echoed and reinforced by its stages. His reexamination of the 1596 petition and the characters involved asks important and neglected questions: who didn't sign it? Why were there no petitions during the following two decades of successful professional theater in the Blackfriars? He makes a convincing case that local opposition to the theater, when it did surface, was often more about the practicalities of local politics and space-sharing than any larger ideological conflict between the godly and the stage.

The book's third section presents three informative case studies, including an informative local contextualization of Jonson's *The Alchemist*, a reading of *Henry VIII* and *Duchess of Malfi* as engaging specifically with the Blackfriars' Catholic past, and a thorough examination of opposition to the Spanish Match from both stage and pulpit.

Blackfriars in Early Modern London convincingly challenges received wisdom in so many ways, broad and picayune, that it would be impossible to catalogue them here. At every turn, it reintegrates our idea of the drama of the Blackfriars into the lived experience of the neighborhood's citizens in often surprising ways: *Cynthia's Revels* wasn't written for court? *Poetaster* satirizes specific neighborhood merchants? In case after case, Highley's book asks us to reconsider the story we think we know about the conditions and output of the Blackfriars stages with regard to their location in this idiosyncratic London neighborhood.

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Games and Theatre in Shakespeare's England. Tom Bishop, Gina Bloom, and Erika T. Lin, eds.
Cultures of Play. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 332 pp. $109.

The editors of *Games and Theatre in Shakespeare's England* have delivered a carefully curated volume that offers an evocative hermeneutical paradigm that challenges supposedly settled critical assumptions as well as an impressively wide range of conversations and materials that will benefit students and teachers at all levels of education. Foremost among the settled questions it reexamines is the very nature of dramatic performance, which has been reduced to mimesis for such a long time as to seem ineluctable. To counteract this problem, they propose instead to play the clown, as it were, by deploying a series of essays that depart from the traditional scripts of our field by uncovering the gamelike qualities of early modern drama.

True to the publisher's series Cultures of Play, 1300–1700, the volume investigates elusive forms of medieval and early modern play that have seemed untraceable according to longstanding disciplinary models. But *Games and Theatre* goes further, by examining game's relationship to theater both forward and backward—by which I mean not only how early modern game culture and professional dramatic performance were mutually influential but also how present-day game cultures can help to reevaluate our study of

early and premodern performance. Its eleven essays (exclusive of its introduction and epilogue) are divided into three parts. Contributors in the volume's first section convincingly demonstrate how games provided the essential "conceptual and regulatory context" for early modern professional drama (23). Considering theater itself to be a game of games, essays in part 2 show how, in the words of Badir's keen analysis of *Troilus & Cressida*, early modern plays pursue ideas of truth beyond the ken of mimetic representation—in the rifts and interstices between what is spoken and unspoken, what is present and what is missing, and above all in the gamelike unfolding of the present from the past. Games and play, this analysis suggests, fundamentally oppose not only work (and by associative corollary, the literary work) but also history (153–55). Readers with interests in time studies will accordingly be pleased to note that the question of the relation of games and theater to time and history deeply informs most essays in the volume, whether they incorporate late medieval drama and the broad array of sixteenth-century dramatic activity (Purcell, Kathman, and Steele Brokaw), the continued intertwining of theater and game well into the period of the English Civil War (Hirschfeld), Restoration and Victorian productions (Greenberg), or movement outside temporality itself (Badir and Menzer).

Not being a gamer myself, I was challenged and inspired by the contributions in part 3 to rethink my tacit assumptions about digital games and their relation, whether historical or contemporary, to Shakespearean drama. Potential readers should know that these contributors, particularly Roberts-Smith and DeSouza-Coelho, are not unthinkingly in favor of video games as pedagogical tools for the study of theatrical performance. Bushnell's and Way's essays, furthermore, are excellent starting points for high school and college undergraduate teachers and students thinking about how to create board and video games based on *Hamlet* and other Shakespeare plays.

For all its scope and prescience, the collection would be incomplete without Natasha Korda's epilogue, in which she highlights a form of game—the board game—as well as a game-related form—the *Wunderkammern* (wonder cabinets)—both of which I think will require further consideration by these or other scholars. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, tabletop board games with substantial role-playing components were seeing a resurgence of interest. Contemporary Western culture has developed its own form of the *Wunderkammer* in the form of Lego designs that have in turn inspired film performances, games, and books like the *Brick Shakespeare* series, which offers construction guides on how to build famous scenes from Shakespeare's major plays. I'd like to close by emphasizing the word *build*, for it seems to me that *Games and Theatre in Shakespeare's England* has given us a lot of constructive material with which to work—and play. It includes three tables and one illustration.

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