

ESRA 2027

Shakespeare and Form: 'To set a form upon desired change'

27-30 July 2027
Bangor University, Wales
Pontio Arts Centre, Bangor, Wales

Call for Seminar Papers
Deadline: 4th December 2026

Reminder to seminar applicants:

- a) ESRA 2027 has been advertised from the outset **as an In-Person ONLY event**. You should keep this in mind when considering all events at ESRA 2027.
- b) In order to participate in an ESRA 2027 seminar you must register for ESRA 2027, when the latter's website becomes live for bookings in autumn 2026. Seminar convenors must also be members of ESRA. Membership is free and to become a member, you just need to send a message to [europeanshakespeare@gmail.com](mailto: europeanshakespeare@gmail.com). We are also happy to welcome seminar participants among our membership.
- c) If you wish to apply to join a seminar, all ESRA 2027 delegates are **strongly advised** to participate only in **ONE** seminar. Given the very large number of seminars, panels and roundtables at ESRA 2027, it is inevitable that there will be programme clashes. You should keep seminar organizers updated with any changes in your circumstances and remember that seminars will be running simultaneously in the ESRA 2027 programme.
- d) **All** seminar correspondence should be addressed in the first instance to seminar organizers and **NOT** to the conference organizing committee. Contact details for each seminar are to be found at the end of each seminar entry in the list which follows.

With thanks and best wishes
ESRA 2027 Organizing Committee



Seminar 1: Experimental Performances of Shakespeare

Convenors:

Francesca Rayner, *Universidade do Minho, Portugal*

Veronika Schandl, *PPKE-BTK, Hungary*

The *Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance* (2017), edited by James C. Bulman, opens with a section on Experimental Shakespeare. The chapters included in the section are diverse, ranging from a re-examination of realist aesthetics and the changing status of women directors to Shakespeare performed by prisoners of war. Susan Bennett's chapter is the only one that deals explicitly with experimental Shakespeare. She argues that the adjective 'experimental' has become 'anything but precise' (14) and details three phases of what might be called experimental Shakespeare. The first links the aftermath of Jan Kott's vision of a contemporary Shakespeare with the theatre work of Peter Brook. The second deals with non-Anglophone Shakespeare and, in particular, Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* (2012-). The final section focuses on the Globe's original practices remit with its all-male casts and original pronunciation productions. Bennett's scepticism around the links between the experimental, astute international marketing and a need to attract new audiences for Shakespeare make her conclusions about experimental Shakespeare pessimistic in relation to an earlier (unspecified) period of innovation and creativity. She concludes 'While ideas of an experimental Shakespeare over these last forty years have been an engine of extraordinary change on both analytical page and interpretive stage, it may well be time to mark the experimental's limits' (25).

This seminar suggests Bennett's conclusion is unnecessarily pessimistic. Whether large or small-scale, in a theatre or a found space, with diverse interpellations of spectators, experimental Shakespeare has reiterated the importance of a politics of form in challenging capitalist economics, political censorship and incentives to produce Safe Shakespeare. While experiment is part of many creative processes, there is often a point where experiment ends and choices about the final performance take precedence. Yet experimental practitioners have sought to make the creative process visible in performance, recast hierarchical and precarious working practices, and continued to experiment beyond the first night.

This seminar aims to examine the role of experiment in performances of Shakespeare before, during and beyond public performance. From the site-specific and technologically mediated 2012 *Coriolanus* by National Theatre Wales to Christiane Jatahy's immersive *The Moving Forest* (2015), practitioners have experimented with alternative notions of text, corporeality and audience relationships in order to change perceptions of politics, theatre and Shakespeare. Sometimes labelled alternative or avant-garde theatre, experimental performances of Shakespeare assume multiple forms, tend to eschew finality and avoid methodological nationalisms. Etymologically, experiment comes from the Latin *experiri*, meaning to try out or test, but it is also connected with ideas of experience that imagine the experimental as sensual, pragmatic, formal and embodied. More provocatively, the experimental has been cast by performer and author André e. Teodósio as 'the impossible made real' (43). We welcome papers on experimental

practices, people and places in Shakespearean performance which address aspects of performing Shakespeare, including, (but not limited to):

Experiments with form

Experiments with casting

Experiments with audiences

Experimentation vs. canonicity

Digital experiments

Intercultural experiments

Experiments with language

Experiments with location

Failed experiments

Experimental theatre theory

Eco-critical experiments

References

Susan Bennett (2017), 'Experimental Shakespeare' in James C. Bulman (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, (OUP)

André e. Teodósio (2025), *Um Outro Teatro: Histórias do Teatro Experimental em Portugal* [*Another Theatre: Histories of the Experimental in Portugal*], (Lisboa: Sistema Solar)

All expressions of interest in this seminar should be addressed to

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Seminar 2: Intersections of Tragedy

Convenors:

Naomi Conn Liebler, *Montclair St. University, USA*

Paul Innes, *United Arab Emirates University, UAE*

Is tragedy an ineluctably social form or a set of conventions that inhere deeply within the individual? Aristotle's discussion is obviously of great importance, especially when it comes to conceptualising *hamartia* and the role of the protagonist as situated on what Alan Sinfield so usefully conceived as a cultural faultline, together with the ritualistic scapegoating of the tragic protagonist. Is this compatible with psychological inwardness and coherence, often easily stereotyped as character motivation?

Should Shakespeare's tragic characters be treated as real people? Were his plays much more Aristotelian in conception, where structure mattered far more than any characterisation? Or were they more "modern", perhaps prefiguring the concerns of later periods, as has been claimed for him so often, by writers such as Harold Bloom? Or, indeed, have they changed across the centuries, from one to the other as their critical and cultural reception has changed? Papers might include an awareness that Shakespeare's plays are equally foreign to contemporary Anglophone cultures just as much as they are to Global audiences. Constant adaptation is the keynote here and it pertains at least as much to the requirements of performance as to dramatic criticism. How can innovative productions keep performance fresh given the weight of theatrical tradition that inevitably accompanies the announcement of another version of one Shakespeare's tragedies? How can the plays be made to seem somehow still recognisably Shakespearean, while also offering possible critiques of contemporary social practices and injustices – and how "localised" should such productions be?

In other words, how do definitions of the human, the social and the generic come into play? Shape matters, in terms of physical appearance as well as the shape of a tragedy – is *Richard III* a history play or a tragedy, for example? Is "tragedy" a genre "constructed" by or constructing culturally perceived attributes and therefore "written" to meet certain expectations?

Accordingly, this seminar invites contributions that discuss Shakespearean tragedy in terms of genre; gender; race and ethnicity; social rank; religion; and the intersections between them. Other aspects related to tragedy are also welcome. The intention is to explore the relationship between the plays as produced for their own culture and what they might mean for us now as dramatizations of social power and its limits. Word limit should be around 2500-3000 for purposes of the seminar.

All expressions of interest in this seminar should be addressed to

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Seminar 3: 'Forming Practice, Practicing Form': Early Modern European Drama in Practice and Research

Convenors:

Ben Blyth, *University of Calgary, Canada*

Ollie Jones, *University of York, UK*

This seminar considers how forms of early modern European drama (its performance conventions, spaces, objects and gestures) were and are produced and transformed through practice. Building upon an emerging set of interdisciplinary questions around embodiment and performance, the session interrogates how we conceive of, articulate, and (re)produce early modern theatrical practices today. What are contemporary experiments in historical performance made of, and from? And in what ways are they being practiced, staged, reconstructed, and reimaged across Europe?

Considerable attention has been given to Shakespeare, his theatres and companies, and (to a modest extent) his English contemporaries in this field, especially within Anglophone scholarship; we are keen to invite consideration of European dramatists and performance cultures which might helpfully cross-pollinate these research areas. What might be learnt, directly or indirectly, through the parallel consideration of, for example, Spanish Golden Age drama, Italian *commedia* traditions, Dutch dramatists such as Vondel or Bredero, or the French Corneille or Molière. We invite papers from scholars and practitioners working in a broad range of fields, touching on topics such as embodiment, process, practice, materiality, space, archaeology, architecture, spectatorship, and skill, among others. Contributions might, for example, address a particular playing convention or performance space; examine the methods by which historical practice is recovered or activated; consider the part played by objects, bodies or audiences in making form; or explore the appropriation of early modern practice in contemporary European performance. Papers on methodological horizons are also welcome, and we particularly invite contributions to consider historical performance practices across a wide range of disciplines and traditions.

This seminar is convened as a space for shared enquiry rather than a showcase of conclusions, and aims to open a sustained, interdisciplinary and international dialogue about what early modern theatrical practice is made of, and how it lives, across Europe today.

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Seminar 4: Shakespeare Bioadaptations: Forms of Life Stories

Convenors:

Deborah Cartmell, *De Montfort University, UK*

Coen Heijes, *University of Groningen, Netherlands*

Peter J. Smith, *Nottingham Trent University, UK*

In a world increasingly threatened by advances in artificial intelligence, the 'biographical turn' in Shakespeare studies is more welcome and urgent than ever in its mission to humanise the dramatist. The seminar will explore a range of forms from Shakespeare's own life writing to the vast array of global depictions of the playwright in films, documentaries, portraits, figurines, tourist trails, and other experiences. Under the heading of 'bioadaptations' the seminar will consider how breaking down formal boundaries can shed new light on the ever-expanding representations of Shakespeare's life. We welcome papers on topics such as Shakespeare himself as life writer as well as Shakespeare and:

- Biofiction
- Bioplays
- Biographies
- Documentaries
- Biopics
- Portraiture
- Newspapers, magazines, popular media
- Material objects, such as figurines, board and video games, stationery and toys
- Field trips, residencies, heritage trails and other experiences
- Pedagogy

**All expressions of interest in this seminar
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Seminar 5: Economic Change and the Forms of Shakespearean Drama

Convenors:

Jesús López-Peláez Casellas, *Universidad de Jaén, Spain*

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, *Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal*

Jonathan P. A. Sell, *Universidad de Alcalá, Spain*

This seminar invites papers exploring the relationship between economic transformation in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England and the evolving forms of Shakespearean drama. The Elizabethan and Jacobean periods witnessed profound economic changes that reshaped English society. Population growth, inflation, enclosures, debasement, usury and money-lending for profit, the expansion of domestic and international trade, the emergence of new commercial institutions, and the increasing importance of wage labour all contributed to the gradual transition from a predominantly feudal economy toward a more market-oriented society, while debates intensified over value, exchange, property, new trust-based payment instruments, and credit.

These developments provided not only some of the material context for theatrical production but also new ways of understanding social and economic relations. The so-called New Economic Criticism has reconnected Shakespeare's drama with the economic conditions that shape and are shaped by it. Linda Woodbridge (ed.), *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism* (2003), David Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory* (2015) and Anne Enderwitz, *Economies of Early Modern Drama: Shakespeare, Jonson, and Middleton* (2023) have examined specific economic concepts such as prudence, credit, and self-interest and shown how plot and character relations reflect and problematize such emergent notions as the instability of value or the emergence of capital. But, with few exceptions like Bradley D. Ryner's *Performing Economic Thought: English Drama and Mercantile Writing, 1600–1642* (2014), there has been little attention to dramatic form itself as a means and mode of reproducing economic realities and producing economic knowledge.

By placing Shakespeare's dramatic form centre-stage, this seminar aims to start a conversation about how it is impacted by the "very age and body of the [economic] time his form and pressure" (*Hamlet*, 3.2) and how it engenders, embodies or produces new conceptualisations of economic reality. To that end, the seminar invites papers addressing, but by no means limited to, such questions as:

- How did the economic transformations of Elizabethan and Jacobean England influence the formal properties of Shakespearean drama?
- Were shifts in economic theory and practice linked to developments in plot structure, genre and the dramatic or theatrical representation of space and time?
- Did formal experimentation, rupture or hybridity register tensions between older social forms and new commercial realities and respond to changing economic conditions?

- Did Shakespeare's dramatic form shape early modern and later, even contemporary, perceptions and understandings of economic realities?
- Can Shakespearean dramatic form be understood in terms of Marx's distinction ("Capital and Class", 1867) between "natural" form and "social" form?
- How might Shakespeare's dramatic form relate to Marc Shell's (*The Economy of Literature*, 1978) and New Economic Criticism central thesis that economics is constitutive of literature?

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Seminar 6: Subverting subgenres – reframing drama

Convenors:

Imke Lichterfeld, *Rheinische Friedrichs-Wilhelms Universität (University of Bonn), Germany*

Oana-Alis Zaharia, *Universitatea din București (University of Bucharest), Romania*

The literary engagement with dramatic subgenres reveals tensions: In the First Folio, Shakespeare's plays are divided into comedies, tragedies, and histories but the quarto editions had already defied set categorisations. Dramatic forms can be subject to critical reflection. In his 1916 study on "Freedom and Form", Cassirer claims that the path to freedom leads through the concept of form. While for many critics dramatic categories have assumed "the status of natural, not arbitrary, entities" (Howard 2012), these generic distinctions can become problematic. Recent scholarship emphasizes fluidity, hybridity, and the role of performance and reception in constructing generic meaning. Genre emerges as an effect of staging, embodiment, audience expectation, and medial transformation: adaptations and performances can transgress generic form. The framing of any staging of a play may deviate from conventions by recategorization through semantic shifts and stylistic experiments, e.g. *Macbeth* as satire, *Richard III* as farce, *Henry IV* as ghost story with a tragic Falstaff; *King Lear* becomes light-hearted, *Twelfth Night* a bittersweet lesson, *Pericles* a documentary on current politics, or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* an eco-tragedy.

Scholarship that might provoke discussion include Guneratne, *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies* (2011) which foregrounds the interplay between early modern genre theory and contemporary performance, media, and global adaptations, Howard on "Shakespeare and Genre" (in Kastan 2012), or Knapp, *Shakespeare High and Low: Character, Audience, Career* (2025). Oakley-Brown, *Shakespeare on the Ecological Surface* (2024) focuses on environmental genre reinterpretation. Engaging with adaptation theory (Hutcheon, Sanders, Iyengar) and recent work on performance and media transformation(s), we invite participants to reconsider genre as a dynamic, historically contingent, and performative category.

This seminar will explore dramatic subgenres addressing the transgression of theatre categories and the malleable versatility of Shakespeare's texts. We will focus on how generic conventions are refashioned, revisited, and reworked in different media and performances.

We are seeking paper proposals based on but not limited to the following topics:

- Generic hybridity / limits of classification (comedy, tragedy, history, romance, tragicomedy)
- Genre as performance: embodiment, staging, and audience reception
- Adaptation and medial transformation (stage, film, digital performance)
- Eco-tragedy and environmental performance
- Parody, pastiche, satire, the grotesque / carnivalesque
- Disastrement (disaster & entertainment), melodrama, bathos, tonal instability
- Genre and affect (emotional experience)
- Genre and audience: "high" / "low" forms

- Metadrama and self-reflexivity

The organizers for this seminar request interested ESRA2027 delegates to send abstracts of 200-300 words no later than 4 December 2026. The organizers' aim is to select proposals by 16 December 2026 to allow participants to write their papers in spring to be circulated among the further members of the seminar in the early summer

**All expressions of interest in this seminar
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Seminar 7: Shakespeare and Crime: The Forms of Criminal Narrative

Convenors:

Koel Chatterjee, *Regent College, London, UK*

Kinga Földváy, *Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary*

Peter James argued in *The Guardian* at the time of the 2016 Shakespeare anniversary that “If Shakespeare was writing today, he'd be a crime writer”, while in his paper Jeffrey R. Wilson “suggests that Shakespeare’s plays offer an embryonic version of criminology, and that they remain a valuable resource for the field, both a theoretical and a pedagogical resource” (Shakespeare and Criminology, *Crime, Media, Culture* 2014, Vol. 10(2), 97-114, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659014537655>). Shakespeare's life (that we know of) is moreover, mostly framed by legal documents - marriage licence, contracts, last will - but there is also the legendary deer poaching episode that puts him as a criminal/having form at quite an early age.

This seminar explores crime as a dynamic Shakespearean form rather than simply a recurring dramatic theme. Shakespeare's plays have generated an extraordinary range of criminal narratives that extend far beyond the stage, shaping legal argument, detective fiction, true crime, and biographical crime writing. Together, these afterlives demonstrate how Shakespeare's dramatic structures continue to provide formal models for understanding criminality, guilt, evidence, and justice.

The seminar invites papers that examine the ways in which Shakespearean narratives are reconfigured within different crime genres. Topics might include legal strategies that invoke Shakespeare, such as the so-called “Othello Syndrome defence” in cases involving intimate partner homicide; Shakespeare's role in contemporary true crime, including podcasts, documentaries, and narrative journalism such as *Blood Will Tell*; detective fiction that mobilises Shakespearean clues, quotations, or interpretative methods; and crime biofiction that reimagines Shakespeare, his contemporaries, or his characters within the conventions of mystery and criminal investigation.

Rather than treating these examples as isolated adaptations, the seminar asks how criminal storytelling itself becomes a Shakespearean form. What formal features of Shakespeare's tragedies make them particularly attractive to legal discourse? How do detective fiction and true crime repurpose Shakespeare's methods of concealment, revelation, testimony, and interpretation? In what ways do Shakespearean texts function as evidence, witness, or suspect across different media and genres?

This seminar welcomes contributions from literary studies, legal humanities, adaptation studies, criminology, media studies, performance studies, and digital humanities. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, the session aims to reconsider Shakespeare's relationship to crime not simply as content but as an evolving formal tradition that continues to shape contemporary understandings of investigation, justice, and criminal narrative.

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Seminar 8: Shakespeare Translations and Space: Where Do Dramatic Texts Take Form?

Convenors:

Ingibjörg Þórisdóttir, *University of Iceland, Iceland*

Alicja Kitlasz, *University of Warsaw, Poland*

The aim of the seminar is to explore the ways in which broadly understood space (e.g. geographical, sociological, historical, political and psychological) shapes, or “forms”, Shakespeare translations by anchoring the newly emergent texts in specific settings and environments. We are interested in the impact of various relations and circumstances on the processes of translation, dissemination and appropriation of Shakespeare’s texts, including the long-term reception of translations adapted for new generations of readers and audiences.

We invite papers reflecting on various aspects of space and how they relate to the mediation and introduction of Shakespeare into target cultures. We also wish to explore the human factor in Shakespeare translation, i.e. translators’ relationship with particular spaces, their situatedness and the impact of space on translation practices, strategies and techniques.

We seek to explore the following topics in the context of space:

- Shakespeare translations produced in centres and peripheries, borderlands, liminal and multilingual spaces;
- the role of Shakespeare translations in national awakenings and establishment of national canons;
- Shakespeare translators (translators’ biographies, microhistories);
- translation strategies; transposing Shakespeare for specific media and theatrical spaces;
- cultural transformations and hybridity in translation (adaptation, appropriation, and allusion);
- indirect translations and formal experimentation;
- publication formats and dissemination of Shakespeare translations;
- critical reception of Shakespeare translations;
- Shakespeare translations in digital space.

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Seminar 9: Forms of Shakespeare's Diplomacy

Convenors:

Nathalie Rivère de Carles, *Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès, France*

Helen A. Hopkins, *Birmingham City University, UK*

This seminar investigates Shakespeare's diplomacy as a set of theatrical, political, and cultural forms: embassies, intelligence networks, ceremonial encounters, negotiated speech, translation, performance, heritage display, and later uses of Shakespeare as cultural capital.

It will explore:

- how diplomacy within Early Modern plays depends on forms: letters, reports, oaths, staged audiences, theatrical entertainments, curatorial narratives, and embodied performances of civility or threat
- how drama stages the fragile procedures by which states, courts, and individuals form relations across difference
- how playing companies have performed and/or participated in diplomacy from the early modern era until now (performing for ambassadors, negotiating patronage, censorship, audience reception, and transnational theatrical exchange, operating as cultural intermediaries through international festivals, touring productions, education programmes...)
- formal and informal ambassadorship from early modern times until now, and the models of negotiation generated through varied uses of Shakespeare's works and cultural capital
- how Shakespeare becomes an object of heritage diplomacy: curated through archives, museums, anniversaries, diplomatic/commemorative monuments, exhibitions, festivals, and touring productions that present him as a shared cultural inheritance while often reproducing hierarchies of nation, empire, race, gender, and class
- how plays and institutions produce diplomatic knowledge: teaching audiences to read gestures, decode equivocation, evaluate testimony, and imagine political community beyond national borders

The discussion will move from early modern diplomatic forms to Shakespeare's afterlives in official cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, soft power, and heritage policy. Attention will also be given to deformation: failed negotiations, distorted information, imperial appropriation, and the conversion of cultural prestige (soft power) into political force (as cooperation or coercion).

The wider aim is to reassess "Shakespearean diplomacy" as both an early modern practice of relation-making and a modern instrument whose global circulation may enable conversation, domination, or critique. In this way, we engage with the discourse around the decolonisation of Shakespeare. This process will therefore be treated not as the rejection of Shakespeare, but as a method for interrogating the colonial uses of the "Bard," recovering plural performance traditions, and rethinking heritage as a contested diplomatic space.

By bringing together approaches from literary criticism, theatre history, performance studies, critical heritage studies, gender studies, race studies, and new diplomatic history, the seminar asks whether Shakespearean drama merely reflects diplomatic culture or actively theorises it.

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Seminar 10: Forms of Emergency, Forms of (Legal) Action

Convenors:

Rebecca Lemon, *University of Southern California, USA*

Carolyn Sale, *University of Alberta, Canada*

This seminar explores how Shakespeare's works engage with states of emergency as problems of form – dramatic, rhetorical, political, and legal. From plague closures and food scarcity to rebellion, ecological disorder, and proto-terroristic violence, early modern emergencies are not only represented in Shakespeare but structured through distinctive formal strategies that shape how fictional and actual crises are perceived, managed, and resolved. At the same time, legal responses to crisis, including proclamations, suspensions, exceptions, and acts of judgment, offer competing or overlapping forms that mediate emergency conditions. Bringing these perspectives together, this seminar asks: how does Shakespeare give form to emergency, and how does Shakespeare help us imagine forms of action in relation to emergency conditions now?

We invite participants to consider “form” both as aesthetic configuration and as a mode of action. Emergencies often disrupt inherited forms – of genre, temporality, governance, and embodiment – while also generating new ones. Shakespeare's plays repeatedly stage moments in which normative procedures falter: quarantines in *Romeo and Juliet*, food economies in *Coriolanus*, insurgency and unstable sovereignty in the histories, ecological and political breakdown in *King Lear*, and juridical improvisation in *Measure for Measure*. In such instances, dramatic form intersects with legal form, raising questions about authority, legitimacy, and the limits of rule-bound action under pressure. How might analysis of Shakespeare's representation of such issues let us harness Shakespeare's literary imagination to shape new forms of action now, especially possible legal action?

The seminar will foreground collaborative exchange. We are particularly interested in approaches that bridge literary analysis and legal thought, as well as work that connects early modern crises to contemporary concerns (e.g., climate emergency, public health, states of exception). Possible topics include: the poetics of quarantine and contagion; forms of popular protest; emergency temporality and forms of justice; equity, mercy, juridical discretion, and other legal ideas; the relationship between theatrical form and legal procedure; and the question of what makes for conditions of peace rather than conditions of war.

Convened by scholars working at the intersection of Shakespeare studies and legal humanities, this seminar aims to generate a transnational conversation about how forms of crisis and forms of action co-constitute one another. By situating Shakespeare within longer histories of emergency, governance, and law we seek to illuminate how formal innovation both registers and responds to conditions of instability with an eye to effecting present change.

Proposed convenors:)

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Seminar 11: Performance Forms in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: Commercial Drama, Performance Practices and Theatrical Spaces in Early Modern England

Convenors:

Aurélié Griffin, *Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris, France*

Simon Smith, *Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, UK*

The early modern period was characterised by the coexistence of various performance forms, ranging from public stage-plays to private entertainments. Scholars including Stephen Mullaney (1988), Karen Raber (2001) and Martin Butler (2009) have long emphasised the specificities of commercial drama, closet drama and court masques, whilst others such as Alison Findlay (2006) and Marta Straznicky (2004) have sought to go beyond the public/private divide. In fact, there are many continuities and connections between performance forms. Shakespeare's works illustrate such overlappings because of the diversity of his texts, of his extensive use of metatheatrical forms, and the different venues where his plays were staged, from the inns of court to purpose-built theatres to the royal court and aristocratic homes. Mary Sidney Herbert and Elizabeth Cary wrote drama that was not performed on the commercial stage, but chose to have their plays published, which can be viewed as a form of performance. Even the boundaries between forms were themselves sometimes porous, Henry Herbert licensing *The Sun's Darling* as a play 'in the Nature of a Masque' in 1624, for example. Scholarship now regularly recognises these interrelationships, Clare McManus (2002, 2015), for instance, moving beyond identifying the distinctiveness of female performance to try and uncover the connections between private and public performance, and between forms as diverse as courtly masques and rope-dancing. Even forms such as the ballad which existed as communal informal performance as well as in printed broadside sheets have closer relationships with the theatre than previously known, as Tiffany Stern has recently shown (2026).

This seminar invites papers that explore the connections between commercial drama (by Shakespeare and others), and other performance forms in early modern England. These could include but are not limited to closet and household drama, court masques, royal entertainments, pageants, travelling performers, and broadside ballads.

Possible topics addressed by papers might include:

- The links between commercial and non-commercial drama;
- The diverse ways in which drama, broadside ballads and other literary forms find their way on to the stage;
- How theatrical space defines the form and meaning of a play;
- The validity of categories such as commercial or closet drama to define early modern drama as a whole;
- The connections between gender and performance forms;
- The role of pivotal figures like Shakespeare and Jonson who created plays for select audiences at court and mixed audiences in public theatres.

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Seminar 12: Shakespeare and the Commodity Form

Convenors:

Alessandro Simari, *University of Ottawa, Canada*

Martin Young, *Birkbeck, University of London, UK*

Shakespeare Studies, with its longstanding concern for Shakespeare's dramatic texts as documents of performance, has demonstrated a clear interest in the theatre as a site of economic production and, by implication, a commercial workplace. Yet, within this strain of scholarship, sustained engagement with Marxist analysis of the *commodity form* itself remains comparatively underdeveloped.

In his writing on commodity fetishism in the first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx discusses how things produced for commercial exchange look and behave differently from other products, and how the complexities of the market present us with an illusory and mystifying surface appearance. 'Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities,' Marx asks. 'Clearly from this form itself'. The mysteries of the emergent capitalist society, he suggests, can be uncovered by analysing the commodity as a *social form*, that is, as something which mediates and structures relationships between people.

The Early Modern emergence of the commodity form in Western European society has long interested scholars of Shakespeare's theatre. Natasha Korda's work on "domesticating commodities" (1996) and the collection *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama* (Dowd and Korda, 2011), have broadened the frame beyond consumer culture to encompass the national and transnational networks of trade in which commodities were produced and exchanged. David Hawkes (2001) and Jean-Christophe Agnew (1986) have traced how the abuse of theatre was inseparable from its commodification, that is, the transformation of poetry and performance into market goods. More recently, Gina Bloom (2018) has drawn attention to the historical unfamiliarity of theatre's commodification, noting that audiences had to learn how to approach theatre as a commodity. Elsewhere, in the wider field of performance studies, theatre's relationship to the commodity form has been examined by Boyle (2017) and Blackwell-Pal et al (2021).

This seminar seeks to build on and deepen these lines of inquiry, highlighting the significance of the commodity form for the study of historical and contemporary performances of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and to explore what Marx's *formal* analysis of commodity markets can offer our scholarship.

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Seminar 13: Tragedy, Crisis, and Political Form

Convenors:

Mikkel-Theis Paulsen, *Aarhus University, Denmark*

Daniel Vitkus, *University of California San Diego, USA*

As Terry Eagleton (*Tragedy*, 2020) has argued, tragedy is not a reflection of a timeless or universal human condition, but from its ancient origins an inherently political form and institution that responds to moments of crisis, rupture, and historical transition. Over the centuries, this dramatic form has dealt with affairs of state, sovereignty, tyranny and revolt, and it has centred on elite figures, whose tragic fall has dramatic consequences for society as a whole.

Our own present moment of accelerating and interconnected ‘polycrises’ (a term popularised by Adam Tooze for describing the simultaneity and interaction of distinct political, economic, ecological crises) calls for a renewed reflection on tragic form and its political affordances.

This seminar will examine the dynamic interplay between tragedy, crisis, and political form, asking how moments of rupture or violent transformation – political, ecological, epistemological, etc. – are both represented within and give shape to tragic drama.

Bringing together perspectives from ecocriticism, the new formalism, intellectual and political history, presentism, design theory, genre theory, affect theory, the cultural history of emotions, among other relevant fields, the seminar will explore and contribute to ongoing conversations about the historical and present political potential of (tragic) form in Shakespearean and early modern drama. Papers might focus on historical crises (real or imagined) specific to early modernity, or they might offer a presentist approach, helping us to understand how early modern drama continues to speak to our 21st-century polycrisis.

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Seminar 14: Teaching and Learning Shakespeare

Convenors:

Sarah Olive, *Aston University, UK*

Florence March, *Université de Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France*

The term ‘forms’ has multiple valences in relation to Shakespeare in education. These include the years or stages at which students study his work, especially with reference to secondary schooling. ‘Forms’ may also relate to the media, modes, or genres through which they encounter Shakespeare. Media popularly used include films, performances, and performance films; picturebooks, manga, graphic novels and other multimodal retellings ([Olive 2026](#)); as well as resources from archives to video games, many of which are now digital and participatory. Modes through which Shakespeare is taught include various pedagogies. Literary critical (aka textual) practices, active methods (aka practical methods or drama methods), and (new) historicist or “life-and-times” approaches are dominant ([Elliott and Olive 2023](#)). Teaching might involve a combination of these methods, say, literary critical and active ([March 2023](#)). Widespread activities used in the English classroom also include seated reading with parts around the class and creating scene summaries. In terms of the genres through which students encounter Shakespeare, tragedies tend to dominate for older students. In France, for example, *Romeo and Juliet* is chosen for secondary school students’ first encounter with Shakespeare. While, in the UK, *Macbeth* accounts for a fifth of all Shakespeare teaching at school, with the rest of Bradley’s “big four” – *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* – popular at advanced levels (A-levels) ([Elliott and Olive 2019](#)). Comedies – particularly *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest* – are widely considered fit for first encounters. Major publications concentrate on teaching plays over the sonnets. Another possible ‘form’ to consider is the way in which learning about Shakespeare is, or should be, assessed.

The four possible pathways into this seminar outlined above are not intended to be exclusive. Papers on all educational settings, from all sectors, are welcome. So too the study of Shakespeare in subjects other than (English) literature: language, linguistics, drama, theatre studies, for example. A multitude of influences determines policies and practices for Shakespeare in education: curricula, syllabi, exam board specifications, the contents of store cupboards and libraries among others. Contexts for teaching and learning Shakespeare considered in this seminar could be (inter)national, regional, institutional, departmental, and individual; cultural, political, societal and linguistic. A local example is the complex and contested place of Shakespeare in the curriculum Wales, an education sector in an officially bilingual (Welsh/English) country with a government devolved from Westminster. Wales has long experience of English colonialism, which systemically devalued and minoritised the indigenous language and literature, but also contributed to and benefitted from British imperialism. How should Shakespeare figure in education here? Finally, as AI rapidly becomes ubiquitous in educators’ and students’ lives, participants may wish to update existing consideration of educational technologies in Shakespeare studies.

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Seminar 15: Poetic Form and Imagined Communities

Convenors:

Michael Saenger, *Southwestern University, USA*

Iolanda Plescia, *Sapienza University, Italy*

Ever since Benedict Anderson's celebrated formulation of "imagined communities", the exploration of the early modern nation, both in history and in poetic analysis, has found a fruitful home in early modern studies. Anderson's book was published in 1983, at the height of Reagan's confrontation with the Soviet Union, and though eminently historical, it can also be read as a response to the political environment of his time. In our own moment, the concept of a nation is under a different set of stresses, as supranational organizations are under great stress, and nations search for a sense of positive self-definition amidst rising ultra-nationalism. In this seminar, we welcome considerations of Shakespeare's concept of a nation. Texts might include the history plays, but also the tragedies and indeed the comedies or *The Rape of Lucrece*. Seminararians are invited to consider these texts in the context of current affairs, and works of Shakespeare's contemporaries are also welcome. Politics other than the modern 'nation' are also welcome, such as empire, the city, the tribe, or the ethnic group. The central question we pose is, what form do these imagined communities take?

From this central question, many others proceed. What metaphor relationships, such as the body politic, are key to their conceptualization? What happens when communities collide or overlap? Are they symmetrical or not? What communities seemed like models for England, and what communities are cast as dystopias? What roles do birth, habitation and race play in citizenship? What does it mean for entities to be open or closed? What poetic and dramatic forms are used to understand these communities? How might communities resembling nations be implied or alluded to, as in the case of the Muscovites in *Love's Labour's Lost*? How do confessional identities give colour to a nation onstage? If a nation is in an internal war, must one side be true and the other false? How do individual characters experience internal conflicts of nationhood, or external journeys between polities? What sort of centres and peripheries define these communities? Are some groups of people particularly 'formless'? What questions do imagined border nations ask, and what answers can be found? Consideration is invited of London, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Britain, France, Rome, Venice, Athens, Naples, Milan, Troy, Morocco, and Spain, as well as any variety of community offered in the work of Shakespeare or his contemporaries.

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Seminar 16: Dance(d) Forms: Shakespeare and Dance

Convenors:

Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau, *Sorbonne Université, France*

Mattia Mantellato, *University of Enna Kore, Italy*

As an art form grounded in embodiment, movement and visual/geometrical composition, dance offers a particularly rich framework through which to interrogate the notion of “form”. In dance, form may refer to style and technique (classical ballet, contemporary dance, jazz, physical theatre), to national and aesthetic traditions (French, Russian, Danish, American schools), to the shaping of the body in motion, or to the spatial and collective configurations produced by choreography. Form also concerns the structure and format of performance itself: full-length narrative ballets, short choreographic works, dance theatre, dance film, immersive and site-specific performances all generate different modes of adaptation and spectatorship. Dance continuously negotiates questions of corporeality, temporality, memory and presence.

This seminar invites participants to explore how Shakespeare has been continuously reimaged through choreographic and dance(d) forms across cultures, media and performance traditions. Rather than approaching dance as a simple non-verbal translation of dramatic texts, the seminar seeks to investigate how it transforms Shakespearean dramatic structures, affective rhythms, spatial relations and embodied narratives. Shakespearean dance adaptations frequently challenge the primacy of textuality itself, foregrounding gesture, movement, music and corporeal presence as alternative modes of interpretation and storytelling.

This seminar welcomes contributions engaging with adaptation, intermediality and performance theory. From narrative ballet to postdramatic performance, digital dance and dance film, Shakespeare continues to generate new embodied forms that renegotiate the relationship between text, body and spectatorship.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- formal innovations in Shakespeare-inspired choreography;
- narrative and abstract dance adaptations;
- historical and transhistorical perspectives on dance(d) forms;
- Shakespeare in ballet, contemporary dance, dance theatre, and other dance(d) forms;
- intercultural and transcultural choreographic practices;
- gendered and queer embodiments of Shakespeare;
- dance film and digital Shakespeare;
- historical dance forms and archival reconstruction;
- site-specific and immersive performances;
- corporeality, memory and affect in Shakespearean dance;
- notions of defying, conforming, bending, changing form(s);
- inclusive and disability-led choreographic approaches.

By foregrounding the intersections between dramatic and choreographic *form*, the seminar aims to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue between Shakespeare studies, dance scholarship and performance theory, while exploring how dance continues to reinvent Shakespeare for contemporary audiences and global performance cultures.

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Seminar 17: Temporal Extensions, Sequels and Prequels Morphing the Shakespearean

Convenors:

Annamária FÁBIÁN, *Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest*

Márta MINIER, *University of South Wales, Cardiff*

This seminar investigates the formal implications of extending Shakespeare's dramatic universes backward and forward through time. While adaptation studies frequently examine how early modern plays are translated across media, cultures or political contexts, relatively less critical attention has been paid to how prequels and sequels structurally alter Shakespearean form. By exploring what we call "shaquels" – sequels and prequels to Shakespeare, creative and critical continuations of the plays preceding or following the plotline (partly or wholly) – this seminar studies how writers, directors and fans manipulate the temporal boundaries, generic constraints and character trajectories of the Shakespearean corpus. In doing so, we treat the Shakespearean text not as a closed aesthetic monument, but as an open, mutating framework that actively invites re-formation and structural expansion.

When a text is granted a prequel or a sequel, its internal form is retroactively transformed. "Shaquels" urge us to propose questions like: where does the formal boundary of a Shakespearean play begin and end? How do these temporal extensions disrupt or reverse early modern dramatic architecture, such as five-act structures, linear plotting or character containment? How do specific cultures shape the Shakespearean narrative arcs and character trajectories within the "shaquels"?

We invite scholars and practitioners to explore the aesthetic, political and pedagogical dimensions of these expanded universes across theatre, literature, film, television, digital media and beyond. We welcome diverse theoretical and methodological approaches – including reception history, fan studies, creative practices, pedagogical takes, nation/culture specific inquiries – engaging with, but by no means limited to, the following thematic areas:

- The structural anatomy of the "shaquel": how sequels and prequels reframe the generic forms of Shakespearean comedy, history and tragedy.
- Prequels as tools of historical or political revision, uncovering marginalized voices left out of the original exposition.
- The textual and performative aspects of long-form "Shakespearean" continuations (e.g., historical tetralogies vs. modern serialized spin-offs).
- The relationship between early modern practices of collaborative revision and modern corporate or fan-driven franchise expansion.

By analyzing how these texts are formed and reformed across time, this seminar aims to map the emerging formal boundaries and the potential in the "temporally extended" Shakespearean canon.

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Seminar 18: Crossing the form(at) divide: Shakespeare and comics

Convenors:

Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska, *University of Łódź*

Ronan Paterson, *emeritus, Teeside University UK*

In recent years, the boundaries between the theatrical stage and the comic book page have collapsed, sparking a vibrant cross-disciplinary dialogue on how Shakespeare is visually and spatially re-formed. As evidenced by a greater number of academic publications (Casey and Christopher 2024; Myklebost 2025), panels and seminars organised at conferences, alongside new titles and adaptations regularly created by comic artists. Taking into account the multitude of titles, creators, approaches, including the entire history and tradition of adapting Shakespeare's plays, poems, and biography into comics – interest in topic is burgeoning. The proposed seminar aims to build upon the discussion initiated during a panel on Shakespeare and comics that took place at the ESRA conference in Porto in 2025. Building on the groundwork laid there for studying Shakespeare, manga, and comics, this seminar seeks to bring together scholars and practitioners interested in the subject matter. We invite participants to explore the concepts of form, form(at), and (trans)forming in relation to Shakespeare and graphic narratives. These concepts revolve around the notion of translating (or rather transforming) a literary text into a visual medium, and also them manner in which the material format - whether a graphic novel, a webcomic scroll, or a localized manga volume - reconfigures audience engagement and cultural capital.

Potential topics for papers include, but are not limited to:

- Regional adaptations of Shakespeare in comics
- Intersemiotic adaptations and translation strategies for graphic narratives
- Adaptations of sonnets and poems into graphic narratives and graphic depictions
- Biographical comics focusing on Shakespeare or his contemporaries,
- Generic transformations and hybridity of Shakespeare comics
- The suitability of formal comic elements (e.g., panelling, gutter, lettering) for Shakespearean adaptations
- Shakespeare in cartoons and comic strips
- Silent and wordless Shakespeare comics
- Adaptation of Shakespeare in manga, manhwa, manhwa

All expressions of interest in this seminar should be addressed to:

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Seminar 19: “The Concord of Well-Tuned Sounds”: Shakespeare, Music, and Form

Convenors:

Michelle Assay, *University of Toronto, Canada*

Alina Bottez, *University of Bucharest, Romania*

David Fanning, *University of Manchester, UK*

Music in Shakespeare is never merely decorative. It structures affect, shapes performance, orders social relations, and mediates between harmony and disruption. This seminar explores the intersections between Shakespeare, music, and form. If form may be understood as that which gives shape, coherence, and intelligibility to artistic expression, music offers one of the most powerful ways of conceptualising form in both Shakespeare’s works and their musical and transmedial afterlives. At the same time, musical adaptation frequently reshapes, fragments, or deforms Shakespearean structures, revealing how historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts continually refashion Shakespeare through sound and performance.

This seminar invites contributions that consider music as a formal and structural principle in Shakespearean drama, poetry, and performance culture, as well as studies of Shakespeare’s afterlife in musical forms and genres. We are particularly interested in how musical structures—rhythm, harmony, repetition, variation, ornamentation, fragmentation, improvisation, virtuosity, or silence—inform Shakespearean form, and how Shakespeare in turn has inspired and transformed musical composition across periods, media, and traditions. We also welcome papers that explore how Shakespearean forms are altered in musical adaptation: how drama becomes opera, symphony, musical theatre, film score, or popular song; how Shakespearean characters and narratives are reshaped through changing aesthetic and ideological contexts; and how music can both preserve and destabilise Shakespearean form.

This seminar also seeks to situate Shakespeare within the broader musical culture of the early modern period. Marking the 400th anniversary of the death of John Dowland, we welcome papers engaging with Shakespeare’s contemporary musical milieu. We are likewise interested in scholarship that considers the symbolic and material forms of musical instruments in Shakespeare’s texts, including the ways instrumental shapes, sounds, and uses function as cultural, theatrical, and affective signifiers.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Music as ornament, excess, or fragmentation in Shakespeare
- Musical temporality and dramatic form as applied to Shakespeare
- Song forms and lyric structures in Shakespearean drama
- The materiality and symbolism of musical instruments in Shakespeare’s works
- Genres and forms of Shakespeare-inspired music
- Opera, symphonic, choral, popular, or experimental adaptations of Shakespeare
- Formal analysis of Shakespeare-inspired musical works

- Harmony, dissonance, and political order in Shakespeare
- Adaptation, deformation, and remediation of Shakespeare through music
- Form and structure in music contemporaneous with Shakespeare

We invite papers from a broad range of disciplinary and methodological approaches, including literary studies, musicology, theatre and performance studies, adaptation studies, sound and media studies, and history of emotions.

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Seminar 20: ‘Their form confounded, makes most form in mirth’: Trust and Risk in Shakespeare’s Dramatic Form

Convenors:

Alison Findlay, *Lancaster University, UK*

Vassiliki Markidou, *University of Athens, Greece*

Helen Wilcox, *Bangor University, UK*

In the 2025 essay collection, *Early Modern Bonds of Trust: From Shakespeare to Milton* (ed. Joseph Sterrett et al, Arden Studies in Early Modern Drama), the literary functions and expressions of the inter-related concepts of trust and risk were explored in a variety of early modern genres, including drama, poetry, polemic and life-writing. In this seminar, we intend to continue the discussion raised by the book by focussing specifically on the ways in which dramatic form interacts with questions of trust and risk in Shakespeare’s work. Ideas of risk – in plot, speech, belief, love, community, and drama itself – are present across the range of Shakespearean drama, as are the importance, and not infrequent absence, of trust between characters and within institutions. How do these issues relate to dramatic form, as tested and explored in text and performance? We might suggest, for example, that risk is entailed in the very essence of comedy and tragicomedy, while trust, distrust and betrayal are central concepts in Shakespeare’s histories and tragedies. How do these inter-relations of trust, risk and form play out in practice?

The following are some (but by no means all) possible issues to be explored in relation to Shakespeare’s use of dramatic form:

- Personal trust, vulnerability and risk
- Relational trust and its abuse
- Trust and risk in institutions
- Prudent risk-taking
- Dissemblance, manipulation and risk
- Gendered landscapes of trust and intimacy
- Religious trust and risk
- The politics and economics of risk
- The destruction and reconfiguration of trust
- Dramatic trust and the risks of performance

The convenors welcome contributions from scholars working on any play or plays in Shakespeare’s oeuvre; approaches to the topic may be taken across as well as within genres. Above all, the aim of the seminar is to tease out the complexities of Shakespearean dramatic form in relation to ideas of trust and risk. Participants will be asked to submit an outline of their contribution in advance, in a short research statement of not more than 1000 words. Those interested in contributing to the seminar are invited to be adventurous – even risk-taking – in their arguments, and to trust in the promise of a lively discussion.

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Seminar 21: 'This green plot shall be our stage': Shakespeare and theatrical form(s)

Convenors:

Janet Clare, *University of Bristol, UK*

Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Université de Picardie, France*

It is a commonplace that Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed in forms of theatre and performance spaces very different from those in which the plays are now regularly produced. Replicas of the material forms of the Globe and the Blackfriars aim to resuscitate the Elizabethan playhouse and recapture something of the forever lost experience of watching the plays in their first venues. At the same time practitioners working in such reconstructions resist any idea of the replica as theatre museum and introduce anachronism as a mode of interpretation, stimulating the audience to think the play afresh. Globally the plays have been performed in myriad forms of theatre, from national theatres with all their scenic accoutrements and stage machinery to small studio theatres to improvised spaces in parks and gardens, from overfilled to bare stage: 'A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged', Peter Brook famously claimed in 1968, a year marked by political and cultural change. The search for new acting spaces can be linked with the quest for new modes of relation with the audience.

This seminar aims to explore the inter-relationships between theatrical, dramatic, and ideological forms. Past and present forms of theatre available for the performance of Shakespeare can be seen to stimulate and constrain production and interpretation. We are interested in how theatre practitioners pushed back against the form of the theatre in use to overcome its restraints (be they spatial, technical, or by confounding expectations of audiences). The seminar invites reflections on historical moments of theatrical innovation, such as the first attempts to revolutionize bourgeois drama by rejecting the excessive use of scenery (Craig, Appia, Meyerhold), as well as present-day formal experimentation across around the world. The overarching question is what is lost and what is discovered in Shakespeare through the theatrical form of the play's enactment?

Papers might address, although not exclusively the following topics:

- Space and audience
- Experimental forms
- Historic moments of rupture
- Replicating the Globe and the Blackfriars
- Dramaturgy and theatrical form
- The initiation of new theatrical form
- Cross-cultural theatrical forms
- Hybrid form: use of video in stage performance

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Seminar 22: Form, Genre, Performance

Convenors:

Elena Pellone, *Artistic Facilitator: Venice Shakespeare Company & Anarkē Shakespeare*

David Schalkwyk, *Emeritus Professor at Queen Mary University of London, UK*

This seminar will open discussion about the nature and form of Shakespeare's narrative poems (*The Rape of Lucrece*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Lover's Complaint* and the *Phoenix and the Turtle*) and their possible relation to performance. Shakespeare's epyllions were clearly published for reading, generally assumed to have been written during the closure of the theatres, their popularity with a reading public attested to multiple published editions and the generally accepted view that in writing them Shakespeare sought to establish himself as a poet rather than a common player or 'bending author'. There is no evidence that they were meant to be performed or of performances during Shakespeare's lifetime. Governed by a single narrative voice, they appear, in form and genre, to offer little opportunity for dialogical interaction of 'persons' as in the theatre.

This seminar will be devoted to an inquiry into the possibilities and desirability of performing Shakespeare's narrative poetry. It is open to accounts of actual performances, but also to a discussion of what performance to an audience might bring to the words on the page of these texts. To what extent might the narrative voice approach that of a character, how might performance offer the dynamics of character interaction, and how might it release a dramatic form of heteroglossia suppressed by a purely textual form?

The seminar will engage with a performance of *Venus and Adonis* by Elena Pellone on one of the evenings of the conference, following on from her acclaimed performances of *The Rape of Lucrece* in Europe, the USA, the UK and Hong Kong, including at the ESRA Conference in Porto, Portugal in 2025.

All expressions of interest in this seminar should be addressed to:

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Seminar 23: “Do you not know I am a woman?” Women Embodying Shakespeare’s Male Characters

Convenors:

Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Emory University, USA*

Natalia Khomenko, *York University, Canada*

Jasmine Seymour, *Chair: Armenian Shakespeare Association, Armenia*

In considering cross-gender performance of Shakespearean drama, numerous studies have explored the tradition of boys taking on female parts on early modern public stages. In contrast, relatively little attention has been given to women embodying male characters in post-Renaissance performances and adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays. Much of the existing discussion – including Tony Howard’s seminal *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction* (2007) and the 2025 BSA panel on the Prince of Denmark in non-binary performance – has centered on women performers grappling with Hamlet.

Opening the conversation to expand beyond Hamlet, this seminar aims to consider the interpretive, dramatic, and appropriative possibilities opened up when male characters of early modern plays are embodied by/through/as women. More broadly, it asks how charting histories of female cross-gender performance, adaptation, and appropriation might revise and enrich our understanding of Shakespeare’s role in the building of modern culture. The contributors might consider, among other directions:

- Shakespearean characters framed as male or gender-fluid in the play-text, but with a long history of being imagined and played as female (such as Ariel),
- women embodying traditionally male characters, especially those associated with the exercise of patriarchal or military authority in Shakespeare’s plays (such as King Lear, Prospero, Richard III, Othello),
- affordances and limitations of gender-neutral casting, in the context of women playing male characters,
- re-gendering of male characters in adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays across genres and media, including fan fiction, animated film, and social media,
- women referencing or being perceived as one of Shakespeare’s male characters as part of their social or political persona (starting with Elizabeth I’s anecdotal identification with Richard II, and including Margaret Thatcher invoking Polonius’s authority as a prudent court advisor in her speeches),
- women playing Shakespeare’s men in amateur performance and community theatre,
- gender-bending performance of male characters in modern productions of non-Shakespearean English early modern drama,
- challenges of interpretation and reception for female actors performing male roles in non-English cultural and political contexts,
- gender-bending Shakespeare’s male characters in global adaptation, appropriation, and performance.

Applicants should submit abstracts (max. 300 words) and short bios (ca. 150 words).

All expressions of interest in this seminar should be addressed to:

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