

**2017 SAA Seminar: Queer Meter Abstracts**  
**Leaders: Scott Trudell, Univ. of Maryland**  
**and Thomas Ward, US Naval Academy)**  
**Respondent: Jeffrey Masten, Northwestern Univ. 1**

**Alicia Andrzejewski, CUNY Graduate Center**

**Abortive Imagery, Verse, and Meter in *Richard III***

In act 4, scene 4 of William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the highly stylized and regular 10-foot lines that characterize dialogue throughout the play break down for a moment, when Queen Elizabeth protests Richard's requests for her daughter's hand in marriage with the line, "But thou didst kill my children" (342). This 7-foot line is a notable interruption in one of Shakespeare's most metrically regular plays. In *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man*, Paula Blank argues "short lines," such as this one, are created purposefully by Shakespeare "to 'weigh' as much as the long lines to which they compare," perhaps with the intent that audiences "hear" the syllables as stretched (78). One might easily imagine a delivery of this 7-foot line that is stretched out, emphasized, and lingered over. In conversation with Blank and scholars interested in queer meter, I read this line—a line that does not come to term, does not fill the time—as abortive. Abortive lyrics and verse might be incomplete, stunted, premature interruptions; lines that prevent conception, are inviable, or not completely formed; fruitless and unsuccessful; spontaneous, arrested, or imperfect in development; sterile or barren; rudimentary or ineffective—in short, lines that fail to deliver. As Richard's subsequent response to Elizabeth's line suggests, there is a relationship between queer meter and pregnancy in *Richard III* that invites further exploration: "But in your daughter's womb I bury them / Where in that nest of spicery they shall breed / Selves of themselves, to your recomferture" (343-345). In this paper, I aim to consider the "dead end[s]" and "darkness" Jack Halberstam finds crucial to a queer aesthetic (96) as reflected in both lines like Elizabeth's that are "Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before [their] time" (1.1.2) as well as in the abortive imagery attached to the reproductive female body—the "nest of spicery" in which children are buried just as often as they are nourished throughout *Richard III*.

**Barclay Green, Northern Kentucky University**

**"Redeeming it with much labour:" Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* and the Construction of English National Identity**

When historians of early modern literature discuss Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), most focus on the author's infamous (and ambiguous) comments about rhyme or on his recommendations for English quantitative meters. Much traditional Campion scholarship contends that Campion's fundamental goal with *Observations* was to imitate the ancients by creating the foundation for vernacular quantitative verse. I suggest, however, that Campion develops his prosody as part of another project important to late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century English authors. I argue that Campion lays the foundation for quantitative verse

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not only to imitate classical Greece and Rome, but also to enable England to compose vernacular poetry that would surpass the work already produced by the Southern European nations of Italy, France, and Spain. Careful attention to *Observations*, then, broadens our understanding of the endeavor to create a strong body of English vernacular poetry and suggests that the rivalry between Northern and Southern Europe may be the fundamental category that characterizes this project.

**Dianne Mitchell, University of Pennsylvania**

**Measures of Queer Intimacy in John Donne's Poetic Exchanges**

John Donne's poetic correspondence with young, educated men during the 1590s stands out both for its memorable expressions of same-sex desire and for its attention to its own rough meter. Looking closely at poems to and from Donne, I argue that these features are deeply connected. Donne's and his friends' self-critical gestures toward rugged or excessive lines ultimately encode their participation in what I call a queer postal practice of poetic production. "Roughness," I argue, emerges as a way to explore and analyze how poetic transmission can (and can't) facilitate intimacy at a distance.

**Christopher Shirley, Northwestern University**

**"Come Live with Me and Be My Queer:  
Rhythmic Regularity and Queer Meter"**

Christopher Marlowe's seminal lyric "Come Live with Me and Be My Love" and Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" have often been construed, together, as paradigms of heterosexual Renaissance lyric and as exemplars of metrical regularity in vernacular poems. In particular, Marlowe's metric regularity has been praised since the seventeenth century, and has overshadowed close analysis of the poem's manipulation of meter. Beginning with an analysis of Sir Philip Sidney's metaphor of metrical regularity with heterosexual reproduction, this paper aligns with a different critical tradition that views Marlowe's poem, not as a primary instance of pastoral heterosexual temptation, but as a remarkably subtle articulation of same-sex desire *within* normative generic expectations. In particular, it attends to the metric irregularities of the lines that can be taken to identify Marlowe's addressee as female to contend that it Marlowe invokes *just such regularity* to provide contrast for his articulation of same-sex desire. Ultimately, it contends that seemingly formal—and, thus, erotically inert—details such as whether a given line contains ten or eleven syllables can, in fact, unlock queer readings of early modern poetry.

**Bellee Jones-Pierce, Emory University**

**Able Verse: Meter and the Lyric in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine***

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Christopher Marlowe's erasure of the historical Timur's disability in *Tamburlaine the Great* is widely acknowledged, but few critics consider the elision of Timur's disability with regard to Marlowe's poetry. In this paper, I argue that Marlowe's "mighty line" depends upon the strength of an ideally capable, ideally masculine conqueror. Marlowe's blank verse is highly regular, yet places where the meter goes queer—where speakers lose their footing, or where the verse calls attention to its own lyric qualities—work to align Marlowe's decidedly able Tamburlaine with poetry itself.

**Anthony Barthelemy, University of Miami**

**And Stop: Polysyllabic Words and Stops in *Richard II***

My paper focuses on the iambic pentameter line and how the poet uses end stops to reestablish meter after internal variations that signal both thematic and rhythmic queering. Particularly, I'm interested in Shakespeare's use of polysyllabic words, especially names to reveal Richard's weaknesses and liabilities as a man, husband and ruler. Throughout the play individual characters repeat proper names of people who pose threats to Richard's rule and undermine his ability to consolidate power. Each reiteration weakens the king. But the names are almost natural trochees and thus help establish a contrapuntal rhythm to the lines. Other characters' use of polysyllabic words continues to disrupt Richard's claims to authority even though he possesses unquestionable legitimacy. In the end, characters begin to rely on monosyllabic words to establish their own authority.

**Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld, Pomona College**

**Missing the Point: A Counterfactual Reading of the Spenserian Stanza**

The Proem to book 5 of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* begins with an image of the world spun off its axis: having missed "the first point of his appointed sourse," this "world is runne quite out of square." Taking a pun on "point" as its entryway into the poem, this essay argues that Spenser models the wayward trajectory of a world that "growes daily wourse and wourse" through a period that, having missed its opportunity to conclude, spins out of control. I argue that this opening stanza offers an etiology of the form of which it is an instance: and account of what the Spenserian stanza is, why it is what it is, but also, how it might have been something else and even, that it might yet be something other than what it is. At its most extreme, my argument is that this sentence lends a form to its own distant future: the pun on "point" raises the specter of *amphibologia*, the promise that (one day) this sentence will have spun so far from its "first point" that it will be able to reverse itself.