

introduction, and the plays are given marginal glosses and explanatory footnotes, informative but not overwhelming in scope and detail.

If there is a caveat regarding this anthology, then it must concern the omission of specific materials. For example, from the Macro plays the book includes only *Mankind* along with the diagram from *The Castle of Perseverance* (oddly stranded without its play), and nothing at all from the Digby plays. Some of the omissions from York, Towneley, N-Town, and Chester are puzzling. Why, for example, does the book include no fewer than four shepherds' plays while omitting any play of Abraham and Isaac? To be fair, the book's accompanying website promises to post further texts as they are edited, yet at the time of this writing that part of the site remains empty of content; no doubt this will change over time.

One may always quibble with matters of selection and omission in anthologies. More important than those specifics is the way in which the text as a whole reflects both the state of the field and the needs of the classroom, and in this regard Fitzgerald and Sebastian, with their team of editors, have made a landmark contribution. *The Broadview Anthology* gives instructors a wealth of material to choose from, all excellently edited and presented. It is both solid and up-to-date in scholarship, and friendly and accessible to students. Its new approach to the presentation of texts and its thought-provoking selection of materials make it a most welcome addition to the field; it ought to remain the standard undergraduate text for many years to come.

Charles R. Forker (ed.). *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. Pp xxviii, 379.

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Over thirty years have passed since John Sider's edition of *The Troublesome Reign* appeared in print, the product of his 1971 University of Notre Dame dissertation project. Charles Forker's recent edition therefore represents a welcome and much needed reconsideration of the play's text and historical context. Following Scott McMillan and Sally-Beth MacLean's *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge, 1998) there has been a resurgence of interest in

the company's repertoire, which included *The Troublesome Reign*;¹ however, there have been relatively few significant scholarly articles on the play in the past decade, except for those by Beatrice Groves, Richard Helgerson, Brian Vickers, and Forker himself.² Most of these and earlier discussions focus upon the play's oft-disputed authorship, date, and textual relationship to Shakespeare's *King John* as much as its merit as a stand-alone dramatic work. Forker's comprehensive introduction is no exception to this trend, as it includes a section on the relationship between *The Troublesome Reign* and *King John* (also a major focus of the commentary); but he also performs careful analysis of the play's ceremonial spectacle, ideological ambiguity, political symbolism, and many other thematic aspects.

Of course, most professors and students will likely be drawn to Forker's seemingly definitive attribution of the play to George Peele, since for centuries it has been ascribed in part or in whole to various playwrights, including William Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, Robert Greene, Thomas Kyd, Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe, and Anthony Munday, as well as to Peele. Forker builds his argument upon the 'massive totality' of Brian Vickers's argument in favour of Peele's authorship, noting that Vickers 'utilizes the Chadwyck-Healey databases on drama and early modern literature unavailable to most of his predecessors, and shows additionally how Peele's strident anti-Catholicism, his burlesques of monastic life, his fondness of Latin tags ... and his attraction to macaronic doggerel [in *The Troublesome Reign*] ... chime with elements of Peele's acknowledged work' (9). Appendix two contains a table of 'word strings' that appear in *The Troublesome Reign* and in other Peele plays. Vickers originally prepared this table using a software program designed to detect plagiarism and Forker increases the number of references for this edition (335). Though impressive, Vickers's and Forker's computations have a dizzying effect on a reader: 'Part One (1,740 lines) contains 494 instances of alliteration with a frequency ratio of 3.5 (the line count divided by the number of instances); Part Two (1,196 lines) contains 410 instances with a frequency ratio of 2.9' (23). It is difficult to argue with mathematical precision, but I imagine that this information will be of interest only to the most dedicated *Troublesome Reign* scholars. The general editors' preface argues that Revels editions are useful for 'teachers, students, theatre directors and actors'; however, Forker's well-researched tome will appeal more to teachers and students than to theatre directors and actors (ix). This quibble is, however, negligible since Forker's persuasive analysis of the

play's macaronic style and its metrics benefits from his jeweler's-eye attention to detail.

A particularly appealing component of this edition is its assumption that *The Troublesome Reign* is worthy of discussion beyond its similarities with *King John*, even though Forker does admit that 'a close reading of Peele's lesser but not inconsiderable play is not only a worthy enterprise in itself. It also can suggest the springs of a greater artist's achievement' (87). Certainly Forker's attribution of the play to Peele helps raise its critical profile as part of the playwright's established career. Viewed in the context of other Queen's Men plays that 'flatter[ed] the policies of their royal patron' (56) and of Peele's known anti-Catholic bias, *The Troublesome Reign* appears not merely 'a workmanlike play' that 'serves a purpose but ... rises to no heights', as one detractor writes,³ but one that strives to venture beyond Elizabethan political ideology. Forker rightly observes, however, that Peele 'was an artist as much as a nationalistic Protestant' and that the play is 'more ambivalent' and skilfully constructed than has previously been argued (57). The most successful parts of the editor's argument trace several patterns in the work that reinforce the point that *The Troublesome Reign* is not a gallimaufry of disparate moods, incidents, and characters, as it has sometimes been described. The plot, Forker argues, is structured around a series of parallel confrontations. Major unifying themes include usurpation, vengeance, paternity, treason, and policy. Forker also considers vertical and horizontal symmetries between various scenes, which reinforce verbal repetition and the 'reversal' theme that runs throughout the play.

The comprehensiveness of the introduction is matched by the comprehensiveness of the play's annotations. Following the introduction's emphases, the notes provide relevant passages from the works of Peele and his contemporaries in addition to those from the chronicles; moreover, appendix one contains relevant passages from Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Particularly valuable are the notes to part one, scene eleven: the farcical scene in which Philip the Bastard ransacks the Franciscan monastery. Its humour relies upon the reader's understanding of the Catholic clerics' obscure, misquoted, or grammatically inaccurate Latin phrases. The annotations also helpfully range across a wide assortment of sources, such as Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, Hugh Latimer's sermons, and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. I do find it rather unusual that Forker includes an anonymously edited modern-spelling version of the play from the Wikisource website as part of his collations. Repeated references to a

non-authoritative internet publication seem out of place alongside the bulk of the collation notes, which refer to such scholarly heavyweights as George Steevens, F.G. Fleay, H.H. Furness, and Geoffrey Bullough.

This very minor quibble aside, Forker's edition of *The Troublesome Reign* represents a landmark study on the play, on Peele, and on Queen's Men dramaturgy. It constitutes essential reading for any academic who is researching or teaching in these areas: either those already familiar with the play's past editions and critical history or those just beginning their study.

Notes

- 1 Notable culminations of this resurgence include Helen Ostovich, Holger Schott Syme, and Andrew Griffin (eds), *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing* (Burlington, 2009) and Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge, 2009).
- 2 Beatrice Groves, 'Memory, Composition, and the Relationship of *King John* to *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*', *Comparative Drama* 38 (2004), 277–90; Richard Helgerson, 'Shakespeare and the Contemporary Dramatists of History', Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (eds), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume 2: The Histories* (Oxford, 2003), 26–47; Brian Vickers, 'The Troublesome Reign, George Peele, and the Date of *King John*', Brian Boyd (ed.), *Words that Count: Essays on Early Modern Authorship in Honor of MacDonald P. Jackson* (Newark, 2004), 76–118; Charles R. Forker, 'The Troublesome Reign, Richard II, and the Date of *King John*: A Study in Intertextuality', *Shakespeare Survey* 63 (2010), 127–48.
- 3 Julia C. Van de Water, 'The Bastard in *King John*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11 (1960), 164.