

necessary as an organizing principle, and there were times in my own reading when I felt that a chapter that was working well on its own became strained when Lamb tried to connect it to his main thesis. That said, I would not be surprised if the idea of the verbal market caught on and proved useful to scholars going forward, and my reservations about it do not diminish my admiration for this book.

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Shakespeare's Reading Audiences: Early Modern Books and Audience Interpretation. Cyndia Susan Clegg.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. vi + 222 pp. \$99.99.

Cyndia Susan Clegg has written an important book on audience reception, focusing specifically on the readings of contemporary texts that playgoers brought with them into the Shakespearean theater. This approach offers a reconsideration of the usual suspects (Machiavelli, Castiglione, Calvin) as well as ongoing or recent topics of interest (sexuality, law, publics) in Shakespeare criticism by attending to the ways in which what Clegg terms “reading clusters” brought early modern methods of comprehending these topics into the playhouse to think through Shakespeare’s representation of these texts. Clegg thus defines reading as both audiences’ “engagement[s] with written texts” and the “discursive connections” that they make “among groups of texts” (3). Countering notions of homogeneity in Shakespeare’s audiences, these reading clusters indicate a spectrum of readers (9).

Clegg’s second chapter focuses on elite readers but identifies that coteries at the time were composed of women readers as well, drawing upon previous work on Mary Sidney and other women at the Wilton House. This information is used to formulate a gendered understanding of literary coteries, leading to a discussion of the similar publication histories of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* and Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* and drawing upon previous analyses of the sexualization of the printing press. At the intersection of these various threads lies the claim that the *Sonnets* “redefine and reappropriate the structures of gender that the transition from manuscript to print was in the process of displacing” (38).

Clegg’s examination of *Henry V* is one of the book’s strongest chapters. Returning to the fraught understandings of the play and reminding us of scholars’ tendency to focus on the Machiavel rather than Machiavelli, she provides an excellent interpretation of the play, wherein Henry “embraces the political ironies of his circumstances,” prompting the audience “to exercise prudence” (68, 66). The reading cluster familiar with *The Prince* would thus enter into “a litmus test of” their “own ethical center” (62).

In chapter 4 Clegg continues to shed light on the power held by women—this time with respect to the law. Observing that the early modern understanding of *liberal* was

“to be upright, frank, candid, and . . . noble” (81), and perceiving that Falstaff possesses none of these qualities, Clegg illustrates that Shakespeare challenges the view that women require men in order to preserve their chastity, revealing instead that the men are more at fault in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Different observations are made about laws concerning fidelity in *Othello*, with recourse to the Books of Homilies’ statements on adultery, and Clegg delivers further perspective on *Henry V* concerning Catherine.

The next chapter, on *Macbeth*, offers an elaborate overview of Calvinism and engages with previous scholarship on religion in Shakespeare’s play. Having situated the play, Clegg offers insightful analysis of the ways in which the works of English Calvinist writers Perkins and Dent foster a complex reading experience for the members of *Macbeth*’s audience, who continually question whether Macbeth’s conscience concerning his actions indicates he is elect or reprobate. What Clegg adds to the critical conversation on Calvinism in the play is that, given English Calvinists’ tendency to believe God can allow or even use evil to bring about good, *Macbeth* reveals “the tragic implications of failing to understand the power and nature of evil” (119).

The last chapter of the book provides a masterful and extensive analysis of a reading cluster for *Richard II* that was preoccupied with the various tracts on Henry IV’s succession and Richard II’s deposition. Clegg proposes that earlier audiences would have been familiar with a historical tradition that offered a “multivocalic examination of right rule and the right to rule,” allowing for the development of competing sympathies and complex interpretive experiences that mirror the “contradictory political perspectives” offered in early modern histories (130, 152). This earlier public, however, differs from the reading public generated after the Essex rebellion, as “the government understood that a public existed, that it was vulnerable to the printed word, and that words could be dangerous” (166). In this final chapter, then, Clegg addresses the political power these clusters had in determining the public sphere.

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John Donne and Baroque Allegory: The Aesthetics of Fragmentation. Hugh Grady. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. viii + 228 pp. \$99.99.

Hugh Grady’s stimulating study argues that Walter Benjamin’s theories of Baroque aesthetics, in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), provide a lens through which to read and appreciate John Donne’s poetry afresh. The uncertain, chaotic, fragmented world that Donne represents, particularly in his two long *Anniversaries*, has undeniable parallels with the melancholy spirit and allegorical mode of representation in the German *Trauerspiel* of the first half of the seventeenth century. Benjamin never refers to Donne, although Shakespeare is mentioned in his work on the *Trauerspiel*,