Kaplan SAA 2024 Abstract

Infidel Geography: Dislocating Jews and Muslims in Early Modern English Drama

While early modern European accounts of territorial exploration increasingly construct space through ideas of nation, culture, ethnicity, and natural phenomena, medieval perceptions of the world in terms of religious geography continue to shape understandings of peoples and places alongside this newer episteme (Leshock, Hunter). As I have argued, medieval Christianity racialized Jews as punished with exile and cursed with hereditary inferiority resulting from their alleged murder of Jesus (Kaplan). Furthermore, Christian responses to Islamic rule in the Holy Land, even prior to the Crusades, began to coordinate Muslims and Jews as infidels whose imagined violent conspiracies against Christians and Christian spaces cast both groups as enemies to the faith and (anachronistically) equally guilty for the crucifixion (Cohen). Early modern drama frequently places Jews in proximity to Muslims, drawing on a coordinated theological logic of infidel inferiority to racialize and thus subordinate both groups relative to Christian superiors. I consider this theological hierarchy in *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, *Selimus*, and very briefly, *The Jew of Malta*.

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Abstract

Yujin Jang
University of Pittsburgh

My paper examines the politics of music in *The Tempest* to discuss premodern conceptions of race. Music in premodern race formation is related to discourses of cultivation as it functions as an educative means to transform individuals' conduct. Shakespeare's depictions of individuals' body responding to music in *The Tempest* show how such narratives of music's civilizing power intersect with Renaissance medical humoralism. To discuss this intersection, I explore Shakespeare's discourse of "beating," which signifies the phenomenon of pulsation in individuals' body. I argue that the musical ecology of "beating" in *The Tempest* illustrates the formation of premodern race concept, as it marks social and biological differences between the White and non-White body.

Mediterranean and Atlantic Geographies in *The Comedy of Errors*
Donovan Sherman

This essay reads *The Comedy of Errors* as accommodating two geographical frameworks: the Mediterranean of its setting, naturally, but also the Atlantic—specifically, the historical rupture of the Middle Passage that follows England's mercantile engagement in the Inner Sea. This proleptic and transhistorical reading is sponsored, I argue, by the persistent performance choice of casting actors of color in the roles of the Dromios. Such a decision unearths the play's uncanny resonance with theories of race that center the chattel slavery of the Middle Passage. As such I see the overlaying of geographies as an overlaying of two different paradigms of premodern race—one contingent, dynamic, and fluid; the other ontological and dehistoricized. The play does not synthesize nor favor one of these readings but, like our field, holds them in productive tension.

Eric L. De Barros
SAA 2024: Geographies of Race Seminar

Abstract

"[P]oisoning the blood of our country": The Geography of Inclusive Racism in Thomas
Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*

In the midst of a mid-December 2023 campaign rally for the 2024 U.S. Presidential election,
Donald Trump appealed to his adoring supporters' nostalgic view of a geo-somatically pure
American past, when he characterized current U.S. immigration policy in terms of a poisoning of
the nation's blood. "We got a lot of work to do. When they let . . . 15, 16 million people into our
country, when they do that, we got a lot of work to do. They're poisoning the blood of our
country. That's what they've done." While that work will, no doubt, involve mass deportation
and the completion of "The Wall" on the southern border, Trump's racist past- and progressive
tense evocation of blood poisoning also suggests some other non-specified work of racial
management. That is, Trump's nostalgic attention to the impossible work of border fortification
and national purification arguably functions as a political distraction from the way in which
American racism has always also worked anxiously and obsessively on the structural-
institutional management of differently racialize bodies in the same porously delimited
geopolitical space. Focusing on the early modern history of this other kind of work, this paper
examines Thomas Middelton and William Rowley's 1622 play *The Changeling* as a
representative instance and argues that, in its racist attention to infected Spanish blood, the play
is actually anticipating the inevitability of England's own porous geopolitical future and, at the
same time, suggesting internal, structural-institutional means by which to preserve (the fiction)
of English purity.

"Elizabeth I and Mohamet": Whiteness of Property
in the Hangings of Bess of Hardwick and
Mary Queen of Scots

This paper considers the concept of "whiteness of property" as a means to understand the intersection of two country houses in Derbyshire with the Mediterranean Sea as it was pictured there in rooms filled with locally-produced tapestries. Because Bess of Hardwick was the jailer and server of Mary Queen of Scots from 1569 to 1584, the two found ways to collaborate in creating a room-sized series of opulent hangings featuring the figures of inspiring Mediterranean women, as well as an additional series that features "Faith and Mohamet." As they worked complex narratives into their textiles, the first series makes visible how Mary, an inheritor and perpetuator of whiteness as the means, put simply, to claim the earth, and Bess, a ready newcomer to the more sweeping claims of whiteness, managed to whiten the historically divers women living in the Middle East and North Africa. The only possible exception is the hanging titled "Cleopatra," which is missing, as I discuss.

In the second series produced by Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardick, in the hanging titled "Faith and Mohamet" – in which Faith is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I standing opposite a figure of a slouched Muhammed – their composition is actually more tolerant of the religion of Islam than its visual predecessors, a measure of the rising importance to Elizabeth I and to her serving woman, Bess of Hardwick, of the Mediterranean trade with the Ottoman Empire in the 1570s and 1580s. Despite its relative tolerance, the image of Faith-as-Elizabeth that the queen and countess created expresses the larger consquences of the fictions creating whiteness of property, in that it predicts a world in which the French and British claims to trade in the Mediterranean not only succeed, but lay the groundwork for a future in which the vast expanses of the Mediterranean's eastern and southern shores become dominated by their empires, and, eventually, by the political and ecological adversity left in their wake.

Sim Ong
PhD Candidate
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<u>The (Il)legibility of Lunar Skin Color in Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*</u>

As Patricia Akhimie observes in Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference (2018), "what remains constant across the broad range of meanings of race throughout the early modern and modern periods is the emphasis on a need for methods by which racial difference can be detected; in these strategies the body plays a crucial role as a tangible and legible record." How might race be conceptualized when skin color, a somatic feature that was assumed to have stable significations, frustrates interpretation?

To answer this question, I will examine Francis Godwin's treatment of skin color in The Man in the Moone (1638), in which the protagonist Domingo Gonsales encounters the strangely colored inhabitants of the moon. Gonsales struggles to capture the skin color of Lunar people, which was "neither blacke, nor white, yellow, nor redd, greene nor blew, nor any color composed of these." Lunar skin color is seemingly illegible because it is "never seen in our earthly world, and therefore neither to be described unto us by any, nor to be conceived of one that never saw it." But Lunar skin color can change and rendered comprehensible. According to Gonsales, flawed Lunar children are deposited on a hill in North America, "the ayre of the Earth… alter[ing] their color to be like unto ours." He further contends that Indigenous Americans "can easily beleeve to be wholly descended of them, partly in regard of their color."

In this paper, I will argue that the indescribable Lunar color reflects the impossibility of colonizing the already-inhabited moon, while Gonsales's pseudo-scientific account of the transformed Lunar skin color allows him to justify the expropriation of indigenous territory for European colonial expansion. The Man in the Moone thus exposes the insidious strategies deployed by early modern Europeans to racialize and exploit Indigenous American.

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Abstract: "'To extend and enlarge their dominions': Robert Thorne's declaration for an English Empire

This essay examines a declaration by London merchant Robert Thorne to King Henry VIII (1527). His appeal encourages his sovereign to prioritize foreign travel in order to "extend and enlarge [his] dominions and kingdoms" and to bring "perpetuall glory" and "infinite profite" to England. More specifically, Thorne expresses concern that Portugal and Spain had discovered routes to the East Indies and West Indies, respectively, and suggests that a Northern passage to the New World and into eastern regions could yield the same success for England. This declaration acts as a useful case study in understanding early modern English ideas of geography and how cosmographers, geographers, and cartographers conceptualized a world order from a divine perspective. By aligning themselves with the divine, white European "worldmakers" made the world in their image and granted themselves the authority to racialize foreign lands and peoples. Thorne's appeal contributes to this legacy and demonstrates how early modern conceptions of geography were inextricably linked to fantasies of empire.

Sarah-Gray Lesley
University of Chicago

Racial (Re-)Emplacements in Edmund Spenser's Legend of Justice

This paper argues that, in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser develops a trope of feminized monsters who are porous, anti-reproductive, and auto-cannibalistic for a clear moral-allegorical agenda. In Book V, Spenser reiterates these monstrous tropes for a racial agenda. Whereas Book I monsters seem dislocated from historical time and space, Book V emplaces these reiterations within sites and scenes that point to historical bodies and borders which were the subject of English colonial campaigns. These monsters also build upon recognizable early modern misogyny, which centers around perceptions of women's bodies as particularly leaky and penetrable, especially during the reproductive labor of birth, conception, and breastfeeding. Spenser thus repurposes misogynistic cliches, emplaces them within historical borders, and reiterates monstrous types to develop a racial architecture that is based on a body's relationship to reproduction and consumption and to poetic and historical geographies.

Danielle Lee
SUNY Old Westbury

Abstract:

Discourses of geography during the Age of Expansion were instrumental to race-making, as they reveal imperial attitudes about indigenous identity. Early modern travelogues provide insight into complex Eurocentric constructions of race and Otherness, and center European self-fashioning as global players while simultaneously engaging in worldmaking. As products of transatlantic and colonial discourses, travel narratives illustrate how imperial rhetoric informed racial and cultural constructs. Since this period, we have come to understand culture as a fluid term; an amalgamation of experiences resulting from the social interaction of ethnic, religious, and racial contact zones. Though early modern travel narratives are a form of cultural reporting, European chronicles of foreign lands were based on an amalgamation of Eurocentric observations deeply rooted in colonial ideas about native populations, or the "other." As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen" (88). Though intentionally decentered, significant moments of African culture can be revealed through the analysis of European perceptions of race and otherness detailed in travelogues that boast discovery, while textually erasing concepts of African identity and agency.

Danielle Lee
2024 SAA Seminar: "Early Modern Geographies of Race "

Abstract:

Discourses of geography during the Age of Expansion were instrumental to race-making, as they reveal imperial attitudes about indigenous identity. Early modern travelogues provide insight into complex Eurocentric constructions of race and Otherness, and center European self-fashioning as global players while simultaneously engaging in worldmaking. As products of transatlantic and colonial discourses, travel narratives illustrate how imperial rhetoric informed racial and cultural constructs. Since this period, we have come to understand culture as a fluid term; an amalgamation of experiences resulting from the social interaction of ethnic, religious, and racial contact zones. Though early modern travel narratives are a form of cultural reporting, European chronicles of foreign lands were based on an amalgamation of Eurocentric observations deeply rooted in colonial ideas about native populations, or the "other." As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen" (88). It is the hidden and unseen identities and cultures of Africans silenced, and yet unwittingly revealed by European perceptions of race and otherness in these travelogues, that this paper will discuss with an interest in the ways expansion discourse perpetuated racial constructs.

Early modern discourses of geography were instrumental to race-making as they revealed imperial attitudes about indigenous identity. Early modern travelogues provide insight into complex Eurocentric constructions of race and Otherness, and center European self-fashioning as a significant component in worldmaking. As products of transatlantic and colonial discourses, travel imperial rhetoric lies at the root of racial and cultural constructs of the period. Ayesha Ramachandran offers that "worldmaking…describes the methods by which early modern thinkers sought to imagine, shape, revise, control, and articulate the dimensions of the world" (XX). If culture is an amalgamation of experiences resulting from the social interaction of ethnic, religious, and racial contact zones, then we must also think about culture as a system of cultural disruption when it comes to the other. Cultural reporting in the form of travel chronicles about trips to Africa were based on an amalgamation of Eurocentric observations deeply rooted in

colonial ideas about native/indigenous populations. As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen" (88). However, it is the *accuracy* of this reporting that is in large part responsible for why we still address issues of race, stereotyping, and marginalization today. Rhetorical inscriptions of African inhumanity were isolated not only because of the darkness of their skin, but because otherness is never afforded the opportunity to offer a counter narrative.

Colonial ethnographical writing produces and performs race and culture. As such, other imperial texts that travel narratives were in conversation with, act as markers or entry points in the performance where each scaffold level intersects, as well as isolates, the spaces in colonial rhetoric that unwittingly expose African agency as a "truth" waiting for its space in Atlantic history. James Clifford sees ethnographic writing as a "dialogical, in-between space where "many voices clamor for expression," and especially as an 'inscription' of communicative processes that exist, historically, between subjects in relations of power" (XX). The dialogic nature of the travelogue is valuable because its interpretations of difference informed other narratives of the same style attempting to fulfill a similar purpose. Signifiers of difference were presented as geographical, cultural, and corporeal. The encyclopedic style of the travel narrative attempts to make no distinction between topographical and corporeal ideas of difference, but therein lays the reason for it being so well received; the Christian eye and heart is not deceptive. The identification of heathens is the work of the good Christian and Mandeville fulfills this obligation. Therefore, *Travels,* was in effect doing God's work.

Premodern travelogues are understood to be sensationalistic, fantastic tales that contributed to popular conceptions and the fetishization of indigenous societies. The tales are all mediated by "scientific" conjecture as explanation for all that is seen. Michael DiGiovine writes,

"the seer imposes a culturally and historically situated framework on the gazed-upon-place…the narrative—no matter how objectively scientific it attempts to be— is the product of that process" (96). However, the transmission of this information to the audience is also a part of the formula. The mass consumption of imperial texts attests to an audience in the throes of a cultural identity shift. Therefore, when travel narratives are made available to audiences it is at a time when curiosity about the world outside of Europe is not only growing, but also critical to the shaping of the European identity. This is why the identity of the traveler during this period is in some ways more important than what is contained in the text. The absorption and popularity of the information in travel narratives was a simple equation of supply and demand. In this way, knowledge of the unknown world outside of Europe became its own kind of social and epistemological currency:

> Travelers and "discoverers" were themselves informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen – an ocular emphasis that frequently makes the activity of reporting on the foreign or exotic one of the "informing" in the sense of espial or spying out. (Hall 88)

Foreign lands and bodies lend a blank page on which Europeans could craft notions of humanity. The identity of the traveler and his social position impacted the reception of cultural reports from abroad. As such, the traveler's position served to underwrite an imperial mode of social and moral stratification, particularly if the discourse was seated in a religious framework. How Europeans, particularly the English, desired to see themselves over the next two centuries would be fueled by the promise of the success exploration narratives presented. Interactions with native cultures provided an intriguing look into the "unordered" world outside of Europe. Therefore, this study looks at the ways travel writing gives form to the expansion and maintenance of

empire *dependent on the construction of race*.

Travel discourse about Africa is scaffolded in the following ways: topography, native culture, skin color, and social practices. Each level of this ethnographic scaffold conflates into an episteme defining native culture by a system of signifiers. Each level is connected; where the land is strange, so are the people. Where the skin is strange or dark so is the spirit. Where the spirit is dark, the need for Christ is justified, thereby making expansion not only a mission of wealth acquisition, but a moral mission as well. Textually, Africa, in every way, is diametrically opposite to Europe. The mystique of difference was the breeding ground for ideas that made Africa and its people strange. I suggest travel literature about Africa from this period asks the European to suspend their *disbelief* of fantasy and actively engage with the fiction presented. This means the audiences would have to accept without question the construction of the other as hedonistic, uncanny, and inferior. There could be no other way for colonization to have the effect it did without the participation of the European audience. On a subconscious level, the extraordinary image of the African evoked a willingness to engage in the fiction in order to make themselves real (i.e., in the fashion of a gentleman, good Christian, etc.), regardless, if they knew it or not. Cultural dissimilarity was negotiated by assigning it a moral code: "A man fulfills his proper function only by way of practical wisdom and moral excellence or virtue; virtue makes us aim at the right target and practical wisdom makes us use the right means" (Cefalu 62). Practical wisdom dictated the native was a natural heathen and needed intervention. Morality is one of the cornerstones of European superiority. Gayatri Spivak argues that it is within the absences present in the historical narrative, that the marginalized, the suppressed, and the subaltern resides. Difference as a construct is a social and political system. Both native and hegemonic identities are produced in the narratives. In other words, we must understand the making of the colonizer

creates the presence of the colonized, which are two systems of knowledge simultaneously created. Derrida goes further to say that the "system and non-system of difference cannot be conceived together," but I argue difference is a system that exists through semiotics and therefore is always present and always intersecting (Derrida 294). It is not that systems and non-systems of difference cannot be conceived together it is how systems are identified and accessed. According to Homi Bhaba, "cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements *of* culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force" (206). Derrida warns against using philosophy as an element of evidence, and I would agree because it is not so much a philosophical question as much as a question about how systems of knowledge intersect with each other.

The fields of force Bhaba describes are in the catalogs of observations where difference is present in everything from skin color to climate to male/female relationships. In this way, these texts work as mirrors for the audience. In the discovery of new and strange communities, the reader looks for his or herself to be reflected back. When it was not, there lay a space for discourses of power to emerge to quiet anxieties about what difference implied. Hence, why I believe the writer, the text, *and* its readership all undergo a rendering that co-constructs themselves, and the other. Fantasy and imagination produced images that became signifiers for African culture and agency because the "travel narrative is not the "authentic" or "objective" view of a site that it often masqueraded itself to be, but rather a social construction" (Mancall 13). Voices clamor for expression," and especially as an 'inscription' of communicative processes that exist, historically, between subjects in relations of power," there is a failure to recognize the African voice was not given a space in these ethnographies to authentically exist, speak, and perform (qtd in Lomperis 148).

Within early modern travelogues are complex constructions of Otherness as a necessary symptom of Europe's self-fashioning identity. As products of transatlantic and colonial discourses, travel narratives provide insight into how imperial rhetoric informed racial and cultural constructs during the Age of Exploration as well as offers images and discourse through which to see the European mindset about otherness and the respective process of creating a racial and cultural episteme that worked to subjugate native culture. As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters. Within early modern travelogues are complex constructions of Otherness as a necessary symptom of Europe's self-fashioning identity.

As products of transatlantic and colonial discourses, travel narratives provide insight into how imperial rhetoric informed racial and cultural constructs during the Age of Exploration as well as offers images and discourse through which to see the European mindset about otherness and the respective process of creating a racial and cultural episteme that worked to subjugate native culture. As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters Travel narratives were used as guides to inform decisions about maritime exploration and expansion, as cartographic and maritime technological advances made 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 in part because of reports from other travelers claiming to have traversed exotic lands full of riches and resources needed back home. As Patricia Parker explains, "travelers and "discoverers" were informers to a European audience, bringing reports of matters otherwise hidden and unseen" (88). However, it is the *accuracy* of this reporting that is in large

part responsible for how analyze race, stereotyping, and marginalization today. When read against the grain, the early modern travel narrative reveals a rhetorical trajectory of European identity self-fashioning. Stephen Greenblatt, however, cautions against using "self-fashioning" as an accurate term for the development of a cultural identity. Greenblatt writes, "self-fashioning acquires a new range of meanings: it describes the practice of parents and teachers; it is linked to manners or demeanor, particularly that of the elite...it suggests representation of one's nature or intention in speech or actions" (3).[1] However, my application of self-fashioning is at the heart of a social paradigm that relied on binaries of good/bad, Christian/infidel, and black/white in order to succeed. I present self-fashioning, the creation of the European ideal in identity-building, as a self-rendering based on sociocultural pressure for conformity. Hence, why I believe the writer, the text, *and* its readership all undergo a rendering that co-constructs themselves, and the other. This social ordering of the superior European and the inferior was a way to mediate transcultural influences threatening to decenter European ideals as the world became more diverse.

THIS IS A MESS – REVISING THIS WEEK

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[1] My use of the self-fashioning encompasses renaissance ideas of identity and nation building starting in the 14th century. The European Renaissance period saw an increase in interactions with the east and a transformation of intellectual pursuits that informed ways of thinking and behavior.

Since this period, we have come to understand culture as a fluid term; an amalgamation of experiences resulting from the social interaction of ethnic, religious, and racial contact zones. Though early modern travel narratives are a form of cultural reporting, European chronicles of foreign lands were based on an amalgamation of Eurocentric observations deeply rooted in colonial ideas about native populations, or the "other." Reports about African culture reveal the fixity of European social and cultural superiority and serve as "documents of critical historical understanding… comment[ing] critically on the historical conditions out of which they emerged" (Lomperis 147). Cultural dissimilarity was negotiated by leaning on Christian virtue and moral excellence. Travel discourse about Africa is scaffolded in the following ways: topography, native culture, skin color, and social practices. Each level of this ethnographic scaffold conflates into an episteme defining native culture by a system of signifiers. Each level is connected; where the land is strange, so are the people.

Chris Klippenstein
Shakespeare Association of America
"Early Modern Geographies of Race"
Abstract

The Welsh and the Moors:
Neighbourship and Displaced Geographies in *Edward I*

The dynamics between early modern neighbours are often considered in terms of the domestic and everyday, but this relationship also persistently appeared in discourse about the interactions between nations. This short, exploratory paper centers around the surprising conflation of Moors (and their landscapes) with Wales and Welsh conquest in George Peele's *Edward I* (1591). Dipping into non-theatrical texts, as well as plays, to suggest that discourse about neighbourship was often discourse about outsiders who were understood to be uncivilized and strange, I explore some of the possibilities that arise when Welsh and Moorish landscapes are brought curiously close together on the stage.