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Falstaff in Switzerland, Hamlet in Bavaria: Expatriate Shakespeare and the Question of Cultural Transmission

Michael Dobson

This paper considers some of the consequences of the late eighteenth-century canonization of Shakespeare as an indigenously British writer for the performance of his plays in Continental Europe, particularly their hitherto under-studied history of non-professional anglophone performance among expatriates. It examines the conflict between two principal ways of understanding the workings of cultural transmission (essentially, between the notion of Shakespeare as belonging genetically to the English-speaking peoples, and a notion of Shakespeare as amenable to naturalization regardless of ethnicity), as it plays itself out during two periods of international conflict: that of Romanticism and revolution, and that of Modernism and world war. Drawing on diplomatic memoirs, geography textbooks, prologues, vanity-published journals and military archives, it looks particularly at Shakespearean performances by English expatriates and Swiss Anglophiles in Geneva in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, and at productions of Shakespeare mounted by Allied prisoners of war in Bavaria during World War Two. Whose different notions of high culture, ethnic identity and national heritage did these different mobilizations of Shakespeare serve?

Few questions have caused quite so much conflict in Europe as those concerning the nature of communal identity. The little matter of whether we are who we are because of ethnicity, or religion, or geography, or all or none of the above – and whether that "we" is first and foremost national or transnational or local – was already a vexed one in

Performing the Self. SPELL: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 24. Ed. Karen Junod and Didier Maillat. Tübingen: Narr, 2010. 101-125.

Tudor times, as any student of Shakespeare's history plays knows. The question, in particular, of whether distinctive national cultures are primarily founded on genetics or on some more accidental confluence of ideas and practices has haunted the reception of Shakespeare both within Europe and beyond, ever since he was canonized as a national figure in the Romantic period. Since the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's plays have been regarded by his compatriots as intensely native, indeed as paradigmatic expressions of the national character: generously irregular and socially inclusive; deeply attached to the countryside but thriving on the commercial energies of the city; clear-sighted about the deficiencies of monarchy as a political system but heavily invested in the institution regardless. I want to look in what follows at some instances of how an argument about whether the imputed Britishness of Shakespeare is based on biological heredity has played out around the performance of the plays on the European mainland during two periods of conflict, that of Romanticism and revolution, and that of Modernism and world war. I'm going to be looking in particular at theatrical productions staged in two mountainous and un-Warwickshire-like regions, Switzerland and Bavaria. They are productions which have been overlooked in accounts of Shakespeare's European canonization to date, for two main reasons: firstly, none was given by a professional company, and secondly, despite taking place in the heart of the Continent, all were given in English.

There have been two main accounts to date of how Shakespeare came to participate in global culture, and neither, I hope to show, is quite complete. One concentrates on how Shakespeare's plays were taken around the world as part of the cultural baggage of British imperialism. That story begins in Shakespeare's lifetime with the crew of the East India Company ship the *Red Dragon*, who performed *Hamlet* and *Richard II* off what is now Sierra Leone while en route for the East in 1607-8 (Taylor 223-48). In this account, the transmission of Shakespeare is largely a matter of genetics, with performances of his work spreading across the map along with the English-speaking peoples. The great expert on theatre in the nascent British empire, Kathleen Wilson, has researched a history of when different colonized territories right around the world were first treated to the spectacle of Anglophones staging Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, a play she associates with the policing of sexuality required to guarantee which children would count as British citizens (Wilson 240). The exercise would work just as well with Shakespeare's history plays, which helped to keep a sense of legitimate heritage and national identity alive in unfamiliar surroundings: *Richard II* off Sierra Leone, 1607; *Richard III* in New York, 1752; *Henry IV part 1* in Sydney, 1800; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the Windward Islands, 1842.

And so on; and that's without listing countless garrison and shipboard performances of *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in Ireland, Wales, Madras, Chatham, and elsewhere. Once Shakespeare was felt to speak for the native soil, then Falstaff in particular, as the Shakespearean character most often associated with that soil – identified with roast beef and plenty, and destined to go to Arthur's bosom babbling of green fields – seems to have become a necessary extra passenger on any homesick imperial voyage into terra incognita.

The other account of the globalization of Shakespeare looks instead at how the plays came to migrate not into newly-established colonies but into other languages and cultures entirely, starting in Europe. This process again dates back to Shakespeare's lifetime, when the English Players took their repertory on tour around the Low Countries and the Baltic adapting it to the needs of local audiences as they went, and gathered ever greater momentum as translations into local vernaculars proliferated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Between them, these two narratives suggest that Shakespeare has been taken all over the English-speaking world in English, as part of what "home" and "origin" are supposed to mean, and all over the rest of the world in translation, as a naturalized honorary local. But this is a simplification which leaves out a third aspect of Shakespeare's global transmission, the untranslated performance of Shakespeare in countries which nobody imagined were ever going to adopt the Bard's mother tongue as a lingua franca. A striking case-study is provided, for instance, by Switzerland.

1. Falstaff in Switzerland

Promulgating an affection for Sir John in anglophone camps and colonies is one thing; what about his own grandiloquent claim to be "Sir John with all Europe" (*2 Henry IV* 2.2.125)? If it was ever going to achieve any truth, then it was surely during the heyday of Romanticism, and in the country which the British at the time found most congenial [Figure 1].

Figure 1. "Swiss Peasants", from Jehoshaphat Aspin, *Cosmorama: a View of the Costumes and Peculiarities of All Nations*. London: Harris, [1827], plate 7. [Property of the author]

This illustration comes from Jehoshaphat Aspin's schoolroom textbook *Cosmorama: a View of the Costumes and Peculiarities of All Nations* (1827). Aspin helpfully articulates what at the time was the standard English view of Switzerland:

> This country lies on the east of France, and is the seat of honest simplicity and invincible attachment to liberty . . . [T]he Swiss have distinguished themselves in almost every branch of literature and science . . . [They] are generally tall, well proportioned, active, and laborious; distinguished for their honesty, steadiness and bravery . . . [They] also display a fund of original humour, and are remarkable for great quickness of repartee and sallies of wit, which render their conversation agreeable and interesting . . . In the Plate . . . a young herdsman of the Alps is supposed to have just descended from the mountain, on a Sunday morning, carrying some rich cream for his wife's breakfast. (106-7, 108)

How true it all still sounds; and how very unlike, for example, nearby Bavaria:

> [L]iterature and science have made no progress here; and travellers agree in representing the Bavarians as among the most phlegmatic and sensual of the German nations . . . Many of the court ladies know of no other employment than playing with their parrots, their dogs, and their cats. Some keep a hall full of cats, and have several maids to attend them; they spend half their time with them, and serve them with coffee, &c. dressing them, according to their fancy, differently every day. (74-5)

As for the men, although they can be "brave and patriotic" (77) they display "an extraordinary degree of bigotry . . . upheld with a ferocity that frequently gives rise to scenes of blood" (75-6).

Aspin's explanation for the differences in national character he describes is largely ethnic, but significantly it is also in part cultural. The Swiss not only come from good Helvetian stock, but they have lived for years in a republic, and a mainly Protestant republic at that. The brutality of the Bavarians, by contrast, is the result of their having lived for generations under an absolutist Catholic monarchy. This means that for Aspin there is always the hope of progress: if the Bavarians would only catch up with the Reformation and the Enlightenment, in time they too might become civilized. Then again, the gloomy Prussians are Protestants, and even so they live under "a military despotism," where "[l]iterature is much neglected" in favour of "military parade" (61-2). Doubtless what they too need is that encouragement of debate, enterprise and eccentricity which the English find in their great traditions of literature and theatre.

The English were already showing these traditions off to the Swiss – or at least to the Genevans, who would join the confederation in 1814 – a century before this. Live English-speaking Shakespeare first reached the shores of Lac Leman in the 1730s, in a context not of insular homesickness or self-assertion but of aristocratic cosmopolitanism. As an important stopping-off point for those taking the Grand Tour southwards into Italy, excitingly francophone but reassuringly Protestant, Geneva was a place where cultured young Englishmen abroad might meet people of their own rank, and preferably not just from their own country. Richard Aldworth Neville, for example, stayed in the city from 1738 to 1742, socializing not only with compatriots such as Lord Brook, William Windham, and the poets Benjamin Stillingfleet (later an associate of the important Shakespearean critic Elizabeth Montagu) and Charles Churchill (future author of *The Rosciad*), but with other visiting Europeans such as the Comtes de la Lippe, and with the Genevois themselves: indeed, Neville went on to marry the daughter of a local grandee, Madelaine Calandrini (Galiffe vol. 2, 557). This group engaged heavily in amateur dramatics: in 1738 they staged John Hughes' congenially anti-Catholic tragedy *The Siege of Damascus*, and on 15 January 1739, before an invited audience including most of the governing Conseil, they performed an abbreviated and slightly simplified all-male *Macbeth*, with Neville in the title role, and George Hervey, son of the bisexual Lord Hervey pilloried by Pope as "Sporus," playing Lady Macbeth. Further to accommodate the non-Anglophones in their audiences, Neville and his friends gave out printed texts of key extracts from the scripts, and on each of these ambitious bills literary tragedy was counterbalanced by a wordless comic pantomime (Stillingfleet vol. 1, 73-81). As Syndic François Calandrini's own diary records, Neville's future father-in-law was impressed – "les seigneurs étrangers," he wrote, "ont joué leurs comédies avec beaucoup de succès" – and that was clearly much of the point (Engel 3). Much as he functions for Parson Yorick in Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), this was Shakespeare as passport to the right European connections.

After Waterloo, however, when British military power and diplomatic leverage had helped to install reactionary governments right across Europe, live Shakespeare on the Grand Tour became something altogether less tentative. In the 1820s, one palazzo in Florence declared itself to be *de facto* British soil by mounting a series of untranslated productions of Shakespeare, including that garrison favourite, *Henry IV part 1*. The presiding actor-manager was a diplomat, Constantine Phipps, 1st Marquess of Normanby, author of *The English in Italy* (1825). He had always been stage-struck, and only the threat of being disinherited had prevented him, while still a Cambridge undergraduate, from marrying

the actress Eliza O'Neill. Normanby's rank made these performances a suitable topic for sycophantic comment by society journalists, significantly not just in the local English newsletter but back in London:

> English theatricals in Florence. Extract from a letter dated Florence, December 8, 1829 . . . Last evening Lord Normanby opened the tasteful little Theatre he has had constructed in the Palazzo San Clementi [*sic*] which was filled by 400 persons of rank and fashion. Shakespeare's Historical Play of *King Henry the Fourth* (the first part), and the Farce of *Simpson and Co*, constituted the evening's entertainment . . . (NYPL)

The cast's status, furthermore, guaranteed that their performances would be unctuously well-received by those keenest to boast that they had been present:

> Where each filled his part so well it would be invidious to particularize. Lady Normanby [Lady Percy] acted delightfully . . . Lord Normanby [Hotspur], Mr Craven [Prince Hal], and Mr Mathews [Falstaff] evinced the greatest talent . . . the whole performance went off with the greatest *éclat*. (NYPL)

Transforming the British present into the natives and construing everyone else present as foreign wannabes, these performances predictably infuriated the most articulate non-British member of Normanby's invited audience, the American novelist James Fenimore Cooper. To the author of *The Last of the Mohicans*, they amounted merely to mediocre and parochial transplants from the stately homes of England, produced with an insolent disregard for their Italian surroundings. "We have seen Shakespeare in the hands of these noble actors once or twice," he wrote in *Gleanings in Europe: Italy*,

> and found the representation neither quite good enough to please, nor yet bad enough to laugh at. . . . It was like all private theatricals, good enough for a country house, but hardly in its place in the capital of Tuscany.
> (Cooper 24-5; see also Beard 346; Dentler 188; Garlington 87)

Despite this discouraging review, however, in 1830 another such group performed another *Henry IV part 1* in English, this time back on the far side of the Alps, in Geneva.

The big difference with the 1830 *Henry IV* – and part of what makes it a particularly intriguing and conflicted specimen of expatriate Shakespeare, divided between seeing Shakespeare as innately British and as eminently transplantable – is that its instigator and moving spirit was not English but a native Genevois, the bilingual Charles Michel Lullin.

After his patrician family were ruined by the French revolution, Lullin, able to pass as either English or French, was recruited by the spymaster William Wickham in 1793 to infiltrate and monitor possible political conspiracies among French émigrés in London (see Galiffe vol. 1, 110; Wickham esp. vol. 2, 145). Away from his desk at the Aliens Office, he became a passionate theatregoer, and a friend of the thoroughly counter-revolutionary Shakespearean actor-manager John Philip Kemble (see Jones). Combining work and play, Lullin kept an eye on London's French community by engaging key members in amateur dramatics, including a production of his own French verse translation of *Richard III* in 1799, apparently at his own house in Stafford Place, Pimlico. This show, based on Kemble's acting text of the Cibber adaptation, is memorably described in the memoirs of the Vicomte Gauthier de Brécy, a keen amateur actor who also took part in the Margravine of Anspach's Anglo-French private theatricals at Brandenburgh House in Hammersmith. Lullin's double casting of this exiled aristocrat cannily made Shakespeare's play encode the perfect royalist fantasy of vindication and restoration: in the first scene of the play de Brécy played Henry VI, the rightful king martyred by the usurper, and in the last he played Richmond, the exile who returns to avenge him and claim the crown from the usurper (Brécy 282-4). Lullin and his English wife Nancy staged other plays too: they were condescendingly described as "Swiss refugees and semi-gentlefolks" by the future Countess Canning when they later performed Racine's *Mithridate* before the exiled dukes of Berri and Angoulême at 3 St James' Square (Hare vol. 3, 385), but they were more warmly received when they and another cast of expatriates performed Racine's *Bérénice* at the home of an exiled Swiss doctor in Bloomsbury. (This was 23, Russell Square, subsequently the offices of Faber and Faber, just opposite what is now Birkbeck College). Joanna Baillie's friend Mary Berry, for instance, among an appreciative and fashionable audience, was delighted to have this rare opportunity to "admire the beauty of Racine's most French tragedy" (Lewis vol. 2, 476-7).

A sort of cross between Nick Bottom and the Scarlet Pimpernel, Lullin clearly knew all about the potential cultural cachet to be gained from being the right kind of foreigner in the right wrong place at the right time: as the old maxim has it, "when in Rome, do as the Greeks do." Having performed Shakespeare and Racine in French in London, when Lullin returned home to Geneva on a British government pension after the defeat of Napoleon he took to performing in English instead. Dedicating himself to providing hospitality to British visitors (among them Kemble, who retired to Lausanne), founding an Anglican church, and arranging performances of English plays at a purpose-built music room and expatriates' club known as "the Cassino", Lullin became

known in his homeland as "Lullin l'Anglais" (Offord 5-6). Augustin Pyramus de Candolle, for instance, writing to Madame de Circourt on 13 July 1831, reported that Geneva was having a particularly brilliant summer of culture: "d'un côté Mlle Duchesnois joue au théâtre, et Mr. Lullin donne au Casino ses representations anglaises" (de Candolle 14).

In 1830 Lullin's English offerings were Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, an unnamed farce, and *Henry IV part 1*. Colonel Thomas Bradyll, already famed for his performances at Wellington's headquarters during the Peninsular War (Fletcher 88), played Falstaff: along with Nancy, Lullin's fellow-actors also included his sister Anna and her politician husband Jean Gabriel Eynard, both of whom had performed in scenes from Shakespeare in Madame de Staël's salons, and who built private theatres of their own in their apartment on the Cour St Pierre, at their country house at Beaulieu outside Lausanne, and later in their commanding Genevan town-house, the Palais Eynard (Alville 98-103). Lullin, like Normanby, probably took Kemble's old role of Hotspur. He added further Anglophile credentials to this season by commissioning prologues from Geneva's resident English poet: sadly, he had missed Byron and Shelley by more than a decade, and now had to resort to the notorious old bibliophile and snob Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges (see Maginn). Brydges had been acquainted with Byron, and was still in correspondence with major poets such as Southey, Wordsworth and Walter Scott. He would have to do.

A decade of exile had at least compelled Brydges to give the question of national identity some serious thought. Having bankrupted himself making unsuccessful claims to be the rightful Baron Chandos, Brydges had settled in Geneva in 1821, where he continued to dilate on his life and opinions, especially in a magazine which he grandly called *The Anglo-Genevan Critical Journal*. Disappointed to find that earlier English settlers had made little impact on the Genevan gene-pool, Brydges was acutely conscious of the collective insularity of his fellow expatriates. "It is the fault of the English . . . when they come abroad," he wrote,

> still to live too much with one another. As islanders, it is long before we entirely abandon our strong peculiarities, and our conceit of the exclusive superiority of all our own modes and customs and ideas. The English are [not] only esteemed proud by other nations, but really are so. The consequence is, that though they are feared, they are little loved by them.
>
> (Brydges *Autobiography* vol. 2, 102-3)

Brydges was suitably gratified, then, to be made much of by Lullin, whom he praises in his poem *The Lake of Geneva* both as one "renown'd upon the private stage, – / The oracle, thro whose lips miraculous

Shakespeare / Speaks" and as the "warmest in friendship and in hospitality" of all the many local patricians he catalogues (Brydges *Lake of Geneva* vol. 1, 129). A report on his work in progress for Lullin is full of self-congratulation: "I have written 4 Prologues for some intended Private Theatricals here," he wrote to a friend in London, "– Two for Venice Preserved – One for Henry IV. One occasional . . ." (Jones 328). Ever keen to name-drop, Brydges went on to remember the previous occasion on which he had been similarly employed:

> You will observe that I never wrote but one Prologue before, and that was 44 years ago for a private Theatre in Hampshire at Mr Austen's, the father of Jane Austen, author of *Pride and Prejudice – Northanger Abbey,* etc. See *Quarterly Review.* (Jones 328-9)

Brydges was sufficiently pleased with these latest efforts to publish them repeatedly, at first printing only his *Prologue for Shakespeare's Henry IV, Written for a Private Theatre at Geneva,* then publishing all *Four Prologues for a Private English Theatre at Geneva,* 1830, which then reappeared in *The Anglo-Genevan Critical Journal for 1831.*

These eloquent and largely incoherent pieces of verse demonstrate if nothing else how badly-suited the British nativist tradition of Bardolatry was to the task of presenting Shakespeare to non-British audiences. In his "Prologue. For Shakespeare's Henry IV. Written 13 Jan. 1830," for instance, Brydges instinctively adopts the rhetorical mode of David Garrick's Jubilee ode (1769), which commits him to an opening gambit of celebrating Shakespeare as utterly indigenous. *Henry IV* is initially offered as the expression of a British national character acquired primarily through genetics:

> IN every Land the sages say we trace
> Th'hereditary feature mark the face.
> But not alone distinct their outward forms;
> Their nobler part distinctive genius warms.
> With scornful pride each Nation boasts its Muse,
> Whose rays are tinted with unrival'd hues!
> Let but a Briton step upon the stage,
> Whence will he draw the glass for every age?
> To one lov'd fount of magic he will go;
> With one lov'd name his head and heart will glow;
> One only volume will his hand unroll;
> SHAKESPEARE, the mighty master of the soul!
> Him, with one voice whom varying critics praise;
> Him, the great theme of every poet's lays!
> (Brydges *Anglo-Genevan* vol. 1, 303-5)

That's all very well for the British, clearly, but what about the Swiss? It is telling that Lullin had to ask Brydges to rewrite his prologue to *Venice Preserved* to include some remarks addressed specifically to a Genevan audience, and it looks as though the *Henry IV* prologue may have undergone the same process. Turning as if in embarrassment to apostrophize Falstaff at first instead of the Genevois, Brydges rather awkwardly and alienatingly classifies the fat knight's local spectators as "foreign":

> O soul of wit and humour, that attest
> The genuine sunshine of the social breast;
> Unseen before, unimitated since;
> Yet where each word, each look of life convince;
> Rare FALSTAFF, in the drama of life's stage
> Unique; to youth surprising; – new to age;
> Let foreign eyes thy form of fun behold;
> And foreign ears attend thy vein of gold!
> (Brydges *Anglo-Genevan* vol. 1, 303-5)

When it comes to actually speaking to these foreign ears, Brydges finds himself perversely having to argue that it is because the Alpine landscape is so unlike that of Shakespeare's England that its inhabitants should appreciate his work. Since the Genevans inhabit a romantic landscape, he claims, they should be ideally susceptible to the romantic magic of Shakespearean nostalgia:

> Ye, whom the blue Lake, clos'd by mountains hoar,
> Whispers to love all grand and genuine lore,
> Gaze on the glories of a British spell;
> Let your hearts on his vanish'd heroes dwell . . .
> (Brydges *Anglo-Genevan* vol. 1, 303-5)

In his thoroughly convoluted peroration, Brydges takes this idea further, suggesting that since the liberty-loving Swiss take their character from a sublime natural landscape, they may be able to appreciate Shakespeare's sublime genius, even in Geneva.

> Mid rocks and mountains and the torrent's roar,
> And cataracts that down precipices pour,
> If aught sublimer from the outward forms
> The spirit, that presides within us, warms,
> Here mayst thou have the seat of thy sublime!
> Here mayst thou listen to the noblest rhyme!
> Children of Freedom, born amid the show
> Of Nature's grandest works, may learn to glow

With strains, from Nature's loftiest Bard that flow!
(Brydges *Anglo-Genevan* vol. 1, 303-5)

The problem of offering what he still regards as innately British national culture to a European audience, clearly, deeply puzzles Brydges – hence the big "if" in that last passage. In the last of these prologues, indeed, contradicting his introduction to *Henry IV*, Brydges is forced to admit that national difference did nothing to prevent Byron and Rousseau being spiritually akin. As a result he ends up suggesting that the Swiss may enjoy Shakespeare and his literary compatriots not because of their excitingly foreign landscape, but despite it:

What then is MIND? does climate, image, lot,
Or form of government, or choice of spot,
Wealth, poverty, or joy, or grief, bestow
The breath that bids the flame of genius glow?
Ah, not confin'd to climate, country, state, –
MIND is above all fortune, and all fate!
Rousseau and Byron, sons alike of fire,
In their own flames were fated to expire!

Here then congenial is the generous breast;
Tho' mountains, with eternal snows opprest,
Hang on thy walls, and suns of rosy ray
Unfelt upon thy cloud-capt mountains play, . . .
Here may the land of Avon's matchless Bard
Claim for its golden tales the fair reward!
(Brydges *Anglo-Genevan* vol. 1, 306-8)

Sadly, the sole extant contemporary comment on the performances introduced by these prologues, – in the *Dublin Literary Gazette, or Weekly Chronicle of Criticism, Belles Lettres, and Fine Arts* (Feb 1830 no 6, 140) – records only that the decor of these productions was more impressive than their acting. As far as I have been able to discover, Brydges' rhetorical efforts to present Falstaff to the Genevois as the perfect ambassador for British culture produced no long-term effects whatsoever: when it came to drama, the city still belonged to Voltaire rather than to Shakespeare. (Indeed, even when Geneva finally did acquire a permanent Geneva English Drama Society in 1933, it refused to perform any Shakespeare at all for the first forty years of its existence.) But then, why would a francophone city be interested in an exclusively anglophone Shakespeare anyway, save for reasons with little to do with its own dramatic traditions and everything to do with cultivating a nascent world power? (When Charles Kemble's company performed *Romeo and Juliet*

and *Hamlet* in Paris in 1827, they had the sense to supply their audiences with crib-translations of the script). What European romantics more interested in their own cultures needed from Shakespeare was a source and stimulus for their national theatres and literary canons, not further advertisements for Britain's.

From this perspective, Brydges, unfortunately, was at the wrong end of the country. Shakespeare's most important Swiss admirers had already been busily laying the groundwork for his naturalization into their own drama-poor language for decades, but they had been doing so in Zurich, the city of Wieland, Eschenburg, Bodmer and Fuseli; and Fuseli, who had been painting the fat knight for years, certainly didn't need any prologue by Brydges to introduce him to Falstaff (see Stadler). But all this had been happening neither in English nor in French, and the really significant event of the 1830s for the subsequent development of European Shakespeare would not be these Genevan performances of *Henry IV* in English but the completion of the Schlegel-Tieck translation of the Complete Works into German. In practice when it came to live Shakespeare, much of Switzerland would remain a province of Greater Germany, presenting the plays not in English or French or *Schweizerdeutsch* but in *Schriftdeutsch*. As in other parts of Europe, in Switzerland Shakespeare would appear on stage not as Britain's national poet but as the third German classic.

2. Hamlet in Bavaria

This is not to say that English-language productions of Shakespeare haven't occasionally visited German-speaking regions of Europe too, nor that some haven't even originated in them. Some of the most surprising and little-known Shakespearean revivals to have been mounted by English performers in Germany proper, for instance, took place after Bavaria, Prussia and other neighbouring regions had already been enjoying the civilizing benefits of English drama in translation for a century and a half. In this second case-study, I want to examine the surviving traces of some of these shows, uneasy hybrids between the garrison model of expatriate theatre and the diplomatic, produced during a period when the Bavarians had other things on their minds than the pampering of cats. I want to examine the sometimes troubling ways in which these more recent expatriate Shakespeares bring together questions of national identity and questions of sexual identity, and consider how far it is theatrical patronage and censorship which decide whose notion of cultural transmission any given performance serves. These more modern

expatriate productions may at first glance look as insular as Lord Normanby's *Henry IV* in Florence, but that isn't the whole story.

By the middle of the twentieth century, as the foundation of the Geneva English Drama Society suggests, the voluntary, non-commercial British theatre was experiencing something of a boom. This was true both at home and abroad. One especially fine non-professional *Hamlet*, for example, elegantly dressed and superbly photographed, was welcomed by eager capacity audiences of expatriates at every single one of its performances. (For surviving images, see Goodliffe; Loder). Michael Goodliffe, admittedly, who directed and took the title role, had formerly been a professional actor, who had appeared with Laurence Olivier in Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Othello* at the Old Vic. He had also seen Olivier play Hamlet there for Guthrie in 1937, and something of Olivier's celebrated feeling for visual line is surely imitated in the careful poise of Goodliffe's silhouetted fingers in the photograph depicting Hamlet's audience with the Ghost. Goodliffe's Ophelia, by contrast, had no professional stage experience at all: he was a junior British army officer called John Dixon. This *Hamlet* was first staged at Oflag VIIIB prisoner-of-war camp in Tittmoning, Bavaria, in early 1941, and it was then repeated with a different supporting cast after Goodliffe was transferred to Oflag VIIC at Eichstätt later in the war.

Although this is one aspect of prisoner-of-war life which has been kept well out of British popular memory, Axis camps like these in occupied Europe played host between 1940 and 1945 to what was easily the largest flowering of English single-sex theatre since Shakespeare's own time. Nor should this particularly surprise us. Even if the recent conscripts and volunteers who found themselves in captivity after Dunkirk hadn't included a few ex-professional actors and a far larger number of amateurs with experience in the amateur groups which flourished between the wars, many imprisoned servicemen would probably have picked up a taste for dressing up anyway from the seasoned career officers in their midst. In both the Navy and the Army, as in other all-male institutions such as boys' schools, in-house communal theatre had remained socially important. It had also, necessarily, remained single-sexed, just as on board the *Red Dragon* in 1607 or in Geneva in 1739, so that the armed forces provided one haven in which some of the conventions of the Renaissance stage had never quite died out. Lord William Lennox, writing in 1878, describes a standard practice of co-opting "beardless ensigns" to play female roles in the amateur performances which "in almost every garrison town, in our colonies . . . enliven the monotony of winter quarters" (Lennox vol. 2, 100-1). In this single-sexed thespian army, then, it's no wonder that in 1940 Michael Goodliffe, as the only fully-qualified actor in the camp to which he was sent

after being captured during the fall of France, should have been seized upon at once by its senior British officer, General Victor Fortune, who in the interests of morale ordered him to "Put on some shows as soon as you can" (Goodliffe). Even with clothing in desperately short supply as the winter of 1940 set in, the quest for promising cross-dressers was on.

What might surprise us more than its scale or its enforced transvestism is that in an age of mass entertainment and mass conscription any of these captive military theatricals should have involved Shakespeare. It's true that during the First World War a group of aesthetes among the internees at Ruhleben camp in Berlin had staged an all-male *As You Like It*, and that this incident had been cited by some Old Vic supporters between the wars when arguing, rather in the manner of Brydges, for Shakespeare's status as the supreme and natural exemplar of disinterested British culture. At the time, however, other Ruhleben prisoners had been scathing about this enterprise, much preferring their home-grown theatrical repertory to revolve around musical comedy and revue (see Hoenselaars), and even the ambitiously high-minded Goodliffe produced sketch shows and a Christmas pantomime before undertaking his *Hamlet* in 1941. As a number of military archives show, that's much more what PoWs generally staged, when left to their own devices: revues and pantos, with occasional forays into recent middlebrow plays and popular musicals. A whole troupe of brassiered Geordies, the "Northern Lights" company, performed an item called "Perchance in Greece" in one of their revues at the large Stalag 383 camp at Hohenfels in Bavaria, where they were by no means the only purveyors of such entertainment, and the camp's Christmas pantomime for 1942, *Aladdin*, contained even more male-to-female cross-dressing than did its counterparts in the commercial theatre at home. (The following Christmas they put on *Dick Whittington*, complete with added mermaids). The same fat album in the National Army Museum in London which documents these shows, compiled by one R. J. Duncan, records that this theatre's finest hour was its production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, which apparently so delighted the camp's commandant that he cancelled roll-call for three days as a reward (McKibbin 84; Duncan). Other such establishments too, even those reserved for hardened would-be escapees, showed similar theatrical tastes. The first show mounted at Colditz, in November 1941, was a revue called *Ballet Nonsense*, dominated by the display of home-made tutus (Mackenzie 210), and the establishment's thespians rarely ventured into anything more highbrow than Noel Coward thereafter.

The style of cross-dressed performance required by a successful male Gertrude or male Gertrude Lawrence, however, is obviously different to

the burlesque manner favoured in a sketch show like *Ballet Nonsense*, and Goodliffe for one recognized that if he was to produce "straight" drama at all with all-male casts his audiences were going to have to unlearn their modern understanding of what stage drag meant. In the face of a conditioned reflex of giggling, he later remembered, "we soon found that unless the presentation of female roles was intelligently tackled, any serious productions were impossible" (Goodliffe). It may be significant here that despite staging two *Hamlet*s and a *King Lear*, among many other shows, Goodliffe's most elaborate Shakespearean revival was the *Comedy of Errors* he mounted at Eichstätt in December 1943 (see Goodliffe; Mansel 136). Although in this PoW context the frame-narrative of the play must have been especially poignant – dramatizing as it does Egeon's captivity in a hostile country and his ultimate release and reunion with his family – the main plot was handled very lightly, the cast dressed in comic and sometimes mildly salacious Regency costumes which included a split red satin skirt for the Courtesan capable of being detached from her dress to reveal elaborate lingerie. The play was entirely set to music, like a Viennese operetta, and was billed as that year's Christmas pantomime. Despite this ultimate concession to the panto tradition, however, Goodliffe claimed after the war that in his serious productions, especially his Shakespeares, the cross-dressing conventions of the Renaissance had been fully recovered: "Two or three clever actors solved this problem [with the female roles], so that our audiences accepted them exactly as the Elizabethans accepted their boy-actors" (Goodliffe).

In certain respects, the subculture which grew up around these prisoner-of-war playhouses did indeed hark back to Shakespeare's own theatrical world. As Stephen Orgel has shown, one of the reasons the early modern English had all-male theatre companies was a belief that males were simply better at performing, including performing as women; and this belief surfaced once more during the war. Describing the 1942 Eichstätt pantomime in his diary, for example, John Mansel was especially impressed by Brian McIrvine, who had played Gertrude for Michael Goodliffe:

> Citronella (Brian McIrvine) is staggering and in a dance with the Prince, himself quite excellent, performs a dance at which the average girl would make a poor attempt. There is graceful movement accompanied by perfect control . . . (Mansel 68)

Such specialists in female roles, moreover, like Stalag 383's "Pinkie" Smith, attracted cult followings of which seventeenth-century boy-players like Solomon Pavey or Edward Kynaston would have been

proud: according to one prisoner, they "really needed protection going 'home' to their barracks after the shows" (Palmer 179). "Of course lots of the fellows have done this stuff previous to the war & we have some celebrities to be sure!", wrote one captured bombardier in a letter home about the theatrical scene at his own camp in Italy, ". . . some of the fellows have to take girls' parts & they are real knockouts . . ." (Good). Adulation of the beardless-ensign-come-boy-actor seems to have been especially marked at Stalag VIIIB, at Lamsdorf in Silesia, where an impressive *Twelfth Night* was staged in 1943 [Figure 2].

Figure 2. *Twelfth Night*, Stalag VIIIB, Lamsdorf, 1943. Bequest of Corporal Peter Peel (Sebastian, left). Courtesy of Second World War Experience Centre, Leeds.

This group picture was taken at the dress rehearsal, with a home-made camera. On the left, playing Sebastian, is Corporal Peter Peel, who saved this photo; and on the right, playing Viola, is a young RAF wireless operator called Denholm Elliott. Elliott seems to have enjoyed a level of idolization at Lamsdorf after which his post-war stage and screen career could only be an anticlimax. "Any person who played the [female] lead role in the camp theatre was considered to be a heart-throb," remembered his fellow-inmate George Moreton. "'She' had more fans and more people dreaming about 'her' than 'she' would ever imagine. When 'she' walked down the road, eyes would follow 'her' adoringly" (More-

ton 96). This is borne out by a sailor called Andrew Macdonald-Bell, who recalled Elliott's Viola with the understated lyricism of the time:

> Spellbound, we watched and listened as first he presented as a girl, then as a girl pretending to be a youth, then again as a girl . . . [The following morning], [q]uite on impulse, I walked over to the slim lad who had been Viola, and I thanked him for his marvellous performance. Denholm smiled, a long-lipped Irish sort of smile. "Glad you liked it," he said, while his quiet eyes drifted shyly away from mine and his hand went up to finger back a flopping wing of dark hair. (Elliott 44-5)

As in the Elizabethan age, too, these latterday boy-players attracted some equally passionate anti-theatrical sentiment, both secular and religious. The Lamsdorf camp newsletter *Stimmt*, for instance, ran a sustained editorial campaign against "theatre 'pansies' and their bitchy admirers" (Mackenzie 212), while the diary of Ellison Platt, the Methodist padre at Colditz, is full of more pious outrage about the criminally tempting defiance of God's prohibition against cross-dressing, Deuteronomy 22:5, which he was compelled to witness in *Ballet Nonsense* and its successors.

As Marjorie Garber has pointed out, however, troubled attention to the transgression of gender boundaries represented by cross-dressing is always liable to represent the displacement of anxieties about different border transgressions entirely (Garber ch. 10). In the case of the born-again Renaissance boy-players of the Oflags and Stalags, what may be much more disturbing than their potential for sexual ambiguity is an ambiguity as to whose larger cultural and national agenda their transvestite performances were really serving. After all, these theatres were actually German, and even the revues mounted in them sometimes betrayed as vivid an engagement with German culture as with British. In Stalag 383, for instance, the revue "Bally Who" included a skit on Goethe called "Soust" (see Duncan). Did such Allied actors as these really perform strictly as homesick warriors, bravely sustaining their comrades' national identity in the interests of combatant morale, or were they for the time being good puppet citizens of Fortress Europe, entertaining their captors and keeping their colleagues from more belligerent thoughts? Theatre as elaborate as this would have been impossible without at the very least the toleration of the Nazi authorities, and this toleration often extended to actual assistance when it came to procuring make-up, lighting equipment, photographic facilities, printed programmes, and so on. As long as prisoners did not attempt to abscond in the civilian clothes they were allowed to wear in modern plays, camp guards were generally more than happy to see their charges occupied

with theatricals, not only because such activities kept the Red Cross happy too, but because they usefully distracted many inmates from their professed military duty to escape. Given good enough productions of *Hamlet*, it appears, some prisoners could have been bounded in a nutshell and counted themselves kings of infinite space. "The entertainments as a whole, after [escape attempts], were the most important part of Camp life," recalled one of Goodliffe's actors, Robert Loder. "Some officers, not interested in escape work, used to get exceptionally annoyed if their regular entertainment was disrupted [by escape alerts]." (See the Loder papers, which also preserve several commercial make-up catalogues).

General, pragmatic toleration extended to definite patronage, however, when it came to camp performances of Shakespeare. As far as I have been able to tell, whenever Allied prisoners of war staged Shakespeare in Europe they did so with the active sponsorship and encouragement of the German authorities. Just as Shakespeare's company had operated under conditions provided and dictated by the Master of the Revels, so Goodliffe and his peers were ultimately working for the Master Race. It can't be accidental that Goodliffe didn't produce *Henry IV* as his first Shakespeare play, never mind *Henry V*, but instead offered a play which his captors regarded as a supreme triumph of Aryan high art. *Hamlet* had of course been the most important Shakespearean play for any self-respecting German since before young Werther got sorrowful (the Nazis' chief legal theorist, Carl Schmitt, would even publish a whole monograph about it after being deprived of his Berlin professorship in 1945), and Goodliffe's two productions were duly provided with costumes specially obtained for him from the Munich opera house: so was his Strauss-like *Comedy of Errors*. In a regime otherwise committed to extirpating all signs of sexual deviation in the interests of normative reproduction, cross-dressing by Englishmen performing in Shakespeare could apparently be permitted and even encouraged. Perhaps for the camp authorities the practice offered antiquarian glimpses of that odd offshore pre-history Shakespeare had enjoyed in the bad old days before he became German.

As in the case of this *Hamlet,* professionally-made costumes were also procured, from the Breslau opera house, for the Lamsdorf *Twelfth Night* – not coincidentally, the Shakespearean comedy revived most frequently in Germany during the 1930s, when a ban on decadent modern drama made Shakespeare more prominent than ever in the generously state-funded playhouses. The Germans, amazingly, even took this *Twelfth Night* on tour to other camps, transporting its cast around the country in Wehrmacht lorries which might otherwise have been moving supplies to the Eastern front. But then the Third Reich was serious

about Shakespeare. In 1830 Brydges had seen Shakespeare as part of the genetic make-up of the English, and by 1911 Arthur Buckley could describe Stratford as "a temple dedicated to the genius of the Anglo-Celtic race" (Buckley viii). In 1940 the German writer Hermann Burte, delivering a lecture in Weimar on the eve of the Battle of Britain, similarly saw Shakespeare as part of an ethnic inheritance, albeit one which in his erstwhile homeland had now been fatally contaminated:

> Shakespeare ist der Unsere so gut wie der seiner Engländer, ja, wir kennen und spielen ihn besser als jene und behaupten kühn, daß wir als Deutsche von 1940 dem Geist der elisabethanischen Engländer und ihrem Genius William in Warheit näherstehen als die Englischen von heute, hinter deren Thron jener Shylock steckt und herrscht, den Shakespeare erkannte und – verwarf!
>
> [Shakespeare belongs as much to us as he does to the English . . . We Germans of 1940 are in truth closer to the spirit of the Elizabethan English and their genius William than the Englishmen of today, behind whose throne lurks and rules that Shylock whom Shakespeare recognized and – rejected!] (Burte 20; and see Mosse 141-4; Symington 244; Heinrich 192-4)

This remark, I think, provides a useful gloss on one incongruous item in Stalag 383's otherwise studiously undemanding repertory. It's the sole Shakespeare play this theatre ever attempted, and one of the only plays on the list R. J. Duncan preserved of its productions from which no photographs are displayed in his album: *The Merchant of Venice.* It would be nice to be able to pretend that what was still at the time the most often-revived Shakespearean comedy among English professionals and amateurs alike (see Markús) had been chosen for revival at this camp in sheer crass obliviousness to what ideological charge the play might carry in Hitler's Bavaria. But the cheerful account of life at Stalag 383 published after the war by N. M. McKibbin sadly makes this impossible:

> One useful gesture the Jerries did make was to loan us the complete costumes for *The Merchant of Venice* from the State Theatre of Berlin; and though this was done simply because they considered it an anti-Jewish play, it was none the less welcome. A grand production was most enthusiastically received. . . (McKibbin 85)

It is true that McKibbin, writing in 1947, after the doings of Stalag 383 had been rather upstaged by revelations about what had been happening at another camp only fifty miles away, Dachau, was at pains to remember this production as having challenged Nazism rather than collaborated with it. "I remember few more impressive performances," he con-

tinues, "than that of Bob Jarvis, an Australian professional, who gave Shylock a fine dignity rather disturbing to the Germans in the stalls" (McKibbin 85-86). But he seems unnaturally keen, just as Garber might predict, to change the subject immediately to that of the camp's "fellows who could make up to look like girls – glamorous and sophisticated girls," our "female impersonators," or rather "actors taking female parts, which is quite a different thing." "Shylock's daughter," he recalls, "was played by a sergeant whose name escapes me . . ." (McKibbin 85-86). It doesn't appear, then, that this production adopted the change to Shakespeare's script followed by Nazi dramaturgs, whereby Jessica became an adopted Gentile so that Lorenzo could enjoy a miscegenation-free elopement, but for McKibbin the point here is not the defence of interracial marriage but the vindication of cross-gender casting: "Under the magic of the Theatre the character was just Jessica and it was as easy to accept her beauty as to accept Lorenzo and the moonlit bank the lovers sat upon" (85-6). According to McKibbin, it appears, thousand-year Reichs may come and go, but world-beating British military cross-dressing goes on forever. But which factor was uppermost in determining what this performance, and others like it, could mean – the transvestite skills of its cast, or the vested interests of its sponsors? Despite being staged in English to a mainly English audience, this surely was a genuinely European Shakespeare, serving a vision of a pan-European literary canon. Unfortunately it was a vision much more determined to explain European identity in exclusionary racial terms even than Aspin's *Cosmorama* a century earlier.

Posterity has not been kind to either Samuel Egerton Brydges or Michael Goodliffe. Brydges died in 1837 without having made Geneva into a hotbed of live Shakespeare, and he is now remembered primarily in the footnotes to biographies of Jane Austen, who thought his fiction was dire (le Faye 22). Michael Goodliffe, after having the ill fortune to give his greatest Shakespearean performances under the patronage of a German regime which saw no contradiction between supporting high culture and carrying out genocide, managed an inconspicuous post-war career, often in prisoner-of-war films, before committing suicide in 1976. Their respective forgotten ventures in expatriate English-speaking amateur theatre now look like dead ends, Goodliffe's a not entirely honourable one. Between the German prison guards anxious to disown their Nazi pasts and the British casts and audiences anxious to forget having just-about collaborated with them, it is quite possible that after the 1940s nobody was able to remember Goodliffe's productions of Shakespeare, brilliant as they clearly were, with any pleasure. Even any visiting Red Cross officials who may have seen them have recently had the tale of their own blamelessly humanitarian role in the war sullied by

the revelation that their organization knew about the Holocaust as early as the summer of 1942 but remained silent on the subject (presumably under pressure from the Swiss government of the time), something for which they officially apologized only in 1996. Sadly, for some in Switzerland neutrality and a tradition of Anglophilia didn't preclude selling hi-tech weapons to Hitler and banking gold melted down from dental fillings (see Ziegler).

As an Elizabethan whose works have incongruously survived into the 21st century, Shakespeare is nowadays at least as much a foreigner in England as he is anywhere else: the past, too, is another country. But Romanticism, unfortunately, established so decisively at the Stratford jubilee in 1769, in the long term managed to export not only Shakespeare to other countries such as Switzerland and Germany but the idea of culture as the indigenous and exclusive voice of the native soil. It would be comforting, but misleading, I fear, to think of this too as a historic mistake now long-abandoned. As the worst recession since the 1930s deepens, extreme right-wing nationalism is again making gains across our continent, and in the summer of 2009 Britain managed to export two further commodities to Europe; two Members of the European Parliament representing the British National Party. As their manifesto shows, this organization believes – despite his own enthusiasm for the establishment of the European Common Market – that Winston Churchill is on their side. It would be a pity if the notion of Shakespearean drama as an indigenous genetically-transmitted heritage were still sufficiently prevalent for them to retain the idea that Shakespeare is too.

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