## Caralyn Bialo, Manhattanville College

### A/Historical Genre?

By nature, theories of genre are often ahistorical theories of structure, lenses through which we might think about the relationship between socio-cultural frameworks and literary texts. My paper will turn, instead, toward a very historically specific way of thinking about genre. Late-Elizabethan poetic treatises identified "literary kind" as an element of style, and as such it was to be governed by the rules of decorum—the principle of using language suitable to the rhetorical occasion. The nature of the occasion, in turn, was determined by the statuses of audience and author, the poetic topic, and the purpose for speaking. Decorum dictated both that writers match their language to the status of their poetic subjects and that they adapt their style to suit their audiences. In theory, for example, a writer should compose an epic about great deeds in an elevated register for a high-status audience. Audience, topic, and occasion, however, rarely coalesced so neatly in the Renaissance, making of genre a site of tensions among aesthetics, material form, and readership. My paper will place this historically specific understanding of genre in conversation with structure-centered theories that emphasize ahistorical elements of genre in order to consider, first, how theory might usefully be adapted to discussions of English Renaissance genre and, second, how we might bridge the divide between modern literary theory and the historical conditions of Renaissance literary production.

## Devin L. Byker, College of Charleston

### Dying Beyond the Bounds of Tragedy: The Trouble with Hermione

Perhaps because it might represent the most familiar characteristic of the genre of tragedy, death is often regarded to be excluded from comic genres. In practice, however, death frequently makes an appearance in Shakespeare's comic and comic-leaning plays, albeit sometimes in adjacent ways: Ragozine's head surfaces in *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labor's Lost* features the abrupt death of the Princess's father, *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well that Ends Well* showcase characters in mourning wear facing acute grief, to name a few examples. Although John Fletcher claimed that tragicomedy only "brings some near to" death, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* nevertheless incorporate death into their plots. If death is far more pervasive outside of tragedy than is typically acknowledged, to what extent do non-tragic genres determine a distinct attitude toward, or foster unique possibilities surrounding, the act of dying? How is dying approached differently beyond the bounds of tragedy?

To explore this question, my essay will consider the uncertainty surrounding Hermione's death in *The Winter's Tale*. Unlike the deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus, Hermione's deathly status persists in ambiguity. While Stephen Orgel has asserted that "There is no question that, at the end of act 3, the queen is dead—as dead as Mamillius," scholars often insist that Hermione never died. Certainly Hermione's continuous survival at the

hand of Paulina is undoubtedly a viable and persuasive reading of the play, but why is the alternative possibility—that Hermione has in fact died, and is somehow revived—so often rejected? To what extent have generic expectations influenced this critical resistance to Hermione's death? In my essay, I hope to consider the stakes of generic assumptions made by readers of the play as well as the generic possibilities that shape an approach to dying that is distinct from Shakespeare's tragedies.

### Jason Crawford, Union University

### Tragic Passion and Tragic Genre

This paper will explore the intersections of two early modern terms: "tragedy" and "passion." In what ways does the language of passion inform early modern notions of the tragic? To what extent can "passion" itself serve, in early modern usage, to indicate a literary or dramatic genre? "Passion" can of course refer to tragic declamation or action (as when Hamlet speaks of actors who can "tear a passion to tatters" and who weep "in a fiction, in a dream of passion"), and Shakespeare in his tragic plays uses the word to name a diverse range of experiences and affective states. The semantic range of "passion," for him, has much to do with the word's complex genealogies. In its earliest senses, in both Latin and English, a passion is a suffering or an enduring – often, in Christian usage, the suffering of Christ, the suffering of a saint, or the narrative account of such a suffering. And *passio* is related to *passus*: a passion is also a passage. From these basic senses come the word's later medieval senses (madness; submission or passivity; intensely experienced emotion) and its increasing tendency, in the sixteenth century, to indicate a rage, an erotic devotion, a consuming zeal, or a particular kind of dramatic display. My readings of Shakespeare's tragedies will ask how it is that the changing uses of "passion" might help Shakespeare to articulate the problems and possibilities of tragic drama, and how it is that this word's own problems and possibilities might matter to our theoretical accounts of tragedy as a genre.

### Adrienne L. Eastwood, San Jose State University

### Working Title: Genre Play in *Romeo and Juliet*

For my contribution to the workshop, I plan on focusing on New Historical Formalism. Following Stephen Cohen and others, I consider a historically specific interrogation of form and genre that examines the ideological charge—or cultural assumptions—carried by a specific form. The intersection between the choice of form and its cultural resonance reveals much about how a particular text functions within its culture. I will apply a methodology inspired by New Historical Formalism to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: a text that noticeably engages in genre play on a number of levels. Critics have long noted the ways in which the first three acts of Shakespeare's early tragedy are shaped like a comedy—culminating with marriage and consummation. With the death of Mercrutio, the play begins its march to the tragic conclusion. But perhaps the most innovative use of genre in *Romeo and Juliet* is the deployment of the sonnet. I will argue that the sonnet

operates as a sub-genre within the text, signaling to the audience that Shakespeare's concern is linguistic experimentation—the purview of the poet/playwright—and its growing ability to challenge traditional norms.

## Elizabeth Hanson, Queen's University

### Kindness and the Merchant of Venice

My paper will sketch out some problems of genre in *The Merchant of Venice.* I have long found this play intractable because it appears to me to participate in many genres with the codes of each jamming the others. For instance both Jessica and Portia in their cross-dressing bring the codes of Italian comedy and through it, New Comedy. But Portia is also an allegory for money, with affinities for the Dame Pecunia and Lady Lucre from later morality plays such as *Liberality and Prodigality* or *Three Ladies of London*. This doubleness has affinities for how we see Bassanio, but more importantly, consequences for what we take a character to be in the play, a representation of a person, or a force or idea. Similarly, the there is more that one kind of economy at issue in the play. In some respects the play refers to the concerns and practices of early mercantile capitalism. In others it seems concerned solely with symbolic economies. My paper will be a very preliminary meditation on what it means to think about the play less in terms of moral dilemmas than generic overdetermination.

## Kelly Lehtonen, Pennsylvania State University

### Charismatic Transcendence and the Revision of Epic Drama in *Coriolanus*

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* has been recognized for defying traditional generic boundaries—approaching the form of "epic drama" by producing what Brecht calls a *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect). Said to lack the psychological interiority found in tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus* purportedly invites critical distance rather than emotional involvement, in a manner characteristic of Brechtian epic. Reconsidering the nature of "epic drama," this essay suggests that *Coriolanus* taps into epic tradition in a way that enhances the portrayal of interiority, by invoking a concept of psychological and emotional transcendence important to Renaissance versions of the epic genre. Renaissance epics such as Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* develop heroic models based on a principle of charisma, wherein heroic characters pursue an attraction to a divine power channeled through a mediating individual. In doing so, epic heroes pursue a state of communal elevation and transcendence of self that prefigures eternal glory—a condition that reflects the divine origins and *telos* of humankind, and represents the culmination of religious zeal stemming from the Reformation. In locating charismatic transcendence in the figure of Coriolanus, Shakespeare invokes but revises this model of epic heroism, reflecting a cultural disillusionment toward religious as well as political idealism. Through an unswerving commitment to his principles, Coriolanus embodies a distinctive model of transcendence that compels others to recognize his godlike status after his passing; he transcends death

through communal glorification, even while failing to compel others to follow him during life. By inviting attraction without imitation, Coriolanus' charisma unifies onlookers based not on shared political or religious objectives, as is typical of charismatic group structures, but on a universal capacity for captivation. In reaction to a context in which unity was often centered on doctrinal agreement, the play's model of epic drama celebrates the human capacity for enchantment—a psychological and emotional condition experienced individually, but that draws a person out of the self and gives the individual self meaning in shared communal encounters.

## Nathaniel C. Leonard, Westminster College, Fulton

### "I will not name for what":
### Autonomous Female Revengers in Women Beware Women

While female characters have been central to the tradition of revenge tragedy (or the "tragedy of blood" as Fredson Bowers often describes it), critical discourses on gender and its treatment in early modern examples of the genre have a tendency to focus on the importance of masculinity. This seems to be due largely, and not surprisingly, to the fact that even though women are often integral to the revenge plots of the period, they rarely act outside of the confines of masculine influence. Characters like Bel-Empiria, Lavinia, Beatrice-Joanna, and Duchess of Malfi are understandably seen as collaborators, instigators, or muses for the ultimate violence of the plot instead of being discussed as the primary authors of that aestheticized bloodshed. In this essay, I will discuss the distinct generic implications of a set of female characters that, contrary to the norms of revenge tragedy, enact violence autonomously in order to explore the structural decisions that the plays which house these women make to justify their behavior within an English Renaissance construction of femininity. In particular this discussion will focus on the vengeance enacted by Livia and Isabella against one another in Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women. In this play the liminal logic generated by the layers of dramatic representation that often accompany aestheticized violence in the revenge tragedies of the period is heightened in order to stabilize both the inherent taboo of private revenge as well as the potentially disruptive social implications of women empowered to directly enact vengeance.

## Nedda Mehdizadeh, University of California, Los Angeles

### The Persian Habit in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*

In his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662) Thomas Fuller includes a description of Thomas, Anthony, and Robert Sherley, the three famous brothers of a disgraced family who spent their careers attempting to reclaim their statuses as part of the English gentry. Fuller remembers the youngest brother, Robert, approximately 30 years after his death as an adventurer who "much affected to appear in *forreign Vestes*: and, as if his *Clothes* were his limbs, accounted himself never ready till he had something of the Persian Habit about him." Though this account seems to celebrate Robert's ability to slip in and out of

the "Persian Habit," the fluidity of his identity raised questions about where his loyalties lay. Despite these concerns, Robert's slippery identity conjured a different kind of response than some other travelers who seemed more susceptible to "turning Turk;" whereas Robert seemed capable of fluidity within his identitary transformations – a habit he could put on or take off at will – travelers who "turned Turk" often suggested a fixed, unidirectional movement away from Christianity and toward Islam. *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607) is a dramatic representation of the adventures of the Sherley brothers that stages not just a binary system of contact between Self and Other – a system that seems to govern readings of the Travel Play, which Daniel Vitkus has described as "a subculture of a tightly knit body of conversion plays," but rather, what I call a constellation of contact between various terms that include Christian, European, English, Spanish, Muslim (Sunni as well as Shi'i), Persian, and Turk. These staged identities, therefore, offer a way into a more complicated, textured approach to the simplistic, binaristic readings of East/West encounters of the early modern period, opening up new discussions about encounter and identity construction within the travel play. My essay will center on the ways in which the inclusion of Persia within the genre of the travel play necessitates a more comprehensive discussion about early modern transnational encounter.

## Cyrus G. Mulready, SUNY New Paltz

### Shakespeare and the "Old Play" as Genre

As various witnesses in the early seventeenth century attest, even within Shakespeare's lifetime his plays had become out of date. Augustine Phillips testified that the Chamberlain's Men were puzzled by members of Essex's party who asked for a performance of *Richard II*, which by 1601 was "so old and so long out of use." Bacon reiterates this judgment in his assessment of the same episode, reporting that the players worried "they should have losse in playing it" because it was "olde." And Walter Cope, writing in 1604 about household entertainments for Anne of Denmark and James I, indicates that Burbage had "no new playe that the queen hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one" (*Love's Labor's Lost*). Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century, Shakespeare and his works were often viewed as "old," even "obsolete." There was a shift in thinking about temporality and the Renaissance dramatic canon in the eighteenth century, however, when Shakespeare's works became timeless and those of his contemporaries were simply deemed old. In this essay, I argue that Shakespeare's arrival as immortal poet was partially enabled by the construction of a new genre: the Old Play. Whereas in earlier periods, "old" functioned simply as a measure of relative time, in the eighteenth century it also came to describe and qualify the characteristics of a play—the term started working as a generic marker, in other words, that separated out a particular class of drama. Considering collections such as Robert Dodsley's *Select Old Plays* (first printed in 1744, and revised in three subsequent editions by Isaac Reed, J.P. Collier, and William Hazlitt) and A.H. Bullen's four-volume *Old English Plays* (published in the 1880s), this essay explores the characteristics of the Old Play, as I also work through the implications of thinking about genre in relationship to temporality.

**Maria Teresa Prendergast, College of Wooster**

**History, Divorce and the Disruption of Romance
in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII (All is True)***

In this paper, I argue that the generic incoherence of *Henry VIII* became inevitable once Shakespeare radically disrupted political and cultural Jacobean form by representing Henry VIII's Roman Catholic and annulled queen, Katherine, as the benevolent female protagonist of the play. As such the play could neither fit the dominant Jacobean form of the History play--the patriotic and Protestant-inflected Elect Nation play--nor that of Shakespearean Romance. While Katherine shares with Romance female protagonists such traits as the move from the mother to the daughter, the trial for calumniation, and a divine vision, cultural censorship made it impossible to create the classic providential Romance ending by which Katherine would be succeeded by her daughter Mary, who, like so many of Shakespeare's Romance heroines, experienced a loss of identity and exile before taking her place as wife and queen. Instead, politics dictated that Mary be replaced with the Protestant Elizabeth, whose very existence was despised by the historical Katherine. The other possible Romance pairing would be that of Anne Bullen and her daughter Elizabeth; but Jacobean politics also dictated that Anne be erased from this providential Romance narrative. Furthermore, the mute baby Elizabeth is not someone who can heal a family or nation the way that Imogen, Marina, Perdita, or even the indecisive Emilia could--not only via their agency but also via marriage and the promise of a new generation, something which Elizabeth never achieved. We are left, then, with an ironically mismatched pairing of the aged (as she is presented in the play) Katherine and the baby Elizabeth--markers of the way that the Master of the Revels might be seen in many ways as a co-author, or at least co-inspirer, of the play, and, as such, co-distorter of any coherent genre identity.

**Matthew J. Smith, Azusa Pacific University**

**"The sole drift of my purpose": The Ends of Tragedy in *The Tempest***

In describing Shakespeare's late plays as "post-tragic," some scholars have argued that the romances reverse the effect of tragic recognition (*anagnorisis*), in effect replacing tragic "inevitability" with a shared future of "possibility" facilitated by scenes of mutual recognition (*anerkennung*). Yet among the romances, it is difficult to insist on the conclusive effects of mutual recognition in *The Tempest*. Certainly, there is a nod toward intersubjectivity when Prospero abjures his magic and faces his captives, but in context this conspicuous performance of political divesting, not unlike that of Henry V, carries something like what Empson has called "the feeling of tragedy"—where "its strength is to be prepared to waste itself" for the greater good.

In this paper I argue that the final scenes of *The Tempest* showcase a political and theatrical usage of tragedy to the end of exposing the process whereby tragic inevitability is naturalized in the play. Prospero's abjuration of "rough magic," in turn, relies on

narratives of coerced reform, recalling and calling into question various contexts of theological and aesthetic efforts of nationalism in England. The very pastoral that Prospero imagines in reverie—"you whose pastime / Is to make midnight mushrumps"—serves to challenge Prospero's claim of self-sacrifice—"Yet with my nobler reason gainst my fury / Do I take part." In short, the return to the "festive" (to borrow a concept from Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition*) that arguably characterizes *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and The *Winter's Tale,* is sublimated in *The Tempest* through the language of pastoral nostalgia—itself an instrument for justifying power—thus challenging the notion that the play is in the end *after* tragedy.

**Nathan Szymanski, Simon Fraser University**

**Title: Shepherds in Shakespeare and Marlowe**

My essay proposes to look at Shakespeare's shepherds appearing before 1600 and to ask what happens when we view them through the lens of a rarely considered genre: the Elizabethan eclogue. The eclogue in early modern England was defined alongside but also against larger conceptions of Renaissance pastoralism; specifically, the eclogue was more closely associated with dialogue, as evidenced in the classical poems of Virgil and Theocritus, and in ways inextricable from riddling allusion, as evidenced in the eclogues and commentary by Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Even when Elizabethan writers did not write eclogues, they often signaled contact with the form's ideas: Marlowe's shepherds, in "The Passionate Shepherds to his Love" and the *Tamburlaine* plays, channel models of seduction found in classical eclogues that counter typical conceptions of Renaissance pastoralism.

This essay will suggest, most broadly, that Shakespeare's shepherds often respond to their Marlovian counterparts. It will focus especially on the *Henry VI* plays, where Shakespeare's shepherds respond to their Marlovian contemporaries not through the idealizing tendencies of pastoralism, but rather through the dialogic, often ambiguously allusive, attributes of the eclogue. Thus the essay will showcase how a particular genre might transcend its immediate circumstance and illuminate two writers working outside its formal parameters. The essay will also present a new instance of dialogue between these two literary giants, one that responds to the recent authorship attribution of the *New Oxford Shakespeare* edition.