

SAA 2014 ABSTRACTS: PUTTING GENDER TO WORK

Elizabeth Acosta

Wayne State University

‘I play the man I am’: Gender, Geography and Labor in *Coriolanus*

This essay takes as its point of departure the moment in Act 5 when Aufidius calls Coriolanus a “boy of tears.” (5.6.102). And Coriolanus acts accordingly to the designation. He cries out, “Measureless liar, thou has made my heart / Too great for what contains it. ‘Boy’? O slave!” (5.6.104-05). Dismissing the First Lord’s plea for “Peace” (5.6.112), Coriolanus continues with his tantrum-like tirade, exclaiming, “Cut me to pieces” (5.6.113). What I would like to point out, though, is that what has ignited Coriolanus’ explosion is Aufidius’ use of the term “boy.” As with the use of the gendered term “boy,” Coriolanus’ masculinity is tied also to his geographic space and his exploits in battle. In his attempt to prove his masculinity, however, Coriolanus’ inadequacy is continually highlighted. There is a cycle of violence through which Coriolanus will never be satisfied in his search for masculinity. What masculinity is, according to Homi K. Bhabha, is a “prosthetic reality.” There are “pre-fixed” rules of gender and sexuality that are removed from the subject. Because the subject is removed from the abstract reality of masculinity, throughout the play, Coriolanus struggles with establishing and maintaining his masculinity, and because masculinity itself is fundamentally unstable, as figured in the character of Coriolanus, we see him use geographic spaces and the labor of war to attempt to negotiate his anxieties about masculinity.

Coriolanus’s passionate response to this term highlights the opacity of masculinity that he is so often faced with. Throughout the play, Coriolanus struggles with establishing and maintaining his masculinity, and because masculinity itself is fundamentally unstable, as figured in the character of Coriolanus, we see him use geographic spaces and the labor of war to attempt to negotiate his anxieties about masculinity.

Jami Ake

“Wrighting *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*”

In this essay, I argue that Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* offers an ongoing analysis of the creation of comedy itself as a form of work. As the play performs the reworking of Ovidian tragedy as Elizabethan comedy, Shakespeare insists we witness the clear effort required to repurpose the materials of tragic storytelling in the fashioning of comic structures by foregrounding of the work of the so-called “rude mechanicals” throughout the play. I suggest that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* characterizes the making of comedy as a new form of intellectual artisanship, a form of labor both closely connected to the play’s amateur artisanal players and implicitly opposed to the power of problem-solving fairy magic in the play. In celebrating the work that comedy demands, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* also challenges the assumption that the making of comedy is somehow less strenuous than the construction of tragedy. Finally, Shakespeare’s play helps to anticipate the category of “playwright”—initially intended as a pejorative term—as one to be embraced for its deep connection to artisanal craft even as it evolves to include intellectual labor within its scope.

Katherine Gillen

Desirable Disability and Theatrical Labor in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*

This essay considers the disabled, queer masculinity of the Cripple in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* in relation to his artisanal and theatrical labor. As in other “fair maid” plays, the anonymous *Fair Maid of the Exchange* explores the effects of commercial activity on early modern subjects by juxtaposing a chaste woman, vulnerable yet steadfast in her virtue, with desiring male characters whose integrity is compromised by market forces. The Cripple, however, complicates this gendered dichotomy, troubling conventional dynamics of gender, desire, and labor. Drawing on Robert McRuer’s work on queerness and disability, as well as Natasha Korda’s and Michelle Dowd’s on early modern labor, I suggest that the Cripple reflects the position of the theatrical laborer, who catalyzes networks of desire through the prosthetic use of props and costumes but who is barred from participating fully in these networks.

Like Phillis, the fair maid, the Cripple chastely participates in the commercial, sexual, and theatrical exchanges of the London market, working as a drawer and also resolving the play’s romantic conflicts through disguise, plotting, and letter writing. Yet unlike the self-contained maiden, the Cripple is defined by supplementarity, his crutches visibly compensating for his disability, just as his presumed impotence releases him from the emasculating desire experienced by other men. This prosthetic self-sufficiency prevents the Cripple from personally participating in sexual exchange but renders him an object of desire—by extension casting the theatrical laborer as neither normatively masculine nor feminine but as queer and disabled yet ultimately agential.

Amy Greenstadt

Portland State University

What Do You Lack? The Fungible Phallus in Middleton’s Drama

In Thomas Middleton’s *The Chaste Maid of Cheapside*, the character Touchstone Senior has a problem: he keeps getting women pregnant. It turns out, though, that his prodigious potency can make him rich. For a tidy sum, he sells the impotent Sir Walter Kix a “water” that miraculously restores fertility. We must wait two scenes before we learn that this mysterious “water” is really a vial of almond milk that Touchstone advises Sir Walter to drink and then follow up with a long, vigorous ride on horseback (while Touchstone secretly impregnates his wife). In the same play we find another male character singing the nonsense words common to ballads: “La dildo, dildo la dildo,” at which another comments: “Now’s out of work, he falls to making dildoes.” Both these instances frame men’s work as the production of masculine genital abilities (potency or pleasure) that can be detached and sold as commodities. My paper examines this phenomenon in Middleton’s drama in light of England’s shift from a primarily land-based economy, in which patriarchal authority was inherited through the transfer of property, to a mercantile economy in which patriarchal authority became a valuable commodity subject to exchange. Middleton and Dekker’s *Roaring Girl* emphasizes this connection between the erotic and the economic in the situation of a character named “Laxton” (i.e., “lacks stones”), who reports that “all my land’s sold.” In a world where his heritable wealth can be commodified and lost, Laxton’s phallic power itself becomes alienable. In fact male genitalia are so fungible in this play that the cross-dressed Moll can assume masculine prerogatives and, apparently, the organs that signify them. When the tailor comes to measure her for new breeches, he tells her they “will take up a yard [i.e., penis] more,” to which she replies, “look it be put in then.”

My paper connects this commodification of phallic power to the rise of the literary market and with it the cachet of authorship. In *Areopagitica* Milton famously justified the free trade in books by elevating the status of the author as a “master spirit” whose books “do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.” I believe it is no accident that Milton’s image of authorial potency resonates with the vial of “almond milk” that Touchstone Senior sells as commodified male fertility. Touchstone’s vial would have evoked the dildoes mentioned elsewhere in Middleton’s play: in England these objects were typically hollow tubes of Venetian glass whose centers could be filled with warm water or milk – thus *dildo* became a synonym for “vial.” I conclude my paper by asking what it might mean to press the link between the vial as a symbol of masculine literary potency and as a sex toy. What might this connection reveal about the fragility of masculine authorial power as well as the role of female pleasure – especially forms of pleasure that did not need to involve male bodies – in economies of literary exchange? This question can inform our understanding of the word *dildo* itself which, the OED notes, is “of obscure origin.” Although the word enters written English at the turn of the seventeenth century, as nonsense sounds “dildo” had long been a ballad refrain. It is possible, then, to see the singing of “la dildo, dildo” in *Chaste Maid* as signaling a pleasure in consumption that defies definition, a pleasure that could be experienced and produced by persons of any gender.

Courtney Lehmann

University of the Pacific

Vicious Wares: Taming the Female Voice from Renaissance Criers to “Talking Pictures”

Somewhere, sometime, a phrase was born:
“America’s Sweetheart.” Thousands of such
phrases are born daily in Hollywood. Most
of them, mercifully, die young.
—Cecil B. DeMille

This essay explores the connection between women’s work during the English Renaissance and the silent “working girl” films of the Jazz Age. Specifically, I will examine the cultural forces that conspired to domesticate and, ultimately, eliminate the voice of female hawkers selling their wares in and around the public theaters, while likening this process to the silencing of women filmmakers following the rise of the sound film in Hollywood. In the Renaissance, accusations aimed at female criers centered on suspicions regarding the sale of “vicious” or false wares which, if proven, would result in the ritualized burning of the commodities, as well as in punishments that overlapped with the humiliating public abuse directed at shrews and scolds. The female voice was similarly punished During the Jazz Age, as novel expressions of female empowerment, reflected in both the figure of the Flapper and the “New Woman,” challenged Victorian expectations of appropriate behavior. These seemingly divergent historical ends meet in Mary Pickford’s 1929 role as Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1929), the first Shakespearean “talkie.” Though not considered a “working girl” film, per se, *Shrew*, I shall argue, literally records the silencing of Hollywood’s hardest working girl—America’s Sweetheart—during the very same decade that women achieved the right to a public voice

through the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Indeed, Pickford's performance as Padua's most despised female "crier" was received as an exercise in selling vicious wares, as the filmgoing public could not abide her attempt to break free from the "sweetness-and-light" heroine of her silent film stardom. Making only two more films, Pickford became a recluse at the age of thirty-seven after her effort to withdraw *Taming of the Shrew* from circulation failed. Indeed, in the years following 1930, women filmmakers retreated far behind the scenes and screens, for their main accomplishments in the film industry came as editors, as well as set and costume designers.¹ Not unlike the Renaissance *querelle des femmes*, *Taming of the Shrew* offers a disturbing chronicle of the ongoing effort to tame the female voice—and body—testifying to the fact that, to this day, a woman's work is never done.

Sandra Logan

That Which Has Been Lost: Labor, Community, and the Reworking of Pastoral in *The Winter's Tale*

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* opens up in intriguing ways within the analytical framework of hospitality. The first half of the play turns on the extension and retraction of conditional hospitality in a courtly context, enacting the violence associated by Derrida with that form. Act 4 offers a strikingly different view of hospitality – one enacted through the unconditional care, concern, and welcome extended to friends and strangers. This form of hospitality emerges through the conception of community grounded in shared labor, shared obligation, and the concept of giving – a form that takes its most explicit and extended shape in the recollection of the labors of the Old Shepherd's wife, as she welcomed and provided for her guests in the sheep shearing feasts of the past. Her labor as a hostess is a central aspect of the social formation of rural Bohemia, emblematic of Shakespeare's differentiation of the values and practices of court and countryside, and of his challenges to the mystifications of pastoral literature. This paper considers the play's resistances to the violence of hierarchy and conditional hospitality associated with the court, resistances evident in the labor-based communality and unconditional hospitality of rural Bohemia. I argue here that Shakespeare imagines a sense of common good and common need that develops out of the shared experiences of labor and a shared view of social equity even in the context of economic hierarchy, but that cannot exist in the context of social hierarchy and proprietary right associated with the court.

Maya Mathur

University of Mary Washington

"And woe is me that any man should want": Playing the Good Host(ess) in *Arden of Faversham*

Arden of Faversham focuses on the grisly murder of the landlord, Thomas Arden, by his wife, Alice; her lover, Mosby; his servant, Michael; a former tenant, Greene, and two vagrants, Black Will and Shakebag. In the historical sources for the play, the plot against Arden was considered especially disturbing because it overturned the traditional hierarchies of gender and class, and emphasized the threat that subaltern groups could pose to those in authority. However, the play

¹ Though not technically considered a director, Pickford exercised nearly complete control over the creation, marketing, and distribution of her films. Women directors and producer-actors like Pickford thrived during the first three decades of Hollywood cinema, after which, only exceptions such as Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino continued to make films.

also gives the murderers a platform to voice their grievances against Arden and, in doing so, highlights his failure to fulfill his duties as husband and landlord.

In this paper, I posit that Alice compensates for Arden's failure by forging a social network with her co-conspirators that levels the traditional divisions between landlords and tenants. Unlike Arden, who emphasizes the contractual nature of the relationship between the two groups, Alice champions older forms of social obligation in which the gentry were exhorted to provide for their kin. Thus, although Alice and her associates are condemned at the end of the play, their alliance destabilizes the boundaries of gender and class, and provides a temporary alternative to the established order.

Jessica C. Murphy

The Labor of Feminine Virtue

Living up to social expectations, in any age, involves quite a bit of work. For early modern men and women, this work is both strictly gendered and seemingly clearly codified. Thomas Elyot's *Book of the Governor*, aimed at men, counsels parents to raise their gentlemen sons with learning appropriate to one who will one day be responsible for others. Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman* advises parents to raise their daughters to be good wives. At first glance, we might assume that early modern men were supposed to rule and early modern women were supposed to obey. While this is the ideal articulated in the manuals, doing the work involved in being a virtuous woman is much more complicated than that first glance might suggest.²

In this paper, I plan to examine a few female characters from early modern drama (including Paulina from *The Winter's Tale*, Abigail from *The Jew of Malta*, and Marina from *Pericles*) to see what kind of work might be involved in the performance of feminine virtue. Michelle M. Dowd writes, "In creating narratives of pious housewifery, early modern texts produce a specific fantasy of the Protestant household—a fantasy in which wifely obedience, diligence, and virtue are documented and knowable."³ I would like to see what kind of "fantasy" there might be in the portrayal of the labor of feminine virtue on the early modern stage. I expect to find, at the very least, that the work of being a "good" woman is both physical and intellectual, and that the expectations are not as clear-cut as we might imagine them to be.

Marianne Novy

University of Pittsburgh

The Gendering of Food Preparation, Presentation, and Invitation in Shakespeare

More men are shown and described as involved in food preparation, presentation, and invitation than women in Shakespeare. Marian Hackett in *Shrew* and Dame Quickly in the *Henriad* and *Merry Wives* are shown as food providers. Other women so referred to though they don't appear providing the food are Luce/Nell in *Comedy of Errors*, Lance's beloved in *TGV*, Touchstone's former girlfriend Jane Smile in *AYLI* (both of them milk), the shepherd's deceased wife and Perdita in *WT* (her brother wonders what she will do with the rice he has been sent to buy), and

² Presumably, the work of being a virtuous man in the period is also more complicated than it might at first appear. However, I have chosen to focus on feminine virtue specifically in the seminar paper.

³ Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, 131–132.

Imogen, in disguise) and semi-proverbial figures in LLL (greasy Joan), Cleopatra (the maid that milks), and MND (the housemaid who is trying to churn butter).

Male characters involved in food preparation are Timon, Titus, Petruccio, Grumio, Old Capulet, Davy in 2H4, and the Duke and his men in AYLI. These, except for Old Capulet, present as well, and so do male-named fairies in MND, Francis in 1H4, Hal and Poins in 2H4, Bardolph, Old Gobbo, and Tranio. The many servants named in Shrew are all male, and Aaron has aspirations of feeding his infant son. Many male characters invite people to dinner. Sometimes the invitation celebrates a return to social harmony, real or apparent, like Page's to Falstaff and Leonato's in Much Ado. Sometimes it suggests an attempt to form an alliance, either marital or otherwise: Simonides' hosting of Pericles may fall under the first category, as probably does Page's dinner earlier in MWW; Cassius' to Casca, Aufidius' to Coriolanus, and Bassanio's to Shylock in the second. The Duke and Bassanio each invite Portia to dinner after the trial, apparently out of gratitude. No clear motive seems to be needed for Timon's early invitations to dinner (as opposed to his later invitation for the sake of vengeance) or Bassanio's plans, already in motion when he asks Shylock.

Fewer female characters have enough power to issue a dinner invitation. Helena in All's Well hosts a dinner at an inn to form an alliance, Paulina to conclude WT with harmony, and Portia issues an invitation to Morocco before he makes his choice apparently out of sheer politeness. Antony and Cleopatra compete in generosity with invitations, as do Antony and Pompey. Bianca and Quickly issue invitations to Cassio and Falstaff from positions of less power. Anne Page and Beatrice invite their expected suitors to come in to dinner on behalf of hosts Page and Leonato; Slender's reluctance and Benedick's eagerness indicate their attitude toward their inviters. Women are mocked more often than men in relation to their role in food preparation; however, men are also mocked in relation to eating too much or too little, and denounced as butchers for their cruelty (Macbeth, Oliver). There are probably sexual innuendoes suggested about both Quickly and Davy with regard to their role preparing food and doing much else for their masters. Both male and female characters may be compared to food, sometimes even the same food in the same play (AYLI and Much Ado).

The fact that food preparation (which women probably still did more) does not often appear reflects the fact that Shakespeare's plays do not show much everyday work. Most likely, more men invite because a greater proportion of male characters have the social power; having only men present food, as in Shrew and 2H4, heightens the effect of the all-male household. Food references cluster most heavily in H4 1 and 2, MWW, Much Ado, As You Like, and Merchant of Venice, all probably written between 1597 and 1599.

Anne-Marie E. Schuler
Central State University

Vox Populi: Staging Queen, Country, and Commonwealth Ideology in Nicholas Udall's Respublica

When Mary Tudor came to the throne in 1553, political writers faced the difficult task of defining monarch-subject relationships under the first English queen regnant since the disastrous reign of Matilda of England in the Twelfth Century. Nicholas Udall's *A merey entrelude entitled Respublica made in the yeare of oure Lorde 1553 and first yeare of the mooste prosperous reigne of our mooste gracious Sovereigne Quene Marye the first* (hereafter *Respublica*), was the first extant dramatic response to female rule. Thus, *Respublica* is historically significant for both its presentation of a model for female rule, and as a response to the crisis of political uncertainty that overshadowed Mary's first Christmas season. This paper argues that Udall's *Respublica* presents a paradigm of political order that located subject-monarch relationships within the rhetoric of service to the commonweal. I demonstrate that Udall represents the play's central dramatic figure, *Respublica*, as a widow in order to emphasize the monarch's duty to serve her subjects for their common good in a way that was ordained, obligatory, and natural. The role of the widow is significant to Udall's political allegory because, as executrix of a husband's will, a widow performed virtually all the tasks of the male head of household, including buying and selling property, managing the estate, and defending the family's interests in legal matters. The widow figure is also important to the relationship Udall develops between *Respublica* and the People (a representation of the state's populace), because it is he who voices complaints to her that emphasize the monarch's duty to serve her subjects for their common good in a way that was ordained, obligatory, and natural. Thus, Udall's political allegory responds to female rule, by defining subject-monarch relationships within commonwealth ideology.

Liberty Stanavage
SUNY Potsdam

“He has both the cost and torment”: Marital labor and Commercialized Masculinity in “A Chaste Maid in Cheapside”

In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Mr. Allwit, the willing cuckold, exults to the audience that his wife's adulterous liaison with Sir Walter has freed him not simply from commercial labor, but also from *marital* labor. The financial support Sir Walter provides substitutes for Allwit's own efforts, and saves him from the jealousy he suggests is an *essential* husbandly labor, a labor that can here be financially exchanged. Like other men of the play, he has made a deal that makes commercial sense and suitably replaces his own defective masculine marital labor, although the arrangement renders him morally and socially ridiculous. Despite this, Allwit's final success, in which his household can relocate to the Strand and he can resume conjugal activity with his wife, seems on some level to vindicate him. Is there a way that the play suggests that we can take him at his word?

In this paper I'll be considering the financial exchange of male characters' marital labor, a process that effectively replaces their own failed masculine efforts at social success with their wives' sexual labor. The boundaries between the competing aspects of masculine identity collapse as the social and commercial invade the domestic, rendering the domestic sphere an appropriate(?) arena for the deployment of

commercial values. This collapse comically highlights fundamental conflicts between different strategies for masculine performance in each of these arenas.

Jan Stirm

University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

Problems of Identification and Mis-Identifications in *The Changeling*

In William Rowley's and Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling*, the primary plot focuses on a woman, Beatrice Joanna, who seeks to marry Alsemero instead of Alonzo. However, in return for his murder of Alonzo, Beatrice Joanna has had sex with De Flores to repay him for killing Alonzo and convince him not to betray the fact. When she marries Alsemero, then, she confronts the problem that he will test her virginity, and so sends her servant, Diaphanta, in a bed-trick, to Alsemero. In so doing, Beatrice Joanna foregrounds her dependence on Diaphanta, and introduces a level at which Diaphanta replaces, stands in for, Beatrice Joanna. This replacement reinforces the ways that Diaphanta sees herself elsewhere as able to be a married woman and a mistress herself, despite her apparent relative poverty. Thus, the play exemplifies the breakdown of their interdependent relationship, and the misrecognition by mistress and servant of their interdependence.

Barbara Traister

Lehigh University

Staging Early Modern Women as Shopkeepers

A substantial number of the city comedies written between 1599 and 1620 portray women who are, to some degree or other, involved with commerce. (I exclude women sex workers from my discussion although they are clearly involved in commerce.) The women I examine are sometimes employees, such as Jane from *The Shoemakers' Holiday* or Phillis Flower from *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*. Most often, they are wives of shop owners, involved to some greater or lesser degree with their husbands' business. My paper explores the autonomy and vulnerability such work offers these women. My argument is that such commercial involvement makes them more "public," subject to the admiration and criticism of London citizenry in ways their more stay-at-home sisters are not. Regularly treated by male customers as part of the merchandise they sell, these women receive a number of sexual offers, either for marriage or for illicit sexual encounters. Frequently, the women shopkeepers look at their male customers in sexual terms as well. They make choices (sometimes unwisely) about marriage or flirtation independent of parents or husbands. On the stage, shopkeeping seems to be used to showcase women's sexual appeal and independence; the sellers become merchandise, but they make their own choices about whether or not they are actually ready to be purchased.