

Anston Bosman

SAA 2021 Seminar 40

Shakespeare and Translation beyond the Global

Shakespeare translation, Trans-Indigenous performance, and Native language renewal

How do Indigenous theatre artists use Shakespeare's plays to revitalize endangered languages? My paper answers our seminar's challenge to think "beyond the global" with a paradox drawn from Chadwick Allen's 2012 monograph *Trans-Indigenous*, which boldly called for "a version of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while remaining always cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global" (xix). By decentering settler nation-states in favor of Native communities, and juxtaposing rather than homogenizing those communities' cultural work, we bring into view a new "global Shakespeare," one in which the urgent reversal of linguistic genocide sharpens the edge of theatre translation.

For our discussion, I'll set aside the striking results of Indigenous-language productions and their reception, and focus instead on the early stages of commissioning and developing their scripts. In Indigenous contexts, the procedures for translating Shakespeare depart from Western theory, and answering our seminar questions (Who? How? For whom? To what ends?) complexifies. I'd like to explore three special circumstances. First, translating early modern texts into threatened or dormant languages intensifies the collaboration typical of theatre translation, necessarily diffusing work among agents including traditional language keepers, academic linguists, literal translators, dramaturgs, and directors. This is translation in a language acquisition environment, which must also accommodate actors who, even if themselves Native, may either be minimal heritage speakers or have a background in a related dialect or another Native language entirely. Second—or, in some cases, first—the translation team must follow the principles of Indigenous governance, a diverse local set of community protocols for consulting and learning from Elders. In Western law, Shakespeare lies in the public domain; in Indigenous protocols, on the other hand, knowledge and stories, objects and emblems, and even specific parts of a language may constitute cultural property, and negotiating their respectful use shapes the translation itself. Third, there is the question of a translation's audiences or (counter)publics, which are destined to vary in their knowledge not only of the aboriginal language but also of the Indigenous cultural practices and styles of narration and embodiment, including ceremony, storytelling, song, and dance. Most Indigenous Shakespeare translations refuse the imperative to have one ideal form, but instead generate components of text and performance that can be iteratively reassembled in spatiotemporal flux. The stakes of this translation-reassemblage are exceptionally high, given the vexed relationships that exist between Native language, culture, and identity—relationships that the productions tend to unsettle even as they advocate for decolonization and resurgence.

Ruben Espinosa
University of Texas at El Paso

Hamlet Untethered

Capitalizing on the poignancy behind The Public Theater’s “#ToBeBlack” —a production that renders Hamlet’s “To Be or Not to Be” speech through the voices of thirty Black actors— this essay seeks to scrutinize how the understandings of some of Hamlet’s most iconic passages are translated into something more, dare I say, universally meaningful when considered through the lens of Black or brown individuals with an eye toward anti-racist designs. As I put together a field essay on *Hamlet* for a Folger series on teaching, I want to consider how untethering Hamlet from perceived notions of his universality that are, much too often, directly connected to his whiteness allows us to reimagine the purchase this play has in our contemporary society. In particular, I want to consider how the exhaustion of existence that *Hamlet* lays bare pales in comparison to the heaviness of being Black or brown in today’s racist America. By isolating particular passages and considering them alongside issues directly correlated to Black Lives Matter, the militarization of the U.S. Mexico border, and family separations and incarceration of brown children, I seek to find ways of untethering *Hamlet* from a literary and performance tradition that has defined him along narrow, white, masculinist lines.

Laura Francis

SAA Seminar Abstract

12/31/20

“Adaptation and Experiment: The Changing Storms of *The Tempest*”

Reflecting on her adaptation of Ireland’s *By the Bog of Cats* for Brazilian audiences, director Alinne Fernandes writes that translators not only articulate languages and cultures but also the processes between the page and the stage. They can create connections at once global and intensely local: the translators’ use of key markers from target and source locations hold the potential to “orient actors and guide spectators into the complex world of the play, in which translation and performance are seen as an intercultural encounter where different, and yet somehow related cultural memories meet.”¹ They generate resonance across stage and page.

My proposal explores these ideas of interconnected cultural memories through my own collaborative space — the classroom. I plan to share a syllabus that rejects visions of Shakespeare as an untouchable original in favor of a negative capability that allows for great transformation in the hands of equally great translators. In specific, the course follows the ever-morphing storms of *The Tempest* in its journeys through SparkNotes, Kamau Braithwaite, and Aimé Césaire as well as the further stretches of science fiction films like *Forbidden Planet* and even *Ex Machina*. Paired with feminist and translation studies theory, each class will examine how authors use their environments to bring together “different and yet related cultural memories” in the forging, rejecting, subverting, and expanding of tradition. Ultimately, I hope this will help my students understand the importance of translation across the local as much as the global, the page as much as the lived stage.

¹ Alinne Fernandes, “Translating Marina Carr for a Brazilian audience: The interweaving of memories in theatre and translation,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 41 and 43.

Historicizing the “translating Shakespeare” to Inform our Understanding of “Translating Shakespeare”

Benjamin C. Miele

This paper begins with the premise that we can better understand the processes and politics of translating Shakespeare by investigating the politics of translation that conditioned the literary age in which Shakespeare wrote and the work he did as poet and playwright. As such, it will ask what were the origins, functionality, and validity of translation in Shakespeare’s formative years in late Elizabethan England.

Historicizing the “translating Shakespeare” may be relevant to our knowledge of “translating Shakespeare” because of what I see as a shared erotics of translating. I draw on but also qualify work by Kevin West and Joshua Billings (who writes of an “erotics of reception”), agreeing with both that translation is an embodied process that bridges the cognitive and the erotic. West and Billings suggest that the desire of translating arises from an innocuous *libido sciendi*, an attempt at oneness with a distant other, and here Elizabethan translating may diverge from their formulation since it sprang from an urge to control how others obtain and process meaning more than a yearning for a fullness of meaning. Translating was propaganda, with state ministers and the poets they patronized often translating classical texts to advance proto-nationalist agendas. The famed dramatist Thomas Norton was known to his contemporaries as “The Rackmaster,” and Elizabethan England’s most notorious torturer, Richard Topcliffe, was an avid reader of translations of Catholic texts. This is erotics in the sense not of union but perversion, the erotics of surveillance that reinforces vast asymmetries of power. I will focus on one particular example of translating in the service of legitimating state violence, the execution of William Parry, which was commemorated by three neo-Latin texts (*Pareus, In Guil. Parry Proditorem odae & epigrammata*, and *In Catilnarias Proditiones ac Proditores Domesticos*)

which conform to the trend in Elizabethan translation practice of harnessing the past as an instrument of present ideological coercion. What does this Elizabethan translating methodology tell us about translation as an embodied practice? Primarily seen as motivating translational excellence, the erotics of translation could also speak to the corrosive influence of ideology on literary production, and how an erotics could distort rather than mirror the meaning of the source text. Shakespeare actively translated Ovid and others into his works, and we could use translations of Shakespeare to trace out a more ideal model for translational practice.

SAA 2021 Shakespeare and Translation Beyond the Global
Anandi Rao

I would like to workshop a book proposal with the SAA seminar, and here is a brief abstract of the Book project.

Book title: The Bard and the Hindu Nation – mapping the politics and circuits of literary translation

Grounded in poststructuralist critical theory as well as theoretical conversations on language and translation from the Global South, particularly North Africa and South Asia, this book explores the intertwined intimacies of language, identity, nation and translation using translations of Shakespeare as a starting point. Two key questions animate the book: i) How is translation conceptualized in different languages and how are nationalist discourses intimately tied to these multiple figurations? ii) What is the relationship between translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and the vision of the Indian nation at the time they were produced? While the first question might seem to stem from a translation studies perspective and the second from a Shakespeare studies perspective, this book makes the argument that translation at both a theoretical and practical level is imbricated with nationalism, particularly in the context of Shakespeare. In doing so I also argue that the myth of Shakespeare as a "universal" genius and the masculinist myth of India as a Hindu nation are co-constituted through translations of Shakespeare.

Proposal for SAA 2021 Seminar: Shakespeare and Translation Beyond the Global

Book Proposal: Producing something of her own – A speculative Biography of German Translator, Dorothea Tieck

Christian Smith
Independent Scholar, Berlin

For the “Shakespeare and Translation Beyond the Global” seminar, I will submit a book proposal for a speculative biography of the German Romantic translator Dorothea Tieck. Tieck was a key member of the Schlegel-Tieck translation team which made the most famous and enduring German Shakespeare translation. This project was begun in the 1790s by August W. Schlegel, his wife, Caroline and his brother Friedrich. It was abandoned unfinished and then handed over by the publisher to a team led by Ludwig Tieck. Ludwig Tieck only translated one of the plays, but he edited and oversaw the entire project to its completion in 1833. One member of his team was Wolf Graf von Baudissin, but the identity of the other member, who translated six of the plays and collaborated on editing the rest, remained obscured for three quarters of a century. It has since been revealed that this person was Tieck’s daughter, Dorothea. There are many factors to why her identity was hidden, including the marketing and branding of translations, work relations on literary and translation projects in this period, sexism, and Dorothea Tieck’s own wish to remain obscure.

A small amount of research has been conducted on Dorothea Tieck’s life and her role in translations. This has been written in articles, research websites, books about the German Romantics, an introduction to an edition of her Sonnets translation, and her Wikipedia pages (the German one being the most extensive). I have written two of the articles – one published, the other under consideration at a journal.

There is very little known about Dorothea Tieck’s life. This scarcity fits the state of affairs of the gender-based obscuration of female literary workers in the 19th century, or more plainly put, sexism in 19th century literary work. This condition is especially prevalent in translation work, which was a type of work favoured by women literary workers. Besides other well-known problems that arise from gendered relations, obscuring the identity of female translators removes them from the chain of influence that translation exerts in literary and theoretical fields. I have shown in an essay, published in *Borrowers and Lenders*, that Dorothea Tieck’s translations of *Timon of Athens*, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* display a reading of those plays that prefigure Karl Marx’s reading of *Timon of Athens*, Sigmund Freud’s reading of *Macbeth* and Bertolt Brecht’s reading of the first act of *Coriolanus*. Without knowing Tieck’s identity, history would assume that this influence of translation on critical theory was produced by the two men after whom the translation was branded – A. W. Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck.

I would like to gather as much information as I can from six sources and write a speculative biography of Dorothea Tieck. The six sources are: 1) existing biographical information on Wikipedia (which was written by a German Shakespeare scholar) and in books, including, for example, Roger Paulin’s texts on Ludwig Tieck and on the reception of Shakespeare in Germany, 2) introductions to studies of Dorothea Tieck’s Sonnets and other Shakespeare translations, 3) a collection of Dorothea Tieck’s letters collected and published online by

Humboldt Universität, Berlin 4) research in Dorothea Tieck's archives (about 40 boxes of handwritten documents left by Ludwig and Dorothea Tieck) at the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and Dresden, 5) a close reading of Dorothea Tieck's Shakespeare and Cervantes translations, and 6) the history and conditions of the cities in which she lived, Berlin and Dresden, when she lived there. I hope to find not only facts about her, but also to speculate upon the facts that are not known using information that surround them. I am especially interested in how Dorothea Tieck approached the task of translation and in her aesthetic theory in general. This could give a more complete picture about German Romantic translation, and help complete a picture of this world I have begun in my article on Caroline Schlegel, the other hidden female translator in the project, currently submitted to the *Shakespearean International Yearbook*. This information and speculation will also give me the opportunity to comment about gendered relations in translation, and in literary work in general.

For this seminar, I will submit a book proposal and will ask for comment and critique on my proposal and my idea in general. I am not yet sure to which publisher I will submit the proposal. I currently have a contract for my monograph with Routledge and talking to Edinburgh about an edited volume. I will search for the appropriate publisher for this book. I am open to suggestion on this question both seminar organisers, Letty and Katie.

**Never Only English: Regarding Europe's Shakespeare and Shakespeare in South Africa
(Abstract of a book proposal)**

**Chris Thurman
University of the Witwatersrand**

Revisiting the earliest Shakespearean connections to mainland Europe and relating this history to recent productions, translations and adaptations – viewed from a “Southern”, specifically South African, perspective – the proposal emphasises the fundamentally European construction of an historical figure, a symbol and a body of work so often (mis)perceived as quintessentially English. The proposed book will “provincialise” England and the English language by returning to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European contexts that informed the production, translation and adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays. While many scholars have explored Italian and French influences on Shakespeare, or Shakespeare and classical languages, there has been less attention paid (in Anglophone scholarship) to Shakespeare’s early reception and dissemination in German and Dutch. Likewise, the significance of Denmark and Poland in “the story of Shakespeare” is often glossed over. An insistence that Shakespeare has never been only (in) English facilitates a second point of emphasis: postcolonial Shakespeares, or Shakespeare in/and the Global South, with South Africa as an exemplary locus. By sustaining a Southern gaze on European Shakespearean histories; by comparing these to the history of translation and appropriation in a country like South Africa (drawing on other examples from the Global South); and by placing translations and adaptations in Europe alongside contemporary South African manifestations of Shakespeare on page, stage and screen, the proposed book will not only reconsider European Shakespeares as a means to undermine the ethnonationalism driving a phenomenon such as Brexit, but also critique the discourses surrounding – and the representation of – race, immigration and nation-statism in twenty-first century Europe.