**Shakespeare-Tage 2017: Abstracts der Vorträge**

**Brian Cummings (York)**

***Cordelia in Aulis: Shakespeare and Sacrifice***

The deaths of Cordelia in Shakespeare and of Iphigenia in Euripides have often been compared as examples of tragic sacrifice. Both in *King Lear* and in *Iphigenia in Aulis* the question is raised whether either daughter *needs* to die in order to fulfil the plot of the play. The consequent suffering seems in some sense incommensurate, perhaps even beyond tragedy. Traditionally, the reading of one play against the other has nonetheless been oblique. However, the reading is made the more powerful when we find that the death of Iphigenia is discussed throughout the sixteenth century (from Erasmus onwards) as a type for the suffering of Christ. Theology recoils from the sacrifice of daughters as a trope for understanding the scarcely imaginable demands of theodicy. In some cases, it is made into a specific critique of predestinarian theory, in which the judgement of God appears arbitrary and possibly cruel. In this paper I investigate the theological ethics of the death of Iphigenia to shed light on *King Lear* amid a century of Reformation turmoil over divine justice.

**Janet E. Clare (Hull)**

**Reform and Authorization: the parameters of the Elizabethan stage**

Seen as a process demanding uniformity in dogma and religion, sixteenth-century confessionalism included wider cultural formulations. Plays were shaped by and shaped discourses of confessionalization. The commission of 1581 to the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney, for example, entrusted Tilney with the authorization of play production and content. Though the Revels was a secular office, the Master’s powers were nevertheless articulated in the language of reform: he must ‘order and reforme aucthorise and put down as shalbe thought meete or unmeete unto himselfe’. Historians of the reformation have commented that with the shift of doctrinal authority to the agencies of the state, the project of reformation as ‘renovatio’ gave way to that of reformation and order. Such a semantic shift is present in Tilney’s commission where the assertive voice of secular authority seems to equate reform with conformity.

In this paper, I want to explore the transmission of the reform and order agenda to the stage and the productive role of censorship. Plays, like sermons were instrumental in enforcing religious identity, as is evident in Shakespeare’s *King John* and *Henry VIII*. Order is cited to consolidate authority and create obedient subjects: a commonplace which Shakespeare eloquently expresses in his contribution to the revisions of the heavily censored play, *Sir Thomas More*. At the same time, reformed doctrine brought a notion of the dynamic will of God into conflict with an understanding of fixed order. I will suggest that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare broke with earlier orthodoxies and in his most Lutheran play, order and reform regain an urgency redolent of the early reformation.

**Gillian Woods (London)**

**Creation and Creativity: Performing Art on the Post-Reformation Stage**

What does it mean to perform art on the post-Reformation stage? Statues that move, brazen heads that talk, and wax figures that signify both human beings and monuments appear in plays and masques from across the period. By troubling the distinction between actor and ‘prop’, subject and object, these representationally unstable moments actively engage audiences with the question ‘what is an image?’ Scenes in which artful images are part of the dramatic action self-consciously interrogate both the mechanisms of theatricality and the significance of visual culture. This paper situates such instances of ‘performing art’ in the context of post-Reformation debates about idolatry and representation. In particular, I consider the mimetic significance of the creation story (in which man is formed in God’s image), and explore where controversies about the difference between idols and images left the concept of creativity. When plays staged images, Renaissance theatre explicitly reflected on, and positioned itself in relation to, other visual arts. Focusing on work by Lyly, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Campion, I analyse the ideological, theological and aesthetic stakes of staging statues and icons that refused to stick within clearly material categories. I argue that performed art affords an important site for re-viewing drama’s visual meaning and clarifying the significance of the early modern image.

**Alison Shell (London)**

***King Lear* and Post-Reformation Imaginations**

In the early 17th century, the English author of a Catholic tract published on the Continent criticised the author of a play on King Lear for a lack of engagement with the conscientious issues of his time. If, as seems likely, he was referring to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, this comment fails to acknowledge some aspects of the play. Cordelia's principled resistance to arbitrary power draws on pre-Reformation saints' lives, in Voragine's *The Golden Legend* and elsewhere, and on the tales of exemplary religious heroism collected by post-Reformation commentators such as Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments*. Cordelia is not a religious martyr in the strict sense, but her character and her function in the play recall contemporary stories of those who suffered for religion. For instance, she is banished from her country and her father's love because she has told the truth: everyone in Shakespeare's audience, whatever their personal notion of truth, could have agreed that was admirable, and been able to cite real-life counterparts who had been exiled for conscientious reasons. Catholics in Shakespeare's first audiences would have seen the analogy to confessors, saints who suffered for religion without dying for it. Protestants, especially those of the puritan persuasion, might also have compared Cordelia to a saint: not, for them, an intercessor with God, but someone who demonstrated religious integrity. Thus, Shakespeare's dramatisation of Cordelia shows him channelling emotions elicited by the circumstances of religious division, while still appealing to the widest possible constituency.

**Cornel Zwierlein (Bochum)**

**Shakespeare, the Reformations and Tyrannicide: Constellations within the Period of Confessional Crisis**

Around 1560-70, one of the consequences of the reformations was the transformation of older medieval as well as humanist practices and theories of regicide, tyrannicide and conspiracy. What was still rooted in the medieval concept of *coniuratio* as *congiure* (Machiavelli, Discorsi III, 6 *Delle congiure*) or inspired by ancient authors (such as the young Thomas More's Lucianic emulation *De Tyrannicida*) became a highly polarized interpretative politico-theological scheme that structured perceptions and actions of and within the early modern international state system. Shakespeare's own time saw the diffusion of the so-called Monarchomarch theories by both Calvinist and Catholic Neo-Thomist authors as well as the spiritualization of the *crimen laesae majestatis* (Cod. Just. IX, 8, 5) by Tacitist lawyers such as Alberico Gentili. From the excommunication of Elizabeth I (1570) up until the Gunpowder plot, political contexts were marked by the intersection of these theories with the well-established practice of 'plotting' and pan-European networking: Catholic networks were spanned between Rom, Madrid, Reims, Douai and Rouen, responding to the Protestant connections between England, the Netherlands and the Palatinate. This paper does not intend to yet again search for direct influence on Shakespeare's plays and to interpret Shakespeare's usurpers, tyrants and plotters as reflections of these historical realities (e.g. by regarding *Hamlet* as a comment on the succession crisis, or by asking for literal influences of the *Basilikon doron* on *Measure for Measure*). From a historian's point of view, I would rather like to argue that towards the end of the 16th century, a new mode of political practice and communication became established: It trained and precipitated a continuous change of perspectives and of reflexivity – the good king would become a tyrant, he who was once the protector of one's own religion became its cruel persecutor. Ambivalences like these were not only first and foremost performed on stage but became a crucial problem in real politics. The relationship between sovereignty, stability and legitimate rule on the one hand, and tyranny, scandalous massacres, regicide and tyrannicide on the other had become a pivotal and urgent issue within a fragile political reality. This ´liquifying of confessional politics´ is the epistemic 'pressure' that is reflected and personalized into character constellations in the prismatic interrogations about tyranny, sovereignty, usurpation ,and regicide in Shakespearean plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III.*

**Debora Shuger (Los Angeles)**

**Shakespeare’s Bibles**

This paper deals with the Bibles Shakespeare might have used—not the translation but the edition. Thus, for example, while there was only one Geneva translation (not counting the Geneva-Tomson and Geneva-Tomson-Junius versions), it appeared in many editions—editions that differ not only in format (folio, quarto, etc.) but in substantive respects. The paper will look at a few of these substantive differences, and, albeit briefly and provisionally, at their relevance for Shakespeare studies.

**Anne Enderwitz (Berlin)**

**Ökonomie und politisches Kalkül: *Macbeth* und die Reformation**

*Macbeth* combines the enactment of political conspiracy with detailed attention to oeconomy, the art of household management. The paper discusses the play’s peculiar constellation of politics and domesticity in the context of Puritan writings. Those writings offered detailed advice on marital life and identified the well-governed house as the basis of political order. The first part of the paper analyses the relations between the individual house and the political community. It focuses on *Macbeth*’s keen interest in strategies of self-authorisation at the expense of the common good. The paper relates the play’s fascination with self-authorisation and its performance of hermeneutical desire to the reformation’s investment in spiritual freedom and biblical exegesis. The second part of the paper discusses self-authorisation in relation to a proto-bourgeois desire for social advancement and accumulation. Rather than discussing theological questions, the paper concentrates on socio-economic implications of post-reformation writings and practices which are staged and explored in *Macbeth*. Despite its feudal Scottish setting, the tragedy examines concerns which were relevant to an early seventeenth-century audience and, in particular, to London’s ‘middling sort of people’.

**Thomas Betteridge (London)**

**Shakespeare and the English Reformation**

A fundamental flaw in some approaches to the relationship between Shakespeare’s drama and religion is a potentially reductive emphasis on its confessional status which can be boiled down to the question, was Shakespeare a Protestant or Roman Catholic. The key difference at a cultural level in this period was, however, between confessional and non-confessional religion  The exemplary early modern clerical figure is the godly churchman, Protestant and Roman Catholic, seeking to teach his benighted parishioners the basics of confessional Christianity, and failing.  
Shakespeare was deeply concerned about confessionalization and the kind of communities its discourses and practices produced; ones that should have been Christian and grace-full but were often marked by a violent desire to label, order and exclude. In this paper I will examine a number of key moments from Shakespeare’s drama, Henry VI Part 2, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night’s Tale, The Winter’s Tale and Pericles, to illustrate Shakespeare’s approach to the idea of a church and the constitution of a Christian community of believers.