

2018 SAA Seminar: Locating (and Dislocating) Voices in Shakespeare 1
Leader: Bruce R. Smith, University of Southern California

Mary Adams, Western Carolina University

**‘Who’s there?’:
Navigating Acoustic Territory in *Hamlet***

This paper will examine the play’s moments of vocal games and failed speech to understand not only Hamlet’s struggles to sufficiently mourn his father but also other characters’ inability to extricate themselves from social and spiritual predicaments engendered by either the murder or Hamlet’s response to it. Characters often participate in “Hoodman Blind”: game-like searches in the dark around a palace that echoes with both slander—inhabiting the upper sphere—and subterranean voices dwelling below. Above and below, this acoustic territory is defined by these voices and other noises which, intermittent at first, crescendo and proliferate in the play. The cacophony of voices comes not only from literal play sounds but also from metaphorical voices as well as human voices and activities within and beyond the theater. I’d like to imagine that these voices belong to the forgotten “rabble” that Hamlet and Claudius go out of their way to forget. Meanwhile, the principal characters’ preoccupation with Hoodman Blind signifies to us on multiple levels: As a means of discovery, speech and motive are less and less intelligible or sufficient. As the expression of the ability to mourn, speech is separate from the body and echoes as a distant copy of itself. Simultaneously, as Denmark’s political stewards, the principals themselves are losing their bearings amid a cacophony of disembodied voices. And throughout the play, speech fails in the mouths of those who utter it until finally surrogates must speak for them, dividing speech most finally from the body.

Katie Adkison, University of California Santa Barbara

**Singularity and Bare Voice:
The Politics of Vocal Representation in *Coriolanus***

Of all of Shakespeare’s plays, *Coriolanus* seems to speak not just through, but about voices. Accounting for over 20% of the use of the word “voice” in the entire Shakespearean corpus, *Coriolanus* stages the voice as more than the medium of dramatic performance by making it a central problem of representative politics. The play presents this problem by consistently figuring the voice as an embodied excess, an entity that has more in common with the fluid that leaks from wounds than it has with the language it carries. This paper argues that the play thus engages with the voice on two levels—on the semantic/symbolic level and on the phenomenological level, as a felt experience unto itself—in order to show how political power manipulates not only what its subjects can say, but also manipulates how subjects experience their own voices, what it *feels like* to speak as a political subject. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben’s political theory and Adriana Cavarero’s philosophy of vocal expression, I ultimately argue that the play works to gesture to a different kind of vocal relation within political discourse. This political otherwise seeks to take into account that for which it can never be entirely accountable: how the felt experience of the voice is as much a part of a speaker’s words as what can and will be said.

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Rebecca Ann Bach, University of Alabama Birmingham

Voice in the Creaturely World

Abstract not available

Andrew S. Brown, Yale University

‘Authors,’ ‘Actors,’ and the Bonds of Representation in *King John*

In the opening scenes of both Shakespeare’s *King John* and the anonymous *Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, the figure of the “vulgarly named, the bastard Fawconbridge” (as the latter’s title page has it) relinquishes his right to his family estate and becomes a servant of the crown by opening his mouth and inadvertently revealing his true parentage: he is the son of the dead King Richard I. Although these plays eventually furnish spectators with more conclusive proof of his paternity (in the form of a confession by the Lady Faulconbridge), in each case it is the Bastard’s ability to speak *in the place of* Richard that first convinces auditors of his origins. As Holger Schott Syme has recently demonstrated, in early modern England the seemingly disparate spheres of law, government, and public theater all “relied thoroughly on deferral, mediation, or representation as engines of authority”—that is, on the idea that certain utterances were not necessarily diluted or made fraudulent when reproduced by another speaker, but could thereby be imbued with new significance and power even as they were conveyed to a wider audience. Building on Syme’s concept of “the authority of deferral,” this paper examines instances from *King John* in which ‘voice’ acquires much of its potency precisely from the contested notion that it could allow individuals, kings, and entire nations to be meaningfully ‘spoken for’ in their absence—a paradigm which experienced significant change during this period, culminating in Thomas Hobbes’ influential account of how “authors” could formally license “actors” to speak on their behalf in his *Leviathan* (1651). In doing so, it aims to contribute to ongoing discussions of the status of language and authority in Shakespeare’s play, as well as its relationship to the broader re-evaluation of John’s legacy by Tudor historians and dramatists.

Lars Engle, University of Tulsa

**Hearing Voices:
Signal and Noise in the Soundscapes of Augustine's *Confessions*
and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus***

This paper compares two very dissimilar works that map the life-trajectories, amid a Roman soundscape, of two very different men, the Augustine who becomes Bishop of Hippo and the Martius who becomes Coriolanus and declines to become Romanus. Different as they are, their lives have some similarities. Martius plays a part in the transformation of the Rome from a monarchy to a republic, Augustine in the transformation of Roman Empire from a pagan polity to a Christian idea. Both resist, separate from, then acquiesce to, their formidable mothers, Volumnia and Monica. In the context of our seminar, I compare their struggles to separate signal from noise in the soundscapes of their worlds. I argue that both Augustine and Coriolanus are

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“strong hearers” who view the soundscapes they inhabit as needing a purifying edit in order to distinguish worthy signal from unworthy noise. For both, the voices of Roman public life count mostly as noise, not signal.

Sharon J. Harris, Fordham University

**Hearing Nothing:
Music and the Form of the Pun in *Much Ado about Nothing***

This paper explores the parallels between punning and music in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* and suggests that we consider Shakespeare’s use of music as similar to the form of the pun: it broadens the meaning and mode of meaning in the play while effacing itself as part of the entertainment expected of its form, e.g., the entertainment expected of wordplay or of musical references. Although the pun as such postdates Shakespeare by several decades, the wordplay is explicit throughout, particularly in the multiple connotations of nothing in the title. Pronounced as “noting,” the play foregrounds the musical meaning of the primary pun or wordplay on “nothing” in its title, especially as Don Pedro and Balthasar introduce the song “Sigh No More Ladies.” This connection shows how the play relies on auralty or vocalization for part of its extra-textual meaning, i.e., through the homophones in the multiple layers of “nothing.” In the sense that nothing/noting indicates music, music seems to be trivial or nothing of significance, and yet examples of music throughout the play expand its commentary on other connotations of “nothing,” such as its sexual associations. This dual form of significance in the form of something seemingly insignificant represents the regard for music in English drama of the period as well as how it undermines that assumption. As part of a larger project interested in how music signifies in drama and poetry, this paper argues that even if musical moments and references are not necessary to advance the plot of the play, sounded, performed, and voiced music is diegetic and meaningful to the play and is not as disposable or as interchangeable as we may have believed.

David Landreth, University of California Berkeley

**Speaking Thick:
Breath and Voice in *Henry IV***

This essay will depart from Lady Percy's retrospection in Folio 2*H4* on the qualities of Hotspur's vocal performance, which were (she says) both distinctive and defective, but nevertheless attracted universal imitation: "speaking thick [i.e., hurriedly], which nature made his blemish,/ Became the accents of the valiant;/ For those that could speak low and tardily/ Would turn their own perfection to abuse/ To seem like him" (F 2.3.24-28). She characterizes her husband's voice in terms of an uncontrolled pace, an "abuse" of an elemental dimension of the actor's craft--the coordination of words to breath. And she says this abuse has been contagious across the elite warrior class of the play, to whom Hotspur had been the cynosure. I am going to demonstrate the ways in which this claim aptly describes the conditions of "short breath" throughout the many venues of *Part One*, and I will consider what happens to these breath effects in *Part Two*--the ways in which Hotspur's voice lingers after his own last gasp. Attending to breath in this way

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will, I hope, complicate the account of logocentric mastery that the Prince and his adherents use to justify his grasping of the crown after (and also before) his usurping father's last gasp.

Kent Lehnhof, Chapman University

Locating and Dislocating Voices in *Coriolanus*

Abstract not available

Catherine Lisak, Université Bordeaux Montaigne

Who's pulling your strings? Spellbinding Resonance in Shakespeare

This paper explores the spellbinding nature of resonance, and argues that the sounds and resounding of the word draws the spectator-cum-reader into what John Harington identified as a “deep and necessary” calling into account. I begin by looking at the dynamics of “deployment” in order to argue that resonance both voices and dislocates the status of all accepted significance. Being an experience of sound as much as of show, combining the spectacular with the unseen, resonance rests upon those mediating powers that a work of art – and indeed a play – entertains with the plurality of voices it not only reaches *out* to, but also in turn stands *in* for, as the voices return an aggregate of echoes in acknowledgment, as well as a “listening”, “the recognition of a given code”, to borrow Veit Erlmann’s phraseology. This leads me to investigate the declension of the acoustics of resonance, in *Richard II*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Macbeth*, built in part on the painful double strain of animal shrieks and the noise of weapons in friction. I argue that the way in which Shakespeare explores the shared relationship between the sound of war and the sound of a child, either newly born or in the womb, used to account for a process of entropy, to some extent anticipate the seventeenth-century’s own understanding of *sympathia*. His plays seem to invoke “sympathetic resonance”, weaving the fabric of body sounds, body parts, and body fluids in a way that makes the tropes service a larger agenda. I thus finally argue that it is through resonance that Shakespeare is able to conduct some form of public self-scrutiny of his own ideas from one play to the next. Such scrutiny is possible only with the participation of the audience. Resonance ultimately comes to represent both a poetic and a proto-dramatic way of engaging in the troublesome and unresolved issues as they are raised in the plays through the unfolding of sonorous ramifications that the audience hand in hand with the playwright take part in construing.

Ruth Morse, Université Paris-Sorbonne-Cité Diderot

Shakespeare's Depriving Particles

Shakespeare clusters prefixes in ways not dissimilar from strong images or those fingerprint groups analysed by Caroline Spurgeon and Edward Armstrong, among others, but he uses them to convey the simultaneous absence or negation of an evaluative-descriptive noun. Their purpose is to create unease about the characters who speak them: that is, they have an ethical function, as my examples demonstrate. I focus on the Anglo-Saxon derived ‘un-’, with a reference or two to the Latin/French ‘diss-’, which does slightly different work. These ‘depriving particles’,

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sometimes called ‘privatives’, create particular moments of recusatory dismay, embedding the values they lack or negate, thus emphasizing what they contradict: for example, ‘unthought’ and ‘dishonour’. Not only do they do things with words which unconsciously affect our attitudes to speakers’ characters, Shakespeare seeded them throughout to help create the world of his plays.

John Mucciolo

The Mood and Function of Three of Ariel’s Stage Songs in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

About the songs in Shakespeare’s plays there is much external uncertainty. We know that if Shakespeare wrote a lyric, a musician set it to music. We do not know whether Shakespeare collaborated with the composer. We know that for *The Tempest*, Robert Johnson set “Full fathom five” and “Where the bee sucks,” to music, but for other of the play’s songs the music is lost. We also do not know at which venue Johnson’s version of these songs was sung at court, Blackfriars, or the Globe, or if Johnson decided to set music to these songs for publication in a collection of songs. As is true for most aspects of Shakespeare’s plays, there are few external details we know about the songs in them. When, therefore, we seek a comprehensive view of Ariel’s songs, we must proceed with caution. For this reason, I limit my examination of Ariel’s songs to discussions of Shakespeare’s lyric and Johnson’s music, when available, in terms of the lyric. Ariel’s songs, however, are stage songs, and, as such, they cohere in the same way speeches do; move the action forward, as when Ariel’s “Come unto” guides Ferdinand toward Miranda and Prospero; comment on the action, as when Ariel’s “Full fathom five” relates the condition of Alonso’s supposedly drowned body; and even express the feelings of a character, as when, in “Where the bee sucks,” Ariel expresses delight at the imminent prospect of freedom. But the songs’ musical dimension extends the logical, rhetorical, and formal significances of their intricate lyrics beyond mere incidental, plot-related set pieces (an extension I cannot satisfactorily address in this paper).

Robert Stagg, St. Anne’s College, Oxford University

**Hearing Gender:
The Voices of Rhyme in *The Taming of the Shrew***

How do we voice rhyme, or give voice to it, or elicit rhyme's voice? My paper wonders about the slippery way rhyme seems either to elude or to glut the voice. One way of anchoring rhyme's voicings might be to think about the gender of rhyme - traditionally and etymologically hermaphrodite but also, in the developing prosody of the Renaissance, 'masculine' and 'feminine'. My paper thinks through how we might hear gender in rhyme's voices or voicing, especially in *The Taming of the Shrew* - a play that queasily genders its rhymes, or that makes much of their gender. In doing this, I also think about the gendered (or troublingly un-gendered) voices of boy actors and how much Shakespeare's play seems to take account of - and make something valuable out of - an actor's voicing of rhyme.

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Gillian Woods, Birkbeck College, University of London

‘I’m too loud’: Hearing Voices on the Renaissance Stage

This paper explores the representational status of theatrical voices. Starting with a consideration of how people talked to themselves in early modern England, I analyse the relationship between internal and external voices. Critics often assume that there’s something representationally awkward about a soliloquy and its notion that a person might articulate private thoughts aloud. However, the evidence of prose romances, prayer manuals and even chronicle histories suggests that the practice would not necessarily seem so unnatural to early modern audiences. That being said, the representational rules governing the way audiences interpret theatrical speech are extremely elastic. Within the space of a few lines playgoers can be required to understand speech as a dialogue between characters, as private speaking not heard by others on the stage, and as private speaking that *is* overheard by other characters. Speakers even sometimes answer asides they apparently haven’t heard. Actors and audiences have to hear and not hear voices in complex ways that are self-consciously probed by Renaissance dramatists, even as theatrical play makes the process feel easy. By exploring the way in which voice reverberates between different representational modes, I hope to gain a fuller understanding of its place in negotiating the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other.

Lucía Martínez Valdivia, Reed College

We found voice in a lyric place: Audiation and Shakespeare’s Sonnets

This paper explores the affordances of lyric poetry to record, transmit, and revive voices to and for its readers. Lyric implies direct speech in such a way as to divorce its voices of identity-specific characteristics, inviting readers to overlay and mix their own voices onto the one living on the page: the lyric voice is capacious, able not only to stimulate an inner voice, but its *simulation*. This simulation of an inner voice is one for which musicians have a name, one which has yet to transfer to the study of literature: audiation. Audiation has been cited in the study of literature, but in terms of the sounds readers activate in their heads—the things heard in the mind—audiation has common currency in the study of music. It is the process and practice of mentally (silently) realizing a musical score, of using the auditory “imagination” to turn a visual reproduction/record of sound back into a (silently) sounded one—an exercise in sensory double translation. This paper will use the concept of audiation to explore the voices in our heads dictated by reading lyric, in particular the voices, and claims about voices, made in Shakespeare’s Young Man sonnets. To describe how readers of novels experience time and space when they read, Mikhail Bakhtin proposes the idea of the chronotope, “a center for concretizing representation” in which combinations of time and space are represented in narrative fiction. This paper builds from this concept to suggest “lyric chronotopes,” spaces in and from which readers audiate the voices of lyric speakers, combining a particular space (the poem) and time (the lyric present tense) which, unlike novels, resist a narrative or history.