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Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods, eds. *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. Pp xvi, 350. Hardback £80.00. ISBN: 9781474257473.

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This collection of a dozen essays organized in five sections looks at early modern stage directions from a variety of angles. In their introduction Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods say that the collection takes up the invitation in *The Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642* to provide 'additions, corrections and comments' (11); but the aim they describe is actually something much broader: to put stage directions 'at the centre of literary and dramatic analysis' and to 'start new conversations about how and why stage directions matter' by calling attention to their 'interpretive richness' (8, 12).

Section one, 'Taxonomy', begins with Tiffany Stern's 'Inventing Stage Directions; Demoting Dumb Shows', which actually deals with dumb shows first, then stage directions. The *term* 'stage directions', moreover, not stage directions themselves, and the differences between dumb show directions and others are actually the dual foci. Stern says that 'while the dialogue of a play could be distributed and learned in separate actors' parts, the dumb shows will have needed to be rehearsed ensemble from "group rehearsal" scripts', a potentially important idea that would seem to involve significant time for rehearsal (28). Stern also asks 'whether or not Shakespeare wrote non-dialogue paratext', answering that 'he certainly sometimes did, though evidence is inconclusive on the subject' (40). In fact, however, there is a lot of pretty clear evidence that Shakespeare (and other playwrights) did write most of the stage directions in their plays (as several of the other essays in this collection amply demonstrate). Next in this section is 'The Boundaries of Stage Directions' in which Laurie Maguire considers the 'perspectives taken by early modern stage directions', as in a *Coriolanus* direction featuring weighted words such as *mutinous, mutiny, rabble,* and *faction* (52). Other examples are directions that 'cross the boundary between actors' needs and readers' needs' when they describe character relationships (61). The third chapter, '"Peter falls into the hole": Nonce Stage Directions and the Idea of the Dictionary' by Paul Menzer and Jess Hamlet, is concerned with one-off or rare words or phrases that are not necessarily in *The Dictionary of Stage Directions.* Their premise is that such 'idiosyncratic stage directions can renovate our understanding of theatrical practice' and 'suggest that the early modern theatre industry was anything but standard'

(73). After asking 'some conceptual questions about the way the idea of a dictionary shapes our understanding of the early modern stage', this chapter 'explores the way that the large print corpuses of a handful of playwrights, Shakespeare more than any, dominate our understanding of a "fluency" in a language they disproportionately "invented"'. The focus then turns to Heywood as a counter-example, 'since his work contributes a disproportionately large number of one-off stage directions' (73).

In section two, 'Text', the first chapter is Emma Smith's 'Reading Shakespeare's Stage Directions', in which she wants to 'reinstate stage directions in early Shakespeare texts as the property of readers, and as understood instances of a different mode of narration in printed playbooks' (97). Smith contends that stage directions 'function as snippets of narrative, and are susceptible to narratological analysis', and she applies that idea to some Shakespearean directions to illustrate how 'they do narrative work for the reader' (97, 111). In the second chapter of this section, 'Shakespeare's Literary Stage Directions', Douglas Bruster argues that 'The vocabulary of the stage directions in *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's, not Crane's' (129). He offers intriguing examples of directions that 'reveal a deeper set of verbal and imaginative links with surrounding text', thereby extending to stage directions the method of close reading developed by Stephen Booth in his studies of Shakespeare's dialogue and poetry (130). Curiously, in concluding, Bruster says 'As we have seen, it is hard to say with confidence which of the directions in [Shakespeare's] plays came originally from his pen' (137). But Bruster has not demonstrated this lack of confidence; in fact he argues strongly that Shakespeare was largely responsible for the directions in his plays.

Editing is the focus of section three, which begins with Suzanne Gossett's 'When is a Missing Stage Direction Missing?'. Rightly noting that that '*any* [editorial] intervention is interpretive' (142, original italics), Gossett is not prescriptive but calls attention to the problems for an editor when dealing with stage directions, concluding that 'deciding what is missing is up to editorial discretion and unspoken assumptions about the reader for whom the edition is intended' (159). By contrast, in 'Editing and Directing: *Mise en scène, mise en page*', Terri Bourus is much more specific in her justifications for the existence and content of the paratextual notes about staging provided in her edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the 2016 Oxford Shakespeare.

The fourth section, 'Space', begins with '"By indirections find directions out": Unpicking Early Modern Stage Directions', in which Martin White draws on his research in a 'candle-lit indoor theatre', first at Bristol, then at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (192). He argues that 'The interrelationship of lighting with all

other production elements was a key part of indoor performance' (197). Furthermore, White's experiments at the Wanamaker have led him to conclude that indoor playhouse lighting was flexible and 'user-friendly' and that dialogue and stage directions about lighting are to be taken literally (200). Next comes '"*Strikes open a curtain where appears a body*": Discovering Death in Stage Directions' by Sarah Dustagheer with Philip Bird, an actor-director whose staging notes appear in bold through the chapter. Their focus is on six plays in which a dead body is discovered, and on how the stage directions show a 'repeated imaginative construction of the discovery space in revenge tragedies which situated and associated this stage space with post-Reformation cultural anxieties about death' (215). But this is problematic in assuming a 'discovery space' at the centre of the tiring-house wall, for which there is little hard evidence; certainly the term is never used in an early modern stage direction. While these revelations of dead bodies certainly occur, the authors do not mention the other kinds of scene that are similarly discovered. These qualifications undermine an argument that includes many perceptive ideas about possible links between cultural and staging practices.

The fifth and final section is headed 'Plays', which is somewhat misleading when every chapter in the book is about plays; but each of the three in this section is about a single play. First is Andrew Hiscock's '"*Enter Macduffe, with Macbeth's Head*": Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Staging of Trauma', which speculates about 'how the play's verbal and nonverbal codes in the Folio text might urge us to revisit the possibilities of violent spectacle in the play' (249). Then in '"(*From the Dutchesse Grave*)": Echoic Liminalities in *The Duchess of Malfi*' Sarah Lewis considers how 'echoing strategies connect scenes of destructive desire and sexual violence with scenes of romantic love' (265). After a survey of how Echo is treated in several non-dramatic works, Lewis turns to the stage direction quoted in her title, claiming that its 'ambiguity … presents Echo as a puzzle to be fathomed' by playgoers (284). But we may wonder if it is possible, let alone probable, that Webster deliberately constructed an ambiguous stage direction. More likely, for Webster (or Crane, the scribe) and the players this direction was perfectly clear; to hang the interpretation of the whole play, and especially of the Duchess, on this or any single stage direction is problematic. The final chapter is Gillian Woods's 'Understanding Dumb Shows and Interpreting *The White Devil*', an assessment of 'the interpretive relationship between dumb show and main action, stage direction and dialogue' in Webster's play, which Woods argues, 'is especially concerned with problems in understanding; it asks, how can you read what you see?' (289, 304). Her analyses of the two dumb shows focus on how they 'entangle the audience in the play's problems with understanding' (305). In this detailed

exploration of the interconnections between spoken and silent action, Woods is clearly on the side of those who believe that early modern playwrights wrote most of the stage directions in their plays, and that those directions are as integral a part of a play as the dialogue.

The seemingly cryptic and incomplete quality of early modern stage directions certainly creates wide scope for analysis and interpretation, as this collection repeatedly demonstrates. After reading these different approaches to the topic, we are almost certain to pay more attention to the italics in a playtext and to the staging they imply or describe. But what does the title's 'Shakespearean Theatre' mean? Many of the plays discussed are not by Shakespeare, so that descriptor is no more accurate than 'Elizabethan' was when it described the period from about 1580 to 1642. Shakespeare is not really representative, moreover, because unlike almost all his contemporaries he was a member of the company for which he wrote and could supplement his stage directions verbally. We need to be wary of terminology that elides the many differences between then and now. After all, we do not even know what — if anything — early modern dramatists called the performance information included in their plays.