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978-0-521-63358-1 - Shakespeare's Theory of Drama
Pauline Kiernan
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Why did Shakespeare write *drama*? Did he have specific and significant reasons for his choice of this art form? Did he have clearly defined aesthetic aims in what he wanted drama to do – and why? Pauline Kiernan opens up a new area of debate for Shakespearean criticism in showing that a radical, complex defence of drama, which challenged the Renaissance orthodox view of poetry, history and art, can be traced in Shakespeare's plays and poems.

This study examines work from different stages in the canon to show that, far from being restricted by the 'limitations' of drama, Shakespeare consciously exploits its capacity to accommodate temporality and change, and its reliance on the physical presence of the actor, in an attempt to replace both the artifice of mimetic art and the belatedness of historical record. She discusses the influence of Ovid's artistic concerns with poetic originality and immortality and the compelling power of fiction.

Shakespeare's Theory of Drama shows how Shakespeare rejected many of the theories of his age to create an original theory of drama. Kiernan provides a lively, readable but scholarly examination with a deliberately eclectic approach, covering less obvious texts in detail. She demonstrates that the non-dramatic works are about poetry in relation to Shakespeare's own role as a dramatist.

This is an important book: it offers an original and scholarly insight into what Shakespeare wanted his drama to do and why.

Pauline Kiernan is the author of *Staging Shakespeare at the New Globe* and is editing Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. She is also a playwright and won a Special Prize in the Mobil/Royal Exchange Theatre Playwriting Competition for *Actors*, a play about politics and the theatre at the Elizabethan court.

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PAULINE KIERNAN

*University of Reading
and
The Globe, Bankside*



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For Colin Robson

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page xi
<i>A note on references and abbreviations</i>	xii
1 Introduction	1
2 Shakespeare and Sidney. Two worlds: the brazen and the golden	6
3 Shakespeare and Ovid. 'What strained touches rhetoric can lend': poetry metamorphosed in <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and the Sonnets	21
4 'In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life': exposing art's sterility. <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> , <i>The Winter's Tale</i> and <i>The Tempest</i>	59
5 'O'er-wrested seeming': dramatic illusion and the repudiation of mimesis. <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> , <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and <i>Hamlet</i>	91
6 'Thy registers and thee I both defy': history challenged. <i>Richard III</i> , <i>Henry VIII</i> , <i>Henry V</i> and <i>Richard II</i>	127
7 <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> as 'A Defence of Drama'	154
<i>Notes</i>	191
<i>Bibliography</i>	209
<i>Index</i>	216

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Quotations from Ovid's works are from the Loeb Classical Library editions, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. English translations are from these editions except where otherwise stated.

Quotations from Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry* are from Jan Van Dorsten's edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966; reprinted 1982.

Quotations from Plutarch's *Lives* are from *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, translated by Sir Thomas North, 8 vols., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1928.

ABBREVIATIONS

All journals cited are given their title in full, except for *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA)*.

Titles of Shakespeare's plays are given in full, except in the notes, where they follow the abbreviated form recommended in the MLA Handbook.