lively ways of thinking about the relationship between historical drama and its audience, and even (were one to interrogate the categories of 'us' and 'not-us', which are rather taken for granted here) about the questions of national identity that Griffin eschews. Also, by suggesting an incompatibility between 'open' history and 'closed' tragedy, it asks interesting questions about plays that, like, say, *Edward II*, seem to be both. It is in these possibilities that this rather premature and amateurish book is at its most useful.

peter womack

Roslyn Lander Knutson. *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp x, 198.

Roslyn Lander Knutson argues in her latest book that playing companies have traditionally been studied in terms of personalities, as exemplified in the attention given to rivalries between the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men, and between the adult and children's companies. She claims persuasively that the groups of players had a common commercial interest that was far more important than contentions and rivalries. She acknowledges that there were hot-tempered theatre people, such as Christopher Marlowe, Richard Burbage, Ben Jonson, and John Day, who fought in personal quarrels, but she sees in the overall workings of the theatres a 'commercial predisposition toward cooperation grounded in the patterns of hierarchy and fraternity in the patronage and guild systems' (12). She points to a number of factors to support her thesis. Players from various companies tended to live fairly close together in a few parishes such as Shoreditch and Cripplegate. The Admiral's and Strange's Men acted together in 1594 according to Henslowe's *Diary*. Players 'formed friendships, kinships and professional connections across company boundaries' (47), and the paramount concern of the companies was to stay in business. So, she concludes, the personal relations of players were subsidiary to the commercial interests of the companies.

The companies also relied on 'a cooperative workforce of playwrights' (49) to supply marketable scripts, exploiting the topics and genres that were in vogue at the time. In relation to this claim, and to the matter of personalities, Roslyn Knutson focuses on the so-called 'war of the theatres'. She assembles evidence from imagery, prosody, style, and vocabulary to argue that *Histriomastix* was not written by Marston and demonstrates by a casting chart that the play could not have been acted by the children's companies because its

enormous number of parts, more than a hundred, require far more actors than would have been available. This play, she thinks, must have been written by an amateur dramatist who had no idea of the principles of doubling parts on the professional stages. She would date its composition, as E. K. Chambers did, around 1590. Her argument is persuasive, but leaves puzzles: why did Ben Jonson quote from *Histriomastix* in *Every Man Out of His Humour* and in *Poetaster*, plays written around 1599–1600, and why was the play published in 1610?

Roslyn Knutson then tackles the 'little eyases' passage in *Hamlet*, which appears first in the Folio text of 1623. She argues that the references to children's companies in the three texts of the play may each 'be seen to indicate a different commercial event' (108). Q1 (1603) refers to the 'novelty' of the 'private plays', and says the audience at the public theatres have turned to 'the humour of children'. This allusion she sees as 'consistent with the degree to which one or both boys' companies might have been seen as a commercial threat in 1600' (111). In Q2 (1604–5) the 'humour of children' passage vanishes, and a new reference appears to the problems of the 'tragedians of the city', who travel because of an 'inhibition' that comes 'by the means of the late innovation'. This she takes as a substitution made in 1604, with reference to the 'innovation' of the arrival of a new king, and to an 'inhibition' against 'playing in London during plague time' (118). The 'little eyases' passage she thinks was added even later, probably in 1606, and relates both to the children giving offence by satirizing noblemen and to the aging of the boys who were already 'passing puberty' (119). The idea, then, is that the passage concerns not a rivalry between adult and children players so much as the King's Men distancing themselves from the boy companies.

This argument seems to me rather too neat, depends on an accumulation of several hypotheses (as seen in the sequence of three clauses beginning with 'if' on page 118), and assumes that in Q2 'a passage was dropped that alluded to a novelty no longer novel (the opening of boys' playhouses)'. The text in F, which many think was cut from Q2, says of the 'little eyases' or children that '[t]hese are now the fashion', which suggests novelty to me. So, there are some difficulties with Roslyn Knutson's argument here, as there are in her last chapter, which focuses on Jonson's *Poetaster* and Dekker's *Satiromastix*, again rejecting the concept of a war of the theatres and seeing the satire by each playwright on the other as less significant than their numerous allusions to or quotations from old plays. She finds in Jonson's play a 'grudging admiration for the commercial stage' (130–1), while 'Dekker caps his defense of pulp drama and common playwrights with an advertisement of the commercial

strategy by means of which the companies might all profit, namely, the exploitation of one another's repertorial successes' (141); both comedies thus served to revive interest in old plays. But is there any evidence that Dekker's allusions related to revivals of the plays he cited, and are his citations simply affectionate?

Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time offers a challenging perspective on the activities of playwrights and the relations of the companies of actors between roughly 1590 and 1610. If Roslyn Knutson is right, commercial interests were predominant in the workings of the theatres at that time. It is, of course, now recognized that collaboration in writing plays was a normal mode of operation so that our concept of authorship has changed. It is plausible that the companies of players worked to support one another in their common commercial interests. So, the argument of this book demands attention, and points to alternative ways of interpreting evidence, as in relation to the plays on similar topics commissioned by the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men at various times. What if they were not competing, but rather both companies were exploiting 'popular topics in fashionable genres' (49)? I found the argument less compelling as it went on and least persuasive in the later chapters on *Hamlet* and on Jonson and Dekker. However, the general thesis, that the prime concern of the players and playwrights of the period was to maintain good business at the box office or its equivalent, and to work more by cooperation than by competition, is very appealing.

r. a. foakes

Constance Brown Kuriyama. *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. Pp xxi, 255.

Constance Brown Kuriyama's new biography is an important contribution to Marlowe studies. It presents all of the documentary evidence of Marlowe's life in a tidy, concise narrative and corrects some errors made by previous biographers, as well as summarizing the weight of scholarship since Bakeless's documentary life of the 1940s and supplying fresh transcripts of the most important documents. Anyone studying Marlowe's life in the future will thus begin with this book.

In addition to providing a standard reference work, Kuriyama has a more combative aim of '[c]ounterbalancing the tendency toward disproportionate sensationalism in Marlowe biography' (6). In particular, she provides counter-