

Hateley, Erica. *Shakespeare in Children's Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital*. New York: Routledge, 2009. xiii + 218 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-96492-0 (Cloth).

Katie L. N. Grubbs, University of Georgia

In the Spring/Summer 2006 edition on the theme of "Shakespeare for Children," *Borrowers and Lenders* published an article entitled "Of Tails and Tempests: Feminine Sexuality and Shakespearean Children's Texts," by Erica Hateley, in which the author examined what she termed the "mermaid-Miranda" figure in literature for children. She closely examined both Disney's 1989 film *The Little Mermaid* and Penni Russon's adaptation of *The Tempest*, the young adult novel *Undine* (2004), arguing that while these texts "seem to perform a progressive appropriation [. . .] they actually combine the most conservative aspects of both *The Tempest* and mermaid stories to produce authoritative (and dangerously persuasive) ideals of passive feminine sexuality that confine girls within patriarchally-dictated familial positions" (Hateley 2006, 1). In *Shakespeare and Children's Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital* (2009), Hateley expands these ideas to examine not just *Undine*, but many other appropriations of Shakespeare for young people, while still maintaining her focus on gender issues within such texts.

In the Introduction, Hateley lays out the critical framework of her text by focusing on both Michel Foucault's concept of the "author function" with regard to Shakespeare's "discursive authority" and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural capital, "particularly as it applies to 'Shakespeare' as both embodiment and marker of its attainment" (Hateley 2009, 10, 11). She introduces the subject of how "the discourse of 'Shakespeare' is put to work in literature for young readers to legitimate gendered difference," arguing that "children's authors deploy Shakespeare, not just as cultural authority, but as cultural authority *on gender*" (2009, 12, 14, emphasis in original). In other words, Hateley argues that authors of Shakespeare appropriations for children prescribe traditional gender roles for implied readers, using the cultural capital of the Bard to add weight to those prescriptions.

In Chapter 1, "Romantic Roots: Constructing the Child as Reader, and Shakespeare as Author," Hateley examines three prominent nineteenth-century adaptations/appropriations of Shakespeare for children: Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales From Shakespeare* (1807), Mary Cowden Clarke's

Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines (1850-1851), and Edith Nesbit's *The Children's Shakespeare* (1897). A treatment of all three of these foundational texts in the genre of Shakespeare for children in one chapter might initially seem overwhelming for a reader. Hateley prevents this, however, by giving a thorough background for each text, but then focusing closely only on each text's treatment of *Macbeth*. The chapter argues that these texts established patterns of appropriating Shakespeare for children that have lasted throughout the twentieth century, and "thus diachronically contextualize contemporary Shakespearean children's literature and the cultural forces reflected and reproduced by it" (2009, 21-22). This statement also explains why the chapter on nineteenth-century texts is important to Hateley's argument in the rest of the book, which deals almost exclusively with contemporary appropriations of Shakespeare for young readers.

The title of Chapter 2, "Author(is)ing the Child: Shakespeare as Character," is self-explanatory. In it, Hateley examines recent texts for young readers that incorporate William Shakespeare as a character, arguing that though "[f]or academics [. . .] 'Shakespeare' is a signifier or a discourse [. . .] whose personal history and experience are fundamentally irrelevant to the Shakespeare play," within popular culture, "Shakespeare is first and foremost the man whose plays *reflect* his personality and experience" (2009, 49, emphasis in original). This section includes close readings of Gary Blackwood's *The Shakespeare Stealer* (1998), *Shakespeare's Scribe* (2000), and *Shakespeare's Spy* (2003); Grace Tiffany's *My Father Had A Daughter: Judith Shakespeare's Tale* (2003); and Peter W. Hassinger's *Shakespeare's Daughter* (2004), all historical-fiction novels for young readers. Hateley's close readings provide numerous textual examples to support her claim that even though these texts present male and female protagonists and were written by male and female authors, within all of them "masculine readers are encouraged to recognise and ultimately appropriate the cultural authority of Shakespeare," while "feminine readers are encouraged simultaneously to recognise both the cultural value of Shakespeare and his work, and the extent to which their own natural distance from it is authorised by that value" (2009, 81). Though this chapter is comprehensive and useful within the area of novels that include Shakespeare as a character, it can feel removed from the other chapters, which deal exclusively with appropriations of plays.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, Hateley settles into the meat of her argument, presenting close readings of appropriations for young readers of three chosen plays: *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*. The author does an excellent job of explaining the plots of the stories and giving background where necessary: though I was not familiar with many of the children's texts she examined, I never had any trouble following her close readings or her argument. Chapter

3, "'Be These Juggling Fiends No More Believed': *Macbeth*, Gender, and Subversion," argues that *Macbeth's*

gendered taxonomy of subversion and containment is transferred into contemporary children's texts as gendered models of reading: feminine subjects are allowed a limited sense of cultural subversion, aligned with passive reading praxes; masculine subjects are offered a self-reflexive model of reading that enables long-term cultural power. (2009, 83-84)

Hateley supports this argument by examining such texts as Neil Arksey's *MacB* (1999), which is basically *Macbeth* on the soccer field, and Welwyn Winton Katz's *Come Like Shadows* (1993), in which protagonists Lucas and Kinny experience an actual connection with one of the witches of *Macbeth* via a magic mirror. She also does close readings of many other novels in this chapter, exploring specific ways in which feminine subjects are given a culturally subversive, though still passive, reading model, while masculine subjects are given a self-reflexive model. For example, in Arksey's *MacB*, female readers encounter a powerful and culturally subversive female figure in MacB's ruthless mother (the Lady Macbeth figure), but in the end MacB rejects her influence and blames her as the cause of all his wrongdoing. In Katz's novel, while both female (Kincardine or "Kinny") and male (Lucas) main characters are presented, throughout the novel Lucas is portrayed as a more acute observer and a confident person, while Kinny continually doubts herself, even wondering at times if she is crazy. Hateley aptly comments that "the conclusion of the novel makes clear that if the protagonist has been Kincardine, the hero is Lucas" (2009, 111, emphasis in original). She demonstrates that the male characters in these texts are presented as characters that male readers can identify with in a positive way, while the culturally subversive female characters are presented as evil, unstable, or simply less capable.

Chapter 4, "Puck vs. Hermia: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Gender, and Sexuality," asserts that "[s]pecific sub-plots of *Dream* are explicitly gendered" (Hateley 2009, 117). One such sub-plot involves what the author terms "Puck Syndrome," which is a narrative that places implied male readers "not only into a position of limited autonomy that is circumscribed by Oberon (the Shakespearean father), but also implicitly prefigures future authority for such readers when they become adults" (2009, 118). Appropriations that display this "Puck Syndrome" include Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* (1999), Mary Pope Osborne's *Stage Fright on a Summer's Night* (2002; part of the *Magic Treehouse* series), and Sophie Masson's *Cold Iron* (1998). However, Hateley also explores appropriations that deal with other gendered subplots. John Updike's *Bottom's Dream* (1969) and Ursula Dubosarsky's *How to Be a Great Detective* (2004) both feature the "rustics" (the

Dubosarsky text focuses on the Pyramus and Thisbe narrative), and stories for teenage feminine implied readers focus more on the "romance" plot dealing with Hermia, Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius: examples include Meacham's *A Mid-Semester Night's Dream* (2004), Marilyn Singer's *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth* (1983), and Charlotte Calder's *Cupid Painted Blind* (2002). After examining all of these texts, Hateley concludes that "Puck may operate as a carnivalesque figure of limited autonomy for pre-adolescent masculine readers, but when children's literature appropriates *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for adolescent feminine readers, no space is made for autonomous development" and that in these texts "[y]oung men are directed towards a life of the mind, young women towards a life of the body" (2009, 145, 146).

Hateley's final chapter of close reading, Chapter 5, "'This Island's Mine': *The Tempest*, Gender, and Authority/Autonomy," connects to her discussion of *The Tempest* and Russon's *Undine* that appeared in her 2006 *Borrowers and Lenders* article, but greatly expands both the range of texts treated and the point being made. She states that appropriations of the *The Tempest* for older child readers usually center on the "child figures" Miranda and Caliban, rather than on Prospero, "offering [these child figures] as figures of identification for the implied reader" (2009, 147). Hateley's choice to view Caliban as a child figure in the play is intriguing and can perhaps be attributed to her views on the "arguably analogous cultural position of children and subjects of colonisation" (2009, 148). In addition to *Undine*, she also examines Sophie Masson's *The Tempestuous Voyage of Hopewell Shakespeare* (2003), Dennis Covington's *Lizard* (1991), Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), and other novels. She concludes that novels like *Lizard* and Tad Williams' *Caliban's Hour* offer "the juvenile masculine subject [. . .] a model of cultural authority which is simultaneously predicated on the sexual subordination of the feminine (intratextual) and cultural authority (extratextual)" (2009, 164), and that novels that imply a feminine reader also comply with this model. While she concedes that "Russon comes closer than L'Engle or Oneal to offering the implied feminine reader a position of autonomy," she nevertheless states that *Undine* is not "an unequivocally feminist appropriation" because of its "maintenance of unregulated feminine sexuality as dangerous" (2009, 186).

That final statement reflects the main point of Hateley's Conclusion, that no Shakespeare appropriation for young readers that she has so far seen succeeds in escaping the following trap: "[r]ather than offering an imaginative space where categories of subjectivity [. . .] might be contested, appropriations of Shakespeare naturalise normative values, and even make the implied reader complicit in their production" (2009, 187). The author admits that even she is not quite sure what this text would look like, though she posits that it might need to shift away from focusing on specifically gendered characters in favor of a more "ambiguously gendered" character like Ariel

(2009, 186). Hateley "looks forward to a text which combines feminine autonomy *with* the cultural capital of Shakespeare" but in the end concludes that

shifting the discursive norms of Shakespeare for children [. . .] must be enacted in at least two ways: the first being the willingness to admit the pluralities inherent in the Shakespearean text into appropriations of the plays; the second being the re-construction of children as *critical* readers rather than *gendered* readers. (2009, 186, 188-89, emphasis in original)

This book would be of great interest to both Shakespeare scholars studying appropriations of his work for children and scholars of children's literature in general; scholars interested in gender theory and construction of selfhood will also find it helpful. Hateley's close readings are thorough, as mentioned earlier, and her notes provide valuable additional information. Perhaps the only drawback to this text is that the title is in some ways a misnomer: though the book is called *Shakespeare in Children's Literature* (perhaps because Hateley's text is part of a Routledge series entitled *Children's Literature and Culture*, edited by Jack Zipes), it deals mainly with young adult novels, and the Young Adult genre often presents very different subject matter from picture books or novels for readers under ten. Therefore, scholars interested in those areas of literature for young readers might not find as much useful analysis in this book. Nevertheless, this focus on young adult novels means that scholars interested in appropriations of Shakespeare for young adults or gender roles as presented in young adult novels will find this text invaluable.

References

- Hateley, Erica. 2009. *Shakespeare in Children's Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital*. New York: Routledge.
- Hateley, Erica. 2006. "Of Tails and Tempests: Feminine Sexuality and Shakespearean Children's Texts." *Borrowers and Lenders* 2.1. <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu> [cited 16 July 2011].