

Whitlock, Gillian. "Australian Literature: Points for Departure." *Australian Literary Studies* 19.2 (1999): 152–62.

Robert Dixon

Peter Holland, ed. *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Pp. xx, 357. \$99.00 cloth.

Remembering what one has read or seen (on stage or screen) seems to be an ordinary part of our intellectual labour. What does it entail, however, to remember or forget Shakespeare, a performance, or both? The practical and theoretical implications of this question lies at the heart of *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, edited by Peter Holland, a collection of imaginative and bold essays by senior scholars in the field. This pioneering volume seeks to redefine the terms of such important topics of debate in performance and literary studies, including cultural memory, the act of forgetting, and the politics of archiving performances. Readers of *ARIEL* may be familiar with classic studies such as Peggy Phelan's *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997), Edward Casey's *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (1987; 2000), and Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001). However, none of these books address explicitly the issues of memory and Shakespearean performance. As the first book-length study of the topic, Holland's volume aims to contextualize and theorize ideologies of preserving performances (xx), "creatively inaccurate" memories (3), and the cultural memory enacted in theatrical, cinematic, textual, and museum spaces. Taken as a whole, the volume addresses, in fresh perspectives, the paradoxical situation where "the memories of Shakespeare and performance and their intersections are less reliable, most vulnerable, at exactly the points at which they appear most secure" (19). The thirteen essays—complemented by 51 illustrations—aim to examine "the concerns of memory" as they move from "the acts of remembering within the plays" to "the acts of remembering the plays themselves in performance," among other issues (2). This goal is achieved with grace. In the wake of the volume emerged two special issues of *Shakespeare Bulletin* 25.3 and 25.4 (2007) on relevant topics, co-edited by Barbara Hodgdon and Peter Holland.

Shakespeare, Memory and Performance is neatly organized in five thematically related parts, each containing two or three essays. The "Introduction" connects the memory of performance to the performance of memory, arguing that "the act of verification may confirm and order memory but it cannot confirm both

the past and present feelings (6)." Indeed, performance, like history, is not an "object that will . . . stay still in order to be remembered" (6). Readers are called upon, quite appropriately, to participate in the work of memory by taking the five sections of the book simply as "convenient markers for the closer connections between certain chapters" rather than "impermeable divisions" (5).

The collection opens with Stanley Wells' foreword that asks forcefully, "How, if at all, can we memorialize performance?" (xvii), and affirms the necessity of both "the external appurtenances of the theatrical event" preserved by the mechanical recording media and the feelings and local intimacy recorded by written records of performances. In the afterword, Stephen Orgel examines his own memories of theatre as a history of desire that is "essential to the creation of ourselves" (349).

The three essays in the first section delineate the complex functions of memory in early modern playtexts' "performances of their arguments" (5). In "Speaking What We Feel about *King Lear*," Bruce Smith argues "the *King Lear* that hit the boards in 1605 or 1606 was not the first link in a chain of memory but a new link in an already established chain" (29), and that memory consists in perpetual movement between "two very different ways of knowing": speaking what one feels and what one ought to say (42), as evidenced by various moments of *King Lear*'s history examined in the essay, ranging from Shakespeare's writing of the script through its original stage performance and textual presence to the truth claims of film and video. John Joughin examines the ethical and political repercussions of suffering (and dead) bodies and "memorial aesthetics" in Shakespeare's "mourning plays," *Hamlet* and *Richard II* (43–44). Anthony Dawson delineates a different aspect of memorial acts, specifically memories and representations of Virgil's *Aeneid* in Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

The second section, "Editing Shakespeare and the Performance of Memory," turns to the intersections between the performance and editorial practices as acts of cultural memory. Michael Cordner's and Margaret Jane Kidnie's essays cautions against the editorial tendency to dictate what is supposed to happen on stage. With case studies of Nicholas Brooke's Oxford and A. R. Braunnmuller's Cambridge editions of *Macbeth*, Cordner questions why they fail to use "relevant testimony from the play's rich theatre history" (90). Kidnie looks at the "disruptive intertextual effect of citation" (132) and ways in which live performance archives were developed in an attempt to "compensate for the ephemerality of performance, a deliberate, even paradoxical, effort to save that which no longer survives" (121).

Kidnie's point about live performance archives is extended in the next section on the repository of memories, titled "Performance Memory: Costumes

and Bodies." Barbara Hodgdon's "Shopping in the Archives" carefully excavates archival politics in Royal Shakespeare Company's costume archive and what she calls "communal epistemology in which looking functions as a form of discourse" (138). Carol Chillington Rutter frames her richly illustrated essay as one "in gossip," culling material from her own "memories going back twenty-five years of Shakespeare in performance [and] conversations with a number of Shakespeare performers-remember-performance" (169). She provides a fascinating account of lost props in the same archives Hodgdon examines, specifically one of the handkerchiefs in RSC's productions of *Othello*, present only in the form of photographic images. Continuing the issue of the lost presence of performance, Holland turns to forgetting (when a performer's memory fails) and analyzes several performances, including Kristian Levring's Dogme film *The King Is Alive* (1999).

Reconstructing performances is the subject of the fourth section. Russell Jackson considers the "double experience" of films of Shakespeare's plays between the 1900s and 1950s as "a means of preserving great performances" and of expanding the performance idioms, as evidenced by the transformation of Elisabeth Bergner's stage performance as Rosalind to Paul Szinner's 1936 film *As You Like It* (238). In "Shakespeare Exposed," Michael Dobson investigates late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rediscovery of open-air theatre (such as Minack Theatre in Cornwall), whose performances have affected cultural memory in significant ways.

The final section focuses on the technologies of memory and their transformative effects on cinema, television, and museum. In "Fond Records: Remembering Theatre in the Digital Age," Bill Worthen revisits Michael Altmeyer's *Hamlet*, a film well-known among Shakespeareans, and traces its confrontations and collaborations with digital technology, theatre, and editing practices. Robert Shaughnessy looks at recent developments of media culture in the BBC live broadcast of a London Globe's production of *Richard II* in 2003 and the use of TV screens in Royal National Theatre's production of *Measure for Measure* in 2004. Ironically, despite being a "naked theatrical engagement with . . . the performance event," the live broadcasting "simply reinforces the suspicion that one must be missing something" if one is not present at the performance venue (307). Dennis Kennedy picks up on what Dobson calls the conventional theatrical "heretic of the real" (322) and argues that the desire for collective knowledge turns cultural memory into a "historical and social construct" (338). Comparing performance historiography to the cultural functions of the museum, he argues for the significance of the space of forgetting created by the notion of remembering.

A well-organized collection that packs a lot of intellectual punch, this volume charts new and exciting territories. It will be a welcome resource,

in part or in whole, for courses on Shakespeare, performance theories, and Renaissance studies:

Alexander C. Y. Huang

Anastasia Valassopoulos. *Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context*. London: Routledge, 2007. Pp. 176. £60.00 hardcover.

Anastasia Valassopoulos's book covers a wide range of Arab women's literature and advocates a critical engagement with Arab women's writing that goes beyond tried and tested feminist paradigms. Valassopoulos discusses novels from Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria and Palestine but emphasizes that her choices were not "guided by location but by issues of theme and form" (2). Enabled by the "growing field of translation and distribution of Arab women's literature" (1), Valassopoulos considers it necessary to broaden the disciplinary forum of discussion of these works. Thus her ambitious and insightful book has a clear agenda: it seeks to promote the study of Arab women's writing as an integral part of postcolonial and feminist studies.

This book is directed at an English speaking audience. Valassopoulos goes to great lengths to justify the use of translated material; besides being concerned with raising the visibility of these novels, she feels the need to discuss material which is available to a wide readership: "I did not want to engage with material on which I would have the last word. I write in the spirit of transcultural and transnational communication, and if a work has been translated and is readily available, then I invite a community of readers to participate openly in its interpretation" (2).

Throughout the book, Valassopoulos emphasizes the need to contextualize Arab women's writing and cautions against employing critical approaches that may stifle rather than open up new possibilities for reading these texts. A commonly held critical assumption, which Valassopoulos finds problematic, is, for example, that "Arab women's writing only has one thing to offer: an affirmation of oppression. Read critically, many of the works that I discuss reveal a deep-seated mistrust of any foreclosing arguments that would seek to pre-empt their meaning" (4). Valassopoulos also avoids focusing on "questions of faith and ethnicity" as these issues threaten to "dominate the discussion on Arab women's literary production" (2). Instead, she argues for employing a variety of critical approaches such as "feminist, queer, postcolonial and cultural theories." Not only will those approaches benefit the study of Arab women's

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Jordan Stouck recently relocated to the University of British Columbia Okanagan from the University of Lethbridge. She has published articles on Jean Rhys, Pauline Melville, Olive Senior, Shani Mootoo and on the multicultural formations of Canadian and Caribbean literary discourses. A collection of Sinclair Ross's letters is forthcoming in May 2010.

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