

## Seminar 09: Early Modern Architectural Spaces: Fromhovels to Palaces Abstracts

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### **“to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap”: Fairies and Early Modern English Chimneys**

In the final scene of Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597), local townspeople trick the libidinous knight Falstaff by disguising themselves as fairies and pinching him for his lechery. Mistress Quickly’s suggestion that a fairy named Cricket should “leap” over Windsor chimneys almost directly echoes the anonymous play, *The Maid’s Metamorphosis* (1600), when a fairy named Cricket likewise recites a rhyme about chimneys: “When a dew-drop falleth down, / And doth light upon my crown. / Then I shake my head and skip.” *The Maid’s Metamorphosis* makes explicit the connection between the fairy character named Cricket and the architectural function of a chimney cricket—the triangular structure on the upper back side of a chimney that sheds water, preventing moisture penetration into the home. The link in these two plays between fairies and the architectural structure of early modern English homes provides key insights into what Bourdieu called “habitus”—the dense layer of accepted, everyday meanings and actions that define that define who we are, although we rarely articulate them. Particularly as the function and style of Early modern English houses began to change toward the turn of the seventeenth century, the construction of chimneys represented not only the increasing affluence of its population, but also a fundamental change in lifestyle effecting everything from meal preparation, to air quality, to movement through and into the home. That fairies were associated with the chimney and other threshold spaces suggests the essential function folklore in the material practices of early modern English life and identity.

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### **Shakespeare’s Windows: The Spatial Dramaturgy of Contested Authority**

In his landmark study of early modern stage space, Robert Weimann draws the distinction between the *platea*, the “platform like acting area” that produces unlocalized space, and the *locus*, “a domus, sedes, or throne” often positioned against the tiring house and established through “representational closure” (409). Erika Lin has suggested that these spatial labels be recalibrated to respond solely to a character’s degree of theatrical awareness. Like Lin, Jeremy Lopez has argued that the upstage/downstage approach is “somewhat too simple” (Lopez 72) for

scenes that are dramaturgically multi-focal in nature. However, domestic window scenes are multi-focal while still defined by their explicit treatment of physical distances; these two modes of inquiry are not mutually exclusive. Staging a window scene fundamentally requires a spatial relationship produced through the intersection of *locus* and *platea*; when staging window scenes, the tiring house façade must open itself to the platform stage below.

In this essay, I consider the dramaturgy of two Shakespearean window scenes alongside developments in early modern vernacular architecture that saw a shift from interior-facing courtyards to street-facing façades. Most scholars who have considered the dramatization of early modern windows have referred to them as boundaries. However, thinking of the window as a boundary implies oppositional spaces. Onstage, such boundaries were decidedly flexible. Rather than a boundary, then, the early modern stage window is better defined as an intersection, a place where two value systems meet, overlap, and inform one another. If we see *locus* and *platea* as “mutually informing constructions” (Johnson 165), this intersection is what allows the stage to use dramaturgy to negotiate the limits of domestic space.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the façade begins the play as a contested site of authority (“the weakest goes to the wall”) so by the time we reach the “balcony scene,” the sense of *locus* and *platea*, house and street, converges in violence. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the same façade is asked to represent two very different houses, Shylock’s house in the Venetian Jewish ghetto and Portia’s house in the fictional bucolic Belmont. Both houses represent nontraditional forms of authority, a fact that allows Jessica to escape through her window to the street below. While many early modern plays staged domestic windows, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* do so in ways that consciously infuse a dramaturgical understanding of the *platea* into the window, a site otherwise situated in the tiring house façade, a bastion of *locus*-oriented authority and control. In offering a challenge to traditional dramaturgy, these plays critique the structures of authority that the façade traditionally represents.

#### Works Cited

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#### **The key that opes my outward gate: A Woman Killed with Kindness, Othello and the presentation of ocular proof on the early modern English stage**

In a 1983 essay, Peter Rudnytsky made a persuasive argument that Heywood’s “Woman Killed with Kindness should be considered a probable source as well as an analogue for Othello” (124). In my seminar paper, I will attempt to develop Rudnytsky’s argument in order to gain fresh insight about the staging strategies likely

mobilized by Shakespeare and his contemporaries in performances of *Othello* and other plays featuring opportunities for simulated sex on stage. Rudnytsky identifies Shakespeare's central debt to Heywood as the importation of the demand for "ocular proof" and the complex plot machinations that then follow. Rudnytsky dwells on the fact that the two plays form a kind of chiasmus in their relations in that Othello acts on the illusion of the ocular proof that Heywood's hero Frankford actually witnesses. Yet critics remain uncertain how the Heywood scene in which Frankford catches Wendoll with his wife Anne *in flagrante* was actually staged. R. W. Van Fossen suggests in his 1961 Revels edition that "a movable structure with entrances on the sides as well as in front" would have been the logical set used (71 n. 13). I suggest that Heywood's play logically used that set to incorporate a dumb show revelation allowing the audience to watch through the fourth wall with Frankford while he discovers his wife in the act of adultery. This staging is then alluded to by Iago in his dramatization of Cassio's masturbational appropriation of his body (in 4.1). The larger issue is the utilization of the playhouse to reproduce the emergent spaces of early modern subjectivity via stagings that conflate sexual voyeurism with the physical trespass of private zones for living. The dramatic draw of transgressional, racialized erotic subject content develops in tandem with the sacralized adoption of domestic private dwellings. This insight provides the intellectual scaffolding needed to mobilize readings of *Othello* that are more responsive to our own post-BLM moment.

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### **Scamozzi's theater in Sabbioneta**

I plan to examine an early modern architectural space in the Italian city of Sabbioneta, built by Vespasiano Gonzaga. The duke sought to create the sixteenth-century equivalent of an ancient Roman urban settlement. Because he had deep pockets and an indomitable will, he was able to construct a small city near Mantua. By emulating Roman models of architecture, sculpture, and painting, Vespasiano hoped to achieve a consistency of design not seen for a thousand years. He knew that the ancient Romans built theaters virtually everywhere they went (including colonial London), and he knew that his project would be incomplete without a theater. So he hired Vincenzo Scamozzi, who had finished Palladio's theater in Vicenza, to design a new theater, which is substantially intact. I think that Shakespeareans will find this theater fascinating.

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### **The Architecture of Memory: Chiastic Space in *Hamlet's* Mousetrap**

The English Renaissance public theatre occupies a paradoxical position between inner and outer space. Like any performance site, the Renaissance stage is meant to evoke places not present—the stage platform, a great hall, the side entrances, hallways. The Renaissance stage is also obviously an architectural site in its own right, with characteristics and contours that sometimes track its imagined topographies, and at other times pull against them. However, at special junctures, a third topographic dimension opens up, when the audience is encouraged to imagine the playhouse as a projection of characters' minds—the auditorium, a “seat” of memory, the theatre itself, a “distracted globe.” At such moments, inner and outer space collapse into each other, with playhouse architecture hovering between realities real, imagined, represented, and remembered. This essay considers a particularly rich example of this phenomenon, the Mousetrap from *Hamlet*. Drawing on Robert Fludd's illustrations of memory theatres from *Utriusque Cosmi*, I argue that the relationship between inner and outer space in “The Murder of Gonzago” is mediated by the figure of chiasmus. Although traditionally defined as a rhetorical device in which “the order of words in one of two parallel clauses is inverted in the other” (OED), chiasmus, I shall argue, may also function as a topographic principle, translating relationships between characters, events, and places into stage pictures. The distinctive species of “architecture” that emerges from such chiastic patterning is a kind of conceptual and poetic blueprint for *Hamlet* itself.

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### **Shifting Visions of Church Architecture and the Wife in Early Modern Drama: “I can see a church by daylight”**

When Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* succinctly sums up her pragmatic, unidealistic view of marriage with the proclamation that she “can see a church by daylight,” she alludes to both the church and the role of wife, not as spiritual or romantic ideals, but ironically as jointly defined by a hyperbolically prominent building in the social landscape (a building perhaps associated with illusory deceit by candlelight). Her language appears to endorse a Reformation complaint against the traditional church's use of special effects rather than a reliance upon the Word even as it expresses skepticism that the supposed benefits of the liberating escape from a rigid Catholic hierarchy redounded to women. Questions about the post-Reformation church's role in the (dis)empowering of women and wives resurface when the aborted marriage ceremony between Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado* occurs within a scene set within a staged church. What transpires appears to justify Beatrice's jaded suspicion that the reformed church space retains its support of even abusive masculine authority. Likewise, although the architectural space of the church is left offstage in the account of the fortune-seeking Petruchio's outrageous appearance in the church for his marriage to Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the report that “at the parting [of the

witnesses] all the church did echo” not only with Petruchio’s loud kiss but the shattering of tradition suggested by his patched and tattered clothing and carnivalesque behavior suggests that even as the husband engages in a desacralizing of the church space, he retains his culturally sanctioned authority over the wife. This play’s attention to the husband’s recycled fashion underscores the reformed church’s inherited role as a setting that enforces the continued subjugation of women within a social structure that had been strengthened rather than weakened by a break with traditionally patristic spiritual powers. Such a skeptical view of the Reformation’s impact on women is furthered by the invocation of the cloister in several plays in which the church and marriage are juxtaposed to the structure of the convent or cloister and celibacy; in at least one, a scene is actually held in such a space. Hamlet advises Ophelia to flee to a nunnery; Hermia is warned that her choice is to marry, to die, or to be “in shady cloister mewed”; and Juliet is offered refuge in a “sisterhood of holy nuns.” *Measure for Measure*, which has Isabella encounter Lucio in a staged cloister whose interior space is protected by a locked door, invites the audience to associate the cold austerity of Angelo as reported by Lucio with the austerity of the space and choice associated with the sisterhood, but the play’s strange ending also reminds us that the eradication of the traditional cloister also eliminated one alternative to marriage itself. These romantic comedies and tragedies suggest that the husband’s authority not only survived the stripping of the altars and demolition of the convent and monastic building in the Reformation’s reimagining of church architecture but was strengthened. Ultimately, I argue, Shakespeare’s plays offer a complex view of the impact of the reform of the old structures and affiliated institutions in a post-Reformation culture. The church as an architectural—and staged—space served to contain social change.

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### **“What’s in a name?”: York Place/Whitehall and Historical Memory**

In 1613, Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *King Henry VIII* presents the confusion that renaming well-known architecture can cause. In 1529, almost a century before the play is staged, Henry VIII acquired Cardinal Wolsey’s many properties, including the lavish York Place. Renaming it Whitehall, the king and his new queen, Anne Boleyn, took up residence. The play suggests that the name change remained somewhat unsuccessful at erasing the memory of its previous owner(s) in the intervening years. History’s conflicting processes of remembrance haunt structures indelibly marked by the inhabitants and the events the building hosted. This paper will explore representations of York Place/Whitehall through play, chronicle, and other early modern sources, considering ways that architecture’s legacy resists the erasure of history, and hinges the past to the present.

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## **"Thralldom of the Tower": Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Tower of London.**

By the time Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare were writing *Edward II* and *Richard III* in the early 1590s, the Tower of London was a potent symbol of a national English identity and royal power, precisely as its founder William I intended. The Tower was also a place where royal power and justice were enacted publicly, and spectacularly, particularly by the public executions on its grounds. Several early modern English plays make reference to the Tower, some even setting scenes before or in its prison. Indeed, Kristen Deiter catalogues 24 "Tower plays," arguing generally that the Tower develops "as an icon of opposition to the crown," and the Tower plays dramatize aspects of such opposition.<sup>i</sup> Deiter's scope of work does not include sustained literary analyses of these plays, and the few scholars that do address early modern dramatic engagements with the Tower of London in detail focus primarily on *Richard III* in the context of that play's interventions into relations between past and present, the dead and the living.<sup>ii</sup>

This paper offers a start at a literary analysis of these two dozen plays as a genre by looking at *Richard III* and *Edward II* in conjunction to compare their dramaturgical use of England's fabled tower. For Marlowe's *de casibus* tragedy, the Tower of London is an apt structure with which to coordinate the tragic falls of two key figures, Edward II and Mortimer. *Edward II* deploys the height and visual aspects of the Tower in counterpoint with the depths of the dungeons of several castles poetically to illuminate the play's negotiations of public and private sovereign power. *Richard III* likewise negotiates public and private power as Richard undermines public protocols to send and keep his enemies in the Tower. But Shakespeare is extraordinarily fascinated by the Tower of London. The tower stealthily colonizes the spaces of the theatre--its soundscapes, its off- and onstage spaces, and even its dreamscapes--accruing a theatrical agency that establishes the Tower itself, not the mere man Richmond, as Richard's final and conquering antagonist. I suggest that for Marlowe, the Tower functions primarily as metaphor to serve the play's political and thematic interests, whereas Shakespeare is increasingly enthralled by the very physicality of the Tower until the entire play is drawn into its service. Richmond may close the play with a prayer to God for peace, but the voice of power and authority remaining with the spectator at the play's end is that of the Tower.

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### **Gods and Groundlings: How 400 years of changing spaces affected performances by Shakespearean actors**

In the four centuries since Shakespeare's death the performances of his plays have changed radically. Setting aside the translation of his work into other languages, the sound of his plays in his own language is very different from that of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. But it is not just the sounds that have changed.

Performance conditions are different, playhouses are different, audiences are different. The whole geography of performance displays major differences. These differences have considerably altered the style of playing a number of important elements within the plays.

In this video presentation, filmed in a number of historic English theatrical locations, the author demonstrates how different conventions, created for medieval and Renaissance performances, worked in practice as the English theatre moved from the open-air thrust stages of Shakespeare's time to the tiered and enclosed theatres of succeeding centuries.

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### **“How I may compare / This prison where I live unto the world”: Carceral Assemblages on Shakespeare’s Stage**

This paper aims to explore the important proximity of theater patrons to spaces of incarceration as a component of the political and corporeal sovereignty of early modern England. My reading of carceral spaces traces a meaning that goes beyond the historical stage to imprint contemporary ideological debates.

I grapple with the notion of sovereignty as a subtly present ideological problem for Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. I point to the growth of prison literature at the turn of the 17th century as a contextually significant piece of evidence showing the meaningful proximity of spaces of incarceration to the daily lives of London theatergoers. This congruence of lived space and juridical order materializes onstage as a question of sovereign stability through monarchical shifts. As the potency of theological sovereignty waned, spaces of incarceration come to emblemize the tools for keeping political order.

As such, jail cells on the early modern stage form a complex assemblage (akin to Tim Ingold’s notion of a taskscape) that situates the dramatic text at the heart of an emergent understanding about the way specific spaces were both affected by and exerted influence upon historical and cultural practice. Further, these practices shaped a broader audience’s formulation of sovereign political rule that exerted influence subtly and overtly through the assemblage of staged spaces of incarceration. By examining the way those incarcerated speak about the spaces and by tracing the metaphoric tenor of carceral spaces’ usage, this paper aims to assert that representations of jail cells onstage constitute a sustained engagement with cultural exertions of power and demarcations of difference.

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### **No Maid’s Land: Titles and Structures in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy***

In the paper, I use the architectural spaces of Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* to analyze two structural categories suggested by its title: gender and genre. First performed by the King’s Men in 1610 and published in 1619, *The Maid’s Tragedy* is a notoriously perplexing play for audiences and critics. It appears to deviate from what its title promises: its assumed titular maid, the rejected Aspatia, rarely holds the tragic focus of the plot or its characters, much to her

(sometimes comic) frustration. Yet the title takes on a particular meaning in the castle bedroom in the play's most famous scene: when the King's mistress, Evadne, stabs the King in his bed, she repurposes the play's relentless joking references to maidenhood's violent end in the bedroom. The gender and genre instability of the bedroom interior, however, finds a counterpoint in the buildings of war. As gender roles are renegotiated within the castle walls of the corrupted Rhodesian court, an exterior citadel occupied by Evadne's brother ultimately shelters its male occupants and helps restore governmental order. The architectural spaces of *The Maid's Tragedy* thus scaffold our understanding of its title's structures of gender and genre.

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Prisons have multiple and complex representations in early modern drama, their ubiquity in plays reflecting their ubiquity in the lives of many audience members. Actual London prisons like the Tower, the Marshalsea, and the Counters appear as part of the referential world of the plays or in extended scenes where characters are imprisoned. Sometimes prisons are figured as spaces for performance and credit-making, sometimes as schools for spendthrifts, sometimes as spaces of suffering, danger, death, and physical and spiritual deprivation, sometimes as spaces for the spiritual firing of the soul or the refining of the mind, and often as many of these at once. Shakespeare's drama often points out these multitudes of meanings by playing them against each other, as seen, for example, in *Measure for Measure* when Claudio first steadfastly embraces his death in prison, like an exemplar of patient suffering, and in the next moment begs for his life. In this SAA paper, I plan to explore *Richard II*, as a play where the title character feels compelled to comprehend his imprisonment in ways that also reflect the multifaceted ways imprisonment is depicted in early modern drama. When Richard seeks to tear through the "flinty ribs/of this hard world, [his] ragged prison walls," those walls may be those of Pomfret castle or those of the stage the actor is performing on; "ribs" reminds of the ways the body was often represented at the time in plays and other texts as a prison, and "hard world" conflates the world with, and shrinks it down to, Richard's prison. His imprisonment inspires great verbal creativity—a multiplicity of thoughts that "people" and accompany him in his prison—but this creativity does not succeed in breaking him out of prison and out of what his prison signifies: his unkinging and his imminent murder. Through Richard, the play points to narratives that frame prisons as spaces for stoic resistance—and then undermines them through revealing how Richard, with his powerful, but powerfully disjointed imagery, cannot speak and think his way out of imprisonment.

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### **The Council Chamber and Political Space in Shakespeare's *All Is True***

Henry VIII loved the art of building and designing palaces. When he died in 1547, he left fifty-five palaces that he could call his own. During Henry's reign, the role of the palace shifted from a military fortification to withstand siege and strategically placed buildings to oversee key locations in the city, to the centralized living quarters of the monarch and the center of state



government. The Tudor monarchs made increasing use of the royal palaces as the royal court, center of state administration, and center of diplomatic entertainment. Palaces were not just for pleasure, and within the walls of the palace Henry included the Council Chamber, a set of private rooms where he met with his Privy Council. Here, Henry and his advisors discussed urgent matters of state, and made some of the biggest decisions of his reign.

This paper examines the representation of the royal palace, especially the Council Chamber in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* or *All Is True*. Before the days of regular parliament, the national administration was a function of the royal court, and the Privy Council met nearly every day. The Council Chamber is the setting of three prominent scenes of the play, and other scenes take place in an antechamber of the king and queen's private rooms. I analyze the use of space and location in the play as a depiction of political power and places of governmental administration. Taken together, the use of architectural space in the scenes illustrates the strategic means that Henry VIII ruled the state through private relationships.

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<sup>i</sup> Kristen Deiter, *The Tower of London in English Renaissance Drama: Icon of Opposition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4, doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.4324/9780203895665>.

<sup>ii</sup> See for instance Philip Schwyzer, *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199676101.001.0001; and Stephen Marche, "Mocking Dead Bones: Historical Memory and the Theater of the Dead in *Richard III*," *Comparative Drama*, vol. 37, no.1 (Spring 2003): 37-57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41154168>. But see as well Hannah Jane Crawford et al, *Shakespeare in London* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 221-36, doi:10.5040/9781474220491, which addresses Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* from the point of view of the Tower, considering briefly the relationship between the play and history.