

Cambridge University Press

052164075X - Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

Kent Cartwright

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THEATRE AND HUMANISM

English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

This book examines the hundred years of drama preceding Shakespeare in the light of a critical problem: English drama at the beginning of the sixteenth century was allegorical, didactic, and moralistic; but by the end of the century theatre was censured as emotional and even immoral. How could such a change occur? Kent Cartwright suggests that some theories of early Renaissance theatre – particularly the theory that Elizabethan plays are best seen in the tradition of morality drama – need to be reconsidered. He proposes instead that humanist drama of the sixteenth century is theatrically exciting – rather than literary, elitist, and dull as it has often been seen – and socially significant, and he attempts to integrate popular and humanist values rather than setting them against each other. Taking as examples plays by writers from Medwall and Heywood to Marlowe, Lyly, and Greene, as well as many by lesser-known dramatists, the book demonstrates the contribution of humanist drama to the theatrical vitality of the sixteenth century.

KENT CARTWRIGHT is Associate Professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park. He has published on Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, and American fiction. His previous books are *Shakespearean Tragedy and its Double: The Rhythms of Audience Response* (1991) and *Othello: New Perspectives* (1991), which he edited with Virginia Mason Vaughan.

Cambridge University Press

052164075X - Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

Kent Cartwright

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THEATRE AND HUMANISM

English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

KENT CARTWRIGHT



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 052164075X - Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century
 Kent Cartwright
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Kent Cartwright 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville 11/12.5 pt [wv]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Cartwright, Kent, 1943–

Theatre and humanism : English drama in the sixteenth century / – Kent Cartwright.
 p. , cm.

ISBN 0 521 64075 X (hardback)

1. English drama – Early modern and Elizabethan, 1500–1600 – History and criticism.
2. Theater – England – History – 16th century.
3. Renaissance – England.
4. Humanists – England. I. Title.

PR646.C37 1999

822'.309 – dc21 98–37229 CIP

ISBN 0 521 64075 X hardback

Cambridge University Press

052164075X - Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

Kent Cartwright

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*To
my brother Jerry*

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
Introduction	1
1 The humanism of acting: John Heywood's <i>The Foure PP</i>	25
2 <i>Wit and Science</i> and the dramaturgy of learning	49
3 Playing against type: <i>Gammer Gurton's Needle</i>	75
4 Time, tyranny, and suspense in political drama of the 1560s	100
5 Humanism and the dramatizing of women	135
6 The confusions of <i>Gallathea</i> : John Lyly as popular dramatist	167
7 Bearing witness to <i>Tamburlaine, Part 1</i>	194
8 Robert Greene's <i>Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay</i> : the commonwealth of the present moment	222
Afterword	247
<i>Notes</i>	249
<i>Index</i>	313

Acknowledgments

In the six and a half years that I spent writing this book I tugged on many sleeves. Demands for brevity do not permit me to identify in detail the substantial and varied contributions of the owners of those sleeves, but I list their names now with a deep sense of gratitude: Catherine Belsey, Thomas Berger, David M. Bevington, Theresa Coletti, Robert Coogan, Jane Donawerth, Donna B. Hamilton, William M. Hamlin, Grace Ioppolo, Erin Kelly, Bernice Kliman, Robert S. Knapp, Theodore B. Leinwand, Maynard Mack Jr., Laurie Maguire, Nancy Klein Maguire, Robert Miola, Alan H. Nelson, Elihu Pearlman, Joseph A. Porter, Lois Potter, Martha Tuck Rozett, William H. Sherman, Virginia Mason Vaughan, Paul Whitfield White, Gary Williams, and Georgianna Ziegler. In spring 1996 I was privileged to participate in a semester-long Folger Institute seminar led by J. W. Binns on “Books, Learning, and the Academy in the English Renaissance.” I am obliged to Professor Binns’s seminar for greatly increasing my understanding of sixteenth-century neo-Latin literature in England. I owe subsequent debts to the two anonymous readers, for their perceptive comments, and to Sarah Stanton of Cambridge University Press, for her efficient editorship. Immeasurable thanks are also due to the Folger Shakespeare Library for providing the venue for most of the research and writing of the manuscript. The drafting of several chapters was facilitated by a semester research fellowship from the Graduate Research Board of the University of Maryland.

I also express my gratitude for opportunities to present parts of this project at meetings of the Modern Language Association, South Atlantic Modern Language Association, Central Renaissance Conference, Southeastern Renaissance Conference, Shakespeare Society of America, and International Shakespeare Conference. An early version of chapter 1 was published in *Studies in the*

Cambridge University Press

052164075X - Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century

Kent Cartwright

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Literary Imagination; portions of chapter 3 appeared in *Renaissance Papers*; and chapter 6 first saw light in *Comparative Drama*, to all of which, for their permission to reprint material here, I register my appreciation.

I save several special thanks for last. When I began working on this project I profited greatly from numerous conversations about Tudor drama with my graduate student, Victoria Plaza. This book still reflects many of the interests that surfaced in those discussions, and I remain grateful to Victoria for her perspicacity. Later, when I was beginning to wonder if I would ever finish, my friend Mike Casey coached me for eight months through the drafting of a large share of the manuscript. It was one of the most productive periods of my life, and this book would not be appearing now without his help. As I was preparing the manuscript for submission and printing, Mary Tonkinson, copy-editor *extraordinaire* for *Shakespeare Quarterly*, helped me to sharpen and tighten it sentence by sentence. Finally, I express my gratitude and love to my wife, Pam, whose encouragement and support are without end.