

its inextricability from the cultural and discursive processes which have both sustained and defied power and authority.

Theatre Research International, 37.2 doi:10.1017/S0307883312000119

***Drama and the Succession to the Crown, 1561–1633.*** By **Lisa Hopkins**. Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama. Burlington and Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. x + 178 + 1 illus. £55/\$99.95 Hb.

***Religion and Drama in Early Modern England.*** Edited by **Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson**. Burlington and Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. xiii + 281 + 4 illus. £60/\$104.95 Hb.

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The question of succession in the late sixteenth century most vividly involved the problem of who was to succeed the childless Elizabeth I to the throne. Up to a dozen potential candidates for the crown can be cited, but in her new book Lisa Hopkins argues that the problems surrounding the succession did not go away with Elizabeth's death and the accession of James I. Instead she steadily and persuasively lays out the case that succession in early modern drama was an ongoing issue and traces how playwrights adroitly but carefully steered through the potentially dangerous waters of the subject. Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster and Ford all demonstrate varying degrees of interest in the topic but Hopkins additionally introduces a number of less-well-known plays, which she suggests also raise questions of succession. Primogeniture is brought under scrutiny in a number of these works and Hopkins delves into complex dynastic family trees to argue that there were alternatives to the eldest son automatically enjoying unhindered succession.

Hopkins is particularly careful to emphasize that playwrights had often to be oblique in their references to matters of succession and she provides the reader with caveats regarding reading too much into a particular play or scene, noting that ideas are 'delicately hinted at or faintly suggested' (p. 155). Nevertheless, she is consistently provocative in her interpretation of various allusions in the texts of the plays and even argues that the names of characters (she cites the use of Antonio, among others) may have significance in possibly alluding to questions of succession. Even more intriguingly, Hopkins enrols fairies (particularly Oberon), Robin Hood and the Romans (more specifically Pompey) in her arguments to demonstrate that the problem of succession pervades what might seem the most unlikely dramas. Hopkins argues that questions of succession surface again on the death of Prince Henry in 1613 and after the Scottish coronation of Charles I in 1633 (which was coincidentally the year in which Charles's second son, James, was born).

Hopkins elegantly, and nearly always persuasively, proposes that a number of dramatic works of the time reflect and negotiate the issue of the succession to the throne. In doing so she opens up the debate and points out new directions for further study.

An even more pervasive theme than the succession in early modern drama is the prevalence of religion and religious representation. The fourteen intriguing chapters in *Religion and Early Modern Drama in England*, plus the provocative Introduction by the editors, constitute a timely re-examination of the place of religion and its depiction in the drama of the period. The avowed intention of the editors and contributors is to ‘complicate’ (p. 2) our understanding of how representations of religion were created in the contemporary theatre and all the chapters identify representational gaps in the treatment of religion and demonstrate how drama reconfigures existing religious ‘signifiers’ (p. 2). What is made particularly apparent is how disparate religious references often come together in the same play, providing simultaneous layers of recognizable religious practice that may consist of a conflation of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and even Islamic visual, material or symbolic meanings. Dramatists could simulate a religious experience by presenting to the audience, through costume, dialogue or props, a familiar cultural reference point from which interpretation becomes more inclusive and significant. The volume thus investigates analogies between religious and cultural practices and sees wider contexts, rather than a simple Protestant–Catholic duality.

The volume is divided into three sections, the first dealing with specific material stage conditions – visual, olfactory, auditory (music, for example) – and how these can suggest religious connotations or provide a religious reference in addition to the basic dramatic effect. Thus the burning of the Qur’an in *Tamburlaine*, the use of incense in *Women Beware Women*, false large noses to depict Jewishness – all have not only dramatic impact but also a wider religious resonance. In the second section, questions of the relationship between the stage and religious discourses are examined and possible similarities and parallels between the entertainment offered by theatre and the experience offered by religious ceremony are discussed. Both the first and second sections are perforce allusive in their approach, but in the third section more literal or open religious references in the dialogue are examined to detect unexpected complexity within apparently straightforward religious signifiers. The contributors to this third section question whether any coherent religious ideology is available in the drama of the period.

Not every contribution to the volume is persuasive, but each chapter provokes a rethinking of both the material and symbolic aspects of dramatic representation in the period and recognition that simply noting religious allusions and citations is not enough to reveal the dynamic between theatre and religion in early modern drama.

Theatre Research International, 37.2 doi:10.1017/S0307883312000120

***Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance through Cognitive Science.*** By Amy Cook. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Pp. xii + 205 + 6 illus. £50/\$75 Hb.

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Like other volumes in the Palgrave series Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance, *Shakespearean Neuroplay* demonstrates ways in which recent cognitive theory can help