



Prayer and Performance

acts of belief as symbolic communication in the late medieval and Renaissance period

Programme

*All plenaries are in the Main Auditorium

Monday, 23 April

9:30	Welcome and coffee	
10:00-10:50	Session 1 Plenary*	(Chair: Joseph Sterrett)
	Armin Geertz	'Defining prayer as a performative act: applying new social and scientific methods to our understanding of prayer in society'
10:50-11:05	15 min coffee break	
11:05-12:30	Session 2: Plenary Panel*	Exterior and interior stages (Chair: Helen Wilcox)
	Alison Findlay	'Prayer , Performance and Community in Early Modern Drama' How did acts of prayer work to create imagined communities between members of households, cities, religious affiliations, audiences and actors? This paper will explore ways in which the ceremonies of prayer are represented on stage in examples of late medieval and early modern drama. In particular, it will consider how the cultural trauma of the Reformation in England changed the significance of ceremony and performance as aspects of prayer.
	Chloe Preedy	'Grounded Messengers: Delivering Prayers in Early Modern Drama' On the early modern stage, it is common for characters to be shown praying to their gods. A related but less often explored phenomenon is the prevalence of divine messenger figures: prophets, intermediary saints, and angels, as well as the most famous of divine messengers, Hermes/Mercury. Perhaps in response to the new Protestant emphasis on prayer as an intimate conversation with God, however, from the late Elizabethan period Mercury in particular is consistently represented as an absent, incompetent, or indifferent messenger. This paper will focus on the way in which the divine messenger-figure apparently expresses anxieties about the difficulties of communicating with the gods, exploring the significance of the divine messenger in Elizabethan drama through specific reference to the representation of Hermes/Mercury in four plays of the 1590s: <i>The Arraignment of Paris</i> , <i>Dido Queen of Carthage</i> , <i>Titus Andronicus</i> , and <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> .

Judi Loach **'Civic performance as communal prayer'**

In seventeenth-century Lyons the town college's patronal festival, Trinity Sunday, constituted the official act of obedience and gratitude, ordained to be enacted by the Jesuit schoolmasters towards the councillors as their paymasters. But the Jesuits presented the series of acts (literally) performed – mass followed by a tragedy interpolated with ballet – as a Christian form of the Roman imperial vota, or communal vow to the city's deity. They incorporated their civic audience into this performed prayer of thanks for the past and supplication for the future: citizens were unconsciously drawn into participation in these acts which touched their outer senses and thus activated their inner spirits. This paper examines the 1667 celebration in order to demonstrate how such superficially secular performances as plays and ballets could legitimately be considered to constitute prayer.

12:30-13:30

Lunch

13:30-14:30

**Session 3:
Plenary
Panel***

Material evidence
(Chair: Holger Gräf)

**Martin
Wangsgaard
Jürgensen**

'Motion as Meditation: The Role of Actions in Early Modern Praying'

To pray is often considered purely a speech act, either voiced out loudly or unspoken, solely expressed internally. However, from the early Middle Ages and across the Reformation it was always debated whether or to what extent the act of praying ought to include more than merely words. Even to Protestants rejecting the idea that there was anything especially beneficial in taking specific poses or combining prayer with certain actions, the kneeling position was hard to explain away. Luther agreed that gestures performed during prayer could be helpful to maintain a fervent state of mind. When looking back into the Middle Ages, a wide register of performed actions are discernible in combination with the act of praying. Taking its cue from such considerations, this paper will discuss how spatial movements and prayer are connected. I propose to analyse how gestures and movements in the material space were believed to affect and shape the mind-set while praying. These questions are to be analysed from a medieval perspective and ultimately presented in their post-Reformation guises.

Rainer
Atzbach

'Between Representation and Eternity: Forms of Prayer in Archaeological Contexts'

In archaeological contexts, the immaterial act of prayer becomes visible in different ways. The well-known practice of putting magical or religious objects into graves seems to continue until the 10th century even in regions which have been converted to Christianity for some time. The specific position of hands and arms in the graves also reflect changing bearings of prayer becoming a kind of immortal prayer lasting until the day of Last Judgment. It seems that as a consequence of the Reformation the practice of placing grave goods returns in the 16th century consisting of clothing, weapons and jewelry as well as prayer books and bibles. Staging the "immortal prayer" again becomes a part of funeral performance of the "true belief". Moreover excavations have brought to light a broad range of objects either showing prayer, e.g. tile stoves, or being used for it, e.g. rosaries. This paper will discuss the possibilities and problems of these sources.

14:30-14:45

Coffee break 15 min

14:45-16:00

**Session 4:
Parallel
Session**

Main

Grave performances
(Chair: Morten Larsen)

**Holger Th.
Gräf**

'The sepulchral politics of the landgraves of Hesse from late medieval period to early 17th century'

Most important for Hesse dynastic identity during the middle ages was the cult of their ancestor, the holy Elizabeth, especially as a means of conferring legitimacy to landgraves. These medieval landgraves were buried in close vicinity to her tomb in the Church of Saint Elizabeth. After the Reformation and the death of Philip the Magnanimous in 1567, Hesse was divided. While Calvinist Hesse-Kassel was oriented towards protestant powers like Sweden and Brandenburg, the more Lutheran Hesse-Darmstadt aligned with catholic powers and the Hapsburg emperor. This paper will compare the inscriptions, programmes and architecture of tombs in Marburg, Darmstadt and Kassel in order to trace the threefold split along dynastic, political and confessional lines that resulted in distinct divergences in sepulchral politics as part of early modern territorial state-building.

Claudia
Melisch

'Faith and religious practice: sepulchral culture in Berlin/Cölln (Germany) from the Middle Ages to the Baroque era'

It is generally believed that the pre-Reformation Church in Berlin and the Margraviate east of the Elbe did not have the same resplendent background as the Church in western Germany and the important towns of the Holy Roman Empire. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether this thesis is represented in the graves from the cemeteries of St. Peter's church and the Dominican monastery, and to explore how the graves might allow further conclusions to be drawn regarding contemporary religious practices. Two archaeological excavations have unearthed more than 3,500 graves dating from the medieval period through to the first quarter of the eighteenth century. One of the sites is near the oldest cemetery in Cölln around the former St. Peter's church which was in use since the beginning of the thirteenth century and closed in 1717 when it was thought overfull. The other is situated near the Dominican monastery built c.1300 which became a theological college in the 15th century and a Hofkirche (court church) in the 16th.

Both cemeteries reflect, in their graves, the developments of sepulchral culture and thus of the changes in religious culture of Cölln from the Middle Ages to the Baroque era. At the same time, by analysing these exceptional collections of skeletal remains, the composition and living conditions of the population may be better understood. Similarly, patterns can be established in the material cultures of the monastery, the members of the court, and the lay population of Cölln revealing contemporary regional religious practices.

Juliane
Schenk

"Signs of faith—crosses, rosaries & pilgrims badges in postmedieval burials"

Archaeological finds of graves and crypts from the 16th to 20th century reflect changes in mortuary practice. Grave goods and the remains of garments are increasingly found in burials from this period and seem to be associated with the impact of the Reformation. The phenomenon is evident until the 19th century in almost all regions, social ranks and religious denominations.

The purpose of this paper is to present an analysis of all modern grave goods and finds in Lower, Middle and Upper Franconia as well as in Upper Palatinate with regard to their appearance, distribution and usage, particularly in matters of social, gender-specific, confessional and local distinctions. Grave goods such as crosses, rosaries and pilgrims badges provide basic notes on personal devotion and prayer practice and can be understood through the detailed indexing and interpretation of objects from 120 find spots yielding approximately 2600 burials.

14:45-16:00 *Auditorium 5*

Shakespearean performances
(Chair: Per Sivefors)

**Emma
Depledge**

'Fighting with 'Womens Weapons, Piety and Pray'rs': Passive Obedience in Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear* (1681)'

This paper will explore Nahum Tate's 1681 alteration of Shakespeare's Quarto and Folio versions of *King Lear* into *The History of King Lear*. It will focus on the character of Cordelia and the ways in which her reduced agency and frequent use of prayer can be seen to reflect the policy of passive obedience advocated in Tory propaganda of the late seventeenth century. Tate's play, like nine other Shakespeare alterations staged between 1678 and 1682, was produced in response to a succession crisis known as the Exclusion Crisis. The Crisis, which takes its name from a parliamentary bill designed to bar Charles II's Catholic heir, James, Duke of York, from the succession, led to heated debate over the circumstances in which a monarch's rule might be resisted or limited. I wish to argue that Cordelia's prayers and the numerous references to the gods found in *The History of King Lear* are central to the play's defence of James's (Divinely ordained) birth right, and legitimate rule more generally.

**Sonia
Suman**

'Performing Prayer in Shakespeare's *Henry V*'

This paper will examine the efficacy of prayer in William Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The play is saturated with instances of calling upon or praising God, however the agency of prayer itself is called into question by the rhetorical performances on offer throughout the play. The semblance of divine intervention is created through Henry V's oratorical skill. I will consider Henry's prayer in act four scene one in the context of early modern debates about the efficacy of spontaneous versus prescribed prayer, public versus private devotion and the efficacy of 'habit' or physical preparation for prayer. The absence of ceremonial kingly dress at this crucial moment in the play also bears on the perceived transformative power of this peculiar kind of speech. Finally, this paper will explore how early modern audiences may have responded to prayer performed on stage, taking into account the contemporary anti-theatricalist view that the theatres preached false religion.

Annelis
Kuhlmann

“O, what form of prayer can serve my turn?”: Claudius and the problem of prayer’

In Act III, scene 3 of *Hamlet* Claudius asks, ‘O, what form of prayer / can serve my turn?’ (51-52). The form of prayer in this tragedy is the point of departure for this paper for prayer and its form has a particular function at this crucial place in the middle of *Hamlet* – a moment that is deeply connected to the genre of Shakespeare’s revenge tragedy. Prayer as rhetorical disguise protects Claudius, but it also exposes him as potential victim of Hamlet’s sword. The use of prayer also provides an insight into more formal aesthetic sides of the play, namely the notion of *theatrum mundi*. The very notion of theatricality in *Hamlet* plays on the theme of the world as theatre. This can be seen in the ways characters’ make spectators perceive the nature / theatricality of the play. By asking ‘what form of prayer’ it could be argued that Claudius is questioning the very nature of prayer on multiple levels. Is this prayer a religious act, and the question contemptuous? Or is this an utterance of some deep reflection? Or perhaps it refers to prayer as a theatricalised speech act. The form of prayer can be perceived as a double-edged sword in the composition of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. This paper examines the form of prayer from the perspective of interpersonal speech as elaborated by Mikhail Bakhtin. While Claudius’ prayer would seem to be addressed to God, Hamlet hears the prayer and, as a Saviour, prevents the immediate sacrifice of the criminal’s body, creating a dramatic tension that lasts until the end of the play. It is my argument therefore, that Claudius’ monologue embeds a theatrical heteroglot form of speech.

16:00-16:15

Coffee break 15 min

16:15-17:15

**Session 5:
Plenary
Panel***

Textual and material traces of prayer
(Chair: Rainer Atzbach)

Roy Eriksen

‘Varieties of Prayer: Marlowe’s Mighty Line and Its Sources.’

Hauke
Kenzler

‘Funeral Rites in Catholic and Protestant Germany: Religion, Status, Taboo’

This paper will focus on the archaeologically tangible aspects of the burial customs, which highlight the different treatment of the deceased in Protestant and Catholic areas of Germany. Now for the first time, an attempt to compare post-medieval burial customs over spatial and denominational boundaries can be undertaken.

The presentation will deal with the differences in the organization of cemeteries, the shape of the graves and the number and type of grave goods. The analysis will show that people behaved quite conservatively concerning funeral customs. It was not for a long time after the Reformation when significant changes occurred. For example, in Protestant areas a strict separation of church and burial ground is visible. The type of grave goods (secular or religious) varies noticeably according to different beliefs. But not only religious reasons were crucial for the application of new ideas. Partially a number of profane reasons such as hygienic causes or a status-oriented way of thinking stood behind the changes.

17:15

**Adjourn to Aarhus for drinks and dinner
The bus leaves at 17:38 sharp.**

**Our three course dinner is at the 'French inspired' Sct. Oluf's Restaurant at 19:30.
(See map included).**

**Meet in Cathedral Square by the water sculpture (which may be dry) in front of the
Cathedral at 19:15 to walk the short distance to the restaurant.**

Tuesday, 24 April

9:30-10:45

**Session 6:
Parallel
Session**

Main

**17th century poetic prayers
(Chair: Mats Jørgensen)**

Nancy Zaice 'Prayer and (Sexual) Performance: The Role of Prayer in Lord Edward Herbert of Chirbury's Metaphysics'

While many have written about the performative aspects of George Herbert's prayerful poetry in *The Temple*, most scholars simply neglect or ignore the poetry of his elder brother, the soldier, courtier and scholar, Lord Edward Herbert of Chirbury. One reason for this may involve Edward's reputation, in his younger days, as a lady's man, a "gay blade," and as a caricature chivalric knight. This reputation tends to cause scholars, if they notice his poetry at all, to categorise his poetry as "cavalier." Edward Herbert's later reputation as an atheist or "deist" has also deterred some scholars from seriously examining the spiritual aspects of his poetry. This study of Edward Herbert's metaphysics, as explained in his philosophical treatise *De Veritate*, and of his love poetry will reveal the spiritual nature of Herbert's poetry and the role of prayer within Herbert's spirituality, particularly the sexual act as the highest form of human prayer. This act or "performance" by male and female joins the physical and the spiritual into a transcendent experience that provides both with a momentary glimpse of the divine and an apprehension of the state of, what Herbert terms, "eternal blessedness."

Erik
Ankerberg

'Johann Gerhard, George Herbert, and the shimmering of chaos in early modern prayer'

Contemporary scholars, as varied as the anthropologist Mary Douglas in her *Purity and Danger* and the literary critic Gary Morson in his theory of prosaics, have chronicled and interrogated humanity's continual efforts to impose the concept of order on its cultural artifacts and phenomena. However, if the German Romantic poet Novalis is correct in his assertion that in "a work of art, chaos must shimmer through the veil of order" then

attempts to overlay a system or order on a work of art, even if that work of art is a form of prayer, are bound to meet with frustration, and potentially, failure. In their engagement with collections of religious meditative texts such as Johann Gerhard's *Sacred Meditations* and George Herbert's *The Temple*, early modern readers are exposed to two levels of performance: The first performance is the development and implementation of an over-arching architecture to the collection of texts by the translator (in Gerhard's case) or the author (in Herbert's case), and the second performance is the act of reading, praying, or engaging the respective collection of texts. Contrasting the performative acts we associate with these two collections of religious texts clarifies alternative paths of reaching Morson's conclusion that life, art, and in this case, prayer, always contain the "unfitting" of patterns and assumptions of stability or control.

Jonathan
Nauman

"Vaughan's Poetry of Prayer (a homily)"

Llansantffraed parish in Breconshire, Wales has become a destination for Christian literary pilgrimage, a place "where prayer has been valid," largely because of Henry Vaughan's gravesite in the parish yard and significant awareness of local setting in his devotional poems. I shall here consider how Vaughan's verses of direct address to God interact with the natural imagery of the Usk Valley, showing how the poet's decisive turns toward the transcendent strengthen rather than weaken his appreciative gestures toward nature.

9:30-10:45

Auditorium
2

Memory, text, and gesture
(Chair: Hauke Kenzler)

**Effie
Botonaki**

'The Protestant Diary and the Act of Prayer'

As I have argued elsewhere,* the early modern diary owes its emergence and development to the Protestant duty of self-examination which replaced the Catholic confession. While examining the form and content the early modern English diaries, I have found that a most powerful influence on them was the scores of guides to private prayer published at the beginning of the seventeenth century. While encouraging the unmediated, unprocessed contact between the believer and God through extempore prayer, these guides ultimately sought to control the believer's act of prayer and mould it into acceptable forms. This effort and its results are vividly seen in the Protestant spiritual diaries which are an unruly mixture of the guidebooks' prescriptions, and the individual believer's needs. This is why we encounter the repeated recording of "improper" feelings and deeds, as well as the transformation of these spiritual accounts into secular texts that do not meet the prescriptions of the guidebooks to prayer.

**Maria
Beatriz
Hernandez**

'Framing vision through prayer: The Book of Margery Kempe'

Late medieval literary and artistic evidence, immersed in a culture of piety, clearly refers the emergence of an individual dimension which had so far been restrained or ignored. Among other possible causes, the spread of new techniques of confession not only fostered such sense of individuality but also contributed to stress the conversational quality of prayer itself. The degree of intimacy between human pleaders and divine addressees is especially apparent in the works of some female authors. Similarly, the portraits of the female commissioners in religious books speak the proximity between these believers and their divine counterparts in the sacred space depicted. This paper will analyze the role of prayers in the layout of individual divine visions in the *The Book of Margery Kempe*, an autobiographical work conflating diverse performative and discursive techniques --among them, prayer-- through which its protagonist tried to readjust herself into late medieval congregational activities.

Stina
Fallberg
Sundmark

Humiliter genu flectare - Bodily Expressions of Prayer in Late Medieval Eucharistic Settings

Late medieval Church life was in many senses concrete and had corporeal dimensions. Late medieval prayer did not solely consist of different verbal expressions but also included varied bodily ones. In this paper we will look closer at prescribed body language and gestures for the layfolk in different Eucharistic settings and contexts such as Mass itself and the Eucharistic procession outside Mass when the priest went to sick and dying persons to give them communion. Questions to be answered are: Which were these bodily expressions? Which were their meanings? How were the bodily expressions related to the verbal prayer? How could they be interpreted in connection to the sacramentally present Christ in the Eucharist? To be able to answer these questions different sources will be used, such as prescriptions in synodal and provincial statutes from the Church province of Uppsala, teaching and moralizing descriptions in handbooks for priests and in exempla and visualizations through images (mostly German woodcuts).

10:45-11:00

Coffee break 15 min

11:00-12:15

**Session 7:
Parallel
Session**

Main

Symbolic prayer cultures

(Chair: Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen)

**Mirko
Gutjahr**

'Lead tablets and the materiality of popular belief in medieval Europe'

Recent archaeological finds of inscribed lead tablets from various locations in middle Germany as well as rediscoveries in the archives at the State Museum for Prehistory in Saxony-Anhalt, all dating from the 12th to 15th/16th century, could help to shed a new light on the materiality of magical and religious popular beliefs in medieval Europe. The Latin inscriptions consist of a hotchpotch of prayers, scriptural quotations, holy names and invocations against evil forces and personified illnesses. Densely folded and worn as amulets, the inscribed leaden sheets were intended obviously not to be read aloud but to work in secrecy. Although condemned by the church authorities, textual amulets were authored apparently by members of the local lesser clergy for the illiterate common folk. Since some of the lead tablets were

found in graves of children or young women their apparent purpose was to protect those which were thought to be most vulnerable to demonic influences.

**Blandine
Wittkopp**

'Miscellaneous medieval burial rites in Brandenburg as a sign of religious identity'

Many churchyards in Brandenburg include unusual medieval graves. 'Leitersärge' graves contain caskets with ladder bottoms, or others containing mysterious burial objects such as sickles. While these might appear to be pagan or superstitious in meaning they also occur in clearly Christian churchyards such as the Dominican monastery of Strasberg. Other burial objects like scallop shells (Jakobsmuscheln) and what appear to be aspergillum are found alongside skeletal body postures which clearly express devotion: hands together as if in prayer or arms crossed over the thorax.

"Leitersärge" from the 13th century are very common in southern Brandenburg with scattered examples across the whole of Germany and neighbouring areas. With the help of the graves in Schleswig, these are thought to be connected to St Laurentius, whom tradition held was martyred bound to a gridiron. The paper will present new findings for burials of this type.

**Tanja
Armbrüster**

'The plate as a mirror of belief - On Christian symbols decorating dishware and the impact of Protestantism on tableware, table-manners and table-graces during the Renaissance and Baroque'

Among the many obvious and not-so-obvious changes brought about by the Reformation, religious habits underwent by far the most thorough transformations. The table prayer for instance was introduced only after the Reformation. An idealistic post-Reformation concept of man saw the individual as a collection of virtues, caritas and piety particularly prominent ones among them. And Protestantism explicitly spiritualized the household, inspiring the involvement of the family prayer. As one result depictions of families praying together became more and more frequent in mural monuments and Dutch paintings through the late sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century. The Common Table Prayer as we know it occurred during or after the Reformation. Some relate it to Martin Luther himself though that is highly speculative. First published evidence does not precede the mid-eighteenth century (the Moravian hymnal, 1753), but research indicates that it occurred most likely at some point during the seventeenth century. And while looking intently at the historical records we are nearly missing the material evidence at hand: Ceramics of the early modern period from central Germany are broadly comprised of so called "glazed utility wares" including a considerable amount of decorated (painted) table wares. Plates and bowls are common finds on site and while quantitative analysis indicates that plates were less popular in most early modern households the bowls of various shapes from shallow to high and conical forms were dominant. Among those we have only recently identified some items decorated with Christian symbols as for instance a three part interlocking fish symbol that commonly symbolizes the Holy Trinity (Father, son and Holy spirit). We assume that the occurrence of that particular symbol on utility table wares may be related to the performance of post-Reformation period table prayers and eating habits.

11:00-12:15	<i>Auditorium</i> 2	Authorship and Author (Chair: Erik Ankerberg)
	Viktor Aldrin	<p>'Prayer Practices among ordinary people in the Late Middle Ages'</p> <p>In this paper I will present key findings of my concluded project on the prayer life of peasant communities in late medieval Sweden, conducted at the University of Gothenburg 2005–2010. The aim of the project has been to identify, explain and delineate praying among peasant communities in late medieval Sweden. Four aspects have been examined through the perspectives of ideals and practices, namely the standards of prayer, devotional prayer, prayer in times of need and prayer cultures. Focus in my paper will be practices of prayer, especially those occurring in connection with the praying for miracles.</p>
	Per Sivefors	<p>'Prayer and the Performance of Authorship in Thomas Nashe's <i>Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem</i>'</p> <p>This paper argues that the frequent occurrences of prayers in <i>Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem</i> (1593) constitute an expression of Nashe's own liminal position as a writer, specifically in the context of the hostile audience reactions that the work provoked. Prayers for comfort from the Lord function as acts of empowerment for the author and furnish a position of "mourning" from which Nashe constructs his authorial persona. While the paper thus revisits some of the more recent scholarship on Nashe and authorship, it provides a new angle in exploring the specific role of post-reformation religious belief and ritual in the development of authorial role models. Moreover, it contributes to the ways in which <i>Christ's Teares</i> can be understood as a central, rather than marginal text in Nashe's oeuvre as a whole.</p>
	Micah Snell	<p>'The Enchantment of Mercy: The Hopeful Ending of The Tempest'</p> <p>The conclusion of <i>The Tempest</i> is not an epilogue but Prospero's prayer. I will argue that <i>The Tempest</i> is the consummation of Shakespeare's creative vision, and the consummation of that vision is a Christian prayer. Prospero, the priest of the play, sets down his charms to be relieved only by "prayer / Which pierces so that it assaults / Mercy itself and frees all faults." Shakespeare's liturgical conclusion places the play, the audience, the theatrical space, and even the playwright himself in a familiar religious construct. Shakespeare's intention is veritable enchantment that submits humanity to mercy and grace, not magic.</p>

12:15-14:30

Lunch, Moesgaard Grounds and Museum
(all delegates have free entry to the Museum)

14:30-15:45

**Session 8:
Plenary
Panel***

Spontaneous performances: Milton on prayer
(Chair: Chloe Preedy)

Erica
Longfellow

'Inwardness Regained: Private Prayer in Milton's Epic Poems'

In *Eikonoklastes* Milton is particularly concerned to attack what he sees as Charles's hypocrisy in printing his own prayers in *Eikon Basilike*: 'he should have shut the dore, and pray'd in secret, not heer in the High Street. Privat praiers in publick, ask something of whom they ask not, and that shall be thir reward'. This was a familiar argument about the hypocrisy of personal prayer performed for an audience, but for English Calvinists before Milton this fear of hypocrisy had been linked with an English cultural suspicion of secrecy and solitude. Milton, by contrast, displayed a radical optimism about the ability of the inward self to align itself to God in prayer. In *Paradise Regained*

the disciples and the Virgin Mary are redeemed persons who use prayer to bring rational order to chaotic inner selves; and the divine person, Jesus, proves capable of redeeming the whole of humankind through his perfect subordination and inner self-ordering. It is Milton, not his puritan predecessors, who truly makes the Protestant faith inward.

Gilles
Sambras

"A fair show in the flesh": Reconsidering Milton's rejection of codes and art in prayer.'

Milton is famous for his rejection of set forms, art and performance in prayer. In his eyes, the only valid form of prayer seems to be both private and spontaneous.

The point of this paper is to examine Milton's grounds for this rejection of both conventions and art in prayer and to question Milton's theological and artistic consistency on the subject of prayer.

I will try and establish Milton's theological consistency in showing that his rejection of set forms and rhetoric does not spring from a belief in man's ability to be spontaneously intelligible to God but, on the contrary, from an awareness that prayer, for fallen man, can only be mute or mere sighs and that any attempt at 'performing' otherwise implies a blasphemous denial of the consequences of the Fall.

As a religious poet however, Milton cannot escape the contradictions between truth and beauty, humility and vanity, that lie at the heart of most Protestant devotional poetry and are best represented in a text by one of Milton's contemporary poets, Andrew Marvell's 'The Coronet'.

Panagiota
Tsentourou

'In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisie': Milton and the antitheatrical discourse'

In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton refers to Shakespeare's Richard III as 'a deep dissembler of religion', while in the same tract, Charles I's prayers are condemned as theatrical. This paper for the first time places Milton's apprehension of hypocritical worship amongst debates of hypocrisy/hypocrites in early modern drama. In his condemnation of deceitful behaviour, which for Milton is primarily located in the Church's adherence to an obsession with visual worship, the poet suggests that an individual's inner state could be shaped by external shows of religion. The paradox of rejecting performance, while simultaneously acknowledging its transformative value, is typical of the antitheatrical rhetoric of late sixteenth-early seventeenth centuries. I argue that reading antitheatrical tracts alongside

Milton's prose allows for a redefinition of the notion of performance through prayer. Performing devotion is an idol to be demolished only when accomplished by private intentions.

15:45-15:55

Coffee break

15:55-17:00

**Session 9:
Plenary
Panel***

Hamlet 3.3
(Chair: Nancy Zaice)

**Christopher
Hodgkins**

'Playing at Prayer: The Spiritual Failure of Performance in *Hamlet*'

When King Claudius falls repentantly to his knees in *Hamlet*, it would seem to be a victory for what Philip Sidney had called the "virtue-breeding" powers of tragic poetry — after all, he has just seen the all-too-familiar "Murder of Gonzago," and he's seemingly been cut to the heart. In fact, in a number of Shakespeare's plays, both comic and tragic, drama seems to take on quasi-

salvific powers: for instance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom is the theatrical "weaver" whose visionary folly serves as the reconciling catalyst between city and country, spiritual and material, fairy and mortal, husband and wife, lad and lady, reason and love. Bottom essentially saves the world, and then concludes with a Bergomask. Even amidst the darkness of *King Lear*, Kent plays for a noble end, and Edgar's heartbreaking impersonations save his father's life for a better death. So Hamlet's advice to the players seems to attribute great stakes to the actor's craft, since unbeknown to the troupe, they're playing not merely for the entertainment, but for the conscience, of the king.

But can they play for his soul? As Hamlet overhears the beginning of Claudius' remorseful prayer, he fears that his "Mousetrap" has worked only too well, and resolves not to kill him while in a theatrically-induced state of grace, lest he dispatch the lecherous villain to heaven. Yet, as events quickly show, Hamlet needn't have worried: if playing does indeed "hold the mirror up to nature," then it's quite possible, as it is written in James 1: 23-24, to put down the mirror, walk away, and forget everything. Art can move the emotions, even convict the conscience, but Hamlet casts profound doubt on the power of the stage to duplicate the transformative power of the Spirit.

So this paper will explore Shakespeare's portrayal of the players' failure to convert the soul and the self. Along the way I will refer to Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*—which after all cannily doesn't rise to matters of saving divinity—as well as to some 16th-Century commentaries on James' epistle, and to the literary pedigree of the "mirror of the soul" tradition.

Joseph
Sterrett

'Poetic, public and private: re-reading early modern prayer as social act'

The purpose of this paper is to sketch out a theoretical framework for reading prayer as a performance, as an act governed by social conventions with effects in the social world. While this may seem straight forward, even obvious, it is a move away from critical tendencies to evaluate prayer from within a theological framework reading prayer in terms of theological correctness.

Instead, we should keep pace with current socio-anthropological studies of religion that view prayer as act, text, and subject. Beginning with late 19th C and early 20th C studies of prayer, Tylor and Heiler, I highlight the tenacity of theological perspectives tied up as they are with notions of an interior, unified, autonomous self before moving to more groundbreaking work by Marcel Mauss where prayer is a social act, socially defined and policed. Then, noting the 'whiff of determinism' in Mauss's socio-anthropological conclusions I show how Hans Georg Gadamer's theory of play can be used to understand prayer as an act defined by social processes while maintaining limited room for individual self expression that resists totalised readings of prayer as a deterministic practice. Finally, as an example, I offer Act 3, scene 3 in *Hamlet* to illustrate how critical readings have sought to evaluate the quality of Claudius's prayer, in effect accepting his theological misgivings on their own terms and ignoring the Prince's more literal recognition of prayer as a meaningful--or potentially meaningful--act. I offer, in contrast, a reading sensitive to the scene's presentation of the social tensions inherent in the act of prayer.

17:15-18:20 **Plenary
Panel***

Poetic Performers
(Chair: Joseph Sterrett)

**Graham
Parry**

'Lancelot Andrewes and the Laudian Tradition of Prayer'

**Helen
Wilcox**

'Your suit is granted': performing prayer in early modern English poetry

This paper will examine the idea of prayer as performance by focussing on the nature and role of the performers involved. In a reading of poems by, among others, John Donne, Elizabeth Major, Henry Colman, Mary Carey and George Herbert, I shall suggest that there are three main categories of those who are seen to enact prayer in early modern English sacred poetry. First, there is the collective performer, principally the Church whose 'common' prayer is frequently echoed by the poets as they invoke the language of the Bible and the performance of the liturgy in their own work. The second type of performer is the individual believer whose spiritual experience is vividly represented in devotional poetry; the single petitioning voice is the most predominant rhetorical feature of the early modern religious lyric. The third category of performers of prayer is not a human group or individual but the imaginative construction of a divine presence. If prayer is dialogue, then the anticipated or felt response of God is a vital part of the performative texture of poetic devotion, expressed in the formal structures as well as the discourse of the verse. As implied by my title quotation (from the last line of Herbert's 'Redemption'), poetic prayer is concerned with a double performance: the communal or private 'suit' to God, and the hoped-for divine 'granting' of that request.

Colloquium close

