

that Bianca is actually a prostitute or a courtesan" (136). Class remains a slippery concept in this period; however, its significance within feminist theory and its centrality within early modern texts make this discussion and its contiguous exploration of women and race particularly valuable.

The compression of texts inevitably leads to some confusions, such as the unexplained reference to Titania's purported pregnancy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (126). Nonetheless, Novy offers an accounting of the subject that will prove useful to those wishing to gain an overview of this important topic.

Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Emory University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2018.118

*Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood.* Kevin Curran. Rethinking the Early Modern. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017. x + 180 pp. \$34.95.

In the early modern era, the law established a system of order to guide the way in which individuals navigated their lives, yet simultaneously this juridical framework became complicated in the performance of disorder, as we read the culture through its texts. Clarifying the dramatic and the poetic disorder, Kevin Curran, in his *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies*, finds a way to investigate notions of identity through a clever engagement with law and literature. He examines an unassuming concept like selfhood to explore an intricate web of the law. Building on the scholarship of political theory and law and literature, this illuminating study of selfhood submits that Shakespeare offers a language of identity in his analysis of property in *Richard II*, the laws of hospitality in *The Merchant of Venice* and the Sonnets, the phenomenology of treason in *Macbeth*, and judgment in *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale*. Acknowledging the work of several law and literature scholars, Curran insists that his inquiry is grounded in "communal, collaborative, and distributive" notions of selfhood (8).

Chapter 1, "Property: Land Law and Selfhood in *Richard II*," explores how land law establishes the complex nature of material and nonmaterial things to develop connections to define selfhood in his theory of property. Extending Richard Helgerson's and Ernst Kantorowicz's ideas of the legal subject, Curran deploys different characters from the play and their relationship to property to demonstrate the evolution of not just personhood, but the property itself. Through shifts from John of Gaunt and Bullingbrook to Richard over the course of the drama, we witness an evolved understanding of "national belonging grounded in collectivity and obligation," a "political and personal identity," and the "gradual loss of property" (24). Using legal concepts from wills to waste, Curran demonstrates an inescapable connection between "our material world of people and things" (48).

Curran, in chapter 2, focuses on the law of hospitality and otherness, employing the Sonnets and *The Merchant of Venice* to examine the “philosophical tradition of hospitality,” specifically Kant, Saint Paul, and Levinas. Dissecting a set of Shakespeare’s Sonnets—mainly 35, 49, and 88—along with the play, he investigates notions of justice and obligation: does hospitality emerge as “recklessly and irrationally self-sacrificial,” or defend the rights against the hostility for otherness (49–50)? In both the play and the Sonnets, Curran interrogates what debts, obligations, rights, and justice are owed to both self and others. In this way, he offers a way to reveal both the constraints and the scope of the lawful relationships between individuals. With *Macbeth* as its focus, chapter 3 delves into the drama’s phenomenological traces in its notions of treason. Curran assesses the film *Minority Report*, starring Tom Cruise, to present a contrast between the film and Shakespeare’s play, to determine the commencement of crime both in the theoretical and the physical, by configuring the nature of intention (*mens rea*) and action (*actus reus*). Arguing that criminal intent is a process, Curran notes that the dagger scene in the play should be read as “both an act of theater and an act of theory” (96). He contemplates the legal consequences of thinking and doing in terms of treason in a manner reminiscent of Rebecca Lemon’s monograph *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion in Shakespeare’s England* (2006).

In the final chapter, Curran explores the nature of judgment and the sociality of laws in *Hamlet* and *The Winter’s Tale*. For *Hamlet*, he explores judgment as an efficient collective, whereas *The Winter’s Tale* exemplifies an ineffective use of judgment—his analysis dissects the morality of each approach. Finding *Hamlet*’s application of the play within the play as a legal instrument for judgment, Curran configures the play as a vehicle for collaborative judgment, while recognizing other primary texts, like the justice-of-the-peace manuals, as useful in terms of their juridical collectivity. This discussion further expands upon earlier work with justice-of-the-peace manuals by Lorna Hutson and John Langbein. By contrast, the character of Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* demonstrates the problematic nature of “extreme individualism,” positioned in tension with the restorative nature of “legal communalism” (119). Curran insists that judgment highlights the moral and social risks when we stop thinking “in, and through, the presence of others” (129).

This law and literature text will be most helpful for those scholars, especially Shakespearean ones, who desire a new take on the nature of selfhood. The writer combines notions of national identity with larger concepts of justice, obligation, individualism, and society. Clearly recognizing the scholarship of seminal scholars—legal and political—Curran grapples with a new way to investigate law, literature, poetics, ethics, and the theater.

Lisa M. Barksdale-Shaw, *Michigan State University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2018.119