

SHAKESPEARE QUARTERLY

T H E
Tragicall Historie of
H A M L E T,
Prince of Denmarke.

By William Shakepeare.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much
again as it was, according to the true and perfect
Coppie.



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Lancashire's details about emblematic castles in medieval and Renaissance literature, to Bullough's facts on Theobald's correspondence with Warburton. In addition, this Festschrift also contains valuable interpretative criticism. With "Staging the Occult in *1 Henry IV*," for instance, S. P. Zitner gives a lucid and convincing interpretation of III.i, which he follows to its logical conclusion: "In *1 Henry IV* the resources of the theatre are used openly and consciously as resources of the theatre—rather than as means hidden or subdued in the course of creating a theatrical illusion" (p. 147). Similarly, Waith and Hunter on *Titus Andronicus*, Leggatt on *Macbeth*, and Bulman and Parker on *Coriolanus* illuminate the plays as they exercise their readers' critical faculties.

Thus substantive in its content, *Mirror up to Shakespeare* (surprisingly) lacks apparatus: it offers neither an index nor any comprehensive list of Hibbard's publications. Yet it serves overall as an appropriate tribute to the scholar it aims to celebrate, responding generously to his broad spectrum of interests, high standards, open-mindedness, and vigorous sense of collegiality.

William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, and His Influence. Edited by JOHN F. ANDREWS. 3 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985. Pp. xx + 954. \$180.00 cloth.

Reviewed by JAY L. HALIO

Since the collection of essays edited by C. T. Onions called *Shakespeare's England* appeared in 1916, several very useful compendiums to Shakespeare studies have been published. In 1934, Harley Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison edited *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, which includes fifteen essays by divers hands on such topics as "The Life of Shakespeare" by J. W. Mackail, "The Theatres and Companies" by C. J. Sisson, and "Shakespeare the Poet" by George Rylands. It contains then up-to-date essays on Shakespearean criticism and scholarship, essays on their special fields by each of the editors, a concluding "Reading List," and several appendices.

By comparison, F. E. Halliday's *A Companion to Shakespeare* (1952) is rather a handbook or glossary for much of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama where one can find brief statements about such items as the characters in Shakespeare's plays or poems, notable personages of the era, plays by Ben Jonson or Webster, and famous Shakespearean actors. Commemorating the quadricentennial of Shakespeare's birth, James Sutherland and Joel Hurstfield edited *Shakespeare's World* (1964), a slim volume that includes essays by Winifred Nowotny on "Shakespeare's Tragedies," Arthur Brown on "Shakespeare's Treatment of Comedy," Geoffrey Bullough on "The Uses of History," and Hilda Hulme on "Shakespeare's Language," as well as essays by the editors. Though much in Kenneth Muir's and S. Schoenbaum's *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (1971) is still current, with valuable contributions by such scholars as Richard Hosley, Inga-Stina Ewbank, M. C. Bradbrook, G. K. Hunter, and others, including the editors, Cambridge University Press has recently (1986) published a revised and updated version edited by Stanley Wells. This volume contains excellent new essays by Robert Smallwood, Russell Jackson, Robert Hapgood, Alan Dessen, and others. But not since Onions's massive two-volume work has anything like John Andrews's three-volume collection of sixty essays by as many different authors become available.¹

It is nothing if not comprehensive, though it makes no claim to be definitive. As Andrews states in his Introduction, "many of the essays in this collection elicit at least as many queries as they answer" (p. x). The rationale behind *William Shakespeare: His*

¹ At least in English. Ina Schabert's *Shakespeare-Handbuch: Die Zeit, Der Mensch, Das Werk, Die Nachwelt* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1978) is a comparable compendium, designed mainly for students, but it has not been translated, so far as I am aware.

World, His Work, and His Influence is to provide a "multifaceted" contemporary view of Shakespeare; that is, to offer readers as full a context as possible for approaching the major subjects of study that Shakespeare's works inspire. Each essay is essentially an introduction to a special field, a survey of the relevant information and insights so far obtained by scholars and critics, with occasionally new information or insights added. Inevitably, some essays overlap others, though not often enough to be wasteful or distracting, except as noted below. The contributors are all known experts, and all of the essays are so well written (or well edited) that they are a pleasure to read. The style tends to be uniform, but clear and graceful, suggesting the hand (or hands) of astute and able copy-editors.

Each volume contains twenty essays, most of them with bibliographies appended, a few of them annotated. Volume I, on Shakespeare's "world," begins with a series of essays on the major institutions of Shakespeare's time. G. R. Elton leads off authoritatively with "The State: Government and Politics under Elizabeth and James," referring to Shakespeare seldom if at all. The structure of rule at every level is briefly described and analyzed, with emphasis on government "not only under the law but by the law" (p. 7) and on the system of patronage, which both "underpinned the monarchy" and "qualified [its] dominance" (p. 14). Elton's essay is followed by Patrick Collinson's on "The Church: Religion and Its Manifestations," an appropriate collocation, given the powerful role of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Throughout his essay Collinson weaves in references to Shakespeare and to such related cultural phenomena as late-medieval religious drama, which Shakespeare may have seen at Coventry. The conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, and later conflicts with Puritans, are well-summarized and clarified, and Elizabeth's careful attempts to steer a middle course between extremes are shown in illuminating detail. By contrast, James I is shown as a more resolute opponent to the Puritans, seeing them as a threat to the crown, though, as Collinson notes, much of what the Puritans demanded was accomplished by the time James died. Collinson ends his essay with a short account of the impact of religious change on Shakespeare's early environment and on his immediate family.

J. H. Baker offers a clear and concise account of the "Law and Legal Institutions," and notes that legal terminology in Shakespeare's plays was not directed to an elite audience but reflected the parlance of everyday life. Baker is especially good on the evolution of law and society in the Renaissance as it led up to the "Crisis of 1616" and Coke's dismissal as a judge. Schools of various sorts were also of immense importance, as Anthony Grafton shows in "Education and Apprenticeship." In Grafton's view, the gulf in literacy between aristocrats and commoners was not as great as has been supposed, thanks to the heavy investment in education and vocational training during this period. The implications for Shakespeare's audience are significant, as Ann Jennalie Cook argues elsewhere.

These four essays provide the basic "background" for understanding the social, political, and religious forces in Shakespeare's world. What follow are essays somewhat more narrowly focused on economics, medicine and sanitation, warfare, and patronage. Margaret Pelling describes the circumstances that created a demand for much medical attention, particularly relief of physical and mental pain, and notes that Shakespeare, though not a physician or specialist, had good knowledge of the medical profession. John Rigby Hale demonstrates Shakespeare's detailed knowledge of warfare, as evidenced in many of the plays, without claiming that the dramatist was a soldier. The essays then shift to subjects more immediate to Shakespeare's profession of dramatist. Andrew Gurr's survey of theatres and acting companies is excellent. His accounts of the growth, development, and organization of theatrical companies as well as the rigors of repertory performance are models of clarity and concision. A long discussion of the physical dimensions of the theatre and the use Shakespeare made of theatrical space, especially the opportunities for symbolic representation, concludes his essay.

Arthur J. Slavin's short history of printing and publishing brings to the reader not only the mechanics of production, but also the origins and development of printing, both in England and on the continent. Like Gurr's, his essay is well illustrated with reproductions

of woodcuts and other documents, so that the reader can grasp more easily the intricacies discussed. Graduate students in English will find this a good introduction to the subject and should connect it with George Walton Williams's essay on "The Publishing and Editing of Shakespeare's Plays" in Volume III. There, Williams gives an excellent account of both the original and subsequent publication of Shakespeare's work, although he tends to perpetuate what I believe to be the myth of memorial reconstruction in the so-called Bad Quartos. J.G.A. Pocock tackles a more difficult assignment in attempting to define "The Sense of History in Renaissance England" but succeeds admirably in discerning the various influences that affected the understanding of what history was and does. Of paramount concern, for both ancient and Renaissance historians, was the nature of truth (compared with "factuality") and its moral application. Throughout the essay Pocock shows an awareness of Shakespeare's plays, as his concluding paragraph demonstrates:

The sense of history in Shakespeare's England . . . was immensely diverse and vital, and it was growing and changing rapidly. It was neither classical nor modern, and we must ask whether the directions in which it was growing did not point away from the theater: away from poetry and toward prose, away from rhetoric and toward criticism, away from the court and toward parliament and the printing press. If history was moving away from its immediate relevance to the drama, this may be yet another reason why Shakespeare raised the English stage to heights that it found such difficulty in sustaining.

(p. 156)

S. K. Heninger, Jr., also takes on a difficult topic in defining "The Literate Culture of Shakespeare's Audience." Emphasizing the importance of literacy in Elizabethan England (and the Renaissance generally), he shows how important the study of language was in education, especially in training for the civic virtues. Pocock contrasts the medieval chivalric knight with the humanist gentleman of the Renaissance, while Heninger, in a different approach, argues that civic humanism was largely a literary movement. "The aim of education," he says, "was not so much to purify the soul for entrance into the kingdom of heaven as to prepare the mind for effective participation in God's kingdom on earth. . . . The arts of language, in fact, provided the means whereby private meditation could be turned most readily into public event" (p. 161). Heninger's essay and Pocock's are among the most thoughtful and thought-provoking essays in the collection.

The rest of the essays in Volume I, all excellent in their way, deal with a range of topics as diverse as "Science, Magic, and Folklore" (Michael MacDonald) and "Travel by Sea and Land" (David B. Quinn). Lacey Baldwin Smith discusses decorum in dress and rhetoric as well as behavior, and Roger Pringle has a good essay on "Sports and Recreations." George P. Garrett tries to dispel the myths that London was a dirty, smelly, noisy town and that Elizabeth's reign was peaceful and prosperous. His essay overlaps in some particulars with Quinn's and Smith's. John L. Lievsay on "Shakespeare and Foreigners" reminds us that Shakespeare did not have to go abroad to meet people from other countries, as there were plenty of them in London by the end of the sixteenth century.

Wylie Sypher's essay on "Painting and Other Fine Arts" is a link to the essays in Volume II on Shakespeare's "work." He discusses Renaissance, mannerist, and baroque styles in painting and connects them to aspects of Shakespeare's art, which most closely resembles the mannerist style, especially in *Hamlet*. S. Schoenbaum's witty, balanced, and brief survey of Shakespeare's life and what we know—or don't know—about it heads Volume II, and Leeds Barroll's discussion, "Thinking about Shakespeare's Thought," properly follows next. Barroll demonstrates the need to distinguish between ideas and attitudes that we find in Shakespeare's work and those that Shakespeare may have personally held. Typically, many of Barroll's paragraphs begin with questions, often questions that are not or cannot be answered (though that has never deterred others from attempting to do so). As Barroll notes, we cannot discover Shakespeare's "value system" in his plays, however much they invite us to do so. Moreover, in many plays, such as *Antony and Cleopatra* or *King Lear*, the discernible ethical structure is "an evolving

argument," not a simple statement (p. 305). In a related essay toward the end of the volume, the editor, John Andrews, also raises important questions concerning the ethical and theological implications in Shakespeare's dramatic works, using the tragedies and especially *Hamlet* as his major focus. There, the attempt is not to discover what Shakespeare himself thought but what the plays tell us, and, as we should expect, the evidence by no means lends itself to simplistic interpretation. Hamlet, for example, emerges as a man riddled with contradictions, some of which come very close to compromising his primarily Christian beliefs and outlook.

In "Shakespeare's Professional Career," David Bevington provides a good overview of the dramatist's development without neglecting the non-dramatic works, and M. C. Bradbrook follows with a discussion of "Shakespeare and His Contemporaries." She suggests that we replace the notion of Shakespeare among the rival poets with the notion of Shakespeare among the rival play groups operating in theatres other than the Theatre or, later, the Globe. Marvin Spevack's essay on "Shakespeare's Language," while a good introduction, is perhaps more technical than the other essays in these volumes; it is followed closely by George Wright's essay on "Shakespeare's Dramatic Techniques." On the other hand, Bernard Beckerman's analysis of "Shakespeare's Dramatic Methods" shows how literary and theatrical approaches to Shakespeare can be combined very fruitfully—an objective that Beckerman urged on Shakespeareans for many years up to his untimely death in 1985. His definition of types of scenes in Shakespeare is instructive and practical, and his analysis of *Coriolanus*, V.iii is brilliant in demonstrating how the play's narrative, dramatic, and linguistic flows merge in ways suggested but not determined by Shakespeare's source in Plutarch.

John Dixon Hunt's essay on "The Visual Arts in Shakespeare's Work" complements more than it overlaps Sypher's essay in Volume I, though both make much of the art of miniatures and portrait painting. Hunt is especially good at showing Shakespeare's use of the art of perspective, in, for example, his discussion of the "comic and tragic potential of right and wrong perspectives, or of viewpoints that augment clarity of perception" in scenes where characters watch one another (p. 429). His essay, in turn, is complemented by W. Moelwyn Merchant's in Volume III on "Shakespeare and the Painter and Illustrator," an illustrated and rapid survey that includes material on set designs and costumes. Likewise, "Music in Shakespeare's Work" by F. W. Sternfeld and C. R. Wilson finds a complement in Volume III in Ellen T. Harris's piece on "Shakespeare in Music." Sternfeld and Wilson identify four types of music in the plays: stage music, magic music, character music, and atmospheric music. They make the point that "In Shakespeare's hands music is never employed as a simple divertissement or idle distraction; its effect is carefully calculated in poetic and dramatic terms" (p. 424), a point that they illustrate with analysis of songs from the comedies. In her essay, Ellen Harris offers several excellent analyses of musical scores based on Shakespeare's plays, particularly operas by Nicolai (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) and Verdi (*Otello*).

Volume II includes seven essays on the different genres Shakespeare used, beginning with Margreta de Grazia's "Locating and Dislocating the 'I' of Shakespeare's Sonnets" (a comparison of three major editions of the sonnets—Benson's in 1640, Malone's in 1780, and Booth's in 1977). Hallett Smith follows with a good brief survey of the poems and makes some interesting links between *The Rape of Lucrece* and the tragedies. Drawing on his wealth of knowledge about Shakespeare's history plays, Peter Saccio explains the main reasons for that genre's popularity (e.g., its appeal to patriotic nationalism and its usefulness in providing applicable models and lessons). He then proceeds, in "Shakespeare's Treatment of English History," to discuss the plays both as a group and individually, and concludes by noting the "open-ended" nature of Shakespeare's history plays as one source of their "plenitude." In "Shakespeare's Treatment of Roman History," J. L. Simmons sees Shakespeare's "idea of *Romanitas* . . . formed as much by literature, drama, rhetoric, and philosophy as by the Roman historians" (p. 473). His discussions of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, which make good use of sources in Plutarch, are well worth reading, particularly in the light of Bernard Beckerman's essay on Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

Simmons's essay suggests that there are problems with approaching Shakespeare's work generically, and in "Shakespeare as a Writer of Comedy" David Young remarks at the outset that "genre was never a significant barrier for Shakespeare" (p. 489). Although the dramatist began with classical models in *The Comedy of Errors*, the romance element was already apparent in that play; and in *Love's Labour's Lost* the question of comedy's adequacy as a genre is clear. Young presents many useful insights into the comedies; it is a pity that generic considerations may have excluded a discussion here of the *Henry IV* plays. Young defends *Troilus and Cressida* as a comedy (unconvincingly, in my opinion) and rightly connects the other problem comedies to both the earlier plays and the late romances. His brief concluding section on "History of Performance and Commentary" fails to recognize the actresses that, as Jeanne Addison Roberts has shown, helped make the comedies successful.

Arthur Kirsch treats only the Bradleian "Big Four" in his essay on "Shakespeare's Tragedies." Heavily influenced by Freud, his discussion of the plays is nonetheless perceptive and stimulating. Refreshingly, he emphasizes feelings over ideas in the tragedies; Hamlet is a great tragic hero because, like Othello, Macbeth, and Lear, he is immensely vulnerable to suffering and pain. His world is one "that is essentially defined—generically, psychically, spiritually—by a ghost whose very countenance, 'more in sorrow than in anger' (I.ii.232), binds Hamlet to a course of grief that is deeper and wider than any in our literature" (p. 511). Thus Kirsch relates *Hamlet* to Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia." In Freudian terms again, Macbeth is a victim of parricidal feelings and thoughts, although Kirsch also cites St. Augustine, Montaigne, and La Primaudaye. Kirsch is wrong, I think, in seeing Macbeth's decision to close the gap between thought and action (IV.i.144–49) as the turning point of the tragedy; Dolora Cunningham is closer to the mark in her argument made long ago that the crucial decision comes earlier, when Macbeth recognizes that he is so stepped in blood that "Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (III.iv.135–37). As Kirsch reads *King Lear* (still following Freud), Cordelia does not redeem her father; representing death, she also (as the most beautiful and desirable of the three daughters) expresses the innate human desire to deny death. But death will not and cannot be denied, as Ecclesiastes (more influential here than the New Testament) insists.

Overlapping Young to some extent, John Russell Brown on "Shakespeare's Tragicomedies and Romances" begins with an extended discussion of the three problem comedies, which he considers tragicomedies because they contain elements of danger and even death but end with some happiness. (In my view *Troilus and Cressida* successfully resists any generic definition.) The common factors in the three tragicomedies, according to Brown, are experiment and investigation, but certainly as much can be said for almost all of Shakespeare's writing. In any case, Brown does not see these factors as links to the later romances, which seem to me as "revolutionary" or at least "exploratory" in their way as the problem comedies are in theirs. What is new in the last plays, Brown says, is the emphasis on what happens to a family over a long period of years and on what happens "when suffering and injustice are replaced, not by reward or punishment, but by reconciliation and new hope" (p. 539). Brown discusses *Pericles* at length and suggests that the other three romances can be seen as further developments from what was achieved in that strange and difficult play, which some scholars still have trouble recognizing as entirely Shakespeare's.

Volume II on the "work" ends with three more general essays: Ann Jennalie Cook's "Shakespeare and His Audiences," John Andrews's "Ethical and Theological Issues," mentioned earlier, and Meredith Skura's "Shakespeare's Psychology: Characterization in Shakespeare." Cook summarizes the findings of her book (*The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London* [1981]): most of those attending Shakespeare's plays were not noisy apprentices or "groundlings," but a sophisticated and relatively well-to-do audience, including foreigners. Skura raises the question of how to regard psychological phenomena in the plays, beginning with the New Critics' attack on character criticism and proceeding through contemporary psychoanalytic approaches. Although she concedes that "[a] full-scale psychoanalysis of Shakespeare's characters is neither possible nor appropriate" (p. 575), she is willing, along with others, to recognize "unconscious" attitudes, motivations, and

fantasies that Shakespeare's characters reveal. She concludes her essay with a detailed and thoughtful analysis of *Othello* and *Hamlet*, in which oedipal elements are recognized as major aspects of the inner dramatic action.

Four of the first five essays in Volume III, on Shakespeare's "influence," deal with performances of the plays in England, the United States, Canada, and around the world, as well as on film and television. Stanley Wells presents a good overview of Shakespeare on the English stage, though like Young he tends to scant the contributions made by actresses in favor of those by famous actors such as Garrick, Kean, and Kemble. This is not true of Charles H. Shattuck's history of Shakespeare on American boards from colonial times to the present, which like Wells's essay is detailed and informative but unlike Wells's lacks a bibliography. In "Shakespeare as a World Figure: Translation and Performance Around the World," Anne Paolucci surveys Shakespeare's influence in every corner of the globe. None of these essays, alas, has illustrations, which are bountiful in Jack Jorgens's "Shakespeare on Film and Television," a condensed and updated treatment of materials in his book, *Shakespeare on Film* (1977), somewhat expanded here to include television productions.

G. E. Bentley undertakes to correct some mistaken impressions of "Shakespeare's Reputation—Then Till Now" while at the same time providing a good historical perspective. Bentley wisely distinguishes between Shakespeare's reputation in the theatre and in the study, and he necessarily repeats some of the information presented earlier by G. W. Williams and Wells. Similarly, Philip Brockbank's review of "Shakespearean Scholarship: From Rowe to the Present" covers some ground already traversed as he discusses the early editors of Shakespeare; he then goes on to outline and evaluate major works of scholarship with a fine critical balance. Arthur M. Eastman provides an historical survey of Shakespearean criticism, emphasizing modern contributions under several subheadings including biography, style, and the various genres. Inevitably selective, Eastman nevertheless has some curious omissions, such as Madeleine Doran on *Shakespeare's Dramatic Language* (1976) or Norman Rabkin's important and influential book, *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (1967).

Ralph Berry offers a useful introduction to collections of research materials in "Major Shakespearean Institutions: Libraries, Museums, Organizations." He singles out the Folger Shakespeare Library as "the finest Shakespeare library in the world" (p. 793) and, recognizing the growing importance of performance criticism, includes a section on "Theatre Collections." But what of Shakespeare's influence on modern writers? According to Anthony Burgess, Shakespeare has given little to the novelist, although Shakespeare can and sometimes does give to a writer "a sense of the importance of his craft and of the resources of the English language" (p. 808). Peter Ustinov, in "Shakespeare and the Modern Playwright," rambles to an apparently similar conclusion. Then Jonathan Miller offers an excellent if highly personal approach to directing in "Shakespeare and the Modern Director," arguing for productions that provide coherence while at the same time permitting the text's latent ambiguities to emerge. Appropriately, John Gielgud follows with "Tradition, Style, and the Shakespearean Actor Today," an equally personal, urbane, and honest discussion derived from many years' experience in the theatre. In the section on the development of an actor, he stresses "relaxation" as a difficult but all-important quality, best learned by acting in the plays of Chekhov.

Citing many quotations that have now become proverbial, Joseph Price discusses Shakespeare as a "cultural phenomenon of the post-Renaissance world," as distinguished from a "cult hero" (p. 834); and in "Shakespeare and the Humanities," a long and syncretic essay, Jacques Barzun demonstrates how Shakespeare not only confirms our experience of reality but extends it. Three more essays on Shakespearean criticism conclude Volume III and the series. Vigorous and witty, conservative theatre critic John Simon rakes Peter Brook, Jonathan Miller, and others over the coals for disfiguring Shakespeare in their productions of the plays. The critic's job, Simon maintains, is to develop standards and defend Shakespeare from abuse, not to vie with other critics "to be the first to hail the latest reinterpretation and transmogrification of a masterpiece" (p. 871). In "Teaching Shakespeare: Tradition and the Future," Homer Swander stresses the importance of per-

formance criticism in his survey of modern critical approaches and their impact on teaching. Quoting Susanne K. Langer ("Drama . . . is poetry in the mode of action") and others, he argues that the language of drama is not the language of novels or poetry, though many Shakespeareans resist or ignore the fact and continue to treat the plays like other forms of literature. Finally, in what is really a review essay or a critical, annotated bibliography, Maurice Charney considers "Contemporary Issues in Shakespearean Interpretation." Concentrating on "trends, movements, and special concerns," he divides his subject into eight topics: theatre, film, feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, iconography, metadrama, and Shakespeare's relation to the drama of his time. He supplements as well as complements Eastman's survey of criticism, but before he ends he recognizes important omissions in this "heroic survey" of Shakespearean criticism in the last twenty-five years, such as the "new historicism" of Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Goldberg, Jonathan Dollimore, and others. His conclusion—a fitting one for the three volumes—is that Shakespeare seems more and more connected with popular theatre and culture than with erudite scholarship; that the "new emphasis on a free Shakespeare" is making his work available to all; and that because Shakespeare is so alive and vigorous, every account is after all a temporary one.

Charney is right: in the future, new accounts of Shakespeare will undoubtedly have to be rendered. But I think it will be quite a while before another compendium such as *Shakespeare: His World, His Work, and His Influence* is undertaken. This truly impressive collection of learning and opinion will not easily be duplicated. The judgments found here, for the most part sound and well-documented, will be challenged; indeed, as I have tried to show, they already can be challenged. But it will require another editor like John F. Andrews, a staff like the one Scribner's assembled, and above all sixty thoughtful and well-informed writers to put together another handsome encyclopedia to take its place.

Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare. By RONALD LEVAO. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. xxiv + 446. \$38.00 cloth.

Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory. By FRANK WHIGHAM. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. Pp. xiii + 257. \$27.00 cloth.

Reviewed by PETER ERICKSON

In *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions*, Ronald Levao superbly combines large-scale cultural generalization with finely detailed textual observation to their mutual advantage. The book's range is impressively wide—in addition to substantial studies of three major figures, Levao presents deftly summarized contextual chapters on medieval philosophy, on Italian Renaissance criticism, and on English medieval and early Renaissance drama. Yet the virtues of close reading are everywhere in evidence. Levao's scope is also shown in his refreshingly long view of critical history as he respectfully, though not passively, recounts the work of criticism from the nineteen-forties, -fifties, and -sixties.

Levao's subject is a large, if familiar, one: the "increased attention" in the Renaissance to "the power and contingency of human constructions—literary and extraliterary" that helped to create a new "vision of culture, not as structured by eternal categories, but as a distinctively human artifact" (p. xvii). Levao portrays the transition from medieval to Renaissance as leading to "a crisis over the status of cultural forms" (p. xxiv), and his portrait of this crisis includes a capacity to render the emotional nuances and effects of the "new psychic agitation" (p. xviii). Each of Levao's three authors engages the psy-