



A Mirror for Magistrates and the De Casibus Tradition (Mental and Cultural World of Tudor and Stuart England)

Paul Budra

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The collection of English Renaissance narrative poems *A Mirror for Magistrates* has long been regarded as a mere repository of tales, significant largely because it was mined as a source of ideas by poets and dramatists, including Shakespeare. Paul Budra invites us to look again and see this text as an important literary document in its own right.

A Mirror for Magistrates brings together the voices of many authors whose tales encompass a variety of characters, from Brute, the mythical founder of Britain, to Elizabeth I. Budra situates the work in the cultural context of its production, locating it not as a primitive form of tragedy, but as the epitome of the *de casibus* literary tradition started by Boccaccio as a form of history writing. Deploying theories of rhetoric and narrative, cultural production, and feminism, he argues that the document uses linked biographies to demonstrate a purpose at work in the course of human events. Budra's analysis reveals *A Mirror for Magistrates* to be an evolving historiographic innovation - a complex expression of the values and beliefs of its time.

This study presents an innovative treatment of an important but neglected subject. It will be of special interest to Renaissance scholars, particularly those concerned with literary theory, English and Italian literary history, historiography, and Shakespearean studies.

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