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SAA 2014: Shakespeare and Pedagogy

### **Letter Writing in *The Merry Wives of Windsor***

This paper argues that letters govern both the plot and thematic structures of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Letters create the comedic problem, through Falstaff's letter to Mistresses Page and Ford, and provide the play's comedic resolution, through Anne Page's letter to Fenton. Letters also provide a vehicle for the play's exploration of gender and social status, because of an inherent tension between the way letters were theorized in instructional spaces, both in the classroom and in letter writing manuals, and the way letters functioned in practice. The play raises doubts that these instructional spaces actually could provide ideal governing structures for the shifting and multiform practice of letter writing; these doubts then extend to the possible effectiveness of the ideal governing structures of social practices of gender and station. The play itself thus serves a pedagogic function, in that it envisions a social ordering to letter writing that did not in fact exist as such—it creates an illusion of control over letters that letters themselves did not provide. The paper briefly draws a picture of the pedagogical ideal of letter writing, then considers how women wrote in practice in relation to this ideal. It then examines how letters function through the play, in particular the letters of Anne Page and of Falstaff, and the ways that characters respond to these letters.

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Paulina's Schoolroom: 'words as medicinal as true'

Focussing on Paulina's bold correction of Leontes, this paper explores the intersection of religious instruction and rhetorical education in post-Reformation church discipline. I ask what authorizes Paulina's transgressive speech; what conception of education underlies her words and actions; how the forms of language that she uses serve her ends; and how Paulina illustrates and alters a model of spiritual correction that can challenge hierarchical structures of power. In its historical dimension, the essay outlines the role of rebuke in church discipline and tracks its chief forms, admonition and exhortation. Theoretically, it considers the usefulness of Foucault's late writings on pastoral power and *parrhesia* to a consideration of early modern church discipline. But while Foucault's opposition of *parrhesia* to rhetoric helpfully identifies the limits of Christian pedagogy – understood here as the fundamental impossibility of teaching faith – I also investigate the rhetorical devices that the boldspeaking Paulina employs to combine correction with identification. My reading of *The Winter's Tale* concentrates on Act two, Scene three, which I briefly compare to the more famous final scene.

Ross Knecht

Abstract: “Action all of Precept”: Normativity and Early Modern Pedagogy

“Shakespeare and Pedagogy,” Shakespeare Association of America 2014

This paper compares Ludwig Wittgenstein’s normative understanding of education to Humanist pedagogical theory. For Wittgenstein, learning is an acculturative process that depends upon the participation of the student and the embodied guidance of the teacher: “I do it, he does it after me,” he writes, “I influence him by expressions of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement.” The student engages in a linguistic performance, while the teacher, through explicit injunction or expression of approval or censure, shows where she has followed or violated the relevant norms governing her speech. As the student advances through this process, she becomes gradually more competent and is eventually able to act independently in accordance with these norms. Her behaviour comes to coincide with that of the teacher: she is inducted into a linguistic community, having internalized its norms and values.

This understanding of education, I argue, chimes with that of Humanist pedagogical theory. We can see this in such practices as Roger Ascham’s “double translation,” in which the student would translate a passage Cicero’s Latin into English and then back into Latin, and the master, placing the student’s Latin alongside Cicero’s original, would demonstrate where he had erred and where he had “rightly hitte.” In Ascham’s model, the master does not simply expound to the student the definitions of words and the rules of grammar, but guides him through a practice by which he internalizes both the rules of Latin and the values of Humanism. He learns through guided practice the norms of Ciceronian eloquence, and brings his values and desires into accord with the wider Humanist community by developing, through the enticement of the master’s praise, what Ascham calls “a will to learning.” The paper concludes with a brief consideration of *Measure for Measure*’s “action all of precept,” a phrase that illustrates this practice of participatory and embodied guidance.

Raashi Rastogi  
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Title: Unruly Grammar: The Contradictions of English Instruction

This paper examines the link between grammar and the discourse of discipline in the early modern classroom. It takes traditional understandings of vernacular English as fundamentally disordered, disorderly, and categorically operating “without any rules” as a starting point for explaining the new importance ascribed to preference and pleasure in learning. Though earlier, English’s lack of grammatical organization had been opposed to the formally structured grammatical *habitus* of Latin, during the Reformation, Latin’s rigidity came to be increasingly associated with papistry, tyranny, disorder, and affectation. I focus on how the resulting linguistic reprioritization had numerous implications for the Renaissance classroom. The attempt to reconcile the classroom, which represented an important mechanism for teaching and instituting hierarchical order and obedience, with the larger role unruly, disordered vernacular was playing in instruction, produced somewhat contradictory discourses of discipline. My paper will primarily examine how some pedagogical theorists begin to reject the Latinate model of structured, grammatical, disciplinary instruction as contrary to natural Englishness. This denial of the old model of subject formation creates the space for a new English model grounded in the vernacular’s distinctive traits. I posit that an investment in individual choice and preference over structural systemic order became a central aspect of this new model. To support my argument, I examine English grammars and pedagogical treatises – including Ascham’s *The Scholemaster* and Mulcaster’s *Positions* – and conclude with a brief examination of pedagogical models represented in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

### **Short Bibliography:**

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Cody Reis  
New York University

### Shakespeare and Pedagogy: The Roman Sonnet

“What justifies the shame?” Wittgenstein asks. “The whole history of the incident.” In my essay, I wonder if we might consider an older if not altogether “whole” history of shame’s justification by putting Wittgenstein’s question in terms of the co-occurrence of Shakespeare and pedagogy. Although not a Shakespearean, Wittgenstein was no stranger to pedagogical theory and practice. Indeed, pedagogy broadly is the great obsession of *Philosophical Investigations*, which of course opens with a quotation of a primal scene of instruction from the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, an all-time great pedagogue of shame (“...as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires...”). Nor have Shakespeareans themselves been strangers to Wittgenstein, at least not since the prominent and profound example of Stanley Cavell’s *Disowning Knowledge*, a work haunted as much by Wittgensteinian skepticism as by Shakespearean tragedy. But if Cavell represents a crucial intermediary between Wittgenstein and Shakespeare, then he must also represent a critical limit. Limitation in this case is self-limiting to the extent that it is generic: Cavell’s Shakespeare is essentially dramatic, and so *Disowning Knowledge* has nothing to say about Shakespeare’s Sonnets, for example. Cavell does, meanwhile, have a lot to say on the subject of shame. But any final analysis of Shakespearean shame is, so to speak, *a waste of shame* without the Sonnets, especially what I want to call his “Roman” Sonnet, #111, so-called for its reminiscence of an important speech about shame in *Antony and Cleopatra*. My hypothesis: whatever is Roman about Shakespearean shame is also *Latin*, which is to say, a reminiscence itself of classicist practices which justified shame as pedagogical.

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N. Amos Rothschild, St. Thomas Aquinas College

***Love's Labour's Lost* and the Tropes of Worthy and Foolish Learning**

In an effort to dissect the cultural significance of the pedant figure in early modern England, this essay uncovers a collection of recurrent tropes—incorporation, cosmetic ornamentation, animal degeneration, puffery/inflation, and externalization/application—used to construct the social value of erudition in texts ranging from Brandt's *The Ship of Fools* to Petrarch's *Phisicke Against Fortune* to, ultimately, the Tudor-Stuart stage. As I locate these same tropes in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, I situate the character Holofernes within a larger cultural conversation about false and foolish learnedness, and I argue that the violence and humiliation visited upon him (and so many other stage pedants) serves to dramatize the process of learned self-fashioning. View thus, the shaming of Shakespeare's pedant not only allows the lords of *Love's Labour's Lost* to negotiate an erudition free from laborious stiltedness, but also leaves room for Shakespeare to acknowledge—and redress—the essential pedantry of the very project of distinction that discourses of pedantry and foolish learning work to accomplish.

Bradley D. Ryner

Arizona State

### Humanist Education and *The City Wit*

As its title signals, Richard Brome's *The City Wit* is a self-reflexive reworking of city comedy conventions. Scholarship on the play generally focuses on how Brome mixes together character types and plot mechanisms drawn primarily from the plays of Ben Jonson, for whom Brome had previously worked as a manservant. Equally prominent, though less remarked upon, is the play's invocation of a different theatrical tradition: pedagogical plays. *The City Wit* (which may or may not have been performed by a boy's company) is framed by a prologue and an epilogue spoken by the pedant Sarpego, who, in the concluding scene, attempts -- unsuccessfully -- to stage a didactic allegory on the model of humanist plays for schoolboys, such as John Redford's *Wit and Science*. This paper will explore the effect to which Brome puts this juxtaposition of dramatic forms. On one level, the play discredits the idea of humanist education and the mechanics of humanist stagecraft. Sarpego is unequivocally a target of satire, whose effusive demonstrations of Latin rhetoric are transparent bids for social elevation and connubial bliss (both of which are pointedly denied him at then end), and the play he stages seems jarringly anachronistic next to the conventions of city comedy that *The City Wit* foregrounds. At the same time, *The City Wit* recodes the practices and values of humanist pedagogy in terms of a mercantile theatricality: the play's protagonist (a jeweler named Crasy) triumphs in the end through the machinations of his apprentice, Jeremy, whose actions are flagged as virtuoso feats of *imiatio* that solidify a homosocial/erotic relation between the two by demonstrating the younger's wit. Moreover, the play evinces a reactionary nostalgia for the apparent stability of signifiers of gender in humanist allegory, even as it marks it as outmoded.

Contributions to a bibliography:

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Paul Weinhold

University of Dallas

### Place-Logic and Emotion in Lucrece's Debate with Tarquin

Because I am broadly interested in logic and rhetoric as they were taught in the Tudor grammar schools, my essay reads Lucrece's disputation with Tarquin before the rape with the places of invention in mind. In addition to the poem itself, Thomas Wilson's *The Rule of Reason* will serve as my primary example of Tudor logic. The central question of the essay is: What is the relation between the logic of Lucrece's disputations and her affective responses? I hope, in other words, to demonstrate a relationship between her argumentative strategies and her complex emotional state. Furthermore, I wonder what Shakespeare's narrative portrayal of disputation can tell us about the logic that was taught in Tudor grammar schools, or the way that schoolmasters taught it. The characters in *Lucrece* have a complicated preoccupation with disputing, such that they seem unable not to dispute, and yet their efforts to understand themselves and their respective situations are consistently thwarted, such that disputation itself seems a futile exercise. Could this complicated portrayal of disputation be a Shakespearean comment upon the educational practices of his time?

Deanne Williams

York University

### Girls and their Books in Shakespeare

Critical discussion of Shakespeare's representations of pedagogy and of scenes of instruction often focuses on the all-male environments of the grammar-school classroom and the boy actor and his company. This paper looks instead at Shakespeare's representations of girl characters and the idea of girlhood in relation to teaching and learning, and books and reading. Examples include (but are not limited to): Lavinia's Ovid in *Titus Andronicus*, Juliet's classical allusions and religious frame of reference in *Romeo and Juliet*, the learned Marina in *Pericles* ("deep clerks she dumbs"), and just what did Miranda get out of Prospero's books in *The Tempest* anyway? I will consider how these moments, performed by a boy actor, reference a grammar-school curriculum and the processes of educating boys in Tudor England. But I will also look closely at the extent to which they represent pedagogical cultures associated with the education of girls in the period. With Elizabeth I herself as a paragon of girlhood learning in the early Tudor period (along with Lady Jane Lumley and Margaret Roper), and with the young Elizabeth Stuart receiving instruction from the glitterati of Jacobean England, the cultures of pedagogy in Shakespeare's England not only extended to girls (some girls) but also shaped prevailing ideals of feminine accomplishment and empowerment. I will propose that books, learning, and pedagogy form an essential part of Shakespeare's conceptualization of girls and of girlhood as a distinct identity and condition, separate from while also continuous with womanhood, and, finally, offer some reflections upon the implications of this separate category of girlhood for feminist scholarship ... and pedagogy.

### Bibliography

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