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978-1-107-66306-0 - Theatre and Testimony in Shakespeare's England: A Culture of Mediation

Holger Schott Syme

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## THEATRE AND TESTIMONY IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Holger Syme presents a radically new explanation for the theatre's importance in Shakespeare's time. He portrays early modern England as a culture of mediation, dominated by transactions in which one person stood in for another, giving voice to absent speakers or bringing past events to life. No art form related more immediately to this culture than the theatre. Arguing against the influential view that the period underwent a crisis of representation, Syme draws upon extensive archival research in the fields of law, demonology, historiography, and science to trace a pervasive conviction that testimony and report, delivered by properly authorized figures, provided access to truth. Through detailed close readings of plays by Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare – in particular *Volpone*, *Richard II*, and *The Winter's Tale* – and analyses of criminal trial procedures, the book constructs a revisionist account of the nature of representation on the early modern stage.

HOLGER SCHOTT SYME is Associate Professor of English at the University of Toronto. His essays have appeared in publications including *English Literary Renaissance*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and *Textual Cultures*, and he is the co-editor of *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing* (2009). For the third edition of the *Norton Shakespeare* he is editing *Edward III* and *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, and is writing an extended essay on the theatre of Shakespeare's time.

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*A Culture of Mediation*

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*For Alison*

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### *Textual note*

Quotations from manuscripts and early printed books are reproduced in their original spellings and punctuation. When citing from manuscript sources, I usually include revisions and deletions as applicable. In transcribing these, I have used the following conventions:

Deletions are enclosed in angle brackets: < >

Insertions or interlineations are marked by carets: ^ ^

Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are enclosed in square brackets: [ ]

I quote most of the dramatic works I discuss (especially Jonson's and Shakespeare's) from standard modern editions; however, wherever I consider features of the original texts important to my argument – as I often do – or where no reliable contemporary editions are available, I have used early modern printings.

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ACT	John H. Langbein. <i>The Origins of Adversary Criminal Trial</i> . Oxford University Press, 2003.
BL	British Library
CAR	J. S. Cockburn, ed. <i>Calendar of Assize Records: Home Circuit Indictments Elizabeth I and James I: Introduction</i> . London: HMSO, 1985.
CT	David Jardine. <i>Criminal Trials</i> . 2 vols. London: Nattali and Bond, 1870.
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ELH	<i>English Literary History</i>
ELR	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
HLS	Harvard Law School
INT	J. H. Baker. <i>An Introduction to English Legal History</i> . 4th edn. London: Butterworths, 2002.
OH	Sir John Baker. <i>The Oxford History of the Laws of England</i> , vol. VI: 1483–1558. Oxford University Press, 2003.
PC	John H. Langbein. <i>Prosecuting Crime in the Renaissance: England, France, Germany</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.
PRR	Ferdinando Pulton. <i>De Pace Regis et Regni</i> . London: Company of Stationers, 1609. STC 20495.
RA	Thomas Smith. <i>De Republica Anglorum</i> . Ed. Mary Dewar. Cambridge University Press, 1982.
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
SEL	<i>Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900</i>
SNT	Annabel Patterson, ed. <i>The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton</i> . Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1998.
SQ	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>

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- SRP James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds. *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. 1: *Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603–1625*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
- ST T. B. Howell, ed. *A Complete Collection of State Trials . . . from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783*. 34 vols. London: Longman, Hurst, 1816.
- STC Alfred W. Pollack, G.R. Redgrave, W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, eds. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*. 2nd edn. 3 vols. London: Bibliographic Society, 1976–91.
- TNA The National Archives, Kew

Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Shakespeare's works refer to *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd edn, New York: Norton, 2008.