attempts to reconceptualize the economy in response to such things as the global expansion of trade and the increasing significance of foreign exchange rates were at least in part enabled by changing medical conceptions of disease. If the book has a limit, however, it lies in the arguments Harris presents to support the contention that changes in economic thought influenced the development of medical thought about disease. Harris really only begins to develop this aspect of his argument in the second half of the book, and while the chapter on Volpone makes its case for the influence of economics on medical thought with some success, the following two chapters are less successful in this respect. The links Harris makes between the circulation of treasure and William Harvey’s development of the theory of the circulation of blood (chapter six) and the between revised economic understandings of consumption and changing medical understandings of consumption (chapter seven) are suggestive but are not developed with the detail and precision of the rest of the argument. Nonetheless, students of early modern English drama and culture will find Sick Economies well worth reading. The book very productively brings together two of the most interesting areas of recent early modern scholarship, significantly furthering our understanding of both while opening up avenues for further investigation.

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In Searching Shakespeare: Studies in Culture and Authority, Derek Cohen considers several of Shakespeare’s dramas with particular attention to the way in which they establish power relationships. He declares that “the theme that unites this book is the idea of the boundary, that literal, imagined, constructed, or figurative extreme of the Shakespeare experience, where life at its richest and most intense is made almost to seem normal” (p. xv). That theme is pursued through a three-part structure. In the first section of the book, Cohen presents essays about Othello, the Henriad, The Tempest, and The Merchant of Venice. In each his stated intention is “to address issues of history, historiography, and the politics that lie beneath the surface of the narrative drama that are always the first causes of plays” (p. xi). The book’s second section examines Othello again, King Lear, and Macbeth, to locate a “different kind of history” in memories of the characters’ personal past and “to engage more directly with the human elements of self and identity” (p. xi). Finally a third section considers “messengers of death,” such as the killers in Richard II, King Lear, and Macbeth, and “broken human bodies” in King Lear, Titus Andronicus, and The Merchant of Venice. In this section, Cohen hopes “to explore the relationship between life as presented in the plays and the boundaries that contain them” (p. xii). Readers familiar with Derek Cohen’s other books will recognize in this study concerns that he has dealt
with in past work, although I do not mean to say that Searching Shakespeare recycles old ideas. It offers instead an expansion of his thinking in some ways, and in other ways a reconsideration of the central ethical and political questions that have been a mainstay of a great deal of modern critical analysis.

My one complaint is Cohen’s inattention to matters of text. By that I do not mean the difficulty with which one determines which editions he is citing, since he does not include all those editions in his list of works cited, but simply mentions in passing on page xv that he will use the Arden editions (second? third?). Rather I mean that he treats the text of the plays as unproblematic. Not every editor gives to Miranda, “I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak […]” nor does Edgar invariably speak the final lines in King Lear. The way in which the various authorized texts are formed, especially the way in which editors resolve issues of class and race by assigning non-authorial speech prefixes, could provide a complementary line of argument to Cohen’s very interesting study and its focus on where a particular character exists within a socially constructed web of power.

In the first group of essays, for example, Cohen investigates what happens in terms of our current literary theory and current political ideas when we examine a group of plays that cross generic boundaries. What he finds is a steady engagement with the figure of the outsider, the scapegoat (following the work of René Girard), the Other. Cohen refuses to dodge the consequences of Othello’s racism, The Merchant of Venice’s anti-Semitism, The Tempest’s racism and celebration of colonialism, and the Henriad’s elitism and class-based conflict. Such an approach is not for every reader, but those who are engaged in political issues as enacted historically will find much to consider in these essays. In his analysis of Othello, for instance, Cohen locates the moment that reinscribes Othello’s alterity in the blow he gives Desdemona before the visiting Venetians (4.1). That scene, dramatic though it undoubtedly is, has not received the sort of attention as scenes like 3.3 (the very long seduction of Othello by Iago) or 5.2 (Desdemona’s murder). Whether or not one finds Cohen’s arguments persuasive, the analysis is a fine piece of close reading.

The second and third sections, however, were the parts of the book that I found more rewarding. In Part II, Cohen begins with a brief discussion of character criticism and the current theoretical orthodoxies. He remarks:

While the nineteenth-century […] notion of the autonomous individual is no longer a credible or acceptable way of conceptualizing early modern dramatic characters, it is nevertheless the case that by enduing his characters with apparently individualized, unique memories, Shakespeare manages to give the impression that they possess an autonomous inner life and that they are constituted as subjects in the same way we are constituted. (p. 85)

He then goes on to inventory the moments in which characters speak about their memories, proposing that such moments have particular significance (because of their dramatic effect). In one sense, the sort of memory he writes about can help us to think about the plays themselves. If Othello has fifty-four such
references, while *Macbeth* has about twelve, we can consider why the past is more resonant in the former play. Such observations are useful to both literary and performance analysis, as are those in the third part of the book.

While the three essays in Part II share a common focus, those of Part III consider disparate characters and how the audience understands them. Part III suggests that hired murderers in the plays are generally in a class-bound relationship to a venal authority, and that the use of body parts is more likely to arouse disgust from an audience than either murder or rape. The first of these propositions seems very generative: one can imagine extending its insights to a re-examination of other serving characters, who might be said to exist as a function, not as a subject. The second is considerably more provocative, particularly when Cohen suggests that Lavinia’s mutilated body necessarily arouses disgust, while neither her rape nor her murder does (p. 163). The way in which he defines “disgust,” as a universal human emotion of physical revulsion (p. 160), is crucial to his meaning here, yet he has clearly saved his most controversial analysis for last.

As my comments may suggest, one strength of the book is the way that it addresses matters of race and class. Its comments about gender are far less important and focus strongly on the father-daughter relationships portrayed in Shakespeare’s work. The book does not address the plays’ concern with unstable gender categories (especially because of cross-dressed boy actors or heroines in disguise), or indeed with the instability of class identity (Christopher Sly comes to mind, as do Maria and Malvolio). Yet that focus on class and race is certainly the author’s prerogative, and Cohen offers intense, rich readings of specific moments that should appeal to many critics.

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Historical narratives describing early modern state-building have long been dominated by the spectre of Max Weber, with his emphasis on the formative power of Protestantism over processes of secularization, rationalization, and the public sphere. Recent attempts to move beyond this model, however, have opened up a more varied explanation for the development of political centralization, and one that expands upon the important component of gender. In *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in the Early Modern State*, Ulrike Strasser continues to question past assumptions by examining the “nexus of state formation and control of marriage and family” in the case of Catholic Bavaria (p. 22). The book argues that not only did the example of this southern German state reveal that Catholicism itself “operated with the modernizing state and not in antithesis to it,” but also that the matter of sexuality, and specifically female virginity, was