

TOLERANCE AND DISSENT
Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies
Ninth Biennial Conference
University of Fribourg
Wed-Fri, 24-26 June 2026

ABSTRACTS

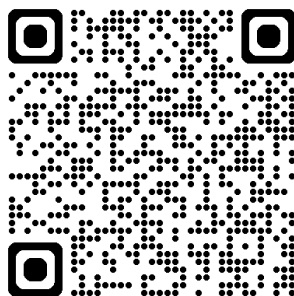


Organisers:

Kilian Schindler, Elisabeth Dutton, Honor Jackson
(University of Fribourg)

samemes2026@unifr.ch

www.samemes2026.com



KEYNOTE LECTURES

Alexandra Walsham (University of Cambridge)
Records of Prejudice?

Finding Tolerance in Early Modern Archives of Religious Persecution

Wednesday 24 June, 11:00–12:00

Chair: Kilian Schindler

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

This lecture brings two historiographical trends into dialogue: the surge of recent work on the history of the archive and studies of the Reformation as a religious movement that fractured Christendom and fomented sectarian tensions and precipitated outbursts of persecution, but that also, paradoxically, created conditions in which forms of pluralism, fellow-feeling and ultimately toleration took root. The religious records and archives generated by dissident churches and sects in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were records of repression and prejudice. They reflect and project a binary and polarised view of the world rooted in the notion that there was a single route to salvation and a single form of truth. They privilege conflict, violence and rupture; they highlight the legal discrimination meted out to dissident minority groups. Predicated on the idea of mutual hostility between true and false believers, they encourage us to see the period as fraught with antagonism and confrontation. They are structured to occlude evidence of charity, forbearance and mundane transactions that ameliorated tensions on the ground, not to mention more cooperative, collaborative, amicable and congenial social relations. Deployed as dossiers to demonstrate the animosity of their enemies, they are archives that channel hostility and foster antagonism and leave a legacy of hatred and distrust. Underlining the benefits of reading both ‘along’ and ‘against the archival grain’, this lecture will argue that, ironically, the same bodies of documentary evidence also illuminate the contours of compassion and accommodation in early modern English society. In doing so, it adopts a flexible, capacious and expansive concept of the term that not only transcends the boundary between legal documentation and other forms of text, but also acknowledges a continuum between orality, manuscript and print and between library and archive.

Adrienne Williams Boyarin (University of Victoria)

Literary Tolerance? English and Hebrew Poetry in Late Thirteenth-Century Norwich

Thursday 25 June, 9:15–10:15

Chair: Rory Critten

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

In the 1280s, two Norwich poets composed long metrical retellings of the first two books of the Bible: one anonymous Christian produced the Early Middle English *Genesis and Exodus*, and the Jewish Meir ben Elijah produced the Hebrew *Who is Like You? (Mi cha'mocha?)*. These poets were in community with each other, writing in a shared urban environment and using the same scriptural sources. A comparative look at their works allows us to ask new questions about the stakes of such community, both in the Middle Ages and in our modern cultural histories. What might it look like to sketch a literary history of Norwich—a UNESCO City of Literature boasting “over 900 years” of literary production—that accounts for the city’s notable legacy of Christian-Jewish tolerance and intolerance? and how might we account for Jewish-Christian proximity and neighbourliness around poetry and scripture, even at the height of England’s anti-Jewish policies? Employing a critical imagination and informed speculation, this talk will show how reading these poets together creates new opportunities to assess Christian-Jewish polemics and encounters.

Suzanne Conklin Akbari (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ)
The Virtuous Pagan in the 'New World':
Indigenous Encounters with Christian Missionaries on Lenape Lands

Thursday 25 June, 15:45-16:45

Chair: Elisabeth Dutton

Room: RM 01 C-01.101

This presentation begins with an account of the figure of the “virtuous pagan” in medieval European literature from the twelfth to the fifteenth century before turning to first-person accounts of Presbyterian and Moravian encounters with Lenape people in their traditional lands, which cover present-day New Jersey, southern New York, eastern Pennsylvania, and northern Delaware. Concluding with an overview of present-day collaborations with Lenape people on a global book history project (“[Hidden Stories](#)”), this presentation seeks to place the discipline of Medieval Studies in dialogue with Indigenous Studies, with a particular focus on the role of confessional identity in the colonial context, especially as this intersects with discourses of race and racialization.

Sharon Achinstein (Johns Hopkins University)
‘Two opinions doe not well on the same Boulster’: Milton, Divorce, and Civil War

Friday 26 June, 9:30-10:30

Chair: Antoinina Bevan-Zlatar

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

It was during the period of civil war that Milton himself suffered his wife’s abandonment, just a couple of months after their wedding. Reasons for Mary’s departure have been speculated: Milton was an impossible husband, aloof, introspective. She was tempestuous and ill-willed. The household was noisy with children, and there were cries of their being beaten in his tutorials. The seventeen-year-old wife was, perhaps, too young and missed her family. Certainly, the divorce writings depict an incompatible and inconsolable loneliness. John Aubrey is crisp on this matter: ‘She was a zealous Royalist, and went without her husbands consent to her mother in the Kings quarters.’ Aubrey comments with a proverb: ‘Two opinions doe not well on the same Boulster.’

It is the usual account that Milton wrote his four tracts on divorce out of this personal experience. Yet the personal story he saw as part of a tripartite defense of liberty: ecclesiastical, domestic or personal, and civil. With them, he became known as a radical ‘divorcer,’ with ideas dangerous to the commonwealth. In this talk I take Milton as a theorist of civil war through his divorce writings, where he develops an intimate understanding of the etiology of hatred, division, and separation. In short, there civil war and divorce become aligned.

POLITICAL RESISTANCE AND THE LIMITS OF TOLERANCE

Wednesday 24 June, 13:30–15:00

Chair: Kevin Curran

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

Izzi Strevens (University of Bristol)
‘If that I do speak the word, how dare ye once say nay?': Execution and Dissent in
Thomas Preston’s *Cambyeses*

Twentieth-century criticism of Preston’s early Elizabethan play *Cambyeses* argued that Preston promotes unwavering obedience to the monarch even in the face of brutal tyranny. Recently, however, this has come into question. Imeke Murakami has argued that Preston advances a ‘quasi-

democratic commonwealth'; Paulina Kewes has suggested the play is a Marian allegory that seeks to discomfit Elizabeth's government for their complicity; Maya Mathur has proposed that the rustic interludes, previously dismissed as comic relief, in fact show rebellion and regicide as an alternative to aristocratic passive resistance. I concur that the play surely does not promote obedience. In this paper I will argue that the play's insistent depiction of public brutal violence urges the audience to consider the town square and the scaffold as a particular locus of monarchical tyranny and a testing-ground for the limits of civic tolerance. I suggest that far from promoting civic obedience, Preston's play condemns complicity and encourages active dissension in the face of tyranny.

I will examine three tyrannical murders which all promote the value of dissent. The murder of Praxaspes' son criticises aristocratic inaction and as Kewes suggests, subliminally condemns Elizabeth's own complicity in the Marian regime; Smirdis' murder reveals the inefficacy of conforming to tyranny; the Queen's murder can be read as a martyrdom and perhaps recalls the executions of Cicely Ormes three years prior to the play's performance.

This paper will argue that Preston's depiction of brutal violence is more than sensationalism: execution is positioned as the inevitable consequence of tolerating tyranny.

Isobel is a first-year PhD student in the Departments of Theatre and English at the University of Bristol. Her doctoral research examines dismemberment on the early modern stage from the perspectives of stage materiality, classical reception, and the medical humanities. She is interested in the nature and use of violence of all forms in the early modern period, but her work particularly focuses on the relationship between the stage, the scaffold, and the anatomy theatre.

Catherine Jenkinson (University of Oxford)
Descriptions of Dissent: the Antwerp Citadel and London

In 1577, the people of Antwerp attacked the citadel the Spanish had recently built to overawe them. News of this act of rebellion spread rapidly. This paper will track English responses to Antwerp's act of insurrection, particularly amid English anxieties about wider Spanish encroachment and repression. As Londoners heard reports from Antwerp, the news was both familiar and unrecognisable. London had its own citadel: the Tower of London. Yet though there had been attempts to seize the Tower, there were never efforts to destroy it, and the Tower held a different place in public consciousness. Despite its continued role as a state prison and administrative headquarters, the Tower had a ramshackle quality as an outdated medieval bastion now part of the city's fabric. The newness of the construction of the Antwerp Citadel by occupying forces ensured a contentious relationship with the city. In considering the ways in which the people of London understood and described the attack on the Antwerp Citadel, this paper examines the ways in which Londoners spoke about armed dissent and toleration abroad and the extent to which they used this news to comment on their own local landmark of royal and military power and their own political structures, too. By thinking about these two cities' fortresses separated by only c. 200 miles, it is possible to draw comparisons about the process and politics of communicating 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' dissent in the late sixteenth century and beyond. What constituted oppression abroad was different from what it meant domestically, as was the threshold for when and where armed resistance was permissible. It was one thing to encourage rebels abroad. It was another to suggest that it might ever be appropriate at home.

Catherine Jenkinson is College Lecturer in History and Julian Schild Junior Research Fellow at Pembroke College, Oxford. In 2024-5, she was also the Research Associate on the Oxford John Fell-funded project *(Hi)stories of Violence: Myth-Making, Imprisonment and the Cultural Identity of the Tower of London* led by Dr Hannah Skoda. The project, a partnership between Oxford, Historic Royal Palaces, and the Royal Armouries, considered the Tower of London's associations with violence

across time. In 2025, Catherine was Highly Commended at the Oxford Vice Chancellor's Awards in the Breakthrough Researcher Award category. She completed her DPhil at Oxford in 2024.

Laura-Sophie Stolzenberg (Christian Albrecht University of Kiel)

‘Ein rechter Christ kann Fairfax that Nicht gut heissen noch preisen’ (‘A true Christian cannot approve of or praise Fairfax’s deed’): Instances of (in)tolerance in Anna Ovena Hoyers’ (1584–1655) poetic response to the regicide of Charles I (1649)

The execution of King Charles I of England on the 30th of January 1649 – the first monarch to be beheaded after being tried by his own people – provoked polarised reactions across Europe. Although Charles I should have presented himself as divinely ordained head of the Church of England, by the early 17th century, his position had been undermined due to his military failures, his marriage to a Catholic woman and church policies that were widely perceived as being ‘popish’.¹ Consequently, Puritans and Parliamentarians denounced him as tyrant, seeking to abolish his Catholic-friendly policies and establish a strictly Protestant empire in their stead.² In order to legitimise their political resistance, they presented themselves as God’s chosen instruments, tasked with purifying the nation of sin.³ For many with diverging nationalities or beliefs, however, regicide constituted an unacceptable violation of divine order.

A fair example of the struggle of how to respond to the execution is provided by the German poet Anna Ovena Hoyers (1584–1655) in her poetic text *Schreiben an die Gemein in Engelandt* (1649). This paper aims to trace her discourse, oscillating between disapproval and tolerance.⁴ Although Hoyers emphasises the biblical obligation to obey secular rulers and condemns regicide as diabolical and destructive, she categorically rejects physical violence. Instead, she promotes an ‘intolerance towards the intolerant’ through social exclusion and discursive persuasion, rather than coercion. Her argument to fight tyranny with strong verbal disapproval, morally rooted in Christianity, and not violence, makes her text a striking example of asymmetrical tolerance.

¹ See Walsham, Alexandra: *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 17, 54. See also Pečar, Andreas: *Macht der Schrift*, pp. 391, 401.

² See Murphy, Andrew: *Conscience and Community*, p. 95.

³ See Walsham, Alexandra: *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 137, 172.

⁴ This analysis will focus on the disapproval-respect model of tolerance by Bernd Simon (see Simon, Bernd, *Taking Tolerance Seriously*), and on conditions and resources for tolerance as defined by Anne Sarah Matviyets (see Matviyets, Anne Sarah, *Defining tolerance*) as hermeneutic tools.

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Laura-Sophie Stolzenberg works as research assistant at the Department of Modern German Literature and Media Studies at Kiel University. In her doctoral project, which she is conducting as part of the DFG research unit FOR-5472 “The Difficulty and Possibility of Tolerance: The Multifaceted Challenges of the Concept and Practice of Tolerance”, she is investigating pre-modern forms of tolerance in confessional poetry of the 17th century written by German-speaking women. Her main areas of research interest are early modern tolerance, the connection between religion and literature, and female writing in the early modern period.

DISSENT ON THE SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE

Wednesday 24 June, 13:30–15:00

Chair: Lukas Erne

Room: RM 01 C-0.104

Ina Habermann (University of Basel)

Roads to redemption in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

My paper revisits the debate about a religiously heterodox Shakespeare, arguing that Shakespeare had an investment in recusant culture. Thriving on clandestine activities and the resignification of spaces for Catholic worship, recusant culture was intrinsically theatrical, possibly suggesting to Shakespeare the 'as if' that transforms the stage into a complex space for the performance of eschatological geographies. In his comedies and romances, Shakespeare made the most of the malleable and interactive Catholic conception of space to stage roads to redemption. The woods as a sacred space with recusant resonances become a refuge for exiles, a destination for pilgrims and a setting for transformation and redemption. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare dramatizes, and celebrates the redemptive qualities of the alternative space of the woods. Potential suspicions about a recusant agenda are deflected by the fanciful fairy world and the appeal to the imagination. The play's optimistic trajectory promises harmony and the healing of rifts and divisions. By 1613, however, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* which revisits the *Dream*, the sacred woods have been superseded by sectarian battlefields, the enchantment has gone, and the road to redemption is lost from view.

Ina Habermann is Professor of English literature at the University of Basel. Her publications include *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ashgate 2003), *Myth, Memory and the Middlebrow: Priestley, du Maurier and the Symbolic Form of Englishness* (Palgrave Macmillan 2010) and *Wartime Cinema, Englishness and Propaganda: Michael Powell and the 'Pressburger Touch'* (Manchester UP 2025). She is co-editor, with Michelle Witen, of *Shakespeare and Space: Theatrical Explorations of the Spatial Paradigm* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016), and her research focusses on early modern drama, middlebrow literature, gender, spatial studies and cultural topographies as well as Anglo-European Studies including Brexit. Her current research projects deal with early modern Anglo-Swiss relations and the British Mediterranean.

Pascale Aebischer (University of Exeter)

Free speech and martyrdom in Shakespeare and Peele's *Titus Andronicus*

When, encountering Lavinia for the first time after she has been raped and had her hands and tongue cut off, her brother Lucius asks her to "Speak, gentle sister: who hath martyred thee?" (3.1.82), he draws attention to her speech/lessness and, in the same breath, invokes the enduring cultural memory of religious martyrdoms under Queens Mary and Elizabeth I.

This paper will explore the connections established in this scene and throughout the play between different forms of speech (from inarticulate 'blab[bing]' to 'pleasing eloquence' (3.1.84)) and martyrdom. Repeatedly, the play draws attention to the importance of being able to speak one's mind and articulate information, thoughts and emotions. The inability to speak is itself injurious to the body, as Marcus explains when he remarks that "Sorrow concealed, like an oven stopped / Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is" (2.3.37-38). The play, I will argue, draws on exempla of Protestant steadfastness and courage, as recorded in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, to frame the hand mutilations of Lavinia and Titus in relation to ideas of dissent and martyrdom through incineration and public amputation. Frames of reference that originate in late medieval biblical drama and sixteenth-century accounts of hand mutilations to punish religious and political dissent combine to

present the silent wounded body as an object of pity and meditative contemplation of suffering and fortitude for the sake of a truth that must be spoken.

Pascale Aebischer is Professor of Shakespeare and Early Modern Performance Studies at the University of Exeter. She studied at the University of Bern before a Berrow Scholarship took her to Lincoln College, Oxford, where she wrote the DPhil thesis that became the foundation for *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies* (CUP 2004). After a Research Fellowship at Darwin College, Cambridge and two years at the University of Leicester, she moved to Exeter, where she continued specialising in early modern performance studies while also maintaining an interest in Victorian literature. She is now co-editing *Titus Andronicus* with Lubaaba Al-Azami for Cambridge University Press.

Gemma Kate Allred (University of Neuchâtel)
That's not my Hamlet, his [BLANK] is too [BLANK]

That's not my Hamlet, his hair is too ginger.

That's not my Hamlet, his voice is too loud.

That's not my Hamlet, his tummy is too fleshy.

Writing in the *Mail on Sunday* in 2013, Georgina Brown noted of Jonathan Slinger's *Hamlet* at the RSC that 'he doesn't have leading man looks. He is balding, ginger, fleshy and 41'. Suggesting that with 'poor posture and bulging tummy, he's more depressed bank manager than poster boy for the school motto – a sound mind in a healthy body'. She wasn't alone. Jane Edwards, reviewing for the *Sunday Times*, observed that Slinger's Hamlet was 'Bespectacled and balding, he initially looks more like a clerk than a prince' and wished for him to 'strut and bellow less'. To be clear, it is not just Slinger that is criticised in this way – Kenneth Branagh was too 'muffin faced' in his youth to play Hamlet, and Toby Stevens was too 'hefty'. The reviews of *Hamlet* would suggest that it is difficult for an actor to embody a Hamlet that is close enough to satisfy the professional critic – the suggestion being that for the critic a *good* Hamlet is one that conforms to a set of established norms. This paper explores conformity and identifies those norms to completes the sentence:

That's my Hamlet, his [BLANK] is so [BLANK]

Gemma Kate Allred holds degrees from the Shakespeare Institute at The University of Birmingham, Sheffield University, The College of Law, London Business School, and the Open University, and is currently a Doctoral Researcher with the University of Neuchâtel. Her doctoral work examines how Shakespeare in performance is sold and marketed. Her co-edited volume *Lockdown Shakespeare: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*, eds. Gemma Kate Allred, Benjamin Broadribb and Erin Sullivan, was published by Bloomsbury Arden in July 2022 and has a chapter on *Lockdown Loves Labours Lost* in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama: New Medial Challenges of Visualization and Adaptation*. Her examination of celebrity and Shakespeare: "'Who's There?'" Britain's Twenty-First-Century Obsession with Celebrity Hamlet (2008-2018)' was published in *Shakespeare Survey* 73 (2020). Gemma contributed a chapter on marketing *Emilia* for the *Notelets of Filth: An Emilia Companion Reader* (Routledge 2023). She also writes on biofiction and has contributed a chapter on the biofictional representation of Shakespeare on the modern stage in the Bloomsbury Arden collection: *Shakespearean Biofiction on the Contemporary Stage and Screen* (Eds. Edel Semple and Ronan Hatfull) and has a chapter on biofictional representations of Emilia Lanier in the forthcoming *Biofiction Handbook* for Palgrave.

GENRE, PUBLICATION, AND LITERARY AFTERLIVES

Wednesday 24 June, 15:30–17:00

Chair: Isabel Karremann

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

**Nadine Weiss (University of Fribourg)
Shakespeare's Religious Sonnet: A Critical Stress Test**

This essay offers an examination of the particularly vexed critical reception that has grown up around Shakespeare's one hundred and forty-sixth sonnet. Two things it does not seek to do are to adjudicate the status of the poem's disputed second line or to hold a mirror up to a sonnet that it posits as the reflection of an unwaveringly absolute confessional stance. Instead, I treat Sonnet 146 as a critical stress test that has consistently induced generations of editors and critics alike to engage in methodological over-self-justification. Whether by absolutising matters such as the poem's contested second line or the poem's asserted doctrinal closure—insisting that something can be or mean only exactly one thing—, by excessively pluralising the poem's meaning until it threatens to mean everything and thus nothing, or by seeking, as so many Shakespearean reorderers have, either to relocate or isolate the poem entirely, the reception history of Sonnet 146 pulses with a palpable, often meta-critical unease that tests the very limits of interpretive tolerance. Beginning with Stephen Booth's notoriously distended editorial plea, appended as part of his gloss on the poem in his seminal 1977 edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, this paper teases out a coherent strand within that critical tradition and, finally, proposes an all but overlooked source of its persistence.

Nadine Weiss holds degrees from the University of Richmond, Yale University, and the University of Cambridge. Since completing her doctorate, she has held postdoctoral and teaching positions at the University of Geneva and taught at the Universities of Fribourg and Neuchâtel. Her monograph—the first book-length study of the early modern religious sonnet—is under review with Cambridge University Press. She is also the recipient of Studies in Philology's 2025 Louis Round Wilson prize for her article on encrypted reading in George Herbert's 'Easter-wings'. She is currently a senior researcher at the University of Fribourg on the Swiss National Science Foundation-funded project 'Anglo-German Literature in the Seventeenth-Century Palatinate'.

**Emma Depledge (University of Neuchâtel)
A Genre Shaped by Toleration and Dissent: The Publication of Mock Heroic Poetry**

This paper examines the interplay of toleration and dissent in English mock-heroic poetry from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663–1678) to Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728–1743). I explore how these poems and the stationers who shaped their print publication deploy poetic form, humour, satire, and the release of new parts or versions to negotiate political, religious, and literary conflicts, situating them within the specific historical contexts in and for which they were produced, namely, the aftermath of the English Civil Wars for Butler and the early eighteenth-century London print culture for Pope. While it has long been recognised that the English mock-heroic genre drew inspiration from Italian and French antecedents, such as Alessandro Tassoni's *La Secchia Rapita* (1622) and Nicolas Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (1674), my paper foregrounds a previously underexplored dimension: the playful and strategic relationship English poets inherited from Tassoni's and Boileau's engagement with the Italian and French book trades of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, this paper argues that English mock-heroics provide a distinctive lens through which to understand the negotiation of ideological difference and the practices of literary mediation in early modern England.

Emma Depledge is Professor of early modern literature at the University of Neuchâtel, and the current president of SAMEMES. Her publications include *Shakespeare's Rise to Cultural Prominence* (CUP, 2018; pbk 2022); *Canonising Shakespeare: Stationers and the Book Trade, 1640-1740* (ed. with Peter Kirwan, CUP, 2017; paperback 2022); *Making Milton* (ed. with John Garrison and Marissa Nicosia, Oxford University Press, 2021); 'Performance and the Paper Stage, 1642-1695' (HLQ, ed. with Rachel Willie, 2022), and a SPELL volume entitled *Medieval and Early Modern Afterlives* (2024). She is currently working on a monograph that explores the relationship between mock-heroic poetry and the London book trade, 1660-1740.

Regula Hohl Trillini (University of Basel)

"Must nit alle Schawspiel sähen": Early modern reservations about English theatre

17th-century Swiss students' reports of theatrical experiences in Britain are curiously reserved. Performances in London, Oxford or Cambridge must have made a considerable impression on young men from a country that knew neither courtly nor commercial stages, but most records are low-key or indirect. Thomas Platter's diary entry about seeing *Julius Caesar* in 1599 is very sober and Lukas Erne can only assume that the playbooks which "two gentlemen of Zurich" bought were of plays they had actually seen performed. The letters and documents investigated by the SwissBritNet project contain further intriguing evidence from two related Basel lives. Wolfgang Meyer, studying theology in Cambridge, reported home on the pageants for the 1598 coronation anniversary of Elizabeth I. His near-incoherent enthusiasm prompted the admonition that he should "nit alle triumph unnd schowspil sähen" but concentrate on the studies that would make him a useful son and citizen after his return. Meyer's student Johann Jacob Frey loved English poetry and probably saw at least three plays in London and on his English pupil's Grand Tour. And yet Frey's letters do not mention this playgoing and the Shakespeare Second Folio he took back to Basel is pristine. Frey was also in London when his pupil performed in a court masque whose cast included Charles I, and yet that pupil's brother was at pains to protest that he was not "much inclined unto reading Romancys & playbooks". Such disapproval and subsequent self-censorship may be what drove narratives of theatre experiences underground.

Regula Hohl Trillini, a research associate at Basel University and senior editor with the SwissBritNet project, is working on a corpus of letters and books which document 17th-century Swiss-British relations on the *République des Lettres* platform. Within this corpus, she curates the online edition of the correspondence of Johann Jacob Frey (1606-1636) and an account of his English library. Regula also edits the SNF-funded WordWeb database (<https://wordweb-idem.ch>), which maps the network of quotations that links early modern plays to each other, to their Classical sources – and, most recently, to friendship albums which Swiss students carried to England.

ADAPTATION AND DISSENT

Wednesday 24 June, 15:30–17:00

Chair: Gemma Allred

Room: RM 01 C-0.104

Emily Smith (University of Geneva)

Representing Dissent: Mediating the Medieval and Early Modern

Dissent – whether minor or major in scale – has a considerable narrative pull. Though video games which represent the early modern largely attest to represent the quotidian in these eras, they are repeatedly drawn to such moments of contradiction, dispute, and defiance. This paper examines

the depiction of dissent in the video games *Elsinore* (Golden Glitch Studios, 2019) and *Pentiment* (Obsidian, 2022).

Elsinore is a retelling of Hamlet from Ophelia's perspective. As well as dissenting from Hamlet's famous narrative, the game also centralises dissent in its action and as crucial to the player's decisions: Ophelia can react against her father, the court of Elsinore, or even her country. *Pentiment* represents the life of an illuminator who becomes embroiled in the social life of a fictional Bavarian town called Tassing, a place within which dissent thrives in all its forms: intellectual, religious, cultural, and social.

This paper examines how both games incorporate dissent into their narratives and their medium. The representation of such disruptions – and the individualisation of characters which it permits – is fundamental to the depiction of these premodern worlds, but the capacity to dissent also shapes both games' mechanics. In both senses, dissent proves crucial to players' engagements with these worlds, and is a keystone to the reception and recreation of early modernity in modern media.

Emily Smith is a maître-assistante at the University of Geneva. Her doctorate, completed in May 2024, focused on ambiguous signification in Shakespearean drama, incorporating interdisciplinary approaches including the study of dramatic reception and adaptation, computational textual analysis, and cognitive approaches to literature. Recent work on Shakespearean adaptation has appeared in *Shakespeare Bulletin* (2024) and *Shakespeare Survey* (2023).

Benjamin Broadribb (Independent Scholar) **The Henriad Echoes of *This is England***

This paper explores how Shane Meadows's 2006 film *This is England* offers echoes of Shakespeare's Henriad – traditionally plays associated with national pride and celebration, culminating in *Henry V* – to create a sombre meditation on the instability of British nationhood.

Set in England in 1983, *This is England* deals with the uneasy division in skinhead subculture between its roots in Black culture and heritage, and its later influence by the racial intolerance of far-right nationalism. During a scene depicting a National Front meeting, lines from Henry V's "St. Crispin's Day" speech are spoken by the meeting's leader as part of a racist call to arms. While this is Meadows's sole explicit reference to Shakespeare's Henriad, it is a marker of *This is England*'s wider relationship to these plays.

Meadows's main character is twelve-year-old Shaun (Thomas Turgoose), who is struggling with mourning – and a sense of duty to – his late father, who died during the Falklands War. Shaun finds both escape and comfort through the adolescent skinhead gang he befriends in a way that echoes Shakespeare's Eastcheap scenes. The ostensible leaders of the gang, Woody (Joe Gilgun) and Combo (Stephen Graham), emerge as dual Falstaff figures, offering an oscillation between lighter and darker echoes of Shakespeare's character, both as a comic figure and dangerous influence. My paper explores how *This is England*'s Henriad echoes resonate with the enduring struggle between cultural diversity and xenophobic intolerance at the core of British national identity.

Benjamin Broadribb is an independent scholar who completed his PhD at The Shakespeare Institute in 2023. His research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including *Adaptation*, *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, and *Shakespeare Survey*; and in edited collections published by Bloomsbury, CUP, and Palgrave. With Gemma Kate Allred and Erin Sullivan, Benjamin co-edited *Lockdown Shakespeare: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation* (Bloomsbury, 2022). His first monograph, *Shakespeare in Flux: Adaptation and Oscillation on Screen in a Time of Instability*, is forthcoming with Bloomsbury. Since April 2023, Benjamin has served as Performance Reviews Editor for *Shakespeare Bulletin*.

Simon Heller (University of Oxford)
Medievalism and Dissent: Vietnam War Revisionism through *Beowulf*

While many of America's military operations have been the subject of national and international criticism, none has yet matched the degree of widespread dissent generated by the Vietnam War. Even amid early popular condemnation of draft dodgers or sympathisers such as "Hanoi Jane" and consistent governmental support for nearly two decades, America's war in Southeast Asia was deeply unpopular. At home, the anti-war movement took the form of protests and disobedience; abroad, military dissent grew to the extent where "fragging" became a well-known term associated with Vietnam.

By the end of the war, the once-dissenting anti-war opinion all but became political orthodoxy, and, even as the Cold War reached new heights, it took almost a decade for interventionism to become accepted again as a tenet of American foreign policy. However, years before Reagan's famous view of Vietnam as a "noble cause" became widely accepted, a revisionist discourse spanning political discourse, histories, and popular culture had already started casting the war in a positive light. Works of medievalist fiction stood amongst those. This paper on Old English medievalism will explore the way American authors of fiction such as Michael Crichton, Larry Niven, and Jerry Pournelle contributed to this revisionist discourse by reconfiguring the poem *Beowulf* in the service of post-Vietnam conservative ideologies. In their hands, the Old English poem was transformed in order to recast America's first lost war into a tale of triumphant heroism.

Simon Heller is a Swiss researcher currently residing in the UK. After completing his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Lausanne, he obtained his DPhil at the University of Oxford. He works on Old English poetry, modern medievalism, and far-right appropriations of medieval England, with a specific interest in the reception and adaptation of *Beowulf* in the United States.

ARTICULATING DISSENT

Thursday 25 June, 10:45–12:15

Chair: Devani Singh

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

Georgia Fulton (University of Geneva)
Early Modern Lucian: Dialogue as Dissent

This paper will argue that the joint Early Modern Latin translations of Lucian (by Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus) offer a case study for the use of dialogue as a strategy of dissent. The context of the translation project will form the start of the paper. The project's unusually collaborative nature, and its cultural importance in bringing Lucianic satire to a Northern European audience grant these texts a specific framework which dilutes the satire of the original through translation. Moreover, the subsequent polemicisation of Lucian as a dangerous thinker over the Reformation contribute to the reception of his texts as dissenting. The majority of the paper will be devoted to investigating the idea of dialogue as a useful space for articulating subversive ideas. The paper will also consider the use of dialogue in one or more of Shakespeare's late plays. This section of the paper will consider dialogue in a theatrical context, and how it relates to the Lucianic dialogues published in 1506. Having established the parameters of Early Modern Lucianic dialogue, the analysis in this second half of the paper will focus on Shakespeare's use of dialogue in the first halves of the late plays. The paper will conclude by arguing for the role of dialogue in complicating a coherent dramatic narrative which promotes dissent over tolerance.

Georgia is a doctoral assistant in Geneva, and is writing a PhD entitled: ‘Early Tudor Seriocomedy in Shakespeare’s Late Plays’. She holds degrees from Durham and Cambridge, and has also researched at Oxford thanks to a grant from the Doc.Mobility scheme. Her thesis considers the heritage of Thomas More’s and Desiderius Erasmus’ early Tudor literature upon Shakespeare’s use of the tragicomic form in his solo-authored Late Plays. She has presented, recently, on Erasmian visual paradox, and bridging genre in the Late Plays. She also has an article forthcoming in *Shakespeare Survey* on the figurative platea and foolish-wise subplotters in *The Tempest*.

Douglas Clark (University of Oxford)
Suicide in Early Modern English Pastoral Drama

My paper examines the depiction of suicide as a form of political dissent in early modern English pastoral drama. I use Samuel Daniel’s *Queenes Arcadia* (1605) and the anonymous manuscript play *Samos* (c. 1635) as key sources, placing these plays in conversation with early modern discourses on ‘self-homicide’.[1] I argue that both plays rework aspects of Torquato Tasso’s 1573 tragicomedy *Aminta* to consider the rationale of, and societal discord caused by, suicide. To do so, I explore how suicide is aligned with self-control and purification in these seventeenth-century English plays, and the extent to which the self-destructive tendencies of their pastoral characters are initiated by the incursion of foreigners into the pseudo-idyllic habitats of each play. *Queenes Arcadia*, for example, opens with two elderly Arcadians reflecting on how their land has been “divested of that grace” that “faire nature” had granted it, due to the presence of “strange” agents.[2] In *Samos*, the threat of imperial domination from a foreign power forms the backdrop to the suicidal actions of its nymphs and shepherds. This paper thus aims to advance our understanding of how suicide was presented in early modern literary culture, while also offering details about a relatively ‘new’ manuscript play, *Samos*: a play that has lain largely ignored in the Folger Shakespeare Library until I transcribed it in full over the Spring of 2025.

¹ John Donne, *Biathanatos* (London, 1644), F2v. *Biathanatos* is thought to be first written in 1608.

² Samuel Daniel, *The Queens Arcadia* (London, 1606), B1r-v.

Douglas Clark is a Lecturer in English at Wadham College, University of Oxford. He has published articles in *English Literary History*, *Renaissance Drama*, *Studies in Philology*, *The Seventeenth Century*, and *Women’s Writing*. His first book, *The Will in English Renaissance Drama* was published with Cambridge University Press in December 2025.

DISSENTING WOMEN

Thursday 25 June, 10:45–12:15

Chair: Emma Depledge

Room: RM 01 C-0.104

Sonya Cronin (University College Dublin)
‘Aen Strang Monopollie’: Gender, Stuart Libel and Performing Dissent in the Lady Margaret Wemyss Songbook Miscellany

This paper explores how Margaret Wemyss’ Buckingham verses intersect with dissenting discourses which sought to undermine royal authority at a time when Charles I struggled to implement religious and political policy in mid-1640s Scotland. Through examination of Wemyss’ reconstitution of 1620s events, personalities and texts in a Scottish covenanting context, this paper shows how the verses make a significant political intervention through their figuration of the royal favourite as a troubling presence at the heart of the body politic. Turning then to consider Wemyss’

instruction to set one of the verses to a Scottish air – an air which foregrounds improper sexual relationships – the paper considers the possible impact of melody on the verse and listeners at Wemyss Castle in Fife. Through analysis of the relationship between the second verse and its accompanying air, themes of sexual corruption are concretised as verse and melody commingle to subversive effect. Wemyss’ thematic consolidation of the verse through her application of melody therefore proves this young noble woman was not simply copying out verse and music for pedagogical purposes but strategically adapting the memory of Buckingham for covenanting agendas which sought to reject the Caroline regime. This paper thus foregrounds Scottish women as collectors, active readers and manipulators of controversial material for specifically dissenting purposes, while examining the importance of music – melody and performance – to the meaning of libellous political poetry.

Sonya is currently an Research Ireland fellow with the School of English, Drama and Film at UCD, Dublin. Her current research action, *Royalist Counter-Publics: Women, Forms of Correspondence and Literary Networks, 1649-1660* traces the mobility of people, texts, and ideas as they intersected with other significant, heavily politicised circles of the period. Her research interests include women’s writing and literary networks; history of the English civil wars; archipelagic literary history. Her publications include a monograph entitled *Women, Royalisms, and Exiles 1640-1669: Towards Writing the Royalist Diaspora* (2022), which examines a range of royalist women’s cultural responses to war, dislocation, diaspora and exile during the civil wars and interregnum.

Honor Jackson (University of Fribourg)

Adapting the World Turned Upside Down: Selective Toleration and Female Political Agency in Aphra Behn’s *The Roundheads*

John Tatham’s *The Rump* (1660) imagines the Restoration through the exposure and humiliation of Commonwealth disorder. Its Parliament of Women transforms female political intervention into a comic symbol of a world turned upside down, restoring order through the exclusion of those associated with the Republican regime. When Aphra Behn returned to Tatham’s play in *The Roundheads* (1681), however, the political divisions that Tatham had imagined as resolved had become newly unstable. This paper examines how Behn reworks Tatham’s representation of female political agency. While *The Roundheads* retains the satirical language of female ambition and political inversion, figures such as Lady Desbro and Lady Lambert demonstrate political intelligence and strategic negotiation, while Behn’s Cavalier “Heroicks” fail to secure Restoration through conventional displays of Royalist mastery. Behn thus transforms Tatham’s fantasy of political closure into a more complex vision of Restoration in which former enemies are not simply expelled but selectively tolerated and incorporated into the restored order. Yet this toleration remains conditional: political dissent may be accommodated, but only once competing claims to sovereignty have been abandoned.

Honor Jackson is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in early modern English Literature at the University of Fribourg. Her interests span the early modern period but her research specialises in seventeenth century political and social culture and gender and fertility politics, with broader interests in book history, and the history of science. Her work has been published in venues such as *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, *Cabiers Élisabéthains*, and *SPELL*, and she is currently working on her monograph project entitled *Utopian Intertextuality in Restoration Drama: Gender, Politics, Adaptation, 1660-1700*.

Simone Camponovo (University of Neuchâtel)
‘Down goeth all the Pots and Dishes’:
Stirring Culinary Dissent in Margaret Cavendish’s *Matrimonial Trouble*

England was the most active site of cookery publication in Europe between 1570 and 1650, with many recipe books troped as private closets on their title page. Margaret Cavendish draws on the language and rhetoric used in cookery books and, when defending her decision to publish her early dramatic works and her *CCXI Sociable Letters* (1664) into two separate folio volumes, she builds on the connotation of closets as private spaces associated with the storage of expensive ingredients and female productivity. Indeed, in an epistle appended to her 1662 collection of *Playes*, she fashions herself as “a plain, cleanly English Cook-maid;” worrying she may “surfeit [her] Readers with too great a Volume,” she frames publication as an act of moderation, likening her choice to first offer “one Book” to the serving of “one dish of meat” at a time to manage appetite and excess. Reading Cavendish’s two-part play *Matrimonial Trouble* alongside the paratexts to *Playes* and contemporaneous recipe books and household manuals – such as Walter Montague’s *The Queen’s Closet Opened* (1656), *The Court & Kitchen of Elizabeth, Commonly Called Joan Cromwel* (1664), and Hannah Woolley’s *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) – I show how culinary imagery becomes a vehicle for negotiating tolerance, authority, and resistance. Episodes of food preparation, ingestion, deprivation, and fasting stage conflicts over conjugal governance and expose the limits of patriarchal accommodation. More broadly, Cavendish’s food symbolism registers aristocratic anxieties about class instability during the Interregnum, echoing conduct literature that encouraged servants and cooks to aspire beyond their social status. Through culinary rhetoric and self-fashioning, Cavendish thus articulates a dissident politics of moderation that challenges established gender and social hierarchies, whilst also asserting bodily and textual authorship by equating gastronomical and literary production.

Simone Camponovo holds a BA degree in English, French and German literature and an MA degree in English and French literature from the University of Neuchâtel. After teaching French at a Sixth-Form college in Suffolk in 2023-2024, he obtained a position as a doctoral assistant at the University of Neuchâtel in October 2024. His dissertation on *Food, and Gender, and Performance Spaces in Early Modern Drama, 1594-1700* examines plays written before, during and after the English theatre ban in the light of contemporaneous recipe books, analysing how the two genres mutually shaped representations of gender roles through references to food preparation and consumption. He has also published for *Shakespeare Bulletin*.

DOMESTIC DISSENT

Thursday 25 June, 13:45–15:15

Chair: Rahel Orgis

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

Kevin Laam (Oakland University)
Marriage and the Politics of Dissent in Lucy Hutchinson’s *Memoirs*

In the *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, Lucy Hutchinson undertakes with diligence, and some ambivalence, the project of making her husband a republican martyr. Written over the seven years following his death in 1664, the *Memoirs* dramatizes the colonel’s commitment to the godly cause amid the defection of his allies to the restored Stuart regime, remarking his distinction from the “mutability of some, and the hypocrisy of others, and the servile flattery of all.” In a knowing irony, Hutchinson concurrently casts herself as an antagonist to this enterprise, fictionalizing an officious and practical “Mrs. Hutchinson” who prioritizes her husband’s safety above his righteous dissent.

In the process, she uncovers a contradiction in her role as republican wife: the demands of conscientious nonconformity cannot be squared with the bonds of conjugal affection and obligation. Throughout the *Memoirs*, marriage is implicated strongly in the problematics of republican identity, allegiance, and resistance. The most notorious example of this is when Hutchinson, without her husband's will, pens a letter in his name recanting his involvement in the regicide, saving him from certain destruction. The marital strain that results from her self-proclaimed disobedience becomes an emblem of the post-Restoration allegiance crisis, where Lucy Hutchinson's accommodationist instincts run up against her husband's staunch nonconformity and growing radicalism. In the end, the *Memoirs* comprise not just a document of the couple's trials through the civil wars and Restoration, but a deliberate meditation on marriage as the vehicle for the formation of a sustainable politics of resistance and dissent.

Kevin Laam is an Associate Professor of English at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, USA. He has published articles and book chapters on Marvell, Herrick, Traherne, Shakespeare, and other early modern writers, and his works have appeared in journals such as *Studies in Philology*, *The Seventeenth Century*, and *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*. He is currently writing a book on marriage, politics, and literature in civil war England.

Courtney Beale (University of Edinburgh)
Domestic Monstrosity and Dissidence in Book V of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*

In this paper, I examine domestic and gendered dissent in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, looking specifically at transgressive women who can be termed monstrous for their disruption of household spaces. As monsters, these women threaten Spenser's goal of "[fashioning] a gentleman," and therefore must be dealt with (737). Yet, as is revealed by the end of Book V, there are certain monstrous women that are eradicated completely, and some that are 'tolerated.' To demonstrate this, I focus primarily on Adicia from Canto VIII of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, with some reference to Radigund from Cantos IV-VII. Adicia appears in the poem after Artegall, the knight of justice, has been freed from Radigund's subversive household, where she re-fashioned masculine identities and redefined gender roles. Radigund is beheaded for these transgressions; but Adicia, who acts as a corruptive influence over her husband, disrupts acceptable female rule, and threatens sexual chastity, is left alive. Though Adicia exemplifies early modern anxiety towards women who were unregulated by masculine authority within the domestic space, she ends Book V transformed into a tiger. Adicia is allowed to live and is therefore 'tolerated,' although in a non-human state. As a tiger, Adicia embodies dissent in a form that no longer threatens the domestic and gendered space in Book V of Spenser's poem. My analysis of Adicia considers her as a dissenting figure within the context of the early modern England's domestic and gender norms, how her deviance can be conceptualized through examining her as a monstrous woman, and how the monstrous is 'tolerated' in Spenser's poem.

Works Cited

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*, edited by A.C. Hamilton, Longman Annotated Poets, 1977.

Courtney is a 2nd year PHD candidate in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She received her BA in English Literature and Medieval & Early Modern Studies at the University of California, Davis, before completing her Masters by Research at the University of Edinburgh. She has presented her doctoral work with the University of Edinburgh's LAMPS society, as well as at the LLC's Postgraduate Work-In-Progress seminar series. Working with early modern drama and poetry, Courtney examines the presence of monsters in domestic spaces and how their presence redefines national, social, and cultural norms and boundaries.

Anne-Claire Michoux (University of Zurich)
Displays of Sensibility: Undomesticated Women of the Theatre, 1750-1830

This paper examines the representations of eighteenth-century actresses in artefacts held in the Babette Craven Theatrical Memorabilia Collection at the Folger Shakespeare Library. It considers how the visual depictions of eighteenth-century female performers, in engravings, statues, busts, porcelain figurines, cameos, watch-paper, and tea caddies, challenged contemporary discourses on femininity and female propriety. Visual representations arguably invited viewers to consider their aural qualities, encouraging a reflection on the speech implied in representations. Frontispiece engravings, for instance, which also circulated as stand-alone pieces, typically included the act, scene, and the specific lines the image illustrates. While engravings did showcase examples of female vulnerability and suffering, as in the illustrations of Sarah Siddons as Nicholas Rowe's heroine Jane Shore in Act 5, starved and exhausted, readying herself to knock on her friend Alicia's door, many engravings depicted female protagonists in forceful, defiant, and commanding attitudes. Other material objects such as ceramic items similarly depicted actresses as imposing rather than submissive figures, as in the statuette of Sarah Siddons (c. 1835, ART 241027), scowling, with lips unfurled in mid-sentence. Women were, additionally, in charge of the interior decoration of the home; as consumers, women actively endorsed representations of unconventional femininity. Moreover, porcelain figures were often intended as dinner table decoration and served as conversation pieces. While the display of artefacts reflected an owner's taste and sensibility, it is also possible that the domestic presentation of images of forceful female characters sparked discussions surrounding the question of female agency, leading, perhaps to greater tolerance for deviations from conventional conceptions of femininity. It is my contention that the ubiquity and frequency of representations of defiant female figures, in the playhouse and in the home, could normalise instances of female nonconformity, offering new models of female agency.

Anne-Claire is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zurich. Her current Habilitation project examines the representations of women's voices in theatrical culture of the long century. Her first monograph, *Cultivating Simplicity: British National Identity in Austen, Burney, Edgeworth and Hall*, is forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan. She is the coordinator of the Swiss Centre of Irish Studies.

TOLERANCE AND DISSENT IN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

Thursday 25 June, 13:45–15:15

Chair: Honor Jackson

Room: RM 01 C-0.104

Damien Elsig (University of Fribourg)
Self-Shaping Dissent in Medea, Lady Macbeth, and Milton's Satan

This paper explores the use of the rhetorical figure of *dialogismus* in Seneca's *Medea*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* to depict the conscious rejection of prescribed identities by their respective protagonists. I argue that the authors employ *dialogismus* to illustrate the internal struggle of these characters as they wilfully pervert their natural selves, transforming into malevolent ideal-selves. Milton's bracketing of Lady Macbeth's soliloquy, in which she asks to be "unsexed", in his recently discovered copy of the First Folio, indicates his interest in dissent from socially ascribed gender roles. In this paper I shall explore how this soliloquy echoes a corresponding soliloquy in Seneca's *Medea*, and in turn anticipates Satan's soliloquy against the sun in *Paradise Lost*. In their soliloquies all three characters are portrayed as rebelling against their expected roles: Medea and Lady Macbeth against the role of submissive wives and protectors of their offspring, and Satan

against the role of obedient angel whose love is entirely turned towards God. Driven by revenge, these characters deliberately abandon their natural inclinations toward goodness, embracing violence and destruction instead.

Through their use of *dialogismus* Seneca, Shakespeare, and Milton provide their character with depth and make apparent their inner turmoil, thereby inviting audiences to pity the protagonist for its real or perceived wrongs whilst simultaneously evoking fear at the extremes of their vengeful actions. This duality achieves an Aristotelian catharsis, which, I argue, renders the characters' inner turmoil both relatable and compelling.

Damien Elsig is a PhD student at the University of Fribourg. Building on the discovery of Milton's annotated Folio, his thesis aims to re-examine intertextual connections between Milton, Shakespeare, and the broader tradition of revenge drama. Through close readings of Milton's epics, alongside Shakespearean and Senecan plays, and remnants of the Corpus Christi Cycles, his thesis explores how Milton repurposed revenge tragedy tropes to craft his compelling portrayal of Satan while advancing his theological objective. Damien holds a BA and MA from the University of Fribourg majoring in English Literature with a minor in History.

Nino Töndury (University of Fribourg)
Repressive Tolerance in Eden:
Adamic Dissent and the Making of Binary Sex in *Paradise Lost*

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton repeatedly imagines created beings as on a spectrum between angelic unity and bestial pairing. Angels can assume either sex and mix totally in intercourse, modelling an idea of undivided spiritual embodiment. By contrast, animals rise in pairs, their sexual difference functioning as a principle of orderly reproduction. This paper argues that Milton initially aligns Adam with the angelic paradigm: as the creature made in the image of God, Adam figures a prelapsarian wholeness unmarked by binary sex. Sexual division, I suggest, emerges not as a primordial given but as the consequence of an act of prelapsarian dissent. In Book VIII, Adam insists on a companion, reasoning from the paired animals he has observed; in doing so, he rejects the divine model of self-sufficiency and presses God to refashion humanity into a binary form. God's concession can be read as an instance of repressive tolerance: a grudging accommodation that contains Adam's dissent by channelling it into a new regime of embodied hierarchy ("He for God only, she for God in him"). Reading Eve's extraction alongside the poem's scene of Satan's self-division and the birth of Sin, the paper shows how Milton links division to the genesis of evil and mortality. By reframing the origin of binary sex in humanity as a managed, ambivalent response to dissent rather than a neutral feature of creation, *Paradise Lost* exposes gender hierarchy as a contingent settlement, an arrangement produced through forbearance, discipline, and the policing of difference.

Nino Liam Töndury is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Fribourg. Their dissertation examines urban ekphrasis and alternative city-spaces in contemporary British fiction, with a focus on London in urban fantasy and related modes of the fantastic. Alongside this strand of research, they are interested in the poetics of embodiment, gender, and sexuality; theories of description and visuality; space and material culture; queer theory; and the relations between bodies, form, and power.

Antoinina Bevan Zlatar (University of Zurich)
John Milton's Son of God, Diabolical Dissent, and the Limits of Heterodoxy

Since the discovery of the manuscript of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana* in 1823, Miltonists have been embroiled in 'the controversy' provoked by the heterodoxy of Ch. 5 "On the Son of God". Was Milton an Arian, a pre-Nicene subordinationist or even a Socinian? Eschewing ill-fitting labels, this paper proposes to let Milton be Milton.

If, contrary to Trinitarian doctrine, Milton's Son in *De Doctrina* is generated in time and is thus not the same essence as the eternal Father, he is 'the only-begotten Son' to distinguish him from God's other 'sons', the angels and human beings. As only-begotten he is generated directly from the substance of the Father and acts as the Father's only mediator and agent of Creation. But heterodox polemical theology is put to subtly different uses in *Paradise Lost*. In Book V, the Father's begetting of the Son is recounted so as to foreground the first act of dissent in heavenly history, and this dissent is construed in heretical terms. Wracked by envy, Satan insists on the inferiority to the second person of the Trinity and refuses to acknowledge his mediatorial office as king of the angels. Posturing as a Republican, Satan appeals to his faction's rights as 'native sons of heaven'. Indeed, unable to acknowledge the ontological chasm between himself as creature and the Son as Creator, he famously claims to be 'self-begot, self-raised'. Implicitly Milton uses Satan to limit heterodoxy. By having Satan deny the only-begotten pre-incarnate Son as the only witness of the Father, Milton declares his unwavering faith in him.

Antoinina Bevan Zlatar is Privat Dozentin and Lecturer in Early Modern Literature at the University of Zurich. She is the author of *Reformation Fictions: Polemical Protestant Dialogues in Elizabethan England* (OUP: 2011), two essay collections, and numerous articles on Milton. She is currently completing a monograph entitled *Making Images in John Milton's 'Paradise Lost'*.

TOLERANCE ACROSS BORDERS

Friday 26 June, 11:00–12:30

Chair: Ina Habermann

Room: RM 01 C-0.101

Angana Moitra (University of Copenhagen/O.P. Jindal Global University)
'The matter of Religion to be tolerated':
Tolerance and Dissent in the Elizabethan Marriage Match

This paper will explore the sundry ways in which the members of Elizabeth I's Privy Council attempted to broker a marriage between the English queen and the Duke of Anjou, Henry III of France, throughout the 1570s. In particular, this paper will study the complex chain of diplomatic negotiations carried out by—and between—Francis Walsingham, the queen's ambassador resident in France, William Cecil, Baron Burghley, Elizabeth's Secretary of State and Lord High Treasurer, and the kingdom of France. Through an investigation of the epistolary exchange between these parties, this paper will argue that both tolerance and dissent played a key role in this elaborate exercise in political diplomacy which relied more on rhetoric and linguistic representation (both textual and conversational) than it did on action. The protracted, often abstruse negotiations turned upon the fulcrum of religion, especially on finer points of doctrinal difference between religious rites accepted as commonplace by Catholic France and those regarded as blasphemous, idolatrous, and opprobrious by the Church of England. For instance, one of the crucial points of contention was the rules governing the celebration of Mass, with the French faction pushing for the observance of Catholic liturgical rules and the English faction insisting on Anglican Christianity's right to religious autonomy in sacramental ritual performance. Elizabeth's push for autonomy was

simultaneously hinged upon a calibrated appeal to Anjou's spirit of toleration and the express articulation of dissent in order to assert and champion the spiritual legitimacy of Anglicanism, thereby illuminating how political alliances in sixteenth-century Europe were forged within a religious landscape where the right to doctrinal disagreement was a crucial part of diplomatic agreements.

Angana Moitra is currently postdoctoral scholar at the Centre for Privacy Studies (PRIVACY) in the University of Copenhagen where she is working on the "Secrets to Patents" project, a collaborative research project between Lund University, Sweden, the University of Copenhagen, and the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brazil funded by the Swedish Research Council. She is also Assistant Professor of English at O.P. Jindal Global University, India. She completed her PhD in 2020 on the Erasmus Mundus TEEME (Text and Event in Early Modern Europe) Joint-Doctoral Programme, and her monograph entitled *The Evolution of the Fairy King: From Medieval Romance to Early Modern Prose, Poetry, and Drama* is currently under contract with Palgrave Macmillan. Her research interests span the length and breadth of the literary, religious, and political culture of the medieval and early modern periods in the British Isles, and she is currently expanding her area of expertise into colonial and postcolonial history with a special focus on the Indian subcontinent between the sixteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Marcel Elias (Yale University)
Transcultural Effects of the Muslim 'Moral Rearmament'

In the decades following the First Crusade (1095-1099), Latin Christian presence in the Levant gave rise not only to military resistance, but also to what Emmanuel Sivan memorably called a "moral rearmament" of the Sunni Muslim community, involving an emphasis on ascetic piety and just governance, a crackdown on practices that flouted Islamic law, and a suppression of religious dissent. In this paper, I will discuss how this program of Muslim ethico-religious reform shaped the early history of English tolerance via two case studies. The first focuses on Saladin as represented in chronicles by Baha' al-Din and Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani, in William of Tyre's *Historia*, and in Anglo-Norman renderings of the *Estoire d'Eracles*. The second focuses on Baybars as depicted in Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Zahir's *al-Rawd al-zahir fi sirat al-Malik al-Zahir*, in William of Tripoli's *De statu Saracenorum*, and (indirectly) in the Middle English manuscript tradition of John Mandeville's *Travels*. Through these case studies, I will argue that Arabo-Islamic counter-crusade culture filtered into Latin settler discourse and, over time, into English literature, fostering a more tolerant and expansive understanding of Muslim praxis as encompassing not just ritual obligations, but also Qur'anically specified virtues (such as justice, mercy, and generosity), commitment to "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong" (Q. 3:104, Q. 3:110, Q. 9: 7), adherence to the "circle of equity," respect of oaths, and patronage of the religious classes.

Marcel Elias is Assistant Professor of English at Yale University. He is the author of *English Literature and the Crusades: Anxieties of Holy War, 1291-1453* (Cambridge UP, 2024) and the editor of *New Directions in Medieval Postcolonialism*, a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (2025). His essays have appeared in *Speculum*, *Review of English Studies*, *Studies in Philology*, *New Medieval Literatures*, *The Oxford History of Poetry in England*, and elsewhere. His current book project is entitled *How Islamic Resistance Shaped European Culture, 1150-1500*.

Günay Heydarli (Baku State University)
Negotiating the Other: Visual Culture, Confessional Anxiety, and Diplomatic Tolerance
in the Anglo-Safavid Encounters, 1600–1700

This project examines how art and diplomacy mediated Anglo-Safavid encounters, shaping English perceptions, diplomatic tolerance and offers a critical perspective on the role of visual culture in shaping early modern European understandings of the Orient. While many studies on Orientalism have been based on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), particularly his claim that Orientalist representations operate through the denial of Eastern self-representation, as the Orient cannot represent itself, and Western representations will serve only to illustrate the "poor Orient." This study challenges this view by foregrounding visual culture as a space where representation, agency, and diplomatic meaning were actively negotiated in Anglo-Safavid diplomatic encounters. The portraits of Robert Shirley, dressed in Safavid attire and bearing a crucifix by M. Greuter, Diego de Astor, and Luca Ciamberlano, and his wife, Theresa Sampsonia, the first Safavid royal woman in England, by Anthony van Dyck, the portrait of Naqd Ali Beg by Richard Greenbury, all signal Oriental agency, self-representation, and even beginnings of cultural cross-dressing in portraits. At the same time, scholars such as Nezam-Mafi (*Persian Recreations*, 1999) argue that the Anglo-Safavid diplomatic relationship remained "performative" because England lacked imperial political power over Persia, and they resist applying Orientalism to the Anglo-Persian context. This project highlights that supporters of this approach tend to underestimate the role of the Shirley brothers as English diplomats who not only protected Safavid interests but also those of the English Crown, acting as catalysts for cross-cultural communication and the fostering of diplomatic relations between the two distant allies. This is evident in Anthony van Dyck's portrait of Robert Shirley; Van Dyck worked at the English court of James I from 1620. According to Susan Grundy (Van Dyck's Spanish sojourn, 2020), he likely travelled to Rome to meet Shirley, whose close ties to the English crown, evidenced by Prince Henry Frederick's role as godfather to Shirley's only child, confirm his role as a diplomatic intermediary serving both Safavid and English courts. This study seeks to trace how images of Anglo-Safavid diplomacy moved from the elite sphere of the court to the public sphere (via prints and pamphlets), influencing the emergence of early modern cosmopolitanism in England and reshaping the English popular imagination of the Orient.

Dr. Günay Heydarli is a historian of early modern intercultural relations, specializing in Papal–Safavid diplomatic and cultural encounters. She received her PhD from Baku State University in 2025. She has participated in different projects relating to her research area. For instance, in 2019, as the framework of the "Strengthening Research Capacities and Building International Partnerships" grant project organized by the U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan her research paper, "Why Did the Catholic Missionaries Fail to Convert the Eastern Christian Community of the Safavid Empire?" was awarded and she presented the paper in the Rome Center of Washington University. In 2022, she received the Brepols Scholarship from the Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale (SIEPM) and had a chance to deliver a paper titled "Polemical Treatises in Defense of Christianity and Islam in the Safavid Empire" in Paris, which was a significant privilege and a chance to engage with scholars from around the world. In the same year, her research project, "The Catholic Missionaries as Mediators on the Silk Road: Interfaith and Cultural Exchanges between the Safavid Empire and Europe", was awarded the UNESCO Silk Roads Youth Research Grant. This grant allowed her to work directly with manuscripts and visual materials, conducting research in archives in the Vatican, Paris, and London.

TRANSGRESSIVE IDENTITIES

Friday 26 June, 11:00–12:30

Chair: Kristen Curtis

Room: RM 01 C-0.104

Lucie Kaempfer

Emotional Dissent and the Limits of Tolerance in *Partonope of Blois*

The fifteenth-century Middle English romance *Partonope of Blois* is particularly interesting for an exploration of medieval tolerance. Around the protagonist, the romance presents, and tolerates, an exceptionally large cast of secondary characters inhabiting different identities – French and foreign, Christian and Pagan, rich and poor, noble and common. But tolerance for different fixed identities becomes tested when these identities intersect in unconventional ways or become mobile. For example, while the romance appears broadly accepting of religious and cultural difference, it proves extremely intolerant of low-born, social climbers who are repeatedly demonised. In this paper, I will argue that (in)tolerance is powerfully articulated through emotion in the romance.

In a 2017 book review article Holly Crocker invites scholars of medieval emotion to formulate new approaches to how emotions ‘influence, and even invent, new social identities by reimagining categories including, but certainly not limited to, station, gender, sexuality, embodiment, religion, ethnicity.’ Emotions can both replicate as well as call into question fixed categories of identity and therefore play a central role in evoking both tolerance and dissent. Crucially, the hero often feels differently from his social and ethnic group. This emotional non-conformity will be read as moments of dissent which disrupt the affirmation of fixed identities and therefore the romance’s construction of (in)tolerance.

Lucie Kaempfer is an independent scholar specialising in emotion and identity studies, medieval European romance and medieval comparative literature. Her first monograph, *The Joy of Love in the Middle Ages: A European Literary History* has just been published by CUP. Her postdoc project focused on the European romance *Partonope of Blois* and resulted in several comparative articles on topics such as the narrative representation of self, beauty, pleasure and the romance hero.

Olivia Golby-Kirk (University of Birmingham)

Performing Nonconformity:

Dissenting Masculinity in Seventeenth-Century English Ballads

In recent years the study of ‘alternate’ masculinities in early modern England has come to the fore. One such masculinity is that of young men, whose unmarried status excluded them from the most culturally established form of masculinity in the seventeenth century: the ‘household patriarch’. This paper will demonstrate the ways in which seventeenth-century broadside ballads constructed and celebrated dissenting modes of masculinity for young men. For example, numerous ‘bachelor’ ballads appealed directly to young men which celebrated singleness and engaging in activities such as male sociability and illicit sex to excess, despite this behaviour being seen culturally as unmanly. In this way, it would seem young men expressed masculine identities which subverted the paradigms of the household patriarch. However, as ballads were primarily a form of entertainment, I will consider how performative this expression of masculinity was for young men.

This paper will also look at two different responses to ‘bachelor’ ballads: ‘warning’ ballads, which warned young men about the dangers of marriage, and ‘persuading’ ballads, which urged young men to marry. These responses call into question how accepted youthful masculinity as a dissenting masculinity was in wider society. Some ballads present it as threatening for the status quo; others consider it the inevitable precursor to household masculinity, or the way in which young men were expected to behave. As such, I will explore this dichotomy in order to understand

how nonconforming masculinities were understood by young men themselves, and by those who adhered to established married masculinity.

Olivia Golby-Kirk is a Ph.D. student at the University of Birmingham in the faculty of Arts and Law. Her thesis explores the aural, visual, performative, and textual constructions of masculinities in English broadside ballads, c.1600-1750. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, her research contributes to our understanding of the relationship between ballads and the cultural construction of early modern male identities. Her research is funded by the Wolfson Foundation, and she was recently awarded the Francis Bacon Foundation Fellowship at the Huntington Library in California.

Abbie Fray (University of Bern)
‘Sounds more like the diabolical cries of peacocks’:
Queer Sensory Rhetoric as Political Communication in the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt

The literature of the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt describes the rebel crowd as being made up of affective ‘beasts’, ‘wolves’, ‘devils’ and even ‘peacocks’ that were seen, heard and sensed. Presenting the rebels as acting beyond the bodies, roles and positions that they were assigned at birth, literature across a range of genres shows political actors undergoing human to non-human transformations. This paper offers a new reading of the Peasants’ Revolt by approaching medieval political dissent through the lens of sensory, queer and trans studies.

In this paper, ‘queer sensory rhetoric’ refers to how literature uses the senses to portray political action beyond acceptable binary categories. In 1381, queerness was not an identity claimed by rebels, nor a space for transgressive freedoms. Instead, it was a condition imposed upon rebels, through the senses, and used to justify their exclusion from political society. The sensory disturbance of the body was a hostile tool of communication, transforming political dissent into illegible noise, excess and contamination. Queerness did not simply disrupt power, but could be deployed by it. Queer rhetoric must acknowledge not only the possibilities it opens, but also the violences it can be made to perform.

Abbie Fray is a doctoral student in Medieval English Literature at the University of Bern. Her thesis, ‘Affective Dysphoria’: Empathising with Transformation in Late Medieval Literature’, forms part of the SNSF-funded project, ‘Becoming Axolotl: Empathy, Simulation, and Embodiment in Medieval Narratives’. Holding degrees from the University of Oxford (Medieval History, MSt) and Durham University (History, BA), Abbie’s research falls at the intersection of queer studies, sensory studies, literary theory and late medieval history.