

study, continues to challenge its performers, directors and audience. Hankey's suggestive and incisive analysis points to an intriguing future for *Othello* in performance.

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Lucy Munro. *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp xiv, 267.

Lucy Munro's *Children of the Queen's Revels* is a splendid addition to the recent crop of studies of individual playing company repertoires. Many of the Queen's Revels plays — which include *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, *Eastward Ho*, *Epicoene*, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and *The Malcontent* — have been studied in an author or genre-centred context. By looking at them as a repertory, Munro frequently succeeds in capturing what it meant for a theatergoer to regularly attend performances by a company that was 'ambitious and innovative, even avant-garde' (1) in their experimentation with generic form and in their risky forays into political satire.

Munro begins with a 'company biography' in which she describes the Queen's Revels' origins, its management, its move from the Blackfriars to the Whitefriars in 1609, the layout of its theatres and its personnel. She draws suggestive connections between its shareholders, dramatists, patrons and actors: for example, the plays that offended the King become more intriguing when one learns how many company patrons had 'an uneasy relationship with authority and the court of James I' or were connected with the 'Spenserian' group of oppositional poets (36). In the rest of the book, Munro studies the company's experimentations with genre, dividing them into comedies, tragicomedies and tragedies, and devoting special attention to their endings, which she considers to be 'generic stress-points' (60).

The chapter on comedy is the most problematic, not for its content, but for its relationship with the book's overall methodology. Munro begins by exploring the company's audience; she rejects the notion that it was an aristocratic male 'coterie', noting contemporary references to citizens in the indoor playhouses, as well as to women and possibly children (62-3). Considering

ing that much of the audience would have been the ‘aspirant children of yeomen, tradesmen and professionals, and anxious gentry’ (66), Munro focuses on the comedies’ relationship with class anxiety. Taking issue with the notion that boy’s company comedies uphold the social order, she suggests that due to the unpredictable nature of laughter in a socially diverse audience, ‘mockery ... can undermine societal norms even as it claims to uphold them’ (73), especially when the plays demonstrate ‘[a]wareness of the shaky foundations of social status’ and ‘the performativity of rank’ (68). She studies in detail *Eastward Ho* and *Your Five Gallants*, focusing on apparent mockery of linguistic markers of status in the former, and of sartorial markers in the latter. Using these plays and *Epicoene*, she also observes that ‘[t]he comedies of the Children of the Queen’s Revels, studied as a group [...] demonstrate a striking awareness of the problematic aspects of comic closure’ (87), using endings that are discomfiting, or parodic of conventional comic closure.

This chapter is lucid and convincing, but its place within a repertory-based approach is problematic as Munro does not compare the Queen’s Revels comedies with those of other companies, aside from one brief comparison of marriage-to-courtesan endings (87). It could surely be argued that comedies from other boys’ companies — the Children of Paul’s plays *Michaelmas Term* and *A Mad World My Masters*, for example — contain similar uses of status-inflected language, clothing references, and parodic happy endings. There may be important differences between the companies too, but Munro simply does not explore the question. The reader may thus query the value of a repertory study that demonstrates little uniqueness in the company’s output.

Fortunately, the chapter on tragicomedy is very different. Here, Munro validates the repertory approach by reconsidering Fletcher’s defense of his unpopular 1608 tragicomedy *The Faithful Shepherdess*, which has led to the common scholarly reading of the play as one of the first English tragicomedies. Reading the play within the Queen’s Revels repertory, Munro shows that the genre’s origins ‘cannot be found in any one play or author’ (96), but can be detected within the repertory of the Queen’s Revels company. She demonstrates that most seventeenth-century tragicomedies were produced either by the Queen’s Revels and the King’s Men, the repertories of other companies containing few or none (104). Moreover, she draws a clear distinction between these two companies: unlike the Kings Men’s ‘romances’, the Queen’s Revels’ tragicomedies are ‘more comic and satiric’ (105), in that ‘romance is complicated by the introduction of material which reverses, complicates, exaggerates, or, especially, ironises it’ (106).

Through close analysis, Munro shows the tragicomic nature of several Queen's Revels plays, including *The Malcontent*, with its allusions to tragedy but its climactic refusal of a tragic ending; *The Widow's Tears*, with its 'unsettling' mixture of farcical comedy and dark violence (116); *The Isle of Gulls*, with its ending that 'surprises and disconcerts', in which 'the successful characters are those who place their faith in cynical *realpolitik* rather than those who trust the conventions of prose romance' (119); and *Cupid's Revenge*, in which death is presented with a 'farcical, tragicomic tone' (123). Having situated *The Faithful Shepherdess* within this context, Munro shows that it was not an aberration but 'part of [the Queen's Revels'] politically inflected, comic-tragic repertory' (125). She suggests it was the play's *pastoral* nature that the audience rejected; Fletcher's 'attempt to naturalize Italian pastoral tragicomedy failed' (132), but tragicomedy as a whole had already been popularized by the Queen's Revels, and was subsequently consolidated by the King's Men.

In the final chapter, Munro notes that the Queen's Revels company produced more tragedies than other children's companies. She also finds a difference between their tragedies written for the Blackfriars and for the Whitefriars, and connects this 'generic instability' with the 'textual instability' that is observable in the published texts of the tragedies. At Blackfriars, the company apparently experimented with different tragic forms, staging Daniel's former closet drama *Philotas*, Marston's theatrically spectacular *Sophonisba* and Chapman's politically offensive *Byron* plays. She connects this experimentation with textual variation by suggesting that the 'refiguring [of] the performance texts for a reading audience' by Daniel and Marston (137) and the censoring of the text of *Byron* show that 'generic mutability is reflected in the plays' textual instability' (147).

In the section on the Whitefriars tragedies, most of which were written or revised around 1611, Munro suggests that the company began to infuse tragedy with the tone of tragicomedy and experimented with questioning the conventional endings of tragedies. Two of the Whitefriars tragedies — *A Christian Turned Turk* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* — express discomfort with the notion that tragedy educates via true stories: *Christian* invents a fictional death for its real-life protagonist Ward the Pirate, and Chapman said of *Revenge* that in a 'Poeme ... materiall instruction' is more important than truth (151). Noting that *Christian* and *Revenge* were unpopular, Munro suggests that such 'straight' tragedies seemed outmoded by the rise of tragicomedy, and argues that the *The Insatiate Countess* represents a new form of 'generically flexible, sexualized tragedy' (154). She links this with 'textual

instability' again, speculating that the revisions the play seems to have undergone around 1611-12 were intended to alter its 'overall verbal texture and tone' (155) in a tragicomic direction. This argument is speculative; Munro acknowledges that we don't know the extent of the play's revision, and she offers no specific examples of the changes made. However, she is on surer ground with *Bussy D'Ambois*, where she is actually able to compare two versions and demonstrate that while the original version of *Bussy* is a straightforward, moralistic tragedy, the revised version incorporates tragicomic material in the form of 'ironic twist[s]' (162). She suggests that these changes actually make the play's tone darker, creating an ending that 'resists any consolation that tragedy might bring, and any sense that society can be rebuilt in its aftermath' (162). This analysis certainly shows *Bussy* being pushed in a more experimental direction.

Munro's study is a splendid demonstration that awareness of a play's company auspices can be an important correlative to playwright-centred studies. This short review cannot do justice to the wonderful level of detail that she is able to offer by focusing on one company, and she proves that 'company biographies' are of enormous importance. However, as the chapter on comedy demonstrates, this level of focus on one company occasionally risks missing the wider picture. As more studies of this kind are written, syntheses that *compare* the repertoires of different companies, giving equal attention to each, will become important. Such works will clarify what is distinctive and what is not, thereby illustrating further the different expectations that an early modern theatergoer had when choosing between different theatre companies.

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Chester N. Scoville. *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Pp viii, 140.

In this learned, readable, and convincing study, Chester N. Scoville examines the rhetorical theory used to characterize four distinct saints—Thomas, Mary Magdalene, Joseph, and Paul—in medieval English drama. His alert readings are firmly grounded in an enviable grasp of Classical and Christian rhetoric from Aristotle to Aquinas, which he employs to show that the audience fre-