

In 'The Place of the Stage' Mullaney employs a genuinely multidisciplinary approach to theater. He studies popular drama as a product of playhouses located in the ambiguous territory just outside the official city of London and its monitoring powers. Inescapably the book raises basic questions about license and subversion, economic and libidinal energies. London's "Liberties" established a sphere of unofficially sanctioned ambivalence which answered to profound and complex needs in Renaissance English culture. Mullaney notes that the Liberties were a refuge for lepers and criminals as well as actors. Plays, he suggests, explored grotesque and alien possibilities of life with results that were neither simply subversive nor orthodox. In fact Mullaney resembles Gabrielle Bernhard Jackson - whose essay on the topical background of the Henry VI plays appears in ELR's special 'Women in the Renaissance II' (1988) - in his ability to show convincingly how Shakespeare could be at once opportunistic, rebellious, and reverential in his handling of sensitive cultural materials onstage.

Mullaney treats only a few plays in detail. His 'Measure for Measure' dramatizes a movement toward increasing surveillance and internalization (or introjection) of authority in the period. Construing 'Macbeth', he puts the idea of treason in a fresh historical context. His treatment of 'Pericles' is especially innovative in as much as he sees the play - and the genre of romance - as efforts to disengage from the economically driven culture which supported them. It's a subtle and convincing argument, and should put the play once and for all beyond the reach of trivializing genre critics. The book should have as salutary an effect on larger conceptions of the London stage.

Despite large areas of agreement, even the most satisfying of these studies present different Londons and different Shakespeares. Superimposed, their images of the past would produce a teasingly blurred succession of pictures - especially when traditional views also come into play. Still, as frustrating as that blur may be, this new history promises revelations that make you want to try even harder, as Greenblatt says, to talk to the dead. And also, of course, to look harder at the living world which makes the imagination of the past possible.

Drakakis, John (ed.):

Alternative Shakespeares.

London, New York: Methuen, 1985. 260 p.

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In England as in the United States, Shakespeare has figured as an icon of cultural supremacy. 'Alternative Shakespeares' is dedicated to exposing this appropriation of Shakespeare, and to creating alternative uses of Shakespearean criticism. "Engage(d) in the discursive struggle that determines the history within which the Shakespearean texts will be located and read", the essays in this volume agree: "it matters what kind of history that is."

This sense of purposefulness underlies the unique contribution of this anthology: its enabling synthesis of post-structuralism and "movement" politics. Derridian awareness of textuality and the indeterminacy of language, Fou-

cauldian understanding of the interpenetrations of discourse and power, and psychoanalytic insights into anxiety and repetition are variously interwoven with feminist and marxist commitments to social change. Refusing the all-too-common seduction of territorial disputes, each of these essays enacts a procreative and provocative synthesis. Political commitment rescues post-structuralism from excessive abstraction, while post-structuralism raises "movement politics" above its often simplistic analysis of subjectivity and power.

Although I enjoyed and learned from all of the essays in 'Alternative Shakespeares', four of them deserve special mention. Perhaps the most exciting is Jacqueline Rose's 'Sexuality in the reading of Shakespeare: "Hamlet" and "Measure for Measure"'. Psychoanalyzing the two plays and the history of their criticism, Rose demonstrates how they all enact a "drama of sexual difference" in which language and sexuality are interdependent and necessary to the ordering of literary form. Femininity figures as a scapegoat for the "failure of integration within language and subjectivity itself". Rose's analysis underscores the unique feminist contribution to the problematic of subjectivity - a project furthered by Catherine Belsey's "Disrupting sexual difference: meaning and gender in the comedies", in which feminine identity is shown to be deconstructed in the plurality of identifications enabled by the comedies' transvestite disguises. Belsey's reading asserts neither bisexuality, asexuality, nor androgyny, but rather "a plurality of places, of possible beings, for each person in the margin of sexual difference." Despite Belsey's emphasis on historical analysis, however, her article insufficiently explains precisely how the workings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ideologies of the family create the conditions of possibility for this disruption of sexual difference.

Self-consciousness about one's own critical practice, however, is not missing from Malcolm Evans' 'Deconstructing Shakespeare's comedies'. Evans deconstructs 'Love's Labour's Lost', only to demonstrate that Shakespeare's comedies invite a Derridean appropriation because of their historical location in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century crisis in representation. Arguing, not against Deconstruction, but for an awareness of its own and other texts' historicity, Evans pointedly questions: "deconstruction for and accompanied by what?"

Evans' call for the cohabitation of the political, historical, and linguistic is answered by Terence Hawkes' 'Swisser-Swatter: making a man of English letters'. Deconstructing the dichotomy "human/not human" posed by Caliban, Hawkes delineates how the unsettling question, "What is a man?" that Caliban's presence evokes, underlies English claims for supremacy in their colonial domination of other languages and peoples.

'Alternative Shakespeares' - the emphasis is not only on an alternative to liberal humanist criticism, but also on the plural "Shakespeares" who emerge as implicated in, but not contained within, dominant ideology. Rejecting pluralism, wherein all differences are supposedly levelled and ideology is a matter of "free choice", these heterogeneous essays unite in a view of subjects as circumscribed by, yet also enabled by, discursive practices.

Unfortunately, John Drakakis' Introduction gives little indication of what awaits the reader. His critique of humanist, essentialist precepts in favour of historical analysis of textual production and critical reconstitution is assumed knowledge for the audience of the essays which follow, and his specific analysis of the tradition of Shakespearean criticism is largely replicated, only in a more lively and pertinent fashion, in the later essays. More helpful, per-

haps, would be a sustained discussion of the issues raised by reading in Shakespeare the problematization of subjectivity, gender, race, and representation. Because Shakespeare's plays enact a conflict of ideology, are they necessarily politically subversive? Is criticism merely a matter of appropriation - we all see what we want to see according to our own ideological commitments? What are the ramifications of viewing sixteenth-century texts as already deconstructed? And finally, what is at stake in the differences among the authors of these essays?

Marcus, Leah S.:

The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell,  
and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes.

Chicago, London: U. of Chicago Press, 1986. x, 319 p.

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In 'The Politics of Mirth', Leah Marcus has made an important contribution to current work which seeks to recover in Renaissance prerevolutionary and revolutionary texts a revolutionary or "oppositional" political potential. Like David Norbrook in 'Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance' and Annabel Patterson in 'Censorship and Interpretation', Marcus relates politics and aesthetics, showing that even a writer as conservative and court-centered as Ben Jonson always inscribed a critical perspective in his works. In addition to Jonson, Marcus focuses on Herrick, Milton, and Marvell, relating all of these authors to the early Stuart court's interest in traditional pastimes, an interest registered in the patronage monopoly over the theater and in the 'Book of Sports'. Tensions and resistances are opened up in works by these writers, Marcus argues, because James I did not generally live up to the Anglican middle way the 'Book of Sports' charted between the idolatry of religious conservatism and the fanaticism of religious radicalism. Too often, James lapsed back into the drunken sloth and sexual deviancy with which radical Protestants associated traditional pastimes. These tensions only increased in the seventeenth century. When Charles undertook to reform the court, little room was left for such pastimes. Jonson was left out in the cold. At the same time, Laud's enforcement of the 1633 reissue of 'Book of Sports', as part of his conservative not to say reactionary advancement of church ceremony, was viewed by Milton in 'Comus' as a satanic, coercive conformism from which Milton tries to disentangle his own sexually chaste festival. And after 1642, writers like Lovelace or Marvell were forced to write about pastimes without a court.

Marcus both participates in and profits from recent new historicist and new historical work on carnival. Her model of festivity is derived from Natalie Davis and Christopher Hill and her readings support David Underdown's recent work in 'Revel, Riot, and Rebellion'. In this view, festive license is not to be reduced to safety valve mechanisms wherein subversion is always contained (as in the work of Max Glucksman and C.L. Barber), nor is it to be celebrated as a form of plebeian assault on authority as in Mikhail Bakhtin; rather, festivity could work in a progressive, critical direction as well. Her supple model