

Abstracts
Shakespeare and Distributive Justice
SAA 2013

David K. Anderson,
University of Oklahoma

“Distributive Justice and the Double Bind in *Coriolanus*”

This paper that will examine the relationship between the volatile political situation and the individual hero's psychology in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Few of Shakespeare's plays would seem to face the theme of distributive justice as squarely as this late tragedy, which opens during a bread riot that is exacerbated by the intense animosity felt by the patrician class for those beneath them. However, in Shakespeare's dramatization the matter is not simply—or not only—one of power politics and material resources. It is a commonplace of *Coriolanus* criticism that what the hero really fears distributing is *himself*. Hating the people of Rome far more profoundly than he does his actual enemies the Volsces, Coriolanus is revolted by the idea that he is to be shared out among the unwashed of Rome. But the executive power he seeks in the consulship demands exactly that.

As I have never formally written on this play before, my efforts here will be exploratory—an investigation of Coriolanus as representing a series of double binds surrounding Roman manhood. I do not suggest that the Roman famine and the politics that underpin it are a mere metaphor for his internal state, but that they are entrammelled with it. Ultimately, I will argue, Coriolanus' flight to the Volsces represents a flight from the awareness of his own inadequacy.

Andrew Barnaby
University of Vermont

**“The Botome of Goddes Secretes”:
1 Corinthians and *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

Even now, when Christ accepts the lowliest and chooses those whom the world rejects as foolish and unfit—as St. Paul declares (1 Cor. 1:27): “God chose what is weak” when He established His kingdom though none but beggars, clumsy louts, and lowly people, namely the apostles—even now it is hard to grasp that Christ's kingdom is *also* for the poor. —Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of John* (1537)

In March 2010, Glenn Beck started a public firestorm by advising Christians to leave (or, more accurately, flee) churches that have anything about “social justice” or

“economic justice” in their mission statements. Not surprisingly, many leaders and defenders of those radical (and even not-so-radical) Christians called Beck out: “Why does Glenn Beck hate Jesus?” ran the title of one response; “Jesus is Glenn Beck’s worst nightmare,” ran another. Yet if we think beyond the ministry of Jesus to the history of Christianity more broadly, Beck had a point: social and economic justice has not always been a central theme within Christian thought. In fact, much of Christian tradition has itself run away from that very notion.

My paper seeks to explore that modern controversy in an early-modern form and, more particularly, in relation to Shakespeare’s allusion in Act 4 of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians. After a brief consideration of how Shakespeare constructs this allusion, I will move to the Pauline original: that is, how does the question of social justice play out in the context of Paul’s response to the crisis in the Christian community at Corinth? In the final section, I will return to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to explore in greater detail the play’s complex engagement with the Pauline vision. More specifically, I will try to show that Shakespeare returns his audience (readers or theater-goers as that might be) to the ethical-political implications of the original Pauline text.

Greg Foran
Nazareth College of Rochester

“Bare distress’ in *As You Like It*”

This paper takes up the problem of distributive justice in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. I am particularly interested in the treatment of outlawry here and in Shakespeare’s source texts, Lodge’s *Rosalynde* (1590) and the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Gamelyn* (late 14th century). In all three, the Aristotelian formulation of distributive justice is prominent: Orlando, Rosader, and Gamelyn are all youngest sons of a deceased knight, kept in servitude and denied honor and education by their wicked eldest brothers. *As You Like It* is relatively more interested than its predecessors in the condition of the working poor, and in the experience of extreme hunger that underpins the right of necessity, though it does not offer the impassioned structural critique of wealth and poverty later to be voiced in *King Lear*. Nevertheless, these three representations of forest life under the sovereign ban provoke difficult questions about the relationship between positive law and its exceptions. To what extent is the right of necessity bound up with the politicization of natural life that Giorgio Agamben sees as the primary operation of sovereignty?

Katharine Eisaman Maus
University of Virginia

Vagabond Kings: Entitlement and Distribution in *Henry VI, part II*

My SAA paper is drawn from the first half of the last chapter of my forthcoming book, *Being and Having in Shakespeare* (OUP). The chapter considers the "vagabond

king" in Henry VI, part II and King Lear: this figure, theoretically entitled but actually dispossessed, poses conundrums about distributive justice and raises some fundamental questions about property relations and social organization.

David Morrow
The College of Saint Rose

'Give him a little earth for charity': land redistribution in Shakespeare and the Commonwealthmen

If early modern England lacked the political structures and ideological resources to support modern distributive justice—in Samuel Fleischacker's sense of a secular theory by which the state ensures some amount of material well being to all—the work of the Tudor moralists, or Commonwealthmen, nonetheless provides useful points of comparison with this concept. Unlike their eighteenth-century counterparts, these authors conceptualize distribution largely in moral and religious terms, with the manor, village, or commonwealth serving as the administrative frame. Yet redistribution in various forms is central to their plans for a revitalized and just society. The Tudor moralists' promotion of charity for the poor has drawn much critical attention, but I am more interested here in mapping how their images of egalitarian society are shaped by legal, popular cultural, and theological arguments that figured access to land as a basic right—and the redistribution of land as groundwork necessary for social renewal. I plan then to use this discursive field to inform readings Shakespeare's plays—including *2 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, *King Lear*, and *Henry VIII*—that likewise thematize poverty and dispossession within the context of land based conflict.

Heather J. Murray
The College of Coastal Georgia

The limits of distributive justice: The death of Horatio in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*

The first part of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* concerns the death of Don Andrea, a young Spanish nobleman recently killed while fighting the Portuguese during the Battle of Alcantara. Since the audience is informed of the backstory in the first scene, the rest of the play explores why and how the series of events unfolded as they did. Andrea's death is not staged; there are no poetic reflections on mortality the night before battle, no climactic fight scenes, no noble gestures of self-sacrifice, no last gasps of air. Instead, the genius of the early part of Kyd's play lies in the way that he allows the story of Andrea's final moments to evolve. As the events surrounding Andrea's death are told and retold five times by various characters within the play for different purposes, the material is continually reshaped to accommodate the needs of the teller in the moment of telling. These stories are meant to persuade the various listeners to allocate to the teller some portion of the community's wealth,

offices, and /or honors. As a result of these stories about the Battle of Alcantara, during which Don Andrea died, Horatio (son of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshall of Spain) receives from his King public recognition and acclaim for his feats of valor. During the fifth version of this story, Horatio himself privately tells the story of Don Andrea's death to Bel-imperia (the niece of the King of Spain and Don Andrea's love). During this scene, Horatio and Bel-imperia express affection for each other and begin a romantic relationship. Judged purely on his merits, Horatio would appear to be a worthy partner for Bel-imperia, but he lacks a suitable lineage, and the court of Spain is an aristocracy, not a meritocracy. Shortly thereafter, Horatio is murdered both by Lorenzo (the son of the Portuguese Viceroy) and by Balthazar (Bel-imperia's brother) for over-reaching himself. In the world of The Spanish Tragedy, distributive justice is acceptable as long as it does not challenge the established social and political hierarchy.

Kelly Neil
UC Davis

'Give the cripple alms for charity': Disability and Distributive Justice in Dramatic Prologues and Dedicatory Epistles

Disability informs my interest in distributive justice. Analyzing representations of disability in dramatic prologues and dedicatory epistles, I focus on how playwrights and poets used the practice of giving alms to physically disabled people as a metaphor when writing to audiences or patrons in genres designed to create and sustain a literary reputation and financial support. I look at both Shakespearian and non-Shakespearian texts. For instance, when Shakespeare dedicates "Venus and Adonis" (published 1593) to Henry Wrothesley, Earl of Southampton, he identifies Wrothesley as "so strong a prop" supporting a text that may "prove deformed." Shakespeare identifies Wrothesley as a kind of prosthesis to his "deformed" poem enabling Shakespeare to gain cultural capital. In his prologue to his 1602 *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, a play about a heroic "cripple," Thomas Heywood calls his play "lame" and "imperfect" yet asks the audience to "give the cripple alms for charity." Shakespeare's dedicatory epistle and Heywood's prologue structure their relationships to readers and viewers modeled on relationships between an alms-giving, able-bodied person and a needy, disabled person. What benefits might writers derive from this model of disability? What is lost and what is gained when lived practices of distributive justice become representations that writers deploy for material resources but also for less tangible benefits such as cultural capital and literary prestige?

Lindsey Row-Heyveld
Canisius College
rowheyvl@canisius.edu

Distributive Justice, Disability, and Performance in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

My paper outlines the early modern theatrical tradition of fraudulent disability—where able-bodied characters feign various forms of disability—and situates Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* within that tradition. I trace the connections between the fraudulent disability trope and the English Reformation, and I argue that playwrights used the performance of disability to control the charitable actions and theatrical reactions of their audiences. *Bartholomew Fair*, which features a real fool and a fake fool, as well as a real madman and a fake madman, rehearses the tropes of fraudulent disability to criticize and reform the theatrical conventions and expectations of that genre, as well as the social and political agendas that often motivated the staging of fraudulent disability. Jonson's ambitious play also goes beyond simply teaching audiences how to respond to the performance of disability, but uses this well-rehearsed tradition to teach his spectators how to react to performance in general. Specifically, I assert that *Bartholomew Fair* attempts to create for itself a uniquely uncritical spectator, while, at the same time, affirming the necessity of critical watchfulness in matters of financial distribution, both charitable and legislative.

The main focus of my analysis is Justice Adam Overdo, a judge incapable of correct judgment. Jonson interrogates the relationship between justice and charity in Overdo, who is tasked with maintaining the law at Bartholomew Fair, which he attempts to do by (illegally) feigning foolishness. Overdo is also fixated on charity, and his actions demonstrate the tension between distributive justice and the charitable mandate in the English Reformation. Overdo exemplifies the centrality of disability to these issues: not only does he perform disability himself, but, as a justice of the peace, Overdo would have been tasked with distinguishing fraudulent disability from the real thing in order to appropriately distribute the funds designated for the “deserving poor.” Yet this professional disability-identifier can't recognize real disability when he sees it, and the misadventures caused by his epistemological ineptitude allow him to be manipulated by a much more skillful spectator, Quarlous, who also becomes a performer of disability. The conclusion of the play demonstrates how performance can mediate the relationship between charity and distributive justice. *Bartholomew Fair* vividly illustrates the critical role disability played in the development of early modern poverty, charity, and social policy, and affirms that any discussion of distributive justice in the early modern period must also include a discussion of disability.

Bradley D. Ryner
Arizona State University

Distributive Justice and Ontological Difference in Early Mercantile Thought

In my contribution to this seminar, I plan to examine how the seventeenth-century

mercantile writers Gerard Malynes and Thomas Milles conceptualized the relationships among distributive justice, commerce, and royal authority. Conventionally identified as “bullionists,” they argued that England’s economic prosperity depended on royal power guaranteeing that bullion was not being syphoned from the country. Following Thomas Elyot, both men justify the privileged place of the King by citing the Aristotelian distinction between the commutative justice essential to commerce and the distributive justice essential to social harmony. For Malynes and Milles, the *inequality* between king and subject was necessary to maintaining the *equality* of measurements in commercial transactions. Although I am in the early stages of thinking this through (read: “I’m trying on a thesis to see if I really believe it”), I plan to argue that Malynes and Milles partially undermine the distributive justice rationale they depend on to conceptualize royal authority. Their assertions about the merit of the monarch reiterates their assertions about the value of coins. With coins, both seem at times to suggest that value is an ontological property of gold and silver (hence their designation as “bullionists”); however, at several points they make evident that the appearance of ontological value is actually the structural effect of the commercial system. Similarly, both men claim that the monarch’s merit entitles him to greater power and wealth (especially Milles, who insists on an ontological difference between king and subject based on the homology between royal and divine authority). Likewise, though, upon further examination, this merit reveals itself to be an effect of the system that sustains it. Thus, despite their claims that distributive and commutative justice apply to two different domains, They actually show that the transactions of the domain putatively governed by commutative justice performatively create an ontological distinction that becomes the basis for distributive justice’s unequal rewards.

James Siemon,

Boston University

Pooling/Polling Pole: Suffolk and the Pirates in *2H6*

While discussions of distributive justice in Shakespeare should be drawn to the Cade episodes of *2H6*, with their ties to the Peasants’ Revolt and their carnivalesque discourses invoking radical re-allocations of social rank and material goods, the scene of Suffolk and the pirates offers another potentially interesting commentary on injustice. This paper will examine that episode in a context defined by contemporary concerns about the desperate state of demobilized Elizabethan soldiers and the threat of anarchy they embodied and about unsanctioned forms of martial activity undertaken by non-state actors. I am interested in the contrasts between the material and social distributive economics of early modern piracy, especially in its internal politics of recognition which in some cases took the form of participatory governance and office-holding, and contemporary complaints about

injustices inhering in military organization, promotion, remuneration and job security.

David Summers
Capital University

“Taking Care and Reasoning Need: Distributive Justice in *King Lear*”

Perhaps the starkest statement of progressive economic and political theory in Shakespeare’s plays comes when Lear confronts his own enormous loss of political and economic power he has experienced by finally noticing the perennial powerlessness of his most destitute subjects, whose “poor naked wretches” he contemplates on the heath. At least for a moment he realizes: “I have ta,en / Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp, / Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, / That though mayst shake the superflux to them / An show the heavens more just” (3.4.32-36). This reflection on the distributive obligations of the powerful toward the poor is contextualized by the complex issues of fairness in the division of the kingdom in 1.1-2, as well as Lear’s woeful misunderstanding of the depth of destitution experienced by “our basest beggar” in 2.2. Shakespeare’s use of the relatively rare words *superfluous* in 2.2 and *superflux* in 3.4. suggests that this concept should attract our critical attention if we are to understand the complex notion of distributive justice represented in *King Lear*. In some sense, Lear’s evolving sense of justice is tied to the agenda of “showing the heavens more just,” begging comparison with the approach to providential justice as explored by Spenser in Book Five of the *Faerie Queene*, where human agency is deemed just—in some cases—to the extent that it ratifies, reinforces or restores the distribution of wealth and power decreed by Providence. This essay is largely informed by the distinction between the “transcendental institutional” (Rawlsian) and the “realization-focused comparative” paradigms delineated by Amartya Sen. It also explores (briefly) how prior expression of radical notions of distributive justice in More (*Utopia*) and Montaigne (“On the Cannibals”) lay the groundwork for the astonishing articulation of Justice as taking care, reasoning the need, and “showing the heavens more just” that we find in *King Lear*.

Charles Whitney
University of Nevada

Cursed Spite

This paper is based on the premise that today’s unprecedented environmental crises demand a re-thinking of the entire human record, one of the goals of which is to glean promising resources for addressing contemporary problems from culturally residual elements of the past, rather than from dominant elements that propelled modernity. The paper works toward a provisional understanding of green distributive justice as an alternative to the tradition presented by Fleischacker. It considers possible parallels to green distributive justice in the work of the

commonwealth men and in Shakespeare, ones relating to the notion of the commons as a set of goods that is passed on through generations.