

## Abstracts

### **Group 1:**

**Jennifer R. Rust** (Saint Louis University)

“Plague, Providence and Pastoral Power in Early Modern Print Culture”

This paper examines the genre of seventeenth century “cheap print” broadsides known to modern scholars as *Lord Have Mercies*. These popular texts appropriated the official mortality data produced by the city of London and reframed it in both medical and religious terms. These ephemeral documents regularly appeared amidst serious plague outbreaks (including in 1625, 1636 and 1665). On one hand, these early modern broadsides popularize new numerical ways of knowing the illness and health of the body politic that anticipate the modern sciences of demography and epidemiology. On the other hand, these broadsides promulgate a numeracy deeply invested in the revelation of a providential cosmos and an etiology of disease dependent on supernatural forces. In the context of early modern London, the plague numbers reproduced on these broadsides are artifacts of complex ecclesiastical-governmental interactions, which illuminate a unique political theology of pastoral power. These documents aim to make visible providential patterns as much as objective realities of the urban pandemic. The *Lord Have Mercy* broadsides represent a significant experiment in governmentality that blends emergent and residual forms of pastoral power to create a new space for individualized self-care, one that nonetheless remains dependent on collective structures of care in church and state governments. Moreover, these broadsides reveal how the numbers that form the building blocks of the social and medical sciences that begin to emerge in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are initially weighted with a providential transhistorical significance even as they also offer a new political technology for managing mass populations.

**Wesley Kisting** (Augusta University)

“A Different Kind of Devilishness: Redefining Evil in Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*”

Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) so thoroughly rejects belief in the supernatural that commentators have often accused Scot of atheism. In his own time, these reactions condemned his rejection of the authority of learned and godly men; but later critics reached similar conclusions by reading the *Discoverie* through the lens of a presumed opposition between “science” and “religion.” In their eyes, Scot had embraced rational empiricism (“science”) over belief in spirits (“religion”) but cloaked his observations in religious terms to avoid exposing his full radicalism. Such claims continue to this day, but they reflect a serious misreading of the *Discoverie*, in which Scot offers an alternate understanding of spiritual evil that may have been a significant influence on William Shakespeare. Although scholars generally assume Scot was an important influence on Shakespeare, the evidence is scant. The plays make no reference to distinctive names,

spells, or other particulars from the *Discoverie*, and only faintly echo Scot's general descriptions of magic; nevertheless, "the very accumulation of such echoes ... pleads in favour of Shakespeare's knowledge of [Scot's] book." I contend that some of the most compelling echoes have escaped notice due to misreadings of Scot. In fact, the *Discoverie's* highly original view of spiritual evil bears a striking resemblance to Shakespeare's depictions of women, magic, suspicion, prosecution, and redemption in *The Winter's Tale*. These parallels suggest Shakespeare's interest in both the perils of the imagination and the ambiguity of magic and illusion may owe a considerable debt to Scot.

### **Group 2:**

**Sarah S. Keleher** (Colorado College)

"Andreas Vesalius and the Soteriological Body"

When Andreas Vesalius published the landmark anatomy treatise *De humani corporis fabrica* in 1543, anatomy was in the process of transforming into a recognizably modern form, with human dissection yielding detailed and typically accurate information about bodily structures and functions. Because modern, Western science defines itself as secular, we may intuitively map the development of modern anatomical science onto the historical process of secularization, tracing a mutually causal connection between the two such that secularization seems to enable scientific progress while scientific progress perpetuates secularization. The lingering legacy of Andrew Dickson White's "conflict thesis" would certainly nudge us in that direction. Yet, as scholars such as Andrew Cunningham and Katharine Park have demonstrated, Christianity and dissection-based anatomy were deeply interconnected in early modern Europe rather than violently opposed. This paper builds on the work of scholars such as Cunningham and Park by demonstrating that the model of the body that Vesalius constructs in *De humani corporis fabrica* is a soteriological model. Vesalius embeds human anatomy in the salvation narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and resurrection. I argue that the soteriological model of the body creates an intractable knowledge problem for Vesalius because, as a fallen anatomist working with fallen cadavers, he cannot directly access versions of the body that are crucial to embodied salvation history—for example, the prelapsarian body; the living, ensouled body; and the resurrection body. I suggest that Vesalius responds to that epistemological problem by positioning the resurrection body as the endpoint of anatomy: the point at which the perfection of the body will render perfect knowledge of the body accessible to the anatomist.

**Becky S. Friedman** (University of Pennsylvania)

"Shylock's Living House: Early Modern Science and Knowledge Production in *The Merchant of Venice*"

When Shylock tells Jessica to "stop my house's ears (I mean my casements)" in Act 2 of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, he recalls contemporary scientific anatomical illustrations which represented the body as a "living house." Tobias Cohen's *Ma'aseh Tuvivyyah*, for example, is one premodern European medical diagram that juxtaposes a

played human form alongside a blueprint of a building; the two structures resemble each other in shape and thus offer the viewer an entry point for understanding corporeal design and functionality. Shylock's invocation of the body-as-house is fitting in a play that so blatantly broaches questions about Jewishness as a matter of spiritual or physical difference. And yet, this anthropomorphic citation is one of the comedy's numerous references to the sciences and academic activity. These interpolations complicate the popular anti-Jewish representations of the Elizabethan theater, especially as they are most often deployed by Shylock himself. My paper explores *Merchant's* interest in Jewish intellectualism and the scientific language that came to be associated with European Jewry, and examines the ways that Shylock manages to satisfy dramatic conventions which called for profane humor while signaling the knowledge production that was increasingly linked to early modern Jewish culture.

### **Group 3:**

**Jacqueline Cowan** (Red Deer Polytechnic)

“A ‘Goldmine of Inspiration’: Literature’s Role in the Science and Religion of Richard Dawkins and Thomas Sprat”

When Richard Dawkins attempts to bridge the current divide between the humanities and the sciences, he adopts the rhetoric of an early modern thinker he might reject in other contexts. By proclaiming that “[t]he poetry is in the science” in his best-selling book *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder* (1998; 2000), Dawkins offers the poetic imagination as a new solution to the supposed incommensurability between literature and hard science. I identify the roots of this line of rhetoric in the works of the devout English Bishop and early Royal Society Fellow, Thomas Sprat. While the early Royal Society Fellows and Richard Dawkins were criticized on different grounds, they both suffered the ire of churchmen. For both Dawkins and Sprat, recourse to poetry helped resolve the religious tensions that plagued their respective forms of science. In the seventeenth- and twenty-first century alike, scientists appropriated the power of poetry to legitimize their authority within the realm of religion. Rather than rely on persistent scholarly narratives of the conflict among science, religion, and literature, I show how Sprat's and Dawkins's vexed appropriations of the poetic imagination entangle science, literature, and religion, even as these studies diverge into different disciplines.

**Paul Adrian Fried** (Independent Scholar)

“Kuhnian Paradigm Shifts and Emmaus Untethered in Elsinore & Venice”

Outdated paradigms are like outdated regimes: If old paradigms have a hold on individual and collective minds of a body of scientists or body of faith, or are imposed by authorities, many will continue serving the old paradigm even if inconsistencies in data or in texts hint that the paradigm may be in need of correction or replacement. Thomas Kuhn's work in paradigms and scientific revolutions finds that, after heightened awareness of a flawed or incomplete scientific paradigm, there follows a period of crisis and creativity to find new or

revised paradigms that might better account for anomalies that the old paradigm could not. Scientific Paradigm shifts during and immediately preceding Shakespeare's time sometimes required an untethering from too-literal or reified readings of certain biblical texts. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* convey awareness of shifting astronomical, economic, political, and biblical-hermeneutic paradigms. The courtroom scene of *Merchant* and the graveyard scene of *Hamlet* display heightened Kuhnian paradigm creativity in their untethered echoes of the plot structure of the Luke 24 tale of two disciples on the road to Emmaus meeting a stranger later recognized as Jesus. These scenes also represent moments in which a previously hinted but flawed Christ-figure is replaced. In this way, they function analogously to paradigm shifts. Important implications include insights about the limitations of some previous Shakespeare studies relating to the Bible and religion.