

Respondent: Will Stockton, Clemson University

Valerie Billing, Central College

Queer Orientation toward the Large Mother in Brome's *The New Academy*

This paper investigates a moment in Richard Brome's city comedy *The New Academy* (c. 1636) in which a male character describes how Lady Nestlecock, an indulgent mother, continues to wash her teenaged son's face, bounce him on her knee, and "play with's cock." This queer touch, which passes between mother and son, activates queer affects that reach other characters in the play and, potentially, the playgoers themselves. I argue that queer affects condense in the play around Lady Nestlecock and that reading her through these affects gives us new ways of understanding the large, intrusive maternal figures in early modern drama who have often been seen as villainous "suffocating mothers," to use Janet Adelman's phrase. Instead, we might see Lady Nestlecock as offering queer pleasures of touch and indulgence for those characters and playgoers who turn away from the demands of normative early modern masculinity when they orient toward her large maternal body.

Dennis Britton, University of New Hampshire

Desiring Othello: Race, Petrarchanism, and Pity

In act 1, scene 2 of *Othello*, we learn that Desdemona's feelings toward Othello are transformed from fear to love. Brabantio tells the senate that his daughter initially "fear'd to look on" Othello (1.3.98), but Othello's tale of suffering allows Desdemona to pity him: "She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd, / And I loved her that she did pity them" (1.3.167-68). Pity is thus the conduit that alters how Desdemona and Othello feel about each other; pity converts hate to love, and it produces queer desires—in this case, interracial desire—that are deemed unimaginable, bestial, sadistic, and non-normative. This paper explores Desdemona's pity and love for Othello, and how and why Othello becomes desirable. I argue that Desdemona's pity does not foreclose the import of Othello's blackness on her feelings; in fact, her pity should be read as an expression of an English Petrarchanism that variously racialized male suffering and female pity. Othello becomes desirable to Desdemona only when his blackness is able to be read as a mark of suffering. *Othello* suggests that the suffering black subject is a pitiful one; the pitiful black subject is a lovable, desirable one. *Othello* also raises questions about how Petrarchanism may have contributed to early modern feelings about and desires for racial otherness.

Casey Caldwell, Northwestern University

A Barren Breed: Corporeal Usury and the Price of Affect in *The Merchant of Venice*

In Will Fisher's essay, *Queer Money*, he suggests both that there is a sense in which the term "queer" traces its lineage from "coining terminology," and that, in the early modern period, "sodomy and counterfeiting were ... united *conceptually* long before the linguistic connection

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was established” (1). We can generalize Fisher’s claim to develop a framework for talking about a normative human sexuality and a queer, monetary sexuality—where the latter is a sexuality inhering in money itself. I utilize this framework to think through a different orientation to history of friendship and sexuality scholarship on *The Merchant of Venice*. Specifically, after establishing the political stakes of Shylock’s reappropriation of the Aristotelian critique of usury’s “sexuality,” I argue that Shylock’s “kind [...] offer” (1.3.138) proposes a bond with Antonio that enacts the fantasy of a “monetary,” reproductive male amity. I conclude by speculating on the “price of affect” their bond might evoke—where the pound of flesh, in its almost yet never arriving, marks for the audience a point where affect almost but never passes. Instead of arguing the queer amity between Shylock and Antonio produces new affects, I suggest the play makes palpable an affect the theater cannot afford to produce.

Huw Griffiths, University of Sydney

Kissing Fops for Pleasure: *Love Makes a Man* as Archive of Queer Affect

The performance of the fop, on the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English stage, can be read as an archive of queer affect. In this paper, I start with a detailed reading of a small moment in Colley Cibber’s play, *Love Makes a Man*, specifically the distinct pleasure that one character takes in kissing Cibber’s fop, the “pert coxcomb” Clodio. I then place this moment in the context of the play’s early modern sources and antecedents: the two Fletcher-canon plays that Cibber uses for his narrative, *The Elder Brother* and *The Custom of the Country*, and the Cervantean representations of homosociality and homoerotic attachment upon which they, in turn, depend. Older ways of “making a man” persist into the eighteenth-century context, with the fop delicately poised between the old-fashioned, Renaissance mores of what Thomas King has called “residual pederasty”, and the urban pleasures of post-Restoration London. Dramatic adaptation offers us a privileged access to archives of queer affect: in this case, the pleasures of kissing and of foppery.

Matt Kozusko, Ursinus College

Affectation, Affection, and Affect in *All’s Well that Ends Well*

This paper looks at the queer alliance that emerges in *All’s Well that Ends Well* between Paroles and Lafew. Paroles, out of favor and out of a job, signs on with Lafew, whose confused affection for Lavatch suggests his desire for a fool of his own. In a play that is otherwise about a perverse drive to square misaligned faces—Bertram and Helen; youthful passion and ancient wisdom—the arrangement between Paroles and Lafew is a way of resettling social class standings disturbed by a rupture that separates honor and birthright. Whether Bertram earnestly adopts in 5.3 the view of marriage to Helen held by his elders is difficult to say, since the play repeatedly undercuts his gestures of repentance by following them up with more lies and evasions. But in offering even the prospect of Bertram embracing the marriage, the play advocates a radical exogamy that it either mediates or exacerbates by relocating Paroles in the role of court fool. I think the play is uneasy and confused about its vision for exogamy and tries

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with Paroles—an echo of Malvolio and a predecessor to Autolycus—to achieve a precarious balance that effectively defers the happy ending promised in the play’s title.

Elizabeth Labiner, University of Arizona

“One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all”: Incest in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

In this paper, I examine the incestuous relationship between siblings Giovanni and Annabella in John Ford’s *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c. 1633) as queer in the sense of being aligned against traditional norms and expectations. From the moment that Giovanni dismisses social, cultural, and religious impediments to his desire for his sister as merely “a peevish sound, / A customary form” (I.i.24-5), the play sets up a tension between the siblings’ love and sexual relationship and the normative expectations of a heterosexual, exogamic marriage. Giovanni argues that the familial relation only makes his romantic love for Annabella more natural, and twists philosophy and religion to suit his desires.

I will argue that Ford queers both heterosexuality and siblinghood through the incest portrayed in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, particularly in light of the ambivalence with which many of the characters approach and react to incest. In doing so, he confronts the audience with the flawed structures of heterosexuality, marriage, religion, and family – particularly as the latter relies on the three former to maintain its traditional shape.

Jess Landis, Franklin Pierce University

Queer Tears: Crying, Age, and Masculinity in Early Modern Drama

Crying as a gendered act is a trope throughout early modern English literature. On the early modern stage culture, tears signal weakness in men. Often a signal of an inability to regulate emotions, crying marks men as effeminate because, as King Lear remarks, tears are “women’s weapons” (II.ii.249). There are countless references to womanish crying in early modern drama. Like a young lover’s sighing, crying is a bodily manifestation of an inner weakness. Lear’s brief description reveals a gendered association, but in other parts of the play, he links crying with age. In this paper, I claim that there is a marked association between the act of crying and masculine maturity as well as the threat of effeminacy. By looking at *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*, I read crying on stage as a queer act that adolescent and old men can embrace, but that mature men must deny. Tears and their associations with age and gender disrupt early modern notions of a stable and natural masculinity.

Anthony Guy Patricia, Concord University

Pornographic Queer Affects in *Much Ado about Nothing*

Shakespeare critics such as Evelyn Gajowski have referred to the trope as, “the true woman falsely accused,” in descriptions of the story arc of such characters as Hero in *Much Ado*, Desdemona in *Othello*, and Imogen in *Cymbeline*. As is well known, all three of these women

are put through the ignominy of being suspected of infidelity through the machinations of villains like Don John, Iago, and Iachimo. In this paper, I perform a close reading of “the true woman falsely accused” trope in *Much Ado*, as that story arc involves the characters of Don John (and, to a lesser extent, Borachio and Conrad), Claudio, Don Pedro, Hero, and Leonato. Since, by and large, what brings about the impugning of Hero is embedded in an all-male homosocial matrix, I claim that *Much Ado*’s treatment of the “true woman falsely accused” narrative can be read as queer. Here, I do invoke (yet, at the same time, I hope I have not pushed it too far) the simile of homoerotic penetration as occurring between Don John and Claudio with Don John’s salacious words about Hero forming the bodily fluid that is exchanged between the two men. With the word count constraint, I was just beginning to explore how Don John’s language resonates with contemporary understanding of heterosexual pornography—used, queerly, as a tool of arousal between men.

Andrea Stevens, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Buried in One Monument: Bizarre Love Triangles in *The Fatal Contract*

Among the more violent works of early modern drama is William Heminge’s rape-revenge tragedy *The Fatal Contract* (1639). The play narrates the story of a villainous African eunuch, ‘Castrato’, who turns out to be ‘Crotilda’, a white woman who has assumed this black-face disguise in order to avenge herself against her rapist, the French King, Clotair. In this hybrid figure of Castrato, Heminge creates what surely is the only cross-dressed and black-faced revenger to appear on the early modern stage; moreover, and unusually for early modern drama, this disguise deceives not just the stage characters within the fiction, but also the audience. That is, the revelation of the Eunuch’s true identity as the aristocratic Crotilda is only disclosed at the play’s end and requires a wrenching shift in sympathy to accept: just moments before this discovery Crotilda (still acting as her male alter-ego) binds the play’s tragic heroine, Aphelia, to a chair and then burns her breasts with a red-hot iron, the stage direction in the printed quarto indicating ‘*the eunuch much sears her breasts*’.

The tonal shift is jarring, to say the least, and becomes more jarring still when, in the wake of this sexual violence, the Eunuch confesses not just to her true identity but also to her secret love for her rapist, the very man she’s been plotting against for the duration of the play: ‘I should have killed thee, King, and had put on / A masculine spirit to perform the deed. / Alas, how frail our resolutions are! / A woman’s weakness conquered my revenge’ (5.2.458-61). Upon hearing the Eunuch’s true identity the injured Aphelia affirms her likeness to the ‘real’ woman under the disguise: ‘Mine injuries and hers are so near kin, / That they must bear each other company / In tears of blood and death’ (5.2.476-78). The play then concludes with the prospect of Aphelia, the Eunuch/Crotilda, and King Clotair joined together in the same tomb: ‘Take up the body of the King, and these / That for his love on either hand lie slain; / they shall lie buried in one monument’ (5.2.543-45).

The paper I propose for this seminar will try to theorize the multiple, complicated, shifting, violent, and erotic affective ties (or orientations, or alignments and misalignments, or

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identifications and disidentifications) between these characters, centering on the love triangles of Eunuch/Aphelia/King and Crotilda/Aphelia/King and, to be sure, Eunuch/Crotilda/Aphelia.

Melissa Vipperman-Cohen, University of California, San Diego

**“Look on beauty, / And you shall see ‘tis purchased by the weight”:
The Queer Value of Reputation in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice***

In this paper, I analyze the concept of reputation in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* to interrogate how early modern individuals conceptualized identity and resisted self-commodification at the start of global capitalism. Reputation was a complex creation in the Renaissance, not only a vital aspect of economic status but also a legally protected synecdochical manifestation of the physical body. Meg Wesling argues that queer value is characterized by “its instability, its refusal to remain fixed along the vectors of use or exchange,” as well as the way it “mediates between the material, the cultural, and the psychic.” I propose that the treatment of early modern reputation reveals an inherent queerness in it, as characters who manipulate its value move unexpectedly between material and social spaces. In *Merchant*, reputation’s value also opens up the possibility for a rejection of heterosexual linkages and a celebration of homosexual and homosocial desire through men’s shared chains of economic obligation. Further though, I seek to queer the value of reputation itself by exploring how recognizing its potential power makes it possible to reject the confines of a capitalist system designed to exploit and commodify gender, sexuality, and race in the early modern period.