including Blake, put Gnostic material" (127). Hence, Blake is seen to utilize Gnostic ideas in his mythology in order to expose Newtonian science, which he represents symbolically as Urizen, a modern demiurge.

In *Blake and Kierkegaard: Creation and Anxiety*, Rovira shows much skill in handling both writers on the basis of the comparative premises he sets up. The comparative strategy is a stimulating device, although the analysis takes on a heuristic rather than pragmatic character at times. But, on several occasions, the author proves that there is something to be gained from translating Blakean terms into Kierkegaardian concepts. Through Kierkegaard, we are provided with a fresh sense of how another thinker's conceptual structures can be used to clarify Blake's often perplexing mythology.

Robert W. Rix
University of Aalborg, Denmark

Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds: National and Transnational Identities in the Elizabethan Age. By Carole Levin and John Watkins. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. 232 pp. Cloth $45.00, paper $24.95.

Propelled by a renewed interest in histories of globalization, Shakespeare and Renaissance studies have undergone major transformations in recent years, both in scope and their theoretical foundation. Several new books put pressure on the boundaries and connections between English drama and European texts, particularly those of Italy, Spain and France. Examples include Richard Wilson's *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (2009), Eric J. Griffin's *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire* (2009), Barbara Fuchs' *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (2009), and *Identity, Otherness, and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome,* edited by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (2009). Adding a whole new dimension to this body of scholarly work is *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds*. A persuasive, interdisciplinary study of the presence of Italy in the conception of English nationhood at the end of the sixteenth century, it interrogates the foreign as a portable category in case studies of marginalized individuals of English society, both historical and fictional, through the broader context of "European historical moments" (8). It provides a much-needed account of the connections between early modern English

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDIES, VOL. 49, NO. 3, 2012.
Copyright © 2012 The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

drama and European contexts and establishes the centrality of the figure of the foreign in Shakespeare's imagination.

Coauthored by Carole Levin, a historian, and John Watkins, a literary critic, *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds* is a successful model of collaborative research that opens a new vista on the formation of English identity in the decades preceding "England's expansion into the Atlantic" (10). It says something about the state of the humanistic fields that Levin and Watkins have to spend so much time on the issue of interdisciplinarity in the introduction and to return to the question in the afterword (e.g., they observe that "the more closely early modern literary and historical studies converge," the more scholars in each field insist on the distinctness of the two disciplines [5]). The book came about through the coauthors' many conversations that led them to approach Shakespeare's world simply as early modernists rather than as a literary critic or historian. The fruit of their collaboration demonstrates the profound impact of a new mode of scholarly inquiry that is "no longer answerable to the canons of institutional and disciplinary affiliation" (3). Though each of them is responsible for different chapters, the book as a whole tells a compelling story about how Shakespeare responds to religious dissidents, women, and the marginalized sectors of his society within the broader context of European history.

Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds opens with one of the most famous moments in Shakespeare, Portia's puzzling question in the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice* ("Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?"), to bring to the fore the historical experience of being an outcast and to hint at the merging of the coauthors' new, indistinguishable scholarly identities. Parsing historical texts and this tense moment in Shakespeare's plays, Levin and Watkins suggest that "Shakespeare's England comes about by reducing an almost infinite number of [heterogeneous] groups and individuals [Italians, religious dissenters, Jews, old women, and more] to the general category of the foreign," which is seen as both "an object of wonder and opprobrium," threatening and reinforcing the unified identity of Englishness (9). The court scene is treated at length in chapter 4, especially pages 135–37. As later chapters make clear, literature was an important force in "policing the boundaries between English and foreign identities" (13), which in turn establishes the fiction of national coherence that lies at the core of English identity. Subsequent chapters examine how Shakespeare transformed the notion of Englishness by revealing of its coherence and distinctiveness.

The book is divided into three parts (two chapters each), with each part focusing on one Shakespearean play: *1 Henry VI*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Each part also offers a brief, overarching preface

that highlights the key issues bringing the two chapters together. The parallel studies by Levin and Watkins in each section complement each other. Chapter 1, by Levin, canvasses the legal and historical contexts of accusations of witchcraft and Joan of Arc's function as Elizabeth I's opposite. Joan is killed not because she is French but because her presence troubles the boundaries between sacred and profane (23). Watkins follows up on this paranoia in *1 Henry VI* in chapter 2 with the ambitious goal of "de-nationaliz[ing] the history that dominates our understanding of the English sixteenth century" (53). Shakespeare's hostility to such figures as Margaret of Anjou informs the historical resistance to interdynastic marriages.

The next chapters turn to the foreigner's place in the dominant, local culture. Part 2, "Aliens in Our Midst," examines the exclusion of Jews and *The Merchant of Venice*, a dramatic text and historical record of assimilation, conversion, and mercantile culture. This is one of the best parts of the book. The parallel chapters' primary contributions lie in their in-depth study of key historical contexts that further our understanding of the play and its period. Levin brings rich medieval and Renaissance materials about Jewish women, including Abigail in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, to create a complex and more comprehensive picture of Jessica, Shylock's daughter, than is common in Shakespeare criticism. Jessica has commonly been read as either a disobedient daughter or a praiseworthy Christian wife, but Levin points out that what is most striking about her is "her isolation as a Jewish woman" (85–86). The question of conversion that has vexed Shakespeare criticism for decades thus becomes a question of assimilation and one of female conversion: can a non-Christian woman ever truly become a Christian one in early modern England? (86). Levin's and Watkins's chapters demonstrate that while characters such as Jessica and Abigail are "the fictional creations of male non-Jewish playwrights," they are the keys to understanding "the dominant cultural anxiety over gender and difference" (87). Adding usefully broad historical contexts is Watkins's chapter on conversion of a different kind, namely the conversion of English society into the Venice of the North Atlantic (113–15) with its attendant anxieties. These two chapters can be read productively along with Janet Adelman's *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in "The Merchant of Venice"* (2008) which argues that the relationship between Christianity and Judaism is framed in uneasy, familial terms.

The title of Part 3, "Dangerous Reading in *The Taming of the Shrew*," points to Renaissance humanism and Reformation as two major foreign intellectual movements lurking behind the creation of the play. Following the pattern of the previous sections, the chapters are designed to be read both along and against each other. Once again, at stake is an Italian threat—in this

instance a domestic one as well as the humanist belief in the freedom of the will. Levin reads John Foxe's story of Katherine Parr's struggles with Henry VIII in *Acts and Monuments* and Queen Kate in Samuel Rowley's lesser-known play *When You See Me, You Know Me* as analogues for Katherine's struggles with Petruchio in Shakespeare's play. These instances suggest the rise of English women who were "empowered by Reformation teaching" to help evangelize the country (143). Watkins, on the other hand, offers a darker interpretation of the play by reading it against its Italian source, *I suppositi* by Ludovico Ariosto, and the experience of women in Italy and England. As much as a humanist education can be liberating, it is also dangerous to the establishment. Petruchio's insistence on taming Kate is an English counter to humanism (202–6).

In the afterword, Levin and Watkins return to Portia's question of which is the merchant and which the Jew. In their passionate plea for integrated, interdisciplinary scholarship, they urge readers to shed the defensiveness that often accompanies the meeting of different disciplines: "If the merchant and the Jew's modern analogues, the literary scholar and the historian, can bring together a confluence of approach and method as well as a respect for the differences inherent in their approaches as well as the similarities, the foreign worlds will be home to us" (209). The book lives up to its coauthors' vision of a "common academic discourse, one more compromised than abetted by formal disciplinary affiliations," analogous to the "litigation that exposed a common identity between Shylock and Antonio" (2). There is much to recommend in this accessible, exciting book.

Alexander C. Y. Huang
George Washington University

Thinking Allegory Otherwise. Edited by Brenda Machosky. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010. 288 pp. Cloth $50.00.

It would seem that a volume of essays called *Thinking Allegory Otherwise* would be setting expectations a little too high. After all, how to propose a different way of thinking about a trope that has been theorized differently for millennia? To make matters more difficult, allegory has passed through a number of significant revaluations over the last two centuries, unfavorably, for

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDIES, VOL. 49, NO. 3, 2012.
Copyright © 2012 The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

the novel, history, society, Machado de Assis, and Jorge Amado. His books include *Literatura, política, identidades* (2005) (*Literature, Politics, Identities*) and *Jorge Amado: Romance em tempo de utopia* (1996) (*Jorge Amado: Romance During Utopia*).

CAROLINE EGAN is a graduate student in the Department of Comparative Literature at Stanford University. She completed her BA and MA at Penn State University and is currently working with Thomas O. Beebee and Dawn Taylor on a book about Jorge Amado's lectures at Penn State in 1971. She is interested in the processes of rewriting that cross different traditions and genres, particularly in the literatures of the Americas.

WAÏL S. HASSAN is a professor and the acting director of the Program in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (2003) and *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (2011). He translated Abdelfattah Kilito's *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language* (2008) and coedited *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz* (2012). He is currently writing a book on Arab-Brazilian literary and cultural relations.

ALEXANDER C. Y. HUANG is director of the Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare Program and associate professor of English, East Asian languages and literatures, theater, and international affairs at George Washington University in Washington, DC, where he is affiliated with the Sigur Center for Asian Studies and Medieval and Early Modern Studies Institute. He is also a general editor of *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, chair of the MLA committee on the new variorum edition of Shakespeare, performance editor of the *Internet Shakespeare Editions,* vice president of the Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies, vice president of the Association for Asian Performance, and the cofounder and coeditor of *Global Shakespeares,* an open-access digital video archive. He is the author of *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (2009), which received the MLA's Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize, the Colleagues' Choice Award of the International Convention for Asian Scholars, and an honorable mention for New York University's Joe A. Callaway Prize for the Best Book on Drama or Theatre. His new book *Weltliteratur und Welttheater: Ästhetischer Humanismus in der kulturellen Globalisierung* is forthcoming.