Shakespeare and Memory – Abstracts

"Remember me!": Narratives of Remembrance in *Hamlet*
Megan Allen

Focusing on ways of remembering in *Hamlet*, this essay will begin with the observation that the difference between the Ghost's "Remember me!" and Hamlet's "tell my story" suggests two ways of ensuring some part of the self lives on. When at the beginning of the play the Ghost asks his son for vengeance, he ends not with the expected 'avenge me' or 'kill your uncle' but with 'remember me' – an emphasis on the personal that encompasses not some aspect of the old king, or simply the need for revenge, but Old Hamlet's *self,* the same self his son theoretically carries a part of. "Remember me" also reads as re-member, or reconstitute, an attempt to ensure the continuation of a whole self in the body of the son. Hamlet doesn't precisely succeed in this task, as he dies at the end of the play, and his own desire for immortality is quite different. He asks Horatio to tell his story – partly as a reason sufficient to prevent Horatio's immediate suicide, as implied by the framing of the request, but also as a means of living in impersonal memory if not in the personal body of a son. A narrative can tell of the self but not contain the self; nevertheless, living on in memory is better than not living on at all. As another means of ensuring a family's survival, remembrance structures pressure familial affect in ways similar to but distinct from inheritance structures.

Overlooking Forgetting: Acts of Oblivion in the Second Tetralogy
Jonathan Baldo

This paper aims to highlight and to contend with a central paradox of Shakespeare's plays, one that has been largely overlooked. Shakespeare's history plays are charged with an awareness of the role of forgetting in the construction of any historical memory. A signature of Shakespeare's history plays is their willingness to give forgetting its due in their reconstructions of England's medieval past: one of the reasons, surely, that Falstaff, a virtual Prince of Oblivion, figures so largely in this series of plays. Shakespeare's histories are punctuated by acts of oblivion, to borrow the common title of the parliamentary act of 1660 (whose full title is "An Act of Free and General Pardon, Indemnity, and Oblivion"): an act that restored lands, pardoned rebels (with a few notable exceptions), and attempted to put an end to festering memories of the recent conflict. They remind us of the manifold uses of forgetting in a nation fractured by civil conflict, as England is throughout much of the second tetralogy, or by religious divisions, as it was during the period in which Shakespeare wrote. In the second tetralogy, Shakespeare constructs the relationship between remembering and forgetting in ways that range from fratricidal rivalry to conspiratorial partnership.

Memory and Survival in *King Lear*
Craig Dionne

This paper looks at the use of proverbial speech in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* from the theoretical perpective of memory theory and the posthuman context. The use of common-placed adages and proverbs were at the heart of early modern Tudor humanism, where proverbs and other "saws and maxims" were part of the classical 'progymnnasmata' (or rote training exercises) of rhetorical education. Why does Shakespeare choose to have his character's affect proverbial speech so frequently in his great tragedy? I want to consider how memory functions

more generally in the play. I want to explore how Shakespeare uses this commemorative voice as a way to signal the character's response to traumatic events, as a way to code such experiences within a collective memory. In the Renaissance, proverbial speech meant to preserve and make communal the knowledge of the ancients. Saws, maxims, proverbs—all were part of the humanist pedagogical imperative to set to memory the learned wisdom of the ancients for future consumption, a way to survive future strife by relying on the collective memory of the past. Shakespeare's *King Lear,* at times, seems to put this imperative to the test. At the heart of the play's notorious negotiation of medieval customs is a skepticism over rehearsed forms of rhetorical display. However, as much as the tragedy indicts such mnemonic forms of expression, it could be argued that the play finds anchor in the adage. Characters throughout seem to affect proverbial speech in response to the perceived threat of social decay, to retreat into the space of memorized proverb in reaction to traumatic events.   To place Shakespeare's *King Lear* in the context of memory theory and the history of rote education more generally, one notes that the use of proverbs and maxims is at one with the tone of the play to evoke an older sensibility toward speech and thought.   In his *Adages* (1508), Erasmus equates proverbs with an ancient language of immanent knowledge "very similar to the rites of religion, in which things are most important and even divine are often expressed in ceremonies" (13). There is "no form of teaching which is older than the proverb…What were the oracles of those wise old Sages but proverbs?" he asks. "They were so deeply respected in the old time," he continues "that they seemed to have fallen from heaven rather than to come from men…And so they were written on the doors of temples, as worthy of the gods; they were everywhere to be carved on columns and marble tablets as worth of immortal memory." It is no surprise that Erasmus fantasizes about the origin of his own humanism as a moment of transcription where divine knowledge is written on permanent stone surfaces. When thinking about the universality of proverbs he returns to this image: "There is…in these proverbs some native authentic power of truth. Otherwise how could it happen that we should frequently find the same thought spread abroad among a hundred peoples, transposed into a hundred languages, a thought which has not perished or grown old even with the passing of so many centuries, which pyramids themselves have not withstood?" (16). It is as if Shakespeare follows Erasmus' advice by using proverbs to inhabit his medieval subjects, making his characters speak like stone tablets from the past. Importantly, the very terms of social renewal signaled in the play's ending, the possibility of living beyond the dismally "ruined nature" the play consistently invokes, seems to rest in the knowledge preserved in the hollow adages: "speak what we feel." Renaissance humanism's reliance on adages in the face of modernity understands the ancient popular language of commemorative speech as a kind of linguistic prosthetic device for human survival.

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"The Medieval Author on the Shakespearean Stage:
Gower as Authorial Memory in Shakespeare's *Pericles*"
Brian J. Harries

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Pericles is unique within the Shakespearean canon in that Shakespeare not only acknowledges the source of his story, but actually brings the original author onstage as the chorus for the play. John Gower's presence throughout the play keeps the audience aware of this story's context within their own culture. Moreover, Gower's importance within English literature, especially the association with a particular genre of writing, lends a distinctly medieval concept of textual authority to the play. As Shakespeare presents it, this is not merely a story borrowed from Gower, but a particularly "Gowerian" story—freighted with the whole of the *Confessio Amantis*,

as well as generic and historical expectations connected to Gower's authorial name. This stage presence asks the audience to actively engage a sort of cultural and textual memory in order to fully understand what they see. As Gower himself is literally "re-membered" and given a physical form on stage, he serves as a sort of mnemonic that points to a whole body of texts with an established conventional meaning, in much the same way that his authorial name does in a textual setting. By putting Gower in the role of narrative mediator, Shakespeare asks the audience to remember everything they know about Gower and his writings and to keep that always in mind as an interpretive lens for the play. The characters within the play further mirror this process as they reconstruct memories—both their own and one another's—to create coherent narratives and make sense of their present moments. This paper will explore the way that the play utilizes the interaction between these various kinds of remembering to produce something in a distinctly Gowerian medieval tradition.

'The Time Misordered': Memory, Imagination, and the 'Passed' in Shakespeare's *Henry IV/V*
Trilogy
Denise Kelly

My interest in this paper is on the complex relationship between time and memory in Shakespeare's history plays (looking, specifically, towards the *Henry IV/V* trilogy), and the temporal implications of staging memory and imagining the 'past'.

Interacting with theorists such as Ricoeur, and entering into the active critical arena of theories of 'remembering' and 'forgetting' in the early modern period, I will interrogate the ways in which Shakespeare explored early modern conceptions of linear, cyclical, and multi-directional time through an engagement with, and negotiation of, memory. I will argue that by self-reflexively constructing and manipulating remembered sequences of time within the history plays, Shakespeare exposed the ways in which both cultural memory, and, by proxy, history itself, could be – and was actively – deconstructed and shaped according to the present. Such a temporal malleability, I suggest, exposed time as an unfixed and possessable commodity, and questioned theologically endorsed conceptions of time as linear, and the past as, strictly, 'passed'.

Divisive Remembrances of Collective Memory in Shakespeare's *Richard II*
James McClure

This paper analyzes conflicting uses of collective memory in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, a play that draws heavily upon "memories" of England's Trojan ancestry. In *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed that Aeneas' great-grandson Brutus founded Britain, which later devolved into England, Scotland, and Wales. Using theories of collective memory developed by Jan Assmann and Wulf Kansteiner, I contend that the story of England's Trojan origins, which became central to Tudor myth and English identity during the Elizabethan era, effectively achieved the status of collective memory by Shakespeare's time.

My argument builds upon Philip Schwyzer's contention that John of Gaunt's "scepter'd isle" speech offers an idyll of Trojan Britain against which Gaunt contrasts and thereby disparages Richard II's reign. Schwyzer's reading identifies but does not fully explicate the significance of Gaunt's politically-motivated use of "memory." Gaunt alludes to Trojan Britain in such a way that implicitly supports Richard's eventual deposition. The intermingling of

encomiastic and subversive politics in this speech effectively renders the concept of Richard's deposition into a nationalistic cause.

Richard II includes a rebuttal to Gaunt's use of "memory" through Richard's Queen who complements and yet contests Gaunt's "recollection" of Trojan myth. The Queen elaborates upon Gaunt's allusion to Trojan Britain in a way that refutes the concept of Richard's deposition as a nationalistic cause and characterizes Richard's enemies as traitors reminiscent of ancient Britain's despoilers rather than as patriots who embody ancient British valour.

By centering these conflicting "remembrances" of England's past on the same allusion, Shakespeare presents collective memory as a divisive and destructive societal influence that does not clarify but confuses issues of English community and identity.

"Who am I? Ha?": Remembering to Forget in *King Henry VIII*
Gaywyn Moore

Shakespeare and Fletcher's *King Henry VIII* begins with a paradox; the prologue actively invites its audience to bring their memories and experiences to the performance of their play— and then requests that they forget those memories. The audience must remember to forget. This is particularly difficult when the audience may include people who lived during Henry's post-reformation reign. History plays about this Tudor king tremble on the edge of contemporary Jacobean history, the almost present blurring the line of the definitive past. Performance combines historical and popular accounts an audience that spans Henry's reign through James's, and the tension between history and memory sits at the center of theatrical representations of Henry VIII. Jacobean plays about Henry VIII must construct a recognizable image for this well-known king, but Henry's image refuses easy representation. While *Henry VIII*'s prologue may ask its audience to forget Rowley's Henry and put aside cultural memories of the infamous king, the play regularly proffers expected images of Henry only to confound those expectations in the same scene. Indeed, the play toys with the audience's memories, inviting recognition before displacing those memories with a contradictory impression of the king. Through the paradoxical project of remembering in order to forget, *King Henry VIII* shows the conflict surrounding the king's image and his reign instead of polishing it for public consumption. It draws the audience's attention to the paradox of Henry's image in the early seventeenth century.

Masonry and Memorial: Funerary Effigy in Shakespeare's *Othello*
Dee Anna Phares

In *Othello*, the site of the murder, the suicide, and the memorial is the couple's marriage bed. Though it only appears in the final scene of the play—when Othello takes Desdemona's life and then his own—it functions as the crux of the tragedy since Othello views the bed as an emblem of his reputation and his power as a patriarch, an emblem he has failed to safeguard. Because he believes that Desdemona has befouled the marriage bed, Othello must "strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated" if he is to regain mastery within his household and recover his lost honor (4.1.214-15). Once Othello realizes that his wife is innocent and was unjustly murdered, he makes the decision not only to take his own life, but to take control of both of their deathbed scenes by dictating the terms of the couple's commemoration. Employing the rhetoric of eulogy and epitaph and exploiting the iconography of contemporary tomb sculpture, Othello endeavors to remodel both his and Desdemona's tarnished images. His speeches in 5.2 strive to convert the marriage bed—that Othello has transformed into a deathbed—into a

monument to Desdemona's chastity and his great love (4.1.76). Othello's aim is to nullify his uxoricide by crafting an epitaph—and a funeral tableau—that restores his former glory through the reclamation of his status as warrior and general and Desdemona's position as "true and loyal wife" (4.2.38).

Textual Violence: The Written Word as Memory in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*
Kyle Pivetti

In *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592), Hieronimo gives a curious back-story to the meta-drama that becomes his final act of vengeance. This play, he explains, was first written while he studied in Toledo, but it had been "long forgot" until Hieronimo rediscovered its manuscript (4.1.80). Indeed, he presents this very book, proof of the play's composition, to his future victims. In a play obsessed with recollection, the written text thus serves as the cue to memory; it is an embodiment of past knowledge. But of course, Hieronimo may very well fabricate the whole story of the play's first writing, suggesting a more disturbing reading: the text recalls a "fictional" past in order to make claim on real historical traumas. Whether the memory is true or not, the blood spills from the written word in a horrific act of remembering.

In this paper, I argue that *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* (1602) together reveal a cultural anxiety brought on by the printed text, an anxiety apparent in Hieronimo's dangerous manuscript. Critics of the genre have long noted it fixations on memory. Others have explored the ways in which a play like *The Spanish Tragedy* deconstructs notions of the body, of language, and of nationality. The idea of the written word merges these conversations, for writing in these plays is revenge. The page renders memory a material body, subject to the same manipulations and violence that undo social identities. Both plays fittingly appeared in print numerous times in early modern England, and in each instance they ironically demonstrate the same fear: that the written page remembers personal and social pasts only to dis-member them once again.

Devising Britain : Mnemonic Topos and Spatial Topography in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* and *Richard II*
Pauline Reid

Devising incurs both re-membering and dis-membering. The term "devise," in early modern use, implies both division and invention. In Shakespeare's history cycle, Britain is "devised" through its characters' competing historiographies. Early modern maps were nationalist projects: they portrayed an escape from local, regional memory in an attempt to invent a new, nationalist consciousness, but at the same time sought to fix memory through a collection, or re-collection, of mnemonic topos. Early modern "chorographies" described a cartographic process that emphasized material landscapes and historical monuments, while dividing space in a geometric, abstract fashion. In early modern chorographies, these material topographies were collected for the purpose of inventing, or re-collecting, a unified British state. This goal was in turn influenced by the material and visual elements of print. Print chorographies were ideologically reproducible, remaking previous shapes of the world in their images. The canon of memory in pre-print culture depended upon individual mental images, or *loci*; in print maps, these loci become visually fixed and locatable on the page. The visual elements of early

modern print maps thus act as memory *loci* for English nationalist historiography. However, an attention to maps in Shakespeare's histories reveals the fissures in print maps' representational structures; in Shakespeare, maps fail to unify, and fail to surpass or become liberated from England's historical, regionally-divided memory. The visual apparatuses of maps themselves, set alongside Shakespeare's histories, reveal their epistemological crises: the problem of how to shape, re-shape, and perceive space mirrors the political problem of how Britishness can be devised.

Blood Memory: *Macbeth* and Ron Rash's *Serena* (2008)
Elizabeth Rivlin

Blood Memory: *Macbeth* and Ron Rash's *Serena* (2008)

This paper proposes that Ron Rash, a contemporary Appalachian poet and novelist, interprets *Macbeth*'s pervasive concern for blood(lines) and succession in light of his project of cultural recuperation through blood memory, a project which extends to the novel's approach to adapting Shakespeare. Looking closely at *Macbeth* and Rash's recent novelistic adaptation, *Serena* (2008), I point to continuities in the way that the two texts construct memory in terms of social and cultural obligations which the Macbeths and their latter-day equivalents, the Pembertons, strive to "forget" in order to generate new subjective formations. Rash translates the unstable contexts of eleventh-century Scotland and early modern England to a depression-era logging camp in the North Carolina mountains and tells the story of George and Serena Pemberton, timber barons who in their quest to raze every available acre of forestland aim to destroy not only an ever-expanding list of victims but all traces of memory as well. In so doing, they launch an attack on blood memory, a jungian inflected term Rash uses to describe ancestral memories as both embedded on a cellular level within human bodies and bounded by a specific landscape. *Serena* dramatizes the costs of suppressing blood memory: a loss of humanity and an inability to produce a future which exceeds self-limits. Though Rash's use of blood memory has essentialist overtones, it simultaneously suggests that memory is fluid, mobile, and circulatory, properties shared by blood in *Macbeth* which suggest both the vulnerability and the resilience of cultural structures of memory. Finally, Rash suggests that his work is connected to Shakespeare's through blood memory and that this link might unexpectedly advance a regionalist agenda for Appalachia.

Shakespeare and the Memory of Complaint
Emily Shortslef

My paper suggests that complaint—a rhetorical form conventionally used in early modern writing to remind its audiences of injustices committed, loves lost, or historical stories in danger of being forgotten—is not only retrospective but also proleptic, predicting and looking forward to a future in which the grievance it articulates will be remembered and redressed. Scenes of complaint in *Richard III* and *Richard II* demonstrate how Shakespeare assigns complaint a future-oriented, causal agency, but, as I show, the kind of remembrance and justice that the complaint works toward is very different in each play.

Monumental Women: Memory and Imagination on the Renaissance Stage
Gillian Woods

Moments before murdering her, Othello describes his wife's skin as 'smooth as monumental alabaster' (*Othello* 5.2.5). Iachimo, having violated the sleeping Innogen's bed-chamber, wishes that her 'sense' could be 'but as a monument / Thus in a chapel lying' (*Cymbeline* 2.2.32-3). And the Duchess of Malfi urges Antonio to recognise that her body ''Tis not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb' (*The Duchess of Malfi* 1.1.446-7). This paper investigates the dramatic impulse to memorialise women who are not yet dead. In these instances, female characters are frozen as memories, so that the act of remembrance forces their present reality into the past. In considering these moments of attempted ossification, the paper will explore the connections between memory, imagination and desire, and in particular, the significance of commemorative art in drama. It will also explore the tensions inherent in the broader social memory of recent history, by examining the slippery relationship between tomb monuments and the iconography of the Catholic past.