



CALL FOR PAPERS

JOURNAL OF EARLY MODERN STUDIES

Journal

Journal of Early Modern Studies (JEMS) is an open access peer-reviewed international journal that promotes interdisciplinary research and discussion on issues concerning all aspects of early modern European culture.

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JEMS is open to a range of research perspectives and methodological orientations and encourages studies that develop understanding of the major problematic areas relating to the European Renaissance.

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The Circulation of Cosmographical Knowledge in Early Modern Europe

edited by Sophie Chiari and Janet Clare

The translation into Latin in 1406–1409 by Jacopo Angeli of Ptolemy's *Geography* as *Cosmographia* inaugurated a European revival of interest in cosmography. First printed in Vicenza (1475) and then Bologna (1477) with the addition of maps, by the end of the sixteenth century the work had been printed over forty times, principally in Italy and the German-speaking countries. Establishing the boundaries of the *oikoumene*, its influence in reconstituting knowledge across Europe was immense. It was a guide to map-making, allowing the analogical and visual representation of space and showing the relationship between the regions. It prompted the writing of nationally orientated cosmographies and the promotion or self-styling of the cosmographer.

Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographiae universalis*, translated into German, French, Italian and Bohemian, was after the Bible, the most popular book of the sixteenth century. As Frank Lestringant has observed the hypotheses of cosmography – rehabilitated during the Renaissance – supposed a full, global world with no other limits than the celestial orb (Lestringant, 1991). In creating a unified philosophical construction of the Globe cosmography was perceived as a practice revealing the harmony of the universe. Angeli in his preface had carefully distinguished between geography and cosmography: the *Cosmographia* was an attempt to study the world in its entirety. The organization of the celestial and terrestrial maps confirmed the correlation and constant motions of the stars and sublunary world and the harmonious relation between heavenly and earthly things which was to prove so attractive to humanists. Although later translations reverted to titling the work *Geographia*, cosmography was to retain an intellectual and popular hold throughout the sixteenth century before it was disintegrated into its component parts. Even so, the Ptolemaic tradition in print remains dynamic until the mid-seventeenth century; Peter Heylyn's *Cosmographie* appeared in 1652, the first vernacular cosmography to be published in England.

The comprehensibility of the known world was called into question over the course of more than two centuries; one problem for the cosmographers was redefining the world when faced with the continuing expansion of knowledge. As Surekha Davies has commented, the European voyages to America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries posed opportunities and threats not only for European rulers, merchants and the Church, but also for the intellectual milieu of mapmakers and cosmographers. At stake was a world-view informed traditionally by biblical and classical texts (Davies, 2011). While cosmographers like André Thevet might create myths of the new world and its peoples, Münster integrated America into a tripartite world, accommodating the theological problem of the diaspora of Noah's descendants.

Cosmography found itself amid clashing epistemologies: established authority versus eye-witness experience; humanism versus the new science; medieval heritage versus early modern knowledge. Modernity is associated with the direct observation of the astronomers Tycho Brahe, Galileo and Kepler or with the privileged eye-experiences of the discovery of new lands. Raphaelle Garrod has argued that discoveries were granted a discursive existence as ‘novelties’, new textual representations of the heavens and the earth (Garrod, 2016). In other words, empirical information was dialectically reconciled with existing conceptual frameworks, biblical and classical. Nonetheless, the challenges to the cosmological world-view lead to the Church’s condemnation of Copernicanism in 1616 and of Galileo in 1633, preventing heliocentrism from becoming the new cosmological norm in universities and colleges.

The 2023 issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* entitled ‘The Circulation of Cosmographical Knowledge in Early Modern Europe’ will investigate how, when and in what forms knowledge circulated. In contexts of suppression or control of knowledge, we might ask what part did heterodox circles and non-academic groups, represented in ‘invisible colleges’ and ‘schools of night’ play in the spread or popular distrust of scientific novelty. Did confessional division impact on the dissemination and reception of cosmographical knowledge? How widespread or selective was its translation? Print has been long recognized as a significant agent of change, enabling altered methods of data collection, storage and retrieval systems and communication networks used by learned communities throughout Europe (Eisenstein, 1979). As Elizabeth Eisenstein observes Copernicus had an opportunity to survey a wider range of records and to use more reference guides than any astronomer before. Yet, scientific and geographical novelties, requiring new kinds of texts, were often slow to get into print. An important frame for thinking about the shape of the world, and its place in the cosmos, book production was, however, controlled by religious, economic and national imperatives and concentrated in major cities (Pettegree, 2008). J.H. Elliot points out that there was a considerable time lag between the Columbian discoveries and their representation in prose geographies. Further, Robert Mayhew has observed that new information did not modify or cancel the old, but piled up alongside it. While print proved an historically important intermediary, it did not advance the creation of a new world view reflecting the age of discovery (Mayhew, 2003). What part, then, did the book trade play in the extension of cosmographical knowledge? Attention to regional publication such as that of Martin Waldseemüller’s *Cosmographie introductio* at Saint-Dié in Lorraine in 1507 may provide a more detailed understanding of the dynamics of cosmography and print culture.

Ayesha Ramachandran has argued that ‘traces of a resurgent interest in “the World” as a whole appear everywhere in the early modern period’ (Ramachandran, 2015). Indeed, over recent decades considerable scholarly attention has been given to reconfigurings of the world through, for example, the experience of travel, colonial expansion and the development of maps. Yet, we still lack a detailed understanding of how the peoples of early modern Europe gained their knowledge of the world. What were the paths of transmission and to what extent was knowledge controlled or even falsified, by whom and for what purposes? To what extent was scientific knowledge diluted or vulgarized as it entered popular culture or were there, on the other hand, effective means of dissemination? Our own experience of the accelerated pace at which knowledge (and misinformation) circulates via mass media makes this an especially timely juncture to explore such questions. We welcome work on cosmographers as contributors to the cosmographical revolution or as custodians of state secrets. In the contexts of the wealth of new experiences and discoveries we invite contributions on what might be regarded as the constitutive components of cosmography. These include such diverse materials as maps, instruments and texts (for example, geographical, astronomical, botanical, philosophical, anthropological, theological). What kind of new information was embodied in such texts and artefacts and how far was the opening of horizons locally confined or pan-European? As the centre of the world shifted and in the light of astronomical speculation, we ask how learning, thinking, and conceptualizing *terra incognita* remained rooted in belief or subject to revision.

Main deadlines

28 March 2021: Please send your proposal and working title to the guest editors: (sophie.chiari_lasserre@uca.fr; janet.clare@bristol.ac.uk)

18 April 2021: notification of proposal acceptance

3 November 2021: submission of articles to the guest editors

Please note that articles must comply with the editorial norms and must not exceed 12,000 words, including footnotes and bibliography. Articles may include up to 10 images (for publication they need to be submitted in 600 dpi resolution and with publication permit). All articles are published in English.