2023 SAA
"Abject Science" Seminar
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Seminar Abstracts

1. **Katharine Craik**:

O'er-doing it: Technologies of the Lifelike in *Hamlet*

Welcoming the visiting players to Elsinore, Hamlet notes that theatre's mimetic technology is designed to reflect the world by holding 'the mirror up to nature'. When theatre is working well, it resembles life; and when characters are convincing, they resemble those whom we know. When theatrical likeness misfires, however, the imitation looks awkward and laborious. In this case, as Hamlet says, 'I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably'. The abomination lies in the flattening and dulling effects of 'o'erdoing' the imitation. An imperfect actor resorts to hyperbole and excess, strutting and bellowing until he 'out-Herods Herod'. This paper considers how such excesses disturb the idea that the world can be shown, or that people can be known, through mimetic technologies based on the incremental presentation of evidence. *Hamlet* unsettles the fixed realism implied by mimesis, showing how artificial or imagined figures exist in rivalrous relationships with natural ones by exceeding or over-doing them.

Using theatrical technology as his starting point, Shakespeare deals in *Hamlet* with the more specific problem of remembering or representing the dead through lifelike figuration. Sometimes these figures appear visibly in front of others, such as the ghost of Old Hamlet. The ghost is an astonishingly accurate replica: as Horatio tells Hamlet, this is 'a figure like your father / Armed at point, exactly cap-à-pie'. At other times, however, visions of the dead appear only in the imagination, as when Hamlet says that he sees his father 'in my mind's eye'. When people are conjured in the imagination, the problem of 'o'erdoing' returns. For example, in a seldom discussed episode in Act 4 Scene 7, a French horseman called Lamord paints a vivid picture of Laertes' unrivalled prowess as a swordsman. This hyperbolic portrait succeeds however only insofar as it makes Laertes look like the unsurpassed and unsurpassable Lamord (la mort, death). Adapting the technologies of theatrical representation, Shakespeare explores how death transforms people by over-doing them in the imagination of the living. *Hamlet* stretches our sense of what being alive looks like – but also, and more strangely, our sense of what it looks like to be dead.

2. **Lianne Habinek**:

Know thyself, know the world: Early modern paper engineering and anatomical-geometrical bodies

This paper opens by considering a peculiar phenomenon in scientific history – namely, the invention of the anatomical flap-book in the 16th century, in which a reader can lift a torso flap on a picture of a seated man or woman to reveal the organs and viscera beneath. In this way, the reader replicates the experience of the anatomist, successively uncovering the body's secrets. Usually these texts were uncomplicated, with one figure and one flap; but we will consider here a bizarre multi-flap, moving-part anatomy first published in Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Johann Remmelin's *Catoptrum microcosmicum* (1618 et passim). Peculiarly, this anatomy was reprinted and

"corrected" in England, and by the end of the seventeenth century, it contained not outdated copies of images from a prior century (as it had originally), but pirated illustrations from a famous contemporary neuroscientific text, the first of its kind and on the cutting edge of research on the brain, Thomas Willis's 1664 *Cerebri anatome*.

Yet anatomy was not the only discipline to make use of flaps, as mathematical texts such as Sir Henry Billingsley's 1570 *Elements of Euclid* deployed similar pop-up page elements to illustrate geometrical concepts of surface area or volume. Thus this paper will address the folded page, namely the ways in which flaps could be folded up, in, or out to replicate three-dimensional figures and spaces. As a corollary, this paper will consider the particular relationship such similar paper folding techniques invites (or provokes) between the disciplines of geometry and anatomy.

3. <u>Gavin Hollis</u>:

Mappery

> Reason, geometry, cartography: bedfellows in the philosophical shaping of the world, and the desire to create interoperable systems (compatible symbols) and increasingly universal narratives in universal languages.
> —Clancy Wilmott, *Mobile Mapping: Space, Cartography, and the Digital*

> This they call bed work, mapp'ry, closet war.
> —William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*

As many scholars have argued, the scientific revolution was engendered and subtended by radical shifts in the ways that space was conceived and measured; and as Franco Farinelli and Gunnar Olson contend, early modernity bore witness to the emergence of what they call "cartographic reason." We might imagine therefore that the sine qua non of modernity would be "the map"—a pictorial rendering of "cartographic reason," akin to Michel Foucault's gridded table; an exemplar of Martin Heidegger's formulation, that the sign of modernity was the world as picture. Yet the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (that is, what we loosely call "early modernity") saw maps quite differently. Not the world picture, but what Thomas Middleton dubs, in his 1607 play *The Puritan*, "pretty devices" most likely found in the domestic settings. Here I attend in particular to Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1601), which gives my paper its title, reading the play across and against Farinelli's claim in *Blinding Polyphemus* (2003; 2018) that the emergence of cartographic reason produced an understanding of space in which "every part can be substituted by another without anything being altered" (§3) and in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's sense of a map as "open and connectable in all of its dimensions" in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987, p. 12). In act one scene three Ulysses despairs at the behaviour of the Greek soldiers, who long for "act[s] … of hand" and dismiss his policy as "cowardice" and "no business of the war": "They call this bed work, mappery, closet war" (1.3.196-204). Ulysses's logic or "reason," founded on a mathematical understanding of war—of "knowing by measure"—is associated with domestic remove and not the field of battle. The soldier's rejection, then, could be said to be about a preference for the physical over the theoretical. Ulysses's resistance, however, is an intellectual one: his reasoning has no place for maps,

which he places in the home. Thus, while Ulysses's "policy" sounds like a manifestation of "cartographic reason," it is, according to its proponent, nothing of the sort.

Ulysses's rejection of maps-as-reason, however, points to a deeper unease at their imitative properties. The Greek soldiery's response to Greek High Command takes the form of "imitation"— specifically Patroclus's seemingly dead-on mimicry of Agamemnon in Achilles's tent, which is described by Ulysses as operating in "parallel" to the general and is considered a threat sufficient to undo "degree." "Mappery" too is an imitative practice: it both imitates war by being conducted at home and revolves around an object—a map—that represents the world but is not the world. Ulysses's conflation of theatrical guying with geometrical forms hints then at a troubling potential in both mimesis and cartography to rend(er) the world flat rather than present it as an object for a discerning viewer—that is, maps and mimicry have the potential to destabilize hierarchies and dissolve the vertical authority of a sovereign cosmos into an open, indistinct expanse or space. Even if we still tend to use "the map" as a metaphoric structure to denote systems and how they function, in the period when that metaphor starts to become operable, the age of "cartographic reason," when reason, geometry, and cartography became bedfellows, it does not seem to work as a surefire shorthand for systemic ordering, and frequently functioned as a shorthand for, and affective and cognitive response to, systemic disorder instead.

4. **Tamara Mahadin**:

"His eyes saw her eyes": The Gendered Eye in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*

This paper examines physiognomic readings presented in Shakespeare's narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* (1593) by closely analyzing the use of the 'eyes' in the poem. Shakespeare's poem draws on Aristotelian physiognomic theories that led to the early modern developments of physiognomic literature. Early modern philosophers of physiognomy were fixated on understanding the face and the body. Such fascination with the relationship between the body and soul became popular in the early modern period. As a pseudo-scientific belief, physiognomy is the study of the face and the body to inform characters' inner nature. In his physiognomic manual The Contemplation of Mankinde (1571), Thomas Hill defines physiognomy as a "knowledge which leadeth a man to the understanding and knowing both of the naturall motions, and conditions of the spirite: and the good or euill fortune, by the outwarde notes and lines of the face and body." Through studying the poetics of the face, particularly the 'eyes,' I intend to show how Venus and Adonis use their sight, whether through speech or nonverbal communication, to engage in a series of charged dialogues and contentions throughout the poem. The "eye" is at the center of physiognomic readings in Venus and Adonis as the characters scrutinize and interpret each other's eyes to gain deeper insights into the other's emotions and intentions. While scholarship on physiognomy in early modern literature tends to primarily focus on Shakespeare's plays, my argument builds on current scholarship on physiognomic discourses in Shakespeare's works to examine and include Venus and Adonis in that existing scholarship. I argue that the eyes serve as an index of one's emotions and thoughts, contributing to Venus's and Adonis's attempts to access each other's emotions and intentions. While previous scholarship on the poem has focused on the inverted gendered meanings, my paper aims to demonstrate how the eyes in Venus and Adonis enable multiple interpretations to emerge. Contextualizing Shakespeare's physiognomic inventory will give a better understanding of how early modern discourses of physiognomy feed into

conversations about race, gender, and sexuality. Thus, Shakespeare's physiognomic inventory eventually broadens our understanding of how these discourses converge with the emerging scientific discourses in the early modern period.

5. Lynn Maxwell

"The Mortal Moon": Genre, Metaphor, and Cosmological Knowledge in Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius*, Kepler's *Somnium*, and Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*

In this paper, I explore the ways that Galileo and Kepler manipulate generic conventions and rhetorical expectations in order to explore the terrestrial nature of the moon and appeal to their respective audiences. Both authors present their ideas about the moon in complicated ways. Galileo worries about how his audience might receive his observations, convincing a reluctant audience of their truth-value, and in communicating the transformational power of the telescope and the pleasure he experiences in seeing beyond the previous limits of human sight. Through a narrative of discovery that reads, as Angus Fletcher notes, like "an astonishingly suspenseful news story," he is able to carve out sufficient narrative and rhetorical space to maneuver between his various agendas.[1] Kepler's *Somnium*, which began circulating just one year of Galileo's treatise, in 1611, utilizes very different generic strategies, turning more overtly toward the literary and fictional in order to insulate his controversial scientific theories. Kepler employs a complex frame narrative and multiple narrative layers to situate his own cosmological treatise about the moon within a fictional dreamscape. This paper explores how both Galileo and Kepler convey their scientific knowledge and the relationship between that knowledge and the truths of poetry and fiction. I then turn to Godwin's *Man in the Moone*, to consider how Godwin's more literary piece might be read in conversation with these scientific tracts and the ways in which it too attempts to offer truths about the moon.

6. Victoria McMahon

Sycorax as Inuit Witch: Malefic Embodiments
of the Old Woman in New World Travel Narratives

This paper's aim is to focus on how the literary, sociocultural, and medical tropes of the older woman's body as the locus of maternal malignancy and diabolical power is similarly 'mapped' onto New World travel narratives of the indigenous old woman. Given that the island of *The Tempest* is geographically ambiguous, I return to Richard Hakluyt's arctic narrative of John Frobisher's second northern voyage of 1577 and a particular incident of an encounter with an Inuit 'witch.' In this extremely limited report, the old 'Esqimaux' woman's body is imbued with the same physiological and cultural fears generated by the ageing English woman's body, a conceptualization that we also encounter with Shakespeare's character of Sycorax.

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[1] Fletcher, Angus. Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare. Harvard University Press, 2007, 15

This embodied anxiety generated by the older woman perhaps explains her apparent absence from written as well as illustrated records of New World encounters and when she does appear, it is the guise of an ugly and diabolical hag, not as the valued community Elder that she would have been in many aboriginal nations.

Like Frobisher's sailors trying to ascertain what the old Inuit woman is by reading an identity through her body, Shakespeare similarly explores how female malefica might be embodied within a 'strange' native body, a body capable of conceiving and birthing a 'monster,' perhaps parthenogenically.

If Sycorax embodies the witch, is she an English sorceress reimagined in a New World context, or is she an interpretation of what the old native woman must be by virtue of the commonality of material embodiment that she shares with her English sister? In fact, Sycorax dwells somewhere in between these two ontologies, a liminal status that marks her as both English witch and Inuit shaman. This creative mapping of a hybrid identity is worked through by Sycorax's child Caliban, the "hag seed" who straddles this epistemological divide: neither 'noble savage' nor cannibal, human nor fish, native male nor Englishman.