

Ludique Societas, or PLS, as Sergi acknowledges the renowned medieval performance troupe. However, this is not to suggest that *Practical Cues and Social Spectacle in the Chester Plays* straddles an exploration of practical aspects of early English play production by an academician with an examination of textual evidence by a practitioner. Rather, from this favorable vantage, although he reports his conclusions as an initiate, Sergi examines his evidence with instinctual acumen as a director. Much of the theoretical thrust of his paradigm hinges on his clear understanding of the exigencies of practical performance. While it is a thoroughly scholarly work, it also enjoys solid footing in a lived appreciation of theater practice. He employs his intuitions from these experiences and his comprehensive analytical skills using a finely ground lens that picks out textual as well as extra-textual detail in a precise manner.

In *Practical Cues and Social Spectacle in the Chester Plays* Matthew Sergi presents compelling arguments for engaging “the plays’ unexamined practical cues to illuminate the sociocultural mise-en-scène that has already been imagined for these plays, and often to recalibrate or challenge modern interpretations of that mise-en-scène” (240). This formidable monograph contributes important new research that enhances foundational works such as *Records of Early English Drama: Chester* (ed. Lawrence M. Clopper [1979]). Sergi’s robust scholarship has added a worthy companion volume to the front ranks of early English theater studies.

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*Religions in Shakespeare’s Writings*. David V. Urban, ed.  
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The essay collection *Religions in Shakespeare’s Writings* is decidedly not an attempt to settle the question of whether William Shakespeare was Catholic or Protestant, either in his confessional allegiance or his heart of hearts. What the collection makes clear is that there is still a great deal to say about religious matters in Shakespeare’s poems and plays. The essays, well researched and carefully crafted by their fifteen authors, are collected in a special issue of the MDPI journal *Religions*.

David Urban, who edits the collection and contributes one of the essays, counterpoises the volume against recent skeptical scholarship that “resists the idea that a positive understanding of Christianity is somehow foundational to Shakespeare’s works” (3). The essays in *Religions in Shakespeare’s Writings* amply demonstrate and artfully develop Urban’s somewhat minimalist claim that “Shakespeare’s various writings demonstrate a Christian grounding, whether that Christianity is Protestant, Catholic, or ‘mere.’” (3).

In “Shakespeare and Religion,” the review essay that begins the volume proper, John D. Cox points out that scholars like David Scott Kastan, Alison Shell, and Anthony

Dawson remain skeptical of claims that Shakespeare's plays and poems promote or even reflect any coherent Christian creed on their author's part. According to Kastan, "religion in the plays is a psychological and social reality that registers as form rather than a credal one that registers as belief" (12; David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* [2016], 7). How any play registers on its audience, though, is clearly in the eye of the beholder. In early modern England, a culture saturated in religious language and ritual, religious form and belief might not be easily separated.

In "At War 'Twi'x Will and Will Not: On Shakespeare's Idea of Religious Experience in *Measure for Measure*," Matthew J. Smith argues that staged depictions of differing religions have a self-censoring effect: "Through their dramatic contact with one another, Catholicism, Puritanism, Calvinism, Lucretianism, agnosticism and other 'religious' perspectives reveal one another's limitations" (39). The result is that despite its insistently religious content, *Measure for Measure* does not clearly champion any religious persuasion. As Smith points out, "nobody converts" (41). In fact, "Isabella, Claudio, Angelo, and the Duke all lose faith in their respective grounds for moral obligation" (50).

In "Hamlet the Heretic: The Prince's Albigensian Rhetoric," Benjamin Lockerd explores the title character's kinship with the Albigensians, adherents to one of the forms of dualist theology repeatedly condemned by medieval and early modern Christian authorities. Like other dualists, Albigensians saw the spiritual world as a manifestation of the good, the physical world of the bad. The body was a trap for the soul, so marriage and procreation should be avoided. The sentiment is familiar to Hamlet in one of his guises. "Why," he asks the frightened Ophelia, would she want to be "a breeder of sinners?" Crazed (or crafty), he declares, "We will have no mo' marriage" (3.1.121–24; 147). For the Albigensians, suicide was not necessarily an ignoble or unholy act. Two of the world's most famous theatrical moments—Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy and his conversation with the skull of Yorick—underscore his affinity for dualist beliefs, whether favored or feigned.

In "That Suggestion: Catholic Casuistry, Complexity, and *Macbeth*," John E. Curran Jr. takes issue with A. C. Bradley's observation that Macbeth has "the imagination of a poet." Not so, says Curran: "*Macbeth* is a study in the dangers of moral, logical, and spiritual oversimplification, and this bent for oversimplifying is aligned by Shakespeare, here as elsewhere in his work, with the deterministic Protestantism hegemonic at this time in England" (140). Focusing on the Porter's comic portrait of the equivocator in 2.3, Curran concludes that Shakespeare "preferred the complex, the particular, and the open to the oversimplified, the generalizing, and the closed, and he found the state religion of his time too bent toward the latter" (154).

A deft navigator of scholarship on *King Lear*, Emily E. Stelzer is very likely the first scholar to point to a possible biblical source for Lear's enigmatic dying words ("Look there, look there!"). The meaning of these "ambiguous and suggestive" words is "both preserved and illuminated when read as an allusion to Jesus' words in Luke 17:21" (157). In that passage some Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God will appear. He replies, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Nether shall men say,

Lo here, or lo there: for beholde the kingdome of God is within you” (Geneva Bible). The *OED* supports Stelzer’s reading of Jesus’s words “lo there” as a plausible source for Lear’s “look there”; in early modern English, *lo* could be synonymous with *look*.

In “*The Tempest* and Black Natural Law,” Julia Reinhard Lupton sees Shakespeare’s Caliban as a participant in the natural law tradition stretching from Aristotle to Aquinas to Hooker, but with a difference: Caliban’s bitter complaints make sense especially as expressions justified by “the epistemic privilege of the oppressed,” a central idea in Vincent Lloyd’s seminal 2016 book *Black Natural Law*. Lupton’s essay provides a fitting end to a highly evocative collection.

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*Sexual Desire and Romantic Love in Shakespeare: “Rich in Will.”* Joan Lord Hall. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. viii + 272 pp. \$110.

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This monograph examines the love/lust binary as depicted in Shakespeare’s plays, narrative poems, and sonnets in the context of Renaissance Anglican and humanist discourses, especially Neoplatonism and Petrarchism. It argues that love and lust are opposed for Shakespeare’s contemporaries and in Shakespeare’s early work, but that Shakespeare’s later plays deconstruct the love/lust binary and challenge moral norms that rely on a strict separation of carnal lust and marital love. Its primary method is close reading, which it employs extensively to show how Shakespeare engaged with, adapted, and critiqued Christian humanist discourses about love and lust across his career. The book is written for a general audience and would be of interest to students, scholars in fields adjacent to Shakespeare studies, and those with a more general interest in Shakespeare.

The book’s defining feature is its wide-ranging close readings. Hall weaves together evidence from all thirty-eight of Shakespeare’s plays, the three narrative poems, and the sonnets as she traces themes, images, and recurrent phrases across Shakespeare’s oeuvre. For example, chapter 4 argues that across his career Shakespeare became increasingly ambivalent about the constancy of romantic love. Hall supports this argument by tracing references to fancy and eyes in a number of plays, including *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

*Sexual Desire and Romantic Love in Shakespeare* opens with a brief introduction that traces three key words for Shakespeare’s exploration of the love/lust binary: *will*, *affection*, and *friend*. Chapters 1–3 focus on lust and its negative powers, especially in the sonnets written about the dark mistress and in the early plays. Chapters 4–7 treat the topic of love in relation to desire, including fancy, romance, marriage, and same-sex bonding. Here, Hall shows how Shakespeare troubles the binary opposition between love and lust and critiques the humanist