



FACULTY OF ARTS

Adelaide Summer Research Scholarship 2020-2021

Like Christ on the Cross: Early Modern Models of Pain Management

Supervisor: Dr Claire Walker

Department of History

School of Humanities

In 1659 a Benedictine nun was dying from breast cancer in Ghent. She offered her pain as a form of atonement for her sins, but she also likened the ulcerating tumours to the five wounds of Christ on the cross.

In a world without effective pain killers, early modern people developed narratives of suffering which enabled them to make sense of pain and manage physical trauma. Understanding bodily agony within a religious matrix (for example) did not stop them from seeking various medical remedies, but it shaped the way they experienced and coped with painful symptoms.

This summer scholarship project will investigate 16th and 17th-century languages of pain to establish models of meaning and management. As part of the 2021 ARC Discovery Project *Graeco-Roman and Christian Pain Narratives: Reading Emotion through Language*, the student will compile a bibliography of early modern medical and religious texts, using *Early English Books Online*, to collect preliminary data on conceptual languages of pain. This will be applied to convent narratives of illness to determine which templates informed religious women's interpretation and management of physical pain.

Research to date has identified the religious model, and the project will investigate its form and application in specific cases, but it will also seek alternative frameworks of meaning and how they might complement or replace the religious paradigm.

By undertaking this project, the student will acquire key methodological and analytical tools employed in historical research. They will also be involved in the preparation of a scholarly article which the student will co-author.

The student will gain the following research skills and experience;

- Learning how to write and publish a scholarly article
 - Publication in a high-quality journal
 - Co-publication with Project Supervisor
- Collecting, collating and analysing data

- Work collaboratively on a research project