



Article  
scientifique

Compte rendu de  
livre

2006

Published  
version

Open  
Access

This is the published version of the publication, made available in accordance with the publisher's policy.

---

[Review of :] William Shakespeare : eine Einführung / Thomas Kullmann. -  
Berlin : Erich Schmidt, 2005

---

Erne, Lukas Christian

#### How to cite

ERNE, Lukas Christian. [Review of :] William Shakespeare : eine Einführung / Thomas Kullmann. -  
Berlin : Erich Schmidt, 2005. In: Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, 2006,  
vol. 158, p. 423–425.

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:14564>

(Haggard, Conrad, Buchan) auftauchen, führen schließlich zu komplexen neuen Dämonologien (Cameron, Auden, Golding), die mit Relikten traditioneller Dämonologien spielen und zur Verinnerlichung des Teufels führen. Das vierte und letzte Kapitel deckt fast genau den gleichen Zeitraum ab wie Kapitel III, bezieht jedoch kritische Diskurse über den Teufel, Erscheinungsformen des literarisch inspirierten Satanismus im 20. Jahrhundert und dessen Reflexe in der Rockmusik (*Judas Priest*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Black Sabbath*) mit ein, wobei der letzte Abschnitt Salman Rushdies *The Satanic Verses* als prominentem Fall der *diabolic fallacy* und neuer Form der allumfassenden, unabschließbaren Verteufelung (als literarische Praxis, als intertextuelles Verfahren und als Thema) gewidmet ist, die nicht vor dem Autor halt macht, sondern ihn, seine Lebenswelt und seine Kritiker einschließt.

Diese Untersuchung fast ausschließlich männlicher kanonischer Autoren spannt einen weiten zeitlichen und gattungsmäßigen Bogen. Das ist die Stärke dieser durch die Breite ihres Textmaterials und ihren gut lesbaren Schreibstil beeindruckenden Studie, die sicherlich Kollegen und Studierende gleichermaßen ansprechen wird. Der weit gespannte zeitliche Bogen und die Fülle des Textmaterials sind aber auch ihr Problem, denn die kultur- und ästhetikgeschichtliche Tiefenschärfe leidet zuweilen unter dem Überblicksanspruch. Der gewählte funktional-strukturalistische Ansatz, so wie er von Schnierer praktiziert wird, ermöglicht nicht die erhoffte detaillierte Erfassung der historischen Kontexte, weshalb eine Ergänzung um neuhistoristische, diskursanalytische und nicht zuletzt feministische Ansätze hilfreich gewesen wäre. So rückt die Studie zuweilen in die Nachbarschaft dessen, was der Autor nicht vorlegen wollte: eine Motivgeschichte des Teufels.

Bern

GABRIELE RIPPL

Thomas Kullmann: *William Shakespeare. Eine Einführung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005. Pp. 237. Paper € 17.80.

The continuing popularity of Shakespeare guarantees that there is no shortage of introductory books about him and his works, such as, of recent date, David Bevington's *Shakespeare* (2002) and Frank Kermode's *The Age of Shakespeare* (2003). Thomas Kullmann's introduction joins these predecessors but targets a more specific readership. Written in German, it chiefly addresses German-speaking students of English. Kullmann's aim is to provide an accessible introduction to Shakespeare by relating his plays and poems to their multi-faceted literary and historical contexts, politics, society, religion, theatre, medicine, philosophy, and education (p. 5).

There are a number of obvious ways of structuring an introduction to Shakespeare's works, notably chronology, genre, or a combination of the two ("early comedies", "middle" or "mature" comedies, etc.). Kullmann avoids these well-trodden paths and adopts a more original and ambitious structure, dividing his book into four main parts: literary and cultural discourses of Shakespeare's time; form and language in Shakespeare; constructions of the world in Shakespeare; and constructions of the human in Shakespeare. Each of these parts consists of four to seven chapters, each chapter addressing one or several works from a specific thematic or contextual angle. This allows for enabling juxtapositions which can yield instructive insights: one chapter deals with legitimacy and rule in *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, another chapter investigates the dramatization of place and time in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and so

on. The originality of Kullmann's structure is further emphasized by his introduction and conclusion, the introduction dealing with the reception ("Shakespeare als kulturelles Phänomen, 1623–2004"), the conclusion (which includes a short biographical outline) with Shakespeare's dramatic career.

In the course of Kullmann's *William Shakespeare*, twenty-six plays, the two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, as well as the *Sonnets* all receive separate treatment, varying in length from two to eleven pages. A few plays are examined in more than one chapter, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is included in both discussions of Shakespeare's language and of love, illusion, and natural order. *The Winter's Tale* is even dealt with in three different chapters, while the two parts of *Henry IV*, disappointingly, never receive more than a few cursory remarks. Predictably, Kullmann devotes far more space to the ten tragedies than to the ten history plays: nine of the former receive at least one discussion, but only three of the latter (*Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *Henry V*).

Discussions of individual plays are often succinct and intelligent, close to the text but also aware of their context. The analysis of *Julius Caesar* (pp. 150–55) is a good example of an incisive short introduction to a play, in which Kullmann successfully sketches the chief characters and issues and cogently shows the relevance of Caesar's assassination to early modern political theory. The treatment of a few other plays seems more open to criticism. In a section on *Macbeth* (pp. 190–201), for instance, Kullmann argues that the reason for the hero's ambition is his childlessness, an instance of psychological speculation that recalls the kind of criticism A. C. Bradley practiced in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) and L. C. Knights mocked in "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" (1933). Similarly, following the work by Norman Rabkin, Annabel Patterson and others, which has considerably complicated scholarly views on *Henry V*, many will disagree with Kullmann's argument that the play's protagonist is a man of peace and humility, conscientious and God-fearing, who corresponds throughout to the ideal ruler as described in Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani* (pp. 134–38).

Reading lists are appended to all chapters, lists which usually consist of about three to five articles or monographs, arguably too little to help students find their way around the jungle of Shakespeare scholarship. Moreover, not all bibliographical entries seem particularly well chosen: a chapter on *The Comedy of Errors* and ancient literary tradition is followed by a reading list consisting of three items, including Baldwin's two-volume *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (which even advanced scholars do not find easily digestible) and a short essay by Kullman himself on "Intertextual Travels in Shakespearean Plays". By contrast, Robert Miola's fine and easily comprehensible monograph on *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy* (1994) remains unmentioned, as does the same scholar's collection of essays on *The Comedy of Errors* (1997). Nor is there any attempt to present reading lists that are up to date. A chapter about "Individuum und Weltordnung", "individual and world order", in *Macbeth* lists four items, the most recent of which is E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943). Kullmann rightly assumes that more recent are not necessarily better studies, but that surely does not mean that the last sixty years of criticism on this question, including the New Historicist and Cultural Materialist challenges to Tillyard, should be passed over in silence.

Kullmann's book covers so much ground that it is perhaps impossible to avoid occasional errors. Contrary to what Kullmann writes, the early quartos of *Edward III*

are not ascribed to Shakespeare (p. 10); the penny playgoers paid to get access to the pit of a playhouse corresponds to quite a bit more than one Euro (p. 19); Thomas Kyd did not go to university (p. 19), and Belimperia in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is not killed but commits suicide (p. 21); some of Shakespeare's plays were clearly designed in five acts (p. 70; cf. *Henry V* with its Chorus; plus the work by Gary Taylor on act breaks at the Blackfriars playhouse); the Prince in *Romeo and Juliet* refers to the dead Mercutio as "My blood" not because Mercutio is a subject but because he is a relative of his (p. 97); and the "balcony scene" in the same play is Act 2 Scene 2 (Act 2 Scene 1 in some editions) and not Act 3 Scene 5 (p. 163). Despite these occasional slips, Kullmann has produced a useful introduction to the works of Shakespeare of which many students will gratefully avail themselves.

Geneva

LUKAS ERNE

*In the Footsteps of William Shakespeare.* Ed. Christa Jansohn (Studien zur englischen Literatur, 20). Münster: LIT, 2005. Pp. vi + 295. Paper € 24.50.

This collection of essays takes stock of the latest achievements of Shakespearean studies, formulates some tentative conclusions and sketches out avenues of further exploration. It also offers a choice of thoughtful analyses of the dramatist's works raising new problems and revealing new facets of their inexhaustible complexity. And, finally, it turns to the continuing inspiration that these works have yielded for further thought and creation far and wide beyond the cliffs of Dover.

The first section comprises four comprehensive overviews of the state of the art in four major areas: biography, text, canon and theatre. Stanley Wells's article, "Current Issues in Shakespeare Biography", surveys critically the central preoccupations in this field since 1998. On a fairly sensitive current issue, that of the identification of Sir Alexander Hoghton's protégé William Shakeshaft with the Stratford poet, he is unequivocally sceptical and dismisses the Lancaster project as prompted by group interests. In general, Prof. Wells is of the opinion that the productive line of Shakespearean biographical research at present is not so much factual detection as textual interpretation leading to a better grasp of the author's individuality. His own conclusion is that, in spite of the continuing disagreement on this point, Shakespeare's writings reveal "a fundamentally religious person, someone who acknowledges the mystery of human life but is not bound by any dogma."

Christa Jansohn bemoans the failure of modern German Shakespeareans to carry on the distinguished tradition of editorial and textual studies, after which she conducts a thorough assessment of the new academic editions of the entire canon including the Arden *Complete Works*, the second *Riverside Shakespeare*, the updated fourth edition of David Bevington's *Complete Works* and Stephen Greenblatt's *Norton Shakespeare*. After a detailed discussion of their individual merits and demerits, she remarks that they are all too bulky and unnecessarily comprehensive for the needs of teaching, which is supposed to be their main *raison d'être*. A recent publication singled out for particular praise is *The Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM*, which brings together textual criticism and theatre studies and reveals the fact that there is no such thing as a definitive text.

In a perspicacious overview of the scholarly research on the problems of Shakespeare's authorship both within the canon and in the apocrypha, Richard Proudfoot comes to the conclusion that this investigation "has been taken about as far as it can