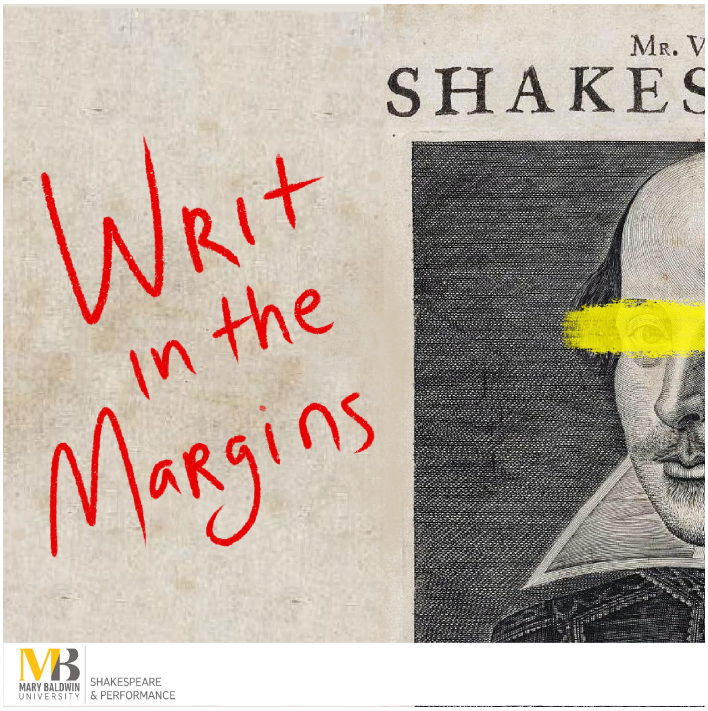


# Writ in the Margins Podcast

Created by the students in REN670: Dramaturgy in the Shakespeare and Performance graduate program at Mary Baldwin University
Produced by Prof. Molly E. Seremet (she/her/hers)

## Episode Guide

**Season 2, Episode 6**
***The Antipodes*: Is It a Mad World?**

Hosts: Brie Roche and Alaina Smith

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## Episode Transcript

**Brie:** Hello and welcome to another episode of Writ in the Margins. My name is Brie

**Alaina:** And I'm Alaina –

**Brie:** And today, we're talking about *The Antipodes* by Richard Brome.

**Alaina:** This play was published in 1640 but likely performed in 1638 according to its title page.
Brie: We're each interested in this play from different perspectives.

**Alaina:** My focus is material culture and domestic references in drama, especially in relation to women.

**Brie:** And I'm interested in reframing madness in early modern drama as social nonconformity.

**Alaina:** The intersection of these topics is where we come together and are looking at the gendered treatment of madness throughout the play.

**Brie:** We know that *The Antipodes* isn't the most well known play, so we're going to start off with a plot summary for those of you who aren't familiar with this story.

**Alaina:** Right. This play is a take on the city comedy genre with a heavy dose of satire. Our main players here are the country couples: Joyless and his young wife, Diana, and Joyless' son, Peregrine, from his first marriage and

Peregrine's wife Martha. Our London city-slickers: Dr. Hughball and his companion Letoy are kind of early modern drama therapists and have a troupe of actors on hand to treat the Joyless family. Joyless brings his family to London and hires Dr. Hughball and Letoy to cure Peregrine and Martha of madness. This is what causes them to "travel" (I'm using air quotes here) to the Antipodes, the upside-down version of England. (Stranger Things, anyone?) This section of the play is really just a trick played on Peregrine and Martha played out by the actors and Dr. Hughball. We need to pause for a second here and talk about how wild it is that Letoy just has a troupe of actors ready to go for this.

**Brie:** Bonkers.

**Alaina:** I know. It's definitely exploiting the play within a play motif we see so often in early modern drama and using it as a cure for madness. The play ends with the (re)Marriage of Martha and Peregrine - they are tricked into marrying each other in the Antipodes And in the process of all of this, Joyless, who you may have forgotten about, is also cured of his [00:02:00] jealousy, which is a rather huge problem throughout the course of the play. At the beginning of the play he is worried that his young wife may cheat on him and more on that later. Um, I kind of felt tricked when I read this play the first time because I definitely thought it was gonna be like the adventures of Perergine, like running around the Antipodes and it was way less that and more like Joyless is manipulated by Hughball into not being jealous anymore. Wild. But before we dive into our close reading of the play, we are going to play a little game just for fun. I mean, before we get really dark here.

**Brie:** Cause it will get dark.

**Alaina:** Yeah, it will get dark. Um, we have a few true or false questions about the play that we have prepared and my husband Paul, who is not a Shakespeare scholar, but has seen Shakespeare plays because he is married to me, is going to guess if the scenarios actually come from *The Antipodes*. Welcome. Hello.

**Paul:** Hi. Very excited to be here.

**Alaina:** Great. Okay. I have not told you the answers to these questions beforehand.

**Paul:** No, you have not.

**Alaina:** Okay. So we are gonna ask you some true or false questions about the play. Tell us if you think it's true or false. All right. Perfect. All right. Question number one. True or False. Martha, who is called a virgin multiple times in the play, describes a sexual liaison with another woman. True, or false?

**Paul:** Uh, I'm gonna say true.

**Alaina:** It is true. Stay tuned listeners. Paul, we can't give it away for you now. You're gonna have to listen to the episode to hear more about it later.

**Paul:** Very excited to hear it.

**Alaina:** Great. Okay. Question number two. True or false? The antipodes is under the earth and each country has a corresponding antipodean country. France, Spain, England, et cetera.

**Paul:** I'm gonna say false.

**Alaina:** Oh, that one is true. Although it's kind of a trick question because these places don't actually exist even in the play. Dr. Hughball gets Letoy's players to convince the Joyless family that they're in the antipodes within a play ithin a play, which is super confusing, but it's not real. Great.

**Paul:** It's complicated.

**Alaina:** Doing great, doing great. If this was, um, "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me," I'd tell you you if have two out of three then you can still win. All right. This is our last question. So this is, this is for the game here, Paul.

True or false? Letoy flirts with Diana who then later reveals that she's his secret daughter. But only after we make sure that she's rejected his advances.

**Paul:** I'm gonna say true. Cause that's wild.

**Alaina:** True. You're so right.

**Brie:** You're such a good guesser, that's impressive.

**Alaina:** Yeah, have you seen some Shakespeare plays? Um, yeah. This is a pretty icky surprise in this play that Diana is secretly the gentleman, Letoy's long lost daughter. His flirtation and her subsequent refusal is shown to be a part of Joyless' healing process.

**Paul:** Wow.

**Alaina:** Wow. Wasn't that fun? Thanks for joining us.

**Paul:** Thanks for having me. Whose voice do I get on my voicemail?

**Alaina:** Mine.

**Paul:** Perfect.

**Brie:** All right. That was a lot of fun, Alaina. Thank you for that game. Now we're gonna shift our focus to the characters in the play and the role they play in this story.

Dr. Hughball is the doctor that Joyless hires to cure his son. Hughball is a precursor to the modern psychiatrist. In the Old Globe production of *The Antipodes* in 2000, Gerald Freeman chose to include a stereotypical psychiatrist's couch. This design choice leaned into Freudian psychoanalytic psychology with their take on the doctor. Psychoanalysis focuses on the unconscious. Today, we call this the subconscious, which can refer to thoughts we aren't aware of that motivate our behavior, but is most commonly associated with dreams. This choice has particular resonance during the play within a play. Dr. Hughball uses wine and a sleeping potion mixture to drug Peregrine and get him to "The Antipodes."

**Alaina:** Air quotes again.

Brie: I'm using air quotes because The Antipodes is a figment of Peregrine's imagination. The play itself is an alternate version of reality, like a dream.

**Alaina:** Now before we go too far down the Freudian rabbit hole. . . . I'm sure Freud talks about them somewhere, maybe.

**Brie:** Rabbit holes? I mean I think he is in and of himself a rabbit hole.

**Alaina:** But we should probably go over the type of illness that the Joyless family has.

**Brie:** Great point, Alaina! Hughball "diagnoses" Peregrine, Martha, and Diana. I use the term diagnose *very* loosely because he does so without meeting them, which by today's standards is a huge ethical no-no. Based on Joyless's reports, Hughball decides that Peregrine has melancholy, which is similar to what we call major depressive disorder or depression.

**Alaina:** Hmm, and we should probably note that the person telling a doctor he is concerned about his son's melancholia is named Joyless. So like, projecting, much?

**Brie:** Too true, Alaina. Then, Hughball diagnoses Joyless with horn madness, which is basically an irrational form of jealousy and both of the women, Martha and Diana, with general madness. Martha shows symptoms of madness, but Diana doesn't have any, and yet she gets the same diagnosis as Martha, which reveals Hughball's gender bias in diagnosing.

**Alaina:** That's so interesting. I do feel like to fully understand madness from an early modern perspective, we'll have to get into a little bit of historical context, which is perfect because you have some research on this from your thesis.

**Brie:** I sure do. In order to understand madness in the early modern period, we have to understand the four humours. To do that, I'll be pulling some information from Gail Kern Paster's body of work. In her article *The Unbearable Coldness of the Female Being*, Paster explains that "Humoral theory distinguished four main types of human temperaments – the sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. Differences in temper resulted from the

predominance in a person's body of the humors of blood, yellow bile, black bile, or phlegm."(Paster 423) In other words, humours are liquids in the body, like blood and spit. According to the early moderns, everyone has humours, but people with a humoural imbalance, or too much of one humour, were mad. The liquid that a person had an abundance of would determine which form of madness they had. For example, the early moderns believed that an abundance of black bile caused melancholy, which is what Peregrine has. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton describes melancholia as "a sort of melaina (black) chole(choler) from black Choler. A bad and peevish disease, which makes men degenerate into beasts." This quote explains the negative view of melancholy during the early modern period and reveals the ways in which the early moderns dehumanized mad people. We can relate this to *The Antipodes* in the following way. Peregrine is 25 years old, but his father goes to a doctor on his behalf, without his consent, and the doctor agrees to diagnose and treat Peregrine before meeting him. In this part of the play, Joyless is treating his son like a sick dog that he is taking to the vet. Peregrine's autonomy is taken away again when Dr. Hughball drugs him with a wine and sleeping potion mixture.

**Alaina:** Do we think that we can relate this to the early modern view of Bachus as the Greek god of wine and health?

**Brie:** Good point, Alaina. The Renaissance was an odd mix of antique and medieval ideas, so it's hard to tell what Brome was going for in that moment. Now that we've covered the problematic early modern view of melancholy as it relates to Peregrine, let's shift our focus women and madness. In her book The Body Embarrassed, Gail Kern Paster explains that "The language of humoralism, thoroughly suffused by signifiers we assign to ethical discourse, establishes an internal hierarchy of fluids and functions within the body which is fully assimilable to external hierarchies of class and gender." In other words, the theory of the humours was heavily influenced by the class and gender hierarchies of the early modern period. Kern is a modern historian with a retrospective view. In order to understand the early modern conception of madness, I'm pulling another quote from *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* which is as follows: "Of sexes both, but men more often, yet women misaffected are far more violent and grievously troubled."

Here, we see that Burton believes men experienced madness more often, but that when women did experience madness, it was more severe. We can connect this quote to Dr. Hughball's gendered treatment of the Joyless family. When Hughball learns that Martha and Peregrine have been married for three years, but haven't yet consummated their marriage, without asking any questions, he says: "I shall find her the madder of the two then." Before meeting Martha or Peregrine, he diagnoses Martha with a more severe form of madness than her husband.

**Alaina:** That is so true. Do you think that Robert Burton is the only early modern writers with this kind of sexist view of madness?

**Brie:** Good question, Alaina. Burton certainly isn't the only one. In *The Conception of the Body of Man,* which Helkiah Crooke published in London in 1615, he expresses a similar view. He writes: "It behoued….that man should be hotter, because his body was made to endure labour and trauell, as also that his minde should bee stout and

inuincible to vndergoe dangers, the onely heating whereof will driue a woman . . . out of her little wits" (Crooke 274) In other words, women have little sanity to begin with, so something small can easily push them over the edge.

**Alaina:** Hmm. It seems that these ideas may have influenced Richard Brome when he was writing the character of Martha. I mean when we first see her meeting Barbara, she asks her how to get children and asks Barbara about her own children. She also is shown in these scenes to be barely able to carry on a conversation outside of questions of children and sex and often breaking down into laughter, while Peregrine, on the other hand, interacts with the doctor and the actors verbosely, questioning the world they're going to visit, etc. Peregrine is generally shown as more active and conversational. Martha appears actually in a far fewer number of scenes throughout the play and I think only has two lines total when she does reappear onstage again after being air quotes 'cured.'

**Brie:** I think the comparison between Peregrine and Martha is really useful, because both characters have moments where they are oppressed because of their illnesses, but in different ways based on their gender. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* Burton states that "We are subject to infirmities, miseries, interrupt, tossed and tumbled up and down. And he that knows not this and is not armed to endure it, is not fit to live in this world,"(Burton 126) which is the early modern equivalent of saying "get over it." Joyless echoes this sentiment when he tells the doctor about Peregrine's condition. He says: "Tis found a most deep melancholy…I wish he had gone abroad to meet his fate." In both of these quotes, we see that it wasn't uncommon for the early moderns to say that a mad person was better off dead, which is so ableist. So the stigma surrounding madness during the early modern period was two-fold: both men and women were judged for being mad, but women were judged more harshly due to the sexism in the period.

**Alaina:** You know it's really interesting that Peregrine's madness partly manifests in a desire to travel. I think we think of travel as like fun vacation time today in our era, but travel in this period, in the early modern period comes with a xenophobic twist. Peregrine's desire to travel is therefore considered detrimental two times over: it would take him away from his wife and would expose him to dangerous ideas and you know "outsiders" that may change him. By the way, when he does travel, he immediately goes to setting the upside down world of the antipodes right. Which is quite colonialist.

**Brie:** Oh yeah.

**Alaina:** We won't get into that today, but fulfilling his desire to travel would keep him in a way from fulfilling his heteronormative duties of reproducing and continue his family's lineage. And do you feel like that this shows gender difference and madness here?

**Brie:** I'd say so. The early moderns believed that melancholy could cause impotence in men, which may be why the simple fact that Martha and Peregrine haven't yet had children is enough for Hughball to diagnose Peregrine with melancholy. *In Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours*, Noga Arika explains that the early moderns believed that people, quote "who were not sexually active might be in danger of going mad," end quote. So sex and madness had some strange associations during the Renaissance.

**Alaina:** This is all so interesting, but to get into this specifically, I think that we should look at some text from the play. And we're gonna look at Act 1 scene 1. So first, we're going to circle back to how madness is depicted and then dive into the way that gender influences the diagnosis and treatment of madness in the play. We're going to start by taking a look at one of Barbara's speeches, who I don't know if we mentioned her much previously, but she is Blaze's wife, who we have definitely not talked about. But they're kind of one of the couples associated with the doctor and Letoy, but this is when she's describing Martha's mad behavior.

**Brie:** Yeah. Martha's scene with Barbara happens after Dr. Hughball and Joyless discuss Martha's condition, so we see the male perspective on madness first and then the female perspective. Before Martha enters, Barbara tells the audience about the manifestation of her mental illness in the following quote. She says:

"Indeed, she's full of passion, which she utters
By the effects, as diversely as several
Objects reflect upon her wand'ring fancy,
Sometimes in extreme weepings, and anon
In vehement† laughter; now in sullen silence,
And presently† in loudest exclamations."

Here we see that Barbara considers being openly emotional in a public space as a symptom of madness. This comes up again when Barbara and Martha speak to each other. Let's take a look at a bit of that dialogue and um, do you wanna read Martha A. Little?

**Alaina:** Yeah, sure.

**Brie:** Okay. And I'll read Barbara again.

**Alaina:** Great.

***Martha*** When I shall know, I'll tell. Pray tell me first,
How long have you been married?

***Barbara*** *[Aside]** Now she is on it.
*[To MARTHA]** Three years, forsooth†.

***Martha*** And truly so have I;
We shall agree I see.

***Barbara*** If you'll be merry.

***Martha*** No woman merrier, now I have met with one

Of my condition. Three years married, say you? Ha, ha, ha!

***Barbara*** *[Aside]** What ails she, trow?†

***Martha*** Three years married. Ha, ha, ha.

***Barbara*** Is that a laughing matter?

***Martha*** 'Tis just my story.

And you have had no child; that's still my story. Ha, ha, ha!

***Barbara*** Nay, I have had two children.

***Martha*** Are you sure on't?

Or does your husband only tell you so?

Take heed o'that, for husbands are deceitful.

***Barbara*** But I am o'the surer side: I am sure

I groaned for mine and bore 'em, when at best

He but believes he got 'em.

***Martha*** Yet both he

And you may be deceived, for now I'll tell you,

My husband told me, fac'd me down† and stood† on't,

We had three sons, and all great travellers,

I never saw 'em, nor am I such a fool†

To think that children can be got† and born,

Trained* up to men, and then sent out to travel,

And the poor mother never know nor feel

Any such matter. There's a dream indeed!

***Barbara*** Now you speak reason, and 'tis nothing but

Your husband's madness that would put that dream

Into you.

**Brie:** What I find really interesting about the scene is the repetition of laughter and the word story. I mean, first of all, you know, forcing laughter is its own challenge for an actor.

**Alaina:** As we just heard…

**Brie:** But I think it brings up interesting questions about, you know, how do we as actors depict madness in a way where we're, you know, not laughing at them. But maybe there is situational comedies. So we're laughing with them and, you know, are we portraying a stereotype or, you know, a three dimensional person.

**Alaina:** Right.

**Brie:** And Richard Brome doesn't really set us up for success in this scene. I mean, he is really writing Martha in this sort of stereotypical way.

**Alaina:** Mm-hmm. It's so interesting the quotes that you used. I feel like rereading this now, even though we've looked at it before, it's quite obvious whether he was influenced or not by these particular texts, it's very much lining up with stereotypical depictions of madness in the period.

**Brie:** Mm-hmm. And you know what's interesting too, just looking at the text and this repetition of laughter and the word story, Martha's laughter always came with three ha's at the end of her line. The succession of laughter also happens three times in a row in the same section. In the same section, Martha used the word "story" twice. Structurally, this play is about the use of a story (a play within a play) to cure its characters. In terms of genre, *The Antipodes* is technically a comedy, so one could argue that the theme of this play has to do with the healing power of laughter. Since the characters that are "cured" by the play are "mad," (debateable) this may spark conversations regarding the use of comedy as a coping mechanism for mentally ill individuals.

On a granular level, we can use this scene to determine how people in this world define madness. Barbara thinks that Martha is mad because Barbara cannot understand the reason for her laughter. Within the context of the play, madness is associated with an emotional reaction without a perceived reason. Barbara not only speaks to Martha's madness, but also references Peregrine's madness. When Peregrine tries to convince Martha that they have had children even though Martha and Barbara know that they don't, Barbara decides that he is mad, too. So, in *The Antipodes*, the play not the place, madness can refer to someone expressing emotions with seemingly no reason, but it can also mean believing in a false reality.

**Alaina:** Hmm. Well now that we've covered the meaning of madness in this world, I think it's time we move onto some of the connection between madness and sexuality in The Antipodes, what do you say?

**Brie:** Let's do it!

**Alaina:** You all may remember that in the beginning of this episode, in our true or false game, we talked about how Martha is referred to as a virgin, but also describes a liaison with a woman. So we are going to look at the moment right after that in the same scene between Martha and Barbara, wherein Martha says: And here I'll be reading Martha.

***Martha*** Pray tell me, for I think nobody hears us,

How came you by your babes? I cannot think
Your husband got them you.

***Barbara*** *[Aside]** Fool, did I say?
She is a witch, I think. *[To MARTHA]** Why not my husband?
Pray can you charge† me with another man?*

***Martha*** Nor with him neither. Be not angry, pray now.
For were I now to die, I cannot guess
What a man does in child-getting. I remember
A wanton† maid once lay with me, and kissed
And clipped†, and clapped† me strangely, and then wished
That I had been a man to have got her with child.
What must I then ha' done, or (good now, tell me)
What has your husband done to you?

***Barbara*** *[Aside]** Was ever
Such a poor piece† of innocence! Three years married?
*[To MARTHA]** Does not your husband use to† lie with you?

***Martha*** Yes, he does use to lie with me, but he does not
Lie with me to use† me as he* should, I fear,
Nor do I know to teach him. Will you tell me?
I'll lie with you and practise, if you please.
Pray take me for a night or two: or take
My husband and instruct him. But one night.*
Our country folks will say, you London wives
Do not lie every night with your own husbands.

***Barbara*** Your country folks should have done well to ha' sent

Some news by you; but I trust none told you there

We use to† leave our fools to lie with madmen.

**Alaina:** And scene. So this is one example we have here of a non-monagamous relationship, but Peregrine also cites an example of a non-monogamous relationship similar to the way that Martha does here, but Dr. Hughball quickly labels that as mad as well since Peregrine is discussing travels again…

***Peregrine*** Mandeville writes

Of people near the Antipodes, called Gadlibriens*,

Where on the wedding-night the husband hires

Another man to couple† with his bride,

To clear the dangerous passage† of a maidenhead.

***Doctor*** 'Slid, he falls back again to Mandeville madness.

**Brie:** It is problematic that the mad characters happen to be the ones that express interest in queer and polyamorous relationships. I mean, what is that trying to say? And this was a section that we went back and forth about including, because we couldn't find any, historical, historical information about queerness in the period. And our professor Molly was really helpful in explaining that people in this period didn't really identify themselves in the way that we do today in terms of sexuality. But we didn't wanna engage in a bi or poly erasure, so we felt like it was important to highlight there are characters in place from this period that are talking about these things.

**Alaina:** Yeah, I think actually Richard Brome himself includes a couple of other illusions to queer characters within his work, which is a great thing for our listeners to research if they are interested in looking into this further. So I feel like we have had a pretty long chat about madness and gender expression of madness. But I think we should wrap up cuz we were almost running out oftime. We could probably talk about this forever, but our play here concludes when Peregine and Martha are tricked into consummation of a heteronormative relationship, which is framed by a happy ending. So they're no longer considered mad after they consummate their relationship, which I think is really important, especially for the reason that we were just talking about.

**Brie:** Right. It sort of like allows the audience maybe to even forget about these lines. You know, it brings up questions about, you know, productions cutting those lines because they technically aren't driving the plot forward.

**Alaina:** Right.

**Brie:** Nothing really comes of them unfortunately. Um, and this whole movement of, you know, maybe by curiosity or queer curiosity, Into a patriarchal, heteronormative relationship reinforces the idea that madness can be cured by social conformity.

**Alaina:** Absolutely. So, If it feels like the gendered stereotypes that we are still stuck with today about madness began way earlier than you thought, you would not be the only one. I, for one, am fascinated that this play is firmly situated, as we said in the city comedy genre, but also within the patriarchy. And it's, it's true with so much drama of the period. And like we said, we could talk about this forever, but…

**Brie:** we're just gonna leave you with this. We hope our listeners may view portrayals of madness in *The Antipodes* with a new awareness of the effect that gender stereotypes have on the early modern conception of madness.

**Both**: Thank you.