



Languages of Love: The Swiss Stage Bards' *Love's Labour's Lost*

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The *Love's Labour's Lost* film produced by the University of Fribourg's Multilingual Shakespeare Project 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 of the dominant languages of Switzerland (German,¹ French, Italian) under the direction of Elisabeth Dutton,² weaving those languages together with Shakespeare's English into films that shift easily back and forth between different languages. Set and filmed at the University of Fribourg (Fig. 1), the film uses the linguistic diversity of Switzerland to highlight aspects of character and plot through language changes and code-switching. Promotional materials for the Lausanne Shakespeare Festival explain that the Swiss Stage Bards use multilingual Shakespeare to explore "ways in which language and languages can both include and exclude".³ For audience members, the linguistic variation excludes those who do not have a strong command of all of the major national languages of Switzerland, and yet productions by the Swiss Stage Bards have been shown and understood in international venues, including King's College in London and the European Shakespeare Research Association. The company balances careful and subtle translation that takes advantage of the repetitive patterns in Shakespeare's language with the use of humour through music and gesture throughout the film to create a distinctly local Shakespeare that can be understood in a global context.

Linguistic Variety

When the Swiss Stage Bards performed at King's College, the advertisement pitched the performance as understandable even by those who do not speak the languages: "You will

¹ The production uses both Standard German, which is sometimes referred to as High German in Switzerland, and Swiss German.

² Dutton has written in detail about the linguistic choices in the Swiss Stage Bards' production of *Henry v* in her 2021 article "Helvetic Henry? A Swiss Adaptation of *Henry v*, or Something Near Enough", and an article that looks more broadly at the translation project as a whole ("Swiss Shakespeare: Creative Translation as Research and Appropriation") is forthcoming in 2022.

³ Lausanne Shakespeare Festival, "Workshop: 'A Helvetic Henry?'" *Program for the 2017 Lausanne Shakespeare Festival*, 20 May 2017, <https://lausanneshakes.com/en/workshop-helvetic-henry/>. Accessed 14 November 2021.

be amazed at your own capacity to follow what is going on".⁴ Monolingual audience members might be sceptical of that claim, given that the company's productions include scenes in which each character speaks a different language, and the conversation shifts rapidly between French, English, Italian, and German depending on which character is speaking. The impression is reminiscent of Hieronimo's description of the "sundry languages" play in *The Spanish Tragedy*, when he states that:

Each one of us
Must act his part in unknown languages,
That it may breed the more variety:
As you, my lord, in Latin, I in Greek,
You in Italian, and for because I know
That Bell-Imperia hath practiced the French,
In courtly French shall all her phrases be. (IV.i.172–178)⁵

By using a similar strategy in remaking *Love's Labour's Lost* into a film that uses at least seven different languages, the Swiss Stage Bards paradoxically both increase and decrease the linguistic accessibility of the production. They allow any audience member who understands at least one of the languages to understand at least part of the film, but no one can understand the full film unless they are familiar with English, French, Italian, and German (Swiss and Standard), as well additional speeches in Latin, Spanish, Rumansch, and the dead language Patois Gruyerien. Within the world of the film, however, the chaotic switching of language functions seamlessly, and the characters do not demonstrate much difficulty in following the transitions. In a sort of reverse Tower of Babel, four different people can be speaking four different languages in a single conversation, and every word is understood, seemingly effortlessly. While the production is defined by linguistic complexity, every effort is made to help audiences to follow the plot even if they cannot understand the shifting languages with the same ease that the characters do.

The Language of Music

One of the strategies employed by the Swiss Stage Bards to increase comprehension is to combine music and situational humour to complement the use of spoken language. The first diegetic instance of music is at 0:55, where we see some of the breath-taking scenery in Fribourg and several students (Ferdinand's lords) tossing a Nerf Vortex (a miniature foam football with a foam shaft and flight attached, which looks like a hybrid of a football and a dart) on campus, and first encounter King Ferdinand in the library. As we see Ferdinand, we learn that the young woman standing behind him, who we later learn is playing a gender-swapped Dull, is the source of the violin music. At first music in the library seems inappropriate, but since the library represents King Ferdinand's court, the violin is not so out of place after all. At 1:32, the king motions for Dull to stop playing, which brings the viewer's attention back to the library once again, where silence is appropriate. Beyond the absurdity of a violin in the library, Ferdinand's opening lines are undercut by the physical humour of his attendants continuing to throw the Nerf Vortex; at 2:03 we actually see it

⁴ King's College London Events, "Multilingual Shakespeare Mash-up", 8 May 2016, Arts & Humanities Research Institute at King's College, London, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/eventrecords/2015-2016/lsc/mash-up.aspx>, accessed 25 July 2018; link no longer active; repr. in "Week o", Oxford Comparative Criticism and Translation (OCCT) blog, <http://www.occt.ox.ac.uk/blog/week-o-updates-1>. Accessed 14 November 2021.

⁵ Thomas Kyd, "The Spanish Tragedy", *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 45–93. All quotations from *The Spanish Tragedy* are from this edition.

arching between two bathroom stalls. Finally, Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine arrive, and have a heated discussion with Ferdinand, once again bringing the viewer back to the kinds of sounds more appropriate for the revelry of court than a library. The placement of Ferdinand's court in a library and the alternation between behaviours appropriate for a library and ones appropriate for a court leave the viewer chuckling at the silliness of the opening scene. One of the first instances of code-switching as humour comes at 3:46; after Berowne's dialogue lulls Ferdinand to sleep, and he wakes him by throwing his Nerf Vortex at him and switching to French.



1. Ferdinand and his lords in *Love's Labour's Lost*, by the Swiss Stage Bards (2018).

The second example of diegetic music as a humorous device comes as King Ferdinand and his attendants have been in the library discussing their plans to sequester themselves for three years and live an austere life of studying and sleeping only three hours per night. The characters briefly break into a chorus of "Who let the lords out?", sung to the melody of "Who let the dogs out", a hit song from 2000 by Baha Men. Both the original song and the phrase "Who let the lords out" would seem to suggest that the characters were preparing for a party, which of course is far different than spending three years alone studying. The impression is one of hapless lords who proclaim to have been unleashed, but who are in reality preparing to be locked away.

Perhaps the most ironic use of music in the production begins at 1:08:06, when Berowne leads King Ferdinand and the other attendants in a rap song comprised of an abbreviated version of Berowne's praise of Boyet. The scene is evocative of a music video, complete with two luxury cars (one is a BMW, but the brand marking of the other is not visible in the video). The music underscores Berowne's praise of Boyet, despite the fact that it opens with an on-screen text that reads "The Lords Boyet Diss". As in Shakespeare's text, Boyet is the one who alerts the Princess and her attendants that King Ferdinand and company would soon be arriving disguised as Russian travellers. Boyet's warning provides the impetus for the Princess and her ladies to don masks, exchange favours, and mock the men. Thus, the song celebrates a man who helps set the stage for the lords' ridicule. In all

of these scenes, music functions as an additional language, one that can be understood by any viewer, regardless of their skill level in any of Switzerland's national languages.

Love's Languages Lost

The scenes involving the lovers particularly highlight these rapid language switches because each man and each woman has a language which they prefer to speak. Each part of the conversation is therefore conducted in a different language. Because *Love's Labour's Lost* includes an unusual amount of repetition, linguistic differences between each of the four women and four men serve as variations on a form. Shakespeare's stylistic use of scenes in which all of the lords, ladies, or couples cycle through similar speeches or actions in quick succession cannot be dismissed as textual errors or confusion between the Quarto and Folio texts.⁶ Even when editors remove the most obviously repeated lines spoken by Berowne and Rosaline in Act V⁷ and clean up the play's textual inconsistencies, repetition is inherent in the structure of the scenes featuring the lovers. John Dover Wilson's 1962 essay "*Love's Labour's Lost: The Story of a Conversion*" establishes the importance of "pattern, balance and contrast as well as repetition and variation" to the play.⁸ After noting some of the patterns of the play (oaths, letters, declarations of love), Wilson expounds that "it would be idle to multiply examples, some of them of the subtlest character, so subtle that like the lesser variations upon a theme in music they are felt rather than perceived; suffice it to say that repetition with variations is one of the mainsprings of the play's structure."⁹ Both Lynne Magnussen, cited by Stefan Daniel Keller, and Keller himself later explored this repetition in more detail, clarifying that Shakespeare's use of repetition in *Love's Labour's Lost* is significantly greater both in frequency and variety when compared to other Shakespeare plays.¹⁰ By scripting each character as using a different language to tell what is essentially the same story, the Swiss Stage Bards take advantage of the scenes with structural repetition (each of the lords swears an oath to dedicate himself to scholarship, each lady recalls a previous meeting with one of the lords, each couple exchanges greetings when the two groups meet, etc.). The technique of varying the languages among the lovers serves not only to break up the repetitive content of some scenes, but it can also aid the comprehension of those viewers who do not understand all of the languages equally.

The multilingual scenes in the film give each character a distinct linguistic identity, but the conversation flows unimpeded as if the characters were all speaking the same language – or at least, as if the characters all understood each language perfectly. In the scene in which the Princess and her attendants extoll the virtues of Ferdinand's attendants, the Princess speaks Swiss German (her preferred variety for familiar discussions), Maria speaks

⁶ For a more detailed study of the textual issues relating to *Love's Labour's Lost*, see Frédérique Fouassier-Tate and Sujata Iyengar, "*Not Like an Old Play*": *Love's Labour's Lost de William Shakespeare*, Paris: Editions Fahrenheit, 2014, pp. 37-59.

⁷ As Iyengar and Fouassier-Tate note, "most modern editions, including Carroll's Cambridge edition, delete both Berowne's and Rosaline's speeches. The reasons for cutting both speeches are clear: Dumaine repeats almost word-for-word Berowne's question to Katharine right after Rosaline's speech, and Rosaline offers an expanded version of her speech later in the scene" (p. 53). Yet even with the deletions that correct the clearest examples of repetitive phrasing in Act V, the scene still follows a repetitive structure as each couple responds to the news of the King's death and the ladies' departure.

⁸ John Dover Wilson, "*Love's Labour's Lost: The Story of a Conversion*", *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 187.

⁹ Wilson, p. 187.

¹⁰ Stefan Daniel Keller, *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric: A Study of Nine Plays*, Tübingen, Franke Verlag, 2009, pp. 9-10.

Italian, Katherine English, and Rosaline French. As Hieronimo's description of the play in *The Spanish Tragedy* suggests, having each woman speak in a different language does "breed more variety" (IV.i.174). Rather than watching characters slowly cycle through the languages of Switzerland in groups, the audience experiences all of the languages at once, overlapping in conversation as if each part of Switzerland had come together to tell four simultaneous love stories. The audience does not need to understand each line of dialogue because the scene makes it clear that each woman's speech is a variation on a theme – a fond memory of a previous encounter with one of the men, followed by some light teasing from her friends. The humour in the scene comes not so much from the dialogue, but from the juxtaposition of their praises over scenes of the men in ridiculous situations. Longaville is shown messily eating a sandwich, Dumaine is practicing bodybuilding poses in front of a mirror while wearing a Speedo, and Berowne appears to be interrupting a professor's lecture to stand and address the class himself. The behaviour of each man is at odds with the noble virtues that the women are listing, and the contrast relies on tone of voice and physical humour to aid the viewer in understanding the situation even without understanding all of the languages.

Power Plays

Language can also serve as a means to assert power, as we see when the lovers meet in person. With each female character and each male character speaking a different language from the rest of their peers, it might easily be assumed that each pair of lovers would speak the same language – that they would be linguistically matched in the same way that the couples in performances of *Love's Labour's Lost* are often costumed in the same colours to indicate that they belong together. The King of Navarre speaks primarily in French, which might initially suggest him as the natural love interest for the Princess of France. Rather than making the simple choice of scripting the French Princess as a French speaker, the production presents the character as "a Swiss German speaker, who chatted to her ladies in Bernese dialect but nonetheless switched confidently to High German¹¹ in public settings, and to French when speaking to the – francophone – King of Navarre".¹² Elisabeth Dutton clarified in an interview¹³ that the Swiss Stage Bards decided against having the Princess speak French because Shakespeare himself "makes no effort to produce realistic linguistic choices", and the actual realistic language choice for the Princess would have probably been closer to "Sixteenth-century Navarrese-Aragonese" than modern French. In fact, none of the lovers are linguistically matched; Rosaline speaks French, but loves the English-speaking Berowne, Maria speaks Italian, but loves the German-speaking Longaville, and Katherine speaks English, but loves Dumaine, who speaks Italian and Rumansch (and uses Rumansch in his love letter to Katherine). Rather than telling a love story in which the coupling is linguistically inevitable because the couples already speak the same language, the Multilingual Shakespeare Project emphasises the linguistic mismatch of growing love between individuals who are literally speaking different languages. Because the characters can each understand all of the languages in conversation, the film does not present the

¹¹ Among linguists, the term *High German* refers to German dialects south of Benrath, near Düsseldorf (and thus all dialects of Switzerland). In common parlance, it refers to Standard German, which is how we use the term here.

¹² Elisabeth Dutton, "Swiss Shakespeare: Creative Translation as Research and Appropriation", forthcoming in *Making New: The Creative and the Critical in Encounters With Early English*, ed. Helen Brookman and Olivia Robinson, ARC Humanities Press, forthcoming.

¹³ Elisabeth Dutton, Interview with Jennifer Flaherty. September 1, 2021. Audio, 50:37.

lovers as actually being unable to understand each other. They are not Lord and Lady Mortimer from *Part 1 of Henry the Fourth*, who are unable to communicate without her father acting as translator because she speaks no English and he speaks no Welsh. Instead, the linguistic shifts in the conversations of each couple function as a means of establishing control and conciliation. While each character primarily sticks with his or her own preferred language when the lovers are separated into homosocial groups of four, the couples shift back and forth between each other's languages when they pair up.

In their first meeting, which transfers the setting from the field described in Shakespeare's text to a café (Fig. 2), King Ferdinand addresses the Princess in German, but with a strong French accent. The wordplay is changed from Shakespeare's text, where Ferdinand says, "Fair princess, welcome to the court of Navarre", and the Princess replies, "'Fair' I give you back again, and 'welcome' I have not yet. the roof of this court is too high to be yours, and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine" (II.i.91-93).¹⁴ The film renders the Princess's reply as "Das Dach dieses Hauses ist zu tief, um das Eure zu sein, und Willkommen am hölzernen Tisch zu gering für mich". Where Shakespeare has a reference to a roof that is too high (the sky), the film has a roof that is too low (the ceiling of the café), and the wide fields are exchanged for a wooden table, which is too little for the Princess. Nevertheless, the dialogue is appropriate for the café scene, and is quite clever in German. The sentence also adds a near rhyme with *Tisch* and *mich*. As the conversation continues, King Ferdinand's contention that his "ladyship is ignorant what it is" (II.i.100) is a less aggressive "Madame weiß nicht von was es handelt" in German. This translation choice sets up an opportunity for the Princess to mock Ferdinand, as she states, "Ihr wärt weiser wenn Ihr's auch nicht wüsstet, da der, der es weiß *gar nicht mehr handeln kann*" (20:08). In the italicised portion of the quotation, the Princess mocks King Ferdinand's French accent. The effect is one of not just playful teasing, but also of a power move, as she immediately follows up with "Gewährt mir, dass Ihr lest, warum ich komme, so dass mein Fall bald abgefertigt ist." At this point, after having been mocked and prompted to read the Princess's letter so that her case can be resolved quickly and she can be on her way (perhaps implying that she has other business to attend to and little time to waste with him), Ferdinand gives up his bid to speak German and switches to French, a language in which he is more proficient. Another code-switch occurs in the same café scene, as Berowne encounters Rosaline exiting the bathroom, and asks her in French if they had not once danced in Brabant. Rosaline responds in English, and the conversation closely follows Shakespeare's text. Whereas the Princess takes control with Ferdinand linguistically in order to assert power in a diplomatic matter, Rosaline's utterance establishes "linguistic divergence"¹⁵ from her would-be suitor by switching from her native language to English. Indeed, the code-switch here highlights the linguistic and social distance present in Shakespeare's original text, as Berowne suggests that Rosaline may be sent many lovers, to which she retorts "Amen, so you be none" (II.i.124).

¹⁴ This and other quotations from Shakespeare's play are taken from *Love's Labour's Lost: The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

¹⁵ Howard Giles, "Accent Mobility: A Model and Some Data", *Anthropological Linguistics*, 15:2, 1973, pp. 87–105.



2. Meeting between Ferdinand and the Princess at the café in *Love's Labour's Lost*, by the Swiss Stage Bards (2018).

Here, the power plays of the code-switching among the couples reflect the dynamic that Valentin Gerlier notes in Shakespeare's text: "the ladies never succumb to the men's linguistic powers: just as the Princess outdoes the King in manners, Rosaline quickly surpasses Berowne at an inaugural game of stichomythia. The men may impress one another with banter, sonnets, and arguments, but their linguistic ventures into relations with their opposites fail miserably."¹⁶ In both the Ferdinand/Princess meeting and the Berowne/Rosaline conversation that follows, the male character begins the conversation in one language, the female character changes the language, and the conversation continues in the language selected by the female character. The shift in linguistic control works to establish the power dynamics between the couples. The King of Navarre welcomes the Princess to his kingdom in his own language rather than hers, but she takes control of the conversation by switching to German, and he follows her lead by continuing the negotiations in her language. Conversely, Berowne approaches Rosaline in her own language, breaking away from his typical English to speak French, and she repeats his line back to him in English and continues speaking in his language rather than hers. For the Princess, the switch from French to German gives her more control over the conversation and puts her in a stronger position for negotiation in a political conversation with the King, especially since he keeps trying to switch back to French. In the more personal conversation between Berowne and Rosaline, she rejects his attempt to speak French with her and rejects his question as unnecessary by switching to English and besting him at verbal sparring in his own language.

¹⁶ Valentin Gerlier, "'How Well He's Read, To Reason Against Reading': Language, Eros and Education in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 53:3, 2019, pp. 589–603, 596.

Tricks and Translation

Dutton explains that the film uses “code-switching, changes of language, to reflect changes of attitudes of the characters; changing your attitude to somebody is reflected as trying to change your language”, so because “the men are initially hostile to the women, they don’t speak the same language, but then, as they fall in love with the women, they start trying to speak their language”.¹⁷ The female characters drive the choice of language and the tone of each conversation, and they continue that pattern through most of the film. The women consistently use language in ways that give them power over their male love interests. When the Princess and her ladies trick their lovers by impersonating each other, they switch their languages as well as their favours, but they make very little effort to change their actual appearance. The masks they wear do not hide their features, and the women do not even wear each other’s distinctive hats and accessories – the Princess is still wearing her crown as she pretends to be Rosaline (Fig. 3). So the primary means of impersonation is linguistic – they are mimicking each other’s languages more than they are replicating each other’s appearances. The result is even more linguistic confusion – the overblown accents of the male characters and the language switching of the female characters mean that none of them are speaking in their own voices.

When Ferdinand and his attendants arrive in Russian disguises to visit the Princess and her attendants, Boyet addresses the men in German, and they answer in English. Rosaline asks what they want in German, and for a moment it seems as if Boyet is serving as an interpreter between Rosaline and the men. At 1:03, King Ferdinand speaks French, and then a mixture of German and French, “Wir haben viel gereist für zu tanzen avec vous sur cette polouse.” There are several grammatical mistakes in the sentence; first, the verb *reisen* “to travel” requires a form of *sein* “to be” as an auxiliary in present perfect constructions; thus, *Wir sind viel gereist...* would be the grammatically-correct construction. Second, *für* is not used in the sense of “in order to” in German; the proper form would be *um*. Finally, *zu tanzen* would occur at the end of the phrase (although it is possible that the choice to include it before *avec vous* may have been a sign that the speaker wanted a clear break between the German and French parts of the sentence). In this sentence it seems that code-switching is not a conscious choice to demonstrate the character’s linguistic virtuosity (as may be the case with Holofernes), but rather required, as he does not speak German well. His poor German is demonstrated not only by the code-switch and incorrect grammar, but also by an exaggerated Russian accent. One is left to wonder whether it is Ferdinand himself being mocked, or whether his grammatical mistakes, code-switch, and faux Russian accent are part of his intention to play up the “Russianness” of his disguise. Either way, his sentence would be considered quaint and humorous to many German speakers. Ferdinand’s comment, while entertaining, does not capture the meaning of “measured many miles” (v.ii.184) from the original, but in the subsequent dialogue the film does get to the question of how many inches are in a mile. At 1:03:14, Rosaline responds to Ferdinand’s comment: “Das stimmt nicht. Frag wie viele Zoll die Meile bei ihnen hat. Wenn sie so viele kennen, wird es sicher leicht so was zu nennen.” Unlike the original text, Rosaline has added rhyme (*kennen* and *nennen*), and unlike Ferdinand, she does address the question of how many inches are in a mile. The wordplay with “measured many miles” finally appears more explicitly when Boyet relays Rosaline’s question to Ferdinand: “Da Ihr, um herzukommen viele Meilen durchmessen habt, will die Prinzessin wissen, wie viele Zoll denn eine Meile hat” (1:03:24). Here again, we have a near rhyme with *habt* and *hat*. When Ferdinand and

¹⁷ Dutton, interview.

company return to the park bench, no longer in Russian dress, Ferdinand apologises that the Princess and her ladies have been left alone. At this point, the original text has "A mess of Russians left us but of late" (v.ii.361). The filmmakers allow themselves an entertaining change here, as the Princess answers Ferdinand's apology: "Gar nicht, mein Herr. Mit viel Besuch haben wir hier gewohnt. Vier fremde Herren waren eben hier" (1:08:44). This change from "a mess of Russians" to "vier fremde Herren", whose nationality is not stated, allows for a comical response from Ferdinand, who inadvertently admits what he and his attendants had been up to as he asks, "Comment, madame? Des Russes?" The Princess and Rosaline speak Standard German to King Ferdinand and his attendants when they arrive disguised as Russians, and continue to do so when they return without their disguises. While the men would like to court them, the Princess and Rosaline prefer to mock them, and Standard German serves as a means for linguistic divergence and formal negotiations of power. Swiss German, by contrast, provides closeness between the Princess and her friends, the standard language allows her greater social distance from the men. This distance is part of the point of these early scenes in the relationships of the main characters, as Dutton clarified during our interview: "The fact that they struggle a little bit in the language of the other is part of the point... it's supposed to match something psychologically in the way that relationships work we don't easily accommodate to each other's languages – we have to make an effort and learn to do it."¹⁸ The linguistic mismatches and mistranslations of the scene underscore the fact that the lovers are each trying to trick their beloved rather than being open and honest about their feelings.



3. The Princess and her ladies in disguise in *Love's Labour's Lost*, by the Swiss Stage Bards (2018).

Love's Languages Found

There is one use of Patois Gruyerien in the film. As Armado, Costard, Sir Nathaniel, and Holofernes are presenting the Nine Worthies (and being mocked by Ferdinand, the Princess, and their attendants), Marcade, now a man in a shirt that reads "Marcade's Express Delivery", informs the Princess that her father has died. There is a jarring contrast

¹⁸ Dutton, interview.

between the mocking and revelry of the presentation of the Nine Worthies and the news that the King of France has died, a contrast punctuated by the sole use of Patois Gruyerien, a recently dead language, in the film. After the death of the King of France, Dumaine, Longaville, and Berowne all find the women in the train station and swear their love in the language of their beloved, each of whom responds in the same language. The promises they make are as much about the linguistic choices as they are about the emotion. An advertisement of a performance of the Swiss Stage Bards explains that Shakespeare's plays "remind us that all relationships require an effort of understanding – to love another is to learn another's language, even if each person will always speak with their own accent."¹⁹ The film ends with the lovers together, finally speaking the same language.²⁰

The Language of the Land

Swiss German²¹ serves both as a marker of class/education level and covert prestige in the production.²² It is employed in the text as a marker of Dull's low social status, reflecting low overt prestige for the dialect, but is also a signifier of solidarity and familiarity for the Princess and her attendants. Similar prestige roles have been identified for standard languages and dialects in sociolinguistic studies (see Luhman on Kentucky English).²³ When we first encounter Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel, Holofernes switches confidently among English, French, Italian, and German. Dull, on the other hand, whose name suggests a lack of sophistication, speaks only Swiss German. When Sir Nathaniel uses the Latin phrase *haud credo* [I do not think so] in the original text, Dull responds with "'Twas not a *haud credo*; 'twas a pricket" (IV.ii.11), which elicits scorn from Holofernes. In the Swiss production, the misunderstanding works even better than in Shakespeare's original (if one can fathom that!). Holofernes exchanges the original *haud credo* for the French *un grand coup*, and Dull proclaims that it was not a *Kuh* "cow" but a *Reh* "deer" (37:10). The irony is even more poignant than in the original because rather than referring to a pricket, Dull misunderstands *coup* as *Kuh*, which sound nearly the same in French and German. The viewer can easily comprehend how she might mishear the phrase. At 38:45, Dull speaks a bit of English, mishearing *allusion* as *collusion* and *pollusion*, as in the original (IV.ii.38–43). Throughout the

¹⁹ King's College London Events.

²⁰ In a marvelous example of life imitating art, a similar linguistically challenged love story played out during the filming of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The German-speaking actor playing Berowne and the French-speaking actress playing Rosaline met and began dating during production. They learned each other's languages as their relationship progressed, and they are now married. As Dutton noted during our interview, "that relationship has enacted what we did in the film – they've come to learn and love each other's languages as they have learned to love each other."

²¹ The dialects of Swiss German are markedly different (particularly in lexicon and phonology/pronunciation) from Standard German, to the point that the varieties are not always mutually intelligible. Thus, a native speaker of German would perceive the switches between the two as quite salient. For an introduction to the phonology of Swiss German, see Kurt Goblirsch, *Consonant Strength in Upper German Dialects*, NOWELE Supplement X, Odense, Odense University Press, 1994; Astrid Kraehenmann, *Quantity and Prosodic Asymmetries in Alemannic. Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, Berlin, DeGruyter, 2003; Craig Callender, "The Progression of West Germanic Gemination", *Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis*, 12:2, 2007, pp. 187-222. For an older but excellent and comprehensive bibliography of dialects from the entire German-speaking world (including Swiss dialects), see Peter Wiesinger and Elisabeth Raffin, *Bibliographie zur Grammatik der deutschen Dialekte. Laut-, Formen-, Wortbildungs- und Satzlehre 1800-1980*, Bern, Lang, 1982.

²² For more information on covert prestige, see Peter Trudgill, "Sex, Covert prestige, and Linguistic Change in the Urban British English of Norwich", *Language in Society*, 1:2, 1972, pp. 179–195.

²³ Reid Luhman, "Appalachian English Stereotypes: Language Attitudes in Kentucky", *Language in Society*, 19:3, 1990, pp. 331–348.

scene, she speaks Swiss German, except for her rendering of "The allusion holds in the exchange". Although Dull's use of Swiss German seems to underscore that she is not as well read as the pedantic Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel, Holofernes, perhaps condescendingly, addresses her several times in Swiss German. It is also possible that Holofernes uses Swiss German in order to showcase her own "linguistic virtuosity",²⁴ as she is able to switch seamlessly among four standard varieties (French, English, Italian, and Standard German), and one non-standard one (Swiss German).

In the case of the Princess of France, the use of Swiss German emphasises the use of language to play with expectations by "reversing everything – so the Princess of France speaks German, and also, because she's a Princess, she ought to speak High German, but instead we'll have her speak Swiss German as her native language".²⁵ Swiss German serves as a marker of intimacy, in contrast with the more formal Standard German. It is the friendly variety in which she chats with her close attendants. In II.i, the Princess and her attendants arrive at the train station in Fribourg (standing in for Navarre) on a diplomatic mission, and we find the Princess speaking with Boyet in Standard German as she and her attendants make their way to a car (15:43). At 17:02, we find the Princess in the car on the way to meet King Ferdinand, and she is speaking Swiss German (while her attendants speak French, English, and Italian). While Standard German is perfectly suitable for discussing the formalities of her diplomatic mission with Boyet, when she is having a friendly conversation with her closest friends and advisors, only the familiar Swiss German will do. At the beginning of V.ii, which takes place in a nail salon, the Princess is again speaking in Swiss German with her attendants. Here we see a group of friends bonding over manicures, and Swiss is the appropriate variety for the Princess (although, as with the scene in the car, her attendants all speak different languages). Conversely, in IV.ii, when the Princess and her attendants are practicing archery, she informs them in Standard German that they will be returning to France the following morning, then speaks with Boyet in Swiss German about hunting a deer. In this case, Swiss German seems to be not so much a solidarity marker as a vehicle for discussing something rather base, hunting a deer, while Standard German serves to discuss the business of returning home following a diplomatic mission.

Stranger in a Strange Land

The emphasis on creating a specifically Swiss visual and linguistic aesthetic is also apparent in the treatment of the character of Don Armado, who is humorously set apart from the other characters, while he still converses in German at several points throughout the film. In her article on the Swiss Stage Bards, Dutton explains that Armado's comical and foreign misappropriation of Swiss culture provides potential entry point for audience members outside Switzerland:

Much humour is generated in the film by Don Armado's appearance; at the same time, audience identification with him as the foreigner, the outsider, potentially causes the non-Swiss audience of the film to reflect on their own experience of oddity in the film. The outsider is at once bemused and, to the insiders he observes, amusing, perhaps cruelly so.²⁶

²⁴ Carol Myers-Scotton, "What the Heck, Sir: Style Shifting and Lexical Colouring as Features of Powerful Language", *Sequence and Pattern in Communicative Behaviour*, ed. Richard L. Street, Jr. and Joseph N. Cappella, London, E. Arnold, 1985, pp. 103–119.

²⁵ Dutton, interview.

²⁶ Elisabeth Dutton, "Swiss Shakespeare", forthcoming.

Non-Swiss viewers might sympathise with Armado's desire to learn about and assimilate with Swiss culture, while simultaneously laughing at (and feeling superior to) the mistakes he makes while doing so. In an early scene, Armado declares his love for Jaquenetta, and Moth answers him in Swiss German. Discussions of love are quite an intimate type of communication, and Swiss German seems to be the better variety to accommodate these kinds of conversations in the film. When Boyet reads Armado's letter to Jaquenetta, the scene shifts to one where he is a teacher lecturing his students (the Princess and her attendants). The letter is comical and overly sentimental, but nevertheless involves expressions of love and affection, making Swiss German the variety of choice. Like the scenes with the lovers, the scenes featuring Don Armado use music and humour to underscore the characters' interactions and make the film easier for viewers of any language level to understand. To highlight the slapstick comedy of the eccentric Armado's first meeting with King Ferdinand's envoys, the production simulates a silent film from the early twentieth century, with the dialogue supported by a solo piano. The scene becomes black and white, with on-screen text in Swiss German for Dull, Armado, and Jaquenetta, and one brief English line for Armado. Later in the scene, Armado and Moth have French text, but the silent film never uses Spanish to designate the words of a Spanish character. The obvious choice in a linguistically varied *Love's Labour's Lost* would be to have the stereotypically Spanish character speaking entirely in Spanish, but Armado primarily speaks accented English and French, with a few sentences of Spanish, German, and Italian. In fact, other than a few strategically placed "olé"s when his name is mentioned, the humour of Armado's character does not come from exaggerating his Spanish identity. Instead, the film presents Armado as a tourist visiting Switzerland who is trying too hard to be Swiss. The visuals accompanying Armado's letter about Costard show Armado searching Google for images of Swiss clothing before arriving in Switzerland dressed up as one of the Vatican's Swiss Guard. Armado continues to wear the Swiss Guard clothing throughout the rest of the film (Fig. 4), whether he is chasing after a train, working out in the gym, or even taking a shower. By emphasising Armado's overenthusiastic attempts to be Swiss rather than using his Spanish identity for humour, the Swiss Stage Bards keep the focus on Switzerland rather than Europe as a whole.



4. Armado in Swiss Guard uniform in *Love's Labour's Lost*, by the Swiss Stage Bards (2018).

The Multilingual Shakespeare Project is not just an attempt to create a Shakespeare that is tied to Swiss linguistic traditions – it is the performance of a local Swiss identity on a global stage, using Shakespeare to bring the world to Fribourg. The stated goal of The Multilingual Shakespeare Project is to “create a Swiss Shakespeare, exploiting the rich linguistic resources and esoteric local traditions of a tiny nation at the heart of Europe”.²⁷ From the scenic shots of the Swiss countryside to a scene in which the male characters discuss their love lives over fondue, the film almost serves as virtual tourism, inviting viewers to visit Fribourg’s streets, cafés, and university campus. It invites viewers into a world of stunning scenery and rich linguistic variety, using Shakespeare and languages to explore the challenges of love and communication. Switzerland’s cultural diversity (and its position at the heart of Europe, where linguistic traditions meet and merge) is ever-present in how the characters exploit their rich linguistic resources to establish solidarity, to create distance, to mock and tease, to assert power, and to find love.

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