

to Blake and Elton. Some of us are excited, some confused, some grumpy. Some long for certainty. Throughout the collection there are variations on the statement, 'There is as yet no definitive work on ...' – to which others would reply, and there never will be. There is mounting impatience with the critical modes of the last fifteen or twenty years, but no sign of a real breakthrough to the next stage. Meanwhile this first volume of *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, for all its local imperfections, provides a lively and vivid cross-section of our achievements, complaints and concerns as what may claim to be the most volatile period in the history of Shakespeare studies draws – maybe – to a close.

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Bruce R. Smith (ed). *Twelfth Night*. The Bedford Shakespeare Series. Boston and New York: Palgrave, 2001. Pp xviii, 430.

New historicism is showing all the signs of middle age (which, in academic years, it has in fact entered). Its position is firmly established in the institution it once challenged, as evidenced by how pervasive the practice of 'situating' literary works in their historical context has become. Perhaps as a result, it has also mellowed considerably, if we can take as representative Stephen Greenblatt's recent, and graciously unpolemical, work on *Hamlet* and purgatory (in younger, or other, hands, the history of purgatory could easily have become merely the history of institutional oppression founded on a fiction). If some of the hallmark adversarial energy is no longer so palpable, however, the practice of new historicism is, perhaps as a result again, also fulfilling more explicitly the promise that Greenblatt in particular initially offered; namely, that by studying the social context in which a work of art is produced, we will appreciate more deeply the aesthetic power of that work. Put another way, the founding premise of new historicism was that the presence of the social in a work of art did not diminish but enhanced the aesthetic power of the work. The latest edition of Shakespeare's plays in the Bedford/St. Martin's 'Texts and Contexts' series – *Twelfth Night*, edited by Bruce R. Smith – enables one to experience the force of this premise.

This edition is divided into three sections: the Introduction, the play-text, and a section titled 'Cultural Contexts', which assembles various contextual materials and is three times the length of the play-text (nearly three hundred pages vs about eighty). Because the First Folio provides the only source text

for the play, and because that text is universally regarded as sound, textual matters are given the least editorial attention. Indeed, this edition merely reproduces the text that David Bevington edited as part of *The Complete Works* (Longman, 1997), together with Bevington's notes and glosses. As indicated by the relative weight given to the 'contexts' section, then, the effort by this edition to shape (and reshape) the reading experience consists in providing a wealth of contextual material and a framework for navigating through it.

In the formal Introduction to the text, Bruce Smith revisits John Manningham's famous entry in his diary that describes a 1602 performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Middle Temple Hall. In this particular entry, and in those that surround it in the diary, Smith discerns seven subjects (or 'contexts' [6]) of continuing fascination to Manningham and presumably to others like him in the Middle Temple: Romance, Music, Sexuality, Clothing and Disguise, Household Economies, Puritan Probity, and Laughter and Clowning. On the face of it, this catalogue looks, above all, like an index of the topics that have most exercised Shakespearians writing on the play in the past generation; one immediately suspects that the index is less the product of, and more a contrived guide for, searching through Manningham's diary. Further, one must wonder how representative Manningham was of the average playgoer in the public theatres; given Manningham's emphasis on the gulling of Malvolio in the entry, he seems most to have enjoyed the aspect of the play that most recalls the clubby Middle Temple atmosphere of ritual humiliations and snobbish fooling. Be that as it may, Smith makes a wonderfully compelling case for the importance of each category. In the Introduction proper, and in further introductory discussions that accompany the material in the 'Cultural Contexts' section, Smith follows the procedure of identifying a theme or strain in the play, and connecting it with the contextual material to make both text and context resonate more interestingly. With regard to the (obvious enough but still unexhausted) subject of music, for instance, Smith notes with characteristic elegance and economy, 'In a theater without illusionistic scenery, Illyria is more a *soundscape* than a landscape, and music forms a prominent feature within the play's acoustic horizons' (10). As one reads selections, for example, from George Sandys' translation of Ovid (1632), John Case's *Praise of Music* (1586), and Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), one comes to understand more fully the prominence and the contours of that soundscape. The Ovidian contest between Marsyas and Apollo – which pits the provocative frenzy of the satyr's flute against the contemplative harmonies of Apollo's lyre – helps to characterize as well as frame the individual sounds

and melodies that fill the play, from the boisterous catches to the melancholy songs of love. (I must wonder at this point, however, why Smith chose not to include representative pieces of music from the period to fill out the play's acoustic horizons.) The customary connections that writers make between musical harmony and cosmic as well as social harmony further remind us that the ordering of pitches in time finds its social analogue in Malvolio's effort to silence Toby and Andrew's drunken nightmusic: 'Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?' (2.3.77). In this connection, as Smith suggests, the 'Time' to which the musically named Viola appeals to untangle the knot she's in is itself a figure for musical harmony. Simply, the more closely one listens, the more the material and the immaterial properties of music – in both the play and the contextual materials – become blended in the way the pleasures of music are synaesthetically blended for Orsino. On the one hand, even oblique musical metaphors begin to resonate with a perceivable music ('naught enters there / Of what validity and *pitch* soe'er ...' [1.1.12]); on the other, a highly physical account of music's effects on the body, like Thomas Wright's, takes on immaterial resonances:

The third manner [by which music stirs up the passion] is this: that the very sound itself, which according to the best philosophy is nothing else but a certain artificial shaking, crispling, or tickling of the air (like as we see in the water crispled, when it is calm and a sweet gale of wind ruffleth it a little; or when we cast a stone into a calm water we may perceive divers warbling natural circles) which passeth through ears, and by them into the heart, and there beateth and tickleth it in such sort as it is moved with semblable passions. (181)

I would add that this account also serves as a perfect template for understanding music's effects on the play's characters as well as the play's effect on the audience once the play's music is more intently heard.

In like fashion, Smith introduces and presents material under six other headings. As is the case with the category of music, much of the material will no doubt be familiar to scholars. In sections on 'Sexuality' and 'Clothing and Disguise', for example, one finds many of the texts that have become central sites for critical struggle over the issues of gender and class struggle in the early modern period: Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, the anonymous *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, or the antitheatrical pamphlets of puritans like Philip Stubbes and John Rainolds. Nonetheless, each section will help all readers – from advanced undergraduates to scholars looking for a compendious introduction – appreciate each aspect of the play more fully. Equally importantly,

under Smith's expert and gently prodding guidance, one will also see how the 'contexts' intermingle (as, again, the sensory pleasures do in Orsino's experience of music). The 'time' of music will recall the special time of 'Romance', under which category we find not only an account of the Christmas revels at the Middle Temple in 1597-98 (*Le Prince d'Amour*) but also selections from *The Book of Common Prayer* relating to the epiphany; as these selections from *The Book of Common Prayer* illustrate a way of ordering time in rhythm with providential history, so the Homily 'Of Excess Apparel' (included in 'Clothing and Disguise') provides a way to dress in accordance with providential order; a vision of some such order is also behind the regulation of households and the laws that govern property management and disposal ('Household Economies'); regulating dress and household economies further entails policing gender boundaries, which subject is part of the 'Sexuality' section that includes poetry that celebrates the erotic titillations of gender crossings and confusions (like Beaumont's 'Salmacis and Hermaphroditus'); and so on. Clearly, the hope of this edition is that in the course of traversing these contexts, the reader will become more attuned to how the world outside the theatre enters the play and enlivens, enriches and complicates it. I believe this hope is well founded. Using *Twelfth Night* to limit its scope, this edition provides an Elizabethan world picture that is certainly updated to reflect the interests of the present moment, but that is also richer in the kinds of material details that reward the effort to situate plays in their contexts. Indeed, though the selection of the material is itself a highly polemical act, this edition trusts the rich potential of the material and thus remains content to leave the bulk of the effort of making connections to the readers. In doing so, this edition enables what Greenblatt called over twenty years ago 'a poetics of culture'.¹

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Notes

- 1 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980), 5.