

Introduction

At the end of 2015, the RADAC board decided that it wanted to organize a special conference to celebrate RADAC's 40th birthday in 2018. The conference took place in Paris October 11-12 and this special issue contains a selection of the papers given, the two keynote addresses and a short summary of each of the two round-table discussions featuring actors, directors, translators, editors, publishers, etc.

We chose the topic "Anglophone Theatre in Europe" for a variety of reasons. Firstly, although we are based in France with mainly French members, of late we have begun to have more international contacts and now have members not just from the UK and the US, but also from Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and beyond. We started to give serious thought to the idea of setting up an international network of scholars working in the field of contemporary Anglophone theatre, not just scholars of course, but also theatre practitioners, translators, etc. those who make it possible for us to see Pinter or Kane, Mamet or Kushner beyond the borders of the UK or US. Although access to English language play-texts poses few problems, access to performances of these works is a different matter. Scholars in Continental Europe will never have the easy access to English language theatre productions that our colleagues across the Channel have. This aspect is rarely acknowledged in publications and we thought that bringing together colleagues from around Europe to discuss Anglophone theatre would be an occasion to exchange ideas and experiences.

The more limited access to English-language productions of contemporary drama does not mean that in Continental Europe we have had to give up the idea of studying performance and production. It is worth noting that the essays contained in this special issue are almost all devoted to specific productions of English language plays. In fact, and this is the second reason for choosing the topic, in some instanc-

es, it is probably easier to see the works of certain British playwrights in France or Germany, for example, than in the UK, a point made by several contributors. By calling on specialists from different European countries this question could be looked at.

Thirdly, the production of Anglophone plays in non-English speaking countries, for the most part involves translation. The third aim of the conference was therefore to consider the role of translation, translators and publishers in the circulation of English language play-texts. We assumed, quite rightly as it turns out, that works written in (and for) one theatrical universe would be changed when placed in a totally different theatrical culture, revealing as much about the works themselves as about the new theatrical contexts in which they were performed. The whole issue of how and why texts are translated into different languages **in order to be performed** is at the centre of several of the essays gathered here.

This volume is divided into two parts, each part beginning with an in-depth analysis provided by each of the two keynote addresses. Peter Boenisch, Professor of Dramaturgy at Aarhus University (Denmark), and Professor of European Theatre at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London (UK), brings his knowledge of both British playwrights and European theatres to his essay “Directing Across Borders: English *Mise en Scène* on the Continental Stage”. If British plays have been staged in Europe since the early sixties with both the “Angry Young Men” and the equally angry “*In-Yer-Face*” generation making their mark, Boenisch stresses that only recently have Continental theatres opened their doors to the work of British directors. Thanks to the work of Artistic Directors such as David Lan at the Young Vic from 2000-2018, productions in Britain have become increasingly influenced by Continental theatre aesthetics. He argues that the arrival of British directors such as Robert Icke and Joe Hill-Gibbons in certain (especially German-language) theatres has paved the way for productions that combine Continental theatre practice with the more British approach to character psychology with the result that: “we are [...] witnessing a potentially very produc-

tive encounter, and maybe the infusion of some new impulses that may eventually work both ways, on both sides of the aesthetic border.” This two-way process has certainly been facilitated by the fact that many of the most influential individuals concerned have backgrounds involving border-crossing of one sort or another. Simon Stone, for example, born in Basel before moving to Australia at the age of 12 “brought a distinct ‘Anglophone’ approach to *mise en scène* on the European stage”. Quite significantly, a number of those mentioned by Boensich have a wide and varied experience of theatre practice. Andreas Beck, who has worked in several different countries and institutions, has also translated, notably Mark Ravenhill. David Lan started his career in theatre in South Africa and was also a playwright and translator. The willingness to take on multiple roles is a feature shared by almost all the contributors to this volume and the playwrights, theatre companies or directors they discuss. It is also the case of the translators involved in helping English-language drama across borders.

In “The Delights and Sorrows of being a Translator and Cultural Mediator”, Maggie Rose insists from the outset of her story of crossing from England to Italy that the term “translator” is inadequate to describe the task and prefers the term “cultural mediator” which she defines as “somebody, who as well as translating plays, assigns herself a number of different tasks in the hope that her translations will make that crucial leap from page to stage.” Throughout her essay it is clear that there is more to theatrical border crossing than mere linguistic competence. Cultural “mediation” allows texts which seem to be “specifically British” to work to great effect elsewhere, as is the case she describes with Alan Bennett.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the movement of English-language drama across Europe has been an easy one. There are three essays in this volume that consider the place of contemporary British playwrights in Italy: Caryl Churchill, Martin Crimp and Sarah Kane. Although Sara Soncini refers to “Churchill’s disgraceful absence from the Italian stage”, Serena Guarracino discusses a very successful version of *Cloud Nine* in “‘Nicks of time’ in the Italian Translation

and Staging of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine/Settimo cielo*". The play was first performed in the UK in 1979 but has been brought up to date in the 2018 production Guarracino describes to allow for new forms of exploration of gender representation and performance. This production constitutes a kind of "reinvention" of *Cloud Nine*, leading Guarracino to argue that translation "also operates a 'decanonization' by displacing the text and requiring it, as in Churchill's original vision, to ask new questions for a different time and place."

Soncini's essay, "Theatre-making with Sarah Kane: *4.48 Psychosis* on the Italian Stage", is devoted to Sarah Kane, whose work features in a number of essays in this volume. According to Soncini, Sarah Kane's presence on the Italian stage can be thus explained: "the writer's sustained endeavour to break formal boundaries has been noticeably paralleled by the striking readiness shown by her plays to cross *national* boundaries." She considers that *4.48 Psychosis*, in particular, lends itself to radical reworkings.

In "An English Playwright on the Italian Stage: Exporting, Translating and Staging Martin Crimp's Drama" Maria Elena Capitani considers the work of Martin Crimp, (playwright, translator and adaptor of many different texts) and quotes Alek Sierz's remarks on Crimp being more successful in Continental Europe than in the UK because of the radical ambiguity of his texts, which make them difficult to categorize. Capitani suggests that some of them might be considered as "postdramatic". Crimp's work has been performed in Italy notably by the Accademia degli Artefatti, discussed here. Capitani argues that Crimp's plays suited this company's "need for artistic exploration and experimentation to which the company is devoted and stimulate its increasing interest in the study of language and communication." She focuses especially on Accademia degli Artefatti's production of Crimp's "dramatic jigsaw" *Attempts on Her Life*.

The final essay in this section of the volume, "'Qu'on entende la langue officielle': Translation and Self-translation of the French-based Creole of Saint Lucia" concerns another aspect of translating plays: self-translation and how it differs from the more usual kinds

of translation. Giuseppe Sofo takes works by the Caribbean poet and playwright Derek Walcott and analyses how the author himself has translated passages from Creole into English. Sofo notes “the use of variation instead of repetition when the same passage is translated several times in the same context” and offers explanations for this.

Most of the questions raised by translation in these essays came up in the round-table discussion devoted to translation and confirm, to use Capitani’s words, “the fertile intersections between theatre, dramaturgy, translation.”

Translations, adaptations and reworkings facilitate the circulation of English-language plays throughout Continental Europe and the authors of the essays in Part One of this volume all underline the role played by translators, publishers, academics, actors, directors and companies in bringing these works to new audiences. English-language drama has also challenged or changed theatre practice in certain European countries where specific works, authors or types of play have resonated in a particular way.

Changing attitudes to English-language theatre and some of the effects of specific works in different countries and regions are examined in Part Two of this volume “National Stages”. Elisabeth Angel-Perez, Professor of English literature and drama at the University of Paris-Sorbonne, begins with an in-depth study entitled “The ‘Devenir-French’ of the Play: Contemporary British Theatre in France and in French”. She examines how English-language drama finally found its way into some of the major French theatres after a somewhat shaky start with the first productions of Pinter plays. Since the 90s, many British playwrights have had their work performed in France, most notably Pinter, Kane and Crimp. Many others have joined this list, including writers such as Bond and Barker who have fallen out of favour in Britain. Caryl Churchill, however, has been neglected, (a point also raised by Rose and Soncini speaking about Italy). Angel-Perez provides precise data about 21st century productions at several leading French theatres, both in Paris and beyond. She also interviewed a number of directors and asked them to explain their choices.

The main reasons given for choosing British dramatists were: “novelty of the approach, strength of the dramaturgy, capacity to address immediate contemporary issues”.

Angel-Perez also argues that contemporary British drama is able to “import other countries’ concerns and traumas, and particularly historical traumas, onto its own stage”. A play like *Blasted* is an obvious example of this but Angel-Perez gives other examples of the “cosmopolitanism” (as defined by Dan Rebellato) of some contemporary British drama which makes a smooth transition to other national contexts. Finally, she suggests that, far from constituting a handicap, the fact of translating these plays from English into another language creates a kind of “linguistic hermaphroditism” (the term used by Claude Régy), the potential for “a frontierless language, which opens a chasm of possibilities for the actors and readers”. She concludes by demonstrating this by looking at how the use of gendered nouns in a play like Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on Her Life* has the potential to infuse new meanings and new voices into the text.

Although in quite different contexts, both Vicki Ann Cremona and Marta Tirado both credit Anglophone drama with providing impetus to the development of theatre with a specific identity: Maltese and Catalan, respectively. In “Maltese Audiences and Theatre in English: Choice and Controversy” Vicki Ann Cremona describes how English-language theatre was initially a colonial phenomenon, but later had a more positive effect by providing training for actors and directors and then, by providing an outlet for political protest in the seventies and eighties. More recently, contemporary Anglophone plays (*In-Yer-Face* and verbatim) have been staged to oppose censorship. Instead of rejecting the English language as the language of the colonizer, certain Maltese playwrights are choosing to write in English to express controversial ideas.

In “On *Rebentats* (TNC, 2018), the First Catalan Production of Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*: Construction and Audience of Catalan National Theatre”, Marta Tirado shows how a Catalan performance of Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* in 2018 at the Catalan National Theatre fulfilled two

objectives: firstly, “consolidating Catalan theatre as a national entity that is part of the European theatrical tradition” and secondly making it possible “to develop the theatre-reception skills of the ordinary Catalan theatre-goer” by introducing new theatrical forms and languages. She begins by explaining that the TNC was set up, like other national theatres “with the purpose of celebrating their distinct languages and cultures.” However, establishing the specific identity of Catalan theatre does not entail isolation, on the contrary, it involves linking up with other European theatre traditions. A play like *Blasted*, already mentioned by Angel-Perez for its “cosmopolitanism” in the French context, also seems to function in a similar way in the Catalan context, attracting the attention of new companies and directors and introducing audiences to a different aesthetics. Tirado notes an interesting parallel between the hostile reception of some of the Catalan press to *Blasted* in 2018 and that of parts of the British press to the first production of the play in 1995.

In order to investigate the place of Anglophone theatre in Greece, Elizabeth Sakellaridou sent out a questionnaire to directors, critics and translators. She presents a summary of her findings in “Echoes of Contemporary Anglophone Theatre on the Greek Stage”.

Not surprisingly, in the light of what Italian and Spanish academics have noted, her results point to Sarah Kane as the most influential contemporary British dramatist. Caryl Churchill, as in Italy or Spain and Catalonia, is not performed as frequently as her place in British drama might lead us to expect. Sakellaridou’s research focuses on the main reasons Greek theatres choose to put on Anglophone plays. Those contacted by Sakellaridou explain that their choice is not just due to the accessibility of the English language and therefore more readily available translations. They point out that many of the works chosen for production are “plays of social unrest and social inquiry that seem to respond to their own precarious existence as citizens of Greece, Europe and the world.”

Furthermore, as noticed by other authors, such as stage director Christina Chatzivasileiou, Greek theatre practitioners are also drawn

to the more experimental side of British theatre, for example, the work of Forced Entertainment or Tim Crouch, in search of a new theatre aesthetic.

In “Contemporary Anglophone Theatre on Montenegrin Stages from 2000 to 2015”, Vesna Tripković-Samardžić examines recent programming trends in two state and two city theatres in Montenegro. Although, to some extent these theatres tend to produce plays written in English (both British and American) which have already received international recognition, for example Samuel Beckett or Tennessee Williams, other choices seem to be more closely linked to the specific context of 21st century Montenegro: “the consequences of ethnic conflict [...] or the mechanisms of repression in a totalitarian regime”. Four of Pinter’s short plays: *The New World Order* (1991), *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988) and *Party Time* (1991) were grouped under the same title *Party Time* “because they address the same theme – the legacy of totalitarianism.”

Clare Wallace focuses on “the cultural dynamics of Anglophone drama as it crosses into and circulates within a Czech setting” in “Transpositional Exchanges: Contemporary Anglophone Drama on the Czech National Stage”. Her focus is on 21st century productions at the National Theatre in Prague and she is particularly concerned with the ways that “new meanings may accrue to work through transposition to another social and theatrical context.” Just as Guarracino demonstrates through her discussion of an Italian production of *Cloud Nine*, how a work written in Britain at a particular moment can take on new meanings in a different temporal and geographical context, so Wallace shows how “the national historical specificities of a play like *Rock’n’Roll* inevitably resonated differently within the Czech context in ways that drew attention to Stoppard’s own nostalgia and, paradoxically, the inherent formal stasis of a work about political change”. On the other hand, more experimental works, like *Earthquakes in London* seem to have been better received in Prague since the Czech theatre has a tradition of “scenographic experimentalism”.

The last essay takes us back to the opening of Part Two by looking at how Anglophone theatre is received in France. This time, however, the focus is on theatre from the United States. In “*Angels in America: Performing American Border-Crossing on the French Stage?*” Xavier Lemoine analyses a series of productions in France between 1994 and 2018, showing that *Angels in America* has actually crossed borders both cultural and aesthetic. Challenging the earlier binary vision widespread in France that American drama was either psychological realism or avant-gardism, Lemoine argues that *Angels in America*, by “blurring the distinction between high and low art, realism and avant-garde” has contributed to the creation of a new hybrid theatrical genre.

The Festival d’Avignon 2019 edition, taking place as we are writing this introduction, happens to echo our investigation into the circulation of Anglophone theatre in Europe. With the collaboration of the BNF - Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Maison Jean Vilar, The Festival IN’s administration has started to carry out statistical research on the production of international drama since 1947 when the Festival was created under the aegis of actor and stage director Jean Vilar. In a timely coincidence with our *Crossing Borders* investigation, the first chapter of the Festival’s historical survey is devoted to the programming of 20th and 21st Century Anglophone drama; on this occasion, two of our RADAC members and regular Festival attenders, Cyrielle Garson and Christine Kiehl, were invited July 6, 2019 to Avignon’s Maison Jean Vilar for a roundtable on the question.

As a statistical survey of the state of Anglophone theatre in Avignon OFF¹ festival has hardly started, our tentative remarks will be limited to the official IN festival. Besides regular Shakespeare productions, and leaving aside classics like TS Eliot’s *Meurtre dans la Cathédrale* (*Murder in the Cathedral*) in 1957 or Beckett’s *Va et Vient* in 1980, Edward Bond paved the way for English drama with *Early Morning* in 1970, staged by George Wilson, *Maison d’arrêt* (*Olly’s Prison*), staged by Jorge Lavelli in 1993, *Pièces de guerre* (*The War Plays*), staged by Alain Françon in 1994, *Numéro d’équilibre* (*The Balancing Act*), staged

and translated by Jérôme Hankins in 2006, and *Naître (Born)*, staged by Alain Françon the same year.

Few contemporary American playwrights have made their way on to the renowned Avignon stage except for Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, programmed twice, in Brigitte Jaques's French version in 1994 and in Krzysztof Warlikowski's Polish version in 2007. (Both productions are discussed by Xavier Lemoine in this volume.) Dennis Cooper came to read his text *L'Apologize* in 2005 and Naomi Wallace was programmed twice as we shall see.

Besides dramatists, renowned Anglophone artists successfully took the Avignon Festival stage by storm like Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre with *Paradise Now* in 1968, a notorious breakthrough with its ostentatious display of nakedness and sex. 1981 welcomed the British Footsbarn travelling Theatre (now based in Central France) with Steinbeck's *Arthur*. South African protean artist William Kentridge (illustrator, animation film author, sculptor, puppeteer, performer, director) and his Handspring Puppet Company came twice with three productions: *Refuse the Hour Woyzeck on the Highveld* in 1996 and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* in 1997.

Tim Etchell's Forced Entertainment made their debut in Avignon with *The Coming Storm* in 2012 and the same year, Simon Mc Burney's Complicite theatre had the great honour of staging *The Master and Margarita* at the Palais des Papes.

The only productions illustrating British *In-Yer-Face* theatre were both proposed by Thomas Ostermeier in 1999 in his German versions of Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking (Shoppen und Ficken)* and Sarah Kane's *Anéantis (Blasted)* in 2005. It should be noted, however, that contemporary Anglophone playwrights are regularly programmed in Avignon's OFF festival (Howard Barker, Alice Birch, Caryl Churchill, Martin Crimp, David Harrower, Sarah Kane, Daniel Keene, Dennis Kelly, Duncan Mac Millan, Harold Pinter, Naomi Wallace, to name but a few).

After Kane, Naomi Wallace is the second female playwright to have entered Avignon's IN repertoire, in 2011 with *Les heures sèches (Things*

of *Dry Hours* staged by Guillaume Lévêque) and 2019 with *La brèche* (*The MacAlpine Spillway*) staged by French director Tommy Milliot.

Last but not least, 2019 marks Martin Crimp's first and most eagerly awaited appearance in Avignon's IN Festival. Is it because Crimp is one of the most European British dramatists (with Ravenhill and Barker) with his recent plays often premiered in Germany? This was indeed the case with the play chosen by the Festival administration this year: *Le reste vous le connaissez par le cinéma* (*The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from The Cinema*) under Daniel Jeanneteau's stage direction. It was first created by Katie Mitchell in Hamburg as *Alles weitere kennen sie aus dem kino* (2013). It is worth pointing out that the play has never been performed in Britain to this day.

The (incomplete) panorama proposed above enables us to draw some similar conclusions to those evoked in the present volume: contemporary Anglophone drama is programmed outside English-speaking countries either in relation to the socio-political context of the host country, or that country's current taste for artistic innovation or, thirdly, via renowned stage directors presiding over the choice of the playwrights.

In Avignon, the avant-gardist production of Julian Beck's Living Theatre tallied with France's revolutionary context in 1968, and the Handspring Puppet Company's show corresponded to Avignon's interest in aesthetic forms other than text-based drama in the late nineties. Forced Entertainment's extravagance and Complicite theatre's innovative transdisciplinary productions answered a demand for devised theatre and a new playful confrontation with the public. A similar reason may account, more recently, for Avignon's attraction to Katie Mitchell's innovative performances and installations (she may be known as Crimp's most regular stage director, but her creations in Avignon (*Christine* in 2011, *Ten Billion* with scientist Stephen Emmott in 2012, *Die Meiden*, and the video installation *Five Truths*, in 2017) owe more to her experimental, often post-dramatic stage aesthetics than to the adaptation of English play-texts:

Ravenhill was ushered into the famous French Festival via one of Avignon's favourite German stage directors, the bold and uncompromising director of Berlin Schaubühne, Thomas Ostermeier, who conquered the Palais des Papes's epic scale stage and audience with a boisterous *Hamlet* in 2008 and came back with a breath-taking *Richard III* in 2015.

Martin Crimp owes his introduction to Avignon 2019 to a French director already known by the Festival, Daniel Jeanneteau, with *Le reste vous le connaissez par le cinema*. This creation is Jeanneteau's second staging of a Crimp text, after the opera libretto *Into the Little Hill* in 2006.

Let us hope that Avignon's interest in contemporary Anglophone drama initiated this year, may presage future editions with more female voices, after Sarah Kane, Katie Mitchell and Naomi Wallace.

Susan Blattès and Christine Kiehl

¹ OFF is quite the opposite of "Official" as it refers to the alternative venues (like Edinburgh's Fringe Festival) with no fewer than 1500 plays.