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THE COMPANY OF SHAKESPEARE IN EXILE: TOWARDS A READING OF INTERNMENT CAMP CULTURES

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This paper studies three instances of Shakespearean appropriation by individuals and groups interned behind barbed wire during World War I and World War II. It studies these Shakespearean cultures as hybrid instances of the 'literature of exile'. By studying these reading, quotation and performance cultures, it becomes possible, to a certain extent anyway, to intuit some of the realities of twentieth-century exile. Although the literature of exile itself may never be able to convey the true horrors of internment, the performance of literary culture in exile – and of the ubiquitous Shakespeare in particular – may help us distinguish the contours and perhaps even more the dynamics of exile.

Keywords Shakespeare; appropriation; literature of exile; internment; World War I; World War II

LA COMPAÑÍA DE SHAKESPEARE EN EL EXILIO: HACIA UNA LECTURA DE LAS CULTURAS DE LOS CAMPOS DE CONCENTRACIÓN

En este artículo se estudian tres casos de apropiación shakesperiana a cargo de individuos y grupos recluidos tras alambradas durante la primera y segunda guerras mundiales. Se estudian estas culturas shakesperianas como casos híbridos de la 'literatura del exilio'. Examinando estas culturas de lectura, cita y representación, se puede, hasta cierto punto, llegar a intuir algunas de las realidades del exilio en el siglo veinte. Aunque la literatura del exilio no puede por sí misma llegar a transmitir todos los horrores de la reclusión, la representación de la cultura literaria en el exilio – y del ubicuo Shakespeare en concreto – nos puede ayudar a discernir el contexto y quizás aún más la dinámica del exilio.

Palabras clave: Shakespeare; apropiación; literatura del exilio; reclusión; 1ª guerra mundial; 2ª guerra mundial

1. Exile and silence

The internment and suffering of individuals in civilian and military camps is a marked feature of the political landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from the concentration camps of the Boer War, the POW and civilian internment camps of the two world wars, the communist Gulags and the Japanese labour camps, to the death camps of the Nazi regime, and beyond, to Guantánamo Bay.[1] Given the ubiquity of internment camps across time and space, much political and sociological research has been invested into these multiple modes of existence. Considerably less attention has been devoted to the so-called *cultural* life of these imposed communities – the innumerable attempts to pass and bear the time, by reading or writing, by performing music or drama, blending internment with entertainment.

This paper focuses on Shakespeare and the literature of exile. More particularly, it deals with the way in which exiles, behind barbed wire, have turned to Shakespeare and have appropriated his life and work. By studying a number of different manifestations during World War I and World War II, this paper tries to propose a means of breaking through the silence of those who led lives behind barbed wire, either because they never returned to the free world, or because those who did return, for a myriad of reasons including shame or a wish simply to relegate the experience to oblivion, never recorded their personal memories. This paper, on behalf of those who went through what may be termed one of the seminal experiences of the twentieth century but never spoke, tries to interpret their Shakespearean investment, insofar as this may be reconstructed through archival research, as a meaningful process of signification. Shakespeare was a common presence behind barbed wire, and studying how internees 'meant by Shakespeare' (to acknowledge the groundbreaking work of Terence Hawkes), we are not only in a position to restore their voices, but also to lay the foundation for original, new research into the political afterlives of Shakespeare, and of the broader function of literature in the cultures that appropriate him, in the course of time (Hawkes 1992: 1-10).

Shakespeareans have not been entirely unaware of phenomena such as exile and internment, but the first sustained treatment of the subject in a number of his plays is Jane Kingsley-Smith's impressive and systematic *Shakespeare's Drama of Exile* (2003). It is rich and learned and has vital things to say about the representation of exile in Shakespeare's plays as well as the classical traditions of exile literature that Shakespeare drew on, including Cicero, Ovid and Plutarch. Kingsley-Smith's discussion of a relatively small group of plays with geographical displacement, banishment and exile as their main theme – notably *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus* and *The Tempest* – is indispensable for anyone seeking to work in this relatively unexplored field of Shakespeare studies.

Kingsley-Smith argues that in recent years critics seem to have been fascinated more by metaphorical notions of exile, "the spectacle of a marginal Shakespeare giving utterance to the suppressed voices of his society", than by the actual representation of exile in the plays themselves. While we appear to have been fascinated by 'marginality' as it relates to Shakespeare in biographical terms, in terms of, say, Shakespeare as a Catholic, as a playwright working in an inferior profession, a Stratfordian in London, and so on – "we [have]

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remain[ed] largely uninterested in the *representation* of marginality, *that is exile*, performed with surprising regularity on the Shakespearean stage" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 2-3).

Kingsley-Smith's alternative approach significantly enhances our appreciation of the literature in question, but, in the end, one wonders if it is fully rewarding too. The author, for example, seems to by-pass somewhat randomly, in her conclusion, Edward Said's seminal consideration whether "views of exile in literature [do not actually] obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 174). Kingsley-Smith argues that Shakespeare is aware of this rift in his own plays. Touchstone himself jibes at the literary exile model of Ovid, and Shakespeare himself is not in the habit of sentimentalizing exile either. In the final analysis, Kingsley-Smith sides with Theodore Adorno who was convinced that, "For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes the place to live", either as a writer himself – through "linguistic self-reinvention", as Kingsley-Smith puts it – or as a reader – "through identification with some literary paradigm" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 177).

Kingsley-Smith's argument is sound, certainly, but with her acceptance of literature as a refuge – "a place to live" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 177) – she does close the door on the issue of the historical realities that Said raises and their inherent untranslatability into literature. One valuable step beyond Kingsley-Smith's monograph, it seems to me, would be to return to the 'actual' instances of exile and study the role of the literary text, the Shakespearean text, within those contexts. This paper seeks to illustrate how the engagement with literature under conditions of exile or internment reveals rather than obscures the historical realities, because they are an intrinsic part of them. Reading and quoting Shakespeare in exile creates a new 'literature of exile' which may indeed be taken and read as what Said calls the "irremediably secular and unbearably historical" (quoted in Kingsley-Smith 2003: 174).

2. Countess Karolina Lanckorońska

A case in point is the engagement with Shakespeare that we find in the diaries of the countess Karolina Lanckorońska. Karolina Lanckorońska was born in Austria in 1898, the daughter of Austro-Hungarian nobility. She studied at the University of Vienna, and became a Renaissance art historian at the University of Lwów in western Ukraine (although she also developed a special interest in English literature, which explains her 1936 edition of extensive selections from Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*). When the Soviets occupied the city of Lwów – also known as Lviv, Lemberg and Leopolis – Countess Lanckorońska moved to Krakow, where she became active in the Polish resistance. In 1942, she was arrested by the Germans, interrogated, tortured, tried and sentenced to death. But thanks to her family connections, Lanckorońska was not executed and, instead, was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women. She survived Ravensbrück and left a record of her experiences in her memoirs which appeared in Britain as *Those Who Trespass against Us: One Woman's War against the Nazis* (Lanckorońska 2005) and in the US as *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück* (Lanckorońska 2006). The first English translation of these memoirs was published posthumously, in 2004, 2 years after the countess's death in Rome, at the age of 104.

These fascinating exile memoirs structured around contemporary diaries, and relating to a period in Lanckorońska's life spent both in prison and behind the barbed wire fence of Ravensbrück, capture the spirit of a humanist scholar who is challenged by

circumstances but who refuses to give in, a scholar determined to find support in the very culture that the Nazis were threatening to destroy. In her Lwów diary she records: "at my request, I was sent Shakespeare. That for me has been the most significant event of recent times. My life in prison has been totally transformed. I have read Shakespeare before and read a lot ... I have read and am reading. I note down extracts and re-read, but it is as though I had never before heard of Shakespeare" (Lanckorońska 2005: 168).

In this way, Lanckorońska started a culture not only of reading and re-inventing Shakespeare, but also of quoting Shakespeare, to reflect on the situation she was in, thus, as she herself puts it, satisfying "the ever-growing need to escape into the realm of intellectual riches, of *inner Emigration*" (2005: 269). Even despite the acknowledgement that literature was a mode of 'escape' to a world that was 'other', the frequent Shakespearean reading and quotation, the performative engagement with European culture by itself signals and enables us to 'read' the 'truly horrendous' agony of a soul in exile.

Via Lanckorońska's daily dialogue with Shakespeare we may chart the emotional state of the internee. The first entry of her Lwów prison diary – dated 18 September 1942 – reads:

> I have been studying how I may compare
> This prison where I live unto the world:
> And for because the world is populous
> And here is not a creature but myself,
> I cannot do it: yet I'll hammer 't out.
> My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
> My soul the father: and these two beget
> A generation of still-breeding thought,
> And these same thoughts, people this little world.
> (2005: 161-62)

This energetic beginning is soon followed by despondency, which explains why, two days later, on 20 September, Lanckorońska begins with the self-corrective words from Edgar in *King Lear* (5.2): "What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither: / Ripeness is all?" The vision expressed here prepares us for the reference to *Julius Caesar* later in the entry, idealizing classical, Stoic principles: "Of all the wonders that I yet have heard / It seems to me most strange that men should fear / Seeing that death, a necessary end / Will come when it will come" (Lanckorońska 2005: 168).[2]

This is only one instance of the prison diaries of Countess Lanckorońska illustrating how Shakespeare as the literature in exile, read and quoted by the individual, could signal doubt or represent a source of moral and ethical strength gradually discovered under duress. In this way we read the countess speaking the unspeakable.

Moreover, she would seem to be speaking on behalf of many others who have, for a variety of reasons, remained silent. This becomes clear from the account following the Germans' transfer of Lanckorońska to Ravensbrück, the transport, as she put it, "from the land of [her] fathers" (2005: 181), into exile. At Ravensbrück, Shakespeare made a

[2] And amidst the musings over a monograph on Michelangelo – whose death in the year that Shakespeare was born, she says, was highly symbolic – comes Julius Caesar again. Feeling physically weak, she realizes that "Truly: Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass / Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron / Can be retentive to the strength of spirit" (2005: 169).

miraculous appearance behind barbed wire: "a great delight came our way. One of the Polish women brought with her from Auschwitz a treasure that, because she was travelling on with the transport, she had to leave with us. That was a one-volume edition of Shakespeare's complete works in English. The book was stamped with the number of an officers' prisoner-of-war camp, from which it had by some miracle been smuggled to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp" (2005: 269).

One marvels at the fact that the same physical copy of the complete works of Shakespeare should have visited three different World War II camps, just as one should wonder about the many readers it must have had. Certainly, at Ravensbrück it was not only Lanckorońska who read it. As she herself notes, it was "secreted in [her] straw mattress, from which [she] used to lend him out to the occasional reader" (2005: 269). Moreover, there were times when she would not read Shakespeare, although this did not interfere with the poet's status, since at such moments he would be remembered. As Lanckorońska writes: "There were days when reading was out of the question. I had neither time nor the energy, but for us the mere awareness that *King Lear* or *Richard II* was with us was proof that the world still existed" (2005: 269).

Both the widespread reading of Shakespeare as well as the non-reading and remembering of his literary work here emphatically present his vital cultural presence as one of the realities of exile.

3. Amateur refugees on the Isle of Man

Beyond this broadly performative cultural presence of Shakespeare in exile, we recognize the phenomenon of Shakespearean performances on actual theatre stages behind barbed wire. In most cases it concerns amateur theatre, and this may also explain why these Shakespearean productions have suffered severe critical neglect. Looking at a single World War II production in greater detail, it becomes possible not only to reconstruct a tale of courage and resilience among exiles, but also a narrative that shames both the then-contemporary theatre establishment (and in particular the Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, during the early 1940s) as well as the present world of academe that has only recently started to avert its gaze fixed on the professional theatre and started to look with greater sympathy on the Shakespearean amateurs.[3]

In the spring of 1940, fearing an imminent Nazi invasion, the British government interned 28,000 men and women of 'enemy' nationality living in Britain. Most of them were Jewish refugees who, having fled Nazi persecution in the course of the 1930s, were appalled to find themselves imprisoned as potential Nazi spies. Fearing a German invasion of Britain assisted by a fifth column of German exile informers already in the country, Winston Churchill issued his infamous 'intern' or 'collar the lot' decree.[4] He proceeded to screen all refugees after interning them in Britain (mainland and the Isle of Man), Canada and Australia. Waiting to be cleared of suspicion, the refugees sought to continue their lives in a regular fashion, developed a school system and produced plays.

Maxine Seller has written about the theatrical entertainments mounted by the predominantly Jewish internees on the Isle of Man and about the type of plays actually put

[3] Michael Dobson would appear to mark a change of perception with his *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance: A Cultural History* (2011).

[4] See Stent (1980), Dove (2005).

on. She notes: "many plays performed in the camps had strong political overtones. Not surprisingly, given the life histories of the actors and audiences, these plays dealt with issues of freedom, the fall of dictatorships, and the horrors of war" (Seller 2001: 135-36). Works by liberal German authors such as Goethe and Schiller appeared on camp playbills, as did Shakespeare, John Drinkwater and George Bernard Shaw. Given the traditional coupling of internment and censorship in captivity, there would always be questions from the authorities when German playwrights like Goethe or Schiller were put on, but there seems to have been no suspicion when the native Shakespeare was chosen. Even the choice of *Julius Caesar* appears to have been unproblematic simply because of its English origin: "Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was more familiar to British authorities and therefore aroused no controversy when it was presented in Sefton [on the Isle of Man] in November 1940" (Seller 2001: 135-36).

This November 1940 production of *Julius Caesar* was directed by the successful Swiss-born playwright and dramatist Hans José Rehfisch (1891-1960). With Erwin Piscator, Rehfisch had run the Central-Theater in Berlin (1922-23), and they had worked together as directors at the politically vocal Theater am Nollendorfplatz in Berlin (1927-28). Rehfisch's status before World War II is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that from 1931 until 1933 he was President of the *Verband deutscher Bühnenschriftsteller und Bühnenkomponisten* (Society of Playwrights and Stage Composers). In 1936, Rehfisch went into exile in Britain. He settled in London, where he earned a living as a metal worker.

On the Isle of Man, Rehfisch directed *Julius Caesar* in modern dress, with senators in business suits. With his experience of the German theatre scene and his apparent interest in British theatrical life of the 1930s, Rehfisch was well aware that modern dress Shakespeare, even a modern dress *Julius Caesar*, was not original in itself: "It is by no means an entirely new venture", he said modestly, "to produce Shakespeare's greatest play in modern dress; it has been done before in Oxford and Cambridge, in New York and in London" (anon., 'Press-Review' *Sefton Review* 1940: 6).[5] Rehfisch was even mildly critical of using the modern setting as "a vehicle for decreasing the remoteness of the atmosphere" and to bring the play nearer to the audience: "the producer who will content himself with replacing the traditional [R]oman costumes with storm-troopers uniforms and with putting telephone sets on to the stage is not likely to achieve this" (Rehfisch, 5). Central to Rehfisch's vision were Shakespeare's characters: "The main task in performing [*Julius Caesar*] or any other of Shakespeare's plays still is, as it always has been, the reproduction of its characters in as distinct and vivid a fashion as the author has visualized them" (Rehfisch, 5).

But Rehfisch, of course, did choose to modernise, because it made a vital political point. But under the circumstances, doing so also solved a number of practical problems that Rehfisch encountered. One major problem Rehfisch faced was that inexperienced actors were confronted with the demands made on them by the Shakespearean verse. How "to prevent the amateurs from acting unnaturally or in a rigid fashion while they were speaking Shakespearean verses"? (Rehfisch, 5) To counter the problem, Rehfisch thought of "keeping the actors busy with commonplace occupations whenever the play would permit it" (Rehfisch, 5). Rehfisch looked upon such 'commonplace occupations' not as gags, but as a legitimate means of bringing 2000-year-old history up to date. It is remarkable how the decision to aid the amateur players via a consistent modernising

[5] I am grateful to Alan Franklin of the Manx National Heritage Library for helping me retrieve a copy of this refugee journal.

practice, produced potent stage images with contemporary political relevance. As Rehfisch said, defending his choices: "Even a dictator will have breakfast in the morning; there is no law forbidding conspirators to have a drink or a cigarette during their dangerous meetings; and when a death sentence on a political enemy has become a matter of daily routine the leaders may well play golf while discussing their plans" (Rehfisch, 6).

Basing ourselves on the archives on the Isle of Man, the Sefton production had a distinctly anti-dictatorial stance. Rehfisch's Caesar – the part he played himself – was both a "dictator" and "[a] great man who has become solitary, suspicious and superstitious" (Rehfisch, 5). But Rehfisch was also critical of Brutus, interpreting his error as the inability to recognize the need, in conjunction with the regicide, for social reform. To Rehfisch, Brutus was "the 'noble' philosopher who assumes that the mere assassination of a dictator will go towards making a nation happier and who forgets that at the same time those very conditions will have to be transformed which lifted the dictator into power – a most fatal mistake" (Rehfisch, 5).

The modern-dress production of *Julius Caesar* on the Isle of Man – with its obvious critique of totalitarianism – did not take place in a vacuum, and may profitably be related to a substantial body of productions in the British Isles that Rehfisch himself knew, or knew of. *Julius Caesar* had been played continuously in Britain during the 1930s.[6] Although, speaking of Britain in the 1930s, Tony Howard has argued that "[t]ime and again, Shakespeare seemed not to belong in any real world" (Howard 2000: 151), a number of productions of *Julius Caesar* were staged during the period that were politically-tinted. There was the Orson Welles inspired modern-dress production at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge (May 1938), and the first BBC television version of the play "set in a fascist state", with the major characters wearing Italian-style military uniforms (July 1938) (Howard 2000: 155). And prepared before but premiering just after World War II broke out, there was Henry Cass's anti-Fascist version of the play, with Brutus symbolizing "common humanity revolted by 'the superman'", Caesar wearing "a General Franco cap" and Mark Antony as "the true Nazi" (Howard 2000: 156) in SS uniform (Ripley 1980: 244). Arthur Humphreys was later to argue that the production's "'relevance' failed to compensate for its lack of nobility" but it *did* communicate to the world that, as *The Times* of 30 November 1939 also implied – and as Hans Rehfisch knew when he himself cited modern dress productions of *Julius Caesar* in Cambridge and London – that the English theatre recognized that "Shakespeare knew what there is to be known about the problem of the dictator" (Humphreys 1984: 67).

Recognizing the British history of *Julius Caesar* in the 1930s, and Rehfisch's contribution to it, it is remarkable that, by comparison, the two productions at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon – staged in 1936 and 1941 – seem to have been so unrepresentative. The 1936 production – directed by John Wyse, starring Peter Glenville (Caesar), Donald Wolfit (Cassius), James Dale (Brutus), Donald Eccles and Trevor Howard (Octavius Caesar, Cinna) – was notable for restoring the original text of Shakespeare, but proved highly traditional in its use of costume and design, as well as in its

[6] 1 production in 1933 (The Guildhall, Winchester); 3 productions in 1934 (The Alhambra, London; Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford; Gate Theatre, Dublin); 1 production in 1935 (Old Vic, London); 2 productions in 1936 (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford; Prince's Theatre, Bristol); 1 production in 1937 (Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, London); 2 productions in 1938 (Festival Theatre, Cambridge; BBC Television); 1 production in November 1939 (Embassy Theatre, London); 1 production in April 1941 (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford).

approach to the play's exploration of tyrannicide. More remarkable, though, was the wartime production of *Julius Caesar* at the Stratford Festival of April 1941, six months after Sefton. Curiously, the production of the play at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre did not register the political strain of the Nazi years, and in no way hinted at the ongoing war with Germany. In fact, the production and its atmosphere enabled most audiences to forget that there was a war on in the first place.

W. A. Darlington, who covered the Festival, wiring his review across the ocean to *The New York Times,* noted that "Nothing in England is quite as it was before the war, but nowhere can you capture the prewar illusion as easily as at the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon" (Darlington 1941). Whereas the blackout in London had led to the decision to have performances begin at 17:30, the theatre curtain at Stratford continued to be lifted at the traditional time of 19:30, and there was undeniably "something nostalgic and prewar about a performance which began at a normal evening hour" (Darlington 1941). There was a clock in rural Warwickshire, but it did not tell the time of the real world at war. But not only the time of the performances in Stratford had remained unchanged. Also the interpretation of the plays helped to create the prewar illusion: "As for the performance, itself, it was exactly of the quality, tone and atmosphere which we have become used to, if never entirely resigned to, at Stratford across the years" (Darlington 1941).

Reviewer John Bourne, however, whose reviews are held in the newspaper archive at The Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon, wrote about the production in the full awareness that there was a war on, having, as the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald* put it on 18 April 1941, "returned to the town [of Stratford] after war-time misfortunes near London" (Bourne 1941).

Writing of the spring season's *Julius Caesar*, Bourne wrote of this anaemic production with irony bordering on sarcasm:

> It is difficult to believe in those off-stage battles. Tin helmets are too few and the clashes are too remote. Perhaps it was the civilian population who were in the front line and who suffered most. Once upon a time – to which we should not hark back too much – men died vigorously on the Memorial Theatre stage. Now it is all very polite – even when they fall – and not a sword is bloody. Thus we go home to use our imagination on the midnight news (Bourne 1941).

The Memorial production of *Julius Caesar* that premiered on 15 April 1941 – directed by Andrew Leigh, and starring the Old Bensonite Gerald Kay Souper as Julius Caesar, George Hayes as Brutus, Baliol Holloway as Cassius and Godfrey Kenton as Antony – has been described by John Ripley as "unremarkable" (1980: 340n6). Of course, seen in context, the production was not 'unremarkable' at all. How remarkable that the professional Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford should have retired into a provincial and a-political shell. How remarkable that such an unworldly production should have been possible within six months after Rehfisch's amateur group of broken-English-speaking émigrés from the European continent had drawn on England's national playwright to reflect on the tyrannical threat from Germany and the possibility of improving society. How remarkable that Shakespeare editions continue to list the Stratford productions, and never make mention of Rehfisch and his exiled amateurs on the Isle of Man. How long shall we be quoting authors like John Ripley, who believed that *Julius Caesar*'s "uncongenial theme and uncommon demand for male actors kept it off the boards during the war" (Ripley 1980: 244). Even if, as Ripley puts it, the stage history of *Julius Caesar* in the twentieth century is the "tale of an heroic play adrift in an anti-heroic age", we should try

no longer to ignore the performance of Rehfisch's heroic refugees stranded on the Isle of Man (1980: 214). How reliable will our official stage histories be if they continue to be concerned with professional rather than amateur theatricals?

4. *As You Like It* in Ruhleben

Amateur productions in exile are not always ignored or forgotten. The final section of this paper will be devoted to a stage production that was remembered longer than the *Julius Caesar* presented on the Isle of Man. This production of what is also one of Shakespeare's exile plays *par excellence* – *As You Like It* – was put on by exiled Britons in the civilian internment camp of Ruhleben (Berlin), in 1915. Viewed in its immediate camp contexts, it seeks to illustrate how beyond our recognition of reading and quoting Shakespeare (as in the case of countess Karolina Lanckorońska), and beyond our recognition of performances of Shakespeare in exile, we may also learn to see the emergence of a new literature of exile. In these cases, the Shakespearean contexts facilitate our interpretation of this literature.

In November 1914, between 4,000 and 5,000 British men were interned by the German authorities, and most of them remained behind barbed wire until the end of the war in 1918. One means of coping with the situation for the British internees was to maintain the hope that they might at any moment be exchanged against some if not all of the 29,000 Germans who had been interned by the British government across Britain but also in the village of Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. Another means of coping with the frustration and the boredom at Ruhleben was to develop a range of social activities. Within a short period of time, Ruhleben developed to become the microcosm of a model society, with its own political hierarchy and a rich cultural life – including a school (known as Ruhleben University), an orchestra, several newspapers and journals, a lending and a reference library, multiple sports clubs (to play football but also golf), a postal system with its own stamps and a theatre (Ketchum and Stibbe 1965 passim).

At this theatre – in the spring of 1915, so within six months after the original internment of the Britons – the first stage productions were mounted. In addition to variety shows and contemporary drama, there was Shakespeare, and the very first of a series of Shakespeare productions put on over the years was *As You Like It.* Relatively much has been written about this production, particularly by internees who recorded their response to and memories of the event, but this does not necessarily make it any easier to arrive at a reliable account of the way in which the exiles at Ruhleben fashioned their Shakespeare.

The play was 'produced' or directed by Cecil Duncan Jones, and his set designer was Leigh Vaughan Henry. Cecil Duncan Jones was a poet and a published novelist, as well as a professional actor who, around the turn of the nineteenth century, had played in Frank Benson's company on tour and acted with Ellen Terry at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.[7] Leigh Vaughan Henry, too, was a theatre man, although he worked at rather the

[7] Cecil Duncan Jones (unhyphenated) was the great-uncle of the prominent Shakespearean and Sidney scholar, Katherine Duncan-Jones. I am extremely grateful to Katherine Duncan-Jones for her information and advice, and her generous assistance with the writing of my monograph about Cecil Duncan Jones and the cultural life in Ruhleben Camp (in progress), and for permission to quote from the family archive and Cecil Duncan Jones's papers, including the unpublished poem 'In the Distance' below.

opposite end of the European theatre spectrum. Until his arrest by the German authorities in 1914, Leigh Vaughan Henry had been the musical director to the greatest theatre innovator of the time, the illegitimate son of Ellen Terry, Edward Gordon Craig, at the Florence-based theatre laboratory. The backgrounds of these two men signal the fact that it is difficult ever to speak of purely amateur drama, also behind barbed wire. However, the ad hoc conditions under which the production was mounted, and the dozens of non-professional theatre enthusiasts at Ruhleben are sufficient to read this 1915 *As You Like It* as an amateur undertaking.

The meeting of these two men on the muddy grounds of the racecourse-turned-internment-camp west of Berlin led to a remarkable production of *As You Like It*, whose reverberations were to be felt both within the camp and beyond, both during the war and in the years to come, and unusually, perhaps, even came to be listed in the Yale Shakespeare edition of 1919.[8] This paper does not discuss the production itself in detail, except its reputation in connection with internment camp censorship and wartime propaganda.

Interestingly, for example, Vaughan Henry himself reported on the event in the New York theatre monthly *The Drama* of 1916. Curiously, Leigh Vaughan Henry depicted the play as a light-hearted comedy, and never as a reflection on exile:

> M. Duncan-Jones' production was distinguished by a thoroughness of preparation, a subtlety of insight, and an individuality of conception. ... No detail, no matter how elusive or small, escaped him; every mood and character of the play was interpreted with a penetration which revealed the utmost of its significance. Yet nothing obtruded to destroy the complete unity of the work as a whole, nor was anything emphasized in such a manner as to obscure its spontaneity. Throughout, *an atmosphere of whole-hearted merriment and gaiety evinced the strong human feeling and sympathy of the producer, a feeling with which he succeeded in imbuing the whole of his cast.* (Henry 1916: 400)

Of course, as Jane Kingsley-Smith has argued, *As You Like It* may be a happy comedy, but this is not to say that it idealises exile throughout. The Duke has his famous opening volley:

> Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
> Hath not old customs made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court!
> (2.1.1-4)

Despite these opening words, there is no *shared* tendency in the play actually to exchange the court for the country. The play does *not* – as Kingsley-Smith also helps us recognize – present a version of pastoral that convincingly foils the corrupt court or city: the Forest of Arden is *not* superior to the "envious court" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 111). Rather, we witness the assumption that there will be a return to the original world outside the forest: "the exile desires civilization and yearns to know himself civilized once more" (Kingsley-Smith 2003: 110). In *As You Like It*, the characters' "expectations of a pastoral idyll are deliberately flouted for an enforced encounter with what is initially perceived as the non-civilized, even savage" (110).

[8] Reference to the Ruhleben production was included in *As You Like It* (Crawford 1919: 138).

It is not likely that either Duncan Jones misread the play as its producer, or Vaughan Henry as its reviewer in 1916. It is more likely that Vaughan Henry's glowing praise of the 'atmosphere of wholehearted merriment' had its origins in other causes. A closer look at the circumstances, for example, alerts one to the discrepancy between the allegation that "nothing obtruded to destroy the complete unity of the work as a whole" (Henry 1916:400) and the fact that the opening act of the play, with its political intrigue as well as its representation of characters who become refugees before they end up in exile, was entirely cut. Furthermore, the Ruhleben authorities exerted severe control both on the contents and the size of the internees' correspondence, which was limited to 2 letters and 4 postcards each month, and the appearance of Vaughan Henry's rave review of the forest scenes in an American theatre journal indicates that it had enjoyed special treatment from the German censor. The strongly favourable tone as well as the partly inaccurate nature of the review suggest that it was the product of a German propaganda campaign.

One reason why the German authorities would have allowed Shakespeare's *As You Like It* to be performed at Ruhleben and to have it broadcast so widely was to counter the daily stories in the world press about the atrocious living conditions at Ruhleben (which were not altogether false). German propaganda sought to communicate to the world that these civilian internees behind barbed wire were being treated fairly, were not subjected to forced labour (they were civilians) and were allowed their pastime in a rural environment. In short, the Germans made all the world their stage to suggest that Ruhleben (which literally meant 'the quiet life') stood for an Arcadian ideal rather than a situation that could be interpreted as a disgrace to humanity at large. A very similar strategy also explains the surprising wartime publication by Ruhleben internee Cyrus Brooks, who wrote of Ruhleben in the way Shakespeare's Duke speaks of the Forest of Arden. Despite the bleakness of camp life, Brooks wrote, men "beg[a]n to grow conscious of beauty". "At first" – he wrote

> it was a reaction against the squalor of the ground, making them turn their eyes literally towards the sky. And there they found magnificence in plenty. The vast cloud mountains which shade the eye of sunset, the infernal red murk of a winter's dawn, the hurtling clouds flying like visible thunder from the west wind's fist, came to the prisoner like an unviewed, unawaited spectacle. To the same man, when he hurried to his office, these dramas of the sky had meant little beyond the need for an umbrella, or the sign of a fine to-morrow. Now they appeared loaded with mystic significance, expressing something in the heart of the watcher, as intimate as speech and as purifying as the Gospel of Christ – 'Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance'! (quoted in Swale 1916-1917: RUH 52)[9]

In addition to conveying to the world the rural delights to be enjoyed in this internment camp, the production and the review of *As You Like It* enabled the authorities to show the world that Germany represented "a country of eminent cultural attainments" and that "Great Britain's enemy honoured Great Britain's poet despite the war" (Foulkes 2002: 187). This was also the German motivation for Max Reinhardt's European Shakespeare tours to neutral countries in 1916.

Of course, no attempt to convey to the world that *As You Like It* at Ruhleben conveyed 'an atmosphere of whole-hearted merriment and gaiety' was going to convince

[9] Cyrus Harry Brooks (A British Prisoner of War in Germany), 'Inside the Wire'. Copy of a published article, without reference to the title of the original journal, as preserved in William Swale (1916-1917).

the internees, and this explains the response by some of them, who either debunked the Arcadian image, or, conversely, sought means of expression more subtle than Jaques' in the play to argue in favour of the life retired. At this stage, the original 'identification' of the exiled self with 'Shakespeare' inspires linguistic re-invention.

One instance of creatively debunking Arcadia is internee Louis Filmore's rewriting of the 'Seven Ages of Men' speech, included in an early issue of the camp journal. In the case of Filmore, the physical hardships of life at Ruhleben and the frustrating speculation about the exchange of prisoners inspired an adaptation that recalls the cynicism of Jaques, but is more good-humoured:

> THE SEVEN AGES OF A KRIEGSGEFANGENER
> All the world's a cage,
> And all the men within it weary players;
> They have no exists, only entrances,
> Where each spends many months ere he departs.
> ...
> And last of all before we drop the curtain
> Upon the scene where life is so uncertain
> Comes he who patient, waits upon the Stage,
> Nor uninstructed seeks to read the page;
> Well knowing that the day will come when he
> Will once again be numbered with the Free.
> Resigned to all each passing day he views
> Sans Cash, Sans Clothes, Sans Liberty, Sans Views! (Filmore 1915: 7)

Given the fact that censorship also applied to the publication of the camp journal, this parody of Shakespeare's 'Seven Ages of Man' never really achieves the ambition of Shakespeare's Jaques to have "as large a charter as the wind, / To blow on whom [he] please[s]" (2.7.48-49). Self-censorship here draws on a fair dose of humour, and its publication in the camp journal really becomes a measure of the dissent that also internees were apparently allowed.

The part of Jaques in *As You Like It* was to be rewritten in another way too, by the producer of *As You Like It*, Cecil Duncan Jones. Prominent in his writings is an identification with Jaques, but not as a cynic. Like Shakespeare's character, Duncan Jones was searching for "true liberty in exile from society", seeking to justify a continued stay at Ruhleben on religious and philosophical grounds (Duncan-Jones 1914-37: xxxii). Cecil Duncan Jones, a disciple of the pedagogue Rudolph Steiner, was convinced of the liberating powers of the mind over substance, as expressed by Steiner in his *Philosophy of Freedom*: "One should feel that one is being lifted out of one's usual thinking [*Vorstellen*] into a thinking independent of the senses [*ein sinnlichkeitsfreies Denken*], in which one is fully immersed, *so that one feels free of the conditions of physical existence*" (Steiner 1983: 107; italics added). As a disciple of Steiner, we find the poet Cecil Duncan Jones define very much the same virtue of 'inner Emigration', of inward migration, or migration into the self, as that explicitly pursued by Countess Karolina Lanckorońska with the complete works of Shakespeare at Ravensbrück (2005: 269). Clearly, Cecil Duncan Jones looked upon Ruhleben as Shakespeare's Celia did upon the Forest of Arden, certainly when she argued that the road to Arden would lead "To liberty, and not to banishment" (1.3.136).

To begin with, Cecil Duncan Jones considered the hardships of Ruhleben – from which he did not seek to escape – as the fuel for an Anglican mode of suffering conducive

to an identification with and a deeper awareness of the mysteries of Christ. Witness his words in his sermon of Easter Wednesday 1915. It is at Ruhleben, Cecil Duncan Jones argued with a brief side-reference to Shakespeare's *Henry V* – "that we men, gathered from the four corners of the globe, have shared – we few – a rare privilege":

> [T]his may with every possible degree of confidence be urged: that we have here and now, particularly those amongst us who take the inward life with all the earnestness in their power, an opportunity that normal life could never present. The great deterrents to spiritual development, alcohol and the promiscuous indulgence of the sexual and other appetites, is removed altogether from the sphere of possibilities. So much then, to the good, for this period of a great retreat from usual mundane influences. What remains for us to perform is the undergoing of this great, hard, long experience, literally for all it is worth. (quoted from 'Easter Sermon' in family archive)

The poor, Spartan conditions at Ruhleben, Cecil Duncan Jones felt, were far removed from the materialist and physical temptations of the world outside, were ideal for a (re)discovery of the early twentieth-century individual's lost self. This explains why, in an internment camp that was daily buzzing with escape narratives, Shakespearean director Cecil Duncan Jones propagated to stay put, taking a bold decision since it was not shared by many internees. His poem *In the Distance* captures the sentiment.

Here, the speaker in the dreary camp unexpectedly gains a special view of the attractive world outside when the guard opens the gate. The space that opens up before him, however, only invites a reflection on the inside of the camp. The poem argues, with Steiner, that the individual is the prisoner of his longings and desires. It argues that once outside the camp, one is not free either, because the Faustian individual always wants to know what is beyond the horizon. True 'liberty' can only exist in the mind of the individual who has learnt to recognize that intellectual virtue of exile:

> IN THE DISTANCE
> Behind the netted wire I stood
> And, just beyond, the gate of wood.
> A wooden soldier set it wide
> And there was all the world outside.
> I saw beneath the railway arch
> The swaying of a silver birch,
> A coppice and a tract of grass
> And someone led a horse across
> That trod with such a mincing air,
> Dancingly and debonair.
>
> Downtrodden by our monotone,
> Stale with surfeit of the known,
> I gazed upon that unknown green,
> I fed upon that foreign scene,
> I painted swift within my mind
> Every flush of cloud and wind.
> I planted it behind my eyes
> To burgeon forth its spaciousness
> In horrid hours when this cell
> Becomes a quiet nook in hell.

Then may unfold that vision green:
The thought of something that was seen
Reminding the imprisoned heart
That prison too is but a part;
And saying too that if I stood
Upon that grass before that wood
That there would spread a distance still,
Beckoning slow to wish and will.
For though we gaze on sea or shore
There still is more and, and always more. (Duncan Jones, unpublished)

Like Shakespeare's Jaques, the speaker prefers to retire into a 'free' or 'liberated' self, rather than return to the freedom beyond the barbed wire. Shakespeare and *As You Like It* become the inspiration for a new poem, and Cecil Duncan Jones emerges as a neglected Word War I poet and a poet of exile.

Thus, amidst the *actualities* of exile in Ruhleben, a condition over-determined by both propaganda and censorship, we witness how Shakespeare's traditional drama of exile, *As You Like It*, slowly morphs into the 'new' poetry of exile, with L. E. Filmore's sardonic skit on 'The Seven Ages of Man' but also with the mystical, philosophical and religious verse of Cecil Duncan Jones.

5. Conclusion

Witnessing these instances of literary identification with Shakespeare and of linguistic self-re-invention, one begins to understand why, for example, the lists of Shakespearean quotations printed in the Ruhleben Camp Journal were presented under the heading of *Shakespeare K.G.* – meaning 'Shakespeare, Kriegsgefängner', 'Shakespeare POW', Shakespeare, one of us. In most instances – particularly where the identification with Shakespeare is clearest – we may continue to wonder where Shakespeare ceases and the true voice of the exile begins. This practice of literature in exile may still, as Edward Said put it, "obscure what is truly horrendous" (Said, 2000: 174) but our acknowledgement of these sites only spells gain. A wall of silence still stands between us and these key experiences of the twentieth century. We may raze this wall once we fully recognize the sometime limitations of our discipline and value the merits of the 'Shakespearean' (and hence nearly ubiquitous) cultures of exile, some of which I have sought to identify in this paper. If approached with caution and the discretion due in this sensitive area of nearly blank biographies, we may be in a position to make the dislocated selves speak – in quotations from Shakespeare, in productions of Shakespeare's plays, in negotiations initiated by censorship or propaganda, or, ultimately, in new verse. Said's doubt about the literature of exile in literal terms cannot, perhaps, be entirely resolved, but the performance of literature, reading, quoting, playing and rewriting, as a phenomenon, represents a cultural reality that involves literature as a survival mechanism, which may at least sketch the contours of the exile's unspeakable plight.

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