elections in which a large share of the electorate stay home such as elections to the European Parliament. However, given that those who abstain are generally less educated, less politicized and more critical of the political class as a whole, their participation would not benefit moderate political forces but, on the contrary, the extremes and populists. In fact, the empirical branches of political science show that the moderation argument, which has been echoed throughout the history as Malkopoulu convincingly demonstrates, is (and probably has always been) a fallacy.

On the whole, the book is however an excellent piece of research. It will be warmly welcomed by all scholars interested in the issues of representation and participation in general and compulsory voting in particular.

## Review

Quentin Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2014)

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Anyone who had the pleasure of hearing, as I did, Quentin Skinner deliver any part of the 2011 Clarendon lectures – on which *Forensic Shakespeare* is based – will recall the force of Skinner's typically compelling style of presentation. How could passages from Cicero's *De inventione*, displayed in power-point alongside familiar speeches from Shakespeare, fail to persuade an audience of the connection Skinner sought to demonstrate, particularly when the case was being made with such rhetorical grace and efficiency? Even in its 'silent' book form, the central claim of *Forensic Shakespeare* – that, in a set of "forensic plays," Shakespeare composed a number of major speeches "according to a set of rhetorical precepts about how to develop a particular case in accusation or defence" – appears inseparable from the effectiveness of Skinner's own style of argument.

In part, this is because the five elements of the Ciceronian *ars rhetorica* – *inventio, dispositio, elocutio, pronuntiatio,* and *memoria* – remain essential tricks of the scholarly trade, of which Skinner is a master. With skill and panache, Skinner anticipates his audience's objections, makes a compelling and well-supported case for his argument; and he supplies ample evidence for his claims, so as to better force our remembrance.

The first effect produced by *Forensic Shakespeare* in this reader was, I confess, a kind of embarrassment for various editors of Shakespeare's work – those who produce the editions of the plays that are widely sold and taught. How

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is it possible, I wondered, that such a manifest 'source' for such a large piece Shakespeare's art had (with a few exceptions) gone so unnoticed for so long? Skinner is, of course, highly regarded for his influential studies of early modern political theory and the importance of classical rhetoric for Renaissance thought. Perhaps Skinner simply had the advantage of erudition and training in the relevant fields, and was thus well positioned to point out what Shakespeare's editors had missed.

The sense of embarrassment deepens when one recalls that Shakespeare's historicist editors have themselves written book-length studies on, for instance, the Ghost's speech in *Hamlet* without noticing the importance of these rhetorical sources for what the Ghost says; or, biographical sketches of Shakespeare's childhood and professional life, without observing what Skinner calls Shakespeare's "classical and humanist" allegiances – which, Skinner demonstrates, must have been formed in Shakespeare's days as a schoolboy in Stratford.

If nothing else, at any rate, Skinner's study will henceforth be an indispensable reference for scholarly editions of the plays. And this alone is a worthy and commendable achievement. There is something poignantly self-deprecating about Skinner's opening expressions of gratitude for the existence of online concordances and new databases for Shakespeare's work. While these tools are of course convenient and useful, such innovations too often blind us to the vital need for a thorough scholarly preparation, for the study of Latin and foreign languages, for thoughtful consideration. There is no substitute for steeping oneself in the intellectual and cultural climate of whatever period one is studying. And Skinner has once again written a work that demonstrates the indispensability of that kind of preparation (not to mention the "rare book rooms of the great libraries") – whether for the adequate study of Shakespeare, or any other work from the past. (In an era when Shakespeare companies are commissioning 'modern translations' of Shakespeare's work, this kind of reminder is apparently needed.)

Given the generosity and scope of the achievement, it may seem churlish to register anything other than gratitude. Nevertheless, following upon the praise just given, I want to specify one point on which, I thought, Skinner might have insisted with greater force. And I want to do so in order to call into question his opening distinction between what he calls the "interpretation" and the "explanation" of texts (2).

As mentioned, Skinner's aim in *Forensic Shakespeare* is expressly to "say something about the dynamics of Shakespeare's creative processes by way of excavating the intellectual materials out of which these passages are constructed." However, in the end, that "something" turns out to be a rather modest conclusion: Shakespeare "assembled" major speeches in his "forensic plays" "according to" rhetorical precepts that he had learned as a boy, and which he continued to study in his adult life.

Yet, I think, everything Skinner has written (throughout his career) actually leads to, and thus *requires*, a much more ambitious conclusion – one that Skinner might have stated thusly: Shakespeare *could not have written* these speeches, and *could not have become* the dramatist we study, *without* the kind of training in the *ars rhetorica* that his work demonstrates.

Put another way: not only is an awareness of Shakespeare's reliance on classical rhetoric necessary for 'us' – once we concede the requirement of an adequate familiarity with the linguistic and intellectual climate in which Shakespeare wrote, for any serious engagement with the plays. This awareness was also historically necessary for Shakespeare *himself* – for the composition of *that* body of dramatic work. If Skinner is right, in other words, then Shakespeare too had to 'wrestle with' the fruits of his own rhetorical training, in order to become the kind of dramatist that he became. And 'wrestling with Shakespeare's own wrestling' just *is* part of what it must mean for us to "explain" Shakespeare today – where explanation entails, as Skinner puts it, "determining why the works… possess their distinctive characteristics." After all, Shakespeare's use of classical rhetoric in his dramas is not merely the expression of blind instinct, passive transcription or ingrained habit. Rather, Shakespeare's 'use' of that source (like his use of any source) must be seen as evidence of some reflective assessment of that source's importance. And it is precisely *that* reflective assessment on Shakespeare's part that we are interested in.

Skinner goes out of his way to offer a caveat to his study: that he is engaged in "explanation," not "interpretation." But I fail to see the difference. Both the interpreter and the explainer must answer the same question: Why did Shakespeare write *that*? The gold standard for any *explication de texte*, after all, must be whether the interpreter can explain the use of *those* words.

Explanation and interpretation are not the end of the story, of course. We might go on to ask whether Shakespeare's plays teach us anything, whether we can still learn from them, or turn to them for help with our own questions, today. But, in the course of asking these latter questions, we will still invariably find ourselves trying to understand why Shakespeare composed *those* speeches thusly. We cannot arrive at an understanding of what Shakespeare might teach us today without some understanding of why he wrote in this way, rather than another. These are not separate questions. Between the understanding of Shakespeare and the assessment of Shakespeare's value – between explaining and interpreting – there can be no division.

Is this not, in fact, a central lesson of the *trivium*?