

## REVIEW

MARGARET TUDEAU-CLAYTON. *Shakespeare's Englishes: Against Englishness*. Pp. ix+245. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Hardback, £75.

Only a few pages in to Margaret Tudeau-Clayton's excellent *Shakespeare's Englishes*, one gets the sense that this book is not *just* about the past. Whether or not Tudeau-Clayton set out, when she began her work on this topic, to comment so pointedly on our present moment, she certainly does not shy away from it as she approaches the closing pages of her first chapter. There, Tudeau-Clayton re-conceives her book's central argument in view of recent political and cultural events: as we bear witness to Brexit and to increasing tensions between England and its 'more local' (p. 43) neighbours, we ought to recall that Shakespeare, too, lived in a time of heightened xenophobia, a time in which a project of cultural reformation—one that laid particular claim to the notion of 'the King's English'—had taken a disturbing hold. In the face of this, Tudeau-Clayton argues, Shakespeare pushes back, not only by showing the ways in which England is made up of many 'strangers' and many 'Englishes', but also by exposing how arbitrary notions of 'true' Englishness are. Throughout these five richly descriptive chapters, Tudeau-Clayton builds this argument, focusing especially on what she sees as Shakespeare's most linguistically inclusive works.

The first chapter serves as the book's introduction as well. In it, Tudeau-Clayton acknowledges her debt to scholars who have argued that the protestant Reformation provided an opportunity to 'write' the nation's citizenry as 'plain-speaking [and] plainly dressed' (p. 3), differentiating them from those on the continent and on their immediate borders. In the 1590s especially, Tudeau-Clayton argues, Shakespeare's plays reject the 'cultural norms of Englishness' (p. 4) by engaging with the English not as a fixed standard but instead as a 'gallimaufry'—a mobile and inclusive mix of (human and linguistic) "strangers" (p. 5). She deftly shows that not all of Shakespeare's contemporaries were onboard, noting especially the Lenten character of Jonson's language and the critiques of Shakespeare's language as excessive. She also introduces readers to what will become central ideas in later chapters—first, how discourse over the purity of language intersected with discourse over foreign fashions, and second, how debates over 'good' and 'bad' words overlapped with debates over the 'bad' coin brought by foreigners who held increasing economic power in England. The contexts—interwoven with brief references to the plays she will consider more at length later—help prepare the reader for what is to come.

Chapter two explores how the ‘King’s English’ was not so much a descriptive term as it was an exclusionary one. An intriguing chart tracks the way the phrase was invoked not to define anything specific, but instead to censure the ‘Englishes’ of the others. Tudeau-Clayton thus demonstrates how the idea of ‘plain speech’ became a ‘disciplinary instrument’ (p. 55) of the ideology-driven citizen class, which is eventually ironized via George Page in Shakespeare’s famous English comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Page’s preoccupation with plainness sees him judging the speech of others; Shakespeare sets him down by including characters—Mistress Quickly, Falstaff, Fenton, the Host—who are expansive in their language, a collective ‘gallimaufry’ that belies the notion of a single, center-produced Englishness. In Tudeau-Clayton’s layered reading, xenophobia, anti-intellectualism, and economic anxiety are met with an alternative spirit of celebratory inclusivity that resists the ‘Lenten’ forms of control produced by cultural reformation ideology.

The third chapter turns to an examination of ‘the true-born Englishman’, beginning with a focus on sartorial, rather than linguistic, ‘gallimaufry’. Tudeau-Clayton explores Shakespeare’s use of the ‘elite Englishman dressed in a motley of foreign fashions’ (p. 93), a figure that was, for those preoccupied with ‘plainness’, seen as a threat to insular boundaries of Englishness. While plays like *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado About Nothing* point to the impossibility of finding any ‘normative center’ (p. 108) when seeking a cultural standard, Tudeau-Clayton also suggests that Shakespeare’s later plays, particularly *All’s Well That Ends Well*, point to a more ambivalent attitude. Though he never goes so far as to explicitly embrace plainness, Shakespeare, in the shadow of a new patron, seems at least more reluctant to deploy the ‘linguistic extravagance’ (p. 124) that characterized earlier plays.

A highlight of the book is chapter four, which examines Shakespeare’s engagement with strangers/straying. Tudeau-Clayton makes a compelling case for the connection between these terms: ‘strangers’ in Shakespeare’s England stray *from* their roots by making a home in a place far from their origins, but they also stray *with* their roots by introducing their own cultural practices to England. In comedies such as *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare asks his audiences to ‘imagin[e] themselves in their case’ (p. 149), reminding us of the risks and conflicts of being a stranger and calling our attention to the ways in which we are *all* strangers somewhere. Also here is an intriguing discussion—based in Biblical parables—of Christian charity and hospitality. Tudeau-Clayton’s parable-based reading of *The Comedy of Errors* points to increasing hostility toward ‘strangers’ in London; this is linked to her more detailed reading, in chapter five, of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Tudeau-Clayton concludes in her fifth chapter with a discussion of Shakespeare’s own reputation for linguistic excess, in particular, his frequent use of ‘synonymia.’ The practice is itself a resistance to plainness, but also to insularity, as verbal play is extended through the borrowing of foreign words. Figures in Shakespeare’s plays who practice it are generative, festive, and, perhaps most importantly, educative—their plays upon words become lessons for an audience expanding its vocabulary with each passing scene. This, Tudeau-Clayton shows, is Shakespeare’s ‘emancipating poetics’ (p. 207), one from which we—who are ‘arguably still under the dominance’ of a plainness ‘regime’ (p. 208)—still benefit.

Readers of *Shakespeare's Englishes* may well find its contents inspiring and comforting: a celebration of Shakespeare's language and his apparent spirit of inclusivity. This latter point of celebration, I suspect, will feel at best tentative to those who have noted the many moments in Shakespeare's plays that seem designed for exclusivity—racial, religious, and otherwise—and one wonders whether Tudeau-Clayton's argument would have benefited more from engaging directly with scholarship that highlights these moments. I would be remiss, too, not to note that *Shakespeare's Englishes* offers its own 'straying' qualities at times: Falstaff, for example, wanders through the book in a way that seems suggestive, especially given Tudeau-Clayton's argument that he is a man 'without a territorial base' (p. 21), the ultimate Shakespearean stranger. If Tudeau-Clayton has intentionally developed a structure for the book that resists a 'normative' centre, it may not always be successful: on occasion, the brief references pointing to arguments past or arguments to come feel unmooring, and at times one wonders whether the argument might have had a fuller, more memorable impact had its organization been slightly less scattered. Yet, I am careful now—owing to the striking, original argument of this book—to resist plainness: perhaps there is a lesson even in this part of Tudeau-Clayton's thoughtful and thought-provoking work.

Marisa R. Cull  
*Randolph-Macon College*