

Letter from the Issue Editors

The contributions to the second issue of LINGUACULTURE are, for the most part, papers presented at the international conference *Shakespeare in Europe: Nation(s) and Boundaries*, held in Iasi in November 14-17, 2007, the seventh in a series of conferences begun in 1990 and devoted to Shakespeare's work, his afterlife, that is to his presence in different European cultures for four hundred years. The papers clearly evince Shakespeare's constant cross-cultural appeal, kept alive by those people who have gone on interpreting, adapting, recontextualizing, rewriting, translating and, above all, performing his plays in various ways.

What the studies included in the present volume demonstrate is that the meanings of such notions as state, nation, boundary, geography, cultural identity, otherness and appropriation are essential to the discussion of Shakespeare's work within an international context, which shifts emphasis from the plays as such to the ways in which the quasi-imaginary lands and nations evoked in his texts are reconstructed as real territories and national identities across Europe, or to the imaginative and ideologically charged reinterpretations of the Shakespearean texts in performance, film, or translation.

There is great variety in the approaches to Shakespeare's work included in this special LINGUACULTURE issue, which is, we believe, the most appropriate way to reflect the plurality of thought and the wide scope of Shakespeare research in Europe in the past years. Only two of these studies stand out as being written by scholars on the other side of the Channel and of the Atlantic, Michael Hattaway's "Empire, State, and Nation: Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Peele" and Gary Harrington's "Whose Play Is It?" Translating Shakespeare into English". If the former places William Shakespeare's work in a literary context in which the notions of empire, state, and nation were explored and debated upon in drama and in political essays, the latter comments upon the potentially disastrous effects that the rewriting of Shakespeare's tragedies using everyday language might have on generations of American young readers, considered by the *No Fear Shakespeare* editors not capable of at least making an effort to understand a text written four centuries ago, in a language remarkably different from their own.

Remaining in an English-speaking cultural context, this time on German soil, Ton Hoenselaars explores in "ShakesPOW" the intense dramatic activity of British civilians in German prisoner camps during the Great War, particularly at Ruhleben Camp, where there were around 5,000 internees, many of whom deeply committed to literature and performance. Manfred Pfister's study takes us back to British soil on a "route 66" that the Shakespearean poem known as sonnet 66 traced from the early Romantic age to the Modernist period in the form of echoes

or comments in the works of authors such as Mary Robinson, William Butler Yeats and even Virginia Woolf, or as critical comments made by W.H. Auden as notes on his personal copy of the *Sonnets*.

Three studies are dedicated to performances of Shakespearean plays across Europe, whether it is *Macbeth* as a vehicle for political debate on Poland's military involvement in international conflicts (Jacek Fabiszak), or director Stéphane Braunschweig's 1997 staging of *Measure for Measure*, a performance strongly influenced by the German and French theatre practices of the 20th century (Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine), or the Dutch director Ivo van Hove's experimental merging of three Roman tragedies in a spectacular, experimental performance with *Toneelgroep Amsterdam*, in 2007 (Jozef de Vos). Antonella's Piazza tackles a different type of artistic interpretation – more attuned perhaps to the needs of the visual-oriented public in the last decades of the 20th century – in the form of film adaptations, her attention focusing on Derek Jarman's (1980) *The Tempest* and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991).

Last but not least, two papers included in this issue reflect an interest in the reception of Shakespeare's work in individual cultures. Juan Francisco Cerdá presents us with a critical assessment of the cultural impact that Spanish translations of Shakespeare's plays (mostly from French versions) had on the critical debate between neoclassicists and *dissident* critics in 18th century Spain, while Monica Matei-Chesnoiu's study shows how some of Shakespeare's plays are particularly interesting and revelatory for a Romanian reader, who can become aware of how Shakespeare relied on ancient texts to imaginatively reconstruct the geography and culture of the Black Sea area, including areas that are now part of Romania.

We would like to believe that this issue of LINGUACULTURE will be read with intellectual curiosity by present and future collaborators to our journal, and we hope to receive further contributions from academics and researchers on both sides of the Atlantic and the Pacific, turning these pages into a genuine forum for discussions of contemporary directions in literary and cultural studies.