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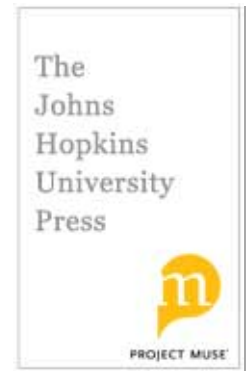
Battling with Memory

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narration among people working in the theater is not always shared by audiences,” I find myself in the audience rather than among the theoreticians.

—Gerald Weales

BATTLING WITH MEMORY

*Performing Early Modern Trauma
from Shakespeare to Milton*
by Thomas P. Anderson
(Ashgate, 2006. 224 pages. \$94.95)

Readers unfamiliar with the vagaries of Renaissance studies may not be aware that trauma has been gaining a foothold. The Shakespeare Association of America meeting included a session entitled “Historicizing Trauma on the Early Modern Stage.” In the same year, 2005, a conference in Manchester was devoted entirely to “Early Modern Terrorism: Atrocity and Political Violence, 1500–1700.” I quote typical questions: “How does memory of violence and terror function? How do discourses of ‘terror’ intersect with the relationship between state and subject?”

That scholars should turn to trauma now is understandable, given the time delay to be expected for trying to make sense of what lessons—if any—are to be learned from the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. The movement picked up steam last November with the four-hundredth anniversary of Guy Fawkes’s scheme to blow up Parliament: “I see no reason why gunpowder treason / should ever be forgot.” Scholars work-

ing in trauma studies would agree. Issues of memory and forgetting, and of how traumatic cultural events are remembered, embody the core of this line of inquiry.

The scholarly turn toward *trauma* is also understandable, given its etymology, derived from the Greek word for *wound*. Wounds figure prominently in literature and literary criticism—from Odysseus’s scar unriddled in Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* to Titerul’s Christ-like wound in the grail stories, especially as retold in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, to any of many Petrarchan suitors who have received wounds from a woman that only can be cured by her love. But the kind of wounding central to trauma studies today is of a different nature. It involves historical transmission, identity formation, and legal theory—the main components of Thomas Anderson’s acute study.

There is some precedent for this approach in Renaissance studies, beginning with Timothy Murray’s landmark grab bag of literary theory and cultural studies, *Drama Trauma: Specters of Race and Sexuality in Performance, Video, and Art* (1997). Murray is concerned with how Shakespearean drama sets the stage for contemporary art’s representation of psychosocial traumas involving race, gender, sex, and power, as well as melancholy, deception, skepticism, masquerade, and censorship thrown in for good measure. Insofar as Anderson in the first part of his book, “Haunting Allegories,” looks closely at *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard II*, it is curious that *Drama Trauma* is nowhere to be found. It is equally curious that Grant Williams’s work is absent since his argument in

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Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacies (2004) is concerned directly with "the mnemonic trauma of early modern subjectivity."

Although Anderson is concerned with subjectivity, his is perhaps of a different order than Williams's. He seeks to demonstrate how early modern English identity is the fragile product of an ambivalent desire to flee history. He is interested in "how an historical imagination," represented by the authors in each successive chapter, "does battle with the memory of a traumatic past that insistently presses its claim on the present." Accordingly he examines how personal and collective loss is registered in prose, poetry, and drama. Each of the chapters, ranging from Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights to Milton and Marvell, has in common "the idea that significant cultural loss alters normative modes of expression and representation."

Three main topics constitute the narrative thread: royal death, which in the first three chapters is seen as "interrupting the links between the past and the present"; secularization, especially as it pertains to "the elimination of older funerary practices that keep the spirit of the deceased an integral part of the world of the living," exemplarily enacted in revenge plays such as *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Spanish Tragedy*; and the beheading of Charles I, which, in a stunning final chapter, explores "the various forms that speaking for the dead take after the event of the regicide." These topics facilitate Anderson's argument that artistic meditation repeatedly fails to account or compensate for the "protracted loss

generated by these types of political, cultural and religious traumas." His analysis concerns how literary responses to and reconfigurations of such events commemorate the past even while reenacting their loss, a double feint that is seen as being fundamental to any authentic effort to represent traumatic history.

This monograph has no formal conclusion or epilogue, but none is needed. The argument is evinced amply that representations of violent loss—secular and religious—in early modern works dramatize (or, as the title would have it, "perform") moments of "failed political and social memorialization." This book therefore implicitly makes good on a tentative claim buried in a note to the opening chapter, a claim that perhaps should have been presented more boldly: "The emergence of England's shifting sense of national identity and historical consciousness in the early modern period depends on this relationship between trauma, loss and civic life."

—William E. Engel

AN IMAGINATIVE ART OF THE REAL

Quick-Eyed Love: Photography and Memory

by Susan Garrett
(Southern Methodist University Press,
2005. 196 pages. \$22.50)

No one who has read either or both of Susan Garrett's books about health care, *Taking Care of Our Own: A Year in the Life of a Small Hospital* and