***Gender, Power, and Politics on the Early Modern (and Modern) Stage***

Professor Marion Wells

ENAM/GSFS 419

T/TH 11-12:15

AXN 104

In this class we will explore the representation of gendered embodiment on the early modern stage, considering as we do so how theatrical embodiment intersects with other treatments of the body in early modern culture. We will read both early modern and contemporary theoretical accounts of gender as performance, investigating among other issues the use of boy actors, the representation of specifically “female” disorders (e.g., “suffocation” or hysteria), the performance of maternity, and the treatment of same-sex eroticism. Of particular importance will be the representation of the articulate or angry woman as the “shrew” or “scold,” and we will begin the class with an investigation of so-called “shrew-taming” narratives. Primary readings will include: Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew and The Winter’s Tale, Webster’s Duchess of Malfi, and Cavendish’s Convent of Pleasure. We will end the semester by examining the complex nexus of gender, race, and power in contemporary political and popular culture, focusing in particular on the representation of Hillary Clinton, Anita Hill, Michelle Obama, and Christine Blasey Ford, with commentary by Rebecca Traister, Brittney Cooper, and Lindy West.

Editions of all these plays are available through the online college bookstore. In general, I’m not concerned about which particular edition you use, as long as it is complete and unabridged. You may also photocopy plays from other editions if you prefer. An asterisk\* indicates that the reading will be posted to our class webpage, which you can access through sites.middlebury.com.

***Course Requirements***

**Papers**. You will write one long paper for this class (around 12-15 pages). This paper may be *either* a comparative research paper focusing on two of the plays we have read, or a hybrid paper that includes personal narrative in relation to one or more of the plays and critical essays. A shorter critical paper (6-8 pages) will be due mid-way through the semester, and you will have the option of using the research for this paper in your longer paper. The final paper should include some secondary research, including theoretical and critical treatment of our central themes as well as articles focused on these plays.

**Presentations**. Presentations will occur during the last two weeks of class. In groups of 2 or 3, you will choose a topic that fits with the day’s reading (e.g., “Hating Hillary”), and relate it creatively to the themes and readings we have done in the class. Your presentations should include:

\*Detailed discussion of a particular passage from the reading/segment of video.

\*Some reference to, or critical discussion of, an additional reading for that day.

\*Discussion of how this topic illuminates/revises/continues/illustrates themes that emerged from our readings in the early modern texts.

\*Bring in something your group found in the news or on a digital platform that you thought engaged usefully with your topic.

\*Questions for the class.

**Blog Posts**. For one class per week I would like you to choose ONE passage that seems especially striking, central, strange, illustrative of major themes, etc., and write a brief informal post about it. The post is equivalent to a short online response paper—we can all benefit from observations that come up in these before class, and also use them during class discussion. It is also my hope that you will develop a portfolio of blog responses that may come in useful for your papers. The post must be submitted by 9 PM the evening before *either* the Tuesday or Thursday class. Please note it is NOT possible to submit late blog posts, because the point really is to do them before class discussion, not afterwards. Blogs that fulfill the requirement and are submitted on time will automatically get full credit.

**Grade breakdown**:

First paper: 25 %

Class participation (including presentation and responses): 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Blog: 15%

Sept 10: Introduction

***The Woman’s Tongue: Bridling and Taming the Scold***

Sept 12: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

From Mary Beard, *Women and Power*: “The Public Voice of Women”

Sept 17: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”\*

Carson, “The Gender of Sound”\*

Sept 19: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Joannes Bramis*, “A Merry jest of a shrewde and curste wife, lapped in morrelles skin”* \*

Boose, “Bridling Scolds” \*

Sept 24: Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Finish up

Film clips

***Anxious Masculinity: Then and Now***

Sept 26: Fletcher, *Tamer Tamed*

Robert Cleaver, extracts from *Godly Form of Household Government*\*

Thomas Laqueur, from “Making Sex”\*

Oct 1: Fletcher, *Tamer Tamed*

Excerpt from Mark Breitenberg, “Anxious Masculinity”\*

Excerpt from podcast, *This American Life*, Episode 46, Act 2, “Instructions for Sissies”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/male-trump-voters-masculinity/503741/>

Oct 3: Fletcher, Tamer Tamed

Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed”\*

***The Maternal/Witchy Body: Patriarchal Territories Enclosed***

Oct 8: Shakespeare, The Winter’s Tale

Schalkwyk, “A Lady’s ‘Verily’ is as Potent as a Lord’s”

Oct 10: Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

From Sedgwick, *Between Men\**

Oct 15: Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

Oct 17 Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*

Extract from Sady Doyle, *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers*

*Oct 18 PAPER ONE DUE*

Oct 22 FALL BREAK

Oct 24 Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

An Homily of the State of Matrimony\*

*The infortunate mariage of a Gentleman, called Antonio Bologna wyth the Duchesse of Malfi, and the pitifull death of them both*, from Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure\**

Oct 29: Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

Jankowksi, “Defining/Confining the Duchess”\*

Oct 31 Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

Nov 5: Dekker, et al., *The Witch of Edmonton*

Deborah Willis, from *Malevolent Nurture* \*

Nov 7: Dekker, et al, *The Witch of Edmonton*

*\**from King James I, *Demonology, In Form of a Dialogue*

\**An Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits*

Nov 12: Dekker, et al, *The Witch of Edmonton*

From Paster, *The Body Embarrassed\**

***Challenging the White Masculine Stage: Then and Now***

Nov 14: Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure*

Nov 19: Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*

Katherine Kellett, “Performance, Performativity, and Identity in Margaret Cavendish’s Convent of Pleasure”\*

Nov 21:Rebecca Traister, from *Good and Mad*, “Hold Your Temper/Hold Your Tongue”;

From Mary Beard, *Women and Power*: “Women in Power”

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, “Medusa”

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary”

Nov 26: Traister, “The Circle of Entrapment”; “Minority Rules”

From Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/t-magazine/michelle-obama-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-gloria-steinem-letter.html>

Brittney Cooper, from *Eloquent Rage*: “Strong Female Leads”

Nov 28: **Thanksgiving Break**

Dec 3: Traister, “Getting Away with It: Harvey”

Traister, “Sympathy for the Devils”

Lindy West, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/opinion/columnists/weinstein-harassment-witchunt.html>

Lindy West, “Brave Enough to be Angry”

Dec 5: Brittney Cooper on Kavanagh Hearings, from “Now this Election” (video link)

NYT (text and video): “Brett Kavanagh and Christine Blasey Ford Duel with Tears and Fury”

Time: “Myth of Nice Girls and Tough Guys” (video and text)

FINAL PAPER DUE

**Selection of Relevant Texts on EEBO:**

Robert Cleaver: *A Godly Form of Household Government* (1603)

Helkiah Crooke: *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (1615)

William Gouge: *Of Domestical Duties: Eight Treatises* (1622)

James Guillemeau: *Childbirth, Or the Happy Deliverie of Women* (1635)

Edward Jorden: *A Brief Discourse of the Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603)

William Perkins: *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1631)

Reginald Scot: *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584)

Jane Sharp: *The Midwives Book* (1671)

Philip Stubbes: *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583)

Henry Swinburne, *Treatise of Spousals* (1591)

Juan Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1523)

William Whately: A Bride-Bush, or A Wedding Sermon (1617)