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Hart, Jonathan Locke. Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire. Vol. 1, Geography and Language. Vol. 2, Poetry, Philosophy and Politics

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is no doubt that this will be an invaluable reference book for many years to come.

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Hart, Jonathan Locke.

Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire. Vol. 1, Geography and Language. Vol. 2, Poetry, Philosophy and Politics.

London: Routledge, 2021. Pp. 251, 248. ISBN (vol. 1) 978-0-3676-3519-0 and (vol. 2) 978-0-3677-5990-2 (hardcover) \$160 each.

Hart's *Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire* investigates Shakespeare as a playwright and poet of local and global significance, examining both his influences and sources from the western tradition and his impact on cultures and readers around the world, including Asian cultures. Hart sees in Shakespeare "the paradoxical oxymoron of particular universals or universal particulars" (2:8). He was a writer whose work "shows an awareness of sea and land, geography and history, of movement and otherness" (1:15); a man "of England and of English" (1:7) who also "travelled across time and space" (2:205). Hart's book joins and contributes to a growing body of work on Shakespeare, empire, politics, and geography, including the collections *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel* (Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick, and Poonam Trivedi, eds., Routledge, 2017) and *Shakespeare and Greece* (Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou, eds., Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017); Leah S. Marcus's *How Shakespeare Became Colonial: Editorial Tradition and the British Empire* (Taylor & Francis, 2017); Stuart Elden's *Shakespearean Territories* (University of Chicago Press, 2018); and Caroline Ritter's recent *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (University of California Press, 2021). The key significance of Hart's work inheres in its global reach: its emphasis on the playwright's trans-cultural influence and appeal.

Volume 1, *Geography and Language*, focuses principally on Shakespeare, while including discussions of Spenser, Marlowe, and Donne to illuminate

context. Acknowledging Shakespeare as an early modern English playwright and offering close textual analysis of several plays, the volume also stretches to considerations of Shakespeare in the wider world. Following the introduction, chapter 2 examines ideas of expansion and travel, noting Shakespeare's awareness of and interest in worlds beyond his own, particularly in *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*; the chapter also includes a reading of Marlowe's representation of Asia in *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I*. Chapters 3 and 4 treat Shakespearean representations of civil war: chapter 3 addresses examples of rhetoric in the history plays, offering both teaching strategies and close readings of speeches from the Second Tetralogy, while chapter 4 centres on the language of war in *1 and 2 Henry IV*. Focusing on *1, 2, and 3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, chapter 5 queries notions of kingship and war, asking "whether a war involving Christians can be just" (1:71). Chapter 6 shifts to political rhetoric in Roman history, presenting a reading of act 3, scene 2 of *Julius Caesar*. In chapter 7, Hart considers translation and history, examining the importance of language learning and translation "in England and beyond its borders" (1:149), looking particularly at *Henry V*. Chapter 8 examines Shakespeare's reach into Ireland and the New World, considering such figures as Montaigne and Spenser, as well as Popes Adrian IV and Alexander VI. The volume closes with an interpretation of two Chinese film adaptations of *Hamlet: Hamlet—The Banquet* (2006) and *The Prince of the Himalayas* (2006).

Volume 2, *Poetry, Philosophy and Politics*, concerns the "verbal and visual signs" (2:1) of the Shakespearean drama, continuing to read it as both universal and particular, while pressing into its poetic, philosophical, and political dimensions. Following an introduction that focuses largely on how "Shakespeare's representation of humans and his poetry of nature have interested others since his time" (2:24), chapter 2 examines Shakespeare in Germany, looking at German interpretations (principally by Herder, Goethe, Schlegel, and Cohn) of Shakespeare from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 3 considers Shakespeare's representations of his own voice in his dedications to *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*; chapter 4 shifts to aesthetics and ethics, looking to Plato's view of the relationship between these concepts as a backdrop to Hart's argument that in Shakespeare they are "inextricable [...] but not monolithic" (2:75–76). Chapter 5 emphasizes Shakespearean representations of the private and the public, considering such writers as Plato, Aristotle, and John of Salisbury in its discussion of tyranny, kingship, and theatre. Developing

this analysis of liberty and tyranny, chapter 6 reads *Julius Caesar* in terms of tyranny and freedom, as well as rhetoric and poetics. “In Act I, scene iii of *Julius Caesar*,” Hart writes, “Shakespeare sets the scene of tensions over tradition and the present, bondage and freedom, tyrants and resisters of tyranny” (2:124). He extends his reading of these concepts with an analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra* in chapter 7. Chapter 8, while acknowledging that Shakespeare doesn’t develop his own theory of poetry, theatre, or art (and never uses the word “theory”), offers detailed examples of what his characters have to say about these topics in such plays as *Measure for Measure*, *Pericles*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Timon of Athens*. Images within text form the focus of the final chapter, which concentrates on Plato, Aristotle, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Shakespeare.

Wide-ranging and impressive in its scope, *Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire* can be a challenging read, asking its readers to journey with the author across time periods, countries, and continents; bringing us into new territories and realms of investigation as we broaden our understanding of both the playwright’s roots and the huge reach of his influence. At the heart of the work, though, lies an attention to textual particulars, and this is perhaps its greatest strength: Hart’s detailed close readings of Shakespeare and others ground and focus the discussion. Even while illuminating broad contexts, Hart concentrates on the small specifics of the text, echoing in his own work his sense of both the universal and the particular that he eloquently attributes to Shakespeare.

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