



Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds: National and Transnational Identities in the Elizabethan Age

Carole Levin, John Watkins

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In *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds*, Carole Levin and John Watkins focus on the relationship between the London-based professional theater preeminently associated with William Shakespeare and an unprecedented European experience of geographic, social, and intellectual mobility. Shakespeare's plays bear the marks of exile and exploration, rural depopulation, urban expansion, and shifting mercantile and diplomatic configurations. He fills his plays with characters testing the limits of personal identity: foreigners, usurpers, outcasts, outlaws, scolds, shrews, witches, mercenaries, and cross-dressers.

Through parallel discussions of *Henry VI*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, Levin and Watkins argue that Shakespeare's centrality to English national consciousness is inseparable from his creation of the foreign as a category asserting dangerous affinities between England's internal minorities and its competitors within an increasingly fraught European mercantile system.

As a women's historian, Levin is particularly interested in Shakespeare's responses to marginalized sectors of English society. As a scholar of English, Italian Studies, and Medieval Studies, Watkins situates Shakespeare in the context of broadly European historical movements. Together Levin and Watkins narrate the emergence of the foreign as portable category that might be applied both to "strangers" from other countries and to native-born English men and women, such as religious dissidents, who resisted conformity to an increasingly narrow sense of English identity. *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds* will appeal to historians, literary scholars, theater specialists, and anyone interested in Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Age.



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