

REED(Records of Early English Drama)を読む(1) : ”Carting”とMeasure for Measure

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‘Carting’ and *Measure for Measure*

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This paper argues that Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604) is a theatrical representation of ‘carting’, a form of punishment for sexual misconduct commonly practiced in Renaissance England.

A number of records of women ‘carted’ for whoredom are found in *Records of Early English Drama: Kent*. This paper draws on these records to investigate how ‘harlots’ were punished in Kentish towns such as Dover and Canterbury, and points out parallels between the form of punishment meted out to ‘harlots’ in these provincial towns and that received by ‘sexual offenders’ in *Measure for Measure*. Just as ‘harlots’ in Dover were ‘carted about the marketplace’, so Juliet and his lover Claudio are ‘shown to the world’ and thus publicly shamed when they are led to prison through the streets of Vienna in the play.

In Shakespeare’s depiction of Vienna, as in Dover and other towns in Renaissance England, prostitutes are operating and citizens commonly engage in extramarital sexual relations. However, not all these sexual transgressions are punished. What is crucial here is pregnancy as hard evidence of female sexual misconduct. Kentish women ‘carted for whoredom’ were ‘unlawfully begotten with child’ as Juliet in *Measure for Measure* is got with child by Claudio.

It is well known that George Whetstone’s *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) is one of the primary sources for *Measure for Measure*. In Whetstone’s city of Julio, as in Shakespeare’s Vienna, sexual delinquency is rampant, and there is need for policy to be shifted from indulgent laxity to severity. Lamia, a courtesan, and Rosko, Lamia’s man—brothel characters paralleling Pompey and Overdone—are arrested and publicly punished for operating prostitution. What is particularly interesting is that Lamia is literally ‘carted’ in *Promos and Cassandra*. She is thus humiliated in public as are Juliet and Claudio in *Measure for Measure*. The public shaming these sexual delinquents suffer has contemporary relevance. In Renaissance England, as Kentish records of ‘carted’

women indicate, a palpable sexual transgression often subjected the offender to public punishment. This social context contributed to producing a play showing sexual offenders being exposed to public shaming.