

morally robust children who were wet-nursed). By nuancing these fears, Groves writes, Shakespeare's representations of nursing 'can be read as an ethical position celebrating the non-blood ties that bind communities together and a redemption of the female, lower-class "other". Shakespeare's plays question the stereotype encoded in his society's misogynist proverb ("he sucked evil from the dug") and also invert the proverb itself.'

‘YOUTH IS WASTED ON
THE YOUNG’

Keeping the focus on women but more precisely on young women, is Deanne Williams' *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood*. Here the idea of girlhood is a porous and flexible concept which includes many factors beyond the biological or social. Williams' book is dedicated to what it means to be a girl on Shakespeare's stage, how we recognize such categories and what these forms of recognition produce in terms of representation. What she reveals in the process is riveting – and, at times, bitter-sweet. For to be a girl is to take part in an act of being that is at once liberating and risky. Beginning with a summary of the idea of the girl in Shakespeare's plays, Williams demonstrates how the term can signify a feeling, a state, a condition and social status. Most intriguing here is how the sign can function as a relational metaphor or analogy as when Macbeth, unhinged by the ghost of Banquo, 'compares himself to a frightened, babbling "baby of a girl"'. Compellingly, of course, Macbeth is not the girl, but the baby, and, as Williams observes, 'Macbeth's words remind us of the reality of childhood on Shakespeare's stage' as well as the relational forms of both 'baby' and 'girl'. Unique to Williams' project is the extent to which she analyses the girl as distinct from woman and daughter, and by disentangling some of these associations she is able to scrutinize the myriad and compelling ways in which the idea of the girl is constantly under construction – often by men but also by women. The first half of the book focuses on girl

characters, as fictional people but also disguised boy actors, attending to various 'girls', including Julia, Silvia, Bianca, Joan La Pucelle and, finally, Juliet who, she observes, is a character 'whose mutability and movement, flexibility, resistance and transformative creative imagination, dramatize the limitless possibilities of girlhood itself'. Williams then moves from the girl Juliet, self-possessed and a teenager to the ten-year-old Isabelle de France, second wife of Richard II. Here she demonstrates that history has tended to edit out the youthfulness of this character and by thinking about Queen Isabelle as a 'girl' (child) we can observe 'how Shakespeare's dramatization of medieval child marriage both challenges our expectations about girlhood and broadens our understanding of medieval and early modern girls as dramatic characters, as well as historical individuals'. Extending her focus to historical individuals, including Elizabeth I, Princess Elizabeth Stuart and Alice Egerton, Williams examines education and performance (theatrical, musical and social) and the dangers and pleasures of both. Moving through Shakespeare to his reception and afterlives, Williams demonstrates how the masque's, and specifically Comus's, 'dramatization of virginity engages Shakespearean models of girlhood, mobilizes an extremely current musical taste or fashion to communicate a kind of unassailable virginal integrity'. Moving well into the seventeenth century Williams focuses on the court masque as the 'genre par excellence for girls' theatrical patronage and artistic creativity' and here she seems to observe a turn of fortune for 'girls' wherein they can claim some authority, autonomy even, as the 'centre of power at the country house' as well as discerning in Shakespeare's work 'a story in which girls are different from women, even as they aspire and prepare to be adults'. Although for Williams, the representation of the girl is central to the ways in which we should read many of Shakespeare's characters, never has it been more important or more relevant to think about the values that any given culture assigns to its girls and the shaping of their histories.

Palgrave's publication of *Shakespeare's Boys: A Cultural History* by Katie Knowles appears on first

THE YEAR'S CONTRIBUTION TO SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

inspection to be a companion to Williams' focus on girls, but the perspectives and ranges of the books are very different. Like Williams, Knowles sets out to historicize the concept and argue that 'Shakespeare's plays reflect the ambiguous, fluid and transitional status of boyhood in early modern England, and [that] the portrayal of these on-stage boys has been a crucial, and sometimes defining, factor in the performance history of these plays'. Whereas Williams' focus is on identity and status, Knowles is more specifically engaged by the concept of youth: her dismissal of Shakespeare's girls as 'often babies' or teenagers, and thus 'entering the adult phase of life', defines her focus by the observation that 'most of Shakespeare's child characters are boys'. This may be true, but Williams' book demonstrates a fascination with girlhood that extends beyond the categories of age and into the fundamental structures of social behaviour. While Williams' book is engaged in the conceptual, as well as performative aspects of Shakespeare's young women, Knowles is more specifically wedded to questions of gender and youth. Knowles's book is divided into two sections, the first is largely historicist in its exploration of some of the boy characters in Shakespeare's plays, as well as the institutions that define them; the second deals with their afterlives and the various ways in which these characters have been performed or appropriated in the last four hundred years. One of the most interesting things about this study is how Knowles chooses to group the characters. Rather than confine her study to genre, for example, she focuses on status: the first chapter deals with male heirs which leads her to examine a range of young men from all genres. Here she is especially interested in the fated predicament of male children who are destined for responsibility but notable for their vulnerability. The second chapter attends to notions of masculinity through an anatomization of violence in the *bildungsroman* of the Roman warriors, Young Lucius and Young Martius, while the third focuses on representations of teaching and the idea of the schoolboy. Although most of this material is predictable Knowles offers subtle readings of some of the plays, especially *Love's Labour's Lost* where she observes the play's satire of immaturity

through the juxtaposition of Moth and the Lords. One of the best sections of the book is her attention to Falstaff's Boy, who as a 'silent witness' to adult life offers an acute, and often touching, image of the anguish of growing up; 'The Boy does not react to, or comment on, any of what he witnesses, and as the play closes we are left in the dark as to what the result of his "education" will be.' This is a poignant statement and one that resonates through a play in which 'the massacre in the English camp denies Falstaff's Boy the opportunity to put the lessons he has learned from his worldly education into action'. The latter half of the book addresses Shakespeare's afterlives and offers some interesting insights into the performance history of boy characters as well as changing historical emphases (the Victorian period is perhaps the most resonant here). Although Knowles's treatment of boys here is not, perhaps, as sophisticated as Williams' exploration of girlhood, and the methodological range is narrower, it nevertheless provides a thoughtful focus on some frequently overlooked characters.

Keeping the focus on character but moving more specifically onto the relationship between mind and body is an invigorating collection of essays, *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare's Theatre*, edited by Laurie Johnson, John Sutton and Evelyn Tribble. One of the central tenets of this collection is to dismantle the conventional dualism associated with the body/mind dynamic and to explore not only what those terms mean in themselves but the fluid, reactionary or symbiotic relations between them. Similarly, although Shakespeare's work features extensively across the essays, the emphasis is on his plays as part of a wider 'early modern' culture, rather than discrete examples of an autonomous thinker. Thus the body becomes more than the sum of its parts, including the mind, and a site of exploration in which it can affect and be affected. In divergent ways James A. Knapp and Tiffany Hoffman both attend to the 'blush': the body's apparently involuntary response to shame or guilt. Knapp's focus in *Much Ado*, however, is on forms of recognition that involve judgement, or perhaps interpretation, and the ways in which