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Review Essay: MacCaffrey, Wallace T. *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603*

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Kastan, David Scott, and Peter Stallybrass, edd. *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretation of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. Routledge, London 1991. 293 pp. \$45.00 / \$14.95.

Kastan and Stallybrass's anthology, *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, is based on the premise that 'for thirty years, no new, wide-ranging anthology of essays on non-Shakespearean Renaissance drama has appeared . . . [despite] a remarkable quantity of new work' (p 1). From that perspective, the editors have offered up a sampling of interesting new interpretations of traditional dramas and Elizabethan/Jacobean conventions that, when combined, represents a valuable, convenient resource to the interpretive artist and scholar.

Nineteen of the twenty-four articles are reprints and as such, certain articles such as Jonathan Goldberg's interesting research on the case of Christopher Marlow, entitled 'Sodomy and Society', are now widely considered; however, most scholars will find that the perspectives offered in the anthology viably expand on traditional works, like Tillyard's treatment of the Elizabethan world picture. Certain recent trends in scholarship and criticism, particularly the feminist perspective and gay/lesbian awareness, are included to make the anthology, at the least, a comprehensive supplemental text and, at the most, an exciting tool for artists and scholars seeking to create new, varied approaches to the culture and its drama.

The book is divided into two sections. Part one, 'The Conditions of Playing', offers new ways of viewing the culture, while asserting that the collaborative process of making plays with authors in the middle, now considered the norm, was also the norm in Elizabethan/Jacobean England. The purpose of this section is to register these collaborations, emphasizing the ways in which theatre is 'at once responsive to and constitutive of the social formations of Renaissance England' (p 2).

Part two, by far the more valuable asset to the theatre director and dramatic scholar if only by offering new perspective on written-over scripts, treats individual dramas from the host of Shakespeare's contemporaries. A number of the essays, like Sara Eaton's criticism regarding Middleton's *The Changeling*: 'Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love', reflect how changes in our culture have altered the way in which a drama speaks to a society. Others, like Lisa Jardine's 'Boy Actors, female roles and Elizabethan Eroticism', an essay that suggests the use of young boys in female roles was something other than simply a dramatic convention of the day, are based on reevaluations of historical and/or descriptive data.

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MacCaffrey, Wallace T. *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1992. 592 pp. \$65.00.

No review can do justice to the scope, elegance, and intuitive grasp of issues Wallace T. MacCaffrey provides in this the last volume of his magisterial trilogy

on Elizabethan political history. The excitement created by its publication is enhanced by the fact that the original manuscript sources from which this work was created come from that period of Elizabethan history that has yet to be adequately calendared. As in his previous two volumes, MacCaffrey's new study deals with yet another set of short-term foreign and domestic issues. These issues arise from the queen's reluctant entry into war with Spain, the sudden emergence of Anglo-Irish relations from the back burner of domestic policy to the forefront of England's foreign policy, and the appearance of a new generation of councillors, including the dangerously powerful and volatile earl of Essex, whose vaulting ambitions and ungovernable pride revived the specter of faction and even threatened the security of the crown. Purposely written from the limited scope of Westminster, it ignores the perspectives of other European capitals in a successful effort to explore how Elizabeth and her privy councillors defined and realized their goals.

Through close examination of Elizabeth's diligent and constant exercise of power much is revealed about the techniques of her statecraft, uncluttered by the magnetic attraction of the numerous myths that surround her. Forever battling the processes of change, she not only sought to be informed of and in control of all events and individuals close to her but also to avoid the restless personal and martial ambitions of her father as well as the religious extremism of her brother and sister. Authorizing few initiatives, yet constantly forced to respond to pressing events, Elizabeth emerges with a steadiness and consistency of policy that would do her cautious grandfather proud, a policy that ultimately worked to England's advantage. Not surprisingly, her government took a giant step away from the dynastic past with its traditionally aggressive pursuit of royal ambition toward a still-born creation of the early modern bureaucratic state. Her establishment of a rationalized, compact, efficient, and highly successful bureaucracy not only set England apart from its own past but also from its royal neighbors, whose sixteenth-century struggles for power were governed by the overpowering passions of reputation. England's insular security provided Elizabeth a freedom of diplomatic maneuver unavailable to her European neighbors. She therefore took as much or as little of any war as she liked. All commitments were tentative, no alliance irrevocable, and with each shuffle in the diplomatic game the other players had to bid all over again for England's friendship or neutrality.

MacCaffrey's book has no equal for this period of English history. Bursting with insights, discovery, and judicious conclusions, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603* will force all Tudor historians to rethink their conclusions. Certainly no Elizabethan historian will dare ignore its contents.

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Marshall, Cynthia. *Last Things and Last Plays: Shakespearean Eschatology*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale 1991. xv + 142 pp, appendixes, works cited, index. \$24.50.