This is a hugely impressive, far-reaching, lucidly written book. Parvini’s thorough and incisive disclosure of the theoretical underpinnings of cultural historicism is essential reading for all literary theorists and historians. His subsequent rethinking of history and Shakespeare’s history plays balances subtlety with a refreshing clarity and candour.

Andrew Mousley, De Montfort University

‘Shakespeare’s History Plays does what it promises: it rethinks historicism, joining the ranks of the fine recent work that rejects the rejection of any common human nature. Excellent, informed, and exciting, it is highly critical of recent critical assumptions but highly judicious and creative in its own critique of recent criticism and in its insights into Shakespeare’s creativity. No other battlefield in literary studies is as intensely contested as Shakespeare. Like a Tolstoy of scholarship, Parvini traces the ebbs and flows of Shakespearean and theoretical battles over the last thirty years, and offers a chance for light to replace smoke.’

Brian Boyd, University of Auckland

Boldly moves criticism of Shakespeare’s history plays beyond anti-humanist theoretical approaches

This important intervention in the critical and theoretical discourse of Shakespeare studies summarises, evaluates and ultimately calls time on the mode of criticism that has prevailed in Shakespeare studies over the past thirty years. It heralds a new, more dynamic way of reading Shakespeare as a supremely intelligent and creative political thinker whose history plays address and illuminate the very questions with which cultural historicists have been so preoccupied since the 1980s. In providing bold and original readings of the first and second tetralogies (Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II and Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2), the book renews old debates and re-energises recent bids to humanise Shakespeare and to restore agency to the individual in the critical readings of his plays.

Neema Parvini is a Visiting Lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London, UK and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Richmond University, UK.


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