

SAA 2022 Seminar 19: Gender and Science

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Mary Trye's *Medicatrix* and the Rhetoric of Care

This paper considers the polemical publication by medical practitioner and advocate of chemical medicine, Mary Trye: *Medicatrix, Or the Woman-Physician* (1675). Trye's single work has not received a great deal of critical attention in the context of the polemical debates surrounding both the rising popularity of chemical medicine and the foundation of the Royal Society, events that polemicists against both of these trends linked to one another as newfangled and dangerous. Unlike Margaret Cavendish, another woman who wrote in a polemical style in response to the new science, Trye did not come from an aristocratic background. In fact, *Medicatrix* makes it clear that Trye was remunerated for her medical practice and may even have used the scandal of the debates about chemical medicine and the Royal Society as a publicity strategy to advertise her business after a move to London. Trye's rhetorical strategies highlight the fact that women had to justify their decision to bring their writing into the public sphere in the first place, and publishing in the decidedly unladylike genre of polemic prompted an even more potentially skeptical response from readership. Trye navigates this impasse by insisting on her role as a loyal daughter speaking on behalf of her deceased father, a man who had advocated for a College of Chymical Physic that would have rivaled the Galenic College of Physicians. Trye embraces the role of caregiver, repeatedly emphasizing both the care of a dutiful daughter defending her father's reputation and the care of a female practitioner who is concerned only with what remedies are practically effective for patients. If care is the purview of the feminine, Trye makes savvy use of such cultural assumptions in order to negotiate entering the public space of print in order to insist on her family's good reputation and to advertise her medical practice.

Jeff Theis

Abstract for SAA 2022

“Botanical Knowledge in *Cymbeline*”

I am interested in the ways that the processes of dwelling and creating a home in Shakespeare might be constituted through forms of botanical knowledge and usage in *Cymbeline*. The starting point is the contrast between Cornelius and the Queen in their cultivation of botanicals through a proto-scientific method of experimentation and observation—he for healing, she for killing. But it is worth considering Guiderius and Arviragus’ use of plants and plant-derived knowledge in regard to Innogen’s suffering and then supposed death. Observation of the natural world and its transformation through human applications is one of many ways in which Shakespeare troubles the binary oppositions of home and surrounding ecosystem in what I consider to be one of Shakespeare’s most ecocritically engaged plays. I may wander off to other plays, though, to amplify or extend the discussion (or because I’ve spent too much time with *Cymbeline* of late).

Meaghan Pachay

Ohio State University

Across the two poetry collections and prose romance in her manuscript, Hester Pulter draws on multiple scientific discourses, but it is her deployment of new astronomical knowledge, and the relation between celestial and human bodies, that most concerns this paper. Despite a life spent in varying degrees of confinement, Pulter managed to engage the most up-to-date scientific discourses: her poetry displays command over the heliocentric cosmology of Copernicus and Galileo and entertains the possibility of multiple worlds. Pulter’s poetry engages the imaginative appeal of the New Astronomy to experiment with poetic form and genre. Her use of this imagery allows her to reimagine devotional poetry and to claim agency and hope in the face of deep mourning and religious doubt. But the appearance of astronomical knowledge in her poetic language also emerges at the site of the manuscript’s materiality. Though most likely a presentation manuscript composed by a scribe, the revisions in Pulter’s own hand show her ownership and direction of her poetry manuscript. Its material features, the *mise-en-page* noted above as well as ambiguity in the spatial orientation of the text and the accompanying poems on loose sheets, raise questions of how a reader engages with the book, how they imagine their body in relation to it. Which side of the manuscript is the front and which end is up? How does one begin reading – and how does that choice affect how we read and what meanings we take? A newly disordered cosmology, with the earth displaced as the center of the heavens, and thus God’s natural order, gives Pulter the opening to use astronomical knowledge in her poetry to imagine new possibilities for devotion and, I argue, for affinity across bodily and spatial boundaries.

Sara Luttfriing
Penn State Behrend

For this seminar, I plan to analyze early modern medical treatises that seem to have been revised to appeal more explicitly to women. I'm interested in what the publication history of books such as Thomas Vicary's *A Profitable Treatise of the Anatomie of Mans Body* and Owen Wood's *An Alphabetical Book of Physicall Secrets* can tell us about early modern ideas regarding scientific medical practice and women's role in it. In their earliest publications, these books are presented as texts for male readers, including surgeons, medical students, and male householders. Later editions turned women's association with household medicine into a marketing opportunity, repositioning these texts to appeal specifically to women readers. I'd like to examine how this repositioning worked to blur the boundaries between "scientific" (and presumably male) medical knowledge and women's work as empiric practitioners of household medicine. In doing so, I hope to also address the larger question of how early modern medical treatises define the idea of "science" as pertaining to medicine, and whether such definitions were fluid rather than stable.

Hillary Nunn
The University of Akron

Keeping English Bodies: Dr. Stevens' Water in Colonial Virginia

In its efforts to attract colonists to the New World, the Virginia company faced near-overwhelming challenges in its efforts to render Jamestown and its environs more comfortably, recognizably English. Much to the colonist's surprise, the Edenic landscape did not produce familiar English crops, and raising and consuming native grains posed a threat to colonists' sense of identity. How could new immigrants who ate like members of indigenous tribes, they wondered, keep from losing their Englishness? If fed with native foods, at what point would their English bodies start to look, behave, and think like those they sought to dominate? The Virginia Company investors decided that the colony needed roots, and establishing family trees, complete with American-born children of English blood, offered the best opportunity to establish their connection to the newly-claimed region.

The Englishwomen who arrived in Virginia, however, were often unprepared to establish homesteads in their unfamiliar surroundings. Records associated with Jamestown make no notes of recipe books, either printed or manuscript, crossing the ocean in their hands. Help arrived in 1620, in the form of Gervase Markham's "The English Huswife," which arrived as part of 1615 text *Country Contentments*. Though Markham's advice proved ill-suited to the Virginia landscape, his books offered a valuable connection to their homeland, allowing colonists to maintain a sense of their embodied Englishness while in unfamiliar territory. His recipes for Dr.

Stevens' water in particular allowed colonists to cling to long-held notions of English physical strength. For the new wives of the colony, this power to preserve English bodies existed alongside the pressing need to cook and keep the food needed to sustain the colony. The devotion these new recipe-keepers showed to preparing – and presumably using – Dr. Stevens' water, I argue, highlight how white women not only perpetuated notions of the English body's potential to live to old age; they established women's central authority over the nurturing and preservation of English bodies in Virginia's unfamiliar surroundings.

Lee Emrich
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“The most conceived tyre”: Dressing as Feminine Science

Samuel Daniel's 1605 play *The Queen's Arcadia* is often regarded as the beginning of English pastoral playwriting, and indeed, it appears to be a simple pastoral tragicomedy. Arcadia is defined by “simple innocence,” where tending the land is easy, giving youthful shepherds and nymphs time to figure out their romantic couplings while older Arcadians comment chorus-like on the goings-on. But Daniel inserts a particular problem into his Arcadia: *The Queen's Arcadia* opens with four common professionals from nearby cities having already entered Arcadia and overturned Arcadian ethics with their metropolitan business sense. The plot details how the capitalistic views of city outsiders corrupt Arcadian understandings of land use and love as communally enjoyed and easily obtained by all. Rather than land and love—or even self-subjectivity—being stable and essential, the city professionals turn land use, love, and identity into laborious, competitive processes.

Arriving in Arcadia is the character Techne, a tirewoman from the nearby city of Corinth, and she presents a new form of clothing usage to Arcadia which then proceeds to disrupt the “honest” bodies of the Arcadians. Techne sells both clothing items *and* her knowledge of clothing's power and how to dress to access it. She shares this knowledge with the local Arcadians, especially the women, and ends up totally overthrowing the existing Arcadian understanding of how to read clothed bodies. The older shepherds castigate Techne's labor, calling it a dangerous “science,” that turns dressing from a simple technical skill into a scientific process. Techne transforms Arcadian women from essentialized objects available to male desire by teaching them the science of dressing, which they use as a way to experiment with their own desires. Conducting science using the technologies of dress helps the Arcadian women understand how they might exist apart from patriarchal determination. In the end, Techne is also punished the most severely of the four professionals, and the severity of Techne's punishment is clearly meant as retribution for her perceived villainy against Arcadian patriarchal and essentialist ethics. I argue that she makes the Arcadians, and especially Arcadian women, question the limits and compositions of their bodies through clothing, and thus turns knowledge,

and especially self-knowledge, into a refracted, scattered performance—a scientific experiment—that requires labor to envision, carry out, and interpret the data produced.