

that ended Charles' reign. And most interestingly, Clegg illustrates how the ideological factions that rent the church, and that are commonly associated with powerful personalities occupying Durham House and Lambeth Palace, created means for very different and controversial views to avoid censorship and see print. This attention to matters of licensing represents Clegg's thoughtful contribution to an important historiographical debate.

*Press Censorship in Jacobean England* is a very strong book. Clegg knows the STC, the records of the Stationers' Company, and the records in Lambeth Palace and the PRO in such minute detail that she can carefully assemble a substantial context for dozens of controversial and censored books. In each instance, one is confident of her occasionally speculative conclusions and impressed by the depth of material she has at her command. Clegg also clearly understands the state of current historiographical debate and dexterously negotiates between the lines of revisionist and post-revisionist historians, suggesting that in the end the larger outlines of the Whig historical arc and the fine local knowledge of the revisionists may both have something worthwhile to say about Jacobean culture. Rejecting the supposedly uniform practices of the State, Clegg considers individual acts of censorship within localized, specific conditions and in turn opens a new perspective on significant aspects of early modern England. In this way Clegg's work is certain to leave its imprint on the study of Jacobean culture for years to come.

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Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp xxix, 539.

*The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* is the third new book in two years to lay claim to a bosom relationship with Shakespeare, following those edited by David Scott Kastan for Blackwell (1999) and by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells for Cambridge (2001). All three are reference books, but the Oxford venture differs markedly from the other two in its conception of what that means, so this might be an opportune moment to give some consideration to the theory and economics of Shakespeare 'companions', especially as regards the assumptions they imply about the needs of their readership.

Both the Kastan and the Cambridge companions bring together a number of extended and specialist essays by different hands with the intention of giving 'state of the art' coverage of relevant topics ranging from Shakespeare's life and

context, the kind of reading he did and the ways in which he has been read, the professions of playing, writing, and publishing, and in the case of the *Cambridge Companion*, the 'after-life' of the plays in the hands of readers, audiences, critics, theatre-directors, and film-makers. The cover-blurb of the Kastan volume describes it as 'an indispensable book for students and teachers of Shakespeare, indeed for anyone with an interest in his plays', but the inclusion of the general reader/playgoer in that afterthought suggests that the primary readership will be in the academy. I suspect this is true also of the current (fourth) *Cambridge Companion*, though it is of interest that it has dropped the word 'Studies' – a word included in the title of all three of its Cambridge predecessors – as if to downplay its own academic status.

The *Oxford Companion* is at first glance a much more populist enterprise. Its large format and glossy paper give it something of the feel of a coffee-table book, an impression intensified by the fact that it is lavishly illustrated with historical paintings and drawings, maps, and photographs of productions of the plays. It is an altogether more attractive object than the other two books. It provides a broader array of material, ranging from extended introductory essays on individual plays and poetic texts (each with a plot summary and covering such matters as text and sources, artistic features, critical history, and, for the plays, stage history and screen versions), to brief entries on topics as diverse as stage furniture, the Oxfordian theory, enjambment, Frances Yates, Shakespeare in China, and Cole Porter. It has more than 3000 signed entries from about 100 contributors, most of them university teachers and many of them prominent scholars, but its intended market appears not to be primarily an academic one: its cover-blurb describes it as '[i]nvaluable for students; an engaging companion for all theatre-lovers'.

Its major difference from its counterparts, then, is that it presents its material in dictionary or encyclopedia form, which means that items of related interest are disconnected through their alphabetical arrangement, encouraging dipping and browsing rather than extensive reading. Dobson and Wells have tried to ease the reader's movement through the material by providing a thematic listing of entries at the beginning. This is certainly helpful, but the serious student interested in, for example, Shakespeare's reading (the subject of a chapter in the *Cambridge Companion* and five in the Kastan) will have a potentially frustrating search through entries mainly listed under the heading 'Elizabethan and Jacobean literary context', and will be hard pressed to construct anything like a coherent picture of what Shakespeare read.

We might assume, therefore, a target reader who has limited knowledge but a lot of interest in Shakespeare, perhaps a high-school student, or a casual

play-goer. Such a reader will find reliable and up-to-date snippets of information on just about any aspect, and if he or she wants to know more, many of the entries include brief but useful suggestions for further reading. Shakespeare is located in an international perspective (the list of countries under the heading 'Shakespeare around the globe' is most impressive), and within popular culture, especially on screen. This does not mean that the book is of no interest to more advanced students; indeed, part of its function, as the editors tell us in their preface, is to act as a kind of extension to the Oxford *Complete Works*, and most practicing scholars will find much in here that is useful to them. One of the book's happy surprises is the way in which it combines the elementary with the arcane.

One might, perhaps, quibble with some of the editorial choices. The *Companion* incorporates, amongst other things, a 'who's who in Shakespeare', and all but the tiniest of roles are listed, even though the descriptions of some characters are little more than a line in length. I have never found much use for such an elementary reference tool (does anyone really ever look up 'Hamlet' or 'Mopsa?'), and I think the space it takes up here could have been better employed. For example, a number of journals are described, something that certainly has a place here but will be of interest mainly to specialists. The list is by no means complete, however, and while it contains *Notes and Queries*, a periodical only in small part devoted to work on Shakespeare, it does not include *The Upstart Crow* or *The Shakespeare Bulletin*. Such a list would surely be of more use if it were as comprehensive as possible. Still, in a volume with the scope of this one, lines have to be drawn somewhere, and my quibbles mean no more than that I would have drawn some of them elsewhere.

For, in sum, this is a fine publication. Much of the writing, when there is the opportunity for elaboration, is bright and lively, and the fact that so many contributors were involved allows for a broad diversity of opinion and tone. As a scholarly instrument it has limitations of the kind I have suggested, but this does not detract from its value as a source of pleasure, a constant reminder of the richness of Shakespeare's writings and of their part in cultural history. Oxford's finest publication, the OED, gives as definition 1c of 'companion', 'an associate at table or at the bottle', and that sense of exuberant conviviality is one of the main attractions of this book. Most students of Shakespeare will want to have the kind of access to the Cambridge and the Kastan companions that is ensured by libraries. I suspect that many will want a relationship with this *Oxford Companion* that is available only through ownership.

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