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New Directions in Material Space and Literary Production

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Abstract

The present introductory article presents comparative readings of each of the four pairs of case study articles. In it, four respondents each offer an in-depth analysis of the connections between a pair of articles and their resonance for the volume as a whole. Each respondent also gestures towards productive avenues for further research which are opened up by the articles in their pair, offering up new directions for the ever-expanding field of space and place studies.

Keywords: Colonial Histories, Female Community, Landscape, New Directions, Spatial Distance

1. *Introduction*

Our work is highly specialised. We exist within departments separated by disciplinary boundaries between history, English, or modern languages. We are early modernists or medievalists. We are cultural, political, social, intellectual, book, economic, or literary historians, but rarely all at once. We write about institutions or phenomena, events or long-term trends, specific texts or literary movements, drama or poetry, England or France, Europe or the wider world, and so on. Even within the specialised boundaries of studies of space and literary production, our expertise differs. One of the four of us knows a great deal about landscapes. Another studies women's mysticism. Still another is interested in buildings and carceral spaces. The final contributor is an expert in travel writing and cross-cultural encounters. How, then, might any one of us purport to give shape to a wider study of the links between material space and literary production?

With this sense of wonder in mind, the guest editors decided to use this introduction to comment upon what is included in the present volume and where scholars might turn in the future. To do so, the articles here have been grouped and divided into four thematic sections, as outlined in the preceding editorial. From a certain perspective, this organisation is artificial and arbitrary. All of the articles here direct their attention to a single theme. However, the opposite is also true. Despite being linked by a common overarching question about the relationship between material space and writing, each article explores this through very different case studies ranging across the late-fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries and between the British Isles and Africa and continental Europe and the Near East. Yet there is something to be gained by approaching these articles comparatively. To read the articles separately or all together is enlightening, but to read an article in conversation with another article, even when it seems to explore a markedly different topic under the wider umbrella of the issue's theme, allows a sort of tectonic collision from which new questions and approaches emerge. In other words, to read these articles in relation to each other does not simply invite comparison or search for common threads; it creates new space for new questions altogether.

In light of the chronological, geographic, and thematic scope of the contributions to this special issue, the volume's guest editors enlisted colleagues to interrogate these articles and to suggest how the questions they raise might form the basis for the continued development of work on the subject of space and writing. Each of us has focused on a single section of the volume and has produced a short critical response that outlines the contributions each section makes to the field and the new lines of enquiry it raises. First, Chloe Fairbanks responds to Emily Naish's and Felicity Sheehy's articles on human engagement with the land. Olena Danylovych addresses Lena Vosding's and Sarah Bansbach Valles' analysis of women's religious spaces and the writing that these spaces are informed by or produce. Catherine Jenkinson reflects on the themes of spatial difference that Chloë Houston and Jackie Watson raise in their articles about writing that engages with spaces past and present. Finally, Natalya Din-Kariuki offers a reading of Kate Driscoll's and Marcelo José Cabarcas Ortega's analysis of (de)colonial thought in two very different sorts of texts. The result is what follows.

2. *Working With/On the Land*

Simon Estok infamously diagnosed the early modern period with a 'generalised fear or contempt for the natural world and its inhabitants' which he termed 'ecophobia' (2011, 4). For Estok, this contempt is inextricably linked to man's biblically ordained domination over both the natural world and other animals. While neither Felicity Sheehy nor Emily Naish takes a technically ecophobic approach to the study of early modern literature, the environmental and climatic uncertainty and unpredictability in which Estok locates ecophobia are central to both of their articles – and, increasingly, to any environmental or agricultural study of the period. Their work builds upon recent advances in agrarian and environmental history to demonstrate the more nuanced, practical ways in which early moderns worked with the volatile environment in which they lived.

Both articles share an interest in and emphasis on the agential force of the non-human in shaping human experience, reminding us to remain attuned to the ways in which humans were not the only – or indeed the primary – actants in early modern space and place. Both Tusser and Drayton are, they show, keenly aware of the powerful unpredictability of the natural world. Rather than resist or attempt to dominate that world, they seek ways to work with and around it. Drayton's poem may be rife with concern about excessive human intervention, but

Naish notes that it nevertheless allows for some degree of human intercession, treading a middle ground between the idealisation of the natural world and the ecophobia Estok associates with the period. Similarly, Sheehy makes a persuasive case that Tusser deliberately mimics the unpredictability of the natural world through his unconventional formal choices, offering a bracing counter to a critical tradition which has viewed agrarian poetry like Tusser's as mere 'agrarian book[s] of jingles' or 'collection[s] of doggerel' (2006, 160; 1996, 146). Sheehy's interest in the ways we may have misunderstood Tusser's poetic craft is reflected in Naish's identification of an underexplored crossover in early modern studies between the spatial and the ecocritical. What both articles implicitly reject, then, is a binary approach to questions of value and agency, whether literary or environmental.

As such, Sheehy and Naish represent a vital new wave of early modern scholarship which attends seriously to the respective values of the non-human (e.g. Erica Fudge, Karen Raber, Holly Dugan) and non-literary (e.g. Scott Oldenburg, Jessica Rosenberg, Carrie Griffin) worlds. Literary criticism has historically downplayed the importance of the non-human and the non-literary, treating both animals and practical texts such as Tusser's as little more than contextual sources for canonical texts by poets and dramatists such as Shakespeare and Spenser. In recent decades, however, the scholars mentioned above have spearheaded an effort to re-centre both the non-human and the non-canonical in our study of the period, alongside advances in the blue humanities by Steve Mentz, Dan Brayton, and Laurence Publicover which remind us, as Naish does here, that ecocriticism is more than just a myopic focus on the 'green' humanities. In many ways, then, the articles in this section are only the tip of the iceberg – much remains to be explored in, around, and above the natural world in and about which early moderns wrote.

Taken together, Sheehy and Naish offer a valuable blueprint for expanding the ways in which we read these texts, both alongside each other and in the context of the material and environmental conditions in which they were produced. In highlighting the contingency of the human, both Sheehy and Naish and the early modern poets they discuss encourage us to continue moving beyond a strictly anthropocentric view of the natural world in both our personal and professional practice. Now that the value of attending to the essential embeddedness of the human, non-human, and textual worlds is becoming steadily more apparent, our hope is that the articles in this section will stimulate further critical research into these previously disregarded but now burgeoning fields. Further work on the poetic and literary value of practical texts is one obvious avenue for future research; although significant valuable work exists on genres and topics including cookery books, or the practical poetry of the self-styled Water Poet John Taylor, many other genres remain underexplored. What literary merit might we find in midwifery texts, for example? In farrier's manuals? Fencing guides? Likewise ripe for further study is a wider swathe of the colour spectrum of the environmental humanities, from the depths of the early modern ocean to the storm clouds in its sky. Finally, as Gabriel Egan suggests in *Green Shakespeare*, early modern texts which engage with humanity's relationship with, attitudes about, or obligations toward that natural world enable us to 'interrogat[e] … our ideas about our relations to one another and to the world around us. As such they help us think clearly about what is at stake in those relations' (2006, 4). The capaciousness of – and debate surrounding – ecocriticism and related critical terms reminds us that the study of human-nonhuman relations is both presentist and historicist. It is to be hoped that Sheehy's and Naish's work will encourage further scholarship which engages both seriously and responsibly with that mutual entanglement, offering both a historical and an ethical approach to environmental questions.

Nor were such questions limited to the human realm. As Alexandra Walsham (2011) has noted, the landscape was both indelibly connected to and profoundly shaped by the religious changes that swept Europe throughout the late medieval and early modern periods. The landscape was a key site of attempts to negotiate humanity's shifting relationship to the divine during and after the Reformation. Where Sheehy and Naish consider the ways in which the practical manual labour of (frequently male) actors affected and was shaped by the natural world, then, Lena Vosding and Sarah Banschbach Valles take a leaf from Walsham's book in their consideration of the role material spaces played in the religious lives of early modern women.

3. *The Spaces and Places of Religious Women's Communities*

True to their name, reformation movements brought sweeping changes to the devotional landscape of late medieval and early modern Europe. However, these changes were not absolute, as shown by Lena Vosding and Sarah Banschbach Valles, who shed light on the lives and devotional practices of women in religious communities in England and continental Europe across the Reformation threshold. Vosding delineates the soundscape of the reformed Dominican nuns' convent of St Katharina in late medieval Nürnberg, demonstrating how sound shaped convent life and connected the cloistered nuns to the city. Valles, for her part, offers a re-appraisal of Aemilia Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' that casts the entirety of her œuvre, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), as the creation and enactment of a female religious community. Both analyses are grounded in the geographies of Nürnberg and Cookham, highlighting the importance of spatiality for constructing and maintaining community identity. Working within the 'spatial turn' that has shaped literary and historical studies over the past several decades, they reveal how generative this approach continues to be.[1] Though Vosding and Valles focus on different times and places, their papers are highly resonant, emphasising women's agency in shifting social and religious contexts.

Lena Vosding's sensitive analysis of the Nürnberg *Notel*, or sacristan's notebook, provides insight into the activity and organisation of the nuns' lives at the Dominican convent of St Katharina following the Observant reform. Vosding shows how sounds such as songs, knocks, and especially the ringing of different bells, accompanied rituals and routines, modulated behaviour, and created the possibility of interaction with communities beyond the convent's walls. Moreover, the sounds of the *Notel* suggest the nuns' independence from male clerical authority, as they are described to determine their own schedule and liturgical practices, retaining regional customs alongside adherence to the ideals of the Observant reform. Taken together, the convent's sounds served as an important marker of community, as they not only helped structure the Dominican nuns' lives, but allowed them to stake an aural claim in Nürnberg's soundscape, asserting and defining their community within this urban space. Their influence travelled further still, with their way of life serving as a successful model for other reformed convents to follow. Despite the strict enclosure and discipline imposed by the reform, the *Notel* reveals the margins of agency exercised by the St Katharina community, both within and beyond its walls.

The depth of detail gleaned from descriptions of the daily running of the convent is impressive, demonstrating the import of sound analysis within medieval literature, an approach that has been growing in popularity in recent years. Though similar forays within medieval literary studies have tended to focus on the implications of mystical sounds, Vosding's approach shows how much can be gained from analysing material sounds.[2] Indeed, her painstaking analyses vividly reconstruct a convent that, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, underwent profound transformation and, following the Second World War, disappeared altogether. The unassuming and pragmatic *Notel* is thus shown to be a veritable treasure trove of information, and Vosding's forthcoming critical edition will be a valuable resource for further research into this remarkable community.

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[1] A non-exhaustive list of recent studies includes Hanawalt and Kobialka 2000; Raguin and Stanbury 2005; Davies *et al.* 2006; Boulton *et al.* 2018; Blud *et al.* 2019.

Moving from sound to space, from late medieval Nürnberg to early modern Cookham, and from an enclosed religious community to a textual community, we now turn to Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deux Rex Judaeorum*. In her article, Sarah Banschbach Valles examines the multi-layered implications of space in Lanyer's poetry collection, and in so doing, overturns several pre-conceived ideas about her writing. The geographical location of Cookham is shown to be more ambiguous and indeterminate than previously thought, emphasising its metaphorical significance over the actual physical location. Indeed, for Lanyer and the Cliffords, the grounds of Cookham are particularly evocative because they invited meditation on Christ's Passion and motivated the writing of the poems. Valles suggests that, when considered in its entirety, the *Salve Deus* invites readers to engage in affective meditation on the Passion, and in so doing, to enter a spiritual community of religious women. Physical space inspires written space, which in turn inspires spiritual space.

Throughout Valles' analyses, one cannot help but notice the distinctly medieval flavour of some key features of Lanyer's poetry. While it has previously been noted by Cristina Malcolmson that Aemilia Lanyer would likely have had access to Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* (Malcolmson 2002, 21), this potential influence is lent more weight by Valles' identification of Lanyer's community-building impulse. Indeed, Valles' remark that Lanyer's book 'can also be read as a commentary on how ritually and spatially constructed community is essential to unraveling detrimental narratives about gender' can very well apply to Pizan's famous work (*infra*, 101). Conversely, Lanyer's invocation of various patrons in the *Salve Deus* dedication poems might be seen as the construction of a different sort of city of ladies. On another note, Lanyer's detailed, affective descriptions of Christ's Passion appear to be inspired by the medieval tradition of affective meditation, one example of which is *The Orcherd of Syon*, translated from Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*.[3] As much is argued by Nancy Bradley Warren, who identifies a continuity between Lanyer and Catherine of Siena through their emphasis on incarnational piety (Warren 2010, 19-59).[4] Furthermore, by conceptualising Cookham as an environment that induces meditation, one is reminded of the English translator's prologue to *The Orcherd*, which encourages the reader to perceive the text as a vineyard among whose rows one may roam at their leisure, stopping to savour its various fruits.[5] The walks described in Lanyer's poems evoke a similar meditative journey, albeit one inspired by physical reality.

The medieval resonances of Lanyer's poetry, as well as her emphasis on female communities, suggests the possibility of reading Lanyer as part of a broader community of progressive women writers of the late medieval-early modern period. Christine de Pizan and Catherine of Siena were not only influential, but radical and politicised, challenging social and religious norms, and exercising a high degree of agency in a patriarchal world. It is easy to see how Lanyer might fit into this category as well. Though Valles rightly warns against reading Lanyer in comparison with other poets, particularly male poets, considering her in dialogue with other influential women may further broaden our understanding of her writing.

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[2] A detailed overview of recent developments in pre-modern and modern sound studies is provided in Boynton, Kay, Cornish, and Albin (2016), with case-studies of varieties of sound in medieval literature. In an elaboration on this theme, Denis Renevey and Tamás Karáth are preparing an edited volume on sound and mysticism in late medieval England (forthcoming).

[3] A detailed study of the life and afterlives of Catherine of Siena is provided in Brown 2019.

[4] Similarly to Valles, Warren identifies Lanyer's creation of a textual female community in *Salve Deus*.

[5] For a detailed analysis of the translator's prologue, see Alakas 2002.

Whether we consider them as part of broader networks or not, the women in Lanyer's poetry and in the medieval convent of St Katharina were inextricably linked to, and found meaning in, their immediate environments. By grounding their analyses in the geographies of Nürnberg and Cookham, Vosding and Valles demonstrate how considerations of space add further dimension to our understanding of historical reality. Their detailed case-studies highlight women's agency, self-determination and community-building despite the rigid ideals imposed upon them in the wake of different reformation movements. Though produced in distinct historical and cultural contexts, the sacristan's *Notel* and Aemilia Lanyer's poetry attest to the enduring role of place in shaping writing – and to the reciprocal power of writing to shape communities, forging connections across space and time.

Connections across space take centre stage in the third section of the present volume, in which Jackie Watson and Chloë Houston move from the spaces that shaped the written word to the way that writing brought certain spaces vividly to life for its readers. The letter writers Watson considers seek, like those addressed by Vosding and Valles, to build and articulate communities shaped by or taking place within particular spaces – albeit to differing degrees of success. Houston looks further afield, exploring the ways in which writing shaped early modern understandings of different countries and cultures. The spatial spectrum of early modern writing was broad, indeed.

4. *Changing Places/Spaces*

Upon first look, it is not quite clear where the overlap might be between studies of epistolarity in Jacobean court scandal on one hand and mid- to late-seventeenth century European travel writing about Safavid Iran and its wider region on the other. But closer inspection shows that the pairing is meaningful. At their core, the subjects of both Jackie Watson's article 'Real and Imagined Space: The Rhetoric of Thomas Overbury's Imprisonment' and Chloë Houston's ' "Printers they know none": The Material Text and Textual Culture in Seventeenth-Century European Travel Writing About Persia' are fundamentally found in Watson's title: both are explorations of places 'real and imagined'.[6] Both address texts that simultaneously describe and manufacture physical place and space for their readers, primarily through the communication of spatial difference. Watson and Houston are examining the ways early modern writers wrote about places they experienced or heard about, but they are also considering the ways these texts brought real places to their readers, sometimes in ways that transformed them into imagined spaces.[7]

The history of the public scandal surrounding the Overbury murder is by now well covered, but Watson's article shifts attention to the creation and consumption of letters related to Overbury's fall as dramatic inventions that require literary analysis, not just historical examination as 'evidence' of Overbury's prison experience.[8] This is not really an article about prison writing. It is less about the material conditions of writing than about letters' capacity to embody and

[6] See Stock 2013 and 2025; Hannan 2012.

[7] See Matthee 2009.

[8] See Bellany 2002; Lindley 1993; Watson 2024.

create space through emphasis on contrasting spaces and manipulating their readers' emotions.[9] Textual spaces linked to physical spaces. If, however, as Milton's Satan suggested, 'The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of hell, a hell of Heaven', the letters Watson studies are their 'own place', too (1.254-255).

Through their letters, Overbury, his interlocutors, and those reporting on his incarceration created a separation between courtly and carceral spaces and between power and subjugation that at once corresponded to physical and political realities and was more distinct in its literary creation than it was in its corporeal reality. As Watson points out, the Tower was both a prison and an administrative centre of government, 'a site of royal power, just as other court spaces were' (*infra*, 119). Though it is true that Overbury was kept away from the business at the Tower during his incarceration, the choice of the Tower as the place of his imprisonment is itself exceptional. Rather than being sent to live with 'common criminals' in Newgate or the Fleet, he continued to occupy space within, yet just beyond access to, the spaces of power he had formerly inhabited.[10] Though James Daybell has recently argued that 'viewed spatially the early modern built environment – monasteries, prisons, hospitals, schools, or universities, even domestic dwellings – facilitated or enforced separation, removing individuals from the rest of society in order to purify, punish, cure, contain, and educate', the gulf between the courtly spaces of Westminster, Greenwich, and Royston versus the Tower prison was neither as wide nor as glaring as it seems (2025, 29-30).

Houston's survey of the relationship between forms of literary production and place and space similarly examines the ways in which writers moved between spaces. In exploring what European travellers and cartographers wrote about the areas that now make up parts of Iran, Turkey, and Central Asia – broadly conceived as 'Persia' by early modern European writers –, Houston considers European understandings of the 'material space' of what many scholars refer to as Safavid Iran and especially its 'literary space' and culture as she reminds us that the culture of print was not universal (*infra*, 130-131). Less interested in the travel narratives than in broader conceptions of Persian literary culture, Houston argues for decentring Europe from the history of early modern literature to reassess the ways in which the materialities of textual production differed across time and space (*infra*, 130, 134, and 136).[11] Her wide-ranging study shows how travellers used discussions of Persian literary culture and its differences from European print culture to describe and define the material space of early modern 'Persia' for European readers. Both Houston and Watson study texts that construct stark contrasts between the places they describe and the places their authors have left, between the familiar and the unfamiliar. In doing so, these texts blur and complicate the line between what is real and what is imagined.

Print was far less revolutionary in early modern Islamic cultures than it was in western Europe, yet anglophone studies of early modern literature rarely step beyond the confines of the world of print (Blair 2010, 26-28; MacLean 2019, 62). Resisting earlier scholars' tendencies to associate differing cultures of print with 'backwardness', Houston calls for the examination of Persian book culture on its own terms, not merely in relation to contemporary western European models (*infra*, 134 and 140). Watson's writers mostly discuss spaces within the urban landscape of wider London, yet those local courtly spaces were no more accessible to the public than 'Persia' was, thousands of miles away.

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[9] On early modern English prison writing and space and place, see Ahnert 2013, esp. chapter 2.

[10] See Ahnert 2013, 18.

[11] See Brancaforte 2018.

Both scholars establish themselves as literary historians, and together they are more interested in the contents of these texts than in their materiality, pushing readers to consider the ways writers construct space, even when ostensibly writing about 'real' places. Historians (in the narrower sense of the term) might have different questions here beginning with textual provenance and the practicalities of both travel to and communication in Safavid Iran and Tower incarceration. Most of the letters Watson studies survive in scribal copies rather than in the original hands (Bellany 2002, 90; Watson 2024, 112).[12] The letters' contents are in themselves informative, not least about the rhetorical strategies, training, and emotional manipulations Watson identifies, though they might also be understood as pages within a copied scribal text. These codical spaces within commonplace books and miscellanies are at least as important as the spaces and places that appear within the margins of the letters themselves.[13] The same is true for Houston's travel accounts, which existed within a wider European culture of print and, specifically, travel writing. Overbury's supplications to Robert Carr about his ill health are relatively standard fare for prison letters, though Overbury's subsequent murder makes them particularly intriguing. Overbury's foreshadowing of his own death is remarkable, so much so that additional investigation into the history of these letter copies might be useful. Watson's arguments about the letters' linguistic strategies raise questions that extend beyond the Overbury case. Indeed, one wonders how much prison letters like these reflect actual experience or were primarily rhetorical tools. The same is true for newsletter accounts in which writers claimed to be eyewitnesses, even as it remains unclear whether their texts reflect presence in various court spaces or if they were writing themselves into the spaces where the action was occurring (Watson p. 114; see also Watson 2018, 51). Houston's travellers' accounts present the same problem, since she notes that not all reflect actual visits to 'Persia' (Houston p. 132).[14] Where, then, is the line between literary construction and historical evidence?[15]

Watson and Houston lay the groundwork for future study that might extend in various directions, including incorporation of other perspectives, contemporary reception of the texts in consideration, and material form. Overbury and others were writing to specific people, but they were also speaking in the form of copied letters to a wider public eager for gossip and news.[16] Houston's travel accounts also speak to a distinctly European audience, and even amid Houston's work in reframing Persian book culture, it remains true that we are studying this through a European lens, through accounts of outsiders looking in, rather than through texts written from a more local or 'insider' perspective.[17] Scholars may now wish to use this study as a basis for considering how these representations manifested themselves in imaginative literature and wider cultural understandings of 'Persia'.[18] Studying the reception of these texts both immediately after their creation and in subsequent decades might allow us to think about how readers conceived space as much as writers did, too.

Both Watson and Houston are thinking about the ways in which place and space affect culturally derived forms of writing – letters that use cultural knowledge and codes to elicit emotional responses in readers and travel accounts considering deviation from the European model of print. The focus on writers' experience of space and the ways in which texts reflect the places and spaces writers inhabit and the places and spaces from which they had previously come connects the two articles. They call for continued examination of the communication of spatial difference. Together, they push us to ponder how space and culture affect textual form – whether in the process of production or the codes of understanding – and the ways in which textual forms frame, describe, and even create space.

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[12] See Daybell 2012, 2014 and 2025.

[13] See Daybell 2014, 60-61, 68; Daybell 2012, chapter 7.

[14] See also Brancaforte 2018, 131; Brentjes 2009, 179; Matthee 2009, 169.

[15] On the tension between representation and 'material experience', see Stock 2013, 525-526; 2015, 7-8; 2025, 590-592.

[16] See Bellany 2002, 133; Schneider 2005, 23; Bellany 2007, 1140, 1152-1153; Daybell 2012, 192-193, 202-204, 210; 2014, 58, 67-68; Watson 2024, 31-32.

[17] On these travel accounts, see Matthee 2012.

[18] Brentjes 2009 studies the production of travel accounts of Safavid Iran.

In many ways, the two essays which comprise the present volume's final section take up Watson's and Houston's call for further attention to how spatial difference functions and is articulated in early modern writing. Marcelo José Cabarcas Ortega and Kate Driscoll are both interested in the political dimensions of spatial and cultural difference, and how textual and visual forms can be used to think more broadly – and with greater nuance – about colonial and decolonial histories. In our consideration of the material spaces of early modern writing, Cabarcas Ortega and Driscoll remind us that we cannot ignore the politicisation of those spaces.

5. *Imagery, Centre, and Periphery*

Questions of space, place, and writing are bound up with those of power. This is particularly true in contexts of colonial domination, in which the mobilities of those living under colonial rule are tightly limited and controlled. For that reason, travel and other forms of mobility, when undertaken by colonised peoples, can constitute a kind of anti-colonial resistance: an insistence on moving through spaces and occupying places from which they have been excluded. Yet recovering these alternative histories of travel and mobility is far from a straightforward task. The archive, broadly conceived, has largely centred the triumphalist narratives of European colonial travellers, while scholarship has conceptualised travel and mobility in terms which, inadvertently or otherwise, reinforce this triumphalism and erase the agencies of non-Europeans (Din-Kariuki and van Meersbergen 2024). By bringing theories of space and place into dialogue with colonial and decolonial histories and a range of textual, visual, oral, and statuary sources, the articles by Marcelo José Cabarcas Ortega and Kate Driscoll offer exemplary models of how to think about space, and the politics and poetics of human movement through space, differently. While the authors focus on diverse geographies and materials – Cabarcas Ortega examining contested and conflicting representations of Queen Njinga of Matamba in late seventeenth-century Capuchin chronicles, and Driscoll analysing articulations of utopian and decolonial thought in Torquato Tasso's sixteenth-century epic *Gerusalemme liberata* – the approaches they take are complementary and mutually illuminating. Together, they map the theoretical and methodological directions in which scholarship on material space could go next.

Both authors take an expansive approach to their choice and use of sources. Differing disciplinary priorities and paradigms mean that scholars often focus on certain kinds of sources at the expense of others. For example, there can be a tendency for mainstream scholarship on histories of diplomacy to focus primarily on sources drawn from institutional contexts and produced by a specific set of actors – such as reports and correspondence kept by diplomats and government officials – while marginalising other accounts or depictions of transcultural contact, particularly those of the more imaginative or speculative sort. Scholars of literature and art, on the other hand, are often not as attentive as they could be to the connections between their objects of study and, say, diplomatic and mercantile accounts, including texts which do not conform to conventional definitions of literature or literariness at all. Yet as Cabarcas Ortega's study of Njinga shows, diplomatic and military engagements between Central West Africa and

European imperial authority involved extensive negotiations of both material and symbolic power, as illustrated by the competing interpretations of Njinga's baptism and by her postcolonial reception in Angola and Brazil. Driscoll's discussion of Tasso, similarly, reveals the extent to which poetic forms and epistemologies inflected, and were inflected by, accounts of global navigation, including travelogues and diplomatic reports relating to Christopher Columbus' voyage. Relatedly, the authors demonstrate the importance of aesthetics, and questions of form and genre, to the study of space. Driscoll explains why the genre of epic, and to some extent romance, are so central to Tasso's undertaking to reimagine New World 'discovery' as well as his efforts to envision a world before or without colonisation, while Cabarcas Ortega argues that devices such as narrative and plot are key to both the operations of imperial projects and to acts of resistance. Finally, Cabarcas Ortega and Driscoll highlight the roles played by women, fictional and real, in literatures and histories of mobility and material space. In so doing, they offer a necessary corrective to the marginalisation of women's mobility in early modern studies (Fuller 2019) while also prompting scholarly inquiry on space to interrogate more closely the relationships between space and constructions of gender, race, and nationhood.

These articles, and the entire volume, thus make it clear that the study of material space and literary production in the early modern period necessitates a rethinking of the hierarchical frameworks through which space has traditionally been organised and understood. It is a project which demands capacious and creative thinking: collaborations between scholars working in different disciplines; a broader, even eclectic, selection of sources; a negotiation of the local and the global; an acknowledgement of the entanglement of aesthetics and politics; and a commitment to foregrounding the people, places, and perspectives historically excluded from the archive. This issue has, in other words, expanded and enriched the conceptual spaces in which we can collectively move.

6. *Conclusion*

The wide-ranging studies here show the extent to which scholars can and should continue to ponder, pursue, and push the boundaries of analysis of space and place in early modern writing. From the Berkshire countryside to the Tower of London's prison, from late medieval Nürnberg to Tasso's poetic Jerusalem and what are now Iran and Angola, the articles in the present volume of *JEMS* show that spatial analysis continues to bear fruit for both historical and literary study and opens up the possibility of interdisciplinary collaboration between the two. Rich and nuanced exploration of the local and everyday alongside the exceptional and 'faraway' produces new ways of thinking about writers like Tasso, Lanyer, and Tusser whom scholars of early modern history and literature know well. Crucially, though, these articles also show how much there is to be learned about writers we know less well and for texts so often excluded from the early modern literary canon on the basis of their presumed lack of literary merit. The early modern world produced plays and poems, but it also produced ethnographical description and epistolary texts, among other forms of writing. A sacristan's handbook like the one Vosding studies was more palpable both in its materiality and in its constant use as a guide and negotiation of prescriptions and local realities than even the best known 'literary' texts of the following two centuries. Though widely denigrated by literary scholars for decades, Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandrie* was 'a Tudor best-seller', outselling poetry by now canonical writers such as Sidney, Shakespeare, and Spenser (see Grigson 1984, xviii). Together, these articles challenge us to be at once more precise and yet more inclusive of what exactly we mean by 'material space' or even 'literary production'. In a period responding to the eruption of print and burgeoning long-distance travel, the early modern world continues to offer seemingly endless opportunities for interpretation and reinterpretation. As we continue to think about the tension and complementation of print and scribal production, real and imagined space, spaces occupied and spaces left behind, places familiar and unknown, and even of space, place, and writing, we can only conclude that the articles which appear in the present volume raise more questions than answers. Attempting to respond to our own curiosity about the relationship between material space and literary production has failed to provide definitive answers. Instead, the present issue of *JEMS* offers something much more exciting. Far from declaring that the investigation into space and writing can be marked as complete or that these queries have been asked and answered, the present issue of *JEMS* suggests that the spatial turn remains in its infancy even after decades. The contributions published in the present volume have opened up a host of questions and widen the lens of spatial analysis instead of focusing it more tightly. So, where will we go next?

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