Emily C. Bartels. *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. viii + 252 pp. $55.00. Review by ANTHONY G. BARTHELEMY, UNIVERSTIY OF MIAMI.

The dust jacket for Emily Bartels' book reveals much about the author's project. Superimposed upon a cropped 1644 map of Africa by Dutch cartographer Willem Janzoon Blaeu is a pair of men removed from the border of the map and placed in the center of the jacket. They are identified as "Moracchi." On either side of the "Moracchi" in the background are pairs of men identified as "Aegyptij" and "Abissini." In the deep background, almost indistinguishable, stand a pair identified by the map illustrator as "Cafres in Mozambique." On the map they are clearly male and female, very dark, and the woman is topless. The pairs of men on the dust jacket get darker as they recede into the background, but only the "Cafres" are obscured. The jacket tells us that color has been added by its designer. I cannot speak to Bartels' artistic control over the cover, but nonetheless I think the jacket describes the place of Africa and Africans in this scholarly investigation of four English plays that focus on Moors on the English popular stage. For as the book looks at the plays' Moors, it claims that their representations "are not bounded by any set or single racial, religious or ethnic markers—by Africa or the New World, Islam or Turks, by blackness or tawniness, or by an anxiety-provoking strangeness" (16). Instead, Bartels argues that Moors "unsettle" these "codifications" (16).

All four plays which Bartels examines are well known to scholars who have studied the representation of black characters on the English stage. Most scholars of early modern drama know Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1593-94) and *Othello* (1604). The other two plays are Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-89) and Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* (1599-1600). Bartels discusses each play in a chapter of varying length; understandably she devotes more attention to the two texts by Shakespeare. *The Battle of Alcazar,* Bartels argues, is unique among the four because it does not take place in Europe. That fact lays the groundwork for the essential argument of the book: "*Alcazar* presses its spectators to look beyond the bounds of race, religion, and nation, to see a Mediterranean "world" improvised from the unpredictable

intersections of Europeans and non-Europeans, of Moors, Arabians, Turks, Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, and at least one Englishman" (43-44). This notion of a multicultural Mediterranean world drives the book's analysis of these four plays.

With its decidedly international dramatis personae, *Alcazar* brings into contact and conflict a "world" of diverse people. Bartels suggests that the crisis of succession for the throne of Alcazar is important not just nationally but internationally, and this fact underscores the increasing significance of "evolving cross-cultural environment, contingent on political alliances and exchange" (30). This multiculturalism along with the promiscuous genealogy of the plays Moroccans, Bartels claims, minimizes the significance of blackness to the play. Moreover, she assures us that "the alienation of the Moor is not only not assumed; it is also not assured" (44).

The book continues its exploration of Mediterranean multiculturalism in the other three plays that notably take place in Europe, Italy for the Shakespearean dramas and Spain for *Lust's Dominion.* In each of these plays, Bartels notes the integration of the Moors in the larger society around them. The titles of the chapters that treat the Shakespearean plays suggest how Bartels will develop this thesis. "Incorporate in Rome" studies how Aaron is integrated into Rome's imperial household in *Titus Andronicus*, and "*Othello* and the Moor of Venice" explores the "of" in "Moor of Venice."

Between each of the four chapters that critique the four plays, is a chapter devoted to an important cultural production that increased England's knowledge of Africa. Thus we have chapters on Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589*, 1598-1600),* Queen Elizabeth's orders to deport "divers blackmoores" from the kingdom (1596 and 1601), and John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus's *The History and Description of Africa* (1600). Each of these chapters furthers Bartels' point that knowledge of Africa or interests there in was not of primary importance to the English. As she writes: "throughout the *Navigations*. . . Africa figures as a place of passage, a place to go *through*, literally and figuratively, rather than *to*" (52). Obviously, Bartels' investigation is far more nuanced and complex than can possibly be summarized here, but she finds support for her conclusion that English interests in Africa were not

primarily shaped by a language of race and "discrimination." This is especially true for the chapter on Queen Elizabeth's orders to deport blacks out of the kingdom. Through minute and precise research Bartels recasts the famous documents not so much as an exercise in English and Elizabethan racism but as a very particular application of Elizabeth's noted diplomacy and statecraft. I find this chapter the most rewarding chapter of the book, and I am sure scholars of early modern attitudes toward Africans and race will also find it so.

Overall I find Bartels' focus on multiculturalism interesting, but at times she allows it to leads to somewhat anemic readings of the plays. Underplaying the English native dramatic tradition and the significance of blackness within its conventions weakens her arguments. Although Bartels acknowledges "established dichotomies of light and dark," her book seems always to be minimizing those dichotomies rather than entangling them (149). While none of the four principal characters is a simple stereotype, all are referenced by their blackness which always signifies. In the conclusion of the chapter on *Othello*, Iago's genealogy as a villain is traced back to Aaron of *Titus* who "is fashioned on a Jew (Barabas) who resembles a Turk (Ithamore) [both in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*]" (190). Indeed this is a mighty line of villains, but if their ethnicity matters, so do the theatrical traditions that spawned them.

Catharine Gray. *Women Writers and Public Debate in 17th-Century Britain*. New York: Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. x + 262 pp. $69.95. Review by MAURIZIO FARINA, UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO.

Apparently remote from the open-minded salon debates of the Enlightenment, the seventeenth century seems to confine the extra-parliamentarian discussion upon public issues to private meetings and elitist circulation of manuscript writings. Closed in the spaces of the household, the religious conventicle, and, in some cases, the literary coterie, the role of women found few occasions to clear its way in an epoch of proliferation of print. This book by Catharine Gray illustrates in what manner some women managed to "reproduce and disseminate" (59) their arguments for the reception of several audiences