

SHAKESPEARE AND BRITISH OCCUPATION POLICY IN GERMANY, 1945-1949

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“Shakespeare and British Occupation Policy in Germany, 1945-1949”

Abstract:

Following World War II, the United Kingdom was responsible for occupying a section of Germany. While the British were initially focused on demilitarization and reparations, their goals quickly changed to that of rehabilitation and democratization. In order to accomplish their policy goals, they enlisted the help William Shakespeare, a playwright who had always found favor on the German stage. The British, recognizing that the Germans were hungry for entertainment and were looking for escape, capitalized on this love for Shakespeare by putting his plays back on the stage. Their hope was to influence the Germans into being better members of society by showing them classic plays that aligned with their occupation goals of restoring religion and promoting democracy in the region. Shakespeare’s timelessness, his ability to reach a broad audience, and the German familiarity with the playwright is the reason why his plays were especially influential in post-World War II Germany.

Introduction

For centuries, William Shakespeare has been met with approval on the German stage. Some scholars believe that Shakespeare's plays are performed more frequently in Germany than anywhere else in the world, including the playwright's home, England.¹ Shakespeare is, in fact, oftentimes revered as an honorary German; the Germans have adopted him as a native of their country, and he has been credited with the rebirth of German literature and drama in the late 1700s. One of the oldest functioning literary societies in the world and the oldest German Shakespeare society, the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, was formed in Weimar in 1864. This society was formed before a statue to honor the legendary German author, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, was erected in Berlin in 1880. Shortly after Goethe's statue was built, a statue of William Shakespeare, created by German sculptor Otto Lessing, was erected in 1904 and is the oldest monument of him in Europe. Every year in April, Shakespeare's birth month, The German Shakespeare Society sponsors the international event, "Shakespeare Days." These highlights are just some of the ways the Germans show their appreciation for the great playwright.

Shakespeare's legacy in Germany has become a fundamental part of German theater culture. They have integrated him so fully that the Germans have been said to disapprove of any performance attempt other than their own to do him justice. Through the "Germanization" of Shakespeare by August Wilhelm Schlegel in the 1800s, Shakespeare gradually became part of the German canon. Because of the tension between England and Germany after World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans adopted the belief that the British were neglecting

¹ Stephen Kinzer, "Shakespeare, Icon in Germany," *The New York Times*, December 30, 1995, (accessed Nov. 11, 2017,) <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/30/movies/shakespeare-icon-in-germany.html>.

Shakespeare and “the true protection of Shakespeare was happening in Germany.”² German theater enthusiasts and members of the Shakespeare society believed that their own performances were the best representations of the play and that they were the only ones able to do the playwright justice.³ They had a strong desire to adopt his reputation, his name, and his works as their own, which is remarkable, for there are “few writers who have had as benign an influence upon a culture not their own as Shakespeare has had upon German-Speaking Europe.”⁴ This adoration and respect for Shakespeare is one of the reasons why his plays were part of reconstruction of post-World War II Germany.

After the Germans surrendered in World War II, one might think that the last thing on anyone’s mind would be theater, let alone Shakespeare. Hitler’s death on April 30, 1945 signified that the end of the war was quickly approaching. Just a week later on May 6, 1945, General Alfred Jodl and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel unconditionally surrendered all German forces fighting the Western Allies, and Victory Day was declared in America on May 8. The four Allies signed the Berlin Declaration granting the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the French Republic supreme authority in regards to Germany and all of its territories.

While the Germans were undoubtedly concerned with what their future looked like under Allied occupation, the Allies were wondering how to handle the “Nazi sickness” that had swept across Germany. After the war, the Germans were understandably seeking both new and traditional ideas in order to make sense of what had just happened to their country. They were

² Hans-Jörg Modlmayr, “How Shakespeare was turned into a German,” interview by Heike Mund *DW*, April 22, 2016, (accessed July 12, 2018,) <https://p.dw.com/p/1Iat6>.

³ Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage: The Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

⁴ Simon Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage*, volume 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xi.

hungry for entertainment and were seeking escape from their everyday lives. The British recognized this and capitalized on the opportunity, putting Shakespeare back on the stage in makeshift theater houses with few props. Recognizing the German's long standing love for Shakespeare, the British used his plays as a vessel with which to transport their occupation policy agenda to the packed theater house audiences.

Part of the reason for this hunger from the Germans for theater was due to their limited access to art and literature under Hitler's reign. Even though Shakespeare was no stranger to the German stage during the Nazi rule, classic performances of his plays were limited or manipulated to suit the regime's ideology. Theaters were controlled by Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Propaganda, who licensed all performances and companies, including amateur societies. Although some theaters remained independent and were able to perform what they wanted, "even the least conformist theatres could not mount new, critical or radical plays, or plays banned by the regime. They had to follow the dictates of the regime in outward appearance at least, in the language and presentation of their programmes for example, or in their relationship with Party leaders in Munich."⁵ More often than not, classic plays were reinterpreted, focusing on themes such as martyrdom and sacrifice for the entire German people, so the lens with which they had to view the plays was limited and narrow.

Additionally, new theater performances under Hitler's rule came in the form of "Thingspiele," or "meeting-play," a Nazi innovation. In the early years of The Reich, attempts were made to perform ritualistic "specially written political and pseudo-Nordic dramas" which "put into dramatic form the Nazi cult of hero-worship and celebration of the glorious dead."⁶ The manipulation of the theater, as well as the suppression of literature and the Nazi book

⁵ Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 160.

⁶ *Ibid*, 160.

burning in May of 1933, left a gaping hole in the German entertainment industry, leaving the Germans hungry for authentic, creative art and literature.

However, the Allies were not initially concerned with this aspect of German life. Until the Germans surrendered, the Allies focused on determining broad parameters of control concerning territorial change and stability, international cooperation, and disarmament. As combat ceased, questions such as what would happen to the war-torn, damaged country and what would happen to the remains of The Reich became the more imposing questions to be handled. At the second major wartime conference, at Yalta, the heads of government of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States attempted to organize a post-war Europe into a place that provided collective security and freedom. However, five months later, in July of 1945, the Big Three – Winston Churchill of Great Britain, Harry S. Truman of the United States, and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union – met to set the blueprint for the impending occupation. At the Potsdam conference, the final major wartime conference, the Allies established the following four purposes:

- (i) The complete disarmament and demilitarization of Germany and the elimination...of all German industry that could be used for military production.
- (ii) To convince the German people that they have suffered a total military defeat and that they cannot escape responsibility for what they have brought upon themselves, since their own ruthless warfare and the fanatical Nazi resistance have destroyed German economy and made chaos and suffering inevitable.
- (iii) To destroy the National Socialist Party and its affiliated and supervised organizations, to dissolve all Nazi institutions, to ensure that they are not revived in any form, and to prevent all Nazi and militarist activity or propaganda.
- (iv) To prepare for the eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis and for eventual peaceful cooperation in international life by Germany.⁷

The Allies believed that the “four D’s” – demilitarization, denazification, democratization, and decentralization – would help in reconstructing Germany. While this policy was agreed upon at the conference, in the field the situation was much different. As the country separated into four occupation zones, each occupation power had their own feelings about the current situation in Germany and what needed to be prioritized. The British wanted to institute a system of “indirect control” in which the Germans were responsible for rehabilitating

⁷ “Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference 1945,” *Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs*, April 28, 2017, (accessed February 3, 2018,) <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1383>.

themselves with British guidance.⁸ However, it proved impossible to adopt a strict approach to Germany, and not only did the British policy method change multiple times in the three years following the end of the war, but also it was full of contradictions. One reason for this was due to “limitations on industrial growth imposed at the same time as measures to promote economic reconstruction, pragmatism combined with idealism, occupiers and occupied living separate lives in parallel worlds coexisting with examples of intense personal engagement.”⁹ For example, the British were trying to control the German economy and were placing restrictions on goods; however, they were also trying to promote economic growth. They were trying to be realistic in their approach of how to make changes to the country, which was in serious need of repair; however, they wanted to maintain an optimistic front rather than appear hopeless so as to not discourage the Germans and their outlook on the process. These contradictions made it difficult to definitively categorize the British approach since they were trying to mask their true feelings about the process.

The lines the British had initially established were strict, and it ended up being impossible to stay within them. Demonstrating just how quickly the British changed plans was the non-fraternization order set for British soldiers upon arrival in their zone. Soldiers were not supposed to socialize with the local Germans and signs were placed at the border of the country in April 1945 that read, “You are now entering Germany. There will be no fraternization with any German,” or “You are now entering Germany. Be on your guard.” The non-fraternization order was initiated by Field Marshal Lord Bernard Montgomery, Commander-in-Chief in Germany. Montgomery implemented this preliminary policy because he wanted the Germans to

⁸ Ibid, 152.

⁹ Christopher Knowles, *Winning the Peace: The British in Occupied Germany, 1945-1948*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 7.

know that the blame for the Holocaust was being put on all of Germany. The Germans were responsible, even if individuals claimed they did not know or could not do anything to stop it.¹⁰

By not allowing the soldiers to interact with the locals, Montgomery believed the Germans would feel guilty and would be forced to acknowledge their role in the war and the destruction of the country.

Regardless of what was originally established, “implementation of this policy soon proved to be impracticable, and it was never strictly followed anywhere except for maybe the very first days of the occupation.”¹¹ One month into the occupation, non-fraternization guidelines were relaxed, and by the end of September, the non-fraternization orders were abolished. It quickly became clear that it was near impossible to implement a policy such as re-education without social contact. Daily interaction with the Germans and basic human civilities were necessary in order to gain the Germans’ trust which, in turn, would allow the British to work towards their policy goals of demilitarization, spiritual and moral revival, and democratization using empathy. If the British continued to avoid contact with the Germans and treated them as barbarians, then they could not hope to establish a democratic government, a system based on equality.

The British realized they needed to change their tactic if they wanted to make an impact in Germany. Many generals acknowledged that “any re-education, aimed at promoting individual responsibility, tolerance and a peaceful way of living-together would not have gone

¹⁰ Francis Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany: The Refugee Crisis, Denazification, and the Path to Reconstruction*, (I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. New York: 2013), 83.

¹¹ Rainer Schulze, “A Difficult Interlude: Relations Between British Military Government and the German Population and their Effects for the Constitution of a Democratic Society,” in *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany*, ed. Alan Bance, (Germany: The London Symposium, 1997), 73.

too well with a policy of complete non-fraternization.”¹² In order to accomplish their goals, British soldiers needed the freedom to interact with Germans civilians, and trust needed to be established for this to come to fruition. Consequentially, Montgomery quickly developed a modified plan moving forward: self-help. This meant that the British wanted to “create an awareness of the citizen’s duty to participate in the democratic process on which a future state could be built and to oversee educational development in such a way as to encourage those processes.”¹³ The first phase of occupation then became a mission to help the Germans institute a simple and orderly life in hopes that eventually they would be able to make democratic decisions for themselves.

Due to unrealistic expectations from planners in the United Kingdom, the British soldiers were forced to think on their feet when they first arrived in Germany time and time again. Many details had not been thought through. For example, many of the officers were professional soldiers and had little experience in civilian administration. They had spent their lives serving the army and did not know much, if anything, about the German language, culture, or society. Also, they had not been involved in planning the British occupation. For this reason, many soldiers felt unprepared to deal with the situation in which they had been placed in Germany. For example, General Lord Robertson reveals his initial reaction to being put in charge of the defeated enemy country: “I was told to take over this job, and I went to Germany the next day. I didn’t speak a word of German; I’d never been in the country before...I knew nothing about the situation at all,... nor had I taken any part of the great preparatory work that had been carried

¹² Schulze, 73.

¹³ David Phillips, “Aspects of Education for Democratic Citizenship in Post-War Germany,” *Oxford Review of Education* 38, no. 5 (October 2012): 567, accessed October 5, 2017, <http://taurus.hood.edu:2090/10.1080/03054985.2012.728976>.

forward in London.”¹⁴ Also, many of the soldiers were simply following an order and were not completely invested in trying to improve the German people’s quality of life. Because many had been influenced by the media coverage of Hitler and the war, they already had skewed perceptions of the situation in Germany and had developed negative stereotypes about the people they would be governing.

When the apprehensive British generals and soldiers arrived, they realized that the zone planners and politicians at home knew little about the current situation in Germany. For example, initial occupation plans assumed that a central German administration would remain in place after the war; however, this was not the case. The occupation forces were made to believe they would be expected to prevent armed resistance. This never materialized. And, they were told they would have to control various German authorities. Instead, they themselves had to act as civilian administrators, maintaining law and order, rebuilding bridges, clearing rivers, etc.¹⁵ Many of their responsibilities were regulating activities they had little experience organizing. While they had expected to maintain order through military measures, they ended up maintaining order by helping to rebuild a community instead.

After the British realized they needed to change their harsh, militaristic approach, they transitioned from the idea that they would need to prevent German resistance to creating a policy that would promote some semblance of order. This meant developing an overall more positive-based policy, one that was not focused on establishing dominance through scolding and lecturing, but rather allowed the officers to foster growth and trust among the Germans. Many British officers felt it was their duty and responsibility to rehabilitate the Germans, giving them

¹⁴ “Oral History Interview with General Lord Robertson of Oakridge,” *Truman Library*, (2017): 10, accessed December 15, 2017, <https://trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/robertsn.htm>.

¹⁵ Knowles, 17.

“hope for the future” instead of punishing them for what had happened during the war.¹⁶ This policy based on positive reinforcement is reflected in the directives issued by British Army Headquarters in Germany on May 27, 1945, shortly after the start of the occupation. While certain themes remained the same, “the emphasis should now be shifted to more positive aims...the immediate need, from both Allied and German points of view, is for a supreme effort by the Germans at all forms of reconstruction work...Use every opportunity that honest reporting allows to emphasise with good space and prominence reconstruction activities by both the Allies and the Germans.”¹⁷ The primary aim of the British was to promote a culture of teamwork and prove to the Germans that while they were occupying their country, they were determined to help them out of their rut, not just chastise them or make them feel guilty.

For this reason, after a few months, while demilitarization still remained high on the British “to-do” list, reconstruction and re-education quickly rose in importance. The Potsdam Agreement initially established by the Allies mentioned German education: “German education shall be so controlled as completely to eliminate Nazi and militaristic doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas.”¹⁸ However, there were few directions as to how to actually move forward and obtain this result. Additionally, there was the desire to reach all citizens with re-education – old and young alike – not just those children enrolled in formal schools. Because of the lack of specific directions, it was up to each individual zone to imagine what re-education would look like, and in the British zone, Shakespearean performances would be the key to re-establishing Christianity and sound moral values.

¹⁶ Knowles, 20.

¹⁷ FO 1005/739, “Infm Control Policy Directive No. 3”, 27 May 1945, quoted in Knowles.

¹⁸ “Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference 1945,”
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1383>.

The British saw a void in German life, and they believed religion would fill this space and bring hope to the German people. The British found that they could quickly and fairly easily promote their religious ideals through the *British Zone Review*: “Religion was a prominent regular editorial feature; articles stressed that religion could play a major role in papering over the cracks of old wounds.”¹⁹ British High Commissioner in Germany, Ivone Kirkpatrick, in May 1948 suggested that “the promotion of Christianity in Germany should be regarded as a political aim since it is an obvious method of weaning the Germans away from Nazis and Communism”²⁰ Even the military was involved, helping the volunteer groups to promote the universal themes of goodwill and unity of the British Christian churches as a way to make Germany a more unified group.²¹ Those working with the Germans wanted “to remind [their] audience that Britain was committed to playing a full part in Germany’s spiritual regeneration.”²² They wanted to reinforce that they were not simply there to take charge and punish the Germans for the Holocaust, but in fact they were interested in the Germans’ well-being.

In the eyes of many British officials, re-establishing Christianity would help the immoral Germans, and they believed it was their duty to change the minds and outlooks of a country that seemed historically destined for violence. This coincides directly with their determination to help the Germans out of their rut and not merely make them feel guilty for the past. Field Marshal Montgomery, head of Public Relations and Information Services Control branch of the Control Commission (PR/ISC), Montgomery’s eventual successor as Military Governor, Brian Robertson, and General Alec Bishop were all committed to reconstruction and helping Germany return to a Christian society. Additionally, they all had relatively similar backgrounds: they went

¹⁹ Graham-Dixon, 117.

²⁰ 117 TNA, FO 1049/1282, Kirkpatrick to Steel, 5 May 1948, cited in Graham-Dixon, 120.

²¹ Graham-Dixon, 120.

²² Ibid, 110.

to public school, fought in World War One, served in the British Empire between the wars, and had a strong religious background. These men “had tremendous confidence in the strength of their own traditions and sought to apply these to the situation they found in Germany.”²³

Montgomery grew up in a religious household: his father was an Anglican clergyman and later became the Bishop of Tasmania. He attended St. Paul’s School before moving on to the Royal Military Academy. His family background gave him a personal interest in the future of the British Empire: as a professional soldier, he was awarded with opportunities to move up in society that would not have been possible without the experience. His appreciation for the Empire was steadfast and his focus in the British Zone was on the German youth and religion. In one of the correspondences between military officials, he talked about how influential British chaplains could be in collaborating with German clerics, for “The Church is possibly one of the few bridges of confidence between the two countries that is not down.”²⁴ Montgomery recognized how important it would be to find common ground between the occupier and the occupied.

Robertson was born in India because of his father’s military career. His father, Sir William Robertson, rose through the ranks as a British soldier and eventually earned the highest position of field-marshal. Following in his father’s footsteps, Robertson earned himself a scholarship to Charterhouse and afterwards joined the military. He earned a Military Cross in 1918 and the Distinguished Service Order in 1919. During the 1920s, he served with the Bengal Engineer Group, a part of the British Indian Army responsible for military service, as well as peacetime contributions in India. He was a man of strong character and moral principles, and

²³ Knowles, 32.

²⁴ Meeting of 22 March 1945 between Riddy, Major A.L. Bickford-Smith of Youth Section, and Rev. V.K.C. Logan representing the scout movement, FO 1050/1293, cited in Phillips, *Educating the Germans*, 150.

despite retiring from the army in 1934, he returned at the start of World War II and was held in high esteem by Bernard Montgomery.

Despite no military connection in his immediate family, General Bishop's teachers assumed that he would end up in the military. They were not wrong, as Bishop joined the military academy in 1914 when he was 17, and two years later he was commanding an army in India. While he did not hold as high a rank as Montgomery or Robertson, his role in post-World War II as a communications officer was pivotal in keeping the British Military Government in contact with those in Britain. The biggest task, Bishop believed, was to "hold out some measure of hope to the German people...[for] accepting the Christian principles of humanism and democracy will eventually produce a reasonable standard of living, and ...[a part in] the international economic life of Europe."²⁵ This hope allowed him to remain positive during his station in Germany.

For these three men, "the Empire was a force for good in the world."²⁶ They grew up at a time when Britain was at a point of relative political stability, and the British Empire was a great power on the world stage. They had memories of Germany's recent history, saw what happened because of the Treaty of Versailles, and realized that ruling with an iron fist could prove debilitating. For this reason, they coupled their undying support for the Empire with their strong religious beliefs to implement a plan that would hopefully do more than just control the people of a country. Instead, they wanted to help the Germans recognize the powerful effects of religion. On several occasions they have been quoted as referring to their work in Germany as helping the Germans to "'find their own salvation', as if they were missionaries trying to convert the

²⁵ *British Zone Review*, 1 (17) 11 May 1946, Alec Bishop, "Ave Atque Vale."

²⁶ Knowles, 38.

heathen, rather than victors in war, administering a defeated enemy country.”²⁷ Because of the mindset of these military officials, implementing a policy that focused on theater was a possibility. The religious missionary zeal and belief in the British Empire reflected itself through the plays that the British performed during the occupation.

Ultimately, many of the British occupiers saw Christianity as “as a natural vehicle for embedding higher spiritual and moral values within German society.”²⁸ The general belief was that if they could make Germans behave more like the British, the citizens would no longer be Nazis. Having beaten Germany and its dictatorship, Britain felt superior and was full of confidence that their democracy was powerful (even though they were technically losing power on the world stage). Many British officials believed, “If only British structures and ideals could be transplanted to German soil...then it might be possible to divert the disastrous course of German history.”²⁹ In this way, their policy was aimed towards promoting the British “way of life” and the British recognized that performing Shakespeare’s plays would be an ideal way for them to promote religion and morality.

Beyond the focus on Christianity, many British officials were concerned with the moral outlook of the German population. Robert Birley, education adviser to the Military Governor in Germany, played an important role in the British re-education mission. The headmaster of two prominent British schools, Birley took time off to help reorganize education in the British Zone. While his primary focus was establishing an education policy and enhancing the school system, he was also a religious man and saw the problem in Germany as two-fold. When Birley first

²⁷ Knowles, 39.

²⁸ Graham-Dixon, 120.

²⁹ Ian Turner, “Introduction: The British Occupation and its impact on Germany,” in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), 6.

arrived in Germany, he visited Brno and was “shocked by the godlessness of the Nazi state.”³⁰ This was after he saw the chapel in the Spielberg fortress (Špilberk Castle). In this respected holy place, the Schutzstaffel had mounted a giant wooden swastika on the wall that contained an alcove in which a copy of *Mein Kampf* rested. Additionally, a huge eagle replaced the reredos, or the icons, decorating the back of the altar. Birley felt compelled. He realized that “The British needed to change the minds and outlook of the people who did such a thing, and who had suffered a ‘complete moral collapse.’”³¹ This destruction of a sacred religious space made him believe that all Germans were in need of both education and a moral cleansing before they could be expected to make progress as a country.

As the British occupied their zone, it was clear that the young Germans, in particular, were at risk of compromising behavior. Many of Germany’s youth had been without schooling for some time. Not only did many of them lack parental influence or authority, but many had to work to help keep their families alive after the war. Because of the rise in unemployment, the youth were susceptible to delinquency and many fell into petty crime. They were “stealing, foraging for food and fuel, and engaging in black market activities...[This] became the norm for many disoriented young people struggling to survive in conditions of exceptional misery.”³² In 1947, delinquency levels in the British zone were reckoned to be three times those in pre-war years.³³ While re-educating a generation of students was not easy, at least there were certain patterns in place on which an institution could rely. On the other hand, re-educating a generation

³⁰ Giles Macdonogh, *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation*, (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 253.

³¹ Sir Robert Birley, *The German Problem and the Responsibility of Britain*, (London: SCM Press, 1947), 5.

³² Phillips, *Educating the Germans*, 147.

³³ *Ibid*, 147.

of young people who were not attending school full time was a difficult job for the occupation authorities who struggled to develop strategies to accommodate this group.

The British believed “the only way to ensure that democracy in Germany would be built on firm foundations was to replace discredited institutions and structures with a new model, one with impeccable credentials: British liberal democracy.”³⁴ Implementing a democratic government in Germany would help the Germans put the right foot forward. More specifically, re-education through theater and literature was “designed to address the problem at its most deep-rooted level, involving an attempt at changing fundamentally the attitudes, the values and the civic character, not only of the elites but also of the ordinary Germans.”³⁵ By introducing the Germans to classic British literature and showing them examples of respectable British behavior, the Germans would develop a healthier outlook and become a better society overall.

In order to monitor and introduce British literature, late in 1945 or early 1946, the Political Intelligence Division set up a Book Selection Committee. This Committee, composed of three men, drew up a list of recommended titles to be translated and published in the British Zone. These men, Mr. A. L. Rowse, Michael Sadleir, and G. Rees wanted to make books accessible to the Germans. The hope was that in making English classics and contemporary writing available, the younger generation of Germans would inadvertently be instilled with morals: “Literature was thus intended to operate not primarily as entertainment, but as an embodiment of humanitarian and democratic attitudes.”³⁶ The British logic read that since they

³⁴ Turner, “Introduction,” 6.

³⁵ Wilfried van der Will, “British Policy of Re-Education: Contradictions and Achievements” in *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany* by Alan Bance (Germany: The London Symposium, 1997), 271.

³⁶ Rhys Williams, “‘The Selections of the Committee are not in Accord with the Requirements of Germany’: Contemporary English Literature and the Selected Book Scheme in the British Zone

grew up reading the classics and were morally sound, then all the young Germans needed to do was read the classics, too. After being exposed to the characters in the books, ones who had strong moral compasses and good sensibilities, the Germans would begin to act and behave morally, ultimately casting away their life of black market activities and forgetting the rules of Nazism.

In order to facilitate the administration of books throughout the zone, the British Military Government opened British libraries and information centers. Between 1946 and 1950, more than thirty of these establishments, commonly known as *Die Brücke* (“The Bridge”), gave the Germans access to foreign, mostly British, newspapers and literature.”³⁷ In order to stock the library shelves and make sure the Germans were reading the appropriate literature, strict measures were taken to weed out the books deemed to be a bad influence. The Appendix to Educational Control Instruction 37 was direct in its stipulations: “No book will be approved which – a. Glorifies militarism, b. Seems to propagate, revive or justify the doctrines of National Socialism, or exalt the achievements of National Socialist leaders.”³⁸ Understandably, the Germans welcomed this initiative, as it allowed them to explore artistic creativity that had been stifled under the Third Reich.

In reality, few books were banned, but, at this point, “Britain still fancied itself as the policeman, the nanny or the political tutor of the world, quietly convinced of the superiority of all things British.”³⁹ While they were not actually banning books, they wanted to maintain the air of responsible occupier and were convinced that by guiding the Germans towards British

of Germany (1945-1950)” in *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany* by Alan Bance (Germany: The London Symposium, 1997) 111.

³⁷ Schulze, 86.

³⁸ van der Will, 268.

³⁹ van der Will, 271.

literature, the Germans would become more invested in a British democracy. It was assumed “that the Germans would learn from the British example, and that the right people, given the necessary authority, would eventually fund – and sustain – the right kinds of institution.”⁴⁰ The British applied this same logic to the plays they performed. They believed the Germans would see human interactions in the play and morality at work within the plot and would eventually adopt the behavior themselves. Again, this allowed the British to influence the Germans with entertainment, rather than forcing them to endure activities or lectures that would garner animosity.

Because of the focus on Christianity and moral regeneration, theater productions in the British zone started up shortly after the war ended. Plays allowed the British to subtly promote religious messages while also modeling the behavior and etiquette they wanted the Germans to embrace. The other zones recognized the importance of theater, and Shakespeare in particular, in war torn Germany: it is no coincidence that “most, if not all, of the belligerents of the Second World War have, at one time or another, laid claim to Shakespeare and have called upon his work to convey their society’s self-image. His works constituted a readily available, malleable, and instantly recognizable part of their cultural inventory of signs, and symbols.”⁴¹ However, the British saw Shakespeare’s plays as a pivotal tool for re-education and used it to influence their policy goals. The British recognized the German reverence of the playwright and used his plays to facilitate their zone policy and reform of the German civilians.

⁴⁰ Anthony Glees, *Reinventing Germany: German Political Development since 1945*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996).

⁴¹ Irena R. Makaryk, “Introduction: Theater, War, Memory, and Culture,” in *Shakespeare and the Second World War: Memory, Culture, Identity*, edited by Irena R. Makaryk and Marissa McHugh, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 5.

The near unanimous approval and familiarity of the playwright made his plays the obvious way to reach a country that was exhausted and struggling to come to terms with the past few years. The British were not strangers to colonization, and it is clear that they knew how to vary their approach to suit the area. For example, the British did not rely as heavily on Shakespeare to influence their policy goals in their other occupation attempts due to vast cultural differences.⁴² The Bard's plays were available and performed during these occupation ventures; however, because of the difference in culture in areas such as India, Africa, and the Caribbean, many of Shakespeare's plays had to be altered – names and phrases had to be changed or translated, plotlines had to be adjusted – in order for an audience to find meaning in the performance.⁴³ In Germany during the Occupation, this was not the case. Even if the plays had not been translated from the original Elizabethan English and even without sets or props, the Germans were familiar enough with the plays to enjoy them.

Additionally, Shakespeare offered a variety of genres – he wrote comedies, histories, tragedies – and his plays provided depth that went well beyond the typical play. His writing was full of rich content, from religious allusions to moral lessons, and his plays were historically important to German tradition. In this way, the British recognized it as an asset for achieving their policy goals; Shakespeare is “a kind of ‘sign’ or ‘symbol’ of cultural memory.”⁴⁴ The stories he brings to life can be told across cultures and through generations, gaining different meaning and adapting to their surroundings. As mentioned above, this has been seen in India and in the Caribbean, where each culture took pieces of Shakespearean plays they liked and

⁴² Barbara Bogaev, “Shakespeare in Africa,” *Folger Shakespeare Library*, (2018), accessed December 16, 2018, <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited/africa>.

⁴³ Barbara Bogaev, “Shakespeare in India,” *Folger Shakespeare Library*, (2018), accessed May 12, 2018, <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited/india>.

⁴⁴ Makaryk, 6.

adapted it to suit their society's needs.⁴⁵ For example, in order to make the stories more relatable, many of the character names are "Indianized": Macbeth is Rudrapal, Othello is Bhimsinha. In the Caribbean, *The Merchant of Venice* features Shylock the Haitian, instead of Shylock the Jew in order to highlight the marginalized Haitian immigrant situation.⁴⁶ Because his works are "instantly recognizable, infinitely referential, but frequently shifting in meaning, Shakespeare's works...[become] a prismatic lens through which to view" any given event.⁴⁷ This versatility was one of the reasons that the British continued to use Shakespeare's plays when expanding their colonial rule.

The British recognized that using Shakespeare might allow them to get through to an otherwise unreceptive audience. Both the Germans and the British shared a cultural affinity for William Shakespeare, and of this the British hoped to take advantage. As demonstrated in the next three chapters, the plays that the British performed were intentionally selected (or omitted) so as to highlight and implement their policy goals. The first chapter explores the plays that the British excluded, as these have proven to be just as revealing as the ones they performed. The themes in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* would have contradicted the demilitarization that the British were trying to accomplish. Then, the paper will look at two specific plays that were performed: *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*. The British performed *Hamlet* to reinforce their goals of religious and moral revival, or re-education, and *Measure for Measure* was performed to highlight the qualities of humanity they wanted to impress upon the Germans and to emphasize democratization through empathy.

⁴⁵ Bogaev, "Shakespeare in India."

⁴⁶ Neva Grant, "Shakespeare in the Caribbean," *Folger Shakespeare Library*, (2018), accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited/caribbean>.

⁴⁷ Makaryk, 7.

Chapter 1: Demilitarizing Germany

When the British first occupied their zone, they were determined to demilitarize the country for a variety of reasons. Firstly, “the overriding purpose of Britain’s involvement in the occupation of Germany was to ensure that after two world wars, both provoked in British eyes by German aggression, the German nation would never again be in a position to wage war against Britain and her allies. Security was the prime concern.”⁴⁸ Interestingly, Britain’s involvement and concern was not so much from fear that Nazism would come back. Rather, “the perceived danger stemmed...from a deep-seated flaw in the German ‘national character’: the inherent bellicosity of Germans through the ages, the teutonic lust for conquest and domination.”⁴⁹ The Germans were an inherently violent people, and in order to make sure Europe was safe, they needed to reduce Germany’s military strength. In demilitarizing the country by destroying military equipment, demobilizing military personnel, and eliminating the chance for a dictator to rise, the British believed Germany would not have the opportunity to gain strength and become a threat again.

Despite taking away their military power, the British hoped that Germany would become an independent and responsible society through re-education: they wanted a good future ally. Many of the British officials recognized “Britain had to go on living as Germany’s neighbor.”⁵⁰ Therefore, the British had a genuine interest in the result of the occupation and wanted to make sure the end product was something of value. Additionally, the future that the British saw for Germany was influenced by centuries of experience with European politics. The British were not looking for a “quick fix” in Germany. Rather, they were looking to invest in a new future,

⁴⁸ Turner, “Introduction,” 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Alan Bance, *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany*, (Germany: The London Symposium, 1997), 11.

which is why they wanted to monitor the literature that was read and the plays that were performed.

When determining their post-war policies, the British had specific principles in mind that would affect Germany's future: "Among these were firstly the belief that Europe consisted essentially of a family of nation states, whose affairs could best be regulated and settled by negotiation and occasional conferences between the heads of government of the leading powers."⁵¹ Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his close confidant, Anthony Eden, especially wanted Europe to return to "what it had been before the war, as a family of nation states, and who were influenced by considerations of the balance of power in Europe."⁵² This idea of unity and power was what the British wanted to promote for Europe's future, and because of the authority the country now possessed, they wanted to make sure this future image came to fruition. For this reason, the British relied on theater and Shakespeare to help unite Germany and gain their trust.

When play performances began again in Germany shortly after the war ended, theater companies were particular about which ones were appropriate for the damaged citizens. In regards to the British companies and performances, they wanted the plays to reflect their occupation goals. It makes sense, then, why the British would not want to perform plays with overt political content, like Shakespeare's histories. Many of the plays in this genre focus on a leader obtaining and misusing power. Additionally, most of these plays are full of violence. Since the British were dedicated to leading the Germans towards a non-violent future, they felt it would not be beneficial to perform the plays that supported the very ideals they were trying to

⁵¹ Keith Sainsbury, "British Policy and German Unity at the End of the Second World War," *The English Historical Review* 94, no. 373 (October 1979) 787, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/565553>.

⁵² Sainsbury, 790.

eliminate through demilitarization. Specifically, *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* were two plays that were notably not performed in the British zone.⁵³ In both of these plays, tyrannical rulers are glorified, and especially in the latter, many qualities that were celebrated under Nazi rule are praised, as will be discussed later.

While attempting to figure out why the British did not perform these two Roman tragedies at the start of the occupation, looking at the effects of theater and literature on the psyche is helpful. It was assumed that “(a) motifs and themes are present in the texts of the plays and have an effect on the audience; (b) certain of these effects would, under the circumstances given, overwhelm all the others.”⁵⁴ During the 1940s, social psychologists Kurt Lewin and Leon Festinger researched the effect that social situations have on an individual’s actions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They determined that while most humans are inclined to exhibit morally acceptable behaviors, external influences can influence behavior.⁵⁵ It was thought, then, that the violent plays would promote or create civil disobedience or discontentment among society; therefore, the British wanted to avoid performing these plays. Beyond wanting to support their own policy, they also did not want to remind the Germans of the atrocities of the recent war. Looking more closely at the plays will reveal just how much the plot and characters contradicted what the British were trying to do with their policy.

In Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the love the people have for Caesar is clear. Taking place in ancient Rome when the Roman Empire was expanding, the play depicts the events

⁵³ Balz Engler, “The Noise that Banish’d Martius: *Coriolanus* in Post-War Germany,” *Renaissance Refractions: Essays in Honour of Alexander Shurbanov*, ed. Boika Sokolova and Evgenia Pancheva, (Sofia: St Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2001), 181.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 182.

⁵⁵ Charles Stagnor, *Defining Social Psychology: History and Principles* ed. Rajiv Jhangiani and Hammond Tarry, *Pressbooks*, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://opentextbc.ca/socialpsychology/chapter/defining-social-psychology-history-and-principles/>.

leading up to Caesar's assassination and the civil war that erupts shortly after. While many rulers tried to become absolute rulers of Rome, Caesar was the only one close to achieving this success. Shakespeare's interpretation of the situation shows that this was primarily due to his popularity among the citizens.

At the start of the play, the commoners are getting ready to watch the parade celebrating Caesar's military victory over Pompey. Citizens of Rome are wearing their best attire, taking off from work, and throwing flowers to honor Caesar. The peoples' love for Caesar is reflected in the senators' nervousness. Many of them feel that Caesar can do no wrong and that the people would forgive him for anything, regardless of his actions: "if Caesar had stabb'd their mothers, they would have done no less...than forgive him with all their hearts."⁵⁶ This unwavering devotion for a leader is what the British were hesitant to promote. The play does not seem to disapprove of this type of adoration for a leader, as evident in the fact that the British likely supposed the audience would side with Caesar in the play. His fate is viewed as horrible and undeserved. If the British were comparing the play to current events, then it depicts Hitler's death as a tragedy. Additionally, those who act against Caesar in any way are immediately punished. Before the parade, two tribunes are seen removing decorations, and "for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images, [the tribunes] are put to silence."⁵⁷ This type of discipline – death – for not respecting a leader is similar to the type of consequences during the Nazi regime. Freedom of speech and freedom of belief were not tolerated.

⁵⁶ All play quotations from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. By G. Blakemore Evans, Vol 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.274-275, 272.

⁵⁷ *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.285-286.

Lastly, at Caesar's funeral, the people cry out "O noble Caesar!", "O woeful day!", "We will be reveng'd!"⁵⁸ Shakespeare's portrayal of unwavering devotion for a leader and desire from the people to disregard a republic or group run government is what the British did not want to encourage. The citizens of Rome are distraught by Caesar's death and do not understand the Republic's reasoning, for they did not feel threatened by Caesar's growing power. The British believed that this type of praise for a dictatorship directly opposed their policy to promote a democratic government and a peaceful people.

The British made sure to eliminate any comparison that might have been made between Caesar and Hitler by not performing this play. Shakespeare's play portrays Caesar as a martyr rather than a power hungry dictator: it was not Caesar's growing command that was the problem, but instead it was Cassius' jealousy that led to Caesar's assassination. While speaking with Brutus, Cassius tells a story of when Caesar and Cassius crossed the Tiber together. During this adventure, Cassius saved the weak and tired Caesar, and "this man /Is now become a god, and Cassius is/ A wretched creature, and must bend his body/ If Caesar carelessly but nod on him."⁵⁹ This envy of Caesar is further highlighted when Cassius talks about his place in society: "Why, man, [Caesar] doth bestride the narrow world/Like a Colossus, and we petty men/Walk under his huge legs, and peep about/To find ourselves dishonorable graves."⁶⁰ Cassius' envy and anger towards Caesar's rise to power and his own weaker position takes away from the argument he makes that Caesar must die in order to protect Rome. In this way, the play is a tribute to Caesar who was able to rule as a benevolent dictator, and this is something the British would not have wanted to promote.

⁵⁸ *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.199-203.

⁵⁹ *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.115-118.

⁶⁰ *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.135-138.

Shakespeare's tragedy of *Coriolanus* is another play that the British were opposed to performing. It was one of the few banned from the zone for the way in which it reflects a number of views that were common under the Nazi rule. In this political play, Caius Martius is a one-man army and expert killing machine who serves and protects Rome honorably. After a successful battle against the Volscians, Rome wants to promote Martius; however, in order to do so, he must beg the lower classes for votes, which he refuses. He wishes to, "o'erleap that custom" for he cannot stand to succumb to the tradition: to "put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them/ For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage."⁶¹ Martius does not feel the need to cater to others; he believes that his deeds should stand on their own, and whether from humility or pride, he refuses to brag about his ventures. It is this refusal that ultimately forces him out of his hometown.

Before Martius is banished from Rome, the audience is able to see the values with which children are raised in this society. Volumnia, Martius' proud mother, speaks confidently about what she values in a son: "I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honor than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love."⁶² Volumnia is chastising Virgilia, Coriolanus' wife, for complaining about her husband's absence and current dangerous situation while he is away at war. Volumnia scolds her daughter-in-law, saying she would rather he be honored on the battlefield and give love to country than be home loving his family. Volumnia talks about how she raised her son, saying, she was "pleas'd to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame."⁶³ As long as her son would die honorably, she did not care if he got himself into dangerous situations. This complete devotion to serving the state and gaining

⁶¹ *Coriolanus*, 2.3.136-138.

⁶² *Coriolanus*, 1.3.3-5.

⁶³ *Coriolanus*, 1.3.12-13.

honor for sacrificing for the good of the cause is reminiscent of Nazi Germany where the Party focused on preparing the youth to be “obedient, self-sacrificing Germans who would be willing to die for Führer and Fatherland.”⁶⁴

In this same conversation, Volumnia brings up a hypothetical situation, saying that if she had twelve sons, she would “rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.”⁶⁵ Her ability to be proud as a parent results in the admirable death of her children. And, although Virgilia is unhappy about her husband’s absence, she is proud of their boisterous son, admiring that he would “rather see the swords and hear a drum than look upon his schoolmaster.”⁶⁶ Volumnia is delighted to hear her grandson is more interested in war than school subjects, and Virgilia echoes this sentiment, calling him “a noble child” for ripping apart a butterfly with his teeth.⁶⁷ This single mindedness about honor and pride for country was something about which the British disagreed with the Germans: they did not believe that this was a positive quality. Therefore, it makes sense that they would not want to perform *Coriolanus*, a play that promoted these ideals as powerful and enviable.

Not only was the play’s promotion of violence and honor an issue, but the potential audience interpretation of *Coriolanus* made the British uneasy. *Coriolanus* could easily be perceived as a leader who fails because he lacks both love for his people and the overpowering belief in his mission. One citizen says, “If he would incline to the people, there was never worthier a man”,⁶⁸ while another says, “You have been a scourge to her enemies, you have been

⁶⁴ “Indoctrinating Youth,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007820>.

⁶⁵ *Coriolanus*, 1.3.24-25.

⁶⁶ *Coriolanus*, 1.3.55-56.

⁶⁷ *Coriolanus*, 1.3.67.

⁶⁸ *Coriolanus*, 2.3.38.

a rod to her friends; you have not indeed lov'd the common people.”⁶⁹ In this way, Coriolanus failed because he lacked the love of the people. On the contrary, one might infer that Hitler was the opposite – he was portrayed as having the love of Germany – and therefore he was guaranteed to be successful.⁷⁰ Hitler was charismatic and able to rally the citizens behind him and the British believed this was the reason he was able to gain power and influence in Germany; therefore, they avoided performing this play.

The other reason *Coriolanus* was deemed an issue by the British authority was its history in German schools. In 1934 a new edition of the play was published for schools with a very specific ideological goal. Primarily, it was used to depict the ultimate “hero” for the new, young German to idolize. Written in the front of each copy of the book was note praising Hitler: “The poet deals with the problem of the people and its leader; he depicts the true nature of the leader in contrast to the aimless masses; he shows a people led in a false manner, a false democracy, whose exponents yield to the wishes of the people for egotistical reasons. Above these weaklings towers the figure of the true hero and leader Coriolanus, who would like to guide the deceived people to its health in the same way as, in our days, Adolf Hitler, would do with our beloved German fatherland.”⁷¹ This direct note idolizing Hitler and his ideology was yet another reason the British did not feel comfortable promoting and performing *Coriolanus*. Although the British could have removed every copy of *Coriolanus* with this note and restocked the schools with a reprinted version, it would have taken time, and this play would still be loosely associated with Hitler and the Nazi regime.

⁶⁹ *Coriolanus*, 2.3.91-93.

⁷⁰ Lieselott Eckloff, "Heroismus und politisches Führertum bei Shakespeare", *Zeitschrift für neusprachlichen Unterricht* 37 (1938), 97, quoted in Engler.

⁷¹ Martin Brunkhorst, *Shakespeare 'Coriolanus' in deutscher Bearbeitung*, (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), quoted in Engler.

The British believed that both Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* presented to the Germans that the brave, honest, and good triumph, even though they might have to die. After Hitler's nationalistic reign in Germany, the British wanted to de-emphasize military prominence and violence. Because the British were focused on demilitarization with the goal of helping the Germans become a good ally, they avoided the Roman tragedies. Specifically, *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* were not performed during the occupation in order to promote the British policy goal of demilitarization.

Chapter 2: Restoring Religion

While demilitarization was initially a primary concern, the British believed that through re-education, they could help Germany return to a Christian society. Specifically, they believed that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would begin to fill the religious void in German society. While part of their re-education plan was to teach the Germans how to be a functional and stable democracy, they believed the Nazis had strayed far from necessary religious values that would allow them to be a good ally. *Hamlet* was selected as one of the plays to perform because it addresses multiple moral dilemmas, and there are Biblical references throughout the entire play that would help reconnect Germany to their historically Christian beliefs.

Many of the leading figures working in the British Occupation Zone believed that restoring religious ideals into German life was necessary in order to re-establish a strong moral code in society. Despite historically strong ties to Christianity, Germany had succumbed to a corrupt view of the world, and in order to help obtain morality, the Germans needed to be re-introduced to ethical behavior. Lord Robert Vansittart, senior British diplomat during World War II and prominent statesman post World War II, spearheaded the idea that the Germans were morally lost and in need of saving. In his book, *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* he wrote that Germany needed to undergo “‘a deep, spiritual regeneration’: she will have to undergo the most thorough spiritual cure in history; and part of that cure will have to be self-administered. It will have to comprise a complete change of heart, mind and soul; of taste and temperament and habit; a new set of morals and values, a new, a brand-new way of looking at life.”⁷² Although Vansittart was known for his conservative views and sometimes vitriolic statements about the Germans, specifically that the Germans possessed an intrinsic aggressive

⁷² Robert Gilbert Vansittart, *Black Record: German's Past and Present, Rare Books and Manuscripts, 1941* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), 15.

nature, he was not alone in his views that Germany lacked culture and civility. Many of the generals and men in positions of power believed that promoting and practicing Christianity would have a domino effect on society: if religious traditions were strengthened, the Germans would become good people, and then, undoubtedly, a good, fair government would closely follow. The British believed a good way to introduce this topic was through the plays they performed, *Hamlet* in particular.

As the British worked to empower religion through theater and church services, it was clear that they were tapping into a piece of German life that the Germans were missing. This was evident by the crowded churches on Sunday: “what people sought...was reassurance, guidance, spiritual orientation, some form of hope, not flat confrontation with the unthinkable and ineffable.”⁷³ This missing piece was also evident at the crowded performances, and the British recognized that Shakespeare would help establish and reinforce their religious messages. Experts say Shakespeare’s greatest inspiration for his plays was the Bible.⁷⁴ This is believable, seeing as many of Shakespeare’s plays have Biblical references and a heightened focus on justice and morality. Scholars believe that Shakespeare was using the biblical ideals of justice and turning them into plays.⁷⁵

Because Shakespeare frequently incorporated religious messages into his plays, the British had many to choose from when deciding how to best relay a religious message; however, it is no surprise that *Hamlet* was one that they performed early on in the occupation and was the

⁷³ Hortmann, 177.

⁷⁴ Chandra Johnson, “What Shakespeare is still teaching us about good and evil 400 years after his death,” *Deseret Family News*, April 14, 2016, (accessed July 12, 2018,) <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/865652119/What-Shakespeare-is-still-teaching-us-about-good-and-evil-400-years-after-his-death.html>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

most frequently performed play in Germany between 1945 and 1950.⁷⁶ Not only did the German adoration of the conflicted prince in *Hamlet* make this play an obvious choice, but furthermore, this tragedy addresses the validity of moral and religious problems. The British recognized they could use this beloved play to enforce their policy goal of integrating religion into society without being overly didactic in their approach.

The first production of *Hamlet* opened on December 11, 1945 on an undoubtedly cold, bare stage. This early production supported by the British proved “just how consequential Shakespeare was going to be in the cultural reconstruction of the German nation.”⁷⁷ Regardless of the trying environment, attendance was high. This demonstrated to the British that despite the inconveniences in the Germans’ lives, the hunger for theater was insatiable and would be a good vehicle for the British to transport their religious occupation goals.

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Denmark is thrown into disarray when Claudius unnaturally becomes king. The play opens with chaos flooding the stage: there is a confusing funeral/wedding/coronation event, and to top it off, a ghost haunting the castle grounds. Claudius marrying the queen and assuming the role of king may not seem out of the ordinary at first glance; it might seem believable that Claudius and Gertrude are in love and the untimely death of the king allowed their relationship to blossom. However, there are a few details that should raise red flags. First, Claudius and Gertrude get married quickly after the death of King Hamlet: “Two months dead, nay, not so much, not two.”⁷⁸ Additionally, Claudius is connected to the family – he is the late king’s brother. Furthermore, through rules of succession in

⁷⁶ Andreas Hofele, *No Hamlets: German Shakespeare from Nietzsche to Carl Schmitt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 239.

⁷⁷ Dennis Kennedy, “Shakespeare and the Cold War,” *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, edited by A. Luis Pujante and Tom Hoenselaars (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 169.

⁷⁸ *Hamlet*, 1.2.138.

Denmark, it would seem that King Hamlet's direct heir, Prince Hamlet, should inherit the throne next, rather than the King's brother.

If those details are not convincing enough, the audience quickly learns that Claudius was involved in some shady business to earn his royalty. Through the ghost that is haunting the grounds, the audience learns that the most unnatural part of Claudius' rise to the throne is that he committed murder to get the position. When Prince Hamlet's ghost father appears to him, it is made clear that Claudius is to blame for the unrest the ghost is experiencing. The ghost of King Hamlet reveals his brother killed him "in the blossoms of my sin,/Unhoused, disappointed, unanel'd,/ No reck'ning made, but sent to my account/With all my imperfections on my head."⁷⁹ Claudius killing his brother may seem bad in of itself; however, this villainous brother made matters worse when looking at the act through a religious lens. In killing King Hamlet "with all [his] imperfections on [his] head," the King was unable to repent before death. Because he was killed before his sins were forgiven, he is sentenced to purgatory until his sins are "burnt and purg'd away",⁸⁰ according to the Catholic religion. This is why Prince Hamlet knows that "All is not well,/ I doubt some foul play" because his "father's spirit—in arms!"⁸¹ His father is punished to purgatory until he has served his time.

Shakespeare sets the stage for a play influenced by religion in the opening act, and these references continue through the imagery in the play. For example, when King Hamlet's ghost is scared away by the approaching sunrise, the soldiers comment on the crowing of the rooster. Three different soldiers comment on this signal of morning which alludes to Peter's trio of denials of Jesus before the crucifixion. Additionally, in the final scene of the play, Hamlet says,

⁷⁹ *Hamlet*, 1.5.76-79.

⁸⁰ *Hamlet*, 1.5.13.

⁸¹ *Hamlet*, 1.2.254-257.

“There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be [now], tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now...no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is't to leave betimes, let be.”⁸²

Hamlet's sparrow metaphor alludes to Matthew 10:29 which reads, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”⁸³ Hamlet, who wrestles with fate and the afterlife throughout the play, finally acknowledges the role that God plays in controlling life and death, demonstrating how far he has come over the course of his journey. Hamlet finally realizes that he is not responsible for exacting justice on earth: rather, he needs to surrender his power to God, and trust that He will set things right.

The Christian undertones in *Hamlet* also take shape in bigger plot references, too. For example, Claudius' betrayal of his brother mirrors the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel. Additionally, the characters are very much aware of a higher power: Gertrude when she reflects on her actions, Claudius when he prays, and Hamlet when he contemplates life after death. For example, during a point of high tension in the play, King Claudius blames himself for his horrendous act and asks God for forgiveness. The conflicted King, finally alone, thinks aloud, “O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven,/ It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,/ A brother's murder.”⁸⁴ Not only does Claudius recognize his sin as horrible, but he compares it to the “primal eldest curse,” which is, according to the Bible, the first murder. This direct reference to one of the original Bible stories in which a brother commits fratricide stresses the severity of his action. He is comparing himself to an original killer while acknowledging his immorality.

⁸² *Hamlet*, 5.2.219-224.

⁸³ Matthew 10:29 (KJV).

⁸⁴ *Hamlet*, 3.3.36-38.

King Claudius continues his repentance saying, “Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens/ To wash it white as snow.”⁸⁵ He looks to heaven, acknowledging the gravity of his sin, unsure of whether or not there is even a place for him in the afterlife due to his horrible deed. Despite this uncertainty, he prays: “Help, angels! Make assay, / Bow, stubborn knees, and heart, with strings of steel,/ Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.”⁸⁶ Despite his clearly wavering faith, as evidenced by his immoral action in killing his brother, Claudius kneels in prayer to ask for forgiveness. In this pivotal scene, Claudius’ reflection demonstrates the role religion can play in even the most corrupt life and validates religious morality.

Not only does this scene show Claudius in prayer, but Hamlet himself contemplates the role of religion in his life at the same time. When Hamlet witnesses Claudius praying, he contemplates using this moment as an opportunity to kill his murdering uncle. However, he is dissuaded because of his belief in the afterlife. Just as he raises his knife to strike down Claudius, he stops, saying, “A villain kills my father, and for that/ I, his sole son, do this same villain send/ To heaven?”⁸⁷ Why does Hamlet not use this essentially perfect moment to take revenge on his uncle? For the same reason he does not commit suicide a few scenes earlier when he considers the question “To be, or not to be.” Hamlet is highly concerned with the afterlife and what happens to a soul after death. What he is sure of is that he wants Claudius to suffer in the same way as his father. Because of this conflict, he refuses to “take him in the purging of his soul,/When he is fit and season’d for his passage.”⁸⁸ Hamlet will not kill Claudius while he is repenting. Instead, he wants to wait until “he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,/ Or in th’ incestuous pleasure of his bed,/ At game a-swearing, or about some act/ That has no relish of salvation in’t--

⁸⁵ *Hamlet*, 3.3.45-46.

⁸⁶ *Hamlet*, 3.3.69-71.

⁸⁷ *Hamlet*, 3.3.76-78.

⁸⁸ *Hamlet*, 3.3.84-85.

/ Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,/ And that his soul may be as damn'd and black/ As hell, whereto it goes.”⁸⁹ Although Hamlet’s sinister thoughts and actions might be judged as highly irreligious by some, his awareness of religion and the seriousness with which he reflects on the afterlife is clearly portrayed in this scene.

While the ideas of revenge or violence would not be ones that the British wanted to highlight, this pivotal moment in the play supports the British attempt to lead the Germans back towards religion. In his moment of distress, Claudius, rather than lashing out or withdrawing inward, prays, turning to God for an answer. Hamlet continually returns to the question of what will happen to him when he dies, showing the concern he has for his soul. Furthermore, Hamlet’s attention to the afterlife is an important piece of Christianity and validates how influential religion can be. Montgomery, Robertson, Bishop and Birley believed that religion was a critical piece missing in Germany after 1945. They supported the idea that if the Germans adopted a more Christian lifestyle, they would become better citizens and eventually better European allies. With the production of *Hamlet*, the British wanted to send positive messages about religion through a medium that would hold the Germans attention and in a way that they felt was not overtly condescending. The hope was that this nonthreatening approach would allow the Germans to make a decision themselves, one that would help them turn towards religion, and then, naturally, the Germans would become better humans altogether.

⁸⁹ *Hamlet*, 3.3.89-95.

Chapter 3: Fostering Humanity

While the British wanted to re-educate the Germans and lead them towards religion, they also wanted to teach them lessons in humanity by promoting a specific type of culture and renewed compassion for others. Their hope was that this would lead towards a democratic society. One of the occupation's administrators in Germany commented, "I grew to think that what we were dealing with as Germanity and humanity, the former being the bad to be corrected and the latter the good to be fostered."⁹⁰ It became apparent that the British were investing in more than just controlling Germany: they wanted to make sure the integrity of its people was restored and guide them towards a fair society. Because of the way Shakespeare infused many of his plays with questions of empathy and redemption, the British knew that they could highlight this theme through play productions.

As mentioned before, it was believed that the traditional groundwork of German society was morally unsound. Germans were either incredibly anti-democratic and authoritarian or guilty of complicity in the Nazi ideals.⁹¹ These biases and overstatements were not just implied, but also supported with informational documents. Before the occupation began, handbooks were produced and distributed containing information that was supposed to help the British understand the country they would be occupying. While the pamphlets contained basic information about German history and traditions, for the most part, the texts were brief, bland, and "aimed at a wide readership with little or no assumed knowledge of the topics covered."⁹² One guide circulating in 1944 called *Pocket Guide to Germany* commented on how dangerous the youth were and pushed the belief that the Germans were in serious need of moral training: "The young

⁹⁰ Ingrams, "Building Democracy in Germany" 209, cited in Graham-Dixon, 37.

⁹¹ Turner, "Introduction," 6.

⁹² Phillips, *Educating the Germans*, 93.

German...has been taught that the strong are entitled to pick on and destroy the weak, that it is noble to squeal on a pal, or even snitch on a member of one's own family, that if you can win by cheating it's just as good as winning any other way, that a promise or word of honor given is to be kept only as long as it suits its purpose and can be broken at any time."⁹³ The British believed that the German youth especially were taught the message that some Germans were superior to others, and this was an idea that the British wanted to change.

Contrary to what the British believed, in reality, the devastation in Germany was unprecedented and was not connected to the supposed lack of German morality. Housing was especially difficult. In the British Zone, 22% of pre-war living accommodation had been totally destroyed.⁹⁴ Resources were scarce: it was difficult to find food and shelter and fuel for cooking and heating. For this reason, the rise of a black market economy quickly popped up. Daily life became a constant battle, and "the usual parameters of life no longer existed: the moral order had collapsed as people struggled to survive."⁹⁵ Despite the chaos, the British were committed to their occupation goals and still pushed their theater agenda. Shakespeare and his plays easily settled into the environment: because Shakespeare had such a rich understanding of human nature, many of his plays highlight human faults, failure and forgiveness, as well as the difficult choices one must make in face of adversity.

Ultimately, Shakespeare's plays, both in print form and in performances, further helped expose the Germans to the British literary agenda. While the main pillars of European culture – classical antiquity, Christianity, and humanism – were stressed in lectures,⁹⁶ these ideas were

⁹³ Special Service Division, *Pocket Guide to Germany 1944*, Internet Archive, 8-9, <https://archive.org/stream/PocketGuideToGermany/w0048#page/n5>.

⁹⁴ Phillips, *Educating the Germans*, 33.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 35.

⁹⁶ van der Will, 281.

popping up in school syllabuses and newspapers, too. It is no surprise, then, that these same ideas were echoed on the stage, and Shakespeare's theater fit seamlessly into this trifecta of European culture. In the words of German theater critic Gunther Ruhle, theater was meant as a "restitution hominis' or the restitution of a humane image of man in deliberate opposition to the defacements it had endured in the immediate past."⁹⁷ In this way, "there was apparently no doubt that theater's prime task was to contribute to the ethical regeneration of a dejected and morally compromised people."⁹⁸ For the British, Shakespearean theater became more than just a mode of entertainment. It became the vessel responsible for teaching the nation morality and was a way for them to promote a democratic structure.

Luckily for the British, they were able to rely on Shakespeare's plays to enforce their policies. They may not have found as much success if they introduced the Germans to new playwrights or wrote original plays that highlighted the lessons they wanted to promote. First, the Germans were not entirely convinced that the British knew what they were doing when it came to the arts. While they respected the Americans for their films and even the French for their high culture, they were not as open to the British being creative. Their work is seen as traditional, reserved, and uninspiring.⁹⁹ So, the British had to make use of a reputation that had already been established. The Germans already respected Shakespeare, even if they were adverse to the British performing him.

Furthermore, the lessons taught to the Germans through theater "had to be pertinent as well as indirect. The shock techniques...that would later be found in the plays...would have been unbearable at this early period. The message, instead, had to be couched in a more general

⁹⁷ Hortmann, 179.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 180.

⁹⁹ "How the World Sees Britain," *Ipsos MORI*, 22 November 1999, (accessed January 3, 2019) <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-world-sees-britain>.

form, as allegory or parable, and related to a metaphysical form of reference, not pronounced as a direct and historically concrete accusation.”¹⁰⁰ This is why plays written by William Shakespeare were ideal for the British to portray the idea of humanity and democracy. As mentioned earlier, one of Shakespeare’s main sources was the Bible. Furthermore, his plays have strong undertones of morality, and the characters are constantly demonstrating what is right and what is wrong. In this way, the British believed they could use Shakespeare to set a good example for the Germans without them feeling chastised. Ultimately, in a recovering Germany, the British hoped that Shakespeare’s plays would help “audiences to make sense of their experience and understand their place in a moral scheme of things without immediately finding themselves in the dock or at the pillory.”¹⁰¹

As the British considered the plays to perform, it seems odd that *Measure for Measure*, one of Shakespeare’s three “problem plays,” categorized as such for its dark comedy and psychological drama, might be chosen. Because of the unusually harsh punishments and the way characters use sex as a bargaining tool, one might assume this play would end up on the rejection list. However, *Measure for Measure* was an ideal play to perform during the post-war period as it delves into the themes of retribution and humanism. Because of the comedic undertones, the absurdity of some of the situations, and the lack of resolution, the play does not appear to be overly didactic. In this way, the British could perform this play without fear of offending the Germans who were liable to resist being reprimanded for crimes of which they felt they were innocent.

Measure for Measure was performed later in the occupation and was part of the Elizabethan Festival in Berlin in 1948. Ernest Bevin, former Baptist preacher and then foreign

¹⁰⁰ Hortmann, 180.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 180.

secretary for Britain, had the idea for the festival, and the University of Cambridge, specifically the student-run organization, the Marlowe Society, was instrumental in getting this event off the ground. At this first festival, there was also an exhibition of Shakespeare and the English stage, along with poetry readings, a garden party, and lectures, including guest speaker Robert Birley, head Educational Advisor for Germany. Overall, the event was supposed to help boost German morale and expose them to a variety of culture that they had potentially missed during the Nazi era.

Elizabeth Wyndham had a close connection with administrators in the theater department at Cambridge and played an important role in connecting Britain to Berlin for the festival. Her responsibility was to coordinate the logistics of the festival on the British side. One of the decisions made was not to use a professional company. Amateur productions were cheaper than professionals, which is probably why the Marlowe society was selected to perform.¹⁰² Not only was this company easier on the wallet, the Marlowe Society's "focus on text and elocution, paired with a tradition of playing on a bare stage, made the Marlowe an ideal travelling company, and ideally suited to playing in what was still the wreckage of Berlin."¹⁰³ Because the Marlowe Society was a traditionally simplistic company, the conditions in Berlin would not pose a problem to the actors.

The festival began with a grand musical performance; however, it was not as influential as the British hoped: "The musical part of the festival hence caused some anxiety. British respect for German achievements in this field was extremely high, and the attempt to (re-) educate Germans in the musical field was seen as bordering on the presumptuous. In addition, the British faced what they believed to be a German stereotype about Britain as a 'land without

¹⁰² Boecker, 285.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 289.

music.”¹⁰⁴ However, the British were adamant about promoting Shakespeare as the main event and this meant advertising him as “not just a musician of sorts, but a musician first and foremost, thereby at least doubling the perceived musical capital of Britain.”¹⁰⁵ Not only did the British use Shakespeare’s reputation to help boost their credibility in the theater department, but they also boasted of his musical talents, hoping to attract German interest and respect. Regardless of the musical aspect of the festival, the main event was the performance of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, as evidenced by the attendance and the post-festival reviews.¹⁰⁶ This worked in favor of the British who were attempting to promote humanism through the play.

Measure for Measure is about an attention seeking Duke and his desire to use his city as a sample group in conducting an experiment. Vienna has fallen into complete moral disarray, and rather than clean it up himself, Vincentio leaves and hands over all responsibility to Lord Angelo, his law abiding second in command. While handing over an entire city just for fun seems a bit unnecessary, the Duke wants to know what kind of prince the overly moralistic Angelo will make when Vienna is placed into his capable hands. His parting words to Angelo are “Mortality and mercy in Vienna/Live in thy tongue and heart”¹⁰⁷ showing that the Duke expects Angelo to practice balanced judgment of human affairs, specifically, determining who may live and who may die. His expectation was that Angelo would be fair in his decision making and restore order to the corrupt Vienna.

Lord Angelo is initially presented as being above human folly. He is described as having sub-human powers: “Lord Angelo is precise;/Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses/That

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 287.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 288.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Measure for Measure*, 1.1.44-45.

his blood flows; or that his appetite/ Is more to bread than stone.”¹⁰⁸ He is a human in control of basic instincts and capable of self-discipline in a way that many men are not. At least, this is the way he presents himself to others. Angelo is confident in his abilities, convinced that he will act fairly, will not be corrupted by power, and he touts his strength in the face of temptation saying, “Tis one thing to be tempted.../Another thing to fall.”¹⁰⁹

However, it is soon clear that Angelo is indeed human and the power has gone to his head. While in charge, Angelo decides to clean up the infected streets of Vienna by enforcing rules that limit sexual freedom. His first course of action is to arrest Claudio for impregnating his girlfriend, Juliet, before marriage. Even though they were engaged and the act was consensual, Angelo refuses to back down on his sentence and punishes Claudio with death, hoping to catch the city’s attention and set an example. Despite a number of townspeople in disagreement with the sentence, (for why should he be punished for exhibiting human sexual behavior), Angelo stands firm. That is, until Claudio’s sister, soon-to-be nun, Isabella, hears the news and faces Angelo to beg him for mercy.

When faced with the pure and innocent Isabella, Angelo waivers. Even though Isabella agrees that fornication is evil – she pleads “for which I would not plead, but that I must;/For which I must not plead, but that I am”¹¹⁰ – extreme circumstances should be taken into consideration. She scolds Angelo, saying, “Not the king’s crown, nor the deputed sword,/The marshal’s truncheon, nor the judge’s robe,/Become them with one half so good a grace/As mercy does.”¹¹¹ She attempts to persuade him by stating that mercy is the greatest power to possess and makes a great man. She also plays on a hypothetical situation, saying if the roles

¹⁰⁸ *Measure for Measure*, 1.3.50-53.

¹⁰⁹ *Measure for Measure*, 2.1.17-18.

¹¹⁰ *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.31-32.

¹¹¹ *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.60-63.

were reversed, Claudio, the man at fault, would not have inflicted such harsh punishment on Angelo for his sin: “If [Claudio] had been as you, and you as he,/ You would have slipp’d like him, but he, like you,/Would not have been so stern.”¹¹² She attempts to remind him that he is merely made in God’s likeness, and does not have divine right to judge: “His glassy essence” mocks him merely comedic relief in the eyes of the angels who outrank him.¹¹³ This statement comparing men to a higher power enforces the idea that all men are equal and do not have a right to pass judgment.

Unfortunately, none of these reflections seem to impact Angelo’s decision. When she says to him, “Go to your bosom,/Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know/That’s like my brother’s fault. If it confess/A natural guiltiness such as is his,/Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue/Against my brother’s life”;¹¹⁴ however, Angelo begins to weaken. He realizes that she is right: at this moment, Angelo recognizes he has the same urges that got Claudio in trouble, for he finds himself desiring Isabella. He asks himself, “What dost thou? or what art thou, Angelo?/Dost thou desire her foully for those things/ That make her good?”¹¹⁵ At this moment, Angelo is human and not any better than the other citizens of Vienna.

Despite vacillating between righteousness and disgust, Angelo ultimately decides to use his power for evil. He stands by his decision to kill Claudio, despite telling Isabella that he will reverse the sentence if she decides to sleep with him. At the climax of the play, when Angelo’s horrible deeds are about to come to the forefront, he lies to finagle his way out of the situation –

¹¹² *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.64-66.

¹¹³ *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.118-122.

¹¹⁴ *Measure for Measure*, 1.1.138-141.

¹¹⁵ *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.172-175.

“Let me have way, my lord,/To find this practice out”¹¹⁶ – presenting him as an undoubtedly evil man and not any more just or holy than the average citizen of Vienna.

The plot of this play is necessary to understand Shakespeare’s intent, as well as what the British were trying to accomplish with it. Through Angelo’s harsh judgment of Claudio, Shakespeare is asking the question that given a common humanity, what one man has the right to judge another. He presents Lord Angelo, a man in possession of total power, pursuing a situation that would make him guilty of the same crime for which he plans to punish. Rather than viewing the situation objectively, Angelo disregards democracy and pretends to possess more morality than Vienna.

When the situation is righted by the Duke who has conveniently reappeared, Isabella suddenly holds all of the power: believing her brother to have been killed at the hands of Angelo and knowing that he had intended to sleep with her (if not for a crafty bed trick), the Duke offers her an ultimatum: “An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!”/ Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;/ Like doth quit like, and *Measure* still for *Measure*.”¹¹⁷ The Duke presents Isabella with the opportunity to punish Angelo with death because of what he did to her brother. Rather than accept the Duke’s offer, Mariana and Isabella plead the case that redemption is possible for all men. Mariana says, “the best men are moulded out of faults,/And for the most, become much more the better/For being a little bad.”¹¹⁸ Isabella does not seek justice, but instead wishes for Angelo to be spared: “My brother had but justice,/In that he did the thing for which he died;/For Angelo...Thoughts are no subjects, / Intents but merely thoughts.”¹¹⁹ Because of the ladies’ generous forgiveness, Angelo is pardoned. Isabella is deemed good for

¹¹⁶ *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.238-239.

¹¹⁷ *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.409-411.

¹¹⁸ *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.439-441.

¹¹⁹ *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.448-454.

forgiving Angelo despite all that he has done. From her eyes, Angelo has slept with her, has taken her virginity, has reneged on a promise, and has killed her brother. Her ability to show mercy in the face of such adversity is a quality that the British would have wanted to convey to the Germans. Additionally, her ability to acknowledge that Angelo is a human being and her equal, is the lesson the British wanted the Germans to take from the play.

Furthermore, the play covers the topic of judgment, something the British would want the Germans to acknowledge. The undercover Duke makes it clear that while it is not fair to pass judgment on others, judgment is a part of life. He says, “No might nor greatness in mortality/Can censure scape”¹²⁰, or everyone is judged. This becomes incredibly clear in the final scene; however, instead of passing harsh judgments, the Duke pardons everyone. Even the incorrigible Barnardine is forgiven for his terrible faults.¹²¹ The idea that sometimes the best thing for a human soul is hope is revealed by the helpless Claudio: “The miserable have no other medicine/ But only hope.”¹²² The moral of the story ends up being that forgiveness is the ultimate tool to make sense of the world.

The ending of *Measure for Measure*, and the plot as a whole, although seemingly absurd, has the underlying lessons that the British would have wanted to promote. Throughout the play, it is clear that Angelo’s self-righteousness and betrayal are negative qualities. Hope, forgiveness, and tolerance are emphasized as being the best ways to move forward in life. The ending of the play faces the future optimistically with the realization that all issues have been resolved because of Isabella’s mercy.

¹²⁰ 3.2.185.

¹²¹ 5.1.483.

¹²² 3.1.2.

Conclusion

William Shakespeare has proven his ability to withstand the test of time. For the past four-hundred years, his plays have flooded stages, bookshelves, and Netflix accounts. Today, students still learn about Puck's disastrous potion, Iago's manipulation prowess, and Macbeth's thirst for power. Movie adaptations of the plays are frequently popping up in order to appeal to the current generation, like the twin swapping soccer story *She's the Man* that follows *Twelfth Night*, the Taming of Julia Styles in *10 Things I Hate About You*, and the numerous Romeos, from Leonard Whiting to Leonardo DiCaprio.

After World War II, with much of Europe in ruins, the British knew that in order to accomplish their occupation goals, they needed to appeal to the Germans' love for art. The British had specific policy goals in mind and knew what they wanted to accomplish; however, they also recognized that if they mirrored their ideas on the stage, their policy would be a much more manageable pill for the Germans' to swallow. The British had experience with occupation and colonization, and "had learnt from the aftermath of the First World War the difficulties of sustaining punitive restrictions on Germany over an extended period and the corrosive consequences such a policy could have on relations between occupier and occupied."¹²³ They believed that they would find the most success in helping the Germans overcome Nazism by guiding them towards a new thought process rather than forcing them to believe certain ideas, thus repeating the policies of the Nazi Reich. This is why the British focused on re-educating through theater: they believed it would provide lasting results.

The Germans were accepting of this policy for a variety of reasons. Despite their lack of confidence in the British ability to perform Shakespeare at a high level, the Germans were

¹²³ Turner, "Introduction," 5.

willing to entertain the British attempt because they wanted to forget what had happened to their country in the past years. It was clear that “for the public...few things seemed more urgent than being able to go to the theater again. Theaters and makeshift stages reopened almost immediately and enjoyed tremendous popularity despite primitive conditions and considerable distances that had to be travelled on foot.”¹²⁴ The need for theater among the German population was clear, especially considering the great lengths they would go to in order to see a performance. Performances “were held in temporary halls with whatever props or costumes had been salvaged, and the hungry spectators in winter would sit wrapped in greatcoats and mufflers. The new groups mostly made no pretence at all to imitate established theater” operating in whatever venues were available – barns, halls, classrooms, lofts and cellars.¹²⁵ What was clear is that the quality was not nearly as important as the product itself and the ability for the Germans to temporarily forget what was happening in real life: “It was a theater of bare necessity but new [theater] groups responded to a deeply felt need.”¹²⁶

Theater provided an outlet for the Germans, an escape from reality. Although the conditions were miserable, watching a two hour play temporarily allowed them to be somewhere else and forget not just the war, but their immediate living situation that was falling apart around them. Does this mean that any form of entertainment that the British would have supplied would have been successful in attracting an audience? Possibly. But, maybe there was another reason why William Shakespeare worked so well in occupied Germany. Shakespeare’s lasting popularity comes from his plays being able to resonate with all types of audiences. Take *Hamlet*,

¹²⁴ Don Rubin, *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theater: Europe*, 1 (London, Routledge, Inc. 1994), 341.

¹²⁵ Hortmann, 176.

¹²⁶ Hortmann, 177.

for example, a play that has always found popularity in Germany.¹²⁷ Due to the complexity of characters within the play, regardless of the time period, a viewer is able to make a connection. Whether it is the heroically active Hamlet who eventually succeeds in his goal, the bull-headed orphan Fortinbras who is quick to make decisions, or the manipulated Queen Gertrude who is forced into powerlessness after her husband's death, a viewer can find a character with whom to connect.

This timelessness is the main reason why the British decided to latch on to Shakespearean theater and use his plays to reinforce their occupation policy goals. By intentionally limiting the production of certain plays like *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, the British were able to avoid unnecessarily violent themes and militaristic thinking. In performing *Hamlet*, the British were able to stress the importance of religion in society and demonstrated how influential it can be in developing moral behavior. Similarly, *Measure for Measure* was performed in order to help establish the idea of democracy and incorporate fairness into a society that had just experienced marginalization.

¹²⁷ Andrew Dickson, “‘Deutschland ist Hamlet’: Shakespeare in Germany,” *British Library*, 15 March, 2016 (accessed November 11, 2017) <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/deutschland-ist-hamlet-shakespeare-in-germany>.

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