Abstracts for “Shakespeare and Sanctuary Seminar,” 2020 Shakespeare Association of America Annual Meeting

Sanctuary Born
Joseph Campana

This paper is drawn from a chapter about the killing of children in Richard III and King John. In it I consider how the waning of sanctuary privileges intersects with increasingly contradictory attitudes towards the status of the child in both the legal system and in the symbolic languages of sovereignty in the era. Thus, while it seems that the various versions of the history of Richard III dramatize a failure of the regimes of protection and care of children, the introduction of sanctuary introduces a contradiction. As a tool for the protection of children, sanctuary disenfranchises through enforced vulnerability, which prove equally if oppositely damaging as neglect or violence. Shakespeare’s Richard III witnesses both Richard’s radical and perhaps revelatory indifference to the protective regime arrayed about childhood and it also, along with King John, diagnoses the eroticization of childhood innocence that results from the enforced dependency associated with care and protection. As Richard practices not solely cruelty or malice but rather a provocative indifference to the status of children who block his ascent to the throne, the rhetoric of care invoked around child—and the child’s claim to innocence—becomes increasingly spectacular.

Razing Sanctuary: Women and the Denial of Refuge in *Measure for Measure*
Stephanie Chamberlain

My paper will examine the configuration and use of sanctuary in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure.* Sanctuary in medieval England functioned as protected sacred space afforded primarily to men charged with the crimes of murder, theft and the like. Although, as scholars Karl Shoemaker and Shannon McSheffry note, very few women sought and received sanctuary, Shakespeare envisions it in *Measure for Measure* as places of refuge for women afforded by women. In a Vienna where those deemed guilty of sexual crimes, fears of sexual desire, and even tarnished reputations face severe legal and/or social retribution, sanctuary offers a place of reprieve. Sanctuary becomes a convent, a moated grange, and even an inn of ill-repute, offering Isabella, Mariana, and Kate Keepdown respite from male figures of authority, who would punish them for real or imagined sexual crimes. Such sanctuary, is, however, denied them by the same figures who threaten their well-being. Lucio draws Isabella from the protected, cloistered life she seeks to save one guilty of the sexual excess the novice arguably flees. Mariana is removed from the moated grange to punish the lascivious Angelo through a contorted bed-trick. Mistress Overdone’s house, which provides refuge to the pregnant Kate Keepdown is pulled down in the sweeping, draconian reforms Angelo, the Duke’s rigid and hypocritical acting minister enforces. The limits of sanctuary are realized in the sad figure of Julietta, whose pregnancy before the arrival of her dowry lands her in prison, not in a protected space. The Duke/Friar’s remedy for Vienna’s sexual crimes ultimately spells the end of refuge in *Measure for Measure*; marriage replaces sanctuary as those deemed guilty of sexual crimes and/or desires are married off.

As You Like It and the Place of Pastoral
Amy Cooper

This essay proposes that we understand pastoral as a genre of sanctuary. The governing spatial logic of pastoral—the divide between city and country—mirrors the theater's own real, geographic distance from the Elizabethan court and city of London. The theaters were located just outside London in a district known as the London Liberties. The Liberties gave sanctuary to lepers, exiles, sex workers and players—their marginal status was made symbolically visible by their marginal location because, as Steven Mullaney argues, "topography tends to recapitulate ideology." By translating pastoral from the pages of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and Sidney's *Arcadia* to the stage, Shakespeare realizes the imagined place of pastoral in relation to city and court. The metatheatrical resonance in Celia's playful injunction to the melancholic Rosalind—"go we in content / To liberty, and not to banishment" (1.3.545-6)—is undeniable: just as Rosalind and Celia must cross the threshold of the Duke's city to the forest of Arden, so theatergoers must cross the city limits to reach the London Liberties. In this essay, I bring scholarship on pastoral, which tends to focus on poetry rather than drama, into conversation with scholarship on theatrical place to argue that Shakespeare's pastoral play, by reimagining the London Liberties as a space of sanctuary, asserts theater's power to reimagine the world not as it is but "as we like it."

The Games "Sanctuary Children" Play
Bethany Packard

"'Olley, olley oxen free,' shouts the child" (136). With this exemplary cry Joseph Sterrett briefly illustrates the dual concepts that he asserts organize the core of Judeo-Christian thought: the place or potential for sanctuary and the threat that surrounds it. He asserts that "sanctuary was always a thing of mind," and that, "Concurrent with the notion of divine wrath is the possibility of some kind of immunity" (135). He supports the centrality of this duality of danger and reprieve with the claim that it also organizes children's games. I take seriously this implicit sense that attending to children, play, and games, can convey something vital about sanctuary in its early modern English and recent American forms. I use child's play to tackle Buckingham's scepticism, in *Richard III*, about the existence of "sanctuary children" (3.1.57). His argument that the little Duke of York cannot truly take sanctuary because he has committed no crime necessitating it relies on sanctuary's medieval and early modern association with guilt (Shoemaker) and evokes both period debates about the inherent innocence or sinfulness of children and recent American rhetoric of innocence and illegality surrounding children seeking asylum. Games and play create spaces to explore how the organizational binary Sterrett describes may break down, when danger and sanctuary overlap or become interchangeable. For example: In *Richard III* the Tower of London is both a haven on the way to coronation and a prison that gives its name to the murdered Princes in the Tower. The popular early modern chase and capture game Prisoner's Base was also called Prison Bars. To ask for asylum in the United States is to invite imprisonment or expulsion. When children and play are at the center of claims of sanctuary, the opposition of safety to danger may be particularly fraught. I use children's games to probe the boundaries between base and prison, between violence and danger "in play" and outside it, and thus elucidate the fluid agency of children in seeking sanctuary.

Shakespeare's Stranger Things
Nichole E. Miller

This paper analyzes the political-theological lineage of the Tudor and Jacobean legal designation "stranger" (particularly as it pertains to religious refugees) in conjunction with thing theory. "As a stranger / Give it welcome," Hamlet counsels his friend Horatio. Later he proclaims "the play's the thing." What can Hamlet's terms, *stranger* and *thing* (not to mention the designation *friend*) tell us about the long history of current racist, xenophobic policies in the US and elsewhere? How, where, and why do the languages, laws, and practices designating *strangers* and *things* intersect? Where do they diverge? To what ends? How does *play* (as presence, practice, diversion, performance, spectacle) help us construe these categories and their radical potential?

"Strangers" and Sanctuary in *Sir Thomas More*
Benjamin Woodring

I focus on the increasingly well-known immigrant speech, or "the stranger's case," in the play *Sir Thomas More*, widely agreed to be in Shakespeare's hand. In its depiction of "Evil May Day" in 1517, Sir Thomas More stands before the gates of St. Martin Le Grand sanctuary space—home to a thriving migrant labor community—and dissuades xenophobic rioters from entering.

This passage has recently received extensive coverage. But no one has yet explored thoroughly its crucial sanctuary dimensions. More makes "the stranger's case" at St. Martin's threshold, a privileged zone protecting those taking formal sanctuary, and many foreigners (sometimes refugees) practicing their craft exempt from oppressive municipal and guild regulation. I read the speech and play in deep historical context, discussing sanctuary-dwelling immigrant communities through leases (in Westminster Abbey's Muniments Library), crown licenses, and patents. I also make use of Shannon McSheffrey's ongoing pioneering research.

The stranger's case's hypothetical energy—envisioning one's own possible future as a stranger—was very much in England's cultural bloodstream. Drawing on archival research, I analyze sixteenth-century legal and political defenses of sanctuary that employ proleptic and substitutional logics similar to More's plea. More's speech offers a key to understanding Londoners' long-conflicting orientations toward sanctuary.

The stranger's case emblematizes Shakespeare's imaginative enterprise: to inhabit roles of others, to trade places. It is no coincidence that a sanctuary, foregrounded in the play, explicitly allows for this quintessential work of the theatre. The refuge protects other people, other possibilities, other plots. But Shakespeare emphasizes asylum's vulnerability: it must be defended. Sanctuary's boundaries here are ultimately only as strong as More's speech. Sanctuary and drama mutually implicate and protect one another—extra-jurisdictional space is to thank for English theatre; drama, in turn, comes full circle to make the case for the specialness of such exempt spaces.