Whereas much attention has been given to the content of this guide, too little has been given to the format and it therefore lacks methodological rigor. Thus the sections for teaching and for film are subdivided for individual plays while the section for television is not. Further, most of the subdivisions for individual plays are typeset with the play's title in italics, setting it off from the entries which follow, but the corresponding section for films (pp. 145–205), prints the title and entries in the same type as the criticism which succeeds it, making research in this section unnecessarily difficult. Moreover, although essays in collections are in most cases entered under the author's name, separately for each essay, in one case the entire collection is entered under the editor's name (p. 3), with the essays noted in the annotation.

A more serious flaw is the book's lack of indexes. A work of this size (the publisher claims there are about 2,250 entries) and scope deserves a subject, title and author index. The main value of the guide is in its making information available about a particular play, a method of teaching, the choice of a media form. These subjects are scattered throughout the book. Yet the teacher who purchases and takes the time to master the book's intricacies will be well rewarded. The researcher who turns to it for quick reference will be less well served.

DOROTHY E. LITT, *Flushing, New York*

On King Lear, edited by Lawrence Danson. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981. Pp. 185. \$15.00

This lively and enjoyable collection of eight lectures "delivered at Princeton by members of the Princeton University English Department during the academic year 1978–79" indeed retains the "sense of the individual voice that more formal essay-writing tends to flatten" (3). The full essays, suitable for specialist and non-specialist alike, are often wide-ranging and synthesizing, as well as discriminating. This is a volume interested in the experience of the play, in its shape in performance, and in tragedy as not "making sense"; it emphasizes what *King Lear* does to our consciousness. One of the essays, G.E. Bentley's "Shakespeare, the King's Company and *King Lear*" (on the importance of information we now have access to about Shakespeare as actor, shareholder and attached dramatist in a particular theatrical company) is largely factual. However, with the exception of Alvin Kernan's "*King Lear* and the Shakespearian Pageant of History" and Thomas P. Roche's "'Nothing Almost Sees Miracles': Tragic Knowledge in *King Lear*" (both of which will be discussed later), the remaining essays are not principally interested in recovering possible contemporaneous codings of universal themes.

The volume in many ways exemplifies the movement in *Lear* criticism – which began in the 1960's – away from an "ideological" approach that sought to establish the moral substructure of the play in formulaic terms, often at the expense of tragic effect (as, for example, in such work as Virgil K. Whittaker's), and toward a stress "on the poignantly human experience that *King Lear* embodies" (G.R. Hibbard, "'King Lear': A Retrospect, 1939–79," *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 [1980], 10). Six of the eight approaches are concordant with the idea that "the rhetoric of good and evil"

(McFarland, 98) does not do justice to the experience of the play. And that experience is one of "unique strenuousness" (Danson, 120); *Lear* insists "on the need to keep feeling, just when we might well wish to stop, to distance ourselves from the pain" (Goldman, 45). Thus, in many ways, Goldman's fine essay, "Acting and Feeling," on the "histrionic images" in *Lear*, is the keynote. One of the patterns he notes is "emotional release through a sudden external focus of attention" (32), which permits actor and audience to advance "not into generalized empty agitation ... but into profounder awareness," through "many stages of exact response to increasing pain" (28). *Lear*'s vulnerability to his own emotional life – which has indeed been the grounding insight of performances that avoid what Goldman calls "scenery chewing" (26) – provides another recurrent gesture: avoidance of dealing with violent feelings through precipitate action or terrifying suppression.

Two of the essays, faced with the enormous amount of writing on *Lear*, do not achieve quite what might be hoped for. Theodore Weiss' is not completely successful in its attempt to enlarge our grasp of the play's multiplicity; Lawrence Danson's new framework manages to enclose the whole, but a little too schematically.

In "As the Wind Sits": The Poetics of *King Lear*," Weiss refuses, unlike most critics, to "seize for dear life on one position or another" (64). He "almost hope[s]" to be extravagantly, egregiously and "so, perhaps germinally wrong" in an age in which there is "no possibility of homogeneous response" (62, 64) to the play. However, his very discursive essay, longer on assertions and allusions than on argument, never develops the issues it raises fully enough to be "germinally" wrong. Many interesting ideas (e.g. the absence of a "recent past" [68] in the play) are touched on only to be dropped. Some ideas (e.g. that the play, in the spirit of Yeats' "Gaiety transfiguring all that dread" is "a jubilant acknowledgement ... of our frailty, helplessness, anguish" [82]) would require an entire essay to be fully provoking. Statements that seem most like hypotheses or summaries ("What we increasingly feel ... in *King Lear* [is] the tearing apart of words and the world" [70]) are too briefly and intermittently supported, and often by too familiar observations: "The word 'nothing' ... reverberates throughout the play. ... Another word, 'nature,' ... accumulates immense significance. The nature of nature, human and otherwise, is crucial. ... Words are, as I have proposed, the potent ghosts of the play" (75).

Danson, in "*King Lear* and the Two Abysses," proposes an intriguing Pascalian perspective. The tragic search is for "some resting place for our human self-conception"; but we and *Lear*, Edgar and Gloucester are suspended between "the two abysses of Infinity and Nothingness," and find ourselves "a cypher compared with the Infinite, an All compared with Nothing" (124). "Our reason is ever cheated by misleading appearances: nothing can fix the finite between the two Infinities which enclose it and fly from it." (133). Into this metaphysical metaphor Danson works the theme of the shifts in scale in *Lear*: "One of the ways in which the play imposes its sense of arduousness is by the almost impossible yet necessary act of double focus it requires to peer upward toward that unreachably vast heaven from which the storm comes and downward toward the busy populous world of tiny but distinct forms on which it falls" (123). The Pascalian framework does indeed enclose the absence of firm metaphysical ground in *Lear*, aspects of the Dover cliffs scene (for which it seems made) and to some degree the characters' attempts "to fix a sense of proportion in a world soon to lose that comforting sense" (124). However, one feels that the

characters' quests for metaphysical certainty are in many ways only symptomatic of other pressing and immediate human needs implicating human values and human neglect. The minute particulars of *Lear*, the dogs and lice, joint stool, button, feather, codpiece, hog, fox, wolf (Danson, 122–23, 129) are only in a schematic sense analogous to the Pascalian subdivisions of minutiae which make man a colossus until he shifts perspective from microscope to telescope again. Although the strain of shifting from one "scale of seeing" (134) to another is *part* of the emotional effect of these particulars, Danson's focus perhaps inevitably underplays their specific significances and full emotional content.

Even though one may not wish to see examples of the more blatantly unhistorical and polemical Marxist or feminist approaches to Shakespeare, some of the issues raised by the rapidly changing interdisciplinary and philosophical criticism of the present age are not irrelevant to this collection. The volume does suggest an awareness of the complexities that history itself creates for historical understanding, but one would hope for a more specific implementation of such awareness.

To some extent this lack is inherent in any collection of lectures without a bibliography or extensive footnotes. So many precedents to each of these approaches to *Lear* must necessarily go unacknowledged. Although Kernan remarks that scholars have tended to ignore the relation of the plays to economic and social life in their pursuit of universal meanings (10), Lawrence Stone's kind of social history, which Kernan himself makes use of, has had and continues to have great interest for students of Shakespeare. One might mention Rosalie Colie's "Reason and Need: *King Lear* and the 'Crisis' of the Aristocracy" (*Some Facets of King Lear*, Toronto and Buffalo, 1974), which locates Shakespeare in the particularities of history, but suggests as well how we may recover universal meanings from what was once specifically resonant.

In particular, one would appreciate some attention, where appropriate, to the growing question: "*Whose history?*" In Kernan's broadly synthesizing and yet discerning essay, the "Shakespearian pageant of history" moves from a medieval order felt as metaphysically natural, but already decaying from within, towards "the experience of the void underlying history." Shakespearian history "offers no absolute basis on which to authenticate any view of kingship, government, or society," but only the possibility that men, "without metaphysical support," acting on "human feelings" may put together a "set of values ... 'in the face of that inhuman world'" (22). While the main lines of the argument are convincing, that old standby, the shift from "one type of management stressing a natural relationship between estate, lord and tenant to a new type of exploitation of the land for profit" (11) – even if it functions only to suggest how those who internalized the aristocratic *ethos* felt about social change – desperately needs qualification. It inevitably implies an improbable degree of qualitative moral difference between two systems, both of which certainly involved exploitation of people.

Bentley can conclude his essay by saying that while he has "only given his preconception of the kind of man Shakespeare was," it is one he doesn't think will turn out as deluded as later generations may decide the Marxian or Freudian one is (60). But, if it is not a "mere" preconception, in what ways are these approaches invalidated by it? And which approaches are compatible with it, and on what grounds?

Thomas McFarland's interesting example of psychological criticism finds a par-

ticular idealized "image of the family," "'haven in a heartless world'" (105), at the centre of *Lear*. "The truth ... is that human inattention destroys the family as haven" (116) until the fleeting reconciliation, significantly, "on the anagogical plane ... the reawakening of the dead into paradise" (108). This focus casts a new light on some familiar aspects of the play, but some points merit further discussion. One wonders if sex is evicted (113) from a play in which the most intense joy is associated with familial reconciliation (107) *because* sex is the force that most "challenges the satisfactions and securities of the family" (113). Rather, it seems to be the ruin of his family, through "human inattention" and other causes, that turns Lear (who suspects his children are versions of himself and bears the guilt for that) against generation itself – in one of those precipitate actions that are a form of emotional avoidance. Second, although McFarland is not alone (cf. Weiss, 79) in perceiving that it is confusion between the roles of king and father that "sets in motion the tragic descent" (104), it is not entirely clear that "the dynamics of the contrast ['between the absolute power of a king and the loving flexibility of a father'] are existential, not historical or time-bound by Elizabethan convention," nor that the correct "formula" is "the more king, the less father; the more father, the less king." Some versions of the king/father analogy one encounters do indeed suggest a "benign interpretation" (101, n. 5) of the concordant possibilities of these roles quite resonant for *Lear*, if only as a failed ideal: "Let then the wisdom, love and zeale of magistrates ... surmount theyr authoritye in commaunding. And let humilitey, franke obedience and perfect love bee greater in the subjects than theyr civyl subjection ..." (Geoffrey Fenton, *A forme of Christian pollicie* ..., London, 1574, 13). In many ways, *Lear* is both king and father; what he learns, if he learns, applies beneficially to both roles, or invalidates both.

Finally, one most wants to ask "Whose history?" when the unmodified and unexplored "historically-grounded" vs. "imposed" debate is attached to Thomas P. Roche's particular Christian interpretation. The most explicit conflict in the volume (between this essay and Daniel Selzer's reading in terms of "the evocation of feeling" rather than the understanding of "ideas, didactic or not" [71]) raises old questions that one would like to see redefined or used to provoke new questions.

Roche argues "that there is still room to sort out the less valuable readings and to continue as best and as humbly as we may to reconstruct a historical matrix within which the plays might exist intellectually and that will force out what is merely our own imposition of meaning" (140). His provocative interpretation, which makes use of brilliant close reading as well as of source study and generic considerations, has *Lear* depicting the "plight of man before ... salvation ... by Christ's sacrifice was available" (149). *Lear* himself ends by seeing nothing, still deceived, still morally ignorant. Roche thus combines a version of the idea that *Lear* is a play written by a Christian playwright about a pagan world with a conviction – as firm as that of the nihilistic interpreters – that it does not lead to affirmation. He thereby turns the play into a kind of negative case that proves the efficacy of providential history. However, most of the other essayists do vouch for *Lear*'s attainment of a form of tragic knowledge; unlike Roche, they do not see it as necessarily conceptual, or even stable.

Selzer, in "*King Lear* in the Theater," is concerned with the "implicit architecture" of a great stage work, that shapes "a set of limits that the play will bear," "but that simultaneously offers up a specificity of emotion and meaning that are indeed finite and that to change will cause the play ... to fail to make human sense" (164). He

distinguishes (in a manner reminiscent of Roland Mushat Frye) between drama with a dogmatic or polemical purpose and drama that exists in the "historical matrix" – if you will – of a Christian age and makes use of available resonances, but in order to recreate human experience rather than to teach.

We must leave aside many pertinent questions including what we mean by a "Christian" play, audience or playwright, or indeed, what we, or our Renaissance predecessors, would take as evidence. Even so, it is impossible to accept the grounding premises of Roche's interpretation as simply "historical" in our critical age when we have seen works such as William Elton's *King Lear and the Gods* – the acme of "historicism" for some – which are in significant ways not compatible with those premises.

Even if their perspectives inevitably cannot illuminate all aspects of *King Lear*, these are for the most part stimulating essays, welcome in their general distrust of formulae, and certainly contributing to the play's continual renewal in our times. However, it is somewhat disappointing that they do not contribute more to helping us adjust the delicate balance between our respect for history, for the particularity and possible differences of other times and places, and our human response to Shakespeare. Many of us are indeed interested in reconstructing an "historical matrix" for understanding Shakespeare. We need to find ways of being "historical" (other than by making *a priori* assumptions of radical difference), to refine our conception of what we mean by that and to add to our knowledge, without sacrificing the nature of drama as felt.

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Correspondance de Martin Bucer, t. 1, publié par Jean Rott. (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1979) XXV, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, edited by Heiko A. Oberman.

Martini Bucer Opera Latina, t. 1, publié par Cornelis Augustijn, Pierre Fraenkel, et Marc Lienhard. (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1982). XXX, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, edited by A. Oberman.

These two volumes stand together as a monument to what can be accomplished through coordinated team research and financial support that knows no national boundaries. Plans for a critical edition of Bucer's works (in three parts: *Deutsche Schriften*, *Opera Latina*, and *Correspondance*) were laid by François Wender (+ 1972) of Strasbourg with the support of Robert Stupperich (Münster) and have led to the publication of several volumes of the German writings and the *De Regno Christi*. Now the project is being carried forward by the International Committee for the Publication of Bucer's Works, consisting at present, in addition to Stupperich, of scholars from Strasbourg, to be sure, but also from Cambridge, Geneva, Giessen, Vancouver, Erlangen, Apeldoorn, and Paris. The letters received a subvention from France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Latin works one from the Nederlands Organisatie voor Zuiver- Weten-schappelijk Onderzoek. With Bucer's correspondence scheduled to grow to between 28 and 30 volumes, the Latin