

Shakespeare and Accentism. Adele Lee, ed.

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Shakespeare and Accentism discusses race and performance by virtue of how Shakespeare utilized accents to define and distinguish characters. Adele Lee, in the Introduction, notes how Shakespeare knew that, during the Renaissance, accent as an emblem of social status would be varied to conform to some situations. In chapter 1, “‘Accents yet unknown’: In Search of Shakespeare’s Foreign Accents,” Ema Vyroubalová analyzes how the idea of Original Pronunciation tends to homogenize multifarious pronunciations that have animated Elizabethan stages and Jacobean London in order to explain linguistic diversity more completely, with a proclamation that the foreign-inflected lines in Shakespeare’s plays may be regarded as “extra privileged witnesses to the dramaturgical flexibility and textual instability” (36). In chapter 2, “‘The stranger’s case’: Accenting Shakespeare’s ‘ESL Characters,’” Matthew Davies examines a potentially overlooked category of English as a second language characters in Shakespeare’s plays, with an assertion that when an accent isolates Shakespeare’s ESL figures, it accentuates the polyphony of various voices reverberating within the “stranger’s case” (61).

In chapter 3, “All One Mutual Cry: The Myth of Standard Accents in Shakespearean Performance,” Ronan Paterson claims that when vocal flexibility and verbal clarity are supreme in the performance of Shakespeare, one of the ways to convey meaning via unfamiliar words and expressions to the audience who lacks profound knowledge of the text is to allow actors to use their own voices in unaffected manner. In chapter 4, “How Should Shakespeare Sound? Actors and the Journey from OP to RP,” Alec Paterson asserts that nonstandard accents can bring energy to the performance and convey complicated thoughts to the audience, so actors are supposed to freely employ their own natural voices in speaking some lines of the masterpieces.

In chapter 5, “Accentism, Anglocentrism, and Multilingualism in South African Shakespeares,” Chris Thurman indicates that the actors represent a stage in a process of metamorphosis, a sign of a multilingual and metatheatrical South African Shakespeare-to-come, leaving two centuries of Anglocentrism and accentism far behind. In chapter 6, “‘What doth your speech import?’ The Implication of Accents in Indian Shakespeares,” Koel Chatterjee shows that theater and cinema reflect society, with the result that debates on diversity have prompted multicultural performances and productions of Shakespeare.

In chapter 7, “‘What country, friends, is this?’ The Indian Accent vs. Received Pronunciation in Productions of *Twelfth Night*,” Taarini Mookherjee observes that the limited survey of the Indian accent in productions of Shakespeare manifests the importance of diverse voices on stage and screen, and combats entrenched and reductive

perceptions of different ethnicities. In chapter 8, “‘Racklers of Orthography’? Speaking Shakespeare in ‘English,’” Adele Lee suggests that decolonization of our listening ear is really needed, and actors with Asian accents should not be put in the situation where they oscillate between a desire to perform Shakespeare and stay rooted in their culture.

In chapter 9, “Alien Accents: Signifying the Shakespearean Other in Audio Performances,” Douglas M. Lanier contends that attention to accent in audio performance helps open our ears to new possibilities for performative expressivity and Shakespearean meaning, into which directors and scholars have only begun to probe. Carla Della Gatta concludes in the afterword that the collection affords “a comparative look at Shakespeare and accentism” across genres, time periods, languages, vocal methods, and locales, marking the outset of a field of inquiry that provides the stage and the culture with theoretical advancements (204).

The connotation of accent includes ethnicity, class, locale, nationality, and generational qualities, and the function of accentism is part of semiotic, linguistic, and power structures within the world of production or play. In the collection, each contributor illustrates their argument with specific examples and has substantially proved the relationship between Shakespeare and accentism. Most significantly, the contributors try to break with traditional criticism through methodological practices and reveal that Received Pronunciation is no longer the standard for Shakespearean performances. Rather, Original Pronunciation is a flourishing phenomenon which offers a variety of voices and sheds new light on the stage and screen.

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Shakespeare and Biography. Katherine Scheil and Graham Holderness. Shakespeare & 8. New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. 142 pp. \$150.

Shakespeare and Biography is so much more than its title implies. It might more accurately be called *Shakespeare, Memory, and Historical Imagination*. Its contributors reckon with how we create history. Chapters—and one short play—examine answers that have been given to unanswerable questions: Why did Shakespeare leave his second-best bed to Anne Hathaway? Was Shakespeare Catholic? Was he bisexual? At the root—not only of the answers provided by a plethora of biographers, but of the questions themselves—are moments in contemporary culture. This volume offers examples of Shakespeare imagined and the research and interpretation that allow us to create a past in order to understand our present.

Despite the inclusion of Graham Holderness’s new edition of “Some Further Account” (1715) of the life of Shakespeare, a likely forgery of additions to the work of Nicholas Rowe, references to the documentary evidence of Shakespeare’s life are