

*How the Classics Made Shakespeare.* Jonathan Bate.

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Jonathan Bate's luminous study presents Shakespeare anew as a Renaissance writer. Jonson's characterization of a Shakespeare with "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*," and as a poet for all time, as well as a Romantic, nationalist view of Shakespeare that eagerly accepted Milton's invitation to hear "sweetest Shakespeare fancy's child, / Warble his native wood-notes wild," have helped to narrow our understanding of Shakespeare's formation by and engagement with the classical texts he knew and read. So has the specialization and self-isolation of Shakespeare studies within the university, more prevalent, perhaps, on this side of the Atlantic. Bate's argument that the classics made Shakespeare might have been uncontroversial fifty years ago, but it now has an almost polemical edge to it.

His book originated in the inaugural E. H. Gombrich Lectures in the Classical Tradition delivered at the Warburg Institute of the University of London in 2013, and bears the imprint of that institution's capacious and multifaceted idea of classical reception. Bate shows Shakespeare reading the ancient authors directly, in the classroom, in translation, and through the various secondary texts—handbooks, commentaries—that transmitted them to him. He shows him responding to traces of antiquity in funerary monuments, in the urban legends of London, in the appearance and decoration of his theaters. (The Greek dramatists play no role in this account, although Tanya Pollard has recently shown that they were more widely translated and available in Shakespeare's age than has generally been assumed.)

As Colin Burrow does in *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (2013), Bate distinguishes Shakespeare, educated only through grammar school and writing for the public theater and commercial publishers, from university-trained writers and from the budding neoclassicism of Jonson (and of Mary Sidney and other writers of coterie drama in her circle). Burrow seems to find in this distinction a limit on his topic: Shakespeare classicizes only up to a point. But Bate builds the case that classical models expanded Shakespeare's imagination in ways they would not do once early modern literature took a turn to strict imitation and rules of decorum: in his hybrid works Shakespeare may be more classical, more responsive to the ancients than the avowed and self-advertising classicists. That the imagination in question is the most expansive in our literature might decide the case in advance and challenge cause and effect, but one can think of Ariosto, Rabelais, Philip Sidney, and Cervantes in Shakespeare's Renaissance company.

Bate reminds us that a full third of Shakespeare's plays that have come down to us are set in some version of the ancient world; Shakespeare's most ambitious poems were *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Bate lays his cards on the table in his first chapter: Shakespeare's Christian doctrine is elusive. Ancient, pagan authors fed his dramatic imagination and his contemporaries saw him as a secular, particularly Ovidian,

erotic poet: a modern classic in English. The thirteen ensuing chapters of the book treat a wide series of topics united by the common thread of Shakespeare's classical inheritance. A discussion of how Roman republican ideas entered into Elizabethan political thought leads to an eye-opening analysis of the (very) minor roles of Cicero and Ligarius in *Julius Caesar*. Reading the player's speech on Pyrrhus and Hecuba in *Hamlet*, Bate argues for what he has earlier called the anti-Virgilian, anti-epic nature of "Shakespeare's form of classical fabling [that] was profoundly *antiheroic* because it was constantly attuned to the force of sexual desire" (15). His Shakespeare is "more often than usually supposed Horatian," attracted, like Montaigne, to the Roman poet's picture of the epicurean, apolitical good life. Shakespeare defends poetic feigning, a kind of magic, against Platonic and Reformation critics, while he rationalizes the Senecan stage ghost into mental figment and projection.

Bate's strongest chapters (which make some of the book's strongest claims) examine how Shakespeare both acknowledges and contests the classical view of eros as a debilitating and destructive force. Bate's Shakespeare portrays love as heroic as well as anti-heroic. Love brings down a Herculean character like Antony but also makes him fully human, as it does the would-be Hercules or Hector Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, a play to which Bate repeatedly returns. Shakespeare's imagination pivots around this part of the classical legacy: his comedies, tragedies, and poems explore every side of erotic desire and romantic love. The classics, Bate argues, made Shakespeare sexy.

As in his earlier, splendid *The Genius of Shakespeare* and *Soul of an Age*, Bate writes for a general public without condescension or simplification. Each chapter has fresh things to say to specialists as well, and the book's generous footnotes map out a large and inclusive scholarly field. Shakespeareans of every kind will read this book with profit and pleasure. Its corrective argument may send some of them back to Ovid, Virgil, and the less usual classical suspects.

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*Age in Love: Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Court.* Jacqueline Vanhoutte. Early Modern Cultural Studies. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. xii + 292 pp. \$55.

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Vanhoutte's monograph offers new insight into the figure of aged love in Elizabethan cultures. The work, further, quickly frames a central interest in Leicester as such a figure. Throughout, Vanhoutte frames Leicester's (and, to a lesser extent, other courtiers') responsive performances to the queen as a catalyst for public anxiety. Rather than understanding this anxiety as disrupting gerontocratic ideals, Vanhoutte explores how those ideals are themselves against sexualization in or of old men. She clearly outlines