Introduction

Sujata Iyengar and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin
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This ASF issue is dedicated to our dear friend and colleague, the late Christy Desmet

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This volume stems from a three-year Franco-American partnership between the University of Georgia (UGA) and the Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 (UPVM3), and from a programme entitled “Scene-Stealing/Ravir la scene” (2016-2019), supported by the Partner University Fund of the French-American Cultural Exchange Foundation, IRCL (Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-Classical Age, and the Enlightenment, UMR 5186 CNRS) of UPVM3 and the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts of UGA. The partnership combined the interests of faculty at UPVM3 and IRCL in particular scenes in the French and English drama of the Renaissance and Enlightenment and those of faculty at UGA in adaptations of William Shakespeare.
Scholars involved in the programme continued to concentrate on individual types of scene, and to develop issues of ASF, but we also left room for the discussion of modernised adaptations or historical presentations of such scenes.1

This issue of ASF focuses on “Scenes in the Other’s Language / Scènes dans la langue de l’autre”. It is the last output of this programme, which led to the publication of two previous ASF issues, on “Balcony Scenes” (ASF 6, 2017)2 and on “Bedchamber Scenes” (ASF 8, 2019),3 as well as an article in the open access scholarly periodical Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation,4 and to the creation and publication of the open access multimedia online resource Focus on “Henry V”: Navigating Digital Text, Performance, & Historical Resources.5 “Scenes in the Other’s Language / Scènes dans la langue de l’autre” derives from three main events. An exploratory work day took place in Montpellier in 2017,6 organised by UPVM3 and UGA, with the CAS (Cultures Anglo-Saxonnes, UR 801, Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès) and in link with the “Diplomatica” programme led by Nathalie Rivère de Carles,7 within a partnership that obtained the 2018 ESOF (EuroScience Open Forum) label for the Toulouse Jean-Jaurès-led project on “Créer l’entente”. This 2017 exploratory day notably included MA and PhD students both from UPVM3 and UGA, the Montpellier MA students having specifically worked on the multilingual sequences from Henry V so as to perform them during the workshop. Particularly enlightening for UGA visitors was the introduction to the range of languages within Southern France itself, such as Occitan, just as during the second event, which took place in Georgia in 2018, Montpellier visitors learned about language variations in the Southern United States such as the Gullah-Geechee language spoken among African American communities in the South Carolina and Georgia barrier islands. The main activity during the second visit consisted of an international Conference,8 which also gave the UGA-UPVM3 team the opportunity to visit Sujata Iyengar’s “Shakespeare in the Classroom” Class, usually at Hilsman Middle School, but on that day in the auditorium of Cedar Shoals High School. The Conference also included a partnership with UGA’s Department of Theatre and Film Studies, which designed the Rosetta Theatre Project.9 A third and final event brought UGA MA and PhD students to Montpellier once more, this time to visit a French middle school, the collège Croix d’Argent, where we heard students present scenes from Shakespeare’s Othello in English – a third or even fourth language for some of them – and where Georgia PhD students introduced the school’s pupils to some of the linguistic idiosyncracies of the Southern United States.

This multilingual, multiscale, and multimedia enterprise coheres with its topic. The multidisciplinary work carried out on the subject led to a compilation of early modern multilingual scenes on which the Montpellier exploratory day was based10 and also fed the conference in Georgia. The richness of this anthology revealed that this ASF issue is just the beginning of what could undoubtedly be a long-term research programme to expand the exploration and understanding of multilingual theatrical moments and multiple linguistic modalities. (For example, in 2020 UGA hosted, with the help of Georgia Humanities, a remote presentation from Professor Jill Bradbury about the history of Shakespeare in American Sign Language, a language of the Other and a rich performance tradition that has hitherto received little attention.11)

Indeed, the focus of this volume is exclusively Elizabethan, and mainly Shakespearean, as if, in a Babel-like noise of languages and texts, the voice of the Elizabethans had revealed its domination12 and had stifled or silenced the Others. In itself it is
symptomatic that a venture that was originally open to multiplicity and variety and aimed at including a large corpus of early modern French and English texts ended up concentrating on a limited number of playwrights: Shakespeare, Thomas Heywood, and John Marston. The Exploratory Day at Montpellier, for example, included an entire session on “Scènes dans la langue de l’autre dans le corpus français / Scenes in the Other’s language in French drama”, including discussions of Occitan and the Théâtre de Béziers. In the battle of idioms or what Louis-Jean Calvet termed “La guerre des langues”, English seems to have reigned supreme and to have absorbed the other languages but also, maybe, to have been fruitfully contaminated by other idioms that contribute to the hybridity of the dominating tongue.

The “tonguescape” of the Shakespearean corpus reveals a fascinating centre: Henry V. The multilingual sequences of the play are the object of three complementary contributions that constitute a kaleidoscopic approach, the play’s plurilingual matters being reconfigured into three studies that dialogue with one another. Jean-Christophe Mayer explores how the language lesson and the wooing scene in Henry V, while “questioning the idea of foreignness”, also “question the very notion of Shakespearean scenic division”. Mylène Lacroix’s contribution, written in French and thus engaging with these Franco-English scenes from a non-Anglophone perspective, offers a close reading of the same scenes, focusing on the multilingual puns and on the act of language teaching. Linguistic conflict is the object of Amina Askar’s contribution, where she studies two other multilingual sequences, the quarrelling Captains’ scene and Pistol’s encounter with the French soldier Le Fer, two episodes that question the concept of Englishness and interrogate what the “native garb” of a language can be.

Shakespeare also questions and dramatises the zones and modalities of linguistic contact in other plays. Nora Galland’s contribution explores the articulation of language and national identity through the character of Armado in Shakespeare’s comedy Love’s Labour’s Lost, while Andrew Hiscock draws upon modern and early modern theorising on the question of language use in order to focus more narrowly on the construction of Community and the Other through language in one of Shakespeare’s “problem” plays, All’s Well That Ends Well, in which the very name of the character Paroles invites us to study linguistic issues in the play. Philip Gilreath explores the legal and intertextual significance and impact of the Latin word “stuprum” (usually translated “rape”) in Shakespeare’s early Roman play Titus Andronicus.

Scenes in the Other’s language can also be found in numerous other Elizabethan plays. Two contributions in this volume will give the reader an idea of the wide-ranging dramatic potential of multilingualism on the Elizabethan stage. Nathalie River de Carles contrasts Heywood’s diplomatic scenes in If you know not me, you know no bodie or The Troubles of the Queene Elizabeth (1605), with Francis Thynne’s The Perfect Ambassadour (1578) and Jean Hotman’s The Ambassador (1603). Her study “probes how diplomatic multilingualism reflects the difficult construction of the English self at the turn of the seventeenth century in terms of absorptiveness and defiance”. Janice Valls-Russell analyses the use of Italian and more especially Latin, in Marston’s Antonio and Mellida (1599) and its sequel, Antonio’s Revenge (1600–1601). These plays are less frequently considered in discussions of languages on the early modern stage but they are emblematic of what multilingual sequences can bring to contemporary stage
productions in confronting audience members with languages that are not familiar to them.

8 Multilingual Elizabethan scenes thus raise questions of identity, dramatise both conflict and contact and represent processes of absorption and resistance. What happens when you confront spectators with scenes originally written and spoken in English which go on to be translated for performance into other languages? The last section of the volume raises this question by approaching performance issues that may be specific to staging scenes in the Other’s language. Jennifer Flaherty and Craig Callender focus on a filmic production of Love’s Labour’s Lost by the University of Fribourg that is built on the concept of linguistic variety. The film was produced by the Swiss Stage Bards, a performance group that translates Shakespeare into all the dominant languages of Switzerland (German, French, Italian). Sujata Iyengar focuses on another experimental approach to multilingualism, including technological tools that constitute an innovative language and challenge the common reception of familiar texts. The various levels of “translation” carried out by the Rosetta Theatre Project at UGA produced scenes in another “glitchy” language that constituted a completely new experience for the spectators, testifying to the fruitfulness, energising and cross-fertilising effect of putting different languages in contact.

NOTES

9. https://www.drama.uga.edu/events/content/2018/rosetta-theatre-project. Accessed 13 November 2021. On this project, see Sujata Iyengar’s contribution in this volume. On the website, the project is described as follows: “The Rosetta Theatre Project is a unique performance experience structured like an exhibit in an art gallery, allowing guests to come and go at will and experience an immersive, ever-changing theatrical art instalment. The project uses live motion-capture technology to present two short scenes, one from Shakespeare and the other from
Molière, on a continuous loop. Each scene will be instantaneously translated into four different versions, two in English and two in French. Using a real-time motion capture system, live performances will be transformed digitally into four different computer animations, each representing a distinct time period and culture: sixteenth century England, seventeenth century France, modern-day Paris, and modern-day Athens, Georgia."

10. Many thanks to the contributors to the exploratory day for feeding this work-in-progress anthology and to Nora Galland for putting this collection of texts into shape.


ABSTRACTS

This introduction contextualises the publication of this issue and presents its ten contributions.

Cette introduction contextualise la publication de ce numéro et en présente les dix contributions.
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Sujata Iyengar is Professor of English Renaissance literature at the University of Georgia, USA, where she specializes in Shakespearean adaptation, race in early modern England, and book history. Major publications include Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England (Penn, 2005); Shakespeare’s Medical Language (Bloomsbury, 2011); Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body (Routledge, 2015), and (with Miriam Jacobson and the late Christy Desmet) The Routledge Handbook to Shakespeare and Global Appropriation (2020). She is currently writing two books, Shakespeare and Adaptation Theory (Bloomsbury, under contract) and Shakespeare and the Art of the Book.


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Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin is Professor at the University of Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 and a member of the Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-Classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL, UMR 5186 CNRS). She specialises in the study of Shakespeare’s evil tongues and Shakespeare on screen. She published The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England, Three Treatises (Fairleigh Dickinson, 2012). She is the author of Shakespeare’s Insults: A Pragmatic Dictionary (Bloomsbury, 2016) and her Anatomy of Insults in Shakespeare’s World is forthcoming (Bloomsbury, 2022). She is co-editor, with Sarah Hatchuel, of the Shakespeare on Screen series (Cambridge University Press). She is co-editor-in-chief of the international journal Cahiers Elisabéthains (Sage) and of the journal Arrêt sur Scène / Scene Focus (ASF). She has been president of the European Shakespeare Research Association since July 2021.