

The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare. Bruce R. Smith, ed.
2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xlvii + 2,032 pp. \$650.

The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare is an expansive and generous introduction to the enormous variety of ways in which Shakespeare's texts have been read, edited, acted, redacted, translated, and parodied in the approximately four hundred years since the Bard's death. Justly priding itself on its international cast of essay writers and on the geographic and intellectual breadth of its concerns, this two-volume set of brilliantly edited books is a wonderful introduction to the many ways in which academics, creative artists, and ordinary people have engaged with this iconic figure. The general editor, Bruce R. Smith, and his associate general editor, Katherine Rowe, have been imaginative in the topics identified for discussion; and Cambridge University Press has been generous in allowing numerous striking illustrations to accompany the text. Overall, the scholarship in these volumes is of unusually high quality, written by some of the most senior as well as a good number of up-and-coming younger figures in the field. This *Cambridge Guide* can be profitably perused by ordinary readers, by graduate and undergraduate students, by teachers looking for useful essays (with their accompanying bibliographies) to which to point their classes, and by scholars poking into corners of Shakespeare studies in which they themselves do not specialize. In short, it is a fabulous resource for libraries, individual scholars, curious students, and general readers alike.

While it is impossible to do justice to even a fraction of the essays included in the two volumes, which feature pieces by 285 contributors, let me say a word about how these volumes are organized and about a few of their signature features before raising some caveats that inevitably arise in assessing a project of this scope. First, volume 1, *Shakespeare's World, 1500–1660*, aims at illuminating “the historical William Shakespeare and the culture he and his contemporaries inhabited,” while volume 2, *The World's Shakespeare, 1660–Present*, is “devoted to what people living in other cultures, in other times and places, have done with the legacy of Shakespeare's plays and poems” (preface, xxi). As I will suggest further below, volume 2 almost inevitably has a more arbitrary feel than volume 1, so broad is the catchment of topics, geographies, and times represented within it. Nonetheless, both volumes have some singularly strong features. First, each is divided into sections with a lead essay that introduces some of the larger topics, problems, and frameworks informing the set of more particularized essays that follow. Almost without exception, those lead pieces are outstanding: for example, in volume 1, Peter Whitfield's opening essay on “Mapping Shakespeare's World” (1:1–13) or Pamela O. Long's instructive overview of “Science and Technology” (1:247–57); or, in volume 2, Ton Hoenselaars's opening piece on “International Encounters” (2:1033–46) or Joseph Roach's masterful essay on “Production History” (2:1545–57). The general editors have judiciously selected scholars who are admirable guides to the big topics that animate

whole fields of study: Shakespeare and theater, the book, popular culture, media history, early reception, language, or Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights.

The individual essays following these lead pieces also for the most part achieve a notably high standard. While some mainly describe work that has been done on a topic, others have a strong interpretive or theoretical bent. The best combine all of these strengths, such as Bridget Escolme's excellent essay on "Costume" (1:105–12) or Kate Rumbold's engaging piece on "Quoting and Misquoting Shakespeare" (2:1290–97). Still others call attention to corners of the Shakespeare world that do not receive a lot of mainstream attention: for example, Tom Cartelli's essay on "Visual Projection" in Shakespeare productions (2:1467–74) or Karen Hearn's lovely piece on "Painting on Wooden Panel" (1:440–48), which examines the technique of painting on wood, mainly oak, in the development of English portraiture in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. This helpful essay touches on royal portraiture, merchant-class sitters, and the development of collections, including that by the actor Edward Allyn at Dulwich. Quite different, but equally revealing, are essays in volume 2 by Niels Herold on "Shakespeare behind Bars" (2:1200–07) and by Peter Novak on "Signing Shakespeare" (2:1357–62) on American Sign Language productions of the plays. These essays, as surely as Reiko Oya's "Shakespeare Translations in Asia" (2:1399–405) or Mark Thornton Burnett's "World Cinema" (2:1940–46), make the reader newly aware of the many circumstances in which Shakespeare's plays have been engaged.

Inevitably, I have quibbles. I miss, for example, a section on Shakespeare and the environment, one of the most urgent areas of contemporary criticism. Likewise, I wish for more on Shakespeare and race, given the importance of this topic and the deep and varied work being done on early modern understandings of race and on the way in which actors, editors, and readers from differently racialized groups have worked with and against Shakespeare in a myriad of cultural contexts. Likewise, in the geographic terrain covered by the book, Latin America and Africa, save for South Africa, are given relatively scanty coverage. Other sections in volume 2 have an arbitrary feel. For example, in a series of eight essays on iconic characters in Shakespeare, only one treats a woman, Ophelia, by herself; another, on Romeo and Juliet, examines a woman as part of a couple. Surely Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra could have made the cut.

That said, *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare* gives its readers an abundance of both pleasure and profitable insight. It also reminds me of the enormous cultural labor that has been invested in Shakespeare over the ages. Many brilliant people, including those whose essays appear in this book, have edited, written about, adapted, parodied, acted in, and given visual expression to Shakespeare's works. It was particularly poignant to me to read the incisive contributions of scholars such as Russ McDonald ("Ornament" [1:388–96]) and Barbara Hodgdon ("The Stratford Shakespeare Trade," written with Jenny Whybrow [2:1241–49]), who have both died since the essays they authored or coauthored were commissioned for these

volumes. These scholars remain important to the collective enterprise represented in this project. Shakespeare lives in part because of them and they in the global Shakespeare community in which they both played such distinguished parts. *The Cambridge Guide to the World of Shakespeare* pays tribute not only to the Bard, but to those enormously talented people all over the globe who have used his works as the starting point for their own creative, scholarly, and political endeavors.

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The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Comedy. Heather Hirschfeld, ed.
Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xx + 572 pp. \$124.95.

As the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Comedy*, Heather Hirschfeld takes as an organizing concept “the encounter.” This is a topic that is not only historically useful but also politically and hermeneutically important to Shakespearean criticism today. Hirschfeld offers an elegant and urgent rationale for the concept in her introduction, doing much more than preparing readers for the essays that follow. Indeed, she examines past and present criticism of Shakespeare and the various theoretical and historical movements used to read the plays as encounters with the text that also illuminate encounters between genres, playwrights, theaters, cities, nations, peoples, religions, races, ethnicities, sexualities, and genders. The brilliant concept offers a wide array of approaches that are organized into four sections: “Settings, Sources, Influences”; “Themes and Conventions”; “Conditions and Performance”; and “Plays.” The thirty-three essays included in the collection address “the encounter” with varying success; indeed, at times I felt the concept was lost. But among the best are those that actively think through how encounters of different kinds work in the comedies, not only to make them comedies, but to frustrate generic expectations. Former truths, such as all comedy ends in happy marriages, are questioned in fresh, pressing, and theoretically sophisticated readings, many of which I learned from and will teach.

The most exciting essays in the collection are those that work with the organizing concept. These are diverse in topic and come from all the sections. Encounters happen between peoples, religions, ethnicities, locations, beliefs, lands and seas, playhouses, performances, and textual cues to ignite the senses. These articles unlock Shakespearean comedy from generic calcification, explanations of comedy that often serve to limit meaning and understanding of dramatic trajectories, contradictions, displacements, and inconsistencies. Andy Kesson demystifies the concept of genre in a reading of Shakespeare’s plays in the context of other playwrights and problems of comedy.