputy or substitute for another. Speaking as someone else, an act that is often explicitly identified in the play as a taking-up of another's "voice" within one's own body, allows these stand-ins to elicit sympathy, shape judgements, and engender action in situations where neither the original speaker nor the substitute would otherwise be able to do so. Shakespeare's play also, however, takes up a profound cultural ambivalence about the implications of such acts. Disingenuous speakers might cultivate false verbal signifiers of mediated authority, but the act itself of appointing someone to carry one's voice also bears inevitably coercive implications in anatomical and philosophical contexts where the ear (and with it the mind) was conceived as always open to penetration by vicious and persuasive words. I examine contemporary natural-scientific debates surrounding the nature of sound, focusing especially on fantasies of voices' preservation in bodies and objects in natural magicians' experiments, as a means of understanding Shakespeare's intervention into broader discussions of speech and coercion.

Suggested readings:

Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Holger Schott Syme, "The Authenticity of Mediation." *Theatre and Testimony in Shakespeare's England: A Culture of Mediation*. Cambridge and New York: CUP, 2012. 1-25.

"You Won't Believe what these Shakespearean Characters Have to Say about Clickbait"
Christine Hoffmann (West Virginia University)

My paper will begin by examining the ways in which Renaissance writers bait their readers, in multiple senses of the word. According to the OED, "bait" can mean to *set on, to exasperate, to worry*, but it can also mean *to stop, to refresh, to take nourishment, to feed*. As a noun, "bait" can refer to an enticement used to lure prey; it can also refer to a halt for refreshment in the course of a

journey; it can refer to the refreshment itself. So early modern writers baited their readers: enticing them with the disclosure of secret knowledge; worrying them with the possibility that this knowledge might be inaccurate or obsolete; reviving them with the invitation to take refreshment from it regardless of its substance. Shakespeare is an especially noteworthy example of a writer whose copious verbal displays open the door to the undignified possibility that—to borrow the tagline of the twenty-first-century parody website Clickhole—*all content deserves to go viral.*

When Clickbait is discussed in twenty-first century terms, it is usually as a trick or a trap, a temporary distraction from the knowledge we were seeking, a hole we make the mistake of falling into. According to this perspective, knowledge is or should be a fundamentally nondisruptive experience, a matter of steadily gaining ground, acquiring legitimate information from legitimate sources, eliminating the worry of not knowing. Clickbait disrupts and delays this process, and - as several of Shakespeare's characters demonstrate - assuming what I call the clickbait ethos can mean becoming aware of our complicity within a system that likewise baits us into chasing knowledge that, while it may provide some nourishment, also trips us up. I'll spotlight Hamlet, *Twelfth Night's* Malvolio, *Much Ado About Nothing's* Benedick and *King Lear's* Gloucester, all characters who find themselves drawn in by pranks, coaxed into acts of indignity. They fall for the schemes put in place for them, but in falling they also transport themselves to positions of sympathy and correspondence. To arrive at the clickbait ethos is to arrive at this place of paradox; it is to take a leap—intellectual, romantic, spiritual, *what you will*—that is also a pratfall. It is to react to the mundane or the inane as if it is complex, secret, even miraculous.

Recommended Reading:
Avital Ronnel, "The Rhetoric of Testing" in *Stupidity*, University of Illinois Press, 2002.
Christopher D. Johnson, "N+2, or a Late Renaissance Poetics of Enumeration," *MLN* 127.5 (2012): 1096-1143.
"What is ClickHole?" About page. Clickhole.com.

The augmentation of the Indies
Gavin Hollis (Hunter College, CUNY)

Maria's comparison of Malvolio's straining/smiling face to "the new map with the augmentation of the Indies" in *Twelfth Night* draws on the poetic conceit whereby the "map" indexes an emotional state (thus in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece has to hide her face, "That map which deep impression bears"). It has also been held up as proof that Shakespeare was map-minded. That Maria is here alluding to the Wright-Molyneux map, published in 1599 to supplement Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations* and famous for its criss-cross rhumb-lines, has become a commonplace assumption. I want to challenge this orthodoxy: not that those following in C.H. Coote's wake are necessarily wrong, but rather that in repeating his assertion they have under-contextualized and under-theorized both the import of Maria's allusion and, in turn, the cartographic mentalité of late sixteenth/early seventeenth century England, in particular in terms of the relationship between mapping and staging difference.

While arguably one of the most innovative map projections in cartographic history, the Wright-Molyneux map's "newness" was contentious. Jodocus Hondius "borrowed" Wright's calculations in the allegorical *Christian Knight's Map* (1597) two years prior to the publication of the Wright-Molyneux map, much to Wright's chagrin. In addition, it is not entirely clear what constitutes Wright-Molyneux's "augmentation." Some editors of *Twelfth Night* have assumed that the map contains new data about the East or West Indies without seeming to have looked at the map itself. Others have noted that the map is the first to chart the third Barentsz voyage to Novala Zemlya, ignoring the fact, however capacious the term "the Indies," it rarely seems to have stretched as far as Arctic Russia.

Twelfth Night attends to disputes about cartographic novelty in the early modern period. The Wright-Molyneux map's contested "newness" echoes Malvolio's adopted persona—both fashionable (as Olivia declares, "'tis time to smile again") and primitive (he is "no Christian"). It also connects mapping, performance, poetics, and Indianness, linking to an emergent tradition of comparing heightened theatricality (or overacting) to an excessively-passionate, highly-performative, quasi-"Indian" disposition: Malvolio is "turned heathen, a very renegade." Malvolio's face does not map his interiority. It is decipherable only by those who possesses specialized interpretative skills—that is, to someone who can read his hyper-performance and distinguish between reliable "new" knowledge and contentious Indian "augmentation" so as to hierarchize Christian and non-Christian carto-epistemologies.

Bibliography:

Brayton, Dan. *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (University of Virginia Press 2012)

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1988)

Elden, Stuart. *The Birth of Territory* (University of Chicago Press, 2013)

Harris, Jonathan Gil. *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)

Sloterdijk, Peter. *Spheres Volume II: Globes* (MIT Press, 2014)

Sejanus and the "Play of Fortune": Staging Orders of Knowledge
Erin Kathleen Kelly (Rutgers University)

In *Timber*, Ben Jonson likens the privileged position of the wise man to the spectator of a play: "plac'd high on the top of all vertue, [he] look'd downe on the Stage of the world, and contemned the Play of *Fortune*. For though the most be Players, some must be *Spectators*." [1] Pitting "players" against "actors" here suggests different levels of observation that provide different insights on the order of nature: for those actors embroiled in the "Play of *Fortune*," the world must seem hopelessly chaotic. But spectators, it seems, are capable of discerning a higher level of order. At the same time, to be a mere "spectator" implies a limited ability to effect change.

The epistemological conundrums confronted through the metatheatrical world stage in Renaissance drama, I posit, can be understood through the modern critical lens of systems theory. Systems theory has drawn our attention to the ways in which order and disorder are products not only of the language we use to describe them, but also of the processes by which we observe them. [2] In contrast to the traditional view that chance and necessity result from Nature's workings, a constructivist view takes them to "reflect some of *our* abilities and inabilities, and not those of Nature." [3] More specifically, contingency reflects "particular expectations of necessity—that is, when an observer identifies events that escape or disappoint

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[1] Ben Jonson, *Timber: Or, Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1892), 36–37; Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984).

[2] See, in particular Heinz Von Foerster, "Disorder/Order: Discovery or Invention?," in *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition* (New York: Springer, 2002), 273–83.

[3] Ibid., 280.

such expectations."[4] What kind of reflection of nature is presented onstage? Is the theatrical art a reproduction of natural order or an improvement upon it?

I will consider depictions of spectatorship in Jonson's *Sejanus* as they illustrate a crucial dimension of early modern ways of knowing: namely, an increasing attention to the situatedness of knowledge. Jonson's wise man imagines himself capable of standing outside of the "world stage" and looking on as spectator: hence, from the perspective of one capable of standing outside worldly chaos, the possibility of imposing order remains. The presumed order of the universe, in other words, enables objective observation. The dramatic expression of this idea has had a powerful influence on Renaissance stage. The architecture and indeed the formal qualities of theatre similarly likewise raise the possibility that spatial or temporal distance will reveal an underlying order.

In light of his comments in *Timber*, it is interesting to find that Jonson stages the impossibility of pure spectatorship in his tragedy *Sejanus*. There, a chorus of Stoic figures—possibly situated literally above the platform stage—comment upon the action, wherein the titular power-hungry advisor to emperor Tiberius eliminates these Stoic opponents one by one only to find himself out-Machiaveled by the emperor himself. The Stoics' chorus-like commentaries on Sejanus's political maneuverings ultimately incriminate them; the observers become the observed and are promptly charged with treason. Characters' professions that they are spectators to action are complicated by the fact that they themselves are portrayed by actors, and as a result the implied hierarchy of spectatorship over action cannot hold. Spectators are simultaneously also played by actors, and furthermore, spectatorship ideally serves as a means to learn how to act.

Suggested reading:

Heinz Von Foerster, "Disorder/Order: Discovery or Invention?," in *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition* (New York: Springer, 2002)

Paul Kottman, *A Politics of the Scene* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007)

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[4] Edgar Landgraf, "Improvisation: Form and Event, a Spencer-Brownian Calculation," in *Emergence and Embodiment: New Essays on Second-Order Systems Theory*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Mark B. N. Hansen (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2009), 185.

Oracular Knowledge in *The Winter's Tale*
Tanya Pollard (Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY)

Readings of *The Winter's Tale* have explored Leontes' fixation on knowing his wife's infidelity, but haven't explored the implications of locating this knowledge in the Delphic Oracle. Yet Shakespeare dwells on the oracle's significance, both structurally and linguistically: the word appears 14 times in the play, more than half the number of its instances throughout all of Shakespeare's works. More surprisingly, the Delphic Oracle's pervasive identification with both virginity and pregnancy suggests ties between Greek literary authority and embodied female authority in the play. This paper examines the play's representation of the oracle, in conversation with Shakespeare's well-established interest in Plutarch, to argue for a new understanding of the relationship between knowledge, gender, and procreation in the play.

Reading Suggestions:

Shankar Raman, Lowell Gallagher. Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment and Cognition. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010
Stanley Cavell. Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare. Cambridge, revised, 2003)

"We loose it like Lightening": Early Modern Apprehension
Adam Rzepka (Montclair State University)

William Austin, arguing for the *felix culpa* in his 1635 book of meditations (*Devotionis Augustinianae flamma*), explains that the first iteration of God's word was a light that we only "apprehended," though we "comprehended it not": like a bolt of lightning in the darkness, it was no sooner grasped than lost, necessitating the even more glorious light of Christ. The distinction between apprehension and comprehension here was typical in the period, as reflected in theological works like Austin's, psychological treatises, and popular entertainments like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Theseus notes that the "seething brains" of lovers and madmen "apprehend / More than cool reason ever comprehends."

Yet because apprehension was also differentiated from the work of the outward senses, it occupied a liminal, mercurial place in early modern models of the psyche. Suspended between perception and cognition, "apprehension" named something like the becoming of knowledge. Often, this ambiguous status was accompanied by connotations of fearful, even pathological

excess, as in Theseus's account, or of fallen inadequacy, as in Austin's. Just as often, however, apprehension appeared as a Promethean or even divine moment in the processes of the psyche: Austin wonderfully uses a spelling of "lose" that incorporates a sense of the power "loosed" in the first human apprehension of the word of God, and by the time Shakespeare writes *Hamlet* its protagonist is able to reflect on a human being merely "noble in reason" but "in apprehension…like a god."

My essay will examine theological, literary, and scientific uses of apprehension late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century Europe (primarily in English texts but also in more widely circulating Latin ones). I will argue that the concept's increasing volatility in the period reflected growing uncertainty about how we come to know things, and about how permanent the field of knowable things is.

"Accommodate Without Presuming: Towards an Early Modern Stoic Theatricality"
Donovan Sherman (Seton Hall University)

Stoicism presents itself in John Marston's *Antonio* plays in a recognizably parodic, exaggerated form: characters passionately denounce the philosophy's apparent endorsement of socially isolated existence in order to gird themselves for proper action. This reading, however, ignores the more complex theatricality with which Marston stages his dramas. By repeatedly calling attention to the material conditions of their performance—conditions that, according to satiric convention, promise a kind of failure of dramatic realization—the *Antonio* plays invite a more complex understanding of the Stoic conventions they appear to denounce. This essay suggests that Marston inextricably ties theatricality to early modern Stoicism, and that this theatricality can be found tacitly woven throughout influential translations of traditional and Neo-Stoic texts. I conclude by recalling Michel Foucault's late turn to Seneca as a surprising source of radical intervention in the biopolitical apparatus of state power. By aestheticizing (and, I argue here, by specifically *theatricalizing*) the self, Foucault suggests, Stoicism allows for a performance of the knowledge of a constructed but unknowable world—a performance that finds in Marston's self-aware satire an ideal vehicle.

Selected Bibliography

Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Mackay, Ellen. *Persecution, Plague, and Fire: Fugitive Histories of the Stage in Early Modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. (esp. the intro.)

"Epilepsy and Unscripted Knowledge in *Julius Caesar*"
Jessica Tabak (Brown University)

This paper argues that disability destabilizes dramatic genre in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. First performed during the same year that William Kempe's clownish improvisations disappeared from Shakespeare's stage, *Caesar* is often considered one of the playwright's most generically untroubled tragedies – indeed, as Richard Helgerson has noted, the players themselves make a (scripted) reference to the inappropriateness of (unscripted) mirth when Brutus bullies a wandering minstrel off the battlefield, growling, "I'll know his humour when he knows his time. / What should the wars do with these jigging fools?" (4.2.187-188). War is no time for clowns. And yet, this war comes to be, in part, because of the unpredictable public spectacles caused by Caesar's epilepsy — spectacles that replicate the unscripted disruptions, though not the mirthful tone, of the "exiled" clown. Although audiences never see evidence of the general's disease, the conspirators discuss it with a combination of derision and fear: Caesar's displays of "falling sickness" reveal a physical instability both unseemly to a Roman general and unsafe for the Roman republic. But their decision to excise this improvised body from the larger political body itself moves quickly off script, transforming history to tragedy while illustrating the impossibility of exorcising improvisational bodies from the stage.

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Richard Helgerson. "Staging Exclusion." *Forms on Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 195–245. Print.
Allison Hobgood. "Caesar Hath the Falling Sickness: The Legibility of Early Modern Disability in Shakespearean Drama." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29.4 (2009). Web.

Pirate Negotiations: Coming to Terms in *2 Henry VI*
Benjamin D. VanWagoner (Columbia University)

The barbary of Walter Whitmore on the Kentish shore of *Henry VI, Part 2* consists not in his piracy, but in his unwillingness to make a deal. In a scene initially organized by financial arrangements among pirates and their captives, the rash Whitmore sets his own terms: "I lost mine eye in laying the prize aboard, / And therefore to revenge it shalt thou die— / And so should these, if I might have my will" (4.1.25-7). By rejecting any ordered arbitration, Whitmore sets off a series of interactions which multiply the stakes of these pirate negotiations and have implications for the way the stage conveys knowledge of political jurisdiction, identity, and the economic logic of maritime contract.

This paper argues that the rapidly-deteriorating negotiation between the pirates and the Duke of Suffolk performs and accordingly transmits a form of disputative, discursive knowledge. Although this scene has been regularly and rightly glossed as a performance of "disordered relations," in Thomas Cartelli's words, I am contending here that attention to the structure of the staged event can not only clarify the terms of that disorder, but also demonstrate to an audience a discursive way of knowing, both in the abstract and of economic and political stakes. While other Shakespearean pirates are invisible (*Hamlet)* or come pre-beheaded (*Measure for Measure*'s Ragozine), these Kentish corsairs establish themselves onstage both materially and epistemologically as a model for maritime negotiations. Whitmore and his fellows prefigure the later corsairs of Daborne and Massinger by engaging in a complicated and intersubjective coming to terms through the frictional performance of parley.

Suggested reading:

Claire Jowitt, "Politics and Pirate Typology in John Fletcher and Phillip Massinger's Late Jacobean Pirate Drama," *The Culture of Piracy 1580-1630* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 171-97.

Bradley Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought: English Drama and Mercantile Writing, 1600-1642* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), esp. intro.

Magical Trinkets and Texts as Objects of Knowledge
Katherine Walker (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

In leading the Duchess of Gloucester and her associates away to trial, Buckingham promises to gather the paraphernalia of their conjuring for evidence: "We'll see your trinkets here all forthcoming" (2.1.51). Dismissed as baubles of a folkloric, magical tradition, Buckingham's lines nonetheless remind audiences of the demonic prophecies uttered moments before; trinkets may be trash, but of the sort that reveal much more than York and Buckingham apprehend. Taking my cue from these trinkets and the texts employed in conjuring the demon Asnath, I track in this essay how magical appurtenances serve as signifiers of a larger corpus of popular occult knowledge. In other words, I seek to understand how the conjurers and the witch Margery Jordan in *Henry VI, Part II* offer vatic forms of knowledge—slippery as they are—that can be read variously as trifles or as percipient means to truth. Close attention to the materiality of such trifles, I suggest, reveals much about the knowledge embedded in the objects Buckingham and other nobles in the play dismiss with such disdain.

This discussion leads to a larger consideration of popular knowledge and magical thinking in the period, and I turn to witchcraft pamphlets for what they reveal concerning the epistemic possibilities of communing with demonic agents. In this genre, too, trinkets are not only furnished as evidentiary materials, but also represent the witch's own forms of magical and demonic understanding. In the period, the distinction between those sorcerers who harnessed ceremonial magic to control demons and the village witches who practiced *maleficium*—Doctor Faustus and Elizabeth Sawyer, for instance—was much neater in theory than in practice. These two classes of individuals who interacted with demonic agents blurred and were, together, invariably condemned. Acquiring knowledge through a form of apprenticeship in the demonic arts—either via generations of practitioners or directly from a demonic agent—sorcerers and witches alike learned the mechanics of their craft both experientially and through the materials they inherited, pilfered, or crafted themselves.

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Stuart Clark, "Witchcraft and Magic in Early Modern Culture." In Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. 97-169.

Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Teaching Incomprehensible Knowledge in *Love's Labor's Lost*

Adam Zucker (University of Massachusetts)

Love's Labours Lost is a notoriously difficult play to stage, to read, and, most of all, to teach. In it, rhetorical disquisitions masquerade as friendly conversation; sonnets do double duty as dialogue; and the simplest of silly letters from a blowhard to a rustic maiden can pass for elegant lyrical complaint in other contexts. For teachers and editors in particular, the play's linguistic density and obscure wordplay are both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, our students and readers need help, and if we do our job well, we can lead them through the minefield of puns and witty reference that makes up the play's terrain. On the other hand, in Holofernes, Nathaniel, Moth, and others, *Love's Labours Lost* contains within itself Shakespeare's most cutting representation of the act of teacherly explication. If we do our job as explicators correctly, in other words, we will lead our students, step by step, through a bitter (albeit very funny) castigation of the very process we have all embarked upon. Using a series of ridiculous jokes about linguistic knowledge (and disknowledge) as its touchstones, this paper argues that unteachable words in *Love's Labours Lost* can help us think in new ways about pedantry, pedagogy, and our engagement with histories of knowledge in Shakespearean contexts.

Suggested Reading:

Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Reversals: *Love's Labor's Lost*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 54.4 (1993): pp. 435-482.

Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Kristin Ross, trans. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991; 1987).