

being the other recent scholar of note to do so in *Gaming the Stage* (2018). Although there is some overlap between Baird's study and Bloom's in that both authors reach some of the same conclusions, such as the fact that in *Two Angry Women of Abington* "the whole play becomes a game" (7), Baird focuses her study on the idea that games shape and transform the plays themselves, and highlights this through the close reading of texts. Additionally, her work takes into account a greater number of plays, including three that feature dice, which Bloom's work does not.

Baird's work is impressive in its scope, and she must be commended for her attempt to manage such a broad topic with as much detail as she has, especially given the wide variety of games included and their varied usage. Her analysis of literary passages is insightful and makes careful use of contemporary sources. Although she focuses on English drama of the late sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Baird alludes in places to the ways in which certain games were used in literary works of the medieval period, and it would be quite useful to see how their use in those works compares with these early modern references. Additionally, the text can be quite dense and would be somewhat difficult to read for anyone who does not have a thorough knowledge of early modern English drama. Nevertheless, scholars studying early English drama or the symbolism or history of games will find this work particularly interesting. Her regular use of contemporary sources to explain game terminology and rules will enrich our understanding of the texts she considers and should be informative for scholars who might be preparing new editions of them.

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Gentry Rhetoric: Literacies, Letters, and Writing in an Elizabethan Community.
Daniel Ellis.

Early Modern Cultural Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022.
234 pp. \$65.

Gentry Rhetoric is mainly concerned with how members of Norfolk families in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries wrote to each other about matters of family, property, and law. It discusses how their letters and other writings used rhetorical techniques to pursue personal objectives while maintaining a communal sense of identity. It draws upon Daniel Ellis's diligent work with several manuscript collections in the UK and US to argue that gentry writing was shaped not only by rhetorical training gained from formal education, but also by the pragmatics of mundane business.

As stated in the introduction, the term *gentry* is hard to define, though more could have been said about its associations with inherited rural estates (as in the phrase *landed*

gentry), with the terms *gentleman* and *gentlewoman*, and with entitlement to a coat of arms. We seem to stray from general understanding of membership of the gentry in chapter 1, on letters from Anne Boleyn and Robert Walpole, both of whom had ascended far above their roots in the Norfolk gentry; and in chapter 2, which analyses published accounts of the 1578 entertainments for Elizabeth I in Norwich. This was England's second-largest city at the time, so these were urban, civic panegyrics; their designation as gentry productions is possible but needs more exposition.

The substance of the book, in chapters 3, 4, and 5, concerns letters by members of landed Norfolk families—including the Bacons, Knyvetts, and Pastons—from and about their rural estates. These chapters discuss, respectively: rhetorical presence in letters about family relationships; use of rhetorical topics in letters and documents about land ownership; and use of rhetorical style and figures in letters on legal matters. The introduction professes an interest in how relations between social existence and the material world (of buildings, land, livestock, and crops) were managed in words, and this is most to the fore in chapter 4, where literacies are understood in a broad sense to encompass surveying, mapping, and accounting as well as rhetorical competence.

Ellis applies to his primary sources the technique of “thick description” (3) or close reading. Unfortunately, the rather prosaic and functional qualities of many of the letters sometimes make efforts to assert their rhetorical significance seem labored. Mary Holland's conventional statement in a letter to her mother, Lady Muriel Knyvett, that “methinks the time is very long since I saw my Father and your good Lady although it is not yet a fortnight” (70) is painstakingly explained as referring to “having been physically in her parents' presence in the recent past and implies a certain expectation of being so again” (71). It is also claimed as an example of rhetorical presence, as evoked by techniques like *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, yet hardly possesses the vividness and stimulation of the imagination associated with those terms. Many of the readings of letters similarly tend toward statements of the obvious while stretching the meanings of rhetorical terms and exaggerating the rhetorical interest of textual details. For instance, when Anne Knyvett writes to her son Thomas that the legal document she is sending him “differs from law and good conscience” (158), this is surely only in a very limited sense an example of *zeugma* as is claimed.

Some of the book's larger claims are also somewhat problematic. More evidence is needed to support the opening assertion that “the gentry were formed by the humanist curriculum, but the humanist curriculum was also formed according to them and their needs” (2). In fact, the gentry often emerge from this study as conservative users of rhetoric, clinging on to the topics, for instance, when they were fading from favor.

The core project of investigating the communication strategies of a particular early modern provincial community remains worthwhile, despite some flaws in its execution. It usefully reminds us that, even in our age of emails and texts, efficacious interpersonal

rhetoric is still very much part of how we pursue personal goals and construct social identities.

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Playing and Playgoing in Early Modern England: Actor, Audience and Performance. Simon Smith and Emma Whipday, eds.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 350 pp. \$99.99.

This is a challenging, thought-provoking anthology of twelve essays gathered into three sections: “Players,” “Playgoing,” “Playhouses.” The motivation is to interrogate concepts about the reception of early modern drama that, through replication, have become critical and historical staples, now rarely questioned. Rather than focus on a belief in hearing as the prime (in some cases the only) source of communication of drama, all twelve essayists deploy myriad ideas culled from recent developments in sensory, topographical, and performance studies to resituate theatergoing as a complex, bodily, and emotional experience, where ears are no longer privileged in ascertaining the nature of audience response.

To this end, movement, particularly of the feet, is examined in relation to emotion. Another contribution explores youth cultures in relation to apprentices on and off stage, and to the law student audiences who attended Ram Alley so frequently that they helped shape the characters and action of Barry’s comedy. Also discussed is the impact of blenching and blushing onstage, posturing and narration by other actors, and the power structures between observer and observed. The issue of whether Black characters deployed stereotypical gesturing is questioned from ethical perspectives as potentially racist. Yet another contribution traces the complexity of playgoers’ responses and the scheduling practices of theater managements in the short and long term, suggesting that these call into question traditional assumptions of spectators’ sense of chronology and lines of influence. Questioning whether *theater* and *playhouse* should be seen as synonymous terms is provocative and inclusive.

Three essays are especially noteworthy. Jeremy Lopez studies Jonson, Webster, and Dekker’s reactions to the failure of particular plays and argues for a culture focused on the expectation of failure among dramatists. He meticulously analyzes the final scene of *A Winter’s Tale* as an allegory of such creative failure, where Paulina’s hopes of reconciliation and revival are frustrated (chiefly by Leontes and herself) and defined subversively as types of sentimental nostalgia: an analysis that effectively demolishes decades of literary criticism.

Simon Smith uses the terms of Sharpham’s epilogue to *Cupid’s Whirligig* to frame a discussion about the relation of pleasure and judgment in theatrical contexts. His is a