

on the Plague, although there are Girardian echoes throughout. Also missing is any reference to recent scholarship on early modern sympathies by Seth Lobis and myself.

Despite the impressive array of early modern materials amassed and presented in *Shakespeare's Contagious Sympathies*, readers looking for a carefully delineated historical argument may be disappointed. Langley shows little interest in the period's medical conflicts (such as the differences between Galenic and Paracelsian notions of disease, which are not directly addressed until chapter 4). He has a tendency to quote primary materials without providing context, often burying both the author and the date of the source in the footnotes. At times, the quotations prove misleading, as when, for example, Langley makes an assertion about Shakespeare and then provides a quotation from a mid-seventeenth-century medical text on surgery as evidence of his claim (154). This approach flattens out historical and generic differences, encouraging the reader to overlook subtle distinctions and find only resemblances. I admire the erudition of *Shakespeare's Contagious Sympathies* but I find that Langley's methodology and theoretical investments ultimately inhibit the possibility of saying something new or unexpected about the texts he cites.

Mary Floyd-Wilson, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*
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Shakespeare's Moral Compass. Neema Parvini.

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Shakespeare studies is well within a post–New Historicist phase today, and Neema Parvini's newest book, *Shakespeare's Moral Compass*, is a case in point, breaking with the progressive politics of New Historicism and drawing on the academic social sciences—specifically the controversial theory of evolutionary psychology—rather than history, philosophy, or economics. Its main source for its approach to Shakespeare comes from social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, specifically his popularizing account of the evolutionary underpinnings of human morality in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012). Haidt argues that he and his colleagues have identified a set of universally held moral values (“foundations”) in analogy with the five taste buds present in the tongues of all humans. Haidt identifies these hypothetically innate moral senses as binary pairs of moral opposites: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression—this last pair added in this work to an original list of five found in an earlier book.

Parvini argues that Haidt supplies us with the key to a long-standing debate within Shakespeare studies over what exactly Shakespeare's moral philosophy was—if indeed he

had one. The answer, according to Parvini, is that Shakespeare held a particularly empathetic version of Haidt's list of six innate human values. This aligns him with the old idea of natural law, the widespread premodern belief that all humans possess an innate sense of right and wrong on which religion builds. Aristotle and Aquinas are adduced as particularly cogent and trustworthy advocates of natural-law theory (76–91), making them particularly good (but not exclusive) guides to Shakespeare's moral thinking.

Shakespeare's Moral Compass has a lot of other balls in the air as well—some of them tangential—that cannot be easily treated in this short review. Among them is an argument that intellectual history can be divided into political left and right branches (using Thomas Sowell's labels of a liberal “unconstrained” group and a conservative “constrained” group). Parvini wants us to know that he considers himself a partisan of the “constrained” tradition (35–50). There are also surveys of moral thinking in Shakespeare's England (71–138), of the effects of the Protestant Reformation and the rise of capitalism on Elizabethan and Jacobean society (139–78), and of previous critical writing about Shakespeare's moral thinking before 1964 (181–200). One can see how any or all of these might have contributed to a book on Shakespeare's moral thinking. Unfortunately, the discussions are only occasionally integrated into the main argument about Shakespeare and the six moral foundations of evolutionary psychology. Consequently, the reader is left to imagine their connections.

Instead, the book climaxes with six brief chapters, each devoted to one of Haidt's moral foundations. The idea is to illustrate that Shakespeare's works depict each of the moral values in operation, and thus he is revealed to be in essential accord with twenty-first-century social psychologist Haidt. The depictions of good servants, for example, show that Shakespeare had a positive view of authority (201–23). Loyalty, especially among friends like Rosalind and Celia, is a positive value in the plays (224–45). Fairness (but not egalitarianism) is a frequent issue in many plays (246–61). Shakespeare often depicts sins in terms of dirt and stains and so values sanctity (262–79). None of this really ties down the book's thesis. Chapter 10, “Care,” is better in that it makes a persuasive case for the (not exactly startling) idea that Shakespeare's plays value human care and that this virtue is plausibly linked to the biology of reproduction and child rearing. The last chapter, “Liberty,” however, is to me disappointing in its reduction of the idea of liberty to free choice and in a questionable attempt to treat Haidt's six “foundations” as forming a coherent system defining a total Shakespearean moral system (296).

What these final chapters really do establish, I believe, is the aptness of an observation reported by John Dryden from John Hales, a fellow at Eton: “There was no subject of which any poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treated of in Shakespeare” (John Dryden, *Essay of Dramatick Poesy* [1688]). Indeed, Shakespeare contains multitudes and is not easily contained.

Hugh Grady, *Arcadia University*
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