(53); however, in the end, Guy-Bray's discussions come across as wide-ranging and generous rather than rambling.

Even if the author does not suggest so, this is a book that could find its way into classrooms at both graduate and undergraduate levels: it's compact yet wide-ranging, and while it would have to be supplemented by other material that, for example, considers the physical format of the page (and, perhaps, explains some of the terminology), Guy-Bray's book testifies to the lasting value and impact of attentive, focused close reading.

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White People in Shakespeare: Essays on Race, Culture and the Elite. Arthur L. Little Jr., ed.
London: Arden Shakespeare, 2023. 320 pp. $90.

Rare is the occasion when scholarship is as long anticipated as Arthur L. Little Jr.'s *White People in Shakespeare: Essays on Race, Culture and the Elite*. This collection of nineteen essays and the editor's introduction serves as "an intervention in both Shakespeare and critical whiteness studies" (2). More specifically, Little endeavors "to take a closer look at the complex representational construction of a 'white people' in Shakespeare's world and how white people in 'our' world have used Shakespeare in the construction of themselves as white" (2). The introduction considers the emergence of the term "white people," whose first recorded use occurs in Thomas Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth* in 1613, before developing its central claim: "'White people' emerged as a strained category that pointed at once to a white-skinned mass and a white-skinned elite, instituting a tension that persists, whether one speaks of the Capitol insurrection or an unresolved struggle between a white mass who apprehends Shakespeare as universalizing and reifying the superiority of their white identity and white elite who claims Shakespeare as fundamentally their natural property" (5). Thus, Little's bifurcated approach to this topic considers both Shakespeare's participation in the establishment of white people as a category of racial privilege and Shakespeare's role in maintaining such privilege in the twenty-first century.

Part 1 contains eleven essays grouped under the heading "Shakespeare's White People." These discussions of race are not limited to Caliban, Aaron, Cleopatra, Othello, and the Prince of Morocco. Rather, the focus here is on racial depictions of Antonio, Isabella, Juliet, Caesar, Cymbeline, Henry, and

Hamlet. The first six essays focus on skin color—specifically, whiteness juxtaposed with sonnets, blazons, virgin martyrs, sexuality, racial privileging, and politics. This section proceeds with five chapters that move beyond whiteness as a racial category of desire and into whiteness as a racial category for preserving ancestral heritage. Respectively for Andrew Clark Wagner, Joyce MacDonald, and Katherine Gillen, monarchical ascension in the *Henriad*, *Cymbeline*, and *Julius Caesar* reveal British anxieties about the inheritable legacy of whiteness and racial superiority. The final two chapters move away from historicism. Eric L. De Barros explores whiteness in *Hamlet* within the context of humanism and melancholia, and Justin P. Shaw demonstrates how John Dryden appropriates *Antony and Cleopatra* in *All for Love* within the context of Isaac Newton's theory of white as a perfect color.

The essays gathered in part 2, "White People's Shakespeare," powerfully address the role that Shakespeare—the texts, the scholarship, the industry, and the cultural capital—has played in creating and sustaining white privilege, both in academia and Western culture writ large. Margo Hendricks's epistolary chapter includes a series of fictional letters written to Shakespeare from herself between 1996 and 2021, letters that showcase a career attempting to dismantle white superiority in early modern studies. This creative chapter is followed by conversational ones. The first is an interview between Robin Alfriend Kello and Keith Hamilton Cobb (author of *American Moor*) and Anchuli Felica King (author of *Keene*). The two contemporary plays use *Othello* to "indict the whiteness of the Shakespeare industry" (199). The second conversation is between Peter Sellars and Ayanna Thompson, who consider the economic and political challenges of American theater companies hoping to address the white supremacy indicted by the sort of contemporary theater discussed in the previous chapter. Comparable politics surface in America's high school textbook industry, as Jason M. Demeter exposes in his focus on the anthologizing of *Julius Caesar* in public schools during the Civil Rights era. Ruben Espinosa considers contemporary political figures Boris Johnson and Steve Bannon, both of whom identify as Shakespeare aficionados to reinforce the narrative of dangerous Black women and men and defend their "irrational white anger" (253). The collection ends with two self-reflective essays. Jean E. Howard reflects on the opportunities for white early modernists to nurture an antiracist career in editing, teaching, writing, hiring, and service, while Peter Erickson focuses on the responsibilities of scholarship and activism.

Likely to become requisite reading for anyone working in early modern studies, these essays demonstrate the need for understanding Shakespeare's role

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in constructing whiteness while also considering the damage of having done so. Little's collection makes it impossible for early modernists—and not only those who study Shakespeare or literature—to dismiss early modern race studies with the "well, that's just not my area of expertise" platitude. In fact, the collection exposes the damage of such thinking. As Little writes in his introduction, "*White People in Shakespeare* isn't about a Shakespeare or a long list of Shakespearean characters who just happen to be white; rather, it examines how Shakespeare's poems and plays actively engage in 'white-people-making' and how white people have used Shakespeare to define and bolster their white cultural racial identity, solidarity, and authority" (1).

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