

Painted Ladies and False Moors

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This essay explores the iconography of racial and sexual masquerade on the early modern stage through a close examination of John Webster's *The White Devil*. Through its unique and varied uses of the early modern theatrical trope of blackface, *The White Devil* illustrates the changing manner of racial and sexual representation in Jacobean England and, while it is one of the most well-known non-Shakespearean texts of the period, this aspect has been rarely commented on by scholars, editors, or performers. This paper will attempt to demonstrate how racial and sexual masquerade, and a dependence on the attendant stereotypes, is crucial to the play's visual aesthetic. It will also explore how this visual aesthetic is closely tied to the changing visual iconography of the black/fair binary in Jacobean England, in which the visual representation of race and gender were tied in increasingly complicated ways to ideas about aesthetics and morality. It will then examine two recent productions that have attempted to work around these issues using non-traditional casting and examine how they have created further layers of sexual and racial stereotyping by attempting to deny the importance of visual representation in the play and this visual representation's connection to Jacobean ideas about race, gender, morality, and aesthetics. It will conclude with a discussion of how modern classical theatre, despite appearances to the contrary, often demonstrates a moral and aesthetic apprehension about visual representation of race and gender and attempts to elide with a focus on language as preeminent.

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**Figuring the Enemy: Protestant Readings of the Whore of Babylon in Early
Modern England, c. 1580-1625.**

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This paper addresses the politically charged Whore of Babylon from the Book of Revelation and investigates how her physical body became a transnational symbol of the Roman Catholic Church among Protestants in post-Reformation Europe. Reformed exegesis imbued the Whore's body, as well as her seductive and deceiving nature, with a host of attendant ideologies about Catholicism and a series of reoccurring, and related, tropes centring on her glittering apparel, dissembling seduction and corrosive female body can be found across sermons, commentaries and literary re-imaginings of Revelation 17. This paper focuses specifically on the way in which the Whore's body was used to instantiate a distinctively Protestant story about the nature and threat of idolatry. With reference to Book One of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) and Thomas Dekker's 1607 play *The Whore of Babylon*, it traces how re-imaginings of the Whore are used to elucidate, and circulate, the nature and threat of Catholicism's emphasis on the visual. As the most evocative, and widely deployed, anti-Catholic icon of the early modern period, the Whore of Babylon, this paper suggests, not only reveals the reformers' commitment to figurative, rather than literal, reading practices, but reliance on visual images to create, and maintain, a strict opposition between the warring factions of Christianity, and communicate the central tenets of the faith.

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Shakespeare's Iconic Audience and the Imitation of Henry V
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And what is the object of my love? I asked the earth and it said: 'It is not I.' I asked all that is in it; they made the same confession. I asked the sea, the deeps, the living creatures that creep, and they responded: 'We are not your God, look beyond us.' ...And I said to all these things in my external environment: 'Tell me of my God who you are not, tell me something about him.' And with a great voice they cried out: 'He made us.' My question was the attention I gave to them, and their response was their beauty. (Augustine, *Confessions* X.vi.9)

In the first place, I think, it should be presupposed that there is nothing which seemeth proper to the gaze of the icon of God which doth not more really exist in the veritable gaze of God Himself. For God, who is the very summit of all perfection, and greater than can be conceived, is called [THEOS] from this very fact that He beholdeth all things. Wherefore, if the countenance portrayed in a picture can seem to look upon each and all at one and the same time, this faculty (since it is the perfection of seeing) must no less really pertain unto the reality than it doth apparently unto the icon or appearance. (Nicholas of Cusa, *The Vision of God* I.1).

This paper explores the historical and theological implications of Shakespeare's iconic aesthetics, with special focus upon *Henry V*.

There are no icons in Shakespeare's works. Indeed, from the perspective of the audience, the motion, passion, and particularity of Shakespearean drama seems diametrically opposed to the still contemplation of eternal forms appropriate to iconic aesthetics. Even in scenes like the end of *The Winter's Tale*, the sculptural image functions almost in an anti-iconic way that owes more to Augustine and the Italian Renaissance than to the icon tradition. The statue's power over Leontes is in its imitative naturalism, the revelatory beauty that gestures toward its creator, not in the symbolic order of its timeless forms. And yet, if we reverse the perspective and take on the vision of the actor gazing upon the faces of his audience - a Chorus or

Epilogue praying for a muse of fire or for pardon and grace - a strangely iconic dynamic in Shakespeare's visual aesthetics comes into view.

Nicholas of Cusa understood the iconic gaze as a manifestation of the divine gaze which holds in being that which it views and which views all things from every possible perspective. In *Henry V*, Shakespeare figures the actor/audience relationship in similar terms, transmuting the spectatorial audience into an iconic figure for the divine gaze.

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Today's Art Historian in Edmund Spenser's *Visions of the Worlds Vanitie*

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Spenser's *Visions of the Worlds Vanitie* is a series of twelve sonnets, published in his volume of *Complaints* (1590/91) and often called "emblematic" because its poetic imagery visualizes vignettes that can be seen in Andrea Alciato's emblems. The speaker's sequential experiences of ten, small visionary dramas will be the focus of my paper, to the extent that these activate the word-and-image trope Holly, Mitchell, and Moxey use to explore the role of today's art historian.

Spenser's speaker announces in the first sonnet that

Unto my eyes strange showes presented were

Picturing that, which I in mind embraced,

That yet those sights empassion me full nere.

Such as they were (faire Ladie) take in worth,

That when time serves, may bring things better forth.

(10-14)¹

The "showes" avowedly stir the speaker, who promises that his feelings – while maybe not immediately like Will Ladislaw's – "may bring things better forth" (14). His experience wrought by visions of mutability, not unlike Holly's "melancholy"

¹ *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, et al (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989).

and Mitchell's "double consciousness," promise some "things" new, so that for us, his sonnets become ekphrastic icons born of iconoclasm and translated through Moxey's "temporal difference." Not unlike Holly, Moxey, and Mitchell, this speaker is skeptical about the power of "writing on images" (literally, "iconography"), but he trusts those "that read these ruins tragicall / Learne by their losse" (9). The poetic interaction between Spenser's beholder and his images can serve, I believe, as avowedly *anachronistic* commentary on the art historian imagined today by visual cultural studies.

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The Evil Eye: Spectacles in Shakespeare

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There is a long, albeit broken, tradition in Western ethics of opposition to the spectacular. It extends from the Decalogue to Baudrillard's critique of postmodern hyper-reality. For three thousand years, it has been understood that visual spectacles provide an effective way to bypass reason. They contain the possibility of influencing thought and behaviour by nonrational means, and this has deeply disturbed many commentators in every era.

During the English Renaissance opposition to images took a primarily liturgical form. The secular implications of idolatry were not neglected, however, and the discussion frequently focussed around the theatre. Antitheatrical criticism was often answered, and sometimes echoed, from the stage. In this paper I argue that Shakespeare considers the ethics of the spectacle throughout his career. Having prepared the ground for a defence of visual apprehension in general in his earlier work, he appears to reach a coherent and comprehensive defence of spectacles in his "last plays," especially *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

In part this may be due to the increased opportunities for technological spectacle offered by the construction of the Globe. Yet Shakespeare also makes a rational case

for the morality of visual perception and pleasure, subtly reminding his audiences of the extent to which the stability of the English state depends upon impressive displays of power. He also goes a considerable way towards rehabilitating Catholic and even magical understandings of the ethical impact of images.

The Lute as Icon
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The lute was not only a musical instrument, a source of auditory delight. It was also a part of Elizabethan visual culture, depicted in painting, intarsia, and other media. And it appeared as a hand prop on the stage often enough to be termed “iconic.” The instrument figures in the staging of numerous plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. When playgoers saw those lutes, what meaning did they have? One way of answering this question is to examine this stage direction in *Timon of Athens*: “Enter Cupid with the masque of Ladies as Amazons, with lutes in their hands, dancing and playing.” What exactly is the cultural context of this direction and how does it affect the way we interpret the lutes? If the lutes constitute a visual symbol, how may we discover that symbolism? I plan to address these questions in the hope of arriving at some useful conclusions, however tentative.

The Thing Inviolable: Materiality and Meaning in *The Spanish Tragedy*
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Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* explores the idea of “the icon” through its interest in what Huston Diehl calls “the function of visible signs.” Using the play’s alleged anti-Catholic ethic as a framework, scholars like Diehl have examined the play’s alleged rejection of language in favor of action, imagery, and iconography; in

contrast, others have highlighted the play's investment in words. Both visible materials and verbal signifiers are important in the play, but they are at odds with each other. The play presents itself as "containing matter, not common things," equating materiality with value. And yet, as the play reminds us in words, language cannot easily reveal that matter, for "words have several works." This paper argues that the play is interested in what happens when material things that seem like they *should* be self-evident are instead ambiguous or inconsistently interpreted – mediated, in other words, by a language that nonetheless fails in its ability to apprehend, create, or describe material reality. This failure of the symbolic, representative function of language, coupled with the failure of visible and material artifacts to circumvent language by creating meaning directly, recalls Lacan's analysis of psychosis. Psychosis is a psychological organization and, correlatively, a relationship between meaning and language. The clinical structure of psychosis provides a model of reading that can help readers understand the relationship between rhetoric and iconography in *The Spanish Tragedy*, revealing both the interrelatedness and irreconcilable tension between the two, and thereby demonstrating why the play itself represents "endless tragedy."

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"In Remembrance of a Shroud": Women and the Iconic Labor of Death

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Folger Shakespeare Library

The shrouded body is an iconic image in the memento mori tradition. Laying out the dead, however -- the labor of washing and winding long associated with women that produces the shrouded body -- remains elusive in representation, visual or otherwise. This essay puts the familiar icon in dialogue with the much less visible evidence of material labor, as well as with moments of burial evoked by Shakespeare (e.g., in *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*). I argue that doing so allows us to see the icon as a metonym for material practices that transition the body from a messy fleshly state to an object fit for burial rites. The invisibility of women's labor is key to this transition, as the shroud becomes the veil covering the all-too-real decaying flesh. Because even as the icon asks the viewer to remember that decaying flesh, the rhetorical framing positions the decay both into the past ("remember") and into the future ("you too will die"). Thus the transition between the newly deceased body and the skeletal state also deeply associated with memento mori becomes always already accomplished -- but only if the labor of women helping produce that transformation remains invisible.



Liminal Gardens: Edenic Iconography and the Disruption of Sexual Difference in Tragedy

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Shakespearean comedies often present female characters who through the act of crossdressing are temporarily able to usurp masculine prerogative, power, and privilege, disrupting culturally established norms regarding essentialized, oppositional gender. Similar patterns of female unfixing of gender appear in the tragedies, however without the benefit of the putting on of masculine attire. Rather than crossdressing serving as the opportunity for women to transgress identity boundaries, tragedies often associate this usurpation with Edenic iconography either in the form of paradisiacal gardens settings, or in connection with metaphorical garden or bower imagery. Women's bodies work within or themselves become botanical spaces. This pattern can be seen at work in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, where both Tamora and Lavinia blur the boundaries of oppositional gender, operate within or as pre- and post-Lapsarian Edenic settings, and threaten by their disruption of sexual difference, the very perpetuation of patriarchal hegemony thought to have been established in the Genesis garden.

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Fatal Colours and the Political Iconography of the First Tetralogy

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Generally I'm interested in how Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays test different metaphors of political embodiment by pitting fantasies of sovereignty (e.g. the so-called "king's two bodies") against alternative corporatist understandings of early modern England. In this paper, I plan to show how these metaphors are evidenced in the political iconography of colours in the early history plays. *1 Henry VI's* Temple Garden scene famously establishes a de facto iconography for the first tetralogy, allegorizing the beginning of the "War of the Roses" by having various English noblemen pluck roses to indicate their allegiances. This iconography can be read across the *Henry VI* plays in the persistent stage presence and discussion of banners and rose-pins, as well as the metaphorical presence of the colours in the bodies of the actors on stage. Henry VI attempts to cleave the association of the colours with the houses of York and Lancaster, but his failure to understand the power of these

associations reaches its apex in 3 *Henry VI*'s gruesome pietà in which fathers and sons unknowingly kill each other, when the anonymous son's face becomes an icon for the English commonwealth riven by the "fatal colours" of Lancaster and York. By reading the political associations ascribed to the presence of colours on stage, I hope to show the *Henry VI* plays foster and critique a changing early modern aesthetic of political incorporation.

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The Personification of the *Paragone* in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*

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I suggest that the interaction between the Painter and Poet in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* is deserving of more critical attention; not only do these characters represent an engagement with contemporary artistic theory, the Painter and Poet personify the *paragone* debate itself—a debate that pervades Renaissance visual theory and is often referenced in dramatic works. The very elements that compose the *paragone* are utilized to personify the discourse within the play. The Painter and Poet appear visibly on stage; their materiality highlights the visual aspect of the debate while the manner in which the debate is presented—through personification—results in an emphasis and tension on the rhetorical opposition and on the representational nature of poetry itself. Therefore, my paper analyzes the sensorial, emotional, and intellectual effects of personifying and dramatizing *paragone* discourse. By engaging in an interdisciplinary reading and through revising the way in which we approach these minor characters, I explore how the personification of the *paragone* leads us to a greater understanding of the reciprocal role between Renaissance verbal and visual.

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***As You Like It* and the Ages of Man**

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In act two of *As You Like It* Jaques delivers a speech that sums up the entirety of life in twenty-eight lines, beginning with “the infant / Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms” and concluding with the final stage of “second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.” By dividing the progress of life into seven distinct stages Shakespeare invokes the type of images that represented the life-cycle schematically, sometimes as a wheel or circle, sometimes as an ascending and descending staircase, sometimes by pairing each stage of life with a different type of animal, and frequently by representing the changes of the human body as it grows older. The Ages of Man, or Ages of Life, were expressed in text and image, in manuscript and print, and were integrated into the architecture present in early modern Europe. With this speech Shakespeare therefore contends with a long history of visually representing the aging process. This paper examines the interplay of age-related iconic material in *As You Like It* and reads Jaques’ speech as a moment of transformation, as Shakespeare adapts a visual and emblematic tradition of representing the progress of life into dramatic form.

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Iconography, Iconoclasm, and the Divine Encounter on the Pageant Stage

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Protestant disquiet over representation in the sixteenth century was not so monolithic as is popularly assumed. Nevertheless the idolatry which so many Reformers identified with the papist religious practices they rebelled against remained for them a recognized danger inherent in the arts. An example of this difference and disquiet can be found in the story of the Akedah (the Binding of

Isaac) as presented in two plays, the *Barbour's Playe* of the suppressed *Chester Cycle* and the publication in English of *Abraham Sacrifiant* by French Protestant theologian Theodore de Bèze. Although these plays are connected only by subject matter and historical coincidence (de Bèze's play was published in London within months of what was to be the *Chester Cycle's* final performance), both texts show evidence of editorial tampering: the Barbers revised their play by adding text from another pageant and de Bèze's play is accompanied by woodcuts illustrating the action. This essay examines the changes made to both these texts using the theology of icons as articulated in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Though centuries of divergent tradition separate Eastern and Western Christian approaches to representation, I argue that certain discrete elements of the Orthodox tradition, especially as they apply to the practice of painting icons, can be instructive here in understanding the great difference to the approaches taken by the Barbers in re-writing their play and de Bèze's publisher in illustrating his. Ultimately, I conclude that civic revision presents itself as a devotional activity that works to reveal the Akedah (and typologically, the Messiah) whereas in de Bèze's text and illustrations work to read it.

