Hibemo-Norse hybrid religion, and Sidebottom) who show a somewhat distant acquaintance with both Scandinavian sources and current research in Old Norse-Icelandic studies. In a work that emphasises interdisciplinarity this is unfortunate.

There were also some features of the book's organisation that could have been better handled, aside from some spelling errors and inconsistency of reference (e.g. Wormald 1998 on p. 48 = Wormald 1999 in the bibliography on p. 64). These were, on the whole minor, though some (for example Sidebottom's persistent citation of Anglo-Saxon tribal names on his maps as ending in -na (gen. pl. for -an, nom. pl.), as in Wreocanscetna, Magonscætna etc.) betray a shaky grasp of Old English grammar. The organisational feature that was most unfortunate, and took up unnecessary space, was the editors' decision to have a bibliography at the end of each chapter rather than a consolidated one at the end of the book. As there was a considerable overlap in many of the authors' reference lists, a good deal of space could have been saved by an editorial act of consolidation. Finally, it was surprising, though perhaps it was a gesture of a Young Turkish kind, that the book was silent on the contributors' identities and institutional affiliations.

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Most readers would probably think of a 'Companion', when that word is applied to a book, as a 'vade-mecum' (OED), i.e. a handbook or guidebook. This book is often far too difficult to function as such. It is also – it has to be said – too disorderly. Specialist academics will probably feel no less disoriented than the beginner in wondering just what the purpose of this gathering of essays is. It is not, in general, the quality of those (there are 59 of them in addition to the Introduction) which is the trouble, but rather the nature of the selection, and the lack of a firm, clearly intelligible arrangement.

As Shakespeare is absent, it would have been useful to make that clear in the title. Admittedly, the absence of his name did not seem to matter greatly.
in the case of *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* (1990), a very successful and admirable book also edited by Hattaway, together with A.R. Braunmuller. But while most readers probably understand 'Renaissance Drama' to exclude Shakespeare, they cannot necessarily be expected to think in the same way about a book on 'Renaissance Literature and Culture' – an area so wide that the omission of Shakespeare seems odd. The gap is not only damaging to Shakespeare: it reduces the effectiveness of much else which is discussed. As one of the contributors, Rowland Wymer, puts it in a very good essay on Jacobean drama: 'There was a continuous artistic dialogue between [Shakespeare] and his fellow playwrights and we must not listen to only one side of the exchange' (p. 547). One suspects that the exclusion of Shakespeare as a topic for discussion in this book is ultimately due to the fact that the Blackwell Companions already include *A Companion to Shakespeare* and *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*.

I feel that there is a lack of clear focus in what is presented. This is not the fault of individual contributors, but of the publishers and the editor. In a book on 'literature' on the one hand and 'culture' (used in the now current 'broad' sense) on the other, one expects firm integration of those two concepts, or, if that proved impossible, an explanation why. Thus, in turning to some of the literary discussions under 'Readings' (the editor's term), one finds competent analyses of, for example, Wyatt's 'Who so list to hunt' (Rachel Falconer) and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (A.J. Piese) but both of them are, in essence, conventional exercises in exegesis which are not markedly influenced by considerations of 'culture' such as many now consider essential (see p. 663), and which one would certainly expect in a book dedicated to literature and culture. Indeed, although Falconer makes some comments on the Egerton MS in which Wyatt's poem appears, she does not seem to me particularly well-acquainted with either that cultural object (to use a current phrase) or with scholarship on it. This book provided an opportunity to show sceptics like myself why, for example, a new historicist approach is indispensable to an understanding of literary texts, but it has not been seized.

What choice guides the 'Readings'? It is truly hard to see. There is nothing wrong with *The Spanish Tragedy*, but I cannot see why it has been 'privileged' over many other plays that might have been chosen instead, or – in a book on Renaissance literature – should have been included as well. With all due respect to the contributors of the thirteen analyses, the selection seems to me nothing other than a haphazard jumble.
Also, some of these papers might just as well – or perhaps more appropriately – be included in one of the other sections. The excellent chapter 'Translations of the Bible' (Gerald Hammond) is hardly a 'reading': it is, in fact, the kind of survey that is eminently appropriate for a 'Companion', and could have appeared under 'Contexts and Perspectives, c. 1500-1650'. On the other hand, 'The Critical Elegy' (John Lyon) – also not a 'reading' – would have been more logically placed under 'Genres and Modes'.

The dustjacket promises a 'survey of English Renaissance literature and culture'. But, although many aspects of 'culture' are indeed covered, it is quite exaggerated to claim that we are given a survey of it. And in the case of 'literature' that is even more true. Thus under 'Genres and Modes' one finds – as one might expect in a 'Companion' – a paper on 'Love Poetry' (Diana E. Henderson). As far as it goes, this does offer a survey, and an intelligent and well judged one at that. However, presumably the author was told to steer clear of Donne, because she says: 'To others in this volume, I leave the wit and passion of John Donne ...' (p. 388). Donne is indeed discussed in more than one place outside Henderson's paper, but never in such a way as to fill the gap in her survey.

All this, it must be strongly emphasised, is not to complain about the quality of the essays offered, but about the book as a book. To give a little more idea of the range and quality of the papers, I mention a few others I have myself found interesting: N.F. Blake's 'The English Language of the Early Modern Period' is an exemplary introduction to its subject: quite the sort of thing that most readers of English Renaissance literature (or students of its culture), at any level, can benefit from. The paper by Jean E. Howard, 'Was There a Renaissance Feminism?', struck me as a good deal more subtle and carefully thought through than some of her other work. This appears in a section of 'Issues and Debates', which contains some lively explorations, though I was disappointed by Margo Hendricks' 'Race: A Renaissance Category?', which offers a commendable account of the meaning of the word in the Renaissance, but does not tackle such questions as 'Was Shakespeare — or is "the Shakespearean text" — racist in its attitude to e.g. Shylock and/or Othello?'

All in all, though the book seems to me to lack unity and comprehensiveness, it contains easily enough good material to warrant inclusion in academic libraries.

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