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# Book Review: *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol 14. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001.

James Hirsh
*Georgia State University*, jhirsh@gsu.edu

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time the biblical drama enjoyed a brief 'revival' in the 1590s, the incidents depicted were selected with an eye to popular taste and treated in the manner of historical material. Lost from these plays were the emphases on embodiment, on the incarnation, and on the affective bond with the audience. These concerns would instead be transferred to the secular stage.

For Elizabethan playwrights, an anxiety about visual representation complicated the legacy from the medieval theater. O'Connell's conclusion considers the effects of this anxiety on Jonson and Shakespeare, both of whom used meta-theatrical devices to reflect on the visual aspect of theater. Despite his defenses of the theater in works like *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson's insistence on his plays as poems reveals his humanist privileging of text and his ambivalence about visual effects. Although *Much Ado* also stages the reformation distrust of the idolatrous eye through its central courtships, Shakespeare's other plays provide more confident accounts of the visual image and its power to mediate truth. O'Connell reads the final scene of *A Winter's Tale* as a 'legitimation of a way of knowing asserted against the humanist claims for an exclusive, or near exclusive, truth in language' (144). What is most compelling about this interpretation is that it enables O'Connell to suggest that, in the end, Shakespeare embraced his status as a visual artist.

Closely argued, clearly written, and winningly confident in its mastery of its subject, *The Idolatrous Eye* makes important connections between religious and secular drama, and between religion and drama more broadly speaking. The book's major flaw is that it leaves us wanting more: its brevity prevents it from always doing justice to the breadth of its topic. This reader, for one, would have appreciated a more leisurely substantiation of the central claims.

Jacqueline Vanhoutte

John Pitcher (ed). *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol 14. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001. Pp 319.

The lead-off article in the latest volume of *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* is a model of scholarship. In 'Shakespeare's *Richard II* and the Anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock*', Macd. P. Jackson systematically and meticulously presents evidence to demonstrate that *Thomas of Woodstock*, generally regarded as a source for *Richard II* (1595), was actually written later

than Shakespeare's play. Jackson shows how a variety of elements – contractions, feminine endings, locations of pauses in poetic lines, vocabulary – all point to the late 1590s or the opening decade of the seventeenth century rather than to the early 1590s as the most probable date of composition of the play. Jackson's argument about vocabulary employs not only time-honored scholarly tools, such as the *OED*, but the recently available Chadwyck-Healey *Literature Online* (*LION*), an electronic database that allows comprehensive computer searches of English drama and other forms of literature. In some cases, Jackson's search of this database located earlier occurrences of certain words than the earliest entry in the *OED*. Jackson makes a persuasive case that some of the features he examines, such as the locations of pauses, are unlikely to have been the result of a revision of the play. He even proposes an author for *Woodstock*. The play has a number of striking similarities to *When You See Me You Know Me* (1604) by Samuel Rowley, including certain linguistic forms, oaths and expletives, other phraseology, rhyming patterns involving *-y* endings, and spelling eccentricities. Both plays have comic constabularies that seem to be influenced by Dogberry and company in *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598–1600). Similarities between *Richard II* and *Woodstock* are much more likely to have been the result of Shakespeare's influence on Rowley than vice versa.

In 'Rewriting the Narrative of Dramatic Character, or, Not "Shakespearean" but "Debatable"', Ruth Lunney argues that the decisive change in dramatic characterization during the Renaissance was not from representative to individual characters, or from simple to complicated characters, or from an ethical to a psychological perspective, but from characters designed to be viewed and judged by conventional criteria to 'debatable' characters, characters who encourage a 'detachment from interpretive frames' (74). She further argues that Marlowe deserves the credit for the creation of this new kind of character: 'The first of the new "debatable" characters was Marlowe's Faustus' (68). According to Lunney, Shakespeare did not catch up to Marlowe in this regard until his creation of Richard II. Jonson apparently never did catch up; Volpone is a complicated but not a debatable character. The essay is suggestive rather than persuasive. The occurrence of a large-scale shift in techniques of characterization cannot be demonstrated in a brief essay that analyzes in detail only one play and makes only passing assertions about other plays. A more serious problem is the misguided attempt to isolate the one key element of characterization that supposedly really matters. Why does the introduction of 'debatibility' trump the increasing complexity and individuality of characters? These three features seem almost equal in importance and were probably mutually reinforcing. Also, in her very attempts to explain what she means by 'debatable',

Lunney employs the vocabulary that she is trying to supplant. She argues that Faustus is 'debatable' because he detaches himself from conventional perspectives, so his debatability is closely tied to his assertion of individuality. Although it does not succeed in its larger project, Lunney's essay admirably accomplishes a more limited goal. The heart of the essay is Lunney's discussion of *Doctor Faustus*, and that discussion is imaginative, subtle, and insightful.

In 'Second Selves: Marlowe's Cambridge and London Friendships', Constance B. Kuriyama provides valuable information about some of Marlowe's associations and possible associations, although she exaggerates the importance of the essay by setting up and knocking down a straw man. She suggests that the orthodox view of Marlowe is that he was a 'gifted sociopath', whereas she will show he was 'capable of normal sociability and friendship' (87). But few Marlowe scholars believe he was a sociopath incapable of normal sociability. Sometimes Kuriyama leans too heavily on limited evidence. Like Marlowe, Nicholas Faunt was born in Canterbury and educated at Cambridge, but he was ten years older, left Canterbury when Marlowe was eight, and left Cambridge before Marlowe's arrival. Both men were in the metropolis of London in 1586–7, and therefore Faunt 'was approachable ... when Marlowe must have been giving serious thought to his future' (94). On the basis of this tenuous possibility, Kuriyama goes on to declare unequivocally that Faunt was one of 'three men who assisted Marlowe in various ways' (95). Most of the relationships Kuriyama describes fall far short of that between 'second selves'. In one case, however, Kuriyama does provide substantial evidence. Marlowe's relationship with John Benchkin is established by detailed documentation pertaining to the will of Benchkin's mother, signed by Marlowe in 1585.

Ronald Knowles illuminates 'The Political Contexts of Deposition and Election in *Edward II*'. Knowles argues that 'To Marlowe's contemporaries this dramatization of Edward's reign would ... have been ... a direct reflection on the most seditious political issues of the day ... which conflicted absolutely with Tudor orthodoxy' (105). Knowles traces the long history of 'resistance theory' (105) from 'the endorsement of tyrannicide by the republican, classical world' (110) and St. Augustine's declaration that 'a private citizen may kill a tyrant provided he has a mission direct from God' (110) to rationales made by Calvinist Marian exiles and French Huguenots. Knowles suggests that Marlowe gave voice to 'subversive ideas' in *Edward II* but in order to 'escape the censor' adopted a 'clever' ploy (106). This 'strategy', according to Knowles, was simply to endorse 'doctrinal orthodoxy' unequivocally in the second half of the play (115–6). In other words, in order to escape the censors, Marlowe cleverly gave them exactly what they wanted.

William Ingram's 'Laurence Dutton: Stage Player: Missing and Presumed Lost' is a disappointing contribution with a misleading title. Very little of this long essay is concerned with Dutton's career as a player. It focuses almost entirely on his non-theatrical financial dealings after he left the theater. A more accurate title would be 'Laurence Dutton: Borrower, Register Keeper, and Money Changer'. Ingram makes no attempt to suggest how the material he has dredged up from the archives casts light on Renaissance drama in England.

By contrast, Frank Ardolino puts his immense learning to good use in illuminating Thomas Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*. Ardolino locates the play in the rich tradition of literary works that make use of the Book of Esther in one way or another. The most obvious connections are similarities between Haman, the persecutor of Jews in the biblical story, and Hammon, the villain of Dekker's play, but Ardolino teases out other, less obvious parallels not only between the play and the biblical story but between the play and earlier literary uses of the story.

In an important contribution to scholarship on civic antitheatricalism in Renaissance England, Charles Whitney explores the career and motives of John Spencer, a rabid opponent of the theaters, who served as Mayor of London in 1594–5. Spencer was a former Master of the Clothworkers' Company, a director of the East India Company, one of the richest men in London, the courtiers' best-known money-lender, a merchant who once cornered the Levant trade and who was often accused of sharp business practices, and an unpopular mayor. His opposition to the theater reflected efforts by the emerging mercantile elite to exert self-interested, paternalistic control over apprentices, journeymen, and other workers and servants, whose congregation at theaters was regarded by early modern capitalists as a threat to such control. Fortunately for world culture, Spencer's uncompromising attacks on the theater backfired: 'By not offering the Privy Council a meaningful basis for negotiation, Spencer's approach ... helped to write the city out of anything resembling a partnership in regulation' (178). Spencer 'helped give antitheatricalism a bad name' (178). Whitney goes on to argue effectively that the character of Mayor Oatley in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* was designed to satirize Spencer: 'Dekker's portrait of a reluctant father-in-law and rich, overly proud Mayor aloof from both the court and commons fits Spencer about as well as the dramatist could lawfully draw it' (181).

Margaret Maurer makes three distinct arguments in her contribution to the collection. First, she argues that later editors have simplified and conventionalized the character of Bianca by altering the text of *The Taming of the Shrew* that is found in the First Folio. The Bianca that Maurer discovers in the Folio

is feistier and less a simple contrast with Kate than the Bianca created by editors since Rowe, Theobald, and Pope. Second, Maurer suggests that the Folio sets up a parallel between Bianca and Penelope, not the Penelope in the *Odyssey* but the rather different Penelope portrayed in Ovid's *Heroides*. Maurer's third argument is that the features of Bianca she has discovered in the Folio were developed in the character of Byancha in *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* generally attributed to John Fletcher. Although the connections among these three arguments are somewhat tenuous, they each have merit, and collectively they make Bianca and Byancha more interesting than hitherto suspected.

Ian Munro explores the issue of the public sphere in Thomas Middleton's *A Game of Chess*. The basic theoretical framework for recent discussions of the public sphere, a locale or mechanism for the social exchange of views, derive from Jürgen Habermas's work. Although Habermas argued that the public sphere was 'unimaginable until the eighteenth century' (224), some scholars have found incipient forms of a public sphere in the early seventeenth century. One such scholar is Alexandra Halasz, and Munro's essay 'has been influenced by Halasz's formulation' (225). According to Munro, *A Game of Chess* occupies a paradoxical position in regard to the public sphere. On the one hand, the Black House depicted in the play, which is associated with nefarious Catholic forces, operates by means of a 'commodified' network of communication. On the other hand, the performance of the play in a commercial theater necessarily participated in just such a commodified public sphere.

The final article in the collection is of the same very high quality and interest as the first. In 'Marrying Down: Negotiating a More Equal Marriage on the English Renaissance Stage', Marliss C. Desens discusses the inequities of conventional gender roles in the early modern period and then analyzes dramatic works in which woman characters seek to evade those inequities by marrying men of lower social rank or economic class. Among the specific plays she considers are *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing, Cymbeline, Othello, The Widow's Tears*, *Arden of Faversham*, and *The Malcontent.* Desens responds imaginatively to the particularities of individual cases, as in her fine discussion of Olivia:

> In wooing Olivia, Orsino relies on the privileges his rank and gender give him, and he is unable to accept Olivia's refusal to submit to his control ... .Is it any wonder that Olivia wishes to avoid such a marriage, or that she exercises her own control by wooing a 'man' who because of his lesser social rank and wealth will not be able to dominate her in this way? (237)

Desens demonstrates that Olivia is indeed concerned about such matters.

> Sir Toby tells Sir Andrew: 'She'll none o' the Count. She'll not match above her degree, neither in estate, years, nor wit; I have heard her swear't' (1.3.110) ... At the play's end, it is Olivia, not her betrothed, Sebastian, who invites Orsino and Viola to share the wedding feast planned for her own nuptials: 'One day shall crown th' alliance on't, so please you, / Here at *my* house and at *my* proper cost' (5.1.318–9). (236; Desens's italics)

A woman's superior social rank or wealth might serve to counteract or neutralize gender inequities and thus create the possibility of forging an unconventional marriage of equals. But, alas, as Desens also shows, in the context of a patriarchal society, such a marriage might exacerbate the insecurities either of the lover himself or of the woman's male relatives and lead to tragic consequences.

The volume concludes with ten book reviews. It may not be the fashion for a book reviewer to review his or her fellow reviewers, but some of the reviews exhibit distinctive styles and strategies that invite comment. In the course of her review of Eve Rachele Sanders's *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England*, for example, Loreen L. Giese raises twenty-seven questions that Giese chides Sanders for failing to answer. It is hard to imagine how any single book could have fully answered all of these questions. Nearly half of William B. Long's review of Peter Beal's *In Search of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* is taken up by a series of very long quotations. Long quotations have a legitimate place in reviews because they can convey directly the ideas and prose style of the book under review, but in this case Long nearly abdicates the role of reviewer. Lisa Hopkins catalogues an excruciatingly long series of flaws in *Marlovian Tragedy: The Play of Dilation* by Troni Y. Grande. A long catalogue of fresh insights found in a text under review would be interesting and informative, but it is not clear what purpose is served by such a relentless catalogue of inadequacies. These differing styles are not merely an effect of the particular books under review. It is unlikely that, despite his demonstrable commitment to scholarly rigor, Kent Cartwright, who provides a very thoughtful review of Huston Diehl's *Staging Reform: Reforming the Stage*, would have pointlessly amassed the long list of flaws found in Hopkins's review or the long list of unanswered questions in Giese's review if he had been assigned the books they reviewed. Skiles Howard includes frequent quotations and paraphrases of passages from Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, but unlike Long she

integrates these smoothly with her own judicious commentary. Alan Armstrong's review of Thomas Cartelli's *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* takes the form of an intellectually stimulating counter-argument that is more likely to prompt readers to seek out the book than a lame encomium would have done. Frances Teague not only comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the new Revels Student Edition of *Volpone* but supplies informative details about the textual history of the play and Jonson's career. Other books reviewed in the volume are *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* by Deborah Willis (reviewed by Carole Levin); *Ben Jonson and Theatre: Performance, Practice and Theory*, a collection of essays edited by Richard Cave, Elizabeth Schafer, and Brian Woolland (Lesley Mickel); and *Introduction to English Renaissance Comedy* by Alexander Leggatt (Nicholas F. Radel).

James Hirsh

Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (eds). *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660. Theatre in Europe: A Documentary History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp 714.

Let us begin by recognising that: 'Twenty-three professional theatres ... were built in and around London during the seventy-five years from 1567 to 1642. Probably nothing of the kind had happened in any other city on earth.'[1] Incontestable and still breath-taking, this claim, and others not quite so sweeping, help explain why the book in which they appear is significant. Even specialists might need to be reminded that 'the largest number of documents of control (after those governing performances in times of plague and on Sundays and other religious holidays) ... [are] those relating to the conduct of the playhouses and the acting companies who used them' (92). Similarly, we all should ponder the link Glynne Wickham suggests (135n1) between the decline of (local, English) provincial touring in the 1620s and the rise of the 'more profitable (and safer)' European tour, and William Ingram's observation that 'The number of identifiable persons of rank or standing who were patrons of playing companies in that century [the sixteenth] approached 100' (204).

This large book by three hands is, as all large books by any number of hands are likely to be, intermittently inconsistent. It is unquestionably capacious,