

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-82115-5 - The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama,
Second Edition

Edited by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway

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The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama

This second edition of the *Companion* offers students up-to-date factual and interpretative material about the principal theatres, playwrights, and plays of the most important period of English drama, from 1580 to 1642. Three wide-ranging chapters on theatres, dramaturgy, and the social, cultural, and political conditions of the drama are followed by chapters describing and illustrating various theatrical genres: private and occasional drama, political plays, heroic plays, burlesque, comedy, tragedy, with a final essay on the drama produced during the reign of Charles I. Several of the essays have been substantially revised and all of the references updated. An expanded biographical and bibliographical section details the work of the dramatists discussed in the book and the best sources for further study. A chronological table provides a full listing of new plays performed from 1497 to 1642, with a parallel list of major political and theatrical events.

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THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
ENGLISH
RENAISSANCE DRAMA

EDITED BY

A. R. BRAUNMULLER

AND

MICHAEL HATTAWAY

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CONTRIBUTORS

LEE BLISS, University of California, Santa Barbara
A. R. BRAUNMULLER, University of California, Los Angeles
JAMES BULMAN, Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania
MARTIN BUTLER, University of Leeds
R. A. FOAKES, University of California at Los Angeles
BRIAN GIBBONS, University of Münster
MICHAEL HATTAWAY, University of Sheffield
MARGOT HEINEMANN, late of University of Cambridge
JILL LEVENSON, University of Toronto
ROBERT N. WATSON, University of California, Los Angeles

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

We know that there is no such thing as a ‘neutral’ organization for a book such as this, indeed, none for any book. Any shaping of material implies (pre)conceptions about that material; every system stipulates an order, any order accepts some values and ignores others. Still, a book must be ordered, and its order should have a phrasable rationale. Throughout, we have aimed for clarity combined with thought-provoking juxtapositions that convey the exciting multifariousness of the drama our contributors examine.

We considered two obvious ways of organizing this *Companion* – by author and by chronology. Our reasons for rejecting these arrangements will make clear the benefits and advantages of the pattern we did choose. Of all the nominally ‘literary’ arts, theatre involves the widest collaboration. Renaissance English drama is, like classical Greek drama, heavily language-biased (and hence written texts provide, or preserve, more pleasure than texts of later drama); nevertheless, the source of these words, the author, is at best *primus inter pares*. For centuries, the act of preparing a play for production has changed the author’s original text, and the Renaissance theatre was no different. Talking about plays in terms of their authors, like the common metonymy by which we use ‘Milton’ to refer to ‘L’Allegro’, *Arcades*, *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, etc., is a convenience, emphasizing some elements in our relation with a play or other literary work, but ignoring or minimizing others. Discourse about drama almost inevitably speaks of authors and authorship, but to make authors the exclusive basis of our approach to fifty or more years of intense activity ignores the theatre as a collaborative mass art (whether the ‘mass’ of responding spectators be several hundred at the ‘private’ Blackfriars or 2,500 at the ‘public’ Globe), disregards the creative and coercive power of convention, that necessary mediator of similarity and difference, and ignores the less visible but even more powerful forces of society and culture.

An arrangement in chronological terms is still more artificial, since it lacks even the basis in psychological identity provided by individual

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authors. Chronology's drawbacks are most simply illustrated in its grossest form, division by regnal periods. 'Elizabethan', 'Tudor', 'Jacobean', 'Stuart' ordinarily can point to the crudest of contrasts, even if we recognize how absurd it is to suppose, for example, that Jonson, Shakespeare, or Chapman, or their theatre companies, or the audiences, or their experiences and sensibilities changed detectably on that day in March 1603 when Queen Elizabeth died. (This absurdity is proved by the fact of revivals: placing prominence on only the first performance of any one play obscures the kinds of popularity and importance it may have enjoyed with different kinds of companies and at different periods – witness the early theatrical fortunes of Marston's *Malcontent*, originally a children's play, but soon performed by an adult, public theatre company in revenge for the children's producing an adult company's play at the Blackfriars.) Any chronological organization suffers from some form of the problem caused by regnal divisions – important theatrical events rarely march to the calendar's arbitrary metronome, and even when one could argue for an overall consistency or expository clarity offered by the plays, players, audiences, and social conditions of, e.g., the 1590s, what of the 1580s, or the half-decade 1615–20? Imprecise or unknown dates of composition, first performance, and revival also serve to make the dates of the volume's chronological range, 1580–1642, define an area of concentration and not set limits to a period.

The predominant organizing principle of this *Companion* is generic, but 'genre' conceived without neo-classical rigidity. Instead, our contributors have been asked to conceive of genre so as to catch some of the idea's Renaissance capaciousness: the mingle-mangle of clowns and kings, the variety of Bartholomew Fair, the social and musical expectations of a masque-audience. Occasionally, identifiable theatrical change does more or less coincide with a period neatly typified by some non-theatrical event, and we feel that Caroline drama is an example. Even here, however, we would claim no hard and fast temporal boundary, no throwing of switch or gears at the accession of Charles I. Rather, social and political changes rooted as far back as the economic and educational crises of the 1590s and parliamentary events of the later years of James's reign now appear forcefully in the plays produced during his son's reign.

Finally, we have made no attempt to be encyclopaedic. Our contributors were each assigned a list of representative plays appropriate to their topics, and were encouraged to offer accounts or analyses of particular passages or sequences. The general editors thus attempted to avoid duplicating material and to make certain that some account appeared of works by each major author, but they could not guarantee that a place would be found for *every* play commonly taken to rank among the period's masterpieces.

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Shakespeare was included but given no privileged treatment. Some contributors have ranged more widely from the agreed texts than others, and this was always the intention. The essays seek not to be definitive but perhaps to be paradigmatic: to offer the reader ways of experiencing texts and performances, to provoke further reading, and, above all, to add to the enjoyment of Renaissance dramatic texts in the study and the play-house. The volume's apparatus does, however, attempt a conspectus of the best that has been written about the period and about authors. The Bibliography offers a selection of further reading on many of the topics covered in this volume – and many that could not be included in a book of this size. Major and some minor authors are there accorded a brief biography, a citation of the standard edition of their complete works (if there is one), and a brief list of relevant studies. Within the book, each essay is followed by a bibliographical note in which our expert contributors offer guidance on important past and recent work in their areas. The volume ends with a fairly comprehensive chronological table of plays and theatrical and political events. With these guides, and the volume's indices, we hope to match the curiosity and interest of both general and specialist readers.

Our contributors have graciously helped us and each other in shaping this volume. We thank Mary Jane Ross for her assistance in compiling many of the biographies and bibliographical materials and Sarah Stanton and Victoria Cooper for their patience and counsel in seeing the book through the press.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

Since *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* first appeared in 1990, a great deal of important writing has appeared concerning the ideology, history, playing spaces, plays, playwrights, audiences, technology and much else of the early modern professional theatre in England. More than a decade on, major works of critical and documentary scholarship enrich our new edition's still heavily selective bibliography and bibliographies. We draw attention to this continued vitality by expanding those parts of the volume and, more important, by inviting our contributors to revise and, where possible, to improve their chapters. To say much more about what is, we trust, improved in this second edition would be invidious and an odorous comparison. As humble and obedient servants of the students, teachers, and practitioners who read this book, we may note exceptional advances in studies of theatrical companies, the lives of individual theatre professionals, the cultural circumstances of play-writing, performance, and reception.

The editors thank, once more, the contributors, and especially wish to thank Anne M. Myers and Beth A. Wightman for assistance in preparing the new edition and Sarah Stanton and the other professionals at the Press who made this revision possible.

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A NOTE ON DATES, REFERENCES, AND QUOTATIONS

The dates assigned to plays are those of composition and/or performance and derive from Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700*, rev. edn, S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Wagonheim (London, 1989); these dates are often speculative or unreliable, and contributors have felt free to modify them.

References in the notes are given in full at first mention and by author and short title thereafter. Author and short title only are given for a work that appears in full either in the select bibliography (pp. 372–80) or in the relevant bio-bibliography (pp. 380–419) when the work deals with a particular playwright.

Contributors have generally cited the following editions; divergences from and additions to this list are mentioned in the bibliographies to individual chapters. Spelling and punctuation have been silently modernized.

The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge, 1966–96)

The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies (Urbana, Illinois, 1970) and *The Tragedies* (Cambridge, 1987), gen. ed. Allan Holaday

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1935–61)

The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson, ed. G. A. Wilkes, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1981–2)

The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Fredson Bowers, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1981)

The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger, ed. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1976)

The Life and Works of George Peele, gen. ed. C. T. Prouty, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn. 1952–71)

The New Cambridge Shakespeare, gen. eds. Philip Brockbank, Brian Gibbons, and A. R. Braunmuller (Cambridge, 1984–)

The Works of John Webster, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, Antony Hammond, and MacDonald P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995–)

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| CL | <i>Comparative Literature</i> |
| CompD | <i>Comparative Drama</i> |
| CritQ | <i>Critical Quarterly</i> |
| DUJ | <i>Durham University Journal</i> |
| E&S | <i>Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association</i> |
| EIC | <i>Essays in Criticism</i> |
| ELH | <i>ELH: A Journal of English Literary History</i> |
| ELR | <i>English Literary Renaissance</i> |
| EM | <i>English Miscellany</i> |
| ES | <i>English Studies</i> |
| HLQ | <i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i> |
| JEGP | <i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i> |
| JWCI | <i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i> |
| MARDIE | <i>Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England</i> |
| MLN | <i>Modern Language Notes</i> |
| MLQ | <i>Modern Language Quarterly</i> |
| MLR | <i>Modern Language Review</i> |
| MP | <i>Modern Philology</i> |
| NLH | <i>New Literary History</i> |
| NQ | <i>Notes and Queries</i> |
| OED | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> |
| PMLA | <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i> |
| PQ | <i>Philological Quarterly</i> |
| RenD | <i>Renaissance Drama</i> |
| RenQ | <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i> (formerly <i>Renaissance News</i>) |
| RES | <i>Review of English Studies</i> |
| RMS | <i>Renaissance and Modern Studies</i> |
| RORD | <i>Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama</i> |
| s.d. | stage direction |

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| SEL | <i>Studies in English Literature</i> |
| ShakS | <i>Shakespeare Studies</i> |
| ShJ | <i>Shakespeare Jahrbuch</i> |
| ShS | <i>Shakespeare Survey</i> |
| SP | <i>Studies in Philology</i> |
| SQ | <i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i> |
| TDR | <i>Tulane Drama Review</i> |
| TSLL | <i>Texas Studies in Language and Literature</i> |
| UTQ | <i>University of Toronto Quarterly</i> |
| YJC | <i>Yale Journal of Criticism</i> |
| YR | <i>Yale Review</i> |