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Most edited collections follow a familiar format: individual contributions are grouped around a particular theme or concept, essays address the overarching theme of the collection, and the editor works to unite the individual chapters in the introduction. Rarely do authors address one another, and the readers are often left to gather the threads together. Nothing is wrong with this venerable tradition, but there are other ways of conceiving of a group scholarly enterprise.

Subha Mukherji bills *Blind Spots of Knowledge in Shakespeare and His World* as 'a conversation', signalling a break with the conventions of the edited collection. Mukherji assembles nine contributors: Adam Zucker, Stephen Spiess, Jonathan Gil Harris, Supriya Chaudhuri, Aveek Sen, Tanya Pollard, Michael Witmore, Jonathan Hope, and Zachary Lesser. Each author takes the main stage for one of eight sections, proffering an initial provocation, proposition, or reading, which is followed by a response by one or two of the other contributors. The resulting volume feels like a particularly enlivening seminar and reflects, as Mukherji notes, 'an urge to capture a vital part of intellectual life within present-day academia' (21). The innovation here is not form alone, but also tone: the book 'is also designed to write fun and play back into scholarship' (21).

The volume admirably succeeds in these aims, both of which are in keeping with the book's intellectual focus: blind spots of knowledge. Scholarly conversation, sociability, exchange, and generosity are often blind spots in our published work; the acknowledgements section fences off our embodied and extended networks from the finished piece, which stands aloof from its messier, more contingent origins. In signalling its incompleteness and its openness to exchange, this volume enacts its thematic concerns.

Adam Zucker kicks off the first section with a characteristically provocative and enlightening essay on 'Baffling Terms', textual cruxes such as Sir Toby Belch's expostulation 'Castiliano vulgo' in *Twelfth Night* (1.3.34).[1] Such phrases provoke editors to construct meaning out of nonsense. In their meaninglessness such moments constitute a 'blind spot of historical philology' (36), which, Zucker argues, is not a failure to explain, but to know when one's methods have been

exhausted or outwitted by the text. Such moments may also push us, as Stephen Spiess suggests in his response, to a Cavellian form of acknowledgment made possible by a capitulation to bafflement. In her rejoinder to Zucker's essay, Subha Mukherji notes that linguistic play characteristic of Shakespeare's comedies may have a darker and more sinister turn in when 'the drama of asymmetrical knowledges plays out in other genres' (43), such as the dizzying levels of knowledge and blindness played out in the Dover cliff scene of *King Lear*.

Jonathan Gil Harris next takes up 'Shakespeare's Nuts', a witty and engaging tour de force that invites the reader 'to think of objects as active agents' (50). Nuts are productive objects to think with, from Hamlet's conception of infinite spaced bounded within a nutshell, to the consistent figuration of nuts as 'turnstiles between the local and the foreign' (52). Harris's nutty thoughts take him to Goa, where Thomas Stephens, a contemporary of Shakespeare, wrote the *Kristapurana*, a Marathi poem about Jesus Christ that features the *kalpaturu*, or coconut, as its central metaphor. Harris argues that 'we cannot dismiss Stephens as simply an agent of European colonial power', an assertion that Mukherji probes in her response. Mukherji asks questions both about 'somatic agency' (65) and the labor underpinning the poetics of the coconut. These are savvy points of critique about what could be read as a too-hasty dismissal of the colonial project. Yet Mukherji concludes by returning to the undeniable affective dimensions of the poem, asking whether 'affect is one of the blind spots in the necessarily politicized field of contact zone studies?' (67). In thinking through this question, and in engaging with the playfulness of Harris's writing, this response models empathetic and productive models of critique.

The third chapter opens with Supriya Chaudhuri's provocative essay on *Othello*. This section engages the metaphor of the blind spot through a re-examination of the problem of vision in the play. Drawing upon such theorists of vision as Stuart Clark, Luce Irigaray, Suzanne Akbar, and Jacques Lacan, Chaudhuri deftly reveals the blind spots within the play — the ways in which sight is overwritten by 'assumption and conjecture' (84). Surprisingly, she concludes with a reading of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, showing through her juxtaposition of the two plays how fictions can rob us of agency. There are two respondents to this essay. In the first, Harris asks about the problem of epistemological regression: in drawing attention to the blindness of the characters, do we miss our own? Speiss takes a slightly different tack, calling attention to the problem of the discrepant awareness of the audience to 'envision the epistemological dimensions of theatrical thinking' (93).

Aveek Sen's brilliant essay, 'What Emilia Knew: Shakespeare Reads James', follows. Sen further probes the question of knowing in *Othello*. Emilia, Sen argues, bears perhaps surprising affinities to the heroines of Henry James, women who deny to themselves what they know. Shakespeare modifies his source material: while Cinthio grants Emilia full knowledge of her actions but denies her the ability to act otherwise out of fear of her husband, Shakespeare makes her actions 'tantalizingly opaque' (104). Sen does not directly make this point, but we can be tempted to see Emilia's willing denial of her own knowledge as a form of (white?) privilege, especially within the Jamesian context evoked by Sen. Tanya Pollard's lively rejoinder marks the way that Emilia's volubility obscures her unsettling silences, while Mukherji prises open another gap: Barbary, especially as adapted by Toni Morrison in *Desdemona*. Mukherji asks whether 'Shakespeare knew his Morrision, as he 'knew' his James?' She concludes by asking how different media fill in silences and gaps, and what is lost and gained in this process.

Chapter five opens with Tanya Pollard's essay, 'Knowing Kin and Kind in *The Winter's Tale*'. The central question about this most epistemologically complex plays concerns recognition: why is it so difficult to tell who your family is? The protracted and difficult reunions of the play help the audience to 'finally recognize the play's evolving form as tragicomic', that 'fertile, mongrel literary kind that the play embodies' (132). In his response, Zachary Lesser takes up the question of genre, suggesting that 'we still have a blind spot for tragicomedy in Shakespeare's work' (134). Lesser traces this blind spot to the First Folio, whose rigid and outdated generic divisions reject the 'creative mixing' (135) of much of Shakespeare's later work. In the second response to the essay, Aveek Sen returns us to *Othello*, linking Brabantio's terrible dream to Leontes's dream of Hermione's infidelity, showing that moments of deluded fantasy have tragic material consequences.

Stephen Spiess's elegant but disquieting essay, 'The Epistemology of Violence in *The Comedie of Errors*' asks its readers how and why critics and editors have repeatedly told us that the incessant cruelty and violence of that play do not matter. The play is only farce, after all: the violence is meaningless, and it must be ignored if we are to enjoy the play. Like a number of the other essays, this piece asks a seemingly simple question that turns the play on its head. The question, Spiess suggests, is not 'whether the play is funny, but what kind of cultural and epistemological work is performed by violence that audiences are encourages to see as ordinary, insignificant, and indeed laughable' (147). Chaudhuri responds with the provocative question: 'What does the slave know?' (153), a question which Zucker turns back on audiences and 'the empty places of meaning that violence fills up, but never explains' (156).

Chapter seven begins with Michael Witmore's '"To sleep, maybe to dream", and Other Encounters with a Trained Machine'. What is behind the curtain of machine learning such as Google translate, and are we 'flying blind' (173) when we use these powerful tools? Witmore shows that machines 'know' how to translate 'to be or not be' into numerous languages; the phrase is so ubiquitous that algorithms can handle it effortlessly. But they founder when confronted with the more obscure phrases from this best-known of Shakespeare's speeches. Witmore asks what these methods tell us about ways of recognizing literary texts, about what happens when our epistemological desires are given over to the machine. Responding to the German translation of 'that flesh is heir to' as 'this meat is inheritance', Jonathan Hope discusses the goal of identifying the so-called 'distinctive' features of Shakespeare's text. These very features equally show the shared nature of language, Shakespeare's embeddedness in rather than freedom from its structures.

The volume concludes with Zachary Lesser's lively essay on 'Conscience Doth Make Errors: The Blind Spot of Shakespearean Quotation'. Misquotation of Shakespeare is rife, not just on the part of students and laymen, but scholars, editors, and actors. Fully one-third of all texts quoting the line 'Thus conscience does make cowards of us all' get it wrong, substituting 'doth' for 'does', an error that we are remarkably blind to. The error, Lesser argues, stems from a kind of back-formation, in which Shakespeare's hold on cultural authority, his quasi-sacred status, gives the more antiquated grammatical form a spurious authenticity. Almost no one notices this misquotation, which Pollard, in her response, ascribes to the 'power of authoritative misreadings to perpetuate themselves' (197). In the final rejoinder, Adam Zucker admits that he too has misquoted the passage, and the 'right' version still feels wrong. The volume concludes with a warm and humorous memory of the graduate school days of Lesser and Zucker, a story which, as it happens, is both more and less than it seems.

A volume about blind spots of course invites its readers to consider both their own blind spots and those of the collection. Shakespeare himself may be the real blind spot; despite occasional forays into other playwrights such as Jonson or Fletcher, the authors remain fully focused on Shakespeare. This decision is perhaps as it should be, given the scope and origins of the collection. But does any figure blind us to 'Shakespeare's world' more than Shakespeare himself? Perhaps one day a volume about Shakespeare's own shadow might appear. If it does, I hope it will be as delightful and provocative as the present collection.

Notes

1 William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. Elizabeth Storey Donno, 3rd edn (Cambridge, 2017).