

2017 SAA Seminar: Early Modern Technologies of Space and Place Abstracts
Leaders: Laura Williamson-Ambrose, St. Mary's College
and Gavin Hollis, Hunter College, CUNY 1

Dr. Emma Katherine Atwood, University of Montevallo

The Dramaturgical Technology of the Haunted Study

Beginning with Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592), a number of early modern playwrights featured haunted studies in their plays. In these plays, ghosts, spirits, and devils routinely disrupt agreed-upon spatial boundaries, moving through locked doors, penetrating walls, and utterly confounding the dramaturgical contract of space and place. In this paper, I explore the practical dramaturgical technologies that facilitated these staged hauntings, and in particular the technological device of the "magic glass." I also explore the way the haunted study engages a social tension particular to early modern humanism: that the pressing desire to be alone stands in conflict with the fear of what solitude, once finally achieved, might actually bring. The haunted study dramatizes this tension in spatial terms.

Dr. Frederick Bengtsson, University of Kentucky

Mapping Tragedies:

The Cartographic Imagination of Early Modern Domestic Drama

Writing about *Arden of Faversham*, perhaps the best-known early modern domestic tragedy, Richard Helgerson notes that it is "the earliest English play whose action can be closely followed on a map." This quality is not limited to *Arden*, but is in fact a feature of domestic tragedies in the period. Plays such as *A Warning for Fair Women* and the *Two Lamentable Tragedies* situate their actions in precisely described local geographies (both urban and regional), complete with landmarks, place-names, and travel networks. In this paper, I explore these maps, arguing that they are not merely ornamental or incidental, but instead that this theatrical cartography is fundamental to the praxis of these plays and to the way in which they theorize the work of tragedy as a dramatic genre.

Dr. Andrew Bozio, Skidmore College

John Norden and the Technologies of Emplacement

Over the course of the late medieval and early modern periods, the concepts of space and place were radically reimagined, as the belief in the primacy of place gradually gave way to an assumption that space, as an immaterial dimension of infinite expanse, subtends the physical world. In this way, the early modern period represents a moment of intense negotiation over the ontology and epistemology of location, in which philosophers, theologians, cartographers, chorographers, and dramatists asked what it meant to be embedded within an environment. Typically, accounts of this negotiation suggest a smooth transition from a medieval episteme of

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“emplacement,” as Foucault describes it, to one of abstraction in the early modern period. In my essay, I qualify this view by foregrounding the discontinuities and the disruptions that mark the rise of spatial abstraction in early modern England, focusing upon John Norden’s *Speculum Britanniae* and its juxtaposition of cartography and chorography. Cartography and chorography are often described as antithetical modes of depicting a location, the former rooted in geometric abstraction and the latter foregrounding what can be grasped by the senses. In blending these different modes, Norden’s description of Middlesex reveals a technological hybridity that reshapes our sense of the historical shift from place to space.

Dr. Holly E. Dugan, George Washington University

Rotten Oranges: Seeing Beyond Surfaces in the Theater

This paper explores what Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern have termed the “staged effects” of performance, particularly around questions of vision, sight, and embodied difference. My broader project is to query how lighting effects (both indoor and out) shaped what was and was not visible on early modern London’s stages and how these staged effects shaped theatrical representations of staged difference, particularly around embodied differences of gender and race. Taking up the problem of rotten oranges on stage, I explore the paradox of blue oranges (or rotten oranges) in both Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* and Penhall’s *Blue/Orange*. Both plays, I argue, use this trope to foreground the fraught role of vision in constructing knowledge about embodied difference. Reading Hero of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* against Christopher, the afro-British protagonist of Penhall’s 2002 play *Blue/Orange*, I argue that rotten oranges, as both metaphors and as props, raise questions about what it means to see beyond surfaces in the sensorium of the theatre.

Dr. Darlene Farabee, University of South Dakota

“Fathom deep”: understanding and measurement in early modern drama

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind (dressed as Ganymede in the Forest of Arden,) verbally spars with Orlando. Once he departs, Rosalind, unable to contain herself, exclaims to her cousin: “O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love!” (AYL 4.1.205-6). In this particular instance, “fathom” fairly clearly refers to a measure of length—or depth. In *Othello*, Iago uses “fathom” in a different sense when he says of Othello: “Another of his fadom, they have none/ To lead their business” (Shakespeare *Oth* 1.1.152-3). Here, the word means capability, a different type of depth, a depth of understanding. In this paper I consider how these two uses relate to one another and how that relationship, first, might help us

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to better understand certain moments on the early modern stage, and second, might allow us to consider the ways material relationships between measurement and the body relate to shifts in language in the early modern period. I am primarily interested in Brome's *The Antipodes* as a textual example of characters' proprioceptive senses.

Professor Ari Friedlander, University of Mississippi

Bodies in Spaces: Early Modern Population Theory and Practice

Understanding the work of the state as the management of its "population" is a key development of early modern political history. Foucault makes this central to his account of the development of biopolitics, in which the security of the state's "territory" gives way to the regulation of "life." His account suggests modernity as a movement from thinking about space to thinking about bodies. Yet, this paper shows, "population" emerges in the early modern era as a location-based phenomenon, akin to chorography, for the assessment of the characteristics of a particular place. Examining John Graunt's *Observations on the London Bills of Mortality*, this paper asks: What is the difference between counting bodies and measuring spaces? What happens when bodies become a part of the territory and territory becomes an aggregation of bodies? Finally, how does population reconfigure early modern categories of embodiment like gender, sexuality, and social status?

Professor Susan Caroline Frye, University of Wyoming

Armillary Spheres and the Textiles of Exploration

Both court tapestries and women's needlework demonstrate how members of sixteenth-century elites used the armillary sphere to represent the combination of classical and scientific understanding that led to global exploration. Exploration, initially fueled by the struggle for the spice trade, required the creation of increasingly sophisticated maps, charts, measuring glasses for telling time, compasses, and the concepts of spherical trigonometry, leading to new uses for astrolabes and the armillary sphere. The armillary sphere was in many ways a type of astrolabe, connecting terrestrial and celestial points of reference. Its reformulation in the sixteenth century represented the Copernican conception of the cosmos that made global exploration possible. Authoritative patrons spent the profits from opening global markets to glorify their developing perspectives on the new and old worlds, the genealogies these perspectives underwrote, and the culture of collecting they inspired. Bernaert van Orley's suite of tapestries called the "Spheres," created for John III of Portugal and moved to the court of Spain through marriage, features armillary spheres that imbue the sophistication of technical instruments with classical and celestial splendor. Decades later, Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick would produce

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comparatively miniature versions of the armillary sphere, in an England at the economic margins of these riches, as an imagined connection to that distinctly European perspective that predicted their own successful dynasties.

Wendy Beth Hyman, Oberlin College

“Beyond beyond”

My nascent second book project is concerned with the variable, comparative, and interactive nature of “fictions.” That is, I am thinking about the way in which certain inset forms might signal something like a key shift to the extra- or supra-fictional, along the lines of the strange effect produced by *Paradise Lost*'s allegory of Satan, Sin, and Death. Metaphor theory has been somewhat helpful to me, because it provides a scalar and associative model. Just as we can conceptualize the distance between vehicle and tenor as variable and even relative, perhaps we might think of allegories and myths and aubades and lyrical reveries and plays-within-plays striking against each other and redefining their relative nature. Such a framework helps us get at least some way towards orienting ourselves in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, which, with its twenty-seven plot resolutions, its over-determined symbols, its dream visions, its multiple Ovidian myths, its grandiose scale, its floundering bildungsroman, its riddles, its arras hanging, its metaphors that come to life (“his meanest garment!”), and its heroes of another time and anotherwhere, seems to offer, if not a full-fledged scalar theory of fiction, then a model for thinking comparatively about the nature of variegated imaginative and generic forms.

Cymbeline, in all its ambitious multiplicity, maps these issues both temporally and spatially, as if trying to lift off the grid. I have been thinking, for example, of the play's multiple references to vanishing points, and to that which is “beyond beyond” vis. Harry Berger's particularly helpful way of denaturing linear perspective, which “anticipates...the more modern idea of coordinate systems and superimposed frames of reference. In a single place we find two absolutely different and physically unrelated spaces, the three-dimensional field of the picture and the two-dimensional field of the surface.”¹ Writing about the ungainliness of *Cymbeline*'s cosmic scale relative to its bewildered characters, Arthur Sewell offered a comparison to the filmic technique of deep focus, musing that, “It is as though we are looking at what happens in time through the wrong end of a time-telescope.”² But rather than being a failure of synthesis, I

¹ Harry Berger, *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 14.

² Arthur Sewell, *Character and Society in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), quoted in Scott Maisano, “Shakespeare's Last Act: The Starry Messenger and the Galilean Book in *Cymbeline*,” *Configurations* 12.3: 401-434, 415. Maisano's own fascinating essay reads *Cymbeline* in the context of the “playwright's sudden

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would argue, this very irreconcilability is part of *Cymbeline*'s conceptual apparatus. Its goal, as I read it, is precisely to force these discontinuous modes of fictionality, locality, and temporality together. Such an incommensurability of realms is almost by definition metaphysical—and therefore self-referential—since the play itself is the sole device whereby two complementary views can be proffered. It denies the distinction between the inside and the outside of fiction.

This paper will attempt to think through *Cymbeline*'s discontinuous temporal and spatial perspectives: its attempt to lift itself off the X- and Y- coordinates of the grid at once.

Mr. Alexander Paulsson Lash, Columbia University

Props and Allegorical Space in Early Modern Travel Plays

The wishing hat in Thomas Dekker's 1599 *Old Fortunatus* seems a perfect technology for the staging of space in early modern theaters. Whoever puts on the hat can be instantly transported to any other place with a simple wish, just as choruses in a wide range of plays ask audiences to use their minds and imaginatively jump around Europe and Asia. Over the course of *Old Fortunatus*, however, the hat is used only once to stage movement between two physical locations (Babylon and Cyprus). Instead, Dekker more often moves Fortunatus in and out of an allegorical wilderness, where he encounters personified figures of Fortune, Virtue, and Vice. Throughout these sequences, the morality tradition of plays like *Mankind* exerts a strong influence. My hypothesis is that the allegorical and unbounded spatial imagination of that tradition was a key element of staging travel in the early modern theater. In this paper, I want to use Dekker's entwining of spiritual journey and international travel as a test case for thinking more broadly about early modern drama as a technology for representing the world, both as a measurable entity and as a meaningfully charged backdrop for human action.

Ms. Caro Pirri, Rutgers University

Settlement Aesthetics: Theatricality, Form, Failure

I claim that early modern dramatists were developing an archive of representational practices to figure the New World onstage. Rather than identifying it via the setting or "plot," they instead represent the struggle to represent this setting. Their attempts produce a spatial form (or more accurately, *forms*) for representing New World space on the level of character. Each character models a different set of wayfinding skills – what Arthur and Passini have defined as

apprehension of the reality of infinite space and subsequent projection of that perspective back through recorded history, from the Copernican Galileans of his own day to the Christian Galileans of the primitive church" (415).

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“spatial problem solving under uncertainty” – thus, each character models one potential way to attempt to present a coherent vision of their fictional world as the setting or place for dramatic action.¹ And what makes a New World drama a New World drama is that these endeavors usually fail. My paper looks at “New World drama,” then, not as a discrete genre, but as a larger dramatic category where conditions of disorientation, failure, and loss are being represented formally and spatially, and where characters use orienteering techniques to attempt to resolve affective, geographic, and cultural illegibility. The goal of this project is to examine how the presentational challenge of the New World – its resistance to translation – caused playwrights to develop techniques for staging interpretive failure. By considering how the untranslatability of the New World resulted in formal and methodological innovations, I will move beyond the near-exclusive focus on content that has dominated critical discussion of travel drama.

Gregory Sargent, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Surveying Space, Surveying the Stage: Measurement and Performance

This paper will interrelate theatrical practices of space with the ideas and consequences of land surveying in the 16th and 17th centuries, most notably those propounded by John Norden in his *Surveyors dialogue* (1607). Norden’s work implicates a change to customary practices that I argue had been progressing for the greater part of the 1500s. As a part of the burgeoning capitalist economic practice, surveying replaced certain customary forms of land management such as Rogationtide processions and enabled greater enclosures of the palings. The result was an abstraction of the land to chorographic representation and the alienation of the agrarian laborer from the landscape. The resulting migration of dispossessed free-holders to the urban areas, especially London, created the need for a social entity that could explain the practice of space. Dramatists of the public playhouses took particular interest in working through the various changes in attitude towards space, both as they were practiced and produced. Central to the art of drama, the theater engaged with different expressions that sought to explain the social formation of the market space. Thus, theater became a kind of facilitator of social space and an arena for the confluence of many different ideologies. As I examine these two cultural processes, I would like to suggest how surveying acculturated the audience to the abstraction of space, which aided the theater’s own staging of spaces. Further, the theater, as an arbiter of social space, may have substituted for some displaced customs (like rogationtide processions) while also benefitting from the kinds of economic spatial practices suggested by surveying.

Dr. Robert Sawyer, East Tennessee State University

“John Stow and the Elizabethan Playhouses” (working title)

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My essay considers John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598), focusing on his transitional role from a chronicler, whose primary concern is history, to his topographical work, whose principle organizational structure is spatial. Using the theoretical notions of Henri Lefebvre (1974) and others, this paper pays attention to Stow's "pedestrian ward-by-ward topography" which, according to Ian Archer, seems "suffused with nostalgia" for the type of ritual, both ludic and spatial, he experienced as a child. Deemed "an extensive memory theatre" by Steven Mullaney (15-16), Stow's work seems particularly opposed to the "manipulative theatricality" of "public practices and daily life," according to Lawrence Manley (51).

Since Stow was writing during the increasing popularity of the public theatres it is interesting to note that in the first edition of *Survey*, Stow only obliquely mentions the playhouses in two passages, the first in subsection entitled "Sports and Pastimes," the second during his description of Sewer Ditch, the area we know as Shoreditch. In the first reference, Stow is lamenting the decline of medieval religious drama: "Of late time in place of those Stage playes, hath been vsed Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, and Histories, both true and fayned: For the acting whereof certaine publique places haue been erected" (I.93). In the second one he claimed that "neare thereunto" the area where the Priory of St. John the Baptist once stood in Shoreditch, "are builded two publique houses for the acting and shewe of Comedies, Tragedies and Histories, for recreation. Whereof the one is called the Courtein, the other The Theatre" (II. 262). But Stow suppressed even these rather vague allusions to the public playhouses in his next edition published in 1603; speculation about his motivation ranges from the fact that the old theatre had been torn down by 1603 to Stow's aversion to the playhouses more generally. I hope to show that his elision was much more complicated than either of these possibilities.

Jonathan Walker, Portland State University

The Technologies of *Narratio* and *Enargeia* in Early Modern Drama

Instead of considering emergent technologies of space and place in early modern culture, I would like to address the reemergence of an ancient technology that appears specifically within the drama of the period. I argue that playwrights modernized the drama by incorporating the forensic strategy of *narratio* (narrative) and its rhetorical effect of *enargeia* (presence, vividness) into the fabric of their plays. As a means of bringing an absent past into the present—a past which is necessarily a rhetorical reconstruction of a subjective experience—narrative produces spaces and places where they didn't previously exist. Playwrights' deployment of *narratio* and *enargeia* in early modern drama not only significantly expands the representational limits of the platform stage, but also puts into tension the modes of drama and narrative, which authenticate their representations according to discrete logics and rhetorical assumptions.

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ⁱ Paul Arthur and Romedi Passini, *Wayfinding: People, Signs, and Architecture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992): 28.