As in any collection from various contributors, the essays differ in complexity and thoroughness. Beecher and Ciavolella have, however, succeeded in soliciting and organizing a series of provocative papers which should, at the very least, stimulate further research into the artistic, social and aesthetic qualities of European comic theatre in the Renaissance.

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Alan C. Dessen. *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays*. Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. Pp. v, 196. \$19.95.

Professor Dessen has here determined to undo the "selectivity" of our dramatic tradition; we anthologize plays unknown to Shakespeare and his contemporaries (e.g. *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*) while ignoring texts available to the Elizabethans. However much we may agree that Shakespeare and his contemporaries transcended their predecessors, we must allow that their available models are worth attention (p. 166). Dessen focusses upon the late moral plays, such as *Like Will to Like*, *The Trial of Treasure*, and *All for Money* – plays now seldom read, and less regarded. Written between approximately 1560 and 1585, these plays employ a non-realistic logic of presentation centring upon the Vice figure and upon actions that accomplish didactic aims through replication, successive demonstration, and multiple type-figures. The arguments persuade one that these plays have a strong claim for attention, stronger in fact than that of the earlier type of morality play centred upon the *humanum genus* figure; this must cause a shift in our focus when we speak of the "morality pattern" (although, admittedly, the Elizabethan play whose morality ancestry is clearest, *Dr. Faustus*, reflects the *humanum genus* type of plot). We must be careful, however, not to canonize a new "tradition" in place of the old. Against Dessen's claim that the "moral drama, in one form or another, ruled the English stage" (p. 139), we may advance the evidence coming to light in the successive volumes published by *Records of Early English Drama*, which shows that folk plays, saint plays, miracle plays, Robin Hood plays and other forms (now mostly irrecoverable) actually bulked larger in the theatrical experiences of English towns and cities than the moral plays of the travelling professionals. It is truer to say that the moral drama "ruled" the English printing press during the sixteenth century; we will never know what was the complete theatrical legacy available to Shakespeare's stage.

Dessen sees the evidence for the importance of the Elizabethan moral plays on three levels, the first of which is local allusions such as the well-known remembrances of the Vice in *I Henry IV* and *Richard III* (indeed, these

allusions led earlier investigators like Dover Wilson to claim that these plays reflect the "*humanum genus*" structure, an idea that Dessen disputes). The present study puts forward a wealth of such allusions, while modestly disclaiming completeness; the collection allows Dessen to show that there are more allusions to the moral play in the seventeenth century than the sixteenth, and to outline a comprehensive picture of the "Vice" figure (the subject of the majority of allusions). A small *caveat*; the "Vice" is also frequently found as a participant in folk activities, such as morris dances and Robin Hood plays, and many of the literary allusions could as easily point to his existence outside the moral plays.

These allusions, scattered throughout the writings of dramatists and other writers, were obviously aimed to provoke recognition in audiences, and they encourage further thought about the relationship between later Elizabethan dramatists and the traditions of the previous generation. (In some areas, of course, the Elizabethan response was one of self-conscious and intransigent rejection of "jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits,/ And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay" [*Tamburlaine*, Prologue]). As the second type of usefulness of the moral plays, Dessen advances the claim that Shakespeare found their "deep structure" (or dramatic formulae) valuable for solving dramatic problems of scenic structure and character deployment. At the third level, Shakespeare reflects the moral plays in the structures of several of his plays. Before entering into particulars, we should note that, while Dessen has drawn his collection of allusions from a lengthy search and wide reading throughout Elizabethan drama and literature, his examples of these kinds of closer involvement with the moral plays are only from Shakespeare (with the exception of a dumb-show of seduction from *A Warning For Fair Women*, and the Good and Evil Angels in *Dr. Faustus*). While not suggesting that the book should be encyclopedic rather than focussed, one does feel that the case would be strengthened by showing how some of Shakespeare's contemporaries responded to the same stock of earlier dramatic formulae; in other words, the claim for the vitality of the moral play tradition would be reinforced by demonstrating its wider currency.

In looking next at Dessen's suggestions about Shakespeare's patterns of scene development, I am reversing the order of his volume, by moving from local allusions through scenes to entire plays. The scenes Dessen discusses do not all come from early plays, although they may bring to mind early scenes like the garden-scene in *Richard II*. At issue are instances where the dramatic "matter" seems disproportionate to our interest in the characters involved, such as the dialogue about Conscience between the murderers of Clarence (*Richard III*, I.iv). An intriguing discussion of the weakness and failure of Pompey and Lepidus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.vii, reminds us

that their weaknesses in that scene are ones similarly demonstrated later by Antony, and that perhaps they here are used to "explore in depth key values or ways of thinking to be displayed in subsequent scenes by the tragic hero" (p. 155). This idea does not deny that powerful ironies arise from our seeing weaknesses that everyone condemns as 'Egyptian' here displayed by devotees of 'Roman' power. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Dessen suggests that the Trojan council scene is an exploration of the mind of Troy, not the mind of Hector; this is a valuable suggestion, but one must note that there are many aspects of Troy not encompassed in the issues raised during the scene. The argument that these scenes are modelled upon moral play structures remains unproven, but the analogies are intriguing.

More persuasive, and treated at greater length, are Dessen's investigations of the structure of *Richard III*, *I* and *II Henry IV*, and *All's Well*, to show how Shakespeare has availed himself of the "public" Vice, the two-phased action, and the inevitable failure of evil. Three of the plays are tough cases – their endings, in particular, have excited much critical comment, and have failed to satisfy many theatregoers, because they seem either too "pat" or too heavy-handed. Dessen implies that these difficulties arise from our modern perspective, which fails to recognize the moral play paradigm underlying them. The moral play models do not dispose of this objection (indeed, one might argue that the endings of those earlier plays are sometimes heavy-handed), and readers may disagree with the interpretations proposed – they may, for example, decide that there is still much to be said on behalf of the banished Falstaff, and against the new hegemony of rule at the end of *II Henry IV*, or they may remain distressed at Bertram's callowness. But future investigators will have to consider Dessen's well-argued readings with care. Most persuasive, in my view, is Dessen's account of the mode of the replacement, at the centre of the theatrical perspective, of Richard III by Richmond at the end of *Richard III*. Equally suggestive is Dessen's proposal that Hotspur in *I Henry IV* embodies the opposing principle to Hal's chivalrous self-control, in a structure employing dual protagonists.

A final comment: throughout this study the argument is furthered by reference to staging possibilities; these are advanced tactfully, without claims for definitiveness, and they remind us that Shakespeare's plays must be experienced, and imagined, in performance. How the Elizabethans saw them, and what expectations they brought to the plays from the theatre of the previous thirty years, are valuable aspects to consider, as this book constantly reminds us.

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