

Introduction

The term 'dramatic interludes' in the title of this guide is used to encompass the whole range of non-cycle drama in English in the period covered by the book. It therefore includes not only the plays normally designated as interludes, but also such genres as saint plays, farces, early history plays and neoclassical drama. The description 'English' may equally be a little misleading, since it refers to the language in which the plays were written rather than to their geographical provenance. Thus a few Scottish and Irish plays in English are covered, while those emanating from England but written in Cornish, Latin or French have been omitted. A partial exception to this is *The Cambridge Prologue*, an Anglo-Norman fragment with a contemporary roughly parallel text in English, which has been included despite the fact that it may fall just outside the period remit of this guide.

The book covers the extant non-cycle drama in English up to 1580, the terminal date being around five or so years after the building of the first major permanent theatres in London, which signalled the emergence of a new commercial theatre culture. Liturgical drama, stray single plays that might be considered to have belonged to large urban cycles, and closet plays have been excluded (though a list of the last has been provided), but otherwise the whole diverse range of the non-cycle drama has been covered. This includes fragments, with the exception of some unnamed pieces dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that are too limited to exhibit anything of interest from a dramatic perspective. The late thirteenth-century fabliau *Dame Sirith* has not been included though the *Interludium de Clerico et Puella*, to which it bears some relation, has been because of its much clearer dramatic identity. Omitted too (and perhaps unjustifiably so) is John Lydgate's *Mumming at Hertford*, dating from the early fifteenth century. Though mummings do not normally involve performed dialogue, this one unusually does, but it does not stand alone, complete in itself as a dramatic piece, and is part of a larger programme of festivity.

Though much of the drama from this period has been lost, what remains gives a clear sense of the great diversity of forms of playwriting and production that existed. Such a range and variety of drama was partly the result of the different traditions, classical and native, that informed theatrical writing. It was also partly to do with the considerably varying contexts of production (though this is not evenly represented in the extant drama): itinerant companies playing to noble households or more socially diverse urban audiences; religious drama, sometimes

with an institutional connection; school and university drama, sometimes offered for court entertainment; and folk plays incorporated into village festive culture.

The beginnings of English drama are to a large extent obscured by the paucity of material, the problem being that play texts did not enjoy the status of literary, chronicle or devotional writing and were thus relatively unprotected from the depredations of time. We might at least be grateful that some plays began to be printed in the early years of the sixteenth century, helping to ensure their survival. As a result of the loss of so much we can only arrive at a tentative picture of the range of drama produced in England before the mid to late sixteenth century. Some things are apparent, however. The two early fragments from the fourteenth century, the *Interlude of the Student and the Girl* (*Interludium de Clerico et Puella*) and *The Pride of Life*, indicate that secular and religious, allegorical and non-allegorical drama were present alongside one another at an early stage. The pieces surviving from the fifteenth century, whole texts and fragments, allow a somewhat more detailed picture to emerge. The religious drama shows a variety of forms and approaches in both dramaturgical and thematic terms. *The Castle of Perseverance* dating from early in the century demands elaborate place-and-scaffold staging, the mid-century play of *Mankind* enlists scatological comedy into the dramatization of a religious theme, and *Wisdom, Who is Christ* begins to reflect on social issues alongside its spiritual concerns. A non-allegorical religious drama with challenging staging requirements is the miracle play, *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. Secular drama from this period includes the Robin Hood plays and, late in the century, the earliest extant author-identified interludes in Henry Medwall's humanistic pieces *Nature* and *Fulgens and Luces*.

The sixteenth century not only fills out the picture, but broadens it considerably. The elaborate place-and-scaffold Digby *Mary Magdalen* and the possibly processional staged *Conversion of St Paul* date from the early years and are the only two full examples of surviving saint plays in English. *Everyman*, also from early in the century, is among the last allegorical plays to be entirely religiously didactic in orientation, as most interludes in the period with this basis begin to orientate themselves towards social or political problems or concerns. These range from the early *World and the Child*, *Hick Scornor*, and *Youth* to the 'proverb' plays from the mid to late century, including *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *Like Will to Like*, and the 'wit' plays that moralize the growing interest in education. Where the drama does continue to concern itself directly with religion, this is usually in the form of religious polemic, mostly Protestant in orientation, and exemplified strikingly by John Bale's plays. There are also, however, some non-allegorical interludes based on scriptural narrative, such as *Jacob and Esau*, *Godly Queen Hester* and *Virtuous and Godly Susanna*. From early in the century there is a strong representation of secular drama, both comic and tragic. The comic ranges from farcical pieces, like John Heywood's plays or *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, to serious dramas that avoided tragic action, such as John Phillip's *Patient and Meek Grissell*. Tragic drama included plays like *Cambises* that incorporated native elements such as the

Vice, to works structured more uniformly on classical dramatic formulae, like *Gismond of Salerne*.

The non-cycle drama in the period has a variety of auspices, which are likely to have had some determining influence on the nature of that drama. These include religious institutions, such as monasteries and confraternities dedicated to saints, the secular folk festivities of rural communities, the itinerant troupes serving the court and noble households and, secondarily, provincial urban communities, the educational institutions of various sorts – schools, universities and the Inns of Court, and finally particular individual promoters such as John Rastell and John Bale. The auspices of many if not most of the interlude plays are unknown, and so it is difficult to draw categorical conclusions about the relationship of the interludes to their contexts, though it is possible to make some general observations. Much of the early religious drama is associated with East Anglia, less for specifically religious reasons than the early prosperity of that region. With the decline of the dramatic production of religious institutions, the primary patronage of most non-cycle plays of the period up to the establishment of the London playhouses became predominantly the noble household, though this drama found wider audiences in provincial urban centres as well. There is less geographical specificity here, and the drama also develops a strongly social focus. It is probably true to say that the plays coming from these contexts are produced less with an eye to formal innovation – though this certainly occurs – than to the subject matter, which ranges over a variety of issues that concerned the elite. In the other major and increasingly important auspices of vernacular drama – the educational institutions: schools, the universities and the Inns of Court – one finds more evidence of interest in formal genres. The vernacular plays in these institutions emerged alongside traditions of classical drama and it is therefore unsurprising that classical forms are most strongly present in this drama. Adaptations of classical plays include *The Bugbears* and *Terence in English*, a version of Terence's *Andria*. Others are plays more loosely structured along the lines of classical drama, such as *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Particularly notable is the mid-sixteenth-century flowering of Inns of Court drama that produced a clutch of neoclassical plays in English, such as *Gorboduc*, *Jocasta*, *Supposes* and *Gismond of Salerne*.

Though classical forms find a place in the interlude drama, both within and without the academy right up to and beyond the coming into existence of the London playhouses, this drama also retains elements of native traditions. Many of the characters remain allegorical and most have discursive elements in their construction. The Vice may take a diverse range of forms, but remains prominently present as an animating force in many plays, and an element of *psychomachia* persists in the dramatic narratives surrounding several central protagonists. The moral orientation and didacticism of the drama, which have inspired the terms 'morality play' or 'moral play', came increasingly to centre around secular concerns, though continuing through the period to be nominally cast in theological terms. There is a strong political dimension to some of the drama, much of it

4 English Dramatic Interludes 1300–1580

embodying positions on religious conflict and doctrine, but many plays also reflect on issues such as marriage, social mobility, rank and social behaviour, economic competition and aspiration, the upbringing of youth and the transference of wealth across generations, servants, companions, judicial and other corruption, wealth and poverty, the management of money, trade, economic oppression and enclosures, and foreign immigration. The importation of narratives other than scriptural into the English drama, particularly from foreign or classical sources (seen as early as Medwall's *Fulgens and Luces* at the end of the fifteenth century) becomes more commonplace, exemplified by plays such as *Jack Juggler*, *Apus and Virginia*, John Pickering's *Horestes* and George Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra*. It was the remarkable range and variety of this drama, particularly in the sixteenth century, that helped make it the bedrock – technical and otherwise – for the sophistication of the early modern commercial theatre when it became established in London. However, it is far from this alone that makes it a rewarding area of study. The drama also derived its thematic diversity from the fact that it responded to the social and philosophical concerns of the society by which and for which it was produced.

Though many of the plays produced prior to the emergence of the London commercial theatre might appear to be simple and unsophisticated, the range of dramaturgical principles they embody also provides an insight into the depth of theatrical understanding and appreciation of which at least some of their audiences were capable. Though there would inevitably have been some element of discreteness in the types of plays presented to particular sorts of audiences, there was less capacity for self-selection of audiences than exists at present. Thus, the same or similar audiences could, for example, be faced with a raucous farce, a classical tragedy, a religious morality replete with abstract figures, or a secular play engaging a range of contemporary issues. Such audiences would necessarily have been able to apprehend dramatic characters in different modes and on different levels, as conceptual figures and as psychological entities, or perhaps simultaneously in both capacities as combinations of the two modes. The development from dramatic character as abstraction to a more historical or psychological concept of representation was never a simple one, and the degree to which one mode impinged upon the other is an enduring feature of interest in early modern drama and beyond.

What is also striking in the fairly limited body of extant dramatic literature is the degree of formal and technical change and innovation occurring over a relatively brief stretch of time. However, what also becomes apparent when these plays are considered together is that in certain respects technical development was not simply a progression from early simplicity to later sophistication. Earlier drama possessed of the sort of resources that institutions – religious or educational – could provide, often yields evidence of considerable technical complexity in its staging, whereas plays of a much later date are largely devoid of dependence on either complex stage arrangements or sophisticated technology. The advanced stage technology evident in certain early religious dramas is later found in the court masque, inflected with developments imported from abroad, whereas the

simple staging arrangements of Shakespeare's theatre seem clearly a legacy of the limitations placed upon itinerant companies in the sixteenth century.

Since the interest of early non-cycle English plays resides in the ways in which they engage historical and social developments of the period, and also in the range of representational modes they exemplify, the approach in this reference guide has been to try to incorporate these and other aspects in providing essential information about each in as economical a way as possible. Whether from a dramaturgical, technical, historical, textual or thematic perspective, it is intended to facilitate access to the drama, allowing quick reference to the main features and substance of the plays. The entries have been kept brief enough to allow a ready overview, but an attempt has been made to give a reasonably comprehensive introduction to the plays, and to give as full a bibliography for each as possible. The decision to include fragmentary interludes has been made on the basis that there is frequently enough evidence of their formal and thematic features to make them useful in any broad consideration of the drama.

What follows is an explanation of the various subsections of this guide, both within the play entries section and within the end matter.

Plays and fragments

The Plays section is compiled alphabetically by title, using the first significant words of the titles in English. Where titles include the words 'Play of', these words are bracketed and do not determine alphabetical order. A separate entry has been made for the Cupar Banns to the *Satire of the Three Estates* as this is, in terms of narrative substance, an entirely separate play. By contrast, *Promos and Cassandra*, a two-part play, has one entry split into two parts, since these share a continuous narrative.

Dates, authorship and auspices

Under this subheading the dates for each play are given, approximate where no precise dating is possible, the Stationer's Register dates (SR) where available, authorship where known, auspices where known and the entry number in Greg's *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration* (see bibliography) for those plays with early printings.

Texts and editions

Early printings or manuscripts are listed for each item, together with current locations and *Short Title Catalogue* numbers (see Pollard and Redgrave in bibliography). Modern editions are comprehensively listed for each play (including nineteenth-century editions after *circa* 1840, with a selected few prior to this date as well). Only

published editions are included, not unpublished theses. It will become clear from the listings that several of the plays have yet to receive full editorial treatment, while some others (most notably *Everyman* and *Mankind*) have enjoyed considerable editorial and critical attention. The fact that plays are often buried in anthologies can make them difficult to track down, especially in the case of the more obscure ones, and so all modern collections containing this drama have been listed. So too have the Dodsley collections, as they are generally to be found in university libraries and may afford the readiest access to certain of the plays. John Farmer's collections and the Malone Society volumes also provide access to some plays that may prove otherwise difficult to come by. However, Dodsley, Farmer and many of the Malone Society's editions lack lineation and have only the most basic of editorial apparatus. Editions that make substantial cuts to plays, or present only extracts, have been excluded, as have adaptations.

Editions are listed with the most recent first, though this does not imply an order of preference in terms of quality of the edition. The editions I have used to extract data, and to which line references pertain, are marked with an asterisk. Where there are other editions with the same lineation, these are asterisked as well. As editions rarely differ markedly in line numbering, it should be relatively easy to locate allusions and other features from the line references given, even when this guide is used alongside non-asterisked editions. The selection of editions for reference here also does not necessarily designate any preference in terms of quality, since what has governed the choice has been both the probable availability in libraries and the forms of line numbering used. I have used lineated editions, where available, since these make it easier to locate stage directions, allusions and other features in the texts, and for the sake of simplicity editions with continuous lineation have been preferred over those that start numbering afresh in sections of the play. In some cases there are no editions with line numbering available, and in these cases page numbers are used to locate references, along with act and scene divisions where these are present. Editions that do not have line numbering are marked (n.l.) and in cases where the line numbering starts afresh each scene (s.l.) or each act (a.l.). Editions are marked to indicate whether they use original or modernized spelling.

Characters

The lists of dramatic characters follow the first occurrence of speeches (rather than first appearances) by characters in the plays, and are not necessarily as they are listed in the early versions or in modern editions. Where it has been considered useful, descriptive details that occur in the original character lists or in modern editions have been included. Throughout the word 'Vice', when referring to a category of dramatic character, is capitalized to distinguish it from the abstract concept. Mute figures or grouped figures are listed separately below the main lists.

Plot summaries

Though there has been an attempt to make these concise, they are designed not only to give an account of the narratives of plays, but also some idea of their shape as well. In these synopses, characters' names are italicized for the sake of clarity (since many of them are abstract). Occasionally, the names of characters that do not actually appear are also italicized, when it is clear that they are implicitly part of the story.

Brief commentaries

The commentaries are necessarily brief but attempt to give some idea of what is distinctive or interesting about the play being discussed, in terms of its conventions of representation, its place in the history of drama in the period, any important thematic or topical points of reference, or any elements of formal distinctiveness.

Below the commentaries on several of the plays and fragments are lists of those entries in the guide which deal with plays that have similar thematic or dramaturgical features. As this has been done fairly conservatively, exploration in entries not listed here could potentially yield further instances of correspondence between plays, albeit of a more limited extent.

Significant topics and narrative elements

The lists of topics in plays refer only to those subjects or narrative strands which are overtly present in the plays. In many cases there might be reason to argue for political or religious subtexts, and this has frequently been done in the critical literature, but these are not usually included here. The lists include topics and social referents that are present not only as part of the central themes or narratives, but also those that occur incidentally in the action of the plays. The lists are intended as a guide for readers seeking instances of specific narrative patterns or topics in the early drama.

Dramaturgical and rhetorical features

VERBAL AND GENERAL

The general dramaturgical features of each play or fragment are listed, such as changes of name on the part of characters (especially Vices), instances of dialect speech and specific rhetorical features. As these vary widely from play to play, no particular format is possible for their categorization, and they are listed broadly

in the order in which they occur in the plays, except that the similar features are listed together and in the case where features recur in plays, they are listed only once. The dramaturgical notes are simply there as pointers to the potential of plays as objects of study, rather than as comprehensive descriptions of them.

COSTUME AND DRESS

Where there is designation of costume and dress and either indications for change of costume or clear indications in the texts that such changes occur, these are noted. However, where items of dress (for example, armour) are used as props in the action, they are listed as stage properties rather than as apparel.

STAGE DIRECTIONS AND SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

All directions denoting actions are cited fully in the main list, as are those directions for speech, entry or exit where a particular manner is indicated, when characters are carrying objects, when they are performing some other activity at the same time (such as singing), or when speech is particularly juxtaposed with exit or entry. Modern editorial additions to stage directions are not included. In some editions it is not clear which directions are editorial or original and in these cases I have had to go back to the early printed texts. Directions which do not form part of the line numbering in the editions used are denoted *sd*, while those that do are marked as (*sd*). Some editions contain a mixture of these, certain directions being marginal in early printings. Actions cited without either of these are not directions but are inferred from the text, the relevant lines being noted. In the interests of economy of space, all directions that are simply for entry, exit, position or speech are separately listed (after 'simple entry', 'simple exit' and 'simple speech') with just the characters and locations, except in the case of plays with very few such directions where they are included in the main list. The naming of characters at the beginning of scenes is not usually taken as a direction for entry and is not normally included here. Where directions do not name the characters but just state, for instance 'exit' or 'exeunt', the characters' names are bracketed, except where they are designated by 'he' or 'she' directly after speaking, as in 'He goes out'. Also, for the sake of economy of space, names of characters are abbreviated (though only in stage directions and not elsewhere), and some other abbreviations are routinely used: att., attendant; k. or ki. (depending on whether a name or further element of the name is present), king; kn., knight; lac., lackey; ld., lord; ly., lady; ma., maid; mess., messenger; mus., musician; qu., queen; ret., retinue; ser., servant; sol., soldier. Plural forms are not abbreviated.

Where there is a mixture of English and Latin directions in a play, the language of each noted direction is signalled. Notes are included under 'Verbal and general' subsections pointing to whether directions are in English, Latin or both. However,

these do not generally include the directions for exit, 'exit' and 'exeunt', which are conventional in plays whether other directions are in Latin or English.

The function of square brackets and round brackets in this section should be noted: square brackets signal a complementary interpolation where the text of the stage direction has gaps, while round brackets indicate an explanatory gloss, usually in the form of the name of a character who is clearly implied but not named in the direction.

SONGS AND MUSIC

All instances of songs, directions for music, or indications in the texts that songs or music are to be performed are recorded, including instruments where these are designated. Either titles or the first few words of songs (where present) are used to identify them. Where words of songs are provided in the text (or elsewhere), this is indicated.

SET AND STAGING

This includes all information yielded by the plays about the staging arrangements, such as space requirements, doubling arrangements, sets, machinery and pyrotechnics.

STAGE PROPERTIES

The listing of stage properties is based on directions for the use of these, or instances where it is clear from the texts that specific properties are used, though this does not preclude the possible use of further unrecorded properties for which there is no direction or indication. Play texts vary greatly in the information they provide about the use of such objects. Fixtures that are part of sets are not included, such as tombs, bowers or arbours. The listings include animals where there are either directions or clear indications in the texts for their use.

Place names and allusions

PLACE NAMES

All place names are recorded, even when these form part of noble or ecclesiastical titles. A few place names, which refer to ideas rather than real locations, are recorded under 'Allusions', the best example being 'Parnassus'. Where the places have not been identified, the citation is given in inverted commas. Names are given in modern form, with the form occurring in the text being given in brackets alongside where this differs significantly.

In several plays, references to places form part of formulaic rhetorical lists in which the alliterative potential of place names is often the only reason for their presence in the texts. The occurrence of these is indicated below the lists of place names, and the relevant entries marked with superscript numbers. These numbers are attached to the place names except where there are several citations, some of which may not form part of lists, and in these instances the numbers are attached to relevant line references.

ALLUSIONS

All references to classical, literary or scriptural texts are noted if they occur overtly in the texts. So too are references to mythological, biblical, hagiographical or historical figures when such figures are neither characters in the plays nor feature in the narratives of the plays.

References to Bible and other texts are only recorded when these are actual quotations, or where it is signalled in the text that the Scriptures or specific texts are being cited (as when the author is named). References in plays are generally to the Vulgate, and in most instances this is identical to the Authorized Version. In the case of the Psalms, however, there are differences, and modern editors vary in their practice, some recording reference as to the Vulgate and some as to the Authorized Version. I have included both, particularly since the numbering differences between the Vulgate and Authorized Versions are not consistent across the whole run of psalms. Page or section references to works alluded to are given in italics to distinguish them from line references in the plays, and books of the Bible are italicized in the same way as titles of literary works, to distinguish them from eponymous biblical figures who may also be recorded.

Where a narrative alluded to is populated by more than one figure (for example, Diana and Actaeon) both may be cited together, but one or other might also have another entry if they appear separately. In cases where two figures are cited together, the reference is placed alphabetically according to the name of the first. Where a writer is cited with a work, or a work is quoted from, and elsewhere the name of the same writer is cited without direct reference to his works, separate entries are made. References to God, Christ and the Virgin Mary are generally omitted because of their frequency, as are references to classical names for the sun and moon, such as Phoebus or Luna, where the usage is merely formulaic. Similarly, personified ideas with a semi-mythic status, such as Fortune or Mors, are excluded. Names of saints or divinities are not recorded when they are simply part of oaths.

As in the case of place names, note indicators show where the allusions are part of lists, often alliterative, suggesting that they are likely to be present purely because of their sound. These are attached to the names except where there are several citations, some of which may not form part of lists. In these instances they are attached to relevant line references.