

2017 SAA Seminar: Time-Reckoning in Early Modern England Abstracts
Leaders: Alison Chapman, University of Alabama, Birmingham
and Phebe Jensen, Utah State University 1

Deann Armstrong, Vanderbilt University

“Temporal Cynicism in *The Roaring Girl*”

This paper focuses on Moll’s attitude toward time measurement in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s 1611 play *The Roaring Girl*. As a starting place, I take a climactic scene in which the play’s heroine decides not to steal a pocketwatch. I argue that in this scene, as throughout the play, Moll’s attitude toward timekeeping is cynical. Cynicism in the English Renaissance was largely derived from the aphorisms and stories of Diogenes of Sinope, which were transmitted to grammar school boys like Middleton and Dekker by way of Erasmus and Diogenes Laertius. In defining temporal cynicism, I consider these sources as well as recent research on continental Renaissance cynicism.

What would it mean, in 1611, to take a cynical attitude toward timekeeping? A cynical stance toward timekeeping is one that uses performance to mock normative social conventions. To say that Moll takes a cynical attitude toward timekeeping is, then, to say that she necessarily takes a dramatic attitude toward it: she understands timekeeping as a performative, socially-derived practice, one shaped not so much by mechanical devices as by groups like the playgoers in the theatre. It is also to say, in a claim that aligns with much prior criticism of the play, that Moll regards mechanical timekeeping as a practice that can be used to repress non-normative human behaviors in the name of social acceptability.

Jonathan Baldo, University of Rochester

“Once upon a Clock: Losing Time in the Forest of Arden”

In response to Touchstone’s sardonic criticism of the two pages’ music making in their duet “It was a lover and his lass,” the First Page objects, “You are deceived, sir. We kept time, we lost not our time” (5.3.36-7). Keeping musical time is one way of timekeeping in a place where there are no clocks, as Orlando observes of the forest (3.2.295), but only pocket sundials. The claim “we lost not our time” is especially resonant in a play that occupies the margins between England’s past and its present, a present that involves new timekeeping devices and perhaps a new relation to time. To a degree *As You Like It* is its author’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (In Search of Lost Time), inasmuch as the Forest of Arden holds the power to evoke the forested lands near Shakespeare’s boyhood home and his mother Mary Arden’s legacy. There are other lost worlds as well in *As You Like It*, from the lost world of chivalry evoked by the name of Sir Rowland De Boys; to England’s own childhood, its putative egalitarian culture evoked by the Robin Hood legends and displaced by the Norman Conquest, according to a stubborn historical narrative known as the “Norman yoke”; to the time that Orlando complains of losing at the beginning of the play, owing to the tyranny of his brother Oliver; to England’s Catholic past, closely associated with the Arden family. Recapturing lost time and losing time itself are equally associated with the Forest of Arden, a space before timekeeping had become mechanized through the introduction of watches and clocks. Time in the forest is the ultimate “lie seven times removed.”

2017 SAA Seminar: Time-Reckoning in Early Modern England Abstracts
Leaders: Alison Chapman, University of Alabama, Birmingham
and Phebe Jensen, Utah State University 2

Kenneth Graham, University of Waterloo

“Time, Language, and Ritual in Shakespeare’s Theatre”

Temporal relationships underlie Christian doctrine, which places individual lives within a narrative framework that leads from Creation to the Fall, and from the Incarnation and Resurrection to the Last Judgement. Ritual, similarly, is generally understood to make and to mark connections across time, re-enacting past events and anticipating future ones. And as Brian Cummings brilliantly shows in *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*, the way language expresses or notes time plays a central role in the formation of religious doctrine, in, for example, the way modal auxiliary verbs suspend many English sentences about the future between volition and prediction (or deontic and epistemic modality). This paper will explore the significance for Shakespeare’s drama of the ways in which post-Reformation ritual practices drew upon the possibilities of the English language to measure the relationships between past, present, and future events. I will focus on how these relationships play out in matters of individual repentance and forgiveness, where Christian history is re-enacted in miniature, and where expressions of penitential suffering mark the passage from sin to reconciliation and renewal. I will begin by showing how the language of the *Book of Common Prayer* shapes these temporal relationships in the contemporary English ritual practice of confession and forgiveness. I will then turn to the language of the plays, particularly *The Winter’s Tale*, where the reckoning of Time plays an unusually important part.

Christopher Holmes, SUNY Maritime College

“More Matter for a May Morning: Evil May Day”

My seminar paper surveys accounts of Evil May Day from 1517 to *The Play of Sir Thomas More* (1603-04). It begins by analyzing contemporary accounts and chronicle histories. It then moves on to consider the ways in which the event has been understood by biographers as a seminal moment in the life of Thomas More. Shifting from the historical to the literary, it analyses the ways in which *Utopia* anticipates and attempts to make impossible events like Evil May Day, in large part because of *Utopia*’s radical reimagining of the early modern calendar. Finally, I consider some of the resonances of Evil May Day in Shakespeare’s works, most notably in Hand D in *Sir Thomas More*, but also (briefly!) in other crowd scenes and evocations of the calendar.

My general position is that time-reckoning is contested throughout the early modern period, and that it is both more malleable than traditionalists would allow, and more “sticky” than reformers would prefer. Evil May Day is an unusually potent symbol for social conflict and social cohesion, and an anniversary which lingered in early modern imaginations.

Sam Kolodezh, University of California, Irvine

“The idleness of Now: Performance and Time in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*”

2017 SAA Seminar: Time-Reckoning in Early Modern England Abstracts
Leaders: Alison Chapman, University of Alabama, Birmingham
and Phebe Jensen, Utah State University 3

In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, time is conceived of as an agent of change, a unit of exchange, and a measure of efficiency. Time either provides hope for a desired or acceptable outcome or disappointment over its inefficient use. Either way, it is not conceived of as the immediate present or as poly- or multi-temporal. Time is neither aleatory nor rebellious. It can only be managed for a successful or failed outcome. However, in Launce's comical farewell speech, the word "now" appears eight times—more than in any other one speech in Shakespeare's plays except for in Time's monologue in *The Winter's Tale*. "Now," for Launce is both subjunctive and anticipatory. It precedes what he should do and what he will do. Simultaneously, it is imaginary within the context of the play. Each object represents the various characters he is saying farewell to. Thus, his subjunctive and anticipatory exclamations are already a part of a recounted tale. They are, in other words, the immediate performance of an already scripted past that Launce presents in the present after or as he represents the past.

Launce's monologue demonstrates some of the possible relations between time, representation, presentation, idleness, and the comic. Though a metatheatrical critique is implicit rather than explicit as it is in later plays such as *Hamlet* or *The Tempest*, Launce's monologue distills a temporal problem that arises in performance: how one operates with the relationship between a rehearsed past and an immediate present. Launce's position as a servant and as a comic also enriches the discussion of performativity and time in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* because he is both bound to the time of his masters and he is critiqued for his idleness. Within the scope of the play, Launce has the most polytemporal and immediate engagement with time, yet he is articulated as one of the most idle and comic characters.

In this paper I examine the relationship between the comic, idleness, and the performance of "now." "Now" operates as an indicator and measure of uselessness because it escapes measure. Yet, it is able to be measured as measureless and critiqued as useless because the repetition of "now" is the basic method of measure of creative difference: now I come to where I was not before. The measure of time, I claim, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is idleness and its creative potential.

Sarah Lewis, King's College London

“‘[C]ool patience’ and ‘wicked speed’: time marking gender in *Hamlet*”

This paper explores how men and women marked the passing of time in early modern society, but it also highlights some of the ways in which time and its passing were used as markers of gender and of sexual identity on the early modern stage. Medical discourse in the early modern period described the unborn female as developmentally delayed: coolness in the womb was thought to curtail physical development and prevent the foetus reaching completion as a perfect male. As a result of this coolness and concomitant slowness, women were defined as wanton and petulant in their hasty actions. Temporal frameworks of virtuous inaction, such as chastity and patience, worked to control this supposed impropriety and impatience. In this paper I explore the ways in which an inability to come to a point in fact works to define both female vice and female virtue in *Hamlet*, and in early modern society more broadly. Early modern women are caught in a double-bind of delay, which is used as a temporal marker of both their gender and their sexual identities.

2017 SAA Seminar: Time-Reckoning in Early Modern England Abstracts
Leaders: Alison Chapman, University of Alabama, Birmingham
and Phebe Jensen, Utah State University 4

Ian MacInnes, Albion College

“The Sword and the Instant of Time in *Romeo and Juliet*”

It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say ‘It lightens.’
--Juliet

The early moderns’ fascination with the nature of time was particularly acute when it came to its smallest divisions, the so-called instant of time or change, when one action or situation ends and another begins. On the one hand, natural philosophy, beginning with Zeno and Aristotle, had long wrestled with the paradoxical implications of time’s divisibility into discrete instants. On the other hand, the most important human experiences, such as dying or falling in love, were understood to occur in a moment of time so small as to be inaccessible to human understanding. Certain disciplines and practices were particularly concerned with understanding, and sometimes theorizing, precise timing, disciplines such as music, dance, theatre, and above all, fencing. Early modern dueling masters devoted considerable attention to the concept of tempo, described alternately as the pause between two actions or the action between two pauses. In appearance, a good swordsman’s movements might seem smoothly continuous, but the discipline was based on the separation of action into discrete moments separated by instants in which one movement ends and another has yet to begin. Theorists sought to define the “true time,” in which an attack should take place. In a fight, failure could mean a mortal wound. It is no accident that a play like *Romeo and Juliet*, which is so concerned with the instant of change (in love and death) and in which tragedy results from a failure of timing, is also a play in which dueling plays a significant dramatic role. Drawing on early modern natural philosophy and on fencing manuals by Giganti, Capoferro, Silver, and others, I argue that the instant of time was inherently freighted with a sense of loss and inaccessibility and that this emerging temporal concept drives the tragedy in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Lindsay E. Sherrier, Rice University

“The Temporality of Art and Reproduction in Shakespeare”

This paper argues that William Shakespeare explores the temporality of art by reimagining the reproduction of bodies through artistic means. In doing so, Shakespeare imagines the material body as art that is not subject to time or even outside of time but rather encapsulates all time—the past, present, and future coincide all at once. In the procreation sonnets, Shakespeare “engrafts” the man in his poem as a memory of the man’s beauty, as a present object that pleads for the preservation of the man’s beauty, and as the reproduction of that man’s beauty—effectively, a reconstruction of the man’s material body—to continue on into the future. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Hermione’s statue presented to Leontes and the court at the end of the play functions as a memory of Hermione’s life, a present object meant to convict Leontes

2017 SAA Seminar: Time-Reckoning in Early Modern England Abstracts
Leaders: Alison Chapman, University of Alabama, Birmingham
and Phebe Jensen, Utah State University 5

of his wrong-doing (specifically in his misunderstanding of what constitutes biological reproduction), and a projection of the future—an magical object that holds the potential to resurrect Hermione. By depicting reproduction in the form of art, Shakespeare articulates the temporality of literature as participating in all time—past, present, and future—resonating well with Ben Jonson’s assessment of Shakespeare “not of an age but for all time.”

Dorothy Todd, University of Georgia

“The Visual Rhetoric of Time in *The Winter’s Tale*”

In William Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* the figure of Time takes to the stage in Act 4, Scene 1. In this meta-dramatic scene, Time interrupts the action of the play in order to reflect on the events that have transpired in the previous three acts as well as to communicate to the audience that the next scenes takes place some sixteen years after the preceding scene. It is my contention Shakespeare draws on the early modern emblem book tradition to inform his figuration of Time in the play and that Time’s appearance in *The Winter’s Tale* functions both visually and verbally. Audiences of performances and readers of the printed text alike experience a visually complex and historically rooted iteration of Time in this performatively and literarily rich scene. Time creates a picture on the stage, and simultaneously, Time delivers an arresting meditation on the passing of time and its effects on the characters of the play. This marriage of the image of Time on the stage and of the text that Time speaks, in which image clarifies text and text clarifies image, can be identified as the visual rhetoric of Time in *The Winter’s Tale*.