

SAA 2021
SEMINAR 14: ‘FOREIGN’ PLACES IN FAMILIAR SPACES
ABSTRACTS

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Shylock’s House: Configuring Jewish Space on Shakespeare’s Early Modern Stage

Her house, Jessica tells the departing Lancelot, is “hell” (2.3.2), a place of tediousness relieved momentarily by the antics of Shylock’s “merry devil” (2.3.2). Yet Shylock’s house is more than a place of boredom or even the quasi-prison Jessica yearns to be free from; it also functions as both a place of refuge and confinement for Shylock within a frequently hostile, Christian Venice, one that both reviles and needs the Jew that resides within its borders.

What constitutes Jewish space on Shakespeare’s early modern stage? How do we understand Shakespeare’s representation of such space in an England that had long banished Jews? Within the context of *The Merchant of Venice*, how do we reconcile the foreign with the familiar—the Jew with the Christian in a Venice clearly at home with the latter? My paper examines Shylock’s house as a configuration of Jewish space on Shakespeare’s early modern stage. The early modern stage comes to represent a place, a house in a Venice (itself a represented space) as the embodiment of the Jew himself—as a space and a place, using the language of Frank Kermode, where a reviled but necessary Jewish presence may both be contained and accommodated within the Christian space that constitutes Shakespeare’s Venice. Although not a ghetto per se, Shylock’s house, i.e., the Jewish quarter, creates a crucial separation from the surrounding Christians as well as providing the Jew much needed refuge from those who would spit on him even as they seize upon his wealth. The place thus accommodates Jewish presence within Christian space, separating the foreigner from the resident—the former both reviled and suspicious, but also much needed to benefit the Christian economy.

Justine DeCamillis, *University of Maryland, College Park*

“All that were made for man’s use, flie this desert”: Imagining Foreign Land as a Familiar Place in *The Sea Voyage*

Scholars agree that the nameless island on which the action of *The Sea Voyage* takes place is purposefully ambiguous. Containing two vastly different biomes, it is both a fantasy of European

colonists and their greatest fear. The island is absent of native inhabitants and, as such, serves as the perfect site of the burgeoning trope that conflated women's worth with that of the speculative wealth of the New World: a virgin land. As Gitanjali Shahani points out, the "centric part" of a woman (namely, her vagina) was coined by John Donne and in this comedy demonstrates the linguistic slippage between sexual and economic fetishization. While the location of the island is left to the imagination, the geography is unmistakably that of this "centric part." In a play rife with faux Amazons, carnal desire, and inverted gender roles, I will interrogate why this island takes its shape from female genitalia and how that works to make the familiar space of the vagina a foreign place. To do so, I will consider the constellation of early modern literature and accounts that surround this play that also feature fictional islands in similar anatomical arrangements.

Heather C. Easterling, *Gonzaga University*

"'Here's the rich Peru': Creating the Foreign with the Language of Merchandise"

In Middleton's "The Triumphs of Truth," 'the King of the Moors' supposes out loud to the crowd that the sight of a dark-skinned, foreign figure like himself must be unusual, but by 1613 this was not the case. Beginning in civic pageantry by 1585 and an increasingly 'stock' figure of the public stages in plays like *Tamburlaine*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, the black-skinned 'Moor' or dark-skinned 'Indian' by the 1610's had become a regular and recognizable marker of the foreign and exotic in the midst of early modern London. With Middleton's 'King of Moors,' his featured 'foreignness' crucially is domesticated by his announced conversion to Christian, English ways, not unlike the African king and daughters in Jonson's 1605 *Masque of Blackness*. Both thus present an importantly legible blackness; if they do stage 'foreignness' it is as an easily identifiable, performative and contained space. Another version of this phenomenon can be found in Middleton's 1617 show, "The Triumphs of Honour and Industry," with its pageant 'island' on which 'Indians' are 'set at work,' their very industry an important part of their symbolic legibility. In this show, a figure of 'India' is flanked by figures of 'Industry' and 'Merchandise, a perhaps unremarkable linking of India, the east, and mercantilist ventures and wealth given the predominance of the East India Company in the period. But my interest is in the figure and idea of 'merchandise' presented here, and in the ways 'merchandise' comes to represent an alluring and problematic foreignness in London. Specifically, I trace 'merchandise' from civic pageantry to another discursive venue of city space, popular drama. Here, in Jonson's *The Alchemist*, we find the very English knight, Sir Epicure Mammon, creating a foreign space amid the Blackfriars precisely through the language of exotic eastern goods and services. In the play this works to comic effect, of course, compounding the already-equivocal spaces of the Blackfriars and Lovewit's house and making Mammon the text's most absurd gull. But in the process, Mammon's language of merchandise becomes an essential way that foreignness is staged and not as clearly contained. Detached from such racialized signifiers as 'the King of the Moors,' or 'India,' merchandise itself becomes a significant trope of foreignness in London in a range of texts including *The Alchemist*, and suggests a city potentially ever more full of foreign spaces.

Catherine Elliott Tisdale, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Familiar Foreigners: Intranational Difference and the Country Gull Character in Middleton's Michaelmas Term

What is foreign? What makes the foreigner different from the self? It is easy to forget what narratives of national difference rest upon—the differences between others at a social, local level and how everyday people learned to navigate the intricacies of everyday difference. My paper turns to a city comedy character who helps us understand how foreignness was navigated on a local level, how difference was navigated intra-nationally, and how the early modern theater itself was invested in productively thinking with concepts of foreignness. Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) tackles questions of intranational foreignness by parsing geographic and social difference around a specific character type: the country gull. In *Michaelmas Term*, the country gentleman-turned-gull Master Richard Easy generates productive dialogue around what it means to “belong” in London. Following Easy on his geographic and social foray into London reveals an early modern theatrical interest in defining the self beyond simply defining Englishness. *Michaelmas Term*, and city comedies like it, work to situate the self and to sense, navigate, establish, and break down boundaries around the notion of “me” amongst others.

Honor Jackson, *Université de Neuchâtel*

Compressing foreignness in William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* Parts I and II (1656-1663).

This paper focuses on Parts I and II of William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes*. *The Siege of Rhodes* was a ground-breaking theatrical spectacle. Novel features, such as its experimentation with the conventions of masque and opera, and Davenant's use of actresses, will have seemed foreign - in the sense of strange or unfamiliar - to audiences attending performances, be it at Davenant's home (Rutland House), where it premiered, or in the theatres of Interregnum and Restoration London. The subject matter of *The Siege of Rhodes* will also have seemed foreign to English audiences as the piece centres on the Turkish siege of Rhodes by Solymán the Magnificent. Indeed, it might be argued that Davenant's piece dramatizes the paradox of foreign closeness which came with expanded globalisation. Following Bridget Orr's work on the play's representation of empire, Rachel Willie's work on the ambiguous politics of Davenant's interregnum dramas and particularly the character of Ianthe, and Elizabeth Howe's work on the first English actresses, I intend to analyse the ways in which Davenant's play confronts otherness not only in its representation of foreignness and empire but also in the staging of women. By analysing the detailed stage directions, prefatory material and representations of gender found in both the 1656 edition of Part I and the 1663 edition of Parts I and II, I intend to argue that Davenant

tropes female bodies as both homeland and other, modest and bold, domestic and imperial, hidden and seen. Thus, by condensing the foreign and the domestic into the bodies of female characters Davenant makes bold statements about the ambiguous position of women in late seventeenth century England.

Laurie Johnson, *University of Southern Queensland*

“Com’st thou to beard me in Denmark?”—Professional Playing as Foreignness

There is a curious sense of dislocation in Hamlet’s initial greetings to the players arriving in Elsinore, since he indicates he has seen them elsewhere before but now they have come not just to Elsinore but *to Denmark*. Having been overtaken by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on the road to Elsinore, the players, like Hamlet’s two University friends, must have come from Wittenberg via several German states into Schleswig, south of Denmark. Instead of asking, as Hamlet does, “How chances it they travel?” we might ask how they freely crossed so many borders. There is a clear analogue here to the members of Shakespeare’s own company who had previously, under the licence of the Earl of Leicester, travelled to Germany in 1586 and were gifted to King Frederick and then Prince Christian of Denmark for six months. These same players were also members of the company that had been touring England extensively for nearly thirty years. I think it is a mistake to label the two branches of Leicester’s playing group “domestic” and “foreign,” as some have done, as this distinction can conceal the sense that even within England, provincial touring companies were always treated in each locality as “foreigners or strangers.” This paper will draw on my current study of Leicester’s Men to examine the many lenses of foreignness through which professional players were viewed by local authorities from international diplomatic service, to provincial touring, and even to the occasional performance outside of one’s own parish within and around London, wherein the old intramural-extramural binary evaporates in comparison to the administrative primacy of the parishes and wards.

Robin Kello, *UCLA*

Refugee Shakespeares: Displacement, Hospitality, and *Arden/Everywhere*

In recent decades, directors such as Nawar Bulbul, Jessica Bauman, and Adrian Jackson have turned to Shakespeare to dramatize twenty-first century forced migration. Drawing out patterns of displacement, hospitality, geographic and cultural difference, and the vulnerability of the individual subject to political violence, they have employed Shakespeare’s works so as to engage with an urgent global concern, one which will only become more pressing as changing climatic conditions compel greater migration.

Rather than examine the plays through ideas of the foreign in the early-modern cultural imagination, I approach Shakespeare in this essay through performances that open specific ethical

and political questions of the current moment. Those questions involve civic responsibility, and the performances I analyze might foster a response both within and beyond the space of the theater. I begin by outlining a theoretical framework for interpreting Refugee Shakespeares and addressing questions regarding the relationship of performance to activism and social change. What are the risks and rewards of using Shakespeare to dramatize forced migration? What distinct dramaturgical strategies might directors use to suggest or encourage audience response beyond theatrical entertainment?

I then turn to Jessica Bauman's 2017 *Arden/Everywhere*, a production of *As You Like It* based in part on her time offering workshops in the UNHCR refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya. Bauman reimagines Arden as a refugee camp, thus challenging the tradition that the play must work in the mode of the comic-pastoral, with clowns, shepherds, and rustic humor. By doing so, she changes the stakes of the play as it is usually performed, asking audiences to take seriously both its language of displacement and hunger and the experiences of modern refugees. Relying on video recording, interviews with the director, and audience reception based on reports in the press, I examine *Arden/Everywhere* as a performance case study and conclude by putting it in conversation with more radically experimental productions of Refugee Shakespeare.

Alexander Lowe McAdams, Rice University

Shakespeare's Translation of Empire: Ecology, Nostalgia, and Place in *Cymbeline*

How does Shakespeare translate, or interpret, empire? Is empire a place, or a time, or a complex network of both? In *Cymbeline* 3.1, the treacherous Queen describes the isolationist geography of Britain in the same breath that she understands its resistance and eventual submission to imperial conquest. Just as Neptune's "roaring waters" threaten to "suck up" the "enemies' boats," the harsh landscape renders even the great Julius Caesar vulnerable to his "kind of conquest" (3.1.21-25). This brief simile reifies the nexus between geographical landscape and occupied province, in turn emphasizing humans' relationship to the natural environment and anxieties over mismanagement of its resources.

Two scenes later, at the play's dramatic fulcrum, rhetoric becomes reality when audiences are dizzily plopped into a prehistoric Wales outpost, Milford Haven. The play's imperial action occurs in this foreign landscape amid densely packed forest abundant in natural resources. In this peculiar setting, pre-Roman Wales functions as a site of reflective nostalgia, a site of both real, geographical place and imagined, ideological mythology. Wales is transformed from a familiar early modern destination into a foreign prehistoric locale. This paper, therefore, reads *Cymbeline*'s Wales as both mythological mindset and pre-agricultural playground, both of which are ripe for imperial exploitation and profit. This essay will contextualize this British pre-history amid new inquiries in nostalgia studies and ecocriticism. In turn this reading seeks to provide new ways to translate, to interpret, geographical place alongside the fragmented interstices of empire, ecology, and national identity.

Marianne Montgomery, *East Carolina University*

Fat Falstaffs and Sullied Flesh in Dryden's Amboyna

Taking Shakespeare as its “familiar space,” this paper explores John Dryden’s Restoration tragedy *Amboyna* (1673), based on pamphlet accounts of the execution of East India Company factors at Amboyna (an island in present-day Indonesia) in 1623. In this essay, I build on Ayanna Thompson’s analysis of the play’s racialized discourses by considering its allusions to Shakespeare in climactic torture scene, which, I argue, help to complicate the position of English spectators as they gaze upon the material bodies of the tortured. The torture scene marks the culmination of two related bodily discourses in the play that racialize the Dutch, one focused on fatness and one focused on blackness. In its attention to theatricality and spectacle, Dryden’s play breaks down the very distinction between English and Dutch that it labors to construct. Condemning Dutch appetites, for food and for commercial dominance, as excessive, the play also feeds English appetites for theatrical excess. Shakespeare, a touchstone of the familiar space of the English theater, is made to participate in *Amboyna*’s ambivalent exploration of spectacular violence in a foreign place. Allusions to Shakespeare point to the material and racial instability of English bodies subjected to torture.

Cecilia Morales, *University of Michigan*

Mother Egypt: Ambivalent Perspectives of the Nile River in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

This paper reads Shakespeare’s *Cleopatra* through her intersecting identities as a mother and an Egyptian in order to make sense of scholars’ ambivalent reactions to the play. Scholars who emphasize the sense of triumph encoded in Cleopatra’s suicide-by-asp-suckling are opposed to scholars such as Ania Loomba, Joyce MacDonald, and Arthur Little, who note the play’s implication in racialized discourses of blackness and England’s developing imperialist and nationalist identities. This paper shows that what appears to be a *tension* between scholarship on the play is actually a point of *agreement*. Focusing on Cleopatra’s association with the Nile River, I argue that the play offers early modern English audiences a view of Cleopatra that is at once alienating and familiar, foreign and domestic. The Nile, portrayed as both dangerously excessive and reliably fertile, represents England’s opposing views of both Egypt and maternity. However, rather than understanding Shakespeare’s ambivalent representation of Cleopatra and the Nile as antithetical to England’s national and imperialist desires, I reconcile Cleopatra’s apparent triumph with England’s larger colonialist project. Early modern England demonized contemporary Egypt by associating the country with both the Islamic influence of the Ottoman Empire and the racialized presence of Romani, or “Gypsy,” people in England. At the same time, English writers praised ancient Egypt, attempting to fold Egypt into its national inheritance. Insofar as Shakespeare

claims Cleopatra as an *English* mother, he continues this pattern of appropriating ancient Egypt while obfuscating England's various racialized imaginings of the country.

John Mucciolo, *Chatham, NJ*

How to Treat a Stranger: Traces of Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The warrant for this intertextual examination is *The Tempest*'s well documented affiliation with the first half of the *Aeneid* (Nosworthy, Kott, Hamilton, Pitcher, Martindale, Burrow, etc.), and, to my mind, its (recognized, though less accepted) link to the *Odyssey* (Chapman's); but, mainly, while these studies affirm many connections between *The Tempest* and the *Aeneid*, they seem more interested in making comparisons than determining to what ends these similarities aim. For the purposes of this seminar, I shall focus on how strangers (*hospes*) are welcomed to a foreign land (*xenia/hospitium/welcome*): Ulysses at Phaeacia with Nausicaa; Aeneas at Carthage with Dido; Ferdinand on the island with Miranda (1.2, 3.1, 4.1, and 5)—but, crucially, how their resemblances might signify in each.

Emily L. Sharrett, *Loyola University Chicago*

“Nonhumanity and Foreignness: Political Ecology in Shakespeare's Roman Plays”

This paper is part of a larger project in which I analyze Shakespeare's works that represent a historical and mythical ancient Rome. My project addresses posthumanist and ecofeminist theories (in a feminist new materialist vein) while illuminating how the category of the human—whether its metaphysical status, purview, or validity—is at the center of early modern understandings of classical moral and political philosophies. In doing so, my study redresses a gap in the critical reception of Shakespeare's Roman texts by challenging existing cross-historical, cross-cultural studies that (a) consider the human a stable construct and (b) overlook the capacity for nonhuman forces to impact humanity's discursive and material practices. I extend ongoing critical debates by demonstrating how the figure of Aristotle's “political animal” exceeds the human in Shakespeare's Roman plays (*Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Cymbeline*) and narrative poetry (*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*). Specifically, I argue that early modern literary representations of human agency in ancient Mediterranean sea- and land-scapes are positioned alongside, and often considered less favorably than, the forces exerted by other creatures, inert matter, or technologies.

Presenting one aspect from my broader project, my seminar essay addresses how and to what end nonhuman bodies inform the narratives of “foreignness” respectively represented in *Titus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In both plays, far-reaching sociopolitical networks are sustained and challenged by humans and their companions, such as stones, sticks, creatures, water, or vegetation.

Here, then, Rome functions for early modern English theatregoers as abstract political arrangement, the contours of which are determined by human and nonhuman intervention. I build on prior critical studies of Rome represented in period literature, and I identify how the city serves as both ideal and real locale in the early modern imagination. While much scholarship examines Rome as rhetorical symbol, few studies identify and evaluate the cognitive effects for the early modern English audiences who recognized the staged Rome as material city full of vibrant matter, to borrow Jane Bennett's term. I bring Bennett's insights to bear on early modern literary studies, exploring the vital material in the forum and streets, fields and forests, of Shakespeare's Roman plays.

Jennifer Linhart Wood, *Folger Shakespeare Library*

Visiting Pentapolis

More than any other Shakespeare play, *Pericles* is generically desperate to be a travel narrative. The eponymous hero travels widely around the Mediterranean, visiting Antioch, Tarsus, Tyre, Pentapolis, Myteline, and finally, Ephesus. These Levantine locations were uncanny—both familiar and foreign at once—to a Renaissance audience: the place-names would have been recognizable to those who had studied classical texts, and would have been more widely known through scriptural references heard at church. While these locations might have sounded familiar to the audience, translating these various locales into the multi-sensory realm of the theater employed foreign elements to suggest cultural differences. Not only does Pericles spend the majority of the play away from home—only two brief scenes depict him in his native Tyre—but Pericles is also constantly on the move, spending a fair amount of time aboard ship and weathering several tempestuous storms. While the argument has been made that Shakespeare's supposedly "bare" stage meant that there is little differentiation amongst the places to which Pericles ventures, this interpretation neglects to acknowledge the various ways that othernesses were dramatized on the Renaissance stage. This paper will use textual evidence and examples from the theatrical and travel archives to discuss how cultural difference was performed at various ports-of-call throughout *Pericles*: through music, costumes, possible tinting of actors' skin, and meta-textual references to foreign places and stories. Importantly, Pericles, himself from modern-day Lebanon, marries a North African woman—a fact that is utterly ignored in Shakespeare criticism. How might this color-blind-spot say more about modern critics' inclinations than about Shakespeare's presumed "non-ethnic" or "bare" stage? What, then, can this teach us about the diversity of places in this play that travels and uses the space of the stage to make the foreign familiar, and that also takes playgoers on journeys around the globe?