

SAA 2022 - Shakespeare and France

Shakespeare through Berlioz: The Dual Performance of Intimacy and Epic

Andrea F. Van Nort (USAF Academy)

Hector Berlioz underwent a life-altering experience when confronted with Shakespearean plays adapted to the French stage. Reverberations of Shakespearean passions and candor mark his music and his personal life. This paper pursues in particular Berlioz's musical development of the intertwining of intimacy and the epic, through tension, tempo, and melancholy in Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* (1839).

Of hearses, tombs, and ashes: Dying in France in *1 Henry VI*

Ellen Caldwell (Clarkson University)

In *1 Henry VI*, England dies a lingering, sickly death in France. From its opening with the funeral of Henry V, the play charts England's France steadily succumbing to an uneasy lull before a noxious end, much like the death of Henry himself -- slowly, in his bed, of dysentery. In the military codes of the age, there was no honor in dying of sickness, and Shakespeare does not stage the king's death. In contrast, Salisbury dies ignobly before Orleans, and with their dwindling support, factions sully the honor of Talbot's death on the field. In a different register, Joan further destabilizes England's control of France. While she is Talbot's foil, she is perhaps more so the counterpart of the absent king, not least in that she does not die on stage. I argue that they are the central axis, or put another way, they link but cannot bind the turmoil of the play. Through a review of chronicle sources, military manuals, and production history, this paper considers whether the play presents the military death of England in France as a deflation of and a concession to the myths of both Henry V and Jeanne la Pucelle.

French Adaptations of Shakespeare in the 18th century

John H. Cameron (Saint Mary's University)

For this paper, I want to discuss Jean-François Ducis's (1733-1816) translations, or 'imitations' as he called them, of Shakespeare's tragedies, particularly in terms of his choices concerning language and of the dramatic ideas and theories underpinning his approach. My title comes from the title page of Ducis's translation and adaptation of Shakespeare's (or Saint-Guillaume, as Ducis often called him) *Hamlet*. My main focus will be Ducis's own tragedies as adapted from Shakespeare, particularly *Hamlet, Tragédie en cinq actes* (1769). A key area for me will be Ducis's choices in language, but also how concerns over dramatic structure and style, particularly that of the French neoclassical stage. However, my main interest for this paper is Ducis as a professional dramatist rather than as a faithful adapter, for his focus was always on his audience, not on any loyalty to Shakespeare. Relying heavily on the work of Pierre Letourneur (1736-1788) and Pierre de la Place (1707-1793), Ducis's issues with English caused him several problems when translating Shakespeare's plays, particularly with *Hamlet*, a play full of "wild irregularities," as he described them to David Garrick. In fact, Ducis admitted to Garrick that what he wrote was less a translation or an imitation than a creation of "a new play" entirely (*Lettres* 8). It is the creation of these new plays, not only of *Hamlet* but also of *Othello* (1792), *Macbeth* (1784), and *Le roi Lear* (1783), that will be discussed in order to better understand and appreciate Ducis's achievement. Responding to French neoclassical taste, the example set by English eighteenth century dramatists such as Tate and Garrick, and audience demand, Ducis produced works of true importance. It is this last item, audience demand, that should be stressed, for Ducis was not producing texts of Bardolatry but dramatic pieces that could be successfully performed on the French stage. In this respect at least, Ducis's achievement is worth recognizing.

Shakespeare as a French export

Anna Weinberg (De Montfort University)

France has been instrumental in the circulation of Shakespeare at a global scale. Much is said about Germany's "Unser Shakespeare", but "Notre Shakespeare" recast the English playwright as a Romantic hero who had already championed the ideals that the Romantics treasured the most two hundred years prior. Shakespeare was thus turned into a French author, and through this French filter was exported – in French – to Francophile Latin America.

Influenced by French thinker Ernest Renan's philosophical drama *Caliban*, intellectuals in different Latin American countries proposed a new interpretation of the characters in *The Tempest*. Through their mediation Ariel became the embodiment of the cultural and artistic movement modernismo, and a larger political movement called arielismo sprawled through Latin America. In this essay I will explore how Shakespeare was re-packaged through the French imagination, and how it was this new Gallic Shakespeare that circulated in Latin America at the turn of the century.

Shakespeare's "Lost France" and Biden's "Lost" Afghanistan

Philip Goldfarb Styr (St. Ambrose University)

While Shakespeare's history plays are grouped together because of their interest in English history, much of the action takes place across the English Channel in France – not least because in the period depicted, the English kings had massive holdings in France. This paper will focus on Shakespeare's use of France as a failed site of English imperial ambition, typified by the claim at the end of Henry V that Henry VI "Lost France and made his England bleed" (TLN 3379). I suggest that France in the history plays is always presented as already lost, even in the moment of triumph, and doubly so when it actually has to be abandoned for good. I then turn to a modern connection to this kind of "lost" imperial project, and the repeated public claims that Joe Biden "lost" Afghanistan in August 2021. I argue that these accusations are closely related to those about "lost" France, in that the plays make clear that France was always French, just as Afghanistan has always been Afghan – but there are still political consequences in both cases of the perception of having lost what was never actually possessed. However, I argue that in Shakespeare it is the attempt to regain a perpetually lost France that actually causes many of the problems that the plays grapple with, and that this has implications for American foreign policy going forward.

Henry V's D-Day

Eric Johnson (Folger Shakespeare Library)

The first time King Henry V visited France, he brought ten thousand soldiers with him. This amphibious operation similar in scale to the Allies' invasion of Normandy in World War II, when adjusted for the size of the fifteenth-century population. Because it relied heavily on civilian ships to move the massive quantities of men, animals, and materiel necessary for the campaign, it was a sort of "Dunkirk in reverse."

Although Shakespeare only sets a single scene of "Henry V" in Southampton, which was the jumping-off point for the troop movement, naval action and the physical separation wrought by bodies of water linger in the background of the play. After all, Henry and his men fought at Agincourt for the chance to reach the port of Calais, board another flotilla of ships, and cross the English channel for home.

Sixteenth-century London playgoers, many of whose livelihoods depended upon waterborne trade, would have readily picked up on these references. This paper will explore this small but significant thread within "Henry V," contrasting Henry's role as naval commander with his much more famous role as the commander of a victorious land army.

