

Introduction: More European Shakespeares

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The study of Shakespeare in Europe is by no means a new phenomenon and owes much of its pedigree to the formative work of scholars in countries outside the English-speaking world, especially Germany. The German-published *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, for instance, was the first academic journal to devote itself monographically to Shakespeare, predating the existence of both *Shakespeare Survey* and *Shakespeare Quarterly*, organs which, as Stanley Wells has acknowledged, have provided the mainstay of Shakespeare's English reputation abroad (Wells 1998: 3). But beyond the prestigious and ongoing enterprise of the *Jahrbuch* stand a number of sporadic, one-off publications on Shakespeare's European presence which, as Balz Engler has recently remarked, have helped lay the groundwork, if not of a fully-fledged *European Shakespeare*, then of a kind of continental "genealogy, rooted in Shakespeare's works in English and dividing into national limbs and branches". Thus the five or so studies he cites have all, in their different ways, suggested an economy of influence in which, while England remains at the head of a frenetic export industry, Germany and France emerge as efficient, if not always coniplaisant, distributors to the cultural "hinterlands" of Poland, Russia and Scandinavia (Engler, forthcoming).

The prizing open of Europe following the Treaty of Rome and, more recently, the collapse of the Berlin Wall; the impetus given to European economic and cultural transactions at Maastricht and by a globalization of the means of communication have smoothed the way for contacts between Shakespeareans from different parts of the continent, as well as unveiling veritable treasure troves of information concerning the appropriation of Shakespeare in countries on both sides of the East-West divide.

"European Shakespeares" was the title of the first international conference to devote itself wholly to the question of Shakespeare's European receptions. Held in 1990 at the Belgian University of Antwerp's Higher Institute for Translators and Interpreters, the conference treated and helped reflect the work of translators and scholars in France, Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Holland, Bohemia, Poland and Slovakia, and the contribution of that work to the positioning of Shakespeare in translation at the centre of a pan-European Romantic mind-set. *More European Shakespeares* surfaced three years later at an East European venue, Bankya in Bulgaria. "Shakespeare in the New Europe", a conference attended by scholars from both continental Europe and, for the first time, Britain and the United States, was a response to recent events in the former Communist countries Bulgaria, Romania, East Germany, Soviet Union, etc., as well as under formerly fascist regimes such as Francoist Spain. By charting the process of Shakespeare's recruitment for different ideological and nationalist ends, the conference thus stood as a kind of valediction of the words of one of the more notable English delegates:

'What is my nation?' What if Shakespeare asked that question now? I would reply that he has been many nations and can potentially be every nation, and that is why he matters more than any other writer there has ever been, and that is why he is a living presence in the new Europe ...

Bate (1994: 115)

Could Shakespeare possibly be deigned to serve the needs of another non-Anglophone power, or subgroup within that power? The events in Britain's former adversary Germany, where *unser Shakespeare* had developed as a powerful counterpart to his unruly or simply mistreated English cousin, are powerful proof that he could. Appropriations of Shakespeare in the Balkans, reinterpretation of Hamlet on either side of the Berlin Wall or rampant *Shakespeare-mania* in post-Francoist Spain merely confirm the use-value of the Shakespearean corpus to support often contradictory ideological and aesthetic ends.

Which brings us to Spain and the 1999 Murcia conference, appropriately entitled "Four Centuries of Shakespeare in Europe". To the presence of delegates from 13 different countries should be added the equal weight accorded to the three major areas of Shakespeare's historic appropriation: translation, performance and criticism. An important offshoot of the Murcia conference was the collective impulse to engage in further research and other activities concerning the question of Shakespeare in Europe and the proposal to set up a European Shakespeare association. A provisional steering committee was entrusted with coordinating these activities and, where possible, with progressively expanding the initial core to include members from other European countries. One final proposal was the periodical organization of conferences such as the one held at Murcia, with the University of Basle (Switzerland) being offered as venue for the year 2001. Some of the papers presented at the Murcia conference have been revised and adapted for the present volume, which as its title pronounces, has been aimed at giving a voice to yet *more European Shakespeares*.

The plural form of the proper name Shakespeare included in this title is also partly inspired on the collection of essays edited in 1986 by John Drakakis and entitled *Alternative Shakespeares*. The point of this use of the plural, according to Drakakis, was to suggest that whoever he may have been or whatever he may have written or intended to write, "Shakespeare" never was, is or will be reducible to a single set of meanings, values or ideas. And though for very nearly four centuries (at least since the time fellow thespian, playwright and coimpatriot Ben Jonson boldly ventured that he "was not of an age, but for all time") critics (most of them English) have sought to establish Shakespeare's status as "universal" "genius", the "universality" in question has tended to be tied to a somewhat limited and frequently prescriptive concept of creativity, which in turn has rested heavily on such mostly unvoiced ideological constructs as "political correctness", the "great chain of being" or, often explicitly, "essential Englishness". (Re)directing his readers' attention towards the eminent constructability of meaning and towards the inevitable appropriability of different authors for different ends, Drakakis invited a reassessment of the ultimate "authority" of Shakespeare as the author of his works, while suggesting that every reinterpretation of Shakespeare is always a *reinvention* of Shakespeare, that every "final" interpretative solution has its alternatives, reflected here in the battery of approaches (feminist, marxist, deconstructive, psychoanalytic, etc.) which have helped undo the idea of a universal or *univocal* Shakespeare (Drakakis 1985).

"Shakespeare doesn't mean: we mean by Shakespeare" (Hawkes 1992: 3). Given that meaning is largely constructed, not intrinsic or inherent to the (artistic) utterance which is its expression, the question arises as to the different (interpretative) communities (Hawkes's "we") in which Shakespeare's works have *been made sense of*, have proven *meaningful*. The bulk of Shakespeare criticism is, perhaps inevitably, Anglo-Saxon in origin, "Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is part of an Englishman's constitution". The sentiment voiced in Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* applies not just to the universalizing or "essentialist humanist" scholarship of the 18th and 19th centuries but to "alternative" stances as adopted by the poststructuralist contributors to Drakakis's volume who, as Delabastita and D'hulst have shrewdly observed, "focus on the various mechanisms, ideological and otherwise, directing the afterlife of Shakespeare within *English* culture". What of those other "cultures" where Shakespeare's production has proven equally popular and/or influential? of those other languages into which Shakespeare has been translated (transcoded) and which, in discursively distinctive ways, have themselves translated (transplanted or traduced) Shakespeare? "Occasionally England's (former) colonial extensions are taken into account as well, but in essence the new paradigm is based on monolingual and monocultural models" (Delabastita & D'hulst 1993: 21). How alternative do we want our Shakespeares to be? Not, it seems, to the point of seeing them in exotic, non-English locales or of reading or hearing them in non-English tongues.

European Shakespeares, the Shakespeares which have been translated, performed or discussed and dissected on the European continent for the last four centuries, are not just a living

presence to be (grudgingly) deferred to as a mark of the great man's universality, though with very little effect on the tacit but persistent construction of a monocultural, monoglot Bard. As Dennis Kennedy, one of the first English-speaking critics to acknowledge the importance of a "foreign Shakespeare", has suggested, Shakespeare "without his language" stands as an important and often impertinent challenge to the unquestioned hegemony of Anglocentric accounts of the canon, of both the preeminence of *English* Shakespeare and of "the superiority of English as the medium for Shakespearean cognition". It stands, in short, as a subject in its own right, the multiplicity of non-Anglophone inscriptions of Shakespeare's texts standing as incontrovertible evidence of a "phenomenon separate from [their] use in English" (Kennedy 1993: 3). To understand those separate uses, to reposition Shakespeare in the vastly different national and regional contexts in which he has emerged, to distinguish the different inflections in which the corpus of poems and plays have been produced, is the mainspring of an investigative activity which, in the last decade or so, has considerably enriched our cognition not just of Shakespeare but of the cultures in which he has been absorbed and to which, in many respects, he has helped to give shape.

As Europe lurches or speeds (depending on one's point of view or, perhaps more accurately, on different political-party interests) towards even greater economic unity and so probable national or regional political centrifuging, even more Shakespeares emerge, as well as different ways of figuring the impact of Shakespeare "without his language" or even, as Kennedy has recently proposed, of "Shakespeare without Shakespeare" (Kennedy 2001). The centuries-old habit of "adaptation", to which Shakespeare himself was notoriously prone, is itself a powerful source of confrontation with the original texts, conceived not as "sources" to be valued against particular other-language "targets" but as inspiration or *pre*-texts for some truly creative engagements with the differently perceived *idea* of Shakespeare. That this idea is as protean as the histories of the individuals and cultures that have held it is symptomatic of the limitations of any *nationally* predicated conception of Shakespeare's genius. As the editors of a recent collection of Shakespearean adaptations have put it,

The Shakespearean "world text", which in our understanding includes all the various forms of Shakespearean adaptation, suggests the limitations of the British nationalism traditionally associated with Shakespeare. Even as Shakespeare is used to produce coherent visions of national, ideological, and cultural affiliation, the vulnerability of such visions to forces of change is exposed by the way Shakespeare is inevitably altered by new circumstances.

Fischlin & Fortier (2000: 16)

The changing circumstances of millennial Europe, together with Britain's own redefinition of its relation to the continent and indeed to its own unity, are sufficient indices of the probable genesis of yet more and radically undomesticated Shakespeares. The development of more and more sophisticated means of literary production (film and "electronic" texts), as well as the opening of increasingly fluid channels of reproduction and distribution, are still others.

And so to the contributions that comprise this modest volume, which for clarity's sake have been grouped not along national lines but in terms of the focus they give to the different means of Shakespeare's European reception, dissemination and appropriation. (Needless to say, such divisions are rarely absolute and, as almost all the articles suggest, conceal an often intricate process of creative interchange and cross-fertilization.) Under "Stage History and Performance" we have classed those articles which trace the fortunes of individual works in performance or individual landmark performances in Russia, Romania and Spain. Maria Ignatieva's "Stanislavsky's Second Othello: The Great Director's Last Revelations" traces the (brief) history of Stanislavsky's never-completed project to produce a second version of the tragedy of the Moor of Venice, a project which was dogged from the outset by both the director's ill health and the tumultuous beginnings of Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union. Ignatieva finds what she calls a "metaphorical" equivalence in both the fate of the play and Stanislavsky's radical interpretation of it and Stalin's own particular brand of societal "cleansing". Odette Blumenfeld's "Mihai Mănițiu's Richard III: Inwardness Rendered Visible" moves beyond the socialist era to address the Romanian production of the tragedy of Gloucester. Adapting the Derridean concept of *différance* and the supplement, she assesses the impact of a postmodernism on Mănițiu's treatment of the traditional semiotics of theatrical production and, above all, of the personality of the loathsomely seductive dictator-hero Richard. Finally, Marta Mateo in her "Interpreting, Performing and Translating Isabella" turns to a Western production of the "problem play" *Measure for Measure*, with special reference to the differing depictions of the character of Isabella in some contemporary British and Spanish versions of the play.

The second section of the volume, subheaded "Shakespeare in National Cultures", includes two articles on Shakespeare's reception in Central and Eastern Europe. Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney's "'Interpret in the Name of Shakespeare': National Cultures and Polish Sources of Shakespeare's Plays" offers a perspective on the birth of Poland's carefully mediated investment in the Shakespearean corpus, with consideration of the ways in which Polish culture has both been enriched by and contributed to the cosmopolitan narrative material of Shakespeare's plays. Meanwhile, Mihaela Matei-Chesnoiu in her "The Mental and Theatrical Maps of Shakespeare's Romances: A Romanian Perspective" takes a particular section of the corpus, the romances, and reinterprets it in the light of England's own troubled relations with the rest of Europe and of the reception of the plays in Romania's highly turbulent recent history.

Under "Shakespearean Adaptations" are included two articles which approach the vexed problem of Shakespeare's transplantation to other-language codes and genres. Juan Jesús Zaró's "Shakespeare en España: una aproximación traductológica" adopts the perspective of recent translational research paradigms to assess the impact of nine translations of the plays dating from 1798 to 1995. The emphasis in Zaró's article is less on the intrinsic value of these translations than on the "process of acculturation" by which they have been adapted to Spanish tastes. In "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk: Sameness and Difference in Nicolai Leskov" Archibald M. Young takes a well-known narrative by the Tolstoy-inspired Russian author to show how

in his rewriting of the *Macbeth* plot. Leskov tacitly reiterates Tolstoy's notorious strictures against the popular impact of Shakespeare's plays in general and *Macbeth* in particular.

Finally, under "Shakespeare in Other Media". Óscar de Jódar's "Shakespeare en nuestras pantallas: la recepción de las adaptaciones cinematográficas y televisivas en España" briefly explores the history of Shakespeare's adaptation to the medium of film and television, with a careful consideration of the impact of such adaptations in Spain as well as Spaniards' own rather limited contributions to the field.

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