

Seminar 24: Performance Cultures in and around the Inns of Court

Jessica Apolloni (Christopher Newport University)

Gender, Revenge, and Legal Performance at the Inns of Court

This paper will focus on the close connection between gender and revenge in Inns of Court plays such as *Gorboduc*, *Gismond of Salerne*, *Jocasta*, and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. Building from work of scholars such as Lorna Hutson, Bernadette Meyler, and Jessica Winston, I outline the comparative, intertextual development of revenge tragedy within and outside the Inns of Court. I first trace the genealogy of the revenge tragedy genre to the legal spaces of the Inns. In this socio-legal context, revenge tragedy conventions came to life within a dialogue of comparative Classical and Italian textual influences and translations. Placing Inns of Court plays within a dialogue of revenge and gender dynamics brings to light a particular fascination with the legitimacy of violence and legal performance. When analyzing this longer trajectory of gender and revenge within the legal spaces of the Inns, this paper discusses how such narratives challenge key ethical issues in the performance of law. Members of the Inns of Court were constantly practicing and contemplating the performative aspects of the profession, as detailed in Julie Stone Peters' recent book *Law as Performance*. This paper synthesizes the ethics of law as performance with gender and revenge to discuss concepts such as legitimacy, violence, and emotion in legal processes.

Piers Brown (Kenyon College)

Jack Donne makes an Epithalamion

For the seminar, I will be writing about Donne's "Epithalamion made at Lincoln's Inn," one of his more understudied poems. This paper is the first piece of work for a new project on Donne's poetry in the 1590s. A longstanding critical problem is that while Donne canon consists of both occasional writing and work less easily moored to context, this division is unequally distributed and we know more about Donne later in his life. One way to approach the early part of Donne poetic career is via the now-largely-discarded dichotomy of Jack Donne and Doctor Donne, a division of writing selves that was enshrined by the 1635 *Poems* and Isaac Walton's *Life*. Modern critics tend to point out the significant continuities in his engagement with religion across his life. But although I don't want to take Ben Jonson's judgment that Donne wrote much of his best poetry by the age of 25 too seriously, this claim points to the potential value of looking at Donne's early years as a distinctive period in his

literary work, especially for its generic experiments. To that end, I'm interested Donne's epithalamion as an example of an early poem which can be read in the context his time at the Inns of Court. I hope to discuss the poem as both poetic and social performance, thinking about its mixture of gentle teasing and serious praise. The relatively few critical responses to this poem turn around questions of decorum, imitation and to what extent it should be read as serious or parodic. I will focus on Donne's description of the fellowship of Lincoln's Inn, whose members are (as the Epithalamion puts it), "Of study and play made strange hermaphrodites." This phrase, I suggest, is also perhaps a good description the problems the poem tries to negotiate and suggests ways to consider his work during his time at the Inns of Court.

Sierra Carter (University of York)

Gascoigne's 'telltale paper': Epistolary Form and Typography of Letters in 'Adventures of Master F. I.'

This paper considers how Inns of Court poets centred letters and epistolary rhetorics as crucial elements of literary networks and poetic production. Stage letters, in particular, have gained attention for their curious *mise-en-page*, often appearing as 'embedded' documents. Although the only known surviving stage letter from the period is connected to Gray's Inn, scholarship has typically focused on the paper props found in commercial drama. I propose, however, that the seemingly 'theatrical' typography of letters maintains a more extensive history, including literature from the Inns.

Taking George Gascoigne's 'Adventures of Master F. I.' as a case in point, I suggest that the Inns' coterie culture invests in the familiar epistle as literary form and mode of performance. First printed in *A Hundred Sundrie Flowers* (1573) and then revised for Gascoigne's *Posies* (1575), 'Adventures' consists of a prose narrative that frames illicit love letters and letter-poems that are each marked as distinct narrative units through *mise-en-page*. Their dropped letters, changes in typeface, and inclusion of signatures, I argue, reflect the context of scribal publication and coterie circulation that informs both editions' paratexts and the narrative's plot. Gascoigne's letters, however, do not only imitate manuscript features. They also circulate as objects encountered in specific spaces and material conditions. The effect of the narrator's surrounding prose account, which details letters' movements between writers and readers, is recognisably 'theatrical.' Much like the stage letters in Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* (1575) or any number of early modern plays, the letters in 'Adventures' are

pulled from pockets and dropped in passageways, ripped to pieces before being reconstructed, and intercepted or circulated by unexpected readers. Taken together, the typography and narrator's descriptions of these 'telltale paper[s]' ask us to place epistolary form and the Inns' literary letter-writing culture in closer conversation with drama and performance.

Michelle O'Callaghan (University of Reading)

Black Luce at Gray's Inn: the Inns of Court and the Geography of Early Modern London.

The aim of this paper is to explore and rethink the spatial and conceptual boundaries of the Inns of Court. The civic model of the Inns, promoted most notably in the work of Paul Raffield, set out a vision of Inns as 'enclosed environs', whose walls were its defining architectural feature, representing the 'ideal walled city', the city state. For Raffield, the civic concept of the city, as an insular, rational homosocial organization is first formulated and promoted in England at the Inns of Court because of its unique institutional status and organisation, which in turn is laid out in its architecture.

What I want to draw attention to in this paper are the alternative spatial stories that are set in motion and performed in texts of the revels, in this case the Gray's Inn revels of 1594, that complicate our understanding of the situation of the Inns of Court. The plotting of space in these revels is not insular but instead interconnects the global and local. As such, histories and trajectories accumulate in ways that radically disrupt a civic concept of the 'ideal walled city'. These alternative spatial stories coalesce in the figure of Lucy Negro, Abbess of Clerkenwell, or in her other instantiation, Black Luce of Clerkenwell. The *Gesta Grayorum* dramatizes how Gray's Inn is situated within a locality whose domains are made up of constellations of social, legal, and economic relations that are interconnected within wider networks of trade and associations, local and global, and licit and illicit.

Emma Rhatigan (University of Sheffield)

"A 'fellowship in sin": John Donne and Community in the Lincoln's Inn Pulpit'

Lincoln's Inn was an institution central to Donne's work both as a poet and a preacher. Of particular importance to him were the close bonds of community nurtured by the Society. As a student, Donne's poetry was inspired by and circulated among a friendship group centred on the Inns of Court. Twenty years later, his sermons preached at Lincoln's Inn are

distinctive in the way they reflect and validate the Society's institutional identity. However, as well as celebrating community and belonging Donne was also acutely aware of the moral dangers attendant on human relationships. In this chapter I will argue that Donne's sermons in the Lincoln's Inn pulpit are characterised by a concern with how relationships shape behaviour; whether that relationship be sexual, familial, or professional. Man is constituted by his relationships, to use Donne's term, by his 'dependence' upon others, and, wrongly conceived, such relationships can lead us astray. Consequently, a recurring concern in Donne's Lincoln's Inn sermons is the sin of 'scandal', the sin which can, in turn lead others to sin. By focusing on Donne's analysis of what he describes as 'fellowship in sin' I will argue that the Lincoln's Inn sermons offer us an important example of Donne's abiding concern with community; the ways in which human relationships can not only advance, but also corrode man's relationship with God.

Simon Smith (Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham)

Music in Drama at the Early Modern Inns of Court; or, listening again to *Twelfth Night*

With the publication of Alan Nelson and John Elliott's *Inns of Court* volumes in 2011, the *Records of Early English Drama* project demonstrated that, far from being a one-off arrangement, the performance of *Twelfth Night* at Middle Temple Hall on 2nd February 1602 was part of a pattern – indeed probably a standing arrangement – in which professional playing companies provided theatrical entertainment from their repertory for feast day revels at the Inns each year on All Saints Day (1st November) and Candlemas (2nd February). In light of documentary evidence unearthed by *REED*, as well as Andrew Ashbee's work on court musicians at the Inns and the wider swell of scholarship on the Inns over the last decade or so epitomised by the 'Mapping Inns' project, this paper will situate *Twelfth Night*'s well-known musical riches in the wider context of a performance culture at Middle Temple and beyond in which both music and professional theatre were prominent and highly prized. It will ask how it might be significant for our understanding of how Shakespeare and his contemporaries approached their dramaturgy if musically-focused Innsmen were amongst their anticipated audiences, as well as the court and commercial attendees towards whom the bulk of scholarly attention is generally directed.

Jackie Watson (Independent Scholar, Oxford)

Revelry, Satire and Performance in the late Elizabethan Middle Temple

This paper will explore the nexus between place, community and dramatic performance by exploring the role of the Inns of Court revels at the end of the sixteenth century. My focus specifically will be on drama at Middle Temple, and performance in Middle Temple Hall, before an audience reflecting that institution, though I hope to stimulate discussion at the conference on parallels and differences at the other Inns.

In looking at the nature of revelling, and the transgression implicit in this licensed institutional performance, I examine the connection with a play famously performed in the same space by professional players. I argue that *Twelfth Night* owes much to its playing space at Middle Temple and its production as the culmination of the Christmas Revels, and, in exploring the links between these, I shall focus specifically on what performance at the Inn reveals about the importance of homosociality and social mobility there during this period, and explore ways in which the institutional audience may have engaged with the ideas, the language and the visual spectacle of such performances. Finally, after examining the dialogue between what Paul Raffield calls the Inns' 'invisible curriculum' and performance in the same space, I will finish with John Davies, a Middle Templar whose role in the revelry of 1597/8 exemplifies, I shall argue, the kind of transgression that is specifically located in this particular Inn.