

'theory' that pervades the argument results less from theory's shortcomings, I would submit, than from the inability of this slim volume to take into account much substantial theoretical work that goes beyond the binary of 'containment vs. subversion'. A related problem is the tendency of the argumentation to fall back on common sense formulations for interpretation of historical context, ignoring the very rich theoretical analysis of reception and appropriation in literary and cultural studies.

In the two case studies that comprise chapters 3 and 4, Humphrey explores local records to interpret the notorious 'riding' of John Gladman in 1443 Norwich and an incident in which summer festival boughs were gathered from lands owned by the priory of Coventry. Both cases involve competing interpretations of the action, one by the civic authorities and one by the rival authority or property owner, and in each case the town records defend the riding or gathering as conforming to traditional holiday custom. After an in-depth examination of the various controversial issues surrounding these events, Humphrey concludes that such incidents of festive misrule were not inherently oppositional *per se*, but were politicized by their insertion into a specific historical context where they might be used to achieve a political goal.

Although this study is in many ways too sketchy to be truly satisfying as cultural analysis, the incidents from Norwich and Coventry described by Humphrey do suggest that any approach to festive performance that does not embed it within the wide and specific social context must be understood to be incomplete. If we are to understand the politics of carnivalesque activity, it is important to research the historical situation framing such actions – on this point Humphrey's book is persuasive!

kathleen ashley

Cameron Louis (ed). *Records of Early English Drama: Sussex*. Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press & Brepols Publishers, 2000. Pp cx, 403.

This volume deals with the fifteenth region covered by the *Records of Early English Drama* (REED) series. Including the present volume, the series has now explored the evidence for dramatic and musical performance in the local records of some twelve counties and eight towns in England, although with the extension of its projected coverage to Wales and Scotland there remains considerable work to be done. In common with the other volumes in the series, the present publication aims to include all relevant material (taking into

account the selection criteria of the project) up to 1642. Yet the book also shares a similarity with earlier volumes in that the vast bulk of the transcribed material relates to the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth centuries, with relatively little medieval material located for inclusion.

The volume is prefaced by extensive introductory material, including a general historical essay, a more specific account of developments in drama, music and seasonal customs up to 1642, an introduction to the classes of documents used, some bibliographical material and a selection of historical maps. The transcribed documents themselves occupy some two hundred pages, while the remaining two hundred are occupied by appendices, translations, endnotes, glossaries and the index.

Although the fairly lengthy introduction to the historical background for the collection may prove useful for any reader approaching the texts without historical knowledge of the county or period, it might have benefited from a more extensive consultation of recent literature. The notes on drama, music and seasonal customs again provide a useful context but lack any obvious connection with the broader historical outline. Furthermore, this section of the introduction would be greatly improved by some reference to the extensive current debate regarding popular culture in the period and the interplay between religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In particular it is implied that the religious and cultural developments of the Reformation period exerted a significant influence on the forms and incidence of dramatic performance (xxxii–xxxv), with little apparent reference to the last two decades of research into this area.

As with previous REED volumes the principles by which the documents have been selected raise a number of questions. In the first place the omission of particular classes of documents for inclusion could have received greater discussion. No reason is given for the omission of certain kinds of musician recorded in the Sussex coroner's records, while references in the quarter sessions rolls are omitted on the grounds that they mostly relate to victuallers' recognisances (lxxxv). While there may well be good reasons for leaving out such records, it would be helpful to have an idea of the kind of information to be found in such recognisances, and a more explicit statement of the rationale behind omitting them. Equally, while the extraction of particular bequests from wills is understandable, more consistent use of testamentary material would provide a great deal of information about musicians themselves, and their personal and professional connections. Perhaps more serious is the somewhat erratic selection of material from family estate papers, which does

not seem to accord with any explicitly stated set of guidelines. Indeed in a number of cases immediate problems of accessibility seem to conflict with those criteria that are mentioned (lxxxiv).

Problems of selection are exacerbated by a certain lack of clarity in identifying consistent criteria. Some of the assumptions on which selection principles are based seem mutually contradictory. For example, all references to musical instruments are included, except for church organs, but musicians are only mentioned when they are involved in performing. Yet payments to minstrels for items of haberdashery are included 'because such payments may help us to understand the other activities of travelling performers'. In another instance singers are omitted if their duties appear solely of a religious nature, yet references to dancing and to maypoles are included 'when it is clear that such activity was being done as a form of entertainment or ritual'. Given that music is also included when parading wrongdoers in front of the public because of its potential entertainment value, it becomes apparent that the distinction between ritual and entertainment is not only anachronistic, it is also somewhat unsafe as a criterion for selection. Indeed the omission of church organs suggests that a great deal of the evidence for forms of musical performance most commonly attended by Sussex parishioners has been ignored altogether.

In some respects, the documents that have been transcribed overcompensate for these problems by an overly punctilious inclusion of material. For example, the items taken from the Rye Chamberlain's accounts often repeat verbatim year by year. Quarterly payments of wages to Angel Shaw and Thomas Stronge, drummers of Rye, repeat throughout the period 1576–1609. Entire pages are taken up with repetitions of similar entries (e.g. 140–5) that do nothing to further our understanding of Shaw's role. This is the case with the bulk of the material taken from the Rye Chamberlain's accounts, which occupy rather more than half of the space allotted to the documents (44–167). One cannot help wondering if a single record with a footnote recording the existence of identical records for the following years would have saved the time and space necessary for more comprehensive listings of other material, so improving the historical value of the book.

While this volume does include a large quantity of material of use to a wide range of scholars, a consideration of what is not included is as important as those records that are represented. Any project that proceeds on a selective basis will inevitably attract criticism from one angle or another, and the difficulty of including every potentially relevant reference in so wide and complex a subject area in a single volume should be borne in mind. Clearly, it would be

unfair to criticize a researcher too harshly for following a pre-existing set of selection criteria. At the same time it is reasonable to expect that a declared set of criteria should be rigorously maintained, and that the intellectual basis of those criteria should be clearly stated and take some account of the historical reality of the period under examination. The ambitious task undertaken by the REED project is to be applauded, and it is to be regretted that the present volume falls somewhat short of the standards set by the project as a whole.

david hickman

T.F. Wharton (ed). *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp xiii, 233.

For a dramatist with at least three canonically important works (*The Dutch Courtesan*, *The Malcontent*, and *Antonio's Revenge*) contemporary critics have been especially chary of addressing John Marston's plays. Of those three works, one (*Antonio's Revenge*) finds general mention only as a spectacularized and stylized foil to *Hamlet*.¹ Indeed, only a single work – *The Dutch Courtesan* – today receives attention approaching any degree of regularity: Susan Baker, Donna Hamilton, and Jean Howard have each written outstanding materialist/feminist appraisals.² This continuing paucity of critical regard is especially surprising given the astonishing generic range and inventiveness of Marston's plays as well as their incisive representations of a particularly volatile period in early modern culture. Marston collaborated brilliantly with some of the most distinguished dramatists of the period (Ben Jonson and George Chapman on *Eastward Ho!*; John Webster on additions to *The Malcontent*) and also mischievously burlesqued the genres they themselves defined. As one of the principal players in the so-called war of the theaters and as director of St. Paul's, Marston proved to be one of the most powerful forces behind the resurgence of the private theater. The energy and dynamism of his works, choreographed in a brilliant fusion of histrionics, song, dumbshow, and spectacle, suggest a vision of dramaturgy unique upon the early Jacobean stage. And yet, T.S. Eliot's near century-old pronouncement that Marston's 'merits are still a matter for controversy' remains as true today as ever.³

The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions, a collection of twelve essays, sets out to challenge this continuing oversight. In the volume's introduction, T.F. Wharton reflects upon this history of critical neglect, concluding that today's postmodern condition allows contemporary readers an 'instant acces-