

JEREMY BLACK. *England in the Age of Shakespeare*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. Pp. 428. \$85.00 (cloth).
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The traces of the past are everywhere visible in the England of Jeremy Black's compendious new guide, *England in the Age of Shakespeare*. If Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964) encouraged us to see in the playwright's work the makings of postmodernity, Black—a renowned scholar of eighteenth-century British history—has little time for ahistorical literary criticism. The abiding influence in late Tudor England was the previous two centuries of trauma, the *longue durée* of plague, civil war, Reformation, and constitutional crisis that permanently changed the face of the country. We know Shakespeare was familiar with the “bare ruin'd choirs” (Sonnet 73) of former monastic real estate, not least because his theater company cannily repurposed a piece into the Blackfriars Playhouse, but Black also wants us to see the scars in the land that bore witness to the cataclysmic Black Death as far back as 1348. Patterns of ridge and furrow in grazing fields, visible even today, show the extent of ploughland taken out of arable agriculture after the population collapse of the fourteenth century.

At the heart of the book is a run of three long chapters on medieval and early modern history and the political inheritance of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Black is strongest here and in his later survey of wider world affairs. He provides a useful corrective to all the ropery history in Shakespeare's chronicle plays (although he shows himself capable of Shakespearean prejudice with his antipathy to the “greedy and profligate” Henry VIII [131]), and his trot through England's crises from the Wars of the Roses to the Northern Rising and beyond reminds us that audiences at *Henry IV Parts 1* and *2* and the three *Henry VI* plays would have heard names from the past that chimed in their present day: the Nevilles, Percys, Talbots, and so on continued making mischief into the seventeenth century.

Elsewhere, Black attempts to capture a sense of early modern mentality: the average English person's worldview, the religious leanings of a multiply converted populace, the extent of the continuing faith in white and black magic. It is an inevitably fractured and overlapping picture, and Black is right to point out that the “tensions and rift lines” visible in Elizabethan and Jacobean popular culture “reflected the ambiguities and confusions of contemporary thought” (12–13). The plays of the period did not set out to be consistent, and contradictions in Shakespeare are part of the point: his characters display superstition as well as rationality; they are adherents of classical republicanism and medieval monarchism; they are Roman ascetics and Egyptian sybarites. Emma Smith's recent *This Is Shakespeare* (2019) identified “gappiness” (2) as the prime aesthetic quality of Shakespeare's plays—a yawning openness to interpretation that is the result of the convulsive shifts in ideology and philosophy in late Renaissance Europe. But if Smith's book offered a cohesive reading strategy for the plays, Black's purpose is closer to that of Ian Mortimer's *The Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England* (2012), and his book is aimed at a similarly nonspecialist audience who might benefit from a Baedeker overview of a foreign land.

Black is not a Shakespeare specialist, nor an early modernist as such, and he has made his own voyage into the research library. He has a consistent preference for new sources: an impressive proportion of the books in his notes and “Selected Further Reading” are post-2000. But his preferences are visible elsewhere, too, in particular in his lack of curiosity about some of the key developments over the past few decades in critical race studies and the history of sexuality. Although he is particularly strong on the political situation in early modern Africa, he is cursory on race and non-Christian religion as it related to domestic affairs. The work of James Shapiro, Imtiaz Habib, Onyeka Nubia, and Miranda Kaufmann has shown that the lives of Jews and people of color are to be found in the archive if one knows where to look, and it is jarring that *England in the Age of Shakespeare* dispatches this history with “[t]here were officially no Jews in England, although undoubtedly there were some living in Bristol and London”, swiftly followed by “[t]here were also black people” (67). I suspect that Black's knowledge

about the complex politics of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa in the Renaissance is far more expert than was Shakespeare's, as his observation regarding Othello that "it is surely the fact that he is Moorish, not Muslim, that is the issue" (273) betrays an assumption that early modern English audiences would have had a clear distinction in their minds between identifiers of place, religion, and culture—which, as Matthew Dimmock has shown, was not the case. Black's assertion that "[h]omosexual sex was regarded as a sin and was treated harshly in the legal systems of the age" (235) is also misleading, as rather few cases of sodomy made it to the courts and fewer yet resulted in guilty verdicts.

This is a work of history not dramatic criticism, and if some of the literary readings raise an eyebrow (I would struggle to interpret *The Taming of the Shrew* as a play about "female independence" [233]), Black makes up for it with his richness of detail about the sights and sounds of early modern England. I owe it to my employer to pick up a few errors of fact about Shakespeare's theaters (the capacity of the historic Globe was testified in several sources as 3,000 not 2,800; the modern reconstruction holds over 1,600 not 1,400; the King's Men started using the Blackfriars in around 1609, not 1606, [269–70]), but Black largely succeeds in his objective to make strange the world that Shakespeare moved in.

Will Tosh 

Shakespeare's Globe

will.t@shakespearesglobe.com

MELANIE SCHUSSLER BOND. *Dressing the Scottish Court, 1543–1553: Clothing in the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*. Medieval and Renaissance Clothing and Textiles Series. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019. Pp. 740. \$130.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2020.210

Clothing and the people who made it were essential to early modern society. Sartorial demonstrations have increasingly been recognized as a central facet in political, social, and cultural activities. Clothing, textiles, and material culture can assist in building a firmer understanding of human interactions (Catherine Richardson, "A Very Fit Hat: Personal Objects and Early Modern Affection," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson [2010], 289–98), social status (Cristian Berco, "Textiles as Social Text: Syphilis, Material Culture and Gender in the Golden Age of Spain," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 [2011]: 785–810), and gender dialogues (Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* [2016]). Work exploring clothing in a more practical sense—how it was constructed and worn—and what this can illustrate about daily life is also on the increase (Jenny Tiramani, "Pins and Aglets," in Hamling and Richardson, *Everyday Objects*, 85–94). Melanie Schussler Bond adds to this rich and growing area of research, bringing Scottish sixteenth-century evidence into the spotlight.

Dressing the Scottish Court, 1543–1553 is a beautifully illustrated volume that highlights the value of the Scottish royal treasurer's accounts for scholars interested in the history of dress. These accounts have been published (*Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Dickson et al., 13 vols. [1877–1978]), but only the first volume is a verbatim record of the original manuscripts held in the National Records of Scotland. The omissions from subsequent volumes, such as the repetition of similar items and details of clothing components, are highly problematic for a researcher of historical clothing. To respond to this issue, Bond meticulously reproduces and translates a ten-year period of the accounts that relate to clothing purchased during the regency of the earl of Arran. Her primary aims beyond