



Shakespeare's Festive Comedies on Screen: nature, art, politics

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Combining the study of *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Love's Labour's Lost* on screen invites us to explore the filmic treatment of three festive plays that cultivate tensions between art and nature. Their plots rely on elements including: artful cross-dressing and other types of disguise that hide or reveal gender, nature and identities; witty, sophisticated language and spirited clowns; tensions between states of festival and 'Lent'; oppositions between political centres and peripheral, pastoral spaces, thus raising various political, gendered and ecocritical issues. This seminar will explore the multiple ways in which these three comedies have been adapted, recycled, appropriated and parodied on screen.

Paul Czinner's *As You like it* (1936) was Great Britain's first feature-length Shakespeare sound film and Laurence Olivier's first screen performance in a Shakespeare play. It was followed in 1992 by Christine Edzard's version and in 2006 by Kenneth Branagh's adaptation. There have been four British screen adaptations of *Love's Labour's Lost*, the first three for television. Branagh adapted it into a musical in 2000. *Twelfth Night* has had nine full-length British screen adaptations, eight for television and a 1996 feature film by Trevor Nunn.

This ESRA seminar invites contributions addressing the following (non-exclusive) list of questions:

- How are the plays translated and adapted to various cultural backgrounds world-wide? What do the adaptations project in terms of what the plays 'are' and 'mean'?
- How does the screen negotiate the highly theatrical cross-dressing motif or other aspects of disguise, clowning or festivity?
- How is the opposition between art and nature represented in the films?
- What are the ecocritical implications of the plays' pastoral or alternative spaces?
- How does world cinema deal with plays that give such prominence to the English language? How do non-Anglophone versions address the Shakespearean feast of language?

Selected essays will be part of a book proposal we will submit to Cambridge University Press as part of the 'Shakespeare on screen' collection.

Keywords: Shakespeare on screen; comedies; *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Love's Labour's Lost*