

Seminar 05: Brothers and Others: New Directions
Organizers: Elizabeth Bearden and Julia Schleck
Thursday, April 10, 3:30-5:30

Seminar Abstracts

“Travelling Bodies”: Theorizing Native Women’s Movements
in/to Protoimperialist England, c. 1560 to 1580
Professor Bernadette Andrea, University of Texas at San Antonio

In questioning “the relevance of binary models of ‘othering’” for assessing “early modern representations of foreigners in both dramatic and prose texts” (to cite the description of this SAA seminar), I focus on native women’s travels — otherwise dismissed as “mere physical movement” — as inscribed in the historical record of the first official English overseas venture westwards for the purpose of trade, colonization, and empire: Martin Frobisher’s voyages from 1576 to 1578 in search of a northwest passage to the riches of Asia (see full paper for citations). While considered “failures” in terms of their immediate aims, Frobisher’s voyages arguably established the foundation for a British seaborne empire as articulated by the advisor to the short-lived Cathay Company, John Dee. While men dominated these voyages and for the most part did not bring women with them, a small percentage of elite women are listed as investors in Frobisher’s ventures, with Queen Elizabeth preeminent.

Even less visible are the native women who were transported to England as a result of these voyages: a Nogai “Tartar girl” whom Anthony Jenkinson, agent of the Muscovy company and royal envoy to the Russian and Persian courts, gifted to Elizabeth and an Inuk woman whom Frobisher abducted, along with her infant, as a prize for the queen. The latter, the first recorded Native American woman in the British Isles, is grouped in the records of the Frobisher voyages with the “people of Cathay, Tartars, Tartar Indians, country people, strange people, and even Moors, but not of course Eskimos [or Inuit].” This confusion is unsurprising given many of these English men had traveled the northeast route across Central Asia, where the preponderance of natives they encountered were Tatars. The catachresis “Tartar Indian” that emerges from these documents thus resonates with the descriptor “Tartar girl” to signal the triangulations, rather than the binary oppositions, constitutive of the nascent anglocentric discourse of empire.

This paper ultimately seeks to redefine the category of travel to include women relegated to the margins of the early modern/colonial world system, such as the “Tartar girl” and the “Tartar Indian” woman. The question of their agency is more fraught, as they were both captives, the former likely traded to Jenkinson and the latter forcibly kidnapped. The “Tartar girl” seems to have found a place at Queen Elizabeth’s court as her “welbeloved woman Ipolita the Tartarian”; the “Tartar Indian” woman, whom the English labeled “Ignorth,” the generic Inuktitut term for “woman,” succumbed to a fatal disease approximately six weeks after her arrival on British shores. Attending to the traces of her life in English and other European documents, as well as in the oral histories of the Inuit, this paper highlights her negotiations of her enforced conditions of travel to show how she emerged as a subject of history within and beyond the English narrative.

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Strained Relations, Strange Relations; or, John Smith's Bad Blood
Mr. Kevin A. Boettcher, University of Wisconsin

As literary critics are fond of noting, John Smith is far from a model of colonial dominance: he is described as needlessly violent, politically inept, and notoriously undependable, a man prone to misreading and misunderstanding who regularly antagonized the local Powhatan tribes and his fellow colonists alike. Over the last few decades, Smith has been recuperated, damned, decoded, transformed, and corrected (to varying degrees) by literary critics, (post)colonial scholars, and cultural historians. In large part, much of this work has sought to find workable explanations for his accounts of indigenous practices and customs, sites of misinformation and uncertainty that show a proto-colonist trying – and often failing – to fix a set of relations between the English and the people, landscape, objects, and practices of Virginia. However, Smith's first major work, *A Map of Virginia* (1612), constantly complicates those relations by returning, again and again, to the weak, unsteady, and self-destructive subjects that populate Jamestown. Working across the heterogeneous formal elements of Smith's text – including a short language guide, longer descriptions of Virginia, and a collection of heavily edited narratives from other colonists – my paper tracks how the *Map* locates the undependability of its European subjects primarily in their misguided appetites, ungovernable palates, and poor eating habits. In doing so, Smith draws upon a deeply rooted set of tropes (about bad subjects in the New World) that not only reveal the false promises of an entire generation of promotional literature but, more importantly, that collapse the distinctions between European settlers and the local Powhatan, the “brothers” and “others” of our seminar. Somewhat perversely, I want to test out a reading practice that attends to pessimism and misanthropy, in which the Self and the Other are made to resemble one another in their *worst* traits, particularly as individuals caught up in an emergent capitalist system. Though this approach is not without its flaws, it seeks to understand how some common tropes of early colonial discourse – namely, estrangement from fellow colonists and pervasive anxiety about “bad” travelers – ask us to reconsider our critical categories.

Emotions, Race and Genre in *The Battle of Alcazar*
Professor Dennis A. Britton, University of New Hampshire

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed suggests, “Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of ‘towardness’ or ‘awayness’ in relation to such objects.” Ahmed's formulation of how emotions orient individuals and groups one toward another may provide a way to understand the variable European views of and relationships with non-European others. This essay explores what emotions can tell us about early modern racial formation, and how the emotional work of dramatic genres helps shape an audience's perception of categories of racial sameness and racial difference. More particularly, it considers revenge tragedy motifs in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (composed 1588-1589, printed 1594), a play whose genre classification is no clearer than its categorizations of racial, religious, and political sameness and difference. The play uses claims about political legitimacy to create difference within a family, difference between “The Negro Muly Mahamet,” who is “Blacke in his looke, and bloudie in his deeds,” and his uncle, the “brave Barbarian Lord Muly Molocco.” Early modern audiences surely must have had complicated feelings about the play's characters and political alliances; the play stages an alliance between a black Muslim usurper, a honorable Catholic king, and a traitorous Englishman, who together oppose virtuous Moors who fight for legitimate control of Morocco. The play's incorporation of revenge tragedy motifs, however, attempts to shape the audience's emotions and help it sort through the complicated alliances, and help the audience establish differences between itself as a collective, feeling entity and the characters on the stage.

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“Tricksy Spirit”—Ariel’s Bondage
Professor Brinda Charry, Keene State College

The paper will attempt to problematize the binary model of othering through an examination of the figure of the eunuch in early modern travel writing and drama. The Ottoman practice, which went back to ancient Byzantium, of castrating slaves, and employing them in various offices, especially horrified and angered European travelers to the Empire. This was further evidence of the inhumanity and brutality of the Turks. Interestingly, in the early modern English drama the eunuch-slave is often English. The eunuch is clearly a symbol of the anxieties surrounding English identities abroad and a reminder of the complex status of the liminal figure who straddles cultures, religions, and gender identities. However, both travelers and dramatists recognized that the eunuch was a specially privileged slave, who in fact, in certain cases, willingly submitted to castration. This complicated European attitudes to Ottoman slavery and to the nature of servitude and bondage in Ottoman Turkey.

The second part of the paper (which will necessarily be very brief due to length constraints), will study the figure of Ariel, the “tricksy spirit” of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Ariel’s ambiguous gender identity has invited readings that suggest that he represents the hermaphrodite – an identity that is fluid, playful, and multiple. But what if one approaches Ariel – who was after all first enslaved by the Algerian tyrant Sycorax—and then gallantly freed by Prospero—through the lens of eunuch-slavery? The intention is not to suggest that Ariel is a eunuch. Rather the intention is to deploy the idea of the eunuch, in ways similar to the use of “queer” in Madhavi Menon’s essay collection *Shakespeareer* where “queer readings” pay attention to those aspects of “texts and ideas that address . . . the vexed relation between sameness and difference.” The eunuch will then help complicate understandings of power, bondage, and the meaning of desire in *The Tempest*.

The Other Woman: the Geography of Exclusion in *The Knight of Malta*
Dr. Ambereen Dadabhoy, Harvey Mudd College

Within the recent critical discussion of Islam and “the Turk” in early modern English drama, Fletcher, Field, and Massinger’s *The Knight of Malta* (1618) has largely been overlooked. It may be that the play’s occlusion from the debate stems from a perceived lack of clear-cut, identifiable Muslim characters and even a sustained disinterest in the topical matters invoked by its title. Another explanation might lie in its ostensibly moralizing didacticism and pronounced Romance structures and motifs, which offer the play up as nothing more than derivative of its source material. To fall into such conclusions about the play, however, is to elide the particular manner in which it engages with the goals and anxieties of nascent European nationalism and imperialism in their confrontation with Ottoman-Islamic hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, far from exhibiting indifference to the cultural and geo-political concerns raised by its title and setting, *The Knight of Malta*, I argue, takes up and problematizes the notion of “turning Turk”—with its accompanied schematic of religious affiliation and betrayal—through the modalities of gender and race. Employing the generic architecture of Romance, the play imbricates categories of difference, such as gender, race, and religion in its construction of nation and community. In this essay I contend that *The Knight of Malta* offers an innovative optics through which questions of encounter and traffic with Muslim regimes can be framed and answered. By tracing the circulation of women in the play, I uncover the affective and symbolic roles they occupy in addition to the suspicion they engender. Finally, I claim that the dramatization of the national and imperial triumph of Malta (and Christendom) over the Ottoman Empire (and Islam) is achieved through the simultaneous absorption and exclusion of radical difference. Thus, a critical reconsideration of *The Knight of Malta* subtended by the geometry of religion, race, and gender reveals the scope and limits of the project of empire in the early modern eastern Mediterranean.

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“The World Transformed”:
Multiple Worlds in *Antony and Cleopatra*
Mr. Brent Dawson, Emory University

My paper asks how early modern theories of multiple worlds might offer an alternative paradigm to the binary of identity and alterity in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Psychoanalytic, queer, and postcolonial approaches to the play have explored how the play polarizes oppositions between Roman and Egyptian, masculine and feminine, and reason and desire, as well as how it occasionally points up the constructed nature of these oppositions. I pursue a different though related approach, which is to see if the play proposes, alongside its dizzying building up and tearing down of binaries, models of plurality, relations without a central term. As England in the seventeenth century became further involved in a global marketplace and gained increasing knowledge of non-European cultures, several such models of plurality circulated as a means of thinking cross-cultural relation. One, the *prisca sapientia* or ancient wisdom, held up Egyptian learning as equal in importance to Roman or Hebraic. Another, the cosmological theory of multiple worlds, imagined that humanity and civilization could arise anywhere, and so no one particular culture could claim a monopoly on either term. My paper will first briefly survey some of the implications of the theory of multiple worlds for early modern anthropology in the writings of Giordano Bruno and Michel de Montaigne. Then, it will explore two ways in which *Antony and Cleopatra* relates to such a theory: metaphorically, through the repeated figure of the world fragmenting or dissolving, and narratively, through the play's rapid and defiantly un-Aristotelian, non-united changes of scene.

“Decline to your confounding contraries”: *Timon of Athens* and the Poverty of Aesthetics
Dr. Joel M. Dodson, Southern Connecticut State University

In this paper, I propose to look at Athens as a site of some of Shakespeare's more complex thinking about aesthetics – specifically, the impoverishment of aesthetics within early modern poetic and mimetic theory. Readers of *Timon of Athens* have long noted the play's deep interest in monetary debt, deprivation, and poverty, though in terms that have primarily privileged the latter as a subversion of dominant forms of cultural representation, or their absolute limit. As Ken Jackson writes, “No other Shakespearean character gives himself up ‘to the other . . . and to the utterly other’ in the way Timon does” – a notion of “otherness” which at once recognizes the radical alterity of Timon's “abhorred” condition, yet also risks foreclosing its dramatic potential in an aporia of the very “contraries” the play seeks to confound. My aim in this paper will be to explore, instead, the metonymic links between poverty and aesthetics set in motion cunningly by the play, focusing on its staging of the Poet and Painter in Acts 1.1 and 5.1 (scenes most likely written by Shakespeare in his joint authorial endeavor). Shakespeare and Middleton's embrace of the civic and geographic space of Athens in their rendering of Timon signals, I suggest, that Timon's encounter with the Painter and Poet recalls more than merely the Platonic dilemma of mimetic representation's truth or lies, a binary conception of aesthetics perpetuated by early modern theorists like Sidney. It recalls, instead, the very ground of what Jacques Rancière has termed aisthesis – the social distribution of sensibility on which the aesthetic regime rests, and in which the poor, in refusing ever to be one thing, have an integral rather than merely “other” role to play. *Timon of Athens* explores that integral role by not only staging poverty directly but voicing through its confrontation with poets and painters the dissensus, or “forests of beasts,” by which its dramatic representation is deemed an impoverished art in the first place.

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“[A] diverted blood and bloody brother”:
Kinship, Kindness, and the Stranger Community of *As You Like It*
Dr. Ruben Espinosa, University of Texas at El Paso

The forced and voluntary exile of the many characters in *As You Like It* undeniably draws attention to the issue of immigration in early modern England, an issue that gave rise to a multitude of social anxieties in late-sixteenth-century London. Unlike other Shakespeare plays that engage with the issue of immigration, however, *As You Like It* fails to tender a recognizable foreigner to its audience. Indeed, the play’s attention to alterity focuses on gender, social hierarchy and regional difference rather than racial or national identity. And yet despite the absence of racial otherness in the play, *As You Like It* offers its audience a view of the undeniable peril that comes from within one’s homeland – an otherness within itself that threatens the stability and identity of that society. In this regard, the play registers the many anxieties surrounding the tenuous religious and national identity of early modern England, and the value of “kindness”—that is, both “aliqueness” and benevolence—takes on greater currency. However, by scrutinizing the issue of strangeness and strangers from within, I argue, the play also opens the door for its audience to gauge the value of immigration and to apprehend the shifting parameters, (in)stability, and fluidity behind perceptions of one’s homeland. In the process, the ethical responsibilities of the host and stranger are brought to the fore.

Brothers and “Gentles” in *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*
Professor Maurice Hunt, Baylor University

Forms of the word “brother” echo throughout Shakespeare’s *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*, from scenes involving the brotherhood of thieves, Pistol, Bardolph, and Nim (e.g. 2.1.10, 98; 3.2.41; 3.6.48), to that at play’s end where King Charles VI of France and King Henry repeatedly call each other brother (e.g. 5.2.2, 10, 83, 315). The most memorable instance occurs during Henry’s Saint Crispin’s Day oration given before the Battle of Agincourt. Crispin and Crispianus were brothers, cobblers, who were early Christian martyrs. Henry promises that the soldier who sheds his blood with him, “be he ne’er so vile, / This day shall gentle his condition” (4.3.62-63).

But Henry never does reveal that he possesses the capacity for brotherhood as Shakespeare defies the faculty in this play. The relationship between King Henry and his biological brothers, the Dukes of Gloucester and Clarence, is never staged. Nor is it a dramatic issue. Moreover, a self-professed Christian king, Henry never shows that he wants to be his brother’s keeper, that is, humankind’s keeper. In fact, he brutally orders French prisoners’ throats to be cut. The play’s Chorus addresses the audience as “gentles all” and repeatedly asks members, regardless of class to exercise their empathic imagination to flesh out the scene. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Duke Theseus implies that imagining the best of faltering others typifies “gentleness.” In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As You Like It*, Shakespeare more explicitly indicates that this is so.

Ironically, the non-gentleman Williams has the empathetic imagination, conceiving of the suffering of English widows and orphans left destitute by a father’s death at Agincourt. Unresponsive, Henry legalistically replies that he is not responsible for the souls of Englishmen killed that day. “Gentle” Williams is the play’s pre-eminent gentleman; he proudly, with integrity, refuses the money King Henry tries to give him for misleading him. In this way, he belies the promise of his battle-oration.

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Beyond the Black Legend
Dr. Carmen Nocentelli, University of New Mexico

We often think of the Spanish Black Legend as a unique formation in the history of European culture. And yet, Spaniards were not the only targets of Black Legend narratives that harped on ethnic flaws and ethical shortcomings. This paper considers the emergence and development of xenophobic discourses pointedly patterned after the Spanish Black Legend but deployed against other ethnonational groups. The point of the exercise is not to trivialize the Spanish Black Legend or dismiss the enduring legacies of early modern anti-Hispanism. Rather, it is to understand the dynamics and effects—above and beyond the immediate purposes to which these narratives were harnessed—that Black Legend narratives set in motion.

The Othered Mother-Son within *The Tempest*
Dr. Gloria Olchowy, Grant MacEwan University

Scholars who attend to the matter of motherhood in *The Tempest* generally emphasize the marginality or veritable absence of mothers in the play. Some move beyond the binary orientation of center and margin, and presence and absence, to explore the fluidity, or points of connection, between and among the characters in the play, including the mothers. Others examine how various directors and playwrights have interpreted or altered the play to make Caliban's mother Sycorax visible or to give her a voice. In this paper, I make a preliminary case for the contradictory centrality of motherhood to political power, colonialist enterprise, and theatrical work, as they are depicted or alluded to, in this Shakespearean romance. To make this case, I first examine the late medieval and early modern versions of motherhood in competition during Shakespeare's time, the adaptation of these forms of motherhood by James I in his construction of patriarchal power, the connection between the expansive, nuanced medieval notions of the maternal and dramatic performance, and the demonization of these influential notions as well as the dramatic mode with which they are linked. I then glance at aspects of *The Tempest* informed by these materials, with an eye to the colonial inflection of the maternal as it is constituted in the play. Even in this initial, and necessarily brief, interpretative foray, I hope to shed light on contentious matters that have often been obscured due to an overly postmedieval critical orientation—matters that the original audiences of the play, which included James I himself, would most assuredly have been aware of, to one degree or another, due to their location at a cultural crux, or period of monumental change.

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“I cannot tell wat is like me”:
Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fifth* & Ethnicity in the Making
Professor Marjorie Rubright, University of Toronto

“Ethnic identity” would have been a baffling locution for the early modern English. Even so, ethnicity is a concept that I propose we might mobilize to reorient and revitalize our methodological approach(es) to the study of identity formation in the early modern past. In this paper, I will set out to consider what happens to our object of study and our methodological practice if we imagine ethnicity without groups. I will consider the theater’s role in what I characterize as ‘ethnicity in the making.’

What new avenues of inquiry might emerge if we were take up the argument, advanced recently in the field of social anthropology, that “ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group,” something that is “between and not inside,” – a process, in other words, that entails the often uncanny and never wholly predictable work of identification? How, then, would we define the cultural subjects of our scholarship? What role might literature play in this “making” process? The paper will try to do two things. First, I will outline the various ways our field is currently mobilizing the term ethnicity in order to explore the limitations and possibilities inherent in these working definitions to our project of troubling the Brother/Other binary. Second, I will propose that we consider the utility of thinking in terms of cultural approximations as a way beyond the study of ‘types,’ upon which the Brother/Other binary so often depends.

Stigma, Identity, and Difference in Fletcher and Massinger’s *A Very Woman*
Dr. David H. Wood, Northern Michigan University

The playwriting partnership of John Fletcher and Philip Massinger resulted in a number of works that have achieved semi-canonical status within Renaissance drama, and perhaps most famous among them are their Turkish plays, including *The Knight of Malta* (1618), *The Renegado* (1623, perhaps written by Massinger alone), and the tragi-comic romance, *A Very Woman: Or the Prince of Tarent* (1619-21). Against the backdrop of a love-triangle centered upon Almira, daughter of the Viceroy of Sicily, *A Very Woman* features the adventures of her two love-interests: most notably, the gentleman of the subtitle who, once rebuffed, regains access to Almira, and her hand in marriage, while feigning himself a Turk. Recent scholarship, though thin, has examined these plays from a number of perspectives: the ethnographic implications of this and other Turkish representations on the English Renaissance stage; the gendered implications of female representations on the English Renaissance stage (of chaste European maidens contrasted with the sexually voracious women of the Turkish seraglio); and the generic, tragi-comic romance features of the plays themselves. My “SAA 2014: Brothers and Others” paper will take a somewhat different tack. Through a focus on the largely unexamined representation of the slave-market scene in *A Very Woman* (3.1), and the play’s equally discomfiting representation of the adventures, such as they are, of an habituated, female alcoholic, Borachia, I will employ reading strategies developed from disability studies to explore stigma and its intersections in this problematic, under-read, but fascinating play. *A Very Woman* presents many issues of interest to our session concerning the staging of difference in Renaissance drama, I suggest, not least because its ostensibly comedic elements rely almost exclusively upon the two issues (the slave market and explicit alcoholism) we today likely find most unnerving. I hope to show that engaging these issues in plays like *A Very Woman* can aid us in clarifying similar representations of difference in canonical works of the period.