

2011

A Review of *The Surveyor's Dialogue (1618): A Critical Edition* Edited by Mark Netzloff

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Recommended Citation

Jordan, N. M. (2011). A Review of *The Surveyor's Dialogue (1618): A Critical Edition* Edited by Mark Netzloff. *Seventeenth-Century News*, 69(3 & 4), 169-172.

Available at: https://aquila.usm.edu/fac_pubs/15459

Mark Netzloff, ed. *John Norden's The Surveyor's Dialogue (1618): A Critical Edition*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. xlii + 223 pp. + 10 illus. \$99.95. Review by NICOLLE JORDAN, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

Mark Netzloff's critical edition of John Norden's *The Surveyor's Dialogue* presents the figure of the surveyor as an important agent of emergent capitalism. Netzloff's introduction models how Marxist scholars might engage with the text in order to elucidate the economic processes and social negotiations in which a surveyor participated and through which he helped drive an agrarian society from obsolescent feudalism toward inchoate capitalism. Netzloff has solid credentials in Marxist approaches to early modern British history and literature; his first book, *England's Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism* (2003), studied nation and capital formation in terms of England's treatment of its peripheral territories and marginal classes. In *The Surveyor's Dialogue*, his interpretation of England in the early stages of capitalism operates on both the national and regional levels, leading him to explain, for example, how techniques of agricultural improvement allowed a national market to emerge out of a fragmented collection of localities. His edition of Norden's manual is thus an investigation of the economic and social functions of a profession with perhaps singular impact on England's entrée into capitalism: land surveying. A particularly compelling dimension of the project is its animation of the profession; in the behavior of the surveyor, we witness the ambition, social maneuvering, and contempt for the rural poor that surely explain why most of his interlocutors, from farmers to lords, regard him with considerable skepticism.

Aside from economic and agricultural historians, many readers may not know what a surveyor actually did in the early modern period (or at other times, for that matter). Netzloff anticipates this possibility and provides background information so that we may appreciate surveying as more than preparing estate maps for their owners and surveyors as more than the lackeys of their lords. Indeed, Netzloff's explanation of the social and professional profile of a surveyor adumbrates how a successful yeoman might advance through the ranks of the

manorial estate on which he lived. From the position of a “capitalist farmer” (xxi), such a man might then serve as his lord’s bailiff and thus acquire experience that would qualify him to enter the profession of surveying. This career trajectory exemplifies how, on the threshold between feudal and capitalist order, men with expert knowledge of land management and improvement techniques could make decisions and offer advice that would steer their communities—and more broadly, the nation—toward the formation of more stable and expansive market economies. Netzloff displays a thorough knowledge of scholarship on surveying, as when he quotes an unpublished dissertation that detects an early modern shift in the profession, from surveying as “overseeing the relationships between landlords and tenants to overseeing the land as a thing in itself” (xvii). Such insights exemplify Netzloff’s effort to situate the surveyor in the broader landscape of capital formation, both in abstract terms as seen here and in concrete terms as seen when he interprets, for example, the Surveyor’s interactions with a bailiff.

Netzloff divides his introduction into three substantive sections: “Surveying and Social Dialogue,” “Manorial Culture,” and “The Country and the City.” The first section delineates the emergence of the surveyor’s professional identity and how his claims to specialized knowledge, grounded in antiquity (such as Euclidian geometry), enable him to acquire social distinction. The emphasis on social relations, Netzloff suggests, explains Norden’s choice of the dialogue form. Though less common in Jacobean England than it had been a half-century earlier, the dialogue suits Norden’s purpose especially well, according to Netzloff, because it foregrounds the process of knowledge production: “The dialogues themselves stage scenes of learning that provide models for readers’ own acquisition of knowledge” (xix). Over the course of six books, then, Norden puts the Surveyor into conversation with a Farmer, an absentee aristocratic landowner, a Bailiff (that is, the Farmer now serving as his lord’s legal officer), and a purchaser of land. The various scenarios compel the Surveyor to speak in different registers, depending upon who interlocutor is. To the Farmer in Book 1, he must justify his existence in the face of unbridled hostility: “[Y]ou look into the value of men’s Lands,” the Farmer sneers, “whereby the Lords of Manors do rack their Tenants to a higher rent and rate than ever before; and therefore not only I, but many poor

Tenants else have good cause to speak against the profession” (16). The Surveyor proves his mettle by accusing the Farmer of being himself guilty of dishonesty and rash judgment. But while speaking in Book 2 to an absentee landlord who professes his ignorance of surveying procedure, the Surveyor uses charm rather than severity. In response to concern about being “mised by an unskillful Surveyor,” he flatters the landlord by suggesting that a man of his “leisure” and “quality” knows enough to discern a worthy survey: “You have the matter and subject whereon a Surveyor worketh, and without which a Surveyor loseth both Art and Name, and therefore you cannot be altogether ignorant of the things required in the business: as the Master of a feast cannot dress the dainties, but the Cook, yet can the Master reprove the Cook if he do not his duty therein” (42).

In reading Netzloff’s introduction, one experiences the dizzying complexity of land ownership in early modern England. His introductory section on manorial culture explains the three main forms of land tenure at the time: freehold, copyhold, and leasehold. Freehold, the most stable and profitable of the three, dominates this section because surveyors typically held freehold tenures and were thus socially and economically positioned to enter the profession. Indeed, as Netzloff explains, “One can assume an implied readership of freeholder tenants for *The Surveyor’s Dialogue* due to the fact that the text addresses representatives of this class in five of its six books” (xxii). In general, Netzloff’s breakdown of the manorial system of land tenure is lucid and adept at explaining how it changed to accommodate a new market economy; however, non-specialists will occasionally puzzle over how the system he describes fits into the larger structure of land ownership. Thus my grasp of freehold in Netzloff’s account would have benefitted from a brief explanation of the terms by which the gentry (whom he calls “traditional landowners” [xxi] and distinguishes from freeholders) held their land, and how their tenure differed from the freeholders.

In keeping with the principle that a text reveals as much as it conceals, Netzloff uses his knowledge of early modern agrarian protest to assess Norden’s selective depiction of the national marketplace. He makes much of the total absence of the Midlands from the Surveyor’s cumulative depiction of the “the nation’s constituent ‘countries’ ” and commodities: “Norden’s image of England has an

absent geographic center, and his discussion omits an entire swath of the nation” (xxxiii). Netzloff attributes this absence to the Midland Rising of 1607, and argues that the first edition of *The Surveyor’s Dialogue*, written and published in 1607, expresses Norden’s effort “to suppress the memory of a context whose implications threaten to undermine his entire project” (xxxv). With such attention to Norden’s silent subtext, Netzloff inspires readers to track the status of those who became casualties of the new market economy. Yet he figures the Surveyor in three-dimensional terms, noting for instance the Surveyor’s gradual recognition that enclosure and deforestation lead to “devastation” and occasion “a search for alternative models of value” (xxxix). Thus Netzloff balances a critique of the Surveyor’s construction of and commitment to market values, on the one hand, and his entanglement in countervailing discourses such as religious devotion (xxxi-ii, xxxv) and proto-environmentalism (xxxix) on the other. The Surveyor’s complex identity may be one of the most salient illustrations of Netzloff’s assertion that the *Dialogue* rewards thorough rather than piecemeal reading.

Netzloff delivers precisely what one expects from a scholarly edition: evocative context and informative annotations. Scholars interested in the intersections of land, capital, ecology, and literature will therefore appreciate this edition. Its sophisticated introduction is bolstered by an expert critical apparatus that provides footnotes glossing obscure vocabulary, biblical allusions, variations among editions, and details regarding Norden’s alternate careers as a religious writer and cartographer. One may hope that the edition inspires kindred scholars to take stock of the influence, whether beneficial or sinister, of the innovative and crafty Surveyor.

Chloë Houston, ed. *New Worlds Reflected. Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*. Ashgate, 2010. xii + 262 pp. \$97.25. Review by JAKUB JANIK, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKÓW.

The amount of articles and books published on the broadly understood question of Utopia—both seen as a genre and a specific story—is enormous. There are different approaches and perspectives, many