

Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Shakespeare in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp xii, 220.

ALAN ANDREWS

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Early Theatre 16.1 (2013), 208–11

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12745/et.16.1.19>

In 1752 America's first theatre company, led by Lewis Hallam, was in colonial Williamsburg. A playbill for their performance of *The Merchant of Venice* included an announcement that Mr. Adcock, who played Lorenzo, would sing 'songs in character'. It was a common enough practice in the eighteenth-century theatre: Thomas Arne had made a setting of 'Lorenzo's Serenade' for the famous 1741 *Merchant* in which the actor Macklin transformed the concept of Shylock. The authors of this recent book in the Oxford Shakespeare Studies series describe the Hallam troupe's performance as 'a musical version' as if it were a Broadway show. They are perhaps too eager to establish a distinctly American Shakespeare.

This is not the first time the title *Shakespeare in America* has been adopted, not to mention titles roughly similar, as the Vaughans freely acknowledge in their useful annotated bibliography. Over a century ago George B. Churchill contributed a lengthy article entitled 'Shakespeare in America' to the German academic annual *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* expressing pride in the part Shakespeare played in American education but less happiness with the American theatre's treatment of his plays. A significant book by Esther Cloudman Dunn appeared in 1939. Her *Shakespeare in America* remains a lively, perspicacious study of Shakespeare's plays on the American stage; of schoolbooks containing choice extracts for use as exercises in elocution and to reinforce moral education; of Shakespeare's influence on significant American politicians, preachers, and men of letters; and of editions, designed sometimes for the general reader and sometimes for the scholar in the library. Dunn also took account of the authorship argument, giving a vivid and touching account of Delia Bacon, the pioneering advocate of the theory that a 'butcher's son' could not have been the author of the plays and poems attributed to him. The Vaughans also devote substantial space to the authorship question, pointing out how ironic it was that Americans, wholeheartedly committed to self-education and the admiration of self-made men, should have adopted with such enthusiasm the view that only an aristocrat could have written the plays.

Dunn's *Shakespeare in America* brought the story to the end of the nineteenth century with brief glances into the twentieth. When the Vaughans take up the tale from the point at which Dunn left it, their focus seems to shift. Their account of Shakespeare in America in the late nineteenth century comes in two chapters entitled 'Shakespeare Becomes American' and 'Shakespeare and American Expansion'. They take us from the Astor Place riot of 1849 through a well-managed discussion of scholarly and editorial achievements to such deviations as the authorship controversy and minstrel shows. Their aim here appears to be to show that Shakespeare's plays were well known to the population at large; otherwise, audiences would not have appreciated such travesties as 'Hamlet the Dainty', 'Othello and Dars-de-money', or 'Julius the Snoozer'. Shakespeare in America, they suggest, has been the beneficiary of a democratic society and was thus different from the aristocratic one still prevalent in Great Britain. The discussion of popular entertainments paves the way for 'Multicultural Shakespeare' and 'Popular Shakespeare', as later chapters are entitled. By the end of the book whatever it is that allows the notion of a distinctive American Shakespeare seems to spring not from Shakespeare, and particularly not from his language, but from the circumstances of American life.

There are several errors, mostly minor. David Garrick neither produced nor acted in Shakespeare's plays at Stratford-upon-Avon. Fanny Kemble's father Charles, though an experienced supporting actor, can hardly be said to have 'played many of the same Shakespearian roles' as Edmund Kean. The distinguished theatre historian — whose splendid achievement in researching Shakespeare on the American stage remains indispensable for serious students — is Charles H. (not M.) Shattuck. The word 'essay' appears where essay is clearly meant, and there is a careless reference to the nineteenth-century scholar and editor Richard Grant White as Grant. James Mason was hardly renowned as an 'experienced ... Shakespearian' before his appearance with John Gielgud and Marlon Brando in Joseph Mankiewicz's 1953 film of *Julius Caesar*. The Canadian Shakespeare Festival is located not in London but in Stratford, Ontario.

Canada is explicitly excluded from consideration; it requires a book to itself, the Vaughans say. There are other surprising, and apparently less deliberate, omissions. Because Hollywood produced no Shakespeare movies between the 1937 *Romeo and Juliet*, starring the mature Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer, and Mankiewicz's *Caesar*, Shakespeare came to be seen as 'poison at the box office', they say. They completely ignore the Oscar-winning *Henry V*

(1945) and *Hamlet* (1948), starring and directed by Laurence Olivier, which though made in Britain were certainly seen in America. The British Film Institute has estimated that more people saw Olivier's *Richard III* (1955), the third film in this triumphant sequence, than saw the play in all its prior performances. Other absentees include Henry Irving and Ben Greet, whose tours at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century brought Shakespeare to most parts of America, and Harley Granville Barker, whose *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1915) was at least as influential as Reinhardt's. His subsequent lectures at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton as well as other universities and colleges made a considerable contribution to the appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare in America. Missing too are the Broadway *Hamlets* of John Gielgud (1936) and Richard Burton (1963), the latter directed by Gielgud who wittily provided his own recorded voice for the Ghost.

The Vaughans do not discuss Shakespeare's role in American art (for which see Richard Studing's *Shakespeare in American Painting* [Madison, 1993]). Music is not totally neglected, with plentiful attention given to popular music, but apart from a mention of Virgil Thomson's score for Orson Welles's 'voodoo' *Macbeth* the only serious compositions mentioned are *West Side Story* and Duke Ellington's jazz suite *Such Sweet Thunder*. Samuel Barber's opera *Antony and Cleopatra* certainly deserves notice, not only for its own sake as an American Shakespearean opera, but for its intended symbolic function as the inaugural production of the Metropolitan Opera House in its new house at Lincoln Centre. It is true that the event was an unhappy experience for almost everyone concerned with a misconceived, grandiose production by Franco Zeffirelli, technical problems galore, a strike, first-night mishaps, and extensive critical condemnation — not to mention the devastating effect of all this on Barber. But the fact remains that the Met wanted to inaugurate the new house with an opera based on a Shakespeare play. Barber's opera wasn't the only token of esteem for Shakespeare at Lincoln Centre's openings, moreover. The New York Philharmonic also paid homage by including in its inaugural concert Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*, a setting of Lorenzo's words at the beginning of the final scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps ...'. (Was Arne's setting of this one of Mr. Adkins's 'songs in character' at Williamsburg in 1752?)

In constructing their American Shakespeare, the Vaughans bring to the fore various elements of popular culture as testimony to the pervasiveness of

Shakespeare in America: film and television, popular music, burlesque theatre, multicultural adaptations, cartoons and comics, t-shirts and neckties, household bric-a-brac, and much more. 'Many academics', they say, 'take pride in their Shakespeare kitsch'! Is this Shakespeare, or even Shakespeare in America? Perhaps not, but it does offer a perspective on American popular culture that could be carried further.

Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson. *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue. Volume I: 1533–1566*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp li, 500.

PETER HAPPÉ
University of Southampton

Early Theatre 16.1 (2013), 211–15
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12745/et.16.1.20>

This is the first volume of a large-scale undertaking that may, I understand, eventually run to ten volumes and as such is likely to be valuable in many different ways and to have many years of life ahead of it. The introduction, laying out the guiding principles, indicates that it is a work *sui generis*, intended to complement the achievements of other scholars rather than to supersede them. The project presents information about a very large corpus of 'plays' in a systematic way giving 'a consistently detailed body of information in standard format about the whole of English Renaissance drama' (vii.). At a later stage the authors envisage a searchable electronic edition.

The 440 plays in volume one are arranged in chronological order by years, using both positive information where available and educated speculation where the evidence is less than conclusive to give a 'best guess' for the date. This will facilitate a historical perspective since it allows some insight, however limited, into the nature of drama year by year. With the help of some typographical ingenuity, each entry gives information, if it has been found, under six categories that are explained in the introduction: Identity, Fiction, Literary, Theatrical, Historical, and Evidence. These comprise a wide variety of very detailed information and will be valuable for research in many different directions. For example, the Theatrical category offers information about each play's requirements as a theatrical artefact. These include original and implied stage directions, details on staging, assumptions about the audience,