

engagement with class. Besides, it is unclear how readers process Butler's mythical creation of *Earthseed* as intersectional, rather than foundational. It is one thing to claim that God '...does not need to break into history, as it does not exist outside of history' (p. 52) and it is completely different to say that God is the embodiment of change or a trickster and where adherents have to literally develop an adaptive belief system. In the first, the claim is that Butler sees nothing new under the sun because the core principle that defines humans is timeless. In the second, there is no core principle to begin with. Likewise, deeming 'Monáe's resistance to male consumption [as] not simultaneously resistant to capitalist consumption' (p. 66) questions the relevance of intersectionality as a tenable approach for Afrofuturism.

I cannot agree more with Sneed's distinction between the erotic and pornographic in Monáe's *Dirty Computer*, since 'Cindi is less Frankenstein's monster and more the incarnation of the divine in cybernetic form.' (p. 68). Here, radical love becomes accessible through radical alterity à la the Hegelian Christ. But while queerness is surely subversive, it cannot be revolutionary. When reading that capitalism is not the enemy, and only white supremacy and heterosexism are, then one wonders if Monáe has truly seized why the capitalistic mode of production values estrangement in and for itself. This mode of production cannot stand heterosexual norms because it is precisely in sexuality where a real potential for bypassing capitalism lies. Historical continuity dictates the historical necessity to undo the *über* oppression: class exploitation. That is why eschatological destination as elaborated in chapter seven remains nowhere as nearly helpful. Sun Ra's film points toward the posthuman. But restarting life on another planet is exactly what white supremacists want Blackness to do. This explains why Afrofuturism should steer away from apocalyptic preoccupations and the celebration of estrangement, lest it engages in half a revolution.

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Shakespeare's engagement with the issue of religion is complex. There can never be an overarching system of religious belief extracted from his writings; instead, there are religions, as demonstrated by vigorous scholarship in recent decades, among which the present collection is a very good example. Fifteen essays appearing first in the journal *Religions* in 2018 and 2019 are reprinted, preceded by an introduction

by the editor. Together they present a complex overview of Shakespeare's creative use of religious references that can best be summarised, as in the collection's title, with the plural form 'religions'.

Leading the essays is John D. Cox's richly informed review of current studies in this field, unveiling a sizeable proportion of scholarly attention paid to tensions between religions in Shakespeare, a point also highlighted in David V. Urban's introduction. Indeed, Shakespeare's use of religious elements often results in a paradox.

To begin with, certain ambiguities in the plays allow contestations between different religions. Grace Tiffany explores how Shakespeare reforms pagan images and ideas and makes them attain Christian (Calvinist in particular) meanings. As Tiffany argues, Shakespeare's evocations of Diana, the pagan goddess of virginity, present the playwright favouring marital blessings over celibacy. Marriage takes on different meanings in Benjamin Lockerd's article, which locates the contestation of religions in *Hamlet* as between the heretical beliefs of the Albigensians and orthodox Christianity. The Albigensians believe the human flesh to be evil because it belongs to the physical world created by an evil god; therefore, marriage and procreation should be avoided as they bring more sinners to the world. Lockerd argues that such is the message Hamlet hints at when expressing disgust at his bodily existence and when telling Ophelia 'we will have no more marriage' (3.1.147). Yet, in the end, the Danish prince claims his love towards Ophelia and asks for pardon before the duel, signalling his possible acceptance of Christian love and forgiveness. Lockerd's reading further consolidates Hamlet as a hesitant and unsure prince. Equally hesitant is Othello, who shifts back and forth between his Muslim origin and Christian identities, as disclosed in Debra Johanyak's article. Johanyak argues that Othello's resorts to punishments on the adulteress resemble those in the Sharia practice. Slapping Desdemona in public can be seen as a symbolic action of 100 lashes on adulterers in the Qur'an, and the final killing of her comes from the desire to restore honour to his name. Yet, Johanyak also shows that Othello does not take action without inner struggles. Also very useful is Johanyak's account of possible sources of Muslim knowledge accessible to Shakespeare.

Tensions between Christianity and non-Christian beliefs and hearsays are investigated in these essays; meanwhile, the old struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism continues to draw attention. John E. Curran Jr. teases out the objection to oversimplification in *Macbeth*. Macbeth's problem, Curran explains, is not his failure of reasoning, as previous studies show, but his fault of being too sure in his interpretation of the weird sisters' prophecy as an encouragement to murder Banquo. Given that at the time, Protestant theologians advocated the certainty of salvation through personal belief and accused the Catholic system

of thoughts as allowing for uncertainty and doubt, Curran proposes that in *Macbeth* Shakespeare seems to be sympathising with the Catholic perspective.

While Shakespeare may have mastered the art of uncertainties, scripture can be a reliable source to clarify some. Emily E. Stelzer interrogates the problematic ending of *King Lear* by exploring the parallels between the ending lines 'Look there, look there!' (5.3.287) and Luke 17:21: 'Lo here, or lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you'. The parallels reveal, Stelzer argues, that Shakespeare draws attention to the interior, showing Lear as saved by Cordelia's heart and the truth and love in it. 'If Lear is redeemed, he is redeemed as a pagan, but through a journey understandable to a Christian audience' (p. 189). Also looking into the biblical link is Urban's article on *The Tempest*, which uncovers similarities between the play and Psalm 23. Urban contends that the play's redemptive structure indicates a greater Providence present and that Prospero, despite his preference for sorceries and pagan words, finally understands that Providence and mercy have always been with him. Urban's reading also provides an example of the tension between pagan belief and Christianity.

Contestations of religions in Shakespeare's plays might have reflected the troubled times the playwright lived in, particularly when England was faced with an insecure future. Sarah Skwire identifies in *Richard III* the moment of Queen Margaret cursing as a reference to the biblical story of Jacob and Esau. The curse is interrupted before Margaret can name the person whom she attacks, allowing Richard to reverse the curse by replacing his name with Margaret's. Thus, Skwire argues, Richard steals the curse just as Jacob steals the birthright. In contextualising this dramatic moment, Skwire explores Shakespeare's concern of a grave problem in his time: the unsettled and fearful condition of the succession to Queen Elizabeth I. The state is also a key concern in Benedict J. Whalen's article, which demonstrates similarities between *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Hamlet* in the sense that both Lucrece and Hamlet, though victims, suffer from a guilty conscience caused by the sinner's crime. Whalen further argues that by turning to the figure of Hecuba, Queen of Troy, who faces the tragic fall of the city, Lucrece and Hamlet move away from private broodings to public questionings of kings' sins and the future of the states. The same Lucretian story in Feisal G. Mohamed's article shows a different Shakespeare, who contemplates the function of religion as generally a higher force to turn to. Mohamed argues that by raping Lucrece, Tarquin steals the subject's property and reveals his bestial desires, alienating him from divine orders. This is a problem of human government regardless of its monarchical or republican nature, and hence it calls for the higher power of religion. Religion's superiority is also the focus in two essays on *Measure for Measure*. Matthew J. Smith argues for religion's pivotal role in the play when law disappoints and turns into a source of sin because the guilty exercises persecution and pushes for punishments. The shared need for spiritual freedom and salvation beyond law demand religion to be re-established as

the world-making facility. Bethany C. Besteman scrutinises how the ruler's two bodies, the natural-physical body and the spiritual-public body, fail to bring justice in the play. Justice is restored, however, because of a providential coincidence, the death of Ragozine, suggesting that the play 'gestures towards the limitations of human government within a corrupt world' (p. 61). Like Smith, Besteman also reads into the doubts against the rule of law and the resort to something divine for help in the play.

Essays from Mohamed, Smith, and Besteman show Shakespeare's dramatic use of religious elements as not aligning with any particular religion, but revealing a general interest in religion's role in human society. This approach no doubt frees discussions from the narrow bound of historical time by looking into notions of timeless quality, such as justice and freedom. On this front is Julia Reinhard Lupton's article on Caliban, revealing how a self-ruling primal king sins and is sinned against. His move on Miranda, instead of being seen as pursuit of fellowship natural to humankind, brings punishments onto him. In an effort of resistance, Caliban turns to music to build his inner world and seeks wisdom and grace that grow out of pain. Another timeless topic of death and afterlife is investigated by Cyndia Susan Clegg, who highlights the consistency in Shakespeare's use of the afterlife. Clegg argues that while specific images of the afterlife and the occasions they appear may vary from play to play, they always work to elucidate actions and characterisations in Shakespeare.

The diverse approaches in the essay collection provide stimulating findings, but they also exemplify difficulties to specify Shakespeare's religion(s). Such difficulties had led to interesting endeavours in the past, for example, the involvement of phrenology, a pseudoscience popular in the 19th century concerning discovering a person's inner workings by measuring their skulls. Bryan Adams Hampton traces how C. J. Langston's probably fictional narrative of Shakespeare's stolen skull gained wide attention. Just as Hamlet gazes at Yorick's skull, some people were seriously considering digging out Shakespeare's skull to test if Langston's narrative was true. If the skull was not stolen, by examining it, they could at least settle the issue of Shakespeare's religious belief once and for all.

Absurd this proposal may sound, it nevertheless confirms the issue of religion in Shakespeare to be a labyrinth, a topic still inviting critical attention even a century and a half later. However, rather than pinning down Shakespeare's religion or the religion in Shakespeare, a postmodern approach of embracing the diversities of religions and exercising an aesthetic turn may open new space for more interesting findings to happen. Such is the pleasure of reading this collection.