Heather James examines the ways in which Shakespeare handles the inheritance and transmission of the Troy legend. She argues that Shakespeare’s use of Vergil, Ovid, and other classical sources demonstrates the appropriation of classical authority in the interests of developing a national myth, and goes on to distinguish Shakespeare’s deployment of the myth from “official” Tudor and Stuart ideology. James traces Shakespeare’s reworking of the myth in Titus Andronicus, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline, and The Tempest, and shows how the legend of Troy in Queen Elizabeth’s day differed from that in the time of King James. The larger issue the book confronts is the directly political one of the way in which Shakespeare’s textual appropriations participate in the larger cultural project of finding historical legitimation for a realm that was asserting its status as an empire.
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Shakespeare’s Troy

Drama, politics, and the translation of empire

Heather James

University of Southern California
To my parents, Jan and Jerry James, 
and in loving memory of George S. James
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