

CHAPTER 1

GENERALIZATION

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There are reasons to think that professional criticism of early modern drama is emerging from a period of consolidation, comforted by a sense of the canonical importance of its object but nagged by a certain intellectual restlessness. Few fields can claim to have undergone a more radical reinvention over the past forty years, and arguably no field has had a greater impact on the way that literary scholarship as a whole has come to be practised in the academy. In retrospect, the rise of ‘historicism’ as an international critical orthodoxy can be traced directly to the studies of Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, and their contemporaries that were published during the 1980s and early 1990s by New Historicist and Cultural Materialist critics working in both the United States and the United Kingdom. When I entered graduate school, these methods were being reinvigorated by a turn to the history of the book, through which drama was coming to be regarded primarily as a printed form; today, the study of print culture and the history of reading still arguably forms the dominant mode of historicist inquiry in the field, although this may be changing as I write these words—the very existence of this volume implies a new direction. This shift towards the history of the book was possible partly because of the strong grip that sociological and materialist methods held on the critical imagination; it can also be understood as part of a more general drive towards an ‘objective’ criticism based on archive and fact, one that would allow literary studies to stand next to History as a royal discipline in the Humanities division of the university (and one that would make literary study newly amenable to research funding). But whatever the causes, there are good reasons for its currency: thanks to the path-breaking work of textual scholars and critics, the kinds of evidence that we might consider have been significantly expanded; plays we had come to know well suddenly look very different when their variant editions are examined for their interpretive value; we have a much more subtle grasp of the ways in which publishers shaped the dramatic market-place; and we realize how

unstable and non-unified a so-called ‘play’, as well as its many meaningful elements, really turns out to be.¹

It seemed to me then, however, and it still seems to me now, that in a paradoxical way the specifically *theatrical* history of drama has faded from view.² Shadowed by the history of the book, critics writing on early modern theatre have faced several unsatisfactory alternatives. Behind, an increasingly dated New Historicism, for which the trope of ‘theatricality’ proved vital to the analysis of power and culture but which left more to be said about how the theatrical fictions of the period actually came to life.³ To one side, the excavations of theatre historians, rich in detail but often cautious in argument; to the other, performance reviews that remain focused on a singular event or studies of adaptation that assemble a pastiche of cultural moments.⁴ In the distance, the theoretical abundance of Performance Studies, already beginning to cede its ground before the shimmer of New Media (which will itself either fade into a quirk of humanities scholarship or grow to swallow us all). In response, a growing number of critics have found renewal in omnivorous profusion: the recent turn to science and technology, phenomenology, philosophies

¹ Lesser and Stallybrass’s arguments about the commonplacing of *Hamlet* and its implications for early modern definitions of the ‘literary’ as a category of value stand out as an excellent recent example of what new textual criticism can achieve; see Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, ‘The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.4 (Winter, 2008), 371–420; also Lesser’s *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Douglas Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as a Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), which did much to reframe discussions of early modern drama as ‘the intersection of theatricality and literariness’ (220), and Margreta De Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, ‘The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44.3 (1993), 255–83, an essay that still strikes me as paradigm-shattering and that provides a kind of model for the approach adopted here vis-à-vis ‘theatricality’.

² See Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts, 1580–1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. 1–3.

³ Naturally there are exceptions, notably Stephen Greenblatt’s analysis of Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); the work of Stephen Orgel on the masque, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) and *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); the work of Louis Montrose, especially ‘“Shaping Fantasies”: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture’, *Representations* 2 (1983), 61–94 and *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994), for whom a concept of ‘theatricality’ includes a pronounced formal and generic dimension as well as its commercial, institutional, and political realities. The notes that follow can only hope to touch on the enormous debt this collection owes to earlier scholarship on early modern theatre and performance; the citations are not meant to be comprehensive but represent the work that has been especially influential on my own thinking while preparing the volume. I have deliberately refrained from citing the prior work of contributors to the collection, since their essays represent them better than a brief note could; the references and Further Reading that accompany their essays provide a wealth of additional bibliography.

⁴ See, however, the exemplary work of Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) and of M. J. Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

of action, the spatiality of stage directions, actor's parts, globalization, political philosophy, religion and ethics, the history of the senses, props and prosthetics, environmental criticism, the life of animals, music and acoustic performance—to name a few areas of active research—manifests how creative and eclectic current criticism of early modern drama is becoming.

Some of this work has arisen as an attempt to recover areas that New Historicism tended to marginalize: the history of rhetoric, classical philosophy and its diffusion, the history of science. Some work sets out to advance theoretical problems that New Historicism made central but determined in too narrow a way: the nature of sovereignty and power, now resituated in relation to humanism and political theology; the history of gender, sexuality, and desire, especially in relation to queer subjectivity; the nature of 'race' and other forms of geographic difference, with an eye to the East and not simply to the New World; the possibilities of drama as a mode of ideological critique, now of the category of the 'human' rather than of the 'subject'. And good recent work has begun to dig more deeply into topics that have long been of enduring interest to historicist literary criticism, in all its varieties: the relation between drama and religious thought, drama and civic identity, the economic dimension to drama, drama in relation to ritual and performance.

Twenty-First Century Approaches to Early Modern Theatricality has been designed to capture the energy that is emerging around the study of early modern theatre and to sow the seeds for theoretical and methodological innovation of the type that has characterized the study of printed drama and the history of the book more generally. We have seen how powerful a 'New Textualism' or a 'new New Bibliography' can be as an engine for genuinely new and interesting arguments about major literary problems. So what would a 'New Theatricality' look like? The essays that follow provide some answers. The goal has been to provide what engineers call an 'exploded view' of early modern theatricality: a blueprint that isolates functional parts, magnifies them for analysis, and then reintegrates them into the theatrical apparatus. Taken collectively, the essays identify a cluster of mimetic and symbolic techniques: the objects, bodies, conventions, signs, and collective habits of apprehending performance that 'theatricality' conveniently designates.⁵ The abstraction of the term is

⁵ The bibliography surrounding the notion of theatricality is obviously too long for a single note, but useful points of departure, taken from a variety of disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical backgrounds, include a special issue of the journal *SubStance* 31.2–3 (2002), ed. Josette Féral, including Féral's own 'Forward' (3–13), her 'Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language', trans. Ronald P. Bermingham (94–108), a helpful general bibliography on 'Theatricality and Performativity' (280–7), and many highly relevant essays, including surveys of meanings and usage by Marvin Carlson, 'The Resistance to Theatricality' (238–50) and Janelle Reinelt, 'The Politics of Discourse: Performativity meets Theatricality' (201–15). See also Féral's earlier and influential 'Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified', trans. Terese Lyons, *Modern Drama* 25.1 (1982), 170–81; Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theater*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992; first pub. 1983), esp. 139–41; Fischer-Lichte, 'Theatricality: A Key Concept in Theatre and Cultural Studies', *Theatre Research International* 20.2 (1995), 85–9 and, in the same issue,

meant to mark a certain distance from the specificities of actual theatres and individual performances; it designates an open set of features—formal procedures, expectations, attitudes and perceptual experience, patterns of interaction, economic and social structures—that are shared across individual theatrical occasions and that even motivate performances that take place outside of a conventional theatre building. As a generalizing term, ‘theatricality’ opens up the terrain of possible examples while also holding those examples together. But for this reason it also circumscribes the field, limiting its extension. Like all acts of generalization, therefore, ‘theatricality’ should be understood as retaining a certain plasticity as it expands and contracts within certain limits. New examples, situations, and critical contexts will always refresh the term, which finds its definition only in this ongoing movement between particularity and abstraction.

In keeping with this approach, each essay in the collection has been designed as an exercise in what I have come to think of as ‘the art of creative generalization’: rather than attempting to capture the historical dimensions of the field in its entirety or to summarize existing scholarship, I have invited contributors to bundle together a set of historical, formal, and philosophical questions into a single topic, chosen by them, that could stand for the idea of theatricality as a whole. The collection might best be viewed, therefore, as a kind of handbook to the *Handbook* and as a companion to the *Companion*, since it shares with these projects an interest in compiling a large-scale picture of theatre but places its emphasis less on comprehensive synthesis than on a method of emblematic sampling.⁶ Some topics that strike readers as being fundamental will inevitably have been left out, but the collection will have been successful only if it generates fresh possibilities for interpretation that other scholars subsequently take up, seeing the theatre in a new way through rubrics that they themselves discover and that do not appear here, but could have.

As is the convention in large collections of this type, the essays have been grouped into clusters so as to draw out shared ideas and problems, although I have eschewed part divisions and part headings, which often seem to me to be arbitrary and to raise more questions than they answer. Reading the essays in

Fischer-Lichte, ‘From Theater to Theatricality—How to Construct Reality’, 97–105; Elin Diamond, ‘Introduction’ to Diamond, ed., *Performance and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1–12; Patrice Pavis, ‘Theatricality’, in Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 39–97; Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, eds., *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–39; and Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

⁶ The recent *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) has done a superb job of gathering together the best recent scholarship on the state of the field and will undoubtedly become the measure of its type. Other notable collections include John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, eds., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) and Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, eds., *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), animated throughout by the distinction between theatre and drama.

sequence will reveal many immediate continuities among them. But readers will also discover many resonances among essays that lie further apart: innumerable diagrams might be generated to map their overlaps, their departures, and their common concerns. Chronologically, the scale of inquiry for the collection has been expanded backward to the mimetic and spatial conventions of the late-medieval stage and forward across the chasm of the Interregnum, when theatricality putatively ceased to exist, into the new theatrical imagination of the Restoration. The *terminus a quo* for the volume has been set by Laura Weigert's essay on 'Stage', in which she speculates about transitions in theatrical representation from the multiple presentation areas of the medieval pageants to the fixed stage of the Renaissance period and tracks some of the performative conventions that persisted, among them the use of statues, paintings, and fabric to personify ideas, alongside the more conventional body of the actor. This is followed by Richard Preiss's essay on 'Interiority', on the way the enclosure of the theatres made possible not only a newly commercialized drama but also characterization and plot-structure that depended on an implied but unrevealed depth; and then by Peter Womack's essay on 'Off-stage', which examines how early modern performance replaces the absolute, sacred, and cosmic space of medieval performance with a newly secularized space of representation that could become fictional in a way that the medieval stage could not.

Phil Withington's essay on '*Honestas*', Ann Baynes Coiro's essay on 'Reading', and Blair Hoxby's study of 'Passions' together then mark a final perimeter for the volume. Withington traces the emergence of a specifically theatrical notion of personhood in the mid-seventeenth century, one that had its roots in earlier humanist notions of *honestas*, *decorum*, and civility but that had been modified by antitheatrical discourse and by new attempts to imagine a performative public sphere. During the Interregnum, Withington argues, theatricality really *did* become reality, as the antitheatricalists had feared, since it now informed new ideas about how to be a sociable person by playing the roles that were appropriate to the shop, the salon, or the street. Withington concludes with a close analysis of *Othello*, which captures in the figure of Iago the danger that a newly theatricalized notion of *honestas* presented to early modern contemporaries. Coiro, too, traces the fortunes of 'theatricality' after the closing of the public theatres and into the Restoration, showing how the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher were revived by the companies of Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant and gradually transformed into a more readerly form of literary drama by the publishing efforts of Humphrey Moseley and by the retrospective judgement of John Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie*. During the Restoration, 'the London theater was crowded with old theatrical memories and new demands', Coiro argues, and it had been fundamentally altered by its passage into print. Hoxby, finally, follows the theory of the passions from the classical period through to the neoclassicism of the late seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries to show how the later period developed a new

understanding of character and of dramatic form that underwrites the criticism of our own moment. Pointing out that Dryden and Milton both regarded the passions, not ‘character’, as the most important objects of imitation, Hoxby reconstructs a critical and poetic world in which the ‘personation’ of passion was thought to be essential to the formal capacities of theatre and the source of the profound collective experiences it made possible.

Whatever its particular focus, however, each essay also engages with problems that recur across the collection as a whole, and since readers will inevitably move through the volume in different sequences, it will be helpful to survey these large issues briefly before turning the inquiry over to the contributors themselves—the account that follows reflects my own trajectories of reading and collaborating with them. The first concerns the interplay between the notion of ‘theatricality’ and that of ‘performance’. Although it is often conventional within Performance Studies to regard ‘theatre’ as a subset or specialized mode of ‘performance’, for instance, readers of this collection should be alert to differences between the terms and even for an inversion of their topological relationship—for it is equally conventional, after all, to view ‘performance’ as a component of ‘theatricality’ rather than vice versa, and especially for theatre historians and theatre critics.⁷ Some contributors will use the terms as rough synonyms for one another, but others will push them apart. There are many ways to draw distinctions between them, depending on the tradition one bears in mind. Where ‘performance’ might emphasize the immediacy, singularity, and evanescence of a present event—the ‘Now’, as Scott Maisano puts it in his essay, building on the work of Peggy Phelan—‘theatricality’ gathers that singularity into the reiterated, enduring conventions for representing actions, objects, and ideas on stage, conventions that are necessary to any individual performance but that exceed any particular occasion.⁸ When ‘performance’ finds in ritual, in everyday behaviour, and in institutions of all kinds the enduring cultural codes that make action meaningful, ‘theatricality’ examines how the symbolic action of everyday life has been further concentrated by a translation into a specific mode of art. If a theoretical interest in performance once accompanied an attempt to deconstruct the subject and its attendant categories, ‘theatricality’ could be understood as performance beyond the subject—the subject distributed into the collective formations of groups, masses, audiences, and crowds—or with the subject subtracted, leaving in its place a variety of non-human elements, forces, affects, and things (and

⁷ See for instance Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, rev. edn. (New York: Routledge, 1988; first pub. 1977), esp. ‘Drama, Script, Theater, and Performance’ (66–111), ‘From Ritual to Theater and Back: The Efficacy–Entertainment Braid’ (112–69), and ‘Toward a Poetics of Performance’ (170–210); helpful discussions of the problem with reference to early modern drama, specifically, may be found in Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen, eds., *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) and James C. Bulman, ed., *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

in this way also intersecting with some of the most challenging recent work in Performance Studies itself).⁹

At the same time, theatre always draws on performance, even as performance often manages to spill out of the theatrical enclosure. Gina Bloom's essay on 'Games' and Erika T. Lin's essay on 'Festivity' both drive a wedge between 'theatre' and 'performance' in order to see what each term—considered separately, and then refolded together—can bring to a new understanding of an art we feel we know well. Bloom shows how early modern card and board games would have trained theatre audiences in the performative conventions of a newly commercialized stage; under Bloom's eye, theatricality itself becomes a kind of game whose rules are explored, modified, and constantly reinvented through their performance by actors and the audiences who watched them. Lin argues that early modern playgoers would have responded powerfully to performative cues that they recognized from the holiday calendar, as playwrights reshaped traditional symbols and sounds into a commercial theatre system. The result, Lin maintains, is nothing less than a transformation in how time was experienced as a medium for communal identification: the cyclical calendar of the holiday year took a new shape as a homogeneous, bounded medium with beginning, middle, and end, which playwrights could fill with their theatrical fictions. Jonathan Gil Harris's essay on 'Becoming-Indian' meanwhile, focuses on how travellers to the New World and to India made sense of their encounters by framing them specifically in reference to the performance techniques and even the architecture of the theatre, in ways both positive and negative. In the case of Thomas Coryate, England's first travel writer, as Harris shows, theatrical performance became a means of self-transformation in both mind and body, an act of imaginative self-incorporation that blurred subject with object and dissolved the boundaries of cultural identities.

Harris's essay forms part of a larger cluster of essays that demonstrate how early modern theatricality was always an international, travelling phenomenon, taking shape out of shared performative techniques, overlapping legal regulations, networked patronage systems, and creative materials that circulated across the borders of Europe in the form of textual sources, recycled plot scenarios, marked styles of playing, and character-types. Robert Henke's essay on 'Poor' looks at how the

⁹ See, for instance, Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow, 'Animalizing Performance, Becoming-Theatre: Inside Zoosis with The Animal Project at NYU', *Theatre Topics* 16.1 (2006), 1–17; the essays collected in a special issue of *TDR: The Drama Review* 51.1 (2007) on 'Animals and Performance', ed. Chaudhuri; 'On Animals', a special issue of *Performance Research* 5.2 (2000), ed. Alan Read; and, in early modern studies specifically, the work of Bryan Reynolds, especially *Transversal Subjects: From Montaigne to Deleuze after Derrida* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Reynolds, *Transversal Enterprises in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: Fugitive Explorations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Reynolds, *Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

experience of poverty followed players wherever they travelled, furnishing the European theatre with some of its most popular tropes while at the same time persisting as a raw, brute reality throughout all of its formal translations and displacements. By setting the drama of England, France, Italy, and Spain against the backdrop of the new modes of capitalist accumulation that were beginning to transform European society, including the commercial theatre itself, Henke reveals the seams of impoverishment, hunger, and degradation that ran throughout the plays of the period as a source of amusement, humiliation, and restless improvisation.

Susanne L. Wofford's essay on 'Foreign' picks up where Henke leaves off, concentrating on the importation into English drama of elements that had their roots in European theatre as well as in classical sources and in English imaginations of the ancient past. Wofford shows how the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Dekker, Middleton, and Marston absorbed this foreign material, becoming fully international even when they appeared to be most local; she offers several methodological categories for thinking in new ways about the problem of cultural translation that had come to define English theatre by 1600, including the need to recognize the 'formal agency,' as she puts it, of the theatre's many different parts—the tropes, genres, emotions, characters, geographies, and ideas that imported a richly overdetermined set of foreign cultural meanings onto the English stage. Much like Wofford, Anston Bosman identifies three primary modes of theatrical 'Mobility' in the early modern period: geographical mobility from place to place, by both actors and scripts; a formal mobility among different modes of presentation and representation, including acting styles, characterization, and other embedded techniques of performance; and an ontological mobility that put into question the very notion of identity itself. Itinerancy was the norm for acting companies in the period, as Bosman shows, both within and outside England, and as the actors *moved*—over borders and among languages, across the boards and into the characters and plays of any given repertory—they carried with them a theatrical art that depended on many different modes of translation and cultural adaptation.

A second major problem running throughout the collection concerns the need to distinguish the notion of 'theatricality' from a notion of 'drama,' although as in the case of 'performance' the terms will always remain closely related and will be marked in idiosyncratic ways by individual contributors.¹⁰ The essays by Coiro and Hoxby, for instance, both demonstrate how 'drama' becomes an artefact of print culture as well as of critical or theoretical discourse: 'drama' is what theatre looks like from the perspective of the book, as it were, or from the vantage point of a critical tradition that was rooted in Greek and Roman categories but beginning to identify its own novel vocabulary, prescriptions, and judgements of value. Not all the contributors would agree with this characterization of drama or use the terms

¹⁰ The distinction is central to the project of Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (New York: Routledge, 2006), esp. 29–45.

‘theatre’ and ‘drama’ in the same way. Some would emphasize the performative dimension to drama, for instance, and define it as the coincidence (if not synthesis) of scripted writing, live action, and audience presence in a single event.¹¹ For Aristotle, as we know, the term ‘drama’ derived from the Greek *drontas*, or ‘men acting and doing’, and Aristotle obviously had in mind a theatre that had everything to do with public performance and nothing to do with print. But as Paul A. Kottman’s essay on ‘Duel’ argues, philosophy from Aristotle to Hobbes to Hegel has always separated a notion of drama from its conditions of performance in the theatre, and it has done so in order to idealize a notion of ‘action’ that has been denuded of its concrete and collective embeddedness. Kottman shows how Shakespeare presents us with a kind of infinite theatricality that is no less philosophical but that differs absolutely in its mode: in Shakespeare, theatre is not subordinated to philosophy but discloses the innumerable and unique circumstances—social, historical, and ethical—necessary to constituting humanity as such.

The relationship between theatre and drama, stage and page, has been the subject of some of the best criticism in recent years.¹² We know that early printed editions of plays provide our most important evidence for how theatrical performance unfolded on early modern stages, and we owe a significant debt to those modern editors who consider questions of staging sensitively as they reassemble the play and compose their apparatus.¹³ And even as these theatrical conventions left their mark in print, ideas about drama that had been shaped by printed plays, both classical and contemporary, in turn contributed to how theatrical performance on stage was understood. Focusing squarely on this problem, Jeremy Lopez engages in a close analysis of the ‘Dumb show’ to examine how the theatre sought to legitimize itself in the shadow of the printed page’s authority over what drama could and should look like. In the dumb show, Lopez finds an especially complex and self-conscious encounter between word and action, diegesis and mimesis,

¹¹ Along with the works cited in prior notes, see Kier Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002; first pub. 1980); W. B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), esp. 1–34 and 35–93.

¹² See especially Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480–1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in the Elizabethan Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); the essays collected in Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, eds., *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare’s England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Orgel, ‘Acting Scripts, Performing Texts’, in *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 21–47; Anthony B. Dawson, ‘The Imaginary Text, or the Curse of the Folio’, in Hodgdon and Worthen, eds., *Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, 141–61; David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. 7–9.

¹³ On this problem see esp. M. J. Kidnie, ‘Text, Performance, and the Editors: Staging Shakespeare’s Drama’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.4 (2000), 456–73 and Kidnie, ‘Where is *Hamlet*? Text, Performance, and Adaptation’, in Hodgdon and Worthen, eds., *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, 101–20.

presentational vehicles and represented fiction. As a moment of extraordinary semiotic density and redundancy, the dumb show was at once too readerly for the stage and too spectacular for the printed book, Lopez argues, and as such it marks ‘a threshold between *drama* (a play as textual artefact) and *theatricality* (the quality of experience a play provides live and in real time)’.

As many essays in the collection aim to show, widening the analytic space between theatre and printed drama allows for a more precise focus on the cumulative cloud of codes, affective experiences, micro-forms, and large-scale combinations of elements that make the early modern theatre seem so distinctive as an artful practice. We see more clearly the different types of physical ability, for instance, that were integral to the period’s notion of dramatic ‘action’ but that remain only in the interstices of printed plays, as Bosman shows in his essay on ‘Mobility’ and Evelyn Tribble describes in her essay on ‘Skill’. For Tribble, theatre must be relocated onto a continuum with other occasional public games and entertainments, all of which required special combinations of physical, verbal, and cognitive abilities. Attending to the traces, gaps, and fissures in playtexts that open a space for these embodied performance practices, Tribble argues, allows us to discover ways of apprehending and evaluating the theatrical experience that are quite different from those of much twentieth-century criticism and that require a more complex cognitive and environmental approach to the theatrical event. Distancing theatricality from print also gives us a better grasp of the many different media and spectacular elements that might capture an audience’s attention, as Scott A. Trudell recovers in ‘Occasion’. Pointing out that poetic verse was a relatively insignificant element in the entertainments, pageants, and shows of the period, Trudell argues that print became a way to transform the contingencies of occasion into an enduring ‘poesy’: in print, the noise, rain, mud, crowds, bored monarchs, tired children, and sheer formal incoherence of the event all resolved into a grand and silent art. Distinguishing between theatre and drama, finally, also reveals surprising things about the nature of a ‘play’: in many respects, the play was *not* the thing for early modern audiences, or not the only thing, as William N. West argues in his essay on ‘Intertheatricality’. These audiences would have apprehended a play not only, and perhaps not even primarily, as a scripted unity but rather as ‘collections of enacted words, gestures, and interactions’, in West’s terms, that extended across many plays simultaneously and that were reiterated over years of performance. Playgoing implied the ability to pick out many different types of theatrical elements, at many different scales; what appears to us as a textual crux or lacuna, West suggests, may signify an especially dense point on a system of intertheatrical references that has been lost.

Trudell’s and West’s essays both also suggest how separating theatre from a notion of printed drama can help us clarify the difficult problem of how ‘text’ in general might relate to theatricality, a third recurring problem in many essays. For Roland Barthes, to take a classic formulation, ‘theatricality’ depends on the subtraction of ‘text’:

What is theatricality? It is theater-minus-text, it is a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument; it is that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice—gesture, tone, distance, substance, light—which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language... There is no great theater without a devouring theatricality—in Aeschylus, in Shakespeare, in Brecht, the written text is from the first carried along by the externality of bodies, of objects, of situations; the utterance immediately explodes into substances.¹⁴

For Barthes, as for Artaud before him, dissociating ‘theatricality’ from a notion of ‘text’ opens a space to examine the play as an event integral to itself rather than as a mere realization of a prior script.¹⁵ But as clarifying as Barthes’s definition may be, recent work has shown his notion of ‘text’ to be too singular and hence also too sharply oppositional in its relation to theatricality, which is arguably best understood as a particular *interaction* between scripted writing and the ‘embodied, kines-
thetic means of nonverbal action’, as W. B. Worthen has succinctly described it.¹⁶ Tiffany Stern, meanwhile, has demonstrated how differentiated a notion of dramatic ‘text’ actually was in the early modern period, as well as how integral it was to the process of theatrical rehearsal and theatrical performance.¹⁷ ‘Text’ might include the source material, whether classical or contemporary, printed or manuscript, that playwrights borrowed and transformed for the stage; the written scripts, roles, and parts that consisted primarily, but not exclusively, of words to be spoken by the actors; other technical documents, such as plotts, playbooks, and annotated prompt-books, that assisted in the production of the play; ‘arguments’, ‘inventions’, and other digest or sketch-forms of a play that might be used at many different stages of production; songs, musical parts, designs for choreography and larger processional movements.

Many of the essays attend to one or more aspect of this ‘textual’ dimension to early modern theatricality: Stephen Guy-Bray’s essay on ‘Source’, for instance, takes up the crucial question of just what playwrights thought they were doing when they adapted the texts of classical poetry to a new theatrical medium, which even they

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, ‘Baudelaire’s Theater’, in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 25–31 (26).

¹⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

¹⁶ W. B. Worthen, ‘Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies)’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.3 (2011), 309–39 (313). The relationships among text, drama, theatre, and performance have been central to Worthen’s work; see in particular *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 1–27; Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*; Worthen, ‘Drama, Performativity, and Performance’, *PMLA* 113.5 (1998), 1093–1107. See also Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*, arguing that ‘a play... is not an object at all, but rather a dynamic process that evolves over time’ (2).

¹⁷ Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

understood to be a mode of representation with lower prestige. Bray identifies moments of what he calls ‘meta-adaptation’, i.e. those moments in plays when playwrights seem to become especially self-conscious about the locus of literary authority, as they compare the formal capacities of theatre to that of poetry—in linguistic style, in characterization, in plot structure—and when they begin to explore ways in which theatre might become a self-sufficient ‘literary’ mode. Paul Menzer, in his essay on ‘Lines’, narrows in on the gradual emergence of one of the most obviously ‘textual’ units of early modern theatre: the poetic verse we recognize as characteristic of early modern drama and for which Marlowe and Shakespeare, in particular, became famous. Menzer shows that before the line became a formal verse element, it persisted as a graphic mark, a technology of performance shared by musicians and singers as well as by actors and playwrights. Only later, through the printing of plays and poems, did the line become the immaterial metaphysical unit we associate with the period’s finest ‘literary’ writing.

Below the scale of the line but still within the category of ‘text’ we find the word, perhaps the most elemental but also the most complex element of early modern theatricality. For as soon as a word has been spoken on stage, it serves as more than a unit of communication, becoming one of many instruments to be taken up in the course of performance, just as the gesture, the prop, the garment, the dance, the song, or the image might function as an ingredients in the scenic composition. All of these elements remain at some level both presentational and representational, to adapt the terms of Robert Weimann, since they are at once medium and message, or form and content, the furniture of a fictional world and the means by which the theatre goes about creating the worlds it needs to furnish.¹⁸ But because words often bestow a second identity upon a staged thing, and because words can create things that do not appear on stage in a concrete way at all, language has an even more important role to play in early modern theatricality than it does in other kinds of theatre or in other media. As Joel Altman’s essay on ‘Ekphrasis’ shows, the unusually flexible capacity of the staged word meant that it could be used for a wide range of theatrical techniques, including the usual sense of ‘word-painting’ but going far beyond it. Ekphrastic passages might bundle together several classical and contemporary allusions into a single speech, create lingering subjectivity effects, or activate the emotional and psychological processes without which theatricality would be impossible. For Altman, ekphrasis creates nothing less than what he calls ‘the psyche of the play’, a mode of theatrical transference, as it were, that takes place among

¹⁸ See Robert Weimann, *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre*, ed. Helen Higbee and William N. West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 98–108. Weimann’s work provides a template for many of the essays in this volume; see his *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Weimann and Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance*; Weimann and Bruster, *Prologues to Shakespeare’s Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

the actors themselves—some of whom may be so overtaken by their ekphrasis that they cease to ‘act’ and begin to live the role—and that is necessary to the management of the audience, whose attention is gathered and absorbed, their reactions managed and coaxed (as a playwright such as Jonson perceived so keenly).

The essays by Guy-Bray, Menzer, Altman, and many others also remind us, in different ways, of the degree to which texts, especially printed drama but also manuscripts, are often understood to be repositories for literary value, a major question in recent scholarship on the publication of early modern plays. This work raises a large question for critics of early modern theatre: what precisely would we gain by describing theatricality as ‘literary’? Are we ready to cede the definition of drama as a ‘literary’ object to the history of print? Or, to put the problem somewhat differently, if the category of the ‘literary’ at the turn of the seventeenth century depends in some fundamental way on print—a statement that seems broadly true to me, with some qualification (poetry begins not in writing, after all, but in song)—then what alternative category to the ‘literary’ might operate in the theatre? What term of value are we to use, and what evaluating categories did early moderns use? How are we to categorize those plays that seem especially self-conscious of their own theatricality (*Hamlet* has always been the paradigmatic case, but there are many others), plays that deliberately try to condense into themselves an entire repertory of techniques and sensibilities? Early modern plays, after all, present us with some of the best examples we could hope to find, in any era or medium, of art’s capacity to discover singularity within convention, to assemble new patterns of experience, from enjoyment to terror and everything in between (or both at once, as Aristotle perceived), to find a source of gratification in frustrated expectations and to feed new forms to a cultivated taste. And all of this while turning on itself to reflect on how it does so, and all by means of the very theatrical resources it is deploying!

One of the aims of this volume has been to re-approach the problems I have just outlined by foregrounding the category of ‘form’, dissociating it from its usual stylistic, poetic, or narrative associations in order to explore how it might become a resource for analysing the unusual density and ontological complexity of early modern theatricality. The concept of form is such a complicated one, and the legacies of formalism in literary criticism so overdetermined, that the term must be used carefully.¹⁹ Current scholarship employs it to describe everything from small-scale linguistic effects (rhetorical, stylistic, poetic) to large-scale structural principles of composition, to material, institutional, or social formations of all kinds—the

¹⁹ I have broached the topic elsewhere in reference to the history of science and the work of Bruno Latour, and I will add simply that I think the early modern theatre offers one of the best examples—because one of the most *complicated* examples—of how form can function as a principle of ‘translation’ in the way that Latour understands it; see Henry S. Turner, ‘Lessons from Literature for the Historian of Science (and Vice Versa): Reflections on Form’, *Isis: Journal of the History of Science Society* 101.3 (September 2010), 578–89, with additional bibliography on the renewed interest in form in literary studies more generally.

difficulty is partly one of analytic differentiation (among different uses or categories of form) and partly one of application (a more subtle attention to *how* formal categories generate meaning or determine ontological problems). Here contributors approach the problem of form in ways that will often seem familiar to readers, since they focus on the significant elements that allowed the theatres to function as a specific mode of representation, one that was distinct from prose narrative, or poetry, or architecture, or painting, but that extended into the large domain of what we could call a ‘non-theatrical theatricality’, or what Lin calls ‘para-theatricality’: the holiday games and pageants, the aristocratic entertainments, royal progresses, and Lord Mayors shows that were all also often written by commercial playwrights. As Trudell shows, for instance, all of these events share formal features with the commercial theatre: they have actors with speaking parts, use rhetorical language and figurative imagery, employ props and costume, and rework generic source materials into large-scale scenic compositions. And yet occasional entertainments also employ formal effects that either did not appear in the public theatres or appear there in a limited way: machinery, pyrotechnics, elaborate musical ensembles, actual landscapes and buildings, lakes, waterworks, and more. One premise of this volume is that we can gain valuable insights by grouping all of these techniques together: not (or not only) with the goal of achieving a newly enhanced understanding of, say, the *Tempest*, or *Cymbeline*, or *Cynthia’s Revels*, all of which employ several of these elements, but so that we have a better understanding of ‘theatricality’ across the landscape of the period as a whole. The collection is thus especially interested in identifying formal attributes that earlier criticism has tended to overlook, or discuss in a cursory way, or treat in a descriptive manner. Early modern theatricality often behaves in ways that we might not expect—so much so that today, even after several decades of state-of-the-art criticism, we are still learning how to understand it.

At the same time, many essays employ the notion of ‘form’ in ways that may strike some readers as unorthodox, since they do so to describe a continuous process of transformation rather than an idealized, ontologically prior abstraction that remains distinct from particular substances or situations. Here, ‘form’ designates an invariant quality, of whatever type, in whatever medium, and at whatever scale. It is the sign of an always provisional coherence and minimal legibility, the result of an active, perpetual process of reconstitution. It is a ‘performative’ notion of form, indeed, in the strong philosophical sense, although with the emphasis placed less on difference or negation than on persistence and recurrence. Approaching the problem of form in this way allows for two kinds of insights, each occupying an opposite pole on our spectrum of intellectual attention. On the one hand, it is form that allows us to generalize creatively about phenomena, as I have described already: to group things together and to explain why we have done so; to capture, in way that is at once intuitive and informed, the subtle variations among a given collection of examples and hold their differences in suspension. Generalizing in this way not

only yields true understanding (as every teacher will recognize) but keeps thinking flexible, elastic, unpredictable, and thus pleasurable. ‘Form’ is thus always, in my view, a mode of generalization, which has the integrity of the cloud or the cluster and not that of the block or the sphere. On the other hand—and this follows from the act of thinking I have been describing—the power of form is that it permits for specification, for precision; it allows us to mark differences and to make discriminations. ‘Art’ is, at root, a ‘formal’ procedure because it engages in acts of specific generalization: although we are most familiar with generalization in language, it is probably better to consider acts of artistic expression such as theatre as modes of generalization using substances that have very different properties and capacities than language does. Through form we glimpse, suddenly, the appearance of a new thing for which we are unprepared but for which we have, at the same time, somehow been made ready. Something is there, and once there it has already become significant, even if we have yet to understand what this significance is; it is an apprehension over which meaning spreads, like fogged breath on a cold window.

This approach to form as a guiding category of analysis leads to another emphasis that appears in many of the essays, namely a turn to what Bert O. States has called the phenomenology of theatre: its power to disclose persons, actions, ideas, and things with an existential acuteness that we can never anticipate in advance.²⁰ For States, the full event of theatre cannot be described exhaustively through the use of semiotic approaches, modelled as they are on language:

... there is a sense in which signs, or certain kinds of signs, or signs in a certain stage of their life cycle, achieve their vitality—and in turn the vitality of theater—not simply by signifying the world but by being *of* it.²¹

For this reason, theatre can never simply be understood as ‘literary’, taking the literary, literally, as ‘lettered’, as worth reading and able to be read, as a special kind of language that can be decoded with the right kind of intelligence and attention. Nor, more radically, can theatre be adequately defined as a ‘representation’ of another world, through whatever combination of modes we might identify (mimetic, diegetic, ‘poetic’). Instead, theatre absorbs *our* world into itself, and as a consequence it alters our sense of the very here and now that we occupy. Theatre is a mode of appearance whose purpose, like all art, is to make present before us familiar things as we have never apprehended them before; ‘its object’, States writes, ‘is to strip signs, to empty them of received content and to reconstitute them as a beginning’.²²

The magic that Artaud and Grotowski talk about is that of transformation or alchemy; it is not only that the eye can be tricked into seeing almost any object as something

²⁰ Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 128.

²¹ States, *Great Reckonings*, 20. ²² States, *Great Reckonings*, 109.

else, but that an object that does not represent something *in advance* becomes a blank check, an open presence; it becomes the source of something *not yet here*, a thing without a history, or rather a thing whose history is about to be revised.²³

The fact that everything is in view, lying in wait, gives the stage a great deal of its optical and temporal interest. This quality of still silent participation is one that not even the film, a medium exceptionally hospitable to realistic representation, can duplicate.²⁴

Theatre never simply ‘means’: theatre pauses, and then, suddenly, it *does*; it acts and creates; it collects people together, and it does so in living time.

This collective force of theatre is central to Julia Reinhard Lupton’s essay on ‘Hospitality’, which mediates on the longstanding associations between theatre, households, and what she terms ‘acts of reception’: the performed rituals of welcoming, accommodating, sharing, and dwelling, as well as their more inhospitable alternatives. Like the theatre, hospitality can be understood as the art of creating saturated symbolic occasions in which we disclose ourselves as members within a tissue of enduring ethical and political relations. Hospitality welcomes us across a threshold, inviting us to join in the collective practice of meaningful life that provides theatre with both its form and its content. But hospitality also exposes us to the forces that strain that life, if not negate it: to hypocrisy and betrayal, to thirst and hunger, to service and subordination to the absolute will of others. Michael Witmore’s essay on ‘Eventuality’ similarly finds in Shakespeare’s plays an activation of our capacity for sensation, and especially for shared, collective encounters. Building on a diverse philosophical tradition of inquiry into the nature of the event and sensation, Witmore turns to phenomenology to describe what happens when the event gets theatricalized: when it becomes embedded in a complex, multi-stranded texture of actions, at many different scales, any of which might exert a causal force; when it is exposed to the contingencies of performance that might emanate from actor, from architecture, or from audience; when it shakes free, momentarily, from our familiar categories of knowing the world and of experiencing one another.

In looking to phenomenology as a source for new approaches to early modern theatricality, Witmore’s essay joins a number of others in the collection. Bruce R. Smith’s essay, for instance, finds in the different usages of the term ‘scene’ an enduring continuity of meaning that illuminates the scene’s conceptual and phenomenological importance for our own current criticism. Pointing out that much theatre does without scenic units, Smith shows how the notion entered haphazardly into English printed drama, even as other techniques for ‘re-marking the scene’ during performance generated a spectrum of connotations around the term. Across these multiple meanings, Smith argues, early modern plays retained a tight connection between the physical structure of the stage and the mimetic or diegetic illusions the stage made possible. ‘It is the inclusiveness of “scene”—from

²³ States, *Great Reckonings*, 109.

²⁴ States, *Great Reckonings*, 68.

stage structure on the one hand to a perceptual phenomenon on the other—that recommends the term at this particular juncture in performance criticism,’ Smith proposes, allowing us to combine the methods of textual scholarship, architectural history, phenomenology, performance theory, and social practice into a genuinely interdisciplinary amalgam.

Mary Thomas Crane’s essay on ‘Optics’ could also be said to contribute to what Smith himself has called ‘historical phenomenology’ by taking as its point of departure theatricality’s etymological origins in seeing and watching.²⁵ Crane examines how the conceptual and phenomenological relationships among sight, spectacle, and illusion that defined theatre were being reconfigured by contemporary developments in optics and the changing epistemological status of vision in the period immediately prior to the scientific revolution. By transforming optics into a deceptive, magical practice, early modern plays persistently delegitimize visual technologies in order to assert the theatre’s distinctiveness and legitimacy as a mimetic medium, one whose predominantly verbal fictions are at once more wondrous, more powerful, and, paradoxically, more *real* than the images produced by mirrors and lenses. In this moment of transition, Crane argues, we encounter a theatre struggling to accommodate a new representational regime grounded in the mechanical image, a regime to which film and other new media technologies are the heirs and in which theatre threatens to become an anachronism.

Ellen MacKay’s essay on ‘Indecorum,’ too, takes inspiration from the phenomenological work of States but soon moves well beyond it. MacKay trains our attention on the ways in which the traffic between life and stage is always governed by a set of social, ethical, and interpretive norms, the violation of which threatens to humiliate (at best) or physically harm (at worst) the spectator. Playwrights faced the impossible task of placating an audience of many different sensibilities and status-positions while still defending their authority over their own plays—a dilemma that, if it could never be satisfactorily evaded (much less resolved), could at least be converted into the special metatheatrical pleasure of writing plays that pulled the audience *into* the world of drama, where the different possibilities for spectatorial interaction could be exaggerated or contained. MacKay finds in the figure of the female playgoer a model for indecorous participation, one that knowingly exploits the tensions between actuality and theatricality in order to sustain the play while also revealing its dependence upon the absorption and judgement of its audience.

As MacKay argues, the perceptual contract that makes theatrical fiction possible must be upheld by the spectator in so many different ways at once—imaginatively,

²⁵ In addition to the work of Smith, see Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Elizabeth D. Harvey, ed., *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

affectively, ethically—that it may dissolve at any moment; indeed, any act of theatre worth the same will always seek deliberately to push this contract to its limit. Scott Maisano’s essay on ‘Now’ takes up this precise problem, singling out a fundamental formal and phenomenological dimension to theatrical experience—time—and showing us how Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* amounts to nothing less than a theatrical experiment in the nature of time itself as at once a perceived, represented, and actualized series of events. Building on the foundational work of Artaud, Maisano undertakes to rethink the problem of theatrical occasionality; he argues that the temporal unit favoured by Performance Studies—the presentness of the ‘now’—must be abandoned in favour of an alternative idea of temporality that is at once as old as Parmenides and Zeno and as new as Einstein and string theory. The character of Time in *The Winter’s Tale* is a singular and strange choric figure, granting us a metaphysical view of time and of life beyond what we know from our mundane, earthly, individual human existences, Maisano argues, and in the process the play upends the truisms of Aristotle (the *Poetics*, the *Physics*) as well as of much theatre criticism.

Maisano’s essay takes inspiration from twentieth- and twenty-first-century philosophies of science, and especially of physics, which has produced its own deconstruction of linear time and its unit, the ‘now’. And the analogy to physics was one that States, too, embraced at several moments. Theatre is simultaneously a space of metaphysics and of colliding substances, States argues, of force and language, of images so saturated with ontological presence that they shimmer with a kind of special fullness or surface tension. ‘The stage becomes a kingdom held together by a physics of metaphorical attraction’, he writes—I think it would be difficult to describe plays such as *King Lear* or *The Tempest* more concisely.²⁶ For Simon Palfrey, too, in his essay on ‘Formaction’, ‘theatricality’ describes not a technology of *mimesis* nor even a kind of enacted philosophy but rather a kind of physics: a world in which bodies, ideas, affects, and figures combine and recombine to generate the plays we watch, read, react to, and think about today. Palfrey finds in Leibniz’s philosophy of monads an inspiration for rethinking theatre as a living, changing, moving environment that is given shape by a series of actions-in-form, across many different scales. For this reason, Palfrey’s essay shows us the value of the category of ‘form’ and uses it to address several of the major methodological problems that animate the entire collection’s inquiry into early modern theatricality: the need to further specify its alphabet of significant properties (or its ‘vocabulary’, to use a term from Alan Dessen’s path-breaking work);²⁷ the recurrent patterns and recombinations

²⁶ States, *Great Reckonings*, 57.

²⁷ Alan Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare’s Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Dessen’s work shows how far textual evidence can take a critic into theatricality and provides a blueprint for the approach adopted throughout this collection; see especially Dessen, *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer’s Eye* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977) and Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

of elements that circulate both inside and outside the theatres, at many different scales; and the varieties of perception and experience, affective response, and intellectual understanding that are activated in the theatrical encounter and that give it its peculiar life.

To these problems I would now like to add a fourth, which has already appeared briefly and which the category of form, too, helps bring into focus. At the risk of some pretension, it could be described as the problem of the ontology of theatre and its creations. This is not a problem of arriving at an essential definition for theatre (what theatre 'is') but a problem of specifying the multiple *ways* in which theatre 'is', or *how* it is, in its modes, functions, and effects. The problem implies, too, the pluralized notion that there might be different *kinds* of being that theatre can bestow on its actors, audiences, characters, ideas, and things. In her essay on 'Skill', to take one example, Evelyn Tribble cites a passage from Thomas Heywood's 'Prologue' to Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, added upon the occasion of its revival at the Cockpit in 1633, to show how powerful the memory of the actor Edward Alleyn remained on the stage after his death. What precisely does Heywood mean when he declares that:

... by the best of Poets in that age
The Malta-Jew *had being, and was made;*
And He, then by the best of actors play'd (A4^v; my emphasis)

For Heywood, Barabas the character in some sense precedes Alleyn the actor and is entirely distinct from him, a being all his own. But what kind of being is he? For States, the character is 'the actor's first person', an image of a person who 'passes through' the actor's voice and body;²⁸ he is a bundle of events, a combination of action, *ethos*, and thought²⁹ that comes to life upon the actor's frame. 'One might think of a play', States suggests (quoting Kant):

... as a closed society of 'substances' coexisting in 'dynamical communion.' These substances of course are characters represented by actors...³⁰

Thus plays, in their fashion, are efficient machines whose parts are characters who are made of actors. All characters in a play are nested together in 'dynamical communion,' or in what we might call a reciprocating balance of nature: every character 'contains in itself' the cause of actions, or determinations, in other characters and the effects of their causality... And, as in the physical world, if a character's properties are altered his place in the play's nature is altered as well.³¹

Each character exhibits a principle of 'directional lifelikeness'³² that allows him or her to move in relation to the other characters; this 'lifelikeness' is not incomplete but is, to the contrary, entirely complete because *that is all there is*. However much we may infer additional details or 'real-ize' a theatrical character, who 'continues to

²⁸ States, *Great Reckonings*, 124–5.

²⁹ States, *Great Reckonings*, 131.

³⁰ States, *Great Reckonings*, 144–5.

³¹ States, *Great Reckonings*, 146–7.

³² States, *Great Reckonings*, 150.

live in the dotted-line real of etcetera behavior' the minute he or she leaves the stage, as States puts it,³³ this imaginative realization is unnecessary to the illusion taking place on the stage before us, which supplies for us, whether through word or action, everything necessary to the play world. Reciprocally, States points out, we 'fictionalize'³⁴ the real-world people who surround us as the supporting actors in a play that unfolds continuously and seems to occupy 'a circumference with our consciousness at its center':³⁵

Each of us regards our own history from the perspective of a self that has survived it, and in this fact is lodged the whole mystery of time and memory. All of this is condensed, miraculously, into the two-hour traffic of a play. The thing we call our *self*—the 'I' that is always speaking, the eye that is always perceiving—has its analogue in the drama in the fact that Hamlet is always Hamlet. The deep creatural sympathy we feel for Hamlet arises from the fact that the man who says, 'The rest is silence,' is the same man who a little earlier (three hours by the theater clock) said, 'A little more than kin and less than kind.' These are Hamlet's first and last words. In the interim we have essentially been through a whole life. We have, as we say, empathized with Hamlet—by which we mean that Hamlet's history has been the interim project in which the attention of our senses has been consumed. We have lived another life, peculiarly inserted into our own here and now, which has produced the effect of an entelechial completion, dimly like the effect of an out-of-body experience in which we are presumably able to see ourselves from an impossible perspective.

In their own ways, many of the essays in the collection take up the problem of the theatrical 'life' that States describes so evocatively, from Richard Preiss's discussion of how changes in early modern stage architecture, economics, and dramaturgy combined to produce the illusion of a fictional being endowed with secret depths, motives, and drives—a 'modern' sense of character that only becomes further reified by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preferences for reading plays rather than attending theatre—to Madhavi Menon's essay on 'Desire.' Menon trains her attention on the absence of the Indian boy in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, an absence that indicates to us the disembodied, immaterial nature of *all* dramatic character, whether from the point of view of print (where all bodies are imaginary) but also, more unexpectedly, on the stage itself. For the theatrical character, too, never has a proper body; although we tend to think of the character as borrowing the actor's body and living with it, inside it, or upon it—although we always *desire* a body for the character and supply a body for it—strictly speaking, bodilessness turns out to be a condition for the character's mode of existence: the experience of fiction, we could say, turns out to be a state of perpetual desire for a body that always remains absent.

No doubt this 'bodiless body' and its persistent absence is possible on stage because theatricality in general was never exclusively a material phenomenon.

³³ States, *Great Reckonings*, 151.

³⁴ States, *Great Reckonings*, 151.

³⁵ States, *Great Reckonings*, 152.

Certainly theatre is ‘material’ in the sense that specific objects, bodies, and structural elements become integral aspects of a performance and make it possible. And we know that the theatres were embedded in complex networks of institutions, commodities, and work, as some of the best materialist work has shown us.³⁶ But theatre is also always intellectual, mental, fictional, abstract; it is driven by problems and ideas as much as by props, by concepts and figures, as much as by bodies. Theatre parades its ideas around on stage before us by embedding them in substances, scattering them like seeds in speech, ‘personating’ them in assembled characters; it opens a space in which the persistent linking of ideas to persons in a fictional mode can be staged, to be at once reflected upon and vividly experienced. And since theatre is always a *collective* art, it invites us to inquire into the source of its magnetic ideas—those ideas that are powerful enough to hold us together. And so perhaps the promise of ‘theatricality’ is nothing less than a new ontology of ideas (which was, after all, one of the exciting things about materialism in the first place): a new account of the specific and plural modes of being that ideas assume, of how we live with them and of how they often live parasitically through us.³⁷ As I have suggested, this new ontology of ideas would quickly become an ontology of fiction, and especially of ‘fiction experienced collectively in a live form’, which I would propose as another working definition for the notion of ‘theatricality’ that organizes the essays in this collection. To enter into an imaginative contract with a play, whether actively and disruptively or passively and silently, means acknowledging its ethical stakes and thus granting the play a power that extends beyond its fictional bounds. But it is also to recognize that this power originates *in* a fictional state: a strange condition that is at once real and imaginary, immaterial and embodied, present before us and yet somehow also always inaccessible.

³⁶ See, for instance, Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Place, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Marjorie Garber, ‘Dress Codes, or the Theatricality of Difference’, in *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 21–40; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); the essays collected in Natasha Korda and Jonathan Gil Harris, eds., *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Mario DiGangi, *Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency, and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

³⁷ I am inspired by Gilles Deleuze, ‘The Method of Dramatization’, in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotexte, 2004; first pub. 2002), 94–116, and by Martin Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

As I conclude, I would like to thank several people who were vital to assembling this collection: Sezen Unluonen, who brought her keen eye and meticulous attention to each of the essays as I was preparing them for publication; Sarah Hopkinson, who assisted in many of its final stages; the generous assistance of the Undergraduate Research Partnership Program at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University; my research assistants at Rutgers, Lauren Devitt and Stephanie Hunt; James Swenson, Dean of Humanities at Rutgers, and Douglas Greenberg, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers, for their support of the Program in Early Modern Studies and for the leave time during which I assembled the volume; Alastair Bellany, Director of the Rutgers British Studies Center, Meredith McGill, Director of the Center for Cultural Analysis, Curtis Dunn at the CCA, and Kathryn Fisher at the RBSC, all of whom made possible the conference at which contributors were able to present preliminary versions of their essays; Gina Bloom, Erika Lin, Scott Trudell, William West, Mary Ann Frese Witt, and the three readers at Oxford University Press, all of whose comments helped refine my approach to the volume in significant ways; Paul Strohm and Andrew McNeillie, who first suggested that I edit a volume in the Twenty-First Century Approaches series; Jacqueline Baker, who gave the project new life, and Rachel Platt, Jenny Townshend, Elizabeth Chadwick, and Gillian Northcott Liles, who expertly brought it through production. An earlier version of my introduction first appeared under the title ‘Toward a New Theatricality?’, written for the special 40th anniversary issue of *Renaissance Drama*, n.s. 40 (2012), ‘What is Renaissance Drama?’, ed. Jeffrey Masten and William N. West (29–35); I am grateful to Northwestern University Press for granting me permission to reproduce it here. A section of Gina Bloom’s essay on ‘Games’ first appeared in Gina Bloom, “‘My Feet See Better than My Eyes’: Spatial Mastery and the Game of Masculinity in Arden of Faversham’s Amphitheatre”, *Theatre Survey* 53.1 (April 2012), 5–28, copyright © 2012 by the American Society for Theatre Research, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of Cambridge University Press. Permissions for all images may be found in their captions.

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