

Tragicomic Experiments on the Early Modern Stage

Syllabus

organisation

Let's get this out of the way: I am definitely keeping my fingers crossed for a term with in-person instruction, but like the preceding two years (two years... how?) summer term 2022 will be yet another experiment in pandemic pedagogics – albeit one where we *will* meet on campus again. It is also my first term at the University of Bonn, so please bear with me!

To make sure that our seminar feels safe for everyone, including those from vulnerable groups, with small children, or with other caring responsibilities, I would be grateful if you wore a mask on a voluntary basis (I will, too). While I have planned this class assuming that we will meet in an actual seminar room at the IAAK, we will switch to Zoom if the pandemic situation changes for the worse. As you will see, I have scheduled 2 asynchronous weeks in which you can work at your own pace to help you get used to in-person university again.

Please keep in touch with me and (more importantly, perhaps) with your fellow students, and let me and the other course members know if something does not work for you or if you have different ideas about how to do things. Let's do this together!

class:

- **Monday**, 18:15-19:45 (room 1.004 – Übungsraum A)

The seminar will combine in-person sessions with a number of asynchronous weeks which allow you to work at your own pace (see schedule & tasks below).

contact:

- **office:** IAAK 2.007
- **e-mail:**
- **office hours:** Tuesday, 12:00-14:00
- **twitter:** @susannegruss (I might tweet about this seminar using #TragicomicExp but will make sure not to post detailed info about class discussions or anything that could give away personal information and would ask you to do the same should you post about the seminar on social media.)

resources:

- **eCampus:**

e-mail and Zoom etiquette:

- **e-mail:**

Please give me some time to answer your **e-mails** (up to 4 working days). I will not write e-mails after 8pm or on weekends.

As I teach different classes, please make sure that the class you are taking with me appears somewhere in the subject or the body of your e-mail.

- In case we have to go online again, some words about **Zoom:**

Please **mute yourself** if you are not talking. If you feel uncomfortable talking into the camera (or if you have connection issues), feel free to use the **chat** to contribute to class discussions.

I would kindly ask everyone to turn on their **camera** when we zoom. Yes, staring at yourself onscreen can be cringeworthy, but if Zoom is supposed to create a seminar experience, being able to see each other's faces and nonverbal communication just makes everything so much easier (for me *and* you). Imagine trying to keep a discussion going while staring into a void of black rectangles!

Most of us will zoom from our **private spaces** – this means that my kids might make an appearance at some point (sorry). Zoom bombing family members, flatmates or pets are always welcome!

Like in-person sessions, Zoom meetings should be a **safe space** for everyone. Recording (parts of) sessions or taking (and posting) screenshots is an absolute no-go. All material shared onscreen will be made available to you on eCampus.

- I am not exempt from the occasional **technical blip** – please be patient if I freeze and simply wait for a couple of minutes. Like the terminator, I will be back, promised.



course description & mandatory reading:

Please note that this class is part of the MA Compulsory Module **The Renaissance in England** – you need to attend it in combination with **“Playing Indoors: From Boy Actors to Candlelit Tragedy”** to complete the module.

course description:

Tragicomedy – situated, as the term implies, somewhere in between tragedy and comedy – has puzzled English critics since its origin in the late sixteenth century. At the same time, tragicomedy has repeatedly been called the most popular genre of the Jacobean age. In John Fletcher’s famous definition (which we will discuss in class in more detail), he points out that “tragie-comedie is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie.” In this course, we will read a variety of tragicomedies, dating from the late Elizabethan to the Jacobean period, and use these plays to look into the development of the genre as well as these plays’ dependence on early modern discourses such as the law, gender (witchcraft, love), politics (especially the status of the ruler), religion, piracy, and intercultural contact. This course will also offer you a more coherent glimpse at the early modern stage as we will take into account Shakespeare as well as his contemporaries.

reading (in order of discussion in class):

- William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* [Arden edition or any other *critical* edition of the play – please do not buy the Reclam version]
- John Marston, *The Malcontent*
- Francis Beaumont & John Fletcher, *Philaster, or Love Lies A-Bleeding*
- Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*
- Philip Massinger, *The Renegado*

recommended reading:

- Subha Mukherji & Raphael Lyne (eds), *Early Modern Tragicomedy* (2007)
- additional material will be uploaded on eCampus

Leistungsnachweis:

- Apart from preparing **mandatory reading**, all participants are expected to attend **regularly** (i.e. please do not miss class more than twice) and take part **actively** in class discussions/group works/reading responses.
- For **asynchronous sessions**, I have indicated the tasks I expect you to cover over the week in the schedule below. This should not take more time than the 90-minute course slot (plus the time you would normally take to read/prepare for class).
- *Studienleistung*: pass three of four **quizzes** on the texts (to be written during class, based exclusively on knowledge of the texts)
- *Prüfungsleistung*: **term paper** (ca. 7,000 words)

If you need to write a term paper for this course, please make sure you take part actively in the asynchronous session on term papers (see schedule).

Developing a topic **independently** and coming up with a suitable **thesis** is part of your assignment. Please talk to me/chat with me as soon as possible – I will not accept & grade your term paper if I have not talked to you about your topic.



Schedule

 mandatory reading / study
 background reading (optional)

- 01** 11.04.22 **organisation**
 tools (Flinga, Padlet)
 brainstorming: the early modern period (from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean stage),
 early modern genres (comedy, tragedy)
 to read / to do: /
 tasks: /
- 18.04.22 **no class** (Easter Monday)
- 02** 25.04.22 **tragicomedy**
 early modern genre – an introduction
 to read / to do:
 R. Lyne & S. Mukherji, “Introduction” (1-14) 
 J. T. Shawcross, “Tragicomedy as Genre, Past and Present” (13-32) 
 tasks:
 prep for class: Read the articles and take notes. What did you know about tragicomedy before – and which aspects were new?
- 03** 02.05.22 **William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1603) 1**
 quiz 1 – introduction – disguise 1
 to read / to do:
 read the play! 
 V. A. Foster, from “(3) Shakespearean Tragicomedy”: “*Measure for Measure*: The Duke’s Problem Play versus Shakespeare’s Tragicomedy” (53-64) 
 tasks:
 prep for class: Look up Shakespeare’s ‘problem plays’ – and think about why the (quite outdated) term is problematic.
 reading prompts: Read the play with a focus on the meaning of disguise [for today] and the role of the ruler / of absolutism [for next week].
- 04** 09.05.22 **William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1603) 2**
 the ruler & society – James I
 to read / to do:
 James I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598/1616) 
 C. A. Bernthal, “Staging Justice: James I & the Trial Scenes of *Measure for Measure*” (247-269) 
 tasks:
 prep for class: Brush up your knowledge on the divine right of kings/absolutism & take some notes when reading James’s text.
 reading prompt: How does James position the ruler in relation to his subjects?



- 05 16.05.22 **John Marston, *The Malcontent* (1603) 1**
asynch. introduction – generic expectations
- to read / to do:
- read the play! 📖
 - N. C. Leonard, “Embracing the ‘Mongrel’: John Marston’s *the Malcontent*, *Antonio and Mellida*, and the Development of English Early Modern Tragicomedy” (60-87) 📄
- tasks:
- reading prompts:** Watch out for generic cues (comedy, revenge tragedy, tragicomedy) while reading the play [for today] and read the play with a focus on the duke in disguise [for next week].
 - Use Flinga 1 (link on eCampus) to post your reading response.
 - Watch my short video (link on eCampus) for generic cues in the induction & the play’s paratexts..
 - Use Flinga 2 (link on eCampus) to collect generic cues in the play – quotes, scenes, character constellations, etc.
- 06 23.05.22 **John Marston, *The Malcontent* (1603) 2**
 inventing tragicomedy – disguise 2
- to read / to do:
- L. Munro, “(3) ‘Grief, and joy, so suddenly commixt’: Company Politics and the Development of Tragicomedy” (96-133) – read the passages on Marston 📖
 - K. A. Quarmby, “*The Malcontent*: A Play in Two Forms” (61-101) 📄
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Compare *Measure for Measure* and *The Malcontent* in terms of their use of the duke-in-disguise trope and genre.
- 07 30.05.22 **F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher, *Philaster* (c.1608-10) 1**
 quiz 2 – introduction – Fletcherian tragicomedy
- to read / to do:
- read the play! 📖
 - C. Henze, “Francis Beaumont & John Fletcher’s Tragicomedy as Musical Melodrama” (149-64) 📄
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Quick research tasks: look up Fletcher’s career and the *Beaumont and Fletcher Folio(s)*.
 - reading prompts:** Try to keep an eye on what an audience not (yet) familiar with tragicomedy would have experienced/expected while reading the play [for today] and how gender, sexuality, and cross-dressing are staged [for next session].
- 06.06.22 **no class** (Pentecost break)



- 08 13.06.22 **F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher, *Philaster* (c.1608-10) 2**
cross-dressing and identity
- to read / to do:
- C. Varnado, "Getting Used, and Liking It: Erotic Instrumentality in *Philaster*" (25-52) 
 - M. H. Loughlin, "Cross-Dressing and the Politics of Dismemberment in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Philaster*" (23-44) 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Brush up your knowledge on boy actors [cross-check with our Playing Indoors class discussions!].
- 09 20.06.22 **Thomas Middleton, *The Witch* (c.1613-16) 1**
quiz 3 – introduction – (court) scandal
- to read / to do:
- read the play! 
 - A. Lancashire, "*The Witch*: Stage Flop or Political Mistake?" (161-181) 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Quickly google Middleton's career (and his more recent status as 'the other Shakespeare').
 - reading prompts:** Focus on the way the different social classes (esp. the aristocracy) are depicted [for today] and on the depiction of witchcraft [for next week].
- 10 27.06.22 **Thomas Middleton, *The Witch* (c.1613-16) 2**
asynch.
early modern witchcraft
term paper dos and don'ts [see also this week's tasks in Playing Indoors!]
- to read / to do:
- J. Sharpe, "(2) Elite Perspectives on Witchcraft: Demonology, the Law and Educated Culture" (14-31) 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** If you have not done so yet, think about a term paper **topic**.
 - Use the Flinga (link on eCampus) to collaborate on a list of term paper dos and don'ts (I will add my own as well).
 - Use the class Padlet (link on eCampus) to collaborate on witchcraft in Middleton's play: what is the cultural status of witches & how does Middleton make use of it? Bonus: other early modern witchcraft plays!
- 11 04.07.22 **Philip Massinger, *The Renegado* (1624) 1**
quiz 4 – introduction – early modern piracy
- to read / to do:
- read the play! 
 - C. Jowitt, "Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624) and the Spanish Marriage" (45-53) 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Look up definitions for (early modern) pirates, corsairs, privateers, and renegades.
 - reading prompts:** Focus on the way piracy/corsairing is depicted [for today] and on the depiction of gender & religion [for next week].



12 11.07.22

Philip Massinger, *The Renegado* (1624) 2

gender & conversion

round-up & open questions

to read / to do:

- J. J. Hayden, "The 'Turk' and the Female Body in Massinger's *The Renegado*" (349-361) 
- T. J. Wei, "Polemical Tropes of Captivity in Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*" (33-42) 

tasks:

- prep for class Flick through your seminar notes – what are your main takeaways?

Literature

primary literature

- Beaumont, Francis, and John Fletcher. *Philaster: Or, Love Lies A-Bleeding*. Ed. Andrew Gurr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. [Revels Plays]
- James I and VI. "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies." *Political Writings*. Ed. Johann P. Sommerville. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 52–84.
- Marston, John. *The Malcontent*. Edited by George K. Hunter. Revels Student Editions. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

- Massinger, Philip. *The Renegado, Or, the Gentleman of Venice*. Ed. Michael Neill. London: Bloomsbury, 2010. [Arden Early Modern Drama]
- Middleton, Thomas. *The Witch*. Ed. Marion O'Connor. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Eds Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 1129-1164.
- Shakespeare, William. *Measure For Measure*. Ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Robert N. Watson. London: Bloomsbury, 2020. [Arden Shakespeare]

secondary literature

- Berthel, Craig A. "Staging Justice: James I and the Trial Scenes of *Measure for Measure*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 32.2 (1992): 247-69.
- Foster, Verna A. *The Name and Nature of Tragicomedy*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
- Hayden, Judi J. 2013. "'Turkish Dames' and 'English Mastiffs': The 'Turk' and the Female Body in Massinger's *The Renegado*." *The Seventeenth Century* 28.4: 349-361.
- Henze, Catherine. "Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's Tragicomedy as Musical Melodrama." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*. Ed. Ton Hoenselaars. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 149-164.
- Jowitt, Claire. "Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624) and the Spanish Marriage." *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 65.1 (2004): 45-53.
- Lancashire, Anne. "The Witch: Stage Flop or Political Mistake?" "Accompanying the players": *Essays Celebrating Thomas Middleton, 1580-1980*. Ed. Kenneth Friedenreich. New York: AMS, 1983. 161-181.
- Leonard, Nathaniel C. "Embracing the 'Mongrel': John Marston's *the Malcontent*, *Antonio and Mellida*, and the Development of English Early Modern Tragicomedy." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 12.3 (2012): 60-87.
- Loughlin, Marie H. "Cross-Dressing and the Politics of Dismemberment in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Philaster*." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 21.2 (1997): 23-44.
- Lyne, Raphael and Subha Mukherji. "Introduction." *Early Modern Tragicomedy*. Eds. Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007. 1-14.
- Maguire, Nancy Klein, ed. *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*. New York: AMS Press, 1987.
- McMullan, Gordon and Jonathan Hope. "Introduction: The Politics of Tragicomedy, 1610-50." *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*. Eds. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope. London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992. 1-20.
- Munro, Lucy. *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Quarby, Kevin A. *The Disguised Ruler in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012.
- Sharpe, James. *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001.
- Shawcross, John T. "Tragicomedy as Genre, Past and Present." *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*. Ed. Nancy Klein Maguire. New York: AMS Press, 1987. 13-32.
- Varnado, Christine. "Getting Used, and Liking It: Erotic Instrumentality in *Philaster*." *Renaissance Drama* 44.1 (2016): 25-52.
- Wei, Teresa J. 2009. "Polemical Tropes of Captivity in Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*." *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 75.1: 33-42.

