

**SATIRE IN THE  
EARLY  
ENGLISH DRAMA**

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Satire in the Early English Drama by Eva M. Campbell

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# Satire in the Early English Drama

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BY

EVA M. CAMPBELL

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## PREFACE.

Though numerous references have been made to the satirical character of many of the plays of our Early English Drama before 1600, no work exists which shows in detail this informal dramatic satire. It is hoped that this dissertation will be useful with its instances of early informal satire taken from the miracles, moralities, and interludes of the period 1450 to 1600 in showing: (1) the place satire holds in the early drama—a place to become exceedingly prominent in the Elizabethan Drama, especially in the plays of Ben Jonson; (2) the relation of this satire to the subject-matter and the purpose of the plays; (3) the methods, tone, type, and the objects of attack of this satire; (4) a reflection of the manners or social traits of the period; (5) a comparison of this informal dramatic satire with the informal satire occurring in other literary forms of the period, and with the informal dramatic satire of Elizabethan times.

The writer is indebted to the following excellent teachers: E. L. Beck, B. A. Eisenlohr, E. S. Ingraham, E. H. McNeal, W. S. Elden, A. H. Hodgman, and C. S. Duncan; and owes special acknowledgment to S. C. Derby, Professor of Latin, J. R. Taylor, Professor of English, and J. V. Denney, Dean of the College of Arts. Professor Denney has been exceedingly kind and has read the first and last drafts of my dissertation. Professor G. H. McKnight has been helpful in proposing a subject, in directing my efforts, and in giving encouragement—such as only those who have been in his classes can appreciate.

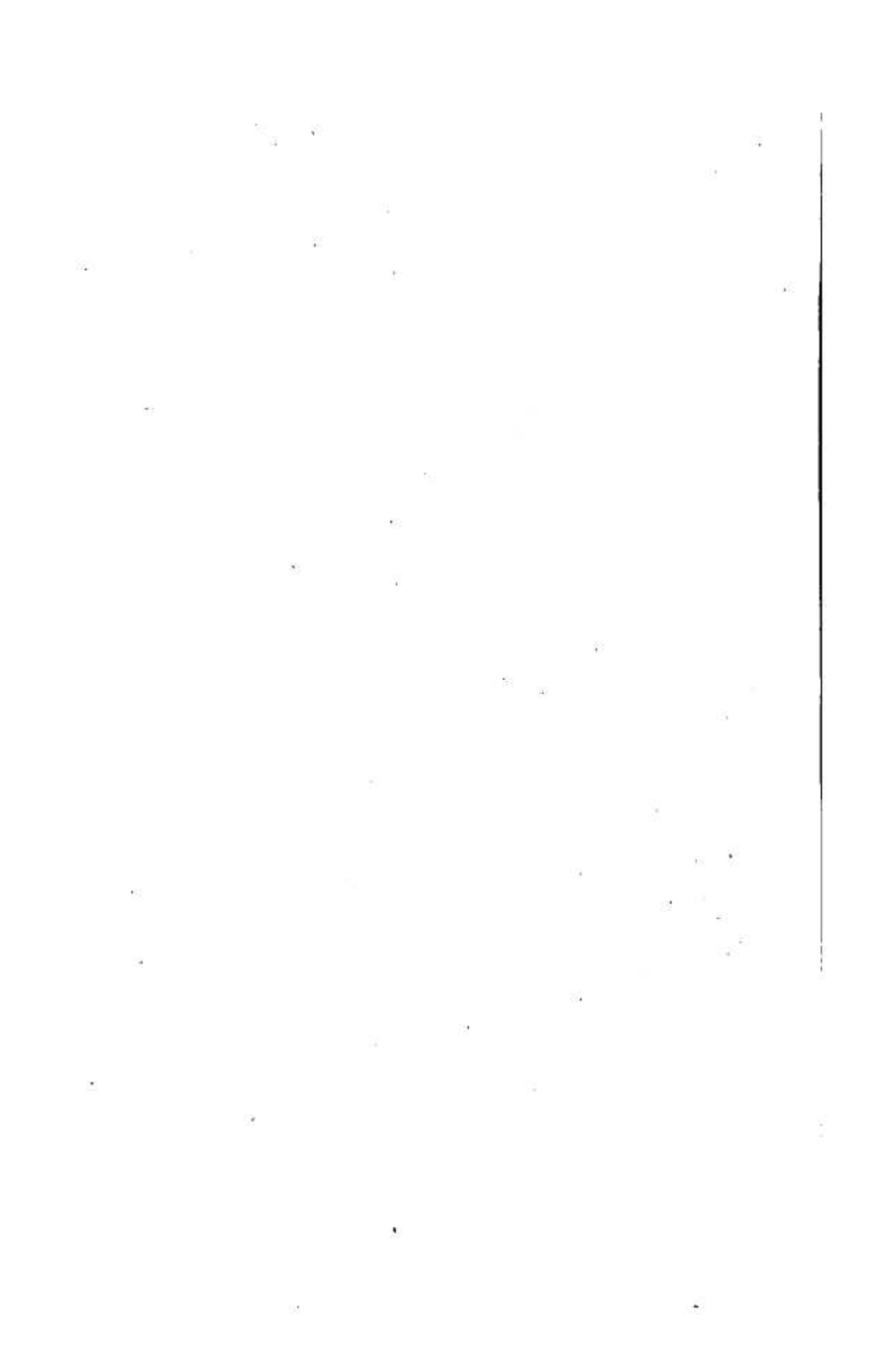
Many thanks are due also to the Dean of Women of Ohio State University—Caroline M. Breyfogle.

Columbus, Ohio, May 22, 1914.

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## CHAPTER I.

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I propose to discuss the informal satire occurring in that mediaeval period of the drama between 1400 and 1600. This satire is like the drama in which it is found in two respects: it is irregular and it is scarcely deserving of the type-name. We may attempt, however, to define it as a form of composition in verse or prose which is subject to no fixed form such as the decasyllabic couplet of formal satire and which is not a conscious literary production but rather the immediate expression of thoughts resulting either from the universal desire of men to ridicule follies in others or from the occasional desire of some to lash evils and inconsistencies with the hope of causing a reform. If we could subtract from Juvenal's satire his interest in form, in rhetoric we should have something approximate to informal satire. This, however, differs from Juvenal's efforts in that it arises spontaneously from the desire to attack evils; it spends all its force on the substance of the attack and pays no heed to the literary form.

The same satirist may write both formal and informal satire, for instance, Ben Jonson. It all depends upon the mood of the writer. If he be solely interested in holding up to the ridicule of the world, an individual, a class, a locality, a trade, or an institution, he will write informal satire. Here, then, we may expect a somewhat faithful reflection of the life of a particular period.

If we contrast formal and informal satire, we find that in the main qualities they are alike. Both must have humor, must show in their authors a sense of superiority, a sense of the ludicrous, the power to exaggerate either consciously or unconsciously, and at the final analysis a reformatory purpose. The chief distinction seems to be in the form, the spirit, the purpose, the quantity of humor, the type and the scope of the subject-matter. The informal satire by not being restricted to one fixed form can show greater variety of expression than the formal. It can be original in choosing forms for its expression; formal