The full complexity of Man is seen most clearly in Hamlet's soliloquies, which bring together "all the contradictory, conflicting elements in man, always in respect to an act profoundly divisive and chaotic in society and in nature, an act twofold but nevertheless indivisibly one in myth and ritual: the killing of the fertility-god-surrogate, priest or father, to supplant him with the fecund mother/woman, and this, in ancient ritual, celebrated annually by 'a seal'd compact'" (117).

Aldus's argument is a cumulative one; such a summary fails to do justice to the scrupulous examination of the text of *Hamlet*, the source, finally, of the persuasive power of *Mousetrap*. His observations and interpretations are sufficiently fresh and suggestive (though occasionally overly ingenious) to recommend his study even to readers without sympathy for his larger enterprise. Two complaints, however, must be registered, one with the author, the other with his publisher: Aldus cites almost none of the critical literature of the past twenty years, thus ignoring the critical context of his endeavor. And while what is within the cover of Aldus's book is pleasing enough to the eye, the choice of a printed cloth case over a plain case with dust jacket detracts significantly from that pleasure — despite Virgil Burnett's striking illustration.

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John Reibetanz, *The "Lear" World: A study of "King Lear" in its dramatic context*, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977. Pp. xii, 142. \$12.50.

The aim of John Reibetanz's book, *The Lear World*, sounds entirely worthy if not novel; he believes, like Bradley and many others, that *King Lear* is in many ways strikingly different from Shakespeare's other tragedies, and that an approach to it by way of contemporary plays, especially through the forms and modes of Jacobean rather than Elizabethan drama, will provide, in the cliché that Professor Reibetanz uses quite straightfaced, "a deeper, more meaningful dramatic experience." His main concentration is on structure, in particular the use of what he calls "the strong scene" as a discrete entity, and on characterisation; he is interested in the play only in relation to other drama, and not in the context of contemporary non-dramatic sources such as Sidney's *Arcadia*, Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essais*, or Samuel Harsnett's pamphlet *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, or in relation to current religious and social thought, or to popular attitudes towards social institutions and society's outcasts, which seems to me a pity. After all, the explanation he seems to be seeking for the fact that the play has gained "a renewed strength of life in our own time" surely lies as much in some affinity between our own social and religious attitudes and those of the early seventeenth century as in "the nature of our modern dramatic traditions and critical emphases." Although Professor Reibetanz writes, often rather unconvincingly, of what "we as spectators" experience at a performance of *King Lear* (as, for instance, that we are called upon to "act out that compassion stressed so many times in the play," that we "share directly in Lear's condition and outlook," and that we see much of the later part of the play through Edgar's eyes), it seems to me that his method of finding similarities with and analogies for techniques in *King Lear* in often unexpected Jacobean plays like Middleton's *The Phoenix* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Jonson's *Epicoene*

and *The Alchemist*, or Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* may illuminate the play for the scholar of the period but does nothing to enrich the experience of a modern theatre audience. Although the author praises Bradley for his attention to the play as "a changing dramatic experience" he feels that Bradley might have understood its mode better if he had had more acquaintance with Shakespeare's dramatic context; but the book does not prove this and *King Lear* gains more illumination from the warmth of Bradley's instinct than from the clear light of Professor Reibetanz's scholarship.

The Lear World is anyway quite a short book, but even so it reads like an article filled out and expanded beyond what the scope of its subject and approach can support; it is true, as the author says, that there is at present no study which approaches *King Lear* by way of other Jacobean drama, but his own seems to demonstrate that this is not a very fruitful approach. It is difficult to see how a consideration of the structure of Chapman's *May-Day* or Middleton's *The Phoenix*, both of which "loosely string discrete scenes on a slight situational framework," helps us to respond more fully to the structure of *King Lear*, or how an anatomy of the "stage-managed scenes" in *The Alchemist* will throw light on the procedures of Edmund and Edgar in manipulating the action of *King Lear*. True, all the plays do share the similarities that Professor Reibetanz points out, but in all cases the differences are much more significant. Occasionally it seems to me that his comparisons are really wrong-headed; Jonson's ironic mode of characterisation in *Volpone* surely produces a distancing effect quite alien to what Professor Reibetanz implies about *King Lear* when he stresses its overriding concern with feeling, and it is hard to accept that the audience are invited to respond positively to that gullible pair, Celia and Bonario, as they are to Cordelia and Edgar. In fact the book's best insights are those which do not derive from relating *King Lear* to anything else but from looking closely at the play on stage, as for instance that the common audience reaction of applauding the disguised Edgar's victory in a fight with Oswald in IV. vi may suggest an unconscious awareness that the victims in the play are at last turning the tables on their tormentors. The discussion of the subplot in Chapter 3 is also useful and interesting, particularly the treatment of both Edmund and Edgar as stage-managers, and the idea that the nature of the subplot as an intrigue action makes it in some ways more accessible than the main plot. But in general the book is often unconvincing, and this reader at any rate felt that Professor Reibetanz's frequent citation of the works of other critics neither increased one's confidence in his thesis nor, indeed, implied his own. It will be a useful book for college students because it surveys much of the basic critical background of *Lear* studies, but it is unlikely to fire anyone's dramatic imagination.

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Gareth A. Davies, *A Poet at Court: Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza (1586-1644)*. Oxford: The Dolphin Book Co. Ltd., 1971. Pp. 367. \$4.50.

In this work Dr. Davies offers the first comprehensive study of a writer who, although now virtually ignored, in his day figured prominently among the *littérateurs* of the