

Beatrice Bradley

Early Modern Money Shots

In *The Color of Kink*, Ariane Cruz writes of the tension between the so-called “money shot” and bareback sex, asking, “if the money shot depends on visual proof of pleasure in the projection of semen *on* the body and the practice of bareback sex is contingent upon ejaculate deposited *inside* the body, how can bareback porn reconcile this representational quandary—rendering visible what is invisible while remaining a kind of ‘visual archive’ of bareback sex itself?” This paper takes as its focus “this representational quandary” in early modern contexts, from the Bower of Bliss to *Venus and Adonis*: I chart the movement between stylized representations of sweat and tears projected on the body—the pearly sweat, for example, that adorns Acrasia—and the tactile melting such fluids produce, hands joined in sweaty rapture or Venus’s tears dissolving on her cheeks. I read the pearly liquid that decorates bodies in my text of focus as in fact analogous to the contemporary slang of the pearl necklace, and I argue that clasped moist hands function to make legible to a reader the fluidic exchange of sexual activity that is otherwise hidden, interior. In even the most explicit forms of pornography, fluidic exchange—rather than the projection of fluid—is almost always hidden from sight, deposited rather than external. Although I focus primarily on the early modern literary, I also ask us to retheorize in the contemporary the projection of fluid on a body and its visual impact.

Erika Lyn Carbonara

“The Happiest State that Ever Man Was Born to”: Contextualizing Cuckoldry within the Kinky Early Modern

In Thomas Middleton’s city comedy *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, marital norms are stretched to the extreme: a husband-and-wife must separate because of their fecundity, a Cambridge-educated man is betrothed to a Welsh prostitute, and, notably, the Allwits’ curious extramarital relationship with Sir Walter Whorehound, who enjoys a sexual relationship with Mrs. Allwit. Despite the negative connotations surrounding cuckoldry in early modern literature, Allwit does not bemoan the relationship between his wife and Sir Walter; in fact, he celebrates it. In this paper, I explore the relationship between current perceptions of cuckoldry, which has largely been reclaimed within kink and BDSM spaces, and early modern notions of cuckoldry, which question the husband’s masculinity and the legitimacy of his children. I argue that the relationship between Sir Walter Whorehound, Allwit, and Mrs. Allwit in Middleton’s city comedy acts as a precursor to modern consensual, intentional relationships involving cuckoldry. This paper interrogates how modern understandings of cuckoldry overdetermine our readings of early modern texts such as Thomas Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, and gestures to new means of reading cuckoldry in other early modern texts within an arranged BDSM relationship.

Gina Filo

“All Parts There Made One Prisoner”: Kink in Herrick’s *Hesperides*

In 1993, Lillian Schanfeld asserts that the speaker of Robert Herrick’s *Hesperides*, “or even Herrick himself[,] is a man with sexual problems related to immaturity, passivity and possibly impotence.” While Schanfeld is unusually, almost refreshingly, transparent about her disdain for Herrick’s erotic imagination, such distaste permeates criticism on sexuality and gender in the *Hesperides*, where scholars like Gordon Braden, Moira Baker, and William Kerrigan position Herrick as fundamentally psychosexually immature. Despite the problematically normativizing tendencies of this work, the observation that Herrick is largely uninterested in penetration and (especially) ejaculation in his work is astute. Instead, Herrick focuses on a variety of nonteleological sexual pleasures—the scopic, tactile, fetishistic, sadomasochistic. In this paper, I will read several poems from the *Hesperides* like “The Dream,” “Upon Cupid,” “The Vine,” and “The Bag of the Bee,” all of which embrace pleasures of pain, dominance, and submission analogous (though nonidentical) to contemporary BDSM. Rather than pathologizing Herrick’s poetry for its nonnormative pleasures, or viewing it as inherently misogynistic for its supposed lack of interest in “sex” with women (a common and regrettable charge it has often faced), I will instead demonstrate how the erotic variety exhibited in the *Hesperides* contributes to our emerging picture of early modern kink, complicating our understanding of Renaissance sexuality and offering pleasure to speaker and reader alike.

Will Fisher

Thinking Kink with the Early Moderns

I am currently working on a book-length project on early modern sexual practices, and my paper will explore some of the significant conceptual overlaps in studying practices and studying kink. In the process, I hope to address several of the questions that Gillian and Joey raised in their proposal, and pose others as well. It is also my hope that referencing specific practices might add a kind of particularity to our discussions that might be illuminating and generative (if not necessarily always clarifying).

One of the central questions that my book project addresses is why focus on sexual practices? Or what does studying practices offer us (socially, politically, conceptually, theoretically, etc.)? Some of the answers I've come up with also seem applicable to studying kink. First, I believe that it offers us a way of acknowledging and illuminating the vibrant sexual cultures of the early modern period -- the vast array of "kinky" practices described in texts from the time, including things like group sex, foot and shoe/clothing fetishism, spanking and erotic flagellation, bondage, macrophilia, voluntary cuckoldry, puppy play, scat play, golden showers, urophagia, autoerotic asphyxiation, felching, necrophilia, agalmatophilia and dendrophilia. In addition, it helps us recognize that these "unconventional" sexual practices have long histories, and this recognition might serve to legitimate those practices today by showing their historical persistence in the face of stigmatization and even overt suppression; it might also ultimately help to promote the concept that Gayle Rubin has called "benign sexual variation."

At the same time, thinking kink in relation to my project raises a number of interesting (and perhaps irresolvable) questions. For instance, I have difficulty with the most basic definitional question of whether the practices I'm studying are kinks? The book includes chapters on chin-chucking, thigh sex, kissing, cunnilingus, the use of dildos, and flogging, and while flogging, for instance, seems to be unambiguously kinky, I'm unsure about the others. Do cunnilingus or the use of dildos fall into this category? Does it matter how the practices are performed? What if, for instance, dildos are used as part of a strap-on and/or for pegging? Does this impact their status as kinks? Other questions arise when viewing these practices historically. I argue in the book that both chin-chucking and thigh sex were relatively conventional in the long-seventeenth century insofar as they were widely-socialized and treated as somewhat innocuous, but given that these practices are no longer so widely-socialized, does that mean they would now be considered fetishes or kinks? The historical trajectory of tongue kissing seems to have moved in the opposite direction since even though this act is now generally considered to be vanilla, it was still in the process of being romanticized in the earlier period, and was therefore sometimes said to be something that only prostitutes or "bestly Leachers" would do "when their veins [were] inflat[e]d with lust." Was tongue kissing therefore somewhat kinky?

I even have questions about the quintessentially-kinky activity of flogging. Medical writers regularly imagined this practice to be a kind of sexual stimulant which worked humorally by heating the "reins and loins," thereby inciting both desire and reproductive potency. Thus, even though some argued that the practice was a "filthy Enjoyment" performed by "flogging cullies" with "ungovernable Lusts," others maintained that it was a form of "Lawful Love" that offered couples a cure for impotence and infertility, and could therefore be performed within marriage "without the Imputation of any Crime." It doesn't appear that this latter group of writers was successful in their attempts to give flogging cultural legitimacy -- or locate it inside what

Rubin calls "the charmed circle" -- but it nevertheless suggests that flogging's status as a "kink" was somewhat contested or ambiguous.

In the end, I think that these examples show that we need to be careful about assuming we know what counts as a kink in any given time or place, but at the same time, this doesn't necessarily mean that the category is entirely fluid or indeterminate; instead, it also suggests that we might productively attend to the inevitably-contested social processes by which kinks are constructed, as well as how they change over time.

Erin E. Kelly

***Taming of the Shrew* and sex “in the midst of the street”**

When actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell (1865-1940) was asked for her opinion of two men’s intimate relationship, she reportedly replied “Does it really matter what these affectionate people do — so long as they don’t do it in the streets and frighten the horses!” What characterizes erotic moments in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* is that they regularly feature characters doing it in the streets (or at least in public spaces that are the early modern equivalent thereof). In my essay, I describe the always-public nature of sex in this play, cataloguing how its erotic energies reside in complicated scenes of exhibitionism and voyeurism. These scenes – which include cross-dressing, teasing, name-calling, role-playing, and bratty performances of submissiveness – centre around couples who can be interpreted as participating with full consent. However, these characters’ erotic play always involves additional participants who have unequal experiences of consent and coercion as they serve as observers, props, or proxies. As such, considering whether *Taming of the Shrew* is kinky doesn’t just give us a chance to notice the extent to which sex was always public in early modern England, and along the way to ponder how Katherine and Petruchio’s marriage carves out space for consensual, powerful, and private pleasures. It also invites us to consider the implications of organizing sexual ethics around questions of individual privacy and consent. Since North American laws protecting individuals who engage in supposedly non-normative sexual behaviour rely on assumed rights to individual privacy, there are important reasons to ask whether and when it is both ethical and legal to engage in kinky play “in the midst of the streets,” whether or not any horses get frightened.

Nathaniel C. Leonard

“What pretty new device” : Bondage, Liminality, and Politics of Sexual Space in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*

While the relationship between sexuality and power is foundational to a significant portion of English early modern dramatic texts, one would be hard pressed to find a play from the period that engages more directly with contemporary concepts of “kink culture” than Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*. Central to the potentially transgressive nature of the play’s sexual power structures is the non-traditional triangular relationship between the King, Evadne, and Amintor, which is built on a foundation of politically enforced cuckoldry as a means for concealing the King and Evadne’s extramarital relationship. This paper will explore the erotic power dynamics of the play with particular emphasis on the “kinky” relationship between the King and Evadne and the ways that that relationship both victimizes and empowers Evadne. Her position as the King’s mistress allows Evadne to navigate the court space with a unique freedom due to the liminal nature of her position, which culminates in her ability to invert traditional power dynamics in the King’s bedroom through the use of bondage. Evadne is able to use her sexuality and the non-traditional nature of her sexual relationship to coopt power and to use “kink” as a cultural performance to enact vengeance in much the same way that many male protagonists in revenge tragedy use dramatic performance or cultural ritual as a catalyst for gaining authority over the tyrants who wrong them.

James Mardock

“And with her own goodwill her firmly tied”: Petrarchan Irony and the Power Bottom

In the conventional Petrarchan sonnet, a (usually male) speaker experiences a paradoxically painful and inescapable adoration of a love object, and creates a poetic fiction of submission to a master/mistress, figured both as a cruel love god and the (usually female) love object herself, a submission that features bondage, torment, and violence that are all simultaneously unpleasant and welcome. Suffering in Petrarchism is bound to pleasure, and though by convention the former is the speaker's lot and the latter the addressee's — Sidney's *Astrophil* writes "that she ... might take some pleasure of my pain" (1.2) — the binaries of gender, of power, and of pleasure/pain are always understood to be an ironic fiction. The male speaker constructs himself as a submissive and the beloved as a dominatrix, but the act of construction ironizes itself. Similarly, in consensual kink practice, the act of submission and the abandonment of control, is always also a fiction belied by the pre-scene negotiation, safewords, and status checks. Submissives are, ironically, always in charge, in the same way that the suffering Petrarchan speaker is the power bottom whose agonies both enable and control the framework of interaction; both Petrarchism and BDSM, that is, stage scenes to explore sexual power dynamics, whose very fictiveness is central to the appeal. In this paper I explore English sonneteers' awareness of these ironies, and especially the foregrounding and disruption of the shaping binaries in Spenser's *Amoretti*, in which gender, agency, and power binaries all collapse. Building on Melissa Sanchez's 2012 recuperation of different forms of early modern "good sex" including what we'd recognize as sadomasochism and BDSM, I will ask what an understanding of the logics and psychology of kink can tell us about the Petrarchan tradition's relationship to early modern sexuality.

James Mulder

“Mishapen Stuffe”: Pleasure and Restraint in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*

This paper offers a kinky reading of restraint in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*. Using kink as an analytic for thinking the pleasures of the poem opens up new ways to understand the poem’s numerous scenes of clinging, locked arms and immobilizing embraces. In previous critical accounts of the poem, I will argue, binaristic frameworks of active/passive and penetrator/penetrated have tended to collapse or undervalue certain dimensions of the poem’s erotic play. This paper builds on Jeffrey Masten’s recent philological study of the poem’s language of passion, in which Masten argues that Leander simultaneously takes up positions of active, desiring subject and passive erotic object. I am interested in the ways in which a kinky methodology may enliven critical conversations about social hierarchy and sexual normativity in the early modern period, particularly around Marlowe, an author whose work has played such a significant role in the development of queer early modern studies. I bring the work of Margot Weiss and Ariane Cruz to bear on the poem to argue that the poem’s scenes of restraint, capitulation, and yielding perform, as Cruz puts it, “rituals of domination and subordination [that] reveal such positions as not necessarily unstable but rather as unnatural, socially constructed, continually (re)produced, and hence possibly deconstructed and reconstructed.”

Kirk Quinsland

Shakespeare's (Into) Race Play

Like queerness in the Renaissance, kink sits at the uneasy intersection of practice and identity: is kink something we do, or is it something that we are? In this essay, I am interested in kink as a form of praxis that avoids any easy reduction to either behavior or being, while also resisting defining kink in terms of statistical normativity (most people don't do this) or cultural normativity (other people would think this is exotic). Instead, I am exploring the ways in which kink what Mario DiGangi terms affective entanglement, "the contingent, improvisational, and open-ended somatic impingements that can forge connections [...] across boundaries of rank, gender, and time" (47), a praxis which circulates between bodies in communities that are largely unbothered by the mores of those on the outside looking in. Adding to DiGangi's list of boundaries, we should add race, recognizing that the affective praxis of race play invites us, in the words of BDSM educator Mollena Williams, "to play with real, structural inequalities in safe and pleasurable ways: in ways that make such play *play*." In this essay, I will suggest that through pairings including Tamora and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, Desdemona and Othello in *Othello*, and Jessica and Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare uses race play to critique the idea that normativity should be the measure for accepting alternative forms of sexual expression, instead encouraging a view of the kink as a form of play within relationships that challenge structural inequalities.

Lisa Robinson

Ophelia At The Edge

For my addition to the Kinky Renaissance's seminar, I will take on the art of edging as my foray into early modern modes of contemporary kink culture. When thinking about edging, there's a focus on the potential gain of delayed gratification. The delay in itself can be pleasurable, with the intent that the endgame will be well worth the wait. And for that potential to reach a positive end, trust must exist between partners. This individual needs to read your body, read its limits, and must also be able to fulfill the final push for pleasure. If that layer of trust does not exist, then the power dynamic within the act shifts past all areas of consent.

Focusing in particular on the potential harm of an unfulfilling and untrustworthy partner, this paper will take on Ophelia as a prime example of the cost of inexperienced and unrestrained power dynamics within edging sex acts. One line will become its own consistent returning wave within this paper, Hamlet's "it would cost you a groaning to take off my edge" (III.ii.244). This is the last conversation Hamlet and Ophelia have before she enters Act IV maddened by her father's death. But what if instead we see Ophelia's madness as the cost of Hamlet's refusal to fulfill the final moment of edging? He states within this line a requirement for his own pleasure, but never mentions hers. And her response of "still better, and worse," marks his embittered words, and ends with the foreshadowing of the worse she will experience. The final part of this paper will focus on her self-relieved death within the rushing waters as a metaphor for her liberation from this untrustworthy partner. Where she ends via the dexterity of her own body, and fulfills edging's pleasure potential.

Stephen Spiess

**Playing Whores and Sodomites:
Marriage, Mimesis, and Sexual Role-Playing in Early Modern England**

In a short epigram entitled *On Sir Voluptuous Beast*, Ben Jonson envisions a scene of conjugal instruction fueled by the erotic interplay of sexual memory, categorical mimesis, and bodily metamorphosis. In eight short lines, the poem describes a sexually-experienced husband—the titular “Beast”—who “instructs his fair, and innocent wife, / in the past pleasures of his sensual life... how his Ganymede moved, and how his goat [moved].” Taking up the role(s) ascribed to her, this domestic Galatea transforms herself into the “varied shapes” of his desire. Such sexual role-playing, we are told, does not tarnish the woman’s chastity. Rather, it appears to affirm her status as a dutiful and loyal wife: both here and in the epigram’s two-line successor, *On the Same Beast*, we are told that she remains (post-“pleasure”) “his chaste wife.” The “Beast,” by contrast, “adulterers still: his thoughts” remain fixed on “a whore.” Readers are left to wonder how and whether his wife aligned with, diverged from, was replaced by, and/or successfully imitated this conceptual counterpart during their sexual encounter(s).

In this paper, I leverage Jonson’s twinned epigrams to inaugurate a broader exploration of sexual role-playing and fantasy within the putatively heteronormative contexts of the Renaissance marriage. As my brief summary suggests, such an inquiry raises questions of experience, agency, and authorship, but also of queer hermeneutics and sexual historiography. What kinds of erotic pleasures and practices are depicted, imagined, and/or rendered imaginable in this short work? How were they learned and taught? How might these and related representations encourage us to productively reexamine the erotics of categorical thinking—how sexual fantasies unfold *across*, *around*, *alongside*, *within*, and *perpendicular to* seemingly familiar binaries: not only wife/whore, marriage/prostitution, human/beast, licit/illicit, etc., but also, and perhaps most useful, original/imitation. As this final pairing suggests, I am especially interested in the kind of illicit mimesis—the imitation of a sexually illicit relationship, practice, or desire—which Jonson here locates *within* the licit conjugal bond. Such fantasies, I will argue, encourage a critically kinky return to, and rethinking of, that staple of Renaissance antitheatrical discourse: the fear that playgoers, having encountered “representation[s] of whoredom” on the London stage, will return home to, in Anthony Munday’s phrase “plaie the whores,” and/or, as Philip Stubbes puts it, “play the sodomites, or worse.”

Alicia Tomasian

My Mistress's Page: "Nashe's Dildo" as Cuckolding Fetish

Thomas Nashe's erotic poem *The Choise of Valentines* begins with the narrator visiting his beloved in her brothel and goes on to describe the couple's many sex acts, followed by Tomalin's premature ejaculation. Frustrated, Francis breaks out the "woman's secretary," her dildo. What follows is praise for the sex toy, superior to the man in every way. The anthropomorphizing of the dildo pits it as a successful romantic rival to Tomalin, consistently satisfying and uncomplicated. Nashe, writing to please a male patron, gives the account from the perspective of the humiliated John, who ends up paying for his pleasure and leaving his lady, satisfied by her beloved dildo and not her man. The poem is funny, of course, and explicit, but why is it sexy? I argue that the anthropomorphized dildo cuckolds Tomalin, that the male protagonist's humiliation is the point. Contemporary exploration and discourse regarding cuckolding fetishes can help to explain the pleasure of Nashe's "Choise." What is sexy is not, I argue, Francis's appetite for sex or her sexy body. It is her satisfaction thanks to her gladiator, her secretary, her page, as opposed to her patron Tomalin. His inadequacy and replacement is the point. "She lyeth breathless: I am taken doune," Tomalin tells us. In addition, Nashe's own humiliation at producing such material seems relevant. He seems not to have won over his desired patron, Southampton, with the piece, which became a source of humiliation for him.