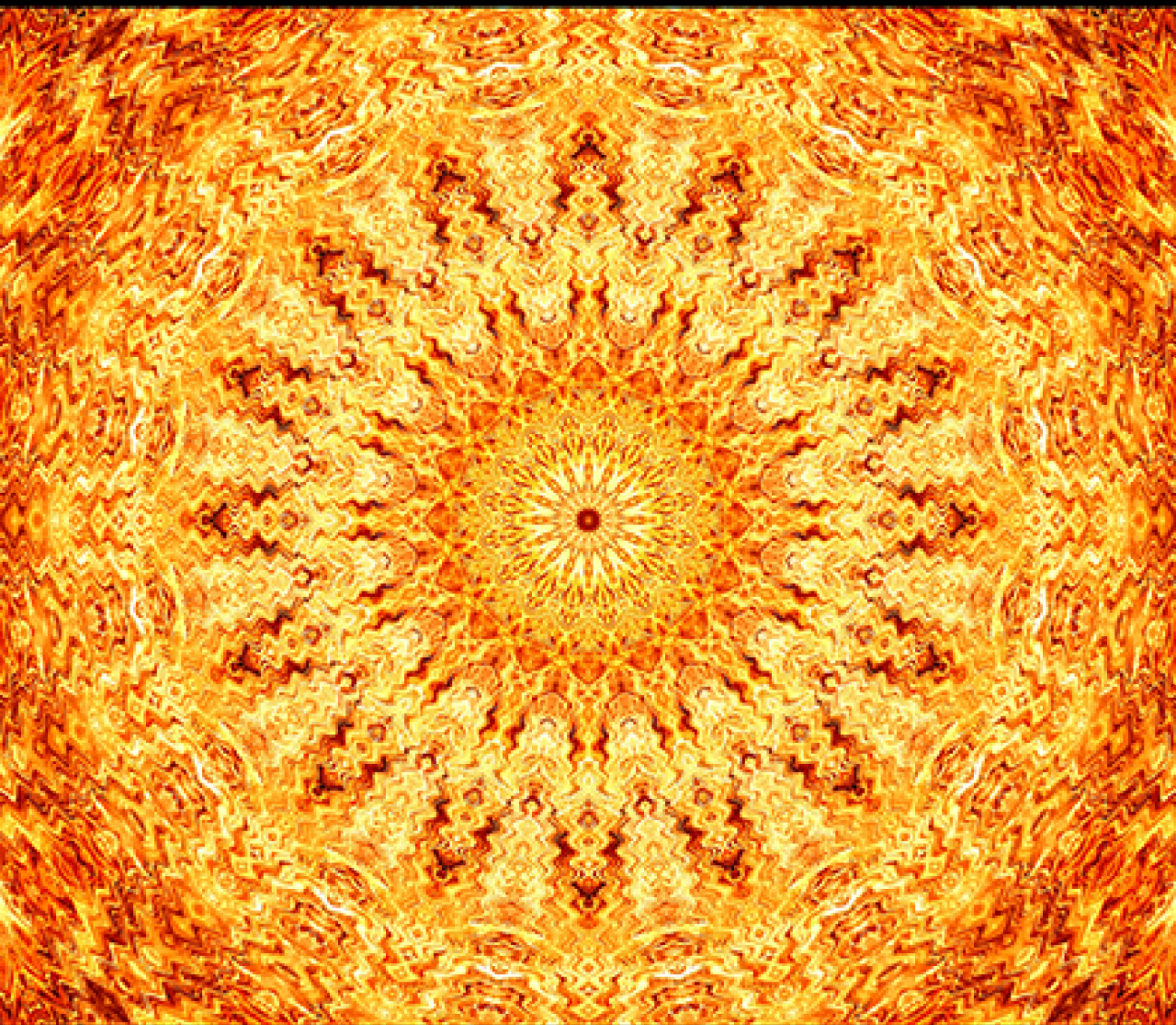
THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE



THE ARDEN RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF

Shakespeare and Contemporary Performance

EDITED BY

PETER KIRWAN & KATHRYN PRINCE

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THE ARDEN RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF SHAKESPEARE AND CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

Edited by Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE
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SERIES PREFACE

The Arden Shakespeare Handbooks provide researchers and graduate students with both cutting-edge perspectives on perennial questions and authoritative overviews of the history of research.

The series comprises single-volume reference works that map the parameters of a discipline or sub-discipline and present the current state of research. Each Handbook offers a systematic and structured range of specially commissioned chapters reflecting on the history, methodologies, current debates and future of a particular field of research. Additional resources, such as a chronology of important milestones that have shaped the field, a glossary of key terms, an annotated bibliography and a list of further resources are included.

It is hoped that the series will provide both a thorough grounding in the range of research under each heading, and a practical guide that equips readers to conduct their own independent research. The topics selected for coverage in the series lie at the heart of the study of Shakespeare today, and at the time of writing include:

- contemporary Shakespeare criticism and theory
- Shakespeare and textual studies
- Shakespeare and contemporary performance
- Shakespeare and adaptation
- Shakespeare and social justice
- Shakespeare and early modern drama

While each volume in the series provides coverage of a distinct area of research, it will be immediately apparent that 'distinct' becomes a slippery concept: how does one define contemporary criticism as distinct from contemporary performance? Indeed, the very porousness of research areas becomes even more marked if, for instance, one explores research in Shakespeare and contemporary performance (in the volume edited by Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince) and Shakespeare and adaptation (in the volume edited by Diana Henderson and Stephen O'Neill). Questions of social justice permeate each area of research, for, as Evelyn Gajowski notes in the introduction to *The Arden Research Handbook of Contemporary Shakespeare Criticism*, 'many of the essays … suggest the inseparability of critical practices, on the one hand, and social justice and political activism, on the other'. Even where we might be inclined to feel on safer ground about the 'particular field' of textual studies as distinct from other fields of Shakespeare studies, Lukas Erne disabuses that notion in his introduction to *The Arden Research Handbook of Shakespeare and Textual Studies*:

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> Textual variants and multiplicity create their own proliferation of meanings, nor can textual studies and criticism ultimately be kept apart. For the question of what the text *is* decisively impacts the question of what the text *means*.

While acknowledging the artificiality of boundaries and the inevitability of some degree of overlap, we have nevertheless encouraged editors to determine the contours of their Handbook with an eye on other titles in the same series. Just as each book provides a systematic grounding for readers, the series as a whole presents an invitation to readers to delve into each volume, to find those connections and points of intersection, and to explore the related fields that ultimately will enrich their own research.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the final stages of bringing this book together, the two industries with which it is most concerned – higher education and the theatre – were thrown into crisis by the arrival of COVID-19. Writing an academic book about contemporary theatre during a period of lockdowns and layoffs in both industries has been a challenge. This book is rooted in our conviction that university workers and theatre workers are crucial allies, both intellectually and practically, and in our love and respect for the creative work that fuels and energizes our field. Our first thanks, then, go to all those who have made the theatre that makes this book possible, and to those now ensuring that this vital work continues.

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All quotations from Shakespeare plays are taken from single volumes in the third series of the Arden Shakespeare unless otherwise stated.

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Introduction

PETER KIRWAN AND KATHRYN PRINCE

On 29 March 2019, Adjoa Andoh stepped onto the stage of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in the role of Richard II, and in doing so rendered herself a fixed reference point within a shifting network of historical interpretive frames through which onlookers could make meaning. From one perspective, this was another *Richard II* in a long history of *Richard II*s, both at Shakespeare's Globe (though this was the first in the candlelit indoor space) and throughout the world, with Andoh the latest in a prestigious lineage of actors to take an old role. From another perspective, this was a groundbreaking production. Andoh was leading the first entirely women-of-colour ensemble to perform a Shakespeare production on a major British stage; the occasion was marked by gorgeously reproduced images of the cast and crew's mothers, aunts, grandmothers and other relatives in the form of banners hanging around the theatre, ancestors gazing down on cast and audience alike. And from yet another perspective, the UK was that day living through the first of several ghosts of aborted deadlines for leaving the European Union under a cloud of racially tinged rhetoric, prompting an audible communal reaction somewhere between laughter and a moan as John of Gaunt (Dona Croll) stood up from her wheelchair to tell us that 'That England that was wont to conquer others / Hath made a shameful conquest of itself' (2.1.65–6).

The interpretive richness of this moment is dependent on its multiple juxtapositions and perspectives. The performance event has a formal coherence all of its own: a story that was already old when Shakespeare reshaped it, about a medieval king, told in dramatic verse, written some 400 years ago and available for analysis in its own right. But the meanings of this moment in performance far exceed anything that Shakespeare's *Richard II* can reveal on its own. These meanings inhered in the bodies of the actors (women, racially diverse) cast in the production; in the mise-en-scène of ancestors that evoked colonial histories; in the current political discourse that revealed an irrevocably changed meaning of the word 'England'; in the conditions of a British theatre industry that made it at all newsworthy for two Black women to be directing a cast made up entirely of women of colour at the Globe; in the histories of minstrelsy and blackface acting that made the production's audacious climactic staging coup – in which the cast whitened their faces with chalk dust and stood before a red cross to construct the St George's flag out of their own bodies – such a powerful moment.[1]

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The curious juxtaposition of a production in so many ways radical and contemporary within a venue associated so strongly with the theatrical practices of early modern England is a perfect illustration of Shakespeare in contemporary performance, which is often poised between the past and the present (Cantoni 2018: 26–34; Tosh 2018: 19–42). The perennial question of Shakespeare in performance – 'why this play now'– often triangulates what the play has meant in the past and what meanings, new or enduring, emerge with vigour in the present. *Richard II* itself, with its long and possibly apocryphal connection to the Essex Rising of 1601, is a play that risked topical application in its own fraught moment.[2] In 2019, that topicality was found through casting choices rather than allegory, the body of the actor oscillating not between Richard and Elizabeth but between Richard and her own Black, female self.

This book is concerned not only with the many meanings that can be unpacked in a production like this one, but in the *processes* of making meaning out of Shakespearean performance, both what is offered and what is taken. While the plays of Shakespeare have lived in performance more or less continuously for over four centuries, they continue to yield fresh interpretive potential; indeed, their endurance has only added to the complexity and depth of the intersecting histories that the plays bring to bear each time they are reinterpreted. The scope of what the field of Shakespeare Performance Studies takes as its subject can seem infinitely varied: as James C. Bulman argues, '[n]ew theatrical styles and techniques, often the result of intercultural exchange, have gained an authority once accorded only to the text … and strong tides of discovery are continuing to shift the contours of the shore from which we spectators gaze out at that turbulent sea' (Bulman 2017: 1) as writers, directors, actors, designers, filmmakers and more continue to adapt Shakespeare.

This infinite variety, however, poses its own challenges. As the plays spring from the page to the stage or screen, they acquire a vast range of codes, signification systems and points of reference that multiply the complexities of interpretation. Performance is a social medium born of collective knowledge and skill (Tribble 2017), and thus implicitly invites its interpreters to be conversant with the languages of scenography, costume and fashion, lighting and sound, movement and voice; to be literate both in the resonances of the source text and in the conventions of a production's choice of period setting; to be fluent in the social, political and industrial conditions that have operated on a production's creation. In 2005, Barbara Hodgdon announced 'a move from the essentializing orthodoxy of performance criticism to the theoretical heterodoxy of Shakespeare performance studies, a more encompassing, expansive, expressive, and relational arena for rethinking performance' (Hodgdon 2005: 7). The shift articulated in that important book, in the wake of the development of Performance Studies as a discipline (see Bulman in this collection), was designed to reflect not only the expansion of what was understood as Shakespearean performance, but also the need to expand the critical and analytical tools used to investigate it. Yet at the same time, theatre and film offer themselves for the consumption and pleasure of anyone who chooses to watch, regardless of prior expertise or interpretive bias. There is a tension, then,

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between the idea of the 'expert' spectator or theoretician who has privileged insight into a production's meanings, and the dispersal of authority to all audience members encountering a performance from their own subject position.

We thus begin this volume, a 'research handbook' for the study of Shakespeare and contemporary performance, with a caution about answers and authority. Neither Shakespearean performance nor Shakespearean performance criticism admit of right answers, especially when even the 'facts' of performance (as memorably illustrated in Peter Holland and Margaret Jane Kidnie's contrasting accounts of a moment in the same production of *King Lear*; Holland 2006: 14–15) are subject to re-remembering, reconstructing and even (especially in the world of digital performance) re-editing. Theatre itself remains torn between impulses towards openness and accessibility on the one hand, and gatekeeping on the other (Sedgman 2018), and even asking the question of who might be qualified to speak about Shakespearean performance implies exclusivity. This handbook hopes neither to provide answers nor to mandate a particular approach to research into Shakespearean performance, but to model methods and introduce current research concerns that will continue to open up the field to new voices and invite new questions.

SHAKESPEARE IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE: A BRIEF HISTORY

The term 'contemporary' in our title suggests, in one sense, that we are interested only in recent performances. 'Contemporary', as an adjective applied to Shakespeare, is inflected a bit differently than 'contemporary' theatre, which may claim, as synonyms, 'experimental' or at least 'in contact with current theatre practices' (Bennett 2017). In terms of Shakespeare performance, the word 'contemporary' perhaps most immediately evokes Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, published in English in 1964, and Peter Brook's productions influenced by it, which suggest that a contemporary performance seeks some relevance in the present moment. 'Contemporary' Shakespeare is, in this sense, not museum-quality Shakespeare intended to replicate Shakespeare's intentions for the edification of a modern audience, but rather a Shakespeare that speaks, in some meaningful way, to the moment of its production. We do intend for that meaning to adhere to the performances explored in this volume, although we would also note that (as Sarah Dustagheer explores in her contribution to this book) in our contemporary moment productions that engage with the original practices of Shakespeare's time, and with the long tradition of performance since, can also speak to the present even if they do not participate in theatre practices that are exclusively contemporary.

What does contemporary Shakespeare performance look, sound and feel like? One dominant model is enshrined in the 'house styles' of the major Shakespeare-focused institutions of the English-speaking world: companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre in the UK and the Stratford Festival and Shakespeare Theatre Company in North America. For better or worse, well-funded theatres such as these – often drawing on sources of public funding and/or

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major corporate sponsorship, often tied up with national and international heritage status, and with long histories and illustrious alumni of their own – dominate popular understandings of contemporary Shakespearean performance. These are the institutions that exemplify what W. B. Worthen, following Hans-Thies Lehmann, describes as 'dramatic performance', rooted in mimesis: 'the purpose of dramatic theatre is to deliver this "world" to its audiences' (Worthen 2014: 5). While not without notable exceptions, performances at these theatres offer productions of Shakespeare that deliver versions of the text broadly recognizable from printed editions of Shakespeare, and with an emphasis on language and narrative rooted in what can be drawn from the text. In addition, the roles of such institutions in actor training and development, and the influence of educator-practitioners such as John Barton and Cicely Berry (both RSC) in pioneering standards of classical performance, has reinforced the institutional dominance of ways of playing Shakespeare.

Such dominance invites challenge, and while the above long-standing companies continue to exert major influence in conceptions of contemporary Shakespeare performance in the West, the latter half of the twentieth century saw several different approaches emerge, often in response to the rising significance of the figure of the director. On the one hand, the movement to construct Elizabethan- and Jacobean-style playing spaces, exemplified in the projects of Shakespeare's Globe in the UK (1997) and the Blackfriars Playhouse in the US (2001, now the home of the American Shakespeare Center), offered a radical shift away from established conventions of the dramatic theatre by foregrounding the playing space, actor–audience relations and approaches that distribute agency among a company. While productions in both have often reflected the dominant modes of the dramatic performance tradition, they have also instigated a greater sense of the role of the audience in shaping each performance as a specific event, and through experiments in 'Original Practices' (see Dustagheer in this volume) that included director-less productions and the creative reworking of early modern rehearsal and performance techniques, these theatres radically disrupted a received sense of Shakespearean performance.

On the other hand, the dominance of the director in European theatre traditions began having a greater influence on practice in the English-speaking world. Directors with a distinctive vision were always a part of the modern RSC, as exemplified by Brook, but in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries figures such as Thomas Ostermeier, Katie Mitchell, Declan Donnellan, Ivo van Hove, Deborah Warner, Peter Sellars and Simon McBurney worked within both Anglophone and non-Anglophone contexts, directing Shakespeare in combination with new and other classical works, and blurred boundaries of language and performance style. Such work often took a deliberately oppositional stance, both politically and aesthetically, as in the companies described by Carol Chillington Rutter in 'Maverick Shakespeare' (2005), who explicitly countered ideas of representational space (Cheek by Jowl), accent (Northern Broadsides) or conservative politics (the English Shakespeare Company). At the level of language, too, the free translation and adaptation (or 'tradaptation') of Shakespeare in director-led productions led not only to versions of Shakespeare

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such as those of Heiner Müller becoming as commonplace on the German stage as Nahum Tate's *King Lear* had been for centuries on the English stage, but more generally and gradually admitted of the text as just one more changeable element within the theatrical milieu.

The primary aim of contemporary Shakespeare performance is seldom to commune with the dead, to evoke Stephen Greenblatt's phrase for one of the pleasures of Shakespeare scholarship (1988: 1). The pleasure of a Shakespeare production, in contrast to more literary engagements, often resides in the oscillation between the past and the present, between what is known and what is being discovered, making the experience of the performance resemble what Rebecca Schneider describes in relation to historical re-enactments as spaces 'where *then* and *now* punctuate each other' (2011: 2). When the past wholly dominates, the result can be something that, while happening in the present, is far from contemporary. Peter Brook's juxtaposition between deadly theatre, seeking only communion with the past, and a living, urgent theatre communicating with the present, remains a useful framework for considering how a production is engaging with Shakespeare and with its audience. As Brook suggests in *The Empty Space*:

> The Deadly Theatre takes easily to Shakespeare. We see his plays done by good actors in what seems like the proper way – they look lively and colourful, there is music and everyone is all dressed up, just as they are supposed to be in the best of classical theatres. Yet secretly we find it excruciatingly boring – and in our hearts we either blame Shakespeare, or theatre, as such, or even ourselves. To make matters worse there is always a deadly spectator, who for special reasons enjoys a lack of intensity and even a lack of entertainment, such as the scholar who emerges from routine performances of the classics smiling because nothing has distracted him trying over and confirming his pet theories to himself, whilst reciting his favourite lines under his breath.
>
> ([1968] 2019: 10)

An antidote to Deadly Theatre (though no style is inherently immune to deadliness) is often found in experimentation, immediacy and irreverence, or in what Lehmann called the 'postdramatic theatre' which 'exerts a decisive pressure on the conventional paradigm of dramatic performance' (Worthen 2014: 3). Worthen notes that 'postdramatic Shakespeare' might be seen as a contradiction in terms, but it is the very familiarity of Shakespeare that makes the works available as subjects for reinvention. Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* is a vivid example of this irreverence that energizes the plays through the unexpected use of object puppetry, using household objects as performers. As Lyn Gardner noted in her review for *The Guardian*, with a nod to Brook, 'It's perfectly possible to respect Shakespeare … without smothering the works in red-velvet reverence' (2016). While it might have been possible to enjoy the rapid-fire, reduced plays without any knowledge of either the plays or their performance history, some of the pleasure, for a Shakespeare aficionado, was in the memories of both the original plays and other performances that Forced Entertainment suggested in the wistful turn of a jam jar (Juliet) or the haughty one of a bottle of rosewater (Richard II). The sheer delight

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in the creativity afforded by an irreverent approach to Shakespeare is an energizing and significant element of contemporary Shakespeare performance also evident in the work of such diverse companies as Spymonkey, The Wooster Group, Kneehigh and Punchdrunk, as discussed in Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie's edited collection *Playfulness in Shakespearean Adaptations* (2020). These productions and others in the irreverent vein are haunted by past performances in the ways that Marvin Carlson discusses in *The Haunted Stage*, their meanings enriched and enlivened by the spectator's 'iconic memories' of their ghostly traces (2001: 78).

Greater reverence for Shakespeare is often discernible in amateur, community and student performance, which, though not unattuned to the audience's pleasure, is also firmly focused on the actor's experience. Performing Shakespeare remains a vehicle for personal development and empowerment, often through the rehearsal techniques developed by Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974). Even where Shakespeare is sometimes now being shunted to the side in the literature curriculum in favour of contemporary and local writers, the perceived value of performing Shakespeare is reflected in a steady number of student productions, such as those discussed by Andrew James Hartley, Kaja Dunn and Christopher Berry in their contribution to this volume.[3] And the fact that Shakespeare is out of copyright and draws reliable audiences means the plays enjoy a robust amateur performance tradition (Dobson 2013). During the COVID-19 crisis of 2020, an abundance of made-for-online Shakespeare performances took the form of readings, from Patrick Stewart delivering a sonnet a day from a garden chair to the elaborate crowd-created Zoom performances of *The Show Must Go Online*, convened by Robert Myles. Implicit in these performances – often characterized by wit and creativity – was a sense of Shakespeare as an end in him/itself; as Myles wrote, the readings 'will allow us to expand our appreciation of Shakespeare, and keep our classical text skills sharp' (2020).

The same global pandemic that brought amateur performances to an international global community in 2020 also saw a widespread sharing of archival Shakespeare performances from around the world that illustrated the blurred lines of national traditions of playing Shakespeare in a globalized and mediatized world (see Alexa Alice Joubin's chapter in this book). At one time, there was a distinction between local and global traditions that made Shakespeare performances originating outside of England, and especially outside the old Empire, at least potentially distinct from the main hereditary line. These global traditions, especially German and Japanese, were sometimes brought into English Shakespeare performance through Brecht and Noh, for example, but these remained distinct, through most of theatre history, from Shakespeare performed for German or Japanese audiences. While perhaps charmed or intrigued by English Shakespeare traditions as the French had been by Garrick's performances in eighteenth-century Paris, performances outside the anglosphere often see these English traditions filtered through local performance styles and conventions. The rise of stage-to-screen broadcast has in some ways changed that, not least by removing some of the rationale for productions that are not firmly embedded in local theatre ecologies. Thomas Ostermeier's Shakespeare at the Schaubühne or Ivo van Hove's at Toneelgroep Amsterdam are not the RSC's

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or the Globe's Shakespeare, and whether at home or abroad (both directors are well known on the international touring circuit), these represent Shakespeare through contemporary European theatrical traditions that have been, but are perhaps no longer, distinct from English-language Shakespeare. Globalized, networked contemporary Shakespeare performances today (as Sonia Massai discusses in her chapter; see also Mancewicz 2014) are in significant ways markedly different from the examples analysed in Massai's collection *World-wide Shakespeares* (2005) or Dennis Kennedy's earlier *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (1993).

The mediation of Shakespearean theatre across new forms and platforms has also required the development of new literacies. From the earliest days of electronic recording technology, makers of Shakespearean theatre sought to translate theatre into new media, from the filming of early twentieth-century productions (Buchanan 2009), to the Royal Shakespeare Company's pioneering attempts to televise its work (Wyver 2019), to the explosion in the last decade of live-streamed theatre to cinemas and computers around the world (Aebischer, Greenhalgh and Osborne 2018; Aebischer 2020). These kinds of remediation have blurred the lines between stage and screen performance, audiences receiving performances that have been shaped by the work of both stage directors and screen directors, by choices made for an audience sharing the physical space of the actors and by choices that anticipate the audience watching remotely, whether 'live' or asynchronously. And the development of productions created via Google+ or Zoom further blur distinctions between stage and the broadly defined 'screen'. While this volume focuses predominantly on the theatre (*The Arden Research Companion to Shakespeare and Adaptation* explores a wider range of media), the single room shared between actors and audiences is increasingly troubled as a synecdoche for contemporary Shakespearean performance, and in this book we include chapters that span film, digital video and theatre, gesturing towards the ways in which newer technologies of remediation and reception continue to shift the parameters of Shakespearean performance.

The anxieties about how acts of translation and remediation affect a notion of Shakespearean value have not vanished; Kennedy and Yong Li Lan argue that 'some worry that when his text is aggressively transformed into a new language and a radically unfamiliar performative mode, something essential in Shakespeare disappears' (2010: 3). Contemporary Shakespeare performance is thus impossible to confine within clearly definable limits, and the critical competencies applicable to a subset of performance that transcends language, nation, style, politics and aesthetic are similarly multifarious. In his playful article '*Romeo and Juliet* Academic Theatre Review Kit*' (2008), Alan Armstrong proposes a parodic checklist for constructing a standard scholarly review of a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, its boilerplate questions and stock phrases a provocative satire of the complacency of a literary-critical method as applied to performance reviewing. The article points to the role of performance scholars in constructing what counts – worse, *matters* – as Shakespearean performance. Approaches to criticism that catalogue whether the Montagues and Capulets wore blue and red or black and white respectively, and

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that treat performers as the vehicle for an expression of Shakespeare, reinforce the dominance of the dramatic performance tradition and the primacy of text. This is perhaps best captured in the furore over what the recently retired theatre critic Michael Billington identified as an apparent (or, we would argue, a manufactured) crisis in verse speaking among English Shakespeare actors (2020). Billington was quick to dissociate his critique from the more reactionary views in the right-wing press that verse and diversity are like the buckets that represent Richard II and Henry IV, the quality of verse speaking declining as diverse casting increases (even if the article as published online misleadingly juxtaposed a byline about 'alienation from his [Shakespeare's] language' with an image of Paapa Essiedu, the first Black man to play Hamlet at the RSC). But even if race is not the central element of Billington's argument, the conservatism that his article represents, especially with its evocation of Great Shakespeareans of the past and its conclusion that 'we are living with a theatre increasingly cut off from its past', puts Billington somewhat at odds with much of contemporary Shakespeare performance.

Billington's retirement perhaps is one sign of drastic changes in the ecology of theatre criticism in the twenty-first century that have already altered the ways in which performances are captured for posterity. While video recordings, promptbooks, stage managers' notes and other materials continue to nourish the archive, in many markets, professional theatre critics, who capture the *experience* of the performance, have been eliminated from newspaper payrolls. Journals like *Shakespeare Bulletin* and *Shakespeare Survey* continue to publish scholarly reviews that contextualize productions within the history of Shakespeare in performance, but alongside this are blogs like *The Bardathon* (Peter Kirwan) and *'Action is Eloquence': (Re)thinking Shakespeare* (Gemma Allred and Ben Broadribb), and online journals such as *Scene* and *Exeunt,* that have collectively emerged as important records of a wider range of productions than those captured in the limited word count of a print journal. The multiplication of voices and of different perspectives on a production is in many ways salutary, though someone like Billington, with his long tenure at *The Guardian* and his deep immersion in contemporary theatre, provided an informed (if often also a contentious and partial) view that is, in many markets, now lost, ceded to an online, polyvocal, more democratic but not unproblematic form of criticism.[4]

The questions of what contemporary Shakespeare performance is and who gets to define it remain unanswerable. In an evocative metaphor, Alexa Alice Joubin describes performing Shakespeare in global theatre as 'a process of incorporating multiple voices into one artwork … a tug of war between competing voices across time and space' (2017: 426), and these voices include not only those producing but those interpreting Shakespearean performance. This tug of war, however, productively foregrounds process, or what Barbara Hodgdon refers to as the 'visible and invisible theatrical labor brought to bear on those remains in order to trace the force of performance' (2016: 5). It is beyond the scope of this book – any book – to define what Shakespearean performance should be; it is our hope, however, that it will support scholars and students in incorporating their own voices and labour into that process of making and remembering.

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SHAKESPEARE PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP: PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

Although this book focuses on 'contemporary' performance, it draws on a long history that includes not only performances but also various ways of documenting them. Diana Taylor's (2003) useful formulation of a performance history that exists in both archives and repertories, in both the material records of performances and the practices of actors passed down through rehearsals and anecdotes, is a way of framing how Shakespeare in performance, even when it is urgently and radically contemporary, draws on a tradition. The interplay between historical, theoretical, practical and experiential approaches to Shakespeare drives the field of Shakespeare Performance Studies, as outlined by Susan Bennett and Gina Bloom in their curated special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* on 'Shakespeare and Performance Studies' (2017), and in this volume we seek to highlight and reflect upon the ecology of methods and theories that situates performance scholarship in a cyclical relationship with Shakespearean performance.

In an interview conducted for this volume, director Yang Jung-ung says: 'I hope historians in the future do not watch my productions but read reviews of my works. As everything is changing, my productions practice their roles at the time when they were created.' While Yang's position is highly unlikely to be a universal one among directors, it is a reminder that the performance critics of today become the archival material of tomorrow. Much of the energy of Shakespeare performance scholarship goes into the documentation of performance from the point of view of the informed spectator, with 'informed' loosely defined. This is sometimes conceptualized as a service to future generations; for example, Stanley Wells's foreword to *A Year of Shakespeare*, a volume documenting the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, acknowledges the book's aim 'of forming an archive of accounts of an exceptionally wide range of theatrical experiences made available within a short space of time and originating in many different cultures' (2013). On one hand, the scholar is conceptualized as a kind of pre-emptive defender of the past, serving an important function of preserving details of stage and screen productions that (especially in the case of limited events, ephemeral digital media and/or smaller theatre companies without archival resources) may be lost to history. But Yang's desire to be remembered through reviews also speaks to the role of critics in preserving the experience of productions: what it felt to have watched something at that moment. The performance scholar is thus often self-consciously involved in the process of writing a social history of experiencing Shakespeare in performance, which may also reflect on shifting experience, as in Kim Solga's shifting feelings towards a 2006 production of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (2009; 2015).

Reviewers are not only the recorders but also the performers of theatre history in the sense Greg Dening articulated in his influential essay 'Performing on the Beaches of the Mind' with the insight that historians perform history (2002); the experiences and insights of reviewers develop into the theorization and historicization of performance, and thus delimit what Shakespeare in performance means, at least for a time. James C. Bulman, introducing his landmark collection *Shakespeare, Theory and*

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Performance, makes this point when he argues that '[i]nsisting on the indeterminacy of meaning and on the radical contingencies which affect performance, critics themselves become performers who, in their acts of translation, play at constructing "Shakespeare"' (1996: 8). W. B. Worthen's manifesto for Shakespeare Performance Studies builds on this, seeing it now no longer as a theoretical position about the positionality of the reviewer but an imperative, arguing that the field

> must be shaped neither by the determinants of performance alone … nor by the figural license of 'the text' … Rather, its purpose is to ask what Shakespeare performance is and is for *as performance* historically, how the material practices of performance media speak with and through Shakespearean drama by remaking it as performance, speak as acting on stage and on large, small, and pixellated screens, speak with and through its audiences.
>
> (2014: 22)

In mediating indeterminate meaning and interrogating material practices, in exploring the purpose and realization, effect and affect, politics and histories of Shakespearean performance, Shakespeare Performance Studies takes moments of performance as objects of study, reworking the raw materials of production (themselves already filtered through subjective experience) and rereading them through new critical lenses necessarily tied to the present concerns and positionality of the beholder. Performance, argues Ayanna Thompson, is 'an event, a set of specific practices, a way of making meaning, and an historical *and* ephemeral moment' and these meaning 'only become exponentially more multifaceted when placed in conjunction' with other critical terms such as 'race' (2009: 359). The materials and methods of Performance Studies are to be found in all areas of scholarship on early modern drama, from editorial gloss to illustrative anecdote, from critical theory to theatre history. Its slipperiness and refusal to be shaped by firm determinants have allowed its tools to be especially applicable to theoretical projects invested in the destabilization of fixed categories of knowledge, especially in relation to the broader definition of 'performativity' as applied to gender, race, queer, postcolonial, trans-, Marxist and other critical fields. Although at one time the field of Shakespeare in performance emphasized the insights that performance might contribute towards a better understanding of Shakespeare, now it is more often the case that Shakespeare is the instrument and performance the object of study, in line with Worthen's aspiration.

At the same time as performance is made to speak to new and pressing critical issues, it enters into history, with performance scholars cataloguing and organizing performances, creating or disrupting genealogies and teleologies, and arranging the materials of the field into narratives. These histories emerge in many forms. The 'Shakespeare in the Theatre' series (Bloomsbury) tells localized histories of specific directors, companies and venues; the 'Shakespeare in Performance' series (Manchester University Press) establishes a performance history for individual plays; and stand-alone monographs and articles capture micro-histories of Shakespeare operating at specific times and places. These histories are always themselves interpretive acts, as perhaps most perfectly illustrated in Barbara Hodgdon's

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performance of reconstruction in her short monograph *Shakespeare, Performance and the Archive* in which she shifts

> from considering performance as product to focusing on performance as process, drawing on memories (mine as well as those of others), photographs, actors' annotated rehearsal scripts and rehearsal notes, prompt scripts, prop scenarios and costumes – materials already collected as well as new ones which potentially give access to scenarios of action and behavior, to the embodied practices toward which these remains gesture, where context sutures them, each to each.
>
> (2016: 5–6)

Hodgdon's immersive account of her archival explorations is itself a process of historicization, reorganizing and retelling the stories of individual productions as preserved in the archives while emphasizing her own agency within that narrative. This is an aspect Rob Conkie picks up on in his provocative *Writing Performative Shakespeares*, when he asks 'how might the archive materials of rehearsal and production be deployed in order to evocatively reconstitute performance?' (2016: 30) and offers in response a performance of two Melbourne student productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Pericles* presented via pinboards. Conkie's work is an exciting intervention into new modes of performance criticism that challenges the sufficiency of prose itself as a means of documenting, theorizing and historicizing performance, rehearsal and archives. And in making a performance out of the process of research, these authors find new ways of constructing what Shakespeare is.

Finally, the research of Shakespeare Performance Studies finds its way back into the creation of performance in its traditional and more experimental forms, as scholars act as dramaturges, advisors, embedded critics, adaptors and makers of performance in their own right. The creation of permanent academic positions at theatres such as Shakespeare's Globe (Farah Karim-Cooper and Will Tosh) and the American Shakespeare Center (Ralph Alan Cohen) has been an exciting development pioneered by reconstructed theatres seeking to operate at the forefront of scholarship and practice, and offers a formalization of processes stretching back to John Russell Brown's affiliation with the National Theatre under Peter Hall in the 1960s and 1970s; scholars such as Russell Jackson and Judith Buchanan continue to act as scholarly advisors on new Shakespearean film. Scholars such as Rob Conkie, Tom Cornford, Bridget Escolme and Stephen Purcell have created professional and amateur productions that have informed their scholarly work, and the iterative processes of practice-as-research (surveyed in relation to Shakespeare by Purcell 2017) have yielded fresh questions by treating rehearsal and performance as process rather than product.[5] And the role of scholars in then creating platforms for other artists to talk about their work, such as Carol Chillington Rutter's *Clamorous Voices* (1988) and the Cambridge University Press *Players of Shakespeare* series, or in Kim F. Hall's preface to the published edition of Keith Hamilton Cobb's *American Moor* (2020; a play performed at scholarly conferences as well as in public theatres) returns us full circle to the role of the Shakespeare performance scholar in creating the materials and reports of Shakespeare performance that will become the archives of the future.

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Shakespeare Performance Studies is thus characterized by its multifaceted and multisensory engagement with the contemporary performance of early modern drama at all stages of its development, production and reception. Its methods and tools are protean and multidisciplinary, responding to performance events whose meanings are unstable and which are themselves affected by the presence and participation of scholars. And the continued proliferation of new primary materials means that this is an especially responsive area of Shakespeare studies, in which the serendipity of chance encounters, the surprise of a groundbreaking new interpretation, the emotional effect of a communal experience, or the intervention of global affairs can radically change a research trajectory. At the time of writing, to take an extreme example, the COVID-19 pandemic has postponed or cancelled practice-as-research projects and traditional theatre productions, and many Shakespeare performance scholars are turning their critical skills to the analysis of digital media productions (see Alexa Alice Joubin's chapter in this volume); drawing upon the tools of emotion and trauma studies to read archived productions through an experiential lens; or participating in fundraising projects designed to help save the theatres upon which the field depends. And as contemporary Shakespeare performance changes and adapts, so will the research that accompanies it.[6]

THIS BOOK

This *Research Handbook* is designed to be a companion to the researcher attempting to situate themselves in relation to Shakespearean performance. It both models ways of approaching productions – from archival research to observing rehearsals, from close analysis of single productions to structural investigation of theatrical seasons, from specific theoretical questions to social and politically active approaches – and opens up directions for future research. The volume also includes resources designed to support researchers in shaping and designing their own investigations. While the volume cannot be exhaustive, our collective aim is to open up questions and inspire future research directions.

The volume is divided into sections that are designed with the needs of users at different stages of their research in mind. Following this introduction, contemporary methodologies are the focus of the three essays in Part One, 'Research methods and problems'. Our contributors to this section were each invited to respond to a major locus of Shakespeare performance material: the archive, the audience and the performance as event. In 'The archive: Show reporting Shakespeare', Rob Conkie draws on Barbara Hodgdon's important work in *Shakespeare, Performance, and the Archive* (2016) and Diana Taylor's productive theorization of the documentary archive and the embodied repertoire to argue that show reports, the documents produced to capture the distinguishing features of a particular performance, exist somewhere between the two. This rather neglected form of evidence is revealed, in Conkie's deft reading, to be 'an archive/repertoire hybrid, an especially embodied document' that reveals the kinds of labour an audience-eye view of performance tends to efface. In 'The audience: Receiving and remaking experience', Margaret

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Jane Kidnie builds on the important foundational work of Bruce McConachie, Patrice Pavis, Susan Bennett, Helen Freshwater, Matthew Reason, Kirsty Sedgman and others to consider the semiotic and phenomenological experience of different levels of theatre spectatorship. With her attention to the nuances between a first encounter with a particular production and a recollection of that encounter in light of reviews and other forms of prompts to memory, Kidnie creates an ideal bridge between Conkie's essay and Paul Prescott's, which concludes the section. In 'The event: Festival Shakespeare', Prescott considers the role of festivals in the contemporary performance of Shakespeare, drawing on notions including Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, the globalization of theatrical touring, pilgrimage, exchange and environmentalism. Distinguishing between the aims and aesthetics of community, regional and international festivals, Prescott argues that future research could focus productively on the meaning of festivals to participants, both theatremakers and theatregoers, thus privileging the connection between the festival and its community over that between the festival and any residual notions of 'authentic' Shakespeare.

Part Two, 'Current research and issues', profiles some of the areas of research currently exercising Shakespeare performance scholars, and in doing so models a wide variety of methods for *doing* performance research. Here again, we asked our contributors to respond to a keyword that has been a focus of activity or concern, and to reflect on the ways in which their current research (represented here in case studies) speaks to ongoing questions for both theatremakers and scholars.

Since its opening in 1997, Shakespeare's Globe has prompted some of the most significant revisions of long-held assumptions about how early modern drama works, both as a crucible for experimentation and in the debates about its purpose and value. The first two essays in this section take the Globe as their starting point. In 'Original Practices: Old ways and new directions', Sarah Dustagheer demonstrates the contemporaneity of original performance practices at the Globe, which remains an important site for innovative and experimental Shakespeare productions, even though these aspects are sometimes occluded by misapprehensions about the Globe's positioning between past and present. Her analysis of the debates occasioned by changes in the Globe's artistic leadership identifies the political and aesthetic dimensions of the role of 'Original Practices' as a distinctively contemporary practice. Stephen Purcell, meanwhile, in 'Space: *Locus* and *platea* in modern Shakespearean performance', revisits Robert Weimann's influential proposition that Shakespearean dramaturgy draws on medieval traditions that situated onstage action according to a semiotics of space. Using productions at the Globe and the Bridge Theatre as test cases, and building on responses to Weimann by D. J. Hopkins and Erika Lin, Purcell uses the practice-based discoveries of fluid spaces to refine Weimann's work and identifies a 'bisociative *platea*' at play in the shifting spaces of the stage.

The Globe is also important to Susan Bennett's response to the economic impact of Shakespeare in the contemporary theatre landscape, contrasting Prescott's work on the often-rural Shakespearean festival with a focus on urban performance. In 'Economics: Shakespeare performing cities', she argues that the economic conditions shaping the performance of Shakespeare in cities worldwide cannot be separated

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cross-referenced, as a wayfinder for readers who are interested in being directed quickly to the essays in this collection that relate to particular topics. The key terms in this section relate to terms and fields discussed throughout the volume that may be unfamiliar to the lay reader; for more extensive introductions to the terms and movements used within theatre studies, we recommend *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* (Kennedy 2010).

For our 'Annotated bibliography' (4.3), we worked with Karin Brown, Librarian at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, to identify and describe the key books of the current century. This was no easy task, and we were sorely tempted to reach back into the 1990s for examples such as W. B. Worthen's *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (1997) and James Bulman's *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance* (1996) that continue to shape the field. It assuaged our consciences that both of these scholars are still active in our field and represented in the annotated bibliography by their more recent work. We note, though, that the scholarly book is only one appropriate avenue for the dissemination of Shakespeare performance scholarship, and cannot do justice to the wealth of articles, special issues, blogs, practice-as-research projects, conferences and other outputs that continue to define and diversify the field; we address many of these in 4.4, 'Resources', and hope that the items catalogued here offer starting points for further exploration.

A field whose primary materials take the form of live theatre productions that occur at a given time and place, and whose archives are material and sometimes irreproducible digitally, can create problems of access; nonetheless, as the attention paid by our contributors to digital resources, new media and community performance makes clear, Shakespeare Performance Studies has the potential to become ever more open to researchers working around the world and on different kinds of material. In 4.4, 'Resources', we collect and reflect on a selection of the many resources relevant to Shakespeare in contemporary performance and the tools available for supporting researchers, focusing on those mentioned in this book and which are most likely to remain accessible for the future.

WHY SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE MATTERS

We began this introduction by reflecting on Adjoa Andoh's *Richard II* as a production that exemplified the intersection of many different interpretive lenses and traditions. But while we have argued in this introduction that contemporary performance draws on local and global traditions, it is also true that Shakespeare is made anew in each production. The process of rehearsal, however well informed by performance history, however strongly it connects to the archive and the repertory, is one of discovery, in which the actors make the roles their own and, between them, recreate the relationships, the hierarchies, the fictional worlds and the emotional nuances held *in potentia* in the Shakespearean text. Andoh's Richard II is very much her own, informed by her experiences as an actor and as a woman of colour living in England in the twenty-first century. Equally, the spectator's share of the theatrical experience is also subjective and individually constituted, connected only loosely to whatever

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intentions Andoh and her co-creators might have had – and even more loosely to Shakespeare's intentions. The Scottish poet Jackie Kay, a close friend of Andoh, exemplifies this in her review-as-memoir of the production, memories of sharing life-changing events with Andoh intersecting with emotive and analytical reactions to seeing the performance, accounts of rehearsal process interwoven and inseparable from intimate biography (Kay 2019). Kay's account exemplifies the uniqueness of the audience-performance bond, resulting in a piece beautiful on its own terms and only made possible by the combination of several different subjective experiences.

Scaffolding the theatrical experience of Shakespeare in performance, and shaping audience expectations of a production like Andoh's *Richard II*, is the work of many hands, from the authors of program notes and marketing blurbs to the reviewers whose responses will also inform posterity's impressions. Teachers at all levels from primary to tertiary also have a role to play in preparing new audiences to receive productions that are not perfect illustrations of preconceived notions about what Shakespeare is and means – and in preparing student actors to find their places within the Shakespearean repertory. Thinking through what Shakespeare might mean in a diverse and globalized world, and to diverse and globalized individuals onstage, backstage and in the audience, is part of the work of this book that we hope will help to shape the discipline from a pedagogical perspective.

It is, we think, a great pity when those in positions of influence prefer deadly productions on the grounds that they are truer to Shakespeare's intentions or, as is the opinion of some of the critics discussed in Price's chapter for this volume, because the role of a production is to provide a commentary on the past. We agree with Emma Smith, who in her extraordinary *This is Shakespeare* states categorically that 'I don't really care what he might have meant, and nor should you' (2019: 5). Positive encounters with Shakespeare are frequently charged with the language of newness, of discovery, of liberation. The plays should be able to connect with an audience on some level – aesthetic, emotional, intellectual – if there is any purpose to performing them today, and we are persuaded by the argument that to appreciate Shakespeare performance as contemporary, alive, urgent, vital and exciting is precisely to honour those intentions.

In continually pushing the boundaries of what Shakespeare performance looks and sounds like, contemporary Shakespeare performance looks to shape the world around it. Kay reports that Andoh's *Richard II* was set in a kingdom made up by the cast because '"show me the place where women of colour are in power, and I will set it there!" Adjoa says laughing' (2019). When Dominic Cavendish published his polemics 'The Thought Police's rush for gender equality on stage risks the death of the great male actor' (2017) and 'The woke brigade are close to "cancelling" Shakespeare' (2020) – in the latter case, misapplying a term with specific application to racial injustice – he highlighted the ways in which contemporary Shakespeare performance is expected by some cultural commentators to resist equality or social justice, but also continued the tradition of Shakespeare becoming the flashpoint for larger shifts in society that pass without comment in the production of other works.[7] If only because of the value that societies around the world continue to accord to Shakespeare, contemporary Shakespeare performance continues (for better and

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for worse) to hold up a mirror to the world and instigate discussion about what the world should look like. In continuing to champion and research the work of producing Shakespeare around the world, in all its forms, Shakespeare Performance Studies seeks to make a meaningful contribution to this project.

This collection is a contribution to a conversation, neither the first nor last word on its subject. We hope that it will provide inspiration for ongoing, world-changing research in this vibrant area of Shakespeare studies.

NOTES

1. On the relationship between the history of blackface performance and Shakespeare, see Thompson 2011: 96–117.
2. On the Essex Rising and the controversy over its connection to *Richard II*, see Hammer 2008.
3. For a detailed account of Shakespeare on the university stage, see Hartley 2015.
4. For a more detailed discussion of the historical development of theatre reviewing in relation to Shakespeare, see Prescott 2013. On the emergence of the theatre blog as a form and its relationship to professional criticism, see Vaughan 2020.
5. See also Dustagheer, Jones and Rycroft 2017 as part of a special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* on practice-as-research.
6. As we finalized this introduction, we simultaneously finalized a special section of *Shakespeare Bulletin* (38.3) on 'Shakespeare in Lockdown', co-edited with Erin Sullivan, which invited reviewers to respond to their experiences of watching recorded and broadcast Shakespeare during the enforced isolation of the COVID-19 period, often at a large physical and temporal distance from the original performance. The brief occasioned reflections on loss, subjectivity and changing relationships between art and spectator.
7. Cavendish's second essay was prompted by the author's knee-jerk misunderstanding of RSC artistic director Gregory Doran's use of the plural 'they' (referring to multiple potential co-authors of the *Henry VI* plays) as singular in an attempt to de-gender Shakespeare.

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PART ONE

Research methods and problems

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CHAPTER 1.1

The archive: Show reporting Shakespeare

ROB CONKIE

Show reports (sometimes called performance reports) record the details of an individual performance.[1] They are (usually) compiled by the production's stage manager at the conclusion of each performance. The details they (can) record include: the names of the company and the production; the time, date and venue of the performance; the timings of the performance; cast or crew injury, illness, lateness or absence; observations about the quality of the performance and the responses of the audience; errors committed by cast or crew; and repairs required to production materials, including set, props and costume (Maccoy 2004: 182–4; Kincman 2017: 221–4; Roth et al. 2017: 139, 149). The first set of items on this list – the facts and figures of the performance – are definitively archival: in Diana Taylor's influential formulation of the 'archive and the repertoire' (2003), wherein the former consists of 'documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, [and] CDs', show reports, quite obviously, are archival documents. Taylor further observes, citing Walter W. Skeat, that the archive 'etymologically refers to "a public building"' (19; see also Derrida 1996: 2); the 507 show reports (from nineteen separate productions of Shakespeare staged between 1962 and 2019) consulted for this essay were accessed – sometimes in person, sometimes remotely – from a range of theatre museums, libraries and theatre company archives.[2]

The second set of items on my introductory list, however – the incidents and accidents of the performance – arguably reside in the latter of Taylor's categories; that is, within the repertoire. The repertoire, explains Taylor, 'enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, [and] singing' (20; see also Schneider 2001: 100–5). Thus, as soon as, for example, a performer's gesture is recorded in a show report, whilst it remains as part of the repertoire, it also passes, if remediated, from the repertoire *towards* the archive. I will argue in this essay, therefore, that the show report, through its archiving of the repertoire, its recording of 'those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge' (20), represents an archive/repertoire hybrid, an especially embodied document. Taylor writes that '[a]s opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same' (20): the show report, attending to night-by-night variations in the performance season, re-enacts this kind of variability.

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offers the following explanation for an anomalous duration: 'Very unresponsive house; cast played swiftly, eight minutes shorter than last night' (7 Mar 1995, show 63). Here, the abbreviated running time is explained by the poor reception, and might be read as the stage manager pre-emptively shielding the actors from criticism by company management.

Show reports also record more open forms of criticism, mostly notes about errors (and very occasionally, misdemeanours) committed by cast or crew. Thus, a 'technician constantly missing the same cue, or an actor their lines, may be subject to some form of disciplinary action' (Maccoy 2004: 185). The show reports for the seventh and eighth performances of the 1973 NYC borough mobile tour of the New York Shakespeare Festival rock musical production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* illustrate this function as an occasional locus for 'disciplinary action': 'Very poor tonight … company was spoken to' (7 Aug) is followed by 'Show was good and audience liked it … sloppiness in dance numbers eliminated' (8 Aug).[6] In general, though, references to stage managers redressing cast 'sloppiness' are, in the reports I have consulted, rare, and most stage management instruction manuals advise sensitivity in delivering such judgements.

Show reports, as well as regulating behaviour, both reflect and reinforce company culture and ideology, and therefore institutional identity. Paul Menzer's admiring, but not uncritical, assessment of ASC performance practice notes that it 'is fundamentally constituted by a rage to connect actor and audience and to forge a community for the duration of the event' (2017: 118) and that, evoking Lacan, 'Audience contact, to be precise *eye* contact, can turn every event into a mirror stage' (119 [italics original]). The 'rage' and 'mirror stage' that Menzer (admittedly, laconically) uses to describe ASC practice speaks to an emotional immaturity – becoming might be a better word – that is arguably characteristic of emerging, reconstructed theatres desperate to both assert mission statements and seize market shares. The show reports for the 2018 ASC *Hamlet*, for example, place significant emphasis on the success of actor–audience contact through the detailed recording of reception, particularly final (and standing) ovations. The production played thirty-two times (in repertory) across almost three months. Standing ovation (with three sets of bows) was its most statistically likely outcome. Here, in ascending order of audience enthusiasm, are the curtain call reports: on seven occasions the performance was ovation-less (performances 7, 10, 14, 20, 22, 25, 26); there was one 'mixed standing ovation' (performance 3); two 'scattered ovations' (16, 31); one 'enthusiastic ovation' (4); seventeen instances of 'standing ovation' (1, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30); two 'huge' ovations (2, 5); and two occasions on which, with four sets of bows, there was an 'uproarious standing ovation' (11, 32). These reports attest not only to the archive/repertoire of audience reception for this particular production at particular performances, but also, mirror-like, to the report author's commitment to, and participation within, the ASC's unique community-forging.

Susan Leigh Foster's notion of 'bodily writing' offers a way to think through this experience of institutional identification that is produced through the authoring and archiving of show reports. Foster, later echoed by Taylor's formulation of the

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