

Gina Bloom

**“MY FEET SEE BETTER THAN MY EYES”: SPATIAL
MASTERY AND THE GAME OF MASCULINITY IN *ARDEN
OF FAVERSHAM*’S AMPHITHEATRE**

Although the long-awaited murder of Arden in the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (ca. 1592) takes place during a game of tables, or what we call backgammon,¹ critics have been quick to overlook the choice of game in this climactic scene, underestimating its importance to the play’s central concerns and even mistakenly calling it a game of dice or cards.² These games do share some common features—backgammon, for instance, involves the use of dice—but the distinctions among them are significant, especially for the play’s often-observed interests in geography and place. In attending to the intersection between games and theatre,

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I participate in a long tradition of performance studies scholarship. But in contrast to much of this scholarship, I emphasize the formal qualities of particular games—which vary widely from one game to another—arguing that different games call for unique competencies in players and in spectators of games.³ *Arden of Faversham* reflects on spatial relations in the early modern theatre by staging and enacting the ludic competencies peculiar to backgammon.

In order to isolate these competencies and their significance for theatre proxemics, we might compare backgammon to other “sitting house-pastimes” staged in early modern plays.⁴ Similar to board games such as chess, backgammon requires its players (usually two) to move “men” strategically across a board that has been divided into twenty-four marked spaces, called “points.”⁵ The points are arranged to create a linear track, so that each of the players moves his or her men in a different direction, attempting to be the first to reach the goal—usually getting all those men to a quadrant of the board called “home” and then bearing them off the board. Like chess, backgammon encourages aggressive interaction: a man left alone on a point is called a “blot” and can be captured and removed temporarily from the board, thereby delaying the player’s progression toward home. But backgammon differs from chess in that how far one’s men move is determined by the roll of dice. In this, backgammon resembles the game of cards, which some scholars call a game of “imperfect information” because, unlike in chess—where possible moves are, at least in theory, visible to both players (who can see the board equally)—in cards certain information is structurally hidden from players.⁶ The dice in backgammon produce a similar effect: they hide information, leaving it, in this case, entirely to chance. If card games teach the competency of negotiating imperfect information, then backgammon teaches the competency of mastering space in the face of aggressive opponents and unpredictable chance.

As becomes evident in my analysis of backgammon in *Arden of Faversham*, this gaming skill was also a competency of theatregoing in the principal venue where the play was first staged, an outdoor amphitheatre.⁷ Aggressive interaction among playgoers—who had to compete for viewing spots in these often crowded, disorderly, and socially heterogeneous theatres—was enough of an expectation that the first commercial playhouses instituted tiered seating, offering patrons of means the fantasy of sociospatial domination through their occupation of seats with a bird’s-eye view of the stage and theatre space. This presumably optimal viewing position in the “two-penny galleries” held out the promise of what Michael Dobson calls “scopic control” of the theatre space, enabling playgoers to transform the chaos and unpredictability of the theatre into what Michel de Certeau has called in his work on spatiality a “system of defined places.”⁸ But *Arden of Faversham* uses literal and figurative stagings of backgammon to challenge the amphitheatre’s appraisal of space, linking characters’ attempts at spatial domination to their failed pursuit of masculinity. In *Arden*, the skills for which both backgammon and theatre call—engaging in risky, even violent, conquest and mastering space—are represented as two contradictory competencies of masculinity. Greene, Black Will, and Shakebag thus face a paradox in their attempts to secure social power through the murder of Arden: the violence necessary to accomplish the assassination is in tension with the code of masculinity to

which the murderers aspire, a code that values spatial domination. The murderers repeatedly fail to kill Arden and thus secure social power because they are fixated on observing and stabilizing the target of their attack, a strategy that is as ineffective for murder as it is for playing backgammon and playgoing. Through its staging of male social conflict, *Arden* draws a parallel between murder—the literal killing of persons as well as the figurative killing that takes place in a capture board game such as backgammon—and theatre spectatorship, suggesting that, like murder, successful playgoing requires participants to embrace the risks of proximity. Spectators' pleasure and agency are a function not of abstract, visual surveillance but of risky, fully embodied interaction with the theatre “boards” in much the way players of backgammon interact with their game board.

At the center of my argument is what may seem a curious series of homologies among theatregoing, masculinity, and game play. After all, how close of a correspondence can there be between the strategies of surveillance exercised by *Arden*'s murderers, theatre spectators' pursuit of the bird's-eye view, and board game players' experience of backgammon? And what is gained by reading these in relation to each other? In setting these up as homologous, I do not mean to imply that they provide exactly equivalent perspectives on space or even that they share the same logic of visibility. Rather, I suggest that the formal and phenomenological aspects of backgammon provide a material model for early modern theatregoing and masculinity, highlighting the extent to which these are also structured around tensions between interactive conquest and spatial mastery. Such tensions may operate differently in game play than in gender formation or in theatregoing, but there is something to be gained by attending to what these share.

MANAGING THEATRE SPACE

Contending with aggressive “opponents” and unpredictable chance was as much a part of the spatial experience of the early modern playhouse as of the game of backgammon, especially in the case of amphitheatres, where patrons interacted physically with each other far more than is the custom in most theatres today. Because there were no assigned seats, patrons attending the more popular plays had to compete for the best viewing spots. In a letter dated 21 August 1624, John Chamberlain explains that he had to miss the “famous play of Gondomar” because he was not prepared to arrive early to find a seat: “for we must have ben there before one a clocke at farthest to find any roome.”⁹ Even when they were not full, amphitheatres were set up in such a way as to encourage, or at least by no means inhibit, physical interaction between playgoers. With plays performed in full daylight, moving around was all the easier and probably quite necessary, since, unlike in the indoor theatres, playgoers did not enjoy intermissions between every act: they would have needed to move about while the play was being performed in order to buy refreshments, relieve their bladders, and socialize with friends. Such movement presumably could become disorderly. Albeit to promote his antitheatricalist agenda, Anthony Munday captures some sense of this chaotic movement in *A Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and*

Theaters (1580), where he decries those “yong ruffins” and “harlots” who “presse to the fore-front of the scaffoldes.”¹⁰

Navigating theatre space must have been all the more troubling to playgoers who considered themselves superior to ruffians and prostitutes. It is not surprising that the first commercial playhouses—which brought people from all walks of life into the same space—established tiered seating, designating certain sections of the theatre for patrons of economic means. For an additional penny beyond the one-penny price of admission to the yard, patrons could sit in the covered first gallery; if they paid an additional two pennies, patrons could sit in the upper tiers (the “two-penny galleries”); and for sixpence, they could sometimes sit in the Lord’s Rooms, the balcony above the stage. Though the amphitheatre was still less formal in its architecture than many theatres today, tiered seating enabled these playhouses to represent themselves to certain patrons as more *socio-fugal* than *sociopetal*: that is, sitting in the two-penny galleries, a patron could conceive of the theatre as a space that set people apart and offered some a more private theatregoing experience (sociofugal) rather than a space that brought people together and produced a more collective experience (sociopetal).¹¹ The priciest seats offered a qualitatively different encounter with a play, *pace* Michael Bristol’s argument that the early modern playhouse was a cultural commodity that leveled social distinctions. Bristol maintains that the professional theatre “conferred at least a temporary social equality on all consumers of the same product.” In exchange for “alienation from direct participation in the creative process,” he argues, consumers received a “higher standard of performance” as well as a sense of being “socially undifferentiated” from other consumers. Everyone was paying for the same thing.¹² But it was precisely because the professional theatre *seemed* to flatten social differences that there was pressure on the emergent institution to mark out social distinctions among patrons, and it did so by placing a premium on some spaces. There is, of course, no way to know whether patrons of means always, indeed ever, chose the two-penny galleries, just as there is no reason to presume that ruffians and prostitutes always stood in the pit.¹³ Yet however theatregoing worked in practice, it is clear that theatre entrepreneurs designated seats in the two-penny galleries as more valuable than spots in the pit and the first gallery.

Part of the seeming value of these seats is that they offered playgoers a way to avoid aggressive “opponents” and unpredictable chance as they navigated theatrical space. For one thing, the galleries tended to be much less crowded than the pit; Phillip Henslowe’s records for the Rose indicate that the galleries were probably only half full at most performances.¹⁴ Even when the galleries were full, it was easier to lay claim to a seat in them than to an unmarked standing position in the pit, and the raking of the upper galleries limited the degree to which a playgoer’s views might be blocked by other patrons’ heads or feathery headware, as would have been the case for those in the pit and in the lower galleries. The second generation of amphitheatres (including the Globe, the Swan, the Fortune, and probably the Rose) further decreased physical contact between patrons in the upper galleries and those in the rest of the theatre by providing the former with separate entrances. Access to the lower gallery was through the pit—anyone in

the pit could pay an additional penny to move to this gallery (e.g., if they desired cover from the elements or wanted to sit down)—but access to the upper galleries was gained through staircase turrets.¹⁵ If, as theorists of performance space Bruce McConachie and Gay McAuley argue, the theatre acts as a “container,” creating a sense of community among those present, then it is no wonder that the theatre could demand more money from those patrons eager to gain spatial distance from, and thus undermine communal bonds with, patrons they considered to be socially inferior.¹⁶ In effect gallery seating promised (whether or not it delivered) a more “civilized” theatrical experience, eliminating some of the chance and aggression that characterized the act of theatregoing.

But if theatre financiers wanted to give wealthier patrons a formal space apart, why did they establish that space above and farther away from the stage? This placement is surprising given that throughout much of theatre history, from the days of the ancient Greek amphitheatres to the indoor theatres of the early seventeenth century and beyond, the most privileged playgoers have been positioned closest to the stage. This is still the case today. Indeed, the bird’s-eye view so coveted by patrons of the two-penny galleries has generally been associated with seats of *lowest* cost. So why did theatre financiers feel confident that patrons of means would pay *more* for the bird’s-eye view in the emergent public amphitheatres? I want to suggest that one way to make sense of this historically unusual spatial configuration is through an analogy to board games, which similarly position game participants and spectators with a bird’s-eye view of the ludic action.

To best understand the value—as well as the limitations—of the bird’s-eye view in the theatre and in board games, we might compare these with a technology whose use of the bird’s-eye view has been helpfully theorized: the map. Michel de Certeau argues that the map offers the kind of pleasure one experiences when viewing the city of New York from atop an exceptionally tall building, such as the former World Trade Center: the viewer is able “to be lifted out of the city’s grasp,” leaving behind “the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators.”¹⁷ The bird’s-eye view transforms that entangling mass of the city into a “text” to be read: static, immobile, transparent, and accessible. Or, to rephrase this in the terms de Certeau uses elsewhere in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, the bird’s-eye view transforms the mobile, variable realm of “space” into stable, static “place.”¹⁸ De Certeau goes on to describe, however, the ways in which the daily practices of people who walk the city disturb the totalizing power that the bird’s-eye viewer claims.

De Certeau’s theories of the map can be productively extended to board games and theatre, although only the latter has been attempted by scholars.¹⁹ Yet historian of cartography P. D. A. Harvey has speculated that board games may be a form of “pre-cartography,” demonstrating “a culture’s disposition to replicate place in miniature” and “as viewed from above.”²⁰ Regardless of whether we pursue the full cultural and historical implications of Harvey’s conjecture, there are compelling reasons to link maps and board games in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although board games, including versions of tables, had been played in the earliest ancient societies, the rise of printing made it possible to produce game boards quickly and cheaply so that they were available to a wider range

of players. Indeed, the process for mass-producing game boards was similar to that used for producing maps: boards were printed, colored by hand, and then mounted on canvas or linen.²¹ The material link between game boards and maps is perhaps most intriguingly demonstrated through the seventeenth-century vogue for geographical board games. For instance, Nicholas de Fer's game "Le Jeu des Nations Principales" (Paris, 1662) has players move around board spaces that represent different nations around the globe. On each space is printed a chorographic description of the nation, including information on the dress and beliefs of its people. Players begin in the Americas and move to Africa and then Asia, before finally ending the game in Europe.²²

But there are philosophical as well as material reasons to link these technologies. In his work on mapping, de Certeau turns briefly to an analogy with board games to underscore his distinction between "place" and "space." He compares the checkerboard to a "system of defined places" because of the way it "analyzes and classifies identities": the act of game play in checkers, according to de Certeau, exemplifies the sort of transgressive spatial practices that frustrate the "scopic and gnostic drive."²³ The *practice* of space "opens up clearings; it 'allows' a certain play within a system of defined places. It 'authorizes' the production of an area of free play (*Spielraum*) on a checkerboard."²⁴ We might say, then, that the game board is to place what game play is to space. That is, the game as form—with its grid lines, specified places, and conspicuous rules—is meant to discipline movement and furnish players with an intelligible plan for managing space. But the practicalities and pleasures of play necessitate less static, controlled, and abstract approaches to the board, requiring players to instead engage in dynamic, risky, and physically interactive navigations of space.

The example of board games supports but also complicates de Certeau's binary of space and place, for game play, a spatial practice, transforms the seemingly fixed visual regime of the game board.²⁵ Game play, for instance, has historically altered the game board's appearance: antecedents of the game of tables (what we call by one of its versions, backgammon) were played on boards shaped like spirals, circles, and crosses as well as squares. Additionally, game play has changed the rules of the game: over the course of its history, the game of tables has seen variations in the number of players, the amount of interaction between men on the board, and the significance of capturing blots, among other things. There is some mystery about how games adapt and change over time, but the prevailing theory is that players reshape game rules to create more pleasurable playing experiences, and those variations are then reiterated over and over until they become institutionalized as the new rules of the game. Game rules materialize through repeated performance. If the theatre stage—which from the eighteenth century onward would notably be called the "boards"²⁶—was like a game board, then those in the upper galleries paid not just a financial but also an aesthetic price for the ostensible advantages of their bird's-eye view. Although positioned like board game players, these playgoers could be too distant from the "boards" to influence their action and form.

Arden uses backgammon to develop a similar critique of fantasies of total spatial management, situating that critique in a narrative of male social conflict.

But before turning to my reading of the play, it is worth noting that my discussion of the bird's-eye view in board games, theatre, and masculinity is less part of a project to historicize vision and epistemology than it is a way to theorize the social implications of different ways of interacting with space. Indeed, as will become evident below, characters in *Arden* attempt to master space even without access to an actual bird's-eye view. That said, I am interested in the ways *Arden* deploys the topos of gaming to query the fantasy of scopic and gnostic power. And what is perhaps most intriguing about the play, especially in terms of its implications for thinking about theatrical spaces, is that *Arden* pursues this critique by problematizing vision itself. As if rendering in material terms the epistemological issues de Certeau raises, *Arden* dramatizes the ways a literal failure to see—whether because one's view is obstructed by another object or person or because one cannot attain a good vantage point from which to see—undermines efforts to master space.

SPACE, PLACE, AND MASCULINITY IN *ARDEN*

The backgammon scene in *Arden* is only the pinnacle of the play's sustained use of geography and place to question the "scopic and gnostic drive." Critics have shown that *Arden*, which was based on a real murder that took place in Faversham, England, in 1551, is concerned with changing conceptions of land ownership in early modern England, dramatizing, as Garrett Sullivan explains, the ways a shift to a capitalist conception of land (a "landscape of absolute property")²⁷ destroys the social relationships possible under a more feudal system. Sullivan significantly points out that surveying and other emergent mapping practices were vital to this shift, for by rendering the land in an abstract, textual form, such practices gave the landlord (a fantasy of) complete power and knowledge of the land and the tenants with whom he had increasingly less social contact. The play thus serves in part as a "cautionary tale"²⁸ about absentee landlords who, through surveillance technologies, treat the land primarily as a source of financial profit rather than as a paternalistic responsibility. As Michael Neill has suggested, moreover, land ownership was important because it signaled social position, and Neill argues convincingly that *Arden* is about the perils of social climbing, suggesting that Arden and his murderers are driven not simply by their appetite for land but by their perspective that owning land will raise their social status.²⁹

Indeed, the murderers' desire for "place"—in both geographic and social terms—is an overriding feature of their plot to kill Arden. Though they never manage to survey their target from that most auspicious of positions, the bird's-eye view, the murderers remain preoccupied throughout the play with surveillance and placement of Arden. Greene, who believes Arden has unjustly taken his land, is somewhat obsessed with finding a specific locale for the murder, even though his hired guns Black Will and Shakebag are initially unconcerned with spatial propriety. When Black Will sees Arden for the first time after receiving the charge to commit the murder, he is eager to jump his victim immediately, but Greene holds him back. Through careful observation, Greene has learned that the Nag's Head is "this coward's haunt" (3.38),³⁰ and he advises that Black

Will attack Arden as he moves to this locale. Greene's murder strategy depends upon a sense of predictable, stable place, an unwise assumption. While Black Will waits in St. Paul's to capture Arden on his way to the Nag's Head, an apprentice lets down the window of his stall and, by chance, Black Will himself is "almost killed" (3.48). In the flurry of activity, Arden escapes. Greene learns nothing from this experience. When he finds out how his plan went awry, he simply pursues another strategy of placing: "let us bethink us on some other place / Where Arden may be met with handsomely" (3.77–78) and again, "seeing this accident / Of meeting him in Paul's hath no success, / Let us bethink us on some other place / Whose earth may swallow up this Arden's blood" (3.107). The murderers may not have a bird's-eye view of their target, but, like the writers of early modern urban guidebooks and surveys that Karen Newman describes—whose peripatetic walks are no less invested in the "kind of scopic cogito"³¹ found in aerial maps—they are nevertheless driven by a desire to master space.

Greene's fixations with emplacement—with tracking Arden's movements in order to isolate a very specific place for the murder—make more sense when we bring the analytic of gender to bear on de Certeau's largely gender-neutral discussion of mapping. Feminist theorists of geography have argued that the cartographic impulse is an especially masculinist fantasy of sociospatial management. As Kathleen M. Kirby maintains, cartography separates the mapper from his environment so as to enable him to "occupy a secure and superior position in relation to it, without it affecting him in return"; for "[t]o actually be *in* the surroundings, incapable of separating one's self from them in a larger objective representation, is to be lost," an experience of significant discomfort to those who wish to dominate their surroundings.³² While I am wary of the gender binary at the heart of Kirby's and other feminist geographers' claims—occupying a position of spatial superiority is not necessarily or inherently masculine—I find their efforts to consider the gender issues at stake in sociospatial management valuable. For instance, when we observe that the landowners who commissioned maps of their estates were predominantly men who were the heads of households, we can better make sense of how they used maps to underscore and exercise their patriarchal power (despite having abandoned a sense of paternalistic care). At the same time, gender by no means guaranteed access to a position of sociospatial power, which, as *Arden* demonstrates, was not available to men such as Greene, Black Will, and Shakebag.³³ What is at stake, then, in these characters' pursuit of murder through strategies of emplacement?

To answer this question we need to qualify Michael Neill's otherwise astute analysis of the play's concerns with social mobility, which, he intimates, supersedes the play's critique of patriarchal ideology. Indeed, Neill takes to task feminist scholars of *Arden* such as Lena Orlin and Catherine Belsey for "reducing the tragedy to a two-dimensional fable of patriarchal orthodoxy" by foregrounding Alice Arden's transgressions (adultery and the attempted murder of her husband) as evidence of the play's critique of the institution of marriage.³⁴ Although Neill is right to call our attention to the crucial role of class in this play and usefully helps us make sense of the murderous acts of Greene, Black Will, and Shakebag—social climbers all—his portrayal of status as working independently from gender is

problematic. In the early modern period, status helped *constitute* gender. My point here is not that *Arden's* story of class conflict (between Arden and his male assassins) mirrors or is imbricated with its story of gender conflict (between Arden and Alice or Mosby and Alice), though, as Richard Helgerson has shown, that may be the case.³⁵ Rather, I maintain that negotiations of power among men can be construed as patriarchal, regardless of whether they involve or even have explicit implications for women.

As Alexandra Shepard reminds us, early modern patriarchy worked not only through the subordination of women but also through men's subordination of other males, such as youths, vagrants, servants, and second sons.³⁶ Some of the latter, of which Arden and Mosby are examples, attempted to overcome their disenfranchisement by climbing the ranks that were supposed to be closed to them and, through marriage or commerce, working their way into positions of social and economic privilege wherein they could exercise authority over not only women but also men of lower status. Whether or not they achieved their goals, they bought into and thus helped bolster the mythos of what Shepard calls "patriarchal manhood" by conforming to the codes of the club they wished to join. To the qualities of patriarchal manhood that Shepard identifies—"strength, thrift, industry, self-sufficiency, honesty, authority, autonomy, self-government, moderation, reason, wisdom, and wit," *Arden* adds, as we shall see, mastery of space.³⁷ Men who failed to climb the ranks in this way and reap the "dividend of manhood" had other options, Shepard argues: they could pursue a different set of codes for masculine behavior, some of which directly countered patriarchal virtues. In this latter model of "anti-patriarchal" manhood, anarchic violence (such as the brutal murder of Arden that Shakebag, Greene, and Black Will pursue) could be a sign of rather than a deviation from manhood.³⁸

Arden exemplifies but also helps extend Shepard's argument. Especially via the staging of backgammon, *Arden* dramatizes masculinity as achieved not simply through an individual's exercise of particular qualities or behaviors but also through a contest with other men over sparse resources. In *Arden*, in other words, masculinity is shown to be a competitive game that some men win while others lose. Significantly, those competing for masculinity are not always playing the game the same way. Whereas backgammon encourages its players to be competent simultaneously in violent conquest and spatial mastery, the game of early modern masculinity calls for a choice between these; those pursuing antipatriarchal masculinity are better served by developing competencies in violent conquest, whereas for those pursuing "patriarchal" masculinity, the focus is on spatial mastery.³⁹ *Arden's* assassins Greene, Black Will, and Shakebag fail at their task because they strive, unsuccessfully, to integrate these two competencies. They attempt to master *Arden's* movements across the landscape in their plot to murder him, a plot that they believe will ensure their social advancement and thus win them patriarchal masculinity.⁴⁰ But therein lies the tragic tension: to succeed at the murder, the assassins must practice a kind of anarchic violence that better befits a code of antipatriarchal masculinity.⁴¹

We might say that what troubles these killers is that their violent actions are incompatible with their desire to master what de Certeau calls a "system of defined

places.”⁴² Their plots fail because murder, like backgammon, is a spatial practice: mastering the rules of the game and knowing where all the men are placed is not enough, as it might be in chess; the practice of aggression (in backgammon, as in murder) necessitates dealing with unpredictable variables that arise *during play*—in backgammon, especially because of the dice. Indeed, the drama turns Arden into something akin to a backgammon “blot,” also known in one early game treatise as *homo vagans*, a wandering man.⁴³ Arden spends much of the play wandering without protection toward his home and, like a blot, avoiding capture largely because of luck.⁴⁴ Arden’s murder can be accomplished only when the killers embrace the risks and indeterminacy of their spatial practice and when they engage their bodies in the murder act, interacting closely and physically with their victim.⁴⁵ From a more proximate position to their target, the murderers can readjust their tactics as unpredictable factors arise.

Black Will, a professional murderer and, at the start of the play, the embodiment of a model of antipatriarchal masculinity, best expresses this notion of murder as a spatial practice. When first explaining how much he wishes to kill Arden, he compares himself to a thirsty, “forlorn traveller./Whose lips are glued with summer’s parching heat” and who wants only to “see a running brook” (3.92–4). Black Will salivates at the possibilities of violence, approaching murder as a traveler winding his way through an unknown landscape. Without a map, he focuses on what lies directly in front of him and seeks only gustatory satisfaction, quenching his thirst through a brook he happens to come across. Black Will is known for the ludic pleasure he takes in murder. As Arden’s fearful servant Michael puts it, “My death to him is but a merriment./And he will murder me to make him sport” (4.83–4). Black Will’s initial desire to kill Arden seems motivated by love of the chase and the amount of alcohol he can buy with money earned for the crime. But under Greene’s influence, Black Will’s approach changes. He and Shakebag become subsumed by Greene’s insistence on place, in both the social and geographic senses of the term. Like Greene, they begin to describe the carefully plotted murder of Arden as a stepping-stone toward their own attainment of patriarchal masculinity. Black Will fantasizes about murder as an “occupation” that might win him respect and power: “Ah, that I might be set a work thus through the year and that murder would grow to an occupation that a man might without danger of law. Zounds! I warrant I should be warden of the company” (2.102–5).⁴⁶ Black Will daydreams that the murder will elevate his economic and social status so much that he will wield power not only over Alice but over Mosby as well: “Say thou seest Mosby kneeling at my knees, / Off’ring me service for my high attempt” (3.84–5).⁴⁷ With the promise of riches and authority over other men, Shakebag, too, agrees to fulfill Greene’s plan, provided Greene can “give me place and opportunity” (3.101).

The murderers’ aspirations of patriarchal masculinity are frustrated repeatedly, however, as their efforts at surveillance and emplacement of Arden fail again and again. After being unable to capture Arden on his way to the Nag’s Head, the murderers happen upon Arden’s servant, Michael, and having questioned him about Arden’s whereabouts—“Where supped Master Arden?” (3.120)—they coerce Michael to take part in their conspiracy: “Thy office is but

to appoint the place” (156).⁴⁸ When Michael, out of fear, fails to follow through on the plan, he defends himself from blame with a concocted story and then deflects the murderers’ rage by giving them what they want, another *place* to do the murder: “you may front him well on Rainham Down, / A place well-fitting such a stragem” (7.18–19). This particular place is less spatially confined than the earlier prospective murder spots have been. Rainham Down was an open countryside around the town of Rainham, a place defined only in relation to other places: it was on the road from Rochester to Faversham.⁴⁹ This plot fails because Master Cheiny and his men happen to come upon Arden and escort him out of harm’s way. Rainham Down may well be a “place well-fitting” murder, but place is not enough; if Arden is like a blot or *homo vagans*, then the lucky arrival of Cheiny and his “men” and their capacity to cover Arden as he wanders keep this blot from being captured.

One of the key ways that the play interrogates the murderers’ fixations on placement, underscoring a conflict between their murderous aggression and their pursuit of patriarchal masculinity, is by literally problematizing their vision. The play mocks the murderers for their strategies of surveillance and emplacement by suggesting that such strategies, which abstract the murderers from their intended victim, depend too much on an unstable visual regime. In *Arden* the mythos of spatial management that de Certeau associates with the scopic drive cannot be achieved because vision, in a very material sense, is easily impaired. In one especially interesting scene Black Will and Shakebag fail to kill Arden on his way to dinner at Lord Cheiny’s house because a fog rises, obscuring their view of him and leaving them incapacitated by sudden blindness.

SHAKEBAG: Oh Will, where art thou?
WILL: Here, Shakebag, almost in hell’s mouth, where I cannot see my way for smoke.
SHAKEBAG: I pray thee speak still that we may meet by the sound, for I shall fall into some ditch or other unless my feet see better than my eyes.
(12.1–6)

Shakebag and Black Will’s strategies of emplacement have rendered them so reliant on visual modes of perceiving and abstract modes of interaction that they are unpracticed in engaging their other senses to navigate space and interact with their target. As it leaves them “making false footing in the dark” and attempting to follow Arden “without a guide” (12.51–2), the murderers’ visual impairment is a material rendering of the blindness of those who, according to de Certeau, walk the city streets, unable to see “the urban ‘text’ they write” with their movements.⁵⁰ Unlike de Certeau’s urban walkers, however, *Arden*’s murderers stumble unproductively in the darkness. They are so fixated on engaging their eyes that they fail to realize they might be able to “see” better with their feet.

The play reserves its most trenchant critique of the murderers’ scopic and gnostic drive for the climactic murder scene itself, however, where Arden is killed while playing backgammon with Mosby. How does this murder plot differ from the previous ones? To be sure, the plot places Arden: Mosby will bring him

back to the house and “play a game or two at tables *here*” (14.96; my emphasis). And Black Will goes further, advising Alice to “place Mosby . . . in a chair” and Arden “upon a stool” (14.115–16) so that Black Will can drag Arden to the ground to be killed. Whereas in previous scenes Arden has enjoyed the liberatory benefits of movement, this new plot stabilizes him; he will be inside the parlor, sitting on a stool, and, most important, engaged with a board game. During the previous murder plots, Arden has been like de Certeau’s urban walkers, blind to the text he writes with his movements and to his place in a/the plot but nevertheless engaging in subversive tactics that undermine his murderers, who believe themselves to have all the privileges of de Certeau’s “voyeur-god.”⁵¹ The backgammon plot differs, though, in that Arden will not simply be an object of surveillance, subject to the observation of others; as Arden plays backgammon, he will partake in a god’s-eye view himself, gazing down on the game board while others gaze down on him. Occupying the position of player, rather than simply a “man” to be played, gives Arden the (false) sense of power and security his murderers possess.

The foolishness of Arden’s fantasy of total spatial management is strikingly foreshadowed in a dream he describes of having been in a deer park where preparations were afoot for a hunt. Notably, Arden reports that in his dream he occupied a bird’s-eye view of the hunt, standing “upon a little rising hill/. . . whistly watching for the herd’s approach” (6.8–9), only to discover that he is “the game” to be hunted (6.19). Just as in the dream, Arden can be “taken” during the backgammon game because he looks down—in this case, at the board—rather than attuning himself to the social game around him. Indeed, the play cheekily suggests that were he simply to look up from the board, Arden might glimpse his murderers before they can attack. As the game begins and Black Will enters the room, Alice warns, “Take heed he see thee not” and Black Will registers concern, “I fear he will spy me as I am coming” (14.224–5). Part of the tension of the scene, then, stems from the precariousness of Black Will’s scopic power: Arden can ruin the whole plot if he simply abandons his scopic management of the game board.

But the most pressing tension of the scene stems from the way it materially links Arden’s life to his competency at backgammon. Mosby has instructed the murderers to wait for him to utter the “watchword” “Now I take you” (14.100–1) before rushing out. Thus, theoretically, Arden may preserve his life if he manages to keep his blots from being captured by Mosby. Although earlier accounts of the historical crime describe Arden as having been killed while playing tables, the connection between the murder and the outcome of the game—between physical and ludic aggression—is far more prominent in the drama than in these other texts. The *Wardmote Book of Faversham* reads: “He was most shamefully murthered as is foresaid/as he was playing at Tables frendely w^t thesaid morsbye for sodeynly cam out (of a darke house adioyning to thesaid plo^r) / the foresaid Blackwyll.”⁵² In the *Wardmote Book*, Black Will does not respond to a watchword that corresponds to a game move but simply comes out “sodeynly.” Holinshed’s version includes the watchword but suggests that Mosby ultimately uses it independent of the game context, confusing or angering Arden: “In their plaie Mosbie said thus (which seemed to be the watchword for blacke Wils comming foorth) Now

maie I take you sir if I will. Take me (quoth maister Arden) which waie?"⁵³ In having Arden question Mosby's claim that he can take one of his blots, Holinshed's account disarticulates Arden's fate from his and Mosby's performance in the actual backgammon game. By contrast, the drama goes to great lengths to connect these. In a scene that would take significantly longer to perform on stage than to read from a printed script, the murderers wait in the wings while the game is played, and they anxiously wonder if Mosby will ever manage to take one of Arden's men and speak the watchword. As the game proceeds, Black Will complains, "Can he not take him yet? What a spite is that!" (14.223). Finally, Mosby, in a climactic moment, declares that he is about to lose his final opportunity to capture a blot if he cannot cast a one on his next roll of the dice: "One ace, or else I lose the game" (14.227). The audience, like the murderers, wait with baited breath as Mosby throws the dice, turning up, Arden informs us, double aces.

For playgoers familiar with the popular game of backgammon, Mosby's comment immediately conjures up a game puzzle: how might the board be set up so as to bring the match to this exciting crux? That the state of game play fascinated early playgoers is evinced by the famous frontispiece to *Arden's* 1633 quarto, which not only represents this scene from the play but highlights the game board, tilting it so as to give readers a bird's-eye view of the gamitic action (see Fig. 1).⁵⁴ The illustration helps demonstrate the oddly ambivalent effects of this staged game scene. On the one hand the illustration reveals this to be the climactic moment of the play, demonstrating how Mosby's report on the status of the game produces much-needed dramatic tension. Such tension kept playgoers engaged in what easily could have become—but for theatrical success could *not* become—an anticlimactic murder scene: most theatregoers probably knew from previous accounts that the historical Arden's murder happened during a tables match. On the other hand, however, and this is the point I would underscore, the illustration shows readers something that playgoers would never have seen. Like the murderers positioned on the edges of Arden's parlor, playgoers did not have visual access to the game board, whose details could not be seen from afar. The staging of the scene thus belies a mythos of total spatial management, insisting that theatrical pleasure—the sense of climax experienced with Mosby's gesture of casting the dice—is possible only when spectators play along with the game, becoming involved (cognitively and emotionally, if not physically) with its unpredictable risks and aggressive interactions.⁵⁵

Catherine Richardson, who also discusses the play's "relentless" emphasis on "geographical specificity," argues that the Arden house is a successful place for the murder because, unlike the locales of previous murder attempts, it can be carefully controlled.⁵⁶ But I would suggest that the play uses backgammon to reveal fixity and spatial control as mere illusions, even at the play's end. When the murderers finally manage to kill Arden, they turn out to be falsely confident about their accomplishments, for like a blot in backgammon, even when Arden is removed from the boards, he is not permanently displaced. This plot development is in keeping with the drama of backgammon. Unlike earlier versions of tables, where loss of a blot could end the game, in backgammon the game



Figure 1.

Frontispiece of *The Lamentable and True Tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham in Kent* (London: Printed by Eliz. Alldewelling neere Christ's Church, 1633). Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

continues and the captured blot has a chance to reenter the board onto the home table of the opponent. For instance, if Player A's blot has been taken and he or she then casts a one, the captured blot enters on the first point of the opponent's table, unless the opponent, Player B, has two or more men protecting that space. From this position on the board, the reentered blot can continue to be played. In fact, if Player B has a single man standing on the point where Player A's blot reenters the board, Player A may capture Player B's man even as it sits seemingly safe on its home table.

In his seventeenth-century manuscript on gaming, Francis Willughby explains how these game rules can be manipulated strategically by a player whose opponent has brought all of his own men home and, as he bears them off the board, appears set to win the game. The underdog player can strategically allow one of his blots to be captured, sacrificing this man so that it may later have a chance of penetrating the opponent's home table and keeping the underdog's chances in the game alive. Willughby uses this game play scenario to provide an etymology for the game of Irish, an English version of tables that is backgammon's closest cousin.⁵⁷ Drawing on English stereotypes about the barbarism of the Irish, he writes: "An Irish man is never dead till his head bee cut of (the Irish having a custome to cut of the heads of all those they have killed), nor a game at Irish wun till the last man bee borne."⁵⁸ That is, in the game of Irish, as in backgammon, a player who seems defeated may revive his chances as long as his opponent still has men that need to be borne off the table. When Arden is captured, he, like a blot, is removed from the boards: his body is dragged offstage to an imagined field behind an abbey. But like a captured blot in a game of Irish or backgammon, Arden returns to the boards by stroke of fortune: snowfall captures the imprints of his murderers' feet so that the movement of Arden's body can be tracked by those who wish to solve the murder case. The "plot of ground" (epilogue.10) where Arden's body is found is by no means a final resting place for a character who resists placement.⁵⁹ Arden's game is not done. Not only is "his body's print" (epilogue.12) reported to have remained for years on the abbey grasses, but his body itself—or that of the actor playing him—takes up a position on the theatre boards again, literally placed back on the stage so that Alice, confronted with it, can confess her crimes in response to Arden's telltale blood, which, "gushing forth, / Speaks as it falls" (16.5–6).

With Arden's eerie return to the boards to identify his murderers—an only slightly less spectacular move than in *Holinshed*, in which the murdered Arden, who has been moved to the countinghouse, suddenly gives "a great groan" and has to be murdered again⁶⁰—*Arden* completes its dramatization of the social stakes of the parallel between gaming and theatre. Like gaming and theatre, masculinity turns out to be an aggressive contest where topping one's opponents does not guarantee lasting power over them: the competition goes on as long as the game does.⁶¹ What is more, surveillance and emplacement of Arden undermine instead of facilitate the murderers' capacity to be victorious in this competitive game. It is through Mosby that the play best expresses this tragic paradox, linking it, significantly, to the bird's-eye view. Reveling in having "climbed the top bough of the tree" to "build my nest among the clouds" (8.15–16), Mosby both reflects on

his successful social elevation and bemoans its impermanence. Even as he considers himself to have achieved social, spatial, and scopic dominance, Mosby recognizes that he must now kill off his allies lest they try to supplant him and prompt his “downfall to the earth” (8.18). Rather than being emblematic of secure patriarchal masculinity, Mosby’s bird’s-eye view underscores the instability of place—in both social and geographic terms—and the impossibility of achieving scopic and gnostic power. Mosby’s decision to use a backgammon game with Arden as the setting for murder is the perfect culmination of his character’s tragic perspective on spatial management and patriarchal masculinity. The match he plays against Arden dramatizes how those who pursue patriarchal masculinity, like inhabitants of the two-penny galleries, cannot play the game without taking the (sometimes fatal) risks.

THEATREGOERS ON THE BOARDS

There was more at stake in the denial of spatial management for early modern playgoers who had chosen and paid significantly more for seats with a bird’s-eye view of *Arden*’s stage. If the design of amphitheatres enabled these patrons to avoid the spatial frustrations of interactive theatregoing (the smells, sounds, and touch of groundlings, for instance), they did so at an aesthetic cost, for the gains in elevation that made a bird’s-eye view possible were accompanied by increased distance from the stage and diminished capacity to interact fully with the action on the “boards.” To be sure, these differences in distance are not extreme by our modern theatre standards; no playgoer in an early modern amphitheatre was more than thirty-five feet from the stage.⁶² Nevertheless, as work on theatre proxemics by Keir Elam and others has shown, a playgoer who is seated thirty-five feet away experiences a play differently than one who is standing within arm’s reach of the stage.⁶³ Even if Elizabethan actors adapted their performance style to reach patrons at a distance, communication with these patrons could not be as intimate as it was with groundlings, whose reactions to the play—laughter, inattention, commentary, sleepiness, and so forth—could be conveyed easily to actors through what Gay McAuley calls “feedback loops.”⁶⁴ Although they were put in the position of players of board games, patrons in the two-penny galleries could not directly manipulate any pieces on the boards. This paradox would have been all the more acute when actual board games were played onstage, for whereas groundlings, positioned below the stage, could not expect to follow such games visually, those in the high galleries were presented with an uncomfortable irony: they were the only patrons who shared the actors’/characters’ bird’s-eye view of the staged gamic action, but because they were so far away, they could not, in fact, see any more than groundlings could. The staged backgammon game in *Arden* at once invites its theatre’s “privileged” playgoers to identify through shared vision with the actors onstage at the same time as it makes them aware of the limitations of their bird’s-eye view. The staged game invites playgoers to reassess the pleasures of the theatrical encounter, which are grounded not in spatial mastery and socio-scopical power, but in the disorienting experience of becoming lost in and part of (the) play.

But might this critique have fallen on deaf ears or, as it were, blind eyes? Some may argue that those who chose to sit in the galleries were simply not interested in the play itself and were perfectly willing to sacrifice theatrical agency for the many other pleasures of the theatre, including ogling other playgoers. That may have been true for certain playgoers or for certain playgoers some of the time; but if the history of professional theatre is any indication, patrons of means seem to have become convinced of the value of proximity to the boards. When Blackfriars and other indoor venues began to be used for professional theatre in the early seventeenth century, they abandoned the amphitheatre's valuation of space: the most expensive seats were, as is the case today, closest to the stage. The seats with the bird's-eye view were used for the lowest-paying patrons, whom Jonson affectionately called "sinfull sixe-penny Mechanicks."⁶⁵ The most expensive seats in these theatres were the boxes that flanked or (more likely) were behind the stage⁶⁶ and stools located on the stage itself. Theatre historians generally assume that men who chose to sit on the stage had little interest in the play, sacrificing good viewing positions in order to become spectacles themselves. If, as Bernard Beckerman contends, some degree of spatial distance from the stage is essential for viewing pleasure and understanding, then close proximity arguably made it impossible for these theatre patrons to follow the play.⁶⁷ But if, as I've suggested, there is a certain pleasure and even power in "free play (*Spielraum*)" on the checkerboard, in becoming lost in a landscape, jostling sometimes blindly and aggressively with others as one navigates space, then those sitting on stools and in boxes were not necessarily uninterested in the action of the stage. Proximity to the boards could provide them an unparalleled theatre experience: becoming almost indistinguishable from actors, they could become *part* of (the) play, able, like players of board games, to shape its ever-changing rules and form.

One story of theatregoer interaction in the indoor theatres helps illustrate this point. A case in the Star Chamber involves an altercation on the Blackfriars stage between two patrons, Captain Essex, who was seated in a box behind the stage, and a nobleman ("the said lord" below), who had taken a position on the stage itself:

This Captaine attending and accompanying my Lady of Essex in a boxe in the playhouse at the blackfryers, the said lord coming upon the stage, stood before them and hindred their sight. Captain Essex told his lordship they had payd for their places as well as hee, and therefore intreated him not to deprive them of the benefit of it. Whereupon the lord stood up yet higher and hindred more their sight. Then Capt. Essex with his hand putt him a little by. The lord then drewe his sword and ran full butt at him, though hee missed him.⁶⁸

The story interests me for several reasons. One, it dramatizes spatial mastery as a competency of both theatregoing and patriarchal masculinity; like *Arden*, the story uses the problematic of vision (in this case blocked sightlines) to render in material terms the scopic and gnostic drive that de Certeau describes in his work on space and social relations. The nobleman, Lord Thurles, was a newcomer to London, eager to establish his superiority to other men.⁶⁹ Like the social

climbers in *Arden*, he does so by attempting to dominate the space around him, which we may notice not simply because of Thurles's choice to sit on the stage with the other upstarts but also because of his choice to stand up. Perhaps he stood because there were no more stools available and he was waiting for one to be free, which appears to have been a practice. (In another legal case, Sir Richard Cholmley had purchased a seat on the Blackfriars stage for a performance in 1603, but when he stood up between the scenes "to refresh himself," another gallant took his stool, which led to a duel.)⁷⁰ Perhaps Thurles intentionally tried to block the view of the patrons behind him, thereby asserting his social parity with or superiority to them. Equally possible, however, is that Thurles stood to get a better view of what was happening onstage. After all, seated on a stool, a playgoer would be positioned at or below the level of the actors on the stage, and his view could easily have been blocked by them or by stage furniture.

This leads to a second interesting aspect of this story: it demonstrates the degree to which onstage seating, despite its higher price tag, did not ensure patrons a better view of the action on the boards; Thurles had to *stand* to see better. Field of vision would have been slightly improved for those seated in boxes behind the stage, for these would have supplied a small degree of elevation. But these sightlines were easily blocked as well. Thomas Goffe in *The Careless Shepherdess* (ca. 1618–29) describes a country gentleman following a courtier and a gallant whom he expects will ultimately move to a box to hide from creditors, even if this mars their view of the stage action:

I'll follow them, though't be into a Box.
Though they did sit thus open on the Stage
To shew their Cloak and Sute, yet I did think
At last they would take sanctuary 'mongst
The Ladies, lest some Creditor should spy them.
'Tis better looking o're a Ladies head
Or through a Lettice-window, then a grate.⁷¹

The boxes are figured here as less preferable than sitting on the stage in part because one has to look "o're a Ladies head," a viewing position that bears comparison with looking through a prison grate. As Captain Essex discovered, too, if just one stool patron stood up, the view of those in the boxes could be significantly hindered. Even seats close to the stage could not guarantee an unobstructed view and full visual access to the stage. Narrowly interpreted, de Certeau's conceptualization of the scopic and gnostic drive of viewers atop a tall city building seems to have little in common with the unobstructed view I describe as sought here, but I am suggesting that Captain Essex and other theatregoers' desires to see all stem from a similar fantasy that it is possible to dominate a space—and the people and things in it—by having unhindered visual access to that space. Like *Arden's* murderers, Captain Essex learned the hard way that such fantasies are impossible to maintain. Instead of fighting for visual access, the captain might have been better served by trying, like de Certeau's urban walkers, to "see" with his feet.

Indeed, contrary to Captain Essex's implied presumption that his seats were worth the higher cost because they offered a better view, I would suggest that part of the value of seats on or almost on the stage was that they did offer patrons a chance to "see" with their feet. From their positions close to the stage action, playgoers could become part of, and thus possibly even have a chance to transform, the action on the "boards." Whereas the amphitheatre's two-penny galleries made it possible for more economically privileged playgoers to avoid the aggression and chance that marked the navigation of space in the theatre, seats on the stage or in the boxes at Blackfriars put playgoers more directly and intimately in contact with each other and with the stage action. The indoor theatres invited inhabitants of two-penny galleries to descend from their positions of abstract, safe spatial dominance and to take up spaces on the boards. Such positions involved risk that even had the potential to erupt, as in the Essex–Thurles case, into physical violence. But they also brought playgoers more closely into the ludic action, offering a unique, thrilling experience of the play.

To what extent and in what ways might these playgoers have been able to shape the action on the boards they came to occupy? This would have depended in part on how actors and other theatregoers responded to onstage patrons. In the case of the altercation between Lord Thurles and Captain Essex, there is no reason to assume that the actors onstage stopped the play. Captain Essex reportedly had time to lodge a series of complaints and even to "with his hand putt [Thurles] a little by" before swords started to fly, suggesting that the play continued unabated for at least part the time the men were verbally and physically interacting. Perhaps other theatregoers even believed the incident to be part of the play, an alternate plotline in which actors pretended to be playgoers, such as was done in Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, ca. 1607). We cannot, of course, know the answer to such questions, but we also cannot assume that the result was undesirable chaos. The incident represents theatregoing as a spatial practice that was pleasurable because of its risky interactivity, much like its performance cousin, game play.

ENDNOTES

1. For the sake of simplicity and clarity for modern readers, I refer to "tables" as "backgammon" throughout this essay. Although modern backgammon derives originally from ancient Roman and Islamic "race games" and was an adaptation of various forms of the game played throughout Europe and England (as *todad tablas* in Spain, *toutes tables* in France, *tavole reale* in Italy, and as Irish in England), it came to England at the turn of the seventeenth century. See H. J. R. Murray, *A History of Board-Games Other Than Chess* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), esp. chap. 6. We cannot know for sure what form of tables is being played in *Arden*, but if backgammon was just coming into vogue, we may surmise that the theatre would have capitalized on the freshest game fashions.

2. In "*Household Business*": *Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 87, Viviana Comensoli mistakes this as a game of cards. Sources that refer to this as a dice game include Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116; and Tom Lockwood, "Introduction," in *Arden*

Theatre Survey

of *Faversham*, ed. Martin White (London: A & C Black, 2007), ix. Future citations from the play will be drawn from White's edition.

3. Much performance studies scholarship on games and theatre, perhaps because of a reliance on theories of play developed by social scientists Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, approaches games and/or play as broad categories instead of looking at specific kinds of games in relation to theatre. This approach risks flattening important differences between games. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950); and Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

4. The term "sitting house-pastimes" is used in King James I, *Basilikon Doron; or, His Majesties Instructions to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* (London: Felix Kingston, for John Norton, 1603).

5. A useful primary source for the early modern rules of backgammon and other table games is David Cram, Jeffrey L. Forgeng, and Dorothy Johnston, eds., *Francis Willughby's Book of Games: A Seventeenth-Century Treatise on Sports, Games, and Pastimes* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). See also Murray.

6. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). On cards, see David Partlett, *A Dictionary of Card Games* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

7. The term "amphitheatre" has been widely used by theatre historians to refer to outdoor playing venues that tend to be circular in shape and have tiered seating. The precise performance history of *Arden* is unknown, but if, as has come to be accepted, the play was owned by Pembroke's Men in the early 1590s, it would have been performed in the amphitheatres that were the prime venue for professional theatre at that time, possibly in the Rose.

8. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 106. See Anthony Dawson's chapter "The Distracted Globe" in Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 88–107. Dawson does not address the physical space of the theatre in the way I do here, but his conception of scopic dominance is very useful. Whereas Dawson examines how actors wrested "scopic control" (96) from their visually distracted audiences, I am interested in how the theatre attempted to problematize scopic management entirely.

9. Quoted in Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 245, no. 141.

10. *Ibid.*, 214, no. 6.

11. For discussion of these terms in the context of theatre proxemics, see Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), esp. 58.

12. Michael D. Bristol, "Theater and Popular Culture," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia, 1997), 231–48, at 248.

13. Such structures of sociospatial difference may have been more advertising than actuality. Dekker's *Lanthorne and Candlelight* mocks gentlemen theatergoers who presume the galleries were socially exclusive: "Pay thy two-pence to a *Player*, in his gallerie maist thou sitte by a harlot." Quoted in Andrew Gurr and Karoline Szatek, "Women and Crowds at the Theater," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 21 (2008): 157–69, at 157 (and in Gurr, 230, no. 73). The theatre was merely a microcosm of emergent social trends in England, where status could be bought.

14. Gurr, 24.

15. *Ibid.*, 22.

16. Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Bruce McConachie, "Using Cognitive Science to Understand Spatiality and Community in the Theater," *Contemporary Theater Review* 12.3 (2002): 97–114.

17. De Certeau, 92.

18. *Ibid.*, 117–18. De Certeau's argument about maps and scopic power has become almost commonplace in the scholarly discourse on cartography. In addition to the sources in the subsequent

note, see Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography through History*, ed. Edward H. Dahl, trans. Tom Conley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography," trans. Colin Gordon, in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 63–77.

19. See John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Philip Armstrong, "Spheres of Influence: Cartography and the Gaze in Shakespearean Tragedy and History," *Shakespeare Studies* 23 (1995): 39–70; Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts, 1580–1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. chap. 5. On maps and early modern drama, see Valerie Traub, "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, *King Lear*," *South Central Review* 26.1–2 (2009): 42–81; Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), esp. chaps. 3 and 5; Henry S. Turner, "Literature and Mapping in Early Modern England, 1520–1688," in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3: *Cartography in the European Renaissance, Part I*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 412–26; Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Richard Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

20. P. D. A. Harvey, "Board Games and Early Cartography," paper presented at the International Conference on the History of Cartography, Chicago, 21–25 June 1993. My thanks to Robert W. Karrow at the Newberry Library for giving me a copy of this unpublished talk and to Harvey for granting me permission to quote from it. See also Jacob, 327–37.

21. David Parlett, *The Oxford History of Board Games* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99.

22. As was the case with many board games—which were published as single sheets that could be cut out to create a deck of cards—these same illustrations, with more extensive descriptions, were used for a deck of geographical cards. See also Pierre du Val's "Table géographique rééditée en un jeu de cartes" ("Geographical Tables Reduced to a Game of Cards") (1669). The earliest known English version of geographical playing cards are Morden's Playing Cards, which depict the counties of England and Wales, complete with small maps of key roads. The deck was first issued in the 1590s and then rereleased in multiple editions throughout the seventeenth century. My thanks to the staff at the British Museum for assistance with these materials.

23. De Certeau, 106, 92.

24. *Ibid.*

25. I am thus extending to board games and theatre the important argument Valerie Traub has recently made about maps in "Grid Lines and Missing Captions," paper presented at the Material Texts Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2009. My thanks to Traub for sharing this unpublished talk with me.

26. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), s.v. "board," I.1.c.

27. Sullivan, 43.

28. *Ibid.*, 54.

29. Michael Neill, "'This Gentle Gentleman': Social Change and the Language of Status in *Arden of Faversham*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 10 (1998): 73–97.

30. *Arden of Faversham*; scene and line numbers are given parenthetically in the text.

31. Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), at 28.

32. Kathleen M. Kirby, "Re: Mapping Subjectivity—Cartographic Vision and the Limits of Politics," in *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996), 45–55, at 48.

33. We might also consider Mosby in this grouping, although I have not included an extended discussion of him in this essay because his social position is somewhat different from that of Greene, Black Will, and Shakebag. Mosby does turn to murder to advance his social position, but he also, like Arden, pursues more “civilized” routes: he romances Alice, who is his social superior, and he actively pursues the patronage of Lord Clifford. Notably, Mosby’s murder plots involve less physical engagement than do the other murderers’ plots. He maintains an even greater distance from his target and doesn’t get his hands dirty, as it were, until the final backgammon scene. If, as I argue below, murder is like game play—necessitating physical interaction between players and the “men” on the boards—then it is especially significant that Mosby can bring about Arden’s death only by engaging in an actual board game with his target.

34. Neill, 75. For a related argument, which criticizes feminist approaches to the play on similar grounds, see David Attwell, “Property, Status, and the Subject in a Middle-Class Tragedy: *Arden of Faversham*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 21.3 (1991): 328–48.

35. Helgerson argues that “Arden’s appropriation of the abbey lands in Faversham finds its counterpart in Mosby’s appropriation of Alice Arden’s body” (28).

36. Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 26.

37. *Ibid.*, 247.

38. *Ibid.*, 32, 248–249.

39. In using the term “masculinity” instead of Shepard’s “manhood,” I make room for analysis of those women who, because of their higher status and sometimes their more advanced age or particular social circumstances (e.g., widowhood), subscribed to codes of patriarchal masculinity in an attempt to usurp patriarchal roles and privileges, acting even as heads of households. Alice, who questions Arden’s right to “govern me that am to rule myself” (10.84), may serve as one such example, though I do not have space to discuss her and other such female characters here.

40. Upon Arden’s death, Greene will ostensibly reclaim his lands (which belong to Arden for the “term of Master Arden’s life” [1.467]), and Black Will and Shakebag will reap great financial and, they believe, social rewards.

41. That the murderers might be models of masculinity *because* of their turn to violence chafes against the ways some critics have approached them. For instance, David Attwell argues that the murder plots and their failures are evidence of the play’s call “for a central form of control by means of the institutions of bourgeois civil society” (348). But as Frances E. Dolan points out, the play also invites its audiences to root for the murderers; see Dolan, “The Subordinate(s) Plot: Petty Treason and the Forms of Domestic Rebellion,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43.3 (1992): 317–40. (A revised version appears in Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994], 59–88.) Murder may be outside of lawful patriarchal society, but it is also a viable option for men who are structurally disempowered by a patriarchal system.

42. De Certeau, 106.

43. Murray, 120.

44. My reading of Arden complements that of Dolan in *Dangerous Familiars*, which argues that Arden is less of an agent in the play than in other accounts of the crime and yet remains central as the target of the murderers’ plot. There has been some disagreement among critics about whether Arden’s life is preserved by luck or Providence. On the argument for Providence, see Comensoli. Alexander Leggatt, in his “*Arden of Faversham*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983): 121–33, argues that the play keeps its audience guessing on this point. It’s worth noting that the question of luck versus Providence is debated with great stakes in many treatises on gaming in the early modern period.

45. By contrast, Mosby and Alice’s earlier plot fails when Arden refuses to eat the poisoned broth Alice prepares. Unlike in the climactic murder scene, the murderers here maintain a distance (temporal and spatial) from the actual murderous act. Thus, when chance intervenes and Arden refuses the broth, the murderers cannot regroup and immediately change tactics; they must devise another plot.

46. By which he means the governing official of a legitimate livery company. See White, *Arden of Faversham*, 34n105.

47. On the significance of social climbing in the play, see Whigham; Attwell; Neill; and Helgerson.

48. Michael does as he is instructed and tells the murderers that he will leave the door to Arden's home unlocked that evening so they can find Arden in his bedchamber. It is notable that when asked for a place for the murder, Michael answers not with a map of the house but with what de Certeau calls a "tour" (118–22): "No sooner shall ye enter through the latch, / Over the threshold to the inner court, / But on your left hand shall you see the stairs / That leads directly to my master's chamber" (3.173–6). Of course, this plan fails, and in retrospect Michael's *tour* of Arden's house works subversively in the ways de Certeau describes: because Michael has narrated through a story how Black Will can find Arden's bedroom, Black Will has no bird's-eye *map* of the house. When he finds the doors locked, his plans are foiled entirely; he cannot even begin to contemplate another way to get into the bedroom—he has no idea where it is except by way of Michael's tour.

49. *Arden of Faversham*, 54n18.

50. De Certeau, 93.

51. *Ibid.*

52. M. L. Wine, ed., *The Tragedy of Arden of Faversham* (London: Methuen, 1973), 161.

53. *Ibid.*, 155.

54. The illustration is also (as here) printed facing sideways on the page, which some have called an awkward positioning because it seems to demand that the reader turn the book in order to see the image from the "correct" perspective. But if the illustration functions as a representation of the phenomenology of game play, then its positioning on the page is actually ingenious: it puts readers on the side of the game board facing Mosby so that they inhabit the playing perspective of Arden.

55. In theatre, as in board games, interaction could be intense even if it was not obviously physical. Cognitive scientific research on board games has found that players produce mental maps of a game board, imagining different playing scenarios even when they are not physically manipulating pieces. See Pertti Saariluoma, *Chess Players' Thinking: A Cognitive Psychological Approach* (London: Routledge, 1995). In fact, this dynamic helps explain why board games can be engaging spectator sports, as they were in the early modern period and remain in some cultural contexts today. Such research on board games supports findings by scholars of embodied cognition and theatre who argue for spectatorship as an active, indeed physically interactive, engagement, even when spectators do not make explicit physical contact with actors or the stage. See, for example, Susan Leigh Foster, "Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46–59; Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Mary Thomas Crane, "What Was Performance?" *Criticism* 43.2 (2001): 169–87; and Amy Cook, "Wrinkles, Wormholes, and *Hamlet*: The Wooster Group's *Hamlet* as a Challenge to Periodicity," *TDR: The Drama Review* 53.4 (2009): 104–19.

56. Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 106. Marissa Greenberg also observes the play's obsessive staging of places as part of her interesting argument that domestic tragedy more generally maps London, offering playgoers the fantasy of an "imageable" and thus safer city; Greenberg, "Signs of the Crimes: Topography, Murder, and Early Modern Domestic Tragedy," *Genre* 40.1–2 (2007): 1–29.

57. The main difference between Irish and backgammon is that the latter game allows players who cast doubles on the dice to play out the doubles, resulting in a faster game. For example, a player who casts double aces would move a total of four points (spaces) instead of two, as in Irish.

58. Cram, Forgeng, and Johnston, 124–5.

59. Notably, Arden describes himself as eluding place when he offers Anne promises of his constancy: "That time nor place nor persons alter me" (10.30).

60. White, *Arden of Faversham*, 119.

61. On patriarchal authority as existing in a state of perpetual contest, see Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, esp. 57, which observes that only when the Arden household is empty can the conflict end.

Theatre Survey

62. Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.
63. Elam, 50–62.
64. McAuley, 246.
65. Quoted in Ann Jennalie Cook, "Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention," in *New History of Early English Drama*, ed. Cox and Kastan, 305–20, at 310.
66. Herbert Berry, "The Stage and Boxes at Blackfriars," *Studies in Philology* 63.2 (1966): 163–86.
67. Bernard Beckerman, *Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Methods of Analysis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 10.
68. Quoted in Gurr, 249, no. 164.
69. Berry, 165.
70. Quoted in Gurr, 199.
71. Quoted in *ibid.*, 44.