

Shakespeare's Poems in Context(s)
Stephen Guy-Bray, Seminar Leader

[He kisses her]: Sonnets and Stage Directions in *Romeo and Juliet*
Mathieu D.S. Bouchard, John Abbott College

When Romeo and Juliet first meet, they, famously, work together to compose a sonnet (1.5.92-105). In modern editions, the end of the sonnet is marked with a stage direction: He kisses her. The quarto and folio texts of the play contained no stage direction. In 1709, Nicholas Rowe, the first editor to add one, inserted it not after line 105, but after line 106 – that is, after fifteen lines. This paper traces the history of this stage direction alongside the broader reception history of Shakespeare's sonnets, while also examining how variations in its placement might inform interpretations of the passage.

Sweet Shakespeare: Invention in the Sonnets
Darlena Ciraulo, University of Central Missouri

Among Elizabethan contemporaries, Shakespeare's Sonnets enjoyed a reputation for sugary sweetness. The "sugred Sonnets," according to sixteenth-century literary critic Francis Meres, had circulated in manuscript "among private friends" well before their publication in 1609. My essay explores the use of "sugar" and its cognate "sweet" to describe Shakespeare's sonnet-boom poems, placing his work in a larger Tudor/Elizabeth context after the tradition of Petrarch. I'm interested in the notion of sweetness as a metaphor for poetic invention based in an economy of exchange and appropriation, resonating with the New World sugar trade.

Shakespeare's Essay
Jonas Gardsby, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

Not a play, a sonnet, or a long narrative poem, Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle" falls into the smallest category of his surviving works. While typically referred to simply as a poem, its primary generic context is the literary essay. After Francis Bacon's 1597 *Essayes*, many other English writers took up this new literary genre, including some early adopters who approached the essay as a verse form. I argue that Shakespeare is one such writer, and that examining his contribution to *Poeticall Essaies* (1601) in light of this trend sheds light on Shakespeare's understanding of the genre.

Shakespeare's 'Bad Poetry': Remembering the Past and Poetics in *A Lover's Complaint*
Rebecca Helfer, University of California Irvine

Only a very good poet could write like a bad one and make it clear that he's doing so, a trick that Shakespeare pulls off with ease with *A Lover's Complaint* (1609). With this complaint, a twice-told tale about a fallen maid's seduction and destruction, Shakespeare does his best

impersonation of a so-called “drab” poet in what amounts to a witty parody of late medieval poetry: he resuscitates a largely medieval genre, writes it in the rhyme royal of Chaucer’s lesser imitators, and ultimately mocks the moral of his own story. But why? One answer, I’ll suggest, can be found in Shakespeare’s art of memory, by which he draws attention to both his remembrance and renovation of the past and poetics.

**Gentle and Ungentle Competitors:
Daniel and Shakespeare as Rival Poets
Steven Monte, College of Staten Island, CUNY**

With a glance at “the rival poet” in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, this paper explores artistic competition in the poetry of Samuel Daniel and William Shakespeare. Daniel and Shakespeare not only influenced each other’s poetry over decades; they were rivals in the literary marketplace who allude to artistic competition in their work. Besides examining examples of allusion and response in their poetry (especially in their sonnets, complaints, and plays about Cleopatra), the paper focuses on the socio-economic dimension of the competition—how, for both authors, social status and poetic status are intertwined.

**The “stretchéd meter of an antique song”:
Hearing Classical Time in Shakespeare’s Sonnets
Joseph M. Ortiz, University of Texas at El Paso**

Critical studies of the classicizing turn in English Renaissance prosody do not typically dwell on Shakespeare. While poets like Thomas Campion openly experimented with classical quantitative meters in English, Shakespeare seems not to have been interested in recovering this aspect of classical poetry. This paper suggests, however, that at times Shakespeare is *very* interested in the possibility of scripting quantifiable time in his poetry. Passages in *Richard II* and *Hamlet*, for example, test the capacity of printed English verse to record measurable silence. Yet it is the sonnets, especially those about “antique songs,” that most evoke the sound of classical meter and attempt to translate it into English. At these moments Shakespeare acknowledges the humanist attempt to reanimate the sound of classical poetry while also suggesting its futility.

**Blackness in the Sonnet
Stephanie Pietros
College of Mount Saint Vincent**

In February 2023 (Black History Month), poet Patricia Smith edited the Poem-a-Day selections for the Academy of American Poets, commissioning 28 new sonnets from black writers. The sonnet has a long tradition among African American poets, and two book-length studies on the subject have appeared relatively recently. While of course the origins of the sonnet in fourteenth-century Italy and Shakespeare’s influence on the form are well-known among Americanists, I will be putting contemporary sonnets by writers such as Lucille Clifton, Terrance Hayes, Marilyn Nelson, Evie Shockley, and others in conversation with Shakespeare’s

sonnets to the dark lady to consider how the sonnet tradition evaluates and reevaluates blackness.

**Shakespeare's Arabic Sonnets?
Robert Stagg, Oxford University**

This paper will set Shakespeare's sonnets in a new, or much older, context: that of medieval Arabic verse, which may have given rise to sonnet form in early thirteenth century Sicily. What difference would it make to see Shakespeare's sonnets as having an Arabic lyric history?

***A Lover's Complaint* Against Shakespeare's *Sonnets*:
Context for that Complaining, Nameless, Female Lover
Kay Stanton, California State University, Fullerton**

Though some critics have briefly noted correspondences between the main figures in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and *A Lover's Complaint*, originally published together, this paper shows how these works dialogue in previously unidentified and mutually illuminative ways. The male friend/beloved of the *Sonnets* closely resembles the male seducer of the unnamed female lover, but she has characteristics of each of the *Sonnets*' major characters: the young man, the "dark lady," and the persona-"I" himself. The narrative poem provides the *Sonnets* with a "double[d] voice," "reword[ing]" their "plaintful story" from "a sist'ring vale" (*Complaint* 1-3), thereby pleading for female sexual and poetic equality.

**'If editors would courageously alter the gender of the pronouns...': Richard Barnfield's
chequered welcome
Will Tosh, Shakespeare's Globe**

The reception of Richard Barnfield's poetry offers a revealing counterpart to the story of the acknowledgement – or otherwise – of the queerness in Shakespeare's sonnets and lyric verse. This paper traces the pearl-clutching and controversy that attended Barnfield's sporadic return to scholarly attention in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and suggests that his frequent re-consignment to obscurity can be explained by the attempt to maintain a cordon sanitaire of hetero-eroticism around Shakespeare – the more valuable cultural asset.

**The Lyrical Adaptations of *Much Ado About Nothing*
Chloe Wheatley, Trinity College Hartford**

What critical concerns are we reflecting when we define Beatrice's speech in 3.1.113-123 of *Much Ado About Nothing* as a truncated sonnet? This paper considers Beatrice's speech as a text within three contexts: as part of *Much Ado*'s "combinatory practices," (as Patrick Cheney terms this play's mingling of sonneteering and theater); as a reflection of the variable affordances of different types of stanzaic "proportion" (which Elizabeth Scott-Baumann and Ben Burton have explored); and as a moment of jagged lyrical intensification that is treated variably in contemporary film adaptations.