Performances of William Shakespeare's plays on the European continent date back to his lifetime. Since his death in 1616, the playwright has never stopped dominating European literature. His Complete Works have gone through an incredible number of editions from the 18th century onwards. During the second half of the 18th century, he was translated into French and German. Yet in Southern Europe it was not until the 19th century that spectators became genuinely acquainted with his plays. In the 20th century, artists started to engage with the cultural traditions of Shakespeare in a variety of ways. By the 1980s, the playwright had not only become enrolled in the ranks of postcolonial critique, but he was also part and parcel of a European theatrical avant-garde. In today's Europe, newly created festivals as well as Shakespearean adaptations on screen continue to provide challenging interpretations of his plays.

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Shakespeare's Immediate Afterlife

The English author William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote poetry (sonnets and narrative poems) as well as 38 plays – 39 if one includes Double Falsehood that is, Lewis Theobald's (1688–1744) 1727 reconstruction of a lost play, which was based on Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's (1547–1616) Don Quixote and originally entitled Cardenio. Shakespeare seems to have been a voracious reader as he mused on books by great European writers in order to feed his drama. The geography of Renaissance Europe he alluded to in his plays was often synonymous with escape for characters in quest of identity, be they heroes or villains.

Ever since the age of Queen Elizabeth I (1553–1603), Shakespeare has been dominating European literature for almost four centuries, and John Heminges (1556–1630) and Henry Condell (died 1627) remain well-known as the joint editors of Shakespeare's posthumous First Folio edition in 1623. Three other Folio editions with his works appeared in 1632, 1663, and 1685, becoming each time less and less reliable.

Performances of Shakespeare's plays on the Continent date back to his lifetime. Records mention touring productions of German adaptations of Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet as early as in the first decade of the 17th century. Very early on, English companies had also begun to visit Eastern Europe and perform their plays in sometimes prestigious surroundings. In 1626, at the Warsaw Royal Court in Poland, the John Green Company, among others, played Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and King Lear. Initially, these performances had to take place in English or German because there was no Polish translation yet.

At the same time, the works of Shakespeare had an impact on theatres in Renaissance England as well. For example, the first appearance of a woman on stage was in Othello – until then, it had been considered indecent to have women perform in theatres, which is why female roles had to be played by men. Indeed, on 8 December 1660, an actress (probably Anne Marshall, a leading English actress of the Restoration era) played the part of Desdemona at the Vere Street Theatre.

Of course, Shakespeare's works at the time were profoundly altered in order to fit the tastes of the audience. Indeed, in the 1660s, they were often seen as "virtually unmediated expressions of Nature" instead of being perceived and protected as elaborate works of art (a view which,
Pericles were the only plays to achieve success without resort to adaptation.4

For example, in 1667 William Davenant and John Dryden (1631–1700) reworked The Tempest into a comedy emphasizing royalist and patriarchal values, namely The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island. The adaptation premiered on November 7 and proved immensely successful, even though it contained less than a third of the original content of the play, featured a new character named Hippolito, and contained much music, dance, and comic material. Another notorious instance of successful adaptation was Nahum Tate (1652–1715), who famously revisited King Lear in 1681—only to turn its tragic ending into a happy one. And this was the version which was played for the next 150 years on the British stage.

Towards the end of the 17th century, Shakespeare's plays thus became a material worth refashioning to fit the tastes of audiences who were no longer interested in the recreation of the past, but in new forms of entertainment. His work was thus incorporated into Baroque music as in Henry Purcell's (1659–1695) The Fairy-Queen, first performed on 2 May 1692 at the Queen's Theatre in London. Loosely drawn from A Midsummer Night's Dream, Purcell's The Fairy-Queen actually established a new, specifically English genre, which could be defined as a baroque masque or semi-opera with a distinctly Oriental flavour, as a Chinese entertainment is part and parcel of Act V. By providing a masque set in a Chinese garden, Purcell actually responded to the vogue of tea-drinking and chinoiserie encouraged by William III of Orange (1650–1702) and his wife Mary II of England (1662–1694), and his Fairy-Queen was immediately successful.7

At that time, English-speaking French writers were just beginning to realise how rich and complex Shakespeare's works were. Yet, most of them still basked in the conviction that French literature represented the apogee of European civilization and viewed Shakespeare with a kind of superior fascination.

Shakespeare Lost in 18th-Century Translations

In the 18th century, Shakespeare's Complete Works were successively edited by Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718) in 1709, by Alexander Pope (1688–1744) in 1725, and by Lewis Theobald in 1733. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) then proposed bringing forth an edition of Shakespeare's plays as early as 1745, eventually producing his first great edition of Shakespeare in 1769. After Johnson, Edward Capell (1713–1781) and George Steevens (1736–1800) also proposed their own editions of Shakespeare's plays.8 For yet another new edition of Shakespeare's writings in 1790, the Irish scholar Edmond Malone (1741–1812) eventually tried to put his plays in chronological order.9

All of these editions proved of great value for the theatrical directors of the time. Indeed, after the Licensing Act of 1737 had been passed, "which limited the London theatre world to two patent houses and stipulated that all new plays and additions to old plays had to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain",10 dramatists increasingly relied on plays already in stock and therefore turned to Shakespeare. The 18th century was consequently marked by intense competition between the male leads at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, namely Spranger Barry (1719–1777), known as the "Irish Roscius", and David Garrick (1717–1779)11, a self-made man from a family of wine merchants. Garrick aimed at restoring Shakespeare's texts to their original state in order to make them more popular, and he largely succeeded. His Hamlet and Macbeth were costumed in modern dress. In 1769, Garrick organized a Jubilee celebration in Shakespeare's hometown Stratford-upon-Avon, whose climax probably was Garrick's recitation of an "Ode to Shakespeare".

In Europe, the idea that Shakespeare was a genius began to emerge at that period, and this also coincided with the rise of the British Empire. From Garrick's time on, there was a real market for an illustrated and sentimentalized Shakespeare, as people wanted to see celebrated actors immortalized in their great Shakespearean roles. Towards the end of the century, the Swiss-born English artist Henry Fuseli, also known as Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), frequently turned to Shakespeare for his inspiration. In 1789, he was one of the main participants in John Boydell's (1719–1804) Shakespeare Gallery. Indeed, Boydell, a leading print-seller who hoped to advance a British school of history painting, had commissioned paintings related to Shakespeare's plays from the best artists of the era (i.e. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), George Romney (1734–1802), Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), and Fuseli himself). Even though his enterprise departed from the stage tradition by turning Shakespeare into a historical figure, it proved an immediate success, and the Shakespeare Gallery existed until 1805.

Meanwhile, the first complete French and German translations of Shakespeare's plays were produced. Against all odds, in 1754, the last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski (1722–1798), who had seen Shakespeare performed in London theatres during his visit to England, translated the first four scenes of Julius Caesar into French, which was then the official language of his court.11 The French themselves discovered Shakespeare thanks to Voltaire (1694–1778), who mentioned Shakespeare's "great genius" alongside his "dreadful scenes" in his Lettres philosophiques (1734).12 To the French writer (who seemed to be familiar with only three of Shakespeare's plays, i.e. Hamlet, Julius Caesar, and Othello), the playwright appeared as

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5. Catherine the Great (1729–1796)
6. Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), Le fantôme sur la terrasse, 1843
7. John Everett Millais (1829–1896), Ophelia, 1851–1852
8. Otto Lessing (1846–1900), Shakespeare-Denkmal, 1904
9. Globe Theatre in Neuss, Germany
11. Shakespeare-Denkmal, 1904
12. Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth: Out damned spot, 1784
13. fantôme sur la terrasse, 1843
14. Catherine the Great (1729–1796)
15. Eugene Delacroix (1798–1863), Le fantôme sur la terrasse, 1843
17. Otto Lessing (1846–1900), Shakespeare-Denkmal, 1904
18. Globe Theatre in Neuss, Germany
Pierre-Antoine de La Place (1707–1793) issued his Discours sur le théâtre anglais a few years later, in 1749, thus ushering in ten Shakespeare plays in translation. 11 Then, during the late 18th century, Jean-François Ducis’s (1733–1816) neo-classical French versions of Shakespeare’s plays – one thinks of Hamlet (1769), Roméo et Juliette (1772), Le Roi Lear (1783), Macbeth (1784), Jean sans Terre (1791; “King John”), or Othello (1792) 12 – were imported into many European countries. As Ducis spoke no English, his dramatic rewritings (he changed names and oversimplified plots) were themselves based on Pierre-Antoine de La Place’s translations. Aimed at theatre practitioners, they were immensely popular across Europe. Ducis’ adaptation was thus in turn translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, Turkish, and Russian.

At the same time, between 1776 and 1783, twenty volumes of collected plays eventually appeared in Pierre Le Tourneur’s (1736–1788) fine and much more faithful French translation. 13 Le Tourneur’s edition attracted the patronage of Louis XVI (1754–1793), and it also became an important influence in Europe. We know that in Sweden, for instance, “the Uppsala University Library bought Le Tourneur’s French translation in 1780”. 14 Soon after, in 1776, Romeo and Juliet was performed by a German company whose members relied on a Swedish translation, itself based on Ducis’s adaptation of the play into French. By contrast, in Denmark, there were direct translations from the original Shakespeare right from 1777 onwards, when Hamlet, Prinz af Danmarks, was published by Johannes Boye (1756–1830). 15

In Germany, Shakespeare’s popularity was far less controversial than in France. From 1762 to 1766, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1815) published a prose translation of twenty-two plays in German. 16 Yet Wieland’s sincere admiration of Shakespeare also was “in stark contrast with his harsh criticism aimed at individual passages”. 17 As a consequence, Wieland simply ignored a number of passages, while trying to improve others. His translation was both harshly criticized and hugely influential. Soon after its publication, and in imitation of Garrick’s festival, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) organised a Shakespeare jubilee in Frankfurt in 1771, declaring 14 October 1771 to be “William’s day”. Wieland’s Shakespeare was then emended and completed by Johann Joachim Eschenburg (1749–1820) between 1775 and 1782. Since then, Germany’s Shakespeare cult has grown steadily in both size and enthusiasm.

In the 1780s, Russia also developed a lively interest in English literature, which was gradually taking precedence over French literary works. 18 Significantly, in 1783, Shakespeare was for the first time rendered into Russian. Richard III was translated and soon after, in 1786, Nikolai M. Karamzin (1766–1826), himself a writer of prose fiction, produced a translation of Julius Caesar, done from the German rendering by Johann Joachim Eschenburg. Thanks to this translation, Russian writers could now discover Shakespeare’s genius. Tsarina Catherine the Great (1727–1796) herself adapted The Merry Wives of Windsor into Russian as Vot kakovo imet’ korsnu i bel’o (“This Is What It Means to have a Buck-Basket and Linen”) 19 – a work entitled after Shakespeare’s character Master Ford’s line “This ‘tis to be married! This ‘tis to have linen and buck-baskets” 20 and indebted to the neo-classical aesthetics of her time – and Timon of Athens (based on a German translation) as Rastochitel (“The Spendthrift”). 21 Quite at the same time, in 1790, the first Hungarian translation of a Shakespeare play was a prose translation from a German Hamlet.

In Southern Europe, even though the learned part of the population had heard of Shakespeare’s reputation, readers and spectators were not yet genuinely acquainted with his works. The situation can be summarized by looking at three countries, that is, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. In Italy, Shakespeare became popular in the late 18th century thanks to Ducis’s work. The first translations were made in the mid to late 18th century, but most of the plays were not performed, at least not in easily recognizable versions, until the mid-19th century. Yet a few Shakespeare performances are worth mentioning. A Hamlet version, based on Francesco Gritti’s (1740–1811) translation of Ducis’s adaptation, was performed in Venice in 1774. As to Romeo and Juliet, based on another French adaptation 22 by Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814), it was staged only a few years later.

Quite similarly, in Spain, the first staged play was Hamlet in 1772, but Ramón Francisco de la Cruz’s (1731–1794) translation was actually based on Ducis’s adaptation. 25 A prose translation of the same play 26 was then produced in 1798 by the neo-classical writer Leandro Fernández de Moratín (1760–1828), who strongly objected to Shakespeare’s breach of decorum, thus censoring most of his puns. Meanwhile, in Portugal, Francisco Luis Ameno (1713–1793) wrote Ambleto em Dania (ca. 1755), an opera based on Hamlet. 27 However, it was probably not drawn from Shakespeare’s own version, but rather from a Spanish – or Italian – rendering of the play.

### Romanticism and Bardolatry in 19th-Century Europe

Symbolically, in Germany, 1800 is the year when the performance of Friedrich Schiller’s (1759–1805) adaptation of Macbeth was premiered in Weimar on May 14. 28 In almost the same year in France, Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766–1817) openly praised Shakespeare in De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales, affirming that the playwright “opened a new literature” and that “it was he who gave to the English literature its impulse, and to their dramatic art its character”. 29

Besides, at the turn of the century, Shakespeare’s long forgotten sonnets suddenly became very fascinating as he was repellent.
Shakespeare's remarkable reputation in the 19th century is testified to by the fact that his plays continued more than ever to influence illustrators and painters alike. Charles Knight's (1791–1873) *Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, issued in eight volumes between 1838 and 1843, relied on its visual material to attract a wide readership, and it rapidly became one of the most popular editions of the time. As the leader of the French Romantic school, Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) drew upon Shakespearian topics throughout his career. In 1844, he published a famous series of lithographs of *Hamlet*. Meanwhile in England, another Shakespeare Gallery was created by Charles Heath (1785–1848) in 1836–1837, and it was far removed from Boydell's enterprise. Whereas Boydell had favoured images reproducing scenes from the plays, Heath's were of characters – and specifically of female characters – whose relation to the scene and play from which they are drawn are interestingly ambivalent. The Pre-Raphaelites, a group of painters, were also interested in scenes which could not be represented on stage, and they produced more than sixty illustrations of Shakespeare's works at the time. John Everett Millais's (1829–1896) painting of Hamlet's fiancée Ophelia (1851–1852), for example, depicts her suicide which Hamlet's mother Gertrude narrates in her famous speech "There is a willow grows as askant the brook", but which was never shown on stage for obvious practical reasons.

In 19th-century Europe, Shakespeare came to be considered as "international property". From the mid-19th century onwards, for instance, Shakespeare was widely translated into Spanish, and Michele Leoni's (1776–1858) translation of Shakespeare's major tragedies between 1819 and 1822 provided the Italians with a more authentic Shakespeare. The first complete translation of Shakespeare's plays was made by Carlo Rusconi (1812–1889) in 1838, but he was soon followed by Giulio Carcano (1812–1884), who published a twelve-volume edition between 1875 and 1882. Meanwhile, in France, François Guizot (1787–1874) republished Le Tourneur's work in a revised form under the title *Œuvres complètes* (1821). However, Shakespeare was not always welcomed by an audience who deeply resented the French military defeats in the Spanish Peninsula War in 1809 and five years later at Waterloo, and who considered the English playwright as an enemy. More than his lack of propriety, it was now the sheer Englishness of the play which actually disturbed the French. Thus, on 31 July 1822, the English company performing *Othello* at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre in Paris was hissed off stage by frenzied spectators. In a tract entitled *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823), Stendhal (1783–1842) even reported that some members of the audience shouted "Down with Shakespeare! He was an aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington!"

Despite the hostility of his fellow countrymen, in the 1830s, the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) did turn to Shakespeare in order to enrich his musical world. Amongst other pieces, he derived his *Lélia* (1852) from *Hamlet*, *Béatrice et Bénédict* (libretto written in 1833 and first performed in 1862) from *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette* (1839) from the play of the same title. Years later, in his 1859 translation of the complete works, Victor Hugo's (1802–1885) son François-Victor Hugo (1828–1873) eventually went back to the roots in order to reveal the full violence of Shakespeare's language, even though the translation's serviceable prose was not always able to suggest the multifariousness of the original.

In Germany, a complete and accurate translation work was initiated by August Wilhelm von Schlegel and completed by Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) in 1833. This became a masterwork of the German language, establishing Shakespeare as the third greatest German author after Goethe and Schiller. It thus comes as no surprise that the world's first academic Shakespeare society, the *Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft*, was founded in Weimar in 1864 and continues to hold an annual Shakespeare conference. The standard Russian translation also dates back to the 19th century. It is the work of Nikolai V. Gerbel (1837–1883) who, together with Nikolai A. Nekrasov (1821–1878), co-edited the complete edition of Shakespeare (1865–1868). Before that, during his exile in Russia, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), the Polish author and friend of Aleksandr S. Pushkin (1799–1837), had "found Shakespeare's history plays especially appropriate to the political situation following the Decembrist Revolution of 1825". As to Pushkin himself, he penned *Boris Godunov* (1825), a satirical and subversive play in verse inspired by Shakespeare's Histories as well as by *Macbeth*, while basing his verse tale *Angelo* (1833) on *Measure for Measure*. His contemporary, the actor Pavel Stepanovich Mochalov (1800–1848), became famous for his anti-romantic *Hamlet* and was highly acclaimed throughout the 1830s and 1840s. In fact, Mochalov's gripping performance really made *Hamlet* sound Russian, thereby bringing Shakespeare's plays closer to Russian social reality.

In other eastern countries, Shakespeare was not so prominent. In Bulgaria for instance, the first play to appear in print was *Julius Caesar* in 1822. By contrast, Scandinavia soon took part in the cult of Shakespeare that had started in England – the playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) himself being a great promoter of the Bard. *Macbeth* was rendered into Norwegian by Niels...
It is needless to say that Shakespeare at this time also became strongly associated with the spirit of Romanticism, as a wave of enthusiasm for the Bard swept through the whole of Europe. Even his formerly neglected history plays were revived by actor-manager Charles Kean (1811–1868) in mid-Victorian London. It is remarkable that Victorian productions tended to focus more on the actors' performances than on the plays themselves. The era featured great performers such as Sarah Siddons (1755–1831), the most famous Lady Macbeth of all, her brother John Philip Kemble (1757–1823), Henry Irving (1838–1905), and Ellen Terry (1847–1928). Siddons was the most renowned actress of her day, her first stage performance being that of Ariel in the Dryden and Davenant adaptation of The Tempest. She then played Rosalind, Gertrude, Imogen, Isabella, Beatrice, and Desdemona, and she even was the first woman to play Hamlet. On the institutional side, the Shakespeare Memorial Company (now known as the Royal Shakespeare Company) was founded in 1875 and soon became attached to Stratford's Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, which opened in 1879 and was destroyed by fire 47 years later.

In Southern Europe, although many people read Shakespeare, they had difficulty in seeing him performed. The case of Italy is particularly significant where "[a]ttempts were made to introduce Shakespeare to theatre audiences in 1820 (Othello), 1845 (Othello) and 1850 (Hamlet) but again with no great success". Nevertheless, even though Shakespeare may not have been seen as fit for the stage, he was certainly regarded as a model by Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) throughout his career. The Italian composer wrote three operas on themes taken from Shakespeare's plays: Macbeth (first composed in 1847 and revised in 1865), Otello (1887), and Falstaff (1893).

Besides, the Italian actor and playwright Ernesto Rossi (1827–1896) started playing Shakespeare with great success, even outside Italy. We know for instance that from the late 1870s onwards, several internationally renowned actors or companies presented their Shakespeare productions in the main cities of Flanders. Rossi, together with Tommaso Salvini (1829–1915), provided an impetus to the creation of a Shakespeare tradition in Flemish cultural life. Against all odds, Rossi performed both Hamlet and Othello in Italian on the Belgian stage in 1876. The first Flemish performance of a Shakespearean play, Romeo and Juliet, took place eight years later, in 1884.

As for the Portuguese, they had to wait until 1877 before they were able to read a play directly translated from the source. King Luís I of Portugal (1838–1886) issued a translation of Hamlet, soon known as "the royal translation", which was hailed by favourable reviews in the press. Before that, only two of Shakespeare's plays had been indirectly translated, and generally speaking, the English playwright had only been accessible to the educated elite, who were more likely to read him in the French adaptations of Ducis.

One last example will be enough to show that bardolatry had reached all European countries by the end of the 19th century. A high school student from Corfu, Andreas Varonos Theotokis (1835–1908), translated Macbeth into Modern Greek in 1819. In the late 1850s, as Iakovos Polylas (1826–1898) published his translation of the Tempest (1859), he prompted several other translators to follow suit. Yet it was thanks to the advocate of the revival of the Olympic Games, Demetrius Vikelas (1835–1908), that Shakespeare was definitively introduced to 19th-century Greek audiences. During his stays in Paris, Vikelas translated King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, and Othello (1878), soon followed by Macbeth and Hamlet (1881). As a result, the Bard had become so influential by the end of the century that, in 1897, even the melancholy Austrian empress Elisabeth (1837–1898) (who became well known under her nickname Sisi) embarked on translating no less than three plays by Shakespeare, namely Hamlet, King Lear and The Tempest, into Modern Greek.

20th- and 21st-Century Shakespeare: From Politics to Multiculturalism

Shakespeare's language continued to trouble the sensibilities of people. In his own country, the playwright was sometimes severely censored. If, by 1850, only seven editions of bowdlerized Shakespeare were available to the British readership, by 1900, there were almost fifty expurgated Shakespeare editions on the British book market. Yet, at the turn of the 20th century, in Le duel d'Hamlet, directed by Clément-Maurice Gratioulet (1853–1933), it was a woman, namely the fifty-five-year old French actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), who played the title part. Shown at the 1900 "Exposition Universelle" in Paris, it was the second Shakespeare film ever made.

A few years later, in 1904, a Shakespeare statue designed by Otto Lessing (1846–1912) was erected in Weimar. This clearly meant that bardolatry continued, not just in Germany but throughout Europe, despite the bouts of censorship in the Bard's homeland which were mentioned above. Artists and writers in early 20th-century England engaged with the cultural traditions of Shakespeare in a variety of ways. Harley Granville-Barker's (1877–1946) productions of Shakespeare's plays at the Savoy Theatre in 1911 and 1914 were highly influential. After him, Shakespeare productions came to be characterized by a great diversity of styles. Yet, more often than not, his plays were now recreated in the service of a political ideology, be it Fascism or...
During the First World War, the Honorary Secretary of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Committee, Sir Israel Gollancz (1864–1930), produced a memorial entitled A Book of Homage to Shakespeare (1916). The 166 tributes of the volume were written in 23 different languages, including all major European languages except German, for obvious reasons. The book purported "to create an imaginary unified community in the face of the deep, increasingly bloody divisions of the Great War" as well as to invest Shakespeare with an imperial mission.

Curiously, after World War I, doubts about Shakespeare’s authorship multiplied. The controversy had in fact been roused by the work of the American writer Delia Salter Bacon (1811–1859), who proposed that Shakespeare was a fictitious person whose works had really been written by a group of men, one of them being the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626). In 1920, John Thomas Looney (1870–1944), an English schoolmaster, suggested that it was probably not Francis Bacon, as his American namesake had claimed, but the Earl of Oxford, Edward De Vere (1550–1604), who was the real author of the plays. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Looney’s ardent supporter, even thought that the early death of Oxford’s father and the remarriage of his mother offered the oedipal basis Freud needed for explaining the psychological conflict in Hamlet. From then on, the supporters of the Oxford theory never ceased reassigning the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays, in spite of massive evidence proving that Shakespeare did write his own plays, and that his possible collaborations with other playwrights were part and parcel of a fairly typical practice of early modern playwrights.

In France, such controversy was easily brushed aside as Shakespeare’s plays, in increasingly accurate form, were central to the French theatre of the 20th century. One of the founders of modern French theatre, Jacques Copeau (1879–1949), was very much influenced by Shakespeare, and he eventually translated Shakespeare’s Tragédies together with Suzanne Bing (1885–1967) in 1939.

Similarly, in the 1920s, some German translators tried to challenge the traditional use of translation. The son of the mayor of Leipzig, Hans Rothe (1894–1978), was a much-disputed translator taking liberties with the original text in order to cater for the demands of the modern theatre. He began publishing his translations from 1922 onwards, cutting complex passages, turning blank verse into prose, or clarifying the syntax. Actors found Rothe’s scripts easily speakable and particularly liked them in spite of the harsh criticism of European Shakespeare scholars, but in 1936, the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) banned them, forcing all theatres to rely on the Schlegel-Tieck version instead. Rothe’s translations were only used again after the Second World War.

At the height of the Fascist period in Italy, Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) was depicted as a modern Gaius Iulius Caesar (100–44 BC) in school textbooks. It is in this context that Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar was performed when the actor and director Nando Tamberlani (1896–1956) used the theatrical space of the Basilica of Maxentius in Rome in 1935. Incidentally, in the same year the Russian Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) completed his ballet based on Romeo and Juliet, writing a score notoriously difficult for dancers to cope with. Two years later, as a direct answer to Tamberlani, the American director Orson Welles (1915–1985) denounced the use of theatre as a propaganda tool and staged his own play Julius Caesar: Death of a Dictator.

In post-war England and Germany, two international centres were promptly established, namely the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1951 and the Shakespeare Bibliothek in Munich in 1964, which implies that Shakespeare remained the backbone of theatre repertory in Germany. In fact, he even represented something from which the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) wanted to break away. Nevertheless, Brecht purported to “grapple” with the English playwright and resorted to Shakespeare in order to fashion his “epic” (later called “dialectical”) theatre. At the beginning of the 1950s, he even wrote an unfinished adaptation of Shakespeare’s Coriolanus, in which he aimed at emphasizing class struggle, attempting to show both the tribunes and the plebeians in a favourable light.

In Russia, Boris Pasternak’s (1890–1960) idiomastic translations, which were published in the late 1940s and early 1950s, have remained very popular with Russian readers and audiences alike. Significantly, for both Hamlet and King Lear, the film director Grigori Kozintsev (1905–1973) used his translations.

Meanwhile in France, the project of a popular theatre reappeared after World War II and was implemented by Jean Vilar (1912–1971), the director and inventor of the Festival d’Avignon, who saw theatre as a “public service”. In his first Avignon season in 1947, Vilar staged Shakespeare’s Richard II, thus pioneering the staging of plays with historical settings in ancient surroundings, a method which was copied all over France in the 1950s. His successor Roger Planchon (1931–2009), on the contrary, preferred to draw on Brecht’s practice. In 1957, Planchon became director of the Théâtre de la Cité at Villeurbanne, a working-class suburb of Lyons, where he presented his version of Henry IV.

European Shakespeare proved increasingly eclectic and adaptable. In 1960, Benjamin Britten’s (1913–1976) opera A Midsummer Night’s Dream, including parodies of grand and bel canto operas, was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival on 11 June. One year later, the Polish theoretician Jan Kott (1914–2001) published Szkice o Szekspirze (English edition: Shakespeare
The 1960s also marked the eastern European appropriation of a Shakespeare who was heavily politicized. In the spring of 1965, for instance, a landmark production of a "plebeian" Hamlet trying to break with the dogmatic constraints of Socialist Bulgaria was directed by Leon Daniel (1927–2008) at the Theatre of the Armed Forces in Sofia. It was only in the 1970s that the poet and translator Valeri Petrov (1920–2014) decided that a full translation of Shakespeare into Bulgarian was needed, making a supreme achievement in translating the playwright’s complete works between 1970 and 1981.

Besides being discussed from the perspectives of feminism, new historicism, and cultural materialism in the 1970s and serving as a weapon to postcolonial critique (as can be seen in Aimé Césaire’s (1913–2008) A Tempest), Shakespeare has now become part and parcel of a European theatrical avant-garde, with playwrights such as the American Robert Wilson (born 1941), Peter Brook (born 1925), or Ariane Mnouchkine (born 1939), all relying on a global network. As to Brook’s experimental theatre at the Bouffes du Nord in Paris, it changed and challenged the way French people usually perceived Shakespeare, and his Timon of Athens, The Tempest, and Lear proved to be exciting and successful. However, his shortened production of Hamlet in 2000, starring the black actor Adrian Lester, was regarded as a failure by many critics. In the 1980s, working for her company Le Théâtre du Soleil, Ariane Mnouchkine borrowed from the various traditional Asian theatres for her staging of three of Shakespeare’s history plays at the Cartoucherie. Her memorable five-hour production of Richard II (1982) was imbued with an orientalism that was meant to reproduce the atmosphere of a medieval court.

In the 1990s, German theatres kept reinventing Shakespeare. For her production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, 1995), Karin Beier (*1965) radically rethought Shakespeare in performance and used actors from all over Europe, each speaking his or her own tongue. In a century eager to promote cultural tourism, the Germans’ special affinity with Shakespeare materialized through a small reconstruction of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre which was opened in Rheda-Wiedenbrück in 1988 before being moved to Neuss (1998), just outside Düsseldorf. An annual international Shakespeare festival has been held there since 1991. Six years later, under the impulse of the American actor, director and producer Sam Wanamaker (1919–1993), a reconstructed Globe Theatre opened on Bankside in London, testifying to the more and more widespread need for an "authentic" Shakespeare.

Generally speaking, the turn of the 21st century saw the emergence of new research groups as well as of newly created festivals which all show performances around the figure of William Shakespeare. These festivals are now part of the European Shakespeare Festivals Network. All these activities have allowed many Europeans to better understand the importance of cultural exchange in the interpretation of Shakespeare. For instance, in 2009, Kåre Conradi (born 1972) of the Norwegian Ibsen Company joined the British Shakespeare Company for a performance of A Midsummer Night’s Dream under the direction of Robert J. Williamson. The two directors could thus share a creative understanding of the performing arts and of Shakespeare in particular. On a much broader scale, in 2012, the Globe organized a multicultural event in which all the plays of Shakespeare were presented, each in a different language, each by a different company from around the world. There was even a Turkish production from the Istanbul theatre Oyun Atolyesi, a Spanish production from the Madrid-based company Rakata, and a Greek production from the National Theatre of Greece.

The 20th century is also the age of cinema, and Shakespeare’s plays have therefore been popularized on screens from as early as the 1920s, when they began to attract film-makers. The Taming of the Shrew, starring Douglas Fairbanks (1883–1939) and Mary Pickford (1892–1979), was released on the silver screen in 1929. As the taste for Shakespeare became increasingly boosted by films, Laurence Kerr Olivier (1907–1989) (whose Shakespeare trilogy, i.e. Henry V, Hamlet, and Richard III was a huge success), Franco Zeffirelli (born 1923) (with his film versions of The Taming of the Shrew, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Verdi’s Otello), Roman Polanski (born 1933) (best known for his interpretation of Shakespeare’s Macbeth in 1971), Kenneth Branagh (born 1960) (who first directed Henry V in 1989 and who has never wavered in his dedication to Shakespeare since then) and the Russian Grigori Kozintsev (who directed two gripping film versions of Shakespeare plays, namely Hamlet in 1964 and King Lear in 1971) followed suit.

The huge success of Shakespeare in Love, a 1998 British film directed by John Madden (born 1949), co-written by Marc Norman (born 1941) and the playwright Tom Stoppard (born 1937), re-imagined part of Shakespeare’s story and turned the playwright into a global icon as well as into a commercial good. The digital afterlife of Shakespeare films (especially through DVDs teeming with interpretive guides, interviews, and additional scenes) increased their impact on spectators even more. Television adaptations then flourished everywhere in Europe, but the BBC series (1978–1984) remains the only one to cover the whole canon.

Today, Shakespeare appears to be increasingly merchandized, and although he remains the embodiment of Englishness for European pupils, students, and tourists, he is also considered as an intercultural icon, bridging the gap between different countries, different tongues, and different religious and social values. Thus, Shakespeare has definitely become European at last.
Appendix

Translations of Single Works by William Shakespeare

Ameno, Francisco Luis (ed.): Ambleto em Dania, no place, ca. 1755.

Boyé, Johannes (ed.): Hamlet, Prinz af Danmark: Tragoedie / af Shakespear; Oversat af engelsk, Copenhagen 1777.

Catherine II of Russia (ed.): Vol’noie no slaboie perelozenie iz Shakespira, komedia Vot kakovo imet’ korzinu i bel’e, St. Petersburg 1786.

Catherine II of Russia: Rastochitel’, St. Petersburg 1786.

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Hamlet: Tragédie, imitée de l’anglois; représentée, pour la 1. fois par les comédiens français ordinaires du roi, le 30 septembre 1769, Paris 1770 (first performed in 1769).

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Jean sans Terre ou la Mort d’Arthur: Tragédie, En trois actes & en vers, Paris 1792 (first performed in 1791).

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Macbeth: Tragédie En Cinq Actes: Représentée Pour La Première Fois, En 1784, Et Remise Au Théâtre Avec Des Changements En 1790, Paris 1790 (first performed in 1784).

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Othello ou le more of Venice: Trag.; Représentée à Paris pour la première fois sur le Théâtre de la République le lundi 16 nov. 1792, l'an premier de la république / Par le citoyen Ducis, Paris 1793–1794 (first performed in 1792).

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Le Roi Léar: Tragédie En Cinq Actes / Par M. Ducis, De L’Académie Francaise; Secrétaire ordinaire de Monsieur: Représentée à Versailles devant Leurs Majestés; le Jeudi 16 Janvier 1783; & à Paris, le Lundi 20 du même mois, par les Comédiens Français, Paris 1783 (first performed in 1783).

Ducis, Jean-François (ed.): Roméo et Juliette: Tragédie; repr., pour la première fois, par les Comédiens français ordinaires du Roi, le 27 juillet 1772, Paris 1772 (first performed in 1772).


Hauge, Niels (ed.): Macbeth, Christiania 1855.

Luis I of Portugal (ed.): Hamlet: Drama em cinco actos: Tradução portugueza, Lisbon 1877.

Mercier, Louis-Sébastien (ed.): Les tombeaux de Véronne: Drame en cinq actes, Paris et al. 1785.

Moratin, Leandro Fernández de (ed.): Hamlet: Tragedia / de Guillermo Shakespeare: Traducida é ilustrada con la vida del autor y notas críticas, Madrid 1798.

Polylas, Iakovos (ed.): ΕΤΡΙΚΗΜΙΑ: Drama, Kerkyra 1859.

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Notes

6. Rowe, Works 1709; Pope, Works 1725; Theobald, Works 1733.
7. Johnson, Plays 1765.
8. Capell, Mr William Shakespeare 1768; Steevens / Johnson, Works 1773.
11. The translation entitled "Essay de traduction du César de Shakespeare" can be found in the Czartoryski Library, Cracow, BCz coll. no. 911, pp. 81–95.
13. See La Place, Discours 1754.
14. Cf. Ducis, Hamlet 1770; Ducis, Roméo et Juliette 1772; Ducis, Le Roi Léar 1783; Ducis, Macbeth 1790; Ducis, Jean sans Terre 1792; Ducis, Othello 1793–1794.
15. Le Tourneur, Shakespeare 1776–1783.
17. Boye, Hamlet 1777.
21. Catherine II of Russia, Komedia 1786.
22. Shakespeare, Merry Wives, Act 3, Scene 5, verses 130f.
23. Catherine II of Russia, Rastochitel’ 1786.
26. This 1772 Hamlet was translated by the playwright Ramon de la Cruz, and was entitled Hamleto, rey de Dinamarca. It was not a direct translation, but a derivative of Ducis’ translation. In Spain, the first direct translation of a Shakespeare play was that of Leandro Fernández de Moratin in 1798. Moratin offered a more authentic version of Hamlet under
the pen name of “Inarco Celenio”.

27. Moratin, Hamlet 1798.
29. Schiller, Macbeth 1801.
32. Shapiro, Contested Will 2010, p. 58.
34. Poole, Shakespeare 2004, p. 53
36. Leoni, Tragedie 1819–1822.
37. Rusconi, Teatro 1838.
40. Hugo, Œuvres complètes 1859.
42. Gerbel / Nekrasov, Polnoe sobranie 1865–1868.
44. Pushkin, Boris Godunov 1831.
45. Pushkin, Angelo 1833.
46. Hauge, Macbeth 1855.
47. Mynorsk (Neo-Norwegian) is one of two official written standards of Norwegian. It was created by Ivar Aasen and is still in use today.
51. Luis I of Portugal, Hamlet 1877.
53. Polylas, Ἐ Ῥικύμια 1859.
54. Vikelas, Saikespeirou tragóðial 1876–1884.
57. This short film only showed Hamlet’s duel with Laertes from Act 5, scene 3.
58. The earliest Shakespeare film, Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s (1853–1917) King John, dates back to 1899.
61. Bacon, Philosophy 1857.
63. Copeau / Bing, Tragédies 1939.
64. Hamburger, Translating and Copyright 2004, p. 163.
69. Wilson notably directed a small-scale, monologue-like King Lear in German in Frankfurt (1991) whose title role was played by the acclaimed German actress Marianne Hoppe (1909–2002). Another German production of his was The Winter’s Tale, performed at the Berliner Ensemble in 2005.
70. In November 1999, Murcia University hosted the international conference “Four Centuries of Shakespeare in Europe”, which attracted scholars from nineteen different European countries. On this occasion, the organizers decided to set up a research network devoted to pooling information on Shakespeare. This association is now called ESRA (European Shakespeare Research Association), online: http://www.um.es/shakespeare/esra/index.php [24/03/2014].
71. Online: http://www.esfn.eu [24/06/2013]. In Poland for instance, the Gdansk Shakespeare Festival started in 1993. Its artistic director, Jerzy Limon (*1950), aims at proposing a variety of theatrical productions from Poland and abroad. The Rumanian International Shakespeare Festival was founded in Craiova, Romania, in 1994, whereas the Shakespeare Festival of Catalonia was born nine years later in Santa Susanna. In Armenia, the Yerevan International Shakespeare Festival was founded in 2004 by the director Hakob Ghazanchian and Andrzej Żurowski, a Shakespeare scholar. In Hungary, since 2005, the Gyula Castle Theatre has been organising the International Shakespeare Festival. Last but not least, the Shakespeare Festival at the Silesian-Moravian Castle is a festival which is part of a large Czech-Slovak project called The Summer Shakespeare Festival. Other European festivals also exist outside the European Shakespeare Festivals Network. To quote but one instance, every year since 2002, Shakespeare in Styria has gathered together an international group of young actors and musicians in the Styrian Alps to perform and produce multiple events around the central core of a Shakespearean play.
72. Festivals have also helped people realise that Shakespeare could convey very different things from the page to the stage. In France for example, the recent translations of Jean-Michel Déprats (*1949) have had a huge impact on today’s performances. Déprats’ translations, conveying the “sharpness” and “vocal energy” of dramatic speech, are deliberately made for the stage. According to him, “[t]ranslation implies making sense of the original, keeping its rhythm, echoing its sonorities, transposing its metaphors and its prosody, while not distorting its poetic resonance” (Déprats, Shakespeare’s Stagecraft 2004, pp. 133, 135, and 138).
William Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright who is considered one of the greatest writers to ever use the English language. He is also the most famous playwright in the world, with his plays being translated in over 50 languages and performed across the globe for audiences of all ages. Known colloquially as "The Bard" or "The Bard of Avon," Shakespeare was also an actor and the creator of the Globe Theatre, a historical theatre, and company that is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. William Shakespeare (bapt. 26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His extant works, including collaborations, consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and