

history play and as a reflection (à la Shakespeare) of contemporary politics as seen filtered through the Georgian and Shakespearean worlds. This is a bit of a balancing act, but Gibbons carries it off, enabling us to see how the three historical layers of the play (to borrow a word from Donne) ‘interanimate’ each other. As such, it comprises a fit coda to the twin preoccupations with form and context that characterize the essays in the book as a whole.

The volume concludes with an Appendix compiled by W. H. Bond (331–8) listing the publications of Gwynne Blakemore Evans. The twenty-two editions (including the monumental *Riverside Shakespeare*), forty-three articles and notes, and some fifty-five book reviews (many of them amounting to scholarly articles in their own right) stand as the most unassailable testimony to Professor Evans’s distinguished academic career. This collection of essays by his colleagues and friends gestures encomiastically toward that highly productive career in the best way possible – by making a noteworthy scholarly statement of its own.

JOSEPH CANDIDO

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- 1 *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA., 1997).

Barbara A. Murray. *Restoration Shakespeare: Viewing the Voice*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press in conjunction with Modern Humanities Research Association, 2001. Pp 306.

This book offers a close look at seventeen Shakespeare adaptations produced for the London stage between 1662 and 1682. Murray promises to treat these ‘much vilified’ plays (including the Dryden-Davenant *Tempest* and the Tate *Lear*) with respect in an effort to understand how these plays ‘were meant to work, and ... how powerful many of them must have been’ (10). By doing so, she hopes ‘to demonstrate that the reworking of Shakespeare in this period was driven by new stage-production techniques that enhanced immediate visual impact, and that this was reinforced by a developing theoretical prescription for the coherently visual in poetic imagery’ (17–18). This approach promises

a book that will not sidestep the issue of the literary quality of these adaptations in favor of social or theatrical history; rather, Murray will emphatically join poetic and theatrical practice in an effort to understand, if not always commend, these plays.

Murray says that by the 1660s changes in poetic theory and stage practice produced a need to make Shakespeare's language 'operate more like speaking pictures, in coherent visual imagery and metaphor, so that it would inculcate instruction more effectively, and also to accommodate this language to the added emotional power of scenery, music, and acting delivery' (32–33). Drawing on a number of seventeenth-century commentators, Murray presents an overview of poetic theory that claims 'it is by the depictive power of poetry that truth is represented to the mind's eye so that knowledge may be conveyed, the moral sensibilities aroused, and art fulfill its proper didactic function' (23). She takes the didactic function of dramatic poetry seriously and sees the innovations in changeable scenery and stage machines as 'an opportunity to add a development to critical theory concerning dramatic poetry' (26).

According to this approach, Shakespeare's Restoration adapters were not simpletons who took the shears to his richly ambiguous plays in order to make them more clear-cut in terms of morality and characterization. Nor were they tone-deaf to the beauties of Shakespeare's language. Instead, they were savvy theatre professionals and poets who 'for quite complex theoretical and theatrical reasons' sought to 'develop the visual and metaphorical coherence of the originals for entertainment and to enhance their didactic function' (199). This is a refreshing approach to these adaptations because it forces us to consider the literary and theatrical quality of the adaptations according to the criteria that the adapters and their contemporaries considered important. And as Murray rightly points out, the document granting the Duke's Company performance rights to many of Shakespeare's plays specifically charged Davenant with revising them so that they would be 'fitt' for the Restoration stage. Murray focuses on the critical and theatrical implications of this charge, not just the moral ones.

On balance, the book delivers what Murray promises, but it suffers from an unimaginative structure that makes the book hard to read and that seriously undermines the development of her argument. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, the book is split into two big chunks, the first of which covers the adaptations of the 1660s, and the latter which covers those from the 1670s and early 1680s. There is no real logic to the split and the political instability of the Popish Plot years is leaned on too heavily as a justification for the latter grouping. Within these two sections, Murray takes up the seventeen adapta-

tions in chronological order of the likely performance date. As a result, the book is a series of essays about the individual plays loosely connected by reference to the thesis described above. But even within the individual discussions, one often feels far from the ostensible focus on coherent visual imagery reinforced by scenic effects in the service of a didactic message. The discussion of Shadwell's adaptation of *Timon of Athens* (1678) is a good example of this. Murray spends fourteen pages on the play, describing it in great detail, but without much focus or reference to her thesis. Many other sections suffer from these same problems. They describe casting issues, performance history, prefatory criticism, governing motifs, and so on, without providing a clear sense of how it all advances the book's argument.

Some of the adaptations lend themselves better to Murray's thesis, and her discussions in these instances are very valuable. The best example is her treatment of Davenant's *Macbeth* (1664). Her careful analysis of key speeches by Macbeth and Lady Macduff shows how Davenant relied on 'depictive images' to make the didactic warning against ambition clear (61). But even more persuasive is the way Murray compares how the play was performed on Shakespeare's stage to how it was done on Davenant's. By pointing out that Shakespeare's company employed music and dance in the play, Murray acquits Davenant of the charge of creating a 'vapid moral story interlarded by vaudeville' (56). The alterations he made to the play's structure and the ways he exploited the scenic and musical capacities of his stage resulted in a play that is more morally serious than the one Shakespeare wrote, not less. This is a valuable contribution to the discussion about Davenant's *Macbeth*, which is too often dismissed out of hand for its singing witches.

In terms of apparatus, the book features a helpful index and a thorough bibliography of secondary material on Shakespeare during the Restoration. While the notes are learned, they are too unwieldy to be truly useful. For instance, a note on Tate's *Lear* runs to six and a half pages; many others exceed two pages in length. This strikes me as symptomatic of the book's organizational weakness. Without a helpful chapter structure, the decision about what goes in a note versus what goes in the text can become arbitrary. *Restoration Shakespeare* is a helpful reference tool for the individual adaptations, but as a book, it lacks the structural clarity and focus to develop its central argument well.

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