

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - *Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

REVIEWING SHAKESPEARE

Ranging from David Garrick's *Macbeth* in the 1740s to the World Shakespeare Festival in London 2012, this is the first book to provide in-depth analysis of the history and practice of Shakespearean theatre reviewing. *Reviewing Shakespeare* describes the changing priorities and interpretive habits of theatre critics as they have both responded to and provoked innovations in Shakespearean performance culture over the last three centuries. It analyses the conditions – theatrical, journalistic, social and personal – in which Shakespearean reception has taken place, presenting original readings of the works of key critics (Shaw, Beerbohm, Agate, Tynan), while also tracking broader historical shifts in the relationship between reviewers and performance. Prescott explores the key function of the 'night-watch constable' in patrolling the boundaries of legitimate Shakespearean performance and offers a compelling account of the many ways in which newspaper reviews are uniquely fruitful documents for anyone interested in Shakespeare and the theatre.

PAUL PRESCOTT is Associate Professor of English at the University of Warwick, a Trustee of the British Shakespeare Association and a teaching associate of the Royal Shakespeare Company. He has published widely on theatre history, contemporary performance and creative pedagogy, and is currently completing a short biography of Sam Wanamaker, founder of Shakespeare's Globe. His work has appeared in publications including *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, *The Blackwell Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* and *Shakespeare Survey*. He is the co-founder of www.yearofshakespeare.com and www.reviewingshakespeare.com.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

REVIEWING SHAKESPEARE

*Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century
to the Present*

PAUL PRESCOTT



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
 Eighteenth Century to the Present
 Paul Prescott
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107021495

© Paul Prescott 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CRO 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Prescott, Paul, 1974–

Reviewing Shakespeare : journalism and performance from the eighteenth century
 to the present / Paul Prescott.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02149-5 (hardback)

1. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Criticism and interpretation – History.
2. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Dramatic production.
3. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Influence. 4. Theater – Reviews. I. Title.

PR3091.P74 2013

822.3'3 – dc23 2013013780

ISBN 978-1-107-02149-5 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
 URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication,
 and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
 accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*For my parents,
Philippa and William Prescott*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
 Eighteenth Century to the Present
 Paul Prescott
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> ix
1 An introduction to the night-watch constable	1
Performance, print, memory: three preludes	1
Eunuchs in a harem: the cultural reputation of the critic	6
Night-watch constables, men of letters and domineering pedants	10
Critical conditions	17
Re-viewing the Shakespearean reviewer: precedents	20
Reviewing Shakespeare: the argument	24
2 Tradition and the individual talent: reviewing the Macbeth actor c.1740s–1890s	31
Macbeth and the ghost of success	32
‘Are you a man?’ Macbeth, King David and the Irish Jew	36
Heroic assassin or common stabber? Class, masculinity and courage	43
Mid century Macbeths: rivalry and rioting	47
A domestic coward: Irving’s Macbeth and the masculine estimate of man	50
‘Lay on’: the Macbeth actor exits fighting	54
3 New Journalism, New Critics c.1890–1910	57
‘The climax and masterpiece of literary Jacobinism’: the introduction of the signed article	58
‘Gentlemen, I am about to speak of myself <i>à propos</i> of Shakespeare’: the critic and the play of personality	67
‘The best part of the circus’: Shaw as New Critic	72
‘The plays as Shakespeare wrote them’: Shaw and authenticity	77
‘He would buy me in the market like a rabbit’: Shaw and incorruptibility	82
‘The hack work of genius’: Beerbohm and Shakespeare in the <i>Saturday Review</i>	84
4 The reviewer in transition c.1920–1960	94
Prologue: another Shaw?	94
‘That modern nuisance’: Agate, the producer and the death of the actor	97

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Contents

Unchanging Cockaigne: Agate and the recuperation of tradition	105
'Post-mortem on the egoist': style, paternity and the dynamics of succession	112
<i>He That Plays the King</i> : enter Tynan, stage right	116
'When comes there such another?' Tynan, Olivier and Macbeth	119
Re-enter Tynan, stage left: anti-heroic Shakespeare and the possibility of radicalism	126
Conclusion: Roundheads and Cavaliers	131
5 New contexts, new crises (1997–2012): reviewing from the opening of Shakespeare's Globe to the World Shakespeare Festival 2012	133
'When comes there such another?' Tynan and belatedness	136
Matters of size and status: reviewing and post-Fleet Street journalism	139
A community of the same? The cultural biography of contemporary reviewers	143
Speak, memory: a misfortune of <i>Macbeths</i> 1995–6	145
Inheriting the Globe: the reception of Shakespearean audience and authenticity in contemporary reviewing	154
Damn Yankees: reviewing the Shakespearean audience	156
'Arsenal/Tottenham': reviewing the Shakespearean space	163
'Dear Mr Billington': the audience writes back	171
The World Shakespeare Festival 2012: coverage, comment and the framer framed	177
'Back to British business as usual': race, nation and regime change in <i>Henry V</i> at the Globe and <i>Julius Caesar</i> in Stratford	183
Epilogue: guarding the guardians, changing the guard	190
<i>Notes</i>	196
<i>Works cited</i>	199
<i>Index</i>	212

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

This book began its life at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, and owes much to the company and advice of students and staff at that very special place. John Jowett and Russell Jackson offered typically acute comments on first drafts of early chapters. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Peter Holland for setting the ball rolling and for being such a kind, clever and inspiring mentor.

In the years since I have benefited from dozens of conferences, seminars, panels and discussions – formal and otherwise – with too many friends, students and colleagues to do justice to here. But I am very grateful for assistance from librarians at the Shakespeare Institute (especially James Shaw and Kate Welch), the Bodleian, the British Library and the University of Warwick. Warm thanks to Andrew Dickson, Terence Hawkes, David Roberts, and Gary Taylor for input and advice at key stages; to Paul Edmondson, Peter J. Smith and Stanley Wells, for reading and generously commenting on late drafts of the manuscript. Special thanks to Michael Billington, Michael Coveney, Charles Spencer and the late John Gross for sharing their experiences and thoughts in interview. Earlier versions of parts of Chapters 2 and 5 have previously appeared in *Shakespeare Survey 58* and the Blackwell *Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* (ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen).

At the business end of the publishing process, I am immensely grateful to Mary Stewart Burgher and Lydia Wanstall for giving so freely of their time and expertise in helping to proof final drafts; Chris Jackson was also an exemplary copy-editor. All errors and infelicities are my own. At Cambridge University Press, Rebecca Taylor, Joanna Breeze and Anna Lowe have all been models of care and efficiency. And I am delighted to join a generation of Shakespeareans in thanking Sarah Stanton for everything she does, for individual authors and for the profession as a whole.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02149-5 - Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Paul Prescott

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

Acknowledgements

It is hard to imagine a greater or a happier debt than the one I owe to my parents, without whom it is pretty safe to say this book would not have been written. I therefore dedicate this to them on the joyous occasion – 31 August 2013 – of their golden wedding anniversary.