Shakespeare's Dialectic of Hope: From the Political to the Utopian. Hugh Grady.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. x + 248 pp. $99.99.

Hugh Grady's book makes the case for seeing Shakespeare as an ultimately hopeful
author. This hopefulness is perhaps surprising in that it stands as an "inverted pattern"
of the "traditional life-story": a certain march of impending death and demise (3). But
Shakespeare, according to Grady, is more like the old shepherd from *The Winter's Tale*
who, upon discovering the newborn Perdita, tells his companion, "Thou met'st with
things dying, I with things newborn" (3.3.110–11). Rather than dwell on a seemingly
inevitable decline, Shakespeare eagerly looks towards new possibilities. It is delineating
this career trajectory that is Grady's primary interest in *Shakespeare's Dialectic of Hope*,
and he offers an illuminating account of how Shakespeare's later plays move away from
a preoccupation with an empty, destructive politics and come to articulate an increas-
ingly "utopian vision" (4).

Shakespeare's utopianism is in one sense an optimistic challenge to instrumental
politics, and Grady is forthright about his book's interest in engaging with longstanding
discussions about Shakespeare's own political sympathies. Yet in contributing to the
construction of a political Shakespeare, Grady seeks to go beyond the potentially reduc-
tive identification of seemingly progressive or conservative values in Shakespeare's work.
Instead, he stresses the playwright's larger "dialectical negation" of the political, a nega-
tion that produces a "utopian response" that is found in an aesthetic imagining of "alter-
natives to existing reality" (5).

Grady traces this evolving dialectic through a two-part analysis of five plays. After the
introduction, part 1 opens with a chapter on *Julius Caesar* to establish Shakespeare's
mid-career emphasis on Machiavellian "objectified political power" (39) and worlds
devoid of any utopian possibility. Chapter 2 argues that *Macbeth* depicts a "more value-
laden treatment of political power" (42) in which a glimmer of the utopian is found in
its tragic hero's registration of fates alternative to the one he chooses to enact. Chapter 3
details how most of the utopian possibility in *Macbeth* manifests through the "Baroque
aesthetics" (60) of the witches. Their ambiguous gender, sexual, religious, and heroic
signification calls into question the stability of the world and its "politics of force" (83).

Whereas part 1 primarily uses Machiavelli to articulate the bleak political circum-
stances of Shakespeare's tragedies, part 2 takes inspiration from the Frankfurt School,
especially the work of Ernst Bloch, to define Shakespeare's "aesthetic-utopian" outlook:
a projection of neither an Edenic past nor heavenly providence but a better, "undefined
future" that is earthly and achievable (94). As chapter 4 argues, such an ethic is first
observable in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The play's Roman context evokes the familiar
Machiavellian power dynamics, but the play's radical commingling of the political
and private yields an enduring pro-sex eroticism that eclipses the protagonists' superfi-
cially tragic downfall. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 focus on *The Winter's Tale* and *The*

Tempest respectively. Both these tragicomedies offer the most overwhelmingly utopian visions through an emphasis on art's ability to "present imaginary, alternative modes of life" (152), and in some cases overturn initial political jealousies and abuses.

Grady is explicit about his belief that Shakespeare's increasingly utopian perspective can and should be a source of hope for us today. At various points, he catalogues the worrisome political circumstances that girded the book's composition—the 2016 election of Donald Trump, the COVID-19 pandemic, racist police brutality, the 2021 storming of the US Capitol, increasing economic inequality, global warming—and he ultimately asserts that Shakespeare's "trajectory of hope" should be a "provocation for [Shakespeare's] readers and auditors to apply similar values to [their] own lives and politics" (99). While this imperative to hope can at times feel overly abstract, Grady does make more helpful, tangible nods to Shakespeare's concern about capitalist commodification and political disenchantment in his chapter on *The Tempest*.

Grady's selection of plays is schematic, but effectively so. His articulation of an aesthetic-utopian emergence offers a potent means for conceptualizing the unwieldy and lesser-attended late plays he does not focus on, especially *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. The book is also peppered with references to the early plays, and these references help to flesh out both the intricacy and comprehensiveness of Grady's vision. Overall, the book leaves us with a useful means to conceive of Shakespeare's career and the works within it, as well as a reminder of the broad inspirational potential that Shakespeare's works possess.

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The Invention of Shakespeare, and Other Essays. Stephen Orgel.
University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. 193 pp. $39.95.

This collection brings together essays written over the last thirty years that question the editorial compulsion to elucidate, emend, or explain (what editors themselves perceive to be) the problems, opacities, and inconsistencies of Shakespeare's works. Reading the essays together, however, it becomes clear that Orgel's issue is not simply with the impulse toward elucidation, but with the shifting cultural forces driving that impulse: what were the circumstances that caused not only editors but also readers, performers, and audiences to identify certain things and not others as problems, and as the type of problems that called for solutions?

In the collection's titular essay, Orgel reads eighteenth-century forgeries and legends (that Shakespeare played the Ghost in *Hamlet*; that *Hamlet* and *Richard II* were performed on a merchant ship anchored off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1608) alongside "another kind of forgery relating to Shakespeare, which is entirely accepted and passes