

Crossing Borders with Colette's Gigi

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[The following appendices accompany the article published in the French Review 93.3

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APPENDIX A

Chronology of Colette's Gigi

RED = French versions of Gigi

BLACK = Versions in English of Gigi

BLUE = An American in Paris

1942 Gigi, a fifty-page novella, is published in Présent, a political and literary weekly in Lyon.

1944 The first edition of Gigi is published. The edition includes three other stories, "Noces," "La Dame du photographe," and "Flore et Pomone."

1946 The first English translation of Gigi appears in Harper's Bazaar, illustrated by Christian Bérard.

1949 A film version of Gigi is directed by Jacqueline Audry, with Danièle Delorme in the role of Gigi. Colette collaborated with Audry for this film and is credited with writing the dialogues.

1951 Vincente Minnelli's musical, An American in Paris, starring Leslie Caron and Gene Kelly, wins the Academy Award for best motion picture.

1951 A stage adaptation of Gigi in English, by Anita Loos and Colette, is performed in New York City with Audrey Hepburn in the role of Gigi. First starring role for Hepburn, whom Colette claims to have discovered in Monte Carlo.

1953 Colette writes a French version of Anita Loos's stage play of Gigi, translating it back into French.

1953? Following the success of *An American in Paris*, Arthur Freed tells Leslie Caron that he would like to do another film with her and asks for suggestions. She suggests Colette's *Gigi*.

1954 A French translation of Loos's stage adaptation is published in *France-Illustration* 158 (1954). The French stage version of *Gigi* is performed at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris, with Évelyne Ker as Gigi. This performance was the last official homage to Colette arranged by the Académie Goncourt. Colette dies later this year.

1956 Leslie Caron performs Anita Loos's version of *Gigi* on stage in England, with Peter Hall, her new husband, directing. Reviews are not glowing.

1957–58 Arthur Freed, who spent over a year trying to secure the rights to *Gigi*, succeeds in purchasing the rights, and also has the 1949 film pulled from circulation. Alan Jay Lerner is hired to write the book and lyrics, with Frederic Loewe writing the music. Vicente Minnelli directs. Leslie Caron stars as Gigi, Louis Jourdan is the leading man, and Maurice Chevalier plays the role of his Uncle Honoré. Filming takes place in Paris, with some indoor scenes filmed on the MGM lot in Hollywood.

1958 Minnelli's *Gigi* opens in New York City. The film premiere is treated like a theatrical event with the opening screening held at a regular theater—The Royale—black tie with reserved seats only.

1959 *Gigi* wins nine Academy Awards, including best picture. Maurice Chevalier is given an Academy Honorary Award for his “contributions to the world of entertainment for more than half a century.”

1960 Françoise Dorléac stars as Gigi in a stage version directed by Robert Manuel at the Théâtre Antoine in Paris.

1973 Lerner and Loewe adapt the musical for the stage. Their remake of *Gigi* premieres in San Francisco and has a disappointing 103 performance run on Broadway.

1985 Lerner and Loewe's stage musical is performed in London's West End, with Louis Jourdan playing the role of Honoré.

2005 *Mademoiselle Gigi*, a reworked film adaptation inspired by Colette's *Gigi* and her Claudine novels, directed by Caroline Huppert with Juliette Lambolay as Gigi, appears on French television.

2014 *An American in Paris*, a new musical based on the 1951 film, premieres in Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet. The show, a Franco-British-American co-production, is part of Jean-Luc

Chopin's strategy to bring Broadway-style musicals to French audiences. To date, he has staged more than 25 musicals with great success and created a French appetite for the genre, which French theatergoers had previously despised as a lowbrow form of entertainment. Chopin is credited for creating the "haute couture" musical in the tradition of French opera.

2015 A revival of Lerner and Loewe's musical *Gigi* is produced for the Broadway stage by Jenna Segal. The story is updated by Heidi Thomas, with Vanessa Hudgens (of Disney's *High School Musical* fame) playing the role of Gigi. It opens on Broadway in April 2015, one week before the New York debut of *An American in Paris*. *Gigi* closes after a disappointing three-month run. *An American in Paris* is currently touring.

2015 On the heels of the Broadway musical production, British director Mark Giesser produces a revival of the original play in West London, claiming that he wants to put the edginess and darkness back into a play that is best-known as a sunny musical.

2018 "Colette," a new biographical movie directed by Wash Westmorland and starring Keira Knightly as Colette, is released. It focuses on Colette's transition from country girl to published writer during the period when she created the character of Claudine for what became a series of best-selling novels. The film also features aspects of Colette's colorful theatrical career, shown in the context of the Belle Époque entertainment business. This is the period Colette returned to when she created *Gigi*.

APPENDIX B

Comparison of Dialogue in Adaptations of Colette's *Gigi*

Novella (Colette, 1944)	Film (Audry/Colette 1948)	Play (Loos/Colette, 1951)	Film (Minnelli, 1958)
<p>—<i>Qu'est-ce que tu as, Gigi?</i> demanda Lachaille à mi-voix.</p> <p><i>Dis-moi quelque chose? Tu sais pourquoi je suis ici?</i></p> <p>Elle fit signe que oui, d'un grand coup de tête.</p> <p>—<i>Tu ne veux pas, ou tu veux bien?</i> dit-il plus bas.</p> <p>Elle passa une boucle de cheveux derrière son oreille, avala sa salive courageusement:</p> <p>—<i>Je ne veux pas</i>, dit-elle.</p> <p>Lachaille pinça entre deux doigts les pointes de sa moustache et détacha un moment son regard de deux yeux bleus assombris, d'un grain</p>	<p>GASTON: Gigi, qu'est-ce que tu as? Dis-moi quelque chose. Tu sais pourquoi je suis ici? Tu veux bien ou tu ne veux pas?</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Je ne veux pas!</p> <p>Je ne veux pas ce que vous voulez! Vous avez dit à grand-mère...</p> <p>GASTON: Oh, je le sais ce que j'ai dit à ta grand-mère. Pas besoin que tu le répètes! Dis-moi seulement ce que tu ne veux pas... Tu peux dire aussi ce que tu veux et je te le donnerai.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Vrai? Alors,</p>	<p>GASTON: There's something I'd like to ask you. Tell me something. Did you know what I went to see your Aunt Alicia about today?</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: I understand you told Aunt Alicia that you would be willing to...</p> <p>GASTON: Please! I know what I said to your Aunt. It isn't necessary for you to repeat it. Just tell me what it is you don't want. And then tell me what it is you do want. I'll give it to you if I can.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Really?</p>	<p>GASTON: Do you know why I'm here?</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Yes, I know.</p> <p>GASTON: Do you want to or don't you?</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: I don't want to. I really don't know what you want. You told grandmamma that you...</p> <p>GASTON: I know what I told your grandmother. We don't have to repeat it. You just tell me simply what you don't want and tell me what you do want.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Do you mean that?</p>

<p>de rousseur sur une joue rose, de cils courbes, d'une bouche qui ignorait son pouvoir, d'une lourde chevelure cendrée et d'un cou tourné comme une colonne, fort, à peine féminin, uni, pur de tout joyau...</p> <p>—<i>Je ne veux pas ce que vous voulez,</i> reprit Gilberte. <i>Vous avez dit à grand-mère...</i></p> <p>Il l'interrompit un avançant la main. Il tenait sa bouche un peu de travers comme s'il souffrait des dents:</p> <p>—<i>Je le sais, ce que j'ai dit à ta grand-mère. Ce n'est pas la peine que tu le répètes. Dis-moi seulement ce que tu ne veux pas. Tu peux dire aussi ce que tu veux... Je te le</i></p>	<p>tonton, vous avez dit à grand-mère que vous voulez me faire un sort.</p> <p>GASTON: Un très beau!</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Il sera beau si je l'aime. On m'a corné aux oreilles que j'étais en retard pour mon âge, mais je sais très bien ce que parler veut dire. Me faire un sort, ça signifie que je m'en irais d'ici avec vous et que je coucherais dans votre lit.</p> <p>GASTON: Je t'en prie, Gigi.</p>	<p>GASTON: I'll try.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Well, you told Aunty that you wished to give me a future.</p> <p>GASTON: A very good one, Gigi.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: It would be a good one, if I wanted it, Tonton. But the way you want things—well, it seems I'm to leave here, and go away with you and sleep in your bed.</p> <p>GASTON: Don't, Gigi—please.</p>	<p>GASTON: Of course.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Well, you told grandmamma that you wanted to take care of me.</p> <p>GASTON: To take care of you beautifully.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Beautifully, that is it if I like it. They've pounded into my head that I'm backward for my age, but I know very well what all this means. To take care of beautifully means that I should go away from here with you and that I should sleep in your bed.</p> <p><i>GIGI</i>: Please, Gigi. I beg of you. You embarrass me.</p>
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<p><i>donnerai...</i></p> <p>—<i>Vrai?</i> s'écria Gilberte.</p> <p>Il acquiesça, en abattant ses épaules comme s'il était recru de fatigue, Elle regardait, surprise, ces aveux de la lassitude et du tourment.</p> <p>—<i>Tonton, vous avez dit à grand-mère que vous vouliez me faire un sort.</i></p> <p>—<i>Un très beau</i>, dit fermement Lachaille.</p> <p>—<i>Il sera beau si je l'aime</i>, dit Gilberte non moins fermement.</p> <p><i>On m'a corné aux oreilles que je suis en retard pour mon âge, je comprends tout de même ce que parler veut dire. Me faire un sort, ça signifie que je m'en irais d'ici avec vous, et que je coucherais dans votre lit...</i></p> <p>—<i>Je t'en prie, Gigi...</i></p>			
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