

## Editor's Foreword

*Iolanda Plescia*

*The entire staff at Memoria di Shakespeare wish to remember very fondly and gratefully two important Shakespearean scholars, Mariangela Tempera and Russ McDonald, for their collaboration and service on our Advisory board. It is to their memory that this issue is dedicated.*

Interest in Shakespeare's linguistic world – both in the sense of the linguistic world he produced, and of the linguistic world he was born into and that can be said to have produced him – has been gaining momentum in the past decades: it is sufficient to have a look at the titles currently being brought out with the word 'language' associated to Shakespeare<sup>1</sup> to see that a significant shift has occurred from the traditional investigation of his rhetorical patterns, figurative language, and the rhythm of his verse, which of course remains a very fruitful field, to approaches that apply tools commonly used in modern linguistics to explore issues of style and form in new ways. As Jonathan Culpeper has written and confirms in the interview which opens this issue devoted to the language of Shakespeare and his time, the increased interest, however, seems not yet to have reached its peak, and much remains to be done. The new contributions here published, which combine linguistic

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<sup>1</sup> Among such titles, starting from the year 2000, see: Lynette Hunter, Lynne Magnusson, Sylvia Adamson, eds., *Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Language*, London, Arden, 2001; Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; Ulrich Busse, *Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2002; Catherine M. Alexander, ed., *Shakespeare and Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; David Crystal, *'Think on my Words': Exploring Shakespeare's Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language: Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance*, London, Methuen, 2010; Jonathan Culpeper and Mireille Ravassat, eds., *Stylistics and Shakespeare's Language. Transdisciplinary Approaches*, London, Continuum, 2011. In Italy, the first book-length study was Keir Elam's rich edited collection *La grande festa del linguaggio: Shakespeare e la lingua inglese*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986.

and literary investigation in various ways, seek to add to this very open debate.

A focus on language, it seems to me, has the merit of acting as a healthy corrective measure against the worst kind of bardolatry: the kind, that is, that goes beyond the appreciation of greatness and crushes discernment, resting on untouchable myths, assumptions, pre-conceptions. In scrutinizing Shakespeare's language – or rather, as David Crystal puts it, "the language used in Shakespearean texts"<sup>2</sup>, which of course is not precisely the same thing – scholars working in historical linguistics are not greatly interested in the rather untenable idea of a man, however incredibly gifted, single-handedly shaping early modern English and thus the English to come. They are rather more concerned with identifying the different elements of the toolkit that was at this man's disposal, and at the disposal of his contemporaries; and with studying the linguistic culture that surrounded him, that is, the glue that holds everything together. In this sense Shakespeare is a privileged vantage point from which to look at an entire linguistic age, an inexhaustible source of material to which, however, must be added other forms of textual testimony from the same period. In this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare*, then, what is meant by 'Shakespeare' is the textual world that is attributed to this name: what we want to understand is how the playwright uses a language that, while already 'modern' in a historical sense, still poses enough problems to contemporary audiences to be considered distant from our linguistic culture<sup>3</sup>.

Shakespeare's linguistic exceptionality thus demands careful consideration, and even questioning in some cases – some findings, as Michael Ingham and Richard Ingham show in their contribution to this issue, indicate that in certain instances Shakespeare could be rather conservative, for his own poetic reasons, of course – and the age of the digital humanities has given us new tools to assess his position with respect to the entirety of the early modern period. At the same time, a well-developed branch of modern linguistics, that is stylistics, is increasingly being applied to historical texts in a quest

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<sup>2</sup> Crystal, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> On this, see Paula Blank's interesting and thought-provoking essay, *Introducing 'Interlinguistics': Shakespeare and Early/Modern English*, in Michael Saenger, ed., *Interlinguisticity, Internationality, and Shakespeare*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, pp. 138-156.

to identify the linguistic 'fingerprints' of a certain style and author<sup>4</sup>. This kind of rigorous investigation of form can give real insight into what we mean by 'Shakespearean' – or, to put it differently, into what makes Shakespeare Shakespeare. It is this intersection between historical awareness, rigorous and replicable linguistic analysis, and stylistic research that is now yielding exciting results even as it may take something away, for some, from the aura surrounding the dramatic poet. While the contributions here presented are not directly concerned with the issue of authorship<sup>5</sup>, they share the same attention to detail: and if it is true that the microscope exposes inner mechanisms and perhaps dispels some of the magic, one could also argue that it is equally fascinating to observe the smallest of components at work as they form patterns and shapes.

'Shape' is precisely the keyword that has been chosen for the title of the present issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies*, which gathers several different voices on Shakespeare's language that as a whole contribute to further define the shape of the language he inherited and used, as well as the linguistic shape of his stylistic choices. Such a focus on micro linguistic detail, which helps however to reconstruct a larger picture, is at the core of the *Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare's Language*, a project led by Jonathan Culpeper at Lancaster University which has won a prestigious Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, and which will focus on Shakespeare's actual usage of language in a pragmatic perspective, rather than building a conventional concordance, so that Shakespearean characters, themes and genres may be redefined through the social uses of language: sociolects, idiolects, and patterns of use. Jonathan Culpeper has provided in-depth answers – really short essays in themselves – not only to my questions on the project, but also to my more general queries about the way forward for linguistic studies of Shakespeare, the relevance of literary linguistics today, and the ways in which our appreciation of literary inventiveness changes when we begin to demystify accepted ideas of for-

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<sup>4</sup> On recent developments and trends in historical stylistics, see Beatrix Busse, "(New) Historical Stylistics", in *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*, ed. Michael Burke, Abingdon-New York 2014, pp. 101-17.

<sup>5</sup> The 2012 issue of the previous series of our journal was entirely devoted to this question: *On Authorship*, eds. Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna, *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 (2012).

mal achievement – such as Shakespeare’s purportedly extraordinary number of neologisms – to look at other areas, such as grammar, for example. Many of the topics I hoped this issue would explore when it was planned are touched upon in the interview, which effectively serves as an introduction to more general questions as well as to what has been done so far in the field. The individual essays which follow each provide closer looks at distinct areas of language and language study: namely, lexis and syntax; pragmatics and translation studies; and finally a welcome intersemiotic perspective.

Inevitably, when it comes to responding to some of the unsubstantiated claims that have been made about Shakespeare’s language, this early phase of engagement with his linguistic world often must perform a necessary, and healthy, *destruens* function. This is precisely the activity in which Jonathan Hope engages, in an essay that relies on what he provocatively calls “zombie killing”: that is, a systematic fact-checking process applied to the lexical items that general belief has attributed, and still widely attributes, especially in the online world, to Shakespeare. Hope notes how much of the current, erroneous notions on Shakespeare’s language seep through blogs, online newspapers, and other virtual spaces, and decides to take these up to task, scrutinizing each linguistic myth in a popular online article and putting it to the test. He uses the updated version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the EEBO-TCP data set, a vast and searchable corpus of early modern texts, and exposes the fallacy of an inherited predisposition to take Shakespearean examples in dictionaries to be automatic first occurrences of words, while in most cases it is possible to trace earlier uses, antedating the words and crossing them off the list of Shakespeare’s supposed neologisms. This tendency to consider Shakespeare mainly as a coiner of words goes back to a popular response to Dr. Johnson’s relish in providing Shakespearean examples in all the instances it was humanly possible, as the chosen cover image of this issue stands to prove<sup>6</sup>. But Hope’s is far from a mere exercise in meticulousness. It is extraordinary how much of our perception of Shakespeare’s creativity is still linked to the rather

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<sup>6</sup> The picture, from the Wellcome Collection of public domain images (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/t4qmsu85?query=samuel+johnson+dictionary>), represents the first page of the letter ‘H’ of Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary. The first word under the ‘H’ heading is the widely used interjection ‘ha’, for which Johnson cannot resist providing a Shakespearean example (from *The Merchant of Venice*).

banal idea that he made up a certain number of words: clinging to that notion can only hinder any serious inquiry into the playwright's use of language, which, as Hope himself has shown in his illuminating 2010 book, stands out in its ability to re-signify older words, use common words in astonishing new ways – even function words and grammatical constructs – and generally produce startling effects, such as those which infuse life into inanimate objects<sup>7</sup>. Critically sizing up conventional claims about lexical creativity and enrichment frees up intellectual energy that can be used to ask new questions, which have not been investigated fully enough, simply because we have been content with a numerical criterion of greatness – vocabulary size and the extent of its novelty<sup>8</sup> – which is unbelievably reductive in its very premise.

With the contribution of Richard Ingham and Michael Ingham, jointly written in their roles as linguist and language historian on the one hand, and literary critic on the other, we move on to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Shakespeare's syntax, which also usefully broadens the scope to the language use of Shakespeare's contemporaries, in particular that 'other' great contemporary who was Jonson. This study begins to fill a gap in the study of Shakespeare's language, in which syntax is under-represented, and also relates its findings to a broader socio-political context that, I would add, is as necessary to understand Shakespeare's use of language as it has been considered crucial to appreciate the theatrical mechanisms behind his texts. By evaluating Shakespeare's and Jonson's use of the Verb-Subject syntactic inversion in their comedies – the construct was still a possibility in early modern English but had a decidedly archaic flavour that generally fit in better with the tragic genre – the surprising fact emerges that Shakespeare's prose and verse dramas are syntactically more conservative. The archaic feature becomes a foregrounded stylistic effect that once again reminds us that poetic language is not necessarily such because it embraces novelty in a historically progressive sense, but rather because it deviates from common usage.

Precisely within the context of looking at language in use, Roberta

<sup>7</sup> Hope, pp. 142-44 (see in general chapter 5, pp. 138-69).

<sup>8</sup> On this, see Crystal, pp. 1-9; Ward E. Y. Elliott and Robert J. Valenza, "Shakespeare's Vocabulary: Did it Dwarf All Others?", in Culpeper and Ravassat, eds, 2011, pp. 34-57; Hugh Craig, "Shakespeare's Vocabulary. Myth and Reality", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62:1 (2011), pp. 53-74.

Mullini investigates dialogical asides across the Shakespeare corpus in a pragmatic and discourse analytic perspective, first assessing the plays in which the device is used most frequently – *The Tempest*, *Henry VI, Part 3* and *Antony and Cleopatra* – and then delving into close readings of scenes from the plays themselves. It is here that the interconnection of literary and linguistic study shows its worth in reappraising a specific, contained phenomenon in Shakespeare: Mullini, a literary critic, refers to the frameworks of some of the classics in the field of pragmatics to deal with important issues such as speaking both to be heard and not to be heard, concealing and revealing, selecting addressees, multiparty dialogue and the role of the audience in dramatic language, as well as the interesting question of the dynamics of overhearing. Her interest lies in the dramatic function and aesthetics of the mechanisms she analyses, showing how Shakespeare skilfully marked his dialogue in such a way as to signal the function of his asides, so that the later addition of stage directions is not a particularly complex task: as is often the case, it is the text itself that offers direction.

With Irene Ranzato's contribution we turn to translation and adaptation studies, here defined in a comprehensive sense that includes literary allusion, and in which processes of recodification into new medial forms, specifically audiovisual products, capitalize not only on particular linguistic features but on overarching Shakespearean motifs as well. The legacy of Shakespeare's language in the contemporary popular landscape is thus taken into account, as Ranzato reads literary allusions as one of the main devices used in contemporary film and television products aspiring to a 'highbrow' status despite having been produced for popular consumption, in order to seek legitimization as works of art. We are thus dealing here with issues of linguistic representation and with the interplay of verbal and visual codes, as well as with the received idea of a Shakespearean 'sub-language'. Constructed though this notion may be, the fact remains that within the audiovisual product it can function as a shared worldview, winking, as it were, at the contemporary members of the audience who 'speak Shakespeare'.

As a conclusion to the thematic section of the present issue, we have the great privilege this year to be able to publish what we believe is the last paper given by the late Russ McDonald, who was in touch with our general editor, Rosy Colombo, shortly before his

death, sharing with her his research on a code, and a means of communication, which, though not strictly verbal, has a number of features in common with the early modern use of language. McDonald proposes a fascinating reading of landscaping design in early modern English gardens as a productive context for studying the iambic pentameter line: if the paper moves along lines of enquiry that are slightly eccentric with respect to our linguistic theme, it is particularly interesting to note how McDonald draws a fruitful parallel between the introduction of Continental plants and designs into the English garden and the early modern practice of translation. Most importantly, McDonald is concerned with patterns and geometrical forms: that is, "the interchangeable language used to describe the pleasures of form, whether in garden design, or in sartorial decoration, or in English verse". I vividly remember Russ McDonald's compelling argument, brought forth along similar lines in a panel on 'Shakespeare's Language and Style' chaired by Jonathan Culpeper and Mireille Ravassat at Lancaster University in 2012, that the increasing preoccupation with order and symmetry in Elizabethan visual culture (in that case, in Elizabethan domestic architecture) could be directly linked to the forms of poetic ornament, repetition and patterning that are found in the Shakespearean sonnet<sup>9</sup>. Such a focus on what we might call the shape of Shakespeare's language has characterized McDonald's life's work and is a fitting conclusion, I think, to this issue as a whole.

The present issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare* also introduces a new feature, that is a Miscellaneous section, published under the general editorship of the journal, in which contributions that are not strictly thematic will be included with the aim of broadening the scope of discussion to topics of current debate. The two articles included in this first selection, by Nadia Fusini and Rosy Colombo with Alessandro Roccati, were both born out of the 2016 celebrations of the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, in different ways which are detailed in the pieces themselves. It is thus by

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<sup>9</sup> See the published essay, "'Pretty Rooms': Shakespeare's Sonnets, Elizabethan Architecture, and Early Modern Visual Design", in Jonathan Post, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 486-504.

a happy concurrence of circumstances that these two contributions speak to each other, since both deal with the theme of Shakespeare's Rome, which was chosen as the silver thread connecting the celebrations collectively organized by three State universities of Rome (Sapienza, Roma Tre, Tor Vergata). The section thus opens up a theme that will be more fully delved into in the forthcoming issue n. 4 of *Memoria di Shakespeare*.

### *Acknowledgements*

This issue could not have been completed without the encouragement and assistance of our general editor, as well as the stimulating conversations and helpful advice which came from my fellow editors on the editorial board of the journal. Laura Talarico's dedication and hard work as the head of the editorial staff has been very much appreciated.

To my friend and colleague Donatella Montini, with whom I have worked closely over the past few years, sharing an interest in Shakespeare's language and most recently co-organizing the mid-term SLIN (Storia della Lingua Inglese) Association Symposium ("A Great Feast of Languages: Shakespeare's Language and the Language(s) of Shakespeare's Time", 27-29 October 2016), my heartfelt thanks for her intellectual generosity and insightful mentorship.