

finds evidence that they developed a preference for the more exclusive confines of the Blackfriars and the other hall theatres, where they would not be subjecting themselves, in Marston's words, to being "gusted / To the barmy Jacket of a Beer-Brewer."

In two nicely organized appendices Gurr lists all the players (102, in all and all the references to playing (203 entries) he has been able to document for the seventy-five-year period. These chronological lists underpin his carefully worded discussions of "who went where" (pp. 59-72) and what the "Different kinds of player?" (pp. 72-79) made of their experience, and they will prove indispensable to all students of the subject, irrespective of their views on Gurr's own interpretations of the surviving evidence.

Gurr concludes his study with chapters on what can be inferred about the mental habits of the period's players, and on how theatrical taste evolved over the seventy-five years between the opening and closing of the professional London playhouses.

Under the heading of "Mental composition," the author focuses on such questions as whether theatregoers of the time were "judicious," capable of hearing and understanding the words and implications of the plays, or merely "spectators," limited in their response to the more superficial aspects of stage spectacle. He concludes that most of the period's playwrights probably shared Ben Jonson's view that "judicious" playgoers were rare even in the "select" hall theatres. At the same time, however, he cautions against our concluding too quickly that dramatists wrote only for audiences seeking "a literal representation of individual characters and actions that were meant to be interesting and moving in their own right, and to embody the primary significance of the play" (quoted from Richard Levin's "The Relation of External Evidence to the Allegorical and Thematic Interpretation of Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Studies*, 13 [1980], 1-29). Gurr is inclined to the assumption that many of the more intelligent members of the audience were more sophisticated in their responses to the plays than most of the surviving diary entries about theatre attendance would imply.

In his final chapter on "The evolution of tastes," Gurr traces the history of English theatre from "The first paying playgoers (1567-87)" to the "Citizens in the last years (1630-42)." Along the way he provides incisive comments on such topics as "Mass emotion and the Armada (1588-99)," "Race, religion, and revenge (1588-99)," "Citizen staples and ruler's rebellion (1588-1605)," "1609 and the settled hierarchy," and "The Blackfriars in the 1630s." These discussions substantiate the many differences, often subtly nuanced, between one company or one playhouse and another. And they demonstrate, with a degree of precision not characteristic of earlier studies, the various ways in which the theatre companies and the audiences of the age interacted with one another. There are many meaty passages in this final chapter, but the one I think most likely to be of interest to the readership of *Shakespeare Quarterly* is Gurr's assessment (p. 169) of the uniqueness of the company with which the leading playwright of the era cast his lot:

They might have kept the Globe and leased out the Blackfriars to another boy company. They might have taken on the Blackfriars with its law-abiding citizens and leased the Globe to another adult company. Seemingly it was not only their pre-eminence as the best company with the best plays, attracting the widest range of audiences, but their desire to stay loyal to their Globe clients which made them choose to divide their time between both playhouses. When the first Globe burned down in 1613 they could have simply reverted to the Blackfriars, which was now securely theirs. Instead they spent £1,400 to build a second Globe on the same location.

To some extent the Globe clearly was a citizen playhouse. But it also offered Blackfriars plays, and there is no evidence before the late 1630s to suggest that the company chose to stage one play at one venue and not the other. . . . Nothing in the available evidence suggests that the King's Men's pre-eminence and their possession of the playhouse most frequented by the privileged altered in any way their assumption that they catered for the whole range of society.

Playing in Shakespeare's London is a volume whose becoming modesty might cause it to be taken too lightly. That would be most regrettable. For though it doesn't pretend

to answer every question it raises, it poses what many readers will regard as the right questions. It assembles and digests an impressive amount of primary material. And it solidifies Andrew Gurr's position as one of our most lucid and reliable interpreters of what it was like to attend a play in the age of Shakespeare.

Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres. By LEONARD TENENHOUSE. New York: Methuen, 1986. Pp. viii + 206. \$33.00 cloth, \$12.50 paper.

Reviewed by PETER ERICKSON

Leonard Tenenhouse's study convincingly demonstrates that the precise deployment of dramatic genres in Shakespeare's career cannot be adequately explained according to an internal logic of the artist's psychological development. Instead, Shakespeare's generic changes must be correlated with larger cultural forces, particularly with the cultural divide separating Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. . . . a whole set of literary genres fell out of favor with the accession of James I, and new forms provided the appropriate means of situating oneself in proximity to political power" (p. 75). Romantic comedy, chronicle to Jacobean tragedy, about-older plays, city comedies, and the romances. This way of approaching genre usefully places the emphasis on the cross-generic connections that unite the various forms in a given period. For example, "seldom has criticism asked what political interests romantic comedy and chronicle history share that bound them together in a common fate" (p. 3). Perhaps the single greatest benefit accruing to this perspective is the seriousness it accords the political significance of comedy. "The overwhelming popular tradition of reading looks at comedy as an utterly apolitical form. Simply because it is about love and courtship, it cannot by definition be political, so the argument goes" (p. 3). In company with a whole array of recent feminist and new historicist criticism, Tenenhouse persuasively overturns this argument of comedy.

Considered exclusively as an analysis of genre, Tenenhouse's overall framework contains elements that are not fully worked out. Details of the Elizabethan/Jacobean periodization remain fuzzy. For example, the image of the mosaic, while attractive, suppresses the question of temporal sequence: "Rather like a mosaic, each form of Jacobean drama contributes a piece to a composite figure of authority" (p. 153). However, since Jacobean tragedy and romance do not occur simultaneously, what unfolding historical developments within the Jacobean period can help to explain why Shakespeare's late romances do not decisively supersede the tragedies? Second, Tenenhouse's interesting remark in passing that *Antony and Cleopatra* is "Shakespeare's elegy for the signs and symbols which legitimized Elizabethan power" (p. 146) suggests that the retrospective possibilities of his model deserve further exploration. If Shakespeare's elegiac stance taps the post-Elizabethan nostalgia for Elizabeth documented by Anne Barron,¹ then what is the political significance of Shakespeare's evocation of this nostalgia during James's reign? Third, the picture of an interim period, roughly 1598-1603, at the close of the aging Elizabeth's reign and before the emergence of new Jacobean modes, needs to be filled in. The action of a transitional phase is invoked largely to accommodate *Hamlet*, but it remains to show how other Shakespearean plays fit into this intermediate position.

Finally, the role of tragedy is the weakest part of Tenenhouse's account. As he is aware (p. 3), tragedy presents the greatest challenge to his thesis because it is the one genre that clearly belongs to both Elizabethan and Jacobean periods rather than, as with other genres, uniquely to one period. The analyses of *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*—the latter interrupted twice (pp. 85-91, 112-15)—as distinctively Elizabethan seem to me

¹ "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *English Literary History*, 48 (1981), 706-31.