

King Lear

[first performance on 26 October 1606 before court of King James I]

James Shapiro, *The Year of Lear* (Simon & Schuster, October 2015), 384 pp.

Brian Vickers, *The One King Lear* (Harvard, May 2016), 416 pp.

Mark Anderson, Alexander Waugh, and Alex McNeil (eds), *Contested Year* (Kindle, February 2016), 140 pp.

Contested Year is an anthology of critical reviews of James Shapiro's book *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. It is also a side-by-side companion meant to be read and consulted as a supplement to *The Year of Lear*. In October 2015, fanfares of acclaim greeted *The Year of Lear's* publication. Yet none of the reviewers seemed to notice its flaws. The roster of mistakes in *The Year of Lear* is enough to sink his entire thesis and cast doubt on his reputation as one of the world's foremost Shakespearean scholars. *Contested Year* puts *The Year of Lear's* errors to right with seventeen leading independent Shakespeare scholars correcting, explaining and expounding upon each of *The Year of Lear's* multiple errors, false statements, omissions and unsupported conjectures, with concision, wit, erudition and keen attention to detail. *Contested Year* rebuts fallacies and clarifies misunderstandings while highlighting Shapiro's inaccuracies of dating, his sloppy confusion of sources, his muddle of historical events, his topographical gaffes, his mix-up of British titles, his errors over names, his genealogical howlers and his flagrant mistakes concerning language, court custom and the historical connections between key figures in his story. *Contested Year* fills the vacuum left by Shapiro's myopic and controversial insistence that 1606 was the year in which Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* by introducing a cornucopia of important evidence (omitted from his book) that undermines his thesis. *Contested Year* is an essential companion to one of the most flawed and misleading works by an accredited academic professor of the last decade" [from Amazon.com].

Stephen Greenblatt, "Can We Ever Master King Lear?", a review of Vickers in *The New York Review of Books*, 23 February 2017, pp. 34-36.

Harold Bloom, *Lear: The Great Image of Authority* (Scribner's, April 2018), 176 pp.