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Shakespeare and the Bible. Oxford Shakespeare Topics. By Steven Marx. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 165 pp. \$39.95 (cloth); \$18.95 (paper).

This informed and useful discussion of the Bible's influence upon and interpretation by Shakespeare—a volume in the Oxford Shakespeare Topics series, edited by Peter Holland and Stanley Wells—offers a brief but substantial consideration of the importance of biblical knowledge to Shakespeare's greatest plays. Like other volumes in the series, Marx's contribution is designed to provide teachers and students with a sufficiently detailed yet succinctly and accessibly written overview of a current topic of interest. The series's aim, which Marx's brief book admirably achieves, is to inform and provoke, to provide close reading and critical analysis contextualized appropriately within historical, cultural, and literary categories. As such, it informs serious first-time readers of Shakespeare's plays while offering numerous avenues of further pursuit for those already acquainted with the Bard through his better-known works.

A brief introductory chapter, "Kiss the Book" (a line from *The Tempest*), provides a pithy overview of the significance of "The book," i.e., the Bible, in Shakespeare's England. Tracing the available editions and translations and their popularity and reception, Marx explains the centrality of the Bible to readers, writers, artists, and patrons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—John Donne, Sir Philip Sidney, Caravaggio and Rubens, for instance—thereby explaining the necessity of the present volume: since knowledge of the Bible informs and enhances any reading of literature, and since sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English culture was "saturated with what was the most powerful cultural influence of its time" (3), it follows that modern readers, who are often unfamiliar with the Bible and exegetical traditions, would be well served by a discussion of specific biblical texts in relation to Shakespeare's use of them, and of the exegetical methods of typology and midrash that can facilitate one's study of both the Bible and Shakespeare.

Thus Marx offers twofold discussions, with each of his six chapters "call[ing] their biblical and Shakespearean stories in tandem, emphasizing the typological and midrashic interplay between them" (17). Using both narrative- and thematic-centered approaches, Marx draws off current critical modes—formalist, archetypal, historical—in conjunction with his overall literary and cultural critique. Some allusions are readily

observable, others more obscure, but, as Marx asserts, "I doubt that Shakespeare intended to marry his book to the Bible, as did Dante, Spenser, Milton, and Blake, but I do think he intended them to embrace" (18); the moments of "embrace" identified and analyzed by Marx are of particular insight. The first three chapters take up, respectively, the Old Testament Genesis narratives, the Deuteronomistic History (Exodus through Kings), and the Book of Job in relation to *The Tempest*, *Henry V*, and *King Lear*. In "Posterity and Prosperity: Genesis in *The Tempest*," Marx considers the essential similarities of the two narratives, first comparing them as cosmic creation myths, with Prospero conjuring his creation with magical utterances much as the God of Genesis creates by fiat, and, second, demonstrating the concern with progeny and history conveyed through the patriarchal narratives (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and Prospero's concerns with inheritance and breeding. The next chapter, "Historical Types: Moses, David, and *Henry V*," considers how English history, modeled on the biblical Israelites' narratives of their trials and triumphs as reflections of rightly implemented retribution and reward, is effectively rendered as myth; miraculous victories, providential intervention, and dissimulation, for example, characterize the DH narratives and are paralleled in Shakespeare's ambivalent representations of kingship. "Within a Foot of the Extreme Verge": The Book of Job and *King Lear* offers an insightful and revealing look at Shakespeare's engagement with the Deuteronomistic doctrine of retributive justice and wisdom, beyond the orthodoxy of the history plays, marking a shift from theocentric to anthropocentric experience.

The next three chapters continue the tandem structure with New Testament texts: the Gospel, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and The Revelation of St. John, better known as Apocalypse. In "True Lies and False Truths: *Masque for Masque* and the Gospels," Marx examines this most overtly biblical play in relation to the gospel narratives and their thematic parallel of a central god-like figure; of particular insight is Marx's consideration of the "complex and often confusing grand finale," which suggests that the Duke offers "scriptural references in order to mislead, and misleads in order to teach the true path" (98), and which likens the strategy to the Pauline attribution to God of a similar didactic strategy. The next chapter, "Dangerous Concepts" and "Proofs of Holy Wit": Allusion in *The Merchant of Venice* and Paul's Letter to the Romans, "takes up the play's dramatization of the relationship between Jews and Christians as a reflection on the typological relationship of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Examining the Pauline discussion of ri-

valry and conversion, Marx finds that *Mertham* symbolizes the struggle between Jews and Christians over the legitimacy of scripture, "a struggle whose traces are recorded in the text as well as in the marginalia of the Bible that Shakespeare read" (120). The last chapter, "A Masque of Revelation: *The Tempest* as Apocalypse," considers the "retrospective and epitomizing role" (126) of each owing to their status as concluding works in larger collections; as closing visions, each suggests the "dissolution of heaven and earth [which] makes way for a new order, which is also a restoration" (140), reflecting *The Tempest's* inconclusiveness as well as its finality; ultimately, for Shakespeare's friends and colleagues, Marx finds, Shakespeare's last complete play, much as the Bible served its commentators, "was the source of its own vindication" (145).

The volume's notes and bibliographic materials are useful, especially the section on "Suggestions for Further Reading," which provides not only a detailed list of recent and standard works of relevance to Shakespeare and his era, but also an annotated list of works of biblical criticism and methodology. Marx's contribution to the Oxford series effectively achieves the series's stated aims in a lively and engaging sequence of close readings in context. Students and teachers will doubtless find much of interest here, and, indeed, every teacher of Shakespeare and of the Bible in literature would likely profit from Marx's careful and accessible observations and insights.

Catherine S. Cox, *University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown*

The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature. By John M. Hill. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000. viii + 176 pp. \$55.00.

"The chiefs fight for victory; the companions for their chief," wrote the Roman historian Tacitus of Germanic warriors in the first century AD: "in fact, it means shame and disgrace for life to retreat from battle surviving one's lord." Almost a millennium later, in or soon after the year 991, an English poet memorialized the defeat of the East Saxon calldorman Byrthnoth at the hands of a Viking army. In the poem, some of Byrthnoth's men flee, but others choose to stay and fight around the body of their fallen lord: "Heart must be harder, courage the keener, / Mood must be more, as our strength weakens," says one. The Victorian critic W. P. Ker was impressed by the archaic character of such personal loyalty to one's lord depicted in *The Battle of Maldon*: "But for a few

phrases it might . . . have been written before the conversion of England . . . [I]t is hard to escape the conviction that the poem of *Maldon*, late as it is, has uttered the spirit and essence of the Northern heroic literature" (*Epic and Romance* 55-57).

Not so, says John M. Hill in his new study of the Anglo-Saxon warrior ethic. Far from being the late reflex of a very old cultural ideal, *The Battle of Maldon* represents a radical innovation, the triumph of a brand-new and very Christian idealization of the proper relationship between lord and retainer. This new *ethos* proclaims a "mythological lordship" in which the Christian God brings victory in battle and territorial expansion to those leaders whom He has chosen for earthly dominion on the model of His own rule over the human race on earth. The relationship between lord and man is now far more hierarchical, far less reciprocal than it had been in former times. The ideal of sacrificial, even suicidal, retainership expressed in *Maldon* is the "jewel in the crown of triumphant lordship" (131).

Hill credits King Alfred (c. 871-99) and his successors in the tenth century with the invention and promotion of this new idea in various prose sagas and poems included in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in particular, the dynastic feud narratives of Gynewulf and Gyneheard and of Ethelwold's rebellion, as well as the victory celebrations of *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Five Boroughs Poem*. Hill very clearly shows how these texts are designed to encourage attitudes which will further the political power of the West Saxon royal family. Ironically, their ideology of triumphant lordship and sacrificial retainership achieves its most extreme expression in a poem composed during the reign of King Ethelred the Unready (c. 878-1016), who himself eventually abandoned his country to Vikings. Perhaps that unfortunate king insisted most strongly upon loyalty to the death because that is what was so often required of his men, like Byrthnoth.

Is Hill correct, then, that the Anglo-Saxon warrior ethic expressed in *Maldon* is a new thing? He is right to point out that this and the earlier texts he discusses reveal a fresh stress on superior lordship and retainer loyalty. He is right to attribute this new emphasis to the West Saxon royal family and its spokesmen. But the values themselves are by no means new. Evidence for some kind of larger cultural continuity can be seen not only in Tacitus, but also in the first surviving text of heroic legend in any Germanic language, the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, composed around 800 in association with the continental Anglo-Saxon monastery at Fulda. This poem, too, valorizes a warrior's sacrificial loy-