

auch neue Formen der Kommunikation (etwa das "Shakespeare Readers Society Facebook") bzw. literarische Verarbeitungen von Shakespeare-Lesungen (vgl. hierzu z. B. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Sonnet on Mrs. Kemble's Reading from Shakespeare") und schließlich die Einbeziehung reiner Männerklubs sowie gemischter Shakespeare-Vereinigungen, zumal der Vergleich zwischen den Geschlechtern ebenfalls aufschlussreiche Erkenntnisse über eventuelle genderspezifische Annäherungen an Shakespeare verspricht, wie folgende Erinnerungen in *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1894) suggerieren:

We had a Shakespeare-Club – a rare thing in those days, – and one of the tutors proposed to take all the copies of all the members and mark out the questionable passages. This plan was negatived at the first meeting, as far as "the girls" spoke, who said they did not want the strange things emphasized, nor their books spoiled with marks. Finally we told the men to do as they liked – "we shall read everything." I remember the lofty air with which Emily took her departure, saying, "There's nothing wicked in Shakespeare, and if there is I don't want to know it." The men read for perhaps three meetings from their expurgated editions, and then gave up their plan, and the whole text was read out boldly.¹

Bamberg

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Edward Pechter: *Shakespeare Studies Today. Romanticism Lost*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. x + 238. Hardback \$ 85.00.

Organized as three sections on "Discipline and Desire", "What's Wrong with Literature?" and "Romanticism Lost", this book is concerned with the state of the profession of Shakespeare studies. Recent new approaches to literature can be summarized as attention to "worldliness", Edward Said's term for the text's connections with the contexts in which it was made and is consumed, bringing in especially "history and power and the body, among many other highly charged terms and ideas, including, of course, race, class, and gender" (p. 4). Such approaches deprecate attention to literary power *per se*. While appreciating the importance of contexts, Pechter finds himself dissatisfied with recent developments in Shakespeare studies because Literature and Authorship (with all that those capitals imply) are what really make the endeavour worthwhile. Although Pechter maintains careful distinctions between them, for the purpose of sketching his argument I will equate worldliness with the materialist approaches and a concern for Literature and Authorship with the aesthetic approaches.

In "Discipline and Desire", Pechter characterizes the turn from aesthetic to socio-political concerns in Shakespeare studies as having the "corollary of" (p. 23) shifting attention from Shakespeare as literature to Shakespeare as performed drama. I would have thought that the latter shift had been happening anyway since the late 1940s (when Drama departments first appeared in universities), so the former turn accelerated rather than initiated it. According to Pechter, critical approaches are about what you do not who you are. Just as materialist criticism has to start by discarding the aesthetic, so aesthetic criticism has to start by discarding the material, and we should not assume that either kind of critic cares nothing for what she discards. Rather, she is being materialist when she discards this and when being aesthetic she discards that (pp. 36–37). Pechter

¹ Zitiert nach Páraic Finnerty, *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), S. 16.

illustrates this via S. T. Coleridge's decision that Othello was brown not black because that suited Coleridge's criticism, even though Coleridge himself was not at all indifferent to real social conditions and wrote about the evils of slavery. Thus there can be no reconciliation of aesthetics and materialism since they are incompatible ways of reading. For Pechter, the key question is why we do literary criticism; if you lack a reason, you are bound to end up revulsed – or at least bored – by both materialist and aesthetic criticism.

Like Doctor Faustus at the start of Christopher Marlowe's play, Shakespearians are discontented materialists: picking up each subject – historicism, postcolonialism, eco-criticism and so on – in the hope that it will reveal the mysteries of the literary universe and finding it disappointing. Pechter has some fun pointing out the self-contradictions in Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass's influential essay "The Materiality of Shakespeare's Text". Romantics such as Coleridge idealised and essentialised Shakespeare because to do so was a blow against the aristocratic elite's claim upon him as their own, and modern attempts like De Grazia and Stallybrass's to promote book history are likewise elitist: only those with access to the originals are enabled to undertake the work. (Here Pechter comes perilously close to saying that Shakespearians ought not to research something unless other Shakespearians are equally well placed to examine it, which cannot be what he means; in any case the digital dissemination of rare books has levelled the playing field in the two decades since De Grazia and Stallybrass's essay appeared.) Materialists working on Shakespeare such as De Grazia and Stallybrass claim that their materialism is politically progressive, but Pechter finds no simple connection between one's politics and how one chooses to do literary criticism. The materialists want others to stop doing Shakespeare the way it has been done in the past and to start doing it another way, but the latter part of the exhortation is much less clearly defined than the former. Thus the project simply splutters to a halt with the cry of 'Stop!'

Part Two, on "What's Wrong with Literature?", is concerned with the New Textualism (a movement which reads the plays from a book history rather than a literary point of view) and the New Theatricalism (which reads the plays as scripts for collective performance rather than dramatic poems for solitary enjoyment). Pechter discusses the recent rise in the stock of bad quartos, as evidenced in such works as Scott McMillin's edition of *Othello* for the New Cambridge Early Quartos series, which focusses especially on the actors rather than the author as the source of its power. McMillin mentions the 160 lines of the 1623 Folio version that the 1622 quarto lacks, but not their theatrical importance in containing the Willow Song and Emilia's speech on the gender double standard. The new orthodoxy seems to be that the shorter and dumber a play the better because that makes it more theatrical. (Those who take this line rephrase shorter and dumber as *pacier* and more streamlined.) Pechter points out that this need not be the case. The 1600 bad quarto of *Henry 5* lacks the irony and anxiety about kingship that is in the Folio version, and the rapid pace of the 1603 bad quarto of *Hamlet* destroys the play, whose whole point is dilatoriness, not getting on with things. It is the very redundancy of certain good-quarto and Folio scenes, such as the Fly Scene in *Titus Andronicus* and the mock trial in *King Lear*, that makes them good theatre: these are pauses of the action for the purpose of reflection, as Alexander Leggatt pointed out (p. 106). It appals Pechter that senior Shakespearians now valorize the collective effort of the theatrical team and denigrate or characterize as anachronistic the lauding of the author.

Pechter finds that McMillin's hypotheses needed to explain the provenance of the manuscript underlying the 1622 quarto of *Othello* – a transcript of collective oral recitation of the play by its actors because they lost the original script – are no more economical or plausible than the New Bibliographical hypotheses they are intended to replace. In the absence of hard evidence, we all hypothesize playhouse practices that suit our ulterior motives, or as Pechter puts it our "desires". The New Bibliographers desired minimally mediated access to Shakespeare's autographs so they hypothesized little or no recopying, while New Textualists want actors to have their share in the outcome so they hypothesize processes such as collective dictation. We cannot get away from wishful thinking, says Pechter, and we should not be embarrassed by this as all interpretation is based on it (pp. 119–25). Pechter makes the useful point that the New Textualist insistence that the surviving playbook manuscripts do not fall into two simple categories but are infinitely different from one another and infinitely complex in their details, so that no generalizations about them are valid, does not (as New Textualists claim) restore to them the "fierce particularity" that New Bibliography took away. Rather the opposite, since it imposes upon them an "undifferentiated sameness" arising from being made by an "unknowable multiplicity of possible agents" (p. 136). Moreover, since editing is an act of criticism, the exhortation against editing – the cry of the New Textualist unediting movement—is also an exhortation against criticism itself (pp. 137–38).

Part Three, "Romanticism Lost", rewrites the standard narrative of this movement's views on creativity and the theatre. Far from being anti-theatrical, the Romantics were opposed only to the poor-quality theatre of their time. Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt were avid theatregoers and reviewers, but found the venues too big and that cheap tricks were used to stimulate applause during the action. The Romantics saw reading and playgoing as potentially equal in their power to generate the mental experience of great art, which involves an exertion on the part of the consumer that stimulates further appreciation of the work (pp. 166–69). This mental exertion is just what the pictorial literalism of the nineteenth-century stage failed to stimulate. What W. B. Worthen and others now claim that performance possesses and written text lacks – variability, imaginative engagement, openness – is exactly what the Romantics claimed that the written text had and performance lacked (pp. 175–76). Far from valorizing Shakespeare-the-author as the origin of his words, as it commonly claimed, the Romantics most commonly reflected on how little of the man there was to discover because he was such a good ventriloquist; his characters' personalities and not his own dominate the plays. What the Romantics valued was the collective effect amongst readers of what the author did, not the author himself. Why do we misrepresent the Romantics so? Because as a profession it would be difficult to use Romantic ideas to teach literary criticism and grade students' attainment. How could we assess attainment of the Romantic call for mental exertion, wonders Pechter. He amuses us with the mental image of a student reporting to a tutor "I gave it my best shot" (p. 199).

Pechter concludes that it is important for Shakespeare scholarship be motivated by strong convictions. You might think nobody could disagree with that, but Pechter finds that graduate students are now more strategic than passionate about their research, because they must hunt scarce career opportunities. Paradoxically, the opportunities may arise in precisely the places one would expect new passions to emerge. Simon Estok recently reported that a speaker at an ecocriticism conference explained that he chose this field "because there's a market for it" (*Ecocriticism and Shakespeare*, p. 49). This

corroboration of the tendency Pechter detects is important. Ordinarily, essays such as Pechter's about the state of the literary profession are tedious and self-important navel-gazing, and I approached this book with trepidation. I need not have worried. Unlike almost all in this genre, Pechter's writing is charming, liberal, witty and urbane. I was already on Pechter's side regarding the New Textualism and New Theatricalism, but found in his ways of expressing the matters a richer understanding of them than I had before. Regarding the Romantics, I will in future be much more careful what I say about their attitudes towards theatre.

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Sarah Carter: *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern English Literature*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. viii + 212. Hard-back £ 50.00.

The fruitful and many-sided impact of Ovid's imaginative tales of mythic metamorphoses on the literature of the English Renaissance has more than once been described in recent criticism. Sarah Carter's review of the particular attraction to Elizabethans of Ovid's rich treasure-house of alluring if not scandalous story material is chiefly informed by her interest in sexual deviance, defined by her as "deviating from standard behaviour or the correct 'path'" (p. 5), transgressing social, moral, or physical boundaries. She finds this chiefly in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tales of Philomela, Hermaphroditus, Pygmalion, Myrrha and Adonis, as well as in the Rape of Lucrece, retold in the *Fasti*.

The book offers a perceptive survey of Elizabethan versions of the Ovidian narratives of Philomela, Lucrece, Ganymede, Hermaphroditus, Pygmalion. Carter argues persuasively that the classical guise allowed Renaissance authors and readers, even the young and "officially" unspoiled novice, a much greater freedom of discourse than would normally have been permissible.

In the works of sixteenth-century poets and dramatists the myth of Philomela, linking the crime of rape with the removal of the victim's tongue, was a favourite tragic story, clearly influencing Shakespeare's gruesome early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, as Jonathan Bate and others have shown. Carter argues that for the Renaissance poets the myth of Philomela "is very much concerned with communication" (p. 33), and she suggests that this "perhaps indicates the increasing textualisation of early modern culture" (p. 34). Her discussion of several variations of Philomela-related ideas and spectacular dramatic conventions, such as female revenge, mutilation, torture and cruel frenzy, confirm her view of the particular attraction the Elizabethans felt for Ovid's unpredictable cosmos.

Carter's review of Elizabethan and Jacobean versions of Lucrece, "Chastity's list martyr", points out that Lucrece's rape was more often shown as an example of violated chastity than as a political crime and consequences for the Roman state. Yet, as her discussion of Middleton's *The Ghost of Lucrece* suggests, the popularity of the legend in the early modern period may be due to the variety of readings Lucrece's story provokes.¹

¹ Carter could have profited from the thoughtful discussion of Götz Schmitz, *The Fall of Women in Early English Narrative Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), especially pp. 79–104.