

media in transition 5: creativity, ownership and collaboration in the digital age

**Opening the Gutenberg Parenthesis:
Media in Transition in Shakespeare's England**

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This conference takes cognizance of the closing, in our time, and in the first instance in the mass media, of what might be termed “the Gutenberg Parenthesis”,¹ a period in the history of expressive culture dominated by the notion of *the original and autonomous cultural product*:

- # readily distinguishable from other products within the same cultural system;
- # acknowledged as the creation (and by implication the property) of a specific individual;
- # its stability and integrity sustained over time.

“Parenthesis” here designates, as it properly should, what comes between a pair of brackets, rather than the brackets themselves, but a term which invokes typographical symbols is appropriate to a development in which a significant role was played by print technology and the book: indeed the round brackets by which a parenthesis is opened and closed are themselves the invention of the printing craft.² The concept of course is significantly indebted to McLuhan’s “Gutenberg Galaxy”, but “parenthesis” in the present context is a more effective reminder of the temporal dimension: the era of the original and autonomous cultural product is emphatically only a phase, with a beginning as well as an end. There was a time before when things were different; there is a time after when things will be different. Accordingly the “post-parenthetical” period that we are moving into may have more in common with the period before the opening of the Gutenberg parenthesis than either has with what came in between.

As the call for papers rightly anticipates, therefore, much can be learnt by juxtaposing developments in the modern media with regard to creativity, ownership and collaboration with recent or contemporary but “pre-parenthetical” expressive culture, both that of *other* cultures (as observed by anthropologists), and that of sub-cultures within our *own* culture (as observed by folklorists) in which the to us familiar notion of one work, one author, one text has not emerged.³ However, since even the modern media are currently still in the *process* of closing the Gutenberg parenthesis, rather than definitively out of it (we are passing through a rather broad and fuzzy bracket), the confusions and controversies involved can perhaps be more effectively appreciated by a more appropriate juxtaposition, that is, with the confusions

¹ I owe both concept and term to Professor Lars Ole Sauerberg, University of Southern Denmark.

² John Lennard, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 1

³ For a major project exploring the compatibilities between OT (oral tradition) and IT (information technology) under the auspices of the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition of the University of Missouri-Columbia see <http://otandit.blogspot.com/> and <http://www.pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/HomePage>.

and controversies attendant on exactly the reverse process: English-speaking culture's *opening* of the Gutenberg parenthesis.

Exactly when this happened will depend on the where and the who. A case could be made for the thesis that segments of African American expressive culture have been going through precisely this entry process in the second half of the twentieth century: from anonymous folk blues to commercial rock music; from spirituals to soul, from street signifying to scripted rap; from family history and back-porch anecdotes to the women's novel: a distinctive textual tradition emerging from still-vigorous vernacular roots. In England the corresponding developments were under way in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-centuries, a period when (to take one aspect of the situation) "oral, scribal and printed media fed in and out of each other as part of a dynamic process or reciprocal interaction and mutual infusion".⁴ Hence the many striking and otherwise surprising compatibilities between the Elizabethan performance culture we associate with the name of Shakespeare and that of African America in the twentieth century, to the mutual credit of both of them.⁵

The main difference between a historical approach and the anthropological or folkloristic analysis of living traditions is the question of documentation. The sixteenth century is naturally less well documented than more recent periods, but the real difficulty is that a culture which, like the Elizabethan, lies athwart the opening of the Gutenberg parenthesis, provides uneven documentation for its subcultures, and the situation is particularly acute in connection with the emergent mass media such as the popular theatre. Few dramatic manuscripts have survived from the period, so with sporadic exceptions the plays of Shakespeare and his fellows survive to us now only if they were printed back then. But the plays actually printed represent only a limited proportion (perhaps about 20%)⁶ of all those written and performed, and are probably *not* representative of the general picture (for example the overwhelming historical predominance of comedy over tragedy).⁷

And furthermore, in the process of being printed as a book, a play effectively takes a significant step into the Gutenberg parenthesis, in a form which may not fully reproduce what it was in its natural habitat. A striking illustration is provided by one of the first smash-hits of the emergent popular theatre, Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, which like the smash-hits of our times was quickly joined by a sequel, *Tamburlaine 2*. In 1590, a year or so after their appearance on stage, they were published together in a single volume by London printer Richard Jones, who contributed a Preface which has haunted theatre historians ever since:

TO THE GENTLEMEN READERS: AND OTHERS THAT TAKE PLEASURE IN
READING HISTORIES

⁴ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500 - 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 410. For a characterization of this period as one of transition between oral and print culture (and all that these imply), combining highly pertinent terminology (patchwork and quilting) with an anthropological magic-and-ritual orientation the present study does not care to emulate, see Linda Woodbridge, "Patchwork: Piecing the Early Modern Mind in England's First Century of Print Culture", *English Literary Renaissance*, 23 (1993), 5-45.

⁵ Explored further in my "'The Lion's Part': Some Afro-Elizabethan Compatibilities", *Odense American Studies International Series*, Working Paper No. 12 (September, 1994), and "New World Traditions in the Study of Medieval English Custom and Customary Drama", *Carnival and the Carnavalesque: The Fool, the Reformer, the Wildman, and Others in Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler & Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1999), pp. 263-81.

⁶ Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and The Book of Sir Thomas More* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 63.

⁷ H.R. Shipherd, "Play-Publishing in Elizabethan Times", *PMLA*, 34 (1919), 580-600.

Gentlemen, and courteous readers whosoever: I have here published in print for your sakes, the two tragical discourses of the Scythian shepherd, Tamburlaine ...: my hope is that they will be now no less acceptable unto you to read after your serious affairs and studies, than they have been (lately) delightful for many of you to see, when the same were showed in London upon stages. I have (purposely) omitted and left out some fond and frivolous gestures, digressing (and in my poor opinion) far unmeet for the matter, which I thought, might seem more tedious unto the wise, than any way else to be regarded, though (haply) they have been of some vain conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what times they were showed upon the stage in their graced deformities: nevertheless, now, to be mixtured in print with such matter of worth, it would prove a great disgrace to so honourable and stately a history. ...

This is at once the first of several illuminating glimpses of attitudes from within the Gutenberg parenthesis on the world outside it to be deployed in what follows, and a warning that when a cultural product from the pre-parenthetical world is published within the parenthesis, the reliability of the documentation is potentially compromised. The *Tamburlaine* which is to be appreciated by “gentleman readers” as urbane recreational reading is not the *Tamburlaine* which they watched, “in London upon stages”, together with the “vain conceited fondlings” (probably a play on “groundlings”) who (Jones assumed) were more likely to enjoy the “fond and frivolous gestures” which seem less compatible with the rest when the play is no longer a performance, but a book. He is evidently referring to the comic scenes, and while in some cases, for example Marlowe’s own *Doctor Faustus*, these have better survived the transition to print, we can in general be far from certain that they are adequately represented in the printed texts of plays: not least since, as we shall see, of all the people involved in the Elizabethan theatre, the stage clowns were those furthest from approaching the Gutenberg parenthesis, and most given, as we would say, to sampling, remixing, borrowing, reshaping and appropriating, in many instances extempore. Luckily (in this too, perhaps, a significant parallel with our times), those within the parenthesis seem, like Richard Jones in the quotation above, to have been provoked by the extra-parenthetical phenomena (whose nearness was probably felt threatening) into vigorous diatribes which are extremely informative -- and which have had a better chance of survival.

And as this discussion already suggests, the entry into the Gutenberg parenthesis was (as, presumably our culture’s exit will be) staggered, the timing and the process dependent on the particular cultural system concerned. This in turn depends not least on the latter’s position in relation to two axes: the cultural spectrum between great and little traditions (high culture to popular culture and folklore), and the spectrum of mode and form extending from artefact, via discourse as text and discourse as speech, to performance. Not surprisingly, high culture entered the parenthesis before low, and discourse-as-artefact before discourse-as-performance (see the appendix for an attempt to display this situation diagrammatically). The variation is conveniently illustrated by Shakespeare, who as poet, playwright, player and theatre-owner participated in more than one such cultural system.

POETRY

Thus to the extent Shakespeare had the status of a poet, producing, with a manifestly significant degree of originality and aesthetic self-awareness, non-dramatic discursive artefacts which were designed to be transmitted (in printed book or on written manuscript) as fixed texts; and to the extent that as thus appreciated these works were associated with his name, Shakespeare operated within a cultural system which by his time in England had taken decisive steps into the Gutenberg parenthesis. The term “literature”, which we would now use of this particular cultural system, would not be deployed in this sense for another couple of

centuries, but his “poetry” was, and was expected to be, original, distinctive, textually stable, and acknowledged as his.

The process would not be completed, at least symbolically, until the first English copyright legislation a century or so later in 1709, and in the poetic cultural system there were still some residual symptoms of pre-parenthetical times. Plagiarism of course continued, and even in the nineteenth century remained a viable procedure of literary production, but was quite emphatically thought about and worried over.⁸ Circulation in manuscripts could still precede, or supplement, publication in print, but anonymity was becoming rare, and almost a decade before their appearance in print as *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, the “sugred Sonnets” from his hand which circulated “among his priuate friends” were explicitly associated with “mellifluous & hony-tongued Shakespeare”.⁹ Only the occasional opportunistic publication of poems attributed to, say, Shakespeare, which were in fact not his (as in Jaggard's *The Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599), were a reminiscence of earlier, less systematic, times.¹⁰ And as a rule, once published a text tended to be pretty stable, with new editions based on their printed antecedents. It was by now two centuries since the medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer had felt it necessary to threaten dire consequences on his scribe, “Adam”, if he copied the text inaccurately.¹¹ Even in printing of course, textual change did occur, but it was increasingly associated with the down-market, disordered and slip-shod end of the publishing business (like the broadside ballads in which “sampling and remixing existing materials”, both textual and pictorial, would continue for a couple of centuries), or emphatically self-conscious and literary. The exception-proving-the-rule in Shakespeare's case must be John Benson's 1640 edition of *Poems Written by Wil. Shakespeare* which did what it could by way of revising the sonnets and substituting personal pronouns to give the impression that their expressions of love, alternately exalted (“Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?”) and anguished (“lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds”) were directed to someone of the opposite sex, rather than the “lovely boy” of the original.

THEATRE

It is quite likely that several of Shakespeare's fellow playwrights – not least the “university wits”, Peele, Greene and Marlowe – would have liked to see their plays as an integral part of their poetic production, but whether or not he shared this view, the part of Shakespeare that was also a player, a shareholder in an acting company and (in due course) the part-owner of two playhouses, would have appreciated that the tragedies, comedies and histories he produced alongside the sonnets and erotic mini-epics belonged not just to different poetic genres, but to a different cultural system: a carnivalesque entertainment tradition in the process of transmorphing into a commercial entertainment business, whose dramatic segment was only just being distinguished as “theatre”, let alone as poetry or literature. Thomas

⁸ For a recent examination see Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹ Francis Meres, in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), cited in E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries* (London: MacMillan, 1982), p. 122.

¹⁰ For an interesting study of the *Passionate Pilgrim* affair in the context of the gradual transition from “a textual system which lacks a concept of authorial/intellectual property, and which operates largely through techniques of imitation” (p. 276) to one in which “the distinguishing characteristic of the ... author ... is that he is a proprietor ... conceived as the originator and therefore the owner of a special kind of commodity, the ‘work’” (p. 278, citing Mark Rose), see Max W. Thomas, “Eschewing Credit: Heywood, Shakespeare, and Plagiarism before Copyright”, *New Literary History*, 31 (2000), 277-293.

¹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, “Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn”, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1957; repr. 1968), p. 534.

Bodley, founding his famous library in Oxford in 1602, explicitly excluded from its acquisitions policy something as frivolous as playbooks, but his attitude seems to have been shared with at least some of the playwrights themselves, who while they manifestly took trouble to see their poetry printed, were by all accounts fairly indifferent to the publication of their plays, which were generally poorly executed, and singularly lacking in authorial contributions such as a dedication.¹² “It was never any great ambition in me, to be in this kind voluminously read”, Shakespeare’s younger and vastly more prolific contemporary, Thomas Heywood, punningly remarked.¹³ Juxtaposition with the modern media, as they emerge *from* the Gutenberg parenthesis, is entirely appropriate (and reciprocally illuminating) for a popular theatre which was still on the brink of entering it. What follows will effectively offer illustration and documentation for the highly pertinent but as it stands unsubstantiated assertion of New Historicist critic Michael Bristol on the characteristic assumption of “parenthetical” editors of Shakespeare, “... *the belief in an individual work of art created by an author*”:

... evidence suggests that there is no reason to assume that any single, finished original ever existed. The texts, with their conflicting variant forms, are exactly what they appear to be -- that is, schematic, incompletely determined and highly variable, resourceful structures that function best in a *mise-en-scene* where they are traversed, or ‘contaminated’, by other ‘texts’ inscribed in the social life of the audience.¹⁴

INDEPENDENT IDENTITY

several plays with one name

The topic has several sub-aspects, the first of which is the question of the independent identity of the individual cultural product in relation to others. Contemporaries would have had no doubt, as they rummaged in the printers’ stalls in St Paul’s churchyard, whether they were confronted with one work or another, but will have been less certain when they crossed the river and watched a play in a theatre. A decade or so on each side of 1600 the repertoires of the popular theatres included two plays on Hamlet, two on King Lear, two on Richard III (and a “Richard Crookback” that may be a third), at least two on King John, two *Taming of the Shrew*’s, and up to five plays on Henry V, the alternatives in each case all by different authors. It is by no means certain that at a given playhouse performance the audience knew – or cared – which one they were watching.¹⁵

one play with several names

Conversely the same play could go by more than one name: to theatre-entrepreneur Philip Henslowe, meticulously entering his daily takings into a ledger, Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris* was equally “The Guise”, Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* “Hieronimo”, and what seems to have been a single play figures as “Love of an English Lady”, “Love of a Grecian Lady”, “Grecian Lady”, “Grecian Comedy”, “Grecian”.¹⁶ A play which Henslowe bought as “A Woman will

¹² Shipherd, “Play-Publishing in Elizabethan Times”; Honigmann, *Shakespeare’s Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 50.

¹³ Quoted in Muriel Bradbrook, “Thomas Heywood, Shakespeare’s Shadow”, in *Aspects of Dramatic Form in the English and Irish renaissance* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), pp. 112-128, at p. 113.

¹⁴ Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre* (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 160-61. See also Margreta de Grazia’s criticisms of those who sought to reconstruct “the golden authorial manuscript”, in “The Essential Shakespeare and the Material Book”, *Textual Practice*, 2 (1988), 69-86.

¹⁵ H.J. Oliver, ed., *The Taming of the Shrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 13.

¹⁶ *Henslowe’s Diary*. ed. R.A. Foakes & R.T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 24-60

have her Will” was published as *Englishmen for my Money*.¹⁷ We lack analogous documentation for Henslowe’s great rivals, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, but their resident dramatist’s *Merchant of Venice* was also referred to as *The Jew of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night* (which Shakespeare himself suggested might be called “What You Will”), was also known as *Malvolio*.¹⁸ Early publishing history suggests a similarly unstable identification: what the first Folio of Shakespeare’s plays in 1623 designates as *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth* was previously published (1594) as *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*, and the Folio’s *Third Part of Henry the Sixth* a year later as *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*. Somewhere in between is the process of revising a play and giving it another, quite unconnected name, as when *Estrild* became *Lochrine*, or *The Noble Spanish Soldier* became *The Welsh Ambassador*.

hybrid performances

Undermining the demarcation between plays could be taken to extremes in the hurly burly of actual performances. Looking back in 1654 (it almost seems, fondly) to conditions in the popular theatres earlier in the century, Edmond Gayton recalled that whatever had actually been advertised, an aggressive audience could determine, there and then, what the players would perform, including hybrid shows of more than one play: “Sometimes *Tamerlane*, sometimes *Jugurtha*, sometimes *The Jew of Malta*, and sometimes parts of all these”.¹⁹

PROPERTY

advertising

There is no indication that the theatres advertised the plays in their repertoires as being by particular authors. None of the notices or “bills” which the companies of players seem to have posted about the town to announce that day’s performance survive from the Elizabethan period, but a hundred years later, when evidence of advertising is better, the author, as often as not, is still not specified.²⁰ None of the many surviving eye-witness accounts of performances of Shakespeare’s plays from 1592 to 1613 mention him as the author.²¹

publication

And tellingly, those stage-plays that were published in Shakespeare’s time were as often as not anonymous. A blockbuster success such as *The Spanish Tragedy* can now be attributed to Thomas Kyd thanks to the happy preservation of contemporary gossip, not the title page of the printed edition.²² Early quarto editions of Elizabethan stage plays are more likely to specify the company by which it was performed (identified by their noble patron) or the playhouse where it was seen, privileging performance over composition. Seven of Shakespeare’s plays had been published anonymously before the first cluster (in 1598) to be attributed to him on their title pages, and he is not specified as the author of a play in the

¹⁷ Andrew Gurr, “Intertextuality at Windsor”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), 189-200, at p. 195. See also McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and The Book of Sir Thomas More*, p. 116 for other Henslowe instances.

¹⁸ Jay L. Halio, ed., *The Merchant of Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 85; J.M. Lothian & T.W. Craik, eds., *Twelfth Night*, Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1975), p. lxxix, n. 1.

¹⁹ Emphasis supplied. Quoted in Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574 - 1642*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; repr. 1993), p. 225.

²⁰ Robert D. Hume, “Before the Bard: ‘Shakespeare’ in Early Eighteenth-Century London”, *ELH* 64 (1997), 41-75.

²¹ Honigmann, *Shakespeare’s Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 27.

²² See the facsimile in Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J.R. Mulryne, New Mermaids, 2nd edn. (London: A & C Black, 1989; repr. 2000), p. 1.

Stationer's Register, which recorded all publications, until the mid-point of his career in 1600.²³

collaboration

The link between author and play could be compromised not merely by anonymity, but by multiple authorship. To judge from Henslowe's records, a new play was manufactured under something like production-line conditions, in a matter of a few weeks, as often as not the result of the collaborative efforts of from two to five authors.²⁴ The narrative to be dramatized agreed on, the play was "plotted" in the sense of being divided into a number of scenes with agreed content. These were then distributed among the collaborating playwrights – presumably in the light of their respective talents -- and the resulting sections conglomerated into the final, complete play. There is no reason to believe that Shakespeare, who was not promoted to "immortal bard" until the eighteenth century, was in any way above this. The central phase of his writing career does see somewhat slower, individual composition, but there are suspicions of collaboration concerning the beginning of his career and clear signs towards the end (*Pericles; Two Noble Kinsmen, Henry VIII*).²⁵ And if correct, the identification of his hand-writing on three pages of the miraculously surviving manuscript of *The Play of Sir Thomas More* puts him in the thick of a collaborative project involving up to half a dozen authors.²⁶

These circumstances inevitably provoke problems for critics who bring a "parenthetical" approach to the products of these processes and treat them as if they were literary works rather than antecedents of the modern media. What are we to do with a *Doctor Faustus* which reflects the personality, insights, aspirations and poetic genius of Christopher Marlowe only in the mighty lines of its opening and closing sequences and sporadically in between? Do we neglect the popular spectacle and vulgar horseplay of the rest as un-Marlovian, the contribution -- as it probably was -- of minor hacks who better knew what the public wanted? But in doing so we would study a play which never existed and was never performed.

ORIGINALITY

Equally subversive of literary-critical approaches is the circumstance that in the creation of an Elizabethan stage-play, many factors qualified the originality of the author, and the following paragraphs will illustrate and elaborate on the vigorous recent summary of Charles Cathcart:

The very act of writing for the stage was one of dependence, and writers frequently reached for Holinshed, or Painter, or Florio's Montaigne, as they wrote, or remembered the Seneca of their school days. Not least, playwrights resorted to stock theatrical devices to furnish their plots; and they may have reproduced the very words of speeches first written by others and subsequently heard, read, or even spoken by themselves. This acquisition of the dramatic language of others reveals the composing activity of the playwright to have been far from autonomous ... The professional dramatist is a redactive figure, one who pulls together disparate materials into a whole that may or may not be his own vision.²⁷

²³ Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, pp. 26-7.

²⁴ G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590 – 1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 205.

²⁵ Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator* (London: Methuen, 1960).

²⁶ For a disciplined approach to the question see Jonathan Hope, *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Sociolinguistic Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁷ Charles Cathcart, "Borrowings and the Authorial Domain: Gostanzo, Polonius, and Marston's Gonzago", *Comparative Drama*, 37.2 (2003), 159-174, at p. 159. Cathcart has immediately previously summarized the

following fashions

For example, to begin with the least tangible factors, in a highly commercial entertainment business fashion was an important factor: as with modern films or television a successful play would provoke not merely sequels from the originator, but imitations by others (like the spate of oriental tyrant plays provoked by the success of *Tamburlaine*, as well as Marlowe's own *Tamburlaine 2*),²⁸ and successful new genres would also prompt opportunistic cloning (like the greenwood comedies which encouraged Shakespeare's *As You Like It*).²⁹ In the competitive conditions of the 1590's the two major London companies, the Admiral's and the Chamberlain's Men, seem to have developed a particularly intense inter-reactive relationship of the kind we would now associate with the major American television companies.³⁰

the re-writing of existing plays

Elizabethan stage-plays were written well before the period (associated with the rise of the novel in the 18th century), when it was considered the task of an author to create an original plot. With only few exceptions, a stage play was achieved by dramatizing an existing (non-dramatic) narrative (romance; epic, chronicle; novella, news report, folktale), sometimes with a fidelity that by modern standards would qualify as plagiarism. But the relationship could be modally closer, a "new" play achieved by re-writing an existing one. The degree of re-writing of course varies, as does the closeness of source and product in cultural terms. Sometimes the source-play is from the world outside the popular theatre such as the Latin plays studied at academic institutions (Plautus, Terence, Seneca), or modern imitations written and performed under academic auspices.³¹ But sometimes the source is another, near contemporary, stage-play, as in the case of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*. Sometimes plays can cross each other's paths more than once, as when a revived and revised *Famous Victories of Henry V* is clearly indebted to the depiction Shakespeare's Prince Hal in *Henry IV*, which in turn owes a good deal to the original *Famous Victories*.³²

This has implications not merely for the integrity of the individual play, but also for the originality (and hence the ownership) of the playwright. Or rather it has implications for modern scholarship and criticism, working from within the Gutenberg parenthesis, for which questions of integrity and ownership are of vital significance. Much of the agonising is necessarily empty when (as in the case of *Hamlet* and the *Ur-Hamlet* of which it seems to be an opportunistic revision) we do not have the "other" play for comparison: it becomes both concrete and intense when we *do* have the other play, and (anachronistically) are desperate to know whether Shakespeare was the lender or the borrower.

factors which "circumscribed the creative activity of the dramatist, "Compositor, publisher, censor, theater manager, and actor alike may have cut, changed, or expanded the text available to a play's first print readers" which will be pursued later in this study (if with more interest in spectators than readers).

²⁸ Peter Berek, "Tamburlaine's Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation before 1593", *Renaissance Drama*, NS. 13 (1982), 55-82.

²⁹ On Shakespeare's response to the successes of his rivals (and vice-versa) see David Farley-Hills, *Shakespeare and the Rival Playwrights, 1600 - 1606* (London: Routledge, 1990), and Peter Ure, "Shakespeare and the Dramatists of his Time", in *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Kenneth Muir & S.Schoenbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 211-221; James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

³⁰ Gurr, "Intertextuality at Windsor".

³¹ For discussion of some possible instances see Baldwin Maxwell, "Wily Beguiled", *Studies in Philology*, 19 (1922), 206-237, esp. pp. 234-236.

³² Gurr, "Intertextuality at Windsor", p. 192; conversely the printers of a "bad" quarto of *Henry V* may have introduced some lines from the *Famous Victories*: see Robert A.H. Smith, "Thomas Creede, *Henry V* Q1, and *The Famous Victories of Henrie the Fifth*", *Review of English Studies*, NS 49 (1998), 60-64.

A particularly acute and complex instance is provided by one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew*, alongside which there survives another, anonymous, play with an all but identical title, *The Taming of A Shrew* (as the only typographical difference the "A" invariably capitalized in discussion to avoid confusion). While most of the characters have different names, the plots (main plot, sub-plot and the framing action) are extremely close, with a similar distribution of material between scenes. And at the level of the individual speech, the two are manifestly distinct but tantalizingly similar, as can be seen from the following parallel texts of a brief extract from a soliloquy in which the tamer, Shakespeare's Petruchio, mulls over his plans for the taming of Kate:

The Taming of A Shrew (Q 1594)

This humor must I holde me to a while,
To bridle and hold backe my headstrong wife,
With curbs of hunger: ease: and want of sleepe,
Nor sleep nor meate shall she inioie to night,
He mew her up as men do mew their hawkes,

And make her gentlie come unto the lure,
Were she as stubbornē or as full of strength
As were the Thracian horse Alcides tamde,
That King Egeus fed with flesh of men,

Yet would I pull her downe and make her come:
As hungry hawkes do flie unto there lure.

The Taming of the Shrew
(Shakespeare F 1623), IV.i.174-197

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And 'tis my hope to end successfully.

My falcon now is sharp and passing empty
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged
For then she never looks upon her lure.

Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come and know her keeper's call
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient.
She eat no meat today, nor none shall eat,
Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not.
As with the meat, some undeserved fault
I'll find about the making of the bed,
And here I'll fling the pillow, there the bolster,
This way the coverlet, another way the sheets.
Ay, and amid this hurly I intend
That all is done in reverend care of her.
And, in conclusion, she shall watch all night,
And if she chance to nod I'll rail and brawl,
And with the clamour keep her still awake.
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak – 'tis charity to show.

It will be seen that in addition to their common general import the two passages share the image of the taming of a hawk or falcon, which in the non-Shakespearean text is combined with that of taming wild horses: on the other hand Shakespeare develops the theme with greater elaboration. There are also many shared words and phrases, making it all but certain that the one author was working with the other text before him or very fresh in his memory.

Discussion of *The Shrew* and *A Shrew* has invariably occurred within the context of Shakespeare studies and editions of Shakespeare, and has accordingly been formulated in terms of the question, which came first? The naive assumption that as an immortal bard Shakespeare must be first can be countered by the equally naive assumption that the relative

dates of publication (*A Shrew* in a quarto edition in 1594; *the Shrew* not until the First Folio of 1623) put Shakespeare second. Scholarly opinion is divided and has oscillated over the years, if within a natural consensus that it would be preferable to reduce Shakespeare's indebtedness to a minimum: if his *The Shrew* is indeed based on *A Shrew* he is scarcely more than a reviser of something that was pretty adequate and effective already, in which case it would be preferable if the latter is actually his own early draft. A compromise might be that both plays (versions?) derive from a now lost common original, but they are so similar anyway that this would still make Shakespeare's a close reworking of someone else's achievement. As it happens (and as some of my annotations on the parallel texts quoted above signal), the amount of verbal repetition in the extract from *The Taming of A Shrew*, despite its comparative brevity, and in particular the way it generates repetitions out of single occurrences of phrases in the Shakespeare text by what I term "internal contamination", suggests very strongly that the non-Shakespearean *A Shrew* is derivative, which effectively rescues Shakespeare from the suspicion of plagiarism. But it is significant that my conclusion is based on having seen the same kind of repetition generated in the oral transmission of folksongs, and in folksongs *it doesn't really matter* which one came first: the variants are each appreciated for their individual handling of the common material.³³

It is not so much that bardolaters can now with a sigh of relief redirect the accusation of plagiarism against the anonymous author of *A Shrew*,³⁴ or that we now have another playwright "guilty" of plagiarism, but that plagiarism is not a relevant notion for the circumstances. Editorial scholarship, a child of Gutenberg if ever anything ever was, lacks the relevant concepts (and the appropriate vocabulary) for dealing with this pre-parenthetical phenomenon -- concepts and terminologies which are being developed precisely in relation to post-parenthetical phenomena such as sampling and remixing in the (post-)modern media. In other words, for Shakespeare's original audience, whose majority would have lived in a culture closer to our media than to our fine arts, the question wouldn't really have been significant, and would hardly have affected their view of Shakespeare had it transpired that he was the derivative writer (not least since they were unlikely to have known who was the author of either *The Taming of the Shrew* or *The Taming of A Shrew*). Much of this probably applies to the other cases in which an early Shakespeare play is uncomfortably close to another: *King John* versus *The Troublesome Reigne of King John*; *Richard III* and *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*.³⁵ In each case it may be possible to exonerate Shakespeare of embarrassing indebtedness, but that just leaves us with altogether three other playwrights who share this penchant for the close re-writing of other men's plays, and who may not necessarily be the exceptions (and the plays they achieve are quite viable for the theatre of the time).

pre-fabricated materials

The situation is merely exacerbated by the circumstance that in addition to being written by author-teams, and/or the result of dramatising existing narratives or re-writing existing plays, Elizabethan stage-plays on a more detailed level could include effectively pre-fabricated

³³ For an authoritative discussion, suggesting that the Folio text of *the Shrew* itself shows signs of revision, see Stanley Well and Gary Taylor, "No Shrew, A Shrew, and The Shrew: Internal Revision in *The Taming of the Shrew*", in *Shakespeare: Text, Language and Criticism. Studies in Honour of Marvin Spivack*, ed. Bernhard Fabian & Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1987), pp. 351-71.

³⁴ Stephen Roy Miller, ed., *The Taming of a Shrew: The 1594 Quarto*, New Cambridge Shakespeare: Early Quarto Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), concludes it is an anonymous re-writing of Shakespeare's play.

³⁵ For a representative discussion of the problems involved, which makes substantial appeal to the case of *The Shrew / A Shrew*, see E.A.J. Honigmann, "King John, The Troublesome Reigne, and 'documentary links: A Rejoinder'", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), 124-126. See also Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 57 for the group as a whole (in the course of a sustained discussion of the King John plays).

materials, put together in a manner more resembling a folk-life quilt than an original work of art. In a powerful exploration of the dramatists' "quotation" of existing texts (if within a somewhat wider notion of the process than adopted here), Douglas Bruster anticipates its relevance for the themes of this conference:

The tension between our sense of quotation as attributed borrowing and the tendency of these plays to "quote" without attribution will ask us to consider how well our notions of property, language, and textuality apply to early modern drama.³⁶

verbal borrowings

Such "quotation" could be on the purely verbal level: in addition to its overall derivative relationship to Shakespeare's *King John*, *The Troublesome Reign* was written, in E.A.J. Honigmann's words, by "an unknown writer with a memory-box filled with scraps from other men's plays".³⁷ But in this Shakespeare is hardly different: "Shakespeare absorbed hundreds of ... phrases and echoes from a variety of sources, including the plays of others. All playwrights did".³⁸ This would be the case particularly with playwrights who, like Shakespeare (and Jonson and Heywood), were also players, and who encountered existing plays not merely as Gutenbergian texts, but as extra-parenthetical performances, and literally had the lines of other plays (on average ca 30 a year) running through their minds as a matter of professional commitment. A small-scale instance which does not seem to have been previously noted is the stuttered reply of the one of the assassins in *Richard III* when Clarence asks why they have come: "To, to, to ..." – perhaps a conscious echo of the reiterated "Tue, tue, tue ...!" of the assassins in Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*.³⁹ Shakespeare's plays in turn were extensively mined for verbal material by other dramatists, not least John Marston, who seems (as a writer for the children's companies) to have had a particular eye to the plays of the rival Chamberlain's Men.⁴⁰ In the case of the many parallels between his *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*, however, the jury is still out on which play is derivative.

Thomas Heywood seems to have been another stitcher of verbal patchworks (or just another to have been caught out), and Muriel Bradbrook has detected, alongside a plethora of small-scale pilferings from Shakespeare, a couple of almost verbatim reproductions in Heywood's *Love's Mistress* from a lost (collaborative) play, *Cupid and Psyche*, of which a few snippets were recorded in another work to reveal the matter; this is the shorter of the two, with Heywood's slight alterations highlighted:⁴¹

***Cupid and Psyche* (1600)**

When many a weary step
Had brought us to the top of yonder mount,
Mild Zephirus embraced us in his arms,

Thomas Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1634)

When many a weary step
Had brought us to the top of yonder rock
Mild Zephirus embraced us in his arms

³⁶ Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 4.

³⁷ Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 79.

³⁸ D. Allen Carroll, "Greene's 'Vpstart Crow' Passage: A Survey of Commentary", *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 28 (1985), 111-127, at p. 118. So, correspondingly, "one detects conscious or unconscious borrowing from Shakespeare wherever one turns", Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 31.

³⁹ *The Massacre at Paris*, ed. W.W. Greg (1928; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1985), ll. 403, 643.

⁴⁰ Charles Cathcart, "Borrowings and the Authorial Domain: Gostanzo, Polonius, and Marston's Gonzago", *Comparative Drama*, 37.2 (2003), 159-174 uncovers and intense segment of this indebtedness, although with a view to emphasizing its positive aesthetic connotations.

⁴¹ Muriel Bradbrook, "Thomas Heywood, Shakespeare's Shadow", in *Aspects of Dramatic Form in the English and the Irish Renaissance*, pp. 112-128, at pp. 119-120 and 123-4.

And in a cloud of rich and sweet perfumes
Cast un to the lap of that green mead.

And in a cloud of rich and strong perfumes
Brought's unto the skirts of this green mead.

Bradbrook remarks that Heywood displays an ambivalent attitude to such borrowing very pertinent to the present topic. While capable of virtually verbatim reproduction himself he was angered when a couple of his own poems were attributed to Shakespeare in the unauthorized publication mentioned earlier; not so much because he was there the victim rather than the perpetrator, as because one ethic applied to poetry in books (in my terms, within the Gutenberg parenthesis), another (outside the parenthesis) to stage plays:

Theatre material was regarded, it seems, as common property within the theatre, however dishonest it might be to print it elsewhere; the text [of *Cupid and Psyche*] was burnt with the Admiral's plays in 1622. In a play originally commissioned by Henslowe ... from Dekker, Chettle and John Day, none of the original three could retain any strong sense of ownership.⁴²

(The point about the destruction of the text is that it occurred over a decade before the borrowing, so Heywood was re-deploying and slightly adapting textual material from his memory, not from a book -- and that this also made it a different matter.)

dramatic borrowings

Some instances might qualify as "dramatic" borrowings encompassing both dialogue and action, although concrete instances are hard to pin down, but there is a very overt example – a play-within-a-play which derives from another play -- in *Sir Thomas More*. When a company of players visit More, they perform a play which they call "The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom". An earlier play with this title, and with the same characters, indeed exists, but the speeches and action actually performed are taken from another earlier play (available in several printed editions), *Lusty Juventus*, and part of the Prologue derives from another, *The Disobedient Child*.⁴³

non-verbal borrowings

And with drama we should also be alert to "sampling" which involves mainly action and visual features, with little or no verbal element. A striking example in Shakespeare is the probable re-use in *The Winter's Tale* (encompassing costumes, music and action) of a dance of satyrs from Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones' masque, *Oberon*, performed a court a little previously.⁴⁴ Similarly the witch-scenes in *Macbeth* include a couple of songs which also occur in Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*, so one must be indebted to the other, critical opinion generally favouring the (respectable) solution that it was Middleton himself who inserted the songs (and perhaps other witch material) into *Macbeth* in connection with its revision for a court performance.⁴⁵

Upstart Crow episode

This may be one of the fields where surviving texts under-represent the historical reality of the phenomenon, for there is a good degree of contemporary comment on it. That the young Shakespeare was also involved in dramatic composition which made significance use of

⁴² Bradbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁴³ *Sir Thomas More*, IV.i.162ff., in *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. C.F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908); W.W. Greg, ed., *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, Malone Society (1911; repr. Oxford: University Press, 1961), p. xix.

⁴⁴ *The Winter's Tale*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.4.319ff., and see Orgel's Introduction, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁵ For documentation and discussion see A.R. Braunmuller, ed., *Macbeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 255-59.

existing materials is suggested very strongly by our first glimpse of him as part of the theatre-world in London, following the “lost years” after his starting a family in Stratford. This is the angry Robert Greene’s notorious warning of 1592 to other poets about the emergence of a mere actor who thinks he can write plays, and does so by means which Greene considers illegitimate:

for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Iohannes fac totem, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.⁴⁶

The parody of a powerful line from *2 Henry VI*, “tiger’s heart wrapped in a *woman’s* hide”, confirms that the “Shakes-scene” is indeed Shakespeare, and while the image of the crow beautified with the feathers of other birds could mean simply that players (like Shakespeare) gained celebrity and wealth by speaking on stage the words written for them by impoverished gentlemen-poets (like Greene), the context suggests very much that Shakespeare is being accused of stealing others’ words in writing plays. It is hard to imagine why, otherwise, the publisher of Greene’s attack, Henry Chettle, found it shortly thereafter incumbent upon himself to offer a handsome apology, in which he acknowledged that “diuers of worship” had confirmed Shakespeare’s “vprihtnes of dealing, which argues his honesty”,⁴⁷ and indeed the accusation was made rather more explicitly two years later in an R.B.’s *Greenes Funeralls*, while using the same image: “... the men that so Eclipt his fame / Purloyned his Plumes: can they deny the same?”⁴⁸

The significance of the incident lies in its revelation of a discrepancy in concepts between cultural systems at different respective positions on their way into the Gutenberg parenthesis. Redeploying the discursive “feathers” of others was unremarkable in an entertainment business in which plays were scripts for performance, not texts for reading, and when only a small percentage ever made it into print. But for the graduate Robert Greene, who saw himself as a literary author (and who manifestly considered it a humiliation to have to provide scripts for the commercial theatre), plays were the product and property of individual skills, and not to be plagiarised by others.

Ben Jonson on recycling

That borrowing and redploying existing materials was indeed common (and that Shakespeare could still be thought of in that connection towards the end of his career) is effectively confirmed by Ben Jonson’s characteristic attack on the vulgar taste of theatre audiences: this is the Ben Jonson who although like Shakespeare graduating into authorship through acting, embraces the Gutenberg parenthesis with all the fundamentalism of a self-taught neo-classicist. Audiences at the popular theatres seem to have found him more difficult than Shakespeare, or as he put it in his defensive “Ode to Himself”, preferred, like swine, acorns rather than wheat, husks rather than grains:

No doubt some moldy tale
Like *Pericles*, and stale

⁴⁶ *A Groats-Worth of Witte*, 1592, ed. G.B. Harrison, Bodley Head Quarto (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), pp. 45-46, quoted here from the informed and perceptive analysis of scholarship on the incident (which tends rather to downplay the implication of plagiarism), Carroll, “Greene’s ‘Vpstart Crow’ Passage: A Survey of Commentary”, p. 111. See also Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 114-119; Muriel Bradbrook, “Beasts and Gods: The Social Purpose of *Venus and Adonis*”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 15 (1962), 64-72.

⁴⁷ Carroll, “Greene’s ‘Vpstart Crow’ Passage: A Survey of Commentary”, p. 116.

⁴⁸ Cited in Honigmann, *Shakespeare’s Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 53.

As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish --
 Scraps, out of every dish
 Thrown forth and raked into the common tub,
 May keep up the play club:
 There, sweepings do as well
 As the best-ordered meal;
 For who the relish of these guests will fit
 Needs set them but the alms basket of wit.⁴⁹

From such a well-qualified source this is a major document, the power and significance of whose images should be fully appreciated. There are two -- related -- assertions. Firstly, audiences prefer familiar, old (and so mouldy) material (like *Pericles*, a play on the edge of the Shakespeare canon which seems to have been both collaborative and evolving, and which perpetuates the rambling structure of much earlier romance-comedies). Secondly they find acceptable dramatic products which comprise re-used materials from a variety of other plays: the sheriff's or "common" tub was a bin placed outside a prison into which charitable citizens might tip or scrape the left-overs of their own meals, for the benefit of prisoners (who were not otherwise fed).

Nor was Jonson afraid of criticizing the audience's taste to its face, making a similar point in the prologue to *Volpone* (1606) in observing that in *his* play he did not construct a text out of "jests stol'n from each table".⁵⁰ Since Jonson is not here developing a culinary image, "table" more likely refers to the small boards covered in wax which gallants (like Hamlet) carried around and in which they noted memorable phrases, not least when watching plays, but the "jests" may be more than jokes or verbal repartee, as the discussion has moved on to the relationship between action and plot: rather than re-cycling existing material Jonson himself "makes jests to fit his fable" (l. 28), so more likely units of action.⁵¹

deployment of commonplaces

But as in the case of genuinely oral traditions like epics and ballads, the re-deployment of existing material in Elizabethan popular theatre can involve more than indebtedness to specific anterior works, as indeed Jonson may suggest when in this same Prologue to *Volpone* he also asserts that he does not fill in gaps in "loose writing" with what was probably a common formula, "a gull, old ends reciting" (ll. 23-4). Such formulas belonged to the tradition as a whole, in a way which Peter Burke has identified as normal for popular culture, including drama: "folksongs and folktales, popular plays and popular prints all need to be seen as combinations of elementary forms, permutations of elements which are more or less ready made".⁵² As previously noted, the surviving play texts, the fact of whose printing brought them to the verge of the Gutenberg parenthesis, may misrepresent this aspect of the Elizabethan stage repertoire, but the likelihood is that the Elizabethan theatre too, as suggested by Louise Clubb, deployed common building blocks, "combinatory principles and

⁴⁹ Ben Jonson, "Ode to Himself" (1629), ll. 21-30, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th edn., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2006), vol. I, pp. 1446-7.

⁵⁰ *Volpone*, Prologue l. 27, *Norton Anthology*, I, p. 1336.

⁵¹ By a happy coincidence which is not really a coincidence, Michael Hattaway adopts the term "gest" for similar action-units in his *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 57

⁵² Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978; repr. 1979), p. 124.

a common repertory of 'theatregrams' (moveable units: figures, relationships, actions, sayings, and framing patterns)".⁵³

verbal formulas

Thus it is possible to identify verbal commonplaces or "formulas" -- concatenations of words (or paradigmatic phrasal structures whose verbal content could be varied) useful under recurrent situations. They were doubtless invaluable for writers working at speed, a natural resource in a culture which retained significant oral connections.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most functional is the formulaic "Come, let us go and ...", infinitely variable in relation to circumstances, used to clear the stage at the end of scenes in playhouses where, in the absence of a curtain, clearing the stage was the only way of ending a scene (and whose players were provided not with a script but with a copy of their own lines, which would tell them when to enter, but not when to exit). Up to half of the scenes in an Elizabethan play might end with this verbal phrase which has dramaturgical implications.⁵⁵

dramatic formulas

In this use of verbal formulas the Elizabethan popular drama placed itself in the pre-Gutenberg parenthesis world of oral epics and folk ballads, but unlike them it also included action,⁵⁶ and a case can be made for the deployment of what we might term "dramatic formulas" involving standardized action, and words which might vary from instance to instance, but had a similar import.⁵⁷ Some of these derive from antecedent dramatic traditions, in the case of the "public confrontation scene" identified by Kenneth Friedenreich perhaps medieval entertainments such as tournaments.⁵⁸ For others we are indebted to the late-medieval morality plays, like the dramatic formula involving a ruler between two counsellors, respectively offering good and bad advice -- only one step away from the Everyman figure subject to the conflicting advice -- and standing between -- figures representing respectively virtue (traditionally entering stage right) and vice (stage left): Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* provides several instances.⁵⁹ More specific is the scene in Shakespeare's *King Lear* in which the king's supporter, Kent, is put in the stocks by his enemies: a favourite ploy of morality vices in the plot-phase where they have the upper hand over the virtues.⁶⁰ Another common formula is the female character lamenting over the body of her beloved, encountered for

⁵³ Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), *passim*: I cite the succinct summary in Natalie Crohn Schmitt's review essay, "Commedia dell'arte: Characters, Scenarios, and Rhetoric", *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 24 (2004), 55-73, at p. 59.

⁵⁴ For the suggestion that Elizabethan plays can be explored from the "oral-formulaic" perspective developed in the study of oral epics, see Marion Trousdale, "Shakespeare's Oral Text", *Renaissance Drama*, NS. 12 (1981), 95-115, and G.T. Wright, "An Almost Oral Art: Shakespeare's Language on Stage and Page", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43 (1992), 159-169.

⁵⁵ For some further examples see Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Richard III (Q1) and the Pembroke 'Bad' Quartos", *English Language Notes*, 14 (1976-77), 257-264, at p. 259.

⁵⁶ Cf. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 134: "... the drama has its formulas and its motifs ... Verbal formulas abound However, in the popular drama, the basic units were not words but characters and actions".

⁵⁷ For an early exploration of this aspect see my "Formulaic Dramaturgy in *Doctor Faustus*", in *A Poet and a Filthy Play-Maker*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich *et al.* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 167-191.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Friedenreich, "'You talks brave and bold': The Origins of an Elizabethan Stage Device", *Comparative Drama*, 8 (1974), 239-253.

⁵⁹ Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, 1604 - 1616. *Parallel Texts*, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), A.101-9/B.96-104; A.452-461/B.402-410; A.640-646/B.581-8; A.706-710/B.647-651. For the stage positions see *The Castle of Perseverance*, ll. 301-9, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles, EETS. os. 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

⁶⁰ See my "Renaissance Poets and Medieval Playgoers: the Stocking of Kent in *King Lear*", *The Early Drama, Art and Music Review*, 18 (1995), 35-41.

example in *Richard III* (Lady Anne), *Henry VI* (Queen Margaret), *Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet), *Cymbeline* (Imogen), and (parodied) in “Pyramus and Thisbe” (Thisbe).

formula-sequences

Sometimes formulas seem to have been linked into a sequence (equivalent to the “type-scene” of oral-formulaic theory?), although not necessarily in adjoining scenes, and not all might figure in a given play. There is for example what we might term an assassination formula-sequence opening with a standardized scene-segment in which a figure of authority calls on a subordinate (or a group) -- who acknowledge the call with a “sir” or the like -- and issues his instructions, to which they indicate acquiescence, and depart. It may be one of the conventional moves inherited by the Elizabethan stage tyrants from their forebears -- Herod, Pilate, and diverse emperors -- in the mystery cycles and miracle plays. Its natural sequel is the formula in which the assassins confront their victim and declare their intentions, allowing him the opportunity to beg for life (or for time to pray) before the blow falls. The most familiar instance is perhaps the murder of Clarence (with that ominous butt of malmsey awaiting off-stage) in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, and such scenes -- perhaps not surprisingly -- become almost a patterning structure in Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris*.⁶¹ A formulaic sequel to a slaying with multiple killers is their discussion about dismembering the corpse, although (since it is rarely carried out) the formula has mainly verbal status: it is applied to Doctor Faustus in the B-Text of Marlowe’s play (B.1407-1446), to the Admiral of France in his *Massacre at Paris* (sc. v), and to Pharamond, Prince of Spain in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Philaster* (V.iv.67ff.). In Elizabethan stage-plays it seems to reflect a characteristic concern with the disposal of corpses, which it would be awkward to leave on the uncurtained stage at the end of a scene: the verbal “come let us go and” exit formula mentioned above can accordingly be given a dramatic element, elaborated with a “take the body and ...” commonplace, variable to suit a villain (“throw it in some ditch / over the city wall”) or a hero (“see it honourably buried”). It might be noted in passing by way of balance that there also seems to be a formulaic cure-sequence (complexly interlinked with the *commedia dell’arte* and folk drama), in which a doctor boasts of his prowess, examines a patient, and administers a remedy (Cerimon in Shakespeare’s *Pericles* is one instance).

pure action

At the opposite performative extreme to verbal formulas are dramatic formulas without a verbal element, in which we might include near-endemic stage-action such as dances, sword-fights, alarums, processions, and maskings, which would similarly conform to existing, traditional patterns. In his 1625 Prologue to *The English Traveller* Thomas Heywood refers to playwrights who use “drum ... trumpet, ... dumbshow, .. combat, marriage, ... song, dance, masque” to “bombast out a play”,⁶² suggesting that they are mainly fillers (bombast being the stuffing used to fill out the characteristically puffy Elizabethan clothes), but they could also take more functional dramatic forms, for example in the clearly formulaic confrontation in which a figure or group of figures deliberately interrupts a procession across the stage (for example Richard of Gloucester’s interruption of the funeral procession of Henry VI in *Richard III*, and the widowed queens’ interruption of his own march to Bosworth field. We should probably also include what Bruce R. Smith designates “pageant moments” -- in which the action takes on the quality of a pageant without being overtly signalled as such.⁶³ More spectacular is the literal “horning” of a character (be it symbolic of cuckoldry or otherwise)

⁶¹ See my “Marlowe’s Texts and Oral Transmission: Towards the *Zielform*”, *Comparative Drama*, 39 (2006 for 2005), 213-242.

⁶² Cited in Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, p. 59.

⁶³ Bruce R. Smith, “Pageants in Play: Shakespeare’s Three Perspectives on Idea and Image”, in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 220-246.

for which the stage technology evidently existed: such incidents occur both in *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1601) and the B-Text of *Doctor Faustus*, with continental analogues in a French *Comédie ou farce de six personages* and (several times) in the derivative German version of Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*.⁶⁴ In addition to its role in facilitating composition, all such standardized, formulaic action is natural and utilitarian in a theatre system in which plays entered and left the operative repertoire of a given company at considerable speed, with little time for detailed rehearsal.

STABILITY

literary revision

Once he had handed it over to an acting company the author's interest in a play was restricted to the proceeds of any benefit performance. In the absence of strict copyright laws a play was "owned" by whoever had physical possession of the "book of the play",⁶⁵ and unless invited, the author had no say in such revisions as were made to the play subsequently.⁶⁶ While there were factors limiting the incidence and degree of textual revision -- it could require the play to be re-licensed with the authorities (and the payment of a new fee) -- it did occur, not least in connection with a change in venue, say when a stage play was performed at court,⁶⁷ or conversely when a play which was originally written for a special venue was transferred to the regular stage repertoire. Leah Sinanoglou Marcus has argued persuasively for a "local" approach to Elizabethan drama, which appreciates textual variants in relation to the different, specific, circumstances for which, as we would now say, they have been re-contextualized and customized.⁶⁸

But revision within the playhouse context did occur, and as Andrew Gurr notes, theatre entrepreneur Philip Henslowe "... kept in touch with several hack-writers. He frequently employed them to patch on additions or alterations to plays he had bought for his companies, or to old plays that needed freshening up".⁶⁹ Thus the anonymous *Clyomon and Clamydes* belonged to a genre which was long out of date by the time it was printed in 1602, and the text published probably reflects revisions made for a recent revival. Ben Jonson was paid to write additions to Kyd's highly successful *Spanish Tragedy*, and when the play was reprinted in 1602 there are indeed additions compared to the first edition, but they look decidedly un-Jonsonian, so it is quite likely that the play was revised twice; at least: the latter part of even the first printing looks as if it is already the result of some kind of revision.⁷⁰ The value of revision for keeping an old play in the repertoire is illustrated by a scene in Thomas

⁶⁴ Henry Frank Salerno, "The Elizabethan Drama and the *Commedia dell'Arte*", Diss. (University of Illinois, 1956), p. 38 (*Jack Drum* and the French instance); *Comoedia von Fortunato und seinem Seckel und Wuenschhuetlein*, in *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, ed. Manfred Brauneck, vol. I (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), pp. 167-8 and several instances thereafter.

⁶⁵ Shipherd, "Play-Publishing in Elizabethan Times"; Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599 - 1609* (1962; repr. New York: Macmillan, 1967), ch. 1, "The Repertory".

⁶⁶ For a comprehensive review of the range of literary -- pen in hand -- revisions Shakespeare's text was submitted to between composition and appearance in the first folio, see Gary Taylor and John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped 1606 - 1623* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁶⁷ Roslyn L. Knutson, "Henslowe's Diary and the Economics of Play Revision for Revival", *THRI*, 10 (1984-85), 1-16.

⁶⁸ Leah S. Marcus, "Levelling Shakespeare: Local Customs and Local Texts", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), 168-178.

⁶⁹ Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Mulryne, ed., *The Spanish Tragedy*, Introduction, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv, & p. xxxv. See also Roslyn L. Knutson, "Influence of the Repertory System on the Revival and Revision of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Doctor Faustus*", *English Literary Renaissance*, 18 (1988), 257-74.

Middleton's *Mayor of Queenborough*, in which the leader of a company of players who have offered the mayor their services goes through what they have to offer:

Player. The Cheater and the Clown

Mayor. Is that come up again?

That was a play when I was 'prentice first.

Player. Ay, but the Cheater has learn'd more tricks of late,
And gulls the Clown with new additions.⁷¹

In an authoritative study G.E. Bentley concludes that as a result of both collaborative authorship (discussed above) and subsequent revision, "as many as half of the plays by professional dramatists in this period incorporated the writing at some date of more than one man", and more specifically with regard to revision under theatrical auspices: "almost any play first printed more than ten years after composition and known to have been kept in active repertory by a company which owned it is most likely to contain later revision".⁷²

Gurr's image of additions or alterations being "patched on" to an existing play is entirely appropriate to the circumstances, and was anticipated by those involved. Ben Jonson's diatribe against plays composed of a miscellany of items quoted above shifts its focus and image to complain that audiences are also satisfied with plays which like much-worn clothes are "turned" and "patched". In 1602 entrepreneur Philip Henslowe's recorded a payment to Thomas Dekker for "mending" an existing play.⁷³ The rather dour Henslowe is unlikely to be making a dig at Dekker, who had actually trained as a cobbler, and the term is exactly right for the craft of the play-*wright*, which encompassed both making and mending (verbal) artefacts.

As a shareholder and (at least in his early years) an actor in the company which bought and owned his players, Shakespeare occupied a privileged position, and there is little doubt he was himself responsible for many of the revisions to which his plays were subjected before publication, not least those to *King Lear* which have left us with two versions of the play which many critics now believe should be studied separately.⁷⁴ (These are in addition to the anonymous play of *King Leir* which was Shakespeare's major source). The same may true to a lesser degree of other plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, although in all cases it is difficult to tell if the revisions were made before or after the play was handed over to the Lord Chamberlain's / King's men.⁷⁵ It is symptomatic of increasing scholarly acknowledgement of the instability of the Elizabethan stage play that standard editions of plays which survive in more than one version now offer editions based on the one version *or* the other (or multiple-

⁷¹ *Mayor of Queenborough*, 5.1.119-123, in *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. A.H. Bullen, 8 vols. (1885-6; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1964), vol. II. Cf. also 5.1.218-219.

⁷² Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time*, pp. 199 and 263. For closer analysis of the revisions in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Fleire*, all surviving in multiple versions, see John Kerrigan, "Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*", in *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear*, ed. Gary Taylor & Michael Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 195-245, at pp. 195-202 (the remainder of the article examines revisions of a play by its original author which, Kerrigan notes, are discernibly different in character).

⁷³ *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Foakes & Rickert, p. 206.

⁷⁴ *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear*, ed. Taylor & Warren.

⁷⁵ On Shakespeare as a reviser of his own plays see Grace Ioppolo, *Revising Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), and Kathleen O. Irace, *Reforming the 'Bad' Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994).

text editions), rather than attempt to re-establish an original encompassing those parts of each which the individual editor judges more authentic.⁷⁶

theatrical revision

This conscious, literary, revision of the script is an aspect of a wider phenomenon, for as both texts and performances, plays were above all *unstable*, and accordingly there survive contemporary editions of a quite a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean stage-plays respectively representing different phases in the trajectory of the play concerned between pen and performance, or between first performance and latest (e.g. *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 2 & 3 *Henry VI*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Richard III*, *Henry V*, *Mucedorus*, *Philaster*), while other plays survive in a single printing which pretty clearly represents something other than what the author wrote (e.g. *Orlando Furioso*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *Arden of Faversham*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, *Macbeth*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *George à Greene*, *Pericles*). As an authoritative twentieth-century editor of Shakespeare, McKerrow, observed:

It is doubtful whether, especially in the case of the earlier plays, there ever existed any written 'final form'. Shakespeare as an active member of a theatrical company would, at any rate in his younger days, have been concerned with producing, not plays for the study, but material for his company to perform on the stage, and there can be little doubt that his lines would be subject to modification in the light of actual performance.⁷⁷

Except that the changes introduced by the actors started well before performance.⁷⁸ Immediately on receipt of the author's "fair copy" the players would subject it to whatever practical revision was necessary to reconcile the author's poetic visions with their resources (and their sense of what would both work and be profitable). A page in a surviving theatre manuscript of *Orlando Furioso* has a note, in the hand of leading actor Edward Alleyn, who was to speak the lines concerned, "scurvy poetry a litell too long", and among many other additions, subtractions and substitutions the offending passage is duly omitted in the printed text, which probably reflects more closely what was actually performed.⁷⁹ As this suggests, the amount of change would depend on the degree to which the author was alert to theatrical realities and willing to compromise with them: there survive complaints at both additions and subtractions. Thus Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* was published in 1623 with a title page

⁷⁶ Thus the Oxford *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells & Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) offers separate quarto and folio versions of *King Lear* (plus a conglomerate version for those still comfortable with this notion), and separate Oxford Shakespeare editions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V* offer multiple-text editions, as does the Revels Edition of *Doctor Faustus*, ed. David Bevington & Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). The New Cambridge Shakespeare series offers an alternative parallel series, "Early Quartos" with variant texts not used as the basis for the standard editions. A series of original spelling quarto editions have been published by Harvester Wheatsheaf under the general editorship of Graham Holderness and Brian Loughrey with the somewhat tendentious title, "Shakespearean Originals" (and are so faithful to the principal of authenticity that scenes and lines are not numbered, making the editions virtually useless for scholarly purposes).

⁷⁷ R.B. McKerrow, *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare*, p. 6, cited in E.A.J. Honigman, *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text* (London: Arnold, 1965), p. 2. Cf. also Leo Kirschbaum, "On the Editing of Elizabethan Texts", *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 5 (1959-60), 13-20, p. 15.

⁷⁸ On the processes involved see further Honigman, *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text*; D. Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), (a perceptive and succinct review), Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 4, "A playtext and its Context".

⁷⁹ London, Dulwich College MS.1.128, Orlando's "part", ll. 261ff., vs. Q1594, *The Historie of Orlando Furioso*, ll. 1190ff., in *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: The Battle of Alcazar and Orlando Furioso*, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Malone Society, 1923), pp. 172 & 173. For discussion see *ibid.*, pp. 125-134, and Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 108-9.

explaining that this is “The perfect and exact Coppy, with diuerse things Printed, that the length of the Play would not leave in the Presentment”, and the playwright Richard Brome notes more explicitly in his preface to the 1640 quarto edition of his play, *The Antipodes*, that it contains “more then was presented upon the Stage”, for some material was “left out of the Presentation, for superfluous length (as some of the Players pretended)”,⁸⁰ while another play published the same year, Samuel Harding’s *Sicily and Naples*, is prefaced by commendatory verses from a Nicholas Downey, observing that here, conversely, the play:

... is exposed to the world’s large eye,
In its unchang’d and native infancy
Before some Players brain new drenched in sack
Does clap each term new fancies on its back.⁸¹

-- the “terms” are the sessions of the London law-courts, to which (for good commercial reasons) the theatre-seasons were coordinated, the remark suggesting that the changes were cumulative over a period. In the play to which Richard Brome prefaced the remarks just quoted, *The Antipodes*, a character complains to an actor (about to perform a play-within-the-play) of both additions and subtractions:

But you, sir, are incorrigible, and
Take license to yourself to add unto
Your parts your own free fancy, and sometimes
To alter or diminish what the writer
With scare and skill compos’d⁸²

The text was also submitted to the government’s censor in the figure of the Master of the Revels (on the lookout for illegal comments on matters of religious controversy, blasphemy, potentially subversive material, or improper references to currently friendly foreign powers): no play could be performed publicly without his stamp of approval on the script. The manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* touched on above may represent a play frozen at a point in this double process: while already the collaborative product of several writers, they and others have made considerable revisions, and there are stern admonitions in the handwriting of the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney, for substantial, potentially provocative passages to be excised or severely reduced “& nott otherwise, att your own perrilles”.⁸³

Even then it is unlikely the play would be performed exactly as thus revised and approved. The “book of the play” which emerged would probably be regarded as a maximum, any one performance -- depending on circumstances -- involving greater or lesser cuts, which could presumably be undertaken with impunity.⁸⁴ A copy of the 1607 quarto of *The Fleire* in the holdings of the British Library is marked up for performance, essentially by signalling cuts.⁸⁵ But that performances did occasionally invoke the wrath of the authorities, with fines and imprisonment duly inflicted, suggests either that the censors were not as vigilant as they

⁸⁰ Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. Ann Haaker, Regents Renaissance Drama (London: Arnold, 1967), Introduction, p. xi. The title pages of the 1600 quarto of Ben Jonson’s *Every Man Out of his Humour* and the 1623 quarto of John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* similarly assert that the text includes material omitted in performance, see Honigman, *The Stability of Shakespeare’s Text*, p. 176.

⁸¹ Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare’s Time*, p. 242.

⁸² Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. Ann Haaker, II.ii.40-44.

⁸³ *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W.W. Greg, Malone Society (1911; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 1n.

⁸⁴ Andrew Gurr, “Maximal and Minimal Texts: Shakespeare v. The Globe”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999), 68-87.

⁸⁵ Kerrigan, “Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*”, pp. 198-202.

might be, or, most likely, that there were unauthorized additions, as in the case of Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*, which in performance, as the players eventually confessed, included lines not to be found in the approved text.⁸⁶ Thomas Nashe went so far as to claim in 1599 that he had merely supplied the first act of *The Isle of Dogs*, a now lost play that provoked the wrath of the authorities, and that "the other foure acts without my consent, or the least guesse of my drift or scope, by the players were supplied, which bred both their trouble and mine too".⁸⁷ Some changes were evidently mischievous, but it would be strange if the players, who had to make a play work on a stage highly vulnerable to psychological pressure, verbal and even physical intervention from an audience which was close, and on three sides of them, did not introduce adjustments which simply made the performance work better.

improvisation

In addition to such deliberate change, we should also take into account the possibility of improvisation during performance.⁸⁸ Some play texts do explicitly call for improvisation, either by a stage direction (*Here they two talk and rail what they list*), or by an "etc." at the end of a speech. Particularly substantial are Heywood's call for extemporised conversation during a dance in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607): "*They dance; Nicholas, dancing, speaks stately and scurvily, the rest, after the country fashion*", and Marston's instruction in *The Insatiate Countess* that one character should "tell ..." another "... all the plot".⁸⁹

When instances occur at moments of angry confrontation with obscenity in the offing, the player is perhaps expected to adjust its nature and degree to the circumstances and mood of the particular performance.⁹⁰ But it could also be that actors were skilled in, and audiences appreciated, the sport of improvised verbal abuse which was evidently practised in the youth culture of Elizabethan streets and taverns. The Elizabethan term for it is specified in Nathan Field's *Amends for Ladies* (1618) when a young man visiting home after a spell in the city startles his father by exclaiming: "yee are ... the son of a whore", and hastens to explain: "this is called Roaring, father".⁹¹ A taste of the insults involved is provided in the "Roaring Lesson" at the "Roaring School" in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's play, *A Fair Quarrel*, from about 1615, including the exuberant concatenation of cant expletives, "I say thy mother is a calicut, a panagron, a duplar and a sindicus",⁹² and Shakespeare glances punningly at it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when a craftsman, told he is to perform the part of a lion in a play, and worried about learning his lines, is reassured: "You may do it extempore; for it is nothing but roaring".⁹³ This is precisely one of those striking

⁸⁶ Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time*, pp. 164-5.

⁸⁷ Thomas Nashe, *Nashe's Lenten Stuffe*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R.B. McKerrow, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 153-4.

⁸⁸ For discussion on improvisation on the Elizabethan stage, see T.S. Graves, "Some Aspects of Extemporal Acting", *Studies in Philology*, 19 (1922), 429-56.

⁸⁹ For a review of instances of both types of signalled ad libbing (including the illustrations offered here) see Doris Fenton, *The Extra-Dramatic Moment in Elizabethan Plays before 1616* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 1930), pp. 17-19, and Peter Davison, *Popular Appeal in English Drama to 1850* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 36-37.

⁹⁰ David Klausner, "The Improvising Vice in England", in *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Timothy J. McGee, EDAM Monograph Series 30 (Kalamzoo: Western Michigan University, 2003), pp. 273-285, at pp. 276-7; Fenton, *The Extra-Dramatic Moment in Elizabethan Plays before 1616*, p. 18.

⁹¹ V.ii.272-75; *The Plays of Nathan Field*, ed. W. Perry (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1950).

⁹² Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *A Fair Quarrel*, ed. R.V. Holdsworth, New Mermaids (London: Benn, 1974), IV.i.89-110; 150-51; 191-97. See also IV.iv.53ff.

⁹³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by R.A. Foakes, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; repr. 1990), 1. 2. 56. The roarers are further discussed in Holdsworth's Introduction, pp. xiv-xv.

compatibilities touched on above between Elizabethan England and African America, the London “roaring” being a close analogue, perhaps a direct antecedent, of the set-piece exchange of insults, “the dozens”, cultivated on the streets of American cities, which displays a similar tendency to question the moral probity of the opponent’s closest female relatives. In his autobiography, *Die Nigger Die* (1969), the author and activist H. Rap Brown invokes exactly the appropriate pastimes to make the point that an essentially oral African American street culture, unlike white America, had yet to enter the Gutenberg parenthesis: “We played the Dozens for recreation, like white folks play Scrabble”.⁹⁴

commedia influence and analogues

It is a moot question whether or to what extent the Elizabethan players, outside these set pieces, deployed *systematic* improvisation in the manner of the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, for the latter were known (and sometimes seen) in England, and may have had some influence (assuming there was no indigenous improvisatory tradition). This may have been particularly true of the clowns (discussed below),⁹⁵ but it is sometimes suggested that Polonius’s claim that the visiting players in *Hamlet* (who generally seem to have stepped out of the contemporary English theatre world), are consummate practitioners of both “the law of writ” and “the liberty” refers to parallel techniques of learning a script (writ) and speaking ad lib (liberty). There are also tantalizing hints that the actor-cum-playwright Antony Munday, shortly after returning from Italy, attempted (with results on which the sources are ambiguous) to forge a career based on extempore performances.⁹⁶

In one of the more rumbustious tavern scenes in Shakespeare’s *I Henry IV*, Falstaff exclaims, “What, shall we be merry, shall we have a play extempore?” (II.iv.279-80), which might suggest the phenomenon was seen as more appropriate to social merriment, but when, in due course, Falstaff and Prince Hal improvise the anticipated encounter between the Prince and his father the King, Falstaff sees the performance in terms of the popular theatre, declaring “I must speak in passion, and I will do it in King Cambyses’ vein”, invoking the highly popular play of that name, and he earns appropriate commendation from the Hostess: “O Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see!” (II.iv.386-7 & 395-6).⁹⁷ On the other hand an actor in the play within the play in Middleton’s *Mayor of Queenborough* is non-plussed when a member of the audience insists on taking over the clown’s role: “I beseech your worship let us have our own clown; I know not how to go forward else” (5.1.198-9). The players concerned are admittedly imposters, whose ultimate purpose is to rob the audience, but this is revealed in a remark which, paradoxically, suggests they do have the capacity to improvise (and provides an early instance of the term, “fribble”, by which the technique was known):

⁹⁴ Cited Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness. Afro-American Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 346, in the course of an analysis of “The Ritual of Insult” (pp. 344-57).

⁹⁵ The question of improvised performance is distinct from specific analogies between *commedia* scenarios and Elizabethan plays, or the general influence of the Italian tradition on the English, on which see for example Charles F. Felver, “The Commedia dell’Arte and English Drama in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries”, *RORD*, 6 (1963), 24-34; Kathleen M. Lea, “Connections and Contrasts between the Commedia dell’arte and English Drama”, *Rivista di studi teatrali*, 9/10 (1954), 114-126; Henry Frank Salerno, “The Elizabethan Drama and the Commedia dell’Arte”, Diss. (Columbia University, 1956); Winifred Smith, “Italian and Elizabethan Comedy”, *Modern Philology*, 5 (1908), 555-567; Eugene J. Steele, “Shakespeare, Goldoni and the Clowns”, *Comparative Drama*, 11 (1977), 209-226.

⁹⁶ I.A. Shapiro, “Shakespeare and Munday”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1966), 25-33, at pp. 27 and 31.

⁹⁷ *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd edn, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). The irony of course is that this “play extempore” is a carefully scripted part of Shakespeare’s text.

They only take the name of country comedians to abuse simple people with a printed play or two, which they bought at Canterbury for sixpence; and what is worse, they speak but what they list of it, and fribble out the rest. (5.1.265-70).

The ultimate implication of an “oral”, improvisational tradition is to blur the distinction between author and performer, and in the work which includes the highly informative attack on Shakespeare quoted earlier, Robert Greene is close to presenting a performer who authors as he performs (or vice-versa) in the semi-autobiographical account of his meeting with a player:

Nay more (quoth the Player) [having just listed the plays in which he is celebrated as an actor] I can serue to make a pretie speech, for I was a countrey Author, passing at a Morall [i.e. a morality play], for twas I that pende the Morrall of mans witte, the Dialogue of Diues, and for seuen yeers space was absolute Interpreter to the puppets. But now my Almanacke is out of date:

The people make no estimation,
Of Morrals teaching education.

Was not this prettie for a plaine rime extempore? if ye will ye shall haue more.⁹⁸

memoral decomposition

The last of the processes conducive to the instability of the individual play in the course of its stage trajectory is the unpremeditated alteration inevitable in oral performance involving the reproduction of verbal material from the memory. I have accordingly designated the process “mem(-)oral decomposition”. That it was more likely to occur on the Elizabethan stage than others, or than in other oral traditions, is due not least to the rapid turnover of plays for a given company documented by Henslowe’s “diary”: any Elizabethan player with a London company could expect to perform (often several roles) in 30 or so different plays each year (only half of which might return for the next season). “Decomposition” is appropriate both in the sense it reverses the process of composition, and because, as in the case of organic material (plants, bodies), it is the softer tissues (the words and lines least necessary for making the scene work) which decay first, revealing the patterns of the firmer structures within holding the whole together. An actor struggling to keep going is also likely consciously or unconsciously to redeploy lines of similar import from elsewhere in the current play (internal contamination), or from other plays in the current repertoire (external contamination), or to make use of the verbal commonplaces belonging to the tradition as a whole. Such features are discernible in a few of the “bad” quartos of Shakespeare’s plays (notably *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*) when juxtaposed with versions closer to Shakespeare’s original, suggesting that they are in some way recordings of actual performances.⁹⁹

intertextuality between revised texts

But that as it may, the changes, deliberated or improvised, conscious or unconscious, of the acting company owning the play or of the individual actors who performed it, which in themselves undermined its stability, also subverted its autonomy and integrity when they involved the insertion of material from other plays. It is striking that some of the most intense and specific instances of verbal borrowing among the surviving texts of Elizabethan popular drama involve clusters of (printed) texts which in some way or other deviate, by various permutations of the processes reviewed above, from what the author wrote. Thus the only

⁹⁸ Robert Greene, *Greene's Groats-Worth of Wit*, 1592 (facs. repr. Menston: Scolar Press, 1969), Sig. E1r.

⁹⁹ See my "The Living Text: The Play, the Players, and Folk Tradition", *Porci ante Margaritam: Essays in Honour of Meg Twycross.*, ed. Sarah Carpenter, Pamela King & Peter Meredith, *Leeds Studies in English*, NS. 32 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2001), pp. 413-29.

surviving text of Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, an undated octavo printing, universally acknowledged to be the result of extensive alteration, has lines borrowed from Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* (and their much-altered derivatives, *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, respectively), *Julius Caesar*, the anonymous *Arden of Feversham*, and Marlowe's own *Edward II*,¹⁰⁰ part of an intertextual cluster which also includes *Woodstock*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *Soliman and Perseda*, and *The Taming of A Shrew*, this last characterized as "... a hotch-potch of poorly remembered Shakespearean lines, invented verse, echoes and borrowings from other contemporary dramatists, notably Marlowe".¹⁰¹ There is also a slightly later group encompassing the first printed texts of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives*, and *Hamlet*.¹⁰² Perhaps not surprisingly, players, who were even further from entering the Gutenberg parenthesis than playwrights, were the more given to "sampling" and other processes which we now see as post-parenthetical.

provincial performance

To balance the shortcomings of the documentation from the Elizabethan period, alluded to at the outset of this study, it may be illuminating to pursue play production beyond the world of the London theatres and into to the provinces, where pre-parenthetical conditions seem to have persisted longer. For every London company there were several provincial companies, and even the prestigious London-based players, including Shakespeare's Lord Chamberlain's Men, took to the road for shorter or longer periods when the capital's playhouses were closed (typically because of plague). While the players were by law obliged to show the local authorities the officially approved script of their plays, it is unlikely that any mayor or magistrate took to trouble to see that performances conformed to it, and the likelihood is that given the technical restrictions attendant on travelling (fewer players; simpler properties; more primitive stages), a given play was shortened and simplified, and at least in some contexts a less sophisticated audience was accommodated by both shortening the serious speeches and extending the clown scenes or sword-fights. The cumulative impact on play scripts may be represented by some of the "bad" quarto texts of some Elizabethan plays explored above.¹⁰³

Post-Restoration itinerant companies sometimes mixed plays together if they thought the audience would not notice,¹⁰⁴ and improvisation to almost Italianate degrees was apparently not unknown: As late as the nineteenth century a stroller performing in provincial fairgrounds reported that he was "more often told what character he's to take, and what he's to do, and he's supposed to be able to find words capable of illustrating the character". The same informant reckoned that for one actor who learnt his part ten did not.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ H.J. Oliver, ed., *Dido Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. lv-lviii; Greg, ed., *The Massacre at Paris*, pp. viii-x.

¹⁰¹ R.A. Cave, Review of three editions in *The Oxford Shakespeare, Theatre Research International*, 9 (1984), 141-5; see also Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, pp. 54-55 and Miller, ed., *The Taming of A Shrew*, p.21.

¹⁰² Alfred Hart, *Stolne and Surreptitious Copies. A Comparative Study of Shakespeare's Bad Quartos* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1942; repr. New York: Folcroft Library Editions, 1970), ch. XX, "Inter-play Borrowings"; ch. XXI, "Inter-play Borrowings of the Later Quartos". See also Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Richard III (Q1) and the Pembroke 'Bad' Quartos", *English Language Notes*, 14 (1976-77), 257-264.

¹⁰³ Robert E. Burkhart, *Shakespeare's Bad Quartos: Deliberate Abridgements Designed for Performance by a Reduced Cast* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).

¹⁰⁴ Sybil Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces 1660 – 1765* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 149.

A report of semi-professional performances (on stages comprised of farm wagons) at country wakes in late-eighteenth-century Shropshire (which reproduced Elizabethan conditions even to the extent of having men play female roles), notes both that the repertoire still included versions of Elizabethan favourites such as *Doctor Faustus*, *Mucidorus*, and *Valentine and Orson*, and that “In all of them the Fool or Jester seems to have been a very important character; in the local phraseology he is reported to have ‘played all manner of megrims’, and to have been ‘going on with his manoeuvres all the time’”.¹⁰⁶ This “village theatre”, which evidently overlapped with the seasonal folk drama of the period, could also produce hybrids comprising extracts from several stage-plays,¹⁰⁷ and its repertoire included “drolls” (or more properly “jigs”) comprising re-versified extracts from plays performed largely as song, a version of *The Merchant of Venice* for example concluding rollickingly:

Bassanio. Here’s a health to thee Antonio
Antonio. Thank thee heartily, *Bassanio*
Chorus. In liquor, love, and unity,
 We’ll spend this evening merrily.¹⁰⁸

English companies in Europe

English provincial conditions would be reproduced and intensified when the English travelling companies extended their itineraries to include the nations of central and northern Europe, areas which, in the absence of an indigenous professional theatre, provided an additional and enthusiastic market, both at the courts of princes and at fairs and in marketplaces, from Graz to Copenhagen (or rather Elsinore) to Danzig. This happened surprisingly often, and is surprisingly well documented.¹⁰⁹ It may be less surprising that performing in what to the audience was a foreign language, they seem to have greatly emphasized the visual aspect of performance, fighting, dancing, and horseplay, much of it focussed around the clown, who usually has the carnivalesque name “Pickleherring,”¹¹⁰ but C.R. Baskerville is tempted to suggest that such changes differ in degree rather than kind from what was found viable for English provincial audiences.¹¹¹

In due course the companies specializing in foreign tours learnt the local language or recruited locally, and had their plays translated. The latter survive in considerable numbers, providing us with, among others, yet more versions of both *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, with even clearer evidence of what the players did to them. Another play with multiple English texts, *Doctor Faustus*, also survives in a Dutch version, *De Hellevaart van Doktor Joan Faustus*, which also illustrates the vulnerable integrity of Elizabethan plays by including scenes inserted from Thomas Dekker’s *If it be not well, the Devil is in it*.¹¹² The contamination in the surviving text indicates that hybrid plays were not just a result of the

¹⁰⁶ Sir Offley Wakeman, quoted in C.S. Burne, *Shropshire Folk-Lore* (London: Trübner, 1883), p. 495.

¹⁰⁷ For a specific instance (with some discussion of its implications) see Tom Pettitt, “From Stage to Folk: the Passages from Addison’s *Rosamond* in the ‘Truro’ Mummings’ Play”. *Folklore*. 114 (2003), 262-70.

¹⁰⁸ C.R. Baskerville, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (1929; repr. New York: Dover, 1965), p. 125.

¹⁰⁹ For texts see e.g. *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, ed. Manfred Brauneck, 4 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970-75), which includes the collection published as early as 1630 as *Engelische Comedien und Tragedien*. Major studies include A. Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: an Account of English Actors in Germany and the Netherlands and of the Plays Performed by them during the same Period* (London: Asher, 1865); Jerzy Limon, *Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe 1590 - 1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹¹⁰ Willem Schrickx, “Pickleherring and English Actors in Germany”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 36 (1983), 135-147.

¹¹¹ Baskerville, *Elizabethan Jig*, p. 130.

¹¹² E.F. Kossmann, ed., *Das Niederländische Faustspiel des 17. Jahrhunderts (de Hellevaart van Doktor Joan Faustus)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910), p. 7.

actors' nonchalant mixing of plays when performing before an audience who did not understand the words, which evidently happened.¹¹³

Otherwise the continental derivatives usefully supplement the sketchy Elizabethan evidence for changes in performance tradition which increased the use of stereotyped dramaturgy and commonplace formulations. And compared to the English texts the role of the clown is demonstrably extended, as is the visual horse-play by other characters. In the German *Hamlet* derivative, *Das Bestrafte Brudermord*, when Rosencranz and Guildenstern are to kill Hamlet (taking this sub-plot further than Shakespeare) he helpfully suggests they stand on each side of him, aim their weapons, and fire when he gives the word. As he does so, however, Hamlet drops to the ground, and the would-be assassins kill each other.¹¹⁴

One suspects that a viable transitional arrangement was a company of local, German-speaking players, augmented, probably led, by an English clown whose contribution could be as much visual as verbal: the German version of Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* has five stage directions scattered through the first three acts specifying "Here Pickleherring does things" (*Allhier agiret Pickelhering*) but with nothing specified, and the clown (who does not seem to have a named role in the play-proper) presumably offered one of his routines or "merriments" on each occasion.¹¹⁵ This is usually at the end of a scene, and was evidently to give the players time to change their costumes for the next, as commented on by a contemporary observer.¹¹⁶ In another play, *Comoedia von koenig Mantalors Unrechtmessigen Liebe und derselben Straff* [The Play of the illegitimate love of King Mantalor and his punishment], a stage direction instructs the clown, Schambitasche, to improvise some fun with a baby ("a large youth wrapped in a tablecloth"), but explains, "this cannot be described, as anyone who performs this can himself think of how to play with a child" -- although it is specified that the intermezzo is to conclude with an unsuccessful attempt to feed the "baby" (with a ladle).¹¹⁷

American frontier theatre

An equally illuminating extension of provincial performance is the tradition of popular theatre in the USA, where Shakespeare was later in acquiring bardic status than in Britain. In a classic study, Lawrence W. Levine charts Shakespeare performances by itinerant companies visiting small towns and making do with such venues as were available, effectively continuing Elizabethan conditions and attitudes deep into the nineteenth century:

Shakespeare was performed not merely alongside popular entertainment as an elite supplement to it; Shakespeare was performed as an integral part of it. Shakespeare was popular entertainment in nineteenth-century America. The theatre ... was a kaleidoscopic, democratic institution presenting a widely varying bill of fare to all classes and socioeconomic groups.

And this included pre-parenthetical attitudes to ownership and textual integrity:

¹¹³ See the irritated observation of a contemporary (English-speaking) observer reported in Louis B. Wright, "Variety Entertainment by Elizabethan Strolling Players", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 26 (1927), 294-303, at p. 300, n. 25.

¹¹⁴ For the German original and a parallel English translation see *Tragedy of Fratricide Panished*, IV.ii, in Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany*, p. 288; my thanks to Lene Petersen for guidance on the German versions of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

¹¹⁵ *Comoedia von Fortunato und seinem Seckel und Wuenschhuetlein*, in *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, vol. I, pp. 137 (end of act I), 146 (end of act II), 150, 154, 159 (in course of act III).

¹¹⁶ Wright, "Variety Entertainment by Elizabethan Strolling Players", p. 301.

¹¹⁷ IV.v., in *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, ed. Manfred Brauneck, vol. II.

The liberties taken with Shakespeare in nineteenth-century America were often similar to the liberties taken with folklore: Shakespeare was frequently seen as common property to be treated as the user saw fit.¹¹⁸

editorial implications

At whatever point it was captured in its trajectory from composition to and between performances, an Elizabethan play was the collaborative achievement of playwright(s) and players, and even to a degree of the theatrical tradition at large.¹¹⁹ This has more than purely theatrical implications, since in most cases the texts of Elizabethan plays are available now only if they were printed in their own time, and the versions acquired by the printers (like the occasional manuscripts which survive to us) represent the plays at different moments in the trajectory of change sketched above: indeed in a number of cases -- including Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and several of Shakespeare's plays -- successive printings -- early quartos of individual plays or the collected plays in folio -- capture a given play at two distinct moments. It then becomes the task of literary editors, working from within the Gutenberg parenthesis, to establish an authoritative -- which in this case means authorial -- version by applying philological skills to effectively reverse these changes and, in the case of multiple printings, to decide which of them is closer to the original.¹²⁰ It may be hoped that juxtaposition with what is happening in the study of our post-parenthetical media will encourage the appreciation of these pre-parenthetical texts as what they are rather than what a parenthetical "Gutenberg" approach would want them to be.

Several of the above points are energetically summarized by Natalie Crohn Schmitt, arguing that the regular theatre, English as much as Italian, was not as alien to the improvisatory world of the *commedia dell'arte* as our familiarity with (what I would call) post-parenthetical conditions would lead us to assume:

The dramatic script has always been unstable. It may have many versions. Often changes are made over the life of a play's performances by the playwrights (and in the Renaissance these were often multiple), by editors, script doctors, censors, directors, actors, and, in the Renaissance, also by the copyist, printer, and revisers. Actors fail to learn, forget, deliberately change, or reinterpret lines. ... The idea of authorial univocality for drama was constructed after the Renaissance. Only subsequent aesthetic codes, neoclassicism, Romanticism, and naturalism/realism, stressed the individuality of the creative artist, the playwright (or the director with a "concept"), or the actor.¹²¹

It is understandably requiring considerable effort of the part of editors, trained in dealing with identifiable, authorial, fixed texts, to come to terms with this pre-parenthetical reality.¹²²

THE CLOWN

the clown vs. the play

¹¹⁸ Lawrence W. Levine, "William Shakespeare and the American People", *American Historical Review*, 89 (1984), 34-66, at pp. 40 & 54.

¹¹⁹ Very much my own view, but encouraged in some aspects by Stephen Orgel, "What is a Text?", *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 24 (1981), 3-6.

¹²⁰ For a critique of the twentieth-century editorial quest for "the golden authorial manuscript" see Margreta de Grazia, "The Essential Shakespeare and the Material Book", *Textual Practice*, 2 (1988), 69-86.

¹²¹ Schmitt, "Commedia dell'arte: Characters, Scenarios, and Rhetoric", p. 63.

¹²² For representative discussions see for example the "Forum", organized by Susan Zimmerman, on editing early modern texts in *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), with contributions from, among others, Stephen Orgel, David Scott Kastan, and Paul Werstine.

The prominence of the Clown in the performances of the English actors in the provinces and in Europe, and the textual and dramatic changes that focus around him, in addition to the light they may shed on English conditions, are a useful reminder that many of the non-literary, “pre-parenthetical” features of the Elizabethan theatre were particularly characteristic of the Clown, and that he entered the Gutenberg parenthesis later, and more reluctantly, than drama and theatre as a whole.¹²³ Symptomatically, “Clown” designated not so much a character in a play as a type of performer. While the specialist Clown in a given company (in the first half of Shakespeare’s career, the celebrated Will Kemp) might be assigned a role in a given play -- typically a country bumpkin (“clown”), a blustering soldier, a household servant or a court jester -- he remained very much himself: the role might be more or less scripted, he might follow the script to greater or lesser degree, and he would come into his own during any extraneous comic routines or more formal “merriments” which interrupted the action,¹²⁴ and in the “jig” (a short farce encompassing both dancing action and sung dialogue) which followed the main play.

Indeed in relation to Crohn Schmitt’s remarks, we may need to qualify the assertion that the Elizabethan aesthetic code did not stress the individuality of the *actor*: the Elizabethan stage clowns, particularly Richard Tarlton and William Kemp, were among the first performers to achieve an “individual” identity which involved both a national reputation and a recognisable, personal repertoire (Kemp with his performing dog; Tarlton’s laughter-provoking facial grimaces). They were the first “stars” of an emergent entertainment business, and as Hamlet complains (in the “bad” 1603 quarto of *Hamlet*), individual clowns, like modern radio comics, were known for their individual catchphrases, which evidently brought the house down when duly delivered -- “Cannot you stay till I eate my porridge?”, “you owe me a quarter’s wages”,¹²⁵ “your beere is sowre”. But while these verbal signatures may have identified one clown from another, they simultaneously undermined the autonomy and stability of the plays in which they occurred. And likewise on a larger scale, the individuality and recognizable identity of the clown was subversive of the individuality and integrity of the play as a whole.¹²⁶

The clown’s liminal situation between performer and character is strikingly illustrated by the absent-minded stage-direction in *Romeo and Juliet* where Shakespeare writes “Enter Will Kemp”, rather than “Peter”, the role Kemp is playing, a servant in Juliet’s household. Immediately thereafter Shakespeare’s is careful to supply Kemp with an occasion to display his talents, a sustained piece of verbal repartee with the musicians who have come to play at Juliet’s wedding. It is no coincidence that the revision of plays discussed above quite often involved extending the part of the clown, who was evidently a crowd-drawer.¹²⁷ This applies for example to *The Malcontent*,¹²⁸ *Mucedorus*,¹²⁹ *Doctor Faustus* and *A Faire Quarrel* (which

¹²³ The standard work on the Elizabethan stage clown, which covers many of the topics touched on below, is David Wiles, *Shakespeare’s Clown: Actor and text in the Elizabethan playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹²⁴ For a review and discussion of surviving instances see Wright, “Variety-Show Clownery on the Pre-Restoration Stage”.

¹²⁵ This also features in the *commedia dell’arte*; see Winifred Smith, “A Comic Version of *Romeo and Juliette* [sic]”, *Modern Philology*, 7 (1909-10), 217-220, at p. 219.

¹²⁶ For further discussion of the clown, his routines, and their significance for Elizabethan plays see Peter Davison, *Popular Appeal in English Drama to 1850*, ch. 3, “Shakespeare and the Comics”.

¹²⁷ John Kerrigan, “Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*”, in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, ed. Taylor & Warren, pp. 195-245. I owe this reference to Eric Rasmussen, “Setting Down what the Clown Spoke: Improvisation, Hand B, and *The Book of Sir Thomas More*”, *The Library*, 13 (1991), 126-136, at p. 127, n. 6.

¹²⁸ G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s Time, 1590 - 1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 207-8.

¹²⁹ John Kerrigan, “Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*”, p. 205, & cf. p. 217.

acquired in this way the “roaring” scenes quoted above),¹³⁰ and as we saw earlier, this tendency is reinforced in the plays performed (and in due course translated and printed) on the continent.

We know from external references that the first, great stage Clown, Richard Tarlton, when the play was over, was given to coming back on stage and improvising witty verses on topics suggested by the audience, and the same applies to his contemporary, Robert Wilson. In an academic play from ca 1598, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, which parodies and comments on conditions in the popular theatre, the Clown complains, “when they have noebodie to leave on the stage, they bringe mee up, and, which is worse, tell mee not what I should saye”,¹³¹ suggesting that in England as in Germany the Clown might also be expected to improvise something to keep the audience “warm” between scenes. But this might also occur, it seems, within the scenes of the play themselves. In the most notorious episode, to be sure, we can hardly blame the clown concerned, Tarlton, as he is directing his jibes at a member of the audience who has twice thrown an apple at him, but there is also an anecdote of another clown, performing in a play in Bristol, who declaimed an unscripted verse insulting to Welshmen, doubtless, given the location, expecting there to be some in the audience (he was right, and we know of the incident because of the fracas which ensued).¹³²

Hamlet’s complaint about clowns who would “themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered” confirms that the clown could on occasion step out of his role and offer a comic routine (the contemporary term seems to have been “merriment”) which had virtually no connection with the plot of the host play, but conversely his accompanying demand, that they should “speak no more than it set down for them”, indicates that sometimes a speaking role for the clown was actually “set down”. The young Shakespeare seems to have generously supplied Kemp (and his dog) with an intermezzo in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in which he ostensibly (in his character as a servant) describes how he took leave of his family, but which effectively provides a slot for one of Kemp’s set pieces, juggling with shoes and staff, and performing several characters as he re-enacts the scene he is reporting.¹³³ But this may have been a local compromise between the demands of playwright and Clown: In a revealing error the title page of the play *A Knacke to Knowe a Knave* as published in 1594 promises that it includes “Kemps applauded Merriments of the Men of Goteham”, but actually contains only one, and that very short: such “merriments” could evidently be unscripted, or at least highly detachable from the “book” of the play.¹³⁴

Clowns and formulas *verbal commonplaces*

Other pre-parentetical features of Elizabethan stage plays touched on above are more emphatically characteristic of the Clown. For example their parts (when we have them), are particularly prone to verbal standardization. There is a classic instance in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, and since this play survives in two versions, the same applies to this formula:

¹³⁰ For further discussion of this instance, see Michael E. Mooney, “‘The Common Sight’ and Dramatic Form: Rowley’s Embedded Jig in *A Faire Quarrel*”, *Studies in English Literature*, 20 (1980), 305-323.

¹³¹ Cited in Rasmussen, “‘Setting Down what the Clown Poke’”, p. 134.

¹³² Klausner, “The Improvising Vice in England”, pp. 280-81.

¹³³ H.F. Brooks, “The Clowns in a Comedy (to say nothing of the Dog): Speed, Launce (and Crab) in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*”, *Essays and Studies*, 16 (1963), 91-100. Kemp was evidently known for doing tricks with his shoes: see Wright, “Variety Entertainment by Elizabethan Strolling Players”, p. 299.

¹³⁴ For further evidence of clown improvisation see Fenton, *The Extra-Dramatic Moment in Elizabethan Plays before 1616*, pp. 13-23.

B-TEXT, I.iv.341ff.

Wag. Come hither sirra boy.Clow. Boy?O disgrace to my person:Zounds boy in your face,

you haue seene many boyes

with beards I am sure.

A-TEXT, iii.361ff.

Wag. Sirra boy, come hither.Clo. How, boy?swowns boy,

I hope you haue seen many boyes

with such pickadevaunts as I haue.

Conventional philology is anxious to know which variant is earliest -- i.e. which is part of the play which Marlowe wrote or at least to which he contributed -- but the situation is complicated by the presence of a very similar exchange in a play-text discussed from other perspectives earlier, *The Taming of A Shrew*:

Q1594, Viii, 1-4

Boy. Come hither sirra boy.Sander. Boy;oh disgrace to my person,sounds boy Of your face

you have many boies

with such Pickadevantes I am sure.

The questions are now which version of *Doctor Faustus* is linked to *A Shrew* (and it can be seen the latter shares a unique line with each of the former), and then which (*A Shrew* or the linked *Faustus* version) came first, but it would be well to take into consideration a further instance of such a clown riposte in a third play, *Wily Beguiled*:

Q1606, ll. 1095ff.

Mother. I think the fool haunts theeWill. Zounds, fool in your face!

Fool? O, monstrous intitulation

Fool? O, disgrace to my person.Zounds, fool not mee,

Much is different, not least the word which triggers the riposte, but this is manifestly related to the others, even to the extent of specific verbal echoes of one or more of them ("in your face"; "disgrace to my person"). There is above all the same basic structure, and it is evident that we are dealing with a traditional clown formula, in which an opprobrious designation is responded to by repetition of the offending word, an exclamation (which may be restricted to "swounds!" or further elaborated), and an optional explanation as to why it is undeserved. An instance with virtually no words in common with our point of departure in *Doctor Faustus* but manifestly the same formula occurs in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (generally agreed to be a memorial reconstruction by the players):

Q1598, ll. 177-80.

Robin. Why, I see thou art a plaine clowne.Clowne. Am I a clowne?Sownes, maisters,

do clownes go in silke apparell?

This is beyond the resources of conventional, intra-parenthetical, philology (which deals in sources and influences): We lack an extra-parenthetical philology which can handle a situation in which verbal parallels between play-texts may be due to direct derivation, or to

the deployment of formulas common to the cultural system concerned, or some mixture of these.

dramatic formulas

And the same applies to formulaic action, for in addition to their individual trade-mark set-pieces the clowns evidently had a collective repertoire of comic routines, suitable (more or less) for a variety of situations, either written into the play by a dramatist with a pragmatic understanding of theatrical realities, or added by the clowns as they saw fit. They are probably best seen as clown-specific sub-sets of the “dramatic formulas” discussed earlier. Typical is a formula involving the clown being hired as a servant, and discussing terms and conditions with his prospective employer, who in turn may exercise a degree of coercion: there is a classic instance in *Doctor Faustus*, and it is something of a favourite in the derivative German plays of the travelling players.¹³⁵ In another, also familiar as a comic intermezzo in *Doctor Faustus*, but also encountered in a popular romance-comedy like *Mucedorus*, a clown has stolen a drinking vessel and uses manual dexterity (particularly effective if two clowns are involved) to hide it as the owner searches him, perhaps even drinking from it as this happens: its antecedents may go all the way back to the theatre of the Greek mimes.¹³⁶

Another clown-scene in the highly informative *Doctor Faustus* seems to be the focus of an interlocking cluster of dramatic formulas, perhaps precisely because the material is not supplied in the source, the English *Faust-book*. We can be fairly certain this episode was not written by a Cambridge graduate like Marlowe, but by someone more closely engaged in the traditions of the popular theatre. In a parody of the main action, one of the clowns has stolen one of Faustus’s conjuring books, and has managed to conjure up the devil Mephistophilis, who is angered at the humiliating interruption. As a punishment, he turns the two clowns into beasts:

Meph. [to Dick] To purge the rashness of this cursed deed,
First, be thou transformed into this vgly shape,
For Apish deeds transformed to an Ape.
Robin. O Braue, an Ape? I pray sir, let me haue the carrying of him about to shew some trickes.
Meph. And so thou shalt: be thou transform’d to a dog, and carry him vpon thy backe; away be gone.
Robin. A dog? that’s excellent: let the Maids look well to their porridge-pots, for I’le into the Kitchin presently: come Dick, come.
Exeunt the two Clownes. (B.1154-1177).

In a later confrontation, the clowns upbraid Faustus that he had earlier made them wear animal “masks”, so the likelihood is that by this means, and body movements very much within the clown’s compass, they were transformed before exiting, and, in accordance with Mephistophilis’ command, Dick-as-ape rode off on Robin-as-dog’s back. In this they incidentally reproduced the morality play formula of the vice riding off on the devil’s back, for example in Ulpian Fulwell’s *Like Will to Like*. Meanwhile in an additional or more likely an alternative punishment the A-Text of *Doctor Faustus* has Mephistophilis tie fireworks (squibs”) to the backs of the clowns (A.1012-13), who presumably run around (and probably

¹³⁵ *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, ed. Manfred Brauneck, vol. I, pp. 229-31, 235-8 (both from *Eine Schoene Lustig Triumphirende Comoedia von eines Koeniges Sohne auss Engellandt und des Koeniges Tochter aus Schottland*), vol. II (1975), *Comoedia und Macht des kleinen Knabens Cupidinis*, I.iii.; *Tragi Comedia [Rosalinda & Listanus]*, III.iv.

¹³⁶ See the depiction of a scene from a Dorian mime performance on an early Corinthian vase in which a figure “armed with two sticks ... seems to be pursuing and checking a couple of slaves engaged in the theft of a wine-jar”, Allardyce Nicoll, *Masks Mimes and Miracles* (New York: Cooper Square, 1963), p. 21.

off) screaming. This in turn brings the scene close to analogous illegitimate-conjuring scenes in the contemporary *Commedia dell'Arte*.¹³⁷ A Dutch *Singspiel* from before ca 1639, *Van Droncke Goosen*, is even closer, in that the devils conjured up by the Fool tie a firework to his breeches and set light to it. These continental *singspiele* derived from, or owed much to, the jigs and merriments of the Elizabethan stage.¹³⁸

visual formulas

As with the plays as a whole some clown formulas evidently comprised visual features or largely wordless action, which would not be constrained by the authority over the script claimed by either the Master of the Revels or a recalcitrant author, and the clown was a step closer to performance culture than the other players, just as they were a step further away from the discourse-orientation of the playwright (which was in turn less than that of the poet). In several of plays for example (*I Henry VI*, *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*) the Clown is given to carrying around a large bag, sometimes motivated as a means of carrying off booty (for example after a battle). In Richard Tarleton's *News Out of Purgatory* the narrator has a dream in which he sees the famous clown Tarlton himself, with evidently characteristic properties:

As thus I lay in slumber, methought I saw one attired in russet, with a buttoned cap on his head, a great bag by his side and a strong bat in his hand, so artificially attired for a clown as I began to call Tarleton's wonted shape to remembrance.¹³⁹

As with some other instances, this particular formula seems to derive from the moral interludes, where it is associated with one of the Clown's direct antecedents, the Vice (for example Avarice in *Respublica*¹⁴⁰).

In the highly informative satire of popular theatre conventions contained in the academic play, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* of ca 1598-8, a clown who is dragged onto the stage without a script to guide him is reminded he can fall back on what are probably well-trying visual routines to entertain the audience:

Why, if thou canst but drawe thy mouthe awrye, laye thy legg over thy staff, sawe a peece of cheese asunder with thy dagger, lape up drinke on the earth, I warrant thee, theile laughe mightilie.¹⁴¹

In the same vein, the Stagekeeper in Ben Jonson's scripted Induction to his *Bartholomew Fair*, regretting that the departed fondly-remembered Dick Tarlton cannot be in the play, imagines some of the – evidently standardized – horseplay he might have contributed:

you should ha' seen him ha' come in, and ha' been cozened i' the cloth-quarter, so finely! And [John] Adams [a player in Tarlton's company], the rogue, ha' leap'd and caper'd upon him, and

¹³⁷ K.M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy. A Study in the Commedia dell'arte, 1560 – 1620*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), vol. II, pp. 614-15 and 667-8, respectively.

¹³⁸ Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, p. 402.

¹³⁹ *Tarlton's Jests and News Out of Purgatory*, ed. J.O. Halliwell (London: Shakespeare Society, 1844), p. 54.

¹⁴⁰ *Respublica*, ed. W.W. Greg, EETS. os. 226 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952; repr. 1969), passim, but see esp. ll. 1725ff.

¹⁴¹ *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, ll. 670-73, cited in Fenton, *The Extra-Dramatic Moment in Elizabethan Plays before 1616*, p. 15.

ha' dealt his vermin about, ... And then a substantial watch to ha' stolen upon 'em, and taken 'em away, with mistaking words, as the fashion is, in the stage-practice.¹⁴²

These seem very close to the *burle* of the *commedia dell' arte*, in which the Zanni would "molest his master ... or his fellow servant" or "provide the act with an uproarious ending by jumping out as a ghost or a demon, by banging saucepans, breaking flasks, or being chased off with e cry of 'Stop, thief'".¹⁴³

The first of the Tarlton formulas looks very much like the pocket-picking/purse-cutting routine which indeed occurs (with the Fool as either rogue or victim) in numerous surviving plays, including *Sir Thomas More*, Robert Greene's *James IV*, Marston's *Dutch Courtesan*, Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, and of course Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*; it seems to have been a particular favourite of Thomas Middleton, occurring in his *Your Five Gallants*, twice in *The Widow*, and twice in *The Mayor of Queenborough* (its deployment in the play-within-the-play further suggesting its traditional character).

Clown improvisation

The similarities in function and sometimes substance with the *burle* and *lazze* of the *Commedia dell' Arte*¹⁴⁴ do not necessarily imply any direct influence, but if any Elizabethan actor was in a position to match the extempor talents of the Italians it was certainly the stage clown. "Exit Clown, speaking anything", is a revealing stage direction in *The Trial of Chivalry* (1605),¹⁴⁵ and in an illuminating phantasy the authors of the play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* envisage William Kemp joining Harlequin in a *Commedia dell'arte* performance -- "If they invent any extemporall merriment, ile put on the small sacke of witte I ha' lefte in venture with them" -- even if it is restricted to a comic intermezzo ("merriment") rather than a whole play.¹⁴⁶ The Cambridge academic Gabriel Harvey, much given to commenting on contemporary literature and theatre, complains metaphorically in a letter that a printer (presumably by publishing something without permission) has "preiudished my good name for ever in thrusting me thus on the stage to make tryall of my extemporall faculty and play Wilsons or Tarletons parte",¹⁴⁷ the "part" suggesting that the extemporising featured within the play itself.

That the clown's role might indeed be improvised is witnessed in a somewhat roundabout way by one of the rare surviving play manuscripts, that of *Sir Thomas More*. As we have it, an original script seems to have been subjected to fairly extensive revision, perhaps in connection with a revival. This revision, in a manner noted above, has involved providing additional material for the Clown, sometimes with supplementary speeches in the margins, or in one case the re-transcribing of a whole scene with several new speeches for the Clown. Or rather, insofar as it involves text, the process has not so much extended, as created, the

¹⁴² Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* [1614], ed. E.A. Horsman, *Revels Plays* (1960; repr. London: Methuen, 1967), Induction, ll. 40-45.

¹⁴³ Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Henke, "Orality and Literacy in the *Commedia dell' Arte* and the Shakespearean Clown", *Oral Tradition*, 11.2 (October 1996); Roma Gill, "'Such conceits as Clownage keeps in play': Comedy in *Doctor Faustus*", in *The Fool and the Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford*, ed. Paul V.A. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 55-63; Eugene Steele, "Verbal Lazzi in Shakespeare's Plays", *Italica*, 53 (1976), 214-222.

¹⁴⁵ Rasmussen, "Setting Down", p. 134.

¹⁴⁶ Cited Lea, p. 381. See also L.B. Wright, "Will Kemp and the *Commedia dell' Arte*", *MLN*, 41 (1926), 516-520.

¹⁴⁷ Cited in Wilhelm Marschall, "Das 'Sir Thomas More'-Manuskript und die englische 'Commedia dell' Arte'", *Anglia*, 52 (1928), 193-241, at p. 205.

Clown's part: in the unrevised script the character played by the Clown (a lower-class Londoner) was present on stage, but not provided with anything to say. In a brilliant piece of textual and theatrical detective-work, Eric Rasmussen argues perceptively and persuasively that the situation, together with the character of the verbal material added, suggests that the revision involved providing scripted speeches for a Clown part which in the original play was improvised by the performer.¹⁴⁸ This may, as Rasmussen observes, reflect the respective talents of Will Kemp and Robert Armin; equally pertinently, it shows the play being taken an important few (s)paces into the Gutenberg parenthesis.

THEATRE BECOMES LITERATURE

the author takes charge performance

It may be no coincidence that one of the most revealing pieces of evidence about the stage clowns is Hamlet's diatribe against them, quoted several times above. To a degree Hamlet is merely speaking in character: as a graduate of one of Renaissance Europe's leading universities he has very much the neo-classicist's notions of dramatic decorum:

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.... (3.2.17ff).

In going on to urge the clowns to "speak no more than is set down for them", Hamlet assigns to drama an integrity which in Shakespeare's England was as yet vouchsafed only to poetry. In an earlier scene (2.2.434ff.), asking a player to declaim a speech from a play he had seen, Hamlet comments on its aesthetic qualities ("an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning"), regretting that they were not appreciated by the playhouse audience ("caviary to the general"), and assigns them specifically to "the author". He is also at some pains to remember the text of the speech correctly.

While Hamlet's attitudes sound more like Jonson than Shakespeare, it is significant that he had them expressed in his play. Whatever else Shakespeare's plays were about, they were about the theatre: substantial, implicit or occasionally explicit, essays in a field on which Shakespeare was better-qualified than most to comment. The comments are naturally enough particularly acute in connection with the plays (or other dramatic performances) within the plays, and it may be symptomatic that Shakespeare typically displays the autonomy and integrity of such inserted shows as under considerable pressure, subject to precisely the pre-parenthetical vulnerabilities characterizing the real drama of his time: revision and interference before performance, variation and disruption during performance. Particularly informative is the production of the mechanicals within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Pyramus and Thisbe", whose trajectory we follow all the way from the distribution of their parts to the performers, through a rehearsal which involves quite substantial changes to the script (including the excision of existing characters to make room for new ones), and finally a performance which is several times, due to both the interference of the audience and the incompetence of the performers, on the brink of disaster, but which just makes it to the end.

¹⁴⁸ Eric Rasmussen, "Setting Down what the Clowne Spoke".

Shakespearean meta-drama of his mid-career thus suggests a playwright (who may himself have stopped acting about 1600) tiring of the theatre tradition's cavalier attitude to the poet's creation. It may be symptomatic that William Kemp, the celebrated clown of the Chamberlain's men for whom Shakespeare had written parts as substantial as Falstaff, left the company at about the same time as Hamlet's diatribe, to be replaced in due course by the more sophisticated and less subversive Robert Armin -- symptomatically himself a playwright.¹⁴⁹ A related and relevant factor may have been the Globe's dropping of the comic afterpiece or Jig, a farcical, often ribald refuge for the clown's song- and dance-talents recently exiled from the play-proper: to judge from the observations of a European visitor who saw *Julius Caesar* at the Globe, the play was now followed by "refined" dances.

Hamlet certainly found an ally in the character (more certainly a spokesman for his author) in Richard Brome's *The Antipodes* who complained, in a speech quoted earlier, of players (and particularly clowns) who both added to their parts and indulged in improvised "interloquutions with the audients". When the player retorts that "That is a way, my lord has bin allow'd / On elder stages to move mirth and laughter" (II.ii.48-49), he is firmly informed that now (in 1638) even for the clowns this is no longer the case:

Yes in the dayes of Tarlton and Kempe,
Before the stage was purg'd from barbarism,
And brought to the perfection it now shines with.
Then fooles and jester spent their wits, because
The poets were wise enough to save their owne
For profitabler uses.¹⁵⁰

That is, the time is over when authors focussed only on the serious plot, leaving the comic intermezzos to the discretion of the clowns: now they demanded control of the whole, both text and performance.

publication

Whatever the exact circumstances, the departure of Kemp, very much a symbol of the non-literary, ephemeral, unstable popular theatre, was accordingly symbolic of that popular theatre's imminent crossing into the Gutenberg parenthesis,¹⁵¹ although the passage was predictably staggered. In 1592, for the first time, Shakespeare's company, and by implication Shakespeare himself, authorized the publication of one of his plays, *Richard II*, all previous publications having been in some way pirated and in more or less corrupt texts.¹⁵² The wretched first quarto of *Hamlet* of 1603 was countered in 1604 with *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.*

Ben Jonson's provocative publication of his collected plays as *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* in 1616, while it provoked a good deal of adverse comment at the time, was an

¹⁴⁹ For a discussion of Shakespeare's attitudes see Eugene Steele, "Shakespeare, Goldoniu, and the Clowns", *Comparative Drama*, 11 (1977), 209-226.

¹⁵⁰ Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. Ann Haaker, II.ii.50-55.

¹⁵¹ For an exploration of the situation a century later, when drama had emphatically entered the Gutenberg parenthesis, with all that that implied for the ownership and integrity of the dramatic work, see Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹⁵² Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, p. 28.

important straw in the wind;¹⁵³ soon thereafter, as theatre historian Andrew Gurr notes, there occurred “a rise in the status of plays to the level of poetic ‘works’, worthy of publication in folio along with graver matter”.¹⁵⁴ Seventeenth century play-editions, both individual quartos and folio collections like Jonson’s and the Beaumont and Fletcher works of 1647, are invoked by Douglas A. Brooks in his study of how playwrights became “authors” in the period, traversing what Foucault defined as the “moment of individualization”. Particularly symptomatic is Jonson’s omission from his folio *Works* of some of his earlier, collaborative pieces, and his statement, in the quarto of *Sejanus*, that in the published version he has replaced the contribution of a collaborator to the play as performed with new text of his own.¹⁵⁵

enclosure movements: works, fields, churches, stages

There is a striking parallel between this ring-fencing of the individual work as the possession of the particular author and the roughly contemporary spatial enclosure movements of early-modern England, both the parcelling up of common fields and pastures into individual farms which goes by the name of “Enclosure”, and its small-scale analogue in the distribution of the once common area of the church nave into enclosed wooden pews which were the preserve of specific households. But in the present context the increasing autonomy of the work, within the enclosing covers of the book, is more appropriately paralleled by the seventeenth century enclosure of the theatre, with the disappearance of the open-air playhouses in favour of indoor, “private” theatres, and indeed by the enclosure of the stage, with the withdrawal of Elizabethan theatre-in-the-round’s projecting stage back towards the tiring house facade and then its retreat behind a proscenium arch, establishing a distinct play world further separated from that of the auditorium by the introduction of lighting and scenery, and the reduction of illusion-breaking contact between stage and audience.¹⁵⁶

the First Folio

Within seven years of Shakespeare’s death his own, once anonymous, ephemeral, unstable dramatic productions would emphatically cross over into the Gutenberg parenthesis (and our literary canon) in the shape of the massive 1623 First Folio. The plays are now poetry, whose textual integrity and association with the author are matters of acute concern. In their preface “The great Variety of Readers”, Shakespeare’s former colleagues, now his editors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, insist that

as where (before) you were abus’d with diuerse stolne, and surreotitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious imposters, that expos’d them: euen those, are now offer’d to your view cur’d, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued them.

If any editors’ wishes were ever fulfilled, it must be their hope that in this volume readers “wille finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe ...”.¹⁵⁷ Shakespeare has mistakenly been considered a literary author ever since, and

¹⁵³ Shipherd, “Play-Publishing in Elizabethan Times”, pp. 586-89. On Jonson as a prematurely “literary” playwright, concerned that even the individual quarto edition of his plays should contain his original text, see Edward B. Partridge, “Ben Jonson: The Makings of the Dramatist (1596-1602)”, in *Elizabethan Theatre*, ed. J.R. Brown & B. Harris, Stratford Upon Avon Studies 9 (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), pp. 221-244.

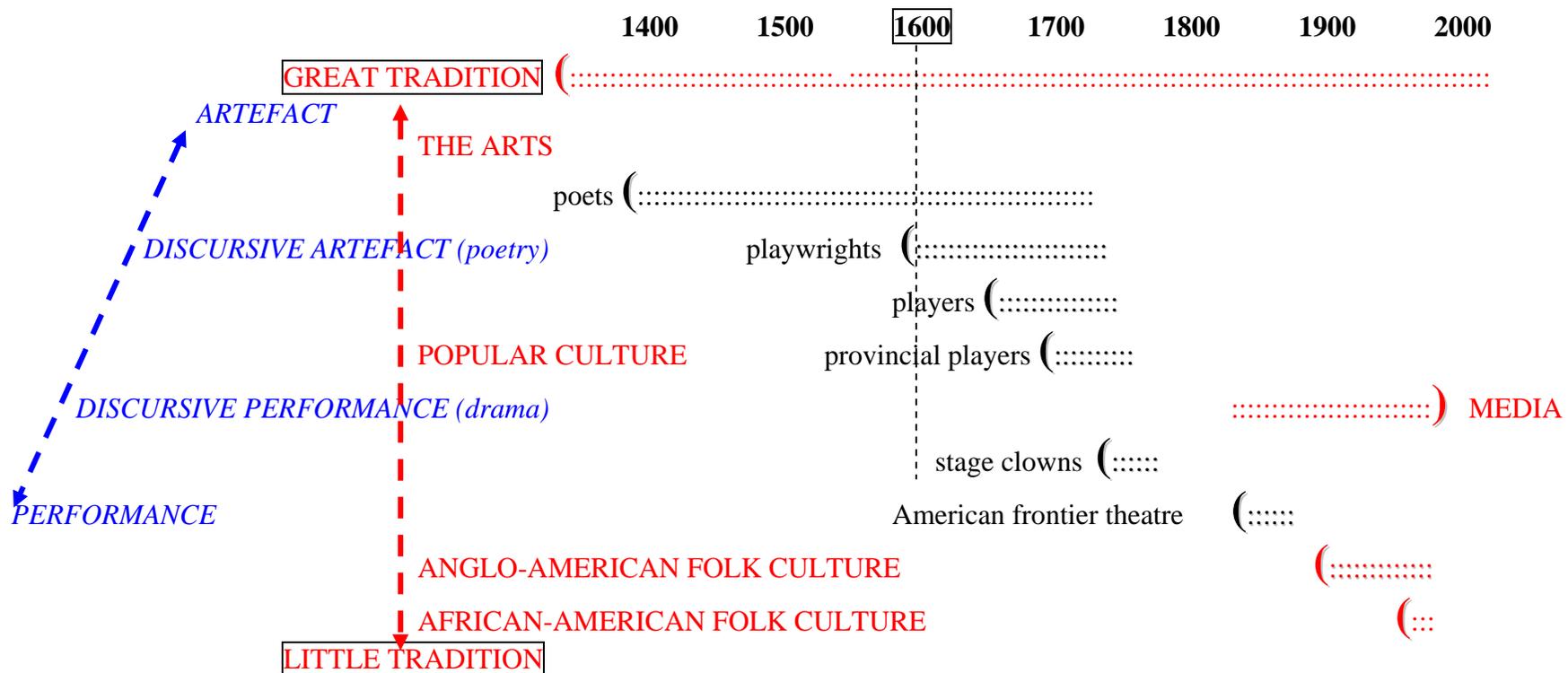
¹⁵⁴ Gurr, *The Shakespearean Theatre*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas A. Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁶ Thereafter pre-parenthetical conditions were relegated, at least for a while, to the “illegitimate” theatre and, ultimately, the music hall: see Peter Davison, *Popular Appeal in English Drama to 1850*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ See the facsimile (sig. A3) in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 95.

juxtaposition with the modern post-parenthetical media will also have reciprocal benefits for a more historically informed appreciation of Shakespeare's achievement.



pre-parenthetical

”jests” ”gallimaufry”
 ”extemporall merriments”
 ”turning” ”mixtured”
 ”patching” ”fribbling”
 ”mending”

(THE GUTENBERG PARENTHESIS)

ORIGINAL AUTONOMUS PRODUCT
 INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY
 SUSTAINED INTEGRITY
 corruption; plagiary; adulteration;
 beautified with others’ feathers

post-parenthetical

sampling familiarity
 remixing repetition
 borrowing collaboration
 reshaping recontextualizing
 appropriating