



Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare

By Richard Meek

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This book examines Shakespeare's fascination with the art of narrative and the visuality of language. Richard Meek complicates our conception of Shakespeare as either a 'man of the theatre' or a 'literary dramatist', suggesting ways in which his works themselves debate the question of text versus performance. Beginning with an exploration of the pictorialism of Shakespeare's narrative poems, the book goes on to examine several moments in Shakespeare's dramatic works when characters break off the action to describe an absent, 'offstage' event, place or work of art. Meek argues that Shakespeare does not simply prioritise drama over other forms of representation, but rather that he repeatedly exploits the interplay between different types of mimesis - narrative, dramatic and pictorial - in order to beguile his audiences and readers. Setting Shakespeare's works in their literary and rhetorical contexts, and engaging with contemporary literary theory, the book offers new readings of Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, Hamlet, King Lear and The Winter's Tale. The book will be of particular relevance to readers interested in the relationship between verbal and visual art, theories of representation and mimesis, Renaissance literary and rhetorical culture, and debates regarding Shakespeare's status as a literary dramatist.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Recommended.' Choice '[Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare] is a fine, scholarly achievement and an important contribution to a revival of interest in the relationships between visual culture, drama, and indeed rhetoric, in the early modern period.' Shakespeare Survey 2010 'In this ambitious study Richard Meek offers a rethinking of Shakespeare's use of ekphrasis [...] and the creative capital Shakespeare makes of the ambiguity of representation in poetry and drama. ... the originality of Meek's approach lies in his readiness to link [ekphrasis] with Shakespeare's broader project of 'narrating the visual'... One of the book's strengths is its readiness to pose difficult questions. The reading of the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* is exemplary of Meek's method... Meek's is one of the clearest expositions of the complex meditation on the ambivalences of art that Shakespeare performs in this text... [A] brilliant study.' Modern Language Review 'Meek offers a highly nuanced analysis of [*The Winter's Tale*]'s complex representation of the relationship between narrative and drama, and the unreliability of both... Meek's excellent essay beautifully shows that there is much more to the spectacular effects of *The Winter's Tale* than meets the eye.' Year's Work in English Studies With an awareness of the visual, the aural and the kinaesthetic (in addition to the conventionally privileged written and read) permeating much that is done in secondary and higher education, Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare deserves a wide readership in Literature, Theatre Studies and Education departments: it is a thoroughly researched, thought-provoking and accomplished work.' Catherine M.S. Alexander, *Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik*

About the Author

Richard Meek is Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Hull, UK

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