

Hopkins, Lisa. *Renaissance Drama on the Edge*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014; hardback; pp. 200; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781409438199.

Lisa Hopkins's latest monograph builds on her ground-breaking study, *Shakespeare on the Edge: Border-crossing in the Tragedies and the Henriad* (Ashgate, 2005), in which she argued that early modern audiences imagined a profound connection between physical and spiritual edges. Her new book expands this notion of 'edges' beyond Shakespeare, by exploring 'not only geographical borders but also the intersection of the material and the spiritual' in early modern drama (p. 1).

The book is divided into three parts. The first, called 'What is an Edge?', examines two extremes of the concept of edges. The first chapter analyses walls: the literal walls that surround a town, and those of a private household. Chapter 2 turns to depictions of the intangible divide between secular and spiritual power. Part I is thus focused on depictions of these edges, as defining an edge 'requires us to attend not only to what something is but also what it is *not*' (p. 3).

Part II examines the edges of nations. Chapter 3, 'Sex on the Edge', is a particularly interesting analysis of how marriage across international borders undermined the concept of 'distinct and securely separate nations' (p. 3). The other two chapters of Part II examine the moveable borders of France in Shakespeare, primarily as a metaphor for England's uncertain borders after the Jacobean succession.

Part III analyses other intangible edges. Chapter 6 focuses on the edge of heaven, and discusses anomalous dramatic references that describe physical access to Heaven from Earth. Chapter 7 analyses the intersection between skin and jewels, and how they influenced each other. Finally, Chapter 8 considers the 'direct interface between the spiritual and material' that can be found in the dramatic use of historical ruins (p. 172).

Hopkins ends by reminding readers that edges 'permit two-way traffic', which for her underscores their contestability in early modern drama (p. 171). She masterfully argues her hypothesis, and convincingly demonstrates that edges were 'a place of power' that 'could always potentially be crossed' (p. 8). Hopkins does, however, assume a relatively advanced level of familiarity with early modern drama, which can make keeping up with the rapid transition between the various plays and playwrights difficult. Nevertheless, the book is [page 385] engagingly written, is expertly researched, and would be highly beneficial to those with a sound knowledge of early modern drama.