

films that perpetuate myths and stereotypes about the early modern actress. Scott ends, fittingly enough, by quoting at length from Mlle Clairon, who in her old age wrote about her life and stage career and who, in a passage Scott quotes, describes the power of actresses 'to appear to be whatever they want to be' (288).

In allowing her subjects to have the last word, Scott is true to the aim of this capacious and forcefully presented study: to set the record straight by exhuming actual practice and experience from the sediment of prejudiced and uncritically accepted accounts, including especially anecdotes, that have been the conduit for received opinion on the early modern actress. This book is a bracing reassessment, a call to arms for smart historical research, and a loving rehabilitation of the role of actresses in early French theatre. Written with verve and wit, it is a must-read for anyone interested in the intertwined histories of French theatre and female performers.

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**Brian Walsh. *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp vi, 239.**

*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* explores the 'production of historical narratives as driven by a sense of longing for contact with the past' (1). Brian Walsh offers a compelling overview of how anachronistic performances of history shape popular concepts of the past. Umberto Eco helps Walsh establish his critical view of history: 'When originals no longer exist, the last copy is the original' (6). This book demonstrates how the anonymous histories associated with the Queen's Men influenced popular lines, characterizations, and narrative elements in Shakespeare's history plays. These theatrical spectres from productions past allow Elizabethan history plays to 'enact historicity as a sense of discontinuity and all the while reflect on the strategies through which historical representation, particularly *corporeal* representation, addresses that discontinuity' (20, Walsh's emphasis).

During the late sixteenth century, Elizabethans participated in seeing and hearing history performed onstage, a process that resulted in history becoming understood as a cultural product that ‘must be produced’ (11). Contemporary scholarship, according to Walsh, must therefore unpack and analyze how human nuances created and observed during performance may have shaped and altered current histories within mainstream society. The Queen’s Men’s successful ‘adaptability’ (33) to new scripts, audiences, and venues transformed history into a social experience developed through performance. They were, he argues, players ‘who cared more about the performance in hand than the text that might survive’ (36). Thanks to the power of the resulting productions, Walsh is able to depict the historical representations of the Queen’s Men as spectres haunting future history plays; like a ghost, he suggests, history manifests itself in similar apparitional forms within different plays over time.

Walsh’s study opens by discussing how onstage ‘time’ is used in the anonymously authored *The Famous Victories of Henry V* as a means of creating ‘an epistemological challenge, or the problem of how to *know* history, and a representational challenge, or the problem of how to *show* history’ (49, Walsh’s emphasis). Notable clown Richard Tarlton’s performance as Derick may have led to the widespread early success of this play; however, Tarlton’s death in 1588 appears to have also directly contributed to its having fallen out of popular fashion until it was revived and reconstructed by Shakespeare in 1599. The characters of Truth, Poetry, and Report from *The True Tragedy of Richard III* bridge Walsh’s movement from the concept of time to that of representational voices in the 1590s. These three figures ‘exhibit, promote, and take pleasure in the unique aesthetic experience of embodied narration’ (83). As they do so, they encourage audiences of this play to see their own participatory role in embodying history through retelling stories. The allegorical characters in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* can thus be seen as early advocates for onstage assistive agents like Shakespeare’s Chorus in *Henry V*.

The second half of Walsh’s study considers Shakespeare’s histories as an attempt to stabilize characters from these earlier historical plays as well as from within Shakespeare’s own tetralogies. Walsh connects Talbot’s poetic lines in *I Henry VI* with the Queen’s Men’s use of the character of Poetry in *The True Tragedy of Richard III*. His analysis reminds us that ‘the actor playing Talbot one day might play a tragic lover or a mischievous Vice figure the next’ (130). Such shifts would demand that audiences find ways to bridge

representational divides between performances they witnessed. Providing Talbot with a poetic voice similar to those of allegorical figures from other plays may have eased such transitions for Elizabethan spectators.

Similarly, Walsh argues, Henry VI's reign resonates throughout Shakespeare's *Richard III* 'as a series of vividly described memories that the characters share with audience members' (151). Everyone in the theatre, both on and offstage, has different yet similar experiences of seeing and hearing Henry VI in performance. Building on Diana Taylor's ideas of the archive and the repertoire in performance studies, Walsh speculates that Shakespeare's historical characters function as cultural echoes even within his own history plays. The ghosts appearing before the battle of Bosworth Field suggest that spirits can haunt not only Richard and Richmond but also the entire audience by appearing as 'a different kind of *being* through performance' (158, Walsh's emphasis). By summarizing the play just performed onstage, these spirits transform *Richard III*'s history into a collective set of dreamlike memories. Walsh then underlines connections between Thomas Dekker's Chorus in *Old Fortunatus* and Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V* by citing Lukas Erne's speculation that these prologues 'could have been specifically added for *readers* of the play' (184, Walsh's emphasis). Chorus figures help 'the reader reconstruct the theatrical event even as they prompt playgoers to reconstruct the historical event' (207).

This book makes interesting connections between the performances of the Queen's Men and Shakespeare's more popular and influential history plays. Walsh relies quite heavily on Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean's history of the Queen's Men for his own notes; however, he does make important links between the creations of the Queen's Men and other popular plays of the period. He ends his study with his own personal reflections on seeing *Henry V* at the reconstructed Globe Theatre in 1997. He concludes that history plays, despite some of the problematic discontinuities they introduce through performance, bridge divides between periods and places — even between Elizabethan and contemporary London. *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* does an excellent job of haunting our understandings of how past performances of history continue to possess our contemporary imaginations.

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