HOW DO YOU FIT SHAKESPEARE INTO THE RADIO? DOES THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS OPEN UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN WITHIN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA?

LITTERAIRE

LITERATURE

HISTORY WAS IT COMING IN THE CENTURY BEFORE THE CANADIAN CONFEDERATION? HOW DO CHILDREN IN SCANDINAVIA ORGANIZE THEIR FUTURE LIVES?

TREND

WHY MUST WE CHOOSE BETWEEN TOLSTOY AND DOSTOEVSKY?

ANCIENT HATRED

CAN TRANSLATION TURN A POET UGLY?

MODERN WORLD

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A BODY?

McGill
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Welcome to this issue


The Faculty of Arts, the largest and most diverse of McGill’s faculties, is committed to scholarly engagement and the building of knowledge. Since 2002, the Faculty has welcomed over 100 new professors, some of whom are leaders in their fields, others who are just beginning their careers, all of whose work is on the cutting edge of intellectual endeavour. Through initiatives like this Newsletter and support of the MQUP Arts Insights Series, the Faculty actively supports dialogue in the scholarly community. We also recognize that research is a continuum that involves faculty and students at all levels as they work to build knowledge upon the foundation of a scholarly tradition of excellence at McGill.

Arts Insights, containing profiles of Arts scholars at all stages of their careers, will appear in May and November.

Welcome to the first edition.

NATHALIE COOKE
Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies
Faculty of Arts
It’s not easy, especially when you have only one hour to pack in the two hours’ traffic (and frequently more) that most theatrical stagings of the plays require. The golden age of Shakespeare on the radio was the mid-1930s, when no less than three radio series were devoted to Shakespeare’s works in the United States and Canada. The first of these was broadcast during July and August of 1937. Over the course of eight Sunday evenings during these summer months, the CBS radio network presented eight of Shakespeare’s plays that were publicized as “The Columbia Shakespearean Cycle.” The cycle was a watershed event in the history of Shakespeare in mass media. Contemporary estimates of the audience size for these one-hour adaptations suggested that a greater number of people heard these live radio performances than had seen famous actors such as Henry Irving or Edwin Booth act on stage during their entire theatrical careers.

Shakespeare may have made it into radio at this time, but radio in turn got into Shakespeare. While the one-hour format obviously necessitated numerous cuts to the plays, the adaptors of the series also found ways to conform Shakespeare’s works more closely to the audience’s expectations. One way in which scriptwriter Brewster Morgan adapted Twelfth Night to the medium was to include sound elements that were familiar elements of his audience’s everyday radio experience. For instance, throughout the 1930s, radio was an overwhelmingly “live” medium. Networks had policies that prevented them from broadcasting previously recorded material. One effect of this “live” quality of the medium was that it increased the radio audience’s sense of a compelling connection with what they heard.

To that end, Morgan transformed the play’s wise fool Feste into a contemporary radio narrator, one who was pressed into the service of describing scene and setting transitions in an odd mixture of typical radio “word-eye broadcasting” and Shakespearean parlance. In his first appearance, he breaks into the narrative as if just handed a fresh news bulletin.

Morgan had a daunting task in adapting Twelfth Night for a one-hour radio production, and he did an admirable job, especially when the commercial parameters he was required to work within are taken into consideration. His achievement with this particular play becomes more notable when one considers that Shakespeare’s comedies have often posed particular difficulties for radio producers, since they so frequently turn on mistaken identity, something not easy to represent solely in sound. Other notable acoustic signatures of this Twelfth Night included Cecil Hardwicke’s performance as Malvolio, which employed particular speech affectations to evoke the character’s social affectations, and Robert Strauss, who used a “Lil Abner-esque” American regional accent in his clownish presentation of Andrew Aguecheek.

Shakespeare wasn’t the only reason audiences tuned in to these broadcasts. They also listened in because it was an opportunity to hear some of their favourite movie stars perform live. Edward G. Robinson played Petruchio in The Taming of the Shrew, and Humphrey Bogart performed a surprisingly good Hotspur from Henry IV, Part I. In Twelfth Night the role of Orsino was played by Orson Welles (who in a few short weeks would take over as the unforgettable voice of “The Shadow”), and Viola was played by Tallulah Bankhead. Not to be outdone, NBC quickly assembled their own Shakespeare cycle starring John Barrymore in numerous plays, to compete with the CBS cycle. The much-hyped “Battle of the Bards” did not end well, however: both cycles were beaten in the ratings by Amos ‘n Andy.

WES FOLKERTH

Wes Folkerth is Assistant Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of English and is a member of the “Making Publics” team.
The golden age of Shakespeare on the radio was the mid-1930s, when no less than three radio series were devoted to Shakespeare’s works in the United States and Canada.
If they hold government positions, it is usually because they are appointed or because they have ties to those in power through their husbands. There also often exist large state-run women’s organizations that attempt to co-opt women and prevent them from presenting their concerns to the state. As a result, most women do not view the state as representing their needs and therefore tend to focus on activities separate from the state. For example, women will form small local organizations that work to improve their social and economic status through income generating activities.

With the transition to democracy, women may view the government differently. In order to determine how women in general, and members of women’s organizations in particular, viewed the transition to democracy, I conducted in-depth interviews with members of such organizations and more general surveys among women within Ghana. Although some of the women I interviewed still talked of the fear associated with the authoritarian regime, other members viewed the democratization process as an opportunity to become involved in politics and as a means to improve women’s social, economic, and political status. They also discussed the decline in influence of both the authoritarian regime and the larger state-run women’s organizations. These changes led some members of various organizations actively to encourage women to vote in presidential elections and to run for parliamentary positions. Their activities appear to have had an impact. The results of my surveys indicate that women who were members of women’s organizations, or who were directly contacted by women’s organizations to become involved in the formal political process, were more likely to do so, particularly by voting in the presidential elections. As time passed, women also placed pressure on the government to address violence against women by staging mass demonstrations.

The transition to democracy leads to changes in the organization of the government and to the loss of influence of the larger state run women’s organizations. These changes allow women to view the formal political process as a means to improve their social, economic, and political status. Although they still participate in locally run organizations and still turn to them to address their concerns, many also begin to become involved in politics at the local and national level. Members of organizations mobilize women to participate in formal politics, organize demonstrations, and encourage women to run for parliament. The transition to democracy appears to open up new avenues for women, and women are taking advantage of those opportunities.

KATHLEEN FALLON

Kathleen Fallon is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology.
Le simple fait de se poser la question est déjà le signe d’un malaise. Et sans doute n’existe-t-il aucun historien littéraire qui prétende avoir une réponse satisfaisante. Il y a trente ou quarante ans, de nouvelles histoires littéraires voyaient le jour un peu partout, animées par l’esprit de renouveau de la critique littéraire. Aujourd’hui, de nouvelles histoires littéraires voient encore le jour, mais avec infiniment moins d’assurance dans la lecture qu’elles font des œuvres du passé. Elles trouvent bien sûr une justification immédiate dans la fonction pédagogique qu’elles continuent d’assumer, étant des instruments indispensables pour l’enseignement des littératures. Mais leur utilité immédiate cache mal la fragilité de leur discours.

D’où vient cette fragilité ? L’historien littéraire contemporain ne veut pas retourner à l’ancienne manière de faire de l’histoire littéraire, il ne veut pas recourir à l’argument classique de l’autorité de la tradition. Au contraire, il veut justifier ses choix, il veut expliquer pourquoi telle tradition mérite encore aujourd’hui d’être enseignée, il veut surtout montrer en quoi certains auteurs du passé sont, d’une certaine façon, nos contemporains, même si plusieurs siècles nous en séparent. L’énorme opération de relecture qu’il entreprend ne pose pas trop de problèmes tant qu’il s’agit d’élargir les connaissances du lecteur, en incluant par exemple de nouveaux textes et en ouvrant ainsi l’histoire littéraire à la pluralité des traditions. Mais il en va tout autrement dès lors que l’historien littéraire est amené à faire des choix, c’est-à-dire non seulement à additionner des noms d’auteur, mais aussi à en soustraire. Pourquoi, au nom de quels critères peut-on juger que tel texte ou tel auteur n’est pas (ou n’est plus) digne de passer à l’histoire ? C’est là que le malaise devient manifeste. C’est aussi là que les choses deviennent réellement intéressantes.

Un tel malaise est encore plus évident quand il s’agit de petites littératures nationales, comme la littérature québécoise. Depuis toujours, c’est-à-dire depuis qu’elle existe, la littérature québécoise n’a cessé d’être considérée d’un point de vue global, comme l’expression parfaite de la nation. Or, une œuvre littéraire est une chose singulière qui ne cadre pas forcément avec les catégories dans lesquelles on voudrait la ranger. Les œuvres les plus intéressantes sont même souvent celles qui déploient au maximum leur « aptitude à la trahison ». Ainsi l’historien littéraire, sous des dehors conservateurs, recherche peut-être surtout les œuvres qui lui résistent, c’est-à-dire qui sont suffisamment singulières et rares pour l’obliger à nuancer les catégories un peu trop commodes (périodes, genres, écoles, mouvements, etc.) qu’il utilise pour organiser sa vaste matière.

Une telle histoire littéraire, ouverte aux singularités des œuvres et non pas seulement aux grandes tendances d’une littérature, est-elle réellement possible ? L’historien littéraire a mille raisons d’en douter. Mais il n’a guère le choix d’y croire malgré tout.

MICHEL BIRON

Michel Biron est professeur agrégé dans le Département de langue et littérature françaises et titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada, Littérature québécoise et littératures francophones.
Authorities warn us today that Canadians are woefully ignorant of history and that fearful consequences may follow.

Two hundred years ago, debates about public and popular knowledge were no less serious, and warnings of public decline no less fearful. The Enlightenment seemed to promise that freedom and prosperity could arise from knowledge – knowledge about how best to harness and control the natural world, and knowledge of politics, history, and human nature. But in practice, existing knowledge never seemed sufficient. The common people, the farmers and workers, were commonly described as ignorant, and in the case of French Canada, ignorant both of enlightened political forms – parliamentary democracy – and of advanced techniques of farming, such as crop rotations. Above all, they lacked the rich heritage of British history to guide them and always seemed in imminent danger of sliding into poverty, republicanism, or despotism.

But the ignorance was mutual: the British government knew very little about the conditions prevalent in Canada, yet it remained the final authority in matters of legislation. “We govern in the dark” was a complaint voiced time and again by British parliamentarians required to reflect on the Canadian constitution, which they seemed to be continually redrafting (in 1774, 1791, 1840, and 1867). So what sort of things were citizens and governors supposed to know in order to go about their patriotic duties, and how was this knowledge supposed to circulate?

A full answer to the question amounts to analysis of the nature of authority in early Canada – understanding authority to mean both politico-military power and the sense of intellectual justification and rational consent that increasingly formed an important basis of political legitimacy during the 18th century. Long before Canada became a democracy, public opinion, formulated and expressed through public debate and the press, was conceded to play a role in governance. My focus is on the extent to which claims about knowledge entered into the formulation of public opinion – that is, the ways in which knowledge claims were constructed on the ground, in Canada, and how they were translated across the Atlantic ocean and integrated into the web of imperial relations. Science provided one model of successful fact-creation and the scientific revolution was gradually transforming political discourse. Historical knowledge was another model that politicians and intellectuals drew on: it provided a treasure-trove of facts and narratives, most of them profoundly contested. It is this sort of study that will help us better to understand just what James McGill had in mind when, in 1813, his will provided for the creation of McGill University. It will also help us better to understand our present relationship with information – political, economic, and historical – if we view it from a historical perspective, rather than repeating the Renaissance’s mistake of being so enamoured with innovation that we disavow the past that made us.

ELSBETH HEAMAN
How will the current trend in scheduling and organizing children’s activities affect their future lives?

Recent research has verified what had long been popularly suspected – that many children’s lives are becoming increasingly more tightly scheduled and regimented. While today’s parents may look back wistfully on the era when their parents sent them out of the house unsupervised to play, this is not, increasingly, the childhood they see as desirable to give their own children. From music appreciation and exercise classes for infants to extracurricular academic, sports, arts, and performance classes for older children, the amount of time children spend in highly structured activities organized and supervised by adults has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. To a large extent, this has happened at the cost of a reduction in the amount of time children spend in less strictly supervised activities, organized and structured by the children themselves.

Probably the most important cause of this trend is parents’ perception that giving their children such experiences facilitates their cognitive development (an empirically questionable proposition in its own right) and that it will benefit them later in an increasingly competitive economic and social life. At least to some degree, this is part of what they perceive it means to be a good, middle class parent in modern North American society. Such parents generally also believe that the best qualities their children can have to help them in their future lives are independence and the abilities to think for themselves and to make informed, autonomous decisions. Empirical evidence, however, at least indirectly suggests it is entirely possible that children’s increasingly adult-structured activities may not inculcate a value for autonomy, but in fact, may produce exactly the opposite result.

Sociologists have long known that the structure of habitual action – how our lives are lived on a day-to-day basis – influences the values we have. One of the more robust findings in this area is that working class parents, who experience more authoritarian control in the workplace, on average cite obedience as the most valuable character trait they believe their children can have for success in their future lives, while middle class parents’ emphasis on independence and autonomy stems from their relatively greater freedom of decision making in their working lives.

The resulting paradox is that if the same mechanism which influences child-rearing values in parents – the degree of autonomy of choice in habitual activity – is at work on children, the increasing proportion of time children spend in structured activities under the auspices of adult authority may, to some degree, be conditioning an emphasis on the value of independence and autonomy out of them.

Does this mean that we may be raising a generation of automatons? Not necessarily. It does suggest, however, that we need to pay closer attention to the potential unintended consequences of the ways in which we structure children’s lives and activities.

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John Sandberg
Among the many categories we use to deal with the complexity of our worlds, there is a peculiar Russian one I find particularly interesting. It is an unofficial yet persistent division of people into those who like Tolstoy and those who like Dostoevsky. Tolstoy’s ‘camp’ is not just indifferent to, but actively dislikes Dostoevsky, and vice versa. Why the need to divide when we can enjoy both geniuses? We find the answer beyond matters of personal taste and the boundaries of literature in the realm of politics and national identity. In Russia, however, literature has always been intertwined with politics.

The great critic Mikhail Bakhtin called Dostoevsky’s novel ‘polyphonic.’ He borrowed the musical term to describe the interaction of a multitude of full-fledged and independent voices arising from the pages of Dostoevsky’s novels. Each character, whether a saintly monk or a killer-ideologue, is allowed a strong voice. This technique permitted Dostoevsky to keep his own point of view hidden, and the reader looking for answers on his own.

Bakhtin’s term for the Tolstoyan technique is ‘monologic.’ It describes the greatest sin a novelist can commit: dominating the world of his novel with the voice and point of view of the omnipresent and omniscient narrator. The author’s moral message is so clearly pronounced and the reader is so unambiguously directed that the character remains a pawn in the author’s design, a mere rhetorical device in Tolstoy’s sermon.

You have probably guessed that this particular critic belongs to the Dostoevsky ‘camp.’ It is also clear that this division parallels the political organization of societies: polyphony stands for democracy, tragically elusive in Russia, and the monologic approach for totalitarian rule. It is no accident that during the first decades of Soviet rule, party leaders called for the ‘Red’ Leo Tolstoy, but hardly published Dostoevsky; and that after the fall of the Soviet empire, Dostoevsky is back at the center of critical and public attention. Just last year the film version of his novel The Idiot became a tremendous cultural and political event, while a sequel to Tolstoy’s War and Peace, despite the controversy about its authorship, has gone almost unnoticed.

Unfortunately, this sharp division overlooks the beauty of Tolstoy’s language and the mad intensity of Dostoevsky’s pages, both of which make choosing between the two authors impossible for many. It also ignores the facts that Dostoevsky, the religious philosopher, believed as ardently as Tolstoy did in the power of the Word to change the world, and that he, too, had a clear moral message. And most importantly, it presses extra-literary considerations on the reader and thus manipulates him in quite a monologic way.

So, let me finish with more questions: is this really how and why we read literature – to work out its political implications? Which ‘camp’ are you in? Is it time to reread the ‘loose and baggy monsters’ and decide for yourself?

Lyudmila Parts is Assistant Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies

Lyudmila Parts | Assistant Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies
The link between public preferences and public policy is at the heart of democratic theory. The connection, however, is not a purely theoretical one – the relationship between public opinion and public policy plays a leading role in assessments of governments in daily newspapers, in parliamentary debate, and around office water coolers. It is the basis for what is perhaps the most fundamental question in everyday politics: Are political representatives doing what the public wants them to do?

The answer is: Sometimes. Under certain conditions, there appear to be relatively strong connections between what the public wants and what the public gets; at other times, the situation is quite different. The interesting (and important) part is trying to understand how and why policy representation varies.

Comparative research can shed light on the institutional and political circumstances that serve to increase or decrease links between what the public wants and what governments do. Within Canada, we can ask whether policy representation differs across policy domains. Are aggregate public preferences reflected in defense policymaking more or less than in welfare policymaking? Looking beyond Canada, we can ask whether policy representation differs across representative institutions. Is the American presidential system more responsive to changes in public preferences than the Canadian or British parliamentary systems?

The effects of public opinion on policy are, however, only one half of the story. A desire to have public opinion influence policy should be accompanied by an interest in what exactly drives public opinion. We should ask whether individuals have coherent preferences for policy; if so, we should ask where these policy preferences come from. Are individuals’ preferences for spending on welfare conditioned by their trust in others, or affected by the ethnic diversity of their neighborhood? Are they affected by media content? Do they react over time to changes in welfare policy itself? The components of individuals’ policy preferences are wide and varied, of course, but understanding how preferences are formed is another central component in the empirical study of democracy.

Taken together, these policy- and public opinion-focused research agendas answer critical questions relating to modern governance, policy processes, political representation, and public opinion formation. Asking whether public policies reflect preferences is a good start, but this work suggests a more informative line of investigation: What drives public policy, what drives public opinion, and what are the links between the two? Answering these questions is fundamental to our understanding of exactly how democracy works; indeed, perhaps even whether democracy works.
In discussing written works, we often make a rough distinction between content and form, between what a text says and how it says it. In many everyday reading situations – when we skim the morning newspaper, go through recent emails, decipher an instruction manual – we focus almost exclusively on content and don’t stop to consider the structures and devices through which this information is conveyed. When we read a complex literary work, however, is it enough to read just for content? Or does the form of a poem matter?

I think form does matter, so much so that form and content can’t actually be separated. For instance, recognizing a poem’s genre, its type of overall form, is crucial for fully understanding its meaning. If we identify George Meredith’s 1862 poem *Modern Love* as a sonnet sequence, we are much more likely to perceive the poem’s innovation and its bitter ironies. Originally, sonnet sequences depicted the pleasures and torments of the poet’s idealized devotion to a beautiful but unattainable woman. Meredith instead presents a failing marriage in which both spouses have been unfaithful. Meredith’s choice of genre draws attention to the Victorian shift away from valorizing unattainable romance, to celebrating happy marriage and domestic comforts; it also exposes the huge gap between Victorian ideals of marriage and the frequently unhappy reality.

Much smaller formal features can also have important consequences for our understanding of a poem. In the first stanza of his comic masterpiece *Don Juan*, Byron rhymes the title character’s name with “new one” and “true one.” The unexpected pairing of sounds itself produces laughter, one of the chief effects of the poem, but the rhyme has more serious implications as well. Byron may use the mispronunciation to distinguish his hero (‘Joo-un’), a passive and naive boy of sixteen, from the wily seducer of legend (‘Hwan’). By forcing his readers to mispronounce Juan’s name, Byron also highlights the tendency of early nineteenth-century Englishmen to anglicize foreign names, and may criticize the insular ignorance of foreign cultures or the violent appropriation of them.

Finally, by rhyming this incorrect name with “true one,” Byron invites readers to question the “truth” they are given in the poem, to see truth as relative and dependent on context, rather than as absolute and easily accessible.

When John Keats declared, “We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us,” he dismissed poems that are too overt in their message, whose purpose (‘design’) is to force the reader into agreement with its content. But a poem’s design, in terms of its structure and formal patterns, plays a significant role in conveying its ideas with greater subtlety and complexity. By studying a poem’s form, we are able to make its design more palpable, and to see that we can’t understand what a poem says unless we understand how it says it.

MONIQUE R. MORGAN
The correspondence of eighteenth-century novelist Samuel Richardson is well worth pursuing. Some authors put all their creative energy into their published works; their letters, in contrast, may be dull notes accepting or declining dinner invitations. Others, in contrast, write fascinating letters, but hardly any may survive. In the case of Samuel Richardson – author of the spectacularly popular, and controversial, Pamela (1740-41), of a tragic masterpiece, Clarissa (1747-48), and of Jane Austen’s favourite novel, Sir Charles Grandison (1753-54) – we have the best of both worlds. A massive store of surviving letters exists, almost all of the greatest interest.

Richardson’s novels are constructed as series of letters, and the parallels between his own epistolary practices and those of his fiction are striking. The intricate systems of composing and delivering letters in the novels, in which an epistle can be written by more than one author and dispatched to multiple recipients, are mirrored in his private correspondence. The letters he exchanged constitute an extraordinary analysis of his novels, a sustained debate on the art of fiction between a practitioner and his readers. Many of those who wrote to him were women, and feminist historians and literary scholars have found a wealth of material in their writings. Since Richardson was one of the major London printers of the period, his letters are also an invaluable resource for the history of publishing and the book.

Recognizing its importance, Cambridge University Press has commissioned a complete edition of Richardson’s correspondence, to be published within a decade, with Thomas Keymer of Oxford University and myself as general editors. Twelve volumes of letters, organized by correspondent or groups of correspondents, will be followed by an index volume, enabling teachers to locate passages dealing with issues raised during classroom discussion of Richardson’s novels and to make this material available to students.

But where are the letters? So far, we know of about 1650, with one from the poet Edward Young to Richardson here at McGill’s Rare Books division; the only manuscript letter to or from Richardson we have found in Canada. The others are scattered among hundreds of libraries, institutions, and private collections in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. New ones continue to emerge, at the rate of about one a month. Some turn up in obvious places, such as Yale University’s Beinecke Library, which has the spending power to acquire any Richardson letter on the market. Other finds are unexpected delights. Three have just appeared in the Hampshire Record Office, England; another has migrated from a bookseller in Paris to the University of Illinois; several have been bought by individuals who have kindly given us copies. Gefen Bar-On, a McGill post-doctoral student working on the project, is now pursuing these errant letters too. The thrill of the chase is exhilarating; we hope and expect to track down many more.

PETER SABOR

Peter Sabor is Professor of English, Canada Research Chair in 18th Century Studies and Director of the Burney Centre.

Where are Samuel Richardson’s Letters?
A significant number of McGill’s graduate students do not have English as their first language. Many of them lack the oral skills necessary to communicate their ideas clearly. As well, those who come from outside North America often struggle with the unfamiliar cultural norms of a North American academic environment. Unlike in our culture, for example, some cultures do not establish eye contact with people of a higher status since this is a sign of disrespect. As a result, students may avoid eye contact with their professors. This may result in professors wrongly interpreting the behaviour as the student being unprepared or lacking confidence.

For reasons of language and culture, McGill offers these students the opportunity to become more effective communicators through instruction in pronunciation and general oral presentation skills. The goal of this kind of language support is to help them develop the ability to speak confidently so that they can share their research with McGill colleagues and with members of academic communities beyond McGill.

Whereas traditional methods of pronunciation instruction have dealt largely with discrete sounds, current research advocates a focus on rhythm, stress, and intonation since mistakes in these areas have a greater impact on a listener’s ability to understand the speaker. As an example, if a non-native speaker of English asks for a “peel” because she has a headache, native speakers can generally determine from the context that the person is asking for a “pill.” If, however, a student reports, “SPécific data to SUPport the hypotheSIS are unAvailable” – with stress on the capital letters – a native speaker of English would have to think harder to figure out that the student is saying, “SpeCIfic data to supPORT the hyPO-thesis are unaVAIlable.”

Placing stress on the correct syllable within a word is a challenging aspect of pronunciation for many non-native speakers of English. Stretching an elastic band is one of several techniques students learn in order to develop proper word stress patterns and proper rhythm. As they practice, they stretch the elastic band on the syllable that is pronounced louder and longer than others in the word, as in the “PO” in “hypothesis”. In general, students are eager to acquire such strategies because it is usually more manageable for them to acquire stress, rhythm and intonation patterns than to produce discrete sounds accurately. Students can see results.

Improving pronunciation skills happens over time. For this reason, we continue to explore ways of helping McGill’s graduate students improve their oral communication ability. We want them to develop the language skills and the confidence necessary to disseminate their research findings in a variety of academic venues. In addition to the current course, a follow-up independent study course is currently being developed. This new course will allow practice of pronunciation skills with materials tailored to a student’s particular area of study. The benefit to the university of this type of language support is noteworthy. It will afford McGill’s graduate students whose first language is not English the opportunity to be confident members of the academic community who can share their research in an intelligible and professional manner.

CAROLYN SAMUEL

Carolyn Samuel is a Faculty Lecturer in the English and French Language Centre.
The short answer is no. While history matters and identities resonate over time, today, ethnic groups fight or do not fight because of the current situations they face.

How do we know this? Largely because hate is plentiful and violence is rare, despite what might be suggested by media coverage. It all comes down to basic logic: You cannot explain something that changes by focusing on something that is constant. Violence ebbs and flows over time, but hatred is relatively constant.

Political scientists focus on motivations and circumstances that change over time and vary from place to place. Scholars have focused on the lust for power, grievances, fear and greed. The example of Slobodan Milosevic and the demise of Yugoslavia, for instance, suggest that politicians will try to use the issue of ethnic identity to divert attention away from economic problems and to shift the focus of public opinion on to nationalistic programs. Elites may have incentives to “play the ethnic card,” such as electoral laws that allow them to focus on mobilizing a single ethnic group. Not all politicians, however, are successful when they try this strategy. Why do groups follow? Grievances, fear and greed may help to explain this.

Grievances refer to the complaints ethnic groups have about the circumstances they face. One of the clearest findings in the field is that repression breeds more conflict. States that seek to repress efforts by groups to express themselves, to engage in dissent, and to lobby the government usually make things worse, causing the conflict to become violent.

Fear refers to the uncertainties and insecurities groups face. Democracies tend to have less ethnic conflict, in part because decisions are more transparent, so groups feel less uncertain. Further, groups may feel less insecure if there is rule of law – that the institutions matter and bind behavior. On the other hand, countries transforming from one form of authoritarianism to another are subject to violence, as groups are often willing to support extreme leaders out of fear for what other groups might do.

Greed may also play a role. Groups and leaders may mobilize around ethnic identities in order to distribute valued resources among themselves. The idea is that resources – particularly those that are easily to harvest such as alluvial diamonds, other gemstones, drug crops, etc. – serve either to encourage or to exacerbate conflict by facilitating the financing of armed conflict. Thus some studies have shown that resources are associated with greater conflict.

While hate may play a role, in order for violence to develop and to escalate, some mixture of power-seeking elites, frustrated and/or fearful groups, and easily lootable resources may be required.

STEPHEN M. SAIDEMAN

Stephen Saideman is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Canada Research Chair in International Security and Ethnic Conflict.
The word al-Khansa’ translates into English as ‘the snub nosed one’. This is the meaning most frequently given for her name in descriptions and discussions of her work. The implication for most of us is that al-Khansa’ was at best plain, if not somewhat ugly. We tend to assume that, at the very least, her nose was misshapen enough to elicit commentary and to merit such a nickname. But the reader well-versed in the Arabic poetry of the era immediately understands this word to be a sort of code. The poetry of early Arabia is renowned for its concision of language and powerful imagery. For example, animals are referred to by descriptive phrases and therefore rather than spelling out that an ostrich is running in the desert, a poet might refer to the dust of a ‘red-legged clump wing’.

The ‘snub-nosed’ poet al-Khansa’ no longer seems so unappealing when we learn that this word is the epithet reserved by poets for the animal considered the epitome of grace – the gazelle.

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Perhaps the best known Arab woman poet of all times hails from the Arabian Peninsula of the Sixth Century. Born Tumadir bint Amr ibn Harith of the Banu Sulaym, she is better known as al-Khansa’, a nickname translated as ‘the snub-nosed one.’

Much about this important literary figure remains a mystery. We have hundreds of lines of her poetry, a more substantial collection than many of her contemporaries, yet not much is known about her. We do know that her poetry is much vaunted by critics – it consists largely of elegies for her brothers fallen in battle – and we do know that she died sometime before 640 CE. Other stories abound: she was a favourite of the Prophet Muhammad, she met his wife Aisha, she was praised by the great male poets of her time as ‘manly’ though she was a woman, she refused to marry a man courting her because he was not her equal, she divorced a husband who did not treat her well. She may indeed have been unattractive, as is often understood from her nickname. We do not know, though, if these stories are apocryphal or, indeed, even if the fabled al-Khansa’ was a real person. Some have suggested she is not, but rather that as an exemplary Arab, Muslim woman she is a composite figure.

Al-Khansa’ is also somewhat unusual in that in addition to her poems being celebrated by Arabic critics, they have also traveled from the deserts of 6th Century Arabia into world literature anthologies used today in North American university courses. This warm reception, by Arabs and non-Arabs alike, guarantees that her poetry will be known by many more people than she would ever have dreamed. But this crossing of linguistic, literary and cultural borders also reveals some of the difficulties involved in such a journey.

Translating poetry from one language to another is notoriously difficult. In this case, misapprehensions in meaning can begin before reading a single line of poetry. Al-Khansa’s nickname demonstrates the challenges and complexities involved in ‘translating’ such a figure and her works across eras, languages, and cultures.
Literary critic Harold Bloom has argued that Shakespeare is the author of modern personhood. Bloom’s claim is essentially that Shakespeare made us what we are.

Although it is worthwhile to think about Shakespeare’s contribution to modernity, a reading of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* or Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* or St. Augustine’s *Confessions* suggests that there were people very like us long before the Swan of Avon was born. While I do believe that Shakespeare did help make us what we are, I think that the idea of him as a solitary genius, which is how Bloom sees him, is deeply mistaken. I contend we would do far better if we understood him as a central figure in the hugely formative emergence of the early modern market in artistic and intellectual goods. A full account of Shakespeare as a participant in this market-based movement toward modernity must be built upon an understanding of just what he was participating in, and that understanding can hardly be the work of a single scholar. I have assembled a team of researchers from McGill and from other universities in Canada, America, and Europe as well as from a range of disciplines from Art History to Literary Studies to Media Studies to Sociology.

Our project is called “Making Publics: Media, Markets, and Association in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700.” It will illuminate the Renaissance and will also have a bearing on questions about modern media and mass culture. This project will make it possible to understand Shakespeare’s achievement in real historical terms. We study what we are calling the “publics” or the “interest communities” that came into existence in the Renaissance and that coalesced around certain areas of interest and forms of publication and/or performance. These publics were different from traditional groupings, such as livery companies, universities, or courts, which were exclusive, institutionalized, and hierarchical. The communities that we study were loosely organized, egalitarian, and open to anyone who had the interest, competence, money, and time to participate. They were fostered by new technologies of representation and dissemination – the printing press, new pictorial forms and techniques, new sites for and styles of theatrical and musical performance. They were encouraged by the development of a lively market in works of art and/or printed works such as plays, paintings, musical compositions, sermons, polemical tracts, news pamphlets, maps, histories, and scientific reports. These voluntary, open-membership groupings were, we believe, crucial to the emergence of the ideal of the public that is at the heart of modern democratic culture, with its emphasis on individual rights, individual self-fulfillment, and collective discussion and decision-making.

In the course of our five-year project on “making publics,” while we will study a wide range of artistic and intellectual spheres of association, one of our central interests will be Shakespeare’s theatre; indeed, we could hardly find a richer model of proto-democratic association than the 3000-seat Globe, where people from all social ranks could experience and learn from surpassingly particularized individuals such as Hamlet or Macbeth or Cleopatra, and where they could exercise their collective right to pass judgment upon those characters, upon the actors who played them, and upon the play-worlds in which they lived out their fateful stories.

**PAUL YACHNIN**

Paul Yachnin is Chair and Tomlinson Professor of Shakespeare Studies in the Department of English and Director of the “Making Publics” project.
In philosophy, we are often concerned with the life of the spirit. The question of the body tends to be too messy, too concretely tied to lived experience, to yield clear answers. But, without an understanding of our bodies, how can we conceive what it is to perceive the world around us, to experience pain and pleasure, to tingle with excitement or to shiver with fear? We move ourselves around in the world through our bodies, express ourselves in our gestures; the smile, the cry and the caress are all experiences unavailable to a disembodied being. As philosophers, when we try to speak of human experience, we are confronted again and again with the fact of our embodiment. The twentieth-century movement of phenomenology, however, begun by Edmund Husserl and continued by such figures as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, offers us a way of studying the body, not as a biological entity or an organic machine, but as a lived structure that makes possible our experiences and actions in the world.

Of all the senses, touch is that which we take the most for granted precisely because touch is such a defining sense. As Husserl points out, if I had vision but no sense of touch, I could not feel myself as a living body. It would be as if my consciousness had its seat in a puppet through whose eyes it could see the world, but in which I was merely a pilot, navigating my way by means of sight, but never feeling myself as identical with the vessel.

Thus, for phenomenology, the subject is a living, sensing, and self-moving body. This is to say that I am my hands, my face, my eyes, my feet... These are not mere instruments, nor are they accidents of biological evolution, they are expressions of the subject that is me, and they define the possibilities of my existence.

**ALIA AL-SAJI**

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**Opposite:** From "Study of Human Proportions according to Vitruvius," Leonardo da Vinci (c. 1485-90)
We move ourselves around in the world through our bodies, express ourselves in our gestures; the smile, the cry and the caress are all experiences unavailable to a disembodied being.
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