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Brayton, Dan. *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2012.

Ecocriticsm has remained curiously landlocked given that water covers approximately seventy percent of the Earth's surface. It is precisely this "terrestrial bias" (18) that Dan Brayton seeks to remedy in his monograph *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration*. Against dangerous notions of the ocean's infinitude and timelessness, Brayton asserts that Shakespeare's representations of the global ocean and its inhabitants bespeak a "profound ontological relationship between humanity and the sea that is not merely metaphorical but material" (4-5). The ocean not only surrounds us, Brayton observes, it also mirrors the composition of our bodies, which contain approximately the same ratio of water as the Earth itself. Considering an array of Shakespeare's works, ranging from *The Rape of Lucrece* to *The Tempest*, Brayton explores the profound depths of Shakespeare's maritime imagination. For Shakespeare, the ocean evokes a "plasticity of meaning" (9)—at once characterized by both "magical otherness" and "strange familiarity" (201). Brayton's book is rigorously historical, drawing upon early modern maritime law, the development of the global fish market, sixteenth-century cartography, and historical perceptions of marine mammals to contextualize and redirect our understanding of Shakespeare's works. Balancing this historicism is an awareness of modern marine ecology, adroitly integrated through personal anecdotes and disquieting narratives about threats facing ocean life in the early twenty-first century. The effect is to lend a sense of urgency to Brayton's analysis of Shakespeare's world, and to transform literary criticism into a call to action. Brayton's book stands not only as a significant contribution to Shakespeare scholarship, but also as a manifesto and model for a "terraqueous ecocriticsm" (199).

The chapters of *Shakespeare's Ocean* are arranged thematically, each building upon the insights of the last. In Chapter 1, Brayton opens with a trenchant critique of the conceptual metaphorics ecocritics have used to *ground* our subjects of inquiry. He argues that the ecocritical focus on *green* literary studies, coupled with our obsession with *the land*, proscribes our ability to see the larger, more aqueous environment that surrounds us: "the emblematic color of environmentalism and ecocritical inquiry imposes a categorical limitation on scholarly discourse" (38). Brayton would have us ask, does Aldo Leopold's celebrated "land ethic" apply also to the ocean? The sharp and well contextualized analysis of Shakespeare's works that Brayton develops in the ensuring chapters serves as a model for what a bluer version of ecocriticsm might look like. Having opened with a terminological critique, Brayton is extremely careful in his conceptual vocabulary, using such novel phrases as "benthic imagination" (68) and "figurative fishmongering" (145) to highlight Shakespeare's complex engagement with the sea. Reading this book, we are constantly reminded of how language, often unconsciously, shapes our perceptions, illuminating certain ideas while blinding us to others.

Brayton begins this textual analysis in Chapter 2 with a consideration of how the semantic ambiguity of Shakespeare's crabs both foregrounds and subverts how the European imagination figures the sea as a place of radical alteriority. This ambiguity, embodied most fully in the character Caliban, bespeaks the epistemological uncertainty surrounding the sea. Chapter 3, "Shakespeare's Benthic Imagination," considers how the ocean's floor, both beautiful and terrifying, represents for Shakespeare the depths of human subjectivity. This chapter is notable for its benthic interpretation of Hamlet's famously elusive interiority: "Hamlet's wildness manifests itself in a kind of oceanic subjectivity

constructed in terms of an unfathomable nature" (79). In Chapter 4, "Tidal Bodies," Brayton highlights the material and metaphorical connections between tidal flows and human emotions, focusing particularly on *The Rape of Lucrece*. Next in Chapter 5, "Royal Fish: Shakespeare's Princely Whales," Brayton draws upon the history plays to consider figurative connections between marine mammals, the presumptive kings of the sea, and European monarchs. Chapter 6, "Shakespeare among the Fishmongers," focuses on connections between human identity and the emergent global fish market. Through a detailed and insightful reading of *Twelfth Night*, Brayton highlights how fish, infamously susceptible to putrefaction ("turning"), provide a privileged trope for imagining the volatility of human identity, figured in the play through the confusion surrounding the shipwrecked twins, Viola and Sebastian. Finally, in Chapter 7, "Prospero's Maps," Brayton considers how in *The Tempest* Shakespeare both evokes and subverts the codes of early modern navigation and cartography in order to highlight the spatial dislocation at the heart of the play. While Brayton's readings vary vastly in scope—some spanning just a few lines, others entire chapters—the cumulative effect is to display just how connected Shakespeare's art is to the sea. Once the floodgates are opened and the salty deluge sweeps over Shakespeare's oeuvre, it becomes difficult to read works like *The Tempest* or *Twelfth Night* without situating the global ocean as a key player.

Building upon the work of Alexander Fredrick Falconer and Steve Mentz, Brayton makes important contributions to Shakespeare scholarship by displaying how the global ocean, a concept that emerged in the early modern period, plays a constitutive role in Shakespeare's art. Where Mentz deals primarily with the symbolic and historical aspects of Shakespeare's sea, Brayton adds a notably materialist dimension in his consideration of the tidal flows of human emotion and the unnerving porosity between people and the fish they consume. Despite its anchoring in Shakespeare studies, the book also has important things to say to scholars in other fields. Of course, Shakespeare is no small fish to fry, but the stakes of *Shakespeare's Ocean* are much higher. Brayton's critique of how "chlorophilia" (37) limits the focus of ecocriticsm should interest anyone focusing on literature and the environment. Careful readers of Brayton's book will appreciate how its methodology and critical vocabulary consciously model a bluer version of ecocriticsm. Using an early modern formulation, Brayton reminds us that to dwell on earth is "to be compassed by the sea" (200).

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