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## “Shakespeare is a Finnish national poet:” Developing Finnish Shakespeare Scholarship from the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century

**Abstract:** In this article, I will take up the idea of “origins” as it pertains to Finnish Shakespeare during Finland’s time as an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia from 1809-1917. While not technically the beginning of Shakespearean performances, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are the beginning of the rhetorical use of Shakespeare in public discourse used to establish cultural sovereignty distinct from Sweden and Russia. Beginning with a brief overview of Shakespearean mentions in the latter half of the eighteenth century, I will analyse the public discourse found in Finnish literary journals and newspaper articles in the 1810’s and 20’s. Following an analysis of J. F. Lagervall’s 1834 *Ruunulinna*, I will then briefly track how shifting attitudes towards translations such as those found in J. V. Snellman’s writings influenced the emerging Finnish literary and theatre tradition, most notably with Kaarlo Slöör and Paavo Cajendar’s Shakespeare translations and the establishment of the Finnish Theatre in 1871. Finally, an analysis of Juhani Aho’s untranslated essay in Gollancz’ 1916 *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* will highlight the legacy of prior Finnish Shakespearean traditions, while also highlighting the limits of translation. Ultimately, I suggest that Shakespeare was appropriated early on as an accessible figure of resistance in the face of Swedish linguistic supremacy and the increasing threat of Russian assimilation and oppression.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Global Shakespeare Studies, Finland, Adaptation, Translation, Imperialism, Colonialism, Sweden, Russia

On March 5, 1864, Finnish historian and journalist Yrjö Sakari wrote a review of Kaarlo Slöör’s translation of *Macbeth*. Sakari, who goes by the pen-name Yrjö-Koskinen or simply, Y.K., asserts that Slöör’s is the first real translation of

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Shakespeare into Finnish despite J. F. Lagervall's 1834 *Runnulinna* which Koskinen says is: "above all some kind of imitation of *Macbeth*, which belongs to literary history, not to literature." Koskinen goes on to write that *Macbeth* is the "noblest" of Shakespeare's plays, and despite some minor issues with the Finnish grammar and word choice, perhaps this Finnish version surpasses the Swedish translation.<sup>1</sup> "There are plenty of places where the Finnishness completely compares to the Swedishness," Koskinen claims, "and there are a few places where Slöör's progress is even more advanced [than Hagberg's Swedish translation]" (*Suometar* 1864).<sup>2</sup>

For Koskinen and other reviewers of Slöör's *Macbeth*, the success of his translation rests on its fidelity to the English source text (Aaltonen, *Time Sharing*, 4). For instance, in the review, Koskinen provides textual examples from Shakespeare's English, Hagberg's translation and Slöör's so that the reader may compare: The witches in *Macbeth* exclaim: "Double, double toil and trouble; / Fire, burn; and cauldron, bubble" which in Swedish becomes "Fördubbla mödan, mödan, mödan fördubbla;/Heta kittel, sjud och bubbla,"<sup>3</sup> and in Finnish "Väsymättä liiku, liehu;/Pala tuli kiehu!"<sup>4</sup> The Finnish is "nicer" asserts Koskinen, "The Swedish, you can see, is a weak formation of the English." Other than claiming that the Finnish is "nicer" and the Swedish "weaker," the actual difference between the two, according to Koskinen, is open to interpretation.

Koskinen's review is a useful place to begin this discussion of Shakespeare studies in Finland for three reasons. Koskinen is fixated on what constitutes "literature;" there is an anxiety surrounding the abilities of the Finnish language to not only produce an excellent translation of *Macbeth*, but one that is perhaps better than a Swedish version; and English is upheld as the superior language from which to begin crafting a Finnish Shakespeare and ultimately a Finnish literary tradition. Essentially, these concerns form a microcosm of Finland in the nineteenth century. Finland was under Swedish imperial rule for nearly 700 years until 1809, after which Russia occupied the region making Finland a Grand Duchy until 1917. During this period, Finnish was a minority language while Swedish remained the language of government and high culture. The rise of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe was a threat to Russian Autocratic rule, and Finland's position as a Russian imperial

<sup>1</sup> The Swedes also chose to begin translating Shakespeare with *Macbeth*. The first Swedish translation of Shakespeare was performed by E. G. Geijer fifty years earlier.

<sup>2</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/binding/425493?term=S1%C3%B6%C3%B6r&term=Macbethin&term=Macbeth&term=Macbethista&page=3/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Loosely: "Double the toil, toil, double the toil; / Heat cauldron, simmer and bubble."

<sup>4</sup> Loosely: "Tirelessly move, stir; / The fire came to a boil!"

borderland with close cultural ties to Sweden meant that Finland presented a “too strong orientation to the West (Polvinen 29).” Indeed, Russian fears of Western influence in the Finnish borderlands were legitimate; since the early nineteenth century Finnish intellectuals sought to distance themselves from Russian imperialism through the establishment of a Finnish national literature and an engagement with an increasingly globalized Europe via the European Republic of Letters (Kortti, 197). Finnish intellectuals interested in Shakespeare were essentially changing one form of (Russian and Swedish) cultural imperialism for a broader European one that they viewed as more benign.

This long history of colonialism coupled with the emergent national romantic movement resulted in the formation of Finnish intellectual circles who utilized a Western ideal of literature to reinforce Finland’s own cultural legitimacy. Shakespeare emerges as a foreign vehicle for Finnish writers seeking to align themselves with the rest of Europe, or as Keinänen and Sivors write, a “literary whetstone” upon which one’s authorial identity is honed (*Disseminating Shakespeare* 2). Koskinen’s 1864 review underscores the palpable anxiety surrounding the legitimacy of Finnish as a literary language during the nineteenth century, and by extension, the legitimacy of Finland as a unitary, and ultimately, European nation state. The differences for Koskinen between a Shakespearean “imitation” versus a translation, “literary history” and “literature,” and the status of a Finnish Shakespeare versus a Swedish one are the core concerns of this paper.

Shakespeare, when adapted by marginalized nations, can be fetishized as a British cultural icon while at the same time used to “confer legitimacy on the project of capitalist empire-building” (Litvin 4), and indeed, the above review brandishes Shakespeare to foreground Finnish anxieties surrounding the legitimacy of the Finnish language. Koskinen’s review is not the only piece to do this, nor is the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century even the origin of Shakespeare’s presence in Finland. Indeed, “origin” is thorny when applied to Finnish Shakespeare. The literal point of origin is perhaps the first performance of Shakespeare in Finland, thought to be an eighteenth century production of *Romeo and Juliet* that was disseminated into the region in either German or Swedish through a traveling performance company as early as 1768 (*Perruque* 144). The next documented performance was a production of *Hamlet* in Turku in 1819 (Nummi 118).

This paper takes up this idea of “origins” as it pertains to Finnish Shakespeare during Finland’s time as an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia from 1809-1917. While not technically the beginning of Shakespearean performances, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are the beginning of the rhetorical use of Shakespeare in public discourse to establish cultural sovereignty distinct from Sweden and Russia.

## Secret Societies, Literary Elites and Shakespeare in The Newly Emerging Press 1770-1834

J. F. Lagervall's 1834 *Runnulinna* is often cited by scholars as the de-facto starting place for analyzing Shakespeare in Finland. While it is the first full adaptation of one of Shakespeare's plays in Finnish, however, the use of Shakespeare to evoke a connection between Finland and Western Europe predates Lagervall's adaptation. Indeed, the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century feature successive intellectual groups that sought to establish a Finnish literary language and promote Finnish nationalism. Mentions of Shakespeare appear in early literary journals and Finnish newspapers in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century produced largely by the Swedish speaking Finnish intellectual elite in general. Such forums are public facing, and in these writings, Shakespeare is utilized to extend the geographical reach of the newspaper or journal while also signaling intellectual allegiance with Western Europe. Importantly, other than evoking Shakespeare's status as a playwright or connecting him to England, there is relatively little critical engagement with his works. Instead Shakespeare is often listed alongside other Western hegemonic literary figures such as Dante, Homer, and Cervantes. This is partly due to the fact that other than these newspapers and journals; a Finnish literary tradition did not yet exist.

What, then, did Shakespeare scholarship look like in these early writings, and how does it affect the origins of Finnish Shakespeare? By tracing these early examples from members of literary societies such as The Aurora Society (1770-1779), the publications of the Turku Romantics (1810's and 1820's), The Saturday Society (1830), and The Finnish Literary Society (1831-present), it is possible to detect the gradual shift in not only Finnish nationalism but also the ways in which Shakespeare is deployed as a rhetorical tool and symbol to help evoke Finland's civility, independence, and linguistic sovereignty. Therefore, early references to Shakespeare rely on his Englishness to evoke a larger geographical scope for the journal or newspaper, or, in J. F. Lagervall's *Ruunulinna*, reject the Englishness of *Macbeth* and attempt to absorb the play into a Finnish context. Later translations of Shakespeare like those of Kaarlo Slöör and Paavo Cajender are expected to both adhere to Shakespeare's source text while also somehow establishing a distinct Finnish voice. Finally, by the end of the nineteenth century Shakespeare becomes the symbol of a Finnish national ideal, upheld alongside Finnish icons such as Elias Lönnrot, Johan Ludvig Runeberg, and Aleksis Kivi.

Walter Benjamin writes that the survival of a text is secured by its translations (Benjamin 1923), and scholars such as Michael Dobson have pointed out how the figure of Shakespeare has become the "transcendent personification of a national ideal" (14). Indeed, Susan Bassnet suggests that the

translations of Shakespeare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe are an example of intercultural transfer, or the exchanges and encounters between a source culture and its target culture (59). But for Finnish intellectuals evoking Shakespeare before the first Finnish translation of *Macbeth* in 1834, it is Shakespeare’s Englishness that is mentioned time and again, not the content of his dramatic works. For instance, in a 1796 contribution simply titled “Anecdote” in The Aurora Society’s newspaper *Tidningar Utgifne Af et Sällskap i Åbo* (*Newspapers published by a society in Turku*)<sup>5</sup> a “twist arose concerning the precedence of the Scottish and English Authors.” This “twist” is discussed between Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Rose Chiswick, and they banter about the way Johnson treated Scottish writers (“contemptuously” according to the anecdote), the merits of David Hume, and their opinion on Lord Bure whom Johnson hadn’t known had written anything. “I think,” Dr. Rose Chiswick playfully asserts, “however, that he wrote a line that supersedes anything of Shakespeare or Milton” (*Åbo Tidningar*, 1796 No. 39).<sup>6</sup>

Four years later in 1800, an article titled “Finland’s Literature” published in *Åbo Tidningar* provides a more substantial mention of Shakespeare, again evoked alongside other writers. The contributor in “Finland’s Literature” does not, in fact, discuss Finland’s literature but rather Shakespeare’s influence on Schiller, Goethe and Lessing: “They imitated him not only in the free and excessive drawing of meaningful characters and passions, but also in the irregular composition on the beautiful, in the whimsical phasing of space, time and people.”<sup>7</sup> In 1809 a description of the private collections found in the Royal Danish Library was published in *Åbo Tidningar*. The article claims that this library is among the most beautiful in Europe, and it features texts closer to home such as Danish and Swedish books, but it is also international: “As soon as a work of importance is published, be it in England or Italy, it is immediately bought. So there was already ... [a] beautiful edition of Shakespeare with copper [plates] after the Gallery in London.”<sup>8</sup>

Each of these three excerpts evoke Shakespeare as an educational and cultural marker. In the first example, the exchange between Johnson and Cheswick establishes a shared sense of understanding between the contributor and reader. Provided without context, it is necessary that the reader first recognize the figures of Johnson, Cheswick, David Hume and Lord Bure. Second, the reader should be aware of tensions between Scottish and English

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<sup>5</sup> Colloquially called *Åbo Tidningar* and this paper will refer to it hereafter as such.

<sup>6</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/binding/408947?term=Shakespeare&page=3/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

<sup>7</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/binding/414473?term=Shakespeare&page=1/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

<sup>8</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/binding/414671?term=Shakespeare&page=1/>. Accessed 14 December 2022.

literature, and third, understand how such tensions are connected to Milton and Shakespeare. The second example does something similar, except the aperture broadens to German literature. In this contribution, Finnish Literature becomes synonymous with German literature, and in this configuration, the English playwright Shakespeare emerges as an inspirational model. The reader is required to traverse three geographical zones and several literary luminaries: Finland (topically at least), Germany, and England. The final example introduces Denmark to the global reach of this newspaper; however, here too the “globe” is contained to smaller regions. The library contains Europe, and while Swedish and Danish books are present, the real draw is how international it is, and that a copy of Shakespeare’s play is available—“just” like in London.

The above excerpts are all from *Abo Tidningar* which is considered to be the first Finnish newspaper. It was issued by the Aurora Society, a secret Finnish literary society founded at the Royal Academy of Turku in 1770. The purpose of this paper was to promote the study of Finnish history and Finnish language at a time when Finland was still under Swedish rule. The most notable member of The Aurora Society and editor of *Abo Tidningar* is the so-called “father of Finnish history” Henrik Gabriel Porthan. Porthan completed his doctoral thesis pertaining to the scholarly research of oral folk tales which formed the basis for later attempts at creating a united Finnish national language. Porthan “postulated that, through collection and comparison, a scholar could reconstitute the original organic unity of a cultural system that had been fragmented with the disruptions of history” (Karner 158). One way to think about the use of Shakespeare in early public discourse is through André Lefevre’s “conceptual grid.” Lefevre argues that countries such as Finland with less widely-known languages “will only gain access to something that could be called ‘world literature,’ if they submit to the textual system, the discursive formation, or whatever else one wants to call it, underlying the current concept of ‘world literature’” (76). While these notations of Shakespeare are not translations, they are an early attempt at creating a bridge between Finland and the rest of Europe or fitting into the “grid” of accepted world culture. Finnish became a source of academic interest, but it was not until the nineteenth century that Finnish nationalism began to really take hold—a movement that truly begins with Russia’s annexation of Finland in 1809. For the first time Finns were offered a semblance of self-governance and the potential to destabilize Swedish as the lingua-franca.

Even after Russia annexed Finland in 1809, Swedish remained the language of government, education, and high culture (Sommer 5). Importantly, linguistic assimilation was essential for educated Finns, and as Tuija Pulkkinen writes, the school system certainly provided an opportunity to improve one’s social class, “however, this meant adopting a Swedish name and Swedish as a home language, Swedish being the sole language of higher education”

(Pulkkinen 126). The so-called Turku Romantics are the successors of the Aurora Society, and while not an organized group in the same sense, the most notable members such as Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, Elias Lönnrot, Johan Villhelm Snellman, Johan Runeberg and Zachris Topelius corresponded with each other and established two journals, *Aura* (1817-18) and *Mnemosyne* (1819-23). This group of young intellectuals studied under Porthan, but the transition into being a Grand Duchy of Russia incentivized them to further Porthan’s ideas of Finnish identity.

The Turku Romantics pursued Finnish “as a medium of high culture” (Sommer 7), and they were animated by the “Finnish struggle for national pursuits” (Karner 158). For them Herder and Hegel were each a major source of inspiration, in particular the Herdian concept of a common language being essential to establishing a nation combined with Hegel’s conception of the *volk* or “the people.” While these journals presented nationalist goals, they, like *Abo Tidningar*, were intended to be read by the educated Swedish speaking elite. They were focused on literature and included poetry by the group, as well as translations of Goethe, Schlegel, and others. These journals are more politically oriented than *Abo Tidningar*, and the attempts to create a public discourse surrounding the legitimacy of the Finnish language and culture is more explicit. The purported goal of *Mnemosyne* was to create for Finns a magazine which could spread “important truths, opinions and ideas, and make self-knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> Promoting the Finnish language is also of utmost importance (despite the journal being written in Swedish) because “a language so beautiful ... so original and close to nature, and yet so expressive ... that if anything deserves the attention of the philosopher and to be saved from destruction this certainly deserves it.” The importance of the Finnish language is foregrounded in this next generation of public discourse, but even here Shakespeare is summoned to forge a European connection.

In 1820, one year after the journal was founded, in an article titled “Notable places in England,” we are introduced to William Shakespeare: “Stratford upon Aven is Shakespeare’s birthplace. The inscription on a wretched house certifies that the great poet came into the world and died there.” The contributor goes on to say that a woman descended from Shakespeare gave them a tour of the home, and among the things shown to them were “his handkerchief, his drinking glass, a slipper that belonged to his wife, a small casket in which his last will lies, a chair on which he wrote his immortal works, part of his song, the hat which he wore in the role of Hamlet, a small chair for his son, which he also called Hamlet.”<sup>10</sup> This introduction comes after other notable foreign writers

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<sup>9</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi/binding/2396021?page=1/>. Accessed 14 December 2022.

<sup>10</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi/binding/501482term=Shakespeare&term=Shakespeare&page=4/>. Accessed 20 December 2022.

were similarly presented: Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was introduced a year before in 1819,<sup>11</sup> and an excerpt from Goethe's *Maxim's and Reflections* appears (in Swedish translation) in 1819. The reflections on Shakespeare's birthplace stands out among other tributes afforded to foreign writers, however. Rather than focusing on his work like the contributions for Cervantes and Goethe, it is Shakespeare's Englishness that renders him as important. It is by privileging his Englishness, and ultimately, his corporeality that a sense of intimacy is created between the bard and his Finnish readers. There is a contradiction between introducing England's most iconic playwright in a journal intended to promote literary works and intellectualism via his home, his body, and his personal belongings. By attempting to humanize the bard, "Notable places in England," in actuality, raises Shakespeare to the status of celebrity, further setting him apart from other literary figures.

In an 1822 article for *Mnemosyne* titled "Over the Heroes of Humanity," Shakespeare is once again mentioned, however this time alongside other canonical writers. This article ruminates on the role of literary figures in the establishment of national literature and how new national endeavors are built on the foundations of earlier models: "Where is the genius for the sculpture of the ancients found? Just its shadow, like shadow. Lost in sculpture and architecture, God still wanders the earth: the soul has chosen another body."<sup>12</sup> This "other body" is transformations of canonical writers: "A Homer, a Pindarus, a Sophocles never appeared again; an Ossian, a Dante, a Shakespeare does not arise again. Other nations have no need of new poets."<sup>13</sup> The subtext here, of course, is that Finland is in need of both new poets and literary models—apparently these figures need not necessarily be Finnish.

### **The First Finnish Adaptation: J. F. Lagervall's *Ruunulinna***

In J. F. Lagervall's 1834 *Ruunulinna*, a Shakespearean "imitation," *Macbeth* is transported from Scotland to Karelia, and the characters names are changed. In a clear effort to make Shakespeare more familiar to a Finnish audience, *Macbeth* is changed to *Ruunulinna*, *Lady Macbeth* to *Pirjo*, and *King Duncan* to *Rostio*. Shakespeare's iambic pentameter is changed to runometer, also known as *Kelevalameter*. Initially *Ruunuliina* was met with positive reviews, but these

<sup>11</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi/binding/500086?term=Cervantes/>. Accessed 13 November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi/binding/502779?term=Shakespear&page=11/>. Accessed 10 November 2022.

<sup>13</sup> <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi/binding/502779?term=Shakespear&page=11/>. Accessed 13 November 2022.



gradually changed: “If we call this little [play] representative,” writes one reviewer, it has happened because it is “the only and best,” and as with any other representation, represents nothing.” Lagervall’s *Ruunulinna* was never professionally performed; however, it did remain the “only” example of a Finnish Shakespeare for thirty years. The negative connotation of “imitation” is a result of shifting attitudes towards translation in the nineteenth century, although these would not come to fruition until the 1860’s. *Ruunulinna* is directly influenced by the struggles between Swedish and Finnish, and indeed Lagervall explains in his afterward that he chose the most easily understood dialect throughout Finland as the play’s language. He also modified spelling and included Finnish proverbs (*Perruque* 147). In contrast to the earlier mentions of Shakespeare explored in this paper, Shakespeare’s Englishness plays a subordinate role in Lagervall’s play. The act of appropriating Shakespeare into a Finnish context becomes a way “to vouch for the existence of the language of translation and, by doing so, vouch for the existence of a people” (Brisset 341).

Lagervall advocates for the Finnish people when he claims in his epilogue that *Macbeth* “has long been understood in English by Shakespeare and repeated as if it had taken place in Scotland; but Walter Scott ... denies it happened there. Where then would it have happened? In our own country” (88). Essential to understanding Lagervall’s approach to his *Macbeth* is the declaration “understood in English by Shakespeare.” Finnishness is tied to the act of translating Shakespeare into the Finnish vernacular, and the way Lagervall has phrased the sentence suggests a separation of *Macbeth* the text from Shakespeare as its author. In this configuration, *Macbeth* is not Shakespeare’s play but rather an ownerless story that Shakespeare has merely interpreted and “understood” in English. The subtext is that if *Macbeth* does not belong to Shakespeare, who is to say that the play cannot belong to Lagervall?

The three witches in *Macbeth* are nameless, but Lagervall provides them names gleaned from Finnish mythology: Mammotar, mother of worms, Kivutar, goddess of pain and suffering, Lemmes, mother of alders, and Luonnatar mother of the seas. In Shakespeare’s original the first witch says: “When shall we three meet again? / In thunder, lightning, or in rain?” (I.I.1-2). Lagervall alters these lines by first having Kivutar say: “Missä näemmä toinen toista?” (Loosely “Where will we see each other”), to which Mammotar replies: “Siellä missä liemu loistaa, Missä ukko jyrisee Että ilma tärisee.” In English these lines are close to “When the hut shines, when the old man rumbles, so that the air vibrates.”<sup>17</sup> What is important in these lines is the word “Ukko.” When literally translated Ukko means “Old man,” but a Finnish reader would know that Ukko is the Finnish god of the sky, weather, harvest, and thunder. Using “Ukko” instead of a more neutral word for thunder like “jylinä” presents a distant echo of Shakespeare mediated through Finnish mythology. In this sense, Lagervall’s

rhizomatic translation of *Macbeth* certainly involves Shakespeare as one of its branches, but Finnish mythology and the *Kalevala* compete for influence.

In addition to using Finnish linguistic markers for nationalistic purposes, Lagervall also includes visual ones. A portrait of Elias Lönnrot—the man who compiled the *Kalevala*—dressed in trousers and holding a Kantele (a traditional Finnish harp) is featured on the title page. Notably he is also wearing a patalakki, a traditional Finnish cap associated with antiquity. Derek Fewster notes that such a move simultaneously signals to Finnish readers that this play is not only a gesture towards the modernity of the Finnish language, but also through the transformation of Lönnrot into a “sage of the ancients” that is “representative of immemorial, or at least, medieval past” (90). Despite the fact that this version of *Macbeth* was never performed, its existence is significant in conjunction with Finnish nationalism. The Finns are concerned with “the right to one’s own culture” (“*Time-Sharing*” 90), and that there must be a national literary and theatrical tradition to establish oneself as an independent nation. Indeed, through translating *Macbeth* into Finnish, Lagervall rewrites *Macbeth* “from within the Finnish culture as a piece of Finnish history” (“*Time-Sharing*” 90).

### **Shifting Attitudes Towards Finnish Shakespeare: 1840’s-1890’s**

Following Lagervall’s *Ruunuliina*, attitudes towards Finnish Shakespeare began to change. Resistance to the imitative nature of *Ruunulinna* prompted calls for a closer translation of Shakespeare. One such advocate was philosopher, journalist, and statesman J. V. Snellman. Snellman was absorbed with Hegelianism and believed that Finnish must become the official language of Finland, and the Swedish elites should learn it (even though Snellman himself never fully became fluent in Finnish). From the establishment of the Finnish Literary Society in 1831 through the mid-nineteenth century, tensions between the Finnish nationalists such as Snellman agitating for the legitimacy of the Finnish language and the Swedish elite increasingly heightened. As Tuija Pulkkinen points out, a postcolonial attitude towards the Finnish language culture and the exalted Swedish language in the country began to emerge, resulting in the perception of Swedish rather than Russian as being the “adversary by the nationalist movement championing the use of Finnish and the creation of a Finnish-language culture in the early decades of the nineteenth century” (119). Russian officials encouraged this, believing that a stronger Finnish language would displace Swedish, thereby weakening Western influence in Finland (Polvinen, 133).

Snellman’s attitudes towards the Finnish language and translation are therefore reflected in how Shakespeare is approached in the mid-nineteenth century, and Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” is a useful way to

think through this phase of Finnish nationalism. Printing literature, as Anderson argues, differentiates between spoken and “print-languages” in a way that “laid the basis for national consciousness” (56) because having a more widely available language shortened the distance between the language of government and the language of the people. Anderson uses the example of the “dethronement of Latin” to suggest that the printing of common languages helped non-Latin speakers become “aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged” (57)—a clear parallel between the emergence of Finland through the “dethronement” of Swedish.

Snellman’s attitudes toward language extended to the translation of foreign texts. Snellman established a newspaper in which he broadcasted his views, *Saima* in 1844; in it, he discussed his vision of the establishment of Finnish literature. He believed that there were two ways to create a national literature in Finland: either making Finnish the language of education from primary school onwards or to translating the “best works from other nations’ literature (Mäkinen 51). From 1870-1873 Snellman became the chair of The Finnish Literary Society, and during that time he proposed a translation program to bolster Finnish national literature. In his proposal he writes: “Domestic original literature cannot be produced by rewards and prizes ... Every nation of every time can take into its own literature those products of geniality that other nations have produced. Thus, such books have become common property among the civilized nations in Europe.” (qtd. Mäkinen, 58 ). Snellman goes on to list authors who would offer the best exemplars, and Shakespeare, of course, makes the list.

I began with a review of Kaarlo Slöör’s translation of *Macbeth*, and generally the public was pleased with how close to Shakespeare it remained. Where the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries cared about Shakespeare insofar as he offered a bridge between the Finnish elite and the West, this attitude gradually shifted towards a reverential mode of adaptation. “When the mode of translation is reverence” writes Aaltonen, “the Foreign, as represented by texts chosen for translation, is held in high esteem and respected” (*Time Sharing* 64). Indeed, Slöör’s translation of *Macbeth* was the result of a competition held by The Finnish Literary Society in 1864. The competition was created in honour of the tercentenary of Shakespeare’s birth, and it offered a prize for the best translation of a Shakespeare play.

Take, for example, the following poem written by Zacharias Topelius in honour of the 1864 tercentenary:

Behold, therefore he belongs to the  
World, Whosoever the great love wills,  
And therefore he is worthy of

Witness For all peoples and countries.  
 And at his cradle this moment  
 We reach, on the foundation of Europe,

To the Great peace, alliance of the  
 Peoples. The hands of the Finnish  
 people. For the poet of mankind he is.  
 To  
 Regard highly, to hold dear  
 The Ray of the Lord's grace  
 prunes. It is to serve the Lord  
 What is all light, if not His, Of

What William Shakespeare's wreath of  
 honor, If not a broken reflection  
 The light of the source alone?<sup>14</sup>

We can see in this poem echoes of earlier versions of Shakespeare addressed in this paper, as well as allusions to the same anxieties surrounding the status of Finland as a contested zone between Sweden and Russia. Is it not possible to see distantly reflected in the lines "Behold, therefore he belongs to the/World" the copper plated Shakespeare in the Royal Danish library? So too, perhaps, the Romantic Shakespeare of the 1810's and 20's is present when Topelius writes that Shakespeare is "the foundation of Europe." This foundation, we learned, is his home still occupied by his descendant in Stratford upon Avon. Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin write that "appropriations, like translations, conjure differing interpretive possibilities that already inhabit Shakespeare's texts" (8). Rather than unifying Shakespeare, his various appropriations "attacks its illusion and reveals multiple Shakespeares, or to put it differently, A Shakespeare perpetually divided from itself" (8). Indeed, thus far this paper has identified Shakespeare the figure (newspaper articles and public discourse), the spectre (*Runnulinna*), the model (Snellman and other translations) and, now, Shakespeare the Finnish national poet.

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<sup>14</sup> My translation—this poem (as far as I know) has not been translated into English. A version of it is found in Gollancz, Israel. *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press, 1916.

## Looking Towards a Twentieth Century Shakespeare—The Finnish Contributions to *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*

Published by Oxford University Press in 1916 upon the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, *Homage* consists of 166 contributions from scholars, poets, historians and other intellectuals from around the world. Loosely organized to begin with contributions from England and work their way out towards the European periphery and beyond, Gollancz writes that while the original plan was to have only one hundred contributors: “the British Empire alone could not well be represented by less than one hundred contributors.” (xxxviii). On the face of it, the goal of *Homage* is to demonstrate the far-reaching cultural capital of Shakespeare, and by extension, the British empire. Indeed this seems to be what King George V took from it, as made clear in his announcement of thanks to Gollancz for his edition: “Their majesties have graciously commanded that their thanks be sent to you for this illustrious record of reverence for him to whose memory the whole civilized world is now doing honour” (Antipodal, 43). This effort to commemorate Shakespeare naturally coincides with the construction of national identity, or what Benedict Anderson writes, the impulse to codify nation-states as simultaneously “new: and “historical” (Anderson, 12). Gordon McMullan claims that in *Homage* we can see a contradiction between: “[the] global publication created at the height of the First World War [that] underlines the hegemonic status of Shakespeare in the early twentieth century as an icon of Englishness and empire, [and] also [a project] which serves as a precursor of the contemporary role of Shakespeare as a figure of global culture” (xvi).

There are three Finnish contributions to *Homage*, and these contributions sit uncomfortably between these two disparate ideas: that of the hegemonic status of ‘English’ Shakespeare and also his role as a figure of global culture. Scholars have read *Homage* as a “document of empire” (McMullan 10), in which Shakespeare is used to uphold and reinforce British Imperialism. While this perspective includes countries that were not a part of that empire—countries such as China, Poland and Japan, for example, are each allotted a contribution—Finland, nevertheless, stands out. Not only does Finland lack geographical and economic ties to England, but at the time of *Homage*’s publication, Finland was still a Grand Duchy of Russia and would not gain independence until 1917: it belonged to a rival empire. The three entries from Finnish academics (two essays and one poem) nevertheless claim Shakespeare as their own national poet and an antidote of sorts to the ever present threat of Russification. For example, when Finnish author Juhani Aho writes in his essay that “Each new play of Shakespeare that has since been acted in Finnish has strengthened the poet’s hold on our people,” (542), he suggests to the reader that Finland is influenced by Shakespeare and that by extension Finland is a Western, not Eastern, nation. The tone of his contribution is one of reverence to England’s imperial project.

On the other hand, Eino Leino's poem "Shakespeare-Tunnelma" or, loosely, "'The feeling' of Shakespeare" takes his contribution to *Homage* as an opportunity by which Shakespeare becomes a vehicle upon which Finnish nationalism can be clearly expressed to the West. "Thou race held in bondage" writes Leino in reference to the Finns, greets "England in unison" (535).

The third and final Finnish contribution is largely untranslated and pursues a middle ground. Written by Finnish novelist Juhani Aho and titled "Ensimäinen Suomalainen Shakespearen Ensi-Ilta Suomessa" or "The First Finnish Shakespeare Premier in Finland," the text movingly describes the 1881 production of *Romeo and Juliet*: "Let me reminisce a little and lay my wreath at the feet of the greatest genius of a great nation from a distant suburb on English culture—the conquest of which the motherland hardly known much about, but whose possession from the first day has become so great that our national Finnish stage showcases Shakespeare every year—Shakespeare more than any author." Aho does indeed proceed to reminisce, and explores the building of the first Finnish national theatre, and success of the actress Ida Aberg. Aho explains that Aberg was so successful because she was Nordic: "her countenance was neither Greek, nor French but a bit angular and Nordic ... this is why she is more expressive and personal" (539). Aho suggests that in this performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, "Shakespeare stood for us," and taught Finns that "our language was not the epic dialect of the Kalevala, but that of the highest dramatic feeling."

This contribution, I think, brings to the fore a key question for these Finnish contributions to *Homage* in particular, and perhaps the status of translation in general: who is the intended audience? Many of the contributions to *Homage* present a united "English" Shakespeare, and in this sense, "every tribute in a strange script or foreign language could be seen as a kind of imperial trophy, a sign of successful interpolation of the colonial writer into the imagined community of Shakespeare's England." I think that on one level, the largely untranslated essay of Aho is operating as a kind of trophy. *Homage* does not need to be overly concerned with the content of the essay and operates under the assumption that it is appropriately reverent of Shakespeare and England's empire. The parts of the essay that are loosely translated in the margin support this—the reader can grasp that there is an important Finnish version of *Romeo and Juliet*, a famous actress was in it, and Finns feel culturally and Hoenselaars writes that "[i]nstances of commemorating the writer, the plays, and the poems, inevitably enhance our appreciation of the functions of authorship, the transmission of the text, and dynamics of literary fame. However, on the whole the cultures of commemoration also tend to be complex in social and political terms" (5). Indeed, the complexity of this process is embedded in the project of *Homage* itself. On one hand, Finland's use of Shakespeare is a good example of this, and also of England's "informal empire", which Robert Young defines as "the way in which the extent of British power, at its height, cannot simply be

measured by the amount of territory coloured red on the world map” (29). Many countries were tied to Britain through cultural influence in this way. In this sense, the cultural capital of Shakespeare operates as a kind of loose or informal colonialism of Finnish nationalism and Finnish literature, or, as Jyotsna Singh suggests, a form of colonial mimicry: “the process of national liberation involves mimicry of colonial process ... the act of repetition” (Singh 2020). On the other hand, however, the way in which Leino, Hirn, and other Finnish intellectuals approach and adapt Shakespeare is to adapt and change him to fit within their own Finnish context. In this way, Shakespeare is shifted to become not “England’s bard” but rather Finland’s “muse and playwright.” This is a more global perspective of Shakespeare—perhaps an unintended implication of Gollancz’s *A Book of Homage of to Shakespeare*.

In each of the examples I have traversed in this paper, Shakespeare is either utilized as a literary model, elevated to the level of celebrity, or rejected in favour of themes closer to home. Gunnar Sorelius writes that with the exception of Lagervall’s *Ruunulinna* there is no sign that [Shakespeare] was used in the formation and strengthening of a national culture (9). Alexa Joubin counters that “Nordic Shakespeares are neither part of the world of the English cultural sphere nor cultures that are diametrically opposed to the Anglophone world” (292). Indeed, we see this liminal space play out in the establishment of Finnish literature.

From the periphery of Europe, Finnish Shakespeare is easily overlooked. Imperial ties to Sweden and Russia create a literary landscape marked by longing for freedom and international recognition. Finnish Shakespeare most often positions Finland first, and Shakespeare second—even in canonical translations of his plays that are revered for their fidelity to their source. Such an attitude is certainly utilitarian. Ultimately, Finnish Shakespeare can be measured by how well Shakespeare is be utilized to either support, promote, or establish Finnish cultural and linguistic sovereignty. For a Western audience, Finland flips the idea of the foreign on its head—his plays may be influential, but in the absence of a useful translation, a description of his home will do just as well.

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