

James Loxley  
Ben Jonson in Space, SAA 2016

This seminar ran very successfully – we had a full roster of participants after one initial withdrawal, timely submission of papers, and some really good discussion and debate before, during and indeed after the seminar. I followed the lead of previous seminar organisers in my initial correspondence, with the difference that I decided to set up a private Wordpress site to share papers and log readers' comments. While there were a few teething troubles for those unused to Wordpress, we eventually got it sorted and were able to use it effectively, though I had to upload and format all the papers (that would have been too much for those not used to the platform). I'd certainly recommend it to others, though I think I underestimated how tricky a few participants would find it to use. I haven't yet made it public, but am planning to ask participants if they'd be ok with me doing so, with suitable caveats placed on all the papers. That way we'll have a record of our discussions that might be fruitful for other researchers. As back up we had a Dropbox folder, which gave people access to all the paperwork if they couldn't access Wordpress for some reason.

All of the paperwork for the seminar is here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ptbp5gl3t1qzoso/AACdXRzyOvGFzF-KIQTun153a?dl=0>

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the seminar 'Ben Jonson in Space' for the Shakespeare Association of America annual meeting, which will be held from March 23-26, 2016, in New Orleans. I'm delighted that you have chosen this seminar, and look forward to receiving, reading, sharing and discussing your work in the coming months. Below I have provided an extended description of the seminar in case that might help you focus your papers, and details of the schedule and arrangements we'll be working to. Please let me know if you'd like to make any changes to your information on the participants' list.

## **BEN JONSON IN SPACE**

Four hundred years after the publication of Jonson's monumental first folio, this seminar explores the Jonsonian use of, and engagement with, spatiality. Among other things, we'll be exploring the idea that it might make sense to talk of distinctively Jonsonian spatial practices. To what extent are we licensed to speak in such terms? It has often been assumed that Jonson's valorisation of writing and reading as the work of understanding requires a corresponding disparagement, or skeptical distrust, of a sensible world in which space and time would have their proper pertinence. The fractious nature of his collaborative relationship with Inigo Jones has also been viewed, in the light of his furious 'Expostulation' with the architect, as a sign of Jonson's consistent privileging of the noumenal over the extended. In recent years, however, such views have been subject to a significant challenge. Jonson's involvement in the spatial arrangement of the printed word, especially evident in his 1616 *Works*, has been rightly emphasised. Critical explorations of the Jonsonian body, his works' acute inhabitation and anatomy of the commodity form, the ways in which his plays and poems invoke the vivid particularities of different kinds of space, or an attention to the site-specificity of his masques, have all contributed to revised perceptions of Jonson's worldliness. The detailed picture we now possess of his 1618 walk to Edinburgh also confronts us, perhaps unexpectedly, with Jonson as a 'biogeographical' artist and performer. This seminar seeks to explore further the ways in which Jonson and spatiality intersect.

Contributions may focus on any relevant aspect of the topic, including the spaces of the theater, the printed page, or manuscript. Jonson's interest in architecture, emblems, and site-specific or itinerant performance, as well as his handling of social or symbolic space, might also feature in participants' work. In doing so, the seminar aims to sketch out something of the range of Jonsonian spaces, while also posing the question of whether there is indeed a signature mode of spatiality that Jonson, *tanquam explorator*, might claim as his own.

#### **SCHEDULE:**

**Now:** Please confirm that you have received this letter by email to James Loxley, [james.loxley@ed.ac.uk](mailto:james.loxley@ed.ac.uk)

Two further emails will follow – an invitation to the seminar website, and to the Dropbox folder to which we'll be uploading abstracts and papers in due course. Please accept these invitations.

The website address is: <https://benjonsonspace.wordpress.com/>

**December 14: Abstracts due.** Please upload your paper titles and abstracts (250-300 words) and a brief bio to the Dropbox folder.

**Late December:** I will use your abstracts to create 4 groups of 4 papers each, for purposes of paper commenting and for organizing the seminar discussion.

**February 8: Papers due.** Please upload your completed paper (8-12 pp) and a revised abstract (if necessary) to the Dropbox folder. THIS DEADLINE IS MANDATED BY THE SAA. IN ORDER TO HAVE YOUR NAME LISTED IN THE PROGRAM, PLEASE BE SURE TO HAVE YOUR PAPER TO ME BY THIS DATE.

I will then upload your papers to the website. I would be grateful if you could use Harvard referencing and avoid footnotes if possible – they don't work so well in the website format.

**February 29: Responses due.** Please post three 250-300 word responses, one for each of the other papers in your group, in the comments field under the relevant papers. Feel free also to post comments on responses to your or others' papers, and to respond additionally to any of the papers not in your group.

**March 14:** I will compose discussion questions—likely one per group—and circulate them to the participants in order to get us thinking about what directions the seminar discussion might take.

**March 23-6:** See you in New Orleans! I will let you know exactly when our seminar is scheduled, as soon as I know.

All further information relating to the Conference can be found at <http://www.shakespeareassociation.org/>.