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Locating the Queen's Men, 1583-1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing

Sally-Beth MacLean

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"The shift from pageantry in the nineteenth century to metatheater in numerous recent productions is not a matter of wrong and right," he says, "but of a response in the theater to seismic shifts in cultural attitudes and preferences" (182). His examples are well chosen and edgy; it is a pity that he does not pass beyond cataloguing examples to speculate on the causes and outcomes of the phenomenon.

The book appears to be directed at the general reader or the student rather than the scholar, and as such it succeeds brilliantly. It is clearly written, with a blessed absence of performance-theory jargon. Speculation is carefully distinguished from historical fact. And at all times, the author provides sufficient plot detail to permit the reader to grasp his argument without keeping a text in hand. To say the book is designed for the nonspecialist should not imply, however, that it lacks scholarly interest. Bevington's insights are never less than intriguing, and his performance citations, particularly those to film, television, and less familiar contemporary productions, are informative and resonant.

It is unfortunate that several minor oversights in the hardcover edition remain uncorrected: I note particularly the misleading phrase "Shakespeare's tragedies of the mid- and late 1600s" (159), a reference to *Pericles* (200) when *Cymbeline* is intended; and the erroneous statement that John Philip Kemble's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1813) featured Helen Faucit as Cleopatra (181). Faucit was born only in 1817. The actress was, in fact, Harriet Faucit, Helen's mother.

Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing. Edited by HELEN OSTOVICH, HOLGER SCHOTT SYME, and ANDREW GRIFFIN. Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. Pp. xiv + 270. \$99.95 cloth.

Reviewed by SALLY-BETH MACLEAN

This collection of sixteen essays, focusing on the Elizabethan acting company known as the Queen's Men, derives from a stimulating conference held in conjunction with a theatrical experiment to mount a limited tour of three of their known plays to six different Canadian venues in the Toronto-Hamilton area in October 2006. The collection is dedicated to the memory of Scott McMillin, who would have been both amazed and delighted by the scholarly and dramaturgic energy that has continued the exploration of the company's repertory and practices initiated by our coauthored study, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (1998). The relevance of this publication for those interested in Shakespeare is primarily in the context provided for understanding, as the subtitle suggests, the material practices and conditions of playing during his early years in the theater, whether or not he joined the Queen's Men as his first engagement.

The essays are grouped into four parts: "In and Out of London," "The Repertory on Page and Stage," "Figuring Character," and "From Script to Stage." The twenty-three-page introduction serves up a meaty contribution to the study of the company and its contemporary significance. Among other observations, the editors rightly challenge traditional assumptions that the Queen's Men declined in popularity

in London in the 1590s—an era when the documentary evidence comes primarily from Henslowe's *Diary* for the Rose theater, only one of several urban playing venues available. Also questioning the measurement of London success by the print history of plays (a prevalent interpretation that will always favor a Marlowe or a Shakespeare but not Greene, who wrote several plays for the Queen's Men), the editors point out that stationers of the time apparently still considered Queen's plays marketable in the 1590s, noting that the company was showing economic good sense rather than failure in seeking this relatively new source of revenue.

To my mind, the first and strongest part of the collection features essays on touring, performance spaces, and patronage by the late Barbara D. Palmer, Paul Whitfield White, Lawrence Manley, David Kathman, and Tiffany Stern. Palmer's careful tally of portable props, costumes, and special effects required to tour three plays in the Queen's Men's repertory (*King Leir*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*) proves a worthwhile exercise. While one might debate the likelihood that *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was in the touring repertory—larger items to be carried included, for example, a golden tree with a fire-breathing dragon—the need to extend our thoughts of doubling beyond cast to props and costumes is urged persuasively in Palmer's fictive northern provincial tour account. White's study of the continuing reception of the Queen's Men at Cambridge during a period when University officials were striving to ban professional players is a rewarding example of the dividends yielded by detailed research into the shifting influence of local officials and powerful patrons such as Lord North of Kirtling on communities like Cambridge. Two other important essays in this section will be further developed in book-length studies: Manley explores the Stanley family's history; the flattering representation of the role of Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby, in the *True Tragedie of Richard the Third*; and the possibility that this might have been the complimentary play the Queen's Men performed at New Park in 1588. And Kathman's account of the Bull and the Bell, two London inns known to have been used by the Queen's Men, focuses on venues too often overlooked in standard theater histories; my only caveat is the omission of the relevant sections of the 1676 Ogilby and Morgan map to situate his detailed description.

Picking up Kathman's theme of neglected theater spaces in the final essay of the first section, Tiffany Stern presents an early "biography" of the Curtain Theater on the outskirts of London from its establishment in 1577 to 1599 and explores the impact its fixed space might have had on the plays performed there. Her focus is not on the plays of the Queen's Men, although it is open to legitimate speculation whether the company performed at the Curtain while in London during the 1580s and 1590s. Rather, she selects *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, and *Every Man in His Humor* for examination, as plays possibly influenced in specific ways by the theater where they were performed, the Curtain of bawdy reputation and less glamorous status. Underlying her essay is a question that might have connected it with Peter Cockett's reflections on the theatrical experiment of re-forming the Queen's Men in the early twenty-first century at the end of the book: can the current trend for reconstructed theaters truly recreate a constantly evolving performance past?

Repertory in part 2 is most directly addressed by Roslyn L. Knutson's bold tackling of the topic in "The Start of Something Big," where she ventures beyond the conservative list of nine plays identified as Queen's by Scott McMillin and tackles the B-list of possibilities according to the key elements that he identified as their dramaturgical style. Her focus is on the prepublication period, 1583 to 1591, although she scores some important points about their enduring influence beyond that heyday. Along the way, she considers plays that the founding members of the company might have brought with them and the most likely candidates among surviving history plays that could fit with (or been influenced by) such a company style, as well as its political agenda. We are presented with intriguing speculations to consider, my only addition being a play Knutson sees but retreats from as a "good bet": *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* was performed at court, quite possibly by Derby's Men in 1582, and then may have been brought to the Queen's new company early the next year by recruits from Derby's, a notable company that ceased to exist at the same time. Three studies of individual plays in the known repertory follow: Ian Munro's on *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, Brian Walsh's on *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, and Richard Dutton's important analysis of the often-disparaged Quarto text of *Henry V* (probably performed in 1599) and its debt to *Famous Victories* (published in 1598), which will be of particular interest to Shakespeare scholars.

The third section, "Figuring Character," features more studies of individual plays: two by Alan C. Dessen and Lloyd Edward Kermode on Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* and two by Karen Oberer and Tara L. Lyons on *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, although Oberer also includes *Famous Victories* in her examination of appropriations of the popular tradition. No contributor has risen to the challenge of two less-examined Queen's Men plays, *Selimus* and *Clyomon and Clamydes*.

Given the impetus for this collection, the highlight of the three essays in the final section must be Peter Cockett's "Performing the Queen's Men: A Project in Theatre Historiography." Cockett was the guiding spirit, if not a conventional director, for the recreated "Queen's Men" company of twelve, with three Equity "master actors," eight nonunion "hired men," and three others taking apprentice roles (including the music director) (231). His fascinating account of the theatrical experiment focuses on the challenges of casting the three plays chosen for the touring repertory and of approximating the Elizabethan rehearsal process. While one might be skeptical that much can be learned from modern audience response to Elizabethan political propaganda, some of the other reflections on the historically informed creative process suggest elements of the original company's practice: constant adaptability while touring, collective improvisation, and an emphasis on individual role and character typing as actors' shorthand response to the need to engage quickly with doubling roles and multiple plays without access to full texts, only the lines to be learned.

If the principal goal of *Locating the Queen's Men* was to open up new perspectives on the company, its repertory, dramaturgic practices, and economic fate, the editors have certainly succeeded. The best essays in the collection are those that will stimulate further fresh research in the elusive, elliptical world of late Elizabethan

theater and contemporary troupes like the Queen's Men, doomed to be eclipsed until very recently by the dominance of Chamberlain's / King's Men, the company of Shakespeare and his plays.

Documents of Performance in Early Modern England. By TIFFANY STERN. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv + 362. \$95.00 cloth.

Reviewed by C. E. McGEE

Documents of Performance in Early Modern England is an important and fascinating book. Taking as her starting point the uncomplimentary characterizations of playwrights as "play-patchers" and "Cobler[s] of Poetrie" (1), Tiffany Stern observes that these disparaging terms of reference accurately registered the patchiness of the writing and production of plays in early modern English theaters. The various textual fragments that led to, and through, the performance of a play—each fragment having "a separate home, a separate circulation and, as often as not, a separate writer" (3)—include plot scenarios, playbills, arguments, prologues and epilogues, interim entertainments, songs and masques, scrolls, backstage plots, actors' parts, and the approved "book" (itself only one of four possible copies of the full text). Consisting of "chapters that hover between bibliography and theatre history" (4), *Documents of Performance* challenges many misconceptions and sheds new light on the personnel and practices of early modern theaters and on the fragmentary character of the texts they required, produced, used, and sometimes saw reproduced in print. What emerges is such a rich sense of the complex makeup of an early modern playtext that *Documents of Performance* is valuable reading for anyone interested in the editing or textual criticism of plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

The scarcity of the documents in question complicates the analysis of the specific "patches." From the early modern period, no playbills and only one "property letter for a 'staged' occasion" (186), two "arguments," five actor's parts, and seven backstage plots survive. As a result, Stern has to rely (and does so judiciously) on later playhouse procedures, continental materials, cognate forms (court masques or university productions), and analogous documents—no *playbills* before 1687 survive, but bills advertising bear-baiting, rope-dancing, a challenge, and a puppet show do. These analogues, along with what is said *about* playbills in a wide array of other sources, make for an intriguing argument about their content, graphic design, distribution, and residual traces on title pages.

When documents are extant, Stern inspects them closely for the bibliographic evidence they offer concerning performance. First, theater scrolls: evidence of them appears in manuscript and printed playtexts, which set off "the papers that are to be delivered onstage, such as letters, proclamations, bills, verses" (174) by the use of different fonts, quotation marks, large capitals, or marginalia. These features are not, Stern argues, a manifestation of the "'literising' of texts for the page," but signs