



Migrating Shakespeare: First European Encounters, Routes and Networks.

Janet Clare and Dominique Goy-Blanquet, eds.

Global Shakespeare Inverted. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021. xiv + 298 pp. £75.

Hailed as the “Michelangelo of tragedy” in Italy (30) and “unser Shakespeare” in Germany (56), Shakespeare has had a strong presence on continental Europe for centuries. Taking a cue from Germaine de Staël on the transportation of “the masterpieces . . . from one language to another” as the worthiest service to literature (v), Janet Clare and Dominique Goy-Blanquet identify “waves of migration” (3) of people and of Shakespeare’s texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in their coedited book, which is part of the series *Global Shakespeare Inverted*. This book is a welcome addition to the scholarship on global Shakespeare and expands the historical depth of the field. It compliments, in historical timeline, and scale, *Disseminating Shakespeare in the Nordic Countries* (2022) in the same series, edited by Nely Keinänen and Per Sivefors, which argues similarly that early Scandinavian translations of Shakespeare created a web of interconnections that empowered readers and audiences for whom English was a second language.

Covering a larger swath of continental Europe, case studies in *Migrating Shakespeare* cohere around the idea of cultural assimilation and map the influence of trade and travel on textual migrations. For instance, the presence of traveling English players, including David Garrick, increased French, German, and Swedish interest in English literary culture in the seventeenth century. Textual migration, as the chapters demonstrate, also takes place through intermediaries. Eighteenth-century Poland encountered Shakespeare through German performances in Warsaw. Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk argues, in chapter 6, that the 1781 Warsaw staging of Friedrich Ludwig Schröder’s German adaptation of *Hamlet* (first performed in Vienna) sparked great Polish interest in Shakespeare. The fascinating and diverse paths of cultural transmission are further exemplified by the review of this German production in Poland, a review in French published in the *Journal littéraire de Varsovie*, edited by “the French staying at the court of King Stanisław Poniatowski” (149). Beyond the more familiar stories of English traveling players’ influence, this volume also presents new discoveries. In chapter 10, Jasmine H. Seymour outlines how Armenian merchants taught Shakespeare in India as a means to promote “rhetoric skills [that were] essential for future merchants” in Calcutta, “preceding the English by sixty years” (235).

While such stories of the migration of Shakespeare are enticing, this volume makes a welcome effort to distinguish between theatrical and literary migrations of Shakespeare’s plays, arguing that in European theater circles the reception of Shakespeare is more positive than in the literary circles, even though, ironically in England, Romantic-era figures such as Coleridge and William Hazlitt held “a poor opinion of theatre

performances . . . compared with the quality of his poetry” (18). Mara Yanni’s chapter demonstrates that perceptions of Shakespeare “as an agent of European cultural advancement” resulted largely from efforts within “the nascent Greek theatre” rather than any project “in the closed circles of the literati” (261).

The migration of Shakespeare is not always a rosy undertaking, oscillating between eulogization and rejection of the Bard. On one hand, “the first decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of an entire generation whose ambition, inspired by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, was to become Shakespeare translators and critical authorities” (8). On the other hand, “French cultural hegemony” became an obstacle to the localization of “Shakespeare’s rule-defying and poetically hybrid dramaturgy” (9).

As much as the book focuses on the migration of Shakespeare, it also directs readers’ attention to cultural changes on a local level, pointing out that “in crossing national boundaries . . . the migrant text may modify the character and art of the recipient culture” (13). Indeed, the discourses of national history in Shakespeare’s plays inspired Russian, German, French, and Swiss artists to rethink images of their own “national heroes” (14). As it searched for a unifying identity, nineteenth-century Germany adopted Shakespeare as its own. August Koberstein claimed in 1864 that, on account of his “kinship with the German mind” and “proto-Germanic nature,” Shakespeare “more than any other could have become, a property of the German people . . . as if he had been born and raised in our country” (quoted on 72). Thus Wolfgang G. Müller, in chapter 2, along with other contributors to this volume, shows that any given European culture’s claimed affinity with, indifference to, and resistance of Shakespeare has to be contextualized and taken with a grain of salt.

Positivist and antithetical patterns coexist in early European reception of Shakespeare. This book successfully demonstrates the multilingual and multicultural nature of the transmission of Shakespeare’s texts within a context where cultural meanings are relational.

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Ovid and the Liberty of Speech in Shakespeare’s England. Heather James.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. x + 288 pp. \$99.99.

In this fascinating study, Heather James explores the palimpsestic ways in which Ovid shapes and informs the works of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Using compelling close reading while consistently remaining grounded in historical context, James synthesizes Ovid’s influence on literary license—particularly as it impacts early modern English politics, sexuality, and gender.