

Theatre Research in Canada Recherches théâtrales au Canada

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Irena R. Makaryk and Kathryn Prince, eds. "Shakespeare in Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves"

Wes D. Pearce

Volume 40, Number 1-2, 2019

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068268ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068268ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama, University of Toronto

ISSN

1196-1198 (print)

1913-9101 (digital)

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Cite this review

Pearce, W. (2019). Review of [Irena R. Makaryk and Kathryn Prince, eds. "Shakespeare in Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves"]. *Theatre Research in Canada / Recherches théâtrales au Canada*, 40(1-2), 175–176.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1068268ar>

that the visionary contributions of the aesthetically and formally diverse theatremakers, playwrights, performers, administrators, scenographers and/or artistic directors profiled in this book should register as significant not *only* because they help us understand new interculturalism. Rather, *Performing the Intercultural City* also makes a rich archive of reflection and analysis on these Canadian theatre practitioners available to international audiences. I can only hope that this book's impact indeed concretely benefits the community depicted within these pages as Knowles envisions, leading to more well-deserved opportunities for touring, dialogue and sustained scholarly study for these intrepid theatre practitioners.

**MAKARYK, IRENA R.,
AND KATHRYN PRINCE, EDS.
*Shakespeare in Canada: Remembrance of
Ourselves.***

Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2017, 270 pp.

WES D. PEARCE

As noted in the introduction, “[t]his collection is the final fruit of a [University of Ottawa] project marking the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare’s death,” (11) and this collection of essays was primarily drawn from the Shakespeare + Canada symposium held at the University of Ottawa in April 2016. It is not surprising that the essays within, approach and situate both Shakespeare AND Canada from a wide range of disciplines, critical lenses, and theoretical positions. While the organizational structure is not always clear, *Shakespeare in Canada* is an approachable and engaging collection that demonstrates the deep connections between Canada and the Bard of Avon.

Not surprisingly, Stratford, Ontario and The Stratford Festival (or The Stratford Shakespeare Festival or The Shakespeare Festival or The Stratford Shakespearean Festival) plays an important role in about half of the essays. Like the anthology itself, these essays are diverse in content and approach and range from Ian Rae’s revisionist look at the history of Stratford (pre- Tom Patterson) and especially the importance of J. D. Barnett and his massive library, to essays by Kailin Wright and Don Moore that critically explore the fictional New Burbage Festival in CBC’s popular “Slings and Arrows” television series and Troni Y Grande’s close reading of the role of the mythic Canadian Stratford (and Shakespeare Festival) in Alice Munro’s “Tricks.” Although vastly different in subject matter these essays speak to aspects of Stratford and/or the Stratford Festival as part of the public imagination. A number of essays are focused on close readings of productions: C.E. McGee’s analysis of a number of productions of *The Merchant of Venice* (with special attention to the ever-changing portrayals and meanings of Portia, Shylock and Jessica) and Robert Ormsby’s critical examination of Leon Rubin’s intercultural productions. Peter Kuling’s insightful essay in this vein examines how

Timothy Findley (*Elizabeth Rex*) and Peter Hinton (*The Swanne*) play with history, counterfactual history and the mythologies of the Stratford Festival AND Shakespeare in researching and writing their post modern “Shakespearean” plays.

As mentioned, not all the essays prioritize Stratford or the Festival and the rest of the essays in the collection address Shakespeare and Canada from a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines. Production, production history, and critical reactions (although not of the Stratford variety) feature prominently in Sarah Mackenzie’s essay examining “Indigenous Shakespeare” and the changes since 1989 in what is meant by “Indigenous Shakespeare” and more importantly how it is created. Similarly, although in more depth, Annie Brisset provides a careful and thoughtful analysis of the production history of Shakespeare in contemporary Quebec. Tom Scholte provides a moving memorial to Neil Freeman, UBC’s “infamous” acting teacher who revolutionized Shakespearean actor training, but importantly Scholte’s essay does not rest on Freeman’s laurels but propels Shakespearean actor training well into the 21st century. In his essay on Shakespeare and Marshall McLuhan, Richard Cavell highlights the many times that McLuhan referenced, was inspired by, or connected his writings on media and mediation, back to the very much over-mediated William Shakespeare. And not to forget the “whining schoolboy...creeping like a snail Unwillingly to school”, Dana M. Colarusso discusses the state of Shakespeare in the provincial (and territorial) curriculums across the country. The final essay in the anthology is by Daniel Fischlin, the noted Shakespearean scholar and founder/developer of the CASP (Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project) website, who in trying to decode “The Truth About Stories About Shakespeare...In Canada?” concludes that these stories will only produce more stories which will only produce more stories and so on and so on and there is probably no better way to end this anthology than with the promise that there will never really be an end to the stories of Shakespeare and Canada.

As with any collection of essays that covers such a wide range of topics and approaches, minor issues emerge and *Shakespeare in Canada* is no exception. As mentioned, the anthology’s genesis was the Shakespeare + Canada symposium and while many of the essays read as revised and expanded conference papers the editors have included a few essays that are obviously not revised symposium presentations. The inclusion of these longer and more formal, analytic essays throws, at least momentarily, the entire collection somewhat off-balance. Not surprising given the nature of the symposium, a celebration of Shakespeare and Canada (sponsors of the conference included the British Council and the British High Commission) but the other concern with this anthology is that the volume lacks any critical voice that challenges the celebratory nature of the collection. In a few essays, Richard Paul Knowles is cited as one such voice, but the collection could have been stronger with a couple of contemporary contrarian opinions. These are, however, minor issues that do not seriously detract from this unique and accessible collection of essays.

Shakespeare in Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves captures a somewhat uneven but timely (and time sensitive) snapshot of Shakespeare (and his continuing effect and affect) in (and on) Canada. Notably, the anthology, which is an open access publication available for free download on the press website, is of interest to a wide range of readers across the humanities including: historians, theatre historians, students and teachers of Shakespeare, pop culture, performance studies and communication/media studies as well as more general readers with an interest in Shakespeare or Canadiana or both!