Recherches anglaises et nord-américaines

56 | 2022
Transmission, transposition, transformation dans l'Angleterre de la première modernité

Shakespeare's Spatial Metaphors of Central and Eastern Europe: Transpositions of Poland, Hungary and Russia in *Measure for Measure*

Monica Matei-Chesnoiu

Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/ranam/575
DOI: 10.4000/ranam.575
ISSN: 3000-4411

Publisher
Presses universitaires de Strasbourg

Printed version
Date of publication: December 1, 2022
Number of pages: 95-105
ISBN: 9791034401444
ISSN: 0557-6989

Electronic reference
Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, "Shakespeare's Spatial Metaphors of Central and Eastern Europe: Transpositions of Poland, Hungary and Russia in *Measure for Measure*", *Recherches anglaises et nord-américaines* [Online], 56 | 2022, Online since 01 February 2024, connection on 08 February 2024. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/ranam/575 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/ranam.575

The text only may be used under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.

Shakespeare's Spatial Metaphors of Central and Eastern Europe: Transpositions of Poland, Hungary and Russia in *Measure for Measure*

Monica Matei-Chesnoiu♦

In *Measure for Measure*, the Duke tells Friar Thomas, in a cryptically located friar's cell, about the fact that Lord Angelo supposed that Duke Vincentio travelled to Poland (I, 3, 12-13). This deceptive locality of the Duke's alleged diplomatic mission contrasts with his "here in Vienna" (I, 3, 13) and with the intriguing atmosphere of its brothels, prisons[1] and colourful inhabitants, reminiscent of Southwark near Jacobean London.[2] This motley set of places shared, in Shakespeare's London, a symbolically and geographically significant location at the edges of the city, in the area known as the Liberties.[3] These places

♦ Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, *Universitatea Ovidius, Constanța, Roumania*.

1 For Foucault, the theory of space is central to the panopticon described in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and to the notion of heterotopia. Heterotopias act as spaces that disrupt the structures of power, expressing transgression, freedom, movement. The space of the prison exercises control over the operations of the body "according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement" (Foucault, 1995: 137). For these reasons, restrictions of movement in the space of the prison open the possibility of imaginary mental spaces created beyond the limits of the enclosed quarters. These imaginary mental spaces, in the theatre, are opened through allusions to various European countries.

2 Richard Levin reviews and argues against a critical vogue, which he calls "occasionalism" (Levin, 1974: 129), referring to a courtly audience at Whitehall in 1604 for *Measure for Measure*. While I am not among those who would readily find a special relationship between King James and Shakespeare's Duke Vincentio, I still think that echoes of Jacobean London are so deeply intertwined with other locations and settings in the play's distorted and imprecise spatiality that it is impossible to avoid negotiating them.

3 I agree with Stephen Mullaney's investigation of the location of theatres within early modern London, in *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England*; Mullaney describes the Liberties as "a geopolitical domain that was crucial to the symbolic

situated at the margin of London, where the city butted up against the countryside, were subject to the titular authority of the City of London but effectively beyond its control; the Liberties were neither wholly in London, nor distinct from it, and marked the troublesome limits of the urban community. I draw on geocriticism and spatial literary studies to examine Shakespeare's allusions to Central and Eastern European spaces in *Measure for Measure* as sites which, like the London Liberties, are neither wholly inside, nor outside Europe.

Building on a sturdy body of work in the fields of literary cartography and literary geography, geocriticism focuses on "spatiotemporality," "transgressivity" and "referentiality" (Westphal, 2011: 9, 37, 75). As Robert T. Tally notes, "literary cartography, literary geography, and geocriticism enable productive ways of thinking about the issues of space, place, and mapping after the spatial turn in literary and cultural studies" (Tally, 2013: 3). Similarly, Ina Habermann and Michelle Witten have introduced the concept of "topological space," which "focuses on relational space, on continuity and connectivity" (Habermann and Witten, 2016: 2). From this perspective, the early modern stage can be seen as a "topological 'node', an interface linking different times and spaces in a multidimensional theatrical experience" (Habermann and Witten, 2016: 203). I argue that the Central and Eastern European locations of Poland, Hungary and Russia in the spatial architecture of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* function as topological nodes. They are transpositional metaphors of space, which transfer stabilized notions about these countries to different contexts and decentre polarized spatiality through allusions to distant liberties or autocracies at the margins of Europe, at once in it and not in it. This is the space of hazard and possibility, where imagination gives way to lateral thinking and make-believe—just like the theatre does.

Many Shakespearean plays are structured by means of juxtaposition of at least two spaces that represent alternative values and sets of possibilities: the space that embodies established, familiar normality—often the court; and the space of liberty, change, and transformation, where normal rules are suspended or called into question. This may be a fertile place of opportunity (the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*), a magically shifting place of confusion (the woods outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), or a terrifying wilderness (the heath in *King Lear*). In *Measure for Measure* there are, indeed, allusions to spaces that do not represent the court of Vienna, which stand for possibilities and alternative values, but they differ from the spaces of other comedies in being several rather than one, indirectly allusive, and suggesting larger spaces rather than just a

and material economy of the city" (Mullaney, 1988: 9). *Measure for Measure* is a play that essentially takes place in the public urban realm: a prison and a courtroom, a moated grange, a place at the threshold of the city gates, and alludes to a brothel and a walled garden. Therefore, the urban locations have many similarities to the buildings and sites of the London Liberties, but are also imaginary places with specific significance.

suburb (of Vienna or of London). These transpositional spatial metaphors exist in *Measure for Measure* through allusions to the countries of Poland, Hungary and Russia (as well as Ragusa and Bohemia); these are peripheral sites of Europe, whose liminality qualifies them as spaces of encounter negotiating among several realms of possibility. Located at the blurred borderline of conflictual zones, these countries evoke submerged social and political instability and are pitted against the relative centrality of the Viennese setting in a diffuse manner. These spaces suggest a network of interpenetrating social practices aligned with allusions to the *translatio imperii* theme and interconnections of political power.

This is not to say that early modern travellers, geographers and historians considered Poland,[4] for example, as a remote country at the margins of the civilized world, with no rightful claim of being included among the European nations. On the contrary, travel writer Ierome Turler, in 1575, aligns Poland with Germany in point of exemplary elective monarchy (Turler, 1575: 58). Further on, Turler mentions that there are countries such as Italy, Germany and France, which are governed by civil law, as opposed to countries such as England, Scotland and Poland, which are governed by the "Municipall or Countrie lawes onely," not the Roman law (Turler, 1575: 79). As a result of these different judicial systems, "none can interprete better then hée that is borne and bred vnder them" (Turler, 1575: 79). From this perspective, Poland's system of justice is similar to that in England and, therefore, best applied and understood by the citizens of that country. Moreover, the association of England and Poland in relation to similar systems of justice is an echo of controversial history and a reminder that Elizabethan and Jacobean England was considered by many at the margins of a Continental European system defined by inheritance of Roman culture, imperial prerogatives of power (the Holy Roman Empire) and religious controversy (Catholic versus Protestant).

Furthermore, Poland's proto-democratic and libertarian legal and political theories and practices significantly influenced efforts to reform absolutist monarchies in Western Europe. Yet Poland is different from many countries of Europe, as bishop George Abbott notes in *A briefe description of the whole worlde* (1599). Because the king is chosen by election, "[t]hese elections oftentimes doe make great factions there; so that in taking partes, they grow often there into ciuill warre" (Abbot, 1599: sig. B2^{v}). As Abbot suggests, in times of trouble, elective democratic systems, such as the one existing in the early modern kingdom of Poland-Lithuania, may find it difficult to cope with law-based principles,

4 Discussing the different names given to Poland in various texts of the period ("Poland," 1589; "Pole," 1589; "Polonia," 1600), Terence McCarthy logically infers that "Poland is, as yet, a distant country, a foreign land whose name has not been fixed" (McCarthy, 2000: 201). While I do not argue against this conclusion, there is still the possibility that such volatility in naming the country in English stems from the marginality of the region, which is seen as an in-between space of confrontation and conflicting influences.

especially when the pragmatism of autocratic rule invades aggressively the border-zones marked by civility and the rule of law. Moreover, early modern Poland was a buffer zone at the margin of the Russian despotic regime, on one side, and the Ottoman threat on the other.

As a result of the clash between Poland's democratic elective system and internal dissension, George Abbott emphasizes the idea of persistent trouble by noting that "[t]he king of Polonia is almost continually in warre" (Abbot, 1599: sig. B2^{v}), either with the Muscovites, or with the Turks, or sometimes with Germany. Internal discord is as much a threat as is the enemy outside the country's borders. This seems to be the case in Shakespeare's Vienna, where the danger of inner disagreement and corruption appears to take precedence over the submerged diplomatic negotiations suggested through the allusions to the three countries, Hungary, Poland and Russia. However, Poland is also known for religious tolerance in English texts because, besides Catholics, the country accepts Calvinists, Anabaptists and Artians (Abbot, 1599: sig. B2^{v}). What could be more favourable for a country's external policy than the suggestion of an internal climate of tolerance, especially at a time when Europe was ridden by religious conflicts? Despite a democratic elective system and an atmosphere of civil and religious liberties, Poland's status among the countries of Europe was still marginal.

Given Poland's conflictual situation with Russia, poet and diplomat Giles Fletcher the Elder notes in 1591, in *Of the Russe common wealth*, that the Polish ambassadors to Russia scornfully refused to call the Russian Emperor Czar, which caused significant commotion (Fletcher, 1591: 19^{v}). Such apparently minor diplomatic tensions have the role of drawing attention to the threat posed by the Russian autocratic control in the region. Yet Poland was a rich country, which held diplomatic and commercial relations with most European nations. In *The description of the Low countreys* (1593),[5] for example, Lodovico Guicciardini gives an account of the commercial value of the merchandise brought into the Low Countries from Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Poland, and the total sum is of 1,680,000 Crowns (Guicciardini, 1593: 39^{r}). This is a contradictory image of early modern Poland: internal dissension and conflicts with (mainly) Russia and the Ottomans coexist with religious tolerance and affluent commercial traffic.

Deception is the key idea related to Shakespeare's spatial transposition of Poland in *Measure for Measure*. While the Duke intends to leave Vienna incognito, he has "strew'd it in the common ear" (I, 3, 15) that he is travelling to Poland. Why Poland[6] of all countries? It may be that the country's marginal

5 This is the abridged English translation by Thomas Danett of *Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* (Apresso Guiglielmo Silvio, Stampatore Regio, 1567).

6 Historian Sebastian Sobiecki dates the British Library manuscript (Royal MS 18 B I) *A Relation of the State of Polonia* to 1603, on the occasion of the accession of King James I

status ensures that secrecy is kept about Duke Vincentio's exact whereabouts. Few "common" travellers from Vienna would have been available to testify to the fact that the Duke was not in Poland. Moreover, the theme of "government" (I, 1, 3), announced in the Duke's first speech, presents an issue related to what the Jacobeans thought about Poland's monarchical system, gleaned from the texts of the period focused on issues of governance. In explaining his intention to Escalus, Duke Vincentio mentions that he "elected" (I, 1, 18) Lord Angelo to supply his absence, which looks like the Polish elective system of monarchy—except for the fact that an autocratic ruler performed the election. In his description of poor enforcement of justice in Vienna, the Duke sketches a libertine disarray, in which "Liberty plucks Justice by the nose" (I, 3, 29). This is a libertarian society in which civil rules are both obeyed and disregarded, not much different from the image of the democratic kingdom of Poland-Lithuania.

The transposition of Central and Eastern European locations in *Measure for Measure* is custom-made to allude to social and political transgression, and it is achieved through examples of social spaces that suggest images of dissension, conflict, and political manipulation. Discussing the moral world of *Measure for Measure*, Robert B. Pierce, in "Being a Moral Agent in Shakespeare's Vienna," shows how idealists in the play try to live by the measure of their ideas; Pierce also notes: "Angelo, Isabella, and the Duke set out on that project in a world that the play analytically divides into four environments for their moral testing: the court, the convent, the tavern-brothel, and the prison" (Pierce, 2009: 268). I would add other metaphoric spaces of deception, suggested by the Eastern and Central European locations as sites of disjunctive possibilities and conflictual meanings: Poland implies political conflict and resolution; Hungary highlights political deception; Russia involves fictional storytelling; Ragusa spells unruliness; and Bohemia involves reckless and carefree nonconformism. These transpositional spaces are important for playing out moral issues, and each of them represents a nodal point in an urban geography that reconfigures the world of the play in a series of interrelated social and political circles.

It is striking that the immanent tragedy of Claudio's precipitous execution in *Measure for Measure* is averted by the lucky death of a prison inmate, "One Ragozine, a most notorious pirate" (IV, 3, 70). The Arden Shakespeare editor notes that "Ragozine" comes from Ragusa, the great Balkan city, whose name is also the source for the Italian word *ragusea*, a merchant ship from Ragusa (*Measure for Measure* 114n70). The pirate's name is, therefore, a metonymy for

in May 1603, and attributes it to John Peyton (Sobiecki, 2014: 1079). While I do not posit this manuscript as a possible source for *Measure for Measure*, performed at Whitehall on St. Stephen's Night (26 December) 1604, it is still possible that the interest for the system of government in the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania might have been aroused by this work. According to Sobiecki, "The text consistently reveals a familiarity with certain statesmen and politicians, besides demonstrating support for Polish Protestants" (Sobiecki, 2014: 1080).

place and nationality—with some allusions to licit or illicit commercial traffic in the area. The Republic of Ragusa was a maritime republic centred on the city of Dubrovnik in Dalmatia, which enjoyed a liberal democracy but switched allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. Despite suggestions of affluent commercial traffic—just as Venice—this area was associated with unruliness and disregard of law because it was then under Ottoman jurisdiction. The region's ancient name was Illyria, which involves another puzzling maritime location from *Twelfth Night*, similarly associated with sea traffic and social disorder. The Republic of Ragusa (ancient Greek name Epidaurus) was a place at the margins of Western Europe, which was famed for commercial traffic but preserved a tinge of exoticism and unruliness of the inhabitants. Moreover, it was the fiercest competitor to Venice's merchants in the period. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lucio's generic "sanctimonious pirate" (I, 2, 6), who went to sea with the Ten Commandments but deleted one of them, the one about stealing (I, 2, 6-10), should originate in Ragusa, and that he would find his natural end in Vienna. Not every place is perceived as its inhabitants would like it to be. A democratic republic famed for its liberalism could also be the site of conflicting relations and might breed much of the divergence alluded to in the play.

While Ragusa evokes conflicting images of affluent commercial traffic and moral disruptiveness caused by self-serving ends, the unruly Ragusan prison inmate could come only from marginal areas of Europe, where regulations were not so well enforced, apparently. The Ragusan pirate's natural death is an unexpected event which saves not only Claudio's life, but the life of Barnadine, "Bohemian born" (IV, 2, 128), yet nursed and bred in Vienna and a prisoner for nine years. The Duke thought him dispensable and designed that he should die instead of Claudio because, according to the Provost, Barnardine is reckless and carefree, does not care that he is in prison, and has not been affected by news of his upcoming execution. Bohemia was a Central European country and part of the Holy Roman Empire at the time (the imperial capital was in Prague in 1604), so there was no eccentricity or liminality attached to its symbolism. Moreover, according to popular theory, the empire, following the tradition of Roman law, was a delegation of power by the Roman people, therefore adhered to a form of proto-democracy. However, "Bohemian" in the play may refer both to a native of Bohemia and a gipsy—synonymous to a thief and vagabond. Transgressive figures originating from several parts of early modern Europe converge in the Viennese prison to engage in a cynical play-within-the-play orchestrated by Duke Vincentio, in a world which he can only apparently control. The prison is a social space of encounter for people from various countries of Europe, at once famed for being liberal democracies or centres of imperial power—such as Bohemia, the Republic of Ragusa, or even Venice indirectly—but which might contain the seeds of corruption and disorder.

Besides the importance of social locations in Shakespeare's Vienna, it is possible to align the spatial reference to another Central-Eastern European country, Hungary, with its vassal principality at that time, Transylvania. Lucio's conversation with two gentlemen introduces a political situation; Lucio assumes that the Duke is absent on a political mission that may decide the question of peace and war: "If the Duke, with the other dukes, come not to composition with the King of Hungary, why then all the dukes fall upon the King" (I, 2, 1-3). This allusion to a possible political treaty has been a point of dispute about dating the play (Lever 1998: xxi),[7] but spatial commentary may lead in a different direction. The Hungary connection might be linked to John Peyton's 1603 manuscript *A Relation of Polonia*, as analysed by Sobiecki. The historian notes that, in a marginal note of the manuscript, there is a reference to "the Princes resignation and reconciliation to Polonia" (Sobiecki, 2014: 1085). The explanation is that Prince Sigismund Báthori realigned himself with Poland in February 1601, but he was defeated by the Transylvanians on 3 August of the same year at Goroszló (in Transylvania). General Giorgio Basta was an imperial general who overcame the Transylvanians at the battle of Tövis on 2 July 1602; Basta governed Transylvania until his defeat by a Transylvanian–Ottoman army in April 1603 (Sobiecki 2014: 1085).

Thus, a London historical document of 1603 refers to an agreement for a political settlement (or "composition" I, 2, 3) between princes of Polonia and Hungary, which might actually lead to war. As the First Gentleman says, "Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary's" (I, 2, 4-5). References to Hungary might point to the Transylvanian situation and fulfil the spatial function of transposing the two countries (Poland and Hungary) into the play's geopolitical context. Rather than moving the action towards political resolution of conflict, the spatial allusions deepen the rift between what appears to be true and the actual facts. As Angelo is led to believe that the Duke might be on a diplomatic mission to Poland, Lucio and company are deluded into supposing that the prince is going to Hungary to strike a diplomatic agreement. These imaginary locations raise ambivalent questions related to deception in politics because, as the action reveals, Duke Vincentio is in none of these fictional places.

Even if Poland entertained diplomatic relations with the neighbouring states, it was not part of the Holy Roman Empire (as Vienna was), but it was just at its margin. On the eastern front, the Ottoman power loomed large, and open-war conflict was a real threat. The further to the eastern part of Europe a country lay, the more dangerous it was for its rulers to contain the complex geopolitical threats. The geographic treatise by George Abbott—who never travelled to

7 J. W. Lever uses the allusion to Hungary to infer that "the dialogue here turned upon King James's negotiations for a settlement with Spain [in 1603], the issues being suitably veiled in view of the censor's objection to the discussion of current political affairs on the stage" (Lever 1998: xxxi). Whether Spain or Hungary, I believe, failed political treaties and transgression are the issues here.

the countries he described but wrote from the comfort of his home—remarks factually on the geopolitical situation: "*Vienna* that noble citie, which is now the principall bulwarke of all Christendome against the Turke" (Abbot, 1599: sig. B3^{v}). Abbot also comments on the countries east of Hungary in impersonal terms: "On the South-side of *Hungarie,* and South-east, lyeth a countrie of Europe called in old time *Dacia,* which is large and wide, comprehending in it *Transyluania, Valachia, Moldauia,* and *Seruia.* Of which little is famous, saue that the men are warlike, and can hardly be brought to obedience" (Abbot, 1599: sig. B3^{r}). Similar to Poland's inhabitants, the people of the three principalities forming modern-day Romania (Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia) are described as preparing for war and expecting political dissension.

Correspondingly distorted political mappings and spatial transpositions in *Measure for Measure* are adduced when Lucio creates confusion concerning the Duke's whereabouts: "Some say he is with the Emperor of Russia; other some, he is in Rome" (III, 2, 85-86). Lucio speaks to Duke Vincentio himself (in disguise), and dramatic irony is fitting. Yet not even the absent/present Duke/Friar is spared Lucio's criticism, when the cynical commentator says that it is a trick for the ruler to steal from the state "and usurp the beggary he was never born to" (III, 2, 89-90). The play strongly elicits the reaction that role usurpation and corruption are reserved not only for the low-life characters, but even the high-born ones may hand over the apanage of their status and play a different role than the one assigned to them. This is exactly what the Duke does, and the mention of the Emperor of Russia—suggesting autocracy—cuts through the play's ambivalent negotiation of social and political systems and values. At the same time, as Lucio claims, Angelo adds "transgression" (III, 2, 91-92) to his deputy rule in Vienna.

Deception, stealing, beggary and transgression in conflicting Vienna are aligned, as if through topographic triangulation, to the emperor of the distant and frozen Russia, who was known for tyranny, autocratic rule and rough administrative practices. Russia is also the place known for long harsh winters. As Angelo remarks scornfully, Pompey's long-winded story "will last out a night in Russia / When nights are longest there" (II, 1, 133-134). Angelo's impatience at Pompey's verbosity is ironically associated to the northern frozen country of Russia, where there is nothing better to do during the long winter nights in isolation than concocting fictional stories. These fantastic tales are obviously opposed to the "truths" (II, 1, 132) everybody is vainly seeking in the play's world. There is a permanent tension in the play's negotiation of spatiality between the relative value of truth in the civic and juridical systems, in political life, and even in personal relationships related to sexuality—in any place and at any point in time.

In the geo-graphic exchange between Lucio and the disguised Duke/Friar (III, 2, 85-86), Rome, the other place to which Duke Vincentio was supposed to be on a diplomatic mission, was the seat of imperial power in ancient times,

and of Catholic supporters[8]—in conflict with Protestant reformers, in the early seventeenth century. These fictional spaces create a tension between what occurs in the play and what might have been true in the real political world. The Duke's inability to maintain order in Vienna—and his subsequently shunning the responsibility through the pretext of deceptive diplomatic travel to various countries—discloses the play's oblique spatiality, in the context of the abuse of power and authority. The Duke wants his Vienna to be a model of civil rights, but reality and Angelo's self-righteousness challenge such impossible expectations. Alternatively, the threat of Rome as a source of Catholic anxieties for Protestants in London might also suggest political transgression and spatial transposition. This is all the more so as this location of Rome is also fictional, just like those of Poland and Hungary, since the Duke was not in Rome, but in Vienna, in disguise.

Early modern countries that shape Shakespeare's spatial transpositions are not what everybody might expect them to be, based on readings of the geography texts of the period. Julia Reinhard Lupton discusses the concept of "civil society" in "Shakespeare's Other Europe" (479) and aligns Shakespeare's Venice in *The Merchant of Venice* with "Venice's peculiar sister-city, the oddly-Italian Vienna of *Measure for Measure*" (Lupton, 2001: 480). Just as Venice in early modern Europe, the Duke's would-be Vienna aspires to exemplary civility and democracy but is suffocated by libertarianism and erosion of justice. Responding to Lucio's indirect question of whether the world is as it was, Duke Vincentio remarks: "Still thus, and thus: still worse!" (III, 2, 51) It is only through the relativity and visuality of theatrical performance that the implication of "thus, and thus" can be revealed, while "worse" may take many conflicting meanings. What transpires, though, is the theme of *translatio imperii*, which presupposes that Roman power and systems of justice were ideally transferred to the Holy Roman

8 In her detailed study of the topical meanings in *Measure for Measure*, Leah Marcus notes that Vienna, as one of the capitals of the Holy Roman Empire and the seat of the immensely powerful Habsburg dynasty, was "the administrative hub of a vast and shifting Catholic alliance with which the English had been on hostile terms for decades" (Marcus, 1988: 162). Marcus claims that most of the playgoers in Protestant London in 1604 would have perceived Vienna in the context of the anxieties about the Holy Roman Empire's expansionary tendencies. Mentioning this distant city would evoke fears of a further extension of Habsburg domination, bringing in its wake imperial repression and inquisitorial reimposition of Catholicism. After Elizabeth's death and the accession of James I, the need to come to better terms with the Habsburg Empire remained a political reality. To this end, the treaty of London, signalling the reconciliation of James's realm with the Habsburgs, was signed in the summer of 1604. *Measure for Measure* had its performance a few months later and Leah Marcus suggests that this fact permits an interpretation of the play as propaganda for the treaty of London's attempt to shift the basis of British relations with the most powerful forces of Catholic Europe (Marcus, 1988: 197). While I do not argue against this particular point, I still think that the play's geography engages in a larger scope than merely particular events of Jacobean London. The Habsburg city of Vienna is included in a spatially-motivated concatenation of locations that play out the European geopolitical context of the time, viewed from a non-aligned global perspective.

Empire. Nonetheless, through allusions related to ambivalent transpositions of spatiality, the play indicates that nations are not able to cope with the complexity of realpolitik lurking behind straightforward judicial codes and practices.

Spatial transpositions of Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, Ragusa, Rome and Russia in *Measure for Measure* might have encouraged Shakespeare's London audience to feel that the action of the play extends to the farther edges of Central and Eastern Europe, in countries both like and unlike their own. These imaginary transpositions of real locations highlight the importance of a sense of theatrical place, when location cannot be shown on stage and conventions demand the audience's complicity in conjuring up an imaginary vision of the spaces of action. Shakespeare only rarely uses locations of Central or Eastern Europe for his plays and, when he does, they tend to have an unreal, somewhat fairy-tale quality. As Illyria in *Twelfth Night* or the coast of Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*, the main point about such settings is that they are distant, elsewhere. Yet in the morally ambivalent environment of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, the presence of Central and Eastern European locations proposes a non-Eurocentric understanding of civil rights and politics.

The final scene makes the public space of the city of Vienna itself into a kind of courtroom, a place where people are put on trial, judgment is passed, and justice is done. While the play challenges the euro-centrism of most legal systems, it also shows a general erosion of civil and political liberties. Democratic rule and civil liberalism in the West clashes with South-Eastern autocratic government and practices. The Central and Eastern European countries of Poland and Hungary are off-stage interfaces where ambiguous alliances and matters of war and peace are played out against threatening autocracies from the East (Russia) and from the South (the Ottomans). At the same time, the play negotiates a liberating openness to new possibilities represented by difference, which brings its own challenges. Transgression is the common notion suggested by these spatial transpositions or permutations of Central and Eastern European locations in *Measure for Measure*, and this feature also pervades the centrality of Vienna in the play. In the face of the ethical, moral and political volatility that we all now live with, it is not surprising that the spatial transpositions in *Measure for Measure* may acquire new resonances in the modern world.

References

• ABBOT, G. (1599): *A briefe description of the whole worlde*. London, T. Iudson, for Iohn Browne, STC 24.5.
• FLETCHER, G. (1591): *Of the Russe common wealth.* London, T[homas] D[awson] for Thomas Charde, STC 11056.

• FOUCAULT, M. (1995): *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. SHERIDAN A. (trans.), 2nd ed, New York, Vintage Books.
• GUICCIARDINI, L. (1593): *The description of the Low Countreys,* London, Peter Short for Thomas Chard, STC 12463.
• HABERMANN, I. & WITTEN, M. (2016): "Introduction," in HABERMANN, I. & WITTEN, M. (eds.), *Shakespeare and Space: Theatrical Explorations of the Spatial Paradigm*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 1-13.
• LEVER, J. W. (1998): "Introduction," in LEVER, J. W. (ed.), *The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare: Measure for Measure*, London, Thomas Nelson, p. xi-xcviii.
• LEVIN, R. (1974): "The King James Version of *Measure for Measure*," *Clio* 3.2, p. 129-163.
• LUPTON, J. R. (2001): "Shakespeare's Other Europe: Jews, Venice, and Civil Society," *Social Identities* 7.4, p. 479-490.
• MARCUS, L. S. (1988): *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
• McCARTHY, T. (2000): "'What's in a Name?': Shakespeare's Poland," *English Studies* 81.3, p. 199-216.
• MULLANEY, S. (1988): *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
• PIERCE, R.B. (2009): "Being a Moral Agent in Shakespeare's Vienna," *Philosophy and Literature* 33.2, p. 267-279.
• SHAKESPEARE, W. (1998): *Measure for Measure*. Lever, J. W. (ed.), The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomas Nelson.
• SOBIECKI, S. (2014): "John Peyton's *A Relation of the State of Polonia* and the Accession of King James I, 1598-1603," *English Historical Review* 129.540, p. 1079-1097.
• TALLY, R.T, JR. (2013): "Introduction," in TALLY, R.T., JR. (ed.), *Spatiality*, London, Routledge, p. 14-23.
• TURLER, I. (1575): *The traueiler of Ierome Turler deuided into two books*, London, William How, for Abraham Veale, STC 24336.
• WESTPHAL, B. (2011): *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, TALLY R.T., JR (tr.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan.