Foreword

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Shakespeare and Europe: History – Performance – Memory

Shakespeare was present on the stages of the European continent already during his lifetime. Strolling players, known as "English Comedians", were performing in the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth throughout northern Europe, from the Low Countries (Brooks, Cohn) and France through German-speaking Central Europe and following the route of the Hansa up along the Baltic coast, all the way to the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk (Střibrný 6–25). We have reports of *Henry VI* being performed at Fountainbleau in 1604, and a group of "English Comedians", headed up by the popular actors Robert Browne and Thomas Sackville, settled in at the court of Heinrich Julius of Brunswick in Wolfenbüttel in 1592, where they established the oldest continuous theatre in Germany (Schickx, Schlueter). As early as 1601 "Gentlemen of a Company" may have been performing in Gdańsk where an English language colony had established itself, and in 1610 the citizens of that city pledged money to erect a large quadrangular theatre modelled on "The Fortune" in London (Limon 28–63). We also have evidence of German language adaptations based on the original versions of Shakespeare's plays being performed in various German cities and principalities during the first two decades of the sixteenth century: *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet* (Cohn, Creizenach, Williams 35–45). What is important here is not only Shakespeare's possible presence, but that these English players created an awareness of theatre as an institution in itself and not simply a holiday diversion or vehicle for religious instruction and that they breathed new life and pride into acting as a profession through the liveliness, vivacity

and spontaneity of their expression and gestures. Arguably these performance may have been Shakespeare "with [some] English", albeit in performance forms allowing for an easy transferral of meaning for a foreign language audience. After German speaking actors joined the troupes, a multi-lingual form, or even Shakespeare "without English", may have been the linguistic and dramatic fare. Not until the eighteenth century do we have what might be called "literary" translations, or renderings, into a language other than English.[1]

The history of Shakespeare on the European stage, after its early beginnings in the seventeenth century, can be divided roughly into three phases: the quest for national identity, from the mid-eighteenth century to 1918 (Shakespeare in "Old Europe"), political Shakespeare, from 1918 to 1989 (Shakespeare in a Divided Europe), and what I would call "transformational Shakespeare" from 1989 to the present (Shakespeare in "New Europe"). With the rise of the national state in late eighteenth century Europe, came a call for a national theatre tradition, and Shakespeare became the model for creating a vernacular theatre. The first national theatre in Germany opened in Hamburg in 1767 and by the end of the 1770s the Germans were in the grip of "a veritable 'Hamletfever'" (Williams 67). Shakespeare had so established his position in the national literary pantheon that in 1916, at the height of the First World War, Gerhart Hauptmann, Nobel Prize winning German dramatist, could still speak of "our Shakespeare" (*unser Shakespeare*) and proclaim to the German Shakespeare Society that "even though Shakespeare was born and is buried in England, it is in Germany that he is truly alive."[2]

Germany was by no means unique. In the nineteenth century Bulgaria (Shurbanov and Sokolova 33–54), Romania (Mattei-Chesniou) and Hungary (Klein and Dávidházi) mustered Shakespeare into the service of a national ethnic theatre tradition in countries which had been dominated for centuries by the Ottoman Empire, and even in Tsarist Russia, Shakespeare had his entrances and his exits. The period between 1918 to 1989 – Shakespeare in a divided Europe – saw Shakespeare performance become a site for political discourse and public debate, especially in fascist and communist dictatorships. In the theatres of the eastern Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union, Shakespeare performance became a site for staging the current ills of society, albeit in medieval or Elizabethan England, transforming the stage on occasion into a forum for public debate in societies in which no open forum for public discourse existed. The essays by Gregor, Krontiris, Schandl, Fabiszak and Sokolyansky address this period of European Shakespeare and attest to how Shakespeare was read (see also Guntner and McLean, Matei-Chesniou, Shurbanov and Sokolova, Střibrný).

[1] See "Shakespeare Translations: A Chronology" at http://pages.unibas.ch/shine/translators.htm

[2] "und wenn er in England geboren und begraben ist, so ist Deutschland das Land, wo er wahrhaft lebt", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 51 (1915): xii; also Engler.

With the implosion of the Berlin Wall on 9 Nov. 1989 and with it the entire Soviet bloc, the Central and Eastern European stage lost the political backdrop against which Shakespeare had been projected. The essays by Hampton-Reeves, Isenberg and Rayner demonstrate how Shakespeare performance has become a site on which the transformations of a new emerging Europe can and have been performed, where borders, differences, margins and conflicts (political, ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, gender, sexual) can be probed and new forms of performance, including the role of the spectator, enacted.

Since 1989 Shakespeare and Europe has also come to mean Shakespeare in Europe, Shakespeare as Europe, and more recently Shakespeare for Europe.[3] Equating Shakespeare with "European", i.e., northern European or "Germanic" culture, was engrained in early twentieth century Americanism "nativism" (Smialkowski), and the presence of European directors of Shakespeare in New York City, conjure up notions of a "European" Shakespeare even today (Lennox). The German actor Norbert Kentrup and Helga Treupel, a German Green Party representative in Brussels, have proposed a EuroGlobe for Europe: a mobile "Wooden O" with room for one thousand spectators that would be erected for a half a year in the capital of the new European Council presidency. There Shakespeare's plays would be performed in the vernacular of that country, utilizing local actors, theatres and schools. In addition there would be a workshop for young dramatists writing on European topics. A jury would select a prize winner, whose play would be performed and translated into every European language (at least twenty-five). Last but not least, a European youth Parliament would adjourn in The Globe on that location, which local artists would decorate. Shakespeare's EuroGlobe would provide a "space for Europe", and Shakespeare performance in Europe would have come full circle: forming a public forum for debating and staging the nation.[4]

In 2003 a loosely organized band of "strolling scholars", calling themselves "Shakespeare in Europe", chose Kraków as the venue for their next bi-annual conference that was to be entitled "Shakespeare and Memory". Kraków is typical of what has occasionally been called the "New Europe".[5] Situated geographically and culturally between Slavic and Germanic spheres of influence, Kraków, the ancient Slavic capital of Poland, has the largest Italianate market

[3] In June of 2004, one month after the European Union expanded to twenty-five nations, one hundred artists – from the conductor Claudio Abbado to the choreographer Sascha Waltz – signed "An Appeal for a Europe Founded on its Culture". The list reads like a who's who of European directors of Shakespeare: Peter Brook, Luc Bondy, Patrice Cheréau, Oskaras Korsunovas, Peter Stein, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Andrzej Wajda, among them. See http://www.artistsforeurope.org/index.html

[4] See http://www.helgatruepel.de and *Die Tageszeitung* 2 Jan. 2007, 12.

[5] With the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union in 2006, "New Europe" has now become what "Old Europe", i.e. pre-1914 Europe, was. Europe has taken almost one hundred years to recover from World War I.

square north of the Alps and is one of the rare cities in the world that can boast a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, icon of European humanism: "Lady with an Ermine". Kraków has been a site on which divergent European "narratives" have competed, intertwined and co-existed with each other for centuries: Roman Catholic Christianity, Ashkenazi Judaism, Marxism, among others. These are what Bryan Reynolds in his afterword refers to as "articulatory spaces" for interaction, e.g., Marxspace, Freudspace, JesusChristspace. But nearby lies Auschwitz and the conference participants were reminded that Kraków, once home to a rich and flourishing Jewish culture, became after June of 1942 the site of a different kind of European narrative: the Holocaust.[6] Nevertheless, for four days in November 2005 the many histories that are Kraków's actively engaged with Shakespearean histories, however immediate or distant.

In the course of reading, listening and discussing papers on Shakespeare performance of the last one hundred years, the participants in the seminar entitled "History and Performance" realized more was involved than "reading" a performance in its historical context. In the Shakespeare performance lay the cultural memory of "European idea of man", to quote Giorgio Strehler, "long before the creation of a form of government" (http://www.artistsforeurope.org/index.html). We were fulfilling the "witness-function", on which Reynolds elaborates in the afterword to this collection, in reconstructing and writing a collective cultural memory of Europe on the basis of Shakespeare performance. This selection of papers from that seminar has, thus, been given the subtitle: "history – performance – memory" in order to highlight the factors which combine in writing a performance history and to remind us and our readers that we are writing at the same time the cultural memory of Europe.

Of all the pan-European narratives, Shakespeare seems less obviously burdened by ideology and perhaps for this reason lends himself more easily to a multitude of local receptions (or memories). Just as Shakespeare's history plays may be read as a struggle between competing cultural memories for the control of an English national cultural memory (Assmann), so too can Shakespeare performances be read as chapters in the cultural memory of that nation in which the performance has taken place. The sum of these chapters from all nations makes up a cultural memory of Europe, as both idea and historical event. Reconstructing/writing a European, or even a national, cultural memory is not an easy task. Most of the authors are writing about performances they have never seen and are relying on reviews, interviews after the fact, critiques, descriptions written by others and the occasional videotape. Like personal memory, these "witnesses" are insightful, but also subjective, idiosyncratic, and possibly even unreliable (Krontiris and

[6] Oskar Schindler recruited his Jewish employees from the Kraków ghetto and Steven Spielberg filmed *Schindler's List* there.

Schandl). This unreliability in the "witness-function" will remain an element of our cultural memory, yet continue to reinforce the significance of human subjectivity in the face of an increasing anti-human, and anti-humanistic, "information society". These essays will become hopefully an important chapter in the ongoing mapping of Shakespeare's procession across the continent and his contribution to a shared cultural memory we call "Europe".

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