On Biography
ISSN 2283-8759
DOI 10.13133/2283-8759-2
pp. 199-240 (December 2015)

Selected Publications in Shakespeare Studies (2013-2014)

Simon Ryle, *Shakespeare, Cinema and Desire: Adaptation and Other Futures of Shakespeare's Language*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xiii+253 pp., £55.00.

According to Ryle's complex yet fascinating argument, Shakespearean adaptation for film acts in such a way that it can bring the language of the plays vividly into the present and empower it to be projected into the future. Materialist and historicist criticism, Ryle claims, has turned away from the inscribed traces that language creates. So often Shakespeare, he points out, projects his own writing into an unknown future by reference to the ink and marble of literary and sculptural monuments. This in its turn draws our attention to the limits of representation in language. One of the tropes of this book is the way in which film, challenged as it is by the special qualities of Shakespeare's language, creates a bridge between the early modern and the present. Film, says Ryle, picks up on Shakespeare's claim that "not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme".

The theoretic presence that underpins Ryle's argument is that of Lacan, and most especially his writing about desire. Ryle, in suggesting that Shakespeare's interactions with both past and future can be seen through the lens of desire, openly admits that his book is an apology for poststructuralist theory. Picking up on Maurice Blanchot's notion of the 'limit experience', Ryle points to those effects where Shakespeare ruptures the 'formal' representational limits of language and draws attention to the sensuous surface of mimesis. This 'limit experience' is felt at its most extreme in the apprehension of void spaces and bodily penetrations, and it is here that Lacan's theories of desire come most powerfully into operation. Desire, says Lacan, involves an unquenchable lack that is in turn related to limit experience. Driven by desire we reach beyond ourselves and, in this text, questions of desire thread together explorations of loss, the future, and the limit experience. Though Ryle draws his theory from psychoanalysis, his work, he says,

is dominantly an aesthetic study of the afterlife of meaning in Shakespeare's language.

The book divides into two parts where part 1 deals with narrative space, and part 2 with narrative time. *King Lear* forms the subject of the first chapter where Ryle examines the nothingness of language separating humankind from the natural presence of the body. In the second chapter it is Cleopatra's body that is the focus of Ryle's discourse. Here Ryle brings to the foreground the performativity of Cleopatra's presence, and her self-conscious awareness of her own performance. The third chapter is concerned with "Unfolding Hamlet" where the inability of representation seems to coincide with Hamlet's own unrepresentable interior and where the character of Hamlet becomes an image of the cinema's own ghostly projections. Chapter 4 deals with *The Tempest* and the new media. Reproductive futures are guaranteed by Shakespeare's female bodies in pregnancy, rebirth, queer identity politics and digital technology.

Ryle's is a fascinating view of Shakespeare's exploration of his own mimetic limits involving a complicated creation of affective intensity by disavowing the representational medium itself. Shakespeare, he says, explores the 'limit point' that serves to locate a void at the centre of representation.

J. B. Bullen, Professor Emeritus, University of Reading

Carla Dente and Sara Soncini, eds, *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xix+275 pp., £60.00.

Shakespeare and Conflict is a reworking of sixteen of the papers offered to the 2009 European Research Association conference in Pisa. Each of the three sections, "Conflict in Shakespeare", "Conflict through Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare in Times of Conflict", is preceded by an introduction. Conflict in Shakespeare is viewed from a number of perspectives. Sometimes these are the literal sites of war and battle in the plays, but at others they are seen as sites of conflict within the metaphors and tropes of the language itself. Shakespeare, claims Paola Pugliatti in her introduction to the first section, staged war as both necessity and scandal. But conflict in Shakespeare does not always derive directly from war. As Sabine Schülting points out in the second chapter, migration and the impact of aliens on native populations create cultural stresses that feature in many of Shakespeare's plays. The most immediate and physical outcome of this impact is the sword dual. At a more local and specific level, the dual ritual is feature of numerous scenes, most especially in the history plays, and its many-sidedness is examined in the third chapter by Paola Pugliatti. The conflictual role of silence, especially as it operates in the language of *King Lear*, is examined in the fourth chapter and this is developed in the fifth into a wider examination of Shakespeare's word

play and its huge manifold of coincidences, contradictions and conflicts. Carla Dente opens the second section of the book with an introduction that stresses the fact that conflict lies at the heart of all drama as an energising force but it is one which has come into special prominence in the twentieth century during a period that has been deeply conflicted and overshadowed by wars and divisions. Dente points out how Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* (1945) and Olivier's version of *Henry V* (1944) exemplify this tendency in both theory and practice. More recently 'language wars' have thrown up all kinds of insight into the translation of Shakespeare, and the eighth chapter deals with the way in which stresses between ideologies, social pressures, and cultural values are stylistically negotiated by translators. In the two chapters that follow, Shakespeare's texts lock horns with surrealist and experimental theatre and film. *Romeo and Juliet* is appropriated by Garcia Lorca in *El Publico* and *Hamlet* in Humphrey Jennings's *A Diary for Timothy*. In the eleventh chapter Miguel Gomes ponders another crosscurrent in Shakespeare appropriation, Heiner Müller's 1977 play *Hamletmaschine*, which, written out of the GDR, revisits the twentieth-century engagement of German culture with the work of Shakespeare. Shakespeare, Gomes argues, provided Müller with a powerful mediation in dealing with conflicted political issues. The introduction to the third part written by Manfred Pfister is concerned with Shakespeare's plays translated or staged in times of conflict opening with a chapter by Clara Calvo who deals with the performances by conscientious objectors during the First World War, notably amateur performances staged in Dartmoor Prison in 1919. In the piece which follows Monica Matei-Chesnoiu picks up the baton with a highly unusual production of *Hamlet* in a Romanian political prison in 1942-43. The acting process, Matei-Chesnoiu suggests, provided the prisoners with a temporary escape by adopting Hamlet's words and poses. The Second World War is again represented by Ton Hoenselaars's chapter on performances of vignettes of characters drawn from *Julius Caesar* in a Canadian prison camp. Other productions of this popular play were also mounted in captivity, one on the Isle of Man, the other in the South of France. Again the pressure to perform comes out of the desire for freedom and escape. The book concludes with a piece by Anna Cetera who returns to the vexed question of Shakespeare translation and the internecine strife that takes place in the ranks of the translating class.

J. B. Bullen, Professor Emeritus, University of Reading

Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xxvii+232 pp., £17.49.

Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century by Michael Caines provides a fresh assessment of the cultural status of the Bard in eighteenth-century England

with a view to illuminating the ways in which Shakespeare's oeuvre was valued, criticized, read, and performed. Caines charts those contradictions, appropriations, and uneven developments that make the study of Shakespeare's reception in the eighteenth century a historiographic challenge as well as a fruitful field of investigation. Avoiding overarching theses and teleological biases, he devotes close attention to a broad range of cultural players, such as Nicholas Rowe, Colley Cibber, Charles Macklin, Alexander Pope, David Garrick, Samuel Johnson, Edmond Malone, and William Henry Ireland. Caines addresses both adaptations of Shakespeare's works and their reception, showing the extent to which they were manipulated for the stage and the way in which they were interpreted by contemporary arbiters of taste. At the same time, however, he assesses how Shakespeare's oeuvre influenced eighteenth-century culture, tracing the dialectical relation between Shakespeare and his later readers and thus looking at the eighteenth century not only as a self-enclosed system. Needless to say, a key topic of this study is the canonization of Shakespeare, his transformation into a touchstone and an icon. Far from being devalued in light of neoclassical or Enlightenment ideals, Shakespeare and his works became weapons in the battle for cultural value. Interpretations of Shakespeare were used to delineate philological criteria, ideological positions – with Shakespeare becoming a 'national' poet – and, of course, aesthetic values. In this respect, Caines also shows awareness of a broader history, briefly focusing on Shakespeare's reception in France, Germany, and America. While Caines does full justice to the eighteenth century and its culture, his study helps us understand how that culture laid the foundations for our own, how Shakespeare became what he is now.

Riccardo Capoferro, Sapienza University of Rome

Andrew Cutrofello, *All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, The MIT Press, 2014, xiii+226 pp., $22.95.

This excellent book is an invitation to philosophers and Shakespeareans alike to tackle the question of Hamlet the thinker by following the thread of continental philosophy from Descartes to Hegel and beyond. In this sense, it may be regarded as a necessary complement to the author's illuminating *Continental Philosophy*, which appeared with Routledge in 2005, adopting a contemporary perspective on the controversial 'continental' label which in recent years has overcome its merely geographical connotation to reach a meta-philosophical level.

In the same vein, Cutrofello has contributed to *Memoria di Shakespeare*'s inaugural online issue (1/2014, *Thinking with Shakespeare*, eds Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini), with a reading of *Troilus and Cressida* through Kant and Derrida.

Cutrofello's intense philosophical reading of *Hamlet* tackles the core of contemporary representations of this most contemporary of characters by reflect-

ing on the play's key issues of melancholy (chapter 1), negative faith (chapter 2), nihilism (chapter 3), nonactivity (chapter 4), nonexistence (chapter 5).

The book's challenging epilogue interweaves Hegel's concept of 'determinate negation', derived from Spinoza, with the literary heritage of T. S. Eliot's reflection on the reworking of the idea of canon as a category constantly exposed to change, and of 'complete meaning' as something that is never achieved once and for all. *Hamlet* itself is proposed as the objective correlative of the philosophical idea of 'determinate negation', conceived as the "permanent possibility of radically transforming the symbolic order" (p. 151). It is this principle of 'objective incompleteness' that leads to the conclusion that "*Hamlet*'s failure is the very mark of its success" (p. 153).

The critical presence of Eliot in the book is matched by more ghostly literary apparitions – Kafka above all, though explicitly mentioned only once in relation to his *Trial*, but even more significantly Beckett, whose position is here incarnated by Vladimir, who, as Cutrofello reminds us, is a character "better at advancing arguments than plots" (p. 2) – exactly like Hamlet. Such an open critical attitude, in which traces are as important as concrete presences, indeed responds well to a radically continental perspective that, in Italy, has produced interesting results, such as Massimo Cacciari's *Hamletica* (2009), itself articulated along the lines of Hamlet's *insecuritas*, K's sense of displacement in the *Castle*, and Beckett's aesthetics of exhaustion. Cutrofello's methodology is rigorous in dealing with Hamlet's negativity from the philosophical point of view, but to the more literary-minded reader his passing, but richly evocative, references to the most iconic figures of contemporaneity are a real boon.

Rosy Colombo and Iolanda Plescia, Sapienza University of Rome

Hester Lees-Jeffries, *Shakespeare and Memory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xiii+228 pp., £50.00.

Memory always needs support: not only practice, but also a material object, such as wax, a hard disk or cloud storage. Plato's metaphor of the wax block in *Theaetetus* famously introduced the concept of impression to account for the varying malleability and persistence of memory among people and over time. Small wonder, then, that even today i-Pads are called tablets. In her innovative, well-informed take on this topic Hester Lees-Jeffries ponders Shakespeare's centrality in early modern interpretations of memory. *Shakespeare and Memory* rests on an eloquent analysis of Shakespeare's references to memory and of the relevant historical and cultural contexts, together with fascinating inspiration from neuroscience and cognitive psychology and more circumstantial evidence like the continuity of acting traditions.

As the author says, "Shakespeare both engaged with and changed the ways in which people remembered" (p. 6). The Elizabethan Janus-like

approach to memory still revered Plato's wax block, the division within the five senses offered in Aristotle's *De anima* and the tradition of the *artes memoriae*. Yet new technologies, like print, prompted a shift from a pre-eminently oral culture to one based on writing. This upheaval in early modern information technology occurs, moreover, after the iconoclastic defacing of the Catholic past, including not only images but also ancient practices of commemoration of the dead inscribed within the belief in Purgatory.

Lees-Jeffries's point is that Shakespeare exposes the early modern decay of the ancient power of memory. As the traditional forms of collective commemoration have been undermined, Hamlet dramatically counters the prevalent notions of personal and national memory testified by Claudius or the performance of mourning enacted by Gertrude. More radically, after the meeting with the Ghost, he deconstructs all forms of memory storage such as commonplace books or *florilegia*. For Hamlet, modern memory is an act fueled by trauma (the author's introduction explicitly refers the topicality of this book to the contemporary trend of 'memory studies' occasioned by the Shoah). The early modern union between memory and trauma informs the other chapters as well: the emphasis is on the uncertainties of modern memory, rather than on its prodigious feats. The Roman plays "question the status and stability of classical texts", as well as "the idealization of ancient Rome" (p. 60), which is indeed "memorable, but for all the wrong reasons" (p. 50). The English past returns in the history plays as proving the educational utility of theatre, and yet this emergence of the past is hardly immune from the anxiety of censorship. As the author notes, "memory in the early modern period is so bound up in material objects" (p. 159): in Shakespeare, these material records turn into palimpsests incessantly erased and rewritten, as is the case with flowers and smells in *Twelfth Night* and in the *Sonnets*, or the exchange of gifts in *Winter's Tale*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello.*

Lees-Jeffries reminds us that in Shakespeare's England remembering the dead, and remembering more in general, had turned into a practice fraught with anxiety. It is Hamlet's memory that "makes *this* Yorick's skull" (p. 103): Shakespeare presents memory as a personal act concerning mere individuals, with a skeptical distrust in communal forms of commemoration.

Rocco Coronato, University of Padua

Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple, eds, *Staged Transgression in Shakespeare's England*, Palgrave Shakespeare Studies, Basingstoke-New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 298 pp., £58.00.

This volume brings together both established and emerging literary scholars to investigate the issue of transgression on the early modern English stage. Various forms (mockery, resistance, divorce, etc.) and figures (drunkards, Jews, bawds) of transgression are analyzed, simultaneously highlighting the

role of authors, audiences and performances in the crossing of established borders. The book moves away from the grand design of new historicism or Foucauldian aesthetics in favour of a more recent "micro-historical" (p. 14) approach to the topic, embracing a multiplicity of critical perspectives, from gender theory to cognitive studies. As a consequence, the general stance of the volume is less ideological and more lively, full of perceptive analysis and original, insightful considerations. Iago becomes a jester and evil 'parody' of history in Adam Smyth's astute examination of the troubling role of laughter in *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* ("'Ha, Ha, Ha': Shakespeare and the Edge of Laughter"); Mariam's denial of her body to her violent husband and the clandestine marriage between the Duchess and Antonio reflect the political debate "about the linked issues of property and freedom of speech" in the Houses of Parliament (Christina Luckyj, "Politics and Law in *The Tragedy of Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi*", p. 94), while Antonio's failure to spit in Shylock's mouth inverts the traditional idiom of the spitting Jew and signals the presence of a "dogge Iew" that cannot be tamed (Brett D. Hirsch, "The Taming of the Jew: Spit and the Civilizing Process in *The Merchant of Venice*"). Other pieces propose captivating investigations of Edgar as Blackface (B. Minor and A. Thompson, "'Edgar I Nothing Am': Blackface in *King Lear*"), of the brothel as a grey area where "a rigid morality is interrogated and exposed as untenable" (Edel Simple, "Rethinking Transgressions with Shakespeare's Bawds", p. 204), of Margaret as "queen consort, Amazonian warrior, and nourishing, protective mother" (Christopher Ivic, "'How to vse your Brothers Brotherly': Civility, Incivility and Civil War in *3 Henry VI*", p. 248). In the afterword ("Thinking Staged Transgression Literally") Jean E. Howard suggests an interesting link between transgression and the aesthetic dynamism of an early modern theatrical scene dominated by a "turbulent, vibrant, and competitive urban marketplace" (p. 256). A whole essay on this subject is the only missing piece in a volume full of fresh perspectives and stimulating insights.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013, 290 pp., £18.00.

Laurie Shannon presents an ambitious and piercing study of the status of animals in early modern culture, organizing her discourse around sources as diverse as Elizabethan plays and poetry, natural histories, political pamphlets, philosophical essays.

The introductory chapter ("Creatures and Cosmopolitans: Before 'the Animal'") presents the fundamental dialectic of the volume: Montaigne's zoophilic vision as opposed to Descartes's anthropocentric notion of the *bête*

machine. In his *Apologie for Raymond Sebond* Montaigne "accommodates the presence of animals and conceives them as actors and stakeholders endowed by their creator with certain subjective interests" (p. 18): the earth becomes a shared kingdom, a universe enlivened by relationships among different species. On the contrary, Descartes's *cogito* outlines a world dominated by man's predatory attitude, where the animal is nothing more than an automaton, deprived of soul and agency.

In Shannon's opinion late modernity, combining ecocritical thought and posthumanist theories, points back to Montaigne's permeability of the boundaries. She exemplifies the main assumption of her study through the notion of cosmopolity: like cosmopolitanism, cosmopolity is a way of inhabiting the world open to diversity, a call to think not only across races and nations but across species, claiming that men and animals possess "legitimate, subjective investments in the world as fellow creatures" (p. 248).

References to Shakespeare are present in almost every chapter of the book: chapter 1 ("The Law's First Subjects: Animal Stakeholders, Human Tyranny, and the Political Life of Early Modern Genesis") envisages the Arden forest in *As You Like It* as a second Eden peopled by deer, the "native burghers of this desert city" (p. 80); chapter 3 ("Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Happiness and the Zoographic Critique of Humanity") reads Lear's well-known line as "part of a larger zoographic critique of man" (p. 133); chapter 4 ("Night-Rule: The Alternative Politics of the Dark; or, Empires of the Nonhuman") analyses nonhuman agency in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a subversive strategy that posits "human identity as *a constraint*" (p. 180); chapter 5 ("Hang-Dog Looks: From Subjects at Law to Objects of Science in Animal Trials") presents Shylock's "stranger cur" as a testimony of a shared human-animal attitude towards difference.

However, Shakespeare occupies a marginal position in *The Accommodated Animal*: his voice is a voice among others, from Thomas More to Jacques Derrida. Far from being a weakness, this is a strong point in a volume that, clearly indebted to new historicism, situates Shakespeare in a larger, general discourse that intertwines history, philosophy and literature.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, Arden Early Modern Drama Guides, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, 278 pp., £60.00.

This critical reader sums up the curators' long-lasting familiarity with *The Tempest*. In his introduction, Alden T. Vaughan provides a brief but effective sketch of the critics' ever-expanding "range of inquiries" (p. 1) into the play. The first part of the volume concentrates on the critical history of *The Tempest*: in chapter 2 ("The Critical Backstory: 'What's Past is Prologue'") Virginia

Mason Vaughan traces a general outline of the text's reception, from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth century. Eckart Voigts (chapter 2, "A Theatre of Attractions: Colonialism, Gender, and *The Tempest*'s Performance History") recalls the performance history of the play, from the spectacularity of Davenant and Dryden's adaptation to the recent, post-Greenaway "digital theatre of attractions" (p. 46); Brinda Charry (chapter 3, "Recent Perspectives on *The Tempest*"), instead, analyses trends in literary criticism from the 1970s to the present. The second half of the book proposes new points of view on topics that have been addressed before: Andrew Gurr ("New Directions: Sources and Creativity in *The Tempest*") signals how both widely accepted sources (Ovid, Virgil, Montaigne) and controversial influences on the play (the *Sea Venture* chronicles, Jonson's masques) undergo the same process: they are constantly reworked by Shakespeare's creativity. Helen M. Whall ("New Directions: *Commedia dell'Arte*, *The Tempest*, and Trasnational Criticism") considers *commedia dell'arte* from a European perspective, suggesting a transnational approach to the issue of Shakespeare's debt to Italian comedy that inverts the burden of proof: "The logical question is: how could Shakespeare *not* have known about *commedia dell'arte*?" (p. 116). Jeffrey A. Rufo ("New Directions: 'He Needs Will Be Absolute Milan': The Political Thought of *The Tempest*") examines "Shakespeare's contributions to an early modern conversation about authority and its limits" (p. 137), underscoring his skeptical oscillation between Montaigne and Machiavelli, while Scott Maisano ("New Directions: Shakespeare's Revolution – *The Tempest* as Scientific Romance") reads the presence of atomism and 'new science' in the play as discourses "at once prefiguring and launching the genre of scientific romance" (p. 194). In the final chapter Nathaniel Amos Rothschild ("'Volumes That / I Prize': Resources for Studying and Teaching *The Tempest*") provides a useful catalogue of selected editions of the text, online resources, thematic approaches for teachers and a selected bibliography. The volume is a valuable guide for both scholars and students of *The Tempest*, providing a comprehensive overview of past and current research into the play. Its only flaw is the misspelling of Italian names, that I hope a second edition will amend.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, viii+282 pp., £50.00.

What is meant by 'classical' in Shakespeare and in Shakespeare's times? And what was it for? These are the questions that Colin Burrow addresses in the six chapters of his volume *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*; a task that he performs by taking issue with any such idea of the 'classical' as a given, an abstract absolute ideal. He consequently provides a welcome consideration of the degree of historicity which is entailed in both the way the very mean-

ing of the terms 'classical'/'classics' evolve in the English language and the diverse uses of 'classical' antiquity that Shakespeare and his contemporaries made. In this sense he convincingly situates Shakespeare's relationship with the 'classics' within a history of the reception of classical antiquity in early modern England. "For Shakespeare and his generation", Burrows maintains, "reading and imitating classical literature were not activities only to be undertaken with reverence and awe, or with the trans-temporal longing described by Johann Winckelmann" two centuries later. Rather, they were part of a "practical humanism". Ancient authors "would inform you about how to live in the present and would provide material for your own writing. Many sixteenth-century readers encountered these texts in the spirit of 'What can this text do for me?' rather than of 'What culturally remote beauties can I discover here?'" (p. 5).

But what about Shakespeare's knowledge of the classics? And how did he learn from the past? Undoubtedly Shakespeare's knowledge of the classics was shaped by the grammar-school curricula. But though grounding his enquiry in this fact, Colin Burrow takes pains to distance his undertaking from T. W. Baldwin's approach to this issue. Burrow argues that using solely the curricula of early modern grammar schools as a sort of "great database of memory" – such as the one built by Baldwin in his imposing two-volume *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944) – helpful though it may be, provides no guarantee as to what and how Shakespeare 'knew'. Shakespeare may have had an imperfect memory of what firsthand knowledge of Latin authors he had by reading them at King Edward VI School, Stratford. Instead, other Latin authors (together with some other Greek works filtered through Latin culture) he may have read later in his life, and at different times. He may have read them entirely, or in translation; or acquired them as a mediated form of knowledge through authors such as Chaucer, Montaigne, or also by means of a variety of less authoritative, miscellaneous and fragmentary sources, adages, *exempla*, *sententiae*, phrasebooks, dictionaries. Some instances may be Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae*, or apt manuals for the instruction of noblemen such as Iohannes Sturm's *Nobilitas Literata* (1549), translated by Thomas Browne of Lincoln's Inn as *A Rich Storehouse or Treasure for Nobility and Gentlemen* (1570). Similarly, one might add, the presence of John Florio – the translator of Montaigne into English, among other things – in London may have been instrumental to building a bridge not only with the Italian language, but also with Italy's vision of the classics.

Burrow's book aims at showing not only the different ways in which Shakespeare 'knew' or 'may have' known, but mostly the ways in which such a knowledge is turned into theatre. What pupils were trained for in their reading of ancient literature in grammar schools, Burrows underlines, was learning a method: that is, how to turn reading into an emulative/competitive writing practice. Humanist readers were trained "to read with

an eye to the 'how' of what they read" (p. 52). Whether those be classical or contemporary works, Shakespeare, as a writer and a playwright, would continue to read 'pragmatically', not just to plunder contents, narrative ideas, or particular quotations, but with an ear and an eye quick to evaluate their performative potential. The specific chapters devoted to Virgil, Ovid, Roman Comedy, Seneca, Plutarch, all exemplify the diverse degree of 'usefulness' that the 'classics' have in Shakespeare's imaginative world, as well as the different kinds of presence they have – direct, extensive, consistent, fragmentary, and more often, ghost-like, the elusive effect of epochal and co-authored intertextual palimpsests. They also explore the ways in which Shakespeare transforms everything he touches into something which is completely Shakespearean. Each time as if '*un*remebering' the original.

Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Roma Tre University

Pamela Bickley and Jenny Stevens, *Essential Shakespeare: The Arden Guide to Text and Interpretation*, Arden Shakespeare, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, 343 pp., $24.95.

This book is presented, rather deceptively, simply as a tool for undergraduate students, a definition which fails to do it justice, though *Essential Shakespeare* certainly offers a very useful early approach to Shakespeare's works, also containing a useful glossary of metalinguistic terms. The book, in which fourteen of Shakespeare's plays are examined from fourteen different critical standpoints, is of great interest, not only to students.

Bickley and Stevens' study offers a range of the most challenging interpretative frameworks of Shakespeare criticism to date, from a Bakhtinian carnivalesque interpretation of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* to a sociolinguistic approach to *Much Ado about Nothing*, from queer studies applied to *Twelfth Night* to psychoanalytic studies in the case of *Measure for Measure,* from a post-colonial perspective on *Antony and Cleopatra* to a deconstructionist interpretation of *Richard II* or a feminist approach to *The Winter's Tale*. The authors' interpretations of most plays, which are far from banal, offer a well-informed insight into the findings of recent criticism.

In the introduction, each chapter is described as having a similar structure, four sections plus one brief section on "Afterlives", in which each play is: 1. discussed within a different critical framework, 2. analysed in the early modern context, 3. subjected to close reading, 4. described in one or more productions. In the brief section on "Afterlives", which concludes each chapter, re-writings from neo-classical to contemporary are briefly mentioned. The principal aspect of each chapter, as already mentioned, is the interpretation of the play in question from one modern critical standpoint, while a second section analyses and clarifies relevant aspects of early modern staging and culture. The second section of each chapter is thus devoted to the func-

tion of: boy-actors (*Antony and Cleopatra*), the revenge motif in Elizabethan times (*Hamlet*), costumes in Elizabethan theatre in connection with sumptuary laws (*Richard II*), the Tudor myth (*Richard III*), early modern attitudes to madness and melancholy (*The Winter's Tale*) and an interesting analysis of the use of private theatre in *Cymbeline*, where the different theories of Tiffany Stern and Andrew Gurr are briefly but fruitfully discussed.

Chapters divide and multiply, creating a rich interplay of their themes. For instance, "Bakhtin's carnivalesque" opens the chapter on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by a second paragraph on Ovid as a source of the play, and a third on rhyme, rhythm and metre.

In the chapter on *Much Ado about Nothing*, sociolinguistics offers a useful insight from a feminist perspective – shared by the authors – where the patriarchal vision of "a silent wife [as] a gift of the Lord" is challenged by a reflection on the power dynamics in the play; Beatrice's "exploit[ation of] the semantic elasticity of words" (p. 43) is shown as undermining the preeminence of male discourse by challenging the logic of its rhetoric.

In the chapter devoted to *Twelfth Night*, queer studies offer a fitting key to the problem of cross-dressing and an awareness of the existential problem involved in this process, while the specific aspect of gender studies enquiry into the myth of masculinity forms the basis for a sound analysis of *Macbeth*. Here the different conceptions of manhood presented by the characters are discussed in the second section; the violence inherent in the praise of martial values is analysed in both the main part of the chapter and in the section devoted to an analysis of Polanski's film, where the stress on blood and mindless slaughter is justly attributed to memories of Nazi attacks on Warsaw during Polanski's childhood, rather than to the lurid chronicle of his wife Sharon Tate's murder. The paragraph on the early modern context is devoted to analysing *Macbeth* "as a Jamesian play".

As mentioned above, *Measure for Measure* is read through the lens of psychoanalytic criticism, mostly Freud but with a mention of Lacan (especially through Belsey). The focus is on the masochistic strains in Isabella's attitudes, and – as often happens in criticism of this play – on her problematic silence following the Duke's marriage proposal. The section on early modern context focuses on echoes of the Bible in the text.

The impossible task of discussing *Hamlet* in less than twenty pages without recourse to platitudes is solved by focusing on the rise of the film in literary studies and the prominence critics now give to filmic interpretations. A brief survey ranging from Sarah Bernhardt's three-minutes *Hamlet* to Olivier's 1948 film, from Kozintsev's (1964) to Branagh's (1996), and quoting Peter Brook's opinion of the "sad history of Shakespeare on the screen" (p. 103), serves as the basis for the authors' discussion of the suitability of Shakespeare's works to the new medium, and indeed vice versa. As mentioned above, the early modern section is devoted to the revenge motif; the paragraph on a specific production is devoted to Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000).

A couple of pages are rightly devoted to the portrayal of the Ghost in various films; the choice of how to present the spectral visions seen by the protagonists in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is indeed a key point in the interpretation of these plays by different directors.

Referring back to the work of such critics as Coppélia Kahn and Jan Kott, the analysis of *King Lear* confronts the reader with a Marxist/Marxist-feminist reading, in which the patriarchal view of love and people as commodities is shown and found wanting. The performance chosen is Kozintsey's masterpiece *Korol Lir*; here – to quote just one example – the shot panning in onto the beggars' emaciated bodies adds poignancy to the poor naked wretches' speech, and is a strong visual statement of the effect of the whims of the powerful on the thousands of common people whose lives are destroyed in the process. A brief summary of the Quarto/Folio question, though it does not explicitly mention specific findings, shows the authors' awareness of the critical debate prominent in recent studies of both *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

Post-colonial studies are applied to a reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*; critics such as C. C. Rutter, Loomba and Daileader are referred to in the first part, Jardine, Jean H. Howard, J. L. Gibson and Shapiro in the second. The all-male performance of the play at the Globe in 1999, with a 'muscular' thirty-nine year-old actor as Cleopatra (p. 205) directed by Giles Block, is used to explore further the transgressive elements in the play.

With the work of Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes as a starting point, presentism, linked as it is to the 'inherently presentist' readings of post-colonial and feminist theory, is the tool used to work on *Othello*, together with an emphasis on Iago's performative language. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Orson Welles' famous production of *Othello.*

The problem of language is also rightly seen as central to *Richard II*. The play is interpreted from a deconstructionist viewpoint, together with an analysis of Shakespeare's verse: *Richard II*, with *King John*, is one of the two all verse plays in the Shakespearean canon; the survey sheds useful light on the general use of blank verse in Shakespeare and on its specific quality in this play. The production examined here is Deborah Warner's *Richard II* with Fiona Shaw in the leading role, seen as a provocative "means of liberating someone from gender" (p. 230).

New historicism is the tool for the reading of *Richard III*, with a useful survey of Tillyard's version as against neo-historicism. Dollimore, Sinfield, Jean H. Howard, Dutton, Richard Wilson and Stephen Greenblatt are aptly quoted; though, in this brief survey, there is no space to mention Lever's historical dismissal of the "chain of being" (which has grown "rusty", as Lever wrote in the seventies). A further paragraph on the sources (pp. 241ff.) precedes an analysis of the *Richard III* film by Loncraine, famously set in the thirties.

'British studies', together with neo-historicism and a post-colonial non-Anglocentric perspective, are used in the analysis of *Cymbeline*, while a feminist approach is applied to the reading of *The Winter's Tale*. This is one of

the most interesting chapters in the book; in just a few pages Shakespeare's sister is quoted, as famously imagined by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*; the reader is then reminded of female authors' works mostly attributed to their brothers (Mary Lamb's and Henrietta Bowdler's) and of Mary Cowden-Clarke's imagined lives of Shakespeare's heroines (pp. 279-80). The work of Showalter and Belsey's is then mentioned, then Dusinberre's seminal book in the seventies, to arrive to McLuskie, Jardine, Ann Thompson and Janet Adelman. Applying Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers*, the concept of pastoral is examined, from the idealized male version shared by Leontes and Polixenes to the fruitful and joyous pastoral actually achieved in Perdita's scenes. The second paragraph examines ideas of madness and melancholy in early modern literature, aptly quoting Bright's and Burton's treatises on melancholy, but also noting how the tragic representation of Leontes' mad jealousy is influenced by comic writing, namely the Jonsonian humour plays (pp. 285-86). A useful analysis of the pastoral genre recurs also in the following paragraphs devoted to this play. Comment on the whole BBC 1980s project is based on Jane Howell's direction of *The Winter's Tale* for the BBC. The project (though, according to Holderness, "oppressive" as an agency of cultural hegemony) is righty remembered, as the only undertaking to include the entire Shakespeare canon.

The final chapter is a reading of *The Tempest* from the viewpoint of genre theory. The chapter opens with a presentation of *The Tempest* as tragicomedy or romance; the 'myth of lateness' aptly opposes the traditional idea of the play as a farewell to the stage by the aging playwright, and the fact that Shakespeare, as now known, wrote three further plays after *The Tempest* (the extant *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII*, both written in collaboration, as was *Cardenio*) and after his thorough revision of *King Lear* in the form now recorded in the First Folio. The examination of the firm belief expressed by many critics that the last plays contain extremely experimental and "daring theatrical ventures" (p. 308: Michael O'Connell is quoted here, but also Gordon McMullan, Russ McDonald and above all Edward Said's work *On Late Style*, difficult as Beethoven's last works, should be mentioned) is a rapid but effective presentation of the *status quaestionis*.

Two useful brief paragraphs on the masque in general, and as used in *The Tempest*, close the survey of early modern practice on stage.

Daniela Guardamagna, University of Rome Tor Vergata

Agnès Lafont, ed., *Shakespeare's Erotic Mythology and Ovidian Renaissance Culture*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, 224 pp., £60.00.

In the editor's words this volume "focuses on the process of textual myth-making, on the transmission and reinvention of classical and continental erotic mythology in Elizabethan and Jacobean texts".

No doubt the reader has an opportunity here to explore the various aspects in which Ovid's *Metamorphoses* did impact on European Renaissance culture, quite often following unexpected and very indirect or subterranean paths in the field of the fine arts, music, literature and drama, and in the development of taste and ways of living as well.

The book contains four sections, the two central ones dealing with some relevant Shakespearean texts: especially *Venus and Adonis*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*. Other Elizabethan playwrights are mentioned, such as Marlowe, and sixteenth-century learning and aesthetics are duly taken into account through detailed discussion of translations, book printing and diffusion, and of the visual arts, mainly painting and decoration.

The approach is rather unusual as Ovid is not considered acting as a direct and well defined source, as one would expect, but as exerting a diffused and subtle influence, in some cases quite hidden and one would say undetectable. On the other hand, Ovidian sources at work in Shakespeare and his contemporaries are so well known and commented upon that there was scarce need of another study about it. The large bibliography and many references here are another proof of that in case the reader had any doubts.

The same happens with eros and its aspects in Shakespearean drama: rather than being examined and discussed *per se*, the theme is tackled through the lens of the multifaceted use of mythological material, sometimes straight from Ovid, more often connected with the most unexpected and even remote hints.

The idea behind it is that more than and beyond method there is influence, and that there are forces at work that in some way or another transcend conscious choices. Therefore the argument put forward appears to be that Ovidian culture was so strong in the Renaissance that scarcely any intellectual of some status would or could take no notice at all – a subtle texture of direct and ancillary but concomitant elements constantly flowed in unnoticeably anyhow.

In a way the critical method applied follows the hypothesis, in that it does openly privilege surprise and detection, and more than proving suggests similarities, analogies, consonance or equivalence, by which myths appear to constantly transform, according to the metamorphic Ovidian model. The risk of course is that one could make this too broad, if applied at large with indistinctions made to prevail on clear cut pictures and characters, here now and then seeming to merge into the common tapestry of ever-changing forms. In fact, coming to conclusions such as "stories have a capacity to mutate, merge and multiply in countless ways as they pass through the pens of poets" (p. 150) seems to add little to critical appreciation.

On the other hand, the idea that eros in Shakespeare becomes more intelligible if connected to the general appreciation of principles such as indistinction, transformation, masking, negation and a sense of an ever-changing

form, to be assimilated to his theory of drama and theatrical representation, has some ground and appears the most convincing point developed across these essays, provided one does not make it strictly depend, as it occasionally may seem, on a range of references so sundry as to possibly suggest "conflation, blurring of boundaries, indistinction, 'non finito'" (p. 4) as the only way to interpret the complexities of the Renaissance and the Shakespearean corpus itself.

The detailed information, the suggestive plates enclosed and the wide cultural perspective make this book a useful and rich resource for the scholar.

Giuseppe Massara, Sapienza University of Rome

Daniel Juan Gil, *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics: Sovereign Power and the Life of the Flesh*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, vi+176 pp., £55.00.

Daniel Juan Gil's thesis is deliberately provocative. The author of *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics* admits that the best recent criticism in Shakespeare studies has proved Shakespeare's intense engagement with politics. However, Gil contends, Shakespeare is not political after all. Far from being an enlightened champion of Tudor and Stuart absolutism, or, according to the alternate critical view, an advocate of civic republican virtues, Shakespeare in fact anticipates Michel Foucault's conception of 'bio-politics' and foreshadows Giorgio Agamben's reassessment of Carl Schmitt's idea of sovereignty in order "to launch a nihilistic critique of state power and a sustained exploration of a countervailing life of the flesh" (p. 2). Accordingly, the power of the fledgling nation-state is supposed to be omni-pervasive of subjective life, even of its most intimate aspects. Gil sees Shakespeare's strategy as being not directly confrontational. In the four plays here analyzed (*Julius Caesar*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello* and *King Lear*) characters (and audience) are supposed to experience the abjection of their bodies when they are put face to face with the brutality of unmitigated political power. It is at these critical moments that, inadvertently fired by power, a key transformation occurs in which subjects reduced to flesh enter new relationships with the flesh of others. The vision in which Marc Antony wishes to mingle his blood with Caesar's through the medium of the swords used by the conspirators precipitates a civil war that causes bodies on the stage to interact in ways not admissible in any form of politically mediated life. In *Measure for Measure* the life of the flesh comes to the fore in acts of cannibalistic prostitution. In *Othello* Iago unveils the raw face of power which Venice has dislocated in the exceptional figure of the Moor, making visible the reversion of dramatic personae to physical bodies both in the two riots Iago starts in Cyprus and crucially in the assassination of Desdemona. A similar disintegration of

socio-political identities is made manifest in *King Lear* through the violence (the torture of Gloucester and the banishment of Lear, Edmund and Gloucester) and the masochistic sexuality the actors enact on the stage and share with the audience.

Overall, the analysis appears coherent with the theoretical sources on which Gil relies, but this merit only accentuates the teleologism deeply affecting his research. Gil seems to relapse into the idealistic precursor syndrome by perceiving in Shakespearean texts anticipations of modern and post-modern theories which add value to them. With the exception of an interesting discussion of the legal system in Shakespeare's time occupying a good portion of the second chapter dedicated to *Measure for Measure*, historicist preoccupations find no place in the book. One would be very interested, for example, in historical evidence concerning the reception of the plays which Gil focuses on. Had he provided the reader with substantial information relative to the audience reaction energized by the life of the flesh, as he puts it, staged at the Globe, one would not have remained with the impression of an academic exercise. To follow him on his favourite terrain, however, let's put the last (but not least) objection in interrogative form. Does Gil really find his sources still inspiring in a globalized era which incessantly reduces the power of nation-states in favour of non state actors? Does he still consider the ideas developed by his cherished critics indispensable for the endless task of actualizing Shakespeare?

Daniele Niedda, UNINT, Rome

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Re-Imagined by Heiner Müller*, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, 2014, 301 pp., €64.00 / $90.00.

When conflicts rage, or censorship squelches both creativity and critique, literature has two choices: to remain silent, or to rewrite itself. There are hardly works more politically engaged than Bertolt Brecht's *Antigone* or Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*, to mention just two east German authors who rewrote ancient myths to critique contemporary societies. At the center of Miguel Ramalhete Gomes's book, *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Re-Imagined by Heiner Müller*, is the greatest German dramatist of the twentieth century after Brecht, and his problematic relationship with the east German state. Heiner Müller's play *Die Umsiedlerin* (*The Resettler Woman*, 1961) was censored after only one performance, and the author was simultaneously expelled from the Writers' Association of the GDR. *Der Bau* (*Construction Site*, 1965), about the construction of the Berlin Wall, was never staged; and neither was *Mauser*, composed in 1970, and first performed in Texas in 1975.

The reason why *Texts Waiting for History* is included in this selection is its focus on Müller's many adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, which Gomes

reads as a way to portray the contemporary political circumstances in east Germany without incurring censorship. Shakespeare, indeed, had become part of Germany's cultural legacy – "unser Shakespeare" – at least since the Schlegel-Tieck translation of the 1820s. Shakespeare's works had been readapted for the GDR's stage among others by Brecht with *Coriolanus* in 1951. In 1964 Shakespeare was officially declared a model to be uncritically emulated by each east German playwright. Simultaneously along and against the dictates of this cultural propaganda, Müller rewrote Shakespeare precisely to question and criticize, in other words to continue producing political drama, in hopes that future authors would not need to *rewrite* Shakespeare – or any other canonical author imposed by authoritarian regimes.

Texts Waiting for History is a revised version of Gomes's doctoral dissertation, the main purpose of which was to account for every use of Shakespeare in Müller's work. After a theoretical introduction dealing with questions of method and philosophy of history in two recent trends in Shakespeare studies – new historicism and presentism – the first part of Gomes's book focuses on the texts that were excluded from his study because their engagement with Shakespeare was only superficial (it is the case of minor dramatic adaptations, translations, poems and fragments). Chapters 2 through 5, however, consider Müller's most original and experimental reworking of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Coriolanus*. *Macbeth, nach Shakespeare* (*Macbeth, after Shakespeare*, 1972) draws on Holinshed as well as on Shakespeare, with a strong emphasis on history and violence. *Die Hamletmaschine* (*Hamletmachine*, 1977) is a postmodern nine-page play that bears little connection with the original *Hamlet*. *Anatomie Titus* (*Anatomy Titus*, 1985) returns to violence and history, which clearly are the lenses through which Gomes likes to explore Müller's aesthetics. Not coincidentally, parts of the book had already appeared in volumes focusing on violence, for example *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective* (eds Carla Dente and Sara Soncini, 2013), published by Palgrave Macmillan.

While attempting to show how Müller's modernizing of Shakespeare develops a theoretical form of reception that is relevant to Shakespeare studies, this comprehensive account of Müller's intertextual practices manages above all to shed light both on the German author and his creative method and the process of rewriting *per se*. In the last chapter, Gomes analyses Müller's references to Shakespeare during the period between the end of the GDR and the first years after the reunification of Germany, with a special focus on *Germania 3 Gespenster am toten Mann* (*Germania 3 Ghosts at the Dead Man*, 1995). Müller's last play is a return to the connection between *Hamlet* and the Wall, and centers on Brecht's updating of *Coriolanus*: "Shakespeare through Brecht, Brecht through Shakespeare" (p. 227).

However, Gomes has the merit, in this book as in his previous essays, of calling attention both to the afterlife of Shakespeare in the GDR, following in the steps of J. Lawrence Guntner and Andrew M. McLean (*Redefining

Shakespeare: Literary Theory and Theater Practice in the German Democratic Republic, 1997), and to Müller's manifold and long-lasting engagement with Shakespeare, thereby completing what Roland Petersohn had started in 1993 with his *Heiner Müllers Shakespeare-Rezeption: Texte und Kontexte*, which of course could not take into account Müller's late production (he continued to compose and direct until he died in 1995). Moreover, Gomes makes his analysis available to the English speaking community – while Petersohn's studies on Shakespeare and Müller have never been translated. Other contributions on the topic in English are limited to book chapters or articles.

Although Müller was famous abroad even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, some of his plays inspired by Shakespeare have been translated into English only recently. The volume *Heiner Müller after Shakespeare* was published in 2012, translated and edited by Carl Weber (Professor Emeritus in the Department of Theater and Performance Studies at Stanford University and translator of *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage* and of *A Heiner Mueller Reader*) and Paul David Young. Not only does it make available for the first time *Macbeth after Shakespeare* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, but it also includes *Shakespeare a Difference*, the text of an address Müller gave at a conference of Shakespeare scholars, *Shakespeare Tage*, in Weimar in 1988. He said: "Shakespeare is a mirror through the ages, our hope a world that he doesn't reflect anymore. We haven't arrived at ourselves as long as Shakespeare is writing our plays". Rewriting Shakespeare – as *Texts Waiting for History* claims – is the sign of the times' violence and lack of freedom. A future without Shakespeare and without rewriting might be a better future.

Stefania Porcelli, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare's Theatres and England's Trees*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, xii+205 pp., €59.00.

The first thing to strike the reader of this book is its awkwardly puzzling title, then the genuine pleasure, the intellectual curiosity and the precise reasoning and style with which it has been written and researched. Completely original in its outcome, this study is also well rooted in recent and less recent scholarship about the English Renaissance and Shakespeare, as well as ecocriticism, and appears, in this latter case, to be a peculiar widening and reversing, although circumscribed to early modern England, of Robert Pogue Harrison's 1992 essay *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. If the first explored the imagination of forests in western thought as, precisely, the "shadow of civilization", this work points out the vital importance of trees and of wood for the survival and wellbeing of civilization in Renaissance England. A fact remarkably summed up in Arthur Standish's phrase "no wood no Kingdome", or in Francis Bacon's observation that the "[p]lanting

of countries is like the planting of woods". More in detail, this study links the economic history of forestry in England's enclosure crisis in the sixteenth century with the beginning of commercial drama performances within the newly built outdoor spaces – permanent theatres like the Rose, the Globe and the Fortune – in London's suburbs. The author reminds us that it is Shakespeare himself who calls the new kind of structure – with incredibly poetic and evocative power, now that we understand its context – "wooden O" in the prologue of *Henry V*.

The essay's starting point is Thomas More's description of the reallocation of trees in *Utopia* (1516) from their original place to new sites, seen here as an "eco-fantasie" – of colonial extraction and/or the reforestation of England – fueled by the, whether perceived or real, scarcity of "wood and timber" (*ligna*) in that time, and "a precursor to the utilitarian regime of fiscal forestry, which simplifie[d] a 'habitat' into the term 'natural resources'". Moreover, the author reveals an interesting analogy between More's transplanting of woods with the building techniques of the 'wooden Os' of Shakespeare's age. These were in fact prefabricated constructions, framed directly in the woods from which they had been extracted and fashioned, "before they were disassembled and conveyed to the performance site, where they were erected again as they had previously stood in the woods". The implications of this technique are manifold as to the significance of the material 'stuff' of London's Renaissance theatres. Their famous lack of perspective scenes and distinguishing scenographic elements gives a different meaning to this background: it is permanently wooden on the one hand, and it is "brought back into life" as living trees "whenever a character enters a wood". One may go as far as to assert that for the audience they worked as a kind of imaginative compensation to the shortage of wood and the consequent fear of deforestation, although this may seem slightly too far-fetched.

The plays and the theatres discussed in this book are Robert Green's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* at the Rose, Thomas Kyd's composite *Spanish Tragedy* at the Fortune, and Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Tempest* at the Globe. It is an unprecedented literary analysis in the field as 'eco-material' history from woodland to theatre, which also significantly testifies the recent 'material turn' in ecocriticism. The only aspect that is maybe missing in this work, and this is a general risk that 'material ecocriticism' runs, is the consideration and inclusion of traditional humanist elements, such as, in this particular case, the architectural history of England's Renaissance theatres, in other words, to mention whence *the plans* (i.e. the 'form') for these 'wooden Os' were taken from. A subject eminently treated in Frances Yates's 1969 study *Theatre of the World*, where we learn how James Burbage built the first permanent wooden theatre in London on the basis of some English sources of Vitruvius' fourth book of *De architectura* and Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, thus linking Shakespeare's theatres not

only to the Roman theatre architecture of the first century b.C., but also to its ancient Athenian model, with all the ensuing enrichment in their cultural and anthropological implications.

Caterina Salabè, Sapienza University of Rome

Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, vii+257pp., €70.00.

Charlotte Scott is a Senior Lecturer in Shakespeare at Goldsmith's College, University of London, and this is her second book with Oxford University Press, after *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (2007). Despite the only seeming plainness and fairly generic range of its title – *Shakespeare's Nature* (possibly echoing Dan Brayton's 2012 prizewinning essay *Shakespeare's Ocean*) – this work introduces us to this talented scholar's liquid play with different terms and concepts such as agronomy, cultivation, husbandry, economic history, language, culture, aesthetic arts, literature and ethics in a way that makes their uncertain landmarks and overlappings visible. This is not only interesting and pleasurable as a feature of critical style, but also reveals theoretical implications in the demarcation of boundaries between academic disciplines.

At the heart of this study lie the author's personal experience and intellectual teachings gained from "the terms and practices of husbandry", projected onto Shakespeare's life, language, work and time in a comparative perspective that goes from Cicero and Virgil to Francis Bacon and the husbandry manuals of the Elizabethan age. The subtitle *From Cultivation to Culture* clearly indicates that in Scott's view cultivation comes first. Thus the ability to know, master, manage and use nature in the services of human life (paraphrasing Joseph Glanvill's quotation from the introduction of the book) becomes the precondition and the model for the mastering of the mind and of every cultural and especially artistic achievement that leads to civilization. An idea beautifully expressed in Bacon's description of *The Advancement of Learning* as a "Georgickes of the mind".

Nevertheless, reading further into the book becomes at times confusing as far as a lucid definition of its conceptual topic and method is concerned. A slightly cumulative stylistic description conveys the impression that the study has not reached the necessary synthesis and clarity of thought, or of speech – which should be a priority aim of every scientific research – by overindulging in the pursuit of discursive liquidity as new value, rather than as critical metaphor for our factual postmodern reality. If the reader is asked to perform such a synthesis, in a kind of up-to-date participative open source scholarship, or 'thought-sharing', the reviewer's personal contribution to that would be the following: what this book wants to say is that true cultural renaissance and in particular the English Renaissance, with Shakespeare as

its best fruit, sprang from the earth rather than from letters. Furthermore, that Shakespeare himself (or his model) was more (that) of a husbandman, than (that of) a humanist. This particular aspect leads one to think that besides being an essay in literary criticism, this work is also a cultural claim trying to uplift responsible agrarian life at the top of human activities, and to create a new branch in the wide range of postmodern 'proud-isms' such as a spring British left-wing 'Rural Pride'. There would be no fault in that, and this may be one of the reasons why such a highbrow publisher as Oxford University Press has chosen to add this title to its collection. Moreover, the text represents an elegant and metamorphic kind of propaganda for the merely one hundred-year-old fascist, and the fifty-year-younger hippie exaltation of the virtues of communal agrarian life, which desperately needs to be restored and rehabilitated, with due mentality changes in our day, for reasons that are evident to most thinking people.

The book is divided into seven chapters discussing Shakespeare's work as a whole, but with a special focus on *The Sonnets*, *Henry V*, *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Its discourse can be plugged in the many-sided reality of contemporary ecocriticism, insofar as it collects the ethical wisdoms and cultural values of early modern husbandry through the work of Shakespeare, as a solution to the sustainability problem for our posterity and its future projects.

Caterina Salabè, Sapienza University of Rome

Margherita Pascucci, *Philosophical Readings of Shakespeare*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 284 pp., £58.00.

In this book Margherita Pascucci provides us with a highly philosophical reading of Shakespeare's dramatic art, trying to explore, within and through four Shakespearean plays – *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* – a theoretical constellation outlined by three main conceptual issues, namely, the self, value and power, a constellation that, risen at the beginning of the seventeenth century with Descartes' and Spinoza's speculation on subjectivity and moral action, results (*via* Marx) in Deleuze's, Foucault's and Benjamin's critique of social constraint as a form of power-knowledge from modernity to advanced capitalism.

According to Pascucci's analysis, Shakespeare's dramatic art can be considered as the hotbed of a new way of thinking man's relation to time, emotion, imagination, consciousness, property and wealth; more radically, Shakespeare's theatre concretizes on the stage the ontological subversion of (Foucauldian) 'representation', that is to say – following Foucault's epistemology (*The Order of Things*) – the peculiar configuration of knowledge that characterizes European philosophical thought during the seventeenth century (the so-called *âge classique*).

In what sense must this 'subversion' be understood? Shakespeare's theatre is not – Pascucci stresses – a mimetic *dis-play* of the state of things as they actually exist or as theory represents them in the realm of abstraction; on the contrary, it is the *play* in which the self-creation (or self-production) of reality (the being of reality in its innumerous forms) makes its appearance as an unexpected, unpredictable, and unique event.

In this way, the relation that Hamlet develops with himself during dramatic action shows us how selfhood is not a pre-determined 'conceptual persona', but rather the ever undetermined (ever "out-of-joint") outcome of human thinking conceived as an ever-changing process: as Pascucci says, selfhood is a "form of being productive of further being".

As it happens with subjectivity in *Hamlet*, so it occurs with sovereignty in *King Lear*: the king becoming the "thing itself" (as Poor Tom previously did) must not be intended as a mere image of degradation: the fall of dignity and power into poverty, misery and dereliction leads us to an exceptional discovery: the insurgence of being as existence. Since he is thoroughly dispossessed, the beggar king embodies the allegory (in the sense Walter Benjamin gives to this word) of human condition: the beggar's sole possessions are, in fact, his own mind and body. What is property in itself but the euphemistic name of the naked self? Thus, *Timon of Athens* answers that modern profit-credit system (the circulation of money) is the play that plays us all false; and since money is the metaphor that stands for society, the whole of collective life is but a gigantic lie.

Macbeth's aspiration to absolute power (to become a king) complements *King Lear*'s subversion of power: almost forerunning Spinoza's notion of *potentia* (the power-to-act), Macbeth discovers the implicit, yet salient feature, if not the hidden essence, of power: imagination, in other terms, the perilous and ghostly path that, bringing from desire to the act, enables and allows us to be what we will.

Sometimes, Pascucci's philosophical 'idiolect' could appear unnecessarily overwhelming to the reader; nevertheless, in the vast panorama of Shakespearean bibliography, this book stands out as an enriching contribution to critical debate, for it stimulates us to read Shakespeare's theatre not only as a literary genre but also, and foremost, both as a form of knowledge and an inexhaustible work of thought.

Massimo Stella, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, eds, *Shakespeare beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, xiv+284 pp., paperback edition £19.99.

Since Delia Bacon published *The Philosophy of Shakspere's Plays Unfolded* in 1857, in which she put forward the hypothesis that Shakespeare's plays

had actually been written by a 'school' of intellectuals including her namesake Sir Francis Bacon, countless books and articles have been published questioning the premise that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was the author of the works attributed to him and proposing an astonishing number of alternative candidates. For a long time what has come to be known as the 'Shakespeare Authorship Debate' remained the domain of amateurs and was largely neglected by professional scholars. Over the last few years, however, doubters have acquired unprecedented visibility and a higher profile thanks to initiatives such as the online petition "A Declaration of Reasonable Doubt", launched in 2007 by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and signed by prominent Shakespearean actors like Mark Rylance and Derek Jacobi, the release in 2011 of Roland Emmerich's film *Anonymous*, which depicts Shakespeare as a semi-illiterate buffoon and Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford, as the real author of the plays, as well as the creation of MA programmes on Shakespeare Authorship Studies in England at Brunel University and in America at Concordia University (Portland, Oregon). Partly as a consequence of these developments, many Shakespeare scholars have come to realise that simply ignoring the problem was not enough to make it go away, that it was necessary to adopt a more active strategy, and the essay collection *Shakespeare beyond Doubt*, edited by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, is a very fine example of this new, energetic way of countering "a too-long-established heresy" (p. xiv).

The book comprises nineteen essays by twenty-two distinguished specialists that outline the history of the debate, review the different theses that have been proposed in the course of time, and supply comprehensive evidence proving "beyond doubt" that Shakespeare actually wrote Shakespeare. The "anti-Shakespeareans" – a term Edmondson and Wells prefer over "anti-Stratfordians" as more "accurate and honest" (p. xii) – are consistently addressed in a respectful and urbane manner. In the General Introduction, for example, the editors state that some of them are "persons of high intellectual ability fully conversant with the techniques of academic scholarship" (p. xii) and that "the authorship discussion is a complex intellectual phenomenon well worthy of objective consideration" (p. xiv). The serious style in which the doubters' theories are described and refuted, however, cannot – nor is it meant to – bestow any legitimacy upon them; on the contrary, it makes their lack of scholarly soundness appear, if possible, even more striking.

The volume is divided into three parts: part I, "Sceptics", looks at the main candidates that have been put forward in the place of Shakespeare, particularly Bacon, Marlowe and Oxford, but also at some "unusual suspects" (including "extreme" nominees such as Mary Sidney or Miguel de Cervantes) and at the unusual kind of evidence, based on cryptograms and anagrams, that has been employed to advocate their candidacies. Part II, "Shakespeare as Author", illustrates what we do know about William

Shakespeare, and the principal historical and documentary reasons for thinking that he wrote, sometimes in collaboration with other playwrights, the texts ascribed to him. Part III, "A Cultural Phenomenon: Did Shakespeare Write Shakespeare?", discusses the dynamics of the authorship controversy in contemporary culture, unearthing some of the political and psychological motivations behind it.

All the essays are brief and accessible. Often summarising their own ground-breaking research, the contributors accomplish a two-fold task: they expose the feebleness of the anti-Shakespeareans' contentions and simultaneously provide accounts of the most recent developments in various branches of Shakespeare studies, whose scope and interest go well beyond the authorship question. The essays by John Jowett, "Shakespeare as Collaborator", and MacDonald P. Jackson, "Authorship and the Evidence of Stylometrics", for example, outline the methodology of computational stylistics and demonstrate the collaborative nature of a number of plays in the Shakespeare canon – a perspective that has profoundly affected Shakespeare scholarship as a whole over the last years and that in itself disproves the majority of the anti-Shakespeareans' theories, typically propounding only single authors as alternatives to Shakespeare. The collaborative nature of the plays also shows that they must have been written by someone immersed in the life of the theatre, thus ruling out aristocratic contenders such as the earl of Oxford or Francis Bacon. This point is further reinforced by James Mardock and Eric Rasmussen who, in their "What Does Textual Evidence Reveal about the Author?", focus on the deft use of the doubling technique which can be found in every one of Shakespeare's plays – highlighting, among other things, that the astounding sixty-seven roles of *3 Henry VI* could be performed by just twenty-one actors – and convincingly conclude that this kind of structure could only be devised by a working theatre professional. But all the essays in the collection supply valuable insights both on the broader field of Shakespeare studies and on the authorship debate. Responding to the argument frequently upheld by anti-Shakespeareans that the gaps in the records of Shakespeare's life and writerly activity are particularly unusual, Andrew Hadfield ("Theorizing Shakespeare's Authorship") shows that such gaps are indeed very common in early modern biographical documentation, that we know much more about Shakespeare than about most of his contemporaries and that "all early modern authors have had attribution problems, which is hardly surprising in a time when many works, plays in particular, were not thought of as the exclusive property of their authors" (p. 66). And Stanley Wells in his masterly survey of "Allusions to Shakespeare to 1642" provides overwhelming evidence for Shakespeare's authorship, "to dispute [which] is to challenge the entire validity of historical research" (p. 87). The last essay in the collection, Paul Edmondson's "'The Shakespeare Establishment' and the Shakespeare Authorship Discussion", explores the various kinds of antagonism at the heart of present-day developments in the authorship con-

troversy, rejects the anti-Shakespeareans' claim that "Shakespeare Studies is an industry in denial" with "too much of a vested interest in the discussion" (pp. 225-26), and illustrates the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's Authorship Campaign started in 2011 and led by Edmondson himself.

The book ends with an "Afterword" by James Shapiro which usefully summarises and comments on the main authorship topics addressed in the collection. As he already did in his outstanding *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (2010), Shapiro points out that anti-Shakespeareans share with Shakespeareans a methodology ultimately based on post-Romantic assumptions about the autobiographical nature of creative writing – which was actually first introduced and embraced by professional Shakespeare scholars themselves – and urges fellow Shakespeareans to abandon such a perspective as the best way to counter the sceptics' movement. However, as anti-Shakespeareans do not really harbour "reasonable doubts" but rather a faith, no critical stance or strategy is likely to make them disappear any time soon – witness the publication of the essay collection *Shakespeare beyond Doubt?* (edited by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's chairman John M. Shahan and by Alexander Waugh, 2013) shortly after *Shakespeare beyond Doubt* and the ongoing debate on the internet and other media. At least, thanks to the invaluable work of Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson, "responding to the next film, or the next campaign, or the next question posed about Shakespeare's authorship" will be "that much easier" (p. 240).

Laura Talarico, Sapienza University of Rome

Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xiv+357 pp., £26.99.

"Not a company keeper": this is how John Aubrey famously described Shakespeare in a note written down about sixty-five years after the playwright's death and based on the actor William Beeston's testimony. Aubrey later crossed out the note and, in his *Brief Lives*, asserted instead that Shakespeare was "very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit" (p. 311). Neither of these statements, of course, can be considered as solid evidence for a biographical reconstruction of Shakespeare's character. They do, however, represent the two main, contradictory perspectives which can be detected throughout the history of Shakespeare criticism: on the one hand, a deep awareness of the unrivalled quality of the dramatist's achievement – what Coleridge termed Shakespeare's "still remaining uniqueness" (p. 304) –, which seems to set him apart from his contemporaries; on the other hand, an acknowledgement of the influence that early modern educational and cultural institutions, and particularly the working patterns of the theatre industry, had on him. In *Shakespeare in Company* Bart van Es brings together these two polarised positions, showing

that they are both correct. The Shakespeare who emerges from this book is, paradoxically, 'unique in company': his work is unparalleled partly because of the unparalleled material circumstances he enjoyed and because of the poets, playwrights and actors he met.

To demonstrate his thesis, van Es offers a lucid and ambitious re-examination of the whole of Shakespeare's career. The volume divides into four, chronologically arranged parts, each one analysing the different professional companies Shakespeare kept in the course of his life and how these affected his artistic output. Part 1, "Shakespeare as Conventional Poet-Playwright (1592-1594)", focuses on the writers – from Christopher Marlowe to Robert Greene, from Thomas Kyd to George Peele – with whom Shakespeare competed, and in some cases collaborated, at the beginning of his career, highlighting the "deep, fibrous intertextuality" (p. 28) and the "compositional habits" (p. 37) his early works share with those of his contemporaries. At this stage, van Es claims, Shakespeare was still a conventional and imitative writer, whose development seems to follow a preconceived model, partly established through the example of Ovid, which was common to many other poet-playwrights of his age.

The second part, "Shakespeare as Company Man (1594-1599)", is devoted to what, according to van Es, was the single most significant and transformative event in Shakespeare's development: his decision in 1594 to become a 'sharer' in the newly formed Chamberlain's Men. It is only after this date that Shakespeare's trajectory started to diverge radically from that of his fellow poets and dramatists. His new position allowed the playwright to exert an unprecedented control over the dramatic life of his plays and, most importantly, over casting. From that moment onwards, Shakespeare started to write his roles for specific actors, such as the great Richard Burbage and the energetic clown William Kemp – who were also sharers in the acting company – exploiting their peculiarities; and this, in its turn, enabled him to devise new techniques of characterisation and to create "psychological depth" (p. 98). In this period, Shakespeare ceased to take interest in the print publication of his work and his involvement with co-authorship waned. The key innovation in this second phase, however, is what van Es defines "relational drama": starting from *Richard II*, he contends, "the distinctive feature of Shakespeare's dramaturgy is the relationship between and within clusters of characters" (p. 119). In other words, the close relationship between the playwright and his performers made possible by the founding of a new, stable acting company gave rise to an original kind of drama, itself concerned with relationships. It is mainly thanks to Shakespearean characters' ability to interact that the audience can perceive them as three-dimensional 'personalities', and this distinguishes them both from Shakespeare's previous creations and from the humoral characters in the plays of contemporary dramatists such as Chapman or Jonson.

The longest and most engaging part of the book – "Shakespeare as Playhouse Investor (1599-1608)" – focuses on what the author identifies as

the third phase of Shakespeare's career, when the playwright became part-owner of the Globe. 1599, van Es argues, marked a second watershed that put Shakespeare in a position not only distinct from but exceptionally superior to that of any other contemporary dramatist. At the same time, especially after Will Kemp left the Chamberlain's Men in 1600, Richard Burbage became unquestionably the company's leading performer. The result was that the "partnership of equals" formed in 1594 was replaced by "a personal partnership between the pre-eminent actor and the pre-eminent poet of the age" (p. 162). This new, hierarchical arrangement provoked a further change in Shakespeare's compositional method: his plots became more and more built around their protagonists, so much so that in plays such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* the lead speaks more than thirty percent of the line total. The transformation, of course, was qualitative as well as quantitative: the investment in Burbage's exceptional talent led Shakespeare to experiment unprecedented forms of characterisation and, particularly after the creation of Hamlet, to explore in ever new ways "that within which passes show" (pp. 239ff). But there were also other actors in the company for whom Shakespeare crafted purposely tailored roles, and van Es devotes a lengthy, stimulating chapter to Robert Arnim, Will Kemp's successor as principal comic performer of the Chamberlain's Men, whose individual style of clowning and whose own writings – especially *Fool upon Fool* and *Quips upon Questions* – inspired a whole series of Shakespearean 'melancholy' fools such as Touchstone, Feste, Thersites, Lavatch and, of course, the Fool in *King Lear*.

The fourth and final part of van Es's book, "Shakespeare in the Company of Playwrights Again (1608-1614)", concentrates on the last period of the dramatist's career, when, after the composition of *Coriolanus*, yet another metamorphosis in his dramaturgy can be detected. A number of interpretive hypotheses have been put forward by successive generations of critics in order to explain the origins of Shakespeare's late style. Having taken into account many of these explanations, and having shown their respective shortcomings, van Es suggests that the crucial factor can be identified, once again, in a shift in Shakespeare's daily pattern of work and in the company he kept. 1608 was, among other things, the year in which the Blackfriars venture started; contrary to the Globe venture, however, the controlling syndicate of this indoor theatre was dominated by men with business interests in the investment rather than by performers, and, consequently, the investment itself "in fact, crystallized a separation between housekeepers and mere actors that had been in progress for some time" (p. 258); moreover, because of a severe outbreak of plague that same year, all London playhouses were closed, almost without interruption, for over two years. These events must have loosened Shakespeare's connections with the acting profession. If, as Russ McDonald affirmed in *Shakespeare's Late Style* (2006), one of the distinctive qualities of Shakespeare's last plays is a weakening of "the link between

speech and speaker", this could reflect, according to van Es, "a weakening of the link between the players and Shakespeare himself" (p. 255). The events of 1608, then, prompted a reversal of the watershed of 1594. This helps to explain why Shakespeare in his last phase resumed, to some extent, the practice of his first phase: he worked, once again, "more as a poet than as a director of actors" (p. 262) and the company he kept became mainly that of other writers. Their presence is evident in the recurring representation of author figures in the romances – ranging from John Gower as Chorus in *Pericles* to the 'playwright' Prospero in *The Tempest* – as well as in the re-emergence of co-authorship, particularly with John Fletcher, his successor as principal playwright for the King's Men and a "shaping influence" (p. 265), van Es argues, even before the beginning of their collaboration.

Shakespeare in Company offers a meticulously researched synthesis of existing Shakespeare scholarship as well as some fresh insights on the playwright's artistic development. Taken together, Aubrey's contradictory statements provide van Es with a "useful paradigm" that enables him to interpret Shakespeare's achievement as an unmatched "combination of integration and difference" (p. 311).

Laura Talarico, Sapienza University of Rome

Chris Laoutaris, *Shakespeare and the Countess: The Battle That Gave Birth to the Globe*, London, Fig Tree, 2014, xvii+503 pp., £20.00.

Shakespeare and the Countess is a well-researched and intriguing work of detection. Chris Laoutaris uncovers the story of how, in 1596, the Lord Chamberlain's Men's plans for a theatre of their own in the Blackfriars district were thwarted by the formidable Lady Elizabeth Russell, self-styled Dowager Countess of Bedford. In November that year the Countess, who lived in the same area, successfully submitted a petition to Queen Elizabeth I's Privy Council, which prevented the opening of the newly built, state-of-the-art playhouse. According to Laoutaris, this episode nearly destroyed Shakespeare's career at the time but, in the long run, contributed to his success: forced to find a different location, the Chamberlain's Men moved to Bankside, where they built the Globe. Had they been able to use the new indoor theatre in 1596, Laoutaris argues, Shakespeare might have developed the style of the romances "Much earlier, and perhaps we would not now have the great tragedies – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* – which were produced in the first six years after the opening of the Globe" (p. 415). In other words, we would not have Shakespeare as we know him today.

The Countess's petition is not in itself a new find. Discovered in the 1830s by the Shakespearean critic, and notorious forger, John Payne Collier, it has been known to scholars for a long time. Unfortunately, however, as Collier decided to improve on it by fabricating a 'counter-plea' bearing the

name 'Will[ia]m Shakespeare' which was revealed in 1860 to be spurious, the petition's authenticity was also questioned. It was subsequently proved to be genuine (it is now regarded as an accurate contemporary copy of the original address to the Privy Council) but, because of its association with the infamy of the Collier forgeries, it "dropped out of public consciousness" (p. 6). Chris Laoutaris wishes to repair the damage done by Collier supplying further, compelling evidence that the petition is authentic; but, most of all, he focuses on a specific, and rather surprising, aspect of the document: its thirty-one signatories include Shakespeare's patron, George Carey, second baron Hunsdon, and Richard Field, his fellow Stratfordian and publisher of the immensely popular *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. This looks like a disconcerting act of disloyalty. "What could have possessed these men, who by all accounts were damaging their own interests in their support of Elizabeth Russell, to turn against Shakespeare?" (p. 7). And who was the woman that managed to convince them?

In order to solve these enigmas, Laoutaris reconstructs the lives of Lady Russell's co-petitioners and unravels their relationships, thus introducing his readers to a varied and fascinating cast of characters and offering them a vivid picture of the whole Blackfriars neighbourhood in Shakespeare's time. He shows that many of the signatories were connected with St Anne's Church in the Blackfriars, a hub of Puritan zeal and Lady Russell's centre of operations, where Richard Field served as a sideman and churchwarden – a circumstance which contributes to explain his 'betrayal'. The greater part of the book, however, is devoted to Shakespeare's fearsome adversary, Lady Elizabeth, a "woman who broke […] spectacularly with contemporary rules of female conduct" (p. 7), whom Laoutaris undertakes to rescue from oblivion and whose reputation he endeavours to redress.

Born in 1540, Elizabeth was the daughter of the humanist scholar and religious reformer Sir Anthony Cooke, who had been tutor to Edward VI and, convinced that "women are as capable of learning as men" (p. 24), ensured that Elizabeth and her four sisters received a high standard education, exactly like their brothers – so much so that their home, Gidea Hall in Essex, was praised by the Cambridge scholar Walter Haddon as a "little university" for women (p. 23). Elizabeth was married, and widowed, twice: first to Thomas Hoby, the English translator of Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* and ambassador to France, who left her the house in the Blackfriars; then to John Russell, heir of the earl of Bedford, who predeceased his father and thus never inherited the title – a detail which did not prevent Elizabeth from calling herself the 'Dowager Countess'. Exposed to radical religious ideas from her earliest youth, Lady Russell was a committed Puritan activist all her life and, as the sister-in-law of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, she was extremely well-connected with the court. Thanks to Chris Laoutaris's extensive archival research, this neglected figure emerges as a woman of uncommon erudition and indomitable will, "a protector of orphans and an early champion of

women's rights": someone to whom "warfare had become second nature" (p. 8). But not only does Laoutaris re-assess the role played by Lady Russell during her lifetime, he also takes care of her 'afterlife' (cf. "Epilogue: Afterlife of a Murderess"). Outside of specialist circles, today the Dowager Countess is mostly remembered as the 'Wicked Lady' who killed her own infant son and whose ghost haunts Bisham Abbey, the Hoby seat in Berkshire; Laoutaris demonstrates that there is no evidence to support these legends and decidedly rejects all the allegations against his heroine.

Given the space devoted to Lady Russell's biography, the title *Shakespeare and the Countess* is partly misleading. Although the author sets out to solve the puzzles posed by Elizabeth Russell's petition concerning Shakespeare's career, Shakespeare himself is a secondary figure in the overall drama reconstructed in the volume. Chris Laoutaris does however put forward some interesting hypotheses on the influence the unconventional Countess might have exerted on the Bard's work and on the creation of some of his characters. He suggests for instance that, claiming his revenge, Shakespeare probably embedded allusions to Lady Elizabeth's violent feats in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and, as other critics have also maintained, that he parodied her son, Thomas Posthumous Hoby, through the Puritanical Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. But Laoutaris's main contention is that the playwright used Lady Russell as the model for the Dowager Countess of Roussillon in *All's Well That Ends Well*, a character defined by George Bernard Shaw as "the most beautiful old woman's part ever written" (p. 8). If this was the case, Shakespeare may have sensed the pivotal and, on balance, positive role the Countess had unwittingly played in shaping his artistic activity and legacy; he may have realised that his adversary's machinations had turned out to be a *felix culpa.*

Laura Talarico, Sapienza University of Rome

Peter Cochran, *Small-Screen Shakespeare*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, 531 pp., £59.99.

"*Small-Screen Shakespeare* is a guide to all the Shakespeare productions available for viewing on computer or TV". The notes on the back cover of Peter Cochran's book begin with a statement that cannot be taken seriously: a staggering number of Shakespeare productions from all over the world are now available on YouTube and no individual researcher (or, indeed, team of researchers) can claim to have watched and catalogued them all. Of course, Cochran has only listed and analyzed items that he has personally seen, or at least heard of, and his 'world view' is very much Anglo-centric. He takes great pride in having unearthed a Peruvian *El Rey Lear* (dir. Edgar Saba, 1999) on YouTube, and shares with us his discovery that "acting in Peru is just as good as anything to be found in London […] if not better" (p.

313). However, about eighty percent of his entries are dedicated to Anglo-American TV productions and big screen films that have been released on DVD and can thus be viewed on small screens.

The book is divided into five parts. Part 1 focuses on Orson Welles, Franco Zeffirelli, Laurence Olivier, and Kenneth Branagh. So much has been written about the 14 Shakespeare films of these directors that one can hardly expect ground-breaking new readings in the 41 pages Cochran devotes to them. A former RSC actor himself, the author has an eye for details of performance that may have escaped the non-professional viewer – for example, the foregrounding of Gertrude (Glenn Close)'s realization that she has been poisoned in Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*. He is less reliable when he offers his own interpretation of fairly complex Shakespearean characters: "Hamlet is a charismatic serial killer" (p. 28).

The bulk of the book is devoted to part 2, in which the author catalogues big screen and TV versions of individual plays. Again, his comments are often helpful and illuminating when he can draw on his own experience as a theatre actor. He is clearly more at ease with TV versions of stage performances than with films. Thus, for example, the entries on Michael Bogdanov's *Wars of the Roses* (1990) are especially interesting for readers who may consider watching those flawed but exciting productions of the Histories, but the entry on Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964), a film Cochran admires, is too sketchy and unfocused to be of any real use for prospective viewers.

Parts 3 (loose screen adaptations of the plays) and 4 (Shakespearean references in non-Shakespearean films) deal almost exclusively with films that had already been included in Richard Burt's (ed.) *Shakespeares after Shakespeare* (2007) and in Marcus Pitcaithly's *Shakespeare on Film: An Encyclopedia* (2010). No good reason is offered for the inclusion of two theatre reviews (of Ingmar Bergman's *Hamlet* and Peter Hall's *Antony and Cleopatra*) as part 5.

In his introduction, Cochran claims to have written his book for the "tiny minority [that] take perverse pleasure in putting Shakespeare's plays on, or in going to see his plays when they're put on" (p. 6). The needs of his chosen addressees would have been better served if he had abandoned his overambitious attempt at comprehensiveness in favour of in-depth analyses of a limited number of televised stage productions.

Mariangela Tempera, University of Ferrara

Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, eds, *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, 296 pp., paperback edition €28.60.

'Spectators', 'listeners', 'assembly', 'audience' are different ways to refer to the Renaissance playgoers, each privileging a sensory sphere over the others. Complementing the traditional view of the primacy of the aural dimen-

sion in Renaissance theatre, this collection of essays explores the range of senses addressed by the theatrical performance, together with the related conventions that may be lost to a contemporary audience. Divided into three sections, the essays examine the fabric of early modern theatres, the technologies of the body and the sensorial complexity of the stage.

In the first part, Tiffany Stern analyses the role of Shakespeare's master-metaphor, the *theatrum mundi*, in its physicality, interpreting the theatrical building as a prop. Next, Gwilym Jones reviews the effects required for the staging of storms, particularly for the 'dropping fire' of *Julius Caesar*, retrieving the supernatural expectations engendered by the convention in the early modern playgoer; *The Tempest*'s stage directions are seen as unusual for their depiction of lightning as a sound effect, a strategy that creates the possibility for the storm to echo throughout the play. Natalie Rivere de Carles then addresses the shifting role of arrases, clothes, curtains, hangings and veils, as objects that used to signal the need to substitute eyesight with the sight of the mind; textile props performed a range of functions: they could anticipate the genre of a play, represent visual conventions or even draw attention on a character's emotional state.

The second section features Lucy Munro's essay on the use of stage blood and false limbs on the early modern stage as being related to the body's ontological status, always midway between the physical and the symbolic. The spectacularization of the body on the Elizabethan stage was in no way an example of proto-naturalism: the crudeness of gory scenes and amputated limbs was always linked to a sense of the cosmic forces involved in human affairs. Andrea Stevens treats cosmetic transformations, or 'paint', such as Martius' sanguinary appearance in *Coriolanus*, in relation to blushing, showing how 'paint' was another way to materialize anxieties about false appearances. In "Costume, Disguise, and Self-display", Bridget Escolme starts from the parodic value assumed by disguising after the Restoration to illustrate the readiness with which a change of clothes ensured a shift of identity. In this way the author highlights the difference between a contemporary notion of identity and the early modern one, which did not assume the existence of a truer self hidden beneath clothing, so that the *cucullus* – the hood – could indeed make the *monachum*. On the other hand, disguises were used to stage concerns about the vulnerability of the great and a simultaneous need for protection. Paul Menzer, then, explores the minor role played by print in theatre, in which scrolls were handwritten, placing the early modern stage between "textual multiplicity and scriptural singularity".

In part 3, Bruce Smith follows the complex circulation of sound between the different areas of the stage, particularly in relation to the stage directions of 'within' and 'without'; while the former disconnects sound from vision, the latter aligns them. Holly Dugan focuses on how the actual smells of the theatres were used to build 'smellscapes' evoking specific occasions, such as Bartholomew's Fair. Farah Karim-Cooper closes the

collection with a contribution on metaphors of taste and, more generally, on the tactile dimension of theatregoing; the second section of her essay examines onstage kisses and the anticipations they portended for the early modern audience. Evelyn Tribble's coda, finally going back to the sense of sight, shows how sight was intended as a creative act, always subject to manipulation and error, thus questioning the accountability of vision in a way specific to the early modern stage.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Bridget Escolme, *Emotional Excess on the Shakespearean Stage: Passion's Slaves*, Arden Shakespeare, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2014, 302 pp., paperback edition €33.89.

Moving along the boundary of historical difference, Escolme explores the gap between early modern views on the expression of emotions and contemporary canons of propriety. Her examination of recent Shakespearean productions brings to light how the gap between the cultural constraints that were operative upon emotions in Shakespeare's times and in the twentieth/twenty-first centuries affects interpretation.

The first chapter focuses on *Coriolanus* and the problem of the warrior's anger. While Plutarch ascribes Martius' choleric temper to the lack of a fatherly education that made him socially unskilled, recent productions, such as Yukio Ninagawa's or Dominic Dromgoole's, are clearly conceived within a post-Freudian outlook, for which anger results from the repression of a psychological need related to the mother. Ralph Fiennes' filmic version asks the viewer to consider anger as the soldier's 'spontaneous efficiency': as the way a warrior stays alive. Being equated with his functional anger, Martius becomes a man whose purpose and value are decreed by the society which can make use of him.

The second chapter addresses the problem of laughter and its excesses in early modern drama. While a twenty-first-century audience may be disturbed by the drive to laugh at tragic figures, an early modern audience may have laughed without reserves. The author considers Elizabethan theories on laughter in its relation to pity, and its power to create and undo communities. The exhibition of mad figures on the early modern stage may have been intended as a partly comic show, in the absence of hints for interpretations based on shame. Escolme, then, examines contemporary productions of *Twelfth Night*, particularly Tim Crouch's *I, Malvolio*, which asks the audience to consider the cruel excesses of the laughter excited by the monologue.

Chapter 3 considers love and its excesses in *All's Well* and in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Prompting the lovers to trespass the boundaries of social propriety, love is notably an excessive passion. However, Escolme points out a basic

difference between the early modern notion of love – always contaminated by the somatic nature of the passion – and the twentieth-century tendency to separate it from lust. Helena's and Cleopatra's loves contradict current notions of maturity and coldness, a reason why contemporary productions show an anxiety over the excessive power of feelings, and, in the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, have anachronistically stressed the gap between the Queen's theatrical excessiveness and a supposedly more authentic personal plainness.

Chapter 4 is concerned with grief and the cultural limits of its acceptability. Although the moderation of grief was crucial to the early modern Christian ethics of a cosmologically god-given state of things, early modern theatre depended on depictions of excesses of grief and sorrow for the achievement of dramatic pleasure. Too long or too passionate a mourning was considered to adumbrate a lack of faith in redemption, whereas a contained grief for the dead was everyone's religious duty. While there is continuity in the notion that excessive sorrow could lead to mental illness, a contemporary audience is not conditioned by philosophical or religious exhortations to moderate its outward expression. With reference to *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, the book considers the relationship between grief and action, particularly political action. In the *Henry VI* plays, grief is seen as an obstacle to action, unless it changes its nature into anger. In *Richard III*, women's grief turns active, as the language of curse that springs from it seems to precipitate Richard's downfall. Roxana Silbert's 2012 production for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre exploits concepts of movement and stasis, having Margaret and Elizabeth lie on the floor, so that the active, obstructive role of excessive grief in the play is foregrounded. Turning to recent productions of *Hamlet*, Escolme remarks how the question of authenticity becomes more and more relevant to political contexts in which the expression of one's unhappiness or uneasiness is prohibited and the State polices one's relationship and outward manifestations. A rejection of negative feelings seems to be common to Claudius' kingdom and some 'seemingly' democratic regimes, imposing a compulsory happiness or an easy way of drowning sorrow with alcohol over their subjects.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Ralph Hertel, *Staging England in the Elizabethan History Play: Performing National Identity*, Farham, Ashgate, 2014, 271 pp., €77.51.

Situating Shakespeare's historical plays within the context of early modern non-fictional writings and cultural materials, the book traces the role of theatre in the transition from the concept of nation as a realm personified in its ruler, to one identified with a geographical space and the community of its people. After a review of the main positions on the emergence of the idea

of a nation – the primordialist, modernist, and ethno-symbolist approaches – Hertel traces the emergence of nationalism in the late sixteenth century. Engaging the audience in imagined communities and asking them to consider and judge kings and politics, theatre was crucial in shaping a new national idea.

Essential, in Hertel's view, was "the cartographic turn": cartography produced a space removed from the individual's psychological dimension, a space visually and verbally homogeneous, which gave actual existence to the representation of a nation that coincided with its spatial borders. The human figures that decorate sixteenth-century maps are the sign of an attempt to re-humanize an all too objective and cold national space.

Maps were also threatening tools, which served the definition of private property: as such, they are used in *King Lear* – in which land is envisaged as a possession to be handed on almost as a physical transmission, with disastrous effects – and in *Henry IV Part 1*, in which the map features as the main tool of the conspirators. In Hertel's view, *Henry IV Part 1* mirrors the new cartographic turn in the width and swiftness of the characters' journeys, which "hardly accord to human scale" but presume the bird's-eye view of the map. Quite in the same way, *Richard III* is tied to a geographical perspective: while the play remains London-centred, the charismatic Richard holds the scene of power firmly, whereas, as the play shifts towards Bosworth Fields, Richard is belittled in a growing vision of the national dimension of history. Richmond's relative weakness as a character accords with the shifting poise from the monarch to the nation as the root of authority.

Part III is devoted to religion and its role in the formation of a national identity, fostered by the many controversies and turns that changed the picture of the sixteenth century. According to the author, *King John* is the play that embodies the need for a new national unity that downplays religious dissention in favour of a nationalized religion.

Part IV analyses the semantic shift of the word 'nation' from the idea of a noble descent to the general population. A debate on the 'commonwealth' granted the emergence of an idea of political authority as being rooted in a community of people. Accordingly, *Henry VI Part 2* is seen to embody anxieties over the basic instability of such an idea of nation, exhibiting its cracks in the class conflict that opposes the common people, the upper classes, and the minor landed gentry.

The last section concentrates on gender and the anomaly of female rule. While Elizabeth's reign created a rift between the king's two bodies – which, in the author's view, is best captured by Marlowe's *Edward II* – a tradition ascribing female qualities to England along with a political imagery of a basically masculinized English people was strengthened. In this light, the book implies, nationalist views of authority can be seen as a means to contain anxieties about the female monarch and her body.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Lois Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 497 pp., £69.95 / 87.50, paperback edition £22.99 / 28.80.

Potter's biography explores Shakespeare's life chronologically and in fact confirms how little we know about his personal life and yet reading it we become more familiar with the particulars of the period in which he lived and thus perhaps closer to an understanding of the mind which produced the drama and poems. Relocating Shakespeare in his own time the author succeeds in reconstructing events and conjecturing – but always on solid documented facts – how these may have influenced the playwright and poet. Lois Potter's own experience as a theatre scholar and reviewer emerges clearly in the noteworthy observations on Shakespeare's contemporaries and possible collaborators, as well as on the role of actors and audiences in the shaping of the plays. It is worth mentioning that the recent revised edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* edited by Potter herself (Arden 2015) contains a long and stimulating introduction in which, amongst other things, the question of collaboration is opportunely investigated and inserted in the broader question of authorship and the stage history of the play, including issues related to casting, adaptation and performance, is very closely examined. The punctual analysis of aspects concerning the status of collaborative plays and theatrical history and theory further confirms the editor's exceptional competence in these matters.

The extraordinarily detailed and documented information surrounding the world of Shakespeare from his earliest days – including speculation on matters such as who may have attended his christening – is certainly a tribute to research even if it inevitably fails to give us absolute certainties; yet the biography is praiseworthy for accomplishing the task of putting together all known 'proofs' of Shakespeare's doings through his transactions and through recorded references to him by contemporaries. The most appealing part of this study however is the reflection on Shakespeare's production: from the economic and political influence on the publication of the plays themselves to the meticulous and often original analyses of the single works which often provide fresh hypotheses.

The strength of Potter's book lies in the vivid and accurate picture of theatre activities and in her critical acumen when approaching the texts more than in the unquestionably scholarly attempt to reconstruct the life of the man William Shakespeare.

Maria Valentini, University of Cassino

Simonetta de Filippis, ed., *William Shakespeare e il senso del tragico*, Napoli, Loffredo Editore, 2013, 317 pp., €14.50.

This volume collects contributions to a Shakespearean conference organized by the University of Naples "L'Orientale" in 2012. The main theme,

Shakespeare's sense of the tragic, is approached from various perspectives which range from a more comprehensive view on the philosophy of the tragic during the Renaissance, to more specific sections concentrating on the tragic gaze, adaptations and rewritings of Shakespeare's works and two final parts which deal more directly with stage performances and Shakespearean directors, actors and actresses.

The opening paper written by the editor Simonetta de Filippis lucidly emphasises the innovative nature of Shakespearean tragedy, a tragedy of men with flaws and frailties, no longer victims of God's wrath but rather tragically responsible for their own fate. The sense of uncertainty and precariousness which characterizes aspects of the Renaissance is observed through the other papers which make up this first section, through examinations of *Richard II* and the metaphor of the mirror as a tool for attaining outer knowledge and reflecting on identity, of the role of passions both in the tragedies and the comedies and of Marlowe's Faustus whose thirst for knowledge is compared to Hamlet's desire for self-knowledge. The section closes with a detailed analysis of King Lear as a father more than a king, and a more general reflection on the Aristotelian idea of the tragic intended as a particular narrative form and a specific series of events.

King Lear is also at the centre of the opening two contributions in the section concerning the tragic gaze. The first minutely analyses the father/daughter relationship, which Shakespeare was to develop further in his romances, and the search for motherly care – together with the acknowledgement of its lack – in association with the storm scenes. The theme of filial *pietas* is interestingly explored also through examination of significant artworks. The tragedy of Lear is seen, in the second paper, as deriving from a breakdown in communication: Cordelia's silence and her "nothing" are shown to give rise to the ensuing confusion and manifestations of cruelty, a cruelty which finds expression through the abundant animal imagery present in the play. Imagery, this time of an erotic nature, is next explored in a study on *Othello* which deals with the concept of obscenity both in its sense of indecency and in that of taking place off-stage – outside and beyond the scene. The audience is invited to gaze at what happens on stage and, at the same time, to turn away from the occurring monstrosities. Gaze is again central in the concluding paper, this time with a captivating analysis of the Sleeping Beauty myth; some Shakespearean females are seen as the object of a desiring male gaze whilst in a position of submission because they are asleep, or lying down or in a state which appears to be between life and death.

A form of Shakespearean transcodification is presented in an appealing analysis on "Digital Shakespeare" in which the author comments on the implications of the interactive mode provided by the web. This is investigated with respect to the Shakespearean text and particularly to the sense of the tragic which traditionally requires an extended period and instead needs to be strongly reduced when expressed through the internet. From

transcodification to transposition we might say in the next contribution on Shakespeare in Bollywood. *Othello* and *Macbeth* are investigated through their Indian versions *Omkara* and *Maqbool* by Vishal Bhardwaj demonstrating how the tragic sense of Shakespeare's plays can be transposed into a contemporary Indian setting where modern politics and corruption echo their original counterparts. Auden's famous *The Sea and the Mirror* is the object of a paper exploring issues of Shakespearean rewritings. The tragic sense in *The Tempest* is expressed in this poem with reference to the tragic events of the forties, and the individual Shakespearean characters are acutely described with Caliban significantly obtaining the final monologue as the one embodying – according to the poet – man's true nature. The closing contribution to this section is devoted to the monologues of Tim Crouch where particular emphasis is given to minor characters with a view to demonstrating that history does not belong to heroes. Apart from the meticulous approach to Crouch's narration, the paper interestingly contextualizes its main focus through the so-called 'Mobility studies' introduced by Stephen Greenblatt and other scholars in 2010 which advocate that in dealing with cultural processes what should be taken into account is the mobility and fluidity of cultural traditions and identities.

Three contributions concentrating on Italian stage performances, stirred by Shakespeare, compose the penultimate section of this volume. The first introduces us to the production by the Neapolitan actor and playwright Giovanni Piscitelli, *Rosalina: ovvero l'incubo di una notte di fine autunno*, which gives body and substance to the very slight figure of Rosaline in *Romeo and Juliet*. The specificity of this play and of its protagonist is that it gains inspiration from both the Shakespearean text and John Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*; in fact, the analysis of Piscitelli's play is preceded by a rich investigation into the sense of the tragic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries precisely through a comparison of the two works which both make use of the eye metaphor as a means for perception of reality. *Hamlet*, as mirror of modernity, is identified, in the second paper, also as a reflection of what Lyotard has defined the "postmodern condition". The rewritings of *Hamlet* by Carmelo Bene and Federico Tiezzi – which are exhaustively commented upon – function as a kind of deconstruction of the traditional tragic element. Both playwrights find in Shakespeare's most famous play the ideal, and possibly only true, subject for their own research into the nature of the tragic and the possibility of its staging. Finally, *Totò, principe di Danimarca* by Leo de Berardinis invites us to reflect upon the possibilities of mixing the comic with the tragic. De Berardinis' production seems to show us that this is not only possible but can produce most effective results. The Italian playwright exhibits highbrow and lowbrow cultures alongside each other in all aspects of his work, from language to setting and music. Different acting styles mingle and the play closes on the notes of Verdi's *Falstaff* as if to remind us of the burlesque nature of our universe.

The closing section of this book provides us with brief personal viewpoints of directors and actors/actresses. Laura Angiulli tells us of the different types of power and forms of evilness exhibited through her direction of *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, initially produced as a trilogy and later as individual plays. The actor Giovanni Battaglia recounts his experiences in interpreting Iago and Michelangelo Dalisi – who is a director as well as an actor – comments on the comic and tragic elements which are frequently combined in Shakespeare and which he accentuates in his own version of *Hamlet*, *Per Amleto*, a play which he centres around the concepts of memory and oblivion. Alessandra D'Elia, an actress who considers Shakespeare the richest source for any performer, stresses her own personal reaction to the female characters she has impersonated whereas Stefano Jotti recalling Peter Brook stresses the extreme power of words in Shakespeare's works which, according to him, function as epiphanies. Finally we hear the voice of Piscicelli, whose adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* had been previously dealt with, explaining himself the reasons which pushed him to place at the centre of his production the neglected Rosaline who existed only through the words of others and his choice to translate the iambic pentameter with an archaic Neapolitan dialect.

The volume, as we have seen, ranges from theoretical issues concerning the tragic mode to the practical implications of putting it on stage as witnessed by those directly involved. The various aspects approached in the different sections provide an extraordinarily rich and vivid picture of the distinct ways a complex theme such as Shakespeare's tragic sense can be confronted and the individual contributions are noteworthy for their capacity to introduce us to less popular performances and directors, new studies and schools of criticism, original interpretations and reflections. This collection of essays confirms the vitality and innovative nature of research which has always been associated with scholars working at "L'Orientale" in Naples, a University which is traditionally an academic cutting-edge institution.

Maria Valentini, University of Cassino

Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 236 pp., £58.00.

Spectrality has haunted Calbi's writing for some time. In *Spectral Shakespeares*, however, the author takes us into new territories. In his introduction, he revisits the theoretical grounding of his work, projecting it onto the new screens provided by a selection of twenty-first-century adaptations of some of Shakespeare's tragedies. In a constantly re-mediating to-and-fro movement, the shifting scenarios of his projections interrogate the practice and thinking of media and performance, providing a major, innovative contribu-

tion to theoretical studies of Shakespeare adaptations and of the new media in general.

In each of his six chapters, Calbi focuses on a different adaptation and its interactions not only with the Shakespearean 'pre-texts', seen as incomplete, fragmentary texts-in-the-making, recreated retrospectively by the new work, but with other adaptations, performances and writing, theoretical, critical and literary. As the author notes in his discussion of Alexander Fodor's experimental *Hamlet* (chapter 5), "Both 'Shakespearecentric' and 'Shakespeareeccentric' concerns show that there is no unmediated access to 'Shakespeare': the film cannot adapt Shakespeare without repeatedly conjuring up the processes of remediation through which 'Shakespeare' is consumed, reprocessed, and recycled" (p. 110). In this sense, his discussion of Billy Morissette's *Scotland, PA*, and Peter Moffat's BBC *Shakespeare Retold Macbeth* (chapter 1) could be taken to suggest a self-reflexively culinary actualization of the process of textual and mediatic consumption and cannibalistic incorporation.

Kristian Levring's Dogme95 film *The King Is Alive* literally rewrites and re-performs the 'bare life' – and text – of *King Lear* in a Namibian desert (chapter 2). Through a continuous process of boundary crossing, it explores issues of displacement, dispossession and dis-adjustment, to which Calbi applies the Derridean concept of autoimmunity (sacrificial self-destruction vs. self-protection as a principle that aporetically opens the space of death, but also of survival, or *survivance*). Some of the 'bareness' of Levring's film returns in the 'rhetoric of silence' that pervades Alexander Abela's *Souli* (chapter 3), a Senegalese reworking of *Othello*. Foregrounding postcolonial issues of textual appropriation, transmission and circulation, it reproduces Othello's concern with narration and with the tale of his self to be delivered to the future in the desire of its Othello-like protagonist to ensure the survival of Thiossane, the traditional oral story he has been seeking to recreate but at the same time protect from the appropriative impulse of a young white researcher: "By making an absent, unwritten, and perhaps unwriteable, *African* tale interact with the *Othello* script, *Souli* forces an interrogation of the status of *Othello* as a Western inscription and appropriation of the alterity of the exotic Other" (p. 73). A literary 'scramble for Africa' paralleled by the possession and abuse of the body of a young African woman by the film's Iago figure.

Ethnic conflict and issues of hos(ti)pitality and migration are central to Roberta Torre's *Sud Side Stori* (chapter 4), a significantly re- and mis-translated 'Shakespeare-in-translation' set in Palermo. A 'postmodern pastiche' of *Romeo and Juliet*, but also of *West Side Story* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*, Torre's film presents the tragic story of Toni Giulietto, a local rock singer, and Romea Wacoubo, a Nigerian prostitute, and the opposing 'foreignnesses' of their respective families and communities – and, indeed, of the richly differing media and styles in which the story is played out.

In this focus on the issues of migration and hospitality, Calbi argues, "the response to the alterity of the body of the 'other'/foreigner/migrant (i.e., especially Romea but also the similarly displaced 'native' Toni Giulietto) becomes inextricably intertwined with the question of the incorporation of the 'foreignness' of Shakespeare, a 'textual body' that migrates from an Anglophone to a non-Anglophone context" (pp. 82-83).

Self-reflexivity marks all the works Calbi takes into consideration. In Klaus Knoesel's *Rave Macbeth* (chapter 6), it takes a particularly intricate transmedial form. Using multiple mirror-window-screens and simulations of DVD rewind and fast-forward modes, its response to the reiterative structure of *Macbeth* works by "repeatedly drawing attention to the *essentially* reiterative, self-destroying 'nature' of the media languages of rave culture; by identifying them as performances that are compulsive and addictive and thus also contiguous with the repeated ingestion of drugs" (p. 122). Here the "quasi-suicidal logic" of autoimmunity (p. 129) is applied to ecstasy and the life-enhancing, life-destroying effects of this new version of Shakespeare's "insane root". Both the viewer-consumer (gazed at by the gigantic eye that intermittently re-emerges on the screen) and the Shakespearean text are drawn into its hallucinatory, mirroring iterations.

Such Tweet Sorrow stages *Romeo and Juliet* as a five-week Twitter performance with Royal Shakespeare Company actors improvising on line on 'missions' received from the production team and interacting, via mobile phones and laptops, both with one another and with their Twitter followers in a potentially ever-expanding and addictive connectivity (chapter 7). Calbi notes however how the performance exploits the off-line mode and inattentive or random, intermittent access in the dramatic unfolding of its story: "*Such Tweet Sorrow* can be said to respond to the spectral effect of that extended aporia which is *Romeo and Juliet* – the oxymoronic entanglement of love and death, cure and poison, friend and foe, fate and chance – by creating a self-reflexive, medium-oriented aporia of its own: a hybrid remediation that takes place at the crossroad of a variety of social media feeding upon each other without necessarily converging, a remediation that includes within itself the possibility of remediation's silence and effacement" (p. 162).

Jane Wilkinson, "L'Orientale" University of Naples