

## **Abstracts: Performing Guilt and Reputation in Renaissance Drama**

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### **Staging Italian Law in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure***

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This paper analyzes Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* as an exemplar of the cross-cultural exchanges in legal ideas inherent to Shakespeare's Italian plays. Although *Measure for Measure* takes place in Vienna, the play builds from well-known Italian sources including Cinzio's *Gli Ecatommiti* and *Epitia*. Shakespeare incorporates not only narrative elements of the *novelle* genre and Cinzio's *tragedia mista*, but also specific references to Italian legal strategies. For example, Duke Vincentio's initial decision to appoint Angelo directly parallels Machiavelli's Cesare Borgia instance in *il principe*—where the prince had appointed Remirro de Orco to restore order and subsequently executed de Orco to gain the community's gratitude. Shakespeare then integrates Italian social circumstances in his plays that are radically different from England's legal environment.

Using *Measure for Measure* as a case study, my paper explains what it means for Shakespeare to stage narratives engaged in Italian Roman Law within England's Common Law system. In north-central Italy, where much of the Italian literature circulating in England originates, communities would appoint more foreign judges on a contract basis. In contrast, England's jury system was heavily tied to local forces—so much so that jury members often occupied a character witness role. The essay then uses *Measure for Measure* to understand the significance of staging Italian legal practices that rely on foreign authority in an English legal atmosphere that is so tied to the local. My analysis builds from literary, legal, and cultural studies to illustrate how legal ideas communicate across borders as well as the effects of such exchange on expectations and understandings of law.

### **Blushing on Cue: The Scripting of Emotion in Early Modern Drama**

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If she be made of white and red,  
Her faults will ne'er be known,  
For blushing cheeks by faults are bred  
And fears by pale white shown.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, 1.2.94

In the precocious Moth's 'dangerous rhyme' Shakespeare pinpoints the troubling ambivalence of the female face. It is a theme to which he frequently returns, for example when Claudio says of Hero 'Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty' (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 4.1.40). Shakespeare's writing would appear to confirm the idea that there is 'no art to find the mind's construction in the face' (*Macbeth*, 1.4.11). Yet in the early modern period criminal defendants were routinely

denied legal counsel, due to a persistent belief in the legibility of the face: ‘if the partie himselfe defend it, peradventure his conscience will prick him to utter the truth, or his countenance or gesture will show some tokens thereof’ (Pulton, *De Pace Regis et Regni*, 1609). The early modern blush sits at the fulcrum of these opposing views; at once thought to be involuntary and natural, while also being the stock-in-trade of the early modern actor; as Hamlet incredulously says of the player’s emotive ability, ‘from her working, all his visage warmed...And all for nothing?/ For Hecuba?’ (2.2.549 Folio).

This paper explores the Janus-faced blush from both a dramatic and forensic perspective, by examining the appearance of the blush in trial settings. Focusing on Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Marston’s *Antonio’s Revenge*, and Webster’s *The White Devil*, I investigate the ways in which early modern dramatists perpetuate, manipulate and undermine the link between quasi-courtroom performance and guilt/innocence. The feminine blush becomes an ambivalent signifier in these trial scenes. Female characters eloquently complicate the law’s insistence that guilt is so easily discerned: ‘O you mistake./ You raise a blood as noble in this cheek/ As ever was your mother’s’ (Vittoria Corombona in *The White Devil*, 3.2.53).

**“lend us your lament”:**

### **Pirate Executions and the Politics of Pity in Early Modern Drama and Print**

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Early modern piracy has been much discussed in recent years, with scholars such as Barbara Fuchs, Mark Netzloff, and Claire Jowitt demonstrating ways in which literary representations critique state policy. However, these perspectives have not addressed piracy’s broader social meanings – specifically, the ways that texts represent pirates’ relationships with their local communities, relationships that reveal values and interests different from those of the abstract “nation.” My paper addresses this topic with particular attention to the ways in which prose accounts of public executions employ dramatic convention to create affective bonds, underwritten by relations of economic interdependence, between condemned pirates and spectators at the scaffold. Specifically, I examine several prose texts describing the execution of the notorious pirates Purser and Clinton, apprehended and hung at Wapping in 1583. In comparison to the rhetorical “othering” of pirates in legal discourse and moralistic pamphlets, I note that the anonymous *Clinton, Purser, & Arnold to their Countreymen wheresoever* (1583), John Stow’s *Annales* (1605 edition), and *A True Relation of the Lives and Deaths of the two most Famous English Pyrats, Purser, and Clinton* (1639, sometimes attributed to Thomas Heywood) depart from the standard rhetoric by conferring tragic status on Purser and Clinton, men whose capacity to attract empathy typically gets occluded by the villainization of pirates as monstrous anti-English renegades. I argue that the deployment of “pity,” within the context of these executions, signals an emotional connection and material interdependence between pirates and the spectators that stands in stark contrast to pirates’ official status as “hostis humanis generis” (enemies of all humankind). By examining the ways in which texts portray these connections, this paper seeks to expand our current understanding of the pirate as political and cultural figure in early modern England.

## **Judicial Performance in Early Modern English Ecclesiastical Marital Law**

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Although early modern English law and theatre are two very different institutions, their metaphoric relationship—trials are a form of theatre and dramas are a form of judgment—pervades plays and criticism alike from the early modern period to our own. In the last two decades, critics such as Luke Wilson, Subha Mukherji, and Lorna Hutson have insightfully explored how developments in legal thinking influenced literature on and off the stage. This paper contributes to this discussion of the law-theatre metaphor by comparing the roles judges play in determining a spouse's innocence or guilt in regard to marital cruelty in contemporary London church court cases and Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. I examine the profound differences in a judge's role when determining litigants' innocence or guilt in legal and literary practice.

## **Reputation and Authorship in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster***

Pax Hehmeyer

When studying the history of copyright, critics such as Mark Rose and Joseph Lowenstein have traditionally looked to the rise of proprietary authorship, the development of an author's sense of ownership over a work and in turn the creation of institutional protections for that ownership. These histories often explore how authors exerted economic control over their writing and the development of a sense of literary work as property. Lowenstein dubs this the emergence of the "proprietary sentiment" in writers, or "possessive authorship." Ben Jonson is often seen as a precursor figure in the development of these modern concepts of authorship because of his aggressive possessiveness regarding his writing. I argue, however, that to focus on possessiveness in Jonson's writing is to ignore the importance of concepts such as shame, honor, and reputation to his ideas about authorship. In this paper, I will explore how re-focusing on these concepts might provide us a different view of Jonsonian authorship and its relationship to the literary work. In particular, I will examine Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, its multiple representations of authorship (from laureates to hacks), and the tensions the play registers between power, poetry, and status. There is something considerable at stake in better understanding Jonson's and other writers' relationships to their own work in terms of how we understand Early Modern writers approach to the labor of writing and the social function of literary texts.

## **Talking about my Reputation: Guiltless Women in *The Merry Wives of Windsor***

Elizabeth Hodgson, UBC

For women in 17<sup>th</sup> century drama, guilt-by-reputation is a demonstrable hazard. Frequently, the hazard is framed as so definitive that only death can "solve" it. As Katharine Eisaman Maus and Lorna Hutson have argued from different perspectives, the problem of inwardness and the problem of proof are writ large on female bodies, in the social as well as the theatrical spheres. On the other hand, a number of plays and other writings from the period also suggest the reverse: that suspecting a woman damages a man's reputation in the community. The weapon of

accusation and suspicion is thus demonstrably double-edged. Even powerful men (Lysander in *The Widow's Tears*, Leontes in *Winter's Tale*, Ferdinand in *Duchess of Malfi*, Othello) can be destroyed because they doubt women. *Merry Wives of Windsor* is a particularly robust example of the ways in which suspicion of a woman's virtue can lead to abjection and loss, not for the women characters but by the men who challenge them. This particular inversion of the trope of female vulnerability, this deflection of suspicion and reforming of reputation's power, is the focus of this paper.

### **“By my shaking I am the guilty man, and not the judge”: Restaging the Efficacy of Performance in Massinger's *The Roman Actor***

Nathaniel C. Leonard, Westminster College – Fulton, Missouri

While much of the critical discourse on Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* is focused on the play's utilization of the play-within-the-play as a medium for critiquing early Caroline censorship, *The Roman Actor* also uses metatheatrical techniques to make a case for how moments of performance evoke guilt in their audience. Massinger uses the play's three distinct play-within-play moments as well as a restaged moment of judicial spectacle to explore the potentially counter-intuitive manner in which that efficacy functions. Specifically, the play argues that performance creates an effect that generally defies the intentions of the individual that created it. In fact, as all four inset performances demonstrate, the more that the creator of a performance crafts it with the intent of creating efficacy, the less likely that efficacy is to occur. But, that is not to say that these moments of cultural performance lack impact on their virtual audience. On the contrary, all four generate some concrete effect, but none of them is in keeping with the intent outlined by their creators. Massinger oxymoronically crafts the play to demonstrate drama's inability to construct efficacy, while also pointing to its inability to serve as an effective tool for tyrannical hegemony. In all four examples, any guilt that is demonstrated is more a product of the individual viewer's perception of the severity of their crimes than a byproduct of an intended gambit built into the performance.

### **Guilty Lists: Revising the Litany of Saints in Reformation England**

Rachel Dunleavy Morgan, University of Great Falls

SEDITION: Some man tell the pope, I besyche ye with all my harte  
How I am ordered for takyng the churches parte,  
That I may be put in the holye letanye  
With Thomas Beckett, for I thynke I am as wurthye.  
(*King Johan* 2587-90)

This paper investigates how the litany of saints becomes an apparatus by which guilt can be assigned and redistributed during the English Reformation. Prior to the Reformation, the litany binds together the posthumous reputations of those named; inclusion in the litany of saints acknowledges each as worthy of being addressed as an intercessor. Both contemporary scholars and many sixteenth-century reformers also recognize that that variations of this prayer provide

indices of personal, local and national devotions: while some figures—Mary, the Apostles, John the Baptist, etc.— are featured in nearly all forms of the pre-reformation litany, other saints are added or dropped depending on the location in which and the occasion on which the prayer is prayed. I read John Bale's *King Johan* in the context of reformers' attempts to revise and/or eliminate the litany of saints. I am particularly interested in efforts, both onstage and off, to reconfigure the litany in order to differentiate among saints, preserving the reputation of some while imputing guilt to others. For instance, Thomas Cranmer in 1538 radically compresses the once lengthy list of saints into a mere three petitions, mentioning by name only the Mother of God. The next year he patronizes a performance at Canterbury of Bale's *King Johan* as part of an ambitious campaign aimed at destroying the cult of Thomas à Becket. I argue that investigating the widespread interest in remaking the litany of saints during the late 1530s makes more intelligible Bale's use of the litany as one means of rendering saints such as Thomas Becket and St. Patrick guilty by association with Sedition, his most corrupt character.

### **“Arden needs must die”: Reputation, Communal Expectations, and Murder in *Arden of Faversham***

Heather Murray, Coastal Pines Technical College

Thomas Arden, of the anonymously written play *Arden of Faversham*, stands at the center of an intensely social world as husband, master, landlord, and neighbor. More specifically, as the manager of an estate, Arden is not only responsible for the conscientious stewardship of the lands deeded to him but also for the judicious governance of the people who live and work there. Arden neglects his lands as well as his marriage, repeatedly failing to live up to the communal obligations his social position entails; inattention to his duties affects his reputation negatively and brings about the social collapse that leads to his murder. The sheer number of people who attempt to murder Arden is quite remarkable; also significant are the various relationships these people had to Arden – wife, servant, tenant and guest. While this multiplicity would seem to be reflective of Arden's failures, the play concludes with several characters expressing their guilt and a description of the punishments meted out.

### **Senecan Tragedy and the Exhumation of Character**

Curtis Perry, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

My paper will offer a friendly amendment to the ambitious and far-ranging developmental argument of Lorna Hutson's stimulating 2007 book *The Invention of Suspicion*. Hutson's book—which traces connections between Elizabethan innovations in dramatic form and the spread of attitudes towards the forensic evaluation of evidence associated with common law—makes a strong case for the importance of models from Roman comedy to the development of intrigue plot structures (in Elizabethan plays of all genres) which hinge on the presentation and assessment of dubious circumstantial facts. Hutson's account is dismissive, however, of Senecan dramatic models, drawing on a long tradition that sees them as “unmimetic” (164): she argues

that while Seneca was more “overtly prominent” (164) than Terence and Plautus in the early Elizabethan period, his plays were not of primary importance in the development of forensically imagined dramatic storytelling because they were seen as deliberative, of use above all for “offering models of how constitutional questions ought to be approached” (158).

I think this gets Seneca wrong and so risks underestimating or even occluding the productive role played by Senecan dramatic models in the development of the period’s drama. I want to suggest that Senecan drama offers renaissance dramatists useful models for staging a forensic approach to characterological inwardness that is crucially distinct from what is possible in comically structured intrigue plots. I also want to suggest that the imperial provenance of Senecan models is part of their reception: writers drawing on them are often interested in depicting milieus in which participatory government and justice have broken down. Such drama can be cautionary or admonitory even if it does not directly reflect its culture’s normative assumptions about justice and evidence.

### **Abstract: Performing and Managing Guilt in *Richard II*, Act 1, and Beyond**

William W.E. Slights

The opening scenes of *Richard II* establish guilt as a driving force in the struggle for dynastic succession in England. Attempts to assign guilt and to assess its importance in Shakespeare’s historical project have, however, met with only limited success. I want to propose three overlapping templates—legal, psychological, and theological—for locating guilt as a performed motivation in Shakespeare’s histories. All three are deployed in the BBC film *The Hollow Crown* (2012), which I will refer to at various points in my argument.

The legal mechanism for determining guilt at the start of *Richard II*—trial by combat—is plagued by lack of evidence and conflicting witness testimony, not to mention Richard’s strategic intervention in the process. A second approach to identifying guilt and its often hidden effects is explored by Harry Berger, Jr. in his extended psychological analysis of father-son relations in the play. At times extremely perceptive about the intricate work being performed by apparently innocent speech-acts, Berger’s Freudian analysis misses a crucial variety of guilt running through these scenes—theological guilt.

The influential description of guilt in *The Book of Common Prayer* and its elaboration in sixteenth-century treatises on the conscience by Martin Luther, John Woolton, William Perkins, and others helped to establish the affective impact of guilt in early modern religious thought and, I would argue, in theatrical practice and to distinguish guilt from shame. The ritual “bawchiling” or un-knighting of Mowbray in the opening scenes of *Richard II* enacts this distinction and anticipates the dis-coronation of Richard. A central question that cannot be fully addressed in a brief essay is whether any of Shakespeare’s historical characters have sufficient agency to manage the guilt that they perform and project.

### **“Now I can take you”: Backgammon and the Fight for Reputation in *Arden of Faversham***

Daniel Timbrell – University of Southern Queensland

It is a game at 'tables' (now known as backgammon) that provides the eventual killers of the title character in Arden of Faversham the opportunity to complete their task. Mosby's victory over the man whose position he aims to usurp provides the opportunity to deliver the signal for his compatriots to strike: "Ah, Master Arden, 'Now I can take you'" (xiv.241). It is my contention that it is the backgammon game that provides the key to understanding a play in which this act of murder for the sake of advancement is ultimately considered an escalation in scale rather than degree when compared to the actions of the victim. Not only is Arden's death the culmination of a scheme that has been played out within the play as a human game of backgammon, but this is a scheme that continues to the end of the play and beyond. Through showing both that the connotations of violent conquest within Renaissance gaming were normalised as a province for demonstrating one's capacity for advancement as well as further explanation about backgammon in the period, it will be argued that it is this human game that connects the potentially lethal battles for reputation and status in this new age to the societal instability that permeates the play. The resemblance to this pastime is even more marked when it is revealed that, much as the victor at backgammon needs the luck of the dice to complement his skill, the best laid plans of any individual is forever intertwined with chance. Despite the swift discovery and sentencing that follows Arden's murder, the state is uncomfortably aware that regardless of its claims to stand apart from this cultural instability, neither they nor the citizenry are immune to the aftermath.