The Greening of Will Shakespeare

Jonathan Baldo
University of Rochester

Abstract

In *The Winter's Tale* (1611), those presumed dead repeatedly return to new life. At the end of the play, the "statue" of Hermione moves through an old stage trick. Similarly, a moldy tale, a genre, and an old enmity are all revived. As Hermione descends from her pedestal, in her movements hoping to move us, so does Shakespeare implicitly extend the same treatment to *Pandosto* and its author, Robert Greene. The statue trick almost seems to be a metaphor for the larger contrivance that is the play itself: the necromantic way Shakespeare has with an old text like Greene's as he coaxes it to move and breathe through the lively art of theater. The play as a whole bears a resemblance to the cony-catching tricks described in rogue pamphlets by Greene and others, with Greene cast alternately as Shakespeare's partner in a con game to catch the more literate part of the play's audience and as a forced lender to the borrower Shakespeare, who once again beautifies himself with the feathers of the rival who had famously accused him of intellectual property theft.

Author Biography

Jonathan Baldo, University of Rochester

Jonathan Baldo, Associate Professor of English in the Department of Humanities, Eastman School of Music (University of Rochester), holds a Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo. His book *The Unmasking of Drama: Contested Representation in Shakespearean Tragedy* (Wayne State University Press) was published in 1996. His articles and reviews have appeared in *Shakespeare Quarterly, English Literary Renaissance, Renaissance Drama, Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, Modern Language Quarterly, Theatre Journal, Criticism, Shakespeare Studies, Semiotica,* and *Journal of the Kafka Society of America*. He is currently completing a book on nationhood and memory in Shakespeare. His other recent work links parliamentary and theatrical representation in Shakespeare's history plays and explores the play of contentment and satisfaction in relation to the rise of capitalism and changing ideas of the subject in *The Merchant of Venice*.
Authors are responsible for securing any necessary permissions for illustrations to their essays. Contact the General Editors if you are having difficulty doing this. The editors have made every effort to obtain permission from copyright holders, but in some cases have been unable to contact the holders. If you have any further information about copyrights and permissions of material on this site, please contact the editors.