

## From the Editor

This fifth volume of the *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference* features five of the most accomplished essays of our 2012 conference, “Extreme(ly) Shakespeare(an).” Dr. Joseph Sullivan, OVSC president and 2012 Conference Chair, organized the October 18-20 meeting at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio. The Marietta College Departments of English and Theatre, as well as the college’s Office of Academic Affairs, generously supported the conference; the meeting’s success is due in large part to the efforts of Tim Catalano, Janet Bland, Jeff Cordell, Andy Felt, Gama Perucci, Mark Miller, Angie Stevens, and Alyssa McGrath.

The conference served as a venue for papers exploring the notion of extremes in Shakespeare’s work, and the first essay in this volume embodies this mission on multiple levels. What if, Byron Nelson asks, instead of concluding the grouping known as the “problem plays,” *All’s Well That Ends Well* could be seen as marking the beginning of Shakespeare’s final phase of work? His essay “Helena and ‘the Rarest Argument of Wonder’: *All’s Well That Ends Well* and the Romance Genre” shows how, once the plays are realigned, “The thematic motifs consistent with the late romances suddenly seem apparent: the plot of *All’s Well* begins where *Pericles* ends, with a long-suffering maiden healing a sick monarch; it ends where *The Winter’s Tale* begins, with a pregnant wife.” In this light, Nelson argues, “Helena seems to have more in common with the plucky, put-upon heroines of the romances, like Marina and Imogen, than she does with the otherworldly Isabella.”

Kirk Hendershott-Kraetzer’s essay, “A Hot Mess: Knowing Juliet through Accidental Encounters in Popular Culture,” tracks the often unexpected echoes of Juliet in television dramas to show how the medium reflects changes in her character’s cultural resonances. Hendershott-Kraetzer surveys eight different television characters described as “Juliets”; these surprising manifestations then become the essay’s basis for outlining the qualities that have made their way into popular conceptions of the iconic character. Today’s scholars may tend to see the Shakespearean Juliet as manipulative, Hendershott-Kraetzer writes, yet it is nonetheless “startling [to see] how far some of the TV Juliets will go in their attempts to manipulate others and the social

systems in which they are embedded—to say nothing of the damage they wreak as a result of their choices.” His essay shows how those qualities mix with the more traditional image of a sweet, star-crossed Juliet in the associations that the character’s name conjures for students and internet commentators alike.

Next, in “Jean-François Ducis: Re-Creating Shakespeare for an Eighteenth-Century Audience,” Amy Drake considers Ducis’s modifications to *Macbeth* as he revised it for the Parisian stage. Eighteenth-century France, she argues, “provided an especially auspicious time for Ducis to introduce his Shakespearean adaptations, because audiences were open to experiencing new forms of theater.” Ducis may be unknown to many Shakespeare scholars, yet this essay shows that his work has influenced drama well beyond his native France. Looking at the plays in the context of the French revolution—and the cultural preferences in heroism it came to inspire—Drake explores *Macbeth*’s metamorphosis into a redeemable character. In the process, Drake considers Ducis’s presentation of Lady Macbeth, whose transformation into Frédégonde gives her a mythic aura and unrepentant manner that proved meaningful to the era’s audiences. Drake’s exploration considers French theatergoing habits to reveal how Shakespeare’s works took on a different life on the other side of the English Channel.

A second distinctive performance venue—the wrestling cage—provides the backdrop for Aaron Hubbard’s essay, “When Words Defile Things: Homoerotic Desire and Extreme Depictions of Masculinity in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* and Mixed Martial Arts.” There, Hubbard reads the battleground hostility of *Coriolanus* alongside the relationships fostered between fighters in the newly-popular sport of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). Hubbard’s essay shows that both the play and MMA construct the male body as a site of unspoken desire, and that the aggression of combat provides a culturally protected mode of expressing fantasies of penetration. Calling upon the vocabulary of MMA to unpack the obsessive rivalry between Coriolanus and Aufidius, Hubbard shows how *Coriolanus* mirrors modern ideas of masculine friendship forged through violence. Both *Coriolanus* and MMA fighters “distrust language because they think it lacks the clarity of a fight,” Hubbard argues. “It is not that fighters are or are not homosexual,” he explains, “but that

homoeroticism is built into the action of the fight, just as it is built into the dramatic structure of *Coriolanus*, only to then be actively suppressed and denied.”

In “Extremes of Gender and Power: Sycorax’s Absence in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*,” Brittney Blystone examines Prospero’s verbal representation of Sycorax in the drama’s opening. Noting that Caliban’s mother never appears on stage, Blystone shows how Prospero’s descriptions of Sycorax shape the ways Ariel and Caliban—not to mention audience members—envision her character. Prospero’s words make clear that “Sycorax symbolizes all of his negative assumptions about women; therefore, he constructs her sexuality in ways that oppose his patriarchal views on virginity.” As Blystone argues, Caliban realizes Prospero’s lingering worries about the female power Sycorax represents, calling on her to strengthen his claims to the island. The emphasis that Prospero and Ferdinand place on Miranda’s chastity provides a vivid counterpoint to Sycorax’s enigmatic but nonetheless condemned pregnancy.

Without Joseph Sullivan’s dedication to the OVSC, neither this issue nor the 2012 conference would have ever materialized. The members of the editorial board once again offered dedicated service and thoughtful input to this collection, as did Co-Editor Gabriel Rieger, whose commitment to the journal has been much appreciated.

This issue has benefited enormously from the work of Assistant Editor Kevin Kane, whose patience, good humor, and relentless attention to detail somehow lasted through the entire publication process. Edmund Taft and Marlia Fontaine-Weisse provided an invaluable infrastructure for the journal; without their earlier work, this issue would have been impossible. For a second year, Kenny Cruse came to the rescue on technical matters too numerous to mention. Richard Wisneski’s ingenuity made the issue’s cover possible, and Thea Ledendecker provided much-needed moral support. The University of Akron Department of English graciously sponsored our efforts as well—something much appreciated in times when projects like this one often go underfunded. And, lastly, I would like to thank all those who contributed their work for consideration for publication in this issue. Without their generosity and faith in our efforts, this volume could never have come into existence.