Kristen Poole. *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama.*
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Kristen Poole's new book sits at the meeting point of a number of scholarly disciplines that are particularly vibrant at the moment when made to work imaginatively together. Among them are, at their broadest, geography, history, and literature, and within those wide categories her work is particularly concerned with the specific fields of cartographic studies, magical studies, and studies of the early scientific world of natural philosophy. *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* innovatively brings all of these together to focus on the space of the early modern theater — but, crucially, the "geography of the supernatural and the afterlife, the geography of heaven and hell" as Poole puts it (3), as well as the evident physical space surrounding actors and audience.

Poole is not interested in reworking recent debates about the cartography of nationalism or overseas discovery, fascinating though these are. Instead she asks a number of good and new questions. What other kinds of space did early modern people believe to be important as they went about their daily lives? Where did they think they had come from, spatially, and where did they think they were going after death? Where were heaven and hell, and where was the world of the spirit, the devil, the ghost? How were these spaces made manifest and represented in the theater? The Elizabethan theater was, after all, very frequently concerned with the supernatural — from Hamlet's father's ghost to *Macbeth*'s witches — and its dramatists often had to consider how best to locate supernatural creatures and beings in relation to other characters and to the audience, which was to be chilled, instructed, or amused by them.

As Poole explains, the early modern period had to negotiate recent Reformation changes in notions of supernatural space. Purgatory, for example, had disappeared according to Protestant ideology, causing "a sense of cosmic disorientation" (6). We are used to this knowledge in general terms, of course, but how did it affect specific understandings of space and spirit in relation to one another? Again, how did changing notions of the body — in an era moving towards understanding it as a mechanical organism — affect the representation of its place and the space it took up in the world? Where were new boundaries located as the world of Spenserian mutability moved toward that of the neatness of geometry and rigid scientific laws? In sections titled "Measuring God" (172) and "Mapping Purgatory" (95), Poole explores these questions with subtlety and energy. Yet she also has a sense of humor about the big ideas that motivate her work, so that, for instance, one section's title echoes the real estate agent's mantra: "location, location, location" (99).

Poole sums up her work by stating that she is aiming to "bring together the 'religious turn' and the 'spatial turn' of recent early modern studies" (219) and the book succeeds admirably in this by no means easy task. Not only must Poole engage with extremely complex and shifting notions of the body, space, and map, but she

must also bridge a number of wide disciplinary gaps: none of this is straightforward. Finally, she must make her book readable, avoiding the literary clotting that can occur when scholars attempt to discuss highly abstract notions in highly theoretical prose. What makes Poole's work so good — and *Supernatural Environments* shares this with her previous work *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* — is her ability to examine subtle distinctions and flexible concepts in accessible language without losing any of the necessary intensity and intellectual clarity.

This is an important, clever, and well-written book that makes a striking contribution to early modern studies, and its epilogue offers a vision of a "re-enchanted geography" (219) that is richly suggestive and should inspire new thinking about the period. We need not, Poole concludes, see the Renaissance as a time of disenchanting drift toward a spiritless environment, mapped and therefore controlled by human science. Instead, the geometric, geographic, and cartographic can be seen as different modes of thinking about the divine and the supernatural. That is a liberating insight.

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