

Staging Power in Tudor and Stuart English History Plays: History, Political Thought, and the Redefinition of Sovereignty

Kristin M.S. Bezio

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Staging Power in Tudor and Stuart English History Plays examines the changing ideological conceptions of sovereignty and their on-stage representations in the public theaters during the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods (1580-1642). The study examines the way in which the early modern stage presented a critical dialogue concerning the nature of sovereignty through the lens of specifically English history, focusing in particular on the presentation and representation of monarchy. It presents the subgenre of the English history play as a specific reaction to the surrounding political context capable of engaging with and influencing popular and elite conceptions of monarchy and government. This project is the first of its kind to specifically situate the early modern debate on sovereignty within a 'popular culture' dramatic context; its purpose is not only to provide an historical timeline of English political theory pertaining to monarchy, but to situate the drama as a significant influence on the production and dissemination thereof during the Tudor and Stuart periods. Some of the plays considered here, notably those by Shakespeare and Marlowe, have been extensively and thoroughly studied. But others-such as Edmund Ironside, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and King John and Matilda-have not previously been the focus of much critical attention.

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