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978-0-521-15271-6 - The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater

Jonathan Haynes

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Jonathan Haynes's *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater* is about the Elizabethan playwright Ben Jonson as a realist, and as an astute observer of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Many of the forms and purposes of his realism spring from the social dynamics of the theaters in which he worked. Jonson's art arose in circumstances fraught with social pressures, and although his plays cannot be reduced to these pressures neither can his art be understood apart from them. This is a study of the social relations represented *in* Jonson's plays, but it is also about the social relations *of* the plays themselves, of what happened between Jonson and his audience in the theater.

Haynes makes a detailed literary historical argument about the sources and consequences of Jonson's realism. The book polemicizes against the moral and formal preoccupations of the last two generations of Jonson criticism; it is informed by the new social history and by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias.

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*The Social Relations
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JONATHAN HAYNES
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*for Ann
and
for David Konstan*

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MITIS: I trauell with another objection, signoir, which I fear will bee enforc'd against the author, ere I can be deliuer'd of it.

CORDATUS: What's that, sir?

MITIS: That the argument of his *Comoedie* might haue beene of some other nature, as of a duke to be in loue with a countesse, and that countesse to bee in loue with the dukes sonne, and the sonne to loue the ladies waiting maid: some such crosse wooing, with a clowne to their seruingman, better then to be thus neere, and familiarly allied to the time.

Every Man out of his Humour, III.6. 191–201

I can assure those unprejudiced readers who are solicitous to become acquainted with the domestic manners and pursuits of our forefathers, that they will find more to gratify their rational curiosity in the dramas of this great poet, than in all the writers of his age.

Gifford, *Jonson's Works*

Le fait théâtral déborde constamment l'écriture dramatique, puisque la représentation des rôles sociaux, réels ou imaginaires, provoque une contestation, une adhésion, une participation qu'aucun autre art ne peut provoquer.

Jean Duvignaud, *Sociologie du Théâtre*