

Meredith Beales

The Relentless Chronicle: *Macbeth* and the Failure of Alternative History

Macbeth can be read as a play which shows the failure of attempts to create an alternative future: that is, Macbeth tries to create a different future—one in which he is king—which lasts only briefly before he is replaced by Duncan’s son Malcolm. In this the play exemplifies not only the logic of tragedy, in which the deaths of characters end the play, but also the logic of chronicle history, in which successful monarchs follow each other in a relentless, unstoppable chain. Macbeth’s attempt to insert himself into the line of kings only briefly disrupts the line of kings before chronicle asserts itself again with Malcolm’s succession. The characters who most forcefully attempt to alter history, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, are also those whose failure to create an alternative to chronicle instead loses them any kind of future, including that of living to the end of the play.

In other words, this paper will ask what happens when *Macbeth* is read as a history play; while it has long been established that *Macbeth* is concerned, like so many of the history plays, with succession, most readings of *Macbeth* follow the First Folio’s generic divisions, which label plays that take place prior to 1066 as tragedies and those after 1066 as histories. This paper is a deliberate attempt to blur those generic divisions by examining both what *Macbeth* has in common with what we understand as a Shakespearean ‘history’ play and the places where these ‘historical’ concerns, such as succession, begin to break down.

Amanda Kellogg

Contingent Mercy: Duke Vincentio’s Figurative Language

Vincentio of *Measure for Measure* labors to exert control: over Vienna, over his romantic and political futures, over the dramatic conclusion he stages at the gates of the city. His success depends in large part on his capacity to blur the line between *is* and *is like* for the other characters in the play. Though the bed trick and the substitution of Ragozine’s head for Claudio’s may most overtly represent the Duke’s capacity to stage alternatives to reality, the Duke also uses his figurative languages to manage how other characters perceive the present and future. Focusing primarily on 5.1, I will examine how Vincentio collapses the distinction between the symbolic and the real, and how he deploys metaphorical language to suggest that his mercy is contingent upon the actions of other characters (Angelo’s marriage to Mariana, for instance, or Isabella’s acceptance of his proposal).

Such uses of figurative language reflect broader early modern anxiety over the negative effects of deploying metaphors, similes, and allegories—which, as George Puttenham argues, can create a “certaine doubleness, whereby our talke is the more guilefull & abusing.” Vincentio takes advantage of the potential for language to signify unreliably in order to create uncertainty in his subjects; stage his miraculous ability to know and make certain; and, consequently, convince others to take actions, sometimes counter to their own desires, that achieve his will.

Emily King

**Refusing History: Alternative Temporalities and the Grammar of Possibility in Marlowe's
*Edward II***

Turning from a sustained critical focus on the king's body and his sexuality in Marlowe's *Edward II*, this essay charts the play's repeated attempt to evoke revised histories, instantiate alternative presents, and potential futures as the imaginative means by which vulnerable subjects create breathing room in the interim. While debates regarding teleology and history continue in early modern studies—and this essay certainly exists in conversation with that scholarship—my intervention shifts the focus to questions of imagination and ephemera. To visualize traces of these alternative temporalities present in *Edward II*, I make use of the work of José Esteban Muñoz and Jack Halberstam to read a queer grammar that undercuts, revises, and even turns one's back on normative syntax and subjectivity. Though I understand these dramatic encounters as temporary refuges from and alternatives to the play's present time, they also crack open what has been largely settled as a matter of factual history, leaving traces of what could have been (or what could still be).

Melanie Lo

**“Past and to Come Seems Best”?
Making Futures, Repeating the Past, and Staying Stuck in the Second Henriad**

More so than the first tetralogy, Shakespeare's second installment of history plays dramatizes the nation's past as a present experience of crafting a future. From the moment Prince Hal reveals that he will “[redeem] time when men least think I will” (1.2.195), the second Henriad demonstrates a fascination with *futurity* as the affective medium through which history comes to be, both onstage and off. Through his proposed reformation, Hal attempts to forge a timeline of English history in which his own personal past does not count in the face of the glorious future-history he strives to actualize for the nation. I view Prince Hal's problematic plan to “falsify men's hopes” (1.2.189) as an ambitious affective project to make the future by treating the present as a usable past; in other words, Hal turned Henry V endeavors to create a future in which his subjects' *cannot* interpret the present in relation to the past, because that past has been abandoned in favor of an alternate timeline.

However, Hal/Henry V's mode of being-in-time demands that his subjects forego affective continuity between past, present, and future; and in *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* Shakespeare explores how emotional meddling with time morphs into disordered and haunted experiences of temporality. In this paper, I will examine the uncanny affective consequences of affectively manipulating time in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*. I argue that Shakespeare stages these sequels as fractured simulacra of their predecessors, in which Hal/Henry V's efforts to forge a national future-history unmoored from the past ironically reinforces the troubling recursiveness of feeling time. By highlighting moments in the plays in which the past unsettlingly repeats and reembodies itself in the present, I hope to show how both theatrical

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characters and sixteenth-century playgoers affectively experience past, present, and future as a weirdly alienating feedback loop. When Shakespeare reached the end of his English history plays, he appears to have concluded that there was no way out of history, and that the future was always already past. Thus, I will gesture to how Shakespeare's final two history plays offer a dark meditation on the consequences of affectively embodying the past in the theater, and experiencing that past again as a playgoer.

Emily Loney

Unnatural Births and Untimely Translation in Florio's Montaigne

In this paper, I discuss John Florio's translation of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* in the context of time, revision, and queer theory. In the introductory material to the 1603 *Essays*, Florio describes his translation as a "Minerva" that follows upon the "Bacchus" birth of the original French text. Focusing upon the reiterative nature of this double textual birth and specifically the odd procreative resonances of these two gods, who were each born outside of normal gestational cycles, I argue that the timing of Florio's metaphor poses a queer, revisory alternative to normative futurity. While the rest of the paratextual material seems preoccupied with memory, progeny, and legacy — all oriented towards what Lee Edelman terms "reproductive futurism" — this moment of reiteration undermines reproductive potential and imagines a recursive, non-sequential relationship to time. In this metaphor, translation as a practice becomes an alternative to a normative future. In the last section of my paper, I will connect this untimely metaphor with Florio's translation practice, arguing that Florio's translation — which composited together material from different editions of the French *Essays* instead of following any teleological predisposition towards the "last" or "most revised," becomes a realization of the revisory futurity that Florio's metaphor sets out.

Timothy Lundy

Possible Futures and Political Deliberation in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*

In the 1593 edition of Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, the Countess of Pembroke herself, Philip's sister Mary Sidney Herbert, brought the two final books of the romance into print for the first time. Her restoration of the *Arcadia's* conclusion, unrevised by Sidney at the time of his death, underscores the vital importance of the romance's ending to the political vision of the work as a whole. In particular, the events of the final book, which transpire between the apparent death by poisoning of the Arcadian king Basilius and his comically miraculous resurrection, do little to advance the overall plot of the romance, instead creating an alternative, contrafactual timeline in which the grounds for political deliberation can be examined with the sovereign removed from the equation.

My paper will consider the rhetorical staging of the final book of the *Arcadia*, particularly the trial of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus, in order to explore the uses of the future within early modern rhetorical and political theory. I suggest that the *Arcadia's* contrafactual *dénouement*

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exploits the tension between two classical branches of oratory: forensic rhetoric, concerned with determining the nature of past events, and deliberative rhetoric, concerned with weighing possible futures. In the flurry of condemnation and debate surrounding Basilius' death, it is the king's sequestered daughters, Pamela and Philoclea, who attempt to transform a forensic debate into a deliberative one, taking seriously the "care of the state's establishment" in the face of profound civil strife.

Andrew Mattison

"To New Eares": The Problem of Posthumous Reading

The primary inspiration for this paper is Samuel Daniel's prefatory poem for his *Certaine Small Works* of 1607, in which Daniel acknowledges that the book will be read in the future, in a literary context he cannot predict:

I know I shalbe read, among the rest
So long as men speake english, and so long
As verse and vertue shalbe in request
Or grace to honest industry belong:
And England since I use thy present tongue
Thy forme of speech thou must be my defence
If to new eares, it seemes not well exprest
For though I hold not accent I hold sence.

Daniel does not promise a beloved that his poems will be read, nor does he hope, wish, or imagine it: he knows it; that much is given. What is uncertain is how his expressions will be understood by "new eares" accustomed to a changed language (including, he stresses, changes in metrical form).

With Daniel's comments on the permanence of print, the changeability of language and meter, the historical specificity of the "forme of speech," and the sheer unknowability of "new eares" in mind, the paper will comment on the ways literary texts of the Renaissance, particularly lyric poetry and verse drama, attempt to anticipate the reading of an unpredictable future. Contrary to critics who have approached the relationship between writers and readers through Foucauldian models of control and resistance or through notions of implied or ideal readers, I argue that the futility of control over reading was understood and largely accepted in the Renaissance, in part because of the assumption of reading over a long period of time and the recognition that predicting how people will read in a changed future culture is impossible. The focus of this intersection of knowledge and ignorance about future reading is, as Daniel says, the "forme of speech"—the potentially but not certainly recognizable forms in which literary language is written and read. The paper will discuss the implications for poetic and dramatic genres if the future recognition and understanding of such forms cannot be assumed. Examples will be drawn both from prefatory and commendatory verses such as Daniel's above and from the texts such verses introduce, including those by Chapman, Jonson, and Shakespeare that reached future

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audiences and others, mostly anonymous, whose anticipatable futures are retrospectively doubtful.

Christopher McKeen

Fads and Futures in 2 *Henry IV*

History, in 2 *Henry IV*, deals not just in matters of state, but in matters of style. In this paper, I argue that Shakespeare's reckoning with history's bearing on the future occupies not just the story of the rebellion's defeat, but also the sub-plot centered on Falstaff and the "swaggering" Pistol. Falstaff and Pistol are anachronisms in 2 *Henry IV*: throughout their scenes, they continually quote Elizabethan plays, debate the use of new words describing London's gallants in the 1590s, and wish to keep up with the rapidly-changing sartorial trends of the late sixteenth century. Nonetheless, I argue that in Falstaff's scenes, Shakespeare develops an alternative form of historiography that works alongside the more overtly historical plot concerning the rebellion. Centered on changing fashions, rather than major events, this alternative historiography gives Shakespeare purchase on a smaller scale of history as well as on non-narrative modes of bringing together past and present.

Sara Morrison

"We must obey the time": Genealogical Time in Shakespeare's *Othello*

As Othello prepares to leave Venice for Cyprus, he looks to the time he has left with Desdemona before he must leave her in Iago and Emilia's hands: "I have but an hour / Of love, of worldly matters and direction, / To spend with thee. We must obey the time" (1.3.300-302). But the contours of time are not static in *Othello*. In this case, they are shaped by the Duke and Senators who are responding to the imminent threat to Cyprus; time is circumscribed by war and territorial boundaries. Elsewhere, however, Othello himself shapes time, specifically genealogical time. Genealogies tell stories; they trace family histories, thereby conferring on individuals a sense of identity that extends beyond the autonomous self. They offer shared epistemological ground on which to understand the past and the present. As histories, they are both verbal and textual, shared with future generations by oral tradition and written texts. They are also iconographic and material; and when passed from one family member to another, such ancestral icons become substantive markers of shared histories. Genealogical storytelling can exceed the strict narrative boundaries drawn by patriarchal lineages, though paradoxically, Othello's story of the handkerchief creates a genealogy shaped by certain epistemological freedoms, yet it also identifies the handkerchief with a particular history that requires a teleological end. When Othello gives Desdemona the handkerchief, his ancestral icon that is inextricably bound to its material and narrative history, he hales her into his family but denies her its genealogical foundations. My paper explores the nature of genealogical time in Shakespeare's *Othello*, suggesting that Othello's narrative history of the handkerchief constructs a retrospective genealogy that connects him to his genetic ancestors but that also condemns Desdemona to a fate shaped by the patriarchal systems of Venice.

Bethany Packard

“Behold the child”: The Boys of *Titus Andronicus* and Their Hypothetical Futures

Julie Taymor’s film, *Titus*, famously ends with Young Lucius carrying the infant son of Tamora and Aaron out of the large amphitheater that serves as a staging space for much of the action. As bells ring, they move out of darkness and toward a bright light, perhaps suggesting a future for the children beyond the violent confines of Roman society and revenge tragedy. At the end of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 2013 production of *Titus Andronicus*, Young Lucius picked up the baby with one hand and a slice of cake with the other. He gazed evenly down at both as the lights went out, suggesting an equivalence between the two that Titus’s cannibalistic pie makes plausible. These examples demonstrate that the play’s children can figure the uncertain future that awaits the survivors, indeed that they evoke an array of possibilities. Early modern children were often burdened by contradictory temporal expectations. They may be seen as spontaneous and living in the present, yet may also be expected to reflect their elders’ pasts while also repeating those pasts on into the future. In *Titus* these expectations do not cohere into a linear trajectory from past to future, a smooth progression by which the boys can grow up to be men like their fathers. Rather, the boys make visible the contradictions imbedded in the assumption that they can prove the past and guarantee the future. Although the plan to switch Tamora and Aaron’s son with the son of one of Aaron’s countrymen is foiled, the proposed future of hidden changelings and possible alternate emperors poses challenges to the unstable ruling structure of Rome. Young Lucius is sometimes framed as a future emperor himself, once his father returns from exile, yet the boy also wishes that he had died rather than his grandfather. Both boys are strongly linked to their fathers, but evoke alternative paths quite different from the choices of Aaron and Lucius. In the final scene, Marcus seems to expect Aaron and Tamora’s son to prove his interpretation of events. His first rhetorical move as he aims to defend the actions of the Andronici is to display the baby: “Now is my turn to speak. Behold the child” (5.3.118). Rather than signifying a specific version of the past or ensuring a particular future, this moment draws attention to the ways that both boys often function as palimpsests of possible pasts and futures. They highlight the layered, alternative temporalities running through *Titus Andronicus*.

Colleen Rosenfeld

The Queen's Knowledge: Conceited Criticism in Shakespeare's *Richard 2*

In Act 2, scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Richard 2*, the Queen knows something that no one else knows. The peculiar form of her knowledge, described by the Queen as the "thought, on thinking on no thought I think," is the object of my essay. The critical tradition's favorite word for the Queen's knowledge has been "intuition." After Richard's departure for Ireland, the Queen cannot fulfill her promise, as recounted to us by Bushy, "to lay aside life-harming heaviness," though she "know no cause": "methinks,/ Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune's womb,/ Is coming towards me, and my inward soul/ With nothing trembles" (2.2.3; 6; 9-12). "Intuition" is the epistemological counterpart to the Queen's latent reproductive capacities which Shakespeare is said to have highlighted by transforming history's Queen Isabel, aged 10, into "a full-grown

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woman" who "metaphorically gives birth." When Green steps on stage and announces Bollingbroke's illegal return from exile, the Queen completes her metaphor. In the words of Jeannie Grant Moore, "her shadowy intuition" is substantiated: "So, Green, thou art midwife to my woe,/ And Bollingbroke my sorrow's dismal heir" (2.2.62-63).

More recent criticism has traded in the language of "intuition" for the language of "premonition." If "intuition" has the effect of withdrawing knowledge from the Queen even as it names that knowledge, the language of "premonition," by contrast, validates the Queen's knowledge but only by casting it as the product of a future that has already been written.³ When the Queen describes "Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune's womb" the language of reproduction doubles for the necessity of temporal succession in a linear conception of historical time. By these accounts, the Queen has foggy and inexplicable access to a necessary future that she is powerless to avert. Maybe she has this access because she is a neurotic ("anxiety" is the word you most frequently hear).

The word I would like to offer to describe the Queen's knowledge in this scene is neither "intuition" nor "premonition" but "conceit," a word that is initially introduced by Bushy in order to dismiss the value of the Queen's knowledge but the accuracy of which the Queen herself subsequently affirms even as she reverses the value that Bushy originally assigned. "'Tis nothing but conceit, my gracious lady," says Bushy; "Tis nothing less," the Queen replies. Whereas Bushy means that the Queen's knowledge is merely a "conceit," nothing more than a "conceit," and therefore should be valued as such, the Queen performs a symmetrical reversal of this act of evaluation when she insists that what she knows is "nothing less" than a "conceit" and therefore should be valued as such.

In this essay, I will argue that the peculiar form of the conceit allows the Queen to know, not the necessary future that Green's role as "midwife" might seem to confirm, but instead, the contingency of a future event that could have gone otherwise than it will. Ultimately, I will argue that the Queen's knowledge is therefore poetic: by narrowing her focus to future contingency, the Queen speaks a language that, as Sidney described it in his *Defence*, "nothing affirms" and therefore, cannot be evaluated according to the traditional criteria of "true" and "false."

Lindsay E. Sherrier

Reproducing Simultaneity in Shakespeare's Procreation Sonnets

This paper argues that Shakespeare's procreation sonnets do not merely preserve the young man within the material lines of the poem but rather conceptualize an active generation of the man through the temporal condition of poetry—namely, simultaneity. These sonnets concurrently manifest the past, present, and future in a continuously recursive movement, drawing both on the idea of circular literary making—"dressing old words new"—and the temporal experience of reading. This process of concurrent temporalities foregrounds the body's potential to exist in a kind of dynamic future-oriented state—rather than a merely preservative stasis—where time

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does not destroy the flesh but aids in its growth and vitality. As a result, poetic reproduction becomes an issue of temporality rather than materiality, reframing the viability of literary procreation and the generative potential of time itself.

Daniel Shore

Non-Narrative Selfhood Before the Novel

The philosopher Galen Strawson's 2004 bellwether essay, "Against Narrativity," opposes the view, dominant across a wide swath of disciplines, that to be a self is to tell (if only privately) an autobiographical story about oneself, and, additionally, that to be a good, ethical, or healthy self is to tell the right kind of story – one that is rich, authentic, coherent, etc. Strawson rejects both the existential and normative dimensions of the narrative selfhood thesis, arguing that there are "deeply non-Narrative people" and good ways of living "deeply non-Narrative" lives. In arguing against the primacy and exclusivity of narrative selfhood and developing a typology of non-narrative models of selfhood, Strawson refers not only to the episodic character of his own self-understanding but to literature by authors as different as Michel de Montaigne, Iris Murdoch, and Bob Dylan.

In this paper I join Strawson in arguing against the claim that "there is only one good way for human beings to experience their being in time." But I also suggest that his present-day perspective skews his account of narrativity, silently identifying it with the conventions of the realist bourgeois novel, while his armchair investigation narrows his inventory of alternative ways of being a self. A better inventory is to be found in the early modern system of genres prior to the rise of the novel. This paper examines works by Shakespeare, Milton, Traherne, and Cavendish as examples of non-narrative versions of what it is like to be *a self* and *a good self*. Drawing on genre theorists such as Lewalski and Dubrow, I explore the consequences of displacing the opposition between narrative and non-narrative selfhood into a larger system of generic differences. Early moderns, I suggest, supposed that many of the best and most praiseworthy ways of being of a self do not require, and may even proscribe, autobiographical narrative.

Laura Yoder

Mind Out of Time: Margaret Cavendish's Posthumous Future

It seems a critical commonplace to describe Cavendish as a person who is somehow temporally different: before her time, out of her time, ahead of her time. Much of this rests on her gender—a woman who does things other seventeenth-century women did not do—and on her idiosyncratic style of thinking and writing, including her own tendency to use epistolary forms to forge a sort of active contemporary connection earlier philosophers. This paper examines resurrection as one image that Cavendish uses in casting herself as asynchronous and imagining a future that she *is* in sync with.

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In the dedication “To two universities” that precedes the 1665 *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, Margaret Cavendish adapts the formula of imagining writing as that which endures beyond—and in some extends the presence of—the author. Eschewing immortality's language of permanence, continuity, and perpetuity, she uses imagery of death, burial, and resurrection to imagine her future existence—and the future itself—as a changeable and changing situation. For Cavendish, writerly perpetuation rests not simply on the endurance of her work in the memory of present readers, but also on the reconfiguration of the world in which that work exists. She uses a metaphor of resurrection to envision a *specific* future rather than a general or indeterminate one: one that is unlike this one, one in which the work of women—and her work in particular—are a common occurrence, seen as neither “unusual” nor “unnatural.” I argue that Cavendish uses imagery of resurrection to envision the future as the realization of a certain set of conditions, not just a far-off point on the timeline.

For all its focus on futurity, this paper also maintains the sense that Cavendish *is* of her time by attending to ways in which her imagery of resurrection and futurity avoids language of transcendence. This is not an attempt to be pedantic or overliteral; rather, I am interested in how a critical parallel between difference and asynchrony (even on a metaphorical level) plays into Cavendish's own imagining of time as that which will solve the problem of her difference.