Early Theatre
A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama

Volume 8 | Issue 1 Article 17

1-1-2005

Book Review: Robert Weimann. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*. Ed Helen Higbee and William West. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

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Recommended Citation
Knowles, Ric. 'Book Review: Robert Weimann. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*. Ed Helen Higbee and William West. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.'. *Early Theatre* 8.1 (2005): 145-8 (paper). Article 17.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/earlytheatre/vol8/iss1/17

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which must be savored and acknowledged with gratitude, but is less likely to serve, like early contributions to the 'new-historicist' movement, as a foundation of and an example for a new school of inquiry.

Alan H. Nelson

Robert Weimann. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*. Ed Helen Higbee and William West. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp ix, 300.

Robert Weimann is best known for his 1978 book, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, and its influential extension of Richard Southern's spatial distinction between *locus* and *platea* in the late medieval and early modern theatre. Much of Weimann's subsequent work has been in different ways involved with teasing out the implications of that early book's politicized distinction between the representational place, or *locus*, and its function within the dramatic fable, and the presentational space, or *platea*, where the performer and audience meet. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice* is no exception: here, as in his 1996 volume, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (to which the volume under review serves as 'a self-contained sequel' [xi]), Weimann is concerned with questions of authority, specifically here the relative, contested, and mutually constitutive authority of writing and playing in the early modern theatre. Rightly lamenting 'that "performance" in Shakespeare criticism by and large is viewed either as performance *of* the plays or as performance inscribed *in* dramatic speech – never or rarely as a formative force, as an institutionalized power in itself, as a cultural practice in its own right' (4–5), he sets out 'to answer the question of how and to what extent performance in Shakespeare's theatre actually *was* a formative element, a constituent force, and together with, or even without, the text a source of material and 'imaginary puissance' (5).

In doing so, Weimann establishes and in some senses deconstructs a series of binaries that operate throughout the eight chapters of his study in more or less material or analogical relationship to one another. These include author/actor, pen/voice, writing/playing, *locus*/*platea*, representation/presentation, textual/verbal, writerly/performative, character/actor, poetry/prose, and perhaps more surprisingly city/suburbs, private/public (theatres and perform-

ances), prince/clown, glass of fashion/antic disposition, statement/pun, and the authority of the represented 'mirror' and that of the presenting body. Each of these binaries involves a distinction between authority that is inherent, something one *has*, or a position from which one speaks (as prince or priest), and authority that is *produced* performatively; each, therefore, has political dimensions that are central to all aspects of early modern life. For me, each also evokes Michel de Certeau's (related) distinction in *The Practice of Everyday Life* between the fixed 'strategies' of the powerful (statement, position, history, text) and the shifting spatial 'tactics' (pun, shape-shifting, memory, voice) of the disempowered: *locus* vs *platea*.

Weimann usefully begins with the first quarto of *Hamlet*, long denigrated as a 'bad quarto' sullied by its contact with the stage, but more recently recuperated by scholars with an investment in performance practice and an appreciation for Q1's sheer economy and theatricality. He reads Q1 semiotically, dramaturgically, and through the lens of audience response, concluding that 'Shakespeare quite deliberately used the threshold between the stage-as-imaginary-world and the stage-as-stage' (22), writing and orality, and that this text is particularly 'marked by a hybrid source of authority, one that was … divided against itself' (28). The chapter is replete with valuable readings, notably of Q1's versions of 'to be or not to be' and the nunnery scene. The former, he convincingly argues, elides the question of 'whether it is nobler in the *mind*' to take arms against hostile circumstances, and focuses more on the harshness of ordinary life, replacing purely intellectual, stoical forms of resistance by a more quotidian horizon of experience inspired by an awareness of unequal social relations as represented by the speech's rich and poor, widow and orphan, and 'the taste of hunger'. More dialogic than the received text, this version's occupation of the *platea* through direct address also facilitates the subsequent shift to dialogue with Ofelia. But what is curious about Wiemann's supple analysis, here as elsewhere in the volume, is his excavation of both sides of the representational/presentational, text/orality, prince/clown binaries *in the text itself*. Disappointingly, but perhaps inevitably, the focus throughout is on the text's own representation of the presentation/representation, performance/text binary.

Subsequent chapters are equally acute in their analyses, and equally trapped by the absence of direct encounter with Elizabethan performance, performativity, and orality. Chapter two addresses directly the question of why, for three hundred years, the text was considered to be authoritative and performance to be corrupt, focusing on changing historical relations of power and authority in society and concluding with a section on 'Players, printers, preachers'. Chapter three's focus is on 'the late Elizabethan difficulty in coming to terms

with the circulation of authority between writing and performing in the theatre' (54). Here Weimann turns to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and to Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Henry V*, making excellent use of prologues, epilogues, and choruses, where presentation and representation – 'frivolous jestures' vs. matter of 'worthiness', 'bifold authority,' 'unworthy' scaffolds vs 'so great an object' – are most directly at issue. Weimann turns next to representations of playing as 'contrariety' and 'disfigurement' which disrupt decorous humanist and high Renaissance poetics of representation. Here the focus is on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ('to disfigure, or present'), *Richard III* (to 'descant on … deformity'), Will Kempe and Elizabethan clowning ('because it hath no bottom'), and 'presentation, or the performant function', by which he means 'the purpose of playing' in the era that interconnects Elizabethan theatrical performance with other cultural performances. This inquiry leads directly to Chapter five, 'Histories in Elizabethan performance', one of the strongest in the book, in which Weimann sets out 'to account for the strength and the decline of the performant function' (109) through an historical analysis of a larger spectrum of Elizabethan performance practices and their 'nonscriptural' dimensions as they began to be contested and intercepted by an increasingly dominant and exclusive regime of literacy in dramatic representations. This inquiry involves tracing a shift from the priority of theatres and performers over text in the early years of the period (playhouses preceding dramatic texts by nearly a decade), through the turn-of-the-century attacks on non-representational, uncontrolled, non-licensed performing, to the significant shifts from 'player' to 'actor' and public to private places of performance.

Weimann's sixth chapter returns to *Hamlet* as a key text in which the different 'purposes of playing' he is exploring are most directly in tension. The tension is addressed directly within the play, of course, in Hamlet's advice to the players, but it is also evident in the tension between his 'antic disposition' (which occupies the *platea*) and his role as 'glass of fashion' in the *locus* of power. And the same tension plays itself out linguistically in the obsessive use of puns, wordplay, and disruptive laughter, which subvert its capacity for authoritative statement. All of these things, taken together, constitute the play as a crisis of representation which plays itself out spatially. Space is the subject of chapter seven, where Weimann most explicitly revisits his earlier work on *locus* and *platea*, with *locus* understood to treat space as 'symbolic form' which 'privileges the authority of what and who is represented in the world of the play' (184), while the more prosaic *platea* tends 'to preclude closure' (192), to be used for 'the marginal, the visceral, the otherwise nonrepresentable' (196)

and to evince 'a certain defiance of, even perhaps an element of resistance to, the regime of an elevated, purely imaginary, self-contained world out there' (196). The concept is very productively used in an analysis of the spatial politics of *Macbeth*'s banquet and Porter's scenes, including the host's displacement of 'the *locus* and the meaning of hospitality' in the former (199), and the Porter's equivocating 'moralizing of two meanings in one locality' in the latter (204). Banqueting in *Timon of Athens* comes under similar, and equally productive spatial analysis, in which Weimann focuses on the mutual engagement of *locus* and *platea* to produce a complex 'scene individable' that makes of dramatic performance itself a liminal space.

The subject of the last chapter, appropriately, is endings. Where earlier Weimann had made good use of prologues and choric speeches, here he begins with epilogues – to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *The Tempest*. His interest here is in the ways that epilogues help 'to assimilate the represented 'matter' to the actual purpose of its performance' (220), as 'the actors, in silent patience, confront the play's post-scriptural future' (224), and as their authority, together with that of the theatre itself, is acknowledged. From this Weimann turns to survey a broad range of Shakespearean deferred endings and imperfect closures as, again, liminal spaces, now explicitly articulated in the surprisingly old-fashioned anthroloplogical sense ('liminality [as] a condition of profound transformation' [243]) theorized a quarter of a century ago by Victor Turner in the earliest days of performance studies as a field. The book ends with its own epilogue, an afterword entitled 'thresholds forever after', in which Weimann reaches back further still, to Raymond Williams, suggesting that the Elizabethan theatre participated in the beginnings of the 'division' between 'writing' and 'action' that Williams found to be characteristic of modern civilization. Weimann's own open-ended (in)conclusion poses the question of 'whether we can revitalize a legacy in ways different from either its traditional or its deconstructionist reception' (248) whether we can 'view performance in its own right and yet … counter its 'drift away from theatre' (249). He finds hope for such a revitalization and reconciliation in the space *between* author's pen and actor's voice:

> Conjoining the material and the imaginary in the teeth of their difference, performance and text constitute, on a threshold to be crossed forever after, the inexhaustible terrain of *and* between present players' bodies and absent, verbally certified representations. (250)

Ric Knowles