

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 1**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

**Respondents: Lynn Enterline, Vanderbilt University**  
**David Marno, University of California, Berkeley**

**Douglas Clark, University of Manchester**

*Semper Eadem?*

**Ecologies of Grief and Regenerative Poetics in Shakespeare and Donne**

This paper is concerned with non-christocentric figurations of rebirth in Renaissance elegiac verse and poetic obsequies, taking conceits concerning organic internment, putrefaction, and regeneration in Donne's 'Elegy upon the Untimely Death of the Incomparable Prince Henry', 'An Elegy upon the Death of Mistress Bulstrode', and Shakespeare's 'Phoenix and the Turtle' and *Venus and Adonis* as primary areas of focus. I open this essay by placing emphasis on the reiterative performance of Venus' grief – as she envisions embracing the 'new-sprung flower' (1171) of Adonis 'day and night' (1186) at the conclusion of *VA* – to query the orthodox understanding of the *carpe florem* tradition in early modern verse (one which ostensibly details a linear movement from erotic potency to decline). A brief study of temporality and fecundity in *VA* will provide a platform for an examination of the commemorative function that soil, flowers, and trees take in Donne's obsequies and Shakespeare's 'Phoenix and the Turtle'. This comparative study will demonstrate how the ecologies of mourning presented in these poems are rationalized through the conceptual tension between perpetual stasis and dynamic renewal. In doing so, I (tentatively) offer a broader argument concerning the importance that the cultivation of grief – garnered specifically through images of organic unification and perpetually fruitful regeneration – takes in the production of English Renaissance elegies.

**Bradin Cormack, Princeton University**

**Poetry and Predication:  
Comparison in Shakespeare and Donne**

This paper comes out of a book I'm completing on philosophical experimentation in Shakespeare's sonnets. I will be looking at comparison, in theory and practice, in a few of Shakespeare's poems, including sonnet 21 and the little admired 145, and in a few of Donne's poems, including Elegy 2 ["The Comparison"] and Elegy 10 ["The Anagram"]. Instead of focusing directly on the metaphysical conceit (interestingly historicized by Katrin Ettenhuber in her "Comparisons are Odious" (*RES* 62 [2011]), I want to use some more ordinary comparisons as indices of the logical habits sustaining the two poetries. I am particularly interested in the force of predications that make visible complex propositions inside simple ones. I will be returning to Fish's 1990 essay on "Donne and Verbal Power" (in Harvey and Maus, eds., *Soliciting Interpretation*) and, even further back, to some remarks by Empson and Eliot (in *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*).

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 2**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

**Barbara Correll, Cornell University**

**Out of Compass:  
Shakespeare and Donne**

My interest is with the play, in Shakespeare and Donne, with figures of circumscription and containment, on the one hand and, on the other, the threat, the thrill, and the significance of being “out of compass,” as Falstaff bemoans the disordered state of his life and body in 1 Henry IV (3.3.11-19). The other side of circumscription, its all too possible failure, points not only to Falstaff’s ever-expanding girth but to disorderly relationships both political and sexual, to a kind of radical loss, an uncontainable excess: a kind of unbounded, even outlaw limitlessness that circumscription—being in compass—is haunted by and attempts to suppress as the threat of what Bataille famously theorized as general economy. I have elsewhere argued for ways in which Shakespeare is willing to entertain the possibility (and danger) of general economy, while Donne demonstrates a symptomatic aversion to limitlessness; this paper further addresses that interest in a transgeneric reading of Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” and Shakespeare’s *IHV*. The preoccupation, in Shakespeare and Donne, with keeping lovers and political enemies or allies in compass while also entertaining the possibility of being out of compass is linked for me with less teleological accounts of the early modern economy and culture. If we read beyond the constraints of restricted conceptual structures that, in effect, freeze at the thought of limitlessness or going out of bounds, out of compass, and thus read outside teleological structures—of nationalism, of the market, of forms of intimacy, even of poetic forms—that dominate accounts of early modern cultural history, we might open other accounts of the past we study and invest in.

**Robert Darcy, University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**“There Is No Phoenix”:  
Crowding Love in Donne and Shakespeare**

In their love poems, Donne and Shakespeare both like a voyeur. Their speaker-lovers crave to be watched while expressing the most intimate of private sentiments. My paper asks if—for Renaissance eroto-emotional poets—three is, in fact, not a crowd, but a numerological antidote to the crushing isolation figured as the spawn of a poetics of metaphysical love apparently searching to make merely two from one. The third figure, aloof and watching—accidental?—populates, troubles, disrupts, and greatly satisfies a poetic longing as deep as that expressed for the beloved. But beyond the fictional engagement of two, three emerging perspectives engage in an ever wider and more complex interplay that resists a fixity or finality of destination. The mysterious third interloper introduces its own pain as traveler and witness, reader and silent signatory.

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 3**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

**Jennifer Edwards, Shakespeare's Globe**

**Beside Themselves:  
Narratives of Ecstasy in Shakespeare and Donne**

My paper explores narratives of ecstasy in the works of Shakespeare and Donne. Derived from the Greek *ek-stasis* – *ek* (out of, away from, beyond) and *histanai* (to place), the ecstatic experience etymologically marks itself out as a moment where the subject stands beside or outside of themselves. For the early modern subject, ecstasy was most commonly taken as the state of a Christian raptured outside of themselves in order to connect with the divine—a narrative that period writers repeatedly explore via the accounts of key figures such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Teresa. But by turning the pathways of devotional correspondence into letter networks, Donne's letter to Sir Thomas Lucey re-imagines the early modern period's conception of ecstasy as an intensely spatial experience. Promoting the capacity of letter-exchange to embody inter-relation, Donne's letter borrows the dynamics of his ecstatic couple who 'advance' beyond the confines of the self, who 'go out' of themselves in order to achieve a mutually incorporate identity. It is these dynamics that this paper takes centrally, exploring the ecstatic departure from and return to self in the work of Donne and Shakespeare (and more specifically reading Donne's erotic alchemy in 'The Ecstasy' alongside Shakespearean comedies such as *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in order to demonstrate how this experience provided these writers with a model through which to think about the construction and fashioning of selfhood.

**John Estabillo, University of Toronto**

**Soul and Document in Donne's Verse Letters and Measure for Measure**

In the verse letter "To M.H.," John Donne implores the "Mad paper" of his letter to "stay, and grudge not here to burn / With all those sons whom my brain did create," suggesting a tantalizing but elusive identity between the life of the writer and the paper document of the letter - a sense that souls, like letters, are both material and immaterial. While the soul is deemed the seat of reason and discourse, the letter promises to contain and convey this ethereal essence, imitating the spark of human thought that is its origin. Both soul and letter, however, are also tethered to vulnerable and tenuous forms of physical existence as they carry out these faculties. Donne's singular approach to self-representation in letters and "verse epistles" alike make them fascinating records of his exploration of the nature of the human soul as both the source of textual essences but also potentially textual in its own native essence as well. In this paper I would like to explore analogies between the objects of soul and letter in some of Donne's poetic correspondence and the "letters of strage tenor" in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, a play that embodies the artificiality of the human soul through the stage property of the letter. As intermediaries between states of knowledge and ignorance, letters are extensions, deputies, and simulacra of the soul that creates them. In turn, soul and letter alike are read and misread as objects of interpretation and judgment. The result is that in the dissimulating Vienna of the play, the

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 4**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

origin and fate of the soul become as artificial and fallible as the letters that condemn and redeem them.

**Dianne Mitchell, The Queen's College, University of Oxford**

**Shakespeare's Several Begetters**

Around the time that William Shakespeare was composing what Francis Meres termed his “sugred sonnets among his private friends,” John Donne was writing some of his earliest verses: epistles, many in the form of sonnets, to “fair youths” associated with Cambridge and the Inns of Court. Using evidence from Donne’s loving poems to male friends, this paper considers what it might mean to read Shakespeare’s male-addressed sonnets not as a published sequence but as manuscript poems, like Donne’s, “among private friends.” I will focus on the “procreation sonnets” in particular, arguing that Shakespeare’s language of begetting and waste bears a striking resemblance to the terms by which Donne enjoins his friends to maintain emotional bonds through the postal circulation of verse. Even as Shakespeare urges a stubborn Friend to procreate, could he have been reminding friends of their social duties? What if the “men” he imagines reading his lines in time to come are not future strangers, but loved readers? This paper will ultimately suggest that some of the Sonnets’ most puzzling features, including their repetitiveness and bizarre obsession with their addressee’s reproductive capacity, look far more natural when we situate them not alongside other printed sonnet sequences but within the popular practice of mailing handwritten poems among members of a same-sex community.

**Steven Monte, College of Staten Island, City University of New York**

**The Metaphysical Shakespeare**

In this paper, I examine moments in Shakespeare that are “metaphysical” or “Donne-like” in style or argumentation, in order to show that Shakespeare is more poetically akin to Donne than is often assumed, and that he is especially Donne-like at a particular period of his career. My focus is on “The Phoenix and the Turtle” and Sonnet 115; other texts include “Love’s Growth” and “Lovers’ Infiniteness,” and *Troilus and Cressida*.

My claims about Shakespeare’s mid-career style, and about Shakespeare and Donne, are modest: I am not arguing for influence or even for a spirit of the age. Rather, I am inviting inquiry into Shakespeare and Donne in 1596–1603. As Katherine Duncan-Jones observes in her edition of Shakespeare’s Sonnets, the Stationers’ Register entry of “3 January 1600” to “A book called Amours by J.D. with certain other sonnets by W.S.” is tantalizing. My analysis provides a warrant for investigating the possibility that “J.D.” and “W.S.” are Donne and Shakespeare.

Beyond claims about Shakespeare’s career and literary relations, I invoke “metaphysical” in a modernist sense. I would denote a sophisticated mode or series of techniques as

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 5**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

outlined in Herbert Grierson's introduction to *Metaphysical Lyrics* and T.S. Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets," in order to draw attention to a "modernist" device in Shakespeare that has gone unnoticed—"delayed decoding." As Ian Watt explains, delayed decoding is the process by which the reader is put "in the position of being an immediate witness of each step in the process whereby the semantic gap between the sensations aroused in the individual by an object or event, and their actual cause of meaning, was slowly closed in his consciousness." Whether or not Shakespeare was influenced by Donne or a metaphysical trend, his use of delayed decoding reveals him to be significantly metaphysical in style and substance.

**Jayne Peacock, Penn State University**

**The Orphic Poet and the Body of the Beloved in Shakespeare's Hamlet  
and Donne's *Sapho to Philaenis***

In this paper, I examine Shakespeare's and Donne's different depictions of and responses to an early modern understanding of Orphic power. Specifically, I examine Donne's love elegy *Sapho to Philaenis* and the graveyard scene in Act 5, scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, considering how each author uses the body of the beloved to reflect upon the Orphic power of poetry. I argue that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* demonstrates the tragic limits of Orphic power, while Donne's *Sapho to Philaenis* produces a new poetics that depends on an erotic imitation of the divine. In both of these texts, the body of the beloved plays a crucial role. Ophelia's corpse refutes Hamlet's aspirations to authorial power, exhibited in his exaggerated and aggressively competitive elegiac lines delivered from within her grave. For Donne's Sappho, the body of Philaenis leads to Sappho's loss of her Orphic "enchanting force" (2; Bates 233-4), and the construction of a new poetics that, I argue, rejects the early modern model of Orpheus in favor of a divine self-definition rooted in the "I am that I am" of Exodus 3:14 and echoed in the poem's imagery of bodily symmetry. The bodies of these beloveds lie at the center of two different but related critiques of Orphic poetry, and it is my hope that this paper may begin to suggest how the beloved works as a central figure upon which early modern discourses of poetics, form, and authorship play out (a topic which I take up more broadly in my dissertation).

**Peter Picetti, University of Nevada, Reno**

**Editorial Influence and Adaptation in Poetic Miscellanies:  
Shakespeare's *Poems* (1640) and Donne's poems in *The Art of Courtship* (1662)**

Shakespeare's 1640 *Poems*, published in octavo by John Benson, has often been criticized as a corrupted version of Thomas Thorpe's publication of the sonnets in 1609, a charge that has only recently been scrutinized. Line Cottagnies reevaluates the 'unanimous criticism' that maligns the revisions to Shakespeare's sonnets in Benson's edition, suggesting that the edition has been treated like the 'bad quartos' of Shakespeare's plays. She does so by interrogating the fine line between an early modern editor's 'legitimate prerogative' to intervene on a text opposed to an editorial overstep by

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 6**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

deviating from previous editions.

For this paper, I will use Cottegnies' work on Shakespeare's stationers as a model to expand on Lukas Erne's bibliographical work on 'adaptations' of John Donne's poetry found in a 1662 miscellany. Erne has found previously undiscovered adaptations of Donne in a duodecimo courtesy book, entitled *The Art of Courtship*, based on eleven poems from Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*. In addition to furthering Erne's work through an interpretative comparison with Donne's *Poems* published in 1633, I will also show paratextual similarities with Shakespeare's 1640 *Poems*. The use of Cottegnies as a model to contextualize editorial intention in *Complements* will assist in understanding the courtesy book's importance—both to the study of Donne and to the publishing of poetic miscellanies in the mid-seventeenth century.

**Richard Strier, University of Chicago**

**Lyrics on Hating Sex:  
Donne and Shakespeare**

Donne and Shakespeare are often thought of as the two greatest "love poets" in our language. But the sense in which this commonplace is true is complex. Shakespeare hardly writes any sonnets that present "love" in the ideal sense -- a mutually committed relationship happily involving both mind and body. Donne is famous for presenting this in some of his lyrics. However, these lyrics are a rather small percentage of his "love lyrics," which really should be called lyrics concerning eros rather than love. For every poem of mutuality in Donne, there are three poems of cynicism or happy male predation. Another strange feature about Donne and Shakespeare as "love poets" is how little overlap there is in their topics and treatments. Perhaps surprisingly, one of these few overlaps is that they both write a number of poems expressing hatred of consummated sex. My paper treats one of these from each of them: Donne's "A Farewell to Love" and Shakespeare's Sonnet 129. It reads the two poems fairly closely, showing points of continuity and points of contrast between them. It concludes that the Donne poem is able to occupy a more stable position with regard to sex than the Shakespeare sonnet does. It also tries to provide an explanation for this.

**José Juan Villagrana, Bates College**

**Reading "The Flea" Syncretically: Donne's Poetics of Colonial Moderation**

Conventional readings of Donne's "The Flea" focus on the parody of the Holy Trinity, the mediation of Protestant and Catholic sacramental theology, and the dramatic irony of the libertine conceit. This essay revises the reception history of "The Flea" by disclosing how Donne's concern with parentage, or the mixing of blood, is inseparable from his ethics of colonialism. When the new-world natives were not being characterized as "garbage" of "inhume Birth" by early modern commentators, they were depicted as tender innocents ready to receive Christ. Donne's sermons identify with this latter stance

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 7**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

that argues, by way of Spanish Catholic theologians, for a moderate Christian evangelism in the English plantations. This essay shows that Donne was pondering the ethical dimensions of colonialism in his libertine poetry as a prelude to his later theological writings, producing surprising affinities with Shakespeare's own consideration of ethno-cultural mixing. Much like how Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, a play about Roman imperialism, invokes the parentage of a fly sarcastically to indict Marcus' "deed of death done on the innocent" in a moment of shared grief, Donne's poem chastises the would-be bedfellow for killing a flea in which "our two bloods mingled be," or for killing Christ, when she "Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence." As a result, both texts center on the ethical concern of murdering their respective metonymic corollaries (Aaron the Moor as the fly and the innocent native as the flea) by recovering the quality that humanizes them, their parentage. This essay shows that Donne's interest in colonialism is not limited to problematized readings of geographic or political allusion, as is the case with the well-known figurations in "Elegy XIX." "The Flea" moderates its transgressive libertinism and religious profanity by putting its paronomasia to the use of considering the morality of English colonialism.

**Wilson, Luke, Ohio State University**

**The Middle Voice and the Location of Literary Value in Donne and Shakespeare**

Ancient grammarians identified a "middle voice," a form of diathesis that stands in the middle ground between active and passive, where the subject of the verb is neither simply active nor simply passive. As Agamben shows, Greek *chresthai*, to use, as well as Latin *uti*, fall into this category of verb. For Agamben, this observation forms the groundwork for "a new figure of human praxis." I don't know about that, but in this paper I want to work out how Donne and Shakespeare work with grammatical constructions in which subject and object are indeterminated, in middle voice verbs, in ambiguities of subjective and objective genitive, and so on, of which there are many instances in Shakespeare (as for example in such apparently simple expressions as "the law's delay," in Hamlet). For me, this is part of a larger project on the idea of use in English and Latin from Augustine to Milton, but more immediately, for this paper, it involves moments where we're invited to distinguish between what matters and what does not, that is, between value and waste, and at the same time are prevented from doing so, as in the line in Donne's *Metempsychosis*, "So perishèd, the eaters and the meat," where the eaters are Adam and Eve and the meat is the forbidden fruit: we should not care what becomes of the fruit, the entirely accidental material substrate of the important human and divine drama that is unfolding, and yet the sentence seems to place the demise of the fruit on an equal footing with that of the human eaters. The strategy of *Metempsychosis* seems to have to do with continual branching, diversion, and deferral, self-canceling feints in the direction of waste disposal, and I'd like to think about this in relation to similar phenomena in Shakespeare – though I admit the connections aren't specific for me yet. Either a vestigial or an active part of the plan involves satire as an available mode in generically non-satiric works (*Metempsychosis*; *Venus and Adonis*, *Troilus*, Shakespeare's comedies generally): where satire is part of the picture, how is literary value (and literary waste) portioned off among

**2018 SAA Seminar: Shakespeare and Donne 8**  
**Leaders: Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Toronto)**  
**Timothy M. Harrison (University of Chicago)**

the different literary kinds? If it's true that satire is as much about suffering as about pleasure, it may be that s/m, as one form of the indetermination of active and passive, is a way of seeing how the satiric has a special place among the modes and genres when it comes to literatures of the middle voice. But as will be obvious, it's early days for me with all this.