

Nicholas Luke

Resurrection Events in Shakespeare's Late Plays

The paper is an initial foray into a broader monograph project that will examine a striking religious feature of Shakespeare's late plays: his frequent staging of quasi-resurrection scenes, in which the (apparently) dead return in fear and wonder. Shakespeare's late period begins with a resurrection of the medieval poet John Gower, who rises "from ashes" to speak the Prologue of *Pericles*. Gower's second coming kick-starts an intense focus on resurrection that lies at the heart of Shakespeare's development from his tragic period to the generically mixed modes of his late plays. The stakes are high, I argue, for Shakespeare's resurrections are not simply a matter of aesthetic joy but of a new understanding of life, self, and time.

The broader project will examine how the idea of resurrection influences early modern religious thought about history and personhood. This will involve engaging with the theatrical history of resurrection in late medieval mystery plays as well as the broader theological discourses surrounding resurrection in the period (including in sermons, tracts, liturgy, and other religious practice). I hope to assess the significance of these religious texts for our understanding of Shakespeare's late plays—and of literature and subjectivity more generally. What imaginative energies does the idea of resurrection tap into and also open up? What sense of personhood or character does it imply? What type of social relation does it deliver? And what type of audience involvement does it call for?

The argument that I will focus on in this paper, more specifically, is that Shakespeare's depiction of resurrection in the romances entails a movement away from tragic drama's emphasis upon a central dominating consciousness (the tragic hero) and towards a more dispersed treatment of subjectivity. It involves a shattering of self.

Luis J. Conejero Magro

Desacralising Monarchs and Sanctifying the Fools: Political Theology and Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy

This study focuses on some of Shakespeare's characters from the Henriad who are inextricably linked to a (de)sacralised context. Shakespeare's second tetralogy involves a wide range of social classes which are contrasted as a way of presenting history. Richard II, for example, represents the common mediaeval concept of the divine origin of kingship, and his relationship with a mediaeval theology is undeniable as represented in the history play, while Falstaff embodies opposition to the Puritan standards which dominated the time Shakespeare wrote. The difference between Richard II and the characters of the last three plays of Shakespeare's second tetralogy needs no further justification. As a matter of fact, one of the plays' most important linguistic aspects involves the accurate representation of class in the characters who appear in *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Mrs. Quickly's amusing malapropisms, Pistol's vulgar insults with their sexual connotations, Francis' innocent slips of the tongue and Poins' sarcastic and scathing interventions can probably all be found and exemplified in Falstaff's mock-Puritanism. The

2018 SAA Seminar: Thinking Theology with Shakespeare 2
Leader: Jay Zysk, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

methodological procedure followed in this study involves analysing the play's features as a guide to understanding the terrain of 'political theology'. In this approach to political theology, developed by Debora Kuller Shuger (2001) and Anselm Haverkamp (2005), religion is transformed into the object of secularised sociological study. Haverkamp defined 'political theology' as a "socio-ideological surface [which represents] the historical function of a translation or commerce between theology and politics" (2005: 314). This politico-theological methodology therefore has an important bearing on insights into how Shakespeare shaped the characters in his histories, and consequently helps understand the style of his works.

Richard Finkelstein

Joint Authorship and Puritanism in *Timon of Athens*

Recent arguments that Middleton wrote much of *Timon* demand that we look at how the younger playwright pursued his interests within the tragedy. Perhaps because thinking about the play as a joint enterprise is relatively new, and also because the play's setting and sources are more Greco-Roman than biblical or early modern, scholars haven't addressed perspectives within *Timon* that connect it to Middleton's widely acknowledged interests in Puritanism. Patterns of language within the scenes authored by Middleton investigate aspects of Puritan theology and values rightly or wrongly associated with that movement. The parts likely written by Shakespeare only minimally use language which carries forward Middleton's interest in Puritanism. Shakespeare provides scenes that focus on the problem of friendship economies, drawing on Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Lucian and probably Montaigne, and gives Timon Juvenalian responses to disappointment that distinguish that character from source materials. The metaphors and images in Middleton's sections draw attention to problems with self-regulation and its relationship to sin and virtue; to alternations between hoarding and consumption; to economies of the body, including those related to procreation; to Pauline promises that depict eternal life with the language of gifts; and to a relationship between fiscal and spiritual success. If we look at Puritan values (or stereotyped portrayals of them) in *Timon*, thinking theology with Shakespeare assists attribution studies. This process also helps us identify the means through which joint authorship, or authorship in general, produces a largely secular play nonetheless imbued with theological perspectives.

Working definition of theology: Although more generally thought of as an intellectual system that encompasses faith, belief, and conceptions of divinity, for the purposes of this seminar a definition of theology needs to include the nature of religious practices and attitudes with which people orient themselves and understand meaning within such systems. These include *representations* of theological concepts and religious practices, which have a reciprocal relationship with the structure of theological faith—both shaping it and being formed by it

James Funk

The “Visage” of Majesty: Kingship and the Hidden God in Shakespeare and Calvin

While critics have long debated whether *Richard II* defends or demystifies sacral monarchy, I argue in this essay that Shakespeare highlights the ironies inherent in an ideology modeled on the workings of a hidden God, a political perspective that must be distinguished from divine right on the one hand and secularization on the other. John Calvin reveals such ironies in the final chapter of the *Institutes*, where he distinguishes between the empirical person of the prince and the divine office that he represents. This discrepancy allows Calvin to argue both for absolute obedience—the sins of an unjust ruler are attributed to the workings of an unknowable God—and for the possibility of resistance, insofar as the divine ordinance by which kings gain authority can take precedence over the king himself and may apply to those who challenge him. York attempts to negotiate this dilemma in *Richard II* when describing Bolingbroke and Richard’s entrances into London upon the latter’s deposition. While York’s declaration of allegiance to a usurper has often been read as a mere capitulation to power, close attention to his language suggests that, far from presupposing the restoration of traditional monarchical authority in the figure of Bolingbroke, York takes seriously the consequences of providence’s inscrutable role in political change. Ironically enough, this fidelity to the hidden God leads him to endorse Bolingbroke’s rebellion and therefore calls into question the very notion of divine right, predicated as it is on God’s susceptibility to adequate representation in a political context.

Gayle Gaskill

***Twelfth Night* and the Prayer Book**

Twelfth Night invites a close reading of linguistic allusions to the liturgy, including the language of sacraments, of prescribed prayers and injunctions, and of appointed scriptures. Wrenched out of their solemn contexts and into comic, romantic, or melancholy dramatic dialogue, the prayer book sentences resonate through the play’s “catechistical” colloquies such as the Clown’s proving Olivia a fool for mourning her brother in heaven (1.5.50-64) or Sebastian’s interrogation of his miraculous double (5.1.215-43). It likewise echoes in allusions to the Old Testament readings assigned for Morning and Evening Prayer, absurdly called into Sir Toby’s caterwauling the tale of Susanna from the Book of Daniel (2.3.73) or Sir Andrew’s linking the prideful, misguided Malvolio to Israel’s Baal-worshipping Jezebel from First Kings (2.5.36). Even the Lord’s Prayer seems to haunt the hyperbolic flattery of Cesario’s proxy wooing of Olivia, for *The Norton Shakespeare* glosses the messenger’s threat to “*Halloo* your name to the reverberate hills” (1.5.254) as “perhaps ‘hallow,’ as in ‘bless’” (n.5), and conversely Maria ironically invents evidence for Malvolio’s demonic possession out of his dismissal of the conspirators’ duplicitous ministrations: “Lo, how *hollow* the fiend speaks within him” (3.4.85). Remarkably, these allusions to familiar phrases of worship come more frequently from the apparently irreverent Clown than from the professionally pious Malvolio.

Emily George

The Penitent King: Performing Contrition in *The Winter's Tale*

The methods and meanings of repentance were conflicted and shifting long before the advent of Protestantism, but Reformed doctrines fundamentally transformed understandings of this inward turn toward God and truth. The theological transformation of repentance was far from neat; it included troubled and inconsistent beliefs about the sacraments, concerns over the importance and effectiveness of contrition, and competing narratives of inward conversion as instantaneous grace and ongoing penance.

With this paper, I propose that *The Winter's Tale* uses the epistemological and imaginative concerns of theater to test out doctrines of repentance and the challenges of finding and recognizing salvation. I focus on Leontes's conversion and prolonged acts of contrition, arguing that through the king's anguish and attempts at penance, the play examines the difficulties of performing sincere conversion and the dangerous closeness of repentance and despair. Although it ends in hope and redemption, *The Winter's Tale* portrays repentance and absolution as a miraculous, theatrical instant and as a continuing enactment and embodiment, a perpetual and potentially threatening state of sorrow. Leontes's repentance is presented as both a single, vivid recognition of inner guilt and a long-term process that demands work and devotion from the penitent. In depicting repentance as simultaneously a complete, sudden reversal, an enduring devotional practice, and a performed rite, the play emphasizes both the spiritual importance of Leontes's performance of contrition and the inadequacy of his actions to atone for the magnitude of his sin.

Jason Gleckman

This paper analyzes Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* from the perspective of its setting (31 BC) on the cusp of the origins of Christianity. One sees in the play signs of the imminence of the new religion, such as the sudden, inexplicable deaths of Enobarbus and Charmian – deaths that suggest, from a Christian (and especially from a Protestant) viewpoint, aborted transformations of the process by which the heart of stone is transformed into the heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26). Yet without the possibility of Christian salvation, the breaking of these hard hearts (particularly that of Enobarbus) results only in termination, not renovation of the spirit. Similar signs of the advent of Christianity are also seen in Cleopatra, who attempts to create love between herself and Antony by deploying a massive arsenal of “love at first sight” techniques designed to allure the noble Roman into recognizing his one true and eternal life partner. Yet, as with the “hard hearts” which were the only option for those in pre-Christian times, so too the possibility of real, married love is also presented by Shakespeare as unattainable before Christianity. As the gospels of Mark and Matthew assert, only Christian marriage bonds lovers through the miracle of two fleshs made one (Mark 10:7, Matthew 19:5). Examining the way Shakespeare imagines a pre-history of Christianity in *Antony and Cleopatra* can hopefully be useful for exploring his treatment of the theme in other plays that are set in pre-Christian eras.

James Mardock

“Spirits of another sort”: can fairies be Protestant?

Calvin’s doctrine of election and reprobation, as no less commentator than Calvin himself admits, is “hard” and likely to produce consternation and anxiety (cite *Institutes*). Traditional Christians could experience soteriological anxiety, of course, but before *sola fide* that anxiety was ontological, not epistemological; Calvinism made uncertainty about individual salvation central to mainstream Protestant theology. While the cultural implications of this conundrum can easily be overstated (Max Weber comes to mind), and while many early modern English believers could even find—or claim to find—comfort in “double predestination,” literature for post-reformation audiences often wrangled with salvation anxiety. We have long acknowledged how the professional stage responded to it in the genre of tragedy — Faustus’s fatalism, Claudius’s awareness of his own reprobation — but Shakespeare presents, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, an even more complicated and nuanced response to the Calvinist subject’s uncertainty than he would do in *Hamlet*. As that play uses the memory of purgatory to expose faultlines in both reformed and traditional theology, *Dream* uses the cultural memory of fairy lore for similar purposes. The play interrogates reformers’ association of fairies with the discarded superstitions of papists, and asks how they might offer Protestant audiences a therapy for doubt about the workings of an unknowable Providence.

Roderick McKeown

‘The imposition... hereditary ours’: Kingship and the Doctrine of Original Sin

Polixenes’ description of his childhood friendship with Leontes as “twinned lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun / And bleated the one at th’ other” who “changed... innocence for innocence” and “knew not / The doctrine of ill-doing” has understandably attracted queer readings, especially in light of Hermione’s comment the his words suggest his “queen and I are devils.” Youthful homosociality, or more, falls into the original sin of heterosexual desire. *The Winter’s Tale*’s verse and diction are notoriously Byzantine, and the play seems to invite abstruse analysis. Alongside the more esoteric readings of this passage, though, is one that might have leapt out to the original audience, and one I have not seen thoroughly explored: the hereditary imposition of which the two princes are yet innocent – their “weak spirits ne’er ... higher rear’d” until their “stronger blood” takes effect – is kingship. The conversations of both kings and of Camillo and Archidamus have focused on the tension between kingship and friendship, the political and the personal.

That Polixenes should invoke the doctrine of original sin is paradoxical: one form of heredity elevates, while the other condemns. This paper will examine this passage and its implications for how Shakespeare examines the idea of hereditary absolute monarchy. To explore these questions it will need to extend into early modern science (medical theories of heredity), political thought (theories of divine right), and theology (the disputed doctrine of original sin). Expect it to get messy.

Tim Rosendale

Unperfect Actors: Reading Theology and Agency in Shakespeare

My paper is not at all interested in Shakespeare's own theological proclivities, but it will offer an overview of the relation between spiritual and secular agency in Shakespeare's plays. Martin Luther himself identified the question of soteriological agency—that is, whether an individual's salvation is secured or lost by his own efforts, or God's, or both—as the central issue of the Reformation, and indeed the broader questions of determinism and agency have occupied virtually the entire history of Western philosophy and theology.

In the works of Shakespeare and other post-Reformation playwrights, we can see this theological problem operating in at least two general ways. In the first, seen in *Hamlet* and other plays, human will and action are rethought in explicit relation to the soteriological sovereignty of God. In another, more indirect way, theology functions not as doctrine but as a context, a vocabulary, an analogy, a logical and allusive structure through which worldly forms of human agency (social, political, libidinal, juridical, and so forth) can be more fully explored and understood as a complex relation of internal and external causes. Focusing primarily on *Measure for Measure*—a play that has received considerable scrutiny in terms of law and political theology—I will discuss the play's use of contemporary theological problems to probe more mundane and secular questions of guilt, desert, accountability, action, and arbitrary grace. In so doing I hope to demonstrate how theologically-attuned reading can greatly deepen our understanding of these plays without falling into doctrinal reductiveness.

Kurt Schreyer

“and golden Vizards on their faces”: Theatrical Recusancy in *All Is True*

Scholarship on Shakespeare and Fletcher's 1613 *All Is True* (otherwise *Henry VIII*) tends to emphasize the play's topicality, its interest in the politics and events at the court of James. According to this view, events in the play culminate in the christening of Elizabeth and Cranmer's prophecy of her future coronation and the succession of James. I will argue, to the contrary, that the play privileges recollection over teleology even as it moves toward its famous conclusion. In doing so, its theology is anti-teleological, opposed or *recusant* both in the general sense of dissenting from or obstinately rejecting authority and more specifically in refusing to “attend,” as it were, Church of England services. *All Is True* pays only lip service to them and to the broader providential claims of the Tudors formerly outlined by E. M. W. Tillyard. Following the work of Julia Reinhard Lupton, I “look at the nexus of theological and political definitions of membership” in civil society. By attending to Queen Katherine's death-bed vision in act 4, scene 2, we see the play resist teleology precisely through pageantry, the very dramatic mechanism most often cited as evidence of its Protestantism. The apparition marks the apotheosis of Katherine who, after the famous trial scene in 2.4, had undergone a secular diminution from Queen to Princess Dowager. Most important and most strange of all, the play resists the future by highlighting the dissolution of the past. In Katherine's vision we witness the erasure of the pre-

2018 SAA Seminar: Thinking Theology with Shakespeare 7
Leader: Jay Zysk, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Reformation mystery play tradition and a theatrical meditation on the meaning of that cultural loss.

Jeffrey Squires

In what is perhaps his most theologically invested play, Shakespeare engages with the effects of Richard II's abdication in 1399 by rehearsing the "historical trauma."² The play has drawn interest from political, theological, and generic scholarship because of its investment in the king's religious suffering and because of its historical importance. For some literary critics, Shakespeare's Richard is divorced from his subjects because of his religious propensities: "The traditional glorifications of his position [i.e. the King's body politic] have become the essence of his being, and he lives in an unreal world in which he thinks of those glorifications as the only reality."

Famously exploring the two-body nature of the king, the play concludes with a reimagining of Richard's death as a type of reunification of these two bodies, if only momentary. In this conference paper, I will explore how despair—the religiously inspired bi-product of the abdication—allows Shakespeare to mediate the theological, political, and historical work he performs in the play, mainly the glorification of Richard's final moments to reclaim the York line. To show this, I argue that Shakespeare uses Richard's companionate marriage to soothe Richard's despair, thus reinforcing the idea that despair is best mediated by good counsel.

Bruce Young

"A Forfeit to the Law":

Atonement and Its Limits in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*

I will focus on elements in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* related to atonement, a word with both a theological and a social sense. Besides referring explicitly to the doctrine, the plays feature moments of substitution and intercession and use deception in ways that echo the "mousetrap" theory of atonement. The plays also refer repeatedly to "forfeiture," a financial or legal situation in which debt or crime has put the body and hence the life of a character at risk. In their attempts to resolve the crisis produced by forfeiture, both plays invoke financial and forensic models of atonement. They also raise the question of the scope of atonement: in the theological language of the time, is atonement limited or universal? In *Measure for Measure* does the word "all" in Isabella's description of atonement really mean "all"? More specifically, how far is the reach of Christian universalism—Paul's claim in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere that redemption overcomes bounds of class, race, and gender? Are Jews encompassed by the redemptive scheme or do they stand forever as the "other" to Christians? Can Shylock the Jew truly be incorporated into the Christian community or, even in cosmopolitan Venice, is he outside the reach of atonement?