This revised and updated Companion acquaints the student reader with the forms, contexts, critical and theatrical lives of the ten plays considered to be Shakespeare’s tragedies. Thirteen essays, written by leading scholars in Britain and North America, address the ways in which Shakespearean tragedy originated, developed and diversified, as well as how it has fared on stage, as text and in criticism. Topics covered include the literary precursors of Shakespeare’s tragedies, cultural backgrounds, subgenres and receptions of the plays. The book examines the four major tragedies and, in addition, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus and Timon of Athens. Essays from the first edition have been fully revised to reflect the most up-to-date scholarship; the bibliography has been extensively updated; and four new chapters have been added, discussing Shakespearean form, Shakespeare and philosophy, Shakespeare’s tragedies in performance, and Shakespeare and religion.

Claire McEachern is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590–1612 (1996), co-editor (with Debora Shuger) of Religion and Culture in the English Renaissance (1997), and editor of the Arden 3 Much Ado About Nothing, as well as several other Shakespeare plays for various series.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of the book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY
Second Edition

EDITED BY
CLAIRE McEACHERN
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Preface to the second edition

The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy seeks to acquaint the undergraduate reader with the forms, context, kinds and critical and theatrical lives of the ten plays we consider Shakespeare’s tragedies: Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus and Timon of Athens. The following thirteen chapters address the ways in which Shakespearean tragedy originated, developed and diversified, as well as how it has fared on stage, the page and in critical history.

Although the first edition of this volume has remained in print throughout the decade since it first appeared, the amount of Shakespeare criticism extant in the world has done nothing to abate its current volume and pace, just as Shakespeare’s tragedies and works inspired by them continue to occupy a vital place in today’s performance repertoire. Shakespeare’s work remains as insistent a presence in our culture as ever, even as many of the historical or cultural frames of reference necessary to an informed understanding of his work ever recede from today’s undergraduate audience. A revised edition of this text seemed not inopportune, and I was happy to respond to the request of the Press to ask the authors of the chapters to revisit their work with an eye to accounting to recent developments in the field. I was guided in this process by the reports commissioned by Cambridge University Press, which also urged the inclusion of four new chapters. I hope the result reflects an adequate response to their thoughtful suggestions, and also that the present list of contributors reflects the worldwide distribution achieved by the first edition.

The book is structured in four parts. The initial group of chapters takes up the forms and definitions of the genre which Shakespeare inherits and develops. Colin Burrow introduces the models of tragedy that may have influenced Shakespeare’s composition and the ways these have influenced critical apprehension of the tragedies; Russ McDonald reviews the rhetorical resources which fuel Shakespeare’s tragic voice; David Bevington
undertakes a holistic account of Shakespeare’s repeated revisitations of the form throughout his career (often in plays not considered tragedies), and Michael Warren provides an account of the curious nature of the material texts on which critical castles are built.

The second section treats the Tudor–Stuart political and social identities which inform these plays. My own chapter considers the religious cultures of Shakespeare’s moment, and Michael Hattaway the political. Catherine Belsey introduces us to the early modern family, and Gail Paster to the mysterious realm of the early modern body. The next three chapters, on ‘themes’, address traditional subgenres of Shakespearean tragedy – the plays of revenge and ambition, love, and classical history – albeit from new perspectives. R. N. Watson re-evaluates the contemporary historical and philosophical understandings of the revenge form; Catherine Bates explores the paradoxes of love and loss that tragedy forces, and Coppélia Kahn describes the ways in which early modern understandings of classical civilization inform the texture of the five Greco-Roman plays. The final two pieces treat the ways in which reading and playing have shaped our experience of these plays. Paul A. Kottman introduces the reader to the important role of Shakespeare in philosophical thought and the ways in which philosophical thinkers have served to shape our notion of Shakespeare. Lucy Munro provides an account of performance traditions, with special attention to the role of texts, spectacle and the actor’s body; her chapter concludes with consideration of two hallmark features of Shakespearean tragedy, the soliloquy and the representation of violence.

While this book will profit from being read sequentially, each chapter is designed to be a self-contained study of its object. The authors have avoided a chapter-per-play approach, and thus the reader will encounter different plays in different lights and from different perspectives (Titus Andronicus, for instance, receives consideration in terms of the family, revenge tragedy and classical models). At the same time, care has been taken to provide sustained coverage of each tragedy somewhere in the volume (the index reveals these concentrations). This prismatic design, in which a given play appears from multiple vantage points, is intended to avoid the restriction of the identity of any one play to any particular critical category or meaning, and urge the reader to the juxtapositions of an organic and cross-referenced critical appreciation.
Chronology

Dates given for plays are of first performance unless otherwise specified; most of these dates are approximate and those cited in individual chapters of the Companion may differ. For a fuller record of plays in the period, see the Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Drama, ed. Braunmuller and Hattaway.

1564 Shakespeare born in Stratford-upon-Avon
1566 Red Lion playhouse opens
1576 The Theatre opens
1577 Curtain playhouse opens; Blackfriars Theatre opens
1581 Seneca His Tenne Tragedies (trans. Newton) published
1582 Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway; the licence is issued on November 27 and the first child (Susanna) is born six months later
1585 Shakespeare’s twin son and daughter, Hamnet and Judith, born
c. 1586 Shakespeare leaves Stratford; nothing is known for certain of his life between this date and 1592, by which time he is in London
1587 Rose playhouse opens. Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy; Marlowe, Tamburlaine 1 and 2
1590 Anon., King Lear
c. 1591 Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus
c. 1592 Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, Edward II
1593 Marlowe, The Massacre at Paris
c. 1594 Around this time Shakespeare becomes a sharer in the Chamberlain’s Men. Swan Theatre built
c. 1595 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet
c. 1599 Globe Theatre opens; Shakespeare’s principal clown, Will Kempe, leaves the company; his successor is Robert Armin. Shakespeare, Julius Caesar
1600 Fortune Theatre built. Shakespeare, Hamlet

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1603</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth dies and is succeeded by James I, who takes the acting companies under royal patronage; Shakespeare’s company, the Chamberlain’s Men, becomes the King’s Men.</td>
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<td>1605</td>
<td>Jonson, <em>Sejanus</em></td>
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<td>c. 1608</td>
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<td>c. 1610</td>
<td>Beaumont and Fletcher, <em>The Maid’s Tragedy</em></td>
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<td>1611</td>
<td>Jonson, <em>Catiline</em>; Tourneur, <em>The Atheist’s Tragedy</em></td>
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<td>1612</td>
<td>Webster, <em>The White Devil</em></td>
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<td>1614</td>
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<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Shakespeare dies in Stratford</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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Abbreviations

Shakespeare’s works

Cor. Coriolanus
Ham. Hamlet
H5 King Henry the Fifth
JC Julius Caesar
Lear King Lear
Luc. The Rape of Lucrece
Mac. Macbeth
Oth. Othello
R3 King Richard the Third
Rom. Romeo and Juliet
Tim. Timon of Athens
Tit. Titus Andronicus

General

F  Folio
q1 First Quarto
q2 Second Quarto
s.d. stage direction

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