

*Thursday Seminar*

**Caitlin Burge**

“Man or Myth? Folklore as Allegory in John Heywood’s *Play of the Wether*”

Written c.1533, John Heywood’s court interlude, *Play of the Wether*, offered a comical – if sharp – commentary on recent changes in the reign of Henry VIII, focusing particularly on the king’s advisors and the state of religion in Tudor England. Framed as a series of interactions between petitioners representing social groups in early modern England asking the god Jupiter (characterizing Henry) to change the weather to suit their needs, the entire play is managed and directed through Jupiter’s newly-appointed servant, Mery Report, whose witty dialogue contains most of Heywood’s critiques-as-comedy.

Though Mery Report is listed as Vice in the opening character list and shares a number of qualities with the medieval and comic vice on stage, this paper will argue that Mery Report is better understood as the folklore character Robin Goodfellow, and a theatrical predecessor to Shakespeare’s Puck of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Invoking physical and verbal devices, Heywood both relies on and plays with a courtly audience’s familiarity with contemporary folklore beliefs to convey additional layers of meaning about the interludes pivotal characters. By outlining how Heywood uses folkloric ideas to frame Mery Report not merely as mischievous and untrustworthy, but potentially dangerous, this paper will demonstrate how this has specific and sinister connotations for the play’s critique of Thomas Cromwell, Mery Report’s off-stage counterpart, hinting not merely at heretical beliefs and underhanded motives, but associations with the devil himself.

**Kenneth Crowther**

“The Devil’s Instrument: Stars, Science and Satan in *King Lear*”

Edmond’s disparaging rebuke of his father’s devotion to the heavenly portents, as the “excellent foppery of the world” in Scene 2 of *King Lear* suggest an emerging scientific mind throwing off the magical thinking of medieval Catholicism. But by the end of the play, Edmond’s stance – whether scientifically accurate or not – has been proven wrong as the prognostications are fulfilled. Contrasting beliefs about the power of the planets prolonged well into the seventeenth century, and as late as 1650, publications such as John Ruane’s *Brief Declaration Against Judicial Astrology* claimed those that practice this “wicked Art ... become the Devils

Instruments to delude others”. This paper considers the fluctuating field of astrology in the early seventeenth century, accounting for the interplay between the stars and God’s sovereignty, human free-will, diabolical oppression, and the humors; all of which were often considered in proto-scientific terms. Rather than excellent foppery, did the stars’ capacity to incline but not compel suggest a material interactive reality, or did Gloucester and Lear, as the play’s most astrologically allied characters, accidentally become the Devil’s instruments?

### **Kaitlyn Culliton**

“*Midsummer and Merry Wives: Fairies in Shakespeare’s Drama*”

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Theseus dismisses the strange tales that the lovers tell as “shaping fantasies” and “fairy toys” even as his argument for rationalization is belied by the fairies that dance through the palace to bless the royal weddings. However, Theseus’ speech articulates some of the contemporary sentiments circulating around supernatural figures. Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597), written only a few years apart, reveal a change in the way that fairies are depicted in early modern drama. While the fairies in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are real within the fiction of the play, the fairies in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are counterfeits, impersonated by the titular wives in order to thwart Falstaff’s advances. While witchcraft became a source of increasing concern after the reign of James I, the fairies undergo a shift in early modern consciousness, becoming increasingly thought of as the product fanciful stories rather than real entities. I suggest that this shift is portrayed in early modern drama through their increasing connection to domestic spaces of early modern homes.

### **Ciara Fulton**

“The Commercial Appeal of “Merriness” in Laurence Price’s *Five Strange Wonders of the World*”

Laurence Price’s 1674 chapbook, *Five Strange Wonders of the World*, imagines the late seventeenth-century English world in short, but hierarchical lists of five that order and categorize anatomical bodies, the natural world, humors and emotions, social behaviors, and relationships. Known mostly as a balladeer, Price’s work was popular during the explosion of print in the latter half of the seventeenth century, mainly during the English Civil War. However, despite Price’s seemingly immense popularity in print culture, *Five Strange Wonders* seems to indicate a new shift in how information and morality were paired and visualized in the era. In fact, Neil Rhodes argues early modern literacy was uneven as it was messy; defined not only by emergent practices of reading and writing across social classes, but also “entwined with older, idiomatic oral traditions of popular culture such as jokes, insults, ballads, maygames, parodies of formal rhetoric and clever impersonations.” This text, easy to read and absorb, offers insight into how moralized polemics of the early modern world could be simplified through ordered lists, and

thereby visualized and digested by a populace consisting of mixed literacies. I point to Price, and this particular example of his work, to call upon us as readers to re-consider how this text could possibly encourage not only the evolution of visual literacy, but also how commercialization of print played a key role in its development. With this in mind, focusing on Price's use of "pleasure" and "merriness," I argue that what we can see in Price's strangely visual, but short text is an opening into the larger print and commercial culture of early modern England: Reading is pleasure, but pleasure is also profit.

### **Ali Madani**

"Indigenous Albion and the Fiction of Giants"

When historians in England around the turn of the seventeenth century undertook modernizing the record of the land and inhabitants of the British Isles, they did so with the application of exacting standards of material evidence, eye-witness testimony, and hard fact. These measures, imported from the domain of jurisprudence and from French innovators like Jean Bodin, made for a more reliable and serious reckoning with a past that had come to serve ever more centrally as the basis for a growing nationalism and nascent empire. Yet when historians like Raphael Holinshed, William Camden, or John Selden scrutinized the narratives of ancient Albion and its earliest settlers, they were pressed for flexibility. Conjectures accommodated where evidence lacked, at least in matters as significant as who first peopled the territory: Trojan Brutus and his followers arrived by ship to find a race of giants in need of eradication. Once eliminated, Brutus claimed the land and from him descended kings. The historical evidence for this account being so flimsy, serious historians required methods to qualify belief. Not so for the broader public or nobility who granted these stories foundational status. I'm interested in this paper to explore the conjectural standard and narratives of indigeneity and genocide that employ its regulation. How did the reckoning with Albion's giants set the terms for other theaters of settler colonialism in Ireland and North America? And how did the modern boundaries of history and fiction arise in dialogue with indigenous encounters?

### **John Mucciolo**

"Prospero's Proper Magic: Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and an Early-modern Aristotelianism"

To regain his dukedom, Prospero, with his servant Ariel, uses magical Art to control the action, even such action outside of his control. When, for example, the king's ship happens to sail by the island, he uses this "most bountiful Fortune" to his advantage, or when Caliban's conspiracy escapes his notice, Ariel, at Prospero's direction, easily distracts Caliban and his confederates from their plot to assassinate him. Not one of the play's actions associated with Prospero's "project" (5.1.1) is extraneous; otherwise, as he explains to Miranda about the drawn-out exposition, "this story/Were most impertinent" (1.2.137-38). In this way, Prospero's magical storm must be by Ariel "perform'd to the point" (1.2.194), with "not a hair perish'd" (1.2.217),

and “[e]xactly” (238). All magical acts Prospero enjoins Ariel to perform “[w]ith diligence” (1.2.306). Prospero’s obsession with the pertinence required to effect his magical Art contrasts sharply with the negligence in Milan, where, “being transported/And rapt in secret studies” (1.2.76-77), he lost his dukedom.

A play so tightly constructed and action so narrowly focused on accomplishing Prospero’s “project” (5.1.1) is a function of the play’s strict teleology, in the Aristotelian sense of that word. That Prospero employs magic to accomplish his end, however, would seem associated more with Neoplatonism than Aristotelianism. Aristotle’s philosophy, even his *Metaphysics*, is grounded in what is possible in Nature; magic is outside the limits of his scheme. This paper will argue there is evidence to the contrary. Early modern Aristotelianism, as Charles Schmitt, among others, has persuasively argued, is not pure. Prospero’s magical art coheres with resurgent Aristotelianism(s) current in England at the time of the play. Under certain conditions, one version even allows magic, along with other occult sciences usually associated with Neoplatonism, a place in Aristotle’s natural philosophy. Given its historical purchase, this Aristotelian magic, an Art adjunctive to Nature, cogently aligns with Prospero’s use of proper magic in the play.

### **John Parker**

"*King Lear* and Kepler's Demonology"

This paper will reexamine the proposal that Edmund's rejection of astrology reflects a cultural trend toward the more scientific astronomical views associated with Copernicus. One part of the paper will examine the longstanding Christian opposition to astrology as a form of magic. The other parts will look at Kepler's role as court astrologer, his participation in the student theater at Tübingen, his appeal to James I for patronage in 1607, and his *Somnium* (a demonological dream-vision composed in 1608 that, he believed, led to his mother's prosecution for witchcraft). I want to build on the idea that early modern science, magic, and theater cannot be disentangled. My sense is that Kepler sought the same refuge in James' court that the King's Men found: namely, a sanctuary for the exploration or even the production of preternatural phenomena that was insulated from persecution by the chief arbiter of the distinction between licit and illicit magic.

### **Marie Roche**

“Numerology and Sixteenth-Century Philosophical Traditions in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”

This paper explores the intricate interplay between numerology and sixteenth-century philosophical traditions in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (LLL), arguing that Shakespeare’s engagement with numerical symbolism extends beyond mere arithmetic to encompass geometric and spatial configurations. While the play is often regarded as a satire of intellectual pretension, its structure

and themes align with Renaissance traditions that linked mathematics, language, and metaphysical meaning. Drawing on Pythagorean numerology, Platonic abstraction, and Judeo-Christian mystical thought, *LLL* employs groupings of three and four characters, direct numerical references, geometric metaphors, and riddles to explore balance and harmony in love. The paper examines how these numerical patterns reflect Renaissance conceptions of cosmic order, with particular attention to the symbolic significance of letters and numbers as pathways to knowledge. By situating *LLL* within this broader philosophical framework, the analysis reveals Shakespeare's deliberate synthesis of classical and early modern traditions, demonstrating that numerical structures are not merely incidental but fundamental to the play's intellectual and thematic design. Ultimately, *LLL* emerges as a profound meditation on the interplay between reason and passion, abstraction and experience, positioning Shakespeare as an architect of metaphysical inquiry through dramatic form.

### **Amos Rothschild**

“*2 Henry VI* and the Magic of Preferment: Status, Masculinities, and the Object(s) of Learning”

Erudition is a tense subject in Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*. In the first scene alone, Duke Humphrey laments the learned labor lost with Anjou and Maine, Cardinal Beaufort warns the peers about Gloucester's studied and “bewitch[ing]” eloquence, and the Duke of York declares that king Henry's “church-like humours” and “bookish rule ha[ve] pulled fair England down” (1.1.82–83, 87–91; 156; 246, 258). Queen Margaret later critiques her husband's education in terms even more explicitly gendered than York's, mocking Henry's “pupil”-like submission to Gloucester and representing his devout study as impotent and unmanly beside Suffolk's “courage, courtship, and proportion” (1.3.47–48, 55). By the time Jack Cade takes the stage in Act Four heading a rebellious force whose primary agenda involves anti-intellectual violence, it is clear that the play offers a sustained interrogation of the tense relationship between erudition, masculinity, status, and power. *2 Henry VI* thus registers mixed admiration and anxiety concerning education's increasing importance to early modern England's constructions of status and masculinity, dramatizing a world in which learnedness might be both rewarded with social preferment and mystified as dangerous (and socially problematic) magical power; indeed, the play valorizes courtiers and clerks who apply their learning to civic ends, but simultaneously reveals how the material accountments of learnedness—books, inkhorns, and, in particular, paper—can equally serve as props to recast such exemplars of civic humanism as conjurers determined to unman their countrymen and unmake their country.

### **Mackenzie Tomlinson**

“Astronomical Imagery and Disorder in the *Henry IV* Plays”

The *Henry IV* plays are laden with astronomical imagery, featuring a significant number of references to the sun, stars, and comets, especially when addressing order and power. Alongside the extended metaphor of the King as the sun, characters invoke the irregular motions

of comets and stars, equating the disorderly motions of these planetary bodies with the breakdown of social hierarchy throughout the plays. This paper will investigate the nature of these references in the context of popular and scientific beliefs about cosmology during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including the shift away from the Aristotelian system of fixed spheres, which consisted of separate realms of perfect stability. Phenomena such as comets and eclipses disrupted this view and presented omens that garnered an array of interpretations, from impending disaster to ultimate glory. Motions in the heavens were widely understood to have consequences on Earth, making references to stellar bodies such as the “revolting stars” especially significant.

This paper will discuss the nature of beliefs about the heavenly objects referenced in the sequence. When read in light of the developments in cosmology taking place during his lifetime, Shakespeare’s references to the strict and immutable sense of order portrayed by stars and the spheres appear more tenuous. This is especially relevant to the references found in plays which are primarily concerned with fundamental breakdowns in order. The King and Prince couch their assertions of hierarchy with cosmic imagery that does not simply replicate Ancient beliefs, but emphasizes the breakdown of previously fixed systems. Early Modern views of cosmology were more complex than older models allowed, and the destabilization of the statuses of heavenly bodies may lead to a more nuanced reading of the astronomical imagery that is particularly abundant in the *Henry IV* sequence.

### **Matthew Walsh**

“Conmen, Brute Beasts, and Fond Fools: Imagining Animal Entertainment Otherwise”

The most (in)famous early modern animal entertainer was Morocco the horse, who was trained by his master, Bankes, to dance, perform basic arithmetic, identify and interact with members of the audience, play dead, feign injury, and pantomime various affects, including despondency and gratitude. Bankes and Morocco’s performances are survived primarily by the accounts of skeptics who sought to redescribe these feats from the behavior of preternaturally gifted horse to the orchestrations of a sly and talented conman. These skeptics argued that Morocco performs the motions of a reasoning mind, yes, but it is Bankes’s mind that dazzles audiences, not that of Morocco. Only “fond” people are credulous enough to confuse the former with the latter. This paper takes a different view. Reading against the grain of the skeptical account above, I seek to reimagine the agency of performing animals and audiences alike by disentangling the exponent of animal mind from charges of irrational superstition, rapt credulity, and phantasmagoric projection. If we admit that those attending Bankes and Morocco’s performances were not passive, unwitting observers but active, engaged players, then what modes of discernment might have been available to them? How do these modes of discernment interface with the aesthetic, and even ludic, pleasure of watching animals perform? I puzzle these questions to ultimately claim that popular animal entertainment is not distantly removed from philosophical inquiry into nonhuman mentation. The two are indissociably linked.

## **Natalia Zelezinskaya**

### **“The Demonic and the Divine: the Color Blue in *The Tempest*”**

The use of the color blue in early modern drama is both elusive and multifarious. The blue livery of servants, the blue bonnets of Scotsmen, and the blue bruises contribute to the referential meanings of the word and detract from the symbolic blue. Focusing on its symbolism the color may require approaching it through chromatic oppositions for they are speculative concepts rather than natural phenomena.

The opposition of blue and red appears in European oeuvres with the interest in Cabalistic, Hermetic and alchemical metaphysics of similitudes. Ramon Llull’s unifying philosophy provides blue with the lines of correspondences, which – due to the alchemical magnum opus and spiritual transmutation – enter the imagery of English poetry. The chromatic symbolism of perennial philosophy gradually becomes common knowledge and finds its way to theater audiences. In plays, it gets involved with political and social contexts, takes on more complexity when the interacting with the “color of celestial and divine light” (Pastoureaux), and acquires negative connotations under the influence of the demonization of magic, misogyny, and witch-hunt. The symbolism of the color blue can be most fruitfully investigated in relation to *The Tempest* with its iconic “blue-eyed hag”.

*Friday Seminar:*

## **Vanessa Barcelos da Silva**

### **“Busirane’s racialized performance of male witchcraft in *The Faerie Queene*”**

Significant attention has been paid to the wise Merlin as well as the evil Archimago in *The Faerie Queene*. This paper, on the other hand, revisits a less popular character, the “vile enchanter” in FQ’s book III – Busirane. I investigate how his performance as a male witch challenges traditional portrayals of men as learned magicians (such as Shakespeare’s Prospero or Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus). Although Busirane resorts to magic books and is surrounded in his lavish mansion by a pantheon of classic gods, they offer him little help; he soon succumbs to the powers of the chaste female knight Britomart. This essay is an investigation of Busirane as an exemplary case of failure in the performance of a male ‘enchanter’. I argue that the representation of Busirane as half-sorcerer, half-beast creature reveals his ultimate vulnerability: his racialization unveils his condition as a ‘grotesque wizard’. It opens space for the possibility of his representation as a fallible, unmanly magician.

## **Roya Biggie**

### **“Cleopatra’s Occult Knowledge in Shakespeare’s Egypt”**

This paper begins by demonstrating that works, such as Johann Lange’s *Epistles* (1544), Herodotus’s *History* (trans. 1584), Della Porta’s *Natural Magic* (1558, trans. 1658), and

Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (1531, trans. 1651), credit ancient Egypt for the development of natural magic. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare returns this epistemology—and occult sympathies and antipathies, in particular—to the banks of the Nile. Characterizing Cleopatra as an occult practitioner, Shakespeare draws on historical lore that underscores her occult and medical expertise—sources that include Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (trans. 1579), Appian of Alexandria's *An Aunvient Historie* (trans. 1578) and Claude Paradin's *Heroicall Deuises* (1591). As I show, Cleopatra relies on her knowledge of cross-species sympathies to temper the pain of Antony's absence and to ensure a painless death. She imagines, for example, the occult affinity between Antony-like "tawny" fish and Egyptian music, an attraction that implies and potentially strengthens the triumvir's acculturation and transformed physiology. While the sympathies Cleopatra alludes to are not always realized on stage, Shakespeare additionally reminds audiences of the sympathetic potency of the maternal imagination, the capacity of women to shape fetal matter and create monstrous forms. In so doing, the play develops associations between the hybrid creatures of Cleopatra's mind and the couple's "unlawful issue[s]," a link that is crystallized in the play's final act as Cleopatra cradles the serpentine "baby at [her]breast." This moment, in addition to others, blurs English conceptions of sympathy and antipathy, and may have elicited in English audiences uneasy cross-cultural identifications as they recognized their own domestic knowledge (and its perversion) in the hands of Egypt's cunning queen. Although Cleopatra defamiliarizes the paradigm, she proffers a vision of interracial exchange that stands in counterpoint to Roman and English fears of its degenerative effects.

### **Rinku Chatterjee**

"The Magus on the Early Modern Stage"

Ms. Vb 26 at the Folger Shakespeare library is titled *Book of Magic, with instructions for invoking Spirits etc. 1577-1583*. While the manuscript does contain spells, and descriptions and drawings of angels and demons, it is set within a Christian framework, and has much "practical" content -- elaborate astronomical charts, alchemical tabulations, and speculations about how the movement of heavenly bodies affect human life, including agriculture. This manuscript is one of the few surviving grimoires that the Early Modern magus typically carried. On stage, Doctor Faustus and Prospero famously rely heavily on their magical books, and the knowledge contained within them, arguably similar in content to Ms Vb 26. Yet in the denouement of both *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Tempest*, Faustus and Prospero relinquish their books. In his last moments of agony, before the spirits of the underworld condemn him to an eternity in hell, Faustus futilely says that he would burn his book. Prospero promises to drown his book before resuming his duties as the duke of Milan. My paper proposes to explore why the magus's source of power, his magical knowledge, is also popularly condemned as the source of his downfall.

### **Dori Coblenz**

"Studios Artisans: Experimental Knowledge in *Doctor Faustus* and *Paradise Lost*"



*Doctor Faustus* and *Paradise Lost* both examine the limits of knowledge and the role of experiment and personal experience in generating new understanding. While this tension has been explored in religious and political terms, the texts also engage with broader concerns about what the historian of science Pamela Smith terms “artisanal epistemology” – the creation of knowledge through bodily labor and practical experience. This form of knowledge, as Mary Thomas Crane argues, was part of a larger crisis in late sixteenth-century England, as traditional, intuitive understandings of the world gave way to new, often disorienting systems of knowledge shaped by advances in physics and other disciplines. This paper explores the deed of blood scene in *Doctor Faustus* and the temptation scene in *Paradise Lost* to argue that Marlowe and Milton, despite their religious differences, participated in many of the same conversations and concerns. *Doctor Faustus* stages a contest between university learning and practical magic, dramatizing the breakdown of resemblance-based epistemology in favor of rationalism and empirical representation. *Paradise Lost*, while ultimately reaffirming divine order, similarly grapples with the limits of human inquiry, particularly through Eve’s engagement with agriculture, labor, and sensory knowledge. This paper situates their works within contemporary anxieties over experimental knowledge, scientific progress, and the changing relationship between human agency and divine authority.

### **Meg Duell**

“Lifting the Veil of Intrenchant Air: Meteorological Enchantment in *Macbeth*: Shakespeare, Kurosawa, and Coen”

This project is a comparative study of representations of the elemental, particularly air and materiality, in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and two film adaptations: Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood* and Joel Coen’s *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

It has often been posited that if Shakespeare were alive today, he would be a filmmaker employing every technique at his disposal to enchant his audiences. And just as the advent of the printing press revolutionized the dissemination of mass media for 16th and 17th-century audiences and readers, film—still a relatively young medium—has made Shakespeare’s dramas widely accessible, especially in the digital age.

While much has been said about the way *Macbeth* capitalized on and alluded to King James I’s obsession with the occult and his involvement in the prosecution of so-called witches, the play’s representations of elemental enchantment are often in conflict with the monarch’s ideas about the occult and nature. By recovering some of *Macbeth*’s metaphysical and meteorological context—especially conceptions of elemental magic described in James’s *Daemonologie*—nuances around ideas of succession, sovereignty, and social marginalization can be restored.

Similarly, Kurosawa and Coen’s engagement with their shooting environments, materials, and visual and theatrical lineages shapes their representations of elemental enchantment,

reflecting modern ideas and anxieties about contemporary intersections of nature, the supernatural, and technology.

### **Susan Dunn-Hensley**

“Demonic Knowledge: Scientific Advances and Magic on the Early Modern Stage”

In the twenty-first century, the rational world of science seems far removed from the world of the supernatural /magical. However, for much of history, the desire for human advancement and the desire to wield magical / supernatural power have been intertwined. In a Christian theological context, both the scientific and the magical could prove dangerous for the human soul, for both could lead the practitioner to presume to “play God.” Writers of the nineteenth century, including Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne explored human overreach in a time of great scientific and technological advances. In their works, scientific hubris intertwines with interest in the occult, creating a sense of moral danger that transcends the rational and ethical problems that attend new scientific advances.

In this paper, I wish to briefly consider the antecedents of these nineteenth-century explorations of scientific hubris as they appear on the early modern stage. In particular, I will consider the dangers that the quest for knowledge in *Dr. Faustus*, *The Tempest*, and *Macbeth* poses to the social order, including gender and social hierarchies. In each work, characters interact with the spiritual / magical world to gain hidden or forbidden knowledge. The paper will consider early modern beliefs about the acquisition of occult knowledge, including a brief examination of Tudor astrology texts and witch trial transcripts. The paper will also consider Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s argument in *Monster Theory* that monsters are a construct and a projection of culture. If we apply this theory to the early modern stage, we will find deep anxieties at the heart of these plays, including religious uncertainties, the destabilizing aspects of global exploration, and dynastic changes.

Although *Macbeth* says little about the quest for scientific knowledge, it, nonetheless, evokes early modern anxieties about secrets and plots – human and supernatural – to overturn order. Further, in so far as the play evokes the Gunpowder Plot, it engages with both the scientific and the occult, for Protestants connected Catholicism with witchcraft, and, as Gary Wills reminds us, gunpowder, which was “considered the devil’s invention, revealed to a friar-scientist,” had the same “eerie and numinous reputation in the Renaissance that atomic weapons acquired in the 1950s.”

### **Judy Hefferan**

“To purge infected blood”: The significance of mandragora and main de gloire in *The Duchess of Malfi*

*The Duchess of Malfi*, a Jacobean revenge tragedy by John Webster, abounds with weird occult phenomena: the dead man’s hand; mandrake madness; witchcraft; familiars; remedies

straight out of books of secrets; lycanthropy; prescient nosebleeds; a ghostly graveyard echo; and the waxen figures Ferdinand stages to look like the Duchess's family in death. However, the predominant focus of the play is rank, infected blood. Within the early modern context, blood, or at least the spiritus it contained, exhibited occult and wide-ranging powers, capable of both influencing and liable to be influenced by others. It had the power to cure or corrupt at a distance. The Duke of Calabria, Ferdinand, is obsessed with the purity of his family's blood. He believes that his twin sister, the Duchess, has turned her once noble blood 'rank' by cavorting with a commoner. And yet, it is his blood that is corrupted, as his escalating madness makes him perform more maleficent deeds until, diagnosed with lycanthropy, he is reduced to skulking around graveyards and killing his brother, the Cardinal, in a hallucinatory frenzy. Why does Ferdinand employ the Mandragora and 'dead man's hand'? What drives Ferdinand to either act like the lycanthrope or become infected with that disease? Why does he think he can cure the lechery in his sister's blood by killing himself and his brother? This paper will draw on preternatural philosophy and knowledge from books of secrets to determine how and why Ferdinand's blood is affected.

### **Miranda Hannasch**

"When the cocatrice beholdeth him selfe": deadly reflections in *Anatomy of Melancholy*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Changeling*"

The early modern basilisk was widely known to be both real and unreal: though its existence was attested in Pliny's *Natural History*, Andrea Mattioli concluded it was impossible to know its "true history," and in 1622, Benedetto Ceruti's elaborate engraving of a basilisk in an apothecary's museum cautioned that "this is neither a basilisk nor a dragon, but a fish." Nevertheless, the emblem of the basilisk had wide cultural currency in early modern symbolism: it could stand in for deadly visions that killed even as they deceived, for monstrous births engendered by unnatural couplings, and above all for beautiful yet treacherous women.

This essay will examine how the instability of the basilisk figure made it a potent metaphor for two-sided depictions of women: its deadly "eyes" could represent the sympathetic poisonings of a bawdy woman's lust, yet its contested existence allowed the possibility that the true infectious agent was the male viewer: that, like Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, it was the male viewer who infected himself through his melancholic imaginings of a nonexistent "spider in the cup."

In examining the use of the basilisk in contested visions of women, I first use Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* to trace contemporary theories both of infection through vision, imagination, and witchcraft, all of which were signaled by basilisk symbolism. In the process, I illustrate the difficulty which confronted the man who tried to distinguish between the three types of infection. Next, I examine literary uses of the basilisk figure to explore its role as both a damning indictment of female figures and a destabilizing force which can incriminate the

supposed victim as well as the accused woman. My analysis brings together imagery from Stuart libels of Frances Howard, *The Changeling*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

### **Wendy Beth Hyman**

“A Looking-glass called a Theatrical Glass”: On Seeing Ghosts in Dee, della Porta, and *Macbeth*”

“Mine eyes are made fools of the other senses / Or else are Worth all the rest.” So says Macbeth, reeling, as he tries to clutch a floating dagger that his murderous thoughts have conjured. Is it physically there before him, or a psychological projection, “a dagger of the mind”? This is partly a question for directors—do they stage the thing floating in the air or not?—but it is also an epistemological question. How do we know what we know about what we see on stage, and is the ocular sense the greatest asset or hindrance in our coming to that knowledge? Over the last several decades, it has become customary to locate the Jacobean theater within disciplinary regimes of order, transparency, and control. Writing of Inigo Jones’ perspectival set designs, for instance, Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong write that “the assumption behind it was that a theatre is a machine for controlling the visual experience of the spectator, and that the experience is defined by the rules of perspective.” More recent critics, too, identify English drama as “a significant imperial antecedent and catalyst because it helped to remap the spatial imagination of early modern England.” But if the stage was increasingly engineered to control vision and instrumentalize imperial order, how do we account for the repeated expressions of bewilderment, amazement, and disorientation on the Jacobean stage—indeed for the spectral ambiguities that adhere to that ostensibly veridical sense, vision? This paper will argue that the spatial logics of vanishing point perspective by no means delimit what characters or audiences see in Shakespeare’s late plays, which are far more marked by the ghostly motions of the camera obscura than they are the Albertian grid. Macbeth’s inability to distinguish spectral vision from a mental figment is exemplary of this vertiginous moment in intellectual history, where optical events and “magical” “visions” (Dee, della Porta, Le Loyer, etc.) were so often one and the same. A simpler way of putting this is that I am interested in the proximity of “vision” and vision in Macbeth’s encounters with the supernatural world. What might it mean to understand the floating dagger, Banquo’s ghost, the witches’ spectral prophesies, and the *mise-en-abîme* of mirrored kings as optical effects—or rather, as magic tricks?

### **Jesse Lander**

“Shakespeare’s Stage Magic in *The Tempest*”

While plenty has been written about the magic practiced by Prospero in *The Tempest* and much has been said about the play’s deployment of special effects, these two topics have tended to proceed on separate tracks. On the one hand, a question of cultural and intellectual history; on the other hand, a question of theatrical technology and its history. The first track invariably involves variations on the familiar theme of the Renaissance Magus, a figure exemplifying what

Frances Yates termed the “will to operate.” In contrast to such grand narratives about Western subjectivity, theater historians offer pedestrian accounts of winches, squibs and cannonballs. Intent on recovering the technology that made certain effects possible, theatre historians have understandably had less to say about the connection between stage magic and the kinds of magic that attracted the attention of Yates. In this paper, I will put these two lines of inquiry together in order to suggest that the practical, mechanical challenges of the theatre had profound intellectual and cultural entailments. Having established that the special effects in *The Tempest* provoke a series of questions about discerning truth from illusion, I make the argument that the play’s special effects are not merely puzzles, that they are in the first instance occasions for affective arousal. This argument focuses on the dynamic of appearance and disappearance, considering first Ariel as Harpy making the banquet disappear by a “quaint device” and second the revelatory appearance of Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess in the play’s final scene. The first of these is the result of sophisticated machinery while the second is simply a matter of “discovering” the two actors who have been hidden from sight; the first an occasion for disappointment, the second for delight, but what they share is an awareness that stage magic was fundamental to the experience of early modern theater.

### **Kara McCabe**

#### “Medea’s Sisters: Prophetic Witchcraft on the Early Modern Stage”

The prophetic witch’s natural magic lacks the grotesque ritual of other forms of witchcraft performed in early modern dramas. In *The Prophetess*, Delphia does not traffic in cauldrons filled with fingers and snakes. Instead, she claims to be able to bring down the moon and shape the future. First published in the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, *The Prophetess* has received little critical attention. Recent work focuses on the role of music in the play (Wong 2013), but there has been no scholarly attention to the role of witchcraft and prophecy in the play. My analysis of Delphia’s role as the titular prophetess will examine how the play inherits the form and function of its witchcraft from earlier dramas. The goal of my research is to examine the relationship between Medea, as depicted in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and Delphia. By doing so, I hope to be able to make a broad gesture toward the argument that early modern depictions of witchcraft inherit a significant portion of their texts and contexts from ancient verse. There are two helpful links within this project: Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* and Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Middleton uses the *Discoverie* as his source material, quoting Scot’s translation of Ovid in Hecate’s spells. The spells connecting Ovid, Scot, and Middleton help to move the references to natural magic into the early modern period, clearing the way for Delphia’s prophecies. Examining lesser-known plays like *The Prophetess* will help to broaden our collective understanding of witchcraft and how early modern plays fit into a textual lineage.