

Peter Holland (ed.). *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp v, 357.

Peter Holland's wide-ranging collection of essays seeks to fill a gap within studies of Shakespeare and performance. As he argues convincingly in his introduction to the volume, there have been no substantial studies of memory in Shakespearean performance despite the burgeoning field of memory studies and despite the fact that 'memory is fundamental to the process of performance' (4). The essays he has assembled testify to the many and varied issues raised by this potent area of study. Some of the topics covered by these essays include acts of remembering within early modern plays; the manner in which audiences remember performances; the importance of the actor's (sometimes faulty) memory; the ways in which performances (including film and television adaptations) remember Shakespeare's plays and previous productions; the roles played by theatrical artifacts (such as costumes and props) in encoding memory; and the remembrance of textual and performance history in major editions of Shakespeare's plays. The collection is impressive in its scope and contains some excellent essays that suggest new and vital areas of inquiry. At times, however, the pieces tend to be overly anecdotal and given to reading individual images at the expense of a larger argument.

Holland's essay, which is placed in the middle of the volume, acts as a microcosm for the collection. In a single piece, he touches on audience memory (especially his own recollections of particular performances), the actor's memory (particularly a gaffe by Harriet Walter in a 2002 RSC production of *Much Ado About Nothing*), the role of the prompter (whose job is to inspire failing memories), anxiety over memory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, and memorial reconstruction (in both the early modern period and Kristian Levring's 1999 film *The King is Alive*, whose cast performs *King Lear* from memory). Holland's piece demonstrates with rather dizzying aplomb the breadth of his topic and suggests that this volume is only a starting point in exploring the intertwining issues of Shakespeare, memory, and performance.

The collection usefully characterizes memory as complex, conflicted, and anxious. Anthony Dawson's essay explores how Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* remember (and mis-remember) Virgil's *Aeneid*. He suggests that memory can distort and diminish but can also celebrate and affirm. In his interpretation, Marlowe and Shakespeare simultaneously want to liberate themselves from the burden of the past and to

memorialize it. The act of remembering, Dawson and his colleagues remind us, is fraught, ambivalent, and melancholy, but also vitally important.

The strongest essays in the book focus fairly narrowly on one aspect of this sprawling topic. Michael Cordner's piece about the problems inherent in including performance history in editions of Shakespeare's plays is clearly and persuasively written, with exhaustively detailed examples from the 1990 Oxford and the 1997 New Cambridge editions of *Macbeth*. He skillfully shows how editors can close down meanings and possibilities by failing to attend to performance history in their notes. He ultimately argues that scholars' annotations 'should be phrased less absolutely — as an exploration of possibilities' (102). Russell Jackson's essay looks at the 1936 film of *As You Like It*, which was adapted from a series of German stage productions that starred Elisabeth Bergner as Rosalind. He sees the film as emblematic of the 'uneasy relationship between Shakespearean films and their theatrical antecedents' (242). This pithy conclusion nicely anticipates later essays by W. B. Worthen and Robert Shaughnessy which also deal with the problematic marriage between theatre and other media such as film, television, and video. Michael Dobson's essay on outdoor performances of Shakespeare discusses the issue of memory with respect to nationalism and national identity, a fascinating point of inquiry only tangentially referenced elsewhere in the volume. He makes a convincing case that outdoor performances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries manifested a desire 'to secure a forever lost, forever threatened Merry England' (277): a desire which, he suggests, is still part of many of today's nostalgic performances of Shakespeare.

Dobson also charges much of Shakespearean performance history with 'a fatal tendency towards the anecdotal' (257), an allegation borne out by some of the essays in this volume. In particular, Barbara Hodgdon's and Carol Rutter's essays on the ways in which theatrical costumes and props function as memorial devices provide some wonderfully evocative individual readings but ultimately seem to be collections of anecdotes and images. Hodgdon, an expert analyst of theatrical imagery, creates some very memorable moments in her piece, such as her depiction of 'The Peggy', a cardigan worn by Peggy Ashcroft that was later donned by two other actresses. Both wore the cardigan in remembrance of Ashcroft, Hodgdon writes, but the piece also shaped their performances and transformed perceptions of the roles they played. Rutter characterizes her essay on Desdemona's handkerchiefs in productions of *Othello* as 'gossip, its material culled from my own memories going back twenty-five years of Shakespeare in performance' (169) — yet the

gossip finally overwhelms the analysis. The ideas behind both of these pieces are unique, and they point the way towards an as-yet-undeveloped field: materialist analyses of objects in Shakespearean production. Still, both need a stronger argumentative stance. Similarly, the structure of Bruce Smith's essay innovatively mirrors the non-linear, anti-analytical nature of memory; yet here again one feels that he has assembled a collection of anecdotes and musings rather than advanced an argument.

In stronger and weaker essays alike, the volume poetically conveys the anxiety attendant upon studies of memory. It begins with a question, posed by Stanley Wells in his foreword, that expresses this anxiety directly: 'How, if at all, can we memorialize performance?' (xvii). It concludes with Dennis Kennedy's evocation of the 'ineffable sadness ... at the heart of spectatorship' (337). It acknowledges the attempt to remember performance as full of loss, forgetting, omissions, changes, and melancholy. Yet in the very act of trying to capture the ephemeral these essays create their own kind of memorial to the many performances they discuss: deeply ambivalent, but shot through with recollection and desire.

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Park Honan. *Christopher Marlowe: Poet & Spy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp xv, 421.

In informal surveys on the best study of Shakespeare's life to appear in the past few decades, Park Honan's biography often springs from scholars' lips. Regrettably, his recent follow-up on Christopher Marlowe is not likely to earn the same accolades. The book is often lively and daring as befits its subject, and Honan paints some vibrant miniatures of family members, schoolmasters, and aristocrats who crossed the playwright's path. But compared with David Riggs' superb *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber, 2004), which combines an evocative reconstruction of the curriculum at Cambridge and riveting discussions of early modern atheism and sexuality with consistently sensitive readings of the plays, Honan's work comes across as somewhat impressionistic and prone to lurid speculation.