



**Language Incorporated:  
Culture Markets, Actors' Bodies, and Shakespeare's World of Words**

Overview

Shakespeare's multivocality, commercialism, and theatricality have been key interests in the published work of a number of Shakespeare and Performance Research Team members, especially Bristol, Folkerth, Lieblein, Salter, and Yachnin. The central hypotheses of the Language Incorporated project (hereafter the "LINC project"), which are formulated substantially on the strength of that work, are (1) that Shakespeare developed his art from a wide range of social and literary languages ("speech genres" is Bakhtin's useful term), (2) that he was inclined to draw so widely because the competitiveness of the early modern culture market set a premium on innovation, and (3) that he created his new language in dialogue with the physical and vocal practices of the players. Shakespeare's language is incorporated in at least three different senses—a plethora of languages is incorporated into a new dramatic language; the new language bears the marks of the "corporate" environment in which it was created ("corporate" with respect both to the marketplace ethos of the commercial theatre and to the artisanal ethos of the company of players); and the new language is embodied in the sense that it carries within it the physical and vocal skills of the players in Shakespeare's company. To these three senses of incorporation, a fourth can be added. By dint of both the presentation practices of book publication and the interpretive practices of readers, Shakespeare's language has become a coherent body of interlinked meanings—a "world of words"—rather than something scattered among a number of scripts for performance. By focusing on the socio-political, theatrical, material, and artistic dimensions of Shakespeare's language in his own time and over the long term, the LINC project will be able to provide an innovative, interdisciplinary understanding of both Shakespeare's artistic accomplishment and his social prominence and power. It is important to note also that the focus on language will allow us to consider the social dimensions of Shakespeare at the same time that we develop a detailed, historical understanding of him as a poet and an artist for the theatre. After approximately twenty-five years of heady and valuable work on Shakespeare and culture inspired mostly by neo-marxist theory, the fields of Shakespeare studies and literary studies in general are ready for a return to a critical approach more friendly toward and better equipped to deal with the artistic dimension of literary and theatrical works. The LINC project will create a methodology that advances socio-political criticism while helping to restore criticism's ability to take full account of the formal distinctiveness of artistic writing as well as the local, material conditions of the creation of that writing.

Research Questions

To understand the four-fold incorporation of Shakespeare's language is to begin to be able to answer a number of important and timely questions in Shakespeare studies:

A. What was the political dimension of Shakespeare in his own time? Political criticism has tended either to ignore the artistic purposes of linguistic incorporation in Shakespeare and/or to focus on a

single social language (say, the language of government, gender difference, or economics) as central in any given play. The LINC Project will produce a better account of the politics of Shakespeare's drama in its own time by studying the multiplicity of speech genres in their orchestrated interrelationships within particular plays.

B. Is Shakespeare primarily a literary artist or a writer for the stage? This question has occupied the attention of leading scholars (Berger, Dawson, Erne, Styan, Worthen) for well over a generation, it goes back at least to the eighteenth-century reception of Shakespeare, and it bears on the teaching and interpreting of the plays in fundamental ways. The choice between theatricality and literariness is, we believe, a false dichotomy. We think that Shakespeare is literary as well as theatrical through and through and that what are often praised as particularly literary features of the plays (their intellectual complexity, their engaging characters, and their ability to galvanize powerful responses) are bound up with the fact that Shakespeare wrote with the actors in mind.

C. How do we explain the durability and adaptability of Shakespeare over the long term? The best recent answer to this question is team member Michael Bristol's book, *Big Time Shakespeare*, which analyzes the poet's canonization within a burgeoning culture market and which provides a Bakhtinian model of literary longevity; the LINC Project will extend these lines of inquiry and will develop new answers in terms of Shakespeare's rich and useable orchestration of speech genres and his performance-based ability to evoke elemental, transhistorical human emotions.

D. What is the nature of the social power of Shakespeare's language over the long-term? We should note that we share little with the idea of power prominent in North American versions of Foucault; for us power can operate at local and global social levels, can be discerned and used by individual and collective social actors, and can work indirectly through cultural activities like play production. However, we do agree with Foucault that power operates through systems of signification, especially language, and so we propose to study how Shakespearean incorporation can serve to critique the social power of languages such as those of government and theology and also to what degree the incorporation of Shakespeare's language as a unified world of words has transformed him into a figure of consequence in the longue durée of Western culture and has thus empowered those who read, perform, and remake his works.

### Methodology

The methodological advances likely to emerge from the LINC project are twofold. The first kind of advance has to do with the collaboration between literary-historical criticism on one side and performance and performance studies on the other. This mixing of approaches, rare in Shakespeare studies, has been one of the hallmarks of our past work, which has seen literary scholars developing and testing their ideas about Shakespeare in collaboration with the creative projects of theatre practitioners. One example is "Metatheatre in *The Winter's Tale*" (to be published in *Shakespearean Character: Theory, History, Performance*), where historical ideas about metatheatre were investigated in a three-month workshop whose participants included Myrna Wyatt Selkirk, Paul Yachnin, and the students in Selkirk's Theatre Lab. Over the course of the LINC project, this interdisciplinary collaboration will be developed and refined, beginning in year one, where the whole team will take part in a literary-historical case study of *The Merchant of Venice* as well as in a series of theatrical workshops on the play.

The second advance will bring together close formalist analysis of Shakespeare's poetry and prose as well as his experiments with larger features such as vocabulary and genre on the one side and the socio-political dimension of his work on the other. Some recent criticism has called for return to the close reading of Shakespeare's language (Kermode, McDonald), and Lynne Magnusson and Patricia Parker have been leading figures in the development of a kind of politicized close reading. We recognize that one cannot account adequately for the social and political dimension of Shakespeare without understanding the specific formal and affective qualities of his language, and we intend therefore to

extend the work of scholars such as Magnusson and Parker to a qualitatively greater degree by focusing on how Shakespeare orchestrates a range of languages—rather than just one or two—in artistically and politically meaningful ways.

It should be noted that our work on language and performance history will be facilitated by the extraordinary collection of promptbooks from the Harvard Theatre Collection, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and other major research libraries worldwide, which were purchased with funds from earlier FQRSC grants and which are available in the McLennan Library at McGill. These will be especially helpful for their inclusion of annotated study copies, in which actors such as Henry Irving marked up, often in copious detail, their reworking of Shakespeare’s words—cutting, interpolating, adding sound effects, and sometimes providing introductory essays about their interpretation of character.

Research Plan

The Shakespeare Team is particularly well-equipped to undertake this project because, over the past twelve years, we have developed an approach that combines performance, performance studies, and literary-historical scholarship. The LINC project’s four-year research plans sees a foundation-building first year where the talents and expertise of all team members will be put to use in a tightly focused interdisciplinary experiment designed to test the two principal methodological innovations and to establish a critical mass of interpretive work on literature, theatre, and language. The work in year one will focus on *The Merchant of Venice*, and that play will remain a touchstone text in subsequent years, even as the work broadens out to consider a number of Shakespeare’s other plays. The case-study and workshops of year one will be followed, in year two, by a focus on Shakespeare’s language in relation to theatrical conditions and practices and in relation to actors’ bodies, mostly but not exclusively in early modern England. Year three will see the team turn its sights from theatre to literature, manuscript and especially print culture, in order to detail Shakespeare’s language’s relationship to written work across a range of fields and also in order to develop a new account of the kinship between theatre and Shakespeare’s literary accomplishments. Year four will pull the first three years of work together in relation to the question of the social power of Shakespeare’s language in his own time and over the long term.

Year	Research tasks and questions	Key contributions by team members	Key contributions by other researchers	Undergraduate and graduate RAs	Publication and transmission of findings
2006/7 <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> : Language and Performance	Case study of <i>Merchant</i> ; performance workshops on <i>Merchant</i> ; developing methodologies; developing body of interpretive work; how does the multiplicity of S’s speech genres enable performance (and vice versa)?	Selkirk to direct performance workshops; all team members to collaborate on case study of <i>Merchant</i>	Bie, McCall to consult re performance workshops; Curran on republican language; Visiting speaker: John Ripley on stage history of <i>Merchant</i>	RAs to work with individual team members on projects related to case study; to develop collaborative projects with team members; to produce bibliography of secondary material on S’s use of social languages	Series of presentations (approx 50% of them will be collaborative between team members and RAs); <i>Merchant</i> performance workshops to be put on-line; work-in-progress in <i>Merchant</i> casebook
2007/8	Developing	Bourassa on	Dawson on text	RAs to work with	Series of

Shakespeare's language, theatrical conditions and practices, actors' bodies	analyses of language and theatrical practice, rhetoric and persuasive and affective powers of actors' bodies; how was S's language influenced by early modern performance?	words and space; Folkerth on prepositions and positions; Lieblein on rhetoric of seduction and actors' bodies; Neilson on costume and performance; Pask and Yachnin on non-human characters	and performance; McCall to consult on voice and performance; Visiting speaker: William Worthen on performance and language	individual team members on their research projects; to develop collaborative projects with team members; to develop data collection on performance and language	presentations (see year 1); conference presentation on <i>Merchant</i> , theatre, and S's language (panel of four team members); work-in-progress on <i>Merchant</i> casebook
2008/9 Shakespeare's language, literature, manuscript / print culture	Analyzing lines of continuity between performance and publication; relationship between S's language and print and book format; the relationship between S's longevity and print culture	Bergbusch on language of maternity; Boro on genre and print culture; Bristol on moral agency and botanical discourse; Yachnin on artisanal language	Visiting speaker: James Siemon on theory of literary language	RAs to work with individual team members on their research projects; to develop collaborative projects with team members; preparation of casebook prospectus	Series of presentations (see year 1); work-in-progress on <i>Merchant</i> casebook
2009/10 Shakespeare's language, performance (including radio and film), and social power	Analysis of S and social power over long-term; S's orchestration of speech genres and social critique; S's canonicity and the uses of his language	Bergbusch on S as progenitor; Bristol on 18C S; Folkerth on S and radio; Lieblein on S in Quebec; Salter on Henry Irving's Shylock	Drouin on S in Québec and the question of language; Visiting speaker TBA on S and language	RAs to work with individual team members on their research projects	Series of presentations (see year 1); conference panel on S, languages and social power (panel of four team members; completion and publication of <i>Merchant</i> casebook

### Dissemination

The LINC project will build on the Shakespeare team's tradition of speaking to a public as well as an academic audience. Year one, with its series of performance workshops, will be of particular interest to members of the public (as was our workshop on metatheatre in *Winter's Tale*, which drew an audience of 70+), but the series of academic events throughout the program will have something to offer to people from outside the academy (including CEGEP instructors and high school teachers). The team website will make accessible selected works-in-progress and also scenes from our *Merchant of Venice* workshops. Our program of academic dissemination includes the event series also, which typically attract faculty and graduate students from McGill and the other Montreal universities, the two conference panels, in years 2 and 4, which will bring our work to specialist audiences in a timely way,

and the publication of the *Merchant* casebook, which will present to a broad university-based readership our work on Shakespeare's languages; his multivocality, commercialism, and theatricality; and his cultural longevity and social power.

## 8A.II COMPÉTENCE

### Research Team: Expertise and Contributions

The current membership of the Shakespeare and Performance Research Team draws from each of the four Montréal universities, as well as Dawson College. Adjunct members of the team add to the institutional mix with their affiliations with the National Theatre School, the Centaur Theatre, and the University of British Columbia. This broad range of institutional affiliations is further complemented by the equally complementary research interests and specializations each participant brings to the project.

**Matt Bergbusch** (English Department, Dawson College) has previously published on the use of Shakespeare in the Gus Van Sant film *My Own Private Idaho*. His contribution to the LINC project will be a two-part research project that will address questions of embodiment, social power, and language practices. He will begin by exploring the languages and practices that relate to maternity, pregnancy, and child-birth in Shakespeare's social world, and then address Shakespeare's use/transformation of these languages—particularly in light of his at times unmaternal mothers, and occasionally maternal father figures. In year four he will connect this discourse to the maternalization of Shakespeare himself as a progenitive origin in recent critical accounts of Shakespeare as a cultural figure, as well as in theatre and film productions of his works.

**Joyce Boro** (Département d'études anglaises, Université de Montréal) specialises in medieval and Renaissance literature, with a focus on romance. She has published on prose romance, Lord Berners, Shakespeare, feminist historiography and medieval studies, sixteenth-century translators and printers, and contemporary Jewish writers. Her current research projects (funded by FQRSC and SSHRC) focus on how medieval romance is appropriated—translated, adapted, and printed—in the early modern period, and how such acts of appropriation resonate and signify. Shakespeare crafted his works from pre-existing literary material, borrowing characters, plots, and motifs. Within the context of the LINC project she will explore how these appropriated and adapted languages—recycled plots, generic horizons, literary traditions, and characters with intertextual identities—operate within Shakespeare's world of words. These intertextual strata are further enriched through the print dissemination of Shakespeare's plays. Building on her research on book history, she will also explore the materiality, production, and dissemination of Shakespeare's plays in order to establish what the material conditions of print disclose about readership, interpretation, canonicity, and the appropriation and creation of linguistic and social power.

**André Bourassa** (École supérieure de théâtre, UQAM) will apply to Shakespeare's theatre the type of research that he has already undertaken on Québécois theatre: studying the relationship between words and space, with a special focus on frontier words and words on the frontier. In Québécois theatre this involves the independence of words and words of independence. With Shakespeare, it will involve the study of the principal words of the frontier (those associated with the country, the stage, and the text) and borrowings from language sources across various frontiers. Of particular interest and importance will be Shakespeare's orchestrations of French language (such as occurs in *Henry V*) and of francophone writers such as Montaigne. Bourassa does not propose to catalogue all the terms and linguistic occurrences but rather, based on a philological analysis among other approaches, to reflect on specific, pertinent case studies.

**Michael Bristol's** (English Department, McGill) work is primarily concerned with situating Shakespeare's work in the social contexts of their production and reception. He has written three book-length studies of Shakespeare's theatre: *Carnival and Theatre*; *Shakespeare's America / America's*

*Shakespeare*; and *Big Time Shakespeare*. His research program for the LINC project will analyze the behavior of Shakespeare's characters as heuristic models for understanding moral agency. Almost every philosophical account of moral agency depends on a specific notion of "the good life" - Aristotle's eudaimonia or "human flourishing." However, Shakespeare's questions about moral agency are not posed in relation to a settled normative framework. The good life is generally expressed as a principle of "thrift" in the sense of thriving, flourishing, or even abundance. This principle is expressed through a system of metaphors derived from the growth and cultivation of plants, among which is the very notion of thrift itself. The proposed research will focus on early modern botanical discourse, including herbals, gardening manuals and treatises on husbandry. The language of plants, plant-life, gardens, herbs, fruits and vegetables is pervasive in Shakespeare, sometimes in the form of overt references, sometimes as dead metaphors. The proposed research will aim at co-ordinating these discursive formation with Shakespeare's evaluative language.

**Wes Folkerth's** (English Department, McGill) first book *The Sound of Shakespeare* (Routledge 2002) received favourable reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* and in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. He has also published articles on acoustic experience in *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare and the Beatles, and the Elizabethan poet Richard Barnfield. He recently completed the section on Shakespeare in popular music for the forthcoming *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture* (ed. Richard Burt), to be published by Greenwood in 2006. He is currently working on the figure of Pietro Aretino in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* for the Making Publics MCRI project, and on the afterlives of the character Puck for the Shakespeare team's current project on Shakespearean character. For the LINC project he plans to study Shakespeare's use of prepositions (which are arguably the most idiomatic part of speech) to convey relations between social languages and the practices they describe, especially as these relationships imply certain forms of spatial orientation that may be reiterated physically by players in performance.

**Leanne Lieblein's** (English Department, McGill) research is situated at the intersection of the page and the stage. She has published widely on both Elizabethan and contemporary plays in performance, and has edited a special issue of *L'Annuaire théâtral* on Shakespeare in Québec. Her recent research has focused on the performing body, and her contribution to the team will be a historicized exploration of the relationship between early modern and contemporary understandings of the physical body as they are articulated in Shakespeare's language. Her interests engage especially with the concerns of year two (languages, acting, and actors' bodies). Her research for the project will begin with a focus on the language(s) of seduction.

**Patrick Neilson** (Drama and Theatre Program, English Department, McGill) is a practicing theatre artist, with a focus on set and lighting design. He offers the team indispensable practical knowledge of theatrical techniques past and present. As a specialist in theatre design and stagecraft, he will contribute resources for the analysis of questions relating to stage construction, costumes, scenery and lighting, as well as the expressive dimensions of stage properties. For the LINC project he will study Shakespeare's languages of clothing and bodily adornment, with a focus on costume and the historical design of costumes for the stage. Bearing in mind that costume designs are frequently embedded in Shakespeare's plays, as well as notions about how costumes act as loci for multiple forms of identity—cultural, political, gender etc.—he will principally be interested in the effect of language on costume and the reverse. Special consideration will be given to the question of how designers and directors are influenced by Shakespeare's language in their costume choices, and what effects those choices have upon the bodies of the actors.

**Kevin Pask** (English Department, Concordia) is the author of *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996), as well as articles on Shakespeare and nationalism in Québec. His current Shakespeare research project is called "The Fairy Way of Writing," following Dryden's term for the introduction of spirits and such to the stage. In this

project he is interested in Shakespeare's appropriation of folk stories and folk beliefs for the stage and the consequences of that appropriation for the history of the literary imagination. He will connect this research with the work of the team by attending to the special problem of staging and acting non-human characters, including the rhythmic characteristics of their speech (incantatory rhymes, jingles, etc.).

**Denis Salter** (Drama and Theatre Program, English Department, McGill) works on theatre history, dramaturgy and criticism, and Canadian theatre. In 2000 he was awarded the Richard Plant prize of the Association for Canadian Theatre Research, for the best publication in English on Canadian theatre. His research concentrates on problematic keywords in theatre historiography. In his work for the LINC project he will detail how at the centre of the Empire, in the nineteenth century, Henry Irving, as a model of "respectability" and as an exemplar of imperial values, in fact challenged those values. In doing so he created one of the first instances of the informed, systematic, and sympathetic playing of the Other on the English stage—something which became manifest not only in his London performances but in his tours to the English provinces, to Scotland and Ireland, and overseas to the United States and Canada. Salter will be particularly concerned with how the language of performance—in particular, the treatment of Shakespeare's words—is shaped, and has been shaped by, Otherness. The primary test case will be *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Irving turned Shylock into a noble martyr whose presence was so idiosyncratic and yet so majestic that it pre-empted that of the Christians.

**Myrna Wyatt Selkirk** (Drama and Theatre Program, English Department, McGill) has been an assistant director at the Neptune Theatre (Halifax) and the Shaw Festival (Ontario). At McGill she has directed numerous full-scale productions, including Michel Tremblay's *Bonjour, là, Bonjour*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *The Castle* by Howard Barker, and Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*. She brings to the team her extensive experience and expertise as a director, an acting teacher, and a specialist on mask and movement based approaches to dramatic texts.

**Paul Yachnin** (English Department, McGill) has published widely on early modern theatre and society. His first book is *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value*; his second (co-written with Anthony Dawson) is *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate*. He is an editor of the *Complete Works of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford, forthcoming), and is presently at work on a number of projects, including the Oxford edition of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the Broadview edition (co-edited with Brent Whitted) of *The Tempest*, and a book-length study titled, *A Social History of Playwriting in Early Modern England*. His contribution will be twofold: he will study the language of animality in early modern Europe in relation to Shakespeare's representations of personhood and social relations, and he will study the language of artisan culture, especially the ways Shakespeare deploys it as an expressive register of human value.