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Most contemporary audiences know that films need stars and money; directors, producers and script writers also play some sort of a part. But how many audiences actually know or care what the ‘best boy’ does or even how long it takes to make a film? In late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century England, general or popular knowledge of how plays reached the stage may well have been just as limited. It is probably a mistake to suppose that audiences or readers had a strong sense of the processes by which plays came into existence, were licensed and realized on the stage, and under what circumstances they were transmitted to the page: these may have been matters of relative or of complete indifference to them.

Like any mass-market commercial enterprise, the pre-Civil War theatre was not static: it sprang to life in the later 1580s and continued developing and changing right up to the closing of the theatres in 1642. This makes generalizing about writing and theatrical and publishing practices particularly difficult: what happened in the 1590s, say, may well have borne no relation to what went on in the 1630s and vice versa. Similarly, the surviving evidence is very limited, and it is dangerous to draw firm conclusions about one part of it from another. For example, the entrepreneur Philip Henslowe's ‘diary’, an enormously important and valuable set of accounts for 1592–1603 that survives with a mass of associated documentary material at Dulwich College in south London, reveals a great deal about what went on in his theatrical empire at the Rose theatre and elsewhere. But Henslowe's record of his activity changed during the course of the period for which the accounts survive: he stopped listing daily receipts for plays and instead left details of advances for buying plays, properties and costumes, and of payments for licensing plays and to the players. Furthermore, in many ways Henslowe's interest in the entertainment business was exceptional – he was also employed at court – and it is unsafe to extrapolate from his surviving records to what went on in the rest of the profession during the whole period of its greatest activity.

The history of the study of the other extant theatrical documents of the period shows a similar sort of wish to generalize on the basis of scanty and very partial evidence. Although most of the individual surviving manuscripts of plays from the period have been catalogued, described and edited, what they actually represent has been much debated. Broad categories for these manuscripts – authorial ‘foul papers’, scribal ‘prompt books’, non-theatrical scribal copies – have been established, but they have also been questioned. Notoriously, those manuscripts are especially hard to date, their authorship may well be uncertain and the companies for which they were produced may not be definitely identifiable. The example of the manuscript of Sir Thomas More, three pages of which are thought to be in Shakespeare's hand, springs to mind as posing many problems of this kind: it is a rich source of information about all sorts of contemporary practices of commissioning, collaborative composition, revision, licensing and censorship, but it is also in the end almost by definition an exceptional case, and generalizing on the basis of its uncertain and much-disputed evidence is hazardous.

To a great extent the same goes for the surviving printed texts. At least these can usually be dated fairly securely, but what they represent may still be uncertain. Again, the desire to establish neat categories for dramatic printed texts has advanced general understanding of the subject: there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ quartos; like plays in Shakespeare's First Folio (1623), the ‘good’ may derive from ‘foul paper’ or from ‘prompt book’ manuscripts. (See Chapter 5.) But what exactly the ‘bad’ quartos represent or even how the texts of the ‘good’ quartos may relate to what was performed on the stage is disputed. There is no simple model that can describe the relations between different authors or theatre companies and printers or publishers: each case needs to be looked at individually. In a comparable way, different printers found the mechanical tasks of setting and printing plays more or less easy. Although there are limits to our knowledge and the dangers of generalization are always present, it is nevertheless possible to provide a usable picture of theatrical activity by concentrating on what is known about how Shakespeare worked, while recognizing that he too was exceptional in what he wrote and how it reached different audiences.

Authorship and playwriting as a profession

During the sixteenth century, contesting senses began to emerge of what a ‘profession’ meant. The older idea that a profession was a vocation or calling with a body of knowledge that could be gained only after long training and with a formal qualification was supplemented by the idea that it was what people did to gain their living. In that second sense, Shakespeare was clearly a professional playwright: whether he had an apprenticeship as such, whether he felt the theatre was a vocation or not are matters for argument. But he was more than a playwright: he had other careers – as a poet, an actor, a sharer in his theatre company, and as a man of business and of property – all of them successful and financially rewarding. Authors’ earnings during this period are hard to estimate, not least because the actual rewards of patronage are unknown: his relations with the Earl of Southampton (to whom the narrative poems were dedicated) and the Earls of Pembroke (to whom the First Folio was dedicated) remain matters for speculation. It is, however, fairly clear that to make any sort of decent living from the pen alone required hard work. When Thomas Heywood in The English Traveller (1633) claimed to have had ‘either an entire hand or at the least a main finger’ in 220 plays, he may have been exaggerating, but the careers of other writers of the period suggest that a degree of hyperactivity was essential to survive as a professional writer. Heywood's fifty years as a writer compare well with Shakespeare's twenty-five, during which he was involved in the writing of around forty plays and in the production of three substantial volumes of poems. Equally, the collected works of Jonson, Middleton, Greene, Dekker, Ford, Massinger, and Beaumont and Fletcher suggest how busy authors had to be to make any sort of living, but they also indicate that other playwrights – Peele, Kyd, Webster – may not have lived entirely by their pens, although the question of lost works hovers over this subject.

The need to earn a decent living undoubtedly spurred an author's productivity. Yet a concern with authorship, exemplified by Shakespeare's standing as the paradigm of the individual author, may have passed the notice of contemporary playgoers. Since original advertisements for the performance of plays have not survived, it is impossible to judge how much prominence was given to naming authors as part of a play's marketing. Early theatre-goers rarely mention who wrote the plays they saw, and the full extent of the collaborative nature of authorship for the popular theatre was probably as unknown then as the correct writer credits were in Hollywood's golden age. Somewhere between a half and two-thirds of vernacular plays written for the popular theatre between 1590 and 1642 appear to have been produced by two or more men in collaboration; figures for the academic drama and for the children's companies point to a far greater reliance on solitary authorship.**(1)** By its nature, it has been argued, the theatre is a site for collaboration, yet it is remarkable how many marks of individual genius still survive in the texts that have come down to us.

Collaboration was not a fixed and always formal arrangement: it might take many different forms, and a single model for the process by which jointly written plays came into being is not adequate. The original division of a play between two authors, such as that Shakespeare and Fletcher appear to have undertaken with King Henry VIII, The Two Noble Kinsmen and Cardenio, might be supplemented by interventions to complete unfinished plays or to make them actable, to supply the initial plot, additional scenes, dialogue or other material, and to incorporate revisions resulting from the experience of performance. It is quite likely that pairs or teams of writers revised each other's work; they may have been expected to follow a style favoured by the company or the entrepreneur that employed them. Equally, a play might need to be revised for new circumstances as a result of changes to personnel, to meet the wishes of the theatre company for which it was being written, or to adapt it for production in a new location or for a special occasion. On the other hand, common sense suggests that most players and audiences would have wanted plays that were internally coherent and made sense: creaking joints between parts written by different authors, muddled plots and stylistic incongruities make for poor theatre. In the same way, modern teams of writers, film-makers and drama producers strive to create 'artistic' wholes which will satisfy their audiences.

The growing scholarly consensus around Shakespeare's collaborating hand in some early works (Edward III, 1 Henry VI, Titus Andronicus and Sir Thomas More) with a variety of authors (Peele, Kyd and Nashe in the two histories and the tragedy, and Munday, Heywood, Chettle and Dekker in More) has been complemented by arguments about Middleton's original contribution to Timon of Athens and about his possible revisions to Macbeth and Measure for Measure, as well as by speculation about the nature of Shakespeare's links with the unsavoury George Wilkins that gave rise to Pericles.[2]

Actors may have had the glamour and been the subject of the salacious stories that went with the theatrical profession, but on the title pages of early play texts names counted – or perhaps some names counted, or at the very least Shakespeare's name counted. Unusually, he must have had the experience of seeing work (poetical as well as theatrical) attributed to him that he knew he had not written: as early as 1594 the anonymous tragedy of Locrine was said to have been 'Newly set forth, overseen and corrected by W. S.'

Composition

Henslowe's diary suggests that his writers took between four and six weeks (sometimes fewer) to finish plays, and that preparations before their initial performance took about two weeks. The speed at which plays were written resulted from the need to feed the ravenous appetite for popular entertainment: teams of writers, it is supposed, could write more quickly than individual authors.

One obvious form of collaboration entailed an author supplying the original plot or outline for a play which another author or authors then wrote up. It is probably in this sense that Francis Meres described Anthony Munday in 1598 as 'our best plotter'. Devising plots, like pitching scenarios in the modern cinema, might well have been a separate activity from writing the resulting play. One way of dividing the work of writing might have been to allocate the source book (Holinshed's chronicles or North's Plutarch, for example) from which the plot was taken to one author, while the other worked on material he devised for himself or took from another source. The theatre company or a theatrical entrepreneur may have owned copies of several such source books from which plots could be extracted and lent them out to authors, so that Shakespeare need not have bought or owned copies of the books from which he adapted material.

In writing plays, whether singly or collaboratively, the unit of composition in which dramatists worked might have been the single line, the speech, the role for the character or, quite simply, the comic or tragic element. The most obvious unit might have been the scene, or part of a scene, or the act. The issue should be easy to determine, but this is not quite the case, for it is complicated by arguments about act and scene divisions. Although intervals between acts had been used in private performances, as well as at court, at the Inns of Court and by the children's companies, and in plays written by University Wits, in the popular theatre they seem not to have come into general use until 1607 or later. Acts themselves were not inherent elements in the popular theatre before about 1607.**(3)**

Yet perhaps scenes and acts were only elements in the story during the composition of plays. One solid piece of evidence survives of an author's defining his hand in a play. Dekker deposed that his part of Keep the Widow Waking consisted of 'two sheets of paper containing the first act' along with 'a speech in the last scene of the last act of the Boy who had killed his mother'.**(4)** In this case, the unit for composition seems not necessarily to have been a discretely identifiable part of a play, such as an act or a scene, so much as the sheet of paper, each sheet consisting when initially folded once of two leaves or four pages. The importance of the sheet is clear from a variety of sources, including Henslowe's diary and the licences of the Masters of the Revels (the official in charge of entertainments at court). This is not to say that the practice of composing plays by the sheet was invariable. In this respect, as in so many others, the so-called Melbourne Manuscript – a folded sheet of an autograph play attributed to James Shirley, discovered in 1985 among the Coke family papers at Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire – provides ambiguous evidence.**(5)** The writing on the sheet begins in what is clearly the middle of a scene, and it is not entirely certain that the scene ends with the fourth and final page. As the scribe reached the last page he wanted to get as much material in as possible, with the result that the page looks distinctly crowded: presumably the scribe did not want to start a new sheet. The Melbourne Manuscript suggests that the sheet as a unit played some part in the play's evolution.

The manuscript

Whether working alone or collaborating, at some stage the playwright had to put pen to paper. It is possible that the company or the entrepreneur supplied the playwrights with paper, which would have been relatively expensive, in loose sheets. Authors might fold the sheets to produce inner and outer margins for their writing: mistakes often found in the form and position of speech prefixes and some stage directions may have occurred because dramatists tended to add them outside the folded margins after the main dialogue had been written. The common handwriting of the period was the secretary hand which had its own distinctive forms, abbreviations (especially the tilde [~] for omitted m and n) and easily confused letters (such as p and x, r and v, and so on). Stage directions, speech prefixes and names of people and of places were generally written in an italic hand which would usually have required a pen cut differently from the one used for secretary hand. Writing with a handcut pen with handmade ink on handmade paper of varying quality and smoothness was not an easy business. A sloping desk with a cloth cover was considered the ideal place for writing, but it could be carried out more or less anywhere with a solid surface such as a table or, with a penner (a portable pen-and-ink set) and a writing box, wherever was convenient; the private study might give way to much more public places, such as the theatre or the tavern.

In addition to their source books, dramatists may well have written with note- or table- or commonplace books beside them.**(6)** These might contain anything from odd words to striking images or sayings, to whole speeches: Webster's use of second-hand ideas and quotations has been explored in depth.**(7)** The initial process of composition might be relatively slow or quite rapid, needing much, heavy revision or very little. 'His mind and hand went together', John Heminges and Henry Condell wrote of Shakespeare in the First Folio, 'And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers' – to which Ben Jonson replied, 'Would he had blotted a thousand.' Heminges and Condell might not have realized that the manuscripts from which they worked were not Shakespeare's first drafts, but his (or someone else's) fair copies of them. Yet there is evidence from the quartos of some of his plays (Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, among others) that Shakespeare wrote and rewrote passages, sometimes neglecting to signal clearly which version was to be cancelled.

Authorial drafts were called foul papers or foul copy to distinguish them from the recopied fair version. ‘I promised to bring you the last scene’, Robert Daborne wrote to Henslowe in November 1613, ‘which that you may see finished I send you the foul sheet and the fair I was writing.’ Surviving manuscripts showing an author at work on a literary composition of any kind are extremely rare, and the existence of examples of theatrical foul papers as opposed to fair copies revised in the process of transcription or later has been disputed.(8) Theatrical foul papers might contain deletions and revisions (first and subsequent ideas), changes in the forms of speech prefixes (including the naming of actors expected to play the part) and stage directions which were not detailed and specific; even exits and entrances might not be fully articulated. These are some of the indications said to be characteristic of foul papers; the traditional outline of manuscript production suggests that these irregularities were ironed out when the papers were copied for the production of the prompt book, the company's official record of the play. In this model, Shakespeare's foul papers were generally sent to be printed in the early quartos, while the prompt book was kept carefully by the company and was eventually used in the production of the texts for the First Folio. Again, this two-manuscript model for dramatic works has been challenged and closely interrogated.(9)

How foul were foul papers? If they were too foul, too chaotic and difficult to read, they would scarcely supply adequate evidence for a company or an entrepreneur that a play in fact existed in an actable form. They would also prove a hindrance for licensing by the Master of the Revels, who was expected to read and approve them (or not) for performance. Similarly, the foulest of foul papers might prove too illegible to be copied for the prompt book. There was therefore some incentive for dramatists not to send their first drafts to the company they hoped would buy the book of the play, or that had commissioned it. Instead, they might be expected to send fairer copies which the dramatist had tidied up and corrected from his drafts. A busy playwright or a company in need of a workable script might well turn to a professional scribe to make a fair copy of the foul papers before or in addition to the preparation of the prompt book.

Yet if the foul papers were reasonably tidy in themselves, there seems to have been no reason to suppose that they could not have served as the prompt book. Its function and status are just as warmly disputed as such other ‘technical’ terms as ‘foul papers’, ‘bad quartos’ and so on. Shakespeare's theatre recognized the role a prompter played in a play's performance, and it would seem sensible that the prompter would have a copy of the text from which he could follow its action. Yet what are taken to be surviving examples of prompt books differ widely in their evident purpose: they are by no means consistent in their marking of stage directions, especially entrances and exits, or the use of props. Furthermore, if the prompt book represents a set of instructions for the recreation of a performance of a play, its often great length and the presence of extraneous elements, such as non-authorial comic material, remains puzzling.

The prompt book was without doubt a valuable property and was apparently prepared with some care from material that ultimately derived from the author's foul papers. In turning the foul papers into the prompt book, theatrical companies might well have used an in-house professional such as Edward Knight, book-keeper to the King's Men. It might also have been the book-keeper's task to prepare two other items connected with the play's production. All or some of the actors, especially those playing the principal characters, would have been supplied with their parts or their roles in what may have actually been a roll – only one example of such a role survives from the popular theatre of Shakespeare's time – which may have contained cue prompts. (See Chapter 5.) The second item is better attested, but its precise function remains disputed. The ‘plot’ of the play was written on a sheet of paper, mounted on pasteboard and apparently hung up on a peg: its scene-by-scene account of the play's dramatic action was copied in two columns and included actors’ names as well as their roles. Although these ‘plots’ – of which seven survive from the 1590s and early 1600s – supply valuable evidence concerning the theatre of the period, their significance remains unclear.(10)

Nevertheless, these two kinds of document bear additional witness to the theatre as a site for the production of manuscripts related to its work. Were manuscripts prepared for circulation outside the theatre? Greg argued that it was not until 1624 and the scandal of Middleton's A Game at Chess that private transcripts of public plays began to be produced.(11) Yet the professional copying of literary works in manuscript was well established by the 1590s, and, even if plays might not have qualified as ‘literary works’ in the eyes of some contemporaries, it is reasonable to assume that private individuals sought out copies of plays they had seen acted; so, too, theatre companies or their individual members saw that supplying manuscript copies provided a way of supplementing their income. The career of the poet and professional scribe or scrivener Ralph Crane, who was extensively involved in the preparation of private transcripts for sale on behalf of authors and, apparently, on commission for himself, supplies some evidence for the form this sort of activity might have taken. Crane had been working for authors in the theatre from as early as 1618, when he prepared a copy of Jonson's masque Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue, and went on to supply the printer's copy that lies behind various dramatic texts, including five or six of Shakespeare's plays for the First Folio, as well as Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. A great deal has been found out about Crane's activities and about his distinctive scribal practices (parentheses, elisions, ‘massed entry’ stage directions and so on), but there is no reason to think that the sorts of copying service that Crane supplied could not have been undertaken twenty or even thirty years before he came on the scene.(12)

Revision

If theatrical manuscripts had a commercial value, it is possible that they would proliferate by hand in the same way that poems, letters, tracts and other documents did. London audiences demanded a high turnover of new plays supplemented by frequent revivals – a well-organized system of copying and storing manuscripts would have been an essential feature of the theatre companies’ business. Furthermore, when companies, for whatever reason, went on tour outside London or in Europe, they might well have needed to take with them copies of the plays they were to perform. All this argues against a simple two-manuscript model for theatrical production. In the same way, authors almost certainly kept manuscript copies of their own plays – they might not have been the cleanest or fairest of copies, but they were probably usable for the purposes of revision.

No subject has attracted more attention in the last twenty or so years than the question of the authorial revision of plays of this period. There are at least three reasons for this. First, if Shakespeare did revise some of his plays and poems, it undermines his image as a spontaneous genius. If revision shows authorial rethinking, then it usually does so in the light of theatrical experience: therefore it is the result of collaboration of one kind or another. Second, a theory of revision chimes with ideas about textual instability and indeterminacy. If, for example, quarto and Folio King Lear definitely are different plays, it becomes impossible to say which is the ‘real’ one, indeed which is to be read first. The certainty of a single conflated King Lear can be replaced by two or more texts, offering the reader distinctive works in the process of becoming, rather than a single finished and evolved masterpiece. In this uncertain textual world, readers can play a significant part in the selection and even creation of the work(s). Facsimile and hypertext editions allow them to choose their own texts and eliminate – so it is argued – the allegedly intrusive role of the editor.

The third reason for interest in revision relates to a desire to understand more about Shakespeare's creative process. In the past, Shakespeare was thought to have been indifferent to the publishing of his plays. For one thing, since the play texts belonged to the theatre company, he had no financial stake in selling them, except as a sharer of that company. In addition, he was believed to have intended his plays exclusively for the theatre, where they were subject to continual change, as a result of suggestions from the actors, for example, or a change of performance venue. But the revision theory allows for the possibility that these changes might represent Shakespeare's second or even third thoughts. Thus texts once thought to reveal nothing more than the vagaries of the playhouse and printing office are now being subjected to minute bibliographical and critical analysis in the expectation that they will provide insights to the process of Shakespeare's writing.

What were play texts?

Shakespeare's plays were published (made public) by being performed, but around half of them were also published during his lifetime in print – the other half appearing in the First Folio after his death. The editions of his plays and of his poems that he might have seen were produced mainly in quarto, with a few in octavo: in a quarto book, the sheet of paper on which the text is printed is folded twice to produce a square-shaped book, in an octavo it is folded four times to produce a smaller, pocket-sized volume. Quartos of the plays, such as Othello in 1622, went on being produced after Shakespeare's death and after the First Folio's publication. Although there seems little doubt that the texts of the narrative poems Venus and Adonis (1593) and The Rape of Lucrece (1594), with their signed dedications to the Earl of Southampton and the use of inscriptional capitals (large and small) for proper names in the later poem, were published on Shakespeare's behalf and with his approval, the status of his other poems, notably the Sonnets (1609) and of the plays is disputed. In the case of the Sonnets, which have several unresolved textual cruces of a kind not found in the narrative poems, the argument revolves around whether their publication was authorized by Shakespeare or whether the volume was in effect pirated by Thomas Thorpe, who is usually identified with the 'T. T.' of the book's enigmatic dedication. There are strong arguments for and against Shakespeare's hand in the book's publication, arguments that have also involved doubts about his authorship of the poem A Lover's Complaint that accompanied the Sonnets.**(13)**

The status of the play quartos (and octavos) is equally still a matter of dispute. When Heminges and Condell told 'the great variety of readers' of the First Folio that 'where (before) you were abused with divers stolen, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors, that exposed them: even those, are now offered to your view cured, and perfect of their limbs', did they intend to condemn the texts of all the quartos or just some of them? During the course of the last century, scholarly opinion moved from thinking that all quartos were stolen and surreptitious to defining a particular group as being 'bad quartos': they were short, mangled parts of the text (when compared against 'good quartos' or the Folio), sometimes included material from other literary works or just obvious comic banter and rarely seemed performable. Such 'bad quartos' could be found among Shakespeare's plays (Romeo and Juliet in 1597, Henry V in 1600, The Merry Wives of Windsor in 1602 and Hamlet in 1603) and elsewhere. How these 'bad quartos' came into being remains uncertain: various theories have been put forward, including the use of shorthand and the idea that they are, in effect, Shakespeare's first drafts (rather blotted) of his plays.**(14)** Most scholars tend to accept that they were in fact memorial reconstructions by one or more members of the theatre company that put them on – this would explain why some scenes in which those characters appear seem better remembered (when compared against 'good quartos' or the Folio) than others. Yet why it was thought worthwhile to try to reconstruct the plays from memory to sell to a stationer with all the attendant risk of accusations of piracy and of exposure is still by no means clear. Nor has anyone managed to explain convincingly the circumstances under which the plays were reconstructed, although it has often been said that these were versions produced for the provinces in time of plague when companies toured the country, forced to leave London without their prompt books.

The badness of the 'bad quartos' has been challenged, so that they are often now known as 'abbreviated' or 'suspect' texts. Although their dialogue and speeches are generally thought to be unreliable witnesses to what Shakespeare wrote, some scholars have argued that their stage directions ('Enter the Ghost in his night-gown') reveal something about contemporary performance practices. This calls into question what contemporary readers thought they were getting when they read one of those quartos. If it approximated in some distant way to what they saw on the stage – a corrupt version of a play, but one that could be performed within a few hours – then what do the texts of the 'good quartos' and of the Folio represent? A dozen or so of those 'good' texts are, by most modern standards, too long to be acted within the performance times that scholars generally attribute to the contemporary stage. Yet the contemporary appetite for lengthy sermons might suggest that some audiences had a highly developed ability to concentrate for long stretches of time; fully performed texts of plays lasting several hours may have caused them few problems.

One answer that has been put forward to the problem of the widely differing length of plays in different versions is that several of the 'good quartos' and of the plays in the Folio represent some sort of 'reading' texts for those who enjoyed the shorter versions actually put on the stage.**(15)** In this account, the status and function of those quartos is called further into question. To many editors and scholars even the 'good quartos' appear to be poorly printed, cheap and ephemeral items, books of low status and (comparatively) little merit or importance, sent by the company to the printers when the play's peak of commercial, performing worth had passed. The alternative view holds that the quartos were published as part of a coherent marketing strategy in relatively expensive formats and that their typography often shows a real concern to present the text in as careful and attractive a form as possible.**(16)** A test case for some of these arguments might be the 1608 quarto of King Lear. Originally thought to be a 'bad quarto' because its text appeared so garbled and so poorly printed, the intensive investigation of its printing history has shown the lengths to which Nicholas Okes' compositors went to try to get the text right and to do a decent job of setting and printing their first ever play. Equally, the publishing history of the early Shakespeare quartos shows that there was a considerable market for them. Shakespeare's may not have been the most popular plays of the period in print, but his full name was attached to the work of others, such as A Yorkshire Tragedy in 1608, 'Written by W. Shakespeare', to make it more saleable. After his death, in 1619 William Jaggard (already a guilty party in the publication of The Passionate Pilgrim in 1599) and Thomas Pavier put together a collection of quartos featuring plays by or associated with Shakespeare, supplying several of them with false dates, such as King Lear '1608'.

Conclusion

If the certainties that hedged in the investigation of Shakespeare's writing during much of the last century seem largely to have disappeared, it could be argued that there has been some compensation for their loss by a new willingness to think afresh about what texts – manuscript and printed – represent. A growing sense that the production of theatrical texts needs to be looked at within the broader context of the entertainment industry of the time has been complemented by a deeper understanding of the ways in which the physical forms texts take determine and articulate their meanings. The evidence of the narrative poems shows that Shakespeare took some interest in the appearance of his writings in print; the challenge for future scholars will be to understand the relationship between the printed versions of the plays, versions which their author must have seen and perhaps owned, and his own dramatic productions.

NOTES

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2. Brian Vickers, Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

3. Gary Taylor, 'The Structure of Performance: Act-Intervals in the London Theatres, 1576–1642', in Taylor and John Jowett, Shakespeare Reshaped 1606–1623 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 3–50.

4. C. J. Sisson, Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 110.

5. British Library, Loan MS 98.

6. Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery and Heather Wolfe, ‘Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England’, Shakespeare Quarterly, 55 (2004), 379–419.

7. R. W. Dent, John Webster's Borrowing (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960).

8. Grace Ioppolo, Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood (London: Routledge, 2006), esp. pp. 75–99.

9. W. W. Greg, The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 106–37, 141–2; Paul Werstine, ‘Narratives about Printed Shakespeare Texts: “Foul Papers” and “Bad” Quartos’, Shakespeare Quarterly, 41 (1990), 65–86.

10. Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, Shakespeare in Parts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Bradley, From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

11. W. W. Greg, The Shakespeare First Folio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 85–6).

12. Ibid., pp. 189–95.

13. Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997); Brian Vickers, Shakespeare, ‘A Lover's Complaint’, and John Davies of Hereford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

14. Laurie Maguire, Shakespearean ‘Suspect’ Texts: The ‘Bad’ Quartos and their Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

15. Lukas Erne, Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

16. Cf. H. R. Woudhuysen, ‘The Foundations of Shakespeare's Text’, Proceedings of the British Academy, 125 (2004), 69–100.

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