

Seminar

‘Something Rich and Strange’: Remapping Shakespeare’s Utopia

Delilah Bermudez Brataas¹, Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik²

¹Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway; ²Tischner European University, Poland

delilah.brataas@ntnu.no; kowalcze.pawlik@gmail.com

In its various forms, utopia and monstrosity are situated against or beyond the given order, be it political, aesthetic or epistemological in nature. Utopia interrogates the ideal topos, or space and place in relation to the hic et nunc, or the here and now; the monstrous interrogates the ideal/idealized self in relation to the other. For the early modern, the monstrous still aroused a sense of wonder, while allowing for a transgression and transformation that was essential to the construction of the world and the self. From its earliest classical models, visions of the ideal society required constructs of a humanity that was conceived of as perfect in its divine rationality; yet, its essence was drawn from differentiation from the other. Since the early modern period both the monstrous and the utopian have undergone major conceptual shifts, possibly affecting the understanding of the Shakespearean playtext and leading to encounters with Shakespeare’s drama as “something rich and strange”.

This seminar seeks to explore the intersections between monstrosity and utopia in Shakespeare’s works and their rewritings that mobilize the polysemous meanings of both utopia and monstrosity, and share in their richness and strangeness. We seek papers that consider diverse ways, in which the monstrous and the utopian are mapped and remapped in Shakespeare’s texts and their adaptations, appropriations, translations, and interpretations in any format and language, in text and in performance, across media and cultures. The possible areas of interrogation may include Shakespeare, utopia and: monstrous geographies; animality and materiality; the monstrous feminine/masculine; hybridity and the post-human; mythology, transformation and metamorphosis; performing monstrosity; queer/trans bodies as idealized/monstrosized; monstrous body in politics and conflicts; monstrous authority and ideal knowledge; digital re-visioning through video games, social media, fan fiction and online forums.

Keywords: Shakespeare and rewriting, utopia, monstrosity