

## Editorial

This collection of essays is entitled *Beyond Books and Plays* precisely because its aim is to reflect on the relationship between performance cultures and practices of writing within and beyond the actual texts of the plays, or the material evidence of existing books. The attention to materiality that has emerged out of Textual Studies and the Sociology of Texts since the 1980s allows us – indeed requires us – to contextualize the production and transmission of texts within the specific context of early modern theatre.

Theatres are places for performance, and consequently represent points of contact between material traditions and immaterial legacies, between traces of written memory and practices in oral traditions. In medieval Europe, in a context of expansion and secularization of writing practices, adopting a written text for performances created a link between literary competence and traditions of entertainment or celebration. Darwin Smith's contribution, 'About French Vernacular Tradition' systematically examines French manuscripts of sacred and profane dramas performed between the thirteenth and the mid-sixteenth centuries. Smith's survey provides a glossary of terms used to classify manuscripts in terms of their form, content, and function. As 'theatre manuscripts' gradually became objects in their own right, they seemed 'to invade the complex process to performance through rehearsals and vice-versa: players' parts, books of prologues, conductor's books, sermons, panels for characters and locations on stage, reference books, lists of *secrets* (special effects), of players and characters – of which only a few still exist (30). Smith concludes by exploring the variations and 'performed layers' found in the writing processes of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* and the *Mysteres des Trois Doms*. In the layers produced by performance processes, the *original*, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, served as a 'full text used as a reference book (*le livre*) in a definite place and time' (36). The same denomination – *original, book* – emerges from documents of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century cycles of English Mystery Plays (Mills 2007). The 'stage original', when used for rehearsals and performances, was transcribed in separate parts for the players. These parts had the characteristic size and shape of *rôles*, or *rolls*, like those used to perform the Passion in the Coliseum in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Rome, or like the Elizabethan scrolls, and the *papeles* for the actors of the professional

Spanish troupes (for this kind of manuscript see Lalou 1991; Palfrey and Stern 2007; for the *rotuli* used in the Coliseum Passion Plays, Wisch and Newbiggin 2013; for *papeles*, Vaccari 2006). Texts that were dismembered to be given to the players to perform were often lost, as was the case in the plays used in Italian court festivals (Bortoletti 2008). Theatre manuscripts were tools, and as such they convey information about their use and users. They served as aide-memoirs, supporting the transmission of information both in the context of the performance and beyond. In many cases, as with the Umbrian confraternities, they help us situate performance activities within the cults and ceremonies of the communities that adopted them (Nerbanò 2006). The fluctuation of writing practices between permanence and impermanence accompanied the transition and overlap between manuscript and print cultures (for the impact of printing on the textual tradition of French *Mystères*, Runnalls 1999).

The introduction of printing in the second half of the fifteenth century, allowed a text with an undefined readership to be defined. Paola Ventrone's essay 'Acting and Reading Drama' focuses on Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* in print, analyzing how the development of printed text illustrated with woodcuts expanded and enhanced performances as spiritual experiences. Booklets were a shared *medium* which could be read out loud, or individually in silence. The relationship between text and woodcut added value to the written, memorized, and performed word.

With the spread of printing, anyone could buy the illustrated books produced for a large public, including those who could not read or wanted to learn, since the illustrations provided a useful aid for recalling the words heard at the group reading and reliving them in the dimension of private devotion. (p. 92 in this volume)

Darwin Smith's work on French texts, and Paola Ventrone's on Florentine booklets, help us trace the origins of the many different paths that theatre texts followed. The phenomenon of printed plays, which has become the focus of debate over the last few decades in research on the history of the book, placed the printed work in a peculiar relation to the context and writing practices that gave rise to them (McKenzie 1986; Chartier 1999). Printing transplanted and transformed theatre texts, but at the same time preserved the processes of writing for performance. At the time Shakespeare was working, two important phenomena came together. The printing of playbooks tended to consolidate both the unity of the text and the author's identity, while, by contrast, the texts of playbooks were modelled on the requirements of production, the sharing out of collaborative copying and writing, the division into parts so that actors could learn their lines, the vagaries of aural memory on the scribe, who wrote and put together the copies ready for the censors, stage management, and the company's repertoires. The Elizabethan and Jacobean professional

theatre system, it has been suggested, should be attributed to a 'collective mind' (Tribble 2011). There is no doubt some truth in this, with cognitive implications that become concrete whenever evidence of the texts' use can be found: textual transformations were, of course, the result of numerous transcriptions according to the frequency of performances. In addition, there was infinite potential for tension between a unified text and the variations that resulted from the practices and processes of memorization. There were many different factors to take into account: playwriting was prevalently a collaborative activity, copies transcribed and memorized were stratified, and a literary identity of the playwright became apparent only gradually after the introduction of printed plays. Surviving theatre manuscripts were not accounted for in a systematic way until relatively recently (Ioppolo 2006, Werstine 2012). Compared to preserved manuscripts, the old opposition 'foul papers vs prompt-books', and the very idea of prompt-books as operative texts, and tools for controlling the outcome of performances, has been circumscribed. They are now mostly labelled 'a manuscript of theatrical provenance' or as 'playhouse manuscripts' (Werstine 2012). Almost eighty years have not passed in vain from W.W. Greg's *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931) to Tiffany Stern's *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (2009). On the one hand, the range of text types (manuscript and print) has widened (plot-scenarios, bills, advertising, scrolls, arguments, para-texts, backstage-plots); on the other, these text types show the wide range of written culture that framed playwriting.

The outcomes and appearance of printed texts give rise to rather generalized views regarding transcription processes: 'Many different kinds of copies, foul papers, authorial or scribal fair copies, and previously printed Quartos were used during Shakespeare's lifetime to print Quarto editions of his plays' (Ioppolo 2006, 157). The stratification of the Quartos and the genesis of the First Folio made it 'immediately apparent that "Shakespeare" was a book whose text could not be definitively established' (Kastan 2001, 98).

Shakespeare's texts and, more generally, theatre texts from Shakespeare's time that circulated in order to be performed, had a practical application. Freed from the conditioning and teleology of the 'editorial problem', these texts can be read as vehicles of memory and transformation. The title of Pettitt's contribution to this collection sums the issue up perfectly: 'Beyond the Bad Quarto'. Starting with twentieth-century Shakespearean philology, hypotheses regarding manuscripts and print books have given us concepts and categories that discriminate print versions that are considered 'suspect', or 'incorrect', simply because they conform less than other versions to the quality required of a literary text. Apart from the fact that these criteria for evaluating Quartos have generally been discredited, this discriminating view has changed: variations can equally be seen as being signs of generative processes; as tools for delving into the living tissue of the text, into the economy of transcriptions within theatre companies, and the interface

between the written and spoken word on stage. It is essential to go back to thinking in terms of practical memory dictated by the demands of performing on the stage. Memorial reconstruction in professional theatres has been considered by the New Bibliography as a hypothetical process of generating ‘bad Quartos’. Performing written plays requires a hybridization of written records and aural memory, which conditions the stratification of texts and the actual writing of the play. A strategy that adopts ‘suspect texts’ as crystallizations of deep processes concerning writing and performance draws inspiration from Pettitt’s reading of Marlowe’s ‘formulaic episodes’, discussed by Laurie Maguire (1996, 116) in her re-evaluation of memorial reconstruction. This research direction has been continued in Petersen’s *Errant Texts*, examining the signs and processes ‘of a much more wide-ranging notion of dramatic transmission’ (2010, 139).

In ‘Beyond the Bad Quarto’, Thomas Pettitt discovers the paths that segments of written (manuscript or printed) texts followed from London theatres, through the fragmentation of the drolls – the fragments recomposed and performed by strolling players – on to the local festive traditions of the mummers’ itinerant country performances. Tracing a relationship between bad Quartos and folk ballads, and other traditions of oral expression, started as an analogy of method. It has led, however, to a field where the dynamics of transformation and adaptation within the logic of the theatre, and in other performative traditions, have created important, lasting, and recurrent intercultural cross-pollination. This approach has led to consequences in other research areas. Studies on authorship and co-authorship, and on criteria for edition and interpretation, tend to have to deal with a more specific notion of ‘instability’, in the sense that a text functions within a living theatrical organism. An indication of authorship given on the basis of internal evidence cannot be completely separated from the idea of an environment where collaboration does not mean a sum of parts, and where actors’ memories interacted with the craft of writing. New contours of disseminated or disintegrated authorship lend depth and definition to the profiles of Kyd, Marlowe, Peele, and Middleton. These recognitions require a more precise reconstruction of both the individual production of playwrights and the configurations of collective writing (Taylor 2017). The development towards recognizing ‘secondary’ figures supports the argument for a re-consideration (and a wider canon of works) of Thomas Kyd called for, in this collection, by Darren Freebury-Jones in ‘The Diminution of Thomas Kyd’, where the examination of internal evidence, and methodologies of attribution, are immersed in an environmental, concrete, interpersonal framework of imitation and influence around 1590:

My evidence suggests that Shakespeare was deeply influenced by the phraseology of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *King Leir*, and *Arden of Faversham* (Shakespeare’s verbal borrowings from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *King Leir*

exceed *Arden of Faversham*), having perhaps seen or performed in these plays. Acknowledgement of Shakespeare's debt to Kyd can therefore offer an insight into the development of Shakespeare's dramatic language, and his aural, or 'actor's', memory of theatrical phrases. (p. 256 in this volume)

We are not in a no-man's-land, but, rather, in a recurrent situation of collaboration, which is far more important than the ability to attribute segments of text with certainty to one or another author. The quest to configure an author within frames of collaboration in the late Elizabethan age, and other periods of Shakespeare's trajectory, generates illuminating close-ups on the process of textual sedimentation.

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It is well known that the prevalent system for acting on stage and producing texts adopted by professional acting companies in Italy was the opposite of that adopted by commercial companies in England. The re-consideration of textual studies on Shakespeare and his contemporaries has its counterpart in research into the *Commedia dell'Arte*. For Italian actors, creating a structure for a play relied on putting together the actions catalogued in the repertoires of the *scenari* or *canovacci* (Testaverde 2007). By contrast, the actual acting of the parts relied more on the invention ('improvisation') of lines based on fixed conventions and *loci*, which were expressed freely, rather than based on the memorization of set, written scripts (on *parti libere* and *tipi fissi*, that is, 'free parts' and 'set roles', see Taviani and Schino 1982). It was another way of dealing with, managing, and publishing the relationship between stage craftsmanship and literary skill. The outcome was seen as a testament to the prestige and fame of the leaders and protagonists of the most successful companies (Marotti and Romei 1991). Research into these aspects has used sources and theatrical text types to contribute to a more valid reconstruction of the acting skills and writing habits of companies in Italy, as well as exploring their links with contemporary literary *élites*. Roberto Ciancarelli's crowded Roman landscape in 'Visions of the City' shows how the accumulation and contamination of stage inventions created a common ground for amateur and professional companies in seventeenth-century Rome. The seven-volume manuscript of the *Opere sceniche diverse in prosa* held in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, from which Ciancarelli extracts the fragments published, is a depository of skills and identities, where texts are imbued with the practice of constant hybridization with carefully-wrought inlays. The dilemma between the permanence and impermanence of text would be purely speculative if it were not rooted in the way a text was put to use. It is vital to recognize what has gone into the breadth of the repertoires in order to appreciate how effective theatre culture was. Collections of manuscripts and printed repertoires provide different

perspectives. The monumental bibliography compiled by Saverio Franchi between 1988 and 1997 in *Drammaturgia romana* is worth citing here, as it focuses on Rome. It is a portrait, in the form of a chronological catalogue of prints, of theatrical life in a European city between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a portrait re-evoked and re-constituted literally comparing the events on stage to printed pieces and *libretti* for operas and oratorios, the booklets which aimed to synchronize theatre seasons with opportunities for reading. They are not documenting facts; they are facts in themselves, which can provide a great deal of information, owing to their breadth, dissemination, and intensity of their ties with festive and everyday life. It is not a question of linking text to performance. It is, rather, a matter of exploring networks of relationships, and constellations of behaviours, between the public sphere and material culture of entertainment, in what Ferdinando Taviani (2010) has labelled ‘the literary space of the theatre’.

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In research on the editorial definition of Shakespeare’s texts around 1700, Kastan’s observations concerning Lewis Theobald are often cited. In Theobald’s single figure, ‘can be seen the era’s [i.e. early eighteenth century] schizophrenic relationship to Shakespeare, always admiring but, in one mode, presumptuously altering his plays for success on the stage, while, in another, determinedly seeking the authentic text in the succession of scholarly editions’ (2001, 93). This ‘schizophrenic relationship’ was, in fact, inevitable in the contradiction and counterpoint between the stage life of texts and their printed history. A few examples might be useful at this point. Both hand-copied manuscripts and printed texts could well be destined for reading, but editions of plays for reading – as we might expect today – often became the means for actors to learn their parts, or for copies to be reproduced in the form of scripts. Shakespeare’s Quartos and the 1623 Folio have been used as prompt-books, and they could well have been used as a basis for revisions and re-elaborations both of the text and performance – see, for example, the 1676 quarto of *Hamlet* annotated by John Ward in 1740s (Chartier 2015, but the chapter was first published in 2011, 201-212; and, in general, for the seventeenth century, Evans 1960-1996). The dialectic between printing of an author’s text and alterations for the stage has led to entire collections of texts with glosses by actors written in the margins (Knight 2015), while scripts, alterations and acting versions were stabilized by means of their printing into ‘performance publications’. The fate of texts that have given life to the theatre and then been transformed into books is not only a transformation in a work of literature; it is also a potential return to the stage of a play. In the junctures and discords between these two alternatives, the history of European theatre is mirrored in a history of theatre in print (for a collection of overviews, Forestier, Caldicott

and Bourqui 2007; for Italy, Riccò 2008; for Spain, Profeti 1999). As the relationship between theatre life and book culture became more consolidated (see, in general, Peters 2000), the literary space of the theatre became an *n*-dimensional system, a ground of forking paths, where books – not just *playbooks*, but every other material manifestation of text – take on and multiply their potential uses. And where, similarly, actor/readers cross-over with writer/spectators and remodel the text according to the transactions and metamorphoses that have taken place in performances.

Christopher Haile's essay, "Pawn! Sufficiently holy but unmeasurably politic", searching for the identity of the White Queen's Pawn in *A Game at Chess*, surveys the parody of theatrical clichés that Middleton, playwright and Chronologer of the City of London, adopted as a tool for representing the history of the day. To the extent that the making of Shakespeare's First Folio was involved in the staging of the sacrificed pawn. In Middleton's view, theatre could either frame or disrupt the readability of the world, or of contemporary affairs, in as much as spectators and readers acknowledged that the text of the play linked the small world of the stage to the big world outside by means of interpretations and metaphors.

The way that theatre interprets texts from the past is to breathe fresh life into the repertory by renegotiating different points of view. Maria Grazia Dongu, in her essay 'An Eighteenth-Century *mise en scène* and the Play of Refractions', explores Garrick's *Macbeth* (in various productions from 1744 to 1768) challenging an issue that is methodologically tricky: how far should one accept the dictates of treatises or the testimonies of critics when analyzing the work of the actor? The language of description, and the values of theoretical perception, are considered from the actor and playwright Garrick's perspective. In this game of refractions, 'actors, critics and theatre goers negotiated the text into a collective, distinctively provisional rewriting of *Macbeth*' (p. 229 in this volume).

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In the vortex of Shakespeare's work, in the endeavours of Italian actors in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and the afterlife of repertoire modifications and the resurgence of playbooks, we are dealing with the things and voices that surround and underlie the text. There are different layers and different states of the spoken word that lead to – and lend life to – writing. In this dimension, the transitions – somewhere between imitations and variations – that take place in the transformation from speech, to text, to book, which are intrinsic to the theatre, are not linear paths but inter-textual and inter-cultural shifts. There is a lively, never-ending motion between listening, reading, and writing. This motion requires us to focus on a key-role, to which we now devote a brief conclusion. Who were the scribes, and what was their task in the production of texts for the theatre? The possible responses

are as many as the functions and interpretations of the part. Even scribes known to have worked with the company of the King's Men, such as Ralph Crane and Edward Knight, played different roles. Knight was the playhouse book-keeper (employed by the troupe in 1620s/1630s), while Crane was a professional scribe, much debated in his role as 'First Editor' of some of the texts published in the 1623 Folio (Werstine 2015).

The role of scribes makes us wonder about their long-lasting influence and extreme importance: scribes were effectively men of letters who were present and active in professional theatres. The renewal of interest for the surviving manuscripts, which has reshaped our hypotheses about the lost manuscripts behind Shakespeare's Quartos, have put scribes right at the centre of the theatrical *scriptorium*, responsible for the reproduction of copies and the transition from playhouse to printers. Their liminal identities have further resonance. In Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651), the troupe of travelling actors welcomed Léandre, the boy escaping from the Jesuit College at La Flèche. They went on to offer him employment as *le valet qui écrit tous nos rôles* ('the servant who copies all our roles'; Scarron 1967, 254). As the author of *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), the prompter John Downes is famously considered responsible for providing the first history of the London theatres after the Restoration. Theatre scribes, who were seemingly confined by the specialization of their task, actually responded to the various requirements of writing for the theatre. Their ability to negotiate their way between preserving and changing, which can be traced back to their book-keeper function in medieval performances, fulfilled several different duties: stage management, preservation of the dramatic repertoire, negotiations with censorship. Early modern theatre was organized on the basis of many different processes of reading and writing that influenced practical memory. Its unwritten traditions re-surface, emerge, and conflict with the physical evidence of acts of writing.

The phenomena that Thomas Pettitt observes as degeneration of textual fragments along the 'low road' of the 'little traditions' (a category that goes back to the origins of the very notion of cultural performance) were a transplant of symbolic values, from London productions to wider and peripheral contexts. Cheap prints and manuscript fragments, drolls and dialogues, revisions and transpositions: in all these states and processes, textual polymorphism was the result of continuous transactions between written transmission and performance practices which involved adaptations and agencies that were both professional and non. The flow of texts which played an active part in theatre practice are a vitally revealing and identifying element of the dynamics of writing in modern Europe.

Raimondo Guarino

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# PART ONE

## Introduction

