

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

This section on “Early Modern Futures” explores the ways in which Early Modern literature and its adaptations project, imagine, and theorise futurity in a double-bind of retrospection and anticipation. Dramatic works, devotional and elegiac verse, pamphlets, and broadsheets of the Early Modern period construct discourses surrounding the poetics and possibilities of the future. The section asks how concepts of progress and time are conceived in Early Modern literature; how different modes and genres model and perform futurity; and how later texts, precisely through their engagement with Early Modern writing, create many possible futures for Early Modern literature and culture. The **Keynote** lecture by Professor Leah Knight (Brock University) addresses the formal and thematic dimensions of futurity in the manuscript poetry of Hester Pulter. The first panel, “**Staging Futures**”, investigates the performance of futurity in Early Modern drama by considering Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* as well as works by Ben Jonson and John Webster. The second panel, “**Form and Futurity**”, examines the complex relationships between genre, style, and conceptions of the future in John Donne’s poetry, the history play, and Early Modern comedy. Panel three, “**Early Modern (Re)Imaginations**”, discusses the links between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature and its later reception and reconstruction by considering the Victorian novel, modern and contemporary popular culture, and diachronic intertextual engagements with Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Keynote

Leah Knight (Brock University): Heavy Hopes – Hester Pulter’s Pregnant Possibilities

Abstract: This paper examines selections from the devotional, elegiac, and emblematic verse of Hester Pulter (1605–78) with a view to tracing a fresh outline of her poetics of futurity. It argues that these poetics were shaped to a significant extent by two interrelated experiences of body and mind that dovetailed with Pulter’s writerly vision and productivity: pregnancy and (more broadly) expectation. Ever since her manuscript was re-discovered at the end of the twentieth century, scholars have been taken by Pulter’s attentive inscription of possibility—and even the possibility of possibility, of imagined futures associated, especially, with liberation from the confinement of current circumstances. In this paper, I will examine the potency of pregnancy, both as a phenomenon that shaped Pulter’s daily life for over a quarter of a century (1620–48), during which she brought fifteen pregnancies to term, and as a trope activated by a wider early modern English discourse in which Pulter did not hesitate to intervene. Through her engagement with eggs and embryos, wombs and nests, as well as in her attention to processes of parenting, patience, and perfection, Pulter’s poems attend to material states that invite anticipation—both anxious and hopeful—of their transformation into something other, more, better, and beyond. In this way, Pulter’s eschatology and soteriology may be brought down to earth and made legible, not least in her depictions of the generative rhetorical power of gestating and maternal bodies: both her own and those of a host of non-human creatures.

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

Bio Note: Leah Knight is Professor of Early Modern Non-Dramatic Literature in the Department of English Language and Literature at Brock University in St. Catharines, Canada. She is the author of two monographs: *Reading Green in Early Modern England* and *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England*. With Wendy Wall, she founded and continues to edit *The Pulter Project: Poet in the Making*, an online home for editions and other treatments of the verse of Hester Pulter. Other recent work includes *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain*, a collection of essays edited with Micheline White and Elizabeth Sauer. Most recently, she has begun working on a digital edition of the travel narratives of Celia Fiennes.

Panel 1 – Staging Futures

Valentina Finger (Munich): “I’ll draw it nearer by a perspective” – Prognostic Mirrors in Jacobean Drama

Abstract: This paper pursues a double purpose: first, it examines the significance of prognostic mirrors in early modern drama after 1603. Second, it demonstrates how their staging is connected to how early modern playwrights and theatregoers felt about their own futures. Early modern individuals experienced social transformations that involved proto-feminist agency and scientific progress. While, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, these processes were still at early stages, they were made present via the seismographic medium of the playhouse. I argue that mirrors, employed both as props and tropes, were effective vehicles for negotiating anxieties about the future. Also, the staging and speaking of mirrors with magical (especially prognostic) qualities in Jacobean drama differs from their Elizabethan stage representations (as, for example, in Robert Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*) in that their ‘magic’ is explicitly marked as a product of theatrical and scientific demonstration.

I illustrate my argument by studying the prognostic mirrors involved in the plot of four Jacobean dramas. In John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613–4), mirrors pervade both language and action to make sense of changing gender relations caused by female agency. The Duchess’s cosmetic mirror returns in the male characters’ references to perspective glasses that allow alternative views on and of women. In Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610) and Thomas Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* (1624) specular instruments supposed to make the future visible are exposed as stages of theatrical deceit. In both plays, the impostor figures pretend to master natural magic or religious wonder while, in fact, they are only masters of performance. In Thomas Tomkis’s *Albumazar* (1615), the illusions produced by natural-magic mirrors are further linked with anxieties regarding social mobility and sexual transgression. I argue that the unmasking of specular magic as a product of scientific and performative skills traces the changing attitude towards magic in a period of increased scientification and secularisation.

Bio Note: Valentina Finger is a post-doctoral researcher at LMU Munich. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on mirrors as props and tropes in English Renaissance drama. She studied Fashion Journalism and Communication, followed by Comparative Literature in

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

London and Munich. Her latest publication is “‘As Brittle as the Glory’: Imperial Mirrors and Their Inversions in Richard II” (*Zeitsprünge* 26:1/2, 2022); an article on dress and disguise in Shakespeare’s Falstaff plays is pending. Besides early modern mirrors, her research interests include sartorial and cosmetic culture on and beyond the stage.

Christine Schwanecke (Graz) & Jasmin Jonser (Graz): Female Futures in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)

Abstract: This paper explores early modern futures as imagined at the intersection of early modern female writing and drama. It is based on the thesis that one of the first female English playwrights, Elizabeth Cary, conceptualizes, in her *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), possible futures of the female sex. Cary’s play is read against the backdrop of Jacobean culture and especially gender conflicts, which were fuelled not least by the politics of King James I. Manifestoes like his *Demonology* (1597) contributed to an increasing demonisation and prosecution of females who either challenged Jacobean hegemonic gender norms or refused to live according to them. The paper poses the question of how these transformations and conflicts are reflected in Jacobean female drama; and it asks which strategies Cary employs to imagine futures for ‘deviant’ females beyond the stake and other forms of state punishment.

The paper poses these questions by examining the ways in which ‘female futures’ are constructed on two defining levels of the play. Focusing, firstly, on the story level, especially on the different fates of the female heroines, Mariam and Salome, we analyse the forms of agency as well as the possible and actual futures these archetypal female figures are endowed with. Taking, secondly, the formal level into account, we aim at investigating how *Mariam’s* form – e.g., its genre, its chorus – informs these futures by challenging, reinforcing, or discussing the plot’s female futures.

Bio Notes: **Christine Schwanecke** holds the chair of English Literature and Culture at the University of Graz. She specialises in drama, early modern literature and culture, gender studies, intermediality, and transgeneric and transmedial narratology. Her most recent publications include *A Narratology of Drama: Dramatic Storytelling in Theory, History, and Culture from the Renaissance to the Twenty-First Century* (De Gruyter 2022) and *The Transformative Power of Literature and Narrative: Promoting Positive Change, A Conceptual Volume in Honour of Vera Nünning* (Narr 2023, with Corinna Assmann and Jan Rupp).

Jasmin Jonser studies English and Latin at the University of Graz and is a student assistant at the chair of Professor Schwanecke. She currently writes her BA thesis on “Through the Lens of Patriarchy – Aspects of the Female Code of Conduct in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry* in comparison to Flavius Josephus’ *Antiquitates Iudaicae*”.

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

Julia Boll (Konstanz): Unbound – The Ethics and Entanglements of Moll Cutpurse

Abstract: First performed in 1611, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's city comedy *The Roaring Girl* is a fictionalised dramatization of the life of a cross-dressing pickpocket in early seventeenth-century London. At the end of her play, Moll Cutpurse, the titular roaring girl, pronounces a utopian vision of what communal life could become if relations between genders and classes were fairer, kinder, less restrictive and less chrono-normative. That the play shares ground with contemporary queer scholarship, especially with the theory of queer futurity as proposed by José Esteban Muñoz, is well established. I suggest combining this approach with a reassessment of the figure that has come to be called bare life, and with Karen Barad's seminal work on quantum physics and entanglement and her concept of human agency as emerging from intra-actions.

The vulnerability and passivity ascribed to bare life in various dominant theories, notably in Giorgio Agamben's own, reveals itself, when explored on stage, to be not without agency. A liminal figure, Moll embodies the threshold within herself, and in keeping with the prevalent philosophical and juridical model of bare life, she would represent the abject, barely human, stripped of political and social rights. Yet, played for comedy, the primary genre of utopian drama, she is fashioned as monstrous as well as mythical, her queerness operating as positive resistance: she manifests what seems impossible in the present, therefore becoming a possibility of the future.

Considering the potentiality and futurity of bare life as a category and as a mode of resistance, I will analyse how a figure earmarked in critical thought as powerless disengages from the system that confines her and reclaims subjectivity, pointing at the possible formation of a community that does not rely on exclusion but recognises embodied relations and entanglements as ethical obligations and as an opportunity for co-constitution and prospective change.

Bio Note: Julia Boll holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh and a habilitation from the University of Konstanz. She is currently an Associate Fellow at the University of Konstanz's Zukunftskolleg. Before, she was Interim Professor for British Studies at the University of Hamburg. Her monograph *The New War Plays* was published in 2013, and her second book, *Scapegoats, Devils, Outlaws, Witches: Bare Life's Lives on the Medieval, Early Modern, and Contemporary Stage*, is under review.

Panel 2 – Form and Futurity

Lukas Lammers (Berlin): Futures of the Past – The History Play's Fraught Relation with the Future

Abstract: The early modern history play was a peculiar and extremely popular form. Characters in Shakespeare's histories frequently prophesy, speculate, and discuss the future. However, when they do so, the point of reference for the audience is often, not the future, but a moment in the past or present. In such instances, playgoers are challenged to envision

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

that anticipated future, but also to compare it to what they know as past or present. A predicted future could thus be framed as a 'past future', a future that was never realised, or as a 'correct' prediction/divination. In one case, the character making the prediction may appear as naïve or imprudent, in the other, as a shrewd observer or as divinely inspired. But even if the prediction turns out to (have) be(en) wrong, does that mean that it is wholly discredited? The Shakespearean history play may have been less politically conservative than much criticism has assumed. In particular, a consideration of acting styles can bring to the fore the potential of theatrical speculation, and how it could coexist with religious and political prohibitions against prediction and prophecy. Considering a range of passages from Shakespeare's histories, the paper argues that the development of naturalistic acting or 'personation' was key to a presentation of history that allowed playgoers to experience the future of the past as open. An immersion in the 'futures of the past' allowed them to indulge in the thought that things 'could have been different' and, thus, also to imagine how things can or should be different in the (further) future. Such considerations are closely tied up with rivaling concepts of time. In particular, a consideration of nostalgia will serve to explore the multidirectionality of early modern temporalities and the performance of history.

Bio Note: Lukas Lammers is currently Visiting Professor at Humboldt-University Berlin, where he teaches English literature and Cultural Studies. He previously held positions at Free University Berlin, and Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg. His research focuses on early modern drama, historical fiction, and questions of cultural memory and identity, with a particular focus on World War II and processes of decolonisation. He is co-editor of Shakespeare Seminar and his monograph *Shakespearean Temporalities* was published with Routledge in 2018.

Johannes Schlegel (Würzburg): "And all after-times" – Futurity, Genre, and Affect in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*

Abstract: In the introduction to her edited volume *Time, Genre, and Experience*, Lauren Shohet argues that form and temporality articulate one another (2018: 6). Starting from this observation, this paper seeks to investigate the relation between futurity, affect and genre. After all, it has become a staple of recent affect theory that emotions take place in temporal relations. Sara Ahmed, for instance, has repeatedly claimed that both anxiety and happiness are future-oriented emotions as they express an expectation of something that might (not) or will (not) happen to the subject: "We can [...] anticipate that an object will cause happiness in advance of its arrival; the object becomes available within a horizon of possibility because it has already been given positive affect. The judgment that some things are good not only precedes our encounter with things, but directs us toward those things" (2014, 220). But while affect theory is a burgeoning field in early modern studies (see e.g. Robinson 2020, Bailey & DiGangi 2017), its relation to problems of futurity have remained as understudied as its relation to questions of genre. Moreover, the few exceptions focus almost exclusively on tragedy (Schlegel 2023, Douglas 2018, Douglas-Fairhurst 2007). To productively relate

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

futurity, genre, and affect, the proposed paper reads two Jonsonian Comedies: in both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, a negotiation of futurity – be it in the form of greed for a future inheritance or, respectively, fear of the apocalyptic “sickness hot” and (mischievous) plans to predict and influence the future – is constitutively linked to comedy.

Bio Note: Johannes Schlegel teaches English Literature and British Cultural Studies at JMU Wuerzburg. Currently, he is working on his second-book project *Shakespearean Synchronisation: Cultural Techniques of Temporality and the Early Modern Stage*. His publications include the peer-reviewed article “*Hamlet* and the Problem of Synchrony” (ZAA, 2018) and the co-edited volume *Media Ecologies of Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2022). His article “My despised time: Temporalities of Disgust in Shakespearean Tragedy” will be published by Cambridge UP later this year.

Marlene Dirschauer (Hamburg): Donne’s Future Perfect

Abstract: John Donne’s religious poetry has been aptly described as a “poetics of brinkmanship”; positioned on “the threshold between one world and the next” (Targoff 2008, 107), Donne faces the “next world” with a mixture of soteriological assurance – what Marotti (1986) calls his “joyful confidence in the power of the redemption” (257) – and a fear of reprobation. This paper uses the temporal logic underlying the Future Perfect – a verb form that grammatically indicates the completion of an event before a given point of time in the future – as a means of approaching the complex temporal dynamics in Donne’s religious poetry, in which a past event – God’s sacrifice – has (already) redeemed man’s present and future sins: “you *antedated* me a pardon in thy *preventing* grace” (*Devotions*, 63). While Donne relies on God’s “preventing grace” as his verse gravitates toward death, the poet also struggles with the Protestant emphasis on the *givenness* of grace, and the passivity in which it places him. Aware of man’s original sin that precedes and predetermines his own fallen state, Donne repeatedly asks to be reassured of God’s forgiveness (“Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun / which was my sin, though it were done before?”), is tormented by the idea that his own future transgressions will outdo divine grace (“When thou hast done, thou hast not done, / For I have more”), and imagines a future in which he is the one exception to God’s pardoning grace (“Oh I shall soon despair, when I do see / That thou lov’st mankind well, yet wilt not choose me”). Focusing on Donne’s moments of doubt that threaten to disrupt the Future Perfect/perfect future, this paper shows how the poet boldly tries to persuade God to “antedate” his future fulfilment in the precarious present of his verse.

Bio Note: Marlene Dirschauer is a post-doctoral researcher at the DFG research group “Geistliche Intermedialität in der Frühen Neuzeit” at the University of Hamburg. Her first monograph, *Modernist Waterscapes: Water, Imagination and Materiality in the Works of Virginia Woolf*, was published with Palgrave Macmillan this year. Her research interests include British modernism and early modern devotional poetry.

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

Panel 3 – Early Modern (Re)Imaginings

Dorothea Flothow (Salzburg): Victorian Pasts and Restoration Futures – Victorian Historical Novels and the Forms of History

Abstract: The nineteenth century is usually considered a significant step in the emergence of scientific historiography. Yet in Britain, historical writings – both in academic and in popular forms such as historical novels or history plays – were still characterised by a strong Whig agenda. History was considered as a story of progress towards liberty, democracy and Protestantism, and the nineteenth-century present represented the epitome of this development.

The late seventeenth century, with its highpoint, the “Glorious Revolution”, which strongly determined the political, religious and social set-up of the nineteenth century, was central to this narrative of progress. Events such as the Great Reform Bill of 1832, Catholic Emancipation or the Disestablishment of the Anglican Church, especially, recalled the earlier struggles of the Restoration past.

As this paper proposes to show, in the many Victorian historical novels set in the late seventeenth century, the comparison between the nineteenth century and the seventeenth century is therefore a constant theme. Popular novelists like William Harrison Ainsworth, Arthur Conan Doyle, or George W.M. Reynolds frequently evoke the nineteenth-century future to question the dark ages of the pre-revolution Stuart past. The Victorian Age is imagined as the more enlightened, more moral, and more liberal future era. Thus, the novels confirm the values of the (Victorian) present, both through direct narrator comments, but also for instance through characters who have clearly fallen out of time and belong with the future Victorian Age. At the same time, however, the tension between past, present and future is also used on occasion to illustrate where the Restoration period’s hopes of a better future did not meet the expectations, and where the expected future did come true. Thus, the late-seventeenth-century’s futures in the Victorian historical novel served a multitude of purposes, which illustrate the many functions of popular historical writings, the topicality of the Victorian historical novel, and the flexibility of temporal narratives.

Bio Note: **Dorothea Flothow** is Associate Professor at the Department of English and American Studies, Salzburg University. She holds a PhD from the University of Tübingen. Her research interests include historical drama and fiction, Victorian literature, crime fiction, and children’s literature. She has just published a study of the Restoration period in popular historiographies and is the Conference Manager of the Historical Fictions Research Network. She is co-editor of the forthcoming book series "Global Historical Fictions" (Brill).

Evelyn Koch (Marburg): Re-Imaginings of the Seventeenth Century in Folk Horror

Abstract: Folk Horror films like *Witchfinder General* (1968), *The Blood on Satan’s Claw* (1971), *The Witch* (2015), *Fanny Lye Deliver’d* (2019), *A Field in England* (2013) and others are all set in the long seventeenth century and recreate this period diegetically. I argue that these films

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

particularly adapt the notions of witchcraft and magic as they were disseminated in seventeenth-century pamphlets and broadsides. In this way, they re-imagine the early modern period in an exaggerated, more spectacular form that can serve as an outlet to address twentieth- and twenty-first-century anxieties and fears and function as a mirror of contemporary issues. This is a marked difference to many versions of medievalism that tend to idealise the past.

Another form of early-modernism, i.e. how the early modern period is interpreted and imagined in modern cultures, can be found in the aesthetics of Folk Horror. The design of seventeenth-century print culture, and particularly of pamphlets, is frequently adapted in Folk Horror, even in films that are not set in this period. For example, the artist Richard Wells created pieces of graphic design for films such as Ben Wheatley's *In the Earth* (2021) and the BBC-series *Requiem* (2018) that are meant to represent items from the early modern period. Wells also illustrated the collection *Damnable Tales: A Folk Horror Anthology* (2022). What is more, the roman typeface of seventeenth-century print has become the default design choice of Folk Horror. Together with recreations of early modern woodcuts (on e.g. t-shirts and tea towels), it can be found on film posters, merchandise articles, fanzines and even in secondary literature on Folk Horror. This shows that early-modernism is by now inextricably linked to the aesthetics of Folk Horror and established an afterlife for the art of seventeenth-century print culture.

Bio Note: Evelyn Koch holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Bayreuth and is currently working as a lecturer in British literature and culture at the Philipps University of Marburg. Her research interests include early modern and nineteenth-century literature, science and literature, landscape and literature, as well as fantasy, horror and weird fiction.

Regula Hohl Trillini (Basel): Shakespeare's German Future – Marking the Start

Abstract: The *HyperHamlet* and *WordWeb* databases, which map the intertextual future of *Hamlet* and early modern drama, both offer search / filter options for the phenomenon of "marking". Early quotations were marked - if at all - typographically, by character names like "Hieronimo" and "Richard the Third" or by *non sequiturs* such as "the quintessence of ... ducks" (John Marston ridiculing Hamlet's ponderousness). Later, as Shakespeare quotation was becoming "a thing" in the eighteenth century, novels and essays often namedrop the Bard himself or make borrowed verse lines conspicuous within a narrative page or as a chapter epigraph. Such intertextuality markers are of particular interest in the German translations of Shakespeare-quoting bestsellers which catered to Continental Anglomania. German translations of *Clarissa* or *Tom Jones* were published before Wieland's work made Shakespearean plots and phrases familiar to non-specialist readers, and in some cases, they represent Shakespeare's very first German words. The way in which the translators handle the Shakespeare quotes in fiction reflect a range of attitudes from ignorance through reverence to the desire to educate naïve readers. These attitudes may also shift, as can be seen in the preface to the second German edition of *Tom Jones*: "Manche Kleinigkeiten [...] hatte der

Section: Early Modern Futures

Nikolina Hatton, Lara Ehrenfried, and Cord-Christian Casper (Munich)

Uebersetzer nach deutschen Sitten geändert [...]. Itzt, da viele der vortrefflichsten englischen Schriftsteller [...] gelesen werden [...] fällt hoffentlich die Ursache weg, solche Stellen zu verändern, nachdem wir mit den englischen Sitten bekannter sind." And indeed, it is in "Kleinigkeiten" such as conscious or casual marking for quotation that we can watch Shakespeare's German future first taking shape.

Bio Note: Regula Hohl Trillini, a research associate at the University of Basel, investigates intertextuality in early modern drama with a data-based corpus approach. She edits two SNF-funded databases which offer open-access corpora in this field: *HyperHamlet* (www.hyperhamlet.unibas.ch, currently under reconstruction) offers nearly 12,000 quotations from Shakespeare's tragedy, while *WordWeb-IDEM* (<https://wordweb-idem.ch>) maps the network of one-liners, motifs and catchphrases which link thousands of passages from early modern literature and letters to each other and to their Classical and vernacular sources. Hohl Trillini's book *Casual Shakespeare* (Routledge 2018), which is based on this research, has been hailed as "a superb example of today's digitally-based literary scholarship" by John Lavagnino. Her current research focus are Swiss-British relations in the seventeenth century as part of the early modern Republic of Letters.