

spere's drama subverting false assumptions about the nature and power of money. Like power, money as a figuration of value emerges as an expression of "an inadequate knowledge of the occurring events and of the affective status that compose us" (p. 198). According to Pascucci, the space which these processes of reduction and clarification open up gives rise to something she calls creation, an ontological concept denoting a comprehensive form of liberation: "Shakespeare stages in his work the most profound comprehension of humanity and liberates it from the chains it is cast into." (p. 2) This is a political and an extremely optimistic reading and, for all their incisive critical potential, even Shakespeare's plays will have a hard time living up to it.

Methodically, the two books are closely related in the wide range of philosophers they bring to the feast and in their penchant for close and careful textual analysis. They also stand united in producing both fresh readings of the plays and fresh readings of philosophy.

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Returns to Religion

Richard C. McCoy, *Faith in Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. xvii, 194 pp. – ISBN 978-0-19-994576-4 – £ 32.99 (hb.).

David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ix, 155 pp. – ISBN 978-0-19-957289-2 – £ 25.00 (hb).

These two studies are among the latest additions to the 'turn to religion' which has been influential in Shakespeare criticism for over two decades. However, the different ways in which they turn towards questions of religion, belief and faith set them off from preceding studies. Both McCoy and Kastan deplore that discussions have too often conflated the issue of religion in Shakespeare with Shakespeare's religion, resulting in too much autobiographical speculation and too little attentive reading of Shakespeare's texts. In order to distance themselves from what each of them sees as questions not worth pursuing, both authors insistently stress that they are neither interested in making windows into Shakespeare's soul nor in reading his plays as either voicing Catholic opposition or staging Protestant propaganda.

In his introduction, Kastan states that "[i]t is not that I don't care what Shakespeare believed; it is that [...] I don't think that the plays or his known biography can tell us anything about that" (p. 10). After this confession, the following chapter of Kastan's study comes as a surprise, albeit a welcome one. It is teasingly titled "Shakespeare's Religion", and here Kastan effectively dismantles the various approaches critics have employed in order to identify Shakespeare's personal belief. Discussing the critical claims that have been constructed from the patchy biographical evidence and the plays, Kastan shows his familiarity with the historical record and the critical history of religion in Shakespeare. He also convincingly argues that Shakespeare's faith can neither be teased out of "the desultory narrative of his familial and personal history" (p. 30) nor does it constitute the "master narrative" (p. 40) underlying the plays. In the following three chapters, Kastan turns to Shakespeare's dramatic texts in order to find an answer to the question

what “religion is doing in these plays” (p. 11). In the third chapter, “All Roads Lead to Rome”, he analyses the representations of Catholics and Catholicism in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King John*, *Henry VIII* and *Measure for Measure*. He reads these plays as being informed by traces of Catholicism, which were constitutive of cultural life in a country in which the Reformation had remained incomplete. In “Conversion and Cosmopolitanism”, Kastan discusses the renderings of Jews, Turks and Moors in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, thus taking into view the non-Christian others of religious discourse in Shakespeare’s England. By way of conclusion, “Forgetting Hamlet” focuses on “literature’s most famous Wittenberg dropout” (p. 11). Here, Kastan refutes Greenblatt’s claim that *Hamlet* is about how “a young man from Wittenberg, with a distinctly Protestant temperament, is haunted by a distinctly Catholic ghost” (*Hamlet in Purgatory*, 2001, p. 240). Kastan argues that religion does indeed matter in *Hamlet*, but he does not see the play as resting on a binary dichotomy of religious denominations. For him, the many uncertainties this ‘problem play’ has to offer align it with Protestantism: “The problem is not that religion demands belief; the problem is that Hamlet desires certainty – and the credal problem gives way to an epistemological crisis at the heart of the play and arguably in Protestantism itself” (p. 135). More importantly, however, Kastan reminds his readers that *Hamlet* “transforms theology into tragedy” (p. 143).

While Kastan’s learned, often witty and always accessible study enables his readers to understand how Shakespeare’s texts are inescapably charged with religion, McCoy’s book explores the complex issue of faith in Shakespeare. For McCoy, the turn to religion in Shakespeare Studies has led to a confused and flawed conception of the faith that Shakespeare’s plays necessitate and evoke. Like Kastan, McCoy argues that there can be no answer to the question of Shakespeare’s personal faith. He disapproves of any critical approach which “equates faith in Shakespeare with faith in a god, false or true” (p. 15) by ascribing quasi-religious functions to Shakespeare’s works. The faith in Shakespeare that McCoy proposes to engage with is of another kind; it is poetic faith, which he defines as “a profoundly paradoxical experience because his scripts in performance allow us to believe in dramatic illusions that move and engage us as we see through them” (p. ix). As laid out in his introductory chapter, McCoy’s notion of poetic faith is theoretically framed by Coleridge’s famous concept of “the willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (*Biographia Literaria*, qtd in McCoy, p. 16). It is also inspired by Keats’s concept of a “negative capability” (qtd in McCoy, p. 4) as well as by Cranmer’s theological writings and Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry*. In four chapters and an epilogue, McCoy analyses instances of poetic faith in numerous Shakespeare plays. Each chapter focuses on one play, but branches out to include other plays and, in one chapter, also sonnets. In his second chapter, McCoy complements his reading of *The Comedy of Errors* with excursions to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Love’s Labour Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*, showing how these plays succeed in implicating audiences in their unsettling confusions of mistaken identities and blurred realities. Focusing on *As You Like It* in chapter 3, McCoy contends that the character of Rosalind embodies poetic faith, because “[h]er multiple masquerades enact the paradox at the heart of faith in Shakespeare, for they allow us to mind true things by what their mockeries be. Rosalind’s clever feigning and fakery allow her to express genuine emotion” (pp. 56–57). While in chapters 2 and 3 McCoy demon-

strates that Shakespeare's comedies "make suspending disbelief more pleasurable because faith in love is so readily rewarded" (p. 83), he convincingly argues in chapter 4 that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* demand from their audiences faith in the enormous value of love while they have just witnessed love's disastrous failures. In chapter 5, centring on *The Winter's Tale*, McCoy reads Shakespeare's romances as "affirming fidelity in the face of faithlessness and forgiveness of human failure" (p. 145). Both *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, which McCoy turns to in the epilogue to his study, perform the paradoxical workings of poetic faith in Shakespeare. These last plays demand the audience's imaginative participation and "awaken our faith in illusions" (p. 144). If, as McCoy claims, "poetic faith demands serious intellectual engagement and active goodwill" (p. 5), then his book about faith in Shakespeare is testimony to a deeply faithful scholar.

McCoy's and Kastan's studies differ in the ways in which they return to religion and faith in Shakespeare, but they also have crucial aspects in common. Both are rooted in their authors' dissatisfaction with the turns that the critical discussion of religion in Shakespeare has taken, and both pay close attention to Shakespeare's plays whilst never failing to contextualize them within their particular cultural, historical and theatrical moments. Maybe most importantly, both studies make readers impatient to return to their Shakespeares and renew what Kastan calls "our covenant with Shakespeare [...]: he will create believable characters, and we will respond with our will to believe in what he has created" (p. 11).

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Einzelrezensionen

Ina Schabert, *SHAKESPEAREs: Die unendliche Vielfalt der Bilder*. Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 2013. 199 S. – ISBN 978-3-520-51101-0 – € 14.90 (pb.).

Nachdem Ina Schabert Generationen dankbarer Leser mit ihrem *Shakespeare-Handbuch* geleitet hat, legt sie ein neues Werk zu Shakespeare vor, das eine "unendliche Vielfalt der Bilder", die seine Lese- und Theatergemeinde sich von ihm gemacht hat, vor uns ausbreitet. In zehn Kapiteln rekapituliert Schabert ein komplexes Vexierspiel der Deutungen und Annäherungen an Shakespeare und gewinnt der amorphen Masse der Personenmythen, Werkerklärungen, kulturellen Annexionen und exegetischen Hoheitsansprüchen Konturen ab, die die Vielfalt der Bilder auf ihre Entstehungsvoraussetzungen, Erkenntnisinteressen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Prämissen zurückführen.

Die ersten beiden Kapitel zeichnen die plurilingualen Shakespeare-Bilder der europäischen Nationen nach, in denen klassische und romantische, rationale und enthusiastische, staatlich (ideologisch) gefeierte und subversive (zensurierte) Tendenzen miteinander konkurrieren. Dem steht eine britische Rezeption gegenüber, die Shakespeare als Nationalheiligtum zu etablieren bemüht ist und daraus eine national-kulturelle Identität ableitet – von den Verklärungsformen eines *merry old England* bis zu den Komplikationen eines Nationenbegriffs nebst seiner kolonial-imperialistischen Ansprüche.