Too close and too distant? The neighbour in Shakespeare and a spatial and ethical (re)turn

Roberta Kwan

In this paper, I bring together *The Winter's Tale* with both spatial and ethical thinking to investigate the culturally powerful ethic of neighbourliness. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' If there is one biblical concept that lingers above all others in the social imaginary of today's West, this call to neighbourly love may be it. Transposed over recent centuries into a more secular key, neighbourliness carries a weight of expectations and anxieties that give the ethic and the figure of the neighbour central to it much emotional, rhetorical and political force.

In early modern England's religiously saturated culture, the biblical language of neighbourly love provided the idiom for that society's vision of community and the individual as a relational subject within it. Of course, the frequency with this language was invoked also suggests that conflict was as commonly experienced as peace. As in the twenty-first century, vexed neighbourly relations were a constant concern in Shakespeare's age and find expression in his plays.

Shakespeare's intense theatrical explorations of neighbourliness in *The Winter's Tale* invites reflection on dilemmas at the heart of his society that are strikingly recognisable today. Who is one's neighbour? That is, how geographically inclusive or exclusive is the designation 'neighbour'? What, if any, obligations do individuals and groups have towards this ambiguous other? How do neighbouring individuals and groups negotiate the tensions between trust and threat, hospitality and hostility? Can a neighbour be, on one hand, too close (with Nietzsche) or too distant (with Freud)? By addressing such questions, I locate this paper at the intersection of a spatially informed ethical (re)turn and an ethically informed spatial (re)turn in Shakespeare studies, and in so doing endeavour to cast new light on both subfields.

Elizabeth Hunter abstract for "Chapter 1, Witness: Shakespeare's Globe"

My paper for the seminar is an excerpt of the first body chapter for my current book project, "In the Story: Space and Spectatorship from Theatron to Augmented Reality." Intended for theatre and performance scholars working across subfields, the book maps a critical understanding of a mode of twenty-first century participatory spectatorship I call "enactive spectatorship." As I explain, four key elements—levers producers can pull, if you will— contribute to the creation and relative intensity of this spectatorial dynamic: a canonical source, a historically resonant site, an immersive performance context, and a production-specific economy that incentivizes some audience behaviors through concrete rewards, while simultaneously discouraging others.

The chapter from which my SAA paper is drawn focuses on Shakespeare's Globe in Bankside, London, built in the 1990s as a replica of the 1599/1613 Globe theatre owned in part by William Shakespeare. As most readers in this group are likely to know, the design and build process of the "new Globe" was notable for its integration of artistic endeavor and rigorous historical scholarship in service of an experimental approach to understanding Shakespeare's plays. After an explanation of the new Globe's reliance on geographic location and material culture to invoke the staging practices and audience reception of its historical referent, this chapter's analysis lingers on the attribute of historical resonance. The new Globe's popularity spans a period of time that includes three (and counting) digital revolutions, a global pandemic, the advent of the Anthropocene as fueled by climate change, and the radical gentrification of the surrounding neighborhood—a longevity that enables analysis of the flexibility of historical resonance as a driver of the spectatorial dynamic this book traces.

The chapter considers how the phenomenology of traveling to a reconstruction created through historicized materiality (i.e., flying across the world to behold the Globe's thatch roof) resonates in a post-lockdown time of deepfakes, virtual reality travel, and replicas created through materiality that is digitally driven (i.e., using 3D modeling to create multiple copies of Palmyra's Arch of Triumph, destroyed in 2015 by terrorists). As this chapter describes, the combination of touristic pilgrimage to "the great Globe itself" with the company's attachment of historical authenticity to materiality positions audience members as *religious witnesses* to the scripture of Shakespeare. Additionally, using the 2023 production of Shakespeare's bloody, witchy tragedy *Macbeth* as an example, the chapter reads the play's dramaturgy against spatial elements like seating configurations and universal lighting to demonstrate how the text embeds roles for audience members. In scenes like Macbeth's first admission of regicidal thoughts and Malcolm's closing monologue, for example, direct address and the architecture of an early modern playhouse work together to cast the audience in roles like ***accomplice*** and ***subject***.

As regards its relationship to the other chapters, my discussion of *Macbeth* in performance at the new Globe creates a link with the subsequent chapter, which examines *Sleep No More*. This internal repetition exemplifies the book's focus on texts from one canonical tradition (i.e., Western drama) as a control variable for foregrounding the impact spatial affordances have on audience participation.

Bodies in Space: Actors, Audiences, and Orientation in Shakespeare's Plays

Katherine Knowles

 In his plays, Shakespeare practiced place-naming to make connections to real world locations that would carry meaning for his audiences. Place-naming provided an orienting framework for Shakespeare to build upon, and these references created representations of space that would connect audience members and their experiences with the plays' spaces. However, place-naming alone is not enough to effectively produce space. Sara Ahmed argues, "Spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body."[1] Therefore, characters are required to steer the subjective responses to the information being relayed to the audience by responding to the layering of the fictional version of a place, the common known elements of that real world location, and the individual audience members' understanding of it. The references to actual locations allow the audience to gain a foothold in the text, but Shakespeare also incorporates ways for the characters to orient themselves through how they interact with space. The meanings created by these orientating factors can be compounded on or reinvented in performance, when actors embodying the roles of the characters layer their subjective relationship with the performance space onto the text while the audience participates in the embodied experience of playgoing. I explore Shakespeare's spatial practices through readings of Henri Lefebvre's theories on the production of space as well as Sara Ahmed's expansions on Lefebvre's understanding of orientation and how the subjective nature of a body's experience in space can illuminate additional, often alternative meanings.

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[1] Sara Ahmed. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 9.

Jonathan Baldo

Place as Palimpsest: Sites of Forgetting in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy

An Abstract for Gavin Hollis and Laura Williamson's seminar,

"(Re)turning to the Spatial Turn," SAA 2024

In the early modern period, perception of the past was closely tied to a sense of place. In Shakespeare's second tetralogy, however, it is the unstable and fluctuating relationship between place and memory that helps characterize the troubled reigns of Richard II and Henry IV. Richard II's and Henry IV's mistakes in governance and insufficient control of the kingdom are tied to their shared alienation from a sense of place. The plays about their reigns are dominated by two complementary places: Ravenspurgh, a name without a place, and the most memorable and localized place in all the history plays, the tavern in Eastcheap, a place without a name. Both represent places without a firm anchoring in memory. The series of plays concludes with a memorable convergence of place and memory after the Battle of Agincourt, followed by an epilogue that complicates Agincourt's functioning as a stable and reliable site of memory.

Exhausted Rivers and Corrupted Seas: Muddy Spaces in John Donne

Catherine Evans

St Gregory declared that the scriptures were a river 'both shallow and deep, in which the lamb may paddle and the elephant swim', a commonplace quoted in almost every early modern discussion of biblical interpretation. In John Donne's sermons rivers are rarely pure and free flowing, but ominously 'brackish' or 'exhausted… brought to such shallowness, as would beare no boats'. Similarly, his seas are not simply divided into the surface and the depths. They are instead filled with "wrinkles", "folds" and "ventricles" in which the "jelly of a Body drowned in the generall flood" can lurk. This paper explores the watery spatiality of Donne's sermons through the lens of ecocriticism, situating his preaching within the pollution crisis facing early modern England. The habitual use of sea coal, which released sulphur when it was burnt, was the second biggest cause of death in the early seventeenth century. As well as polluting the air, mining and transporting coal led to the fouling and clogging of rivers. Donne's sermons draw on a common understanding of polluted rivers, particularly those preached close to the Thames in London, described in John Stow's 1598 survey as full of 'dung, ordure, rubbish, rushes, Seacole dust, or any other thing noyant'. This paper will build on Laura Feldt and Graham Harvey's work on spatiality and religion to investigate the spatiality of aqueous spaces: particularly where water and land meet in muddy disarray.

SAA 2024 - Spatial Turn

ABSTRACT

Playhouse Districts in Shakespeare's London and the Spatial Turn

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This paper introduces "Shakespeare's Theaterscape: London Playhouse Districts 1576-1642," a three-year NEH funded research project that combines theater history with recent advances in GIS and database technology to explore four playhouses north of the Thames in early modern London. It then examines issues of spatiality as they relate to one of those theaters, the Fortune and its immediate surroundings in the parish of St. Giles without Cripplegate. It argues that early modern London playhouses faced challenges and conditions unique to the districts in which they were located and that the larger project's interdisciplinary approach intends to make an important contribution to research in the field.

Chiastic Space in *Hamlet*'s Mousetrap

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The English Renaissance public stage occupies a curious position in the history of theatrical space. In contrast to the medieval mystery stage which preceded it, which made use of literally and symbolically elaborate sets (e.g., Noah's ark, the mouth of hell), and the Restoration theatre that followed, with its illusionistic backdrops and perspective scenery, the Renaissance public stage was a relatively denuded space, relying mostly on language, gesture, and props to evoke a sense of place. Moreover, because onstage locations were required to represent multiple settings, this stage space was inherently fluid and phantasmagoric, hovering between realities real, imagined, represented, and remembered with every shift of scene and speech. However, just because there were no physical sets to ground settings and their relationships to each other does not mean that the English Renaissance public stage lacked topographic principles, strategies, and affordances. Relative location and patterned arrangement, along with conventional associations for different onstage locations, provided frameworks by which actors and audience members could locate themselves in fictional and real space, even if with occasionally dizzying results.

This essay considers a particularly rich example of this phenomenon in "The Murder of Gonzago" from *Hamlet*. Drawing on analogies to Robert Fludd's illustrations of memory theatres from *Utriusque Cosmi*, I argue that various spatial and conceptual relationships in Hamlet's play-within-a-play are 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 could also function as a topographic principle, translating relationships between characters, places, and events into stage pictures and diagrammatic formulae. As one might expect, given chiasmus's ancient pedigree, in some ways these formulae hearken to the past, drawing on premodern spatial epistemes. But redeployed and recontextualized within a quintessentially early modern space–the English Renaissance playhouse–chiasmus takes on new meanings, bound up with emerging scientific and eschatological attitudes toward space. I believe the distinctive species of spatiality that emerges from this kind of chiastic patterning provides a conceptual blueprint for *Hamlet* itself.