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Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism by Stephanie H. Jed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989. Pp. xi+160. $32.50, cloth; $10.95, paper.

Stephanie Jed's *Chaste Thinking* is a provocative work of scholarship which challenges not only received ideas about Renaissance humanism, but the basic notion of literary study which it fostered, namely, the assumption of an autonomous realm of "literature" divorced from the material world which produced it. Her book thus participates both in the critical reevaluation of humanism to which such writers as Lauro Martines, Victoria Kahn, and Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine have contributed in different ways during the past few years, and in the efforts by various literary critics, including Marxists and New Historicists, to re-imbed texts in history, to see them as the products and producers of the cultures in which they are located. Professor Jed's work is, moreover, animated by a deep and passionate, intellectual and moral engagement with its subject, an engagement which makes it compelling to read and leads to many of its most striking insights and fertile suggestions. Unfortunately, that engagement also leads to certain excesses, strained interpretations, and unconvincing arguments which impair the value of this otherwise singularly stimulating book.

Professor Jed's study centers on a single document, the *Declamatio Lucretiae* of the Florentine humanist chancellor Coluccio Salutati, a text which is usually considered marginal, but in which she finds a paradigmatic instance of what she calls "chaste thinking." This *Declamatio*, which was reproduced frequently during the fifteenth century, is a dialogue in two parts: first, Lucretia's husband and father beg her to spare her life after her rape by Tarquin; and then, Lucretia replies that she will kill herself to restore her violated integrity and to urge them on to avenge her. As a result, her rape and suicide lead to the expulsion of Tarquin and the founding of republican liberty in Rome, details admittedly not mentioned in Salutati's text, but certainly known to all from Livy's classic account of the story. In Professor Jed's interpretation, this is really a narrative about repression and violence; the repression of the body and the libido in Lucretia's culturally constructed chastity; the violence of rape which that repression provokes; a further instance of repression which is involved in Lucretia's self-castigation; and the final repression embodied in the actions of the avenger and republican hero Brutus who forbids tears over her fate, impassively watches the execution of his own sons, and thus inscribes a discipline of repression in the Roman republican order. Chaste thinking involves all these acts of repression of emotion and the body, and especially the fundamental act by means of which the rape in all its material and bodily reality is deprived of its horror as it is converted into merely a necessary pretext for the creation of the republic. Moreover, chaste thinking also characterizes the *form* of Salutati's text, for it attempts to treat the Lucretia story as a universal narrative detached from any cultural context, to establish it as "literature" existing outside the bounds of history. Thus, Salutati joins modern literary scholars—and readers—who effectively deny the materiality of the texts they encounter, keeping everything in the realm of ideas, the realm of the mind, from which the body has been safely expelled. One of Professor Jed's goals in her study is clearly to force us to

confront these acts of denial and repression involved in the chaste thinking we still share with our humanist ancestors.

Professor Jed extends her concept of chaste thinking in a variety of directions as she attacks not only the humanists of the Renaissance, but their interpreters and followers in the twentieth century. In the first of her three major chapters, she analyzes Florentine humanist philology as an instantiation of chaste thinking in its concern to produce those purified, integral texts of the ancients which it called "castigationes." Moreover, that philology had a political effect, since it allowed the humanists to present themselves as the true sons of their Roman fathers and thus to legitimize the descent of their republic from Rome. Philology and politics shared common rules for behavior and used the same central terms: integrity, wholeness, and castigation as opposed to corruption and contamination. However, Professor Jed notes that every act of emendation, every castigation of a text, is really a contamination insofar as it changes what is already written. Thus, when the humanists—and all those textual scholars who have followed in their wake—claim merely to have produced castigated texts, they are essentially repressing this contradiction and the signs of their own intervention in the texts just as Lucretia has obliterated the signs of her violation through the self-castigation of her suicide. Similarly, simply to accept the humanist vision of Florence as the heir to republican Rome on the basis of their supposedly faithful reproduction of Roman texts is to ignore their violations of those texts as well as to ignore the violence of the rape in the paradigmatic story of Lucretia.

Professor Jed's second chapter continues her attempt to undo chaste thinking, this time by demolishing the "chaste" distance from the text which we as readers typically maintain as we abstract meanings from it. Here her technique is to insist on Salutati's *Declamatio* as a material object by recording her actual physical contact with it. Her analysis then leads her to a general consideration of the humanist handwriting in which the text was composed, a handwriting which she concludes constitutes yet one more example of chaste thinking. For the humanists presented their handwriting as if it were a chaste return to antiquity when in fact it is an artifical style based on a combination of Carolingian minuscule with Roman epigraphic capitals. By choosing to use the humanists' script, the scribe who copied Salutati's work marks the surface of his text with the meaning of Lucretia's rape: that is, he presents a seemingly pure and integral surface which conceals the contamination involved in its construction.

Professor Jed's final chapter contrasts the two dominant cultures in the Florence of the early fifteenth century, those of humanism and the powerful merchants, arguing that although the latter shared much with the former, they had a slightly different notion of republican freedom. For they linked the political triumph of Florence to its financial success, a connection which the humanists were at pains to suppress. Professor Jed goes on to relate the secret chambers in Lucretia's house where her chastity was kept intact to the secret rooms and secret books of the merchants in which they both kept accounts and reflected on social and political events. These books were concerned with *ragione*, a word which meant accounts, but which was gradually extended to include contracts, a sense of justice and equity, and even pure reason. Eventually, *ragione* lost its original meaning in what Professor Jed

sees as one final instance of chaste thinking. After Cosimo de' Medici's consolidation of power in 1434, the merchants began to feel a need to separate themselves from the scorned class of the new rich, so that, identifying themselves with the humanists, they assimilated the latter's idealized view of Florentine freedom, eliminating the connection it had in their minds with economics just as they suppressed the material component (accounting) in their notion of *ragione*.

Chaste Thinking ends with an afterword concerned with the history of humanism in the twentieth century. In it Professor Jed takes on both exponents of civic humanism such as Hans Baron and defenders of philological humanism such as Paul O. Kristeller. She argues that the two emphases involved—the political and the textual—need to be brought together so that ideas and values can be reconnected to concrete, material acts of reading and writing. She also argues that both schools of thought need to acknowledge the violence and suffering symbolized by Lucretia's rape on which chaste (republican) liberty and chaste (emended and corrected) texts rest. She then ends her book with a plea for a "paleographic perspective" (130) which she has seen developing in Italy, one in which the text of a work must be confronted as a material object, thus interrupting the continued transmission of idealized notions of literature and political freedom from one generation of scholars and thinkers to the next.

As this summary should have shown, *Chaste Thinking* is a rich work, filled with interesting ideas, and offering a global assessment of Renaissance humanism, modern literary critical practice, and the Western world's invidious distinction between mind and body. One of the book's most striking features is its attempt to establish connections between quite disparate phenomena. That attempt is also, to some degree, a liability, since the connections Professor Jed makes will not always be entirely convincing to every reader. Indeed, I suspect that many will be skeptical that the castigation (emendation) of a text can really be equated with Lucretia's self-castigation (suicide) or with Brutus' castigation (repression) of emotion. Nor will all readers agree that the sexual contamination which Lucretia desires to obliterate is equivalent to the contamination by historical reality which humanists' desired to eliminate by situating their texts in some ideal "literary" domain. Professor Jed's problem with her readers here is two-fold. First, the connections she is making are sometimes less than convincing simply because they are often just labelled "connections" or "relations," as if such labelling could by itself adequately and precisely define the relationship involved. Second, when she does attempt to be more precise, she often vacillates, sometimes presenting two phenomena as merely parallel or analogous, sometimes treating one as the cause of the other, and sometimes referring to a "figural relation" between the things involved, as when she says that she is interested in the "figural relation between the Florentine rhetorical claim to liberty and the quality of the humanists' contact with books" (38). It may be that Professor Jed is just trying to sweep too much under the single concept of chaste thinking, but in any case she lessens the force of her argument as a result of what amounts to a fundamental terminological vagueness.

Readers may find other reasons to object to Professor Jed's study as well. They may, for instance, resist her transformation of a narrative sequence

(chastity-rape-castigation) into a causal one which makes Lucretia's chastity —rather than Tarquin—actually responsible for her rape. They may protest that, despite Professor Jed's claims, none of the texts she cites from Livy, Plutarch, or Salutati ever actually says that Lucretia's rape is justified because it led to the founding of the Roman republic. Indeed, no matter how much one may sympathize with Professor Jed's obvious anger over anything which looks even remotely like indifference to the brutal, physical attack on Lucretia, it is hard to agree with her characterizaton of the tradition of writing about that event as something which has "consistently *celebrated* the rape . . . as a prologue to republican freedom" (49, my emphasis); that tradition repeatedly deplores the rape and censures Tarquin for having done it. Moreover, other readers may feel that Professor Jed's vision of the humanists as castigators of ancient texts does not suit people who much more frequently and consistently imagined their activities through metaphors of *disinterment* and *reintegration*. Finally, one may object that as Professor Jed abstracts a set of ideas from the Lucretia story and applies it to textual editing or defenses of Florentine republicanism, she is actually engaging in a form of chaste thinking herself, allegorizing texts and events and thus dramatically turning away from the material and the historically real.

Despite all of these strictures, *Chaste Thinking* nevertheless remains a book well worth reading and pondering. It is particularly valuable for its fine analyses of the language of Salutati's *Declamatio*, that of humanist philology and politics, and that of the Florentine mercantile *ragione*. If it will not convince every reader to accept its arguments in their entirety, it nevertheless will unsettle many received notions about humanism and literary study and should contribute productively to their revision.

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Shakespeare and the Popular Voice by Annabel Patterson. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1989. Pp. vii + 195. $39.95, cloth; $14.95, paper.

Patterson's study is an important, unflinching intervention in the current debate about the political significance of Shakespearean drama. Her bold project is to wrest control from critics who adhere to Coleridge's definition of Shakespeare as "a philosophical aristocrat" (6). As Patterson tellingly notes, this conception makes contradictory claims for Shakespeare as both nonpolitical and politically conservative: "Here historical irony reigns: for the critic who single-handedly created for the English-speaking world the credo of Shakespeare's disinterestedness, or transcendental freedom from the historical conditions of his time, *also* created the credo of Shakespeare's philosophical conservatism; and Coleridge had undoubtedly arrived at that position in response to a contemporary law-and-order crisis." (7) In place of an antidemocratic image of Shakespeare as "a law-and-order playwright" (36), Patterson proposes a progressive Shakespeare who is sympathetic to the lower classes and to organized popular protests against the status quo. At the heart of Shakespeare's development in Patterson's version is a "mature radicalism"

(10): initial indications are seen in *2 Henry VI* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, while *Henry V* and *Hamlet* provide transitions to the full-scale radicalism which is dramatized in *King Lear* and *Coriolanus* and which is confirmed by *The Tempest*. This overall framework is supported by dazzling local readings. I find particularly exciting and useful her discussions of *2 Henry VI* and *Coriolanus*; Patterson brilliantly unsettles and reopens the question of Shakespeare's representations of the underclass and of class conflict.

It is crucial to note that Patterson's argument involves two distinct steps: she seeks, first, to disprove the conservative image of Shakespeare and then, second, to construct a radical image. The latter is not the only alternative to the former and does not automatically follow. To my way of thinking Patterson is convincing on the first point, but far less successful on the second. Patterson is not content simply to make the case that Shakespeare's work includes a radical strand as one element in a heterogeneous, unstable mix. Rather, since "the answer can only be given in strongly intentionalist, historicist terms" (99), she insists that the radical strand constitutes the central, consciously pursued element. To construct a positive, radical image of Shakespeare thus means to create a totally progressive Shakespeare who has no ambivalence and no blind spots. If this tendency leads Patterson to overstate her argument, then what is of interest is the particular forms this overstatement takes.

Patterson's appeal to the concept "radical" is inextricably linked to her evocations of the term "popular." Popular does not necessarily imply a democratic orientation, but the vagueness of her usage invariably elides the popular with the radical. Though Patterson's commentary on Essex's relations with Elizabeth are illuminating, her application of the term popular to his actions is problematic. For whom does Essex, with his aristocratic status, speak? His rebellion of 1601 cannot be construed as a pure expression of egalitarian values, nor can it be seen as smoothly continuous with the instances of lower-class resistance that Patterson also calls popular. More generally, in parallel with her image of a pristine Shakespeare, Patterson formulates popular culture solely as a repository for aspirations to social justice. She thereby fails to take into account the possibility of a negative side that Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* describe as "displaced abjection." In particular, Patterson's definition of politics is confined almost exclusively to issues of class. The virtual omission of gender and race as active cultural forces helps to explain how Patterson can so easily secure an unambiguously uplifting view of Shakespearean theatrical production.

The larger context here is the "subversion-containment debate" sketched by Jonathan Dollimore in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Though not an organized group, a cluster of excellent critics, including Jonathan Bate, Richard C. McCoy, David Norbrook and Richard Strier as well as Patterson, has begun to coalesce in reaction to the new historicist-cultural materialist terms in which the debate initially occurred.[1] While finding unpalatable the containment position articulated in one of the major lines of new historicism, these critics appear equally reluctant to adopt the cultural materialist alternative and are instead in the process of fashioning a third option. Patterson's is the most substantial contribution to this effort to date.

Alert to the immediate contemporary implications of criticism, Patterson remarks: ". . . Burke's question to popular culture, 'Who is saying what, to whom, for what purpose and with what effect?' could equally be posed to today's commentators" (36). Turning the question "with what effect?" back to Patterson's book, I find its impact double-edged in a way that mutes, perhaps unwittingly, its intended political effect. Patterson's determined voice is not sentimental, but it may be the cause of sentimentality in others, not least in conservative proponents of a traditional canon. The paradox is that conservative critics can welcome Patterson's radical Shakespeare as confirmation that the Western, and more specifically English, literary tradition is the most progressive in the world and should therefore be accepted with gratitude, that is, without complaint. Patterson lends herself to this appropriation with her own conservative move in the opening declaration that her study "grants as much perspicaciousness to Shakespeare as is now assumed by his most sophisticated readers" (9). In practice the problem with this statement is that it resolves away the necessary tension between Shakespeare's critical perspective and our critical perspective on Shakespeare by choosing the former at the expense of the latter. The critic is implicitly subordinated to Shakespeare, whose values the critic is expected to find inspiring and fully satisfactory. What is lost is the possibility of a political criticism of Shakespeare that acknowledges Shakespeare's social insights, but also strongly registers his shortcomings. In her one-sided emphasis on Shakespeare as protodemocratic resource, Patterson fails to counteract the drift toward the message—let's feel good about our Shakespearean heritage again—that conservative critics would substitute for a more complex negotiation with the cultural past.

One point where the contemporary implications of Patterson's recuperation of Shakespeare presents difficulty is in her respective responses to James Agee in relation to *King Lear* and to Aimé Césaire and George Lamming in relation to *The Tempest*. Here Patterson engages in her own canon-making activities of inclusion and exclusion. Agee is accorded a lavish, unqualified excursus (108, 113–15, 117); Agee's politics are praised but not analyzed. The work of Césaire, Lamming and other black writers is invalidated on the grounds that they have apparently misinterpreted the text: "I question their central assumption, that Shakespeare's play was fully complicit in a mythology of benevolent colonialism" (155).[2] The defensive burden carried by the word "fully" in the phrase "fully complicit" is never addressed, though surely the legitimate inference that Shakespeare is partially complicit should be thoroughly explored. The result would be to complicate the image of Shakespeare's radicalism; Patterson's approach to *The Tempest* too obviously strains to avoid such complication. One might be inclined to forgive the last chapter on *The Tempest* as the weakest in a generally astute book; yet one must also wonder what the pressures are in Patterson's thesis that require a simplified happy ending and make it all but impossible to ask the questions, how far does Shakespeare's radicalism extend, and what are the limits and counterindications to this radicalism?

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Notes

1. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1730–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); David Norbrook, "Life and Death of Renassiance Man," *Raritan* 8, 4 (Spring 1989): 89–110, and review in *The Review of English Studies* 41 (February 1990): 116–18; Richard Strier, "Faithful Servants: Shakespeare's Praise of Disobedience," in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 104–33.

2. A more productive starting-point for a white critic is Alan Sinfield's response to George Lamming in *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 130.