

## ABSTRACTS

Kristen Abbott Bennett  
Tufts University

At the Crossroads: Intersections of Classical and Contemporary Protest Literature in  
*Pierce Penilesse*

Thomas Nashe's repeated imagery of crossroads in *Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Devil* networks classical and contemporary sources, rhetorical practices, and defensive postures to generate a distinctly English form of protest literature. Throughout *Pierce*, Nashe protests the influx of foreign influences in Elizabethan London, even as he humorously offers them as a foil for the city's native vices. *Pierce's* Ovidian epigraph, "*barbaria grandis habere nihil*" ("now poverty great barbarism we hold"), manifests Nashe's rhetorical and thematic project of *translatio studii et imperii*, or "the translation of learning and empire" (I.151; *Elegies* 3.8.4). Although Jocelyn Wogan-Browne argues the translation of classical sources into early English poetics is "so deeply written into literary culture that writers might not even have registered it consciously," Nashe appears painfully aware of "the double sense of dependence on and difference from Latin thought and literature" (*Idea of the Vernacular* 4.1 318). Nashe's title-page motto epitomizes this "double sense" by translating Christopher Marlowe's Englished version of the *Amores* into Latin through a process I call "double translation imitatio." Jenny Mann has recently argued that sixteenth-century English rhetoric is always already caught in an "agonistic drama of translation – a drama in which efforts to achieve classical eloquence seem only to confirm English barbarity" (*Outlaw Rhetoric* 20). As much as Nashe recognizes this double-bind, he energetically attempts to overgo English "barbarity" by marshaling just about every rhetorical device that he can – and then inventing some. This paper demonstrates how *Pierce* intersects Juvenal's classical program with invocations of Christopher Marlowe's translations of Ovid with Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* to protest the fall of the seven liberal arts to the seven deadly sins.

Chris Cobb  
Saint Mary's College

The Ghost of Hamlet and the Spirit of Revolution in Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs*

In this essay, I argue that Lorraine Hansberry's posthumously produced African tragedy, *Les Blancs*, develops its political plot as an adaptation of *Hamlet's* in order to create a structure of emotional identifications that would guide an American audience unfamiliar with colonial Africa to sympathetic engagement with the struggle against the colonial occupation. Hansberry's use of *Hamlet* as a framework for a play of political protest

emphasizes, I further suggest, the element of political protest in *Hamlet* that is often obscured by considerations of the play as primarily a psychological study. The essay makes this case by explicating the means Hansberry uses to make the adaptation and demonstrating how these adaptations position the audience. Four interrelated devices of adaptation are key: (1) the use of major plot elements (such as the return of a son, Tshembe Matoseh, from exile for the funeral of his father), (2) the use of sparing allusions to *Hamlet* to connect characters in *Les Blancs* to characters in *Hamlet*, (3) the reproduction of Hamlet's mystery in Tshembe to imbue the characters surrounding Tshembe with political motives for investigating him, and (4) the use of the supernatural. By making perception of the supernatural the source of Tshembe's call to political action, Hansberry's adaptation foregrounds what is implicit in Shakespeare—only those who can see the Ghost are empowered to understand and resist tyranny and corruption. By enabling an American audience to see what the American character in the play, Charlie Morris, cannot—the figure of the supernatural—Hansberry offers the audience an opportunity to take up the role of Horatio that Charlie is incapable of taking up: his struggle is not to end up as Polonius.

Melissa J. Jones  
Eastern Michigan University

#### Lucretia's Dagger and Aretino's Point: Erotic Contemplation in Shakespeare and Middleton

Thomas Middleton's *A Game At Chess* (1624) was celebrated and censored by Jacobean playgoers and authorities, respectively, for its spoof on a possible nuptial alliance with England's religious and commercial rival, Spain. This very public act of protest nearly cost Middleton his life and it effectively ended his career as a playwright: he never wrote for the stage again. Critics note, not without irony, that the play itself features a castrated hero, the White Bishop's Pawn, who stands as an icon of repressive state censorship. Instead of seeing the castrated Pawn merely as a site of closure, however, my essay aims to explore the positive values of social change that he might represent if we find in him a visual resonance with the defaced *hermai* that frame Pietro Aretino's notoriously pornographic "Posture 1" from the *Sonetti Lussuriosi* (1527). This imposition of pornographic fantasy onto the play's serious allegory of state might seem a bit cheeky at first; but, I argue, Middleton's exploration of the politics of sexual representation undergirds his larger understanding of how repressive regimes of self and nation work—and how they might be resisted. Reading the castrated Pawn as a simultaneous provocation to as well as warning against illicit libidinal action not only rethinks Middleton's commentary on the Stuart court: it forcibly rewrites popular fantasies of sexual violence wherein the body of the raped *woman* serves as an emblem for "just" war and, at the same time, erotic representation. In searching out moments in *A Game At Chess* where the pornographic—which is itself so often protested against—encodes alternative and embodied forms of social protest, I aim to rethink the uses of pornography in the literary and popular cultures of the early modern period and today.

Bronwyn V. Wallace  
University of Pennsylvania

Precarious Typology: Futurity and Failure in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*

My paper pursues the theological poetics of futurity and failure in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. It traces the movement from Lanyer's claims on intimate, embodied readerly capacities in the dedicatory poems, through the radical feminist eschatology of the title poem, to the nostalgic lament of "The Description of Cooke-ham", arguing that in this movement the volume articulates a politics and poetics of the pitfalls of futurity and the amenities of loss and failure. Through readings of Eve Sedgwick and Origen, I take up Lanyer's recourse to the hermeneutic amenities of typology as a mode of "reparative reading" in a theological register – in taking up exegesis as a feminist mode, Lanyer produces a radical eschatology that can imagine a feminist future, predicated not on the terms of the material world, but on faith in the world to come. But in "Cooke-ham," with its periodization of the pleasures of female community in an irrecoverable past, Lanyer moves into a valedictory mode that critiques the utility of the very hermeneutic program proposed by the dedicatory poems and "Salve Deus." Turning to Heather Love's work on the queer politics of loss, of "feeling backward," I ask how "Cooke-ham" might contribute to contemporary debates about the queer-theoretical potential of mourning, loss, and nostalgia as ways of feeling and of knowing.

To my mind, Lanyer's volume is fairly straightforwardly legible as a document of protest – it contests so many structures, from male dominance of communities of letters to exegetical tradition to class hierarchies and property law, and is at the same time keenly conscious of the precarity of such protests, their conduciveness to failure. The more difficult question, I think, is what that protest (and its failures) means to our present – as critics, as teachers, as feminists, as queers – and how we might approach its politics and hermeneutics in our own moment without collapsing its historical specificity. My most preliminary thinking on how best to adapt this work to our seminar comes from the obvious fact that Lanyer is not Shakespeare – that she lacks the cultural preeminence that makes Shakespeare amenable to adaptation to almost any modern political end. I'm thinking of Jennifer Summit's work on *lostness* as the condition of women writers' relationship to the English canon, and asking myself about *obscurity* as another topos in which we might observe the coalescence of many of this paper's commitments – to radicalism; to ostensibly outmoded forms of feminism and of devotion; to the politics and aesthetics of loss and failure. What happens when we encounter a mode of protest that resists being instrumentalized in the politics of the present? Alternatively, what politics of *refusal* might emerge from readings in a text whose central concerns are with irrecoverable loss?

Ian McAdam  
University of Lethbridge

### Shakespearean Plays as Protest against Theological and Sexual Constraint

My interest in Shakespeare as a potentially radical writer originates in my consideration of Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare, specifically in terms of the sexual and religious anxieties that underwrite the project of masculine self-fashioning in the works of both playwrights. *Doctor Faustus* might be considered the most obvious example from the Marlowe canon of a play that interrogates the effects of Reformation theology, in particular Calvinism, on early modern self-authorization, at the same time that it uncovers more specifically sexual anxieties, which subsequently become the obvious focus of *Edward II*. Although we might expect Shakespeare to be less intellectually concerned with Calvinism – unlike Marlowe he was not exposed to the preaching of William Perkins at Cambridge – his presumed Catholic upbringing may also have inclined him to be critical of some of the more psychologically destabilizing doctrines of Reformed theology, such as predestination, and there is certainly some suggestion of an ongoing critique of Calvinism in the tragedies. The more I study Shakespeare the less inclined I am to accept or promulgate the clichéd comparison of a radical Marlowe and a more conservative Shakespeare. While his survival as a playwright for so much longer than Marlowe may explain Shakespeare's greater maturity as an artist, I have begun to believe that the Shakespeare canon as a whole ultimately suggests a comparably radical theological/ psychological worldview to the work of the famous "wild boy" of the Elizabethan theatre.

Admittedly this assertion constitutes a very broad claim about a very complex issue. I propose for the current seminar to focus on three Shakespearean plays which explore, and subtly protest, the connections between theological and sexual constraint in early modern England: *Twelfth Night*, the last of the romantic comedies; *The Winter's Tale*, the play I have come to regard as perhaps the central statement of Shakespeare's radically humanist vision; and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, his final collaboration with Fletcher, in which the ostensible resurgence of highly conservative sexual politics actually serves to highlight (at least a plea for) a radical revision of human sexual possibilities. The gulling of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* has raised for scholars the political significance of his standing as "a kind of puritan"(2.3.130), and the amount of (natural) condemnation or sympathy such a position would entail for a late Elizabethan audience. Many critics admit to the likelihood of increasing sympathy for Malvolio when, locked in a "dark room," he is treated as a demoniac by Feste as Sir Topaz the curate. Perhaps the most cogent political reading has been offered by Donna Hamilton, who suggests that Shakespeare focuses ultimately "not on puritanism or on ... exorcism, but on the extent to which authority will fabricate [lies and false accusations] in order to protect itself, thus laying bare the strategies of containment ... and scapegoating that the ecclesiastical officials had been using [in their attacks on Puritans]" (*Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* 100). The possibility of sympathy toward Malvolio is increased through a subtle link between him and the object of his adoration, Olivia. Sir Toby calls her "a Cathayan"(2.3.71) which, following Warren and Wells in the Oxford

edition, I take to suggest “a Catharan,” a proponent of a medieval heresy known for its extreme asceticism and a label applied by Elizabethans derogatorily to Puritans. By dramatizing the uncontrollable sexual desires of Malvolio and the highly sympathetic Olivia, Shakespeare manages a critique of both the self-repression encouraged by (excessive) spiritual self-idealization, and the political repression arising from the demonization of those struggling to “work through,” in a Freudian sense, the reality of their own sexual desires. The pattern of (covert) artistic sympathy for the sexually repressed (and, in Malvolio’s case, socially marginalized) may also cast some light on the role of Antonio, whose homoerotic passion for Sebastian is very difficult to dismiss as simply a standard example of early modern amity. In *The Winter’s Tale*, the homoerotic pastoral reflected in the boyhood affections of Leontes and Polixenes is daringly described as a direct challenge to the central Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin: “we knew not/ The doctrine of ill-doing ... we should have answered heaven/ Boldly, ‘not guilty,’ the imposition cleared/ Hereditary ours”(1.2.68-74). This crucial moment is in fact the culmination of a strategy within the tragicomic romances where Oedipal incest, at times coupled with homoeroticism, becomes associated with Original Sin. The “illicit” desires of homoeroticism and incest (Leontes and Polixenes are repeatedly referred to as brothers) are in *The Winter’s Tale* apparently largely contained through a strong son-in-law figure Florizel. His identification with the sun-god Apollo clarifies the rather enigmatic androgyny in the Pericles-Marina reunion evident in the earlier play, and moreover purges the Leontes-Perdita reunion of incestuous implications. Nevertheless the homoeroticism of *The Winter’s Tale* maintains an elegiac presence. Florizel stands in for both Leontes’ original erotic connection to Polixenes (since Leontes responds to the sight of the young man with undeniable erotic intensity) as well as the dead Mamillius, who – though his name might suggest a mother complex, or the narcissism of inchoate youth – emerges as “the suitable subject for an elegy” (Stephen Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space*, 215). Mamillius thus suggests not so much pre-Oedipal paralysis, but tragic loss which haunts the collective unconscious in the world of the play. Such “haunting,” I will argue, continues through *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The darkest of Shakespeare’s tragicomic romances, this play is rather relentless in its imposition, on all of its characters, of patriarchal and heterosexual norms – even through its wholly pagan theological apparatus – but it at the same time, paradoxically, is breathtakingly eloquent in its communication of the passionate and pure nature of various kinds of same-sex attraction.

Jeffrey Butcher  
Arizona State University

#### Recovering the Political Left: Leninism and Shakespeare in America

Political Leftism has become nearly obsolete in Western Shakespeare studies. Marxist theory has been stripped of its inherently political characteristics. While he once stood as an oppositional threat to capitalism, Marx now has been reified into a figure that supports capitalist hegemony through his canonical inclusion in cultural studies, classical

literature, and even business blueprints. Although Marx has survived in Shakespeare studies, more than two decades removed from the fall of the Wall and the Soviet Union, scholars retreat from utilizing Marx as a guide for political practice. The absence of a political role for Shakespeare in Marxist contexts is seemingly still in part due to the specter of Stalinism. As a result, scholars have taken reductionist approaches to justify Marx's cultural and intellectual value in literary studies, excluding the political polemics.

In this paper, I take a different approach to Marxist uses of Shakespeare. I argue that Lenin, the political embodiment of Marx, affords us the opportunity to recover a Leftist discourse in Shakespeare studies without a reductive operation and in a context that precedes the taint of Stalinism. To illustrate my argument, I examine Shakespeare in a neglected Leftist literary tradition in the West: Shakespeare and the American Communist experience in the 1920s and 1930s. The American proletarian literary movements at this time were shaped by the American Party, and the American Party followed what it believed to be a revolutionary Leninist practice. The use of Leninism in political literature by the American Party demonstrates a Leftist tactic that defiantly responded to the dominant capitalist social structure at the time. And even though it does not appear in scholarship, Shakespeare played a contributing role in the American Party's literary agenda.

The Leninist political philosophy that the American Party followed is mostly based on Lenin's idea of the vanguard as outlined in his key work *What is to be Done?* In addition, Lenin's theories on the use of literature as a powerful organizing agent were eagerly adopted by the American Party. I look at two specific examples that illustrate how Shakespeare was appropriated and adapted by the American Party. The first is a questionnaire titled "Are Artists People?" written and published by the editors of the *New Masses*. In this piece, Shylock's famous speech from *The Merchant of Venice* is extracted and developed into a piece of protest literature against Leftist sympathizers who would not join the movement. The second is an experimental performance by Communist-affiliate Robert Lewis (of the Group Theatre) which he called "Red Hamlet." In this skit, Lewis' Hamlet serves as a model for a revolutionary attitude. These examples show that literature not only served as a form of protest, but that protest communicated through several forms of media was considered to be literature.

In our current time of inextricable socio-economic political dilemmas, Shakespeare and the American Party tackled through a Leninist lens may help to demonstrate ways social relations work through political art and literature. Radical political movements in the 1920s and 1930s sought to work through many of the questions we still debate today that need to be answered. These include questions about the function and nature of literature and its social role. How do art and literature related to politics? What are the differences, if any, between art and propaganda? What sorts of texts fit under the label of literature? Leninism demands that a collective consciousness is built that responds to all cases of oppression, no matter what class is affected. Although popular media provide modes that the people can take ownership of Shakespeare on a mass level, I believe that a vanguardist approach to Shakespeare that seeks to challenge dominant culture in order to represent subordinate classes must first start in an academic setting so that we may develop an organized Leftist political discourse.

Jennifer Flaherty  
Georgia College and State University

### Our Virtues Lie in the Interpretation of the Time: Adapting *Coriolanus*

The politically charged plot of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* opens the play up to critics and authors who use the play to address the social issues and political problems of their own time periods. From Nahum Tate's Restoration play to Ralph Fiennes' recent film, adaptations of *Coriolanus* have become a form of social protest that reflects and refracts the atmosphere of protest in the play itself. *Coriolanus* builds on Shakespeare's early portrayals of crowds and revolution by devoting several scenes to the political unrest in Rome. From the beginning of the play, audiences are confronted with unnamed citizens who are fighting their own government over control of the country's food supplies. In that first scene, Menenius and the citizens, using an elaborate fable involving the belly's importance to the human body, debate the role of the people in governing the state. When the protest of the people earns greater representation of their interests in government, Martius claims that "the rabble should have first unroof'd the city ere so prevail'd with me; it will in time win upon power, and throw forth greater themes for insurrection's arguing."<sup>1</sup> The collective revolt that Martius despises is established as a contrast for Martius's later individual revolt. He is the next character to use "insurrection's arguing," and he does so to protest his own rejection by the citizens (who are as easily manipulated as Jack Cade's followers in *Henry VI, Part II*).

The conflict between the citizens and Martius has a varied critical reception; while some argue that the play glorifies the power of the individual over the collective, others claim that it is meant to illustrate the plight of the working class. My approach to the reception of *Coriolanus* moves beyond 'reader response' to 'writer response,' suggesting that adaptations reveal the underlying possibilities and problems that resonate with successive generations as they read Shakespeare. Because Shakespeare's language is ambiguous, with speeches that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, authors or directors who transform Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* consistently seek to add specificity. Their adaptations adjust language, add scenes, and emphasize conflict in order to more clearly direct the audience's perception of the play. By articulating an interpretation to *Coriolanus*, these adaptations make connections with conflicts specific to their own time periods, using Shakespeare to make targeted social commentary.

My paper will give particular attention to the way that *Coriolanus* has been adapted by playwrights and directors for the stage and screen to address specific political forms of protest. I argue that dramatic revisions of *Coriolanus* use the innate flexibility of Shakespeare's text to address key theoretical debates in a theatrical forum. This practice began with Nahum Tate's version of *Coriolanus*, which is subtitled "The ingratitude of a common-wealth." At a time in which England itself was divided about the political roles of the king, the people, and elected officials, Tate uses Shakespeare's characters to draw a contrast between the

Tate re-writes the play by minimizing Martius's faults and

---

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Arden Edition, ed. Philip Brockbank (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 2001), 1.1.217-219.

adding new characters to demonize, presenting Martius as an unappreciated hero to both his country and family.

While Tate's version suggests a desire to replace or clarify Shakespeare's text, adaptations from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries rely on an audience's foreknowledge of the play to emphasize the alterations of the authors. Bertolt Brecht and his ghostwriters use the play to highlight the power of the working classes. Just as he revises Shakespeare's citizens in order to address contemporary social and economic conditions, Brecht presents Martius as a flawed warrior rather than a true hero. John Osborne's *A Place Calling Itself Rome* also reworks the two protest scenes, but Osborne emphasizes the dangers of collective thinking and encourages the individualism of Marcius. Ralph Fiennes's recent film version of *Coriolanus* uses his portrayal of setting and media in the film to connect the conflicts between the characters with recent violent conflicts and protests. Fiennes intersperses scenes shot specifically for the film with images from "found footage from all different sources" in order to establish "an atmosphere of unrest."<sup>2</sup> By utilizing *Coriolanus* as a recognizable medium through which writers can articulate their own social commentary, these adaptations function as indicators of the ideals and biases of their particular cultural moments.

Shankar Raman  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

### Protesting Bodies: *King Lear*

In this paper, I ruminate upon the protesting body in *King Lear*, taking as grounding assumption an anthropological dialectic regarding the relationship of body to world: mediating the experience of the physical body, the social body writes the logic of the universe of social relationships "into the 'natural' symbols that the body affords"<sup>3</sup>; and, conversely, the social universe itself becomes available first and foremost through corporeal experience. In this sense, the physical body functions, on the one hand, as a figure for the social world. On the other, its very presence as body, naturalises the social body, producing what Harry Berger calls "the effect of nature."<sup>4</sup> Thus, for instance, the differential relations of gender, age and genealogy constitutive of social position – i.e. of one's place in the social body – are correlated to physiological indices such as sex, marks of aging, family resemblances, and so on. In turn, qua physiological indices, these 'naturalise' the differential relationships they re-present. That social categories require the physical body in order to be articulated results in their partaking of the latter's ostensible immediacy, its just being-there.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Coriolanus*, directed by Ralph Fiennes (2011; New York, NY: Weinstein Company Home Entertainment, 2012), DVD.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Berger Jr., "From Body to Cosmos: The Dynamics of Representation in Precapitalist Society,"

Kevin Goodwin  
Western University

### Young Hotspur's Cause: Images of Youth and Revolt in *1 Henry IV*

My paper titled "Young Hotspur's Cause: Images of Youth and Revolt in *1 Henry IV*," explores the implications of Shakespeare's decision to change Hotspur's age; a choice that becomes far more interesting when examined in light of the many rebellions and revolts of the 1590's. The real Hotspur was in fact three years older than the king, and in making him a youth, Shakespeare opens up dramatic possibilities that would otherwise be unavailable. Through sheer force of personality, Hotspur takes center stage in Shakespeare's retelling of the story. In *Holinshed's Chronicles*, however, the true villain is Thomas Percy, the Earle of Worcester, whose study, he writes "was ever to procure malice, and set things in a broil" (22). In *1 Henry IV*, Westmorland leaves little doubt that Worcester is, in fact, the main antagonist, and yet the fact that "young" Hotspur is often placed at the head of the rebellion creates a slight discrepancy that warrants a more detailed investigation.

Although Hotspur occupies a relatively privileged position in the social hierarchy, other characters consistently describe him in terms of his youth. The problem, however, is that in early modern England, youths were seen as political non-entities; a fact which Shakespeare complicates in his presentation of Hotspur. Shakespeare draws on a wide range of images related to youth, their malleability, their lack of judgment, and hot temper in order to provide some context for Hotspur's actions. In *2 Henry IV*, for instance, the Archbishop of York's dismissive attitude becomes apparent when he describes Shrewsbury as "young Hotspur's cause" (1.3.28). The association between youth and rebellion, however, would not have been lost on an audience of the 1590's. In an article titled "New Directions: 'The Devil Take Such Cozeners!': Radical Shakespeare in *1 Henry IV*," Chris Fitter explores the involvement of youths in several contemporary revolts. He writes that in 1595, thirteen separate popular insurrections, incited by food shortages, eventually culminated in the Apprentice's Riot. In this particular incident a crowd of thousands, described as "youths" in official accounts, "tore down pillories, marched on tower hill and drove back the watch" (101). Fitter's work positions Hal within certain countercultural movements of the 1590's, yet the idea that Hotspur stands as a central figure for revolt is given little attention. Youths at this time were, perhaps unreasonably, constructed in opposition to patriarchal concepts of order and self-control, and unsurprisingly, most uprisings and revolts were described as the work of youths. Social historians like Paul Griffiths, Alexandra Shepard, and John Walter have all challenged the official accounts, showing that the crowd's makeup was in fact far more varied. In defining these riots as the work of youths, however, the state was able to diminish their political impact. Once a crowd of hungry rioters became accepted as a group misdirected youths, the ideological strength of their position was much reduced. The idea that Shrewsbury can be described as "young Hotspur's cause" and not Worcester's becomes quite interesting in this context. Although the political

significance of Shrewsbury is very different from that of a full-blown food riot, the representational strategies are strikingly familiar.

This paper builds on recent scholarship on the liminal period between adolescence and adulthood that existed in early modern England. My work interrogates the ways that these adjacent categories are constructed in relation to one another while carefully delineating boundaries that exist between them. Recent work by Edal Lamb and Kate Chedgzoy has done much to foreground the political issues at stake here. Lamb's definition of youth as "a status relative to figures of authority" is tremendously useful in helping us understand youth as a politicised category (4). Paul Griffiths reminds us, however, that ideas of youth were highly contested. He describes youth as a loose set of images or ideas that sometimes conflicted with one another. Taken together, these images formed the basis for what Griffiths defines as the "rhetoric of youth" (53). For Griffiths, these competing images of youth "were partly derived from a fund of pliable images and manipulative vocabulary which could be easily adjusted to fit specific rhetorical purposes" (53). In *1 Henry IV*, Shakespeare draws on conflicting notions of youth in order to characterize Hotspur as someone who, as Roberta Barker observes, is simultaneously "a miracle of men and a buffoon" (306). Hotspur is not a simple character. He refracts, and in some ways doubles many of the other male characters. In examining the broader implications of these representational strategies, we discover that "youth" is often constructed in opposition to patriarchal notions of civility and self control. This rhetoric becomes especially problematic in relation to rebellion and riot, where it was used to marginalise potential voices of resistance.

Mark Kaethler  
University of Guelph

### Protesting Perfection: Irony in Middleton and Shakespeare's Disguised Duke Plays

Irony is commonly understood as a witty inversion of meaning both in contemporary everyday life and early modern rhetorical practice, yet Thomas Middleton provides a more complex definition of the trope in his masque *The World Tossed at Tennis* (1620), where *ironia* is the moment at which the eye "looks two ways at once" (125). Such a split viewpoint resembles Linda Hutcheon's modern theory of irony's edge whereby perception is divided between the literal and the figurative, creating a liminal interpretation that looks beyond binary structures or concrete semiotics, disrupting conventional methods of interpreting the world. Middleton's masque has a similar function in its efforts at the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War to vie between King James I's entrenched stance as a scholarly peacemaker and the militant protestant drive of his son, Charles, Prince of Wales. The masque advocates for neither position and instead provides an ambivalent middle ground between active and passive masculinities through the figure of Pallas, a female character played by a boy actor, who represents an additional in-between identity as both scholar and soldier. This ironic framework creates a form of protest through its efforts to show ruling figures that their rigid models of self-identity and governance do not adequately speak to the current socio-political

circumstances. In disintegrating masculine fantasies of perfection prevalent in Jacobean London, irony indirectly protests against patriarchy by aiming to dissolve the hierarchy and hegemony it depends upon in order to maintain control.

This paper aims to examine how irony's gap dissolves order through causing its interpreter to oscillate between binaries rather than settling on a singular, hegemonic one while simultaneously inciting a new sense of identity through the desire to establish a sense of closure. Irony thus protests containment and dominant modes of power that subject individuals to absolute, sovereign authority by elucidating that meaning and thus truth are never fixed. The work thus seeks to provide an alternative to the popular new historicist and cultural materialist subversion/containment debate in which scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt have appropriated Michel Foucault's models of sovereignty to observe transgression in early modern dramatic literature as a temporary moment authorities allow in order to reassert their own dominant order. Containment is thus typically thought to reign supreme over subversion. Irony complicates this hegemonic view of the interaction between the two and instead infers that authorial self-fashioning and governance resembles a process rather than perfection, for as the social world changes so must the outlooks of its rulers in order to properly manage it, especially when this larger world beyond the king's self is thought to be his second body. Irony infers a need for authorities to see themselves as of the world rather than distant and outside of it.

My interest will be in observing how Middleton's *The Phoenix* (1603-4) and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1604) utilize irony in different ways in order to frame and question the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. Unlike Shakespeare's play written for the King's Men, Middleton's drama utilizes a company of boy actors to establish what Michael Shapiro has identified as a multidimensional viewing experience. The open-ended, contractual conclusion of Middleton's drama reflexively draws upon the play's vision of social harmony, asking the audience to share in the vision but to also see it as a potential future world that still needs to be brought about in their reality. *Measure for Measure*, on the other hand, frames an oppressive regime that the audience is led to either accept or reject depending on their interpretation of the Duke's final actions. By examining the nuances between the two playwrights' dramatic usages of irony in these disguised duke plays, the paper aims to examine how their works protest in different ways against current regimes of dominance in order to envisage new, shared future power relations between the ruler and his people.

#### Works Cited

- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Print.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Middleton, Thomas. *The Phoenix*. Eds. Lawrence Danson and Ivo Kamps. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 91-127. Print.
- Middleton, Thomas and William Rowley. *The World Tossed at Tennis*. Ed. C.E. McGee. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 1405-30. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Measure for Measure*. Ed. N.W. Bawcutt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Maya Mathur  
University of Mary Washington

“I’ll call thee a plain cony-catcher”: Paternalism and Protest in the History Plays.

In his seminal study of popular protest, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1984), James C. Scott focuses on the silent and often-anonymous forms of dissent that were used by subordinate groups to register their grievances against those in authority. These strategies could range from implicit forms of protest, such as gossip, rumors, jokes, and slander, to explicit strategies of resistance, such as petitions and strikes. According to Scott, while lower-order protest is often equated with riot and rebellion, these strategies represent the exception rather than the rule for understanding elite-subaltern relations. His work is important because it expands on the language of resistance to include not only the material actions, but also the symbolic gestures used by the disenfranchised to challenge the existing order. For instance, oppressed peasants could protest against the high rents or excessive fines imposed by their landlords by refusing to work, but they could also express their discontent by slandering their public image. Thus, one of the central weapons in the plebeians’ arsenal lies in their ability to undermine the reputations of their social superiors. In this way, marginalized groups can subtly alter the parameters of rule, even when they are unable to overturn it.

In this paper, I wish to use Scott’s study of resistance to examine the encounters between elite and subaltern groups in *2 Henry VI* (c.1591-94) and *Sir Thomas More* (c.1592-92) respectively. In the first of these plays, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Lord Protector and uncle to Henry VI, takes time off from his political responsibilities to interrogate and punish the vagrant, Simon Simpcox, for trying to defraud an unsuspecting public with tales of his miraculous recovery from blindness. In the second text, Thomas More interrupts his serious work as sheriff of London to jest with and discipline a thief and a ruffian for their transgressions against the state. In both narratives, Gloucester and More are characterized by their sympathy for the poor and are, in turn, treated as important mediators between the commons and the king. However, their charity only extends towards the “deserving” poor, who defer to their authority and appeal directly for their intervention with the state. Since the vagrants and thieves they jest with would be classified as the “undeserving” poor – those who preferred idleness over labor – they are presented as perfectly legitimate targets for punishment.

At the same time, Gloucester and More’s public reputation for kindness sits uncomfortably with their private willingness to turn impoverished criminals into objects of comedy. Keeping Scott’s dynamic portrait of resistance in mind, I wish to explore the extent to which the subaltern figures in these texts undermine the positive images that Gloucester and More cultivate for themselves. In this context, the success or failure of the lower orders provides evidence as to whether the counselors’ paternalistic attitude towards the poor works in their favor or not. If Simpcox and his vagrant counterparts are seen to fail, their failure would illustrate the complicity between jests and the status quo. However, if they succeed, their ability to do so would indicate that comedy can act as an important measure of social protest.

Tessie Prakas  
Yale University

### The Office of a Verse: John Milton and the Poetics of Protest

This paper considers the poetic turn in the work of John Milton as a form of protest that embraces literature as a defense against certain dimensions of corrupt ecclesiastical practice. Beginning with Milton's decision to devote himself to poetry rather than entering the ministry, it reads his verse as evidence of his sense that the two vocations were in fact necessarily and fundamentally intertwined. The paper will focus particularly on the terms that Milton's verse employs to depict seductive but deeply problematic figures—in particular, Comus. Milton's pleasure in the aesthetic appeal of such figures is clearly evident, as famously affirmed by William Blake and others, but I will emphasize that his similarly well-documented attempts to caution his readers *against* their appeal often take a very particular—and less obvious—form that owes much to Milton's discomfort with the structure of organized ministry in both the Protestant and Catholic churches. The ministry features prominently as an object of critique in "Lycidas" and, of course, *Paradise Lost*, but Milton's preoccupation with it becomes evident even earlier in his career, and at a more subtle level, in his unusual deployment of certain conventions of masquing.

Milton's masque stages a protracted protest against moral depravity by foregrounding the exemplary virtue of the Lady, and by giving her the aid of divine forces in her efforts to resist the assault of vice. That assault, though, is not confined to an anti-masque, as was common practice in court masques of the period, but allowed to dominate the main action of the work. In court masques, moreover, order was typically restored through the intervention of the work's monarchical figures, often played by the king and queen themselves. In preventing such confinement or restoration, Milton is not only emphasizing the embattled position of human virtue, but also questioning the ability of mortal authorities properly to safeguard it. The plight of the Lady cannot be solved through the intervention of such authorities; she relies, instead, on the divine ministrations of Sabrina. Moreover, she has been threatened, in the first place, by a different form of self-assertion, by an individual who behaves a little like a despotic monarch, and a little like a despotic priest. Milton frequently describes Comus in terms that prefigure his lampooning of the "high abomination" of corrupt priesthood in the antiprelatical tracts, and this is thrown sharply into relief when set against Sabrina's positive ministrations. The paper focuses particularly on the postural dynamics of Comus's interaction with the Lady, and on the suggestions of forced communion in his urging her to "be wise, and taste." Milton is using the form of the masque, I suggest, not only to query the limits of monarchical authority, but also to protest episcopal abuses of power.

I propose, then, that the "power, beside the office of a pulpit" that poetry famously has for Milton is to help the reader cultivate literary and spiritual discernment by framing appealing figures as objects of suspicion on the basis of their quasi-ministerial traits. Moreover, this extra- ecclesiastical form of spiritual pedagogy is implicitly set up as an ideal model for those *in* the pulpit whose excessive, self-serving prelatial arrogance Milton is critiquing. In choosing not to enter the ministry, Milton seems in fact to have

been holding to a theoretical ideal of unsullied priestliness, and imagining his embrace of verse as the most cogent form of protest against its corruption.