Review of "The Figurative Language of the Tragedies of Shakespeare's Chief 16th-Century Contemporaries: An Index" by Louis Charles Stagg

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Stagg lists the image-bearing words in 30 tragedies—Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage, Tamburlaine I and II, The Jew of Malta, The Massacre at Paris, Edward II, and Dr. Faustus; Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, Corinna, and Soliman and Perseda; George Peele's David and Bethsabe, Edward I, and The Battle of Alcazar; Thomas Lodge's The Wounds of Civil War; Samuel Daniel's The Tragedy of Cleopatra; the Countess of Pembroke's translation of The Tragedy of Antonie; Thomas Preston's Cambises; Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's Gorbovus; The Inner Temple's Gismond of Salerne and Robert Wilmot's revision, Tancred and Gismunda; Robert Greene's Selimus; George Gascoigne's Jocasta; Thomas Hughes's The Misfortunes of Arthur; the anonymous A Warning for Fair Women and Arden of Feversham; and the Shakespeare apocrypha Locrine, The True Tragedy of Richard III, The First and Second Parts of the Troublesome Reign of King John, and Edward III. As in Stagg's identically titled companion volume for the 17th century (1982), an appendix cross-references the images by seven major subject categories adapted from Caroline Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us (1935). Cross-references in each of the index's word lists, one for each author, are helpful. “The boundary line between categories” in the appendix, Stagg admits, “is not always too distinct,” reducing the usefulness of the cross-referencing. Where these plays are read and written about, this index will be useful. It is most appropriate for libraries supporting graduate and postgraduate research, partially filling the need for concordances to the works of nearly all of the authors included. Librarians mainly serving undergraduates should carefully examine their curriculum before buying. Questions regarding the most heavily read plays—those of Marlowe—can probably be less expensively answered with Robert J. Fehrenbach's A Concordance to the Plays, Poems, and Translations of Christopher Marlowe (CH, Jul '83).—J.K. Bracken, Knox College