

Larry Bonds, McMurry University

**Allegorical Portraits of Power:
Queen Elizabeth I in *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

Portraying the reigning English monarch on Elizabethan and Jacobean stages could be risky business. King James I, for instance, was apparently angered by a now-lost dramatization by the King's Men of James' thwarting of a coup attempt by the Earl of Gowrie and his brother on August 5, 1600 (five years before the much better known Gunpowder Plot of November 5, 1605). John Chamberlain (not to be confused with George Carey, the Lord Chamberlain who was the patron of Shakespeare's company that became the King's men) was a prolific writer of letters from James' court. John Chamberlain says of the lost Gowrie play in a letter of December 18, 1604, that

the tragedie of Gowrie with all the action and actors hath ben twice represented by the Kings players, with exceding concourse of all sortes of people, but whether the matter or manner be not well handled, or that yt be thought unfit that princes should be plaide on the stage in theyre life time, I heare that some great counsaillors are much displeas'd with yt: and so is thought shalbe forbidden

Furthermore, enacting the murder of even a long-dead monarch could draw negative attention to actors and playwrights. Famously, on February 7, 1601 (before the failure of the Essex Rebellion the next day), coconspirators of the Earl of Essex paid the Lord Chamberlain's men forty shillings beyond their regular fee to stage Shakespeare's *Richard II* at the Globe. *Richard II* shows, of course, both the deposing of an unfit king and his subsequent murder so that Henry Bolingbroke can assume the English throne as Henry IV. Queen Elizabeth apparently understood quite well that *Richard II* had been performed to incite the citizenry of London to support Essex. Learning of the performance, she is supposed to have said to William Lambarde, her archivist, "I am Richard II, know ye not that?" The Queen, after having the matter investigated, did nothing to punish Shakespeare and his company and, in fact, rewarded them with more work: She had the Chamberlain's men stage *Richard II* for herself the day before Essex's beheading on February 25, 1601. It seems possible that Queen Elizabeth used this execution-eve performance to reject her allegorical role as King Richard and recast that tragic, symbolic part for her enemy Essex.

My SAA seminar paper considers two other Shakespearean dramatic portraits of Queen Elizabeth. These portraits occur in *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In these plays, the portraits of Queen Elizabeth are perhaps best described as "covertly allegorical." Unlike the overt and blatantly flattering portrait of Queen Elizabeth I as the chaste Fairy Queen in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, these two dramatic portraits of the Queen are negatively political and unflattering. The portraits of Elizabeth as Tamora and as Titania are provide Shakespeare and his actors with some measure of plausible deniability for their incredibly harsh criticisms of the Queen. In both of these negative portraits of Elizabeth, Shakespeare draws upon mythology to create a less unsafe way for speaking truth to and about the absolute power of his day. The mythological portrait of Elizabeth in Tamora is deeply

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Ovidian and the portrait of Elizabeth in Titania is an amazing blend of Ovidian and English mythologies.

Catherine Canino, University of South Carolina, Upstate

The Transformative Power of Women in *Venus and Adonis*

Since Judith Anderson, most scholars and critics see Shakespeare's Venus as the embodiment of gynophobia, a character who alternates between the burlesque and the pathetic and who ultimately is disempowered. I would agree that there is some gynophobia present in the work, but I would also argue that although Shakespeare's Venus fails in winning the love of Adonis, she maintains a unique feminine power that is reflective of the society in which the poem was created. Briefly, in Shakespeare's poem, Venus has complete control over Adonis' identity and ultimate fate. In this paper I argue that the poem reflects the societal anxiety over another woman who held in her hands the fate and identity of a nation—Elizabeth I.

Andrew Fleck, University of Texas, El Paso

The Subject of Elizabeth's Languages: Diplomacy and *Henry V*

Queen Elizabeth earned a reputation as a skillful linguist. Having had a cutting edge humanist education as a princess, she practiced her impressive linguistic talents through the end of her reign. This paper will make the argument that one famous episode in which Elizabeth displayed these linguistic talents echoed on the London stage in the linguistic exchanges on display in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, particularly as recorded in the quarto printing of that play. The episode I want to focus on occurred late in 1598 when the Polish Ambassador arrived in London to challenge English trade barriers. In the presence of the court, the young ambassador delivered a subtly insulting Latin oration that he had learned by heart. Shocked, Elizabeth responded with an impromptu Latin rebuke, calling into question the diplomatic skill of this insulting messenger. The episode was widely remarked by proud English observers, pleased that their aging queen had aggressively knocked the Polish diplomat down to size. The episode was even recorded in foreign annals of Elizabeth's reign. Just a few months later, the Lord Chamberlain's men staged Shakespeare's culmination to the Henriad. If, as I would argue, the quarto reflects something closer to the patriotic stage version of this play than the somewhat more ambiguous Folio text of the play, its treatment of a queen who pushes back in a foreign tongue against a man speaking to her in a language other than her own may refract the company's memory of the queen's famous sparring with the Polish ambassador.

Ella Hawkins, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham

'Original practices' design at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre: a new perspective

Practitioners and scholars associated with 'original practices' (OP) Shakespearean performance seek to form a direct connection between the past and present Elizabethan eras. Through replicating the plays' original performance conditions as accurately as possible, various

individuals and organisations hope to rediscover lost meanings in Shakespeare's plays for modern audiences. This approach to performance has often proven controversial: Shakespeare's Globe Theatre has been accused of offering a form of 'museum theatre' (stagnant, backwards-facing, nostalgic),* and debates surrounding the achievability and relevance of 'authenticity' in this context continue to unfold. This paper looks towards a new understanding of the 'original practices' activities developed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre between 1997 and 2005. Focusing on costume design, I consider the influences and desires that underpinned the theatre's OP productions, and the extent to which the creative team's intentions and outputs varied during this time. Using historical re-enactment theory, archival material, and in-depth details of the Globe's OP costume practices from members of the theatre's original costume team (Jenny Tiramani, Harriet Barsby, and Melanie Braun), I argue that the theatre's OP design experiments made significant contributions to our modern understanding of (early modern) Elizabethan culture. More than existing simply to serve the plays, the approach to costume design developed during the Globe's early years extended our knowledge of historical dress, and advanced the role of practice-as-research in Shakespeare/Early Modern Studies. Analysing this element of modern Shakespearean performance provides valuable insight into how history can be explored and represented on stage today.

*Alan C. Dessen, "Original practices" at the Globe: a theatre historian's view', in *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, ed. by Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 45-53 (p. 52).

Marion Hollings, Middle Tennessee State

**Elizabeth I's "Tru copie of a letter" (1586):
Documents, "Papers," and Epistolary Voices in Shakespeare's Plays**

My paper explores contexts in which Elizabeth I's State letters were produced, circulated, read and/or proclaimed and the ways Shakespeare makes use of governmental epistolary culture in his plays. I am particularly concerned with the complex stagecraft of the public reading of Elizabeth I's "Tru copie of a letter" written to the people of London in 1586 following the apprehension of "divers persons detected of a most wicked conspiracy"—presumably the attempt against Elizabeth's life known as the "Babington plot." My paper describes the letter (imprinted by Christopher Barker, "Printer to the Queen"), its provenance, textual details, features, and the particular occasion of this letter: the scheme that led to the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587. The "Babington Plot" occurs in the historical context of a series of assassination attempts (by some counts more than 200) over the twenty years of Mary's imprisonment (1568-1587) in England, leading finally to Parliament's demand for her execution, an event Philip II used as a pretext for his planned invasion of 1588. Elizabeth's publically read/proclaimed letter presents a staging that mixes mimetic genres in ways similar to and different than a speech's. The reception of the publically-read-letter's form of dramatization of the written words of the monarch provides evidence of dissemination beyond London of the drama of the event: the plot itself and the subsequent public letter reading reveal early modern practices of the manufacture, spread and consumption of news. These patterns of

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the propagation of news in epistolary and scribal culture are reflected in certain scenes in Shakespeare's plays and subjected to examination.

A close reading of Elizabeth's letter reveals ways of scripting certain social relations, particularly that of her "most loving Subjects" in dutiful relationship to her as their monarch and loving mother. Elizabeth's voice in the letter is a model of the benevolent ruler—gracious, grateful, modulated, and balanced—but also registers the letter as a proclamation—an historical document connected to the formation of institutional archives in the production of Tudor history (Daybell). Further, in recording the incident and her subjects' goodwill toward her, the document's layering of narrative and scribal voices involves a particularly complex form of political ventriloquism. Elizabeth's first-person plural voice is read out publically, "in a great assemblie of the Commons," in the voice of the male reader of her words (Master James Dalton, standing in for the Mayor of London), and her words so publicized are followed by the text of his paraphrase of her letter (also read out, changing only the person of the original letter from "we" to she and "her Majesty"). The complicated drama of the speech-event registers the immediacy of her personal voice presented through the stagecraft of the performance, but also the mediation, displacement, and disembodiment of voice appropriate to monarchy.

Shakespeare reflects this letter's stagecraft in his representations of letters, papers, and epistolary voices (and the dislocations and violences they suffer) in many of his plays and across genres—in comedies such as *Love's Labor's Lost* in particular, but also in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*—in the history plays (*Henry VI*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*), and in tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*), and romances (*The Winter's Tale*). In his treatment of the letter's content—its formulations of reciprocal grace, for instance—Shakespeare problematizes Elizabeth's propaganda regarding her strain of justice as mutual love, tolerance, generous magnanimity, mildness, and mercy. His plays use complex representational strategies to explore a darker side to the State's epistolary voices framed through contextual manipulations.

William Jones, Murray State University

Satirizing Elizabeth: Throwing Shades at Female Rulers

My interest in this seminar stems from my desire to explore those satiric/ critical allusions to Elizabeth I that both did and did not escape the censure of either the Archbishop of Canterbury's book censors or Elizabeth's Master of the Revels, who oversaw dramas. The organizer's question, "how did the Virgin Queen's forty-five-year reign create distinct pictures of virginity, Amazons, Tudors, female rule?", is especially germane to my interest in analyzing how authors keen to critique the royal image devised strategies intended to navigate a sociopolitical environment rife with legal and religious systems intended to protect Elizabeth's public persona as an exalted female ruler.

In my recent book *Satire in the Elizabethan Era*, I analyzed two anti-feminist works (*The Fifteen Joys of Marriage* and *Of Marriage and Wiving*) banned in 1599 due to, in my opinion, the works' translation of key aspects of Elizabeth's personal ideology into demeaning versions

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that undermined the stable continuation of that ideology. In the essay produced for this seminar, I plan to employ some of this earlier work as context in order to demonstrate what could and could not be satirized with regard to Elizabethan ideologies. Subsequently, the essay focuses on two female rulers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania and Hippolyta, as potential critical allusions to Elizabeth I's self-construction, and speculates on those strategies Shakespeare employs to avoid both censorship and provoking the kind of royal displeasure evident in the cases of authors like John Stubbs (*Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*) and Sir Peter Wentworth (*A Pithy Exhortation*).