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WHAT ARE YOU READING?
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It's Easter and, two years out of three, that means it is also the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, this time at the appropriately named Renaissance Hotel (in the absence of a chain of Early Modern Hotels) in Washington, D.C. Never mind about the plenaries and panels and seminars, many of which were outstanding; all conferencegoers, whether Shakespeareans or not, know that the real excitement is to be found at the book display. Was this what King Lear was talking about when he suggested to Cordelia they would spend time in prison talking about "Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out"? And the unseemly scenes on the last morning, when many publishers reduce their prices rather than ship the books back to the warehouse, are remarkably reminiscent of Harrods's china department on the first day of the sales.

What the publishers put on show is often not so much an answer to the question "What are you reading?" as it is to these cognate but troubling questions: "What ought you to be reading?", "What haven't you read?", or "What are you never going to get around to reading?" This year, after the passing of the wonderful store Poor Yorick, whose stall in the display room was always stacked with Shakespeare-related DVDs that you never knew existed, the verb of the questions was unequivocally "read" and not "watch"—though *Theatre Survey* might consider whether there ought not to be a parallel article to this one, a theatre account of "what are you watching?"

As usual, I end the conference with a pile of books to stuff into my bag and a pile of publishers' flyers, most of which end up in the wastebasket in my hotel room. Both piles seem strikingly smaller than usual, the former because most of the books that interest me are far too expensive even at conference-discounted rates. Thank goodness that Ashgate's display hardbacks are half-price and that therefore I can at last buy a copy of *Native Shakespeares* without paying $99.95 for it. (I have come to realize that my obsessive book buying is the result of my intellectual formation in Cambridge, where the University Library's rules allow

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all faculty to borrow no more than ten books for a period of no more than eight weeks; therefore I feel the urge to buy, a combination of greed and a nervous anxiety that a book won't be there when I might need it at some date in the future, with that manic urgency that always happens in the middle of writing.)

Native Shakespeares is Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia's fine collection of articles on, as the subtitle puts it, "Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage." It sits well alongside Sonia Massai's 2005 collection, *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*—and I have to plead guilty to having also gone for the pluralized Shakespeare in a book title long ago. With global Shakespeare having once meant primarily the global dominance of Olivier's films and then the BBC-TV series (which Sam Mendes is threatening now to remake) before becoming *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* and *Shakespeare in Love*, the need to rethink the forms of transformation and transposition, of indigenous and local, of inter-, intra-, and transcultural movements, through direct consideration of the cultural location of the performance/novel/film is pressing. I greatly admire Mark Thornton Burnett's account of the Madagascan film version of *Macbeth*, *Makibefo*, made in 1999 and now available on DVD from Scoville Film, in his article "Madagascan Will" (in *Shakespeare Survey 61* [2008]—and, yes, an editor may admire an article in the journal s/he edits). While Burnett is exceptional in his ability to understand a complex national culture, these two collections enable a series of views that, in themselves, redefine the presences of Shakespeares without using "globalizing" as cheaply as most of the rest of us shamefacedly would have to confess we do (but which these writers never do), even as we pretend to be localizing.

Much of what has most interested me in Shakespeare studies recently has been work that creates adjacencies that expand the cultural notions of the theatrical and performative at particular junctures, like Stuart Sillars's learned and exhilarating *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709–1875* (2008), the follow-up to his *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720–1820* (2006). Or it's work that extends from Shakespeare performance into sophisticated reconceptualizations of acts of performance, like Dennis Kennedy's deliciously provoking *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (2009). Or, just occasionally, it's work that knows nothing of performance, that may, indeed, resist theatre entirely, and that nonetheless opens up a Shakespeare text in ways that are simply thrilling. Janet Adelman's *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in "The Merchant of Venice"* (2008) is, quite simply, the best book on a single Shakespeare play that I have read in decades. The depth of her scholarship in understanding early modern contexts for race and religion, for nation and sexuality, merges perfectly (in an analysis that deals so thoughtfully with imperfect mergers, of transformations troublingly incomplete) with a profound sensitivity to the local possibilities of Shakespeare's language, performing acts of close reading that are at times dazzling—as long as that word does not for a moment suggest that they are blinding and showy, for there is not a sentence that could be accused of that. It is also, by the way, the first book of Shakespeare criticism that I had no sooner finished than I started reading

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again, for the sheer pleasure of following the delicacy of its oh-so-intelligent movement.

I had intended to spend a large chunk of this semester's leave reading the four volumes of E. K. Chambers's *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) from cover to cover, mining its mining of the records. As threatening deadlines approached, I have had to compromise with reading carefully Andrew Gurr's latest revision of his indispensable *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (4th ed., 2009), far more than just the addition of a new preface and instead a page-by-page reconsideration of his own argument.

Unlike Gurr's engaging scholarship, one of the most infuriating and least scholarly of recent movements is the attempt to recover the forms of early modern performance by advocating that the Shakespeare First Folio contains detailed clues for actors, its capitalization of the first letter of some words supposedly indicating emphasis and its punctuation apparently pointing to rhythm. That none of these features has the least connection with the playhouse and originate in the work of printing-house compositors is ignored. Much more exciting is the attempt by Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern in *Shakespeare in Parts* (2007) to see how Shakespeare structured scenes, characters, and performance through the early modern practice of the actor learning his roles from a cue-script. Five hundred pages of their arguments are a lot to digest (i.e., I'm still not sure I can agree with some passages or have followed the authors clearly enough in others) but their work makes me see/listen afresh to events in the plays that I thought I had grasped. Any actor playing Miranda knows—but Shakespeareans seem never to have noticed—that her first words after her angry speech to Caliban, "Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take" (a speech which, from the early eighteenth century onward, was often deemed inappropriate for a demure young maid and given to her father instead), are her lines on first seeing Ferdinand. The actor who first played Miranda would have seen the transition sharply marked in his cue-script, with nothing to say after the end of the first speech until cued with the words "thou seest yond" fifty lines later. It's a tiny example of the book's riches through its attention to the moment-by-moment of an actor's cue-script's definition of performance.

Too often I seem to need that Shakespeare-anchor to help me know where I am starting from in my reading. But sometimes the thrill comes from being cut adrift, reading in areas that are not to be found among the stacked tables of SAA's book display. Long after many others in theatre studies are so familiar with archive theory that they may be bored by it—and, I think, long before many Shakespeareans have been invested in this area—I find my desk and the floor around my sofa stacked with books new to me and that are opening up ways of thinking about the materials, the material traces, of contemporary Shakespeare performance, the archives and archiving of memory, that will keep me thinking for many years to come. There's Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995) of course, as inviting and resistant as always, Carolyn Steedman's brilliant *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2001), and Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003). There's the wondrous study-cum-representation of *Walter Benjamin's Archive* by Ursula Marx and others (2007), Agamben's moving *Remnants of*

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Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive (2002), and Sven Spieker's recent *The Big Archive* (2008). But, just as the parts of Spieker's book that matter most to me are his introducing artists new to me (like Michael Fehr's 1988 deinstallation *SILENCE*, which removed the artworks from the museum in Hagen to leave only the traces of the museum-as-archive), so the volume to which I have kept returning is the other *Archive Fever*, not Derrida's but Okwui Enwezor's catalog of the exhibition, subtitled "Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art," that he curated at the International Center of Photography in New York in 2008, prefaced by Enwezor's long essay on "Photography between History and the Monument."

And Enwezor led me back to Christian Boltanski, linking together the overwhelming impact of those works by him I had encountered in many museums and galleries and those I know about only through accounts like those in Didier Semin, Tamar Garb, and Donald Kuspit's study *Christian Boltanski* (1997) and Ralf Beil's *Boltanski: Time* (2006), records of art that records, archives of Boltanksi's making of archives, tracings of his traces.

Every book I have mentioned so far belies the title of this account, for they are ones I have read, not ones I am reading. So it seems right to close with the book I started reading on a train to London yesterday and am still some way from finishing, T. J. Clark's *The Sight of Death* (2006), his fascinating diary experiment in recording his looking at the same two paintings by Poussin every day for months. I shall enjoy following his acts of repeated observation over the next few days. I bought the book while in Washington—but not at the conference book display!

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