

Seminar

Shakespeare's Romantic European Outskirts

Natalia Brzozowska¹, Jacek Fabiszak²

¹IRCL, University of Montpellier 3, France; ²Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland

nbrzoz@gmail.com; fabiszak@amu.edu.pl

The motivation behind this seminar is the exoticizing potential of Shakespeare's romances, in which the settings are, from the point of view of the Early Modern English spectator, alien and mysterious. The seminar proposes that such an approach be embraced in the case of localities associated with not the cultural core of Western Europe, but Europe's semi-peripheries in the sense these politicized geographies are understood today. Extending the sociological term, cultural peripheries could be found on the same continent, or even within the borders of the same country that housed the core culture - an example being Wales in *Cymbeline*. These frontiers constitute Shakespeare's 'elsewheres', which, through generic and thematic negotiations, are made central to the action of the play. The process of romanticization they undergo consists in presenting the elsewheres as idyllic, strange and magical; at the same time, their quasi-idyllic character is challenged by the invasion of realism: the flawed, familiar and painfully mundane. The plays to be considered do not necessarily include romances, but for example, *Measure for Measure* (Vienna? or perhaps Verona?), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Athens), *Twelfth Night* (Illyria), *The Winter's Tale* (Bohemia), *Othello* (Cyprus), *Hamlet* (echoes of Poland). The seminar invites considerations of why and how these contrasts are shown, as well as:

- Romantic exoticizing of European semi-peripheries and peripheries in Shakespeare and his contemporaries
- Images of non-core European cultures in Early Modern England
- Concepts of the 'European other' in Early Modern England
- Romanticizing non-dominant Europe in stage/film versions of Shakespeare's plays
- Ways of romanticizing 'exotic' localities in Shakespeare
- Understanding of 'exotic' setting in Shakespeare's plays
- Eastern or Southern European and Western (English) cultural exchange
- Non-mainstream scholarly perspectives towards the dichotomies mentioned
- Literary explorations of exotic localities within a 'core' country

Keywords: Europe, Shakespeare, peripheries, the other, exoticism