

nonsense. There is even, suggest Gross, a punning link between curse and 'cursitor' (a word not used in the play) so that both curses and those who curse join the ranks of the persecuted vagabonds (cursitors) of Elizabethan England. This emphasis leads to a devaluation of Edgar's role as witness to the indestructible strength of human compassion and kindness ('blessing'). Arguably, there is a failure here to catch the precise significance in the play of the relationship between curse and blessing.

This is an elegantly written and ambitious work which should be studied by everyone interested in the ways in which Shakespeare thematizes speech and language. But it is a self-indulgent book, too: the freedom with which it turns its chosen topic into a metaphor for everything in the plays diminishes its effectiveness.

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EDWARD BERRY. *Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study*. Pp. xii+254. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. £40.

This well-presented and pertinently illustrated book is a credit to Professor Berry, his university, and to Cambridge University Press. Berry's scholarship and criticism are of a very high order. Moreover, as the publisher states, this is the first book-length study of Shakespeare's works in relation to the culture of the hunt in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. The book is not exhaustive on all aspects of hunting during the Renaissance, but it offers, in comprehensive and well-ordered fashion, a great deal of relevant material about it which will be of use to all Shakespearians. As references to the hunt are frequent in Shakespeare, it certainly is important to understand what exactly is meant by words such as 'hart', 'stag', 'hind', and those applied to the various methods of hunting deer (the main object of the chase): *par force de chiens* (held to be the noblest and most masculine kind of hunt—typically pursued by royals), bow and stable, and coursing with greyhounds. Such matters are well explained in the introductory first chapter.

That chapter also, and perhaps yet more valuably, introduces us to the various attitudes to hunting held in England at the time when Shakespeare wrote. Monarchs were enthusiasts, with James I a particularly devoted hunter. The traditional argument in defence of the hunt was 'the conventional Christian view . . . which sanctioned hunting as falling within the biblical injunction that nature was to be controlled by man' (p. 22). James, moreover, argued that frequent hunting was necessary for his health. The 'sport' was also seen as a training ground in the arts of war, and hunting and war were considered to be closely related activities (as indeed they are by Shakespeare). In opposition to conservative views about hunting, several arguments were offered: for example, in the eyes of humanists such as Erasmus and More, the similarity between hunting and war was a reason for opposing both, a view which Shakespeare appears to have shared. Others opposed hunting more centrally on the grounds of its cruelty to animals, and, again, Shakespeare appears to have done so too, as is observed, for example, in *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford, 1916), ii. 342 ff., and, as Berry acknowledges, by Caroline Spurgeon in *Shakespeare's Imagery* (Cambridge, 1935).

But the fact that Shakespeare's distaste for violence and cruelty has been noted by others does not in any sense make Berry's book superfluous. On the contrary, it is striking how much new insight and evidence he offers, despite the fact that the main thrust of his argument is neither novel nor unpredictable. His case is valuable not only because there have, of course, been scholars holding an opposing view, but especially

because hunting scenes in Shakespeare have simply received far too little detailed attention, even though, as Berry shows, they are quite central to his concerns. Ultimately, the critical points made in this book will perhaps prove yet more important than the scholarly material, indispensable and distinguished though that is.

For example, one critical point of significance, especially for those of us interested in gender studies, is that 'Shakespeare's skeptical and satiric treatment of the hunt is in many respects a skeptical and satiric treatment of the stereotypical male ethos' (p. 222). Another gratifying critical aspect is Berry's belief that—however subjectively—we can discover such a thing as a Shakespearian attitude: 'Individually, each of the works implies a critique of the culture of the hunt; collectively, the recurrent patterns of the critique imply a coherent authorial point of view' (p. 209). But although this attitude is brave and sensible in view of much current support, in academia, for 'Barthes' denial of the very concept of authorship' (p. 209), I am nevertheless not wholly convinced that Shakespeare's point of view was as consistent, or as evaluative, as Berry tends to argue. His insistence that Shakespeare's disapproval of hunting must be held to be present whenever the subject is on his mind strikes me as questionable.

In particular, as Berry is aware, this assumption is hard to square with the evidence of the hunting episode in Act II, scene i of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (discussed on pp. 211 ff.). As Berry admits, the focus is not the kill but on the delightful music of the hounds. Theseus and Hippolyta each mention instances of what she calls 'such sweet thunder'. I should have thought that, in this context, their comments chiefly help to create a positive image of the hunt although it is just possible to see them as a little argumentative, with Theseus typically (as the male) trying to assert his superiority. But Berry sees something altogether more serious and ominous. To him, the interchange between the two characters betrays 'underlying sources of tension', notably a 'continuing tension in a relationship that began with wooing by the sword' (p. 212).

I must say I find this point ponderous, and not warranted by the Shakespearian evidence presented. There is no indication of disharmony between the two lovers, and, odd though we may find it, Hippolyta never seems to mind having been conquered by Theseus. When on p. 213 Berry begins to argue that 'The mythological subtexts underlying the roles of Theseus and Hippolyta also hint at a latent violence associated with hunting that shadows the festive nature of the moment', I feel that he is quite out of tune with the dramatic moment, and leaving the text far behind.

There are other times when to my mind Berry over-reads, or at least reads oddly, as when he discusses the 'poor sequest'red stag / That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt' (*As You Like It*, II. i. 33-4, in the Riverside edition, from which Berry quotes). This is the wounded animal that attracts Jaques's moralizing. Berry wishes us to believe that 'In "taking" the hunter's aim . . . the stag itself seems complicit in its own undoing' (p. 176). But surely the verb *take*, here, has the sense of 'to receive (something inflicted)' or 'to suffer, undergo' (*OED* 34b). The poignancy of the moment described by the speaker is that the stag is a victim, and in no sense 'complicit'. Thus Jaques's reaction is understandable, although in the last analysis it is extreme in regarding the hunters in the forest as 'mere usurpers' and 'tyrants': the Duke and his men are in exile, and will die unless they hunt—for food, not pleasure.

As is so often the case these days, the study tends to be at its least attractive and persuasive when it is at its most political. In a chapter on *The Tempest*, Berry argues impressively and with great originality that Prospero's hunting of Caliban represents a stage in Prospero's development as a man who learns to prefer forgiveness to revenge. Berry shows that Shakespeare's concept of these matters is influenced by Montaigne's essay 'Of Cruelty', which combines the notion that the 'rarer action' lies in virtue, with

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an image of the hunt as an example of irrational passion. This brilliant and wise point is, however, followed by a forced comparison between the hunt in the play and its role in James I's life to the effect that in both cases we are to see a ruler's 'potential for tyranny' (p. 201).

Even so, I mention some of my occasional disagreements with Berry to stimulate debate rather than to detract from his excellent book, which deserves to be read by every Shakespearean, and should certainly be bought by all significant libraries, not least because the important material offered cannot be found anywhere else.

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STUART GILLESPIE. **Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources.** Pp. x+528 (Athlone Shakespeare Dictionary Series). London and New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone Press, 2001. £125.

In the flood of more or less worthwhile publications about Shakespeare, this volume stands out as a genuinely valuable contribution to Shakespeare studies. Dr Gillespie provides a dictionary of Shakespeare's reading, with entries for individual authors, anonymous works, and genres (such as emblem books, Greek romance, homilies, and morality plays). Each entry (except for the very briefest) is divided into four sections. The first provides a short biography^y of the writer and an account of the scope and character of their work. The second charts their reputation in Renaissance England, telling us which works were known, why they were valued, and how they were interpreted. Usually this includes a substantial quotation, so that we can gauge the flavour of the writing. This part of the entry is especially valuable for any student of Renaissance literature wanting to know about the politics of reading Tacitus, or how Seneca sounded in Elizabethan English. Section three discusses Shakespeare's knowledge and use of the particular writer, and section four provides a bibliography.

Dr Gillespie readily acknowledges that the dictionary would have been impossible without the work of generations of Shakespeare scholars, notably T. W. Baldwin for the classical works, and Geoffrey Bullough for the narrative and dramatic sources; and the volume draws heavily on hundreds of books, articles, and editions. But if there is little here that is strictly new in the sense of offering novel discoveries, the whole enterprise allows us to understand Shakespeare's reading as never before, from Accolti to Xenophon (neither of whom, incidentally, Shakespeare seems to have known). Sometimes, as with Erasmus, influence is too diffuse to permit of precise tracking, and Dr Gillespie refuses to pretend otherwise. One should not underestimate the enormous labour involved in all this—not simply the work of compiling, but the much more difficult work of appraising claims for Shakespeare's knowledge of this and that, and the task of describing the nature of Shakespeare's use of any particular source. The labour is prodigious, and the judgement sound. Dr Gillespie rightly tends towards agnosticism and scepticism when weighing up claims for Shakespeare's reading, but he provides plenty of materials for readers to rethink the issues for themselves. When a source really is important, we are given a long, lucid, and imaginative account of how Ovid or Chaucer, Kyd or the homilies, lodged in Shakespeare's imagination and helped to shape particular plays.

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