

General Thoughts & Advice:

- We invited participants to meet in the hotel foyer for a drink on the evening before the seminar. I believe standard practice is to socialize after the event, but practicalities made this tricky for us, and I think that in fact it worked well to have participants chat with one another in advance of the seminar – this made for a warmer and more collegial atmosphere on the day, and was perhaps especially useful for junior colleagues who didn't know many people at the SAA.
- Jemima created place-cards for the day. This helped people remember to whom they were speaking (and to put faces to papers, as it were), but I think it also helped us to think about keeping sub-groups in view of one another and making sure our seminar was well-balanced in terms of where the more prominent/talkative members were sitting.
- We opened the seminar with some more general thoughts that we hoped would structure or inform the subsequent discussions; then we moved through our five sub-groups in turn, beginning with the one that we felt had most closely responded to the seminar's call for papers, and allotting roughly fifteen minutes to each group. Of course, all participants had read all papers, so people chimed in from all sides, but the focus for a short time was on each trio of papers. We then kept aside some time towards the end for a wider discussion that brought all papers together, as well as some time for questions from auditors. Jemima and I had divided responsibility between us for overseeing conversations within individual groups, and we had a set of questions or issues written down which we used (though not rigidly) to guide the discussion. We were keen to make sure everyone had the chance to speak about their paper at some length.

Initial Letter (October)

Dear All,

We would like to welcome you to your SAA 2016 seminar! Firstly, thank you all very much for your interest in our seminar on 'Space, Memory and Transformation in Early Modern Literature'. As you will see from the mailing group listed here we are pleased to announce that we have a full seminar and so we look forward to a lively conversation in New Orleans. At the end of this email we have included the full seminar description as well as a list of seminar participants with contact details and a brief timetable of key dates for easy reference.

The seminars enable a group of scholars interested in a particular topic to share ideas and sources, to read each other's work in advance, and to engage in an in-depth discussion of the issues raised by the papers at the seminar itself. These stimulating discussions often lead to further collaborations, including publications. Though participants may wish to ask specific questions relating to one another's research, the aim of the seminars is to provide a space for debate and discussion of the broader issues raised by the papers, rather than to critique those papers' structure or style. At their best the seminars offer debate and discussion out of which can emerge new research agendas and trajectories.

To that end, the first task we are asking you to perform as a seminar member is to send us, by **31 October**:

1) four or five sentences that outline your interest in the seminar and the area your paper is likely to cover. In particular we would like you to indicate the way in which you will be engaging with the three terms of our seminar's triad 'Space, Memory and Transformation'.

- 2) a preliminary bibliography of 3-5 references related to the seminar's focus. These can be primary or secondary texts, they just need to be texts which will inform your approach to the topic or influence your work.
- 3) a short biography

We would then like to receive fuller abstracts (c. 350- 500 words) by **15 December** to enable us to do some first stage planning and identify one very short piece of shared reading. The aim of the latter task is to cohere some of our thinking as a group prior to the writing stage without (we hope) overloading you with homework.

As you will already be aware from the SAA communication, as seminar conveners we are required to confirm your participation and submission of a completed paper by **15 February 2016** at the very latest, so the deadline for completed papers to reach us (of no more than 12 pages in length double spaced please as a hard rule) is **1 February 2016**. This will allow time for all papers to be read and for the final stage of work before we meet in New Orleans.

These seminars often run best when the conversation is open and fluid, yet it's also important to make sure that as many papers as possible are discussed. To that end we plan to make up four or five smaller groups based on topics and themes. As a formal prompt for our discussion, we will then ask each participant to read the other papers in that group with particular care and to write brief responses to two of them (no more than a page). We will also ask you to submit two questions for the small group and one for the seminar group as a whole. These questions should reflect on the papers collectively and return to the key issues of the seminar.

We will send out more detailed reminders and instructions nearer the time, but this is just to allow you to put the necessary prompts and alerts in your diaries and to plan ahead as necessary.

Dear all,

We are excited to be working with you on this and look forward very much to hearing from you before the **31 October** with your 'expression of interest' sentences. If any of you would prefer we used a different email to that provided by SAA to communicate with you please let us know at the same time as you send the sentences, texts and biogs through, as that will help us to confirm mailing lists with the seminar groups.

We are grateful to have some great help on offer from seminar members Philip Schwyzer, Eleanor Rycroft and Bernhard Klein in terms of facilitating discussions at SAA itself and, nearer the event, when the physical timetabling of our seminars is clearer, we will work with you to make the most of this wonderful opportunity to have so many great minds thinking on this matter. We also hope to organize a social gathering after the seminar where we can continue the conversation informally.

Please do not hesitate to contact Laurence or myself if you have further questions at this or any stage.

With very best wishes,

Jemima Matthews and Laurence Publicover

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Lecturer in English and Director of Exams
University of Bristol

Full Description of the seminar:

Commenting on the periodic flooding of New Orleans, Toni Morrison wrote: ‘in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be’. We wish to take Morrison’s striking assertion as a starting point for considering the connections between space, memory, and transformation in early modern writing and performance. This seminar explores how spaces, both terrestrial and maritime, were remembered, reworked, and reimagined on and off the stage or page. Building both on the spatial turn in early modern studies and on recent work on cognition and performance, our seminar will explore how early modern built and natural environments were reworked and reimagined not only through natural disaster, but also through ceremonial, theatrical, and literary practices that created layered, textual, and memorialized places. We are interested in how authors responded to ruins and to landscapes with particular historical resonances, and also how traces of medieval theatrical and literary places and practices existed beneath early modern performances and texts. We hope that contributors will examine the ways in which early modern culture positioned itself in relation to the past, often in spatially-specific ways, but also how early modern individuals ‘placed’ themselves both temporally and geographically. We will explore how memories and places were adapted, improved or transposed and how inhabitants, writers and performers transformed past places and practices through their labor. How might personal or collective memories alter spaces? How might built or natural spaces transform memories?

We welcome papers examining particular texts, canonical and non-canonical, and/or specific built or natural spaces (from playhouses to forests, from country estates to urban dwellings, from sacred sites and commemoratives spaces to maritime communities). We are equally keen for papers to explore interdisciplinary engagements with scholarship from adjacent fields, including geography, history, art history, archaeology, anthropology, and cognitive science. Subjects of inquiry might include, but are not restricted to, performance environments and temporally-specific performance styles and skills; site specific performance; memory and cognition; sensory geographies; embodiment; material histories; literature and ruin/decay; oceanic or new blue studies, in particular the sea as a transformative space; urban studies; regional and provincial literatures.

Key dates :

31st October:

Participants circulate:

- 1) statement of area of interest/angle on the theme
- 2) short bibliography (3-5 items)
- 3) short biography (2-3 sentences)

15th December:

Participants: circulate abstracts

1st February:

Participants: circulate papers (12 pages max. double spaced)

7th March:

Participants: circulation of responses, plus two questions for their sub-group and one for the seminar.

Second email (9 November)

Dear all,

Thank you for sending through your first set of materials for the seminar. There are a fascinating selection of topics emerging with some interesting crosscurrents between certain papers already.

Please find attached a pdf document in which we have collated the information we have received thus far. Here you will find a brief outline of each topic and the bibliographic and biographic information sent in by each participant.

We are also including a quick reminder here of the next stages in the seminar:

We would like to receive fuller abstracts (c. 350- 500 words) by 15 December to enable us to do some first stage planning and identify one very short piece of shared reading. The aim of the latter task is to cohere some of our thinking as a group prior to the writing stage without (we hope) overloading you with homework.

As you will already be aware from the SAA communication, as seminar conveners we are required to confirm your participation and submission of a completed paper by 15 February 2016 at the very latest, so the deadline for completed papers to reach us (of no more than 12 pages in length double spaced please as a hard rule) is 1 February 2016. This will allow time for all papers to be read and for the final stage of work before we meet in New Orleans.

These seminars often run best when the conversation is open and fluid, yet it's also important to make sure that as many papers as possible are discussed. To that end we plan to make up four or five smaller groups based on topics and themes. As a formal prompt for our discussion, we will then ask each participant to read the other papers in that group with particular care and to write brief responses to two of them (no more than a page). We will also ask you to submit two questions for the small group and one for the seminar group as a whole. These questions should reflect on the papers collectively and return to the key issues of the seminar. Please circulate these responses and questions by 7th March.

We are looking forward to what promises to be a thought provoking and productive set of discussions on the seminar's theme.

Best wishes,

Jemima and Laurence

Third Email

Dear all,

As we enter the writing phase we would like to suggest a piece of shared reading for the seminar. We are attaching the shared reading to this email as a pdf.

The set reading is:

Owain Jones and Joanne Garde-Hansen, 'Introduction', in *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*, ed. by Owain Jones and Joanne Garde-Hansen (New York: Palsgrave, 2012), pp. 1-18

This is not a piece on early modern literature, but we feel that it offers a number of helpful points of reference for such an interesting and thought provoking set of proposed papers. It is an introductory chapter which engages with the topics of our seminar -- space, memory and transformation -- while also introducing a number of other terms, topics and issues pertinent to the abstracts which have been submitted. The chapter introduces the work of cultural geographers and situates a number of interdisciplinary studies in relation to memory studies more broadly.

We are asking all participants to read the chapter attached to this email. You should not, however, feel that you need to engage with the set reading in your paper if your research takes you in a different direction. This shared reading is simply designed to serve as one point of reference for the discussions

that will follow. As we suggested in our correspondence, at their best the SAA seminars offer debate and discussion out of which can emerge new research agendas and trajectories.

We are looking forward to circulating all of the abstracts to the group shortly and reading the full papers once these are completed.

This is a quick reminder that the upcoming deadlines in 2016 are:

1st February:

Participants: submit papers (12 pages max. double spaced)

As you will already be aware from the SAA communication, as seminar conveners we are required to confirm your participation and submission of a completed paper by 15 February 2016 at the very latest, so the deadline for completed papers to reach us (of no more than 12 pages in length double spaced please as a hard rule) is 1 February 2016. This will allow time for all papers to be read and for the final stage of work before we meet in New Orleans.

7th March:

Participants: circulation of responses, plus two questions for their sub-group and one for the seminar.

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We must emphasise that the deadline for the submission of papers is fixed and must be met in order to meet the conditions imposed by SAA.

All that remains is to wish you all a wonderful start to 2016.

Best wishes,

Jemima and Laurence

Fourth Email

Dear all,

Firstly, happy new year! We are attaching the full set of abstracts for your SAA seminar. We are looking forward to reading what promises to be a fascinating set of papers once these are complete.

Best wishes,

Jemima

Final Email

Dear Colleagues,

A final message before we meet in New Orleans.

As you know, our seminar meets on Friday 25 March, 3.30-5.30. Laurence and I would also like to invite you to a brief drink at the Sheraton Hotel Bar at (i.e. the Lobby) at 5.30 on Thursday evening. This will give us a chance to get to know one another a little prior to the seminar; we can then go straight from there to the Annual Reception at 6pm.

Laurence and I have greatly enjoyed reading your papers, and would also like to thank you for your careful and generous responses to one another's papers. In the attached document we have listed 1) the questions you have asked the entire seminar; and 2) the questions you have posed within your sub-groups. We hope you'll find the time to look at these before Friday and that they will prompt further connections and questions which will feed into our discussion.

We intend to structure the seminar by moving through the five sub-groups before opening up for a wider discussion that also takes in questions from non-participants. We do of course hope, though, that seminar participants from beyond the individual sub-groups will be involved in discussion throughout: while we were pleased to see how particular questions emerged within individual groups, we were also delighted by the number of connections that were being made across groups, and we very much hope that discussions on Friday will remain inclusive and wide-ranging throughout. In other words, please don't hesitate to get involved at all times!

We hope you're looking forward to the seminar as much as we are, and wish you safe travels. If you have any last-minute questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,
Jemima and Laurence

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