While Shakespeare's popularity has continued to grow, so has the attention paid to the work of his contemporaries. The contributors to this Companion introduce the distinctive drama of these playwrights, from the court comedies of John Lyly to the works of Richard Brome in the Caroline era. With chapters on a wide range of familiar and lesser-known dramatists, including Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton and John Ford, this book devotes particular attention to their personal and professional relationships, occupational rivalries and collaborations. Their plays are situated in their proper cultural and historical contexts, with discussions of performance in the early modern theatre, drama and reputation and the emergence of city comedy. Overturning the popular misconception that Shakespeare wrote in isolation, this book offers a new perspective on the most impressive body of drama in the history of the English stage.

Ton Hoenselaars is Professor of Early Modern English Literature and Culture at Utrecht University.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book
The Cambridge Companion to
Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists

Edited by
Ton Hoenselaars

Universiteit Utrecht, The Netherlands
For Stanley Wells
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The contributors to this volume of newly commissioned essays introduce Shakespeare and a vast range of fellow dramatists in the early modern theatre, including John Lyly, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Marston, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, John Webster, John Ford and Richard Brome. The essays examine the lives of these dramatists and discuss their individual achievements in detail. The essays are, however, also mindful of the fact that close personal and professional relations existed between Shakespeare and the other dramatists in the early modern theatre. Attention, therefore, is also devoted to the multiple forms of interaction between them – involving tutelage and encouragement as well as occupational rivalry and collaborative authorship. This approach to Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists enhances our appreciation of the single-authored as well as the collaborative plays that together represent the most impressive body of drama in English stage history.

The essays in this collection introduce the playwrights and a number of their works in chronological order. They range from Arthur Kinney’s full account of John Lyly and the University Wits in the 1580s and 1590s – whose hyper-inventive use of the English language and experiments with dramatic representation left an indelible stamp on Shakespeare’s work – to Lisa Hopkins’s discussion of John Ford, whose ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore (1632) and Perkin Warbeck (1633) may be read as Caroline appropriations of Shakespearean models for tragedy and history. Kyd’s charismatic Spanish Tragedy, as Clara Calvo demonstrates, was an inevitable presence, a familiar text for nearly every dramatist of the period to quote, to revise, to imitate, to emulate, to parody, but never to ignore. Richard Wilson reads the work of Marlowe and Shakespeare as closely interreflecting texts that bring into sharp focus these two colossal rivals’ decidedly different personalities and world views. Rivalry between Shakespeare and Jonson was no less palpable, as Warren Chernaiik shows, comparing the two dramatists as they depicted
the Roman world. In his account of the life and work of John Marston, Matthew Steggles describes how around the turn of the sixteenth century conflicting ideas about the status of literary and dramatic authorship unleashed the Poets’ War, or the War of the Theatres, with Marston himself, Jonson and Dekker at the militant centre. Darryll Grantley introduces Thomas Dekker and his work, and demonstrates how the commercial theatre’s demand for registering the latest fashions significantly determined both Dekker’s readiness to co-author and the sophistication of the end-product. By contrast to Dekker, it may be tempting to think of Shakespeare as an individual writer for the stage. However, from Ton Hoenselaars’s essay Shakespeare emerges as an author who worked collaboratively throughout his writing career. Although the number of plays of which Shakespeare is the unchallenged sole author remains unusual, critics now generally agree about the hand of contemporaries like Nashe, Peele, Middleton and Fletcher in the Shakespeare canon, and assume that Shakespeare acted as one of the dramatists who revised Sir Thomas More. Thomas Heywood – sharing Dekker’s almost un-Shakespearean interest in London as a dramatic setting – is alleged to have collaborated on more plays than any of his contemporaries. Yet, as Jean Howard demonstrates, Heywood may be recognised as a committed dramatist who effectively experimented with existing genres and sought to develop new theatrical means to heighten the emotional impact of his plays. George Chapman, introduced by Paul Franssen, may have been the most learned dramatist of his time, and he was nearly alone in his fascination with the contemporary European continent as a source and setting for his plays. His singular identity, however, did not prevent him from participating in the writing of Eastward Ho (with Jonson and Marston). Catherine Henze writes about Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, devoting equal attention to their individual plays and their joint work. Interestingly, a closer look at the music in their plays also reveals unsuspected networks of collaboration between the dramatists and their theatre personnel.

Michelle O’Callaghan guides the reader through the drama of Thomas Middleton, the playwright whom some critics hail as ‘our other Shakespeare’. Active as sole author, co-writer and reviser, Middleton ever worked with an eye to the fashion, and with his ingenuity and commitment managed to lift the genres of comedy and tragedy to new heights. Robert Henke looks at John Webster. An in-depth study of the playwright’s career, his plays and his reflections on the art of writing reveals disparate views of single and joint authorship which, in turn, suggest a conflict between public constraint and private interiority. Rui Carvalho Homem writes of Massinger’s unstable reputation since the seventeenth century. Homem suggests that we may have been confused by the incompatibility of Massinger’s ideas, and have looked
for a degree of coherence in the plays, whereas their very absence should perhaps be recognised as their most vital characteristic, as a feature that must appeal to our twenty-first century.

In the case of later dramatists like Webster, Ford, Massinger and Brome, it is customary to signal their often obvious debt to earlier playwrights, whom they mention by name, whose work they cite and on which they model their own new plays. Introducing Richard Brome as a playwright whose topical comedy is politically committed rather than escapist, Heather Hirschfeld duly recognises Brome as the traditional ‘underservant’ to Jonson, but she also demonstrates how comedies like The Northern Lasse and The Antipodes are beholden to Shakespeare as well.

What emerges from this chronological panorama of early modern drama – with so many dramatists whose rivalry, collaboration, quotation, borrowing and imitation produced the plays that continue to fascinate playgoers and readers alike – is above all a sense of variety. Focusing on familiar and less familiar play-texts, these essays introduce a wide range of dramatic genres practised on the popular stage, including romantic comedy, citizen comedy and city comedy, tragedy, revenge tragedy, domestic tragedy, tragicomedy, as well as the English and Roman history play. Introducing Shakespeare, his fellow dramatists and their plays, these essays further convey an intriguing sense of emergent individuality, while more traditional guild-like forms of collaborative writing persist. In this way, they enhance our appreciation of the individual dramatists’ contribution to the history of English drama, but also capture the cohesion and dynamics of the early modern stage.

In recent years, the popularity of Shakespeare has continued to grow, but so has our interest in the fellow dramatists. Theatres have come to pursue an ever more diverse early modern repertoire beyond the plays of Shakespeare, generating a body of productions with rich stage histories. In the essay that completes this collection, Elizabeth Schafer argues that even though we have recorded stage histories for a number of playwrights, there is still a real need for more performance-centred criticism in relation to most early modern plays. Writing such criticism, however, demands a proper sense of the historian’s duties and responsibilities with respect to issues of selection and perspective. Schafer illustrates her argument with reference to the stage histories of familiar plays like Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi and Jonson’s The Alchemist, but also breaks a lance for the considerably less canonical, anonymous Arden of Faversham whose stage history is fraught with gender issues.

As they are performed with greater frequency, the texts of the plays by Shakespeare’s colleagues have also become more widely available. Individual plays or thematic groupings of these plays are now available in well-known
series and anthologies of English Renaissance drama. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino’s *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (2007) has given a significant boost to the study of early modern dramatic authorship, individual as well as collaborative. Likewise David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson’s new *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* (2012) promises to transform the field: not simply with its seven volumes already available on the shelf, but also with the editorial team’s development, currently in progress, of a digital environment, which will facilitate Jonsonian research worldwide in many ways. The internet is an ideal site for concentrating interest also on the less canonical playwrights of the early modern period, and the *Richard Brome Online* project hosted by the University of Sheffield is a case in point, with its laudable objective to cross-fertilise editorial and staging practices. The plays of Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists have never been more easily available than they are today, and opportunities to approach them have rarely been more diverse. Has there ever been a more opportune moment to study them?

1533  
Birth of Queen Elizabeth I

1535  
Execution of Sir Thomas More

1553  
Death of Edward VI and accession of Mary I

c. 1554  
John Lyly born

1558  
Death of Mary I. Accession of Elizabeth I
Robert Greene born
Thomas Kyd born
Thomas Lodge born
George Peele born

c. 1559  
George Chapman born

1560  
Henry Chettle born
Anthony Munday born

1563  
Michael Drayton born
CHRONOLOGY

1564  Christopher Marlowe born
      William Shakespeare born

1567  Red Lion playhouse built. Thomas Nashe born

1572  Massacre of St Bartholomew’s Day
      Ben Jonson born
      Thomas Dekker born

1573  Thomas Heywood born

1576  The Theatre playhouse opens
      John Marston born

1577  Curtain playhouse opens
      First Blackfriars theatre built

1579  John Fletcher born

1580  Thomas Middleton born
      John Webster born

1582  Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway
      Lord Chamberlain’s Men become active

1583  Lyly, Campaspe
      Lyly, Sappho and Phao
      Philip Massinger born

1584  Peele, Araygnement of Paris

1584–5  Francis Beaumont born

1585  Admiral’s Men become active
      Lyly, Gallathea

c. 1586  Shakespeare leaves Stratford
      Marlowe, Dido, Queen of Carthage
      John Ford born

1587  Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots
      The Rose playhouse opens
      Richard Field born
      Marlowe, 1 Tamburlaine the Great
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>1588</td>
<td>Spanish Armada defeated</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyly, <em>Midas</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peele, <em>The Battle of Alcazar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1590</td>
<td>Richard Brome born</td>
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<td>Marlowe, <em>Edward II</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shakespeare, <em>1 Henry VI, Titus Andronicus</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plague breaks out in London, closing the theatres for two years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chettle publishes Greene’s <em>Groats-worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance</em>, calling Shakespeare an ‘upstart crow’</td>
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<td>Greene dies</td>
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<td>1593</td>
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<td>Marlowe killed in Deptford</td>
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1593–4 Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*

1593–1603 Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*

1594 Shakespeare produces *The Comedy of Errors*, and becomes a sharer in the Chamberlain’s Men

Heywood, *The Four Prentices of London*

Swan theatre built

Kyd dies

1594–5 Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

1595 Shakespeare, *Richard II, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

1596 James Shirley born in London

Shakespeare, *King John*

1596–7 Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* and 1 *Henry IV*

1597 Second Blackfriars theatre built

Fear of second Spanish Armada

Peele dies

1597–8 Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and 2 *Henry IV*

1598 Homer’s *Iliad* translated by Chapman (Books 1–7)

Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, named as one of the ‘principal comedians’ in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour*

1598–9 Shakespeare, *Henry V*

1599 Globe theatre opens

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

Anon., *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*

Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*

Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*

Heywood 1 and 2 *Edward IV*

Edmund Spenser dies in Westminster, London

1599–1600 Shakespeare, *As You Like It*
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<td>Shakespeare, <em>Troilus and Cressida</em></td>
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<td>Queen Elizabeth dies and is succeeded by King James I and VI&lt;br&gt;Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men&lt;br&gt;Shakespeare, <em>Measure for Measure</em>&lt;br&gt;Heywood, <em>A Woman Killed with Kindness</em>&lt;br&gt;Jonson's <em>Sejanus, His Fall</em> is published and lists Shakespeare as one of the 'principal tragedians'&lt;br&gt;Marston, <em>The Malcontent</em></td>
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Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*
Middleton, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*
Lyly dies

1607
Shakespeare, *Pericles*
Heywood, *The Rape of Lucrece*
Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*
Chettle dies

1608
King’s Men lease Blackfriars theatre
Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*
Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*
Chapman, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*

1609
Cockpit theatre built
Beaumont and Fletcher, *Philaster, or Love Lies a-Bleeding*
Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*
Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* published

1610
Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maid’s Tragedy*
Chapman, *The Revenge of Bussy D’Ambois*
Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*

1611
Jonson, *Catiline, His Conspiracy*
Middleton, *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*
Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

1612
Webster, *The White Devil*

1613
The Globe on fire during a performance of Shakespeare’s
*Henry VIII (All is True)*
Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

1613–14
Shakespeare and Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

1614
Second Globe built
Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

1616
Shakespeare dies
Beaumont dies
Jonson’s *Works* published

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<td>Middleton, <em>Women Beware Women</em></td>
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<td>1622</td>
<td>Middleton, <em>The Changeling</em>&lt;br&gt;Massinger, <em>The Duke of Milan</em></td>
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<td>1623</td>
<td>Publication of the First Folio, the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays</td>
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<td>King James I dies. Accession of King Charles I&lt;br&gt;Massinger, <em>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</em>&lt;br&gt;Lodge dies&lt;br&gt;Fletcher dies</td>
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<td>Massinger, <em>Believe as You List</em></td>
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<td>Ford, <em>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</em>&lt;br&gt;Munday dies</td>
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<td>1623</td>
<td>Chapman dies&lt;br&gt;Middleton dies</td>
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<td>1632</td>
<td>Massinger, <em>The City Madam</em>&lt;br&gt;Publication of Shakespeare's Second Folio</td>
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<td>Ford, <em>Perkin Warbeck</em></td>
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<td>1634</td>
<td>Marston dies</td>
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<td>1637</td>
<td>Jonson dies</td>
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<td>1638</td>
<td>Brome, <em>The Antipodes</em></td>
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<td>1640</td>
<td>Second edition of Jonson’s <em>Works</em>&lt;br&gt;Ford dies&lt;br&gt;Massinger dies</td>
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<td>1642</td>
<td>London theatres closed at outbreak of Civil War</td>
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<td>1649</td>
<td>Charles I beheaded. Oliver Cromwell succeeds as Lord Protector of England</td>
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1652/3  Brome dies
1658   Death of Oliver Cromwell
1660   Restoration of the Stuart monarchy with the accession to the throne of Charles II
1664   Publication of Shakespeare's Third Folio