

October 14, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 Shakespeare Association of America seminar, “Metatheater as Rivalry and Dialogue.” Having sat here at this desk thinking about Shakespearean metatheater for what seems like seven of the past five or so years, I am eager to try thinking beyond the Shakespearean variety with all of you. I’m also thrilled to introduce Lucy Munro from the outset as the seminar respondent, and to thank her for her guidance all along.

For a refresher, or for those who have not yet seen the longer (or let’s just call it long) version of the seminar topic, as I described it to the SAA Program Committee:

With the exception of a few well-traveled plays like *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Roaring Girl*, non-Shakespearean metatheater has long fallen victim to bardolatry, with Shakespeare automatically deemed the foremost practitioner of metatheater in the period, at least following Marlowe's death. As a consequence, the metatheatrical practices of other playwrights and companies remain underestimated and ill-defined. Recent scholarship by Lucy Munro, Tiffany Stern, Bart van Es, Evelyn Tribble, and others, however, has demonstrated how often Shakespeare responded to the metatheater of rival boys' and adult companies with metatheater tailored to the personnel and performance conditions of the Chamberlain's and King's Men. With Shakespeare's traditional priority as metatheatrical mastermind giving way to this healthier, dialogic, intertheatrical account of metatheatricality, a reevaluation of competing metatheatrical practices seems increasingly viable and urgent. This seminar aims to address that need by positing and exploring alternative metatheatrical modes, whether conceived in relation to Shakespeare's work or independent of it.

Potential questions to explore: How do the playwrights preceding Shakespeare, especially Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe, pioneer metatheatrical approaches Shakespeare appropriates and revises in the 1590s? How do the boys' companies of the early seventeenth century revise those Shakespearean metatheatrical revisions in turn? How does the metatheater of journeyman playwrights like Chettle, Chapman, even Jonson compare to that practiced by playwrights associated with particular companies, like Marston, Heywood, or Shakespeare? What if anything distinguishes metatheater in collaborative plays like *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Philaster*, or *The Witch of Edmonton* from the more familiar metatheater of Shakespeare's solo works? When if ever should scholars feel confident assigning a house metatheatrical style to this or that individual company or theater, and can we reconstruct the appeal of competing metatheatrical modes to distinct audiences? Finally, how might a more expansive, yet more balanced approach to metatheatrical strategies and practices intersect with recent trends in scholarship on race, gender, age, queer expression, social rank, and other key elements in the production and reception of Early Modern drama?

Re-reading all that, I should underscore that even though parts of the proposal seem to want us to kick Shakespeare entirely offstage or maybe just trip him into the stage trap, in fact Shakespeare may of course feature or even co-star in your papers as one of the titular rivals or interlocutors in metatheatrical dialogue. It's also fine not even to mention him. And let me further assure you that in this seminar it's okay to spell it "metatheater" or "metatheatre" or however you like.

After pondering innovations like sharable Google docs, I've decided it's best to stick to the standard SAA seminar format of titles and abstracts due in December, papers due in early February, and 1-or-so-page responses to selected papers due in early March. I'll organize those mutual-crit subgroups after reading your abstracts, and everyone will read everyone's paper by the start of the conference. Along the way, we'll build a group bibliography of suggested (not required!) secondary readings.

Below, please find a schedule (with the most important dates in bold), as well as a list of seminar participants and contact info. I'll send pesky reminders of deadlines and will be available starting now to try to field any questions you may have about the seminar.

Looking forward to working with you in the coming months, and seeing you all in Minneapolis in March/April!

All best,
Dan

Schedule

As soon as possible: Please email me to confirm your intention to participate in the seminar, and alert me if your contact info on the attached list is inaccurate. If you prefer a name or form of address other than that which appears on the list, please let me know that as well.

November 1: Application deadline for the SAA's travel and dependent care grants.

December 1: Deadline for A/V requests.

By December 16: Please send me a paper title and brief abstract (200–300 words), along with two or three suggested readings for the seminar bibliography. I will organize mutual-response subgroups and share the full bibliography with everyone the following week.

January 2: Conference schedule posted and registration and hotel booking open.

January 31: Deadline for accessibility requests.

By February 13: Papers due! Please send me your essays of around 3000 words (a bit under or just a touch over that is fine). This is a hard deadline, as the SAA needs to know I have received your paper to officially confirm your participation in the seminar and ensure your name gets in the conference program.

February 28: Deadline for updated abstracts (this is what we will distribute to auditors, so if your abstract has changed since December, please send me the update).

By March 10: Please send your responses (one page or a little over) to those in your subgroup and to me.

March 15: Deadline for registration fee refund.

March 22: Deadline for online registration.

March 29–April 1: SAA conference! I'll be in touch before this date to arrange drinks and/or dinner in Minneapolis.

Seminar Participants

[Note: Please let me know if anything here is inaccurate, and please do not share contact information with anyone not participating in the seminar]

Seminar 20 – Metatheater as Rivalry and Dialogue

Daniel D. Moss (Organizer)
Southern Methodist University

Lucy Munro (Respondent)
King's College London

Clara K. Biesel
University of Minnesota

Mark C. Hulse
Jackson College

Jordan Ivie
Vanderbilt University

Joseph Hirzer Kidney
Stanford University

Nathaniel C. Leonard
Westminster College, Missouri

Mitchell R. Macrae
Colorado State University

William G. Roudabush
Southern Methodist University

Nancy Selleck
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Tiffany Stern
Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham

Andrea R. Stevens
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Dear meta-colleagues,

I hope you're all doing well in the new year, and have managed to find a bit of time for those SAA papers. I'm writing with a gentle reminder that the papers are due two weeks from today, on February 13, a hard deadline on which SAA hard-heartedly insists. I'm also writing, then, with an offer to field questions, provide what advice I can, brainstorm or troubleshoot collaboratively via email or Zoom, send you a pep-email, or whatever might be helpful down the home stretch. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you: feel stuck, feel like you're just making it all up, can't find that key secondary, can't decide on that last paragraph, can't decide on that first paragraph, etc.

A few more reminders:

- Once I receive all the papers, I'll send them out to all participants, at which point everyone should write up a 1-pageish response by March 10 for each of the two or three colleagues in your mutual-crit subgroup. (More on this mid-February).
- Either the SAA or I will print abstracts of our papers for auditors at the conference, so if the abstract you sent me back in December no longer describes the paper you've actually written, you'll want to update the abstract and send me the revision by early March or thenabouts.
- You should have received the January bulletin from SAA, indicating that our seminar will meet from 3:30–5:30 on Thursday, March 30. Please remember to register for the

conference if you haven't already (February 28 is the deadline for discounted registration).

- Looking closely at the program, I see an ominous one-liner, "26 February: Hotel Cut-off Date," so if you plan to stay at the conference hotel, the Hilton Minneapolis, I guess that's the deadline to be reasonably sure of a discounted room.
- Of course, if you're flying Southwest Airlines to get to the conference, remember that the deadline for getting in line at the airport is March 15.

Happy writing and see you soon!

Best,
Dan