

PAPERS FOR THE SAA 2020: MONEY AND MAGIC

Comments by David Hawkes, Seminar Leader

Kaitlyn Culliton's 'Cozening Queens and Phony Fairies: Fairy Counterfeits in Early Modern Drama' starts and ends by drawing attention to the parallels between Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* and the trial in 1610 of John and Alice West for the crime of 'cozenage.' In between, it expands to include various other cases of 'counterfeit fairies' and other plays including Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. My ears pricked up at the mention of Mary Ellen Lamb's thesis about how fairies 'constitute speech acts'—this sounds like a productive argument, and I'd like to hear more about it. In particular, I was struck by the idea that fairy lore offered the burgeoning urban proletariat ways to make sense of their new experiences using the mythology of their recent rural pasts. Concepts like 'fairy money' seem to suggest that early capitalism appeared as a species of magic to those people first subjected to it. Or am I just projecting my own concerns onto this paper?

William Casey Caldwell's 'The Vices of Collecting Money in *Mankind*' makes several fascinating arguments about the collection of money from the audience in this late medieval morality play. It was interesting to learn that this isn't necessarily the radical innovation that it is sometimes presented as being, and that the transition to the commercial public stage may have been surprisingly incremental. The implications of having the actors take the collection while still in character as allegorical vices seem profound, and they include an ethical criticism of paying money to players as if they were workers. Because of my own preoccupations, I'd have liked to hear more about the Satanic figure of Titivillus and his relation to the Christian devil. It also occurs to me that there's an interesting parallel with the prefaces to many of Ben Jonson's plays (*Bartholomew Fair* in particular) where he demands that the audience judge the play strictly according to the amount of money they've spent and so on.

David Hawkes' 'Bawdry and Usury in Early Modern Drama' is a relatively feeble effort compared to this seminar's other papers. It is drawn from a larger work-in-progress and by no means as polished as it ought to be. The essay analyzes the axiomatic equation between usury and sexual concupiscence, suggesting that 'bawdry' or pimping provided an especially apposite fusion of the two. It employs the figure of Pandarus as an example, tracing his evolution from Homer through Chaucer to Shakespeare. Finally it uses the logic that linked financial and sexual transgression to explain the hostility directed towards the 'cuckold' in early modern culture. Most cuckolds, it is claimed, were actually wittols: that is to say, pimps to their own wives. Cuckoldry and bawdry meet in the person of the wittol, who thus embodies a convergence of usury and concupiscence that seems as relevant to the twenty-first century as it was to the seventeenth.

Martin Higgins' 'Idolatry, Fetishism and Nature in Lyly's *Midas*: Aristotle, Marx and the Early Modern Idol of Capital' offers a learned description of the influence of Aristotle's teleology on early modern economics, and shows how Aristotle's doctrine informs Lyly's *Midas* (and to a lesser extent Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*). The intersection between magic and idolatry interests me here—are they effectively identical, or is there a distinction to be made? The essay also discusses Aristotle's recognition of the need for a common denominator to facilitate commodity exchange, and on Karl Marx's widely influential critique of Aristotle's thesis. Marx claimed that ancient Athens' reliance on slave labor had blinded Aristotle to labor's role as this common denominator, because he could not conceive of different kinds of labor as equivalent. Although the essay explicitly disavows an interest in this question (which is fair enough of course), I have always been unconvinced by Marx's point here, and personally I

welcome the chance to discuss it in depth. I wonder whether the 'ontological and political priority' that Marx assigns to human beings over the products of their labor isn't also ethical? I agree however that Marx's materialism really leaves him no reason to prioritize people over objects on ethical grounds—people ARE objects for him, after all.

Ja Young Jeon's "The stone is mine": Theater, Witchcraft, and Ventriloquism in *The Winter's Tale* provides an original reading of the Delphic oracle's role in Shakespeare's play. The ventriloquism of the pythia and its evocation of female fertility made the oracle appear suspect by Shakespeare's day—I suspect to the "Puritan" party in particular. As the vehicle of the oracle, the character of Paulina is associated with the occult, idolatry, and especially witchcraft. This essay makes a brilliant case that she is also placed in the position of the playwright. I was left wondering how the play's apparent references to Catholicism (for instance 'lawful as eating' as an allusion to the Eucharist) fit into this thesis. Does Shakespeare differentiate Catholicism from magic and idolatry, or is it among the 'wicked powers' that putatively assist Pauline?

Mark LaRubio's "To th' syllable:" Money, Magic, and the Kabbalistic Tradition in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a persuasive argument for the relevance of the Jewish Kabbalah to the magical elements in Shakespeare's last play. The main point of reference is John Dee, presumably the model for Prospero, and man thoroughly versed in the Kabbalah—and also wont to hold conversations with the archangel Uriel—a possible model for Shakespeare's Ariel, it is argued. The parallel between Prospero and Moses is also suggestive, and it's true that Shakespeare alludes to the story of Moses' rod, though personally I wonder whether Prospero isn't at least as comparable to Pharaoh's magicians. I'd be very interested to know whether the early seventeenth-century interest in Jewish lore was a precursor of the philo-Semitism we find in the interregnum.

Rebecca Steinberger's 'Woman, Warrior, or Witch? Fetishizing Margaret of Anjou on the Early Modern Stage' is a highly effective reading of Margaret of Anjou's character as represented by Shakespeare in four history plays: *Henry VI, Parts One, Two and Three* and *Richard III*. The essay makes the convincing argument that Margaret's real transgression is not her adulterous relationship with Suffolk, but rather her 'shift from femme fatale to Amazonian warrior,' which is traced in detail over the four plays. The difference in how she is portrayed between the tetralogy and *R3* is indeed pronounced, and this essay advances a lucid theory to explain that transformation. I might just quibble about how precise the use of the term 'commodification' is here—I can see how Margaret is 'fetishized' and 'objectified,' but does that necessarily involve commodification?

Kemal Toker's "An Antony that Grew the More by Reaping": The Bounties of Money and Language in *Cleopatra's Egypt* studies the intersection of aesthetics and economics in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. It concentrates in particular on 'eponymy: the metaphorical process whereby proper names are translated into common predicates.' This has always seemed to me an appropriate device for conveying the process of psychological objectification consequent on immersion in a money-based, wage-labor economy—as for example in John Bunyan's use of personification in *Vanity Fair* and *Mr. Badman*. This essay takes a different approach, remarking for example on how Caesar regards his friend's attempt to become 'an Antony' as insufferable populism and 'Asiatic rhetoric.' This is a really brilliant analysis, but in spite of the perspicacious remarks on the homology between language and money, I'm not sure I understand how it might 'loosen the monopolistic hold of the monetary model' on

our interpretation of this or other plays. Perhaps I haven't seen the argument's implications as clearly as I should?

Melissa Vipperman-Cohen's "'I see the jewel best enamelled will lose his beauty; yet the gold bides still': Coins, Counterfeit, and Queer Value in Early Modern English Theater' shows how Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West Part I* meditate on the effect of the market on subjectivity, concentrating especially on the circulation of gold. Ephesus was famous for magic as well as for commerce, and this paper cogently examines the intersection of these two discourses in Shakespeare's play. I'm interested to know precisely how commodification is represented as 'soul-killing' in *The Comedy of Errors*. I agree that it is so represented, but for my own selfish reasons I'd like to trace the process in more minute detail. The parallel between the specie content of coins and noble birth as the determining influence on character is brought out very well here—does it come originally from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, I wonder?

Sharon Vogel's "'This Rough Magic": Maleficia, Diabolism, and Witchcraft Skepticism in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*' deconstructs the opposition in Shakespeare's play between the black magic of Sycorax and what has generally been seen as the white magic of Prospero. As this essay successfully establishes, the polarity soon collapses under interrogation—Prospero admits to necromancy, for example, among other transgressions. The *maleficia* attributed to Sycorax was traditionally able to cause bad weather, but this is exactly what Prospero does in the play's first scene. I'd have enjoyed learning more about the distinction between 'diabolic' and 'malefic' magic—surely the former always involves the latter? I'd also like to discuss the influence of Montaigne's skepticism on the play, this hadn't occurred to me before but this fine essay makes it sound eminently plausible.