

1/ Hanh BUI – **Shakespeare’s Offstage Characters: Race, Gender & Empire**

In this paper I am interested in Shakespeare’s offstage characters, specifically, those linked by race, gender, and contested narratives of origins and empire; characters like the maid Barbara in *Othello*, whose name recalls the Barbary Coast and contemporary narratives of Muslim pirates and slave traders operating in North Africa. Barbara’s mention in the play connects these accounts to Othello’s own pre-Christian and renegade past, as well as his “theft” of Desdemona from her father’s house to European fears of white slavery. But many more nondramatic characters like Othello’s mother, or the Egyptian charmer who in one account gave her the handkerchief, are left unnamed. In another play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, we learn that the Egyptian queen has children, but we never see them nor do we learn anything about them. When the maid Charmian is told by a soothsayer that all her fortune lies in the past, she pertly replies, “Then belike my children shall have no names” (1.2.35). On the surface she means that her expectation of one day starting a family is vaporized by the soothsayer’s prophesy. But closer inspection reveals that Charmian says her children will only lack names, not lives, as if her brood already exists. This is an ambiguous rhetorical construction, suggesting an ontological status hovering somewhere between being and non-being. Her line thus conjures the many absent figures in Shakespeare’s drama, unseen yet nonetheless marked with corporal and cultural otherness, whose stories almost come into view.

2/ Lisa STARKS – **Trans Expressions in the Yiddish Shakespearean Musical: Jewish adaptations of *Twelfth Night* from *Yidl Mitn Fidl* to *Yentl***

Besides their origins in Ballad Operas and later traditions, many Broadway musicals and musical films have roots in generations of Yiddish theater, Jewish musical traditions, and Yiddish appropriations of Shakespeare. Drawing from these traditions, this essay explores the complex treatment of trans experiences in the Shakespearean Jewish Musical through an exploration of the Yiddish cinema classic *Yidl Mitn Fidl* (*Yiddle with His Fiddle*, 1936, Joseph Green and Jan Nowina-Przybylski) and the later Hollywood film *Yentl* (Barbra Streisand, 1983; in context with Isaac Baashevis Singer’s short story and the later Broadway play) as unmarked adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. Like Shakespeare’s comedy, both *Yidl Mitn Fidl* and *Yentl* feature intelligent, plucky women who choose to live trans masculine lives for disparate reasons, resulting in different outcomes; both treat feminist issues while deeply examining cultural gender roles and the leading characters’ lived trans expression. The treatment of gender in these films draws from multiple appropriations of Shakespearean comedies that had become intertwined with Yiddish plots, characters, and themes (and vice-versa), as well as multiple other appropriations, in popular culture. In these musicals, the dynamic mix of these traditions results in a rich interplay of Shakespearean comedy and Yiddish theater/cinema, one that, interestingly, explores trans expressions in complex ways. This essay analyzes how these films treat their characters’ trans experiences and gender identities, while addressing how these identities intersect with evolving Jewish identities in twentieth-century Europe and America before and after the Holocaust.

3/ Harry R. McCARTHY – **‘Cattle of this Colour: Boy Actors and Transracial Possibility’**

In this paper, I want to think about the stage technology by which womanhood was produced on the early modern stage - through performance by boy actors - as itself a mode of racialisation.

Despite over forty non-white characters, many of them female-presenting or non-binary figures such as eunuchs, being written for boy actors during the first decades of the seventeenth century, the particular affective resonance of boy performers' embodiment of non-white womanhood remains under-explored. This paper, then, will aim to offer a consideration of how the always-already gender-indeterminate figure of the boy actor taps into overlapping anxieties about gendered and racial difference. I want to think more widely about how gendered impersonation always constitutes a racialising act, and to consider the kinds of methods and approaches the mutually constitutive fields of premodern trans and critical race studies have to offer to theatre history, and to our sense of embodied non-white womanhood on the early modern stage. After offering a brief overview of early modern connotations of non-whiteness with gender nonconformity (in travel writing and invectives against theatrical crossdressing on English soil), I conclude with brief readings of plays which, through the body of the boy actor, expose womanhood's contingent relationship to whiteness through their demands for redrawing racial lines through cross-gender disguise. This paper emerges from and engages with ideas I am developing in a chapter-in-progress for Simone Chess and Sawyer K. Kemp's forthcoming collection, *Early Modern Trans Drama*.

4/ Kathryn Corah – **Virtuous Me, Sinful Thee: Racializing Paracelsian Assemblages in Shakespeare's Pericles**

In my article, I will trace the alchemically-signified Othering present in Shakespeare et. al.'s *Pericles* (1608) through its relation to the antiBlack racializing rhetoric and emblemata of Paracelsus and his Renaissance inheritors, the Paracelsians. By comparing the cannibalistic and incestuous relationship of the Antiochene nobility with their foil of Pericles and Marina, I will utilize the Christian alchemical tradition's racializing assemblage of potent religious pharmakons as an analytical lens, along with Kim Hall's work on early English antiBlackness in *Things of Darkness* (1996). It is notable that the incestuous nobles are from Antioch, a location famed for Crusader cannibalism and that the incest is signified by the ouroboros, the alchemical symbol of the self-cannibalizing snake; ever more significant is that the incestuous auto-cannibals of Antioch are smote by God Himself. The action of *Pericles* is enacted in the wake of a grave corporeal corruption which imitates the act of cannibalism undertaken by European Crusaders in the same location. By presenting the cannibalizing figure in Antioch as native to Antioch – as the head of state and therefore as the state itself – the memory of the cannibalizing Crusader is obscured by the spectacle of the Other as the true cannibal, as that which devours not only the flesh of noble princes but his own flesh. I found my argument upon an analysis of the use of terms such as “virtue”, “purity”, and “fairness” in descriptions of Marina and Thaisa, as well as trace the use of those particular signifiatory relations through the alchemical works of the Paracelsians. By doing so, my work will show that the narrative of *Pericles* is primarily concerned with the valorizing of a white Christian family that is portrayed as divinely empowered, yet is simultaneously vulnerable to “dark” Others.

5/ Jessica McCALL – **Like Medusa, A Freak Through and Through: Ron Wimberly's *Prince of Cats***

Ron Wimberly's *Prince of Cats* is described by John Jennings in his forward as not “just a mish-mash of things [Wimberly] digs. Yes it's *Romeo and Juliet* meets Kurosawa meets *The Warriors* meets 'Planet Rock.' However, what makes *Prince of Cats* innovative is the fact that it acts as a reified index of what

Hip Hop culture would manifest itself as visually” (2020: 3). In Wimberly’s text, Roslyn—like Juliet, Jacquelyn, and Roxanne—is a woman of color. She is a photographer, pursued by Romeo but in a sexual relationship with Tybalt. In Act 4 of Wimberly’s text, Roslyn is presented nude except for her underwear, standing over a sleeping Tybalt with his samurai sword. Prior to this scene Tybalt has successfully defeated six Montagues and, after being saved by, tended to, and then engaging in sexual intercourse with Roslyn, tells her, “I’ll bear not Montague coals, nor suffer their brazen intimidations to alter the paths I follow on my streets. I bear Capulet’s brand, we know no fear.” To which, Roslyn replies, “Rapier’s tongue you’d rather brave than suffer Pride’s wound that heals and leaves no scar but mem’ry? You’re fucking crazy, Tybalt, verily” (2020: 80). The relationship dynamic between Roslyn and Tybalt, at times, plays into stereotypes—especially in the panels leading up to her lifting of the sword where Tybalt falls asleep post-coitus while she challenges his pride as vanity (2020: 83). But Roslyn, in Wimberly’s text, is a photographer and watcher of the violence around her giving her observations an authority that directly contradicts her silence in Shakespeare’s text.

6/ Savannah Rae XAVER – **Shakespearean Intersections of Race, Gender, Location, and Sexual Freedom**

On the early modern stage, gendered epithets like “strumpet,” “minx,” “hobby horse,” “courtesan,” and “whore” are not just markers of misogyny. Instead, these insults harm the male user as well as their female target. These insults are frequently used to slander female characters in Western European and Christian contexts. The chastity of the wife, daughter, sister, and mother characters who dwell in these Western settings is held to strict moral standards. For the woman character who is placed by the author in a pagan or otherwise “exotic” culture, these standards do not limit her. Unlike the heroine defined within a familial context, the pagan, pseudo-goddess, or generally Eastern woman is not obligated to remain sexually pure nor is she expected to uphold her own and her family’s honor. She is generally rootless and unindebted to male authority figures: “exotic” female characters—who are generally pagan (sometimes African) and occasionally divine or semi-divine – coveted by men for their sexuality and beauty, seem initially to defy the rules that bind domestic female characters in a Christian culture. However, in tragic contexts, their freedom is illusory, or short-lived. When the exotic women characters displease men, their lush sexuality, once the source of their attraction, becomes a mark of corruption, as male characters begin to hold them not just to the rules that should govern the behavior of a matron in the Ancient world, but by an even stricter, anachronistic early modern Biblical standard; the standard by which an Elizabethan or Jacobean householder might judge his own wife. Liberated exotic women characters are thus ambivalently presented on the Renaissance tragic stage: intermittently or successively celebrated and harshly judged. To showcase the complex nature of gendered insults applied to such characters, Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, will be discussed.

7/ Rebecca HIXON – **Racializing *Taming’s* Pop-Feminist Paradox in *Deliver Us From Eva***

As a Black romantic comedy, *Deliver Us From Eva* reshapes existing traditional approaches to adapting Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Most recent adaptations of *Taming* radically shift elements of Shakespeare’s play for a modern audience: creating a Katherine audiences can sympathize with and root for, a Petruchio that deserves to win her heart, and a relationship that feels genuine and necessary for both characters. However, these agendas often transform *Taming* into a palatable white liberal feminist or “pop-feminist” romance. Pop-feminism appeals to a wide audience through the evocation of girl power, individualism, and female visibility without actually challenging the power relations of

the economic, patriarchal, political framework(s) that perpetuate gender inequality, and it aligns well with the contemporary romantic comedy genre. Yet, once Taming is placed within the formula of the historically white romcom genre, adaptations typically fail to provide the feminist rehabilitation of Shakespeare's play that many scholars desire. The feminist efficacy of such adaptations, however, exists on a kind of sliding scale in terms of their reliance on the romcom genre and the possibilities they open up—the further they get from the traditional romcom structure, the more they are able to escape from some of its issues around depicting gender, sexuality, and class. For instance, Gary Hardwick's 2003 film, *Deliver Us From Eva*, replaces the patriarchal structure of Shakespeare's text with an emphasis on family and community. By centering race in its retelling, *Eva* better challenges the sexist structure of Shakespeare's play and its adaptations.

8/ Henriëtte RIETVELD – *Les jeux de Chimène: Le Cid's feisty female character on tour*

In France today, when someone is deeply and passionately in love, they are said to have Chimène's eyes for the other person (*avoir les yeux de Chimène*). The saying refers back to Pierre Corneille's tragicomedy *Le Cid* (1636), in which Rodrigue and Chimène face impossible dilemmas between duty and love. Rodrigue, to protect his family honor, has to kill the father of his heart's desire. In turn, Chimène wants revenge, and does everything in her power to get it, but she also can't help but love Rodrigue. A tale of impossible love that is simultaneously deeply political, *Le Cid* became wildly popular in Paris and soon after across Western Europe, in part due to Corneille's heroine, who was both deeply admired and intensely derided. In this paper, I will consider how Chimène subverted contemporary notions of *bienséance* (roughly translated as decorum) in French polite society. I suggest that the codes of conduct establishing what was 'proper' reflected by notions of ideal white womanhood. I will then turn to the play's tour to the Netherlands, tending to its French visit to The Hague and its transformation to Dutch on the Amsterdam stage. By charting the character's journey, I examine how notions of white womanhood were at once transnational and locally inflected.

9/ Angelina DEL BAZO – *Desdemona's Whiteness and the Restoration Actress*

The Tragedy of Othello, or the Moor of Venice (1604) was an especially popular play across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: between its initial performance in 1604 and 1687 it was performed at least fourteen times, and in the eighteenth century there are 441 performances recorded. This makes it the fifth most frequently performed Shakespeare play in the period and the only one of the top five that was not performed heavily adapted or reworked. But *Othello* is even more important to the history of Restoration and eighteenth-century theater: in a 1660 performance, a woman whose name has been lost to history debuted as Desdemona, the first professional actress on the English stage. In the absence of any name, both in the prologue and epilogue and later in the historical record itself, means that there is no specific woman to modify the idea of the first actress, and so the first actress becomes Desdemona, one of the most famous Early Modern women explicitly raced as white. The difference between character and actress is elided, and the paradigmatic actress becomes Desdemona, her gender inextricable from her complexion. I argue that the rise of the actress was inextricable from the rise of whiteness as a racial category, two processes that were mutually constitutive.