

2019 Seminar Abstracts: Class as Intersectional Phenomenon in Shakespeare
Laurie Ellinghausen, University of Missouri – Kansas City

Ronda Arab
Simon Fraser University

**Class Conflict and Sexual Violence:
 Seizing Patriarchal Privilege**

My essay considers how the intersection of sexual violence with class relationships and class conflict is represented in early modern literature and particularly in early modern drama, where rape and other forms of sexual violence are frequent motifs. Understanding sexual violence as primarily a crime of power rather than a crime of passion, I examine how a number of dramatic representations of sexual violence against women reveal the violence or threat of violence as an act between men, deployed to level class distinctions between men and/or to seize power, authority, or status within the male competitions structuring the social hierarchy of patriarchal society.

Lillie Arnott
Queen's University Belfast

**“Pictures of Good Cittizens”: Class, Gender, and the Art of the Long Gallery in
 Shakespeare and City Comedy**

The early modern long gallery – a length of neutral ground between private and public rooms, adorned with paintings and sculptures – provided the ideal place to exercise the body and the mind. A few turns in the gallery could resolve diplomatic situations, or separate difficult conversations from the rest of the household. However, the long gallery was also a place to display social status and dynastic pride with collections of portraits depicting monarchs, merchants, and the owners themselves. The symbolic registers of the gallery were particularly useful for the construction of female identity and private space through art and architecture. In two city comedies of the early 1600s, the gallery plays a prominent role, highlighting the intersection between the space of the gallery and the place of the stage. The new mode of city comedy registers and produces social change, breaking down class boundaries and emphasising social mobility. Yet, city comedy often privileges a male civic narrative, undermining the depiction of female identity and authority in the plays and Elizabethan era. As this paper will show, the intersection between the theatre and the gallery reveals the reflective and reflexive nature of observation in the early modern period. The reciprocal gaze between viewer and object, stage and audience, highlights the extent to which art and drama forms and shapes identity intersubjectively. Taking the gallery and its paintings as a symbol of authority, social status, and self-display, this paper considers the intersubjectivity of identity and the intersection between class and gender in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601), Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, Part II* (1606), and Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1611).

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**Samantha Demmerle
Indiana University**

Anonymous Friends: Complicating Community in *Timon of Athens*

In *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare and Middleton's unperformed play, scholars tend to focus on the moral degradation of friendship, Timon's almost allegorical descent from fortune, and his resulting misanthropy. The play, however, also seems interested in complicating the class dynamics of Athens through character as a formal category. Timon, the initially magnanimous center of his community, is betrayed by his "friends" and abjures mankind, which "numberless upon [him] stuck as leaves" (4.3.262). The play seems to represent the "numberless" false friends through only three specific lords, the characters of Lucullus, Lucius, and Sempronius who each receive vignettes in the middle of the play; however, the "numberless" that Timon abjures are more than just an abstract hyperbole and are, I argue, actually represented on stage. Using actor-network theories adapted for performance contexts, this paper will demonstrate how the play represents the "numberless" by anonymizing the minor Lords and Senators that "upon [him] stuck as leaves." These characters, whom Timon constantly claims are friends, are his social equals, and yet because of their characterological anonymity, framed as strangers to him. In this way, the play seems to be emphasizing Timon's hamartia in a way that shifts blame from the false friends to Timon's false claims of friendship, and also critiques its ideal: the majority of his upper-class "friends" are anonymized, while lower-class servants are named and individuated. I argue that this intersection between class and character reconfigures the idea of the Athenian community in the play and further complicates the British community which the play is critiquing. The community of Athens, the "friends" of equal class standing, are thus framed as "strangers," and Timon's community is emptied of the equality he attributes to it.

**Timothy Francisco
Youngstown State University**

**Working-Class Villains:
Intersectionality and *Othello* in The Trump Zeitgeist**

This essay is an exploration of Shakespeare's Iago as a cipher for white, working-class masculinity in the Trump zeitgeist. One can see reflected in multiple productions and iterations of *Othello*—onstage, and in popular vernacular citations—that "working-class Iago" signs tensions between a leftist politics grounded in universal class struggle for redistribution and another left, a cultural left, that rejects such "meta narratives" in favor of manifold exigencies of identity to forge multiple sites of resistance, more powerful than a normative redistribution model that has been grounded in a concept of oppression located in the concerns of "white male industrial labor."

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Juan Pedro Lamata
Stanford University

Citizens vs. Consumers: *Coriolanus* and the Politics of the Marketplace

This paper wagers that an intersectional approach to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* provides the best hope for reckoning with the play's complex intertwining of class and gender. An overwhelmingly male-dominated tragedy that ends in the triumph of an embassy of noblewomen, *Coriolanus* stages a series of conflicts that demonstrate some of the ways arguments about economic class could be filtered through misogynist discourses of gender, and vice versa. Drawing on the early modern period's close association between women, words, and the tongue, and men, deeds, and war, Rome's elite consistently posits Coriolanus—the self-sufficient man of action—as the paragon of masculine virtue, and the artisan classes of the commonwealth as an effeminate and effeminizing “Hydra” of fickle breaths that “can do very little alone” (2.1.35). Coriolanus' anxiety that ‘begging’ the people's “voices” in the marketplace will emasculate him, leaving him ‘possessed’ by “Some harlot's spirit,” his “throat of war [. . .] turned [. . .] into a pipe / Small as an eunuch or the virgin voice / That babies lull asleep” (3.2.139-42), finds an analogue in the period's political allegory of the body-politic. If this body was overwhelmingly imagined as male, then Coriolanus and the nobles for whom he fights worry about allowing that body to be ruled by its desiring, female, laboring parts. Shakespeare of course complicates this binary. The play concludes with Coriolanus banished and vanquished, the plebeians and tribunes humiliated, and the republic saved by the words and tears—or “drops of women's rheum, / [. . .] As cheap as lies” in Aufidius' phrase (5.6.54-5)—of its aristocratic women. How we may begin to untangle this “noble knot” (4.2.43) shall be my charge.

Sarah Lewis
King's College London

‘The lazy foot of time’: Class, Time and Gender on the Early Modern Stage

This paper will explore the ways in which ideologies of class are complicated by the cultural category of time. Temporality is used to define social identities in the early modern period, particularly gendered identities. In opposition to complete and ‘perfect’ men, who are presented by medical and conduct literature as inclined toward future-oriented action as a result of their fulfilled development *in utero*, women are constructed as naturally delayed in their physical growth, and are presented as having a propensity to idleness and a resistance to temporal progression as a result. In this paper, I will explore the extent to which temporality is also used to define differences in social status on the early modern stage. As the ‘idle creatures’ of *Julius Caesar*'s Rome, or the ‘lazy knaves’ of *Henry VIII*'s England might suggest, the multitudes are often defined in terms of their inaction: their repetition; their retrograde perspective. In contrast, the nobility are presented as more productive through time: more successfully focused on futurity and linear advancement. Of course, this binary division between lazy plebeians and a productive nobility, like that between idle women and active men, is far too simplistic to withstand much interrogation. Time can be used to confirm but also to deconstruct notions of class difference: to ‘complicate conventional ideologies of blood, wealth, and occupation’, as it

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also complicates categories of gender. Helena's future focused ambition and her success in curing the king, for example, does indeed elevate her social status, but does it also condemn her as 'unwomanly'? Richard II's 'waste of idle hours' literally and dramatically strips him of his authority, but is his dethroning also feminising? In this paper, I will answer these questions by examining some of the key moments in which class, time and gender intersect on the early modern stage.

Mark Netzloff
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Not Home: Intersections of Class, Foreign Service and Family in the Domestic Entertainment at Rycote (1592)

When Ben Jonson visited the Sidney estate at Penshurst, and later poetically commemorated it as a paradigm for English domesticity, Sir Robert Sidney was, in fact, "not home" but rather serving as the English governor at the military garrison of Vlissingen, a cautionary town ceded to England in compensation for its leasing of military labor in the Dutch Revolt. As we see from this canonical example, definitions of the domestic—the nation, the region, and most significantly, the family—are constituted through their relation to transnational contexts of labor, service, and migration. My paper will focus on a text that provides a unique insight into the effects of foreign service on definitions of class and domesticity: the domestic entertainment performed for Queen Elizabeth on her progress of 1592 by the Norris family, one of the most influential families in the late Elizabethan period. In this rare of example of the self-representation of military agents, the hosts present a series of performed letters from family members similarly not home but in a diaspora of foreign service from Ireland to across the Continent. Within several years of this performance, all but one member of the Norris family would be dead. Having served as the brutal agents of extraterritorial state violence, they were ultimately casualties of England's multiple, ongoing but generally forgotten foreign interventions in the late Elizabethan period. This example shows not only the intersections but also the divergences of foreign service and a particular manifestation of class, in terms of the estate and patrilineal family. The subsequent elision of the Norris family from the cultural memory of the period witnesses an abiding inability to complicate the recurring analogies (or intersection) of nation and family as well as domestic and foreign.

Priyanka Roy
Victoria University of Wellington

**Between Outrage and Otherness:
Class, Race and Emotions in *Titus Andronicus***

Demonstrations of anger often function as sources of power for women in the early modern period. Though men are commonly represented as the sex more inclined to articulate their wrath compared to women, women also display their anger in a wide range of ways in the early modern plays. The agential power of these expressions is intimately related to the fervid interaction of race and class. Focusing on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, this paper reflects on the intersections of class, race

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and emotions in the revenge narrative. It argues that important contemporary studies in gender and the history of emotions can be used to reimagine the general understanding of race and its relationship to class and colonial history. It then looks at the bodily anger of the “barbaric” Tamora to highlight the social and performative aspect of her rage and how the physical manifestation of her anger is connected to what lies within (physical) and without (social class). This paper contends that the civilising process of nation-building required the suppression of certain emotions, particularly female anger, and therefore, figures like Tamora posed a greater threat to the patriarchy through her “savage” rage augmented by her self-reliance.

James Siemon
Boston University

“Noble Knot”: Some Intersectional Complications of “Nobility” in *Coriolanus*

This paper briefly explores a few of the complex intersections of values, language and behavior in which *Coriolanus* entangles its two opposing social groups: the people and the nobles. The tentative thesis is that the play’s treatment of nobility – as a class-like group, as a cluster of values, terms, and dispositions of body, language and action – suggests Shakespeare’s interest in social issues and antagonisms evoked by Plutarch’s account of the disastrous Roman encounter between a residual marital habitus and an emergent republican politics.

Natalie Suzelis
Carnegie Mellon University

Injurious Love: Class, Gender, and Religion in *Measure for Measure*

This paper examines residual and emergent ideologies competing to govern the sexual relations of *Measure for Measure*’s citizens. Drawing upon Louis Althusser, Perry Anderson, Leopoldina Fortunati, and Machiavelli, I’ll argue that the consolidation of the social and economic ideologies of Puritanism, mercantilism, and the emerging bourgeois state outweigh the residual feudal and Catholic morality of *Measure for Measure*’s monastic characters, who are experiencing a crisis in the family relation due to the expansion of the early modern bourgeois market. In this reading, Angelo figures as a cipher for emergent Puritan ethics in England, Isabella for residual Catholicism, and Duke Vincentio as the successful consolidator of a new moral-legal ideology behind an absolute repressive state apparatus. The play’s logic of comedy, where it appears, attempts to loosen the grip of feudal rigidity, religious iconography, and the misdirected use of absolute state power for the sake of the successful reproduction of the state’s economic and social relations. Yet the women of *Measure for Measure* – Juliet, Isabella, Mariana, Mistress Elbow, and Mistress Overdone – all complicate, subvert, and expose the ideological relationship between reproduction, the state, the church, and capital. Ultimately, I’ll argue that Isabella’s lack of consent in the final scene implicitly questions political primitive accumulation’s call to make religion more useful for politics.

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Lisa Ulevich
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Transformative Allegory: Social Class and Interpretation in *The Faerie Queene*

The explicitly-stated goal of *The Faerie Queene*, to fashion a gentleman, indicates a focus on the transformative power of the text—the experience of reading and responding to the poem is couched as the affirmation or legitimation of a high social rank. In the first three books of the poem, Spenser’s narrative voice takes a strong pedagogical role in this project of readerly transformation: encounters with figures of personification allegory are punctuated by commentary that offers definitive interpretive judgment and propels the narrative forward when it threatens to stall out by dwelling on figures that embody a single, internally-consistent characteristic. The moralizing pronouncements jumpstart narrative progress after the descriptive, non-narrative signification of allegory (e.g., Redcrosse quailing before Despair and Malbecco convulsively metamorphosing into Gealosie). Even more crucially, the commentary—often just a little misfitting—directs the process of reading to include retrospective evaluation. This narrative pattern changes significantly in the descriptions of Talus in Book V. While Talus’s mechanical violence presents many opportunities for comment, the narrative plows on through brutality after brutality; Spenser leaves his readers to feel the absence of the evaluation and judgment that had occupied those positions in the narrative in the preceding books. The responsibility to judge unprompted is thus a central part of how Spenser conceives of a “gentleman.” Such a reader pauses and evaluates, and tests interpretation—even and especially the pronouncements of an authority—against his own knowledge: nobility becomes a cipher for shrewd reading.