



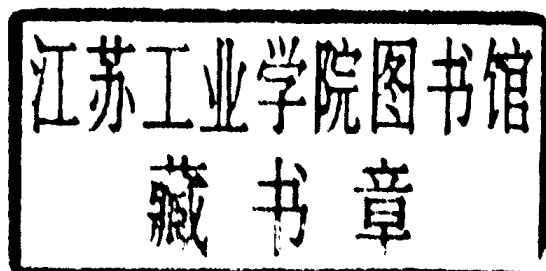
A COMPANION TO
SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS
THE TRAGEDIES

EDITED BY **RICHARD DUTTON**
AND **JEAN E. HOWARD**

A COMPANION TO
SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

VOLUME I
THE TRAGEDIES

EDITED BY RICHARD DUTTON
AND JEAN E. HOWARD



Editorial material and organization copyright © 2003, 2006 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

BLACKWELL PUBLISHING
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK
550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

The right of Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard to be identified as the Authors of the Editorial Material in this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

First published 2003
First published in paperback 2006 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

1 2006

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A companion to Shakespeare's works / edited by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard.
p. cm. — (Blackwell companions to literature and culture ; 17–20)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: v. 1. The tragedies — v. 2. The histories — v. 3. The comedies — v. 4. Poems, problem comedies, late plays.

ISBN 0-631-22632-X (v. 1 : alk. paper) — ISBN 1-4051-3605-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 — Criticism and interpretation — Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Dutton, Richard, 1948– II. Howard, Jean E. (Jean Elizabeth), 1948– III. Series.

PR2976 .C572 2003
822.3'3 – dc21 2002074602

ISBN-13: 978-0-631-22632-1 (v. 1 : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-3605-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-0730-3 (four-volume set)
ISBN-10: 1-4051-0730-8 (four-volume set)

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 11 on 13pt Garamond 3
by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd, Hong Kong
Printed and bound in the United Kingdom
by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

For further information on
Blackwell Publishing, visit our website:
www.blackwellpublishing.com

A Companion to Shakespeare's Works

This four-volume *Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, compiled as a single entity, offers a uniquely comprehensive snapshot of current Shakespeare criticism.

Complementing David Scott Kastan's *A Companion to Shakespeare* (1999), which focused on Shakespeare as an author in his historical context, these volumes examine each of his plays and major poems using all the resources of contemporary criticism from performance studies to feminist, historicist, and textual analyses.

Scholars from all over the world – Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States – have joined in the writing of new essays addressing virtually the whole of Shakespeare's canon from a rich variety of critical perspectives. A mixture of younger and more established scholars, their work reflects some of the most interesting research currently being conducted in Shakespeare studies.

Arguing for the persistence and utility of genre as a rubric for teaching and writing about Shakespeare's works, the editors have organized the four volumes in relation to generic categories: namely, the tragedies, the histories, the comedies, and the poems, problem comedies, and late plays. Each volume thus contains individual essays on all texts in the relevant category, as well as more general essays looking at critical issues and approaches more widely relevant to the genre.

This ambitious project offers a provocative roadmap to Shakespeare studies at the dawning of the twenty-first century.

Companion to Shakespeare's Works

Edited by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard

A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume I: The Tragedies

A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume II: The Histories

A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume III: The Comedies

A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV: The Poems,
Problem Comedies, Late Plays

Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture

This series offers comprehensive, newly written surveys of key periods and movements and certain major authors, in English literary culture and history. Extensive volumes provide new perspectives and positions on contexts and on canonical and post-canonical texts, orientating the beginning student in new fields of study and providing the experienced undergraduate and new graduate with current and new directions, as pioneered and developed by leading scholars in the field.

- 1 A Companion to Romanticism Edited by Duncan Wu
- 2 A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture Edited by Herbert F. Tucker
- 3 A Companion to Shakespeare Edited by David Scott Kastan
- 4 A Companion to the Gothic Edited by David Punter
- 5 A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare Edited by Dymphna Callaghan
- 6 A Companion to Chaucer Edited by Peter Brown
- 7 A Companion to Literature from Milton to Blake Edited by David Womersley
- 8 A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture Edited by Michael Hattaway
- 9 A Companion to Milton Edited by Thomas N. Corns
- 10 A Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry Edited by Neil Roberts
- 11 A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture Edited by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treebarne
- 12 A Companion to Restoration Drama Edited by Susan J. Owen
- 13 A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing Edited by Anita Pacheco
- 14 A Companion to Renaissance Drama Edited by Arthur F. Kinney
- 15 A Companion to Victorian Poetry Edited by Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Antony H. Harrison
- 16 A Companion to the Victorian Novel Edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Tbesing
- 17–20 A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Volumes I–IV Edited by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard
- 21 A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America Edited by Charles L. Crow
- 22 A Companion to Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism Edited by Walter Jost and Wendy Olmsted
- 23 A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South Edited by Richard Gray and Owen Robinson
- 24 A Companion to American Fiction 1780–1865 Edited by Shirley Samuels
- 25 A Companion to American Fiction 1865–1914 Edited by Robert Paul Lamb and G. R. Thompson
- 26 A Companion to Digital Humanities Edited by Susan Schresbman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth
- 27 A Companion to Romance Edited by Corinne Saunders
- 28 A Companion to the British and Irish Novel 1945–2000 Edited by Brian W. Shaffer
- 29 A Companion to Twentieth-Century American Drama Edited by David Krasner
- 30 A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture Edited by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia
- 31 A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture Edited by Rory McTurk
- 32 A Companion to Tragedy Edited by Rebecca Bushnell
- 33 A Companion to Narrative Theory Edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz
- 34 A Companion to Science Fiction Edited by David Seed
- 35 A Companion to the Literatures of Colonial America Edited by Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer

Notes on Contributors

Catherine Belsey chairs the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University. Her books include *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (1985), *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (1994), and *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (1999).

Philippa Berry is a Fellow and Director of Studies in English at King's College, University of Cambridge. She combines interdisciplinary research in English and European Renaissance culture with work on feminist and postmodern theory. She is the author of *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (1989) and *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (1999), and co-editor of *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (1992) and *Textures of Renaissance Knowledge* (forthcoming).

Gordon Braden is John C. Coleman Professor of English at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry*, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, *The Idea of the Renaissance* (with William Kerrigan), and *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance*.

Jerry Brotton is Lecturer in Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary College, University of London. He is the author of *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* (1997), *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (2002), and with Lisa Jardine, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (2000). He is currently writing a book on the art collection of King Charles I.

Mark Thornton Burnett is a Reader in English at the Queen's University of Belfast. He is the author of *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997), the editor of *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (1999) and *Christopher Marlowe: Complete Poems* (2000), and the co-editor of *New Essays*

on "Hamlet" (1994), *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture* (1997), and *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle* (2000). His forthcoming book is entitled *Constructing "Monsters" in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture*.

Rebecca W. Bushnell is Associate Dean for Arts and Letters and Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. Her books include *Prophesying Tragedy: Sign and Voice in Sophocles' Theban Plays* (1988), *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1990), and *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (1996). She has just completed a study of early modern English gardening books.

Martin Coyle is Chair of the Board of Studies for English Literature at Cardiff University. He is joint general editor of the New Casebooks series.

Hugh Grady is Professor of English at Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania and the author of *The Modernist Shakespeare: Critical Texts in a Material World* (1991, 1994), *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Modernity* (1996), and *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from "Richard II" to "Hamlet"* (2003).

Kim Hall holds the Thomas F. X. Mullarkey Chair in Literature at Fordham University. The author of *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (1995), she has published numerous articles on race in Renaissance/early modern culture and has lectured nationally and internationally on Shakespeare, race theory, Renaissance women writers, visual arts, material culture, and pedagogy. She is currently working on two books: *Othello: Texts and Contexts* and *The Sweet Taste of Empire: Gender and Material Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*.

Graham Holderness is Professor of English, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education, and Director of Research at the Graduate School at the University of Hertfordshire. He has published extensively in modern and early modern literature and drama, being author, co-author, editor or co-editor of 30 books, 22 of which are on Shakespeare. These include *Shakespeare's History* (1985), *The Shakespeare Myth* (1988), *Shakespeare: The Play of History* (1988), *Shakespeare: Out of Court* (1990), *Shakespeare's History-Plays: Richard II to Henry V* (1992), *Shakespeare: The Histories* (2000), *Cultural Shakespeare* (2001), *Visual Shakespeare* (2001), and *Textual Shakespeare* (2002). His first novel, *The Prince of Denmark*, was published in 2001, and a poetry collection, *Craeft: Poems from the Anglo-Saxon*, was awarded the Poetry Book Society recommendation for summer 2002.

David Scott Kastan is Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. He has written widely on Shakespeare, most recently *Shakespeare*

and the Book (2001). He is a general editor of the Arden Shakespeare, and his edition of *1 Henry IV* for that series appeared in the autumn of 2002.

Bernice W. Kliman is Professor of English Emeritus, Nassau Community College, and coordinates the New Variorum Hamlet project for the Modern Language Association. She has authored or edited several books (most recently *Approaches to Teaching Hamlet*) and written many essays, reviews, and notes, mainly on performance and on editing, in journals such as *AEB (Analytic and Enumerative Bibliography)*, *Cahiers Elisabethains*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *Shakespeare Newsletter*, and *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Naomi Conn Liebler is Professor of English and University Distinguished Scholar at Montclair State University. She is the author of *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Genre* (1995), co-editor of *Tragedy* (1998) an anthology of theoretical readings in the genre, and editor of *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama* (2002). She has published numerous essays on Shakespeare, other early modern English drama, and modern European and American drama, and is presently working on a critical edition of Richard Johnson's 1596–7 prose romance, *The Most Famous History of the Seven Champions of Christendom*.

Richard C. McCoy is Professor of English at Queen's College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and the author of *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia* (1979), *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (1989), and *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation* (2002).

Kathleen McLuskie is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Southampton. She is editing *Macbeth* for Arden 3 and working on the commercialization of early modern culture.

Cynthia Marshall is Professor of English at Rhodes College in Memphis. She is the author of *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (2002) and editor of *Shakespeare in Production: As You Like It* (forthcoming).

Michael Neill is Professor of English at the University of Auckland, New Zealand; he is the author of *Issues of Death* (1997) and *Putting History to the Question* (2000). He has edited *Antony and Cleopatra* for the Oxford Shakespeare, and is currently editing *Othello* for the same series.

Sasha Roberts is a Lecturer in English at the University of Kent. Her publications include *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (2002), *Women Reading Shakespeare, 1660–1900: An Edited Anthology* (co-edited with Ann Thompson, 1997), *Romeo and Juliet* in the new *Writers and Their Work* series (1998), and articles on Shakespeare, early modern reading practices, and visual culture. She is currently

researching a book on the formation of literary taste in early modern manuscript culture.

Kenneth S. Rothwell is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Vermont, Burlington. He co-founded and co-edited with Bernice W. Kliman the *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter*, produced the Shakespeare on Film Festival in 1996 at the Los Angeles World Shakespeare Congress, and has most recently published *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television* (1999), and "An Annotated Screenography" for the MLA, *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Hamlet* (2001).

Katherine Rowe is Associate Professor of English at Bryn Mawr. Her publications include *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* (1999), as well as articles on Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, early modern psychology, and film. Her current projects include a co-edited anthology, *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (2003), and a study of contractual relations in Stuart drama.

Kiernan Ryan is Professor of English at Royal Holloway, University of London, and a Fellow of New Hall, University of Cambridge. His most recent publications include *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays* (1993), *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader* (1996), *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (1999), *Shakespeare: Texts and Contexts* (2000), and *Shakespeare* (3rd edn., 2002). He is currently completing a study of Shakespearean comedy and romance.

Jyotsna G. Singh is an Associate Professor of English at Michigan State University. She is the author of *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism* (1996) and the co-author of *The Wayward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics* (Blackwell, 1994). Most recently, she co-edited *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period* (2000).

Ian Smith is Associate Professor of English at Lafayette College. He has published principally on Shakespeare and on postcolonial literature. He is currently preparing a book on race and barbarism in the Renaissance.

Contents

Notes on Contributors	vii
Introduction	1
1 "A rarity most beloved": Shakespeare and the Idea of Tragedy <i>David Scott Kastan</i>	4
2 The Tragedies of Shakespeare's Contemporaries <i>Martin Coyle</i>	23
3 Minds in Company: Shakespearean Tragic Emotions <i>Katherine Rowe</i>	47
4 The Divided Tragic Hero <i>Catherine Belsey</i>	73
5 Disjointed Times and Half-Remembered Truths in Shakespearean Tragedy <i>Philippa Berry</i>	95
6 Reading Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>Othello</i> , and <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> in Early Modern England <i>Sasha Roberts</i>	108
7 <i>Hamlet</i> Productions Starring Beale, Hawke, and Darling From the Perspective of Performance History <i>Bernice W. Kliman</i>	134
8 Text and Tragedy <i>Graham Holderness</i>	158

9	Shakespearean Tragedy and Religious Identity <i>Richard C. McCoy</i>	178
10	Shakespeare's Roman Tragedies <i>Gordon Braden</i>	199
11	Tragedy and Geography <i>Jerry Brotton</i>	219
12	Classic Film Versions of Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Mirror for the Times <i>Kenneth S. Rothwell</i>	241
13	Contemporary Film Versions of the Tragedies <i>Mark Thornton Burnett</i>	262
14	<i>Titus Andronicus</i> : A Time for Race and Revenge <i>Ian Smith</i>	284
15	"There is no world without Verona walls": The City in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>Naomi Conn Liebler</i>	303
16	"He that thou knowest thine": Friendship and Service in <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Michael Neill</i>	319
17	<i>Julius Caesar</i> <i>Rebecca W. Bushnell</i>	339
18	<i>Othello</i> and the Problem of Blackness <i>Kim F. Hall</i>	357
19	<i>King Lear</i> <i>Kiernan Ryan</i>	375
20	<i>Macbeth</i> , the Present, and the Past <i>Kathleen McLuskie</i>	393
21	The Politics of Empathy in <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> : A View from Below <i>Jyotsna G. Singh</i>	411
22	<i>Timon of Athens</i> : The Dialectic of Usury, Nihilism, and Art <i>Hugh Grady</i>	430
23	<i>Coriolanus</i> and the Politics of Theatrical Pleasure <i>Cynthia Marshall</i>	452
	Index	473

Introduction

The four *Companions to Shakespeare's Works* (*Tragedies; Histories; Comedies; Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*) were compiled as a single entity designed to offer a uniquely comprehensive snapshot of current Shakespeare criticism. Complementing David Scott Kastan's *Companion to Shakespeare* (1999), which focused on Shakespeare as an author in his historical context, these volumes by contrast focus on Shakespeare's works, both the plays and major poems, and aim to showcase some of the most interesting critical research currently being conducted in Shakespeare studies.

To that end the editors commissioned scholars from many quarters of the world – Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States – to write new essays that, collectively, address virtually the whole of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic canon. The decision to organize the volumes along generic lines (rather than, say, thematically or chronologically) was made for a mixture of intellectual and pragmatic reasons. It is still quite common, for example, to teach or to write about Shakespeare's works as tragedies, histories, comedies, late plays, sonnets, or narrative poems. And there is much evidence to suggest that a similar language of poetic and dramatic "kinds" or genres was widely current in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. George Puttenham and Philip Sidney – to mention just two sixteenth-century English writers interested in poetics – both assume the importance of genre as a way of understanding differences among texts; and the division of Shakespeare's plays in the First Folio of 1623 into comedies, histories, and tragedies offers some warrant for thinking that these generic rubrics would have had meaning for Shakespeare's readers and certainly for those members of his acting company who helped to assemble the volume. Of course, exactly *what* those rubrics meant in Shakespeare's day is partly what requires critical investigation. For example, we do not currently think of *Cymbeline* as a tragedy, though it is listed as such in the First Folio, nor do we find the First Folio employing terms such as "problem plays," "romances," and "tragicomedies" which subsequent critics have used to designate groups of plays. Consequently, a number of essays in these volumes self-consciously

examine the meanings and lineages of the terms used to separate one genre from another and to compare the way Shakespeare and his contemporaries reworked the generic templates that were their common heritage and mutually constituted creation.

Pragmatically, we as editors also needed a way to divide the material we saw as necessary for a Companion to Shakespeare's Works that aimed to provide an overview of the exciting scholarly work being done in Shakespeare studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Conveniently, certain categories of his works are equally substantial in terms of volume. Shakespeare wrote about as many tragedies as histories, and again about as many "festive" or "romantic" comedies, so it was possible to assign each of these groupings a volume of its own. This left a decidedly less unified fourth volume to handle not only the non-dramatic verse, but also those much-contested categories of "problem comedies" and "late plays." In the First Folio, a number of plays included in this volume were listed among the comedies: namely, *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Winter's Tale*. *Troilus and Cressida* was not listed in the prefatory catalog, though it appears between the histories and tragedies in the actual volume and is described (contrary to the earlier quarto) as a tragedy. *Cymbeline* is listed as a tragedy; *Henry VIII* appears as the last of the history plays. *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* do not appear at all. This volume obviously offers less generic unity than the other three, but it provides special opportunities to think again about the utility and theoretical coherence of the terms by which both Shakespeare's contemporaries and generations of subsequent critics have attempted to understand the conventionalized means through which his texts can meaningfully be distinguished and grouped.

When it came to the design of each volume, the editors assigned an essay on each play (or on the narrative poems and sonnets) and about the same number of somewhat longer essays designed to take up larger critical problems relevant to the genre or to a particular grouping of plays. For example, we commissioned essays on the plays in performance (both on stage and in films), on the imagined geography of different kinds of plays, on Shakespeare's relationship to his contemporaries working in a particular genre, and on categorizations such as tragedy, history, or tragicomedy. We also invited essays on specific topics of current interest such as the influence of Ovid on Shakespeare's early narrative poems, Shakespeare's practice as a collaborative writer, his representations of popular rebellion, the homoerotic dimensions of his comedies, or the effects of censorship on his work. As a result, while there will be a free-standing essay on *Macbeth* in the tragedy volume, one will also find in the same volume a discussion of the same aspect of the play in Richard McCoy's essay on "Shakespearean Tragedy and Religious Identity," in Katherine Rowe's "Minds in Company: Shakespearean Tragic Emotions," in Graham Holderness's "Text and Tragedy," and in other pieces as well. For those who engage fully with the richness and variety of the essays available within each volume, we hope that the whole will consequently amount to much more than the sum of its parts.

Within this structure we invited our contributors – specifically chosen to reflect a generational mix of established and younger critics – to write as scholars addressing

fellow scholars. That is, we sought interventions in current critical debates and examples of people's ongoing research rather than overviews of or introductions to a topic. We invited contributors to write for their peers and graduate students, rather than tailoring essays primarily to undergraduates. Beyond that, we invited a diversity of approaches; our aim was to showcase the best of current work rather than to advocate for any particular critical or theoretical perspective. If these volumes are in any senses a representative trawl of contemporary critical practice, they suggest that it would be premature to assume we have reached a post-theoretical era. Many lines of theoretical practice converge in these essays: historicist, certainly, but also Derridean, Marxist, performance-oriented, feminist, queer, and textual/editorial. Race, class, gender, bodies, and emotions, now carefully historicized, have not lost their power as organizing rubrics for original critical investigations; attention to religion, especially the Catholic contexts for Shakespeare's inventions, has perhaps never been more pronounced; political theory, including investigations of republicanism, continues to yield impressive insights into the plays. At the same time, there is a marked turn to new forms of empiricist inquiry, including, in particular, attention to early readers' responses to Shakespeare's texts and a newly vigorous interest in how Shakespeare's plays relate to the work of his fellow dramatists. Each essay opens to a larger world of scholarship on the questions addressed, and through the list of references and further reading included at the end of each chapter, the contributors invite readers to pursue their own inquiries on these topics. We believe that the quite remarkable range of essays included in these volumes will be valuable to anyone involved in teaching, writing, and thinking about Shakespeare at the beginning of the new century.

The editors did not commission a separate essay on Edward III, but several contributors have chosen to treat it as a Shakespearean text: please see the index. We did commission an essay on Henry VIII, but that appears in Volume IV: *Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*. Other contributors have chosen to discuss it in both of these volumes.

“A rarity most beloved”: Shakespeare and the Idea of Tragedy

David Scott Kastan

All words are pockets into which now this, now that is put, and sometimes many things at once.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*

It is upon the pillars of the great tragedies – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*¹ – that Shakespeare’s reputation most securely rests, and indeed it is the tragic plays in general that seem most robustly to confirm Shakespeare’s greatness. The tragedies arguably test the emotional resources of their readers and audiences more strenuously than the comedies or histories, confirming a generic bias that Shakespeare’s own age often expressed. In the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), Tragedy, with whip in one hand and a knife in the other, appears on stage to insist upon her supremacy in the repertory: Comedy is but “slight & childish,” designed merely “To tickle shallow iniudiciall eares,” but Tragedy is made of sterner stuff. Its claim to “raigne as Queene / In great Apollos name and all the Muses” (Ind., 75–6) rests upon its ability to present

passions that must moue the soule,
Make the heart heauie and throb within the bosome,
Extorting teares out of the strictest eyes,
To racke a thought and straine it to his forme,
Untill I rap the sences from their course.
This is my office. (Induction, 44–8)

And although Comedy aggressively contests Tragedy’s claim to generic preeminence, asserting the stultifying predictability of its plots (“some damnd tyrant to obtaine a crowne, / Stabs, hangs, impoysons, smoothers, cutteth throats”; 49–50), many would assent to Tragedy’s aesthetic superiority, like Kyd’s Heironomo, finding Comedy easy and self-indulgent, only “fit for common wits” (*The Spanish Tragedy*, 4.1.157).

Nonetheless, for all her critical praise, even Tragedy must admit that too often she "is scorned of the multitude," while Comedy and History hold the stage and are "Painted in playbills upon every post" (*A Warning*, Ind., 73). What we know about the repertory of Elizabethan theatre companies, mainly derived from Henslowe's account books (and a caveat must be that there is no reason to assume that every acting company followed the patterns of Henslowe's; his diary, however, is the only such document we have), confirms Tragedy's plaint. In the theatrical season of 1592–3, Lord Strange's men performed twenty-seven plays, only three of which – *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and *The Jew of Malta* – were obviously tragedies; the following year, Lord Sussex's company performed twelve plays, only two of which were tragedies – *Titus Andronicus* and *The Jew of Malta*. What records we have confirm that comedies and histories made up the largest part of the acting companies' offerings; tragedies were significantly less often played, although nonetheless they were, as Roslyn L. Knutson has shown, "rare and valuable commodities."²

In Shakespeare's company, however, tragedies may well have been somewhat less rare, although no less valuable, than in the repertory of the Admiral's men, if only by virtue of Shakespeare's own playwrighting. As early as 1598 Francis Meres recognized Shakespeare as being "the most excellent" of all contemporary playwrights in both comedy and tragedy; and, although his list of six plays offered as evidence of Shakespeare's excellence in tragedy includes four (*King John*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *1 Henry IV*) that would later be viewed as histories,³ the classification suggests only how much more amorphous (and thus expansive) the early modern definition of tragedy was than our own.

By 1623 the Folio would neatly organize the thirty-five plays listed in the catalog (thirty-six plays are in the volume, but problems over the rights to *Troilus and Cressida* prevented it from making the table of contents) into the three familiar dramatic genres: "COMEDIES, HISTORIES and TRAGEDIES." The fourteen comedies are clearly linked by a conventional understanding of that genre: plays, mainly about love, which begin in emotional and social confusion and end in harmony. The ten histories are defined by their common dependence upon narrative accounts of English history and are arranged according to the chronology of their subject matter. With the eleven plays that make up the section of "TRAGEDIES," however, it is less easy to characterize the principle of organization.

Indeed, beyond the commonplace generic principle that tragedies should end in suffering and defeat (and *Cymbeline's* notorious presence among the Folio's tragedies confounds even this seemingly inescapable principle), too little else obviously joins these plays together or separates them from a number of the histories, as Meres had already seen in 1598. Comedy and tragedy could be easily differentiated, usually on the simple contrasting principle, as Byron would later phrase it, that "all tragedies are finish'd by a death; / All comedies are ended by a marriage" (*Don Juan*, 3.9). Tragedy and history, however, were harder to distinguish, at least until the organization of the Folio itself began to fix the definition of the history play as a drama uniquely dependent upon the history of post-conquest England. The title pages of the

early quartos of both *Richard II* and *Richard III* confidently label those plays tragedies: *The Tragedie of King Richard the second* and *The Tragedy of King Richard the third* (and each is called a “tragedie” in its entrance in the Stationers’ Register, the first on August 29, 1597, the second on October 20 of that year). In 1615 the fifth edition of *Richard II* was published, still identifying the play as *The Tragedie of King Richard the Second*; and even as late as 1634, *Richard III* could once again be reissued as *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third*. Even the Folio seemed somewhat uncertain about this play, for, while the catalog lists it among the histories and titles it *The Life and Death of Richard the Third*, the head title (though not the running title) calls it *The Tragedy of Richard the Third* (sig. q5r).

But even if the publication of the 1623 Folio could be said more or less firmly to establish the history play as a separate genre,⁴ the tragedies themselves as defined by the categorization of the Folio make up a not much less diverse set than Meres’s earlier mixed grouping. Though the death of the titular character might seem to unify the Folio’s tragic plays, they display remarkable differences in how that death is experienced: in *Julius Caesar* that death comes in the middle of the play, and indeed Caesar arguably is not the play’s hero at all; in *Macbeth* the title character of course dies, but his death does not easily produce the same sense of loss we normally associate with tragedy, as his death seems neither unjust nor undesirable; in *Antony and Cleopatra* the deaths of the title characters are, at least in their own imaginations, fully compensated by the victory they celebrate in their worldly defeat; and although *Timon of Athens* traces the disintegration of its hero, it stops before the character’s death. Even more disruptive is the appearance of *Cymbeline* at the end of the Folio’s section of tragedies. Here too the title character does not die, but the action is that of wondrous renewal rather than decline. The play’s location among the tragedies is justified perhaps only by the fact that in not driving toward a marriage it is in that sense no comedy and in not being about the post-conquest English political past, it is not a history play. *Cymbeline*’s presence in the section, then, suggests that Tragedy is the catch-all category. Even if the play’s appearance among the tragedies is an editorial mistake (and certainly the play’s marvelous conclusion defies any conventional understanding of tragedy), its location in the Folio merely confirms how insecure the very category of tragedy is.

It is no doubt unwise to put too much pressure upon the Folio’s generic distinctions. The organization is almost certainly not Shakespeare’s own. Most likely it represents the organizing impulses of the volume’s two editors, his friends and fellow actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, and it is probably pointless to work backwards from the Folio categorizations in search of Shakespeare’s own generic understandings. Indeed, Shakespeare seems to have been genially suspicious of genre theory; Polonius’s ludicrous inventory of dramatic kinds (*Hamlet*, 2.2.397–401) alone must warn us of the hazards and limited benefits of literary taxonomy. Certainly no concept of genre can be exclusive or precise, since the resemblances that we recognize in texts are not necessarily the only ones that exist, nor are our classifications the only ones that are possible. Still, if it matters little what we call these plays (“What’s the use