

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 1

Daisy Black, University of Swansea

Promising a storm: Anticipation, Spectacle and the Ship in the Digby *Mary Magdalen* and Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

The ship on the medieval and Renaissance stage holds much in common with Chekov's gun. That is, it is rarely put on stage unless it's going to be caught in a storm. The introduction of a ship into a play therefore invokes a tacit agreement between players and spectators that, at some point in the narrative, it is either going to suffer through a tempest or be wrecked.

However, stage ships held transformative, as well as spectacular, properties. In the late fifteenth century Digby *Mary Magdalen* play, the ship physically links the actions between a number of dramatic loci, including places in and around Jerusalem, Marseilles and heaven. The three sea journeys establish a new performance space which, for a 'shortt space', bring audience and players into the same space and narrative. It also sees the characters carried in the ship undergo a series of sea-changes, which trouble and alter their authority, gender roles and bodily status as female characters give birth during a storm, die and are thrown overboard.

These properties are amplified in Shakespeare's later employment of the ship in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, which, via the medieval poet-narrator Gower, re-crafts many of the aspects of the Digby Magdalen narrative. At the same time, a familiarity with the medieval narrative, coupled with audience anticipation of the storm, sets certain expectations on the characters of Pericles, Thaisa and the sailors.

Comparing the use of the ship in the two plays and the power dynamics at play in the storm scenes, this paper contends that the ship is not merely a useful contrivance in continuing a linear narrative by transporting the characters from A to B, but also a place in which relationships between men and women, player and spectator, are subject to sea-change and shift.

Barbara Bono, SUNY Buffalo

Annunciations and Incarnations

As V.A. Kolve argued 50 years ago in his path-breaking study of the medieval cycle plays, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, the central liturgical miracle of the cycle plays was "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Throughout these plays it is dramatically enacted over and over again, turning comedy to tragedy and back in the eyes of both eternity and creatural experience. Secular drama continues to enact that turning point in the courage of the actor and the reception of the viewer, a tightrope walk between what is and is not. And this recurrent embodied action revolves around the skeptical not/knot of a faith in what is not seen, a belief that something can come to be, can come of nothing. My paper will consider two such medieval dramatic tragi-comic turning points and their afterlife in one Shakespearean play:

- first, the turn in the Coventry Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors from the

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 2

- Annunciation, when “The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost” to the apocryphal Joseph’s troubles about Mary, when she rises to be scolded “who hath been here since I went,/To rage with thee?,”
- and then the turn in the Wakefield Second Shepherdes' Pageant from the "demon" sheep baby to the "bairn" who will redeem creation
 - and finally, in application to Shakespeare’s notorious mixed genre play *Measure for Measure*, where in the temporary absence of the ruling figure a precise, Puritan deputy and a novice encounter against the backdrop of a city and suburbs suffused by desire.

At its heart my paper will consider how in all of these plays the “good news” of salvation is intrinsically tied up with the “destined livery” of sex in a knowledge/power/love knot.

Sheila Coursey, University of Michigan

The Problem of Abel’s Body: The Wakefield *Killing of Abel* and the Afterlives of Medieval Domestic Tragedy

After committing the titular fratricide of the Wakefield *Killing of Abel*, Cain unexpectedly turns his attention away from his divine curse, and towards hiding his brother’s corpse: “Bot this cors I wold were hid/ For some man might com at ungayn/ ‘Fle, false shrew!’ wold he bid/ And weyn I had my brother slain” (378-381). Cain’s final moments in the play are spent appealing to his young servant Garcio to help him bury Abel’s body, or “ryn away with the bayn” altogether (397). While God has made a commanding appearance onstage to curse Cain and cry the martyrdom of Abel, Cain and Garcio’s final fear that they will be seized by the local bailiffs, rather than satanic devils, turns Abel’s body from an object of divine martyrdom to a piece of alarming forensic evidence that must be expunged. Garcio, who otherwise embodies the “mischievous servant boy” archetype of the Wakefield plays, becomes a resistant and ultimately rebellious criminal accomplice.

If the murder of Abel by his brother Cain marks “the first murder in the divine history of the world,” then this dramatic enactment within late medieval English culture also offers Abel’s corpse as the first of many problematic bodies within early domestic tragedy. This paper examines the consistent alarm (and occasional comedy) involving the concealment and disposal of corpses in *Arden of Faversham* (c.1592) and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (c.1601), plays that dramatize real sixteenth-century London murders. The struggle of hiding a body, and the struggle to keep accomplices quiet, certainly drives the action of these “true crime” domestic tragedies. However, considering *The Killing of Abel* as an early interlocutor within this tradition puts new emphasis on structures of complicity and guilt in performance that extend to medieval and early modern audiences.

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 3

Gina M Di Salvo, University of Tennessee

Against Reformation: The Devils, The Details, Digby, and St. Dunstan

This paper begins by exploring the theatricality of sanctity in three pairs of plays across the sixteenth century: the Digby *Conversion of Saint Paul* and *Mary Magdalene* (c. 1475-1500), *King Johan* (1538) by John Bale and the *Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene* (c.1550-66) by Lewis Wager, and the anonymous *Knack to Know A Knave* (1594) and *Grim, the Collier of Croyden* (c.1600) by William Houghton. While the Reformation plays of the mid-sixteenth century position sanctity as part of the absence of monstrous and miraculous theatricality, the two Elizabethan St. Dunstan plays, *Knack* and *Grim*, remix the late medieval repertoire of devil play, apotropaic action, and pyrotechnic miracles featured in the Digby saint plays. Furthermore, the later sixteenth-century plays use St. Dunstan, a much derided figure of medieval popish expansion in the pages of John Foxe and other reformers, to both conjure the theatricality of medieval drama and to materialize the Middle Ages on the Elizabethan stage. Although the professional theatre was not “a medium of religious knowledge,” as was the drama of medieval East Anglia, the St. Dunstan plays enact and archive theatrical knowledge of medieval hagiography and its associated cultural practices.

Patrick Gray, Durham University

What is Iago? Shakespeare on Imagination and the Demonic

What is the root cause of Iago’s relentless, thorough-going evil? Coleridge saw in his soliloquies “the motive hunting of a motiveless malignity.” Othello wonders aloud if his nemesis might be a devil. Building on Helen Cooper’s recent work on Shakespeare’s indebtedness to the figurative conventions of medieval drama, I propose that Iago should be understood symbolically, as well as naturalistically. As F. R. Leavis once suggested, Iago is “subordinate and merely ancillary”: “he represents something in Othello himself.” Much as Falstaff might be said to represent, in Pauline language, the “old man” or “flesh” of the protagonist, Prince Hal, or the Fool in *King Lear*, Lear’s own conscience, Iago can be seen as a personification of Othello’s own imagination. Seen in this light, Iago’s characterization makes sense as a reflection of contemporary anxieties about that faculty of the mind: in the wake of Protestantism, imagination comes to fill the role that the devil once held in medieval drama. A sense of “fancy” or “fantasy” as dangerously unreliable, prey to strong passions, and susceptible to demonic influence, yet even so liable to be confused with conscience, can be discerned, not only in Shakespeare’s Iago, but also in the depiction of the witches in *Macbeth*, as well as the ambiguity of the ghost in *Hamlet*. Spenser’s Archimago, too, serves as an illuminating analogue. In Aristotle’s account of what he calls *phantasia* (“fantasy”), the imagination is relatively innocent; if it proves deceptive, it is because we ourselves have allowed our emotions to run riot. We as moral agents are in this sense responsible for our own misjudgement. With the advent of Protestant pessimism about human nature, however, as well as Protestant iconoclasm, this

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 4

chain of causality breaks down; even reverses itself. Imagination takes on a role akin to that of the demonic in Christian thought: an external danger which we are responsible for holding at bay, yet nonetheless seem unable to resist.

Peter Greenfield, University of Puget Sound

Drama and the Reformation: Two cases from REED research. Peter Greenfield

Since its inception forty years ago the Records of Early English Drama project has sought to erase the period boundary between medieval and Renaissance drama as it gathered evidence of England's dramatic traditions from their beginnings to Shakespeare's time. This paper shares two discoveries from my work for REED, one that suggests a strong continuity between medieval seasonal entertainments and Shakespeare, one that may point to a break.

The evidence amassed by REED reveals the spread of the Reformation across the English landscape was varied and complex, with local conditions and local politics having a greater effect on what happened at a particular place than the larger forces of the familiar historical narrative. Some Hampshire parishes clung to their favorite festivity, the king ale, long after such seasonal customs had been suppressed or abandoned elsewhere. Wootton St Lawrence held an elaborate kingale as late as 1612. Perdita's crowning as queen of the sheepshearing may represent recognition that such medieval traditions were still alive.

The REED Patrons and Performances database shows that patrons' troupes identifiable as actors (rather than minstrels) first appeared in the 1470s, but their numbers increased substantially in the late 1520s, exploding in the 1530s and 1540s. The patrons of these new playing companies were nearly all aristocrats interested in spreading the reformed religion, notably Thomas Cromwell. Playwrights like John Bale might have adapted the medieval morality play for their reformist purposes, but was this continuity of form outweighed by the impact of the shift from a theatre that was amateur and Roman Catholic to one that was professional and Protestant?

Lawrence Manley, Yale University

The Lathom Screen and the Magian Plays of the Derby Companies

Harley MS 1927 contains a poem, signed July 1576, by Thomas Chaloner of Chester, a heraldic painter and genealogist, and entitled "A coppie of the demonstrationes of parkers worke for the right honoyrable my good L. thEarle of Derby." The poem describes an elaborate decorated screen in the great hall at Lathom. This paper explores possible connections between the Lathom screen, which depicted "the course of heaven and erthe" (or matter of "Astronomye ... and Astrologie"), and performances by Elizabethan professional companies in the great hall of Lathom, as documented by the Derby household book. I examine the role of occult knowledge and magic in the plays of companies patronized by the fourth and fifth earls of Derby (specifically, *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, *John of Bordeaux*, and *A Knack to Know a Knave*) and I speculate on some traditional performance practices (in mystery

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 5

plays, saints' plays, and post-Reformation biblical pageantry) that may have contributed to the magian plays of the Derby companies, to the decorations of the Lathom hall, and to the possible synergies between them.

Karen Marsalek, St. Olaf College

**Re-Animating the Slaughtered Innocent:
Macbeth and Medieval Performance Practices**

While working with Poculi Ludique Societas at the University of Toronto, I heard the somewhat macabre joke that the company was probably one of very few with a box labeled "Dead Babies." Full-scale cycle stagings, as well as occasional single-play productions at Christmas meant that PLS regularly needed these props, as did early players who performed plays on the Massacre of the Innocents. Inspired by those experiences with PLS, this paper explores the materiality of the slaughtered innocent in the cycle play and its reappearance in *Macbeth*. While the tyrant's Herod-like attack on Macduff's family and the potent symbolism of children in the play are critical commonplaces, I argue for a distinctly physical legacy of embodied staging practices and technology. The medieval Innocent plays offered instances of property praxis available for Shakespeare's re-animation. In *Macbeth*, the figure of the slaughtered child is dispersed, dismembered, and often dematerialized through the play's language, but also re-materialized in the Witches' theatre of apparitions, where its iconophobic and diabolical associations are most powerful.

Halyna Pastushuk, Ukraine

**The Porter's Scene in *Macbeth*: Echoing the Mystery Tradition and the
Memories of the *Harrowing of Hell***

The Porter's scene (Act II Scene III) in *Macbeth* contains allusions to the mystery play *Harrowing of Hell* and its carnivalesque villain stage foolery. By means of acoustic and visual reconstruction of theatrical staging I want to investigate the receptive potential of the scene, so seemingly irrelevant to the tragic story line.

Following upon the murder scene, this comic episode furnishes a momentary communicative distance between the protagonist and the spectator. It also connects Macbeth's state to the mystery play tradition on the one hand, and to low stage-humor discourse on the other. Through the "low" helplessness of the Porter before alcohol and drunkenness one can see the helplessness of Macbeth and his wife before the infatuation for power.

Abundant imagery called to mind by the insistent loud knocking and the Porter's extended commentary suggest an ambivalence about time and place. The Porter is simultaneously available to the spectator as *Globe* comic actor, Macbeth's servant, Devil from the mysteries, rustic fool, and perhaps Shakespeare himself as an authorial narrator.

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 6

Macbeth as devil, devil as Porter, Macbeth as Porter, all serve to link the scene to other scenes in the play and also to engage the *harrowing of hell* motif in the axiology of the play. The ensemble at the beginning of the play – thunder and lightning, witches, screech-owls etc. – is of a piece with the Porter's scene, a key scene despite its making up only two per cent of the whole playtext.

Christina Romanelli, Meredith College

Quick Thinking Mistress Quickly

Because she appears in four different plays each with a slightly different personality and vocation, William Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly is an enigmatic character. In *1 Henry IV*, Quickly is the married Hostess of the tavern in which Falstaff, Hal, Poins and friends plan their escapades. In *2 Henry IV*, she seems to run the same inn, but she's widowed and perhaps a madam for the fiery Doll Tearsheet. By *Henry V*, Quickly is married to her "swaggering" friend Pistol and serving as nursemaid for Falstaff as he dies. The *Merry Wives of Windsor* offers the most confusing role of all: Quickly has left the tavern/inn (or perhaps not yet moved in to it) and is a housekeeper for a French doctor. Phyllis Rackin argues of Shakespeare's portrayal of women that the "anachronistic details of speech and dress evoke a contemporary female stereotype...they depend on—and also reinforce—the assumption that women are always and everywhere the same, immune to the historical contingencies of time and place." At first glance, Quickly's many roles seem excessively anachronistic, even for a playwright famous for eschewing the unities; however, placing her in the context of late fourteenth century through early sixteenth century changes in English society indicates that it was typical for working-class women to perform many jobs. Drawing from primary sources like the Chester Harrowing and the "Ballad of Kynd Kyttock," as well as the scholarship of Pamela Sambrook, Judith Bennett, and Peter Clark, my paper reads Mistress Quickly as a late medieval "ale-wife" in an attempt to integrate her four roles into a coherent picture that contributes to our understanding of and respect for the roles of working-class women in early modern England.

John Warrick, University of Southern Mississippi

Shakespeare's Medievalism and *King Henry VIII*

Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII* is sometimes poorly judged for its uncertain structure and authorship, inconsistent verse, and its inexact replication of English chronicle sources. Shifting from its dialogue to focus instead on the play's visual dramaturgy, however, reveals complex enactments that belie any straightforward account of Tudor history, including the ceremonial meeting of kings, court masques, a dream vision, royal and ecclesiastical trials, and mob reactions to a coronation and a christening. Such types of civic and royal pageantry, when considered in their medieval context, may invite analysis and interpretation involving political typologies. This paper

2017 SAA Seminar: Afterlives of Medieval Drama Abstracts
Leader: Katharine Goodland, CUNY, College of Staten Island 7

argues that Shakespeare and Fletcher drew upon late medieval theatrical sources in their characterization of the more allegorical qualities of royal association.

Scholars have already recognized Mariological characteristics in Queen Katherine's early intercessions with King Henry, and I will return to the play's allegorical features of queen-ship by examining both Katherine and Anne in relation to medieval dramas on the Annunciation and Coronation of the Virgin. I will particularly examine Katherine's dream vision (4.2) in relation to extant iconography, stage directions, and R.E.E.D. inventories associated with plays on the life of Mary.

I will also consider the play's 'Porter' scene (5.3) according to theatrical versions of the Harrowing of Hell. Shakespeare stages two porters holding the court gates against Londoners who wildly celebrate the infant Elizabeth's christening. Their drunkenness, their phallic humour, and their direct reference to Limbo Patrum (l. 61) suggest that King Henry's porters share an ignominious heritage with Macbeth's gatekeeper, who similarly imagines himself as the devil-porter of hell-gate at the Harrowing.