

# Issues in Review

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## Changing Fortunes: Reviving and Revisiting *The Misfortunes of Arthur*

### Introduction

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*The dramatic mixture of Arthurian legend and Senecan tragedy inspired the revival of The Misfortunes of Arthur in 2019, a play originally written by lawyers at Gray's Inn and performed before Elizabeth I in 1588. A small but significant body of scholarship has highlighted the play's function as a vehicle for offering monarchic counsel. As the essays in this Issues in Review demonstrate, however, there are alternative ways of approaching Misfortunes through its theatricality, its dramatization of Inns ideology, its composition, and its publication. This introduction outlines why the play merits further attention.*

How sues a Tragedie for such a time?

Thus. For that since your sacred Maiestie

In gracious hands the regall Scepter held

All Tragedies are fled from State, to stadge.

(‘An Introduction’, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*)<sup>1</sup>

On Shrove Tuesday night, 28 February 1588, five law students from Gray's Inn were led onto a stage in the palace at Greenwich, as captives of three Muses, to introduce a new play to Elizabeth I.<sup>2</sup> ‘Attyred in their usual garments’ ( $\pi 2$ ), these

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performers would have made a strong visual connection between the reality of legal study and practice and the fictional play world, manifesting the ‘from state to stage’ trajectory essential to Inns of Court drama. In presenting plays to the queen, members of the Inns not only entertained the watching court; they validated, via performance, the national importance of their institutions.<sup>3</sup>

When *The Dolphin’s Back* revived the play in 2019 as part of a conference on the early modern Inns, the performance began with a tolling bell striking the hour, cuing the ghost of Gorlois to rise from the underworld and declare that the time for revenge upon the house of Pendragon had come.<sup>4</sup> The Inns’ institutional identity and political concerns were less important to the revival than the narrative and language of the play, as indicated by the omission of the play’s introductory poem. The authors of this Issues in Review were all present at the revival — James Wallace directed it — and so bring an overdue awareness of the play’s performativity into conversation with existing historicist studies. Defining *Misfortunes* through its representation of contemporary politics and Inns ideology has been, and remains, central to the play’s interpretation. As this cluster of essays demonstrates, however, there are other overlooked areas of enquiry, from theatricality to publication, which reward closer attention. The authors consider *Misfortunes*’s performative qualities alongside the manner of its composition, its engagement with contemporary political and theatrical culture, and its bibliographic make-up. Prompted by their original approaches, this introduction outlines why *Misfortunes* merits further consideration both as a representation of the political concerns of the Elizabethan Inns and as a drama in its own right.

Following a template established by the first extant Inns drama, *Gorboduc* (ca 1565), *Misfortunes* reconfigures contemporary concerns through the overlaid lenses of British chronicle and Senecan drama while also complicating the *Gorboduc* model by adding Arthurian legend and Roman history. The ghost of Gorlois, duke of Cornwall, orchestrates the action, thus bringing the formal qualities of Senecan drama to bear on British national myth. (See Figure 1.) As Gorlois declares in the play’s opening speech, Arthur’s nine-year absence waging war with Rome has allowed his son Mordred to take control of the kingdom and enjoy a love affair with Guenevora, Arthur’s queen. On learning of Arthur’s return, Guenevora, after first planning to kill her husband, vows to enter a nunnery, leaving Mordred to declare war against his father. Mordred ignores the advice of his counsellor, Conan, and Arthur’s offers of reconciliation, forming alliances with the Saxons, Picts, and Irish. Arthur initially refuses the advice of his loyal followers, Cador and Howell, but ultimately must engage in civil war with Mordred. By act 5, Mordred has been killed by Arthur and inflicted a fatal wound upon his



Figure 1: Production photograph of Gorlois (Alan Cox). Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.

father, who grieves over his fate with the Chorus and wishes to be remembered as a warning to future kings. Gorlois finally returns in triumph to wish a better future on Britain.

The small but significant body of scholarship on the play focuses on interpreting its political relevance, building on the widely accepted idea of Inns drama as a vehicle for conveying advice to the queen.<sup>5</sup> Inns drama assumed this function through its producers' active engagement in government and their concern with representing the institution of the law, described by Christopher Yelverton, MP and *Misfortunes* contributor, as 'the strong sinew of the commonwealth'.<sup>6</sup> Lord Burghley, treasurer in 1587, was a member and patron of Gray's Inn. His broadly anti-militaristic views have been seen as fundamental to *Misfortunes*.<sup>7</sup> Some read the play as a commentary on fragile Anglo-Scots relations following the execution of Mary queen of Scots in February 1587, on fears of a Spanish invasion, on anxieties towards imperial expansion in Ireland, and concerns regarding military activity in the Low Countries.<sup>8</sup> Earlier scholars have proposed that Arthur and Mordred represent Elizabeth and Mary Stewart, with the play justifying the execution of the latter by dramatizing usurpation carried out by a Scottish figure.<sup>9</sup> Other strands of work have emphasized the politically charged nature of the play's

sources, ranging from Arthurian chronicle and romance to Senecan drama and Roman history.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, the revival that inspired this collection — referred to as *Arthur* in production and within this group of essays — explored how the play could work in performance, at a remove from historical puzzle-solving. Encountering the playtext as live drama invites opportunities to form fresh interpretations that feed back into historicist studies of its original production and reception, as this collection demonstrates. James Wallace reflects on the effect of transforming *Misfortunes* from a nearly three-hour court performance to a ninety-minute, relatively low-budget, script-in-hand reading, discussing the linguistic and psychological dynamics exposed. Lorna Wallace considers how *Arthur*'s 'depiction of the leader-advisor relationship' clarified the importance of counsel to the drama as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Through considering the figure of the ghost, amplified by being onstage throughout the 2019 revival, Felicity Brown emphasizes Thomas Hughes's (the principal author's) engagement with habits of dramatic composition that defined Elizabethan commercial theatre as well as plays produced at the Inns and the two universities.

All the essays in this collection bring *Misfortunes* into conversations with emergent scholarly views of the Inns as porous centres, inextricably connected to the cultural life of the city.<sup>12</sup> Students at the Inns regularly attended performances in public venues and undoubtedly stimulated the growth of the theatre and the book trade in Elizabethan London.<sup>13</sup> James Wallace highlights numerous verbal and thematic similarities with *Macbeth*, which, taken together with Brown's work on habits of translation and imitation shared by *Misfortunes*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and revenge drama more broadly, increase our understanding of the play as part of a wider dramatic culture, rather than an obscure and exclusive oddity. There are indications that Shakespeare had read *Misfortunes*. For example, Guenevora's complaint that she has been 'chose and wedded for his [Arthur's] stale', with its distinctive usage of 'stale' (1.2.3) as a synonym for laughingstock, reappears in *Titus Andronicus* when Saturninus asks, 'Was none in Rome left to make a stale / But Saturnine?' (1.1.309).<sup>14</sup> The play's appropriation of British chronicle history makes it a precursor to *Lochrine*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Cymbeline*.<sup>15</sup>

The second and third essays respond variously to the play's appropriation of classical texts, focusing on intertexts bound to ideas of governance and statehood including Senecan tragedy and Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. Around one third of the play comprises quotations from Seneca, and 330 lines derive from Lucan.<sup>16</sup> Brown explores Hughes's translation methodology, arguing that his transfer of Seneca and Lucan to Arthurian legend expresses the play's process, in which

'acts of translation and composition are presented as valuable to monarch and nation'.<sup>17</sup> Lorna Wallace considers how borrowing from these politically charged texts validates the counsel that *Misfortunes* advocates. Her work explores the play's political messaging to the queen's subjects, as well as to the queen, by situating the play as part of the wider circulation of advice literature in drama, the marketplace of print, and personal commonplace books. Sharing Lorna Wallace's interest in transmission, my own essay, the fourth in the collection, investigates the motivation behind the play's print publication. Privileging its functionality as a record of court performance, rather than the political significance of its circulation in print, my argument finds overlooked parallels between *Misfortunes* and the court masques which began to be printed in the Jacobean period. In print all of these publications combine scripted text and reported action while recalling their original orientation, in performance, to the watching monarch.

The absence of Elizabeth I from *Arthur's* audience in 2019 encouraged James Wallace not to strive for a historical reconstruction of the play's original performance. Emulating the Globe's Read Not Dead project, for which he has worked as an actor and director, our goal was 'to get the play on its feet before an audience to see how it might work in performance'.<sup>18</sup> Private performances at court could last three hours.<sup>19</sup> We set a much shorter running time of ninety minutes. This decision aimed to bring the more challenging aspects of the play — 'long formal speeches and debates, dense verse, apparently static scenes, and seeming lack of dramatic variety' — closer to a modern audience's expectations.<sup>20</sup> James Wallace cut a total of 460 lines. As he explains, the most obvious targets were the flattering references to Elizabeth; without her physical presence 'they lose much of their charge'.<sup>21</sup> The play's vision of a fractured Britain that rests 'a prey for foreign powers' (1.1.39) speaks to the queen's position at the moment of its performance. Elizabeth was reluctant to commit further funds to her Dutch allies in wars against Spain, a situation reflected by the play's portrayal of Arthur as over-stretched by foreign wars.<sup>22</sup> (See Figure 2.) Equally, however, her persistent refusal of reasoned pleas to send more money to her Dutch armies resonates with the wilful, petulant Mordred, who ignores sage advice.<sup>23</sup> (See Figure 3.) The play's protagonists embody multiple aspects of the queen's persona, and her presence would have added dramatic resonances to the original performance. In a modern context, however, repeated references to an absent queen would risk detracting from the force of the performance. Similarly, references to Britain as a New Troy, which would have been an important part of the play's commentary on national identity for the original audience, could, for a modern audience, obscure the narrative. For example, act 2 scene 1 began, in revival, with 'Hail native soil these nine years'





Figure 2: Production photograph of Arthur (Oliver Senton). Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.



Figure 3: Production photograph of Mordred (Patrick Walshe McBride) refusing advice from his counsellor, Conan (Mark Hammersley). Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.

space unseen', not 'Lo, here at length the stately type of Troy, / And Britain land the promis'd seat of Brute' (2.1.1–4), directing the audience's attention to Arthur's homecoming rather than to Britain styled as Troynovant. Rather than stressing concern with the world around the play or how that world is reflected in it, the revival *Arthur* emphasized interest in the play itself.

What could be taken as a disregard for the play's context arguably contributed to *Arthur*'s success. The cuts streamlined Hughes's playtext, allowing the audience to focus on its energetic wordplay and dramatization of conflict between protagonists. Audience members reported being struck by the play's dynamic nature and compelled by the actors' focus. One reviewer commented, 'Mordred's declaration that the greater the opposing odds "The greater is my conquest, if I winne" (2.2.24) resonated through the chapel of Gray's Inn as The Dolphin's Back's performance triumphed'.<sup>24</sup> A video of the production, now available on The Dolphin's Back's website, offers students and critics an opportunity to form their own opinions.<sup>25</sup>

Experiencing the play as spoken text — albeit in the absence of specific references to its original performers, the students of the Inns — confirms how dramatic activity contributed to these performers' education. Dramas produced by Elizabethan academic communities were intended to be verbally challenging so that they would provide, as Helen Slaney writes, 'a valuable means of instilling vocal dexterity in the young'.<sup>26</sup> Although written in English, not Latin, as the Senecan translations of Greek tragedies and Neo-Senecan plays produced at Oxford and Cambridge were, *Misfortunes* shares with early modern Latin dramas the aim of stretching the oratorical and rhetorical capabilities of performers in order to benefit their futures in public service.<sup>27</sup> *Arthur*'s actors experienced the testing qualities of academic drama first-hand: 'they had to work their lips and tongues hard, especially to play at speed', and the first days of rehearsal were 'spent simply sitting trying to untangle the knotty language'.<sup>28</sup>

In response to the demands of the text James Wallace used formal groupings and limited movement. This staging encouraged the audience to focus on what was being said; as a result, 'a shift of weight, the turn of a head, a step taken back — counted for more'.<sup>29</sup> Scholars tend, particularly within debates concerning the performance status of Seneca's plays — which may have been written for recitation rather than full production — to describe static staging as somehow dramatically inferior.<sup>30</sup> Far from being untheatrical, stillness from the cast of *Arthur* generated dramatic tension and energy. For example, the messenger speech reporting Arthur and Mordred's final battle, delivered by Mark Hammersley with a rivetingly attentive cast grouped around him, was one of the most powerful

moments in the revival.<sup>31</sup> (See Figure 4.) James Wallace reports adopting similar staging for *The Dismissal of The Grecian Envoys* (1579), a Polish advice drama he directed at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2019. The level of attention such texts demand from actors and audiences, recognized by our director's staging, is appropriate to their content. Although it was shown at court in the same season as John Lyly's *Gallathea* and *Endymion*, *Misfortunes* was not intended to be comic, and its original audience would surely have understood its commentaries on contemporary politics as part of a distinct dramatic type.<sup>32</sup> The gravitas attached to *Misfortunes's* social purpose informed how the play responded to performance in 2019 — and, in all probability, in 1588. Although it did not aim to do so, *Arthur* perhaps recovered something of the play's original staging.



Figure 4: Production photograph of the Chorus (Laura Rogers, Lucy-Rose Leonard, Jennifer Shakesby) and Gorlois (Alan Cox) receiving Conan/Nuncius 2's (Mark Hammersley) report of the final battle between Arthur and Mordred. Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.

Lorna Wallace explores *Misfortunes's* social function as advice drama in more detail, examining its relationship to a range of contemporary and classical texts concerned with responsible leadership and counselling. The play's use of Seneca augments its function as a vehicle for coded counsel because his reputation 'as someone who tried to hold in check the worst impulses of Nero' made him an



exemplar of political advice-giving.<sup>33</sup> Hughes's appropriation of Lucan — well known in the early modern period as commenting on the failure of republicanism — positions the play in the context of anxieties regarding Elizabeth's increasingly autocratic tendencies. Arthur's first speech to his followers (3.3.1–47) reproduces Caesar's first address to his troops (1.299–349), replacing classical figures with characters from Arthurian literature. Hannibal becomes Hengistus and Horsa (Saxon leaders), Pompey's teacher Sulla becomes Gillamor, the Irish king, who has tutored Mordred in treachery, just as Pompey 'was taught wickedness by Sulla' (1.325–6). Britain is deftly repositioned as Rome on the brink of a regime change; Arthur takes on Caesar's strengths as well as his self-destructive tendencies.<sup>34</sup> Lorna Wallace highlights that *Misfortunes* also draws from mirror for princes literature, 'texts intended to shape the behaviour of rulers and statesmen by providing examples to follow or avoid'.<sup>35</sup> Her essay illustrates how Inns men styled their translations of Seneca as mirrors for princes through additional lines and dedications to the queen and members of the Privy Council, thus advancing our understanding of the play as an advice drama and demonstrating *Misfortunes*'s participation with contemporary concerns about reciprocity between ruler and ruled.

While Lorna Wallace builds on the idea that borrowing from classical texts legitimizes the play's presentation of counsel, Brown explores the practice and process of imitating and appropriating classical texts. As previous scholars have observed, *Misfortunes* builds entire scenes from parts of Seneca's works, often alternating lines from one play with another. Brown shows more specifically that Guenevora debates her future using lines spoken by Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, Deinaria in *Hercules Oeteaus*, Medea in *Medea*, and Atreus in *Thyestes*.<sup>36</sup> (See Figure 5.) While Hughes's persistent reproduction of Senecan material has encouraged a view of *Misfortunes* as 'little more than a pastiche', more favourable views recognize his reliance on Seneca as a self-conscious stylistic choice.<sup>37</sup> George M. Logan, for example, praises 'Hughes's remarkable ability for constructing mosaics', highlighting how *Misfortunes* quotes from Lucan and Seneca to create a distinctly Elizabethan intarsia of preoccupations with revenge, tyranny, counsel, and issues of national identity.<sup>38</sup> For Brown, the play's 'innovative approach to imitation and translation' intimately connects Hughes's work to the emergence of the popular revenge genre.<sup>39</sup> She compares Gorlois's ghost to the better-known ghost of Don Andrea that animates 'the analogous and contemporaneous commercial blockbuster by Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*'.<sup>40</sup> Following Elizabeth Sandis's work on the inclusion of Senecan 'soundbites' in Latin or translated into English (a practice adopted by academic and professional dramatists alike),<sup>41</sup>



Figure 5: Production photograph of Guenevora (Laura Rogers) debating her fate with her sister Angharad (Lucy-Rose Leonard). Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.

Brown opens new ways of approaching *Misfortunes* through its connections to commercial as well as private drama: the presence of a vengeful ghost, the appropriation of chronicle history, as well as classical intertextuality make *Misfortunes* 'both old and new, both a copy and an original.'<sup>42</sup>

This *Issues in Review* situates *Misfortunes* within the similarly public context of printed drama. Brown draws attention to the potential for recognition of classical texts through encounters with the printed text. Lorna Wallace, prompted by the removal of references to Elizabeth in *Arthur*, and being struck by the consistent retention of the scenes involving counsel-giving — intimate exchanges between a ruler and their closest advisors — recognizes that while *Misfortunes* would have been directed specifically at Elizabeth in its original performance, her courtiers and the much wider social range of the play's earliest readers were also targets of its political messaging. Jessica Winston points out that the Inns had 'no official relationship to government', although they claimed, through drama, 'that they too could legitimately contribute to discussions of matters of state'.<sup>43</sup> Regardless of how far Inns dramas ever influenced Elizabethan policy, the ethos of political counsel with which they were composed is fundamental to their composition and

reception. Lorna Wallace demonstrates that in *Misfortunes* the counsel, though not acted on, is always wise, thus emphasizing the extent to which rulers need advice. Conan, long-suffering advisor to Mordred, is unsuccessful in advocating peace, while Arthur refuses to be persuaded into war by Cador and Howell. The play assures us that following counsel would have been each leader's best option, although the advice offered is for peace on the one hand and war on the other. Mordred argues that 'a sovereign's hand / Is scantily safe, but while it smites' (1.4.105–6), but his desire for war, motivated by preventing Arthur from reclaiming his kingdom, is clearly tyrannical. (See Figure 6.) By contrast, Arthur appears to have lost all ambition. Many of his reasons for inaction are honourable; for instance, he wishes to save his soldiers from further bloodshed and places little value on kingship and the fleeting fame of victory. In the context of Mordred's unlawful usurpation, however, his inertia, which results chiefly from his 'blind affection' for Mordred (3.4.200), is wholly inappropriate. Lorna Wallace shows that Hughes diverges from the bellicose figure found in Geoffrey Monmouth's *De Gestis Britonum* (ca 1136) to create an Arthur who needs the advice of his counselors, thus illustrating how concern with counsel moulds the play's narrative.



Figure 6: Production photograph of Mordred (Patrick Walshe McBride). Photo credit: Daniela D'Amato.

Hughes's declining Arthur contrasts sharply with the celebrations of his militarism in other court entertainments and more popular forms, ballads, chap books, and even plays that circulated throughout the early modern period, and especially under the Tudors.<sup>44</sup> Just as the play hybridizes British chronicle, Roman history, and Senecan drama, so too does its figurehead combine classical, chronicle, and romance traditions. In romance literature, Arthur is an ambiguous figure: a conqueror whose enemies are within, an embodiment of 'the dual process of perfection and degeneration'.<sup>45</sup> The romance tradition's most striking change from the earlier chronicle texts, on which Hughes draws pointedly, concerns Arthur's incestuous past and paternity of Mordred.<sup>46</sup> In the *Annales Cambriae* (tenth century) and Geoffrey, Arthur and Mordred are enemies who inflict fatal wounds upon each other in battle; the chronicles contain no reference to their biological relationship and its incestuous origin.<sup>47</sup> Lorna Wallace and James Wallace comment on how, as Mordred's father, Arthur experiences greater tension between public and private duty. Brown suggests an alternative significance of Arthur's incest as an echo of Senecan tragedy, aligning Arthur with Oedipus and reading *Misfortunes* against earlier dramatizations of the Oedipus myth produced within the Inns, notably Alexander's Neville's *Oedipus* (1563) and George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta* (1566).

The final essay explores the influence of these Senecan plays on the bibliographic presentation of *Misfortunes*, which both replicates and deviates from printing conventions germane to Senecan and Inns drama. My argument particularly attends to a feature found in printed Inns drama: descriptions of the dumbshows, the lavishly costumed, carefully choreographed, allegorically encrypted sequences that proceed each act. As James Wallace's essay explains, the political decoding that Lorna Wallace locates within the playtext was enacted, nonverbally, by the dumbshows. *Arthur* did not include the dumbshows; beyond concerns of budget and constraints on running time, we felt that they would be less meaningful to a modern audience than they would have been for their original spectators, particularly in the absence of the arsenal of props and costumes they evidently required. Considering the dumbshows' presence in all surviving examples of Inns tragedy in print reveals not only their importance to the original staging of these plays, but also their authors' concern with providing readers with more than a printed script. Printed versions of Inns tragedies record the total performance experience in a way that was later adopted by printed editions of court masque in the Stuart period, which include painstakingly detailed descriptions of stage sets, props, costumes, and movement. My work also investigates how the play's authors (like Francis Bacon, one of the dumbshow devisers) may have been involved in its

print publication and considers the broader role that Inns drama played in what Lauren Shohet's work on printed court masques calls the 'relationships between dramatic performance and the print record'.<sup>48</sup> Scholars have demonstrated the Inns' importance to the history of English drama in print.<sup>49</sup> *Misfortunes* deserves to be more fully recognized by critical conversations taking place at the intersection of book and theatre history.

This introduction has outlined how the essays in this Issues in Review section explore *Misfortunes*'s engagement with classical texts (in translation and performance), with patterns of publication, with representation of Inns ideology, and with political topicality. In its original context, *Misfortunes* aimed to speak urgently to its audience and readership about national identity and the need for responsible government. While *Arthur*, in a sense, dismantled much of that context, the revival allowed the play to speak more clearly to the present. Part of the performance's energy derived from the audience's recognition of a Britain on the brink of collapse. For a Britain preoccupied with new definitions of national identity, devolutionary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the prospect of a Scottish referendum, as well as changing relationships with European powers, *Misfortunes* remains politically relevant. By giving these areas overdue exploration, the essays in this Issues in Review, along with the recording of the revival that prompted this work, hope to change the fortunes of *Misfortunes* for the better, encouraging further work on this complex yet rewarding play.



## Notes

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- 1 Thomas Hughes, *Certaine deuises and shewes presented to her Maieste ...* (London, 1587; STC: 13921), π2.
- 2 When the play was first printed, the playbook indicated it was first performed and published in 1587. England was still using the Julian calendar at time, meaning the new year began on 25 March. *Misfortunes* must therefore have been printed very soon after its performance to have a printed publication date of 1587, before the end of the Julian year. This dating is arguably a sign of its topicality and political relevance.
- 3 The Inns of Court, England's centres for legal education and practice, have long been recognized as vital to the production and consumption of early modern drama. Important recent studies include Alan H. Nelson and John R. Elliott Jr, ed., *REED: Inns of Court*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2010); Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight, *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester, 2011); Jessica Winston, *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558–1581* (Oxford, 2016); and Lorna Hutson, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Literature 1500–1800* (Oxford, 2017). For a survey of studies on the Inns' significance to early modern literature, see Winston, *Lawyers*, 3.
- 4 'The Inns of Court and the Circulation of Text', held at King's College London 14–15 June 2019, organized by Romola Nuttall and Julian Neuhauser (King's College London), was generously funded by the London Shakespeare Centre, King's College London, the Society for Theatre Research, the Society for Renaissance Studies, and the Inner Temple History Society. Gray's Inn gave free access to their chapel, and Middle Temple Library housed an accompanying exhibition of documents.
- 5 Kevin Dunn, 'Representing Counsel: *Gorboduc* and the Elizabethan Privy Council', *English Literary Renaissance* 33.3 (2003), 297–308, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.2003.00029.x>.
- 6 Christopher Yelverton, 'The Farewell that I Made at Graies Inn at My Departure From Thence When I was Elected Serjeant' (1598), British Library MS Add 48109, fols 11r–15r (fol. 13v).

- 7 Curtis Perry, 'British Empire on the Eve of the Armada: Revisiting *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Studies in Philology* 108.4 (2011), 508–37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23056051>.
- 8 Evangelia H. Waller, 'A Possible Interpretation of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Journal of English Germanic Philology* 24.2 (1925), 219–45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27702858>; Gertrude Reese, 'Political Import of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Review of English Studies* 21.82 (1945), 81–91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/509654?seq=1>; Derrick Spradlin, 'Imperial Anxiety in Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 10.3 (2005), 1–20.
- 9 Lorna Hutson's forthcoming work, *England's Insular Imagining*, argues that *Misfortunes* adapts the Anglo-imperial Galfridian tradition of Arthur as conqueror of the Scots and Picts to the Oedipal tragedy of an Arthur exiled from his British home. See also Lorna Hutson, 'On the Knees of the Body Politic', *Representations* 152.1 (2020), 25–54, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2020.152.2.25>. In addition to Waller and Reese, see Susan Doran, 'Revenge her Foul and Most Unnatural Murder? The Impact of Mary Stewart's Execution on Anglo-Scottish Relations', *History* 85.280 (2003), 589–61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24425939>.
- 10 W.J. Cunliffe identifies the extent of the Senecan textual borrowings in *Misfortunes*. See *On the Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (London, 1893). On the play's use of Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, see George M. Logan, 'Hughes's Use of Lucan in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *The Review of English Studies* 20.77 (1969), 22–32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/512973>.
- 11 Lorna Wallace, 'Decoding *Misfortunes*: Advice to Elizabeth I and her Subjects', 176, in this Issues in Review, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.24.2.4887>.
- 12 See for example, Christopher D'Addario, 'The Texture of the Everyday in John Manningham's *Diary* (1602–1603)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 42.2 (2012), 203–22; Lauren Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity: Civility and America in the Jacobean Metropolis* (Cambridge, 2021); Jackie Watson, 'Ram Alley', in *Players and Playgoing*, ed. Simon Smith and Emma Whipday (forthcoming).
- 13 On Inns students as playgoers, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Cambridge, 2004), 80 and Nelson and Elliott, ed., Appendix 14.
- 14 *The Misfortunes of Arthur by Thomas Hughes*, ed. J.P. Collier (London, 1828). All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition. Line references are my own and will be cited in the text. Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London, 1995). On *Misfortunes* and *Titus*, see *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, ed. Harvey Carson Grumbie (Berlin, 1900), 205.

- 15 See further, Andrew King, 'Dead Butchers and Fiend-like Queens: Literary and Political History in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and *Macbeth*', in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Suffolk, 2005), 121–34.
- 16 Logan, 'Hughes's Use of Lucan', 23.
- 17 Felicity Brown, 'Sourcing *Misfortunes*: Translation and Tragedy', 165, in this Issues in Review, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.24.2.4878>.
- 18 Personal correspondence with James Wallace.
- 19 See further, Richard Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist* (Oxford, 2016), 85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198777748.001.0001>.
- 20 James Wallace, 'Staging Arthur', 142, in this Issues in Review, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.24.2.4891>.
- 21 Ibid, 143.
- 22 Conversely, Christopher J. Crosbie implies that Arthur's incest would have deterred the original audience from drawing parallels with Elizabeth, the virgin queen; Crosbie, 'Sexuality, Corruption, and the Body Politic: The Paradoxical Tribute of *The Misfortunes of Arthur* to Elizabeth I', *Arthuriana* 9.3 (1999), 77, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27869472>.
- 23 On Elizabeth, Lord Buckhurst, and the Low Countries, see Rivkah Zim, 'Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst's Letters from the Low Countries 1587, The "Quarrels of My Lord of Leicester" and the Rhetoric of Political Survival', *Historical Research* 92.255 (2019), 73–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12260>.
- 24 Felicity Brown, '*The Misfortunes of Arthur*, dir. James Wallace (review)', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 37.4 (2019), 575, <https://doi.org/10.1353/shb.2019.0056>.
- 25 See <https://www.thedolphinsback.com/arthur.html>. We would like to thank Kaleido Film, the Society for Renaissance Studies, and the cast of *Arthur* for their participation and support in creating this recording and making it freely available online.
- 26 Helen Slaney, *The Senecan Aesthetic: A Performance History* (Oxford: 2016), 12.
- 27 According to Slaney, 'The practice of translating Greek plays into Senecan-flavoured Latin for educational purposes began with George Buchanan's 1544 *Medea*'; *The Senecan Aesthetic*, 47.
- 28 James Wallace, 'Staging Arthur', 147.
- 29 Ibid, 146.
- 30 On Seneca in performance, see John G. Fitch, 'Playing Seneca?', in *Seneca in Performance*, ed. George W. M. Harrison (Swansea, 2000), 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1n357qh.4>.
- 31 I am grateful to Lucy-Rose Leonard (who played Angharad and Chorus) for sharing observations about stillness and active listening in act 4 scene 2 with me. This scene

- quotes heavily from Lucan's account of the battle of Pharsalus demonstrating the performability of a technically non-dramatic text.
- 32 Brian Jay Corrigan, ed. *The Misfortunes of Arthur: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition* (New York, 1992), 14.
- 33 James Ker and Jessica Winston, *Elizabethan Seneca Three Tragedies* (London, 2012), 10.
- 34 On Caesar as self-destructive see Sarah A. Nix, 'Caesar as Jupiter in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*', *The Classical Journal* 103.3 (2008), 281–94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30037963>.
- 35 Lorna Wallace, 'Decoding *Misfortunes*', 173.
- 36 For the identification of these Senecan sources see Grumbie, ed. *Misfortunes*, 219.
- 37 Logan, 'Hughes's Use of Lucan', 22.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 39 Brown, 'Sourcing *Misfortunes*', 156.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 Elizabeth Sandis refers to the 'soundbite' as a short quotation in 'English Revenge Tragedy on the London stage and university stage', an online talk hosted by the Institute of English Studies, 28 October 2020. Future studies of *Misfortunes* might explore the extent to which the play's authors made their own translations of Seneca's plays or quoted from existing English translations.
- 42 Brown, 'Sourcing *Misfortunes*', 164.
- 43 Winston, *Lawyers*, 185–6.
- 44 According to Paul Whitfield White, 'King Arthur had never been more popular than in the Tudor period', when 'royal propaganda touted the Tudors' direct regal descent from Arthur and promoted his reign as an example of imperial majesty, military glory, and apostolic religion exempt from papal jurisdiction'; White, 'The Admiral's Men, Shakespeare, and the Lost Arthurian Plays of Elizabethan England', *Arthuriana* 24.2 (2014), 34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44697475>. See also Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485–1625* (Uppsala, 1999).
- 45 Norris J. Lacy and Geoffrey Ashe, *The Arthurian Handbook* (New York, 1988), 68.
- 46 Thomas Malory's widely read prose romance, *Morte Darthur*, first printed in England in 1485, follows the less well-known, *La Mort le roi Artu* (ca 1230), in asserting Arthur's paternity of Mordred. See Philip Bennet, *La Mort le roi Artu*, in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. Peter France (Oxford, 1995, online 2005) and Amy Varin, 'Mordred, King Arthur's Son', *Folklore* 90.2 (1979), 167–77.
- 47 Lacy and Ashe, *The Arthurian Handbook*, 50–1.

- 48 Lauren Shohet, 'Introduction', in *Reading Masques: The English Masque and Public Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2010), 18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199295890.001.0001>.
- 49 Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. 71–5; Jennifer Young, 'Minding their F's and Q's: Shakespeare and the Fleet Street Syndicate 1630–32', in *Historical Networks in the London Book Trade*, ed. John Hinks and Catherine Feely (London, 2017).