



to Shakespeare—in every field from biography to poetry—it is surprising that it does not give more time to the anti-Stratfordian theories, many of which are as engaging and evidenced as more traditional biographical findings.

Hannah Leah Crummé, *Lewis and Clark College*

doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.296

Shakespeare and Costume in Practice. Bridget Escolme.

Shakespeare in Practice. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. xii + 216 pp. €83.19.

This provocative study of how costume may be read as creating meaning on stage is densely packed with scholarly insight and interpretation from a wealth of related fields. So broad is Bridget Escolme's scope that one marvels at her meticulous control over such disparate materials as inform her engagement with discourses of gender, power, and color as they affect the design, textures, aesthetics, and function of costuming within the stage space and in relation to text. A close reading of all textual references to clothing, accompanied by their explication in terms of period cultural understanding and expectation, initiates each of the three chapters, focusing in turn on *Hamlet*, *Much Ado*, and *The Tempest*. What then follows is a review of production and performance history for each play over the intervening centuries, charting shifts of emphasis that palpably affected meaning.

Extant period images, descriptions, and artifacts (scrupulously handled) are deployed to explore how the first audiences potentially read the actors' attire. In *Hamlet*, costuming is shown to define political relations between characters and the degree to which Hamlet's difference in his inky black upheld a moral system that was genuinely subversive of Claudius's rule. The fact that Claudius's likely costume (particularly his Danish-style pludderhose, as determined by Escolme) would define him as a comic character brought a profound irony to the discovery that he is the Machiavellian shaper of the whole tragedy. Mourning black clothes here conveyed social implications within the dramaturgical structuring, but those intimations changed with time, especially with Irving, when the black was deliberately cultivated to offset the actor's face, turning the tragedy inward, to be less about self-assertion, as previously, than about self-discovery.

Much Ado is examined for its relating of luxury with gender politics, violence, and warfare, and for the increasing tendency of productions to soften the darkness of Hero's disrupted marriage and its troubling consequences in preference for varying depictions of country house nostalgia and settled content. This theme in Escolme's argument is supported by detailed consideration (including a brilliant analysis of Judi Dench's portrayal) of where Beatrice is placed visually on the play's social scale and how knowing and secure she is in that situation. Directors have similarly begun creatively exploring through costuming the role of Don John, now that bastardy is not viewed as socially

pejorative as in the text. It is good that for much of this chapter the RSC (the majority of the productions under study post-1956 are drawn from their seasons and archives) is an object not of veneration as heritage Shakespeare but of careful scrutiny against a wider determining culture.

With *The Tempest*, Escolme engages with imperial and postcolonial rhetoric and attitudes and what increasingly have been judged as racist elements within the play. Accounts of Elizabethan and Jacobean travels to the Americas do not afford elucidatory help here, while representations of monsters and exotic appearances in the court masques would not have impacted seriously how general theatergoers would read Ariel, Caliban, and the Goddesses, although Escolme makes tentative headway in referencing Burbage and Rice's undertaking the roles of Amphion and Corinea (figures half-human and half-divine) in a river pageant of 1610, keeping their costumes (for reuse?) subsequently as payment.

Color throughout the whole spectrum of its meanings and inferences is foregrounded and gives rise to searching analyses of how Ariel and Caliban are dressed to contrast with Prospero. There is a profound examination of the semiology of white and whiteness, before the discussion extends to critiques of recent attempts at color-blind casting and aestheticized, apolitical stagings in trying to avoid the play's troubling challenges over representation. Productions interpreting characters and action as symbolic of Prospero's imagination have disappeared of late; now more likely the symbolic approach evokes how the play depicts his journey to a more enhanced selfhood, even while engaging with issues of racism.

Interviews with contemporary designers conclude the main thesis, analyzing their processes and related methodologies. Escolme's own methodology impresses overall for its breadth, offering fresh perspectives onto how culturally and materially spectators' reading of how a performance appears is shaped, perhaps manipulated, or freed, as they reach for insight into their experience. Studying this volume is a lesson in such nuanced reading.

Richard Allen Cave, *Royal Holloway, University of London*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.297

Shakespeare and Disability Studies. Sonya Freeman Loftis.
Oxford Shakespeare Topics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. x + 144 pp. \$65.

In this excellent book, Loftis advocates for the cross-pollination of disability and Shakespeare studies. Disability studies emphasizes inclusion, access, and universal design. These values should be present in Shakespeare studies—yet, as Loftis points out in her afterword, “disability studies . . . has been . . . neglected in Shakespeare studies” (118). Drawing on her expertise both as a Shakespearean and a disability