

## *Introduction*

*Peter Holland*

Some things can be remembered rather too well. For Charles VI of France, contemplating the invasion of Henry V, the shame of the defeat at the battle of Crécy was ‘too much memorable’ (*Henry V* 2.4.53).<sup>1</sup> The adjective was one that fascinated Shakespeare in this play but only here: all four occurrences of the word ‘memorable’ in Shakespeare’s works are in *Henry V*, as if there was something about its action, its mode of exploration of history that made the word especially, peculiarly appropriate. When, in the same scene, Exeter delivers to Charles the pedigree that marks Henry’s claim to France, he names it ‘this most memorable line’ (88), a genealogical table that is both a full repository of the memories of the past, the processes of historiography out of which the lineage has been constructed, and something that can be remembered; it is an object that both enshrines and enables memory, a mnemonic aid that assists in the functioning of political, dynastic and imperialist memory. The paper, the sign of Henry’s ‘pedigree’, documents, presumably accurately, what was known and what had been chosen to be remembered and recorded of the family line.

But memory can also become fallible and even oddly contingent on its own naming. After Agincourt is won, Fluellen asks Henry to think back to Crécy (just as the French King earlier had been unable to prevent himself remembering that defeat) and to the victor of the battle, his ‘grandfather of famous memory’, though he is misremembering this particular genealogy and should have said ‘great-grandfather’ (4.7.90). Fluellen creates a joint recall of the way, ‘[i]f your majesties is remembered of it, the Welshmen did good service in a garden where leeks did grow’ (95–7). Henry wears the leek himself on St David’s Day ‘for a memorable honour’ (102) and Gower tells Pistol later that this is ‘an

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor *et al.* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986).

ancient tradition, begun upon an honourable respect and worn as a memorable trophy of predeceased valour' (5.1.67–9). But the wearing of the leek on 1 March is usually held to commemorate a British victory over the Saxons in 540 AD and there is no evidence whatsoever, apart from this passage in *Henry V*, for the Welsh ever having done anything at Crécy in a garden of leeks. The memory may have been current in Shakespeare's time or, equally probably, it may have been invented by him, a creation of something that we now remember within the play and beyond it, as part of our knowledge of Shakespeare and, perhaps falsely, as some myth of English and Welsh history. The act of commemoration, the communal and visible remembering by a society of its own history, is here constructed on a myth that is, at the very least, fallible, a story potentially made up in the very act of Fluellen's remembering it – and Fluellen is also significantly the character who cannot remember Falstaff's name: 'the fat knight with the great-belly doublet . . . I have forgot his name' (4.7.46–8). The naming of Fluellen himself is, of course, in a sense a commemorative act, a political transformation and controlling diminution of the name Llywelyn carried both by many kings and princes of Gwynedd (Wales), including the last native-born Prince (Llywelyn yr Olaf), and by the historical figure Dafydd ap Llywelyn of Brecon, the real 'Davy Gam Esquire' (4.8.104), who died at Agincourt.<sup>2</sup> What is remembered and who remembers it is a central feature of the play's activity.

If Shakespeare's is some of the history that we remember, we do not necessarily remember it as Shakespeare's. It has moved outside the plays to become some popular construction of history itself. But Shakespeare is a central part of Western cultural memory and it is difficult to think of Shakespearean memory without also remembering performance. Sometimes, of course, the memory has come to occupy the lines themselves. I cannot think of Fluellen, let alone read his lines, without hearing Esmond Knight's voice from Olivier's 1944 film and seeing those impossible, beetling eyebrows. I remember, too, how some Fluellens, in the many productions of the play I have seen, have been memorable and many have not; some have inscribed themselves – or, more actively, I have consciously inscribed some – in my memory. The concerns of memory, in other words, move from the acts of remembering within the plays to the acts of remembering the plays themselves in performance. These

<sup>2</sup> On the Welsh background, see for example, Terence Hawkes, 'Bryn Glas' in Anua Loomba and Martin Orkin, eds., *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 117–40 (pp. 133–5).

*Introduction*

3

memories of performance may be as creatively inaccurate as Fluellen's may have been in turn created to be.

Beyond the performance, there may be other complex acts of cultural memory: Olivier's film, as propaganda, recalled – reminded its audience of the memory of – an invasion and a victory at a time when the summoning up of such memory was especially necessary – hence the willingness of the wartime Ministry to support its making. Its performance was itself a summoning of memory, both of Henry V and of Shakespeare, at a point when such memory might be predictive and supportive of future acts of nation. Further, to watch the film now is also to remember 1944, to see it as an anticipation of the Normandy landings, to embed it in the social memory of wartime cultural performance.

In the rapid stretching out of such ripples of acts of memory, ripples I have barely sketched here, there is an interlacing of the play with its varying cultural histories in ways that threaten to be all-consuming as if memory can be the key to unlock all the play's several mysteries. Memory has indeed become a distinctly fashionable topic in the humanities these days, moving far beyond the traditional boundaries of its concerns in departments of psychology, a set of conventional limits typified by the enormous *Oxford Handbook of Memory*.<sup>3</sup> There are dozens of studies that explore aspects of memory in history, sociology, narrative and all aspects of culture.<sup>4</sup> A number of major publishers run series specifically devoted to the topic, for example Routledge's *Studies in Memory and Narrative*. Important theorists and philosophers have made substantial pronouncements about it, as, for example, Paul Ricoeur's brilliant and complex *Memory, History, Forgetting*,<sup>5</sup> while Harald Weinrich's provocative study of forgetting in Western culture, *Lethe*, considers the manifestations of memory's inevitable concomitant.<sup>6</sup> There have been remarkable explorations of the history of memory, including investigations of medieval and early modern practices of memory, their mnemotechniques, like Mary Carruthers' groundbreaking *The Book of Memory*, Janet Coleman's

<sup>3</sup> Endel Tulving and Fergus I.M. Craik, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Richard Cándida Smith, ed., *Art and the Performance of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2002) or Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin, eds., *Regimes of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> (University of Chicago Press, 2004), first published in French in 2000 as *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*.

<sup>6</sup> Harald Weinrich, *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), first published in German in 1997 as *Lethe: Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86380-3 - Shakespeare, Memory and Performance

Edited by Peter Holland

Excerpt

[More information](#)

longer view in *Ancient and Medieval Memories* and Lina Bolzoni's fine *The Gallery of Memory*.<sup>7</sup>

Performance studies has, far from being immune, become a central player in the field with some of its most influential works of the last decade arising out of a profound contemplation of performance as cultural memory, for instance in Joseph Roach's powerful and wide-ranging *Cities of the Dead* or Peggy Phelan's superb and moving *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, or the complex functioning of theatre as a space of many kinds of acts of memory, for instance in Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*.<sup>8</sup>

Surprisingly, Shakespeare studies and, in particular, Shakespeare performance studies have so far been (sub)disciplines which have tended to ignore the recent theorization of memory and investigation of its cultural and social practices, in spite of Shakespeare's own sustained concern with the functioning of memory. In an even more substantial way memory ought to be a matter of major concern to Shakespeare performance critics for memory is fundamental to the processes of performance, from the actors' remembering their lines, through the ways performances remember each other, to the ways in which audiences remember what they have seen – and Shakespeare performance critics are themselves members of those audiences, trying to make into memory the experience of theatre or film but encountering the crucial uncontrollability of memory and the inevitable torrent of forgetfulness.

This volume attempts to mark an inauguration of the study of memory in Shakespeare performance studies as a vital topic of debate. There has been some – and no doubt will be much more – work on Shakespeare and memory. To take only four examples, I recall John Kerrigan's elegant analysis of memory in *Hamlet*; Jonas Barish wrote, at the very end of his great career, on 'Remembering and Forgetting in Shakespeare'; the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft devoted the first Shakespeare-Tage at Weimar of the newly reunited society in 1993 to 'Shakespeare and memory'; as I write this, Garrett Sullivan's *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* has just been

<sup>7</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), first published in Italian in 1995 as *La stanza della memoria*; see also Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, eds., *The Medieval Craft of Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (London: Routledge, 1997); Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86380-3 - Shakespeare, Memory and Performance

Edited by Peter Holland

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

published.<sup>9</sup> All four examples, fine in their own right, are concerned with issues of Shakespeare and memory that do not impinge directly on performance studies. To that extent, the concerns of this collection, while overlapping with such work, attempt to map out a different territory, substantially adjacent to or within the kinds of fields that such studies have investigated, a territory signalled by the three nouns in the book's title, Shakespeare *and* memory *and* performance, rather than the encounter of any two of the three.

In its quest to do so, *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance* has not sought to rein in too tightly the interests of its contributors. There will be time later, as the study of memory in Shakespeare performance develops, to establish narrower parameters for the work in subsequent studies and collections. Instead, the contributors were asked to take up the topic in whatever ways interested them. The result was remarkable both in the range of topics and in the complex interconnections, themselves oddly like memory synapses, between different chapters. The volume attempts cumulatively through its chapters, rather than initially through, say, this introduction or a brief given to the contributors, to define how the topic it studies might be defined and limited, charted and mined.

The five sections of the book are not, then, discrete and impermeable divisions in the topic but simply convenient markers for the closer connections between certain chapters. The first considers memory as a function of the playtexts' performances of their arguments and as an intersection with forms of early modern practices of memory (both physical and cultural). The second section considers how performance figures in the context of editing, the place where the Shakespeare text is now represented to be read in relation to performance. The third section considers how Shakespeare performance is remembered in the costumes and props of production and in the practice of an actor's remembering (and forgetting), while the fourth moves on to see how particular forms of Shakespeare performance (a film and a location) figure their own acts of memory (of an actor's stage performance or of a cultural meaning of classicizing status) as well as how they are able to be remembered. The final section investigates the technologies of recording seen both as means

<sup>9</sup> John Kerrigan, 'Hieronimo, Hamlet and Remembrance', *Essays in Criticism* 31 (1981), 105–26; Jonas A. Barish, 'Remembering and Forgetting in Shakespeare' in R. B. Parker and Sheldon P. Zitner, eds., *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), pp. 214–21; some of the papers from the 1993 Weimar Shakespeare-Tage were published in *Jahrbuch 1994* (= vol. 130 of *Shakespeare Jahrbuch West*); Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

of structuring memory and as forms that themselves become integral parts of practices of performance that re-engage the text in reproducing its own structures of memory, looping the book's argument back to the place from which the opening essays had launched it. From the tables in which Hamlet records something he wishes to remember<sup>10</sup> to the fantasy of the Museum of Jurassic Technology, Shakespeare and performance intertwine in the processes of memory.

Bruce Smith is not sure what he remembers about *King Lear*. Some memories can be corroborated, some only half-remembered. Memories of performance may in some senses be verifiable: who played *King Lear* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1990 can be checked. Alongside the precision or imprecision of the performance details comes a sequence of feelings, feelings that define the memory of *King Lear* seen. But the feelings the performance gave rise to cannot easily be connected with the vignettes of performance memory. The act of verification may confirm and order memory but it cannot confirm both the past and present feelings in the memory of performance, an object that will not stay still in order to be remembered. Indeed, as Smith explores the model of performance memory set out by a modern theorist of theatre like Patrice Pavis or early modern structures of memory adumbrated by Sir Philip Sidney in *The Defence of Poesie* or by Spenser in the Castle of Alma in Book Two of *The Faerie Queene*, what becomes striking is the mobility of memory. As early modern students of the brain imaged it, memory is always linked to movement, whether it is the subject who moves in the storehouses of memory or the memories that move, swimming about in 'the liquid vaporous substance' of the brain.

The movement of memory can then be traced – as Smith moves on to trace it – in the sequence that begins with Shakespeare's writing the script of the play and ends with 'the implicit claims of film and video to offer memory in an always accessible medium'. Shakespeare's writing contains and makes available certain kinds of memories of his sources, parts of *King Lear*, Shakespeare's source-play, forming, suppressed or manifest, a set of 'passions', as early modern psychologists would have termed them, things felt and then communicated, steps in a chain that existed for Shakespeare, for the actors of the King's Men and for their audiences, before Shakespeare began writing his own version of the narrative. As the

<sup>10</sup> For the mechanics of this process see Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery and Heather Wolfe, 'Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004), 379–419.

boy-actor worked with the cue-script for Cordelia, conning the part in order to remember it, he constructed a somatic experience of passions, just as passion dominates one of the play's afterlives in the ballad of King Lear, itself a kind of memory of Shakespeare's play, dating, in the earliest surviving printing, to 1620.

In print and performance *King Lear* negotiates with differing kinds of memory. Yet at the play's end, it poses a problem of speaking – and specifically of the memory of speaking and the speaking of memory – in the distinction between speaking 'what we feel' and 'what we ought to say' (*History* Q 24.319). Seeing 'ought' as something cued from external models and 'feel' as cued by subjectivity and its attendant mobile memory, Smith defines the history of *King Lear* as residing in both models of memory, in the way that the two combine to 'constitute the totality of memory'.

Over the last twenty years of critical analysis, there has been a shift of attention from the semantic to the somatic, from language to the history of the body itself, so that critics, whether historicist or materialist, have kept a fascinated attention on the ways the dead body is represented, 'the memorial aesthetics' which are the focus of John Joughin's chapter. Seeing *Hamlet* and *Richard II* as Shakespeare's 'mourning plays', Joughin studies the aestheticisation of suffering, the moments at which tragedy intersects with the performance of grief as a space in which the ritualisation of mourning connects that tragic performance with the communal practices and subjective experiences of grief as memory. Those intense feelings which for Smith were a fundamental aspect of the experience of *King Lear* are here extended into broader concerns with Shakespeare's power, a force which often resides precisely in the performative forms of grief such as Hamlet so potently describes to his mother as a distinction between seeming (as performance) and feeling, external and internal, performed and offered as true, distinctions which demand an ethical response, 'exposing us directly to what an ethical criticism, influenced by the readings of Levinas and Derrida, might term "the irreducible otherness of the other"'. The theatricalized grief which is necessarily public is set against the private which Hamlet cannot turn into open mourning. As we watch Hamlet and Richard II mourning, 'they serve to confirm that we cannot "know" what they suffer, yet they do so in a language of generality which is in some sense transcendental and with which we can all identify'.

Richard II moves in his grief beyond the position that Hamlet will later adumbrate, for Richard's vision of the commemorative practices of his

memory makes him into ‘the impossible object of his own grief’. The gap between the spectator and the act of memory that is grieving narrows in Richard even as it widens, dividing his subjectivity at the same time as he watches his own performativity. At the play’s end, as Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV, asks us and the others on stage to mourn, to perform the collective act of memory that the state rituals of grief make manifest, even as they attempt to atone and erase the act of regicide which necessitated their very existence, we contemplate the national rites of the cult of ancestors and, in so doing, redefine the forms of memorialisation that they always seek to perform.

Anthony Dawson’s chapter continues this investigation of memory, mourning, grief and performance, in its consideration of the activity of literary remembrance in Virgil’s *Aeneid* as remembered and represented, performed and investigated in Marlowe’s *Dido Queen of Carthage* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Like Bruce Smith, he is concerned with the interconnections of memory but here the specifically literary recall of Virgil’s Troy, a recall that in Marlowe’s case involves direct translation. Remembering Virgil is to be aware of what epic achieves that stage representation cannot, recalling the extent to which the stage is a limited, almost impoverished space for playing out the topoi of heroism. The anxiety over the stage is an extension, though, of a broader cultural anxiety over what can be remembered and commemorated in a society almost phobic about the icons of the past. A crucial part of the distrust of the adequacy of performance as representation lies in the possibility, even probability, that representing grief diminishes its pain. It is not going too far to see in Marlowe’s play a crisis in early-modern theatre (though Dawson goes no further than defining it as a dilemma) and its forms of representation of ‘its remembrance of the heroic past’.

The line from Virgil to Marlowe extends towards the double remembering in *The Tempest* where both are recalled and, alongside them, the Player’s account of Aeneas’s tale to Dido in *Hamlet*, a memory both of Priam’s death and of a mode of performance that is seen as old-fashioned, and yet (or should that be ‘and therefore?’) powerfully adequate to its subject. *Hamlet* which, like Joughin, Dawson finds to be pervaded by mourning, becomes a narrative both of the loss of fathers and of the politics of the state’s collapse and replacement in a way that engages with the action of the *Aeneid*, even as it mirrors it. Shakespeare’s careful and intense reading of Virgil connects to his reading of Marlowe’s *Dido* (more likely than his having seen the play in performance). In rewriting Marlowe rewriting Virgil, Shakespeare bound the literary to the



*Introduction*

9

performed in the memory of earlier modes of performance as Hamlet meditates on the affective power of performance, exactly the problem of affectivity with which Smith's chapter is so much engaged. The return that *Hamlet* marks, a return both to Marlowe and to Virgil, has a sense of belatedness embedded in it as well as a homage to the past, a sense, both melancholic and triumphant, of the theatre-space, the Globe itself, as both Troy and Rome, as that which fell and that which rose.

All three of these chapters are acts of sustained reading of the plays' memories and the modes in which they are performed. Perhaps no-one reads in such a sustainedly close way as an editor but, as the mode of Shakespeare editing in the late twentieth century shifted decisively towards requiring the editor to have an awareness of performance and its history, the sheer difficulty of presenting the materials of performance in conjunction with the text have begun to loom large. Editors now need a vast range of skills and, alongside philology, textual bibliography and a variety of other disciplines, training in performance history would seem to be a requirement. Even more problematic than the fact that not all that many editors have the experience and skills to be good theatre historians is the absence of effective guidance about how commentary notes, the editor as annotator, should engage with the forms of memory of the play in performance available to the editor, materials which, however well researched, often appear fundamentally intractable to the annotator's needs.

Concentrating on examples drawn from two recent editions of *Macbeth*, those by Nicholas Brooke and A. R. Braunmuller, Michael Corder explores the ways in which editions as 'complex acts of cultural memory' recall performances. The risk is anecdote and the construction of commentary which reports events from the performance record without motivating them. To note, for instance, that Irving as Macbeth left the stage slowly on his way to murder Duncan is only helpful if we are also enabled to contemplate other modes of exit, like Godfrey Tearle in 1949 running 'nimble off to do the murder, instead of creeping from the stage as is the usual custom', as a playgoer noted. Remembering one possibility without remembering the other turns the memory into anecdote and risks a form of prescriptiveness, a denial of the fuller range of performance possibilities in the text that performance history richly documents.

Too often annotation makes assumptions about what must be happening on or with a particular line that a better recall of what actors have performed would suggest are disturbingly limited. Remembering options is often to open up the meanings that editors would often seem to prefer

to close out, denying the memory of performance its function as an explorer of the text. As Cordner, for a number of crucial moments in *Macbeth*, shows what actors found and what we ought to remember as we encounter the lines, he shows too how often editors are caught by their traditional concept of their function, 'wrought with things forgotten' both by the burden of that tradition and by the challenging demands of the new imperative to remember performance. Cordner summons up a new kind of edition which 'will be confidently fashioned from a lively and questioning curiosity about all that the performance record can teach the academy', marking an intersection between performance and scholarship that would be more genuinely collaborative as acts of sharing memory and less like a series of uncertain pillaging raids.

Cordner's anxieties over the forms in which editors remember performance are shared and rethought by Margaret Jane Kidnie who starts from Claudette Sartiliot's investigations into how citation operates within the culture of modernity, where memory is preserved precisely through citation: 'To keep the memory of things . . . one has to cite them, to keep them encrypted in one's discourse so that they can survive'. She pursues two tracks: editors citing performance and actors citing plays in performance, both seen as 'prompts to memory that preserve the past for a present moment through an on-going process of invention'. If we cannot share the memory of performance until it becomes fixed in a narrative that both preserves and, I would want to suggest, denies the possibility of the memory in the very act of preserving it by the transformations that narratives make, then we cannot cite fully, only seek to cite effectively. As Colley Cibber wrote in remembering Betterton,

Could how Betterton spoke be as easily known as what he spoke, then might you see the Muse of Shakespeare in her Triumph, with all her Beauties, rising into real Life, and charming the Beholder. But, since this is so far out of the reach of description, how shall I show you Betterton?

Kidnie cites this passage from Furness's New Variorum edition of *Hamlet*, a moment of a late nineteenth-century editor realizing what cannot be done to recall performance. But, as editors narrativize performance, they look forward and back, creating a body of memory by seeking to preserve them in the forms of their own narratives.

Performance, too, can find acts of memory, as when an actor playing Fool in a 1993 *King Lear* scrawled on the wall part of Hamlet's 'What a piece of work' speech. Kidnie's memories of seeing this, of being aware of it as a moment of citation, contrast with my own: she saw five words but