

SAA Abstracts for Seminar 8

“Both in Reputation and Profit”: Kinds of Capital in the Early Theatre

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John Astington (University of Toronto) and Kara Northway (Kansas State University), Leaders

“No less dexterous in the ways of the court as having gotten much by it”:

the profits of the Masters of the Revels

Richard Dutton, Ohio State University

Two scholars have attempted to assess incomes of Masters of the Revels. W.R Streitberger reviewed Edmund Tilney’s income and Nigel Bawcutt reviewed Sir Henry Herbert’s. Both underestimated their respective Masters’ money-making. Streitberger established that Tilney received a court fee (on paper £10) of £100, but reckoned that earnings from licences etc. never amounted to more than £50 pa. Bawcutt (not acknowledging the court fee) reckoned Herbert’s income one year at £147 – less than the £150 he was paying Astley for the post. Both curiously underplay fees the Masters received from theatre-owners which, at £3 per playing month per theatre (1600 prices), surely added up to considerable sums, the backbones of their income. Herbert also had shares in some Caroline theatres: we lack details, but the potential is obvious. The assessment of Hebert by his brother (see title) is doubtless accurate and probably held good for his predecessors.

“Immediate Jewel of Their Souls”: Commerce in Character

Miles P. Grier, Queens College, CUNY

By conjoining reputation with profit, our seminar raises the question of how a relationship between character and commerce was forged. In pursuing this question, Shakespeare’s two Venetian plays prove felicitous to think with. In *Othello*, the contrite general compares his murder of Desdemona to the mistake of the “base Indian [who] threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe” (V.ii.363–64). The economic connotation also draws in Iago’s earlier reference to reputation as the soul’s “immediate jewel” (III.iii.177). In this essay, I wish to theorize this strange conjunction, where women’s chastity is taken as the paradigmatic site of abstract value—a value made socially real through the invention of a “dull Moor” (V.ii.240) or “base Indian” ridiculed for being unable to perceive it. Treatises on trade and more recent anthropological work will round out the discussion.

Profit Abroad. Will Kemp and Queen Anna’s Players in Europe

Eva Griffith, London

In the welcome letter for this year’s SAA theatre history seminar, the seminar leaders posed the following question about Will Kemp: ‘Why would Will Kemp leave the Chamberlain’s men when it must have been apparent that their fortunes were rising, and thereafter, apart from the morris dance, lapse into relative obscurity?’ But Kemp did not just leave the Chamberlain’s men, nor did he become so obscure, as he chose to join Edward Somerset the Earl of Worcester’s men in the stead of Shakespeare’s company. Worcester’s troupe were soon to become the Servants of

Queen Anna of Denmark, a consort queen who is becoming of central interest as a developer of the performing arts in England. This paper follows a trajectory beginning with Kemp who travelled abroad (as well as to Norwich), tracing a relationship between other actors of Worcester's/Anna's men origin who also toured Europe - and one kind of "profit".

**"Kinds of Capital": well, one kind is money.
William Ingram, University of Michigan**

The seminar description says "We will be examining the purely commercial business of making money from the theatre", and my paper is a meditation on the implications "purely commercial" and "making money", and whether one might get money from the activity of stage playing without having a commercial interest in it. I ramble on about what was involved in "making money" – or, equally important, failing to make money – from the theatre, whether as a stage player, playhouse builder or owner, investor, or resentful neighbor; what various ways one might have gone about trying to make money from the activity of stage playing; what the economic entailments were of such endeavors; what the odds of success were; and finally – and most important for me – why anyone did it. There's no answer to this last point, of course, but that doesn't diminish its importance. I digress into historiography, moneylending (Henslowe and Alleyn as moneylenders), godly resentment, performance bonds, the parliamentary act of 1571, alternative histories, and the difficulty of constructing a usable narrative out of all that.

**Early Modern Actors and Their Nontheatrical Sources of Income
David Kathman, Chicago**

It is well-known that some early modern actors became wealthy, or at least respectably upper-middle class, with Edward Alleyn, Richard Burbage, John Heminges, and Henry Condell being prime examples. While it is easy to assume that all or most of these men's wealth came from the theater, the situation is actually more complex. Like many people in early modern England, actors tended to have their fingers in a lot of different pies financially, and in some cases they received substantial income from sources other than the stage. For most of the sixteenth century, even the most accomplished professional players had "day jobs" to supplement their theatrical income, and even when the stage became more profitable and stable in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, top players seldom relied entirely on the theater for their income. This paper will discuss some of the nontheatrical ways in which early modern theater people made money, and will suggest that such extra income was seen as a necessary hedge against the financial uncertainties of theatrical life.

**Playhouse or Brewhouse? Forms of Capital and the Fate of the Salisbury Court Playhouse
Christopher Matusiak, Ithaca College**

Although the private theatre in Salisbury Court struggled to remain open throughout the English civil wars, the crackdown on playing that accompanied the king's execution in 1649 finally compelled the building's leaseholder, John Herne, to put it to new use. Subletting the property to

a local brewer, Edward Lightmaker, seemed a rational move: parliamentary ordinances threatened to make dramatic performances unprofitable in the foreseeable future but beer was a commodity relied upon for daily sustenance and promised to pay the rent. Edward Sackville, fourth earl of Dorset—owner of the ground upon which the playhouse stood—had good reason to authorize the building’s conversion as well, having been thrust into financial straits by Parliament’s recent seizure of his ancestral property in Kent. Why then did Dorset defy commercial logic by opting to disrupt Lightmaker’s enterprise, arranging instead for the actor William Beeston to invest in a newly renovated—but outlawed—playhouse? New evidence discussed in this paper suggests that the economic imperative was outweighed in this case by investments that were cultural and political in nature, including the affiliations of Lightmaker, whose Presbyterian father-in-law had been controversially arrested and tortured during the Personal Rule; social capital brought to bear by Beeston’s spouse Alice Bowen (née Bourne) daughter of a prosperous grocer and widow of a wealthy mercer; and the aesthetic interests of Dorset’s daughter-in-law Frances Cranfield, whose patronage in the wake of the old earl’s death effectively preserved the institution of playing in Salisbury Court for another decade.

Valuing Plays in Richard Brome’s Dispute with the Salisbury Court
Bradley D. Ryner, Arizona State University

In 1635, Brome signed a contract to write exclusively for Richard Heton at the Salisbury Court. Although each party accused the other of breaking the original contract, Heton proposed a second contract in 1638. Brome did not sign this contract, though later he claimed to have considered in good faith doing so, and Heton claimed Brome verbally agreed to it. However, the terms of the second contract, so far as one can recover them, should invite skepticism that either party could have seen it as a tenable framework for a continued relationship. The available details of the terms of the two contracts differ in ways that, taken together, suggest two very different documents. I argue that the second contract was primarily backward looking. With it, Heton aimed at forcing Brome to agree formally to delivering plays promised under the first contract at a bargain rate while also setting up conditions that would give the company a legal advantage if they wished to end Brome’s employment. It is unlikely that these terms could ever have seemed acceptable to Brome. Looked at in this way, Brome’s decision to accept payments and deliver plays under the terms of the second contract but not sign it makes tactical sense. He might have hoped to collect some of the money that he felt the company still owed him while delivering enough plays to make a strong case that he no longer owed the company any residual plays from the original contract he had signed. The court documents show a consistent strategy: Heton aimed at getting the court to accept the second contract’s metrics of value while Brome claimed to be bound only by the first and to have fulfilled its less well-defined terms.

“Heere the blazing Starre”: Allusive Stagecraft and the Divine Economy of Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Part 2
Robin S. Stewart, University of California, Irvine

This paper revisits the critical debates surrounding the apparent tension between the celebration of merchant identity in Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Part 2 and

the incongruous aristocratic behavior of its central protagonist Thomas Gresham, particularly in Gresham's profligate gesture of grinding an expensive pearl into powder to toast Queen Elizabeth. Building off of the recent critical work of David Hawkes, Jean Howard, Charles Crupi and others, who read this tension as symbolic of conflicting early modern class identities and doubts about proto-capitalistic values, it argues that Gresham's action must be read in the context of a larger providential narrative that Heywood develops in conversation with and in reaction to the stagecraft and semiotic references of the Admiral's Men's repertory at Henslowe's Rose, specifically Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (c. 1589) and *The Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley* (1596).