



rule, emphasizing that black skin continues to carry moral signifiers in our modern era due to this racist history.

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Games and Gaming in Early Modern Drama: Stakes and Hazards. Caroline Baird. Early Modern Literature in History. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. xii + 290 pp. \$54.99.

In *Games and Gaming in Early Modern Drama: Stakes and Hazards*, Caroline Baird examines the way in which games feature in English drama of the early modern period. With the use of contemporary sources such as Francis Willughby's *Book of Games* and Cotton's *The Complete Gamester*, Baird analyzes descriptions of games in various plays of the period in order to provide new insights into our understanding of these works. While some of the games she analyzes are still popular today, others, such as Noddy, Post and Pair, and Vide-Ruff, will be entirely unfamiliar to the modern reader. In these plays, she argues that "the games are not about games," but rather about "land and wealth acquisition, social climbing, patriarchal supremacy, risk and reward, abdication, war, politics, sexual conquest and congress, love, adultery and even murder" (68).

Baird begins her book with a survey of the different types of games popular during the period as well as an overview of the roles that games play in drama of the day, explaining that at their most basic, games signal "error, wrong-doing, or over-reaching of some kind" and often function as indicators of "an important moment, turning point or crisis" (54). In chapters 3–6, she narrows the scope of her analysis somewhat, focusing on plays that feature one of four games—dice and dicing (chapter 3), cards (chapter 4), tables (chapter 5), and chess (chapter 6). In each chapter, she analyzes a number of plays (three for dicing, four for cards, two for tables, and four for chess) including certain works by Middleton, Heywood, Shakespeare, and Fletcher and Massinger, among others, in which these games are central. Through close reading, she works to support her thesis that these games have an important "role in the dramatic structure in which they are embedded so as to actively facilitate the plotting, in more complex ways than simply through metaphor" (252). Indeed, she finds that the plot action in many cases "mirror[s] the game's features" (252). She completes her study with two useful appendixes in which she compiles references to various games in other plays she was not able to include in her study.

While interest in the role of games in modern drama as well as other genres of literature has grown in recent years, Baird is one of few scholars who has attempted to establish commonalities of usage of a variety of games in drama, Gina Bloom

being the other recent scholar of note to do so in *Gaming the Stage* (2018). Although there is some overlap between Baird's study and Bloom's in that both authors reach some of the same conclusions, such as the fact that in *Two Angry Women of Abington* "the whole play becomes a game" (7), Baird focuses her study on the idea that games shape and transform the plays themselves, and highlights this through the close reading of texts. Additionally, her work takes into account a greater number of plays, including three that feature dice, which Bloom's work does not.

Baird's work is impressive in its scope, and she must be commended for her attempt to manage such a broad topic with as much detail as she has, especially given the wide variety of games included and their varied usage. Her analysis of literary passages is insightful and makes careful use of contemporary sources. Although she focuses on English drama of the late sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Baird alludes in places to the ways in which certain games were used in literary works of the medieval period, and it would be quite useful to see how their use in those works compares with these early modern references. Additionally, the text can be quite dense and would be somewhat difficult to read for anyone who does not have a thorough knowledge of early modern English drama. Nevertheless, scholars studying early English drama or the symbolism or history of games will find this work particularly interesting. Her regular use of contemporary sources to explain game terminology and rules will enrich our understanding of the texts she considers and should be informative for scholars who might be preparing new editions of them.

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Gentry Rhetoric: Literacies, Letters, and Writing in an Elizabethan Community.
Daniel Ellis.

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234 pp. \$65.

Gentry Rhetoric is mainly concerned with how members of Norfolk families in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries wrote to each other about matters of family, property, and law. It discusses how their letters and other writings used rhetorical techniques to pursue personal objectives while maintaining a communal sense of identity. It draws upon Daniel Ellis's diligent work with several manuscript collections in the UK and US to argue that gentry writing was shaped not only by rhetorical training gained from formal education, but also by the pragmatics of mundane business.

As stated in the introduction, the term *gentry* is hard to define, though more could have been said about its associations with inherited rural estates (as in the phrase *landed*