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978-1-107-02493-9 - Screening Early Modern Drama: Beyond Shakespeare

Pascale Aebischer

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SCREENING EARLY MODERN DRAMA

While film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays captured the popular imagination at the turn of the last century, independent filmmakers began to adapt the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries. The roots of their films in European avant-garde cinema and the plays' politically subversive, sexually transgressive and violent subject matter challenge Shakespeare's cultural dominance and the conventions of mainstream cinema. In *Screening Early Modern Drama*, Pascale Aebischer shows how director Derek Jarman constructed an alternative, dissident approach to filming literary heritage in his 'queer' *Caravaggio* and *Edward II*, providing models for subsequent filmmakers such as Mike Figgis, Peter Greenaway, Alex Cox and Sarah Harding. Aebischer explains how the advent of digital video has led to an explosion in low-budget screen versions of early modern drama. The only comprehensive analysis of early modern drama on screen to date, this groundbreaking study also includes an extensive annotated filmography listing fifty surviving adaptations.

PASCALE AEBISCHER is Senior Lecturer in Renaissance Studies at the University of Exeter. Her co-edited collection *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres and Cultures* (2003) and her first book, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (2004), were followed by a wide range of articles in books and leading journals, including *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Bulletin* and *Shakespeare Survey*. In *Jacobean Drama* (2010), her focus began to shift towards early modern performance studies, which she explored more fully in *Performing Early Modern Drama Today* (2012), a collection she co-edited with Kathryn Prince. As General Editor of *Shakespeare Bulletin*, she encourages conversations about early modern drama in performance and seeks to set Shakespeare alongside his contemporaries, both on early modern stages and in present-day performance practice.

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Acknowledgements

My journey beyond Shakespeare, into what I feared might be a wilderness of forbiddingly alien plays and films and fiercely policed disciplinary boundaries, turned out to be a joyful, immensely enriching, if occasionally exhausting, experience. Instead of finding myself alone, I was accompanied by an ever-growing group of companions and friends, who helped me overcome obstacles and opened doors to new worlds. At 'home', the University of Exeter, I have the luck to be surrounded by smart and generous colleagues: warm thanks to Regenia Gagnier, Jo Harris, Joe Kember, Steve Neale, Ed Paleit, Philip Schwyzer, Vicky Sparey and Jane Spencer for providing early sounding-boards, and to Sally Faulkner, Gabriella Giannachi, James Lyons and Dan North for helping me along the way as I ventured into film studies and intermedial performance. Nela Vlasisavljevic-Kapelan and the Research Office provided very concrete assistance, as has the university, which granted me a much-appreciated period of study leave.

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Abbreviations and referencing

BDC	Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture, University of Exeter
BFI	British Film Institute, London
DB	Don Boyd Collection, BDC
DJC	Derek Jarman Collection, BFI
NMM	National Media Museum, Bradford
PC	Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent
RSC	Royal Shakespeare Company

Quotations from early modern plays will, throughout this book, refer to David Bevington *et al.* (eds.), *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), while quotations from Shakespeare refer to Stephen Greenblatt *et al.* (eds.), *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).