

*The Theatre
in History:
The Social Function
of Renaissance
Dramatic Genres*

A Humanities
Institute

Summer 1992

Sponsored by
The Folger Institute
Center for
Shakespeare Studies

Supported by a
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for the Humanities

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The Social Function of Renaissance Dramatic Genres

A Humanities Institute

8 June — 17 July 1992

Directed by Jean E. Howard
(Columbia University)

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DIRECTOR

JEAN E. HOWARD, Professor of English at Columbia University, is the author of *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response* (1984) and co-editor, with Marion O'Connor, of *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology* (1987). She has recently completed *Discourse of the Theatre: The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* and is at work with Phyllis Rackin on a feminist study of the English history play.

PARTICIPATING FACULTY

SUSAN AMUSSEN, a social historian and feminist scholar who teaches at Union Institute Graduate School, is the author of *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (1988). She is at work on two books: a synthetic history of women in early modern England and a study of the meanings of violence in early modern culture.

FRANCES E. DOLAN is Assistant Professor of English at Miami University. She is currently completing *Dangerous Familiars: Popular Accounts of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700*. Her essays on early modern constructions of women's subjectivity have appeared or are forthcoming in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, *PMLA*, *SEL*, and *The Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*.

KATHLEEN McLUSKIE, Senior Lecturer in English and Drama at the University of Kent in Canterbury, is the author of *Renaissance Dramatists* (1989) for the Harvester Feminist Readings Series and co-author (with Lois Potter, Gerald Bentley, and Philip Edwards) of *The Revels History of Drama in England*, Volume IV (1981). She is writing a book on Dekker, Heywood, and the commercialization of culture in early modern England.

LENA COWEN ORLIN, Executive Director of the Folger Institute, is completing a study of conceptualizations of domestic life in the Renaissance, *Private Matters in Post-Reformation England*. She has written articles on domestic tragedy and political thought and is co-editor (with Gervase Jackson-Stops, Gordon J. Schochet, and Elizabeth McDougall) of *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House* (1989).

GAIL KERN PASTER, Professor of English at George Washington University, has written *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (1985) and many essays on early modern English drama. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1990 to complete *The Body Embarrassed: Early Modern Drama in England and the Disciplines of Shame*. She is currently working on an edition of Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* for the Revels Plays.

DON E. WAYNE, Associate Professor of Literature and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of California at San Diego, is the author of *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (1984) and of numerous articles on Renaissance literature, recently including essays on Jonson and Sidney, and on critical theory, especially new historicism. He is completing a book on Ben Jonson and the emergent ideology of modernity.

ELIGIBILITY

Enrollment in "The Theatre in History" will be largely limited to those eligible to receive N.E.H. support to attend. A few places may be available for independent scholars and for faculty members from colleges and universities outside the United States who are able to participate without stipend support; they are accordingly welcome to apply to attend.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Fifteen participants will be selected to receive support that will include (1) a stipend of \$1,500, (2) an allowance for travel to and lodging in Washington (it is expected that reasonable expenses will be fully reimbursed), and (3) a contribution to food expenses. The following persons are ineligible for N.E.H. support: graduate students, secondary-school teachers, unaffiliated scholars, and teachers in institutions outside the United States (although non-citizens with permanent teaching appointments in U.S. institutions of higher learning are eligible). Anyone who has taken part in an N.E.H. humanities institute or summer seminar in the last two years will be given lower priority in consideration. Those applicants who are eligible for N.E.H. support will automatically be considered for it.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

1 March 1992. For application forms, write The Folger Institute, The Folger Shakespeare Library, 201 East Capitol Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Or telephone (202) 544-4600.

The Theatre in History:



How does one account for the fact that certain dramatic genres flourish in particular time periods and not in others? What historically specific needs does a given genre fulfill? What social, economic, and political tensions does it articulate and address?

What genres first emerged during Shakespeare's years as a playwright, and how did they contribute to or build upon their development?

"The Theatre in History" will investigate these issues by focusing on the late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century emergence of two theatrical subgenres: domestic tragedy and city comedy. Participants will ask why these dramatic "kinds" flourished when they did and will consider the social conflicts embodied in and managed by them.

A central goal of the institute will be to make use of the new methods that anthropologists, literary critics, and historians have developed for examining the place of dramatic texts and the institution of the theatre in the commercial, symbolic, and political life of early modern England. Consequently, readings will include works of social and economic history as well as theoretical pieces on the social function of generic forms and the role of ideology in social change and cultural reproduction.

Many of the sessions will be devoted to using these resources to read and critique two sets of dramatic texts. For domestic tragedy, participants will address the class and gender tensions mediated through this genre, its handling of householding and domestic space as factors in the engendering of possessiveness, and its preoccupation with female criminality. Included will be such plays as *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *Arden of Feversham*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *Othello*. For city comedy, participants will look at the genre's focus on the commercialization of every aspect of social life, including sexuality, and at the way the representation of urban life helps to create new forms of subjectivity, desire, and embodied being. Included will be such plays as *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, *The Honest Whore*, and *Measure for Measure*.

Throughout the institute, participants will be encouraged to define their own sets of interests within the general framework established and to consider how the methods and texts discussed can be used in undergraduate teaching as well as in research projects.

THE Folger INSTITUTE

The Folger Institute is a center for advanced study and research in the humanities that is sponsored by the Folger Shakespeare Library and a consortium of twenty-eight universities. With additional support from such agencies as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, the Exxon Education Foundation, and the Hillsdale Fund, the Institute offers a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural program of seminars, workshops, symposia, colloquia, and lectures. Founded in 1970, the Institute has more recently established a Center for the History of British Political Thought and a Center for Shakespeare Studies.

The Folger Shakespeare Library, located two blocks from the nation's Capitol and across the street from the Library of Congress, holds the largest collection of English Renaissance books outside the British Isles, as well as extensive collections in the English seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the Continental Renaissance, and in English and American theatre history from their beginnings to the twentieth century. The Folger is also the world's foremost repository of archival materials on Shakespeare, with an incomparable collection, not only of Shakespeare First Folios and quartos, but also of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century editions, translations, critical and scholarly works, and theatrical materials ranging from programs and playbills to promptbooks, diaries, costumes, and scene designs. The Library also holds major films on Shakespeare, as well as paintings, prints, and music related to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan period.

Chair: Barbara Mowat

Executive Director: Lena Cowen Orlin

Program Assistants: Carol Brobeck and Ivy Gilbert

Administrative Assistant: Jessica Hymowitz