

tribution to early modern scholarship. Like the female-authored arguments that insist on collaboration between men and women in love (whether positive and to good effect, or negative, to ill effect), the literary collaboration of circles and salons celebrates a mutual criticism between speakers/authors. Furthermore, this social institution of early modern Europe emerges as a significant medium for cultural play between men and women, much like love itself.

Subha Mukherji. *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. xii + 286 pp. + 4 illus.+ 3 maps. \$95.00. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

*Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* convincingly argues for the “nature and extent of the engagement” between legal and dramatic “cultural practices” (2), focusing on the “nature of the interaction” more than “either of the two disciplines *per se*” (15). Subha Mukherji concentrates on links between dramatic and legal evidence and highlights the unique devices drama employs to represent the legal experience. Her study, she notes, is the “first book of literary criticism or interdisciplinary enquiry that attempts to reconstruct the physical realities of courtroom interaction and experience” (16). She points out that this method uses “drama itself as historical evidence—implying the larger argument about historical method and the place of literary evidence in it” (12).

Chapter one interrogates early modern marriage law through grounding in legal records, Henry Swinburne’s seminal text, *A Treatise of Spousals* (c1600), and Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and *All’s Well That Ends Well*. Exposing legal skepticism, Mukherji addresses this often overlooked uncertainty located within the legal evidentiary patterns. Her examination sheds new light on both *de futuro* and *de praesenti* oral marriage contracts and calls attention to the instability of verbal intent, the ring accepted as a non-verbal token, and the misappropriation of signs as legal proof, all of which further complicate adequate dramatic representation.

In a carefully studied unpacking of Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1607) and a 1596 Cambridge University employee’s court case, Mukherji’s second chapter explores the judicial attitudes that accompany adul-

tery and characterize infidelity. Her investigation explains ways that the “ascertainment of adultery as a legal fact provides a historical basis to the metaphor of public spectatorship and helps us to understand key aspects of early modern mental life, such as privacy, intimacy, and experience of domestic space” (11). Mukherji’s analysis reveals investigative practices in dramatic fictional communities and the contemporary legal environment exhibit remarkable consistency; further, she shows that the “dirty business of ferreting out adultery” casts respectable evidence collection into an undignified space (80).

Contemporary materials such as Protestant judgment books, moral tracts, popular news pamphlets, broadsides, and ballads underpin the exploitation of evidence and legitimate representation in chapter three. Mukherji explores *A Warning for Fair Women* (c. 1590s), an anonymous play that both aligns itself with anti-theatrical sentiment and attempts to “forge a generic identity legitimate by the moralists’ own standards” (96). Linking *Warning* with well-known providentialist history in *The Theatre of God’s Judgements* (1597), she argues the play “serves a legal agenda” (112). Her focus on the dumb show as performance within representational strategies demonstrates drama’s attitude toward evidentiary issues. Mukherji’s chapter closes with an analytical look at drama’s ability to “cast doubt on the project of theatrical providentialism itself” (134).

John Webster’s *The White Devil* provides the focal point of Mukherji’s chapter four, as she examines the word “colour” in relationship to image-making, evidence, and judgment. A systematic treatment demonstrates Webster’s understanding of colour as a “hermeneutic tool,” one scrupulously marshaled in order to interrogate evidence (135). She attends to issues of spectatorship and suggests diligent study of “white” and “black” exposes the potential for misreading signs. Her reading offers multiple rhetorical interpretations of “colour” and the legal implication of giving “colour”—“a practice known to be a sham, pure fiction” (149); she contends the play’s judicial self-reflexivity distinguishes it within the context of the early modern legal framework.

Chapter five, “Locations of Law: Spaces, People, Play,” looks at the physical, lived interrelated spheres of legal and theatrical cultures (12). Set in the legally entrenched Whitefriar’s district, with its urban, specifically metropolitan identity, Lording Barry’s *Ram Case* (1608) represents the city, “where law’s centrality was often social rather than technically pertaining to law courts”

(179). Her reading of this play's legal plots exposes the law's trickiness as well as its malleability. A 1623 Star Chamber litigation against playwrights Webster, Ford, Dekker, Rowley and company involving a real-life alehouse story (now lost) furnishes the backdrop for the second strand of Mukherji's analysis. She explores the connections between the era's present-day scandals and entertainment venues. Of special interest are the discussions of common law courts and their workings within and without London, the trial tracts written by those who witnessed proceedings, and the issues of 'open court' that came to signify jurisprudence.

Focusing on law and gender, chapter six examines Webster's *The Devil's Law Case*, a play whose female adulterous protagonist "outperforms" her accusers and disrupts court proceedings (206). Female litigants were accommodated by the court, but the court operated from an established "patriarchal position" and was underpinned by "severely limiting" female "legal agency" (214). Utilizing Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, she shows ways the law itself makes space for contradictions that can then be exploited by women; these situations take the form of "double-speak, contradictions, law-trick, stratagems, and sexual intrigue" (208). Historical background, multiple law cases, and an emerging model for women at court support Mukherji's claims. The "fictional component itself as a historically meaningful phenomenon," she maintains, and the "living art of dramatists resides in the middle ground between literal reality and pure invention" (232).

Mukherji's "Epilogue: The Hydra Head, the Labyrinth and the Waxen Nose: Discursive Metaphors for Law" analyzes the multiplicity of dramatic signification and legal application through a rereading of *Ram Alley* and Swinburne's *Sponsals*. "The threat of multiplicity implicit in legal discourse," she suggests, is "also the threat of uncertainty" that the hydra, labyrinth, and waxen nose make concrete in drama. She integrates Bacon's remarks on the labyrinth of uncertainties that common law had become. Further, she suggests that the image of "error, confusion, and incertitude that occupied theology, science, and philosophy" indisputably points to legal mazes. Although Swinburne recognized these mazes, they have been largely overlooked in examinations of common and canon law (242).

Subha Mukherji has produced an illuminating examination of the relation between drama and law in Renaissance England. With well-researched and solid investigation, her book makes a valuable contribution to cultural studies,

gender representation, legal history, and seventeenth-century theatre. A focus on evidence foregrounds the resemblances between the formal structures; however, her argument, she says, is for “salutary caution against an over-generalising model of the drama’s critique of law” (228). Mukherji succeeds by exposing the complex interaction between these two vital cultural forces.

Curtis Perry. *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. ix + 328 pp. \$90.00. Review by JEROME S. DEES, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY.

Curtis Perry’s study of court favoritism in the period between the mid 1580’s and the outbreak of the English Civil War is arranged into seven chapters and an “Afterward” that looks briefly (and revealingly) at Milton’s treatment of the subject in *Paradise Lost*. After the first, which introduces generally his aims, methods, and scope (while it would have been possible to write a history of early modern favoritism beginning with Wolsey and Cromwell,” he admits, “[t]his is not the book I have written” [20]), each succeeding chapter considers the subject from a specific angle (e.g., the assumed erotic relationship between monarch and favorite); in terms of recurrent tropes (e.g., the ubiquitous association of poison with the favorite); or in light of a specific work and its subsequent influence (e.g., *Leicester’s Commonwealth*). The two most substantial chapters examine the importance of King Edward II and of Roman history for a critical shift in the age’s “structures of feeling” about the constitutional implications of royal prerogative. He continuously refers to the five best-known favorites of the period, extensively to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Robert Carr, Duke of Somerset, and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and more incidentally to Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Walter Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex.

Perry is above all committed to a principle of “continuity,” the recognition of which, he believes, is crucial for an adequate understanding of what favoritism may have meant at any given moment. He puts it most succinctly, perhaps, in the following: “. . . the discourse I am surveying here is a significant native tradition of semi-theoretical radical thought not because it provided anybody with a political program but because writers kept returning to the inherited language of corrupt favoritism to frame responses to new political