



John D. Cox, *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989. pp. xviii, 244. \$29.50.

"Power" in the title of John Cox's interesting and useful book aligns him with lots of current work in Shakespeare criticism concerned with the relations between dramatic literature and politics. Much (by no means all) of this work tends to see Shakespeare as going with the main cultural flow during the sixteenth century, in which power becomes increasingly concentrated in the central institution of the monarchy. Cox is very sceptical of this view. In his version, Shakespearean drama tends to demystify rather than glorify both the monarchy and, more generally (in Wyatt's words), "the power of them, to whome fortune hath lent / Charge over vs, of Right, to strike the stroke." By representing Shakespearean drama as the critique of a dominant ideology, Cox offers us a subversive Shakespeare in some ways similar to the work of other recent critics, most notably Jonathan Dollimore in *Radical Tragedy*. In Cox, though, it is subversion with a difference, for his main argument is to associate Shakespearean subversion not, as Dollimore did, with an emergent materialism, but rather with a residual medieval view in which secular authority is understood, in all of its forms, as the expression of *libido dominandi*. From this perspective, which Cox calls Christian realism, Shakespearean stroke-strikers have little or nothing in them of the divinity that hedges a king, though they may themselves claim such an aura, nor do the plays have any sympathy with the very idea of associating divinity and royalty. Wyatt's prudent qualification, "of Right," doesn't apply here. The politically powerful figures in Cox's version of Shakespeare derive rather from the tyrannical ranters of medieval drama; they out-Herod Herod.

In his early chapters Cox discusses the formation of this tradition of political critique in Augustine (a somewhat misleading origin since the sceptical analysis of power in *The City of God* didn't prevent Augustine from the vigorous suppression of marginal opinion in favour of a central ecclesiastical authority), and its development in medieval drama and sermons. The rest of the book attempts to show the vitality of this tradition in a more or less systematic review of the Shakespeare canon. Cox places the early comedies in — or rather against — the context of a courtly humanist association of neoclassical form, the high style, and the prerogatives of social position. Though in some ways deferring to the social and stylistic hierarchy, Shakespeare is seen in these early comedies as increasingly sceptical about such hierarchies and gradually more confident in mingling rude and high styles as well as clowns and kings. Cox makes the familiar (and plausible) claim that this innovation is empowered by the old popular tradition. At the centre of the book (in both senses) are four engaging chapters, two each on the histories and the problem plays (*All's Well*

and *Measure*), which emphasize the uneasy combination of old and new. Cox takes the archetypes of sacred history to be a substantial presence in the histories, but in contrast to Tillyard and Dover Wilson, he doesn't see these archetypes as governing the theatrical experience, merely competing with a secular analysis in a way that does not allow for resolution. Cox detects a similar equivocation in the problem plays, where Helena and the Duke function, like the sacred trickster of medieval drama, to expose the hypocrisies of power, but are themselves neither sacred nor marginalized nor averse to using their own power in problematically manipulative ways. Cox's chapter on the tragedies is predictably less persuasive. In emphasizing the vulnerability of Antony and Lear, he offers us a kinder and gentler experience, where the humbling discovery of a common humanity gets us alarmingly close to the "redemptivist" readings that keep Empson's cantankerous fulminations against "neo-Christianity" as relevant as they ever were. The final chapter, on the romances, returns to a more balanced view, arguing strongly against the contemporary trend to see these plays as compliments to the court or the royal family while at the same time acknowledging the energies in them that have generated such work and made it valuable.

Cox frequently represents his general argument as making only the minimal claim that Shakespeare, for all his "strikingly innovative" qualities, is "not radically discontinuous" with residual Christian modes of thought and feeling (91). But historical change can never be characterized by radical discontinuity, so if Cox isn't merely stating the obvious he is at least implying a bolder claim, either that medieval elements are more significant than we tend currently to recognize, or that they are finally determining, securely containing if not wholly eradicating the innovative elements. Yet such implicit claims are never confronted. Cox has some astute objections to the work of "most [some?] New Historicists" who are "committed to finding that either cultural poetics or cultural materialism is the ripening paradisaical fruit on the intellectual tree planted by early modern rationalism" (xiv). This critique is persuasive, rather like that of some second-wave feminists, warning against the appropriation of historical texts as precursors of a contemporary political consciousness. But it's one thing to note the "implicit teleology" in somebody else's historicism "that transforms 'what is' into 'what ought to be,'" quite another to acknowledge one's own. Cox goes on to say that "in comparison my conception of historical change is 'relatively static,'" but a static view of history is no less teleological than a progressive one, only differently so (historicism, like all human activity, is nothing if not purposive), its knowledge equally motored by desire and human interest.

History isn't a closed text, and these days the historical text of the Renaissance has been so thoroughly re-opened that even its title (the Renaissance? the early modern period?) is up for grabs. And a good thing too. As Raymond Williams says, the "strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is the immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products." Cox cites Williams as a formative influence on his own work, many disagreements notwithstanding. This seems to me a legitimate citation, which is another way of saying that *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* is a timely and valuable contribution to current debates.

EDWARD PECHTER

Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989. pp. ix, 271. \$29.95.

In a recent Canadian literature class on Cree dramatist Tomson Highway, one of my students made a revealing slip of the tongue, conflating, I believe, the author's name and the name of Longfellow's legendary Native literary creation Hiawatha. He referred to Highway as "Hiaway." Hi(gh)awa(y)tha. This incongruous superimposition of literary on 'real' provides one more illustration of Terry Goldie's thesis in "Fear and Temptation" of the power and circumscription of the semiotic field associated with the Native or, as Goldie prefers, the Indigene.

Goldie's book is a study of what he, following Edward Said, terms the "standard commodities" (15) discovered within the semiotic field of the Indigene, in the literatures of Canada, Australia, and to a lesser degree New Zealand: sex, violence, orality, mysticism, and the prehistoric. Each commodity is devoted a chapter, and there are in addition chapters on the Indigene as "natural," on form or genre in its interconnections with Native content, on theatre and the peculiar ramifications of staging, actors, and audience, and on the specific cases of Rudy Wiebe and Patrick White. Particularly in the instances of sex and violence, Goldie examines the positive and negative spin given images of the Indigene by the opposing poles of temptation and fear, with Indigene as reification of passion that whites envy and deplore. He argues that literary attention to Native peoples is part of a white process of "indigenization," a neologism conveying "the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous" (13) either by erasing and replacing the Indigenes (fear) or by incorporating and acquiring them (temptation).

Fear and Temptation is dense, thoughtful, critically sophisticated and self-conscious. Citing such thinkers as Todorov, Bakhtin, Man-