

"'The truer, so as to be false': 'alternative facts' in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*'"

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South Hall 2623

Sankey Room

Cymbeline, as this paper will illustrate, is fascinatingly invested in both the physics of seeing and the idea of experience (in its seventeenth-century scientific sense of proof by trial or demonstration) as an instrument of knowledge-making. Despite, however, the epistemological currency afforded experience in this play, when it comes to staging trials of knowledge in the crucible of experience, characters repeatedly judge wrongly despite their reasoned weighing of circumstances. Focusing on these moments of misprision, I hope to consider: how, for example, Bacon's figuration of the mind as a crooked mirror that distorts our perceptions might help us to understand the play's dramatization of misjudgment; and how his advancement of experiment as an artificial instrument for correcting the limits of sense perception might model for us a way of thinking about the stage itself as an experimental mechanism that provides a recuperative alternative to the self-assured reasoning employed by *Cymbeline*'s characters.

Pav Aulakh is currently a lecturer at Vanderbilt University where he specializes in the history and philosophy of science, particularly as it pertains to interconnections between the imaginative and proto-scientific literature of the seventeenth century; the history of the book; aesthetics and poetics; early modern and contemporary philosophy; and medieval literature.

