

*Early modern tragicomedy was an international genre, originally emanating from the particular alchemy of theory and practice that distinguished sixteenth-century Italian humanist drama, and in large part sustained by the professional companies whose zenith in Italy closely corresponded to Shakespeare's lifetime.*

Most of the essays in this book bear some resemblance to papers presented there, and it was as a result of that conference that we recognised the need for a book such as this. The other speakers at the conference deserve many thanks for making it such a stimulating event: We are grateful to those who came to listen, especially Rebecca Beale, Tania Demetriou, and Douglas Paine, who were generous with their time and their help. The conference would not have happened without the encouragement provided by Pippa Berry at an early stage. The financial support of the Judith E. Wilson Fund in the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge, and the help of many people at Fitzwilliam College, are gratefully acknowledged. Since the conference, the contributors to this collection have shown stamina and patience, and an impressive ability to work to sudden and impossible deadlines. She has published articles on Shakespeare and Dryden and is currently working on a book which examines the reception of Greek tragedy in early modern England. He works mainly on early modern Spanish literature, particularly theatre. His research areas include gender, nation and religion, and he is currently working on concepts of Iberian nationality in the early modern period and in modern representations of the past. He is the author of several books and articles relating to seventeenth-century France. He is the author of *Pastoral Transformations: The recipient of fellowships from Villa I Tatti, Fulbright, and NEH, he is now working on a book-length study of representations of poverty in Italian early modern drama. A musician, theatre director and dramaturg, her books include The Works of Richard Edwards: He has edited or co-edited three collections of essays, including, most recently, Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England co-edited with David Matthews , forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. His monograph, Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing, will be published, again by Cambridge, in She is currently working on the poetics of doubt in early modern literature. Her other related interests include law, epistemology, the place of " and representations of the heart and its passions in the Renaissance, and John Ford. Lucy Munro is a lecturer in English at Keele University. She is author of Between Spenser and Swift: English Writing in Seventeenthcentury Ireland Cambridge, as well as a number of articles on drama, history-writing, republicanism and Irish writing in the early modern period. Matthew Treherne is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Leeds. He is the author of Culture of Accidents: Children and Fiction in the English Renaissance forthcoming with Cornell, In their error I would not have you fall, least you incur their censure. This much I hope will serve to justify my Poeme, and make you understand it, to teach you more for nothing, I do not know that I am in conscience bound. Its theatrical audience had not been won over by its version of the latest trends in Italian pastoral drama, so this is an attempt to answer their objections. As a brief rejoinder to some basic incomprehensions about what a tragicomedy might have in it, it serves its function, but as the most famous contemporary statement explicitly about this emerging genre on the English stage, it is partial and misleading. This mismatch between theory and practice lies behind this book: In the chapters that follow many perspectives are explored, but the material often remains elusive " as if a counter-example, or a shift of emphasis, even a minute decision on the part of an actor, could unravel the best-laid critical plans. Accordingly, this book aims to be systematic in some ways, and to reflect expanding diversity in others. Cyrus Hoy, in Fredson Bowers gen. It is hoped, however, that the essays that have resulted from this initial brief prove to be useful to far more readers than these. This volume includes, for example, a rare chance to compare and contrast key ideas from England, France, Italy, Spain, and the classical world. The first group of chapters, which covers these various literatures, aims to explore crucial European contexts for the development of tragicomedy. They impinge on Shakespeare and his contemporaries to varying degrees, and they feed into one another, but they also offer up a series of related, connected problems and opportunities offered by tragicomedies in rather different theatrical environments at different times within the period covered by this volume. Its main topic is the work of Giambattista Guarini, whose play *Il Pastor Fido* written , first printed*

sparks new interest in tragicomedy, not least because of the theoretical debate which follows its first performances and publication. The chapter also makes a larger contribution to the collection by recognising the various forms and social levels in which aspects of tragicomedy, as it came to thrive in England, circulated in Europe. The other two chapters in this first section move away from the more established paths of tragicomedy between Italy and England, and fill in two closely related but in some ways parallel manifestations of tragicomedy. Geraint Evans looks at the place of tragicomedy within the popular dramatic tradition of sixteenth-century Spain, and especially at the work of Lope de Vega. Although it is not possible to trace much direct influence between Lope and Shakespeare or Fletcher, Spanish theatrical culture shares some key characteristics with that of early modern England, namely, a mixed audience with a highly varied repertoire to match. The same cannot quite be said of the French scene described by Nicholas Hammond. In France theoretical condemnation could govern practice and popular acclaim. French uses of the genre and the generic label are shown to be symptomatic of the fluidity of the genre itself; a fluidity that was both the strength and the weakness of the form, a quality that enabled experiment and dynamic adaptation as well as its easy transposition into other forms, leading, in a sense, to a formal extinction. What is the connection between this distinctive content and the tragicomic genre? Perhaps same-sex desire is a kind of transgression that can most easily, and needs must, be contained by a form that brings things right at the end while allowing for complication in the middle – so that cross-dressing becomes the dramatically unreal, yet affectively real, vehicle for a desire that is aroused but then dissolved with the desired man or woman turning out to be of the opposite sex after all. In that sense, it might be the equivalent of the desire that Evans talks about in the context of Spain: This is a phenomenon that Evans calls a deceitful solution. Despite crucial differences in the different national and cultural contexts, the formal propensities of tragicomedy seem to straddle France, Spain and England, producing distinct alchemies with the specific circumstances of production and reception. Indeed, the connections may be spread even wider: The second set of essays centres on, or radiates outwards from, the tragicomic drama of Shakespeare and his theatrical successors. It does not, however, spend an inordinate amount of time explicitly outlining the generic problems caused by the range of plays from the period that could be called tragicomic. Modern editors and critics of these plays have already illuminated many specific problems. The essays in this collection aim to illuminate the chronological fringes of the period, and also to consider from fresh angles certain key issues of taxonomy. In doing so they naturally build on critical works in which other paths through the theory and practice of tragicomedy have been taken. Its Origin and Development in Italy, France, and England covers some of the same territory as this book and is a very good introduction to some of the key issues. Its Origin and History still has much to offer the scholar, tracing the history of the genre from c. 1550 to 1700. Its Origin and History New York, English Tragicomedy, – Peter Hall, she claims, in erasing such organically mixed moments in his production of Cymbeline, committed theatrical suicide and generic escapism. This argument suggests the inclusiveness and paradoxical realism of tragicomedy, an idea that we shall observe emerging from several strands of argument in this volume. She does so by emphasising what Beaumont and Fletcher learned from the innovative work of George Wilkins, author of the first two acts of Pericles and quite possibly the initiator of more of it. Explorations in Genre and Politics New York, Nancy Klein Maguire, Regicide and Restoration: English Tragicomedy, – Cambridge, Two essays look even more directly at the late Shakespearean tragic canon. The essays by Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore, and Gordon McMullan, aim to address the issues of taxonomy head on, but by strikingly different means. Hope and Witmore bring the analytical characteristics of discourse analysis software to bear on generic classification in Shakespeare. To readers new to this approach to literary texts, the technique involved – statistical analysis of numerous basic features of language – may seem counter-intuitive. This offers the possibility, perhaps in future developments of discourse-analysis software, of more concrete and refined stylistic distinctions between genres. It also brings a recognition of how quantitative analysis of linguistic features can be a tool of literary interpretation; how reading Shakespeare by the numbers can speak to such objects of conventionally literary enquiry as asides and reported action, tone and atmosphere. Indeed, it illuminates the whole question of what – in terms of dramatic strategy – constitutes generic groups. The idea of lateness in literary careers turns out to be a narrow imposition with repeating characteristics. It also

reveals that there is a telling affinity between tragicomedy and lateness. Tragicomedies can be seen as, and can indeed represent themselves as, sophisticated and urbane innovations. They are late in the sense that they acknowledge that tragedy and comedy preceded them, but they also open and inaugurate possibilities, rather than closing them off. The final group of essays in the collection does not attempt to account for the whole of the post-Shakespearean tradition any more than the previous essays attempted to account for all tragicomic possibilities within Shakespeare. The idea emerges that one aspect of this and other tragicomedies of the period may be their affinity with Protestantism, wherein salvation follows suffering but in an inscrutable way. This essay recognises the importance of providence in all tragicomedy, whether Protestant or not, and introduces the possibility that it is a particularly pointed form in which to explore what providence is and how it works. The final two essays – by Lucy Munro and Deana Rankin – relate to tragicomedy in Ireland and exchanges between the theatres of Dublin and London. In addition to offering new insights into how certain tragicomedies of the period were incorporated into theatrical repertoires and received by different audiences, these essays both consider how tragicomedies change when they change contexts – how this form crosses borders. Both Rankin and Munro recognise how the complex tone of tragicomedy, and experimentation with that tone, enable political comment of a subtle and elusive kind. This is the least celebrated, but by no means the least suggestive, of four iconic statements about tragicomedy that pertain to or arise from these early modern works, and which are all discussed more than once in this book. Although they are all quoted elsewhere in the volume, they are worth quoting here too. Some but not of best judgements were offended at the Conclusion of this Play, in regard Landgartha took not then, what she was perswaded to by so many, the Kings kind night-imbraces. To which kind of people that know not what they say I answer omitting all other reasons: The Sermons of John Donne, ed. Potter, 10 vols Berkeley, 1962, IX, To the rest of babblers, I despise any answer. It is difficult to argue for a simple spectrum between comedy and tragedy, so the placing of tragicomedy at some mid-point begs more questions than it answers. Of course, the relationship with comedy and tragedy is very often at issue in the works discussed in this book, both theoretical and literary. The great challenge is to set up a definition of tragicomedy that can efficiently accommodate two very different phenomena: But there is scope to identify tragedy and comedy being in dialogue within a single artefact, pointing to the integral relation between the law of genre and the structures of experience. Another highly influential definition of tragicomedy proves similarly elusive despite its simplicity. A Tragic-Comedy, as it was presented in the new Theater in Dublin, with good applause, being an Ancient story Dublin, f. Did you pull a face, because I said it was going to be a tragedy? I shall make a comedy out of this tragedy, with all the same verses. Is that want you want or not? What do you think?

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*Tragicomedy is one of the most important dramatic genres in Renaissance literature, and the essays collected here offer stimulating new perspectives and insights, as well as providing broad introductions to arguably lesser-known European texts.*

There is no complete formal definition of tragicomedy from the classical age. It appears that the Greek philosopher Aristotle had something like the Renaissance meaning of the term that is, a serious action with a happy ending in mind when, in *Poetics*, he discusses tragedy with a dual ending. The word itself originates with the Roman comic playwright Plautus, who coined the term somewhat facetiously in the prologue to his play *Amphitryon*. The character Mercury, sensing the indecorum of the inclusion of both kings and gods alongside servants in a comedy, declares that the play had better be a "tragicomoedia": What do you think? Two figures helped to elevate tragicomedy to the status of a regular genre, by which is meant one with its own set of rigid rules. Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio, in the mid-sixteenth century, both argued that the tragedy-with-comic-ending *tragedia de lieto fin* was most appropriate to modern times and produced his own examples of such plays. Even more important was Giovanni Battista Guarini. All three became staples of continental tragicomedy for a century and more. England[ edit ] In England, where practice ran ahead of theory, the situation was quite different. In the sixteenth century, "tragicomedy" meant the native sort of romantic play that violated the unities of time, place, and action, that glibly mixed high- and low-born characters, and that presented fantastic actions. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. By the early Stuart period, some English playwrights had absorbed the lessons of the Guarini controversy. In the printed edition, Fletcher offered an interesting definition of the term, worth quoting at length: But, as Eugene Waith showed, the tragicomedy Fletcher developed in the next decade also had unifying stylistic features: Richard Brome also essayed the form, but with less success. The old styles were cast aside as tastes changed in the eighteenth century; the "tragedy with a happy ending" eventually developed into melodrama, in which form it still flourishes. Later developments[ edit ] The more subtle criticism that developed after the Renaissance stressed the thematic and formal aspects of tragicomedy, rather than plot. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing defined it as a mixture of emotions in which "seriousness stimulates laughter, and pain pleasure. Also it can be seen in absurdist drama.

## Chapter 3 : Westminster College - Nathaniel Leonard

*Tragicomedy is one of the most important dramatic genres in Renaissance literature, and the essays collected here offer stimulating new perspectives and insights, as well as providing broad introductions to arguably lesser-known European texts. Alongside the chapters on Classical, Italian, Spanish.*

Presentations of final essay research 16 Final essay drafts due in class; peer-revision workshop 17 Revised versions of final essays due Course Learning Goals: The goals of this course are to learn to read and analyze classical and early modern comedies, and to develop an understanding of processes of literary reception. By the end of the course, students will be expected to: Demonstrate close reading skills Demonstrate familiarity with classical and early modern comic conventions Identify and address key issues in genre theory and reception theory Formulate thoughtful questions and clear arguments, in writing and discussion, based on textual evidence Assignments Over the course of the semester, you will contribute actively to discussion; make two informal presentations on the readings; and write three brief analytical essays no longer than two pages, focusing on close readings of textual passages. At the end of the semester you will present plans for a final essay, write a draft pages, exchange and critique drafts, and revise the essay. Because discussions will focus on close readings of passages, it is important that everyone bring copies of the plays to class. If you forget your copy, stop by the library and check one out on the way to class. Secondary readings will be available on Blackboard. Texts You are welcome to use any editions of these plays that you would like. If you own any of these plays already, or can borrow them from a friend or a library, feel free; if you would like to purchase them, there are several options. Oxford Worlds Classics publishes all these authors, and will give you a discount if you place an order directly with them for 3 or more texts; I recommend them especially for Terence The Comedies, trans. Peter Brown, Plautus Four Comedies, trans. Erich Segal, and Aristophanes Birds and other Plays, trans. For Jonson, Marston, and Middleton, the New Mermaids series published by Bloomsbury are very good though you can get a responsible and less expensive edition of Jonson from Oxford Worlds Classics. For Shakespeare texts, I recommend Signet Editions inexpensive, portable, well-annotated and supplied with useful contexts and critical essays or for those anticipating further research on a given play, the Arden editions more expensive, but especially rich in scholarship. Selected recommended secondary readings articles available on Blackboard Aristophanes: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis Ithaca: Cornell UP, American Journal of Philology OUP, Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes Philadelphia: U Penn Press, and Matthew Wright, The Comedian as Critic: Greek Old Comedy and Poetics Bristol: Bristol Classical Press,

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*who among English early modern playwrights has the most affinity with Italian dramatists if we consider.*

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*Tragicomedy is a literary genre that blends aspects of both tragic and comic forms. Most often seen in dramatic literature, the term can variously describe by either a tragic play which contains enough comic elements to lighten the overall mood or a serious play with a happy ending.*

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