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A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama

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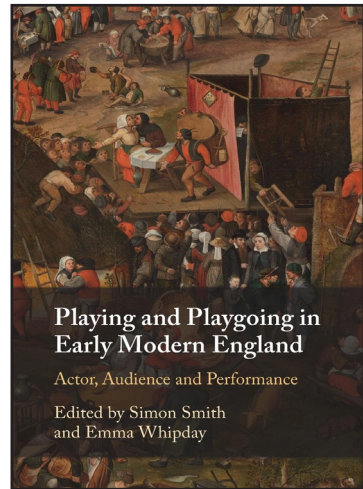
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Given how highly scholars prize the accounts of early modern performance recorded by Simon Forman, Henry Jackson, Thomas Platter, and others, this new volume from Simon Smith and Emma Whipday — an interdisciplinary exploration of acting, playgoing, and performance — is bound to be of great interest to a wide variety of readers. The last two decades have seen some wonderful developments in the study of audiences (eg, Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill's 2011 *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558–1642*, Matteo Pangallo's 2017 *Playwriting Playgoers in Shakespeare's Theater*, or Pangallo and Peter Kirwan's more recent *Shakespeare's*

Audiences, to name but a few examples). This collection is part of a welcome development that recognizes the benefits of 'attending to theatre-historical questions and concerns within literary-critical studies of early modern drama, rather than keeping the two approaches separate' (2). The essays assembled here thus prioritize 'methodological novelty' (5) in their approach, and they are divided into three parts that focus on playing, playgoers, and playhouses, with each part helpfully introduced by short interludes composed by the volume's editors.

In 'Playing', Natasha Korda eschews what she sees as the unhelpful influence of the cinematic gaze for understanding drama as 'a frozen series of stills', and instead models 'a dynamic, interactive experience of bodies-in-motion' (19) that prioritizes footwork and choreography, and what she dubs '*kin-aesthetics*' (21; emphasis in original): a focus on the aesthetics of motion. Emma Whipday implicitly thinks about the power of the gaze and examines 'the spoken blush and blanch' on stage (40) as examples of how playgoer experience is mediated through on-stage characters, and how gendered and racialized power accrues to



the speaker via descriptions of other characters' bodies. Farah Karim-Cooper examines the 'cooperative relationship' between players and playgoers in terms of 'the formation and understanding of subjectivity' (57), focusing on *Othello* 'as a way of thinking through the actor-audience relationship and the dynamic of emotional transmission when racialised bodies are performed' (61). Finally, Deanne Williams turns to the still relatively neglected yet 'long-standing and distinctive tradition' of the girl player (83). She focuses on 'performances of virginity and of the Virgin Mary' in pre-Reformation religious drama, Tudor masques, and civic pageants, rather than in the commercial or professional context of Shakespeare's London (78), documenting examples of girl actors 'singing, dancing, delivering speeches, and walking in procession' (82) and thereby putting to rest any misconception that girls did not perform in early modern England. She draws on this context to argue for the indebtedness of Shakespeare's Juliet to the girlhood of the Virgin Mary and thus 'an iconic, religious quality' recognizably associated with girl players (93).

Part two, 'Playgoers', consists of a series of chapters that oscillate between playgoing as an individuated and a collective experience, with Lucy Munro drawing a fascinating example of life and art imitating each other in the comparison between the apprentice Quicksilver in *Eastward Ho!* and stationer Thomas Pavier's real-life apprentice Richard Meighen's experiences of playgoing, organized around 'conventions, assumptions, and clichés' (including the tropes of 'vice and repentance') common to each (105–6). Simon Smith complicates 'an entirely oppositional model of pleasure and judgement' in playgoer experience (125), and he attends to moments of censure and applause throughout early modern performances (not merely at their conclusion). Jeremy Lopez offers the provocation that 'early modern plays ... were built to fail' (142); that is, that playwrights conceived of their efforts as 'essentially prodigal, a self-wasting expenditure of artistic energy for which there was no hope of repayment', their efforts doomed to result in an 'inevitable misalignment between artistic intention and audience response' (152). One of the highlights of the volume is Eoin Price's salutary reminder that the chronologies of play composition or performance need not align with the order in which an individual playgoer experienced those plays; he explores what it might mean to 'watch plays out of order' (161) by considering the experience of encountering *Tamburlaine* after its so-called imitators.

The 'fullness' of playhouses (181) and the 'impact' (183) of such spaces and conditions on plays, players, and playgoers is the focus of the essays in part three. Tiffany Stern helpfully disambiguates the too-often conflated terms 'theatre' and 'playhouse'. The former is aligned in the classical sense with spectators while the

latter is associated with the more recent (1580s) and capacious sense of performance spaces ('play' not necessarily equating to 'drama') in keeping with Callan Davies's recent work, *What Is a Playhouse?* (2023). Stern proceeds to scrutinize the type of 'houses' implied by the term 'playhouse' and 'its "housey" name' (190). Jackie Watson links sensory studies to theatre history in her exploration of the space around playhouses, in particular Ram Alley as a type of alleyway 'outside societal control', as she reimagines 'the sensations of an Innsman audience member of 1608, walking through Ram Alley from his rooms in the Temple to the local Whitefriars playhouse' (206). Besides the bringing together of sensory studies and theatre history (and the sheer joy of having a chapter on a Lording Barry play!), part of the significance here is the recognition that those who worked at the Inns but didn't live in the Whitefriars were nevertheless part of the community. Watson argues that although their education and wealth distinguished these men from the general residents of the Whitefriars, the repertoire of the Children of the King's Revels nevertheless catered to them. In the penultimate chapter, Stephen Purcell leaps forward (slightly jarringly, it has to be said, given the explicitly historical focus of all preceding chapters) to the *Othello* production he directed in 2019 for The Pantaloons theatre company, in which he consciously embraced 'the effects of direct audience address, playfulness, and spontaneity' (225), and discusses the effect on the play's meaning. He frames the argument prudently within the limits of practice-as-research, offering his case study instead as 'a detailed exploration of the *scope* provided by an early modern text for different kinds of playing' (239; emphasis in original). Finally (though the chapter might equally be at home in part two), Helen Hackett tracks an evolution (and recuperation) of the concept of the imagination in early modern drama, surveying in particular the variety of choric figures that use the term 'imagine' as an imperative that turns individual playgoers into 'a community of imagination' (249). Collectively the essays assembled by Smith and Whipday are creative and energetic, gesturing towards interesting new ways to explore the relationship between playing and playgoing that builds on and extends recent trends in the field.