Keir Elam. 2017. *Shakespeare's Pictures: Visual Objects in the Dramas*. The Arden Shakespeare London: Bloomsbury

B. J. Sokol. 2018. *Shakespeare's Artists: The Painters, Sculptors, Poets and Musicians in his Plays and Poems* The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury

Jonathan P. A. Sell
Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Spain

Edward Dowden's 1899 edition of *Hamlet* marked the start of Arden's priceless contribution to Shakespeare studies. With the publication of *Measure for Measure*, planned for November 2019, the third series of editions will be complete; meanwhile the fourth series is at the planning stage, the new general editors already appointed. The Arden editions, attractively produced and increasingly weighty, have become, so to speak, the market standard, the first port of call for students and academics alike. And over the years, under the Arden brand, other collections have come into being, not least the companion series "Arden Early Modern Drama" (a notable contribution being Clara Calvo and Jesus Tronch's edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* [2013]) and "Shakespeare Studies and Criticism," to which belong the volumes under review. Shakespeare Studies is an endlessly proliferating field of interest to a world-wide audience of general readers, performers and scholars; it is, therefore, a big business with an apparently insatiable market. The question is whether that market is supply or demand-driven; the uneven quality of these two volumes suggests that the suppliers have the upper hand.

Keir Elam's *Shakespeare's Pictures* is no discredit to Arden's reputation. Its excellent Introduction provides a thorough, critical survey of the academic literature relating to Shakespeare and the visual arts, the "agency" of pictures and early modern visual culture. On the basis of his actual involvement in device design and his extensive technical lexicon, the Introduction also argues convincingly for the "intermedial" nature of Shakespeare's art; it finds time too for some observations on ekphrasis as a natural nexus between the dramatic and the visual arts. Chapter 1, whose title "Doing things

with words" signals theoretical indebtedness to J. L. Austin's *How to do Things with Words* (1962), offers a complementary survey of Shakespeare's tactical deployment of pictures throughout the plays as objects which, with a "performative power" of their own, act pragmatically as visual counterparts to words. The 118 pages of these two chapters are as useful and as up-to-date a guide to Shakespeare's relations with the visual arts as could be wished for.

Each of the remaining four chapters is dedicated monographically to sensitive and informed close readings of individual plays. Chapter 2 argues that the "wanton pictures" referred to in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* are Marcantonio Raimondi's engravings (1524) of Giulio Romano's notoriously explicit drawings of sexual acrobatics (*I modi*), to accompany which Pietro Aretino wrote his notoriously scurrilous sonnets (*Sonnetti lussorosi,* 1527). Shakespeare may not have known of Romano's original creations since, as Elam shows, contemporary English writers tended to suppose that Aretino was responsible for illustrations as well as text. In Chapter 3, Elam locates *The Merchant of Venice*'s casket plot within the cultural praxis of viewing at Venice, the Shakespearean "republic of the gaze" (153). Chapter 4 is a veritable wunderkammer, presenting first Hamlet's possibly Platonic mistrust of visual images and then digging up testimony from contemporary portraiture and funereal sculpture to show how Hamlet's own figuratively iconic gestures—young man holding skull, young man holding book, young man holding picture—are actually conventional portrait poses which therefore configure him as literally iconic. Thus, Elam finds a new irony in a play which further underscores its well-known resistance to stability of any kind. Chapter 5 considers what might be called "double vision" in *Twelfth Night*. Once again, the historical underpinning is as convincing as absorbing: Elam's discussion of "Mistress Mall's picture" (*Twelfth Night*, 1.3.122) is persuasive; so too his interpretation of Olivia's self-ekphrasis as an exercise in verbal limning. However, Elam's contention that Orsino's phrase "a natural perspective" alludes to the relative superiority of the English thrust stage to the illusionistic perspective picture sets is, I think, overstated.

In lieu of an afterword, Elam supplies an "Afterimage" dealing briefly with Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale*. Here, predictably, Giulio Romano, the only visual artist named in Shakespeare's works, returns, but briefly and in relation to the technique of *trompe l'oeil*.

Sokol (81–92), by contrast, expends considerable energy on the Italian artist's significance for the statue scene, a point which indicates the considerable amount of overlap between the content of both books. For by "Shakespeare's Artists" Sokol means painters and sculptors, poets, and musicians, to each of which he devotes a brace of chapters.

Sokol's short Introduction sets out his methodological principles and some random theoretical observations concerning what he claims is the "literary critical experiment" of focusing on "Shakespeare's musicians, poets, painters and sculptors" (1). The claim is extravagant, firstly, because much of the book's contents recycles earlier work available elsewhere (Sokol is generous in citing 14 of his own publications, the earliest of which dates back to 1980) and, secondly, because the theoretical framework rests heavily on Rudolf and Margot Wittkower's *Born under Saturn* (1963), Ernst Gombrich's notion of the "beholder's share," as formulated in *Art and Illusion* (1977), or T. S. Eliot's of "The Three Voices of Poetry" (essay title, 1953): this is no criticism of the Wittkowers, Gombrich or Eliot, but their venerability does undermine the purportedly experimental nature of Sokol's book. To point out that Sokol's treatment of Shakespeare's artists in the body of the work actually reverses the order in which they appear in the sentence quoted above may be to quibble, but the piecemeal construction of the book hardly facilitates its coherence, a problem Sokol's clarificatory note on the arrangement of the chapters (2–3) only obscures.

The general, and hardly startling, message seems to be that "Shakespeare's artists" are represented with ambivalence. Apart from the extensive consideration given to ekphrasis in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Chapters 1 and 2 on Shakespeare's representations of painters and sculptors contain little that is not covered more cogently and with more recent references in Elam's work. The truth is that the plays' *dramatis personae* are hardly milling with artist figures, which may explain why Sokol is forced to train his sights on pictures too, particularly those of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as well as to include the painter figures that are members of the cast in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Faversham* (which entails acceptance of Shakespeare's disputed collaboration in both plays). The *paragone* between Painter and Poet in *Timon of Athens* receives due coverage, as does *The Winter's Tale*'s statue, though to little purpose.

Chapters 3 and 4 on Shakespeare's poet figures consider, among others, the issue of "literary criticism by example" (97), drawing predictably on *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It*. Sokol prefers to bypass the potentially fruitful topic of how Shakespearean characters such as Richard II, Hamlet or Camillo conceive of themselves as poets on the suspect grounds that the latter two at least "fall foul of Freud's noble stricture that 'the aesthetic attitude towards an object is characterised by the condition that we do not ask anything of the object, especially no satisfaction of our serious needs'" (97; quote from Freud 1963, 10–11). To adduce Freud at this point (who, despite Sokol's record as an analytical critic, has so far kept a low profile in the book) seems somewhat arbitrary, especially as Freud is simply re-tuning Kant; more seriously, it runs counter to Sokol's previous readings which have made much of the art work's therapeutic capacity. Chapter 4's analysis of poetic self-disclosure in the Sonnets drifts away from its brief towards the trite conclusion that "*Odi et amo*, love and loathing, are often intertwined in Shakespeare's poems" (138), which sounds more like an A-level exam question than an innovative scholarly insight.

Chapter 5 is the most useful in its accumulation of interesting detail about the Elizabethan context of musical production and performance, as well as its social status; Sokol's reading of Sonnet 128 in the light of harpsichord technology is fascinating and persuasive. Casting about for more material, Chapter 6 explores Shakespeare's direct or indirect allusions to mythological musicians, chiefly Marsyas, in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Babys, in *Othello*. Once again, the background, in this case, iconographic, is fascinating; the interpretations a little overdone but, treating of bagpipes and other wind instruments, mercifully under-Freudian.

On the evidence of these two books, afterwords instead of conclusions are the order of the day. Sokol's carries the title "Considering Joyousness in Art" (219), which sits oddly in a work that evinces little authorial enthusiasm for an admittedly diffuse topic, in contrast to Elam's volume, which is plainly a labour of love. Elam's textured, historically informed, jargon-free readings will persuade his readers of the serious pragmatic and semiotic functions of pictures in Shakespeare's plays; Sokol's, too narrow in their focus, will leave his feeling short-changed. Both books would have benefitted from a more considered conclusion which, in Elam's case, did full justice to his

enlightening arguments by bringing together their various strands, and, in Sokol's, gave a measure of coherence to his otherwise motley contents.

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Author's contact: jonathan.sell@uah.es

Postal address: Facultad de Educación, 4ª planta, 24 – Universidad de Alcalá – Calle Madrid 1 –19001 Guadalajara, Spain