



Modern Hamlets and Their Soliloquies (Studies in Theatre History and Culture)

Mary Z Maher

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The Shakespearean soliloquy has always fascinated scholars, readers, and theatregoers, and none is more famous than those found in Hamlet. Dreamed of by aspiring actors, memorized by schoolchildren, and coopted by Madison Avenue sloganeers, these best-known and most repeated lines from Shakespeare's oeuvre have been the inspiration for numerous critical studies on the soliloquy. Now, for the first time, Maher's *Modern Hamlets and Their Soliloquies* takes a performance point of view in examining the challenges and problems of delivering the soliloquies in Hamlet. *Modern Hamlets* offers a detailed record of how various twentieth-century English and American actors, beginning with John Gielgud in 1936 and ending with Kevin Kline in 1990, have dealt with these challenges. At the heart of this fascinating study is a series of eclectic and provocative interviews with Kline, Derek Jacobi, Ben Kingsley, David Warner, Anton Lesser, David Rintoul, and Randall Duk Kim. Maher also worked closely with Gielgud and Alec Guinness to offer chapters on their presentations and has included a discussion of filmed Hamlet performances with attention to the work of Laurence Olivier and Richard Burton. Maher describes each actor's mode of performance and explores the factors that influenced each actor's performance choices within specific production contexts. No one knows how Richard Burbage, the actor for whom Shakespeare created Hamlet, performed it - but here is an inside look at how modern Hamlets have approached performance options and forged unique readings of the part. The interplay of these interpretations and the similarities and differences among the actors both challenges much of the received wisdom about soliloquies and provides an absorbing new look at what Olivier called "pound for pound the greatest play ever written." *Modern Hamlets* should be required reading for all those who would read, watch, or perform Hamlet and for all those fascinated by theatre and the performanc

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