

Lauren Shohet, ed. *Temporality, Genre and Experience in the Age of Shakespeare: Forms of Time*. London: Bloomsbury. 2018. Pp 344. Hardback £75.00. ISBN: 9781350017290.

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Temporality, Genre and Experience in the Age of Shakespeare begins by setting out its immense task and scope; which, in editor Lauren Shohet's words, is to 'sketch broadly' a 'macro-view of form and temporality' focusing on the age of Shakespeare (7). The collection's intention is to provide an overview of temporality and its many forms in early modern theatre. The collection's emphasis is on how temporality connects to form, and how forms alter in relation to time. The title boldly displays buzzwords such as 'genre' and 'form', though the collection contains no firm definitions of either. Shohet states the book's intention to approach genre as 'the matrix of conventions that make up not the context, outside, or prehistory of the work, but the very being of the work in time', a broad definition of genre that sidesteps much of the most rigorous critical work in genre theory (7–8). This sidestep is easily forgotten, however, when recognizing the richness and variety of the case studies, and Shohet's introduction does a fine job of establishing expectations for the coming pages.

The collection includes essays on a variety of subjects and texts, which fall under five sections, each with their own formal focal point regarding temporality, genre, and experience. Each section focuses on a specific form of time and contains two or three essays that unpack the form with an emphasis on genre and experience. The first section, 'Illumination', contains three essays, all of which concentrate on how dramatic form shines a light on time. Kent Cartwright's 'Shakespeare's Theatre of Comic Time' postulates that comedy constitutes 'the dramatic genre that most recognises, manipulates and engages its audience consciously in the witnessing of time' (42). Time, in this sense, takes on a role as physical force within comic action which can stretch itself to extend encounters or push characters inextricably forward against their will. Comic characters are helpless to Time's natural rhythm, and Cartwright notes that the comedies self-consciously reference time far more than do the tragedies. Raphael Falco, in 'Suspense Revisited: The Shared Experience of Time', extends the temporal experience into the realm of dramatic technique. Falco explores the idea that dramatic form and technique can create an interchange between the experience of the audience and the actors, a relationship that is dynamic. The audience share a collective understanding of

both the present and future in terms of time, and this can be shared with some theatrical characters and not with others, mostly depending on certain situations of dramatic irony. This overall relationship between temporality and dramatic form leads to suspense. Finally, Philip Lorenz's essay offers an insight into *Henry VIII*. Lorenz studies the play and its apparent temporal stasis in the baroque, and the issues of inheritance and sovereignty contained within. Lorenz uses this discussion to argue the tragic nature of Shakespeare's history play. All three essays use form and technique as a method of 'illuminating' the temporal discussion in relation to dramaturgy and action on stage.

Section two concerns itself with form's ability to synthesize time, or the ways in which time and form work against this synthesize. Andrew Griffin's 'Is *Henry V* still a history play?' analyzes *Henry V* through the unique inconsistency between historical moments that are 'neither present nor alive' and the immediate temporal elements of theatre (79). Theatre encourages the past to converse with the immediate present, and Griffin attempts to reconcile, or at least acknowledge, the synthetic instability of these two temporal moments. Shohet also has an essay in this section, entitled 'Allusion, Temporality and Genre in *Troilus and Cressida* and *Pericles*'. This essay focuses on hybrid forms such as tragi-comedy and satiric tragedy, and the dramatic relationship between texts and genre. The essay focuses, overall, on themes of repetition and how they act as a healing force in romance but a limiting force in satire. The discussions in this section are some of the most unique in the collection.

Section three explores the misaligning abilities of temporal forms in the wider historic consciousness in such a way that 'layers of time become visible' (22). Matthew Harrison begins the discussion with his '*Love's Labour's Lost* and the Layered Temporality of Poetic Reception', exploring how differing temporal situations can alter experience, and how theatre stages old poetic conventions anew. This revisiting of older poetic styles through the lens of different temporal moments in history offers a new significance to these poetic modes. Harrison's focus is on the poetic forms of *Love's Labour's Lost*, whereas Lucy Munro's essay 'Timing *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*: Genre, Style, and Performance' concerns itself more with theatrical convention. Perhaps the most theoretically ambitious of the essays, Munro's attempt to tackle Beaumont's famous flop is both bold and eloquently executed. Munro deploys theatrical expertise to overcome the chaos of *Knight*, exploring in detail the rapidly changing theatrical circumstances of the early modern theatre using *Knight* as a case study. *Knight's* ability to flop drastically and then resurge successfully within the space of around thirty years perfectly summarizes the theatrical dynamism of the early modern period, and Munro's

essay will be invaluable to scholars of early modern reception. The final essay, Rebecca Bushnell's 'Time, Tragedy and the Text of *Antony and Cleopatra*', offers an opposing perspective to the previous two essays. Where their discussion is of the temporal complexity of layering in early modern theatre, Bushnell's approach successfully demonstrates how the editing methodologies of the eighteenth century cut away Shakespeare's complex, layered style to suggest a more regimented and concentrated style. The fascinating work in this section offers unique insights into reception during Shakespeare's time, with a focus on the temporal misaligning of form.

Section four opens with a contribution from William C. Carroll. "'The Death of Fathers": Succession and Diachronic Time in Shakespearean Tragedy' focuses, as do all the essays in this section, on tragedy. Carroll analyzes time and temporality with a focus on dynastic succession. He generates a secular image of time that relies on biology, reproduction, and generational change. The theme of tragedy continues in Lara Dodds's chapter on *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Dodds's approach to Cary's Senecan tragedy argues that the tragic form and its associated temporalities create an uneven, incomplete timeline. The vagueness and disparity in temporal moments offer the unique perspective that time 'may always be the enemy of humanity' (204). The section concludes with Meredith Beales's essay 'Future Histories in *King Lear*', again reinforcing the tragic theme of the section. Beales studies the 'future histories' of Shakespeare's Britain presented in *King Lear*, and how the dual temporality of the projected future of the stage affects audiences' reception, in comparison to the actual history of the past.

The final section contains two essays on the theme of time and its ability to 'pleat' and fold. Robin S. Stewart begins with 'From Last Judgement to Leviathan: The Semiotics of Collective Temporality in Early Modern England', which has the widest formal scope of all the collection's essays, including study of paintings by Hans Memling and woodcut illustrations of Melancthon. Whilst interesting, most of his analysis focuses on the pleating time through a religious lens. Stewart's time pleats are infinite and examine how the end of the world has changed throughout time, and how differing studies of the end of time converse with secular temporalities. The final essay is Valerie Wayne's '*Cymbeline*, Janus, and Folded Time'. Using *Cymbeline* as her focus, she studies how Shakespearean romance compacts and compresses time. The theatrical and literary rationale of romance can reconcile themes of suspense, anticipation, and the resurgence of the past. This final section of essays is perhaps the most conceptually complex but operates as a final moment of thoughtful exploration to conclude the collection.

Temporality, Genre and Experience in the Age of Shakespeare offers a step in a new direction for the analysis of early modern drama. The collection contains strong and rich studies on the topics of reception, experience, and formal considerations. The book's decision to operate in the dual space of present and past allows it to feel fresh and at the same time detailed. The essays throughout attempt to explore the complex issue of time, focusing on its unique ability to alter form. They also explore the ways in which theatre can act as a stage upon which authors can explore time fully, often bringing together multiple temporal forms into a single moment. As a collection, the essays inform one another on a methodological level while still operating individually as separate case studies. Whilst the initial side-step of genre and generic terms may frustrate genre theorists, or genre-focused readers, the work contained in each essay will be valuable both to those interested in themes of time in Shakespeare's age, or to scholars looking for insights into the individual plays under discussion.