



Of Monsters, Foreigners and Distant Lands: Confining *Otherness* in Middle High German Literature

Erica Passoni

Written medieval European works abound with depictions of monstrosities and foreign peoples. The German-speaking lands are of no exception. The two categories share one specific characteristic, one of being at the margins of the European civilization. Middle High German literature borrows from encyclopedic entries, theological debates, and cartography to construct enclosed spaces that strictly separate the courtly society from embodiments of *otherness*.

Reading such spaces with Yuriy Lotman's concept of *the border*, offers us a medium to understand spatial segregation of all that is foreign — monsters included — in the literary cosmos. In his semiotics of space, the border is an inviolable element that divides the literary space into two fundamentally divergent parts. The Foucauldian concept of the *heterotopia* will also be central for the characterization of the spaces of confinement in which our medieval monstrous and foreign characters live.

Opening remarks

Rodney D. Priestley

Dean of the Graduate School

Brigid Doherty

Director of Graduate Studies, German

Friday

March 31, 2023

ROUNDTABLE

Rocky Mathey

Madison 202

10:30–11:00 AM

Opening remarks

11:00–11:10 AM

Xiaoyao Guo

11:10–11:20 AM

Elisa Purschke

11:20–11:30 AM

Erica Passoni

11:30 AM–12:00 PM

Q&A

LUNCH

12:00 PM

Palmer House



SCHEDULE

Space: Production, Mobilization, Confinement

Space is more than just a homogeneous backdrop, an inert environment or a passive infrastructure supporting, surrounding, and facilitating human movement and action anonymously and inconspicuously: Rather, mediating the production and reproduction of human relations (Lefebvre), containing the making and circulation of knowledge (Martin), as well as establishing regimes of sensory experience (Rancière), space is continuously shaped by and in turn shaping historical, social, and cultural boundaries (Lotman).

This roundtable, featuring reflection pieces by graduate students from various stages of our program, explores epistemic and aesthetic practices implied in or responding to the production, mobilization and confinement of space across theoretical, cultural-historical, and geopolitical contexts.

We welcome you most warmly to join in and look forward to a rich discussion!

—Xiaoyao Guo, Erica Passoni, Elisa Purschke

German
Department
Princeton



Aestheticizing Landscape, Militarizing Landscape: Reading Charles Filiger's *Landscape at le Pouldu*

Xiaoyao Guo

A mystic and a recluse to Paul Gauguin and his circle at Pont-Aven around fin de siècle, Charles Filiger is mostly known, if not famous, for his symmetrical, ornamental canvases on religious themes. *Landscape at le Pouldu* (c. 1892), however, serves as one example of his long-ignored landscape paintings with all its peculiarity: the large color fields, coupled with horizontal stratification as well as procession of land, sea, and sky, not only suggest a congenial pursuit with synthetism, but points to a concern with perspective and abstraction, presentation and representation expressed within and through the technic(al)ity of landscape, which always already functions as a sensory regime as well as a site of encounter, conflict, and mediation. What does it mean for one to see a landscape while already being in it? A landscape aesthetic, as tentatively and provocatively formulated here, seems to suggest an aesthetic of non-belonging, and thus vision and visuality warring and militarized in its own operation.



Common Places: The Impulse of Proletarian Theater

Elisa Purschke

"To proletarianize the devices is to make them commonplace, to condense them to universal-organizational means." — This programmatic, brought forth by Soviet critic and artist Boris Arvatov in a 1922 article on post-revolutionary theater, condenses the premises of an idiosyncratic approach toward the democratization and bottom-up mobilization of cultural production which formed under the umbrella of the Proletarian Culture movement (or Proletkul't), an organization active during the Interwar Period in the Soviet Union as well as Weimar Germany. This paper queries some of the formal consequences incited by the 'proletarianization' of theatrical practices. It traces how the most distinctive feature of the Proletkul't's collective approach to acting, the principle of 'self-activity', and the ensuing restructuring of the dramatic space of appearance, interacted with a conception of social transformation that crucially implied a reconfigured praxeology of space.