
Scott L. Newstock, ed. *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2007. 308p.

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In this well-presented volume, editor Scott L. Newstock brings together Kenneth Burke's thirteen essays on Shakespeare, preceded by Burke's lecture delivered in 1964, titled "Introduction: Shakespeare Was What?" In addition, Newstock puts together an exhaustive list of all references to Shakespeare in Burke's writings. Taylor Jones' caricatural cover art resonates well with the content and purpose of the book.

Today, when so many fear either the disappearance of the printed page or the simultaneously harrowing phrase "out of print," this is indeed a most welcome collection printed on paper. As Newstock comments in one of his copious notes, this is also a pioneer effort to compile Burke's much-referenced essays in a single volume, which had been envisioned already during Burke's life but never took off the ground.

What makes the book most valuable to readers is that the editor carefully introduces the nature and significance of Burke's contribution to the Shakespearean critical canon by offering it as a "series of entry-points" (xvii), complete with annotations and cross-references. As a Shakespearean critic, Burke has triumphantly resisted classification: he belongs to no particular school or *ism*, and maybe because of that, his essays still sound fresh, challenging, and accessible. One purpose of the book is to possibly nourish readers' rediscovery of this unique critical voice.

Each essay is footnoted with Burke's comments and notes that have been unpublished until now, therefore the reader enjoys a more complete view of how Burke's mind works. He is a rhetorician through and through, a dutiful docent of Aristotle, and as such, a refreshing connoisseur of Shakespeare's words. The entire book is an argument—a gauntlet revisited, if you will—to persuade and encourage readers to reconnect with this original thinker.

The "Editor's Introduction" provides an overlook of key terms and concepts that enable the reader to closely follow how Burke "builds" (a key verb that signifies the Burkean conceit) his case for the Shakespearean plays in question. They are all here: from *Hamlet* to *King Lear* to *Macbeth*, including Burke's ventriloquist act on behalf of Antony, and, most crucially, the 1951 "*Othello*: An Essay to Illustrate the Method." Newstock points out the irony of not only that this essay still puzzles and inspires further critical deliberation today but also how Burke playfully closes the 16,000-word discussion with the statement, "This essay is not complete" (xxv). Newstock also ventures into suggesting that the reluctant reception surrounding Burke's *œuvre* may stem from the ambitious proportions he (Burke) aspired for.

Clearly, this volume is a worthy tribute to Kenneth Burke's contribution to Shakespearean scholarship, however arguable its place may be. He "confronts daringly" as Harold Bloom contends in his critical praise, "the triple greatness of the greatest of all writers ever: cognitive power, linguistic richness, and a whole cosmos of persuasive women and men made up *out of words*." The book itself, because of the meticulous editing and painstakingly thorough bibliographic research and references, is likely to become an instant favorite with researchers and students alike. ✱