

Shakespeare, Materialism, Religion
SAA Seminar Abstracts (New Orleans 2016)
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A decade ago Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti cautiously championed a growing body of scholarship devoted to religion in early modern studies. This new scholarship resisted New Historicist and Cultural Materialist accounts of early modern religion as ideological mystification, arguing instead for an examination of the complexity of early modern religious thought on its own terms. Over roughly the same decade, new approaches to materialism challenged earlier materialist criticism focused variously on a Hegelian/Marxist interest in material conditions or on material culture studies and performance theory. Spurred on by the reassessment of subject-object relations and a renewed interest in Lucretian atomism, as well as by new interest in phenomenology, affect theory, and object-oriented ontology, this new (or “new, new”) materialism has a decidedly philosophical rather than political focus. The turn to religion, on the one hand, and the turn to philosophical approaches to materialism, on the other, have created an important opportunity to explore the connections between the two. We seek papers that put these two critical strands in dialogue, broadly speaking. How do arguments over religious feeling complicate claims that materialist thought dominated pre-Cartesian understanding? How are debates over materiality and immateriality implicated in the religious rhetoric of the period? While a focus on materialist thought may seem to be at odds with a serious examination of religious belief in the period, this seminar seeks to explore how the two are cross-implicated.

We have divided the papers into four thematic groups, which will form the basis for our discussion: materiality, conversion, ethics, and visibility. The abstracts are listed below by group.

1) MATERIALITY

Thomas J. (T.J.) Moretti, “Saved Remains for Early Modern English Stages”

This paper argues that remains of the dead—parts like those hearts and hands that are not-yet-corrupted and that nonetheless signal physical corruption—could concretize and concentrate the sacred on whichever early modern English stage they appear. Whether Blackfriars, the Globe, the torture room, the pulpit, or the stake, early modern stages accommodated human remains in ways that problematize the Protestant / Catholic divide. The problem here is one apart from the rhetorical and theological struggles in Tudor and Stuart England to further define and delimit the eucharist as something other than a body transubstantiated. Not simply the body, but parts of it become imbued with religious meaning as complex and affecting as crucifixes, vestments, candles, and statues. Well after the disavowal of relics, Foxe, Andrewes, Shakespeare, and Webster, for different venues and ends, showcased postmortem body parts in ways that shepherded readers and theatergoers into temporary experiences of shared faith and community. In so doing, playwrights and martyrologists signaled post-Reformation efforts to move beyond fantasies of religious materiality, to relocate religion within the material, and to sanctify fragmented materials of the body.

Aaron Kitch, “Unctious Matter in Hamlet”

Though sometimes regarded as a sign of the play’s forward-looking modernism, *Hamlet’s* skeptical materialism (what Stephen Greenblatt calls the Dane’s “irreducible corporeality”) emerges from Reformation theological debates, especially theories of the eucharist. Scholars such as Sarah Beckwith and Katherine Eggert have shown how anxieties about the real presence of the body of Christ within the ritual of communion had broad cultural implications. This essay examines the shaping influence of a different sacrament—extreme unction—on the play. The administration of oil by a priest to the deathly ill was thought to be an extra-biblical invention of the church as early as the writings of John Wycliffe. At the same time, unctuous oil was also a topic of natural philosophy since Aristotle, for whom it was the glue that allowed the four elements to join together and remain fixed. Medieval and early modern medial writing drawing on this

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tradition recorded competing recipes for producing healing “unctions” derived from various plants. Turning to the play, and especially Hamlet’s obsession with material processes of corruption, purgation, and reincarnation, I suggest that unction—a word that appears only twice in Shakespeare and both times in *Hamlet*—operates kind of enchanted matter that triggers catharsis or purgation in the witnessing audience.

John Estabillio, “Matters of Early Modern Kingship”

My paper will begin at the meeting point between the ideal form of early modern kingship, as voiced in a text such as King James’ *True Law of Free Monarchies* in 1598, and its often imperfect reality as a subject of the world’s competing material forces. The tension between these two poles is a recurring theme on the early modern English stage, and the problem of reconciling the corruptibility of kingship as an essentially human station with its validation through divine terms forms the central action of many histories and tragedies: in Shakespeare’s *Richard II* (1595), the ontology of monarchy finds expression as the precipitous difference between the “happy dream” of the divinely-insured throne and the “grim Necessity” (5.2) of *de facto* power that the deposed Richard expresses to his wife at their final parting; Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1619) confronts its audiences with the victimization of an ardent “*jure divino* royalist” and a potent scene of regicide; Samuel Daniel’s *Philotas* (1604) asks whether justice transcends the individual law and imperative of the monarch. Staging the complexity of early modern kingship was, it seems, an early modern commonplace: but where does the confrontation of ideologies that link worldly and divine power and the irreducible horizon of materiality leave belief? The unity between political and religious authority was well-articulated from the position of the individual subject (“rebel and atheist too,” says Donne in “Love’s Deity”); the dramatization of kingship as a fragmented, material, and historical phenomenon, however, seems to leave subsequent questions about the religious authority on which the king depends largely unasked. This paper will explore the tacit consequences of isolating kingship from its sources of theological authority and imagining it through the distinctly material processes of history and the stage.

Justin Kolb, “The Dissolution of the Engine of this World: The Decay of Nature as Ecology and Commonwealth”

Francis Shakelton’s pamphlet *A blazyng Starre* (1580) reads the English earthquake and comet of 1580 as omens of “the finall dissolution of the Engine of this worlde [...] whiche by many manifest and inevitable reasons I gather, can not bee farre of.” *A blazyng starre* is the first known instance of a peculiar sort of slow apocalypse: “The Decay of Nature,” a gradual dissolution that sees the world, infected by sin, gradually crumble into its constituent elements, order receding back into atomized chaos:

[I]t shall manifestly be proved that this worlde shall perishe and passe awaie, if wee doe but consider the partes whereof it doeth consist, for doe we not see the earth to be changed and corrupted: [...] Doe wee not in some places also read that mountaines have falne doune, by reason of earthquakes: [...] Also have ye not read, that seas have rebounded backe, overwhelmed whole Cittes, and utterly drowned whole provinces: And what are these strange alterations els, but evident arguments that the world shall one daie have an ende.

This world waiting to be put out of its misery would become a major strand in English intellectual culture in the first half of the seventeenth century, succinctly summarized by George Herbert’s poem “Decay”:

I see the world grows old, whenas the heat
Of thy great love once spread, as in an urn
Doth closet up itself and still retreat,
Cold sinne still forcing it, till it return,
And calling Justice, all things burn.

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In this paper, I will examine an earlier response to the decay of nature. In William Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1597) we see Gaunt's "other Eden, demi-paradise / This fortress built by Nature for herself" (2.1.42-43) crumble, and Richard's claims to command the stones prove groundless. But in Richard's final scene, the play briefly re-imagines a decaying hierarchy as a dynamic commonwealth, nature as a republic of creatures who approach each other as equals, on grounds of sympathy and love, and exist in a constant state of negotiation. The constellations of kings, prisoners, horses, grooms, stones, and jacks o'the clock are in constant swerving motion. The mutability of the world becomes a sign of hope and vitality, rather than despair and decrepitude. It's all too brief, but for a moment Richard manages to convene what Bruno Latour calls the Parliament of Things, an assembly of human and nonhuman actors combining to make a world.

Unfortunately, Richard's new constitution arrives at five minutes to midnight and assassins cut him off. Nevertheless, the possibility he floats remains a vivid alternative to the despair usually prompted by the decay of nature. As our own warming world faces rising seas and crumbling shores, we might learn from this transitory commonwealth and consider turning away from apocalyptic despair and convening our own parliament of things.

2) CONVERSION

Brian C. Lockey, "'To the Defense of my Secret Conscience': Public Narratives of Conversion and their Dramatic Counterparts."

During the early modern period, one's confessional identity was largely determined by one's participation in what Michael Questier calls "entourages and networks, often factionally aligned internally, whose ideological concerns inflected the more basic fact of their blood, kin and client relationships." According to this model of early modern religious identity, an individual's conscience was circumscribed by ideological concerns, which were themselves determined by familial and communitarian influences. Given the individual's dependence on such networks, it is somewhat surprising that religious conversions occurred at all, and yet, we find numerous accounts of prominent, public religious conversions that occurred during this period. My paper is partly on the transnational aspect of such religious conversions, with a particular consideration of the genre of letter writing as comprising the linguistic context within which to understand them. In particular, I examine a number of inter-related autobiographical accounts, like that of Sir Tobie Matthew's travels to Italy and his conversion there, while also considering those Englishman like Sir Philip Sidney and Anthony Munday who travelled to Italy and maintained their original confessional identity.

I use such autobiographical accounts of conversions in order to gain insight into a number of dramatic portrayals of religious and non-religious conversion in *Merchant of Venice*, *Cymbeline*, and Massinger's *The Renegado*. By way of background to such dramatic portrayals of conversion, I show that religious converts tended to move in the same circles or be members of the same larger social networks—religious converts to both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism often experienced more than one conversion during their lifetime and were often related to or were close to other converts. This paper considers such "convert communities," particularly their involvement in religious disputation, within the context of the communitarian theories of Charles Taylor and Jurgen Habermas concerning the emergence of the secular public sphere. On the one hand, the public account of conversion, whether to Catholicism or to Protestantism, was a paradoxical component of a private reform of the self—what Taylor describes as "building the right inner attitude," and what Edmund Spenser called in a related context, "fashioning a gentleman." In this respect, such accounts of conversion constitute a crucial unexamined stage in the development of Western secularism. On the other hand, as I show, we should understand dramatic portrayals of conversion and expressions of conscience as best understood as emerging communally rather than from an individualistic discovery of a spiritual truth.

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Holly Pickett, “Alchemy, Agency, and Religious Conversion”

There’s a strong conceptual affinity between religious conversion and alchemy. In both cases, a material undergoes a radical – even fundamental – change. Conceptualizing such a change requires drastic, even mystical, vocabulary. Jeffrey Shoulson has recently argued that Shakespeare draws on alchemical tropes in *Merchant of Venice* to analogize religious conversion. I will build upon his analysis to interrogate how such an analogy affects the agency of religious conversion. While Post-Reformation conversion narratives tend towards the internal, how do alchemical analogies complicate such interiority?

Specifically, I will analyze the writings of the natural philosopher and serial religious convert Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-1665) alongside Jonson’s *Alchemist* and Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. Digby claimed to have found the recipe for the “powder of sympathy,” a compound which purports to cure a wound when applied — not to the wound itself — but rather to the object that created the wound. I argue that his “sympathetic powder” offers a useful opportunity to meditate on questions of agency and transformation.

Like Digby, Ben Jonson conformed to the English Church for a period of years before returning to the Roman Catholic faith. Yet in *The Alchemist*, as in perhaps all of his city comedies, one might ask: Are his characters capable of conversion? I will argue that alchemical metaphors will hold one clue to developing a Jonsonian theory of religious conversion. In returning to Shakespeare, my hope is that the discussion of sympathy, agency, and alchemy will then allow us to bring the same set of questions back to Shylock and Jessica: They seem both “forced” and yet “not allowed” to “turn Christian.” Perhaps a set of alchemical principles will help us understand that double bind.

Paul Yachnin, “Converting Froth”

Conversion is movement under pressure. The Justice Escalus in *Measure for Measure* cautions the gentleman Froth not to frequent taverns. “Master Froth, I would not have you acquainted with tapsters: they will draw you, Master Froth”; and Froth himself allows that he never comes into any room in a taphouse but he is drawn in. This imagining of how a person can be transformed by the forces and procedures of a particular environment can stand as a comic model of how the play’s primary characters are subjected to forces external to themselves, or external to their idea of themselves, and how external pressure acts upon their mettle (both their character and material substance) by heating them, making them malleable, causing them to deviate away from who they thought they were and what they thought was their authentic life path.

In this paper, I focus on *Measure for Measure* and build on a paper presented last year at the SAA in order to think more deeply into the material, corporeal, and ecological dimensions of forms of conversion in early modernity.

3) ETHICS

Christopher Crosbie, “Embodied Acts and the Question of Intention in Shakespeare’s Problem Comedies”

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When Isabella pleads for Angelo’s life at the end of *Measure for Measure*, she doubly invokes the deputy’s intentions as reason for exculpation. Arguing that, at first, “a due sincerity governed his deeds” and that, later, even at his worst, “his act did not o’ertake his bad intent,” Isabella figures intention – whether instantiated or unrealized – as crucial for evaluating Angelo’s actions. Frequently dismissed as mere casuistry, Isabella’s speech sits uneasily within distinct ethical systems. A performance redolent of deontological ethics, Isabella’s plea relies heavily on a consequentialist epistemology, one that seems – particularly given the nature of Angelo’s vices – to run counter to Christian notions of transgression. Taking *Measure for Measure* as a starting point and gesturing outward to other problem comedies, this essay will examine Shakespeare’s use of intention as a mechanism for reimagining the standards of moral evaluation in an era dominated by Aristotelian virtue ethics.

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George Moore, "Timon of Athens and the Reformation Ethics of the Gift"

In an article illustrative of the "turn to religion" in Shakespeare studies, Ken Jackson presents *Timon of Athens* (1605-6) as a meditation on religious passion. Timon's spiritual quest, Jackson argues, is figured forth in his hubristic desire to achieve the impossibility of true beneficence—to give gifts that miraculously escape the logic of exchange and reciprocity. Timon's tragic nobility consists largely in this pursuit of selfless beneficence that none but Christ may truly achieve. Whereas Jackson reads *Timon* primarily through the lens of late Derridean philosophy, I rethink (and build upon) his argument by attending more closely to material experiences of the gift depicted in *Timon*, and, further, how such experiences undermine philosophies of gift-giving set out in Reformation theology.

As part of its overall attack on works-righteousness, the Reformation placed special emphasis on the need to forget oneself in the act of giving, to recognize oneself as merely a conduit through which divine beneficence flows in a larger cosmic cycle. I argue that Timon can never fully achieve this ethic of selfless giving because his beneficence is underwritten by usury agreements that memorialize his name. The second half of the play, however, juxtaposes such human dilemmas with a vision of nature as a true gift that appears without a demand for reciprocation. Through such contrasts, the play suggests that the rise of a credit economy alienates would-be givers from participating in larger ecological, cosmic, and divine cycles of beneficence.

Bruce Young, "'Poor Sacrifices of Our Enmity': Corporeal Sacrifice, Social Reconciliation, and Transcendence"

As Stephen Greenblatt points out, Shakespeare always uses the words *atone* and *atonement* in a social sense, to mean the bringing together of divided parties. Yet, even without using these words, Shakespeare offers a host of allusions and images related to the religious doctrine of atonement: references to redemption and salvation, to Christ's corporeal suffering and death, and to sacrifice—especially to bodily human sacrifice intended to purge sin, satisfy revenge, reconcile enemies, or achieve transcendence of some sort. Here I will focus on these references to and depictions of sacrifice and consider how material acts, especially ones involving bodily suffering and death, could be viewed as achieving social, psychological, and spiritual ends. This thread found repeatedly in Shakespeare's plays is a telling example of the materiality of religious understanding and practice in the pre-Cartesian world—or rather, perhaps more accurately, an example of what John Polkinghorne has called "dual-aspect monism," the view, which seems to me dominant among Shakespeare and his contemporaries, that the world, though ultimately constituting a single undividable reality, has two aspects, what can be roughly called material and spiritual. What this would mean for sacrifice is that the sacrificial event can be viewed simultaneously in two ways (if not more): it is an objective event involving material—palpable, visible, measurable, mutable—bodies, yet at the same time it is an event with psychological, social, and spiritual effects, experienced by what are in some sense conscious agents, including the sacrificial victims, the sacrificers, and others who participate in the sacrifice: entities capable of being acted upon but also endowed with motives, with the power to interpret and act, and with vital sensory, emotional, ethical, ideational, and relational experience.

Shakespeare presents a range of sacrificial events toward which the plays suggest a variety of contrasting attitudes. There are brief references to animal sacrifice (practiced by pagans of classical antiquity); in *Titus Andronicus* the ritual sacrifice of human beings satisfies some primal sense of honor and justice but sets in motion the horrific events of the play; Othello strives without complete success to view the murder of Desdemona as a ritual sacrifice. More ambiguously, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet are viewed as sacrifices—perhaps necessary, or perhaps tragically wasteful and avoidable—that reconcile the families. Lear views certain events, not clearly specified—perhaps his own willingness to give up power, perhaps Cordelia's self-risking love—as "sacrifices" upon which "the gods themselves throw incense." The word *sacrifice* literally means "to make sacred or holy," a meaning fraught with ambiguity, as René Girard has noted, since "the sacred" can refer to a self-deceiving mystification of violence or to an ethical self-offering capable of achieving genuine, yet not simply otherworldly, transcendence.

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Sam Kaufman, "Prospero and Caliban in Gibeon: Spiritual discernment and The Tempest's covenantal materialism"

My paper begins from the premise that *The Tempest's* incessant uncertainty about the location of the power of the moon marks its reception of Galileo's instantly famous 1610 telescopic observations of the mountainous and pitted lunar surface. If the moon was mere matter like the earth, whence and wherefore its influence, if any? The play sees the ensuing materialism as both a political and a theological problem, demanding the reconciliation of providential action with practical politics. While traditional theories of mystical monarchy provided one nominal solution, the lability of spiritual powers in the person of the material "airy spirit" Ariel, who has served both Prospero and Sycorax, represents this solution's failure. Like much 17th-century political philosophy, the play represents several attempts to build up a new materialist politics via revived versions of Stoicism and Epicureanism, but these attempts fail. One way to explain these failures is through the traditional theological problem of the discernment of spirits – the distinction between spiritual experiences or events due to God and the devil – which could theoretically serve as an immanent means to discern providence in action. I will argue that Ariel's lability also confounds simplistic forms of discernment, instead demanding an aestheticized form of discernment that avoids the risks of elitism or sensuality through a modification of covenantal theology that stresses the importance of suffering undertaken by both parties, a suffering which exceeds Stoic and Epicurean theorizations. As a side product, Prospero's Machiavellianism is potentially resolved through appeals to a covenantal form of politics and a Lutheran understanding of demonism as spiritual trial. But more significantly for this seminar, the play faces providence through a covenantalism that is capacious enough to accommodate its terms over time to the maturation of its parties, in particular their changing understandings of their selves and the universe. My paper will suggest how the biblical story of Gibeon triangulates the miracles of the play, covenantal theology, 17th-century political thought, and 17th-century responses to Galileo. What I call "covenantal materialism" is the play's cautionary refusal to build its ethics, à la Stoicism and Epicureanism, on a reductive materialism whose basis seemed to be currently changing, but to rely instead on the imaginative and voluntaristic capacities of its parties.

4) VISIBILITYDeni Kasa, "The Shape of Patience in *The Tempest*"

In his *On Patience*, St. Augustine warns Christians not to call a man's endurance of pain by the name "patience" without first establishing his orthodoxy: "When therefore thou shalt see any man suffer aught patiently, do not straightway praise it as patience; for this is only shown by the cause of suffering. When it is a good cause, then is it true patience. But when that is placed in crime, then is this much misplaced in name" (528). Writing during the English Reformation, William Cowper describes patience in much the same way: "[heretics] may make a shew of voluntary Religion in *not sparing the body*, but seeing they haue not the truth of God, how can they haue true Patience?" (286). Although these tracts respond to two very different historical contexts, they voice the same tendency in Christian theology to limit patience only to the orthodox. It follows that whoever has the authority to decide what orthodoxy means—the clergy, the nation, theologians—reifies their own authority when they evaluate someone's patience.

In this paper I argue that in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, this theological approach to Christian patience allows Prospero to divide his subjects into those who actively participate in sovereignty and those who do not. Prospero's subjects are not divided into the heretical and the orthodox, but the binary structure of Christian patience divides them into essentialized classes. Ferdinand, for example, proves his worth through his patience:

The very instant that I saw you did
 My heart fly to your service, there resides
 To make me slave to it, and for your sake
 Am I this patient log-man; (III.i.64-67)

Ferdinand's willingness to be patient is supposed to prove that he is, to borrow Milton's phrase, by merit more than birthright a king and a deserving suitor for Miranda. At the same time, Ferdinand's patience contrasts with Caliban's notable impatience when performing the same work. This system of supposed merit and reward breaks down, however, when Prospero blames Caliban's behaviour on his "shape": "He is as disproportion'd in his manners / As in his shape" (V.i.291-292). Prospero thus essentializes moral behaviour along class lines by reducing it to the material "shape" of the agent: Caliban is as it were predestined to be impatient, and Ferdinand's patience, it now become clear, was a function of his ostensibly superior "shape" all along. By reading these negotiations of patience in terms of the theological history of this virtue, I argue that Prospero adopts the power once reserved for ecclesiastical authorities in order to divide his subjects according to their shape. In the same way that the governing ecclesiastical bodies must deem a martyr orthodox in order for his patience to be genuine, so Prospero must deem his servant to be of an appropriate "shape" in order for his patience to register as such. The sovereign decision—in one case regarding orthodoxy, in the other regarding material "shape"—*precedes* the patience of those being judged, and yet the decision is justified as a *reflection* of the victim's behaviour.

Elizabeth Williamson, "Dying Offstage: Gender, Materiality, and Martyrdom in 1 Henry VI"

Despite the fact that Joan of Arc's death was well-documented, *1 Henry VI* withholds the spectacle of her execution—in large part, I think, because it would have been impossible to convincingly stage the act of burning someone at the stake. Like some of her fellow martyrs who had their tongues cut out in order to prevent them from testifying to their faith in their final moments, Joan is blocked from accessing the powerful combination of suffering and witnessing that male characters draw on in other parts of the cycle; the play is interested in staging her degradation, not her martyrdom.

But where does that leave Joan: what is a martyr without the performance of martyrdom? Tricomi is puzzled by the contradictions between the Pucelle of Acts 1-4 and the Pucelle of Act 5; in an attempt to resolve this tension, he compares both unfavorably to that model of womanhood, the ever-patient Anne Askew. Such analyses elide the differences between theatrical representations and written martyrologies and attempt to impose a stable notion of identity on both. Following Bloom, Bosman and West, my essay tests out the claim that Joan's flickering subjectivity "is productive rather than reflective or derivative" and that her absent martyrdom contributes to this productivity (169). At the same time, I will attempt to both honor and complicate Tricomi's initial insight by suggesting some of the ways in which Askew's hypervisibility (in Foxe's text, especially) sheds light on the suppressed spectacle of Joan's death.

Nova Myhill, "Materializing Confession: Allegory and History in A Warning for Fair Women"

In this paper, I will explore the relation between the historical and the allegorical aspects of crime and punishment in the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women*, a true crime play centered on the murder of George Sanders by George Brown with the possible complicity of Sanders's wife, Anne. My particular interest lies in the staging of interior states that can be made visible only through a series of presentational theatrical conventions—the aside and the allegorical dumbshow--and what this materializing of the invisible might mean in terms of Protestant notions of testimony and providence. The stage can show, can transform into actions, what the scaffold and the pamphlet can only tell, a distinction that becomes vitally important when Brown's confession on the scaffold fails to confirm the court's ruling that Anne Sanders is as guilty as the rest except in an aside. The presentational convention of the aside establishes the stage as a medium able to reveal the soul of the figure on the scaffold where the gallows can only reveal the body.

Amy K. Burnette, "Memory as Literary Prescription in English Renaissance Homiletics"

This paper investigates how image-producing aspects of the *ars memoria* informed structural and stylistic conventions of early seventeenth-century English homiletics. I focus on the sermons of Church of England clergyman Thomas Adams, who, since disappearing into obscurity after the early 1630s, has remained one of the more significant buried literary talents of the seventeenth century. Celebrated by Robert Southey as "the prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians," Adams was highly visible in print from the 1610s through the late 1620s, during which he published eighteen individual sermons, five sermon collections, and a lengthy commentary on St. Peter's second epistle. This paper is concerned with "The Sinners Passing-Bell. Together with Physic from Heaven," the last in a group of four sermons published as *The Devil's Banquet* (1614), in which Adams uses the image of the apothecary's shop as a mnemonic device to explain how scripture can be stored in and called forth from memory to protect the soul and facilitate its ascent to heaven--that is, as a means of spiritual healing.

Apothecaries appeared on the Renaissance stage in plays such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*, and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, but the apothecary's shop itself was also a sort of theater in miniature, with its ornate jars, vials of colored waters and remedies, usually set out where passers-by could easily view them in windows and through doorways. Adams's choice of provocative sermon titles such as *The white deuil* (preached at St. Paul's in 1612, the year of the first performance of Webster's play that bears the same title) suggests not only his awareness of the market in which his sermons competed for readership, but also of popular taste for the sensational apparent in contemporary drama. In "The Sinners Passing-Bell," Adams figures himself as a physician, referring to scripture as "balmes," "drammes," and "receits" meant to be stowed away in the apothecary's "old store," or memory. The metaphor of the apothecary's shop is employed not only as a means of ordering the memory artificially, but it is also, I argue, the convention through which Adams's sermon is able to achieve its intended effect: the striking image of the apothecary's shop would have provided an easily recognizable, yet distinctive, mnemonic device for Adams's wide array of readers and auditors.