reproduction of Shakespearean playtexts, elucidating the importance of marginalized figures and moments. At the same time, their critique of theatrical cuts as producing, in Martin's words, 'underachieved Shakespeare' (336), proves the ongoing authorizing power of Kennedy's modernist Shakespeare, He Who Must Be Realized, over the most politically inflected of readings.

Some important perspectives on performance are perhaps underrepresented here. For example, in a volume of this length it seems odd that only one essay – Peter Thomson's idiosyncratic and fascinating exploration of the career and legacy of the clown Richard Tarlton – considers the transforming power of a specific performer in any depth. Considerable room remains to explore what Wheale, citing the work of Anthony B. Dawson, describes as 'the agency of the actor as they demonstrate the simultaneous authenticity and performativity of character, role and action' (128). On a more technical note, the weakness of the volume's copy-editing sometimes distracts from its arguments. Still, by bringing together a diverse range of perspectives on the modernist Bard, his early modern context, and his postmodern successors, *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance* offers worthwhile contributions to a field of study as vital and plural as the playing it examines.

ROBERTA BARKER

Lynn Forest-Hill. *Transgressive Language in Medieval English Drama*. Aldershot, VT: Ashgate, 2000. Pp 215.

There is room aplenty for Lynn Forest-Hill's study. Slander, lies, boasts, insults, and other types of transgressive speech are scattered widely, if not thickly, throughout biblical and moral plays, uttered by an interesting range of evil lords, 'rude mechanicals', Vices, and reform-bent truth-tellers. Neither David Lawton's *Blasphemy* (Penn, 1993) nor my recent book, *Lies, Slander and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1997) touches the drama, except for the Croxton Play of the Sacrament (Lawton), while articles tend to consider only one deviant type, usually idle language. Unlike *The Book of Margery Kempe* or the *Gawain*-Poet's *Patience*, where deviant speech provokes sustained and sharply conflicting responses, the plays' sporadic and local uses of transgressive language as a dramatic device presents organizational challenges to a writer. Forest-Hill meets them by writing a two-part book: a loose survey of earlier plays followed by extended readings of three early Tudor moralities: *Magnificence*, *The Play of the Wether*, and *King Johan*. But first

comes the crucial chapter on 'social context', on transgressive language in late medieval England.

Defining her topic as 'language which was subject to constraint but nevertheless in some cases exceeded the limits of that constraint' (6), Forest-Hill turns to sermons and laws to establish the moral valence given speech. Her section on legal cases mounts two important arguments running through the book: that spectators were drawn to respond to slander in the plays (Christ as sorcerer) as witnesses were in defamation trials and that they were licensed to ridicule and abuse transgressive speakers much as citizens were during public punishments. By contrast, her section on clerical constraints is oddly limited and unreliable. She confines conceptualizing the transgressive to a few definitions from neighbouring *quaestiones* in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (oddly not several types, like boasting, which she treats at length in the plays); by not moving to a more semiotic, rhetorical, ethical, or theoretical mode she sharply limits the study's analytical reach. Moreover, she misleadingly presents lists of verbal sins in catechetical literature as Thomistic, ignoring the vast and influential pastoral literature examined in Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio's *I Peccati della lingua* (1987), available in a French version as well as the original Italian. Several errors crop up: Richard Rolle is dated a full century late (10), and *The Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen* is characterized as a sermon, whereas the edition she uses presents it in the usual way as catechetical tracts arranged as a double commentary on the Pater Noster.

This limited cultural analysis inevitably hobbles Forest-Hill's chapter on characterization, reducing it often to a catalogue of forms, styles, and dramatic contexts for transgressive speech, though she argues clearly that shifts to and from verbal transgression signify changes in characters' spiritual states. The following survey of the biblical plays (chapter 3) explores how boasts, slander, and insults challenge spectators to respond to 'socially disruptive' conduct, linked to religious dissent or doubt, or to reflect on their sense of Christian faith. Inevitably this tack involves positing audience responses, though she is careful to list a wide range of them, with a spectator's reaction to a specific character's speech governed by his or her experience – that of local lords, for example, shaping responses to a ranting Herod. She identifies especially rich uses of comic abuse in the Passion plays: eliciting the spectators' enjoyment and then shared guilt, anchoring the memory, marking characters' exclusion from Christian community, revealing Christ's true nature.

Despite the paucity of verbal transgression in the Macro plays, Forest-Hill's fourth chapter carries through her central argument in terms of late medieval moral plays: that lies, insults, or shameless rejection of sound teaching mark

the falls of the central figures. She then develops thorough, complex readings of how transgressive speech is used to reflect on cultural change in the Tudor plays. Her overly schematic claim, made fitfully, that the temptation and fall of John Skelton's Magnificence constitutes an 'allegory' depicting the consequences of the humanists' demotion of medieval Latin and Middle English does not mask her sophisticated deployment of earlier arguments: that Fancy's manipulation of words would be countered by the audience's response that some signs are socially valuable and so should be stable, that the tempters' transgressive speech, conventional in moral plays, indicates that signs of good and evil are stable, and that Magnificence becomes an object of the audience's mockery when he falls into the proud boasts of biblical play tyrants. Thus, the signs of spiritual degradation remain stable, even though Magnificence himself misreads the identity of deceptive speakers. With John Heywood's *The Play of the Wether*, Forest-Hill enters the tricky world of topical allusion. Yet her general argument does not depend on the persuasiveness of specific allusions: she cogently moves beyond traditional readings of Heywood's impartiality toward Reformed and Catholic claims to reason that he indirectly espouses virtue, usually in the form of the old religion, and reconciliation.

While these chapters largely ignore any new social context for transgressive language, Forest-Hill grounds John Bale's *King Johan* firmly in the biblically authorized use of abuse in Tudor religious controversy. Bale inverts the traditional use of transgressive language for characterizing spiritual states by having characters utter more abuse as they, quite virtuously, reject Catholicism. In this chapter she also loosely extends transgressiveness to any expression of support for the pope against the king, even to cynical self-disclosure by papal supporters – a move which might have been justified had she developed consistent ethical (especially focusing on will, intention, and consequences), semiotic, and/or theoretical analysis in the earlier chapters. Both the plays and the topic demanded that.

EDWIN D. CRAUN

Clare Harraway. *Re-citing Marlowe: Approaches to the Drama*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2000. Pp 224.

Clare Harraway uses the phrase 'textual cabaret' (60) to describe the proliferation of letters, documents, titles, and signatures in *Edward II*. The strength of her study as a whole lies in her persuasive demonstrations that Marlowe's