

**2019 Seminar Abstracts: London as a theatrical space**  
**Tracey Hill (Bath Spa University, UK)**  
**Andrew Gordon (University of Aberdeen, UK)**

**Respondent:**

**Professor Adam Zucker (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)**

**‘Performances “in no other City possible”:  
the Mountebank and Theatrical Vagrancy in London’**

**Sarah Mayo**  
**University of Georgia**

The early modern mountebank in London is a player of many spaces. Their rhetoric, in fact, seems to *play* with space, as in one speech they may advertise with microcosmic specificity the signs, streets, and directions to the house where their practice retreats off-stage—at the sign of the Golden Ball, in Red Lyon’s Square—and in another moment cite the distant, obscure, and sometimes fictional countries from which they have (supposedly) traveled to arrive on a single stage. This stage itself, crucially, is portable, allowing the mountebank to remove to new streets and fields within a larger urban chessboard of potential play-spaces, and allowing an audience to exist in flux, coming and going in the open air without a ticketed entry. As the mountebank became increasingly defined as a character type in seventeenth-century England, it even made its way into designated indoor play-spaces like the theatre and court, as a *dramatis persona* in works like James Shirley’s *Bird in a Cage* (1633) and as the titular chaos-maker in the *Antimaske of Mowntebanks* (1618). This paper will attempt to articulate the mountebank’s license to roam physically and representationally across London as a kind of theatrical vagrancy, one which begs the question not only of where theatre can exist in urban space, but *how*—how a physically and rhetorically unfixed performance can still be recognized by an audience *as* a performance. Playing with and across space, as this paper will argue, is perhaps one of the most crucial of the mountebank’s many ‘impossible’ feats.

**‘Elizabethan Fool in Performance:  
a Movable London *genius loci* in Shakespeare’s Plays’**

**Halnya Pastushuk**  
**Ukrainian Catholic University**

Shakespeare’s fools, rooted in the tradition of medieval performance art, are vested bearers of all scraps of social conventions of his time, playing all together the role a theme reference, Shakespeare’s text and physical humor. They dispose a unique ability to cross the borderline between inner dramatic chronotope and actual outer theatric performance, to mediate between the performance and the spectator, to interpret the hidden messages of a dramatic fabula to the hodge-podge London public, using the common place language of events, traditions, attitudes, public figures, etc. Aware of the poly-functionality of London theatrical space, as well as aiming to avoid the dire straits of Tudor political censorship, Shakespeare moves the locale of his plays (except for chronicles) beyond England but the fools bring in the London topos and relate to receptive anticipations of the London audience, becoming a movable English locus within the fictional time and space.

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Due to high commerciality of the Elizabethan theatre, the fool characters were often molded to comply with the *horizon of expectations* of their audiences. The universal physical humor of their predecessors (Devil, Vice) is utilized as a platform for transgression to a sophisticated and complicated intellectual jest.

In my presentation I want to trace the connection between the London audiences and the use of stage space by fools in order to connect with them. For this I shall investigate the receptive potential of some scenes from *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Tempest*, as well as the impact of Robert Armin and William Kempe on the formation of play-script characters.

**‘A Vivisection of London:  
 Violence and Truth in the Space of the Theatre’**

**Elizabeth Labiner**  
**University of Arizona**

In my paper I will argue that dramatists use the theater as a space in which to lay bare and anatomize the cultural “truths” that are veiled outside the theater due to their treasonous, dangerous, or unspeakable nature. Plays rip out the inner workings of society, politics, and individuals, thrusting them onstage where the playwrights’ sense of what is true can and must be examined. I plan to explore how the struggle between revealing truths and concealing them spilled out into social, cultural, and religious violence that ranged from the verbal volleys lobbed by the antitheatricalists to the struggles between dramatists and the censors, the conflicts of which could and did extend beyond the page and the stage. I am interested in linking particular socio-political moments to concurrent or reactive literary moments, especially at times of change or unrest.

Additionally, I plan to examine ideas of the theater as a privileged or special space, considering early modern attitudes on the theater and drama, images and imagery of the theater, as well as notions of what this space does for society. I will engage with geographic considerations, particularly in regard to the contained space of the theater juxtaposed with theaters’ locations in regard to the “body” of London (though acknowledging also that the performance of plays is in no way limited to the theater alone).

**‘Liminoid Theaters in Liminal London’**

**Betsy Sullivan**  
**University of Southern California**

When early modern audiences attended performances, they crossed the Thames and entered the bawdy atmosphere of the Southbank. A roving, rollicking world, theatergoers parsed their ways past alehouses, cockfights and brothels to attend theaters, thereby framing the theatrical world of London theater as an experience that must be entered at one’s own peril or pleasure. While many of Shakespeare’s plays are set in locales that would seem exotic to the average early modern Londoner, he and other

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early modernists winkingly GeoTag their performance site through references to and asides about the tawdry South Bank. This aspect of naming factual and familiar locales—specifically, in prologues, epilogues and references to contemporaneous early modern London locations-- blurs the threshold between fact and fiction to a degree that the liminoid experience of the theater bleeds out into liminal spaces in the city.

**‘The River Thames as Theatrical Space’**

**Maria Shmygol**  
**Université de Genève**

The Thames played host to a vast number of dramatic performances of various kinds, including royal and mayoral processions, water shows, and pageants. My paper is interested in how the river functioned as a theatrical space—or watery ‘stage’—and the kinds of opportunities and challenges it presented to those responsible for devising, executing, and performing water entertainments. More specifically, I wish to consider the uses of ship devices across several types of performances on the Thames in order to demonstrate how they engage with the staging of maritime or piscatory labour, displays of naval power, the challenges of navigation, and marine wonder. To that end, I will discuss the uses of ships in the sea-fight staged in honour of Henry’s investiture as Prince of Wales in 1610 (reported in Munday’s *Londons Love, to the Royal Prince Henrie*), and in a number of mayoral Shows, including Munday’s *Triumphs of Reunited Britannia* (1605) and *Chrysanaleia: The Golden Fishing* (1616), as well as Dekker’s *Troia-Nova Triumphans* (1612) and Middleton’s *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613).

**‘Rivers as Theatrical Space (1613)’**

**David Bergeron**  
**University of Kansas**

John Stow in his *Survey of London* (1598+) includes an observation about the importance of water for London and its dependence on the Thames to satisfy the major part of that need. Not surprisingly, many writers, including dramatists, call attention to this crucial river. This paper will focus on the use of the Thames and the New River as places for theatrical spectacle and performance. I choose to look at the events of 1613 as a means of limiting the scope of this paper. I attempt to compensate for the relative neglect of consideration of the rivers as theatrical space.

I will begin with the performances associated with the marvelous festivities for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Frederick, Elector Palatine on 14 February 1613. The Thames figures prominently as the place for fireworks and the mythical battle between “Turkish” and “Christian” forces. Thousands of spectators lined the banks of the Thames for this event. Beaumont’s masque, presented a few days after the wedding, began its journey along the Thames before arriving in Whitehall. This river voyage becomes an integral part of the spectacle.

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On 29 September, Thomas Middleton offered a pageant for the opening of the “New River” project, itself many years in the making. This brief drama celebrated this monumental engineering feat. This was Middleton’s first offering in behalf of the City of London. A month later, 29 October, the Grocers sponsored Middleton’s celebrated Lord Mayor’s Show, *The Triumphs of Truth*, which, like many other Lord Mayor’s Shows, includes a performance along the Thames. I close with the symbolic representation of the Thames in Campion’s *Somerset Masque* for the late December wedding of Robert Carr and Frances Howard. These performances urge us to pay more attention to the rivers as theatrical space.

**‘“Cleopatra in Her Barge”:  
 Anne Boleyn’s Coronation Pageants and the Production of English Cultural  
 Capital’**

**Sarah Crover**  
**University of Wisconsin, Madison**

In 1533, Anne Boleyn’s elaborate two-day coronation pageant was staged on the Thames and then in the streets of London. At the time of Anne’s coronation pageant, London, and England as a whole, stood in a politically precarious position. Henry VIII’s divorce from Katherine of Aragon caused a break with Spain, and his marriage to an English commoner forestalled Cardinal Wolsey’s plans to establish a close alliance with France. Anglo-French relations remained uncertain at best. Moreover, Henry’s disregard for the Pope’s ruling on his marriage and subsequent establishment of the new, English church set the nation in opposition to most of Europe. England’s political situation made it imperative that London’s coronation pageant for Anne stage an affluent, and unified country. At the king’s request, the City carried out an elaborate and dazzling two-part pageant: first on water, and then on land, through the city, to celebrate Anne’s coronation. Her water pageant alone included, in addition to the usual fleet of company barges and foists with military ordinance and trumpets, a fire-breathing dragon, a white falcon, wildmen, singing virgins, and a diving Moor (Anon. n.d., p.4; Leland and Udall 1533, p.45). This phantasmagoric spectacle offered an awe-inspiring display of artistry and luxury goods, while simultaneously staging the king’s magnificence, the installation of England’s new Protestant queen, and the wealth and power of the city of London.

**‘Urban Contradictions:  
 St. Paul’s, the Theatre, and the Making of a City’**

**Jess Landis**  
**Franklin Pierce University**

St. Paul’s Cathedral played a vital role in the everyday life of early modern London. The early modern stage, which consistently alluded to London landmarks, regularly represented and referenced the church. Much like the theater, Paul’s hosted the rich and the poor, the pious and the corrupt, and the ignorant and the savvy, bringing contradictions of early modern urban life together. In Steven Mullaney’s words, activities on and around the stage and other urban locales helped in creating a

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“rhetoric of space,” or a code for producing and understanding the city and its people. This paper will explore St. Paul’s as an example of a public space of social performance that participated in forming such a code, not only reflecting, but shaping early modern London, specifically via its connection with the stage. By looking at representations of Paul’s from Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker, and other playwrights, I hope to come to an understanding of how this important urban landmark acted as not only a “nutshell” of urban life, as Helen Ostovich claims, but also as a proxy for the theater and other early modern institutions.

**‘Building on the Medieval;  
 or (Re)Making the Cityscape in early Modern London’**

**Rachael Simonetta**  
**University of Colorado, Boulder**

Medieval writers represent community formation by likening conscience and sacramental practice to the built environment. A central medieval trope – ethical reflection as architectural space – emerges in medieval England and then fundamentally transforms when the Reformation reduces the sacraments from seven to two and iconoclasts whitewash church walls and strip away the material fabric of buildings. This paper opens with a historical model of how medieval dramatists represent building practice and community formation. Setting out the ethical and sacramental dimensions of the *Castle of Perseverance* and the work of building craft guilds in the *York Corpus Christi Cycle Plays* allows me to then reflect on how the changing cityscape in post-Reformation London serves as an urban performance that adaptively reuses the medieval while simultaneously making something new.

**‘Burning the pope in London’**

**Kathleen Lynch**  
**Folger Shakespeare Library**

My brief seminar paper will open a line of inquiry that examines a curious kind of witness to several rabidly anti-Catholic processions at the height of the Popish Plot scare. Three successive broadsides engravings exist in witness to these events.

These “Solemn Mock-Processions of the Pope” were staged on the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth’s accession; they culminated in a burning of the pope in effigy at Smithfield in two cases or Temple Bar in the third. It may be a stretch to think of them as civic ceremonies. But it may be worth thinking of them with the history of civic ceremony to mind. I seek to better understand the nature of the cultural memories these events and print witness convey, memories of civic and monarchical ceremony, especially memories that can be traced in place and that might carry with them assertions of national and / or civic authority or contestation thereof, even as the source of those assertions may change.

For the larger purposes of the seminar, I hope to raise questions that will resonate: is this an inversion of civic ceremony or the very thing? What corporate bodies or other

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interests were served? How might we situate the elaborate graphic representations in a history of print witnesses to civic ceremony? How do the forms of civic ceremony evolve or not over time? How does a multi-confessional state get instantiated on the ground? What are the forms of resistance? How are they performed in public?

The place of this work for me is in an ongoing study of the ways non-conformist Protestant communities came back into public visibility towards the end of the seventeenth century. London is the focus for me, and I am trying to re-integrate what have become denominational histories into an urban history, post-Great Fire, with increasing homogeneity in residential building styles, a rapidly expanding reach outside the corporation, and at a time when every last alley and court yard is being “described” in a new mode of mapping.

**“Surging Like the Sea”:  
 Locating the Crowd as Spectacle in Early Modern London’s Streets’**

**Heather C. Easterling**  
**Gonzaga University**

Orazio Busino’s eye-witness account of the 1617 Lord Mayor’s Show devotes as much attention to the press of spectators in the windows and streets, “surging like the sea,” than to the official procession and pageantry. Numerous texts of the period echo this fascination with the spectacular and particularly urban phenomenon of people and space: the crowd. And this fascination is both admiring – “windows...filled with the handsomest faces” – and markedly anxious. In this paper, I approach London as a theatrical space by attending to the spectacle of the crowded streets. Drawing together works related to official pageantry, I read the spectacle of the crowd as both explicitly and implicitly expressed, relying as well on urban genres of the time such as surveys, pamphlets, and plays to explore the crowd’s significance to experiences and representations of early modern London space. My project responds to Malcolm Smuts’ observation that scholarship largely has ignored “elements of spectacle that must often have dominated the impressions of contemporary spectators” (180) of urban rituals and pageantry. Thus I seek to close-read the crowd as spectacle as well as theorize its power and its potential menace in terms of urban social practices and official versus unofficial uses of space.

**‘London’s strange hosts:  
 Performing hospitalities in *The Magnificent Entertainment*’**

**Katie Blankenau**  
**Northwestern University**

As Julia Reinhard Lupton has lately shown, theatricality and hospitality are deeply intertwined, mutually imbricated in shared concerns with entrances and exits, with performances of welcome and the roles of host and guest. Nowhere are hospitality and theatricality’s shared structures more evident than in early modern civic and aristocratic entertainments, in which “entertainment” signifies both the performance and hospitality itself. However, when an entertainment’s “host” is a city, the

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complexity of its various hospitalities adds significant practical and political pressures to the theatrical performances that the host-city stages. My essay focuses on *The Magnificent Entertainment*, written by Dekker and Jonson to mark James I's entry to London in 1604. The entertainment is notable because it included the participation of "strangers" – Italian and Dutch immigrants – who contributed two of the pageant's triumphal arches. I approach this entertainment as the messy, theatrical hospitality event it was: an uneven collaboration between a bored Scottish guest, strangers-turned-hosts, and a city made strange to itself in theatrical garb. The multiple contributing "hosts" – including the often-opposed authors as well as the individual immigrant communities – project different forms of hospitality and hosting onto the spaces of the city. Accordingly, I trace the various ways the entertainment frames London as a simultaneously hospitable and theatrical space and, in doing so, constrains its diverse participants into performances of hospitality.

**'The Triumphs of Repetition:  
 Spatiotemporal Performance in the Mayoral Shows'**

**Mark Kaethler**  
**Medicine Hat College**

The mayoral shows might seem repetitive to someone more familiar with Shakespeare's plays, but scholars have noted the ways in which their reiterative content produces symbolic meaning. Kara Northway identifies that Thomas Dekker's allusions in *London's Tempe* (1629) to Munday's *Camp-Bell* (1609) are made in order to counsel the son of this former Lord Mayor not to follow in his father's footsteps, and Susan Anderson elucidates the merit of the five islands moving from the Thames to St Paul's in Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613). This essay will examine other instances of repetition within and across the shows not as tired conventions, but as similar efforts to guide the audience through the intertextual memory web of civic performance.

As site-specific theatre that blurs the distinction between performance and reality, civic pageantry offers a unique experience of environmental theatre, which Andrew Houston views as bringing new unrealized life to a location. While there are obvious incidents of this occurring in the mayoral shows, such as the new water conduit in *The Triumphs of Truth*, the essay will examine how the repetition of emblematic figures or devices at different or similar locations across civic pageantry also generates sociopolitical meaning by imbuing these pageants with the topical or common understandings of the locations.