

Title: Sacralized University Space and the Origins of Academic Authority

Scott O'Neil--University of Rochester, United States of America

David Bleich, in his recent book on the materiality of language, has suggested that language has historically been used in a politically imaginative context, and that such manipulation can lead to political power for those with access to that language. Bleich often returns to his notion of “sacralized” language, most notably Latin, and how he sees it being used as a means of solidifying an elite male group and excluding others based on class, race, nationality and gender. Building on Bleich's work, my paper will explore an unusual historical trend—the further we get from the origins of the university, less and less emphasis seems to be placed on sacralizing language and more energy seems to be spent sacralizing the spaces that contain academic discourse—the schools themselves.

Ultimately, I have two goals in exploring this topic. First, I intend to historically track the use and understanding of academic physical space. Second, I intend to speculate on the impact of such spatial sacralization on notions of pedagogical authority—what does it mean to be a schoolmaster? From whom/where does such a figure derive his authority and authorization? Who benefits from sacralization of academic space? I will explore these questions both historically—through an analysis of the spatial theory of Gaston Bachelard and Henri Lefebvre along with the pedagogical writings of Abelard and other early schoolmasters—and textually—by looking at Renaissance dramatic representations of schoolmasters, including Master Rombus in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Lady of May*, Hugh Evans in William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Holofernes in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Ultimately, my paper will explore the ways in which political imagination has transformed both academic discourse and the places in which it is authorized, and how schoolmasters, as a result, have been historically contained into a state of empowered powerlessness.