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Bentley (Gerald Eades), *The profession of player in Shakespeare's Time*, 1590- 1642

Josef De Vos

requires more dedicated effort for lesss visible results that will, in the end, be more lasting than the reformulation of New Critical creeds in a new jargon that seems so popular in the States. — Geert LERNOUT.

BENTLEY (Gerald Eades), *The profession of player in Shakespeare's Time*, 1590-1642. Princeton University Press, 1984 ; XIV-315 p. — As a companion piece to his book on *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time*, G. E. Bentley has now published a detailed study about *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time*. Undoubtedly this minutely documented work is a happy off-shoot of Bentley's near superhuman research for his *Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (1941-1968).

In his preface the author points out that "player" rather than "actor" was the normal term used in the period discussed here. Also Philip Henslowe's diary often uses the word "player" and never "actor". G. E. Bentley's book was not designed as a collection of contemporary records concerning players but as "an organization and interpretation of these documents" (p. XIII). At the same time, the author offers transcriptions of many of these important records. Starting from and relying on the available evidence, Bentley has been able to compose a picture of the profession which includes many aspects : the relation between the player and his company ; the sharers ; the hired men ; the apprentices ; management, touring in the provinces and casting. A drawback of dealing very systematically with all these aspects is that the same source often has to be quoted several times.

Bentley's account offers a great deal of interesting, often new information. Sometimes he opposes himself against persistent simplifications or even misconceptions. In the introductory chapter, he comments on the status of the players, which rose very notably before the closing act of 1642. He also makes us aware of the great difference between the stable and profitable troupe that were the King's Men and most other companies that were constantly threatened with disintegration. Unlike the other twenty or more of London theatrical troupes in the period between 1590 and 1642, Shakespeare's company, through the system of shared ownership, enjoyed the control of its own playhouse.

The importance of music and musicians in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre must not be underestimated. Most plays of this period call for vocal or instrumental music. Bentley presents evidence that the theatres had orchestras of probably no less than six musicians.

He also provides ample material on diverse theatrical functions such as that of the scribes, the wardrobe keepers, the box-holders and stagekeepers. Very important for companies producing so many different plays as did troupes like the King's Men was the work of the prompter. I was struck by the fact that several playwrights in their dramas make references to the function of the prompter. This, I think, offers another proof of the open theatricality or the anti-illusionist nature of the theatre in this age. The "book keeper" was responsible for many tasks. He had to see that any corrections required by the Master of the Revels were made in the prompt copy, he had to add stage directions, take care of distributing the minor roles etc. It would seem that the function of prompter approximates very much that of a modern stage manager.

Rejecting some conclusions of T. W. Baldwin (*The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company*, 1927), G. E. Bentley notes that there were variations in the age at which boy players were apprenticed and in the term which they served. But there is no doubt that the acting troupes used the apprentice system that was common for many other trades.

In connection with the recruitement of apprentice players, it is fascinating to learn from a law-suit of 1632 that some sort of training institution must have existed.

The author further provides information about important managers such as John Heminges and Charles Beeston and devotes a separate chapter to the companies' tours in the provinces, which were mainly caused by the plague.

What this highly informative book leaves unexplored is the acting style and its possible development. This matter would inevitably have led the author, who painstakingly sticks to firm evidence from historical documents, into the field of speculation. The erudition amply demonstrated by G. E. Bentley makes one eager to learn, though, what he might have to tell us on the subject. — Jozef De Vos.

Bond (Donald F.) †, ed. *The Tatler, with Introduction and Notes*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987 ; 3 vols, xxxvii + 590, xiv + 539, xiv + 569 pp. — The edition of *The Spectator* that the late Professor Bond published in 1965 has been such a source of information and delight to all those who are interested in the history and culture of the early eighteenth century that his edition of *The Tatler* is sure to be most welcome. Like *The Spectator* it is based on the original folio numbers and follows the same editorial principles. Departures from the copy-text (authorial revisions) are duly recorded in footnotes, while the passages in folio omitted in octavo editions are listed in *Appendix I*, emendations of accidentals in *Appendix II*, textual variants in the first duodecimo and octavo edds in *Appendix III*, sources of the mottoes in *Appendix IV*, and — a special boon — a list of the books advertised as "This day published" in *Appendix V*. Scholars will surely appreciate not only the accuracy with which the texts have been collated, but the determination of the editor, in spite of failing eyesight, to carry the work to completion. They will be glad to hear that the volumes came out in time for his 90th birthday. As in *The Spectator* references to people and events are explained in footnotes printed in smaller but very clear type. The only error I have noticed is in No 211 (iii.116), where the reference to No 205 should be (iii.92-3) instead of (i.27-8). This is not likely, however, to mislead readers, for No 205 cannot possibly be in vol. I.

The Introduction traces the beginnings of *The Tatler* in April 1709 as a miscellany intended to give news — to which Steele had easy access as editor of the official *London Gazette* ; information for the "coffee-house politicians" ; entertainment for "the fair sex" ; gallantry ; comments on plays and books ; plus advertisements. Each item was to be written from one coffee-house, thus : gallantry from White's : poetry and drama from Will's, *etc.*, while the comments of the editor were to be written from his own chambers. The name of this editor, Isaac Bickerstaff, was found to recall Swift's imitations of Partridge's almanacs and to contribute to the periodical's success. An important item soon after was Letters from the readers.

The news at once proved to be a further attraction to coffee-houses, especially in the provinces, where men would gather there on the day the post out arrived to read