SAA 2021
English Drama and the Early Modern Atlantic

Seminar Leader: Andrew Bozio, Skidmore College

"Liquid Borders and Atlantic Insularity in *The Sea Voyage*"
Andrew S. Brown, Dalhousie University

The prefatory material to John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Sea Voyage* (1622), which first appeared in print in the second Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1679, sets the play's "Scene" in text nearly as large as that of its title: "First at Sea, then in the desert Islands."[1] The compilers' confident use of the plural "Islands" here belies a topographical ambiguity that permeates the world of the play. The mass on which characters find themselves stranded is variously referred to as a single, bounded island or as part of a murky archipelagic assemblage. This study examines how the seeming indeterminacy of *The Sea Voyage*'s landscape participates in broader early modern shifts in the concept of insularity: the state of being like an island. With its repeated invocation of water as both a fixed boundary and a fluid medium, I argue, the play should be read alongside other contemporary texts that took Atlantic islands—a term applied in this period to lands circumscribed by the sea as well as to parts of the American continent being probed for settler colonization—as a tool for thinking through how the natural environment could shape and resist the legal, economic, and political jurisdictions mapped onto it.

"Replacing the unconquerable space: Crusading in early modern drama"
Régis Augustus Bars Closel, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Brazil

At every new entrance, drama may take us to different times and places. Places and histories are refashioned by the circumstances drawn by every play. Actors give voice and body to fictional narratives that take us to very specific moments. By the use of words, our imaginary map adjusts to the supposed fixity of a place, sometimes depicting its real counterpart. By giving a name to a location or to a scenario, a connection between the real and the fictional world is established. Choices of names are hardly unbiased as spaces are never a neutral site. Real cities carry emotions, experiences, and memories that certainly echo in the stories that take place on it. The impossibility of recovering the specific city of Jerusalem in the sixteenth-century makes the shared stories by the West and East a point of particular interest for the Post-Reformation period. This city and all its meanings represent a space that the crusades were unsuccessful in keeping. By the time of the Tudors, the frontiers were longer disputable. A long-standing desire, however, has established its cultural impact on the imagination. Being now unachievable, it metamorphosed into other narratives, where its societal values were explored individually rather than collectively. Jerusalem and crusading are often rendered like a palimpsest of different individual moments of experience in plays such as in the two plays about King John, *Pericles*, and *Soliman and Perseda*. In these early modern plays, crusading becomes a spiritual vehicle for different kinds of overcoming adversities, but it never loses its desire to conquest, to control, and to rule a precious space, the other, or oneself.

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[1] John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, "The Sea Voyage. A Comedy," *Fifty comedies and tragedies written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* (London: 1679), 339.

"Creaturely Governance and New World Amazonian Empires in *The Sea Voyage* (1622)"
John W. Ellis-Etchison, Rice University

Early modern dramatic depictions of New World sovereignties throw into sharp relief both Anglo-European colonial fantasies and anxieties about the project of Atlantic expansion. Take, for instance, the ways John Fletcher and Philip Massinger grapple with notions of sovereignty and foreignness in *The Sea Voyage* (1622), particularly their self-conscious collapsing of New World cultural identities and notions of sovereignty with thinking about exotic, wild, and dangerous forms of nonhuman life in their depiction of an Amazonian empire and its ruler.

To address some of the overlapping fictions surrounding both nonhuman and non-Anglo and European forms of sovereignty in the early modern world, I turn to and build on the discourse of the creaturely. Leveraging the work of thinkers from Laurie Shannon to Julia Reinhard Lupton to Tobias Menely, as well as Franz Rosenzweig, Carl Schmitt, and Walter Benjamin, I analyze a few of the complex and bewildering ways early modern thinkers recognized the generalized Otherness as well as the charismatic force and sovereignty embodied by foreign rulers who are, at once, like and unlike God, creator and created, powerful and powerless.

Fletcher and Massinger rely on uncanny yet exoticized notions of bloodthirstiness and cruelty to frame their portrayal of Rosellia, the governess of the Amazons. They introduce her as a stoic ruler who defies "[t]he sovereignty / [p]roud and imperious men usurp upon us" (2.2.189-90). However, when Rosellia mistakes the play's piratical protagonists for old foes, she reveals her true status as a Portuguese noblewoman, even as she and her band become "furies / In their full Trym of cruelty" (5.4.6-7). At once, Fletcher and Massinger reveal, through Rosellia, early modern English anxieties about colonizing New World spaces—both about the difficulties of securing colonial power and the fear of being compromised by such spaces. For Fletcher and Massinger, these shifting and unstable notions of foreignness and Otherness intersect with creaturely depictions of sovereign power and authority, to both hold a mirror up to and away from English colonial endeavors.

"*Coriolanus* and Incorporation: The Politics of Anglo-Scottish Citizenship"
Alex Garganigo, Austin College

I will argue that the controversy over the proposed Union of England and Scotland in James I's early years prompted *Coriolanus*'s rethinking of citizenship in the context of republicanism and empire. In his person James had unified the crowns of two separate kingdoms, but he pushed unsuccessfully for further unification or "incorporation" of laws, government, and culture in a new "Great Britain"—a polity that would not really emerge until 1707, decades after Anglo-Scottish tensions had helped trigger civil war in the 1640s. A byproduct of the first Union proposal was the first sustained national discussion of citizenship in either country (1603-1608). Like the proponents of Union who likened the embryonic Great Britain to the Roman Empire—employing Menenius Agrippa's body politic analogy and casting neighboring tribes like the Volsces as counterparts of Scotland—Shakespeare returned to early Rome as a site for gaming out the possibilities of English expansion within the British Isles and across the Atlantic. Would England and Scotland be changed by that expansion, becoming a republic with citizens, rather than kingdoms with subjects? What would British citizenship look like, both at home in the British Isles and in trans-Atlantic colonies like Virginia? While *Coriolanus* contrasts both the extent and content of Greek and Roman citizenship, I will focus on the play's treatment of the extent of Roman Republican citizenship in the context of the Union Controversy.

"*Pericles*, dramatic form, and the "tragical historie of the man eating of his dead wife in Virginia"
Gavin Hollis, Hunter College CUNY

In 1610, Virginia Governor Thomas Gates dismissed the rumours that settlers had turned to cannibalism as lies that had been spread by disaffected returnees from the nascent colony. "These are they" he wrote, "that roared out the tragicall historie of the man eating of his dead wife in Virginia," a story which Gates reveals had nothing to do with starvation and everything to do with a murderous spouse. Moreover, he argued, their "report" was "varying into diversitie of false colours, which hold no likenesse and proportion." Gates's rebuttal is one of many examples of Virginia Company antitheatricalism, in which opposition to settlement was associated with the ungodly, socially malignant playhouse. What interests me here is the specificity of Gates's framing: the rumours are understood in terms not of a generalized theatre but a specific theatrical genre; they are bequeathed a play-like title, such that it is almost as if Gates is evoking a real play; in describing the rumours as holding no proportion, Gates's complaint seems to echo Sir Philip Sidney's dismissal of "our tragedies and comedies" on the grounds that they observe "rules neither of honest civility nor of skillful poetry." Gates's attempt to dismiss the rumours as dramatic license failed, of course. Rumours of a cannibal-riven Virginia persisted, including on the stage (for example, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Massinger's *The Sea Voyage*), and continue to persist, now supported somewhat by archaeological findings. Gates's theatrical turn also indicates that the rumours had themselves already taken on theatrical life of their own—even if Gates is the one to name the rumours as "the tragicall historie," they are recognizable as "tragicall historie" because they had already coalesced into that form. This paper explores the genealogy of the theatrical turn in colonial discourse, encapsulated by Gates, particularly as it relates to the connections between white settler colonialism and cannibalism. It focuses on the Tarsus scenes in Shakespeare and Wilkins's *Pericles*, where "So sharp are hunger's teeth that man and wife / Draw lots who first shall die to lengthen life" (1.4.45-6), and argues that they function as theatrical antecedents to "the tragicall historie." Borrowing from Caroline Levine's claim that form is "portable" and her encouragement to literary critics to "ask what potentialities lie latent—though not always obvious—in aesthetic and social arrangements," the paper explores the ways in which dramatic form of the Tarsus scenes arrange and shape subsequent aesthetic and social discourse in Virginia. Gates and his fellow colonial advocates were forced to respond not only to the rumours themselves but the dramatic form in which they were enframed—a form that already gave life to the rumours long before the events themselves were alleged to have transpired.

"Reading the Early Modern African: The Illocution of Race in Early Modern Travel Narratives"
Danielle Lee, SUNY Old Westbury

Early modern travel narratives were used as guides to inform decisions about maritime exploration and expansion. With cartographic and maritime technological advances making oceanic travel a reality, word about new commodities and resources abroad led to efforts to navigate oceanic routes to Africa, India, Asia, and the New World. Merchants, mariners, explorers, and others interested in lucrative foreign commodities made the voyages outside of Europe encouraged by reports from other travelers. Texts like Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* and Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation (1551-1555),* contain reports about Africa that are presented as informative narratives about the land and its people, with specific

focus on the otherness of the African body and culture. All of which undergirded the need for European exploration of this previously unchartered territory. As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen" (88). When thinking about pre-colonial discourses of power and the shaping of African historiography, early modern travel narratives provide insight into how imperial discourses inform racial and cultural constructs, however unrealistic. Culture is a fluid term; it is an amalgamation of experiences resulting from the social interaction of ethnic, religious, and racial contact zones. Textually, African culture, in every way, is diametrically opposite of Europe. The mystique of difference as presented in these narratives nurtured a breeding ground for otherness, making Africa and its people strange. Travel literature provided a discourse for an ideology that solidified both European superiority and native inferiority. Further, as Douglas Ivison writes, "The genre of travel writing…was the cultural by-product of imperialism, often written by those actively involved in the expansion or maintenance of empire (200). Expansionist ideals surrounding the spread of Christianity underscores the sociocultural dynamics of discovery missions. The construction of Africa as continent static in its economic, political, social, and religious development also meant that it had no history or cultural heritage to claim. This construction served as justification to visit Africa and mine its resources. Jonathan Sell explains:

> The textual transcription of new worlds pushes the problem of
> credible representation to the limits, and yet an age that witnessed
> unprecedented levels of geographical discovery and systematic
> voyaging to parts the globe that were either entirely new… all of
> which demanded some sort of written record. (Sell 2)

I am interested in the way expansionist discourse undermined Africa's multiculturalism and textually created culturally homogenized and misrepresentative tropes of African inferiority that continues to find its place in modern conversations about race and racial construction. Hence, my argument is that the writer, the text, *and* its readership all undergo a rendering that co-constructs themselves and the other.

"Roaring Girls and Infamous Women: Gender, Commerce, and Mobility in London and the 'New World'"
Sarah O'Malley, Mahidol University

In this paper I argue that commercial discourses emerging from the proto-capitalist economies of early modern London and its North American colonies informed the way gender identities were articulated in relation to the policing of mobility. Through an analysis of George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (c.1605), and Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (c.1610) I argue that these early seventeenth-century city comedies interrogated and contributed to the narrative strategies connecting mobility and commerce with normative and transgressive gender identities, specifically women's identities. The shipping of women to Virginia formed part of the 'economic venture' at 'the center of England's colonial enterprise' and drew on existing interactions between commercial discourse and the figuration of women as normative (and therefore desirable) or transgressive (and therefore undesirable) marital prospects.[2] I argue that the shipping of women to Virginia led to an increased anxiety over women's

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[2] Joseph Sigalas, 'Sailing Against the Tide: Resistance to Pre-Colonial Constructs and Euphoria in *Eastward Ho!*', in *Renaissance Papers 1994*, ed. by Barbara J. Baines and George Walton Williams (The Southeastern Renaissance Conference: 1995), pp. 85-94 (p. 90).

mobility outside the home and to colonial context being utilized to heighten pamphlet and dramatic representations of transgressive female mobility in England. Building on this I examine women's position in the commercially loaded marital 'market' of early modern England and argue that the language of commerce and colonial voyaging is used in representations of marital, sexual, and romantic pursuit in *The Roaring Girl* and *Eastward Ho* to construct normative and transgressive gender identities and mobilities in both plays.

"Translating the Moor in the New World"
Joseph M. Ortiz, University of Texas at El Paso

Beginning in the sixteenth century, Spanish colonialists in the New World used the figure of the Moor to make indigenous Americans more legible in political and racial terms. This "translation" of the Moor ranged from the rhetorical (references to Native Americans as *moros*) to the theatrical (performances of *Moros y Cristianos* dramas in the New World) to the anthropological (theories of ancient lineages). Such representations of Native Americans was available to English speakers at least as early as 1625, when Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* was translated into English by Samuel Purchas. Nonetheless, while the figure of the Moor appears regularly in early modern English drama, Native American characters do not. This paper explores the possibility that Native American representation enters early modern English drama obliquely, through the figure of the Moor. In staging the moor, early modern English dramatists were appropriating a Spanish stereotype that had already been conditioned by contact with the New World. As a test case, I consider Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion, or The Lascivious Queen*, a play that was first performed in 1600 but was not published until 1657—a year before William D'Avenant's *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* and other New World works that bolstered England's imperial ambitions. The affinities between Dekker's Moor and the later works suggest that, when English dramatists *did* finally bring Native American characters on stage, they already had a longstanding rhetorical and theatrical tradition to draw from.

"Dramatic Exploit(ation), Persistence, and Anticipation in Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoueries of the English Nation*"
Courtney Naum Scuro, University of California, Riverside

This essay explores "English Drama" in fresh contexts by surfacing the theatrical and performative dynamics that animate Richard Hakluyt's attempt to redefine English national interests and identities in his popular collection of travel narratives,*The Principall Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoueries of the English Nation*. By examining Hakluyt's prefaces and his printed accounts from Walter Ralegh and John Hawkins, I demonstrate how *Principall Navigations* can be usefully approached as a record of performances. Doing so uncovers how elements of dramatic occasion like material immediacy, dynamic spatial identity, and ensemble significantly contribute to the play of social meanings that Hakluyt stages for his readers--especially his text's attempts to anticipate the flourish of English ideas, identities, and values through the altern spaces and times *still* to come with global exploration. Hakluyt endeavors to push back against a sense of time's increasingly diachronic and mercurial capacities by constructing imaginative worlds of persistent *mattering* (material and moral). The future-oriented, evolving imaginaries of persistence that we find in Hakluyt and other contemporary texts renegotiate incumbent temporal orientations in order to make claims *now* about what will happen *next*. By exploring these ideas on time with an attentiveness to their material and

performative dynamics, this essay begins to expand our critical understanding of how networks of proto-imperialistic discursive investment late in Elizabeth's reign create a foundation to support those programs of political harm and subjugation that are soon to come under England's expanding colonial and trade agendas.

"*The Travels of the Three English Brothers* and *The Tempest*: Mapping Fantasies of New World Subjection onto the Islamic World"
Joel Elliot Slotkin, Towson University

Early modern English writers trying to make sense of encounters with unfamiliar cultures frequently resorted to, in the words of Barbara Fuchs, "reading a newly discovered culture as another manifestation of one already othered." In this model, we would expect the relatively long history of contact between western Europe and the Muslim cultures of north Africa and the Near East to provide paradigms by which English writers could understand the more recently encountered cultures of the Americas. At times, however, this appropriation appears to work in the opposite direction as well. How and why might American exploration provide imaginative resources for dealing with the Muslim world, which despite its foreignness and the physical and ideological threats it posed to Christian Europe should still have been significantly more familiar than the New World? My paper will examine instances of this counter-intuitive process: texts that use models of native American encounters to understand interactions with Muslim cultures closer to home, specifically *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). Early modern England was increasingly engaged in a complex web of interactions with both regions that included various forms of captivity, slavery, and subjection. Rather than reflexively seeing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, it appears that at least some English writers were searching for a novel and more optimistic paradigm for understanding their troubled relationship with the Muslim world. The ideas developed in Thomas Hariot's account of the New World, such as the credulity of the native Americans and the ease with which they could be pressed into servitude, may have seemed like particularly attractive fantasies in the face of powerful Muslim empires that enslaved English citizens.