

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, Leonard examines the ways in which numerous editors have wrestled with character ambiguity in the text. The F1 copy text, from which many modern editions are produced, ambiguously and confusedly applies incorrect character prefixes to the twins' names. Yet, as Leonard argues, the confusion is crucial to comedy within the play. Moreover, as she concludes, "correcting things which are not wrong and introducing further unclarity in the aim of clarifying it" (162) ultimately does more harm than good.

Alice Leonard's wide-ranging overview of error in Shakespeare and early modern literature is eminently readable, providing new insights into the ways in which error was used to push the boundaries of what was considered proper language use in the period. Leonard's strengths lie in her astute reading of early modern perceptions of error and how Shakespeare in particular masterly uses it to achieve comedic and dramatic ends. As with all good studies, *Error in Shakespeare: Shakespeare in Error* opens the door to further research with its aim of challenging notions of correctness, of exposing gendered, cultural underpinnings of bias, as well as xenophobia's all too familiar role in depictions of error.

Stephanie Chamberlain, *Southeast Missouri State University*
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Four Shakespearean Period Pieces. Margreta de Grazia.
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"A curious transvaluation," Margreta de Grazia notes, "is taking place in our study of the past" (1). This constitutes the focus of her *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, which explores how developments in an interrelated set of critical concepts affect the ways we approach time in Shakespeare and Shakespeare in time. In each of the essays that make up this engaging and accessible volume, de Grazia tracks how anachronism, chronology, periodization, and secularization are undergoing significant reappraisal, and its subsequent implications for approaching Shakespeare.

Anachronism violates the linearity of time by placing events, places, persons, and even ideas in a historical timeframe where they ostensibly do not belong. But their presence in Shakespeare's works, de Grazia argues, is not an error to be corrected or a mistake that requires explanation. The volume's opening essay examines the well-known anachronism in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Hector invokes Aristotle in the Trojan debate over the question of returning Helen. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, there was no distinction between the past and present on both the stage and page. Thus, Hector's apparent familiarity with the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the other anachronisms in the play are "updatings attuned to the present of the play's enactment" (38). In a play that sits at "the outmost rim of ancient history"

(47), Hector names Aristotle not because Shakespeare thought he did, but rather “to exploit the fact that he could not have possibly known him” (52). The “extreme anteriority” of the play, de Grazia suggests, is “not a historical fact, to be observed or transgressed by details” but a “dramatic postulate that enlarges the scope of irony” (59).

The volume’s second essay interrogates the assumption that a chronologically ordered canon (a relatively late editorial approach) reveals Shakespeare’s upward trajectory as a writer. Given that the plays are “no longer thought to issue from one mind and in one hand at one sitting” and are composed in “more of a durative process than a punctual event” (105), de Grazia places this teleological narrative under significant pressure, questioning chronology’s purchase as a productive critical tool. Period-set productions take center stage in the next essay. This, too, is a late development that takes place at around the start of the nineteenth century. Reading this theatrical innovation against conceptions of modernity proposed by theorists such as Heidegger and Jameson, de Grazia concludes that while period logic is by no means a necessity, productions “cannot altogether suppress their invocation” (143), as indeed her own argument does. As she quips earlier in the introduction, “one can live in a glass house and still throw stones” (22).

The volume closes by returning to another well-known anachronism: the invocation of Merlin in the prophecy delivered by Lear’s Fool. This prophecy, de Grazia observes, is “necessarily muddled” for it lacks a “divine source”: it is “preprophetic,” and the play challenges the audience “to entertain, from its own much later vantage, a time in which the providential program is nowhere yet visible” (148). In an especially illuminating reading, de Grazia argues that the play’s “ungodly emptiness” (173) does not so much exemplify a (modern) post-Christian world as “what it has taken as its own impossible condition: that nothing is yet known of Revelation” (176). The play has been caught “in the periodizing schism that severs the modern from the medieval by its ostensible discrediting of faith,” but its “secular effects,” de Grazia suggests, are “theatrical” (175).

The eloquent and lucid analysis in this volume will be of interest to Shakespeare scholars of all stripes. Each essay stands on its own but also connects thematically with the work as a whole, and its arguments are intelligent and learned. Readers familiar with de Grazia’s oeuvre will recognize overlaps with themes covered in her earlier work, such as *Shakespeare Verbatim* (1991) and *“Hamlet” Without Hamlet* (2007), but the questions and concerns here are developed in a new and characteristically sophisticated fashion. *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces* invites us to sit with the moments in which time in and around Shakespeare feel out of joint, and to think through what these moments might mean for our own practices as literary scholars. In this sense, this work could not be more timely.

Vanessa Lim, *Seoul National University*
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