Vanessa Corredera, Northwestern University
 "The Face of Knowledge: Shakespeare and Physiognomy"

Both historians and literary scholars have often noted the importance of physiognomy—the practice of discerning character through bodily features, particularly the face—to eighteenth and nineteenth-century England. In comparison, very little work has been done on the practice's presence in early modern England. In this paper, I contend that the tenets and discourse of physiognomy—specifically, the ability to discern crucial information about another by "reading" his or her face—pervaded early modern culture, including Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. It was an important tool, I will show, for acquiring knowledge about a range of information concerning another's inward self and identity: his temperament, her character, his aptitude for a particular vocation, perhaps even the secrets of her heart. I thus trace the presence of various physiognomic concepts across a range early modern dramas, with a particular focus on Shakespeare's works, in order to demonstrate that due to physiognomic theories, the face was an important epistemological site that helped shape how early moderns understood themselves and how they negotiated their interpersonal relationships.

Jean Feerick, Brown University
"The Imperial Graft: Horticulture, Hybridity, and the Art of Mingling Races in *Henry V* and *Cymbeline*"

Tracing a tendency in early modern culture to work through questions of human difference with reference to plant life, this essay explores moments in Shakespeare's corpus that lean on the motif of grafting to signal the merits of England/Britain as a hybrid nation whose imperial strengths derive from its ability to mingle aspects of different cultures, languages, and peoples. I first read a series of horticultural tracts to demonstrate a widespread tendency to privilege the hybrid attributes of grafted fruits over a plant's "natural" offspring, before turning to an analysis of *Henry V* and *Cymbeline*. In these two plays I locate a shared interest in the practice of grafting as a trope for England/Britain, one that emphasizes the nation's hybrid origins as its defining strength. Both plays challenge endogamy as a principle for England/Britain, urging instead the dynamic exchange of qualities figured by the graft.

N. R. Helms, University of Alabama
"The Mind's Construction: Shakespearean Character and the Art of the Face"

In *Macbeth*, Duncan claims that there is "no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (1.4.11-2). He has just been betrayed by Cawdor and is about to be betrayed by Macbeth.

Duncan clearly has difficulty reading the minds of others, and he knows it. That does not mean that no such art exists, however. How might Shakespeare have conceived of the "art to find the mind's construction in the face"? In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault argues that one of the major forces in Renaissance epistemology is analogy, the link between dissimilar things. He also argues that the formation of knowledge involves tracing these links, reading the language of analogy in the world. The art of mindreading is the technique of finding these signatures in the face, linking the face to the mind, and thus sorting out the microcosm of an individual. Unlike physiognomy, which follows a set of rules to infer the mind's construction from the face, Shakespeare's art links the face and the mind through the observation of dramatic characters.

James Hirsh, Georgia State University
"*Hamlet* and Empiricism: A Prospectus"

Noting that that Shakespeare frequently depicted characters who arrive at erroneous conclusions, some commentators have erroneously concluded that Shakespeare was a radical skeptic who believed that drawing inferences from evidence is an inherently futile endeavor. In almost all cases, however, characters arrive at erroneous conclusions *not* after rigorously testing ideas against evidence but rather by *failing* to do so. That human beings often make computational errors is not evidence that arithmetic is an inherently futile endeavor. *Hamlet* encourages playgoers to adopt a rigourously empirical frame of mind by depicting a series of experiments that are designed by characters supposedly to test hypotheses but that are conspicuously flawed.

Jasmine Lellock, University of Maryland
"Dissolving Flesh and Bodies of Knowledge: Shakespeare's Experimental Poetics"

Henry S. Turner has recently argued that, for Shakespeare, theatrical performance was a kind of "poetic laboratory" (*Shakespeare's Double Helix*), and he elsewhere describes early modern theatre as a machine that generates artificial forms of life and therefore realigns our understanding of the relationship between literary and scientific epistemologies ("Life Science: Rude Mechanicals, Human Mortals, Posthuman Shakespeare"). This paper builds upon Turner's model of Shakespeare's theatre as an experimental technology by arguing that Shakespeare's plays replicate the very forms and processes of natural philosophical endeavors, acting as an experiment at once in poetic form and epistemology. Shakespeare's theatre transforms such experimentation into play, converting scientific epistemology into ludic discovery, and back again. For example, Hamlet's desire for his "solid" (or "sullied") flesh to "melt, thaw, and resolve into dew" invokes an alchemical lexicon that likens his philosophical malaise to the process of distillation. As both a material and philosophical way of knowing the world, alchemy provides Hamlet with a heuristic by which to evaluate and think through the problem of intellectual suffering engendered by embodiment. By playing with the related forms of alchemy and anatomy, Shakespeare presents theater as an epistemological laboratory in which characters can experiment with the meaning of and problems associated with embodiment. With its actors as characters, theater itself performs a kind of alchemy, a reverse distillation, or sublimation, by which disembodied, imagined figures take solid form. As a result, Shakespeare's theater is also

an experimental form, a way of experiencing, understanding, and modifying the material world. In particular, it is a tool for making sense of the embodied, spiritual human form.

Jenny C. Mann, Cornell University
"Ovidian Poetics and the Confounding of Knowledge in *Titus Andronicus*"

I am currently working on a larger project that explores how Renaissance writers conceive of the unique "force" of linguistic eloquence, a force that can "impress" itself on readers more readily than other forms of knowledge, thereby stirring them to action. Tales of Orpheus, the mythological poet who could tame beasts, soften rocks, and make trees listen to his song, express this conviction and endow it with the authority of ancient wisdom. But Renaissance allusions to Orphic song frequently suggest that poetry confounds rather than clarifies the production of knowledge about the body, the state, and the natural world. I want to explore the idea that poetry confounds attempts to produce authoritative knowledge by focusing on Marcus's reaction to Lavinia's rape in Act 2, scene 4 of *Titus Andronicus*. When faced with his niece's mutilated body, Marcus tries to make sense of her transformation by alluding to a series of Ovidian tales, including the myths of Philomela and Orpheus. Scholars have generally regarded this speech as horribly indecorous, in that it transforms Lavinia's violated body into an aesthetic object via the tropes of Ovidian verse. Without contesting this assessment, I will consider the ways in which the figure of Orpheus enables and also thwarts Marcus's attempt to convert Lavinia's body into an object of knowledge.

Ian Munro, University of California, Irvine
"Wit and Knowledge in *Othello*"

This paper explores the relation between knowledge, judgment, and wit in *Othello*, principally through the figure of Iago. As recent theorists have observed, wit begins in error, exploiting glitches in the operation of linguistic rules; through such manifest errors it redefines and reorganizes the semantic possibilities of language. I begin by reading Iago's notorious comment, "I am not what I am," as a singular performance of wit that inaugurates a game of representation: in a kind of perverse cogito, it is only as a man of wit that Iago can observe that he is not what he is, and his identity is vested in exactly the mechanism of that observation. As a blasphemous variation on God's ontological tautology, Iago's statement reinforces the play's central crisis of judgment, in which knowledge of the world through the interpretation of signs is rendered impossible. Through these issues, the paper suggests different ways of understanding the innovation of Iago, linking him less with the medieval Vice and the *zanni* of *commedia dell'arte* than with another category of metatheatrical character, both novel and proliferating on the English stage: the critic.

Ryan Singh Paul, Allegheny College
"'The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning': Sovereignty and Knowledge"

In my contribution to our seminar, I am interested in examining the relationship between the management of knowledge and the legitimation/operation of sovereign power. I wish to consider Shakespeare within the contexts of early modern and contemporary discourses of sovereignty. In the works of Jean Bodin, for example, a fundamental contradiction seems to exist within sovereignty: it operates within historical temporality, yet at the same time Bodin's understanding of sovereign power attempts to remove it *from* history. That is to say, Bodin attempts to theorize sovereignty as a power that transcends its own history. I will argue that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare documents this paradox and demonstrates how power attempts to justify itself through the control of historical knowledge and memory. The contests over power play out as contests over memory: who has the power to call up the past, to shape the narrative of history, and to erase the past through enforced forgetting. I then plan to bring Shakespeare into dialogue with contemporary political theory; I will argue that *The Tempest* anticipates Agamben's theories of the state of exception: the exceptional event, always located in the play's pre-history, serves as a temporal puncture that knits the past with the present, simultaneously justifying sovereignty within history while also attempting to elide that history by figuring sovereignty as an always already justified imposition of order and right over a fallen world.

Robert Pierce, Oberlin College
"Thinking about Ethics with Brutus"

Is being ethical more a matter of cognition or of volition? When we do something wrong, is it because we do not know better or because we do not want to do right? When we become better people, is it because we have come to understand the meaning of being human, or is it because we pull up our socks? In classical ethics one can roughly distinguish a Greek tendency to consider ethical issues cognitively and a Roman tendency to emphasize duty and self-control in response to obvious ethical truths. Shakespeare portrays Brutus as striving for moral excellence, and he and the other characters judge themselves and one another. Shakespeare's drama provides a way of thinking through how we try to be ethical and how we make ethical judgments. Of special importance to our understanding of Brutus as an ethical being are his decision to assassinate Julius Caesar, his quarrel with Cassius, and his suicide.

Stephen Spiess, University of Michigan
"Epistemology and the Whore: Prostitution, Archive, and Knowledge in Early Modern England"

On April 14th 1546, an unknown representative of the English crown walked the streets of London, broadcasting the terms of Tudor Royal Proclamation 265, "Ordering London Brothels Closed." The proclamation signaled a decisive shift in English social and sexual policy, yet the conditions surrounding its publication remain a mystery. We are left to imagine why the act came about, how Londoners received the proclamation, and how its meanings materialized in the practices of everyday life. Such lacunae prove especially significant given what scholars do "know" about English prostitution: first, that while the licit brothels were erased from the "official" urban landscape, illicit sexual commerce persisted well into the seventeenth-century;

and second, that representations of "prostitutes" and "whores" saturated the stages and pages of Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

In this paper, I consider how such concomitant presences and absences implicate prostitution in larger problems of knowledge production, both in that era and our own. In so doing, I illustrate how scholarly approaches to, and desires for, an historical archive might mask what was productively opaque in early modern London; examine how notions of absence have inspired present-day hermeneutic practices; and discuss how the situated nature of this knowledge production informs my methodology—including my contention that language itself serve as an archive, and a site for epistemological contestation, for studies of London prostitution. Throughout, I demonstrate how absence and opacity might be approached as constitutive features of, and potential heuristics to, "sexual knowledge" in Shakespeare's England.

Andrea F. Trocha-Van Nort, US Air Force Academy
"Shakespeare, Sententiae, and Sentencing"

Renaissance interest in proverbs and *sententiae* is reestablished with each reading of an early Shakespearean work. Aphorisms and wise saws abound as purveyors of certainty, directly relaying to observers the many contemporary sources of apprehension. Indeed, these pearls of wisdom viewed through the distortion of generalization unveil, interestingly, what Bacon would later call the Idols of the Tribe, those hindrances of human nature that secure certitude at the cost of the truth. *Sententiae*, seen under this light, sentence an outlying individual for not living up to the expectations of a particular society. This paper explores the architecture of *sententiae* as a controlling device, especially in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Coriolanus*. We will also consider metaphorical sentencing of the major characters based on the *inventio,* before discussing Shakespeare's skeptical approaches to these forms of knowledge.

Travis Williams, University of Rhode Island

"Hyperbolic Multiplication: Rhetoric and the Female Mathematician in The Merchant of Venice"

In this paper, I present a connection between mathematical activity in *The Merchant of Venice* and the strategies of rhetorically constructed gentlemanly identity that govern the homosocial world of the play. I argue that Portia insists on occupying an independent position in this world through her expert deployment of those strategies, which are themselves aligned with her expert practice of mathematics. Mathematical moments in early modern drama (I briefly analyze Jonson's late play *The Magnetic Lady* as a contrasting case) are indicators of newly developing social orientations of mathematics that would, along with new technical and philosophical movements, remake the discipline in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I suggest that Portia is a female mathematician in order to draw attention to the means by which she might also be understood as a female gentleman.

Marshelle Woodward, University of Wisconsin-Madison
"'Do you call, sir, your occupation a mystery?': Crafting Sacred and Profane Knowledges in *Measure for Measure*"

This paper examines "mystery" as a category of moral, vocational and theatrical knowledge in *Measure for Measure*. A term that encompassed the now obsolete meanings of "trade, profession, calling" and the specialized "art and craft of a trade" as well as more familiar definitions such as sacrament, allegorical meaning and divine knowledge, mystery pointed to multiple and highly contested sites of knowledge production in early modern England. *Measure for Measure*, a play deeply concerned with questions of craft, vocation and sacrament, surprisingly puts the language of "mystery" in the mouths of two decidedly profane characters - Abhorson and Pompey, the hangman and the bawd. In a comic scene that echoes similar moments in works by John Lyly, Robert Greene and Ben Jonson, these two debate whose profession might more properly be termed a mystery. My paper considers the larger resonance of this brief exchange within both the world of the play -- in which nearly every character can be said to practice the mysteries of the hangman or the bawd -- as well as within Shakespeare's theatrical practice.

Adam Zucker, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
"*Twelfth Night* and the Broken Jest"

My paper uses Sir Andrew's trouble with jests and jesting to explore the place of stupidity both in *Twelfth Night* and in contemporary criticism's encounter with the formerly obvious, but now obscure humor of early modern England. Taking myself as a model, I attempt to locate the place of error or idiocy both in a contextual/historicist and in a formalist reading of *Twelfth Night*. I use the play's punning deployment of the term "natural"—a legal and informal term for a mentally underdeveloped or childlike adult, but also an invocation of the commonsense and practical—as a point of overlay between these two approaches. Wise fools and winking jesters have no place in the argument: this paper is meant to be an exploration of unreflective error and deep, unforgivable blockheadedness.