

On 9 January, 1998, at a meeting attended by Werner Brönnimann, Balz Engler, Regula Hohl, Jenny Jermann, and Manuela Rossini, the following text was discussed, amended and approved. Sh:in:E was founded, and it was decided that work on the project should begin next summer semester.

Sh:in:E

Shakespeare in Europe: A project

Version 10 January, 1998 B.E.

Premises

Cultures in contact

Increasing mobility, the development of global trade, and the availability of electronic media have led to a dramatic multiplication of encounters between cultures. Reactions to these have been of different kinds, in particular: Resistance to the other culture, repression, even the attempt to destroy it, but also tolerance, emulation, and the development of new syncretic forms. Where the conflicts between cultures could not be dealt with this has led to political instability, even civil and international war. Under these circumstances the study of cultures in contact is an area in which cultural studies ("Kulturwissenschaften") has a contribution to make to an urgent problem of the contemporary world.

How can cultures in contact be studied?

The Definition of Culture

Questions like these can only be discussed if there is an understanding on how "culture" should be defined. This definition has to be tentative, because it is itself culture-determined. It is proposed here that, as a working definition, culture should be understood in the broad sense defined by the Council of Europe. Culture in this sense can be found in all areas of social life, elite and popular, not only in the arts and literature.

The comparison of cultures

Intercultural questions are often studied in terms of conflicts and their negotiation. There are good reasons for this, among them the urgency of actual conflicts and their resolution, but also the traditions of many disciplines involved in intercultural studies. These traditions tend to be national (e.g., in literature), or interested in the authentic (anthropology, etc.) Instead it may be of interest to study the kind of similarities and synergies that encounters between cultures make visible.

The need of a focus

It is possible to imagine international projects of huge size and complexity to study the questions suggested here. Useful as they might be they could only be successful if they are based on clear notions, and if they are based on focused studies of clearly demarcated areas. It is important to focus on certain topics that lend themselves for the purpose. They should allow for a *tertium comparationis*, and offer a clearly delimited area of study that is of interest in all the cultures involved. At the same time they should include a historical dimension and various types of representative cultural expressions.

Focuses

Europe

One of the questions preoccupying European scholars at the historical moment when Europe is emerging as an economic and political institution must be: Is there a European culture? In particular, is there a European culture that goes beyond the common roots (re-constructed in the Renaissance) of Greek and Roman antiquity? Or shouldn't, on the contrary, the diversity of cultures, like that of languages, be characteristic of the notion of Europe? But would this

diversity be perceived as something shared (and not as mere contingency) unless there were common features that make diversity visible?

This is a complex situation, complicated additionally by the fact that any study of "European culture" at this moment will be a contribution to creating one as much as an attempt of collecting evidence for its existence.

Theatre and Drama

The theatre lends itself as a focus because it is there that cultures constantly rearticulate their concerns, registering, even anticipating changes that take place.

Drama, especially in the shape of the classic dramatic text, facilitates the comparison of these geographically and historically different articulations.

Shakespeare

The European anecdote

In 1984 five quality newspapers in five European countries--*Lire*, *El Pais*, *La Stampa*, *Die Zeit*, and *The Times*--made the playful experiment of establishing, beside the EEC, an ELC, a *European Literary Community*. They asked their readers for the names of the most important European writers. The results were clear: the French chose Shakespeare, the Spanish Shakespeare, the Italians Shakespeare, the Germans Shakespeare. Only the British preferred Dante--the rules of the poll barred the naming of writers from one's own country (Fritz Raddatz in *Die Zeit*).

The importance for European culture is also documented by his influence, since the late eighteenth century, on national literatures, by the many translations and adaptations made, and, especially, by the frequency of Shakespeare productions on the European stage.

There is no other author, whose works offer as rich material for the kind of study suggested here. Shakespeare offers the *tertium comparationis*--a modern one as against possible classical ones, which have so obviously been used to create what they would be used to describe.

Shakespeare as a cultural phenomenon

Shakespeare will be studied as a cultural phenomenon in its various cultural and historical contexts, rather than as a universal genius as he was conceived in the eighteenth century. This means that questions of cultural, social and political discourse will have a role to play as well as long as they relate to the situation outlined under „Premises“ above.

Issues

Issues like the following are of particular interest:

William Shakespeare as a cultural icon

How does Shakespeare appear in various cultures and at different times, what does his figure stand for etc. (Shakespeare monuments, names of buildings, prizes, etc.)

Shakespeare on the stage

Shakespearean figures

How are figures presented in the theatre of different countries? One possible project: Shylock in different countries in different periods.

Location

How do various cultures deal with the concept of location?

Shakespeare adapted

How are Shakespeare's works adapted in different genres: opera, novels, etc. How has Shakespeare been modernised? How has Shakespeare been adapted to various regional/local, political and emotional needs?

Translation

What notions of translation have been applied to Shakespeare? Which linguistic expressions/phenomena are considered to be equivalent in different places and at different times?

Shakespeare in academic criticism

Are there European/national traditions of studying Shakespeare? What has Shakespeare's role been in shaping the academic traditions of various countries?

Work done

Work of the kind outlined here has been restricted almost entirely to theatre studies. Cf. Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare* (1993); Dennis Kennedy, ed., *Foreign Shakespeare* (1993); Michael Hattaway, Boika Sokolova and Derek Roper, eds. *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (1994); Hortmann, book on Shakespeare on the German stage (Cambridge University Press, 1997). **to be checked and complemented**

What is new

Compared to other centres of Shakespeare studies what is new in Basel is the focus on (a) the intercultural dimension, (b) on the cultural history of Shakespeare. Existing centres of Shakespeare studies concentrate almost entirely on Shakespeare in his own period, on his texts and on how they have been staged.

Why Basel?

There are a number of reasons why Basel is the best place for such a project. Basel is an European location, situated as it is on the borders of France, Germany, and Switzerland, on the Rhine. Its location has also given the city a European urban tradition, marked by openness and the awareness of difference.

The university, founded in 1460, has from its beginnings, relied on an international constituency. It has always been an university of European standing, but never grown beyond a certain size, which now may prove a great asset. Communication between different disciplines and between different faculties is still possible, and indeed has been formulated as one of the objectives in developing the university. The university also has an Institute of European Studies, which offers degrees on a multi-disciplinary basis.

The English department has a long tradition in Shakespeare studies, as the research done there indicates. In recent years it has been one of the centres of Shakespeare editing in the German-speaking world.

Institutional aims

To pool existing competence

Due to the traditions of the Basel English department and its long-standing involvement in Shakespeare studies, especially in a bilingual edition of the works (see below), several people with special competence in the area work there. The project will make it possible for them institutionalise their collaboration and to promote each other in their plans.

To create favourable conditions for young researchers

The project will create an atmosphere conducive to doing research. It will help young researchers to formulate and to pursue their projects.

To promote collaboration between disciplines at Basel University

The project, in its very nature, depends on the collaboration between disciplines. Disciplines that are of particular importance include history, the modern philologies, art history, European anthropology (Volkskunde), musicology, law.

To give the Basel English department an international profile

The Basel English department has wide-ranging contacts in the field of Shakespeare studies, but its visibility as such is limited. The project may help it to become attractive to international students.

Means

Regular meetings

Regular meetings (about three times each semester, usually on a Friday, 18-20) will be held on topics related to the project, for guest lectures and for the presentation of work. They will be open to all those interested, in particular students, graduates who would like to keep contact with the university, colleagues. An address database (snail and electronic mail) is being built. Meetings in the summer semester of 1998 are envisaged for 30 April, 29 May, 26 June.

The experience of recent years shows that interesting work in the field is being done in central and Eastern Europe. We intend to develop contacts with scholars in these areas in particular.

Conferences

Meetings at Basel or its region

Specialised conferences on limited topics, addressing cultural implications of Shakespeare, with invited guests, possibly up to 20-25 people.

Meetings at the margins of conferences

Drawing attention to issues. Possible occasions: Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, National Associations of English Studies/ESSE, Theatre Studies conferences, etc.

Courses leading to a degree/a certificate

Depending on resources the following types of courses

Degree course in European Shakespeare Studies

Possible model: European M.A. in American Studies

Short courses

Courses during university recess or as part of the university programme.

Multi-purpose courses

Courses on comparative European culture using Shakespeare materials (*Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear*) not only for universities

Research projects

The topics outlined suggest a large and diverse number of research topics at different academic levels. See above: Issues.

Publications

To be determined. The future role of the Internet will be decisive (see next item).

Website and newsletter

There is no shortage of general „Shakespeare“ websites. The Sh:in:E one concentrate on the issues specific to the project, but offer links to the others. It will be a place to test internet publishing. We are thinking in particular of licentiate papers and other materials that are of scholarly interest but would otherwise remain unpublished.

A newsletter will be necessary at the introductory stage at least. Its contents will probably identical with some contents of the website.

Organisation

Local staff

The following members of staff at the English department will be involved in the project.

Balz Engler, Professor of English Literature

Werner Brönnimann, Professor of English Literature

Markus Marti, Dr.phil.

Jenny Jermann, cand.phil. (employed by the Nationalfonds)

Manuela Rossini, M.A., cand.phil.

Local resources

The Shakespeare Edition

The English department of Basel University has been involved in the project of a bilingual (English-German) critical Shakespeare edition since its inception. Four editions have been published (*Othello, Troilus and Cressida, Julius Caesar, Timon of Athens*), another four (*Henry VI, part 1, King Lear, Titus Andronicus, The Two Gentlemen of Verona*) are being prepared. Work on this edition has created a solid basis for the new project: Extensive experience in questions of mediating between cultures, both historically and geographically (strategies of explanation, translation). It has also created an active network with other universities, especially in Germany and Austria.

Resources in the library

Work on the edition and a long tradition of Shakespeare studies (of which the edition may be seen as part) have led to the development of extensive resources in the field of Shakespeare studies, both in the shape of books (both editions and secondary literature) and of CD-ROMs (Shakespeare Editions, English Verse Drama, OED, The Bible)

Contacts

Existing scholarly contacts include:

Theatre Studies:

There is an active scholarly network, going back to Erasmus, on Theatrical Arts and the Media, including scholars from most European countries. The concerns of this project have been vented at its meetings, and there is serious interest in it. Professor Henri Schoenemakers, University of Utrecht, who is interested in the shape of dramatic figures in different cultures, wants to collaborate on the project in this area.

Shakespeare centres

Centre d'Etudes et Recherches sur la Renaissance Anglaise, Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier (Professor Jean-Marie Maguin). Basel is an active member of the international network, run from Montpellier, which holds annual meetings at Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Shakespeare Institute Stratford (Professor Peter Holland)

Shakespeare Bibliothek München (Dr. Ingeborg Boltz)

Centro Shakespeare, Ferrara (Professor Mariangela Tempera)

Oxford Foundation, Valencia (Professor Manuel Conejero)

Needs

As the project grows out of the activities of the Basel English department and tries to focus them in a manner that serves its interests, and as it envisages a re-orientation rather than an expansion, it is justified that, within reasonable limits, the project can use the resources the department can offer.

Infrastructure

There is need for working-space (desks, shelves, etc.), which already now is partly available, also for specialised publications.

Staff

Among the resources that the project should be able to rely on there is secretarial as well as other (student) help. There is no immediate need for additional staff. However, depending on how things develop, the assistance of additional support may be necessary.