“According to the Scrippe”:
Speeches, Speech Order, and Performance in Shakespeare’s Early Printed Play Texts

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Shakespeare wrote his plays for performance. More specifically, Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed according to a particular set of practices by which authorial manuscripts were sundered into parts, distributed in pieces to players for private study, and reassembled in as few rehearsals as possible. Private study included the memorization of speeches and cues, one-to-three word signals for players to deliver their lines. Previous critics interested in authorial negotiation of historical performance practices have focused primarily upon the content of cues in early modern printed play texts. While cues were vital to early modern performers, the specific content of cues did little to ease the considerable difficulty of performance according to parts; early modern playwrights interested in efficient ways to provide players with assistance in real-time performance appear to have turned to the careful distribution and ordering of speeches. Because speeches were basic units by which early modern plays were written, performed, and printed, the authorial distribution and ordering of speeches proved remarkably stable as early modern play texts were transmitted from authorial manuscripts to printed play texts. In preparation of this dissertation, every speech in fifty-nine of Shakespeare’s printed play texts was counted; speeches were catalogued according to character distribution, scenic frequency, and speech order.
The 47,902 speeches in Shakespeare’s corpus of printed play texts preserve patterns indicating how – by reducing the number of speeches for which a player was responsible at a given time and providing players with recognizable and intuitive patterns of speech order that made cues easier to recognize while providing options in the event of a misheard or misremembered cue – Shakespeare wrote his plays to be efficiently rehearsed and accurately performed. Though the glimpses of performative authorship provided by the distribution and ordering of speeches in printed play texts are relevant to the entirety of early modern drama, the study limits its scope to the play texts of Shakespeare because of complexities unique to his printed corpus: several of Shakespeare’s plays were printed in radically different versions separated by as many as thirty years.

A comparison of the distribution and ordering of speeches in Shakespeare’s variant play texts suggests a need to re-think accepted narratives of Shakespeare’s career and related notions of Shakespearean authorship. Contrary to several hundred years’ worth of criticism understanding the earliest versions of Shakespeare’s plays to be derivative copies of their lengthier Folio printings distorted by, through, and for performance, the variations between versions of Shakespeare’s plays cannot be accounted for by early modern performance practices. The shorter variant play texts appear to have been written to ease the difficulties of performance; the longer variant play texts appear to have been revised to ease the difficulties of subsequent
performance. Reading Shakespeare’s corpus as a chronological series of simultaneously performative and authorial artifacts, we are able to finally reconcile the activities of Shakespeare, the man-of-the-theatre with those of Shakespeare, the early modern author.
Dedication

To Gus, who makes being a Shakespeare scholar feel like being an astronaut.
And to Mary Ann, for believing dissertations should be maps for hidden treasure.
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Introduction: “for when the players are all deade, there neede none to be blamed.”

In the second scene of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Peter Quince initiates one of the most obvious bits of early modern meta-theatricality with the simple question, “is all our company heere?” In the place of an answer, he gets advice from an over-eager Bottom, who suggests that Quince “were better to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrippe.” After Quince complies, revealing the “scrowle of euery mans name, which is thought fit, through al Athens, to play in our Enterlude, before the Duke, & the Dutches, on his wedding day at night,” Bottom continues to guide and interrupt Quince’s attempts to disseminate and prepare “the most lamentable comedy, and most cruell death of Pyramus and Thisby.”¹

The scene details the first steps of staging Pyramus and Thisby, providing Bottom as a counterpoint both sympathetic to and in defiance of these ends thereby simultaneously dramatizing and reflecting upon the process. Along the way, the scene depicts potentially exaggerated versions of the sorts of collaborators commonplace on the early modern stage: players who struggle to play women while “haue[ing] a beard co-ming,” players who are “slowe of studie,” and, of course, players who, like Bottom himself, threaten to destroy the play with their own desire to star in it.² The scene paints a harrowing picture of the inevitability facing plays written for the

¹ Q1 A Midsummer Night’s Dream, B1v-B2r, 1.2.269-80.
² Ibid., B2r, 1.2.308; B2v, 1.2.330.
Despite its value as a satire of potentially specific members of the London theatre community, the second scene of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* does more than simply lampoon its participants, offering up an actual, practical process by which *Pyramus and Thisby* is to be produced. The most notable feature of this process is the sundering of the script into players’ parts to be learned privately and reassembled, if possible, in a single rehearsal. Quince provides an overview of the process in his final instructions to his players:

> here are your parts, and I am to intreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to morrow night: and meete me in the palace wood, a mile without the towne, by Moone-light; there will wee rehearse:….³

Quince’s directive doubles as a summary of the efficient but potentially haphazard process that governed professional theatre in renaissance London during Shakespeare’s career and would remain prominent for nearly three hundred years.⁴

By dramatizing professional staging practices, Shakespeare extends the scope of his satire to include the treatment of authorial texts by professional London companies. Before they can butcher the script of *Pyramus and Thisby* in performance, Quince’s company of mechanicals cut the script to pieces. Worse, we see the players contemplate cutting their play’s climactic death scene; they eventually augment the text with multiple prologues, several of which end up inserted into the dramatic action. Imagining a sixth act of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in which the

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³ Ibid., B2v-B3r, 1.2.359-63.
mechanicals take their play to a printer’s shop, we have no way of predicting the relationship between the resulting play text and *Pyramus and Thisby*, either as it was originally written *or* as it was first played “before the Duke, & the Dutches, on his wedding day at night.” Though obviously satirical, the exploits of the mechanicals illustrate a playing company’s potential to interfere with a text’s transmission from authorial manuscript to printed play text. Given likely parallels between the mechanicals and the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, we are left to wonder about the extent to which theatrical practices altered the text of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* when it was printed in 1600.

This dissertation is a part of a third wave of criticism attempting to determine the effect that professional performance practices had upon the works of Shakespeare as they have come down to us as printed play texts. Though textual criticism as a whole has frequently championed anti-theatrical positions, it should be acknowledged that each of its three most active periods has played a pivotal and lasting role in our understanding of early modern performance: from the first decade of the twentieth century, close study of the physical artifacts of Shakespeare’s printed play texts has been accompanied by an attempt to theorize the activities of Shakespeare’s professional playing companies.

This introductory chapter frames the three waves of textual criticism in terms of their conceptualization of the relationship between performance practices and printed play texts, situating this dissertation among and against the studies responsible for the discipline’s most recent paradigm shift. Unlike critics aligned with the first two waves of textual criticism, I argue that performance practices affected the way
that plays were written, and not – at least not primarily – the way that they were transmitted into print; unlike more recent critics who also believe Shakespeare’s printed play texts to preserve the means by which Shakespeare anticipated performance according to the practices summarized in the second scene of *Midsummer*, this study proposes that Shakespeare’s performative intentions are reflected most accurately by the printed play texts’ distribution and ordering of speeches. To those ends, I counted, classified, and sorted every speech in fifty-nine of Shakespeare’s printed play texts. Speeches were catalogued according to character and scenic distribution; additionally, patterns in speech order were identified and quantified.

While the methodology utilized by this dissertation is applicable to the study of our entire corpus of printed early modern play texts, this chapter introduces problems specific to Shakespeare that warrant the limitation of my primary sample to the 47,902 speeches in fifty-nine of Shakespeare’s printed play texts. Though focused upon Shakespeare, the scope of this study is otherwise comprehensive: because the distribution and ordering of speeches extend through every scene in the corpus, we can compare differences in the way Shakespeare’s play texts were written to anticipate performance. Patterns and changes in Shakespeare’s utilization of his company ask us to re-think the basic relationship between Shakespeare’s printed play texts and performance while reversing traditionally held positions regarding the chronology in which the materials underlying Shakespeare’s printed play texts were

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5 My primary sample includes the thirty-six Folio texts printed in the First Folio of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (1623), the nineteen Q1 editions of plays appearing in the Folio, Q2 editions of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599) and *Hamlet* (1604/5), and Q1 editions of *Pericles* (1609) and *Two Noble Kinsmen* (1634).
written or prepared. What’s more, changes and patterns in the performative logic preserved by the distribution and ordering of speeches offer a narrative of Shakespeare’s early career and allow us to identify and differentiate three types of Shakespearean revision.

The narrative underlying Shakespeare’s corpus of printed play texts is a relatively straight-forward one, provided that we reconcile the clichéd and seemingly oppositional figures of Shakespeare the “man of the theatre” and Shakespeare the “author.” The distribution and ordering of the speeches in Shakespeare’s plays represent products of the shared labor of both archetypal Shakespeares, marking Shakespeare’s printed play texts as simultaneously authorial and performative.

**From the New Bibliography to Shakespeare in Parts**

Commonly referred to as the New Bibliographers, the first wave of textual critics tried to decipher features of Shakespeare’s printed play texts systematically in order to read through printed texts so as to determine the materials from which they had been set. A New Bibliographical approach to Q1 *Midsummer* might begin by examining textual features including the consistency of speech prefixes and the nature of its stage directions in order to determine the type of manuscript lying behind the printed scene. Because the first textual critics were primarily interested in determining which texts of Shakespeare’s printed corpus most closely resemble the plays as they were first written, texts bearing certain types of errors thought to complicate performance were understood to be most authorial. Texts demonstrating fewer artifacts of Shakespeare’s “creative process” and including longer, more
descriptive stage directions were understood to have been set from materials that had been prepared for performance.\(^6\)

Understood collectively, the work of A.W. Pollard (1909, 1920), W.W. Greg (1910, 1931, 1955), and R.B. McKerrow (1911, 1935, 1939) established a schema by which critics might classify the manuscripts behind printed play texts. Consolidated for the sake of brevity here, the four most important types of manuscript materials included authorial foul papers (authorial manuscripts prior to preparation for performance), authorial fair papers (authorial manuscripts that had been regularized and clarified to be read by a playing company), prompt books (manuscripts that had been cut and prepared by theatrical agents for the sake of performance), and “bad” manuscripts (non-authorial manuscripts including those that had been reconstructed from the memory of players).\(^7\) By clarifying a printed play text’s manuscript origins – and creating a hierarchy by which such origins could be compared in terms of relative authority – the New Bibliographers sought to identify textual elements of early modern theatrical influence so that modern editors could avoid or remove them and return printed play texts to the form in which they were written. Despite the anti-theatrical implications of their work, the New Bibliographers’ efforts to identify the

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impact of theatrical practices upon printed play texts were, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, appropriated by a second wave of textual critics more interested in historical performance itself.

The final thirty years of the 20th century saw the fundamental assumptions of literary and theatrical studies challenged by a variety of theoretical revolutions weakening the relative position of the author. In the wake of theoretical upheaval, the pendulum of critical attitudes regarding performance swung to the point that, in an introduction to an edition of the Q1 Hamlet, Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey (1992) asserted that “it is axiomatic, within the current diplomatic alliance of scholarship and theatre studies, that dramatic texts receive their full realization only in performance.” Critics seized upon New Bibliographical categories, interested in reclaiming what had originally meant to be discarded: printed play texts thought to be set from materials prepared for performance. The re-evaluation of performance is epitomized by the 1986 Oxford Shakespeare, edited with the intention of “recovering and presenting texts of Shakespeare’s plays as they were acted in the London playhouses.” For a relatively uncontentious text like Q1 Midsummer, second-wave interest frequently amounted to contextual hypotheses regarding how the play made

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meaning in its performative context.\textsuperscript{12}

While many second-wave critics were re-evaluating the historical value of plays in performance, other critics of the 1980s and 1990s began to question the manuscript categories introduced by the New Bibliographers. William B. Long (1999) and Paul Werstine (1988) raised objections to assumptions about promptbooks.\textsuperscript{13} Grace Iopollo (1991) and Werstine (1990) challenged the category of foul papers.\textsuperscript{14} Paul Werstine (1988) went so far as to denounce the very notion of manuscript typology:

As soon as we begin to test categories against texts, however, every time we seize upon a feature in the hope that it will distinguish only one category, it shows up in a text that we would like to socket into another category. “Bad quartos,” “foul papers,” and “prompt-copy” tend to coalesce.\textsuperscript{15}

Across the board, New Bibliographical categories were proven inconclusive and potentially misleading.

Of the vexed manuscript types championed by the New Bibliography, one troubled category in particular has opened the door for the most recent paradigm shift in textual studies: the increased scrutiny that late-twentieth-century textual critics placed upon play texts thought to be printed from performance sources revealed the

\textsuperscript{15} Werstine, “McKerrow’s,” 161.
notion of “performance texts” to be something of anachronistic fiction. Werstine cautions: “The quest for a stable entity called a ‘performing text’ thus becomes as quixotic as the abandoned quest for authorial intention.”¹⁶ Our inability to identify the features of play texts printed from manuscripts prepared for performance has been taken by some as an invitation to rethink the basic equation in which authorial texts were prepared for performance according to an extra-authorial logic. In other words, our difficulty differentiating printed authorial texts from printed performance texts raises the possibility that authorial manuscripts were performance texts.

This most recent flurry of textual criticism – spearheaded by Tiffany Stern (2000, 2004, and 2009), Scott McMillin and Sally- Beth MacLean (1998), Paul Menzer (2008), and Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern (2007) – reminds us that early modern performance wasn’t enacted upon a finished play so much as it was anticipated by the writing of plays.¹⁷ If we return our attention to the second scene of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, it is “according to the scrippe” that Quince is able to assign characters, to “draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants,” and to prepare the scrolls of speeches each player is to speak.¹⁸ More revolutionary in terms of Shakespeare studies, third-wave textual criticism suggests that early modern playwrights not only wrote plays in anticipation of performance but in anticipation of the specific theatrical practices summarized by Peter Quince.

¹⁸ Q1 Midsummer, B3r, 1.2.365-6.
Citing the fact that Shakespeare was obviously aware that his plays would be sundered into parts for hasty and private study, this recent bevy of critics holds that “Shakespeare as an actor, as well as an author, undoubtedly wrote his plays with the ‘part’ prominent in his mind.”19 In particular, these critics have focused on cues, the otherwise-unmarked, one-to-three-word units affixed to speeches and entrances for the sake of knitting privately-conned parts into the whole cloth of scenes and plays as they were written. Though varied in their particular interests, these critics all focus their scrutiny upon the writing of cues, a feature of manuscript text that was also “an essential performance technology,” suggesting that Shakespeare both provided players with assistance and direction through the content of their cues and worked to avoid cues that would prove confusing in performance. 20 Such criticism contends that we can continue to read Shakespeare’s attempts to negotiate, accommodate, and utilize period specific staging practices by focusing on cued parts.

Though still formative, the paradigm shift implied by these studies would suggest that, instead of examining a printed text to determine the nature of manuscript from which it was printed, interests in authorship and performance are better served by imagining the way the text as printed would have functioned in performance according to parts and cues. Though Paul Menzer (2008) turns to cues in the hopes of determining whether or not individual play texts would have been playable, this recent rash of criticism has for the most part treated early modern play texts as performance texts, suggesting that a shared company interest in coherent, cued parts would have guided the creation of many potential documents from which play texts

19 Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 2.
20 Menzer, The Hamlets, 36.
might have been printed.\textsuperscript{21}

This dissertation, too, asserts that performance practices shaped the writing and making of plays in such a way that we need not be certain of a printed play text’s manuscript origins in order to contemplate the text as one potentially performed on the English stage. However, it is my contention that our focus on cues as the primary means by which companies and playwrights negotiated the demands of performance by parts has artificially orphaned cues from the basic units of writing they were intended to connect, namely speeches. Shakespeare’s play texts were not written according to parts; they were written according to the \textit{collaborative playing} of parts: based on estimates that early modern players typically delivered roughly twenty lines per minute, such collaborative playing involved a high-speed exchange of speeches.\textsuperscript{22} The rapid exchange of speeches between players who had neither read nor extensively rehearsed the entire play was aided by predictable rhythms of speech order.

\textit{“when you haue spoken your speech, enter into that Brake”}

Looking more closely at 1.2 \textit{Midsummer}, we can see that the scene’s forty-one speeches are distributed in such a way to take pressure off of players waiting for specific cues by establishing a recognizable and intuitive pattern designed, I believe, to allow players to anticipate when it was their turn to speak. Most notably, Peter

\textsuperscript{21} I will address momentarily the issue of potential changes made by non-theatrical agents, specifically those responsible for the setting and printing of the play text.

Quince delivers every other speech in the scene; after only a single rehearsal, the player responsible for Quince would have known that every second speech belonged to him. The knowledge that every other speech in the scene ought to terminate in his next cue would have made the cues themselves easier to recognize. Furthermore, in the not-unlikely event of a misspoken, misheard, or forgotten cue, the player responsible for Peter Quince would have known to simply deliver his next speech in order to keep the scene from stalling. By providing the part of Peter Quince with assistance, the scene’s speech order also establishes him as a kind of in-scene conductor: assuming that other players were aware of the pattern, they would have known that their cues were coming from him.

In addition to using Quince’s utterances to create a kind of stem off of which all other speeches originate, the scene was written to limit the number of speeches for which four of the scene’s six players would have been responsible in performance. No player other than those responsible for Quince and Bottom would have been allocated more than three speeches; as importantly, no player other than those playing Quince and Bottom would have been required to recognize more than three cues; finally, every speech given to a player other than those responsible for Quince and Bottom is located in a single string of speeches beginning with Quince and addressing their character by name. In other words, for supporting players, the scene asks nothing more than a short exchange with the player responsible for Quince. While it is doubtless that playing required the careful attention to cues, the scene is written to provide assistance to its principal parts while limiting the amount and difficulty of the speeches and cues assigned to periphery players.
The methods utilized in the writing of this scene extend to each of Shakespeare’s printed play texts. Throughout the corpus, Shakespeare limits the number of speeches for which players are responsible at a single time: more than half of entrances made by characters in Shakespeare’s plays would have required six or fewer speeches (and cues) from a player. More important, a third of Shakespeare’s speeches are located in two-player scenes. Scenes containing only two speaking characters would have provided both players with the benefits given to Peter Quince: both players would have simply need to remember their speeches accurately in order to play the scene. Finally, another third of Shakespeare’s speeches appear in stems of speeches similar to the one that runs the length of 1.2 Midsummer.

Like the authorial attention to cues described by third-wave critics, the careful distribution and ordering of early modern speeches not only served to tell theatrical stories, it also helped a company of players perform the scene accurately according to parts and cues in the context of professional pressures that limited collective rehearsal. In accordance with recent thinking concerning cues, I mean to suggest that 1.2 Midsummer was written in anticipation of the means by which it was to be performed; also in keeping with thinking regarding cues, I mean to suggest that these efforts would have continued to inform the creation of all related theatrical materials that may have eventually been sent to the printer. In comparison with cues, however, I believe that speech distribution and order are more likely to have remained unchanged during the actual printing process and therefore provide a fuller and more accurate picture of how Shakespeare’s plays were intended to be performed.

As Anthony B. Dawson (2005) asserts, cues were distributed to actors as:
handwritten parts, prepared by a scribe from a manuscript copied directly or indirectly from an authorial draft; if the one surviving example is at all typical, the “parts” show quite different orthographic and punctuation features from printed texts. There are, for example, few capitalized letters and short lines; periods are extremely scarce, even at the end of speeches, and there are only sporadic commas, often seemingly misplaced. 23

Dawson implies that cues written for the stage may bear little resemblance to our surviving versions of the play because the transmission from authorial manuscript to parts was inherently different from the transmission of authorial manuscript to printed play text. Even if we ignore the suggestion that only authorial manuscripts would represent cues as they were distributed in parts, Dawson points out that we cannot be certain that cues would have remained intact as manuscripts became printed play texts: while cues were crucial to early modern performance, they served no additional purpose in the printing house where the printed order of speeches was not determined by cues but by the order of speeches in the materials from which the compositor was working. The last few words of a speech are no less likely than any of the other words in speech to be obscured by what Fredson Bowers (1959) famously dubbed the “veil of print.” 24

While the processes responsible for creating hand-written theatrical materials

and printed play texts introduced all manner of textual inconsistencies – including variations in spelling, punctuation, lineation, and even word choice – to authorial texts, I believe that the division of theatrical labor according to the distribution and ordering of speeches is one feature of early modern authorship that remains almost perfectly intact in our extant corpus of printed early modern play texts. I do not mean to suggest that speech order and distribution were never corrupted by the maelstrom of manuscript activity necessary to perform plays and print play texts. However, in comparison with features of early modern written language, I believe that the distribution and ordering of speeches proved remarkably stable as plays were written, performed, and printed because speeches are units of division that were equally important to the writing, playing, and printing of early modern plays: playwrights broke lines into speeches and assigned them to characters as speeches; players conned and delivered speeches; and printing houses developed special conventions to negotiate the spatial demands of separating and attributing speeches. While the performative, extra-textual function of cues could have intermittently gone unnoticed by playwrights and printers, the extra-textual functions of boundaries between speeches could not: whereas cues were truly essential only to players, conventional plays cannot be written or printed without the allocation and ordering of speeches.

The relative stability of speech distribution and ordering can be illustrated by examining the two earliest printings of the second scene of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The Q1 (1600) and F (1623) texts differ substantially in terms of spelling and punctuation. Though otherwise identical in terms of content, the play texts feature four moments where variations would have affected the pronunciation of a single
word. One of the four words printed in perhaps audibly different forms – “perfit” in Q1, “perfect” in F – appears in a cue. However, even as the few hundred variations between the two printed scenes suggest that the play texts were either set from different materials or set poorly from a shared manuscript, none of the variations affects speech order.

I do not mean to dismiss the importance of cues in performance; I only mean to suggest that the ordering of speeches was integral to the playing of parts, and that authorial attention to the ordering of speeches would have functioned with an unusual degree of stability throughout the various incarnations of an early modern play text’s existence as a written, copied, performed, and eventually printed entity. Because authorial distribution and ordering of speeches extends through every scene in Shakespeare’s corpus of printed play texts, features related to speeches provide important clues as to how plays spanning Shakespeare’s entire career were written – and re-written – to be performed.

“Shakespeare Problems”

Give the ubiquity of claims of performance on early modern title pages, an assertion that early modern printed play texts preserve at least one aspect of authorial composition intended for performance extends beyond Shakespeare. The speeches and speech order of non-Shakespearean texts are also likely to preserve authorial designs by which plays were written to be broken into parts and put back together in

25 Q1 Midsummer, B3r, 1.2.369.
26 For more a nuanced analysis of title page claims of performance, authorship, company affiliation, and specific theatres, see Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, “‘Vile Arts:’ The Marketing of English Printed Drama 1512-1660,” Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama 40 (2000): 77-165.
performance. However, this dissertation’s theory by which printed play texts might be read as authorial performance texts is of particular interest to Shakespeare scholars, in part because of the relative abundance of Shakespeare’s early modern playbooks. Nineteen single-volume plays were published in Shakespeare’s lifetime, ten of which were reprinted at least once before his death; forty-two separate editions were printed before 1616.27 Published seven years after his death, the 1623 Folio of Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies is a textual artifact unprecedented by any other collection of publically performed plays in terms of its length, expense of publication, and significance. Despite his potential apathy toward the printed medium, Shakespeare’s theatrical texts were transmitted into print with an unusual regularity.

Beyond an abundance of printed play texts, the “veil of print” poses particular problems specific to Shakespeare for four reasons. First, with the possible exception of a small part of the manuscript of Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare left no autograph manuscripts. Second, his material corpus of playbooks includes plays printed in widely disparate versions, even by early modern standards. Q1 Hamlet (1603), for example, is half the length of the versions printed in Q2 (1604/5) and F. Likewise, quarto editions of The First part of the Contention (2 Henry VI, 1594), Romeo & Juliet (1597, 1599), Henry V (1600), The Merry Wives of Windsor (1602), King Lear (1608), and Othello (1622) stand in stark contrast to their Folio versions. Third, Shakespeare’s divergent texts make competing claims to authenticity. The Q2 Hamlet (1604/5), for example, bears a title page that claims the text is “newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect

Coppie.” John Heminges and Henry Condell, the compilers of the 1623 First Folio, make similar claims in their preface, warning against “stolen and surreptitious copies” that had previously reached readers.\(^\text{28}\) Finally, the earliest versions of plays believed to have been written by Shakespeare – specifically those printed in 1594 and 1595 – were printed anonymously and attributed to a variety of playing companies, none of which definitively included Shakespeare as a member.

Despite their deserved renown for close and objective analysis, the first wave of textual critics often went to great lengths to protect assertions that Shakespeare was not responsible for versions of individual plays thought to be artistically inferior to another version of the same play. Much of the New Bibliographical zeal to imagine the manuscripts behind printed play texts can be understood as a desire to sort out the relationship between competing versions of the same play so as to prove that a play’s longer, more polished form was the one that Shakespeare actually wrote. While New Bibliographers hardly invented mistrust of Shakespeare’s early quartos, they did invent the systematic approach converting that mistrust into evidence that the “bad quartos” were, in fact, set from manuscripts of non-Shakespearean origin.

Almost immediately, the notion of a demonstrably “bad” or non-Shakespearean quarto forwarded by A.W. Pollard (1909) became conflated with the notion of a “performance text.”\(^\text{29}\) In his 1910 edition of Q1 *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), W. W. Greg popularized the notion that “bad quartos” may very well be reconstructions of plays in performance drawn from the memory of an actor

\(^{29}\) Pollard, *Shakespeare*. 
involved in the performance.\textsuperscript{30} Despite Greg’s subsequent hesitation, the theory took on a life of its own to the point that, as Paul Werstine (1999) asserts, “to apply Pollard’s label ‘bad’ to a play has often been equivalent to calling it a ‘memorial reconstruction.’”\textsuperscript{31}

Throughout most of the twentieth century, to suggest that a play text was corrupt was to suggest that players had corrupted it; the most commonly accepted narrative of Shakespeare’s career held the earliest printings of his plays to be derived — by non-Shakespearean agents for or because of performance — from the more polished, authorial versions printed up to thirty years later. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the New Bibliography is the presumption of a convoluted timeline in which play texts printed seven years after Shakespeare’s death are thought to best represent the plays as they were first written, often in the 1590s.

As we might expect, the notion that the manuscripts behind Shakespeare’s printed play texts were written or prepared in an order at odds with the chronology in which they were printed drew contradictory responses from second-wave textual critics. On the one hand, many critics interested in performance accepted the suggestion that the corrupted and derivative quartos were the result of theatrical activities. In Reforming the ‘Bad’ Quartos, for example, Kathleen Irace (1994) contends that “[i]f the short quartos were based on actors’ reconstructions of early performances, they may include valuable insights into the staging of these first

\textsuperscript{30} Greg, Introduction, vii-xiii.
productions.” On the other hand, many second-wave textual critics attempted to problematize the evidence used to identify “bad quartos” in the first place. In addition to his caveats regarding the notion of “performance texts,” Paul Werstine (1999) “calls into question the power of memorial reconstruction to provide a full account” of the “bad quartos.” Likewise, Laurie Maguire (1996) forwards an alternative litmus test to detect the presence of memorial reconstruction, one that essentially undermines the usefulness of the category.

Nonetheless, even as its foundational theories were questioned, the a-chronological timeline forwarded by the New Bibliographers has continued to assert a kind of organizing influence over the field of Shakespeare studies. With the exception of the relatively few advocates of Shakespearean revision that we shall return to in a moment, most critics and readers believe that Shakespeare only wrote his plays once. Moreover, arguments of theatrical revision have only been seriously entertained by mainstream Shakespeare critics in the case of play texts, like those of *King Lear*, that feature relatively few variations. Accordingly, the default position outside of the still formative third wave of textual criticism is one in which “The author’s script was designed from the outset to be an idealized, maximal text, and every early performance altered it into more realistic shapes, often at a quite drastic remove from the ideal.” Despite its performance-friendly ambitions, second-wave critics continued to imply that the manuscripts behind Shakespeare’s latest variant-

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32 Itrace, *Reforming*, 70.
text plays existed when their earlier counterparts were prepared; performance
practices continued to be understood as having been distinct from authorial practices,
primarily responsible for the variant conditions of Shakespeare’s corpus in general,
and directly responsible for the shortest, most derivative quartos.

Third-wave textual critics, however, have begun to assert that the manuscripts
behind Shakespeare’s printed play texts were written and prepared in the order in
which they were printed. James J. Marino (2011) forwards the notion that
Shakespeare’s plays continued to change in and through performance over the course
of (and potentially beyond) Shakespeare’s career and lifetime.36 Likewise, the
suggestion that plays were revised according to parts has become increasingly
commonplace even if the analysis and comparison of cues has yet to offer up
demonstrable evidence of how such revisions were made to entire play texts.37

Put differently, we might understand recent trends in textual criticism to have
their origins in earlier arguments of authorial revision. Suggestions that the variant
texts of King Lear, Othello, and (Q2 and F) Hamlet are the products of authorial
adaptation might be understood as precursors to the recent conceptualization of
printed play texts as artifacts recording performative intentions.38 Arguments of
Shakespearean revision imply that play scripts were prepared for performance, not by
agents external to the writing of plays but, at least in part, by Shakespeare himself.
The connection between arguments of revision and arguments of performance

36 James J. Marino, Owning Shakespeare: The King’s Men and Their Intellectual Property
37 See Stern, Rehearsal, 107-110; Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 8, 34, 94, 390; Menzer, The
Hamlets, 22, 30-31, 44, 88-89.
38 See Steven Urkowitz, Shakespeare’s Revision of King Lear (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980); E.A.J.
practices are made explicit by Richard Dutton’s (2009 and 2011) contextual readings suggesting that plays were changed for particularly important court performances in order to account for shifting political conditions.39

Though many of the studies most closely related to mine have stopped short of asserting it directly, the suggestion that printed play texts record authorial instructions for performance is tantamount to a rejection of the a-chronological timeline that has continued to organize the way many critics think about Shakespeare’s plays. To the extent that playing companies actually worked with foul/fair papers, etc., it is certainly possible that variant play texts were set from varying types of theatrical manuscripts; different types of theatrical manuscripts may be responsible for some of the inconsistencies among Shakespeare’s plays printed in different conditions. However, because the ordering and distribution of speeches is likely to have been consistent throughout all theatrical materials pertaining to a single version of a play approved by the Master of the Revels, variant printed play texts featuring the addition or subtraction of a significant number of speeches are likely the products of different sets of theatrical materials.

While acknowledging the existence of non-theatrical variations in Shakespeare’s printed corpus – usually but not always limited to spelling and punctuation – this dissertation assumes that printed play texts across Shakespeare’s corpus regularly preserve plays as they were intended to be performed, specifically in terms of speech order and distribution. In accordance both with traditional arguments

of authorial revision and with more recent suggestions that plays were revised specifically for performance, this dissertation argues that variant versions of the same play featuring the addition or subtraction of speeches typically indicate that the play was intended to be performed in forms closely resembling both printed play texts. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to a schema in which the earliest versions of Shakespeare’s variant play texts correspond with early versions of the plays as they were written for performance while later versions of Shakespeare’s variant play texts represent authorial revisions that preserve and extend the distribution and ordering of speeches originally intended to ease the difficulty of performance according to parts.

Departing from arguments made by the most recent wave of textual critics, however, I do not believe Shakespeare’s corpus of variant play texts “show the marks of continuing incremental revisions, and of revisions centered on the partial working texts used in the playhouse rather than on a master text.”\(^{40}\) While specific instances of revision frequently appear to preserve cues by adding lines located inside existing speeches, the addition or subtraction of entire speeches simply cannot be fully accounted for by changes made to parts because each new speech would have changed at least one (and often two) cues in other players’ parts. Moreover, Shakespeare’s variant play texts routinely vary by hundreds of speeches. Additionally, though many cues are preserved in Shakespeare’s corpus of variant play texts, many are not. While third-wave critics are right to assert that Shakespeare’s plays were changed with attention to how those changes would affect performance, changes that could have been made exclusively to a single part account for a small

\(^{40}\) Marino, *Owning*, 79.
percentage of the total changes made to Shakespeare’s variant play texts.

Unlike cues, the distribution and ordering of speeches would not have been inherently affected by the addition or subtraction of new speeches: across Shakespeare’s corpus of variant plays, speeches unique to later versions appear to have been added so as to preserve and extend the features designed to provide players assistance when performing the original text according to parts. For example, the corpus of variant play texts suggests that, had 1.2 of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* been revised for subsequent performance, the order of new speeches would have been such that the player responsible for Quince would have continued to deliver every other speech even as the scene became longer. Ultimately, Shakespeare’s play texts appear to have been revised according to the same theatrical logic by which they were written, a pattern suggesting that changes were authorial.

“and, by their showe, You shall know all, that you are like to knowe”

This dissertation’s first chapter makes the historical case for reading Shakespeare’s printed play texts in terms of the distribution and ordering of speeches. After illustrating the unprecedented professional and competitive challenges facing London’s profession playing companies in the 1590s, the chapter explains and contextualizes the particular difficulties arising from playing according to cued parts. The chapter surveys Shakespeare’s management of theatrical resources by cataloguing patterns of speech distribution and theorizing the function of two-player scenes and speech stems. As important, the chapter describes the scenes in Shakespeare’s printed corpus that were likely the most difficult to play, including the
final scene of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. I suggest that most Shakespeare plays include a few scenes written specifically to receive and take full advantage of the scarcest company resource – collective rehearsal – in order to stage particular types of action including but not limited to the meta-theatrical performance and reception of *Pyramus and Thisby*.

The dissertation’s remaining three chapters focus upon different segments of Shakespeare’s corpus of variant play texts. Chapter 2 argues that Q2 *Hamlet* (1604/5), F *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), and F *Henry V* are performative revisions of their earlier quartos. The four play texts feature hundreds of speeches and thousands of lines not in their shorter quartos; in enlarging the play texts, Shakespeare and his company distributed new speeches evenly across the play’s smallest units of performance, French scenes, while following the performance-friendly templates of the earlier, existing speech order. These four play texts, among the longest in Shakespeare’s printed corpus, appear to have been written for performance; such lengthy performance texts ask us to rethink the practices of professional companies and the endurance of London theatregoers. Furthermore, a chronological relationship in terms of the materials behind these pairs of printed play texts suggests that contextual clues used to date the lengthiest play texts should not be used to date the writing of the shorter originals, a suggestion especially interesting regarding the relationship between Q1 *Hamlet* and a 1594 Lord Chamberlain’s Men performance of a play Henslowe records as “hamlet.”

Like Chapter 2, Chapter 3 involves changes made to early quartos to create

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later, substantially longer play texts, suggesting that Shakespeare revised *Taming of the Shrew*, *2 Henry VI*, and *3 Henry VI* by distributing speeches evenly across the entire play.\(^\text{42}\) In the case of these three plays, the distribution and ordering of speeches is notable not only for guiding the revision process but also for functioning differently in performance than the distribution and ordering of speeches in the remainder of Shakespeare’s printed corpus. These differences can be explained by the fact that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men – the company whose practices shaped the writing of Shakespeare’s most famous plays – was not formed until after several Shakespeare plays had been written. Noting differences in the distribution and ordering of speeches, the chapter describes theatrical practices of three companies – the Lord Pembroke’s Men, the Queen’s Men, and the Lord Strange’s Men – that were precursors to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Shakespeare’s earliest plays appear to have been written for a touring company playing before new crowds from show to show with a small repertory of plays and a roster of unproven (or at least not-yet-famous) players. As professional theatre became more London-centric, relying upon the reputation of players in order to compete for a large but finite audience, Shakespeare became increasingly reliant upon the disproportionate efforts of a small number of star players. To offset these demands, Shakespeare employed extra-textual mechanisms (appropriated from the playwrights of the Queen’s Men) by which he could ensure that his plays could be played.

This study’s final chapter considers pairs of variant play texts first printed as “good quartos,” identifying the seven most stable Shakespeare plays, all of them

\(^{\text{42}}\) *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York (3 Henry VI, 1595)* is technically not a short quarto but a short octavo.
printed between 1598 and 1600. Additionally, the chapter makes the case that, though featuring fewer changes than other paired play texts, *F Hamlet*, *F King Lear*, and *F Richard III* were revised for performance by the same methods used to enlarge *Henry V* and *Taming of the Shrew*; such revisions likely required renewed approval from the Master of the Revels and the creation of new parts. Finally, the chapter contends that six play texts – Q4 *Richard II* (1608), *F Titus Andronicus*, Q1b 2 *Henry IV* (1600), *F Troilus and Cressida*, *F A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *F Othello* – were revised so as to avoid the necessity of creating new parts or obtaining new approval from the Master of the Revels.

The Shakespeare that emerges from this dissertation might be thought of as an author who worked through the collaborative medium of early modern performance. Read according to the narrative advanced by this dissertation, Shakespeare’s corpus of printed plays becomes a relatively straightforward collection of documents that record Shakespeare’s artistic and theatrical evolution. Simply by considering the earliest variant play texts to have been written and performed previous to the writing and performance of later incarnations, we restore an authorial timeline in which plays were not only improved upon as Shakespeare became a more confident playwright, but one in which Shakespeare’s verbal acumen, thematic complexity, and theatrical sophistication appear to improve at the same time.
Chapter 1: “Speake the speech”:

Speeches and Speech Order in Shakespeare’s Printed Play Texts

On 7 February, 1601, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men famously received “xl$ more than their ordinary” for a command performance of Richard II. According to a deposition given by Augustine Phillips, he “and his fellows were determined to have played some other play, holding that the play of King Richard to be so old and so out of use….‖ Despite their concerns, the company received their extra fee and “played it accordingly” on the eve of the Earl of Essex’s failed attempt to remove counselors of Elizabeth I from power. Originally examined in terms of the relationship between the early modern theatre and the state, this performance has more recently been treated as one of many bits of evidence attesting to the flexibility of early modern playing companies: Phillips overheard the request no more than two days before the Lord Chamberlain’s Men played Richard II.¹

It is worth noting that, in comparison to other Shakespeare plays, Richard II is a short play with a small cast of characters lacking an especially lengthy lead role. Given the number of critics, including Scott McMillin and Lukas Erne, who have

¹ E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923), ii: 205. In terms of the timeline, the account continues: “He saith that on Friday last was sennight or Thursday Sir Charles Percy Sir Josceline Percy and the Lord Mounteagle with some three more spoke to some of the players in the presence of this Examine to have the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard the Second to be played the Saturday next, promising to get them xls. More than their ordinary to play it.” It should be acknowledged that we can’t be certain that the Richard II performed was, in fact, Shakespeare’s Richard II.
logically assumed that shorter texts and parts were more easily prepared and played than their longer counterparts, it is interesting that little critical energy has been spent contemplating whether or not the Lord Chamberlain’s Men would have been capable of reviving one of Shakespeare’s longer and ostensibly more challenging plays had the conspirators, for example, been interested in a production of Richard III.² On the contrary, the most widely accepted models of early modern performance would suggest that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men was able to revive Richard II not because of the brevity of the text but because of the efficiency of the English early modern theatre as a whole.³

The company’s ability to accommodate the would-be insurrectionists’ request to re-learn and re-stage a retired play is certainly understood as a testament to the talents and memories of early modern players. However, in addition to the apparently formidable capacities of the players themselves, performance critics have explained the company’s ability to perform the play by pointing to a series of systematic and professional processes used for the production of every one of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men’s plays. Richard II was brought back to the stage according to the same practices by which it was originally staged. Critical consensus holds that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men were able to play Richard II on such short notice because, like all early modern plays, the text was sundered into actors’ parts to be studied privately, reassembled in as few rehearsals as possible, and performed with the aid of cues and a stage apparatus including a backstage plot, book holder, prompter, and

attendants. While potentially haphazard, the practices regarding a relative shortage of group rehearsal are understood to have made possible a theatrical ecosystem in which a company was to produce an astonishing number of plays in as little time as possible. ⁴

The most recent conceptualization of the relationship between early modern companies and their playwrights suggests that, while two days given to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men was enough time to prepare Richard II, the same period of time may not have allowed them to produce a modern play like George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion or August Wilson’s Fences; twentieth-century plays were not designed to be broken into privately-studied parts or played in a crowded repertory system where actors needed to keep dozens of plays in or near their heads. Richard II was written by a company playwright – an actor no less – working under the same constraints by which the play was produced and revived; our most recent thinking about plays in performance suggests that Richard II was written to provide players with cues that would both inform private study and be easily recognized in performance. ⁵

Following the lead of recent performance critics, this chapter argues that the revival of Richard II was typical; the Lord Chamberlain’s Men could quite possibly have learned, prepared, and performed any of Shakespeare’s plays under similar circumstances. As others have asserted, Shakespeare’s plays were written specifically to ensure such last-minute performances were possible. However, while I agree that

⁵ Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 2.
Shakespeare’s printed play texts preserve authorial elements catering to the performance of parts, I deviate from the increasingly canonical position that those authorial elements are most clearly seen in the final one-to-three words of every speech that, in performance, would have functioned as cues.

Previous scholarship regarding the use of cued parts has understood the ubiquity of the practice as evidence of both its efficiency and its overall effectiveness. In particular, studies of cues following the basic outline of Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern’s *Shakespeare in Parts* (2007) argue that the early modern practice of sundering a text into individually prepared parts not only made it possible to prepare an incredible number of texts but also offered certain advantages that were lost when, in later centuries, it became common practice to give actors the entirety of a play text and an extended rehearsal process.⁶ I suggest here that, while the use of cued parts and individual rehearsal was necessary to accommodate the sheer number of plays necessitated by the early modern repertory system, it was far from an ideal system: the real-time performance of repertory plays according to parts made it incredibly difficult for players to know when to deliver their lines.

The most widely accepted models of early modern performance hold that companies, working without exhaustive knowledge of the stories or play as a whole, would have relied exclusively on cues in order to connect on player’s lines to the next. By emphasizing the content of cues as the primary means by which Shakespeare wrote for players working according to parts, previous criticism has implied that all printed early modern texts feature characters speaking in an order dictated exclusively

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by the needs of the story. Drawing on a comprehensive examination of fifty-nine of Shakespeare’s printed play texts, this dissertation argues that the Shakespeare’s plays were written to feature intuitive and recognizable patterns of speech order that made cues relatively easy to anticipate and identify; only the most difficult portions of early modern play texts feature purely narrative speaking order. As a typical early modern play, Richard II was written with carefully distributed speeches that reduced the opportunity for performance error within individual scenes; moreover, roughly two-thirds of the speeches in Richard II appear in patterns that would have made cues easier to recognize while offering players assistance in the event of a missed cue. Such patterns exist in equal measure throughout the entirety of Shakespeare’s printed corpus.

Before identifying these patterns and theorizing their use in real-time performance, we must consider the demands of the early modern repertory system that led to methods of play production that solved problems related to the memorization of lines but, in turn, presented very particular difficulties for players regarding the actual performance of plays.

**Studying the Repertory**

Despite the protests of Augustine Phillips, the demands placed upon the Lord Chamberlain’s Men by the command performance of Richard II appear more-or-less

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7 Because, in the context of a play, characters speak when they appear to have a reason to, we have assumed those reasons to be the only ones dictating the order in which characters speak. This dissertation argues that large sections of Shakespeare’s play feature patterns of speech order that – in addition to advancing a story – serve a practical, peformative purpose.

8 In terms of plays, this sample includes the thirty-six plays in the Folio, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Pericles*. In terms of play texts, this sample includes all nineteen Q1 editions of the thirty-six Folio plays, including *Taming of a Shrew*, and Q2 editions of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. 

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identical to the demands placed upon the company by most performances. More often than not, players were given little time to learn new plays or re-learn old ones simply to keep up with the demands of a crowded performance schedule designed to compete for a finite audience. Following the re-opening of the theaters in 1594, the Admiral’s Company played six days a week; in the 1594-95 season, the company offered a total of thirty-eight plays, twenty one of which were new that year.\(^9\) This already rigorous schedule became increasingly demanding: by January of 1596 the Admiral’s Company performed fourteen different plays in a single month.\(^{10}\) While January of 1596 may have been abnormally busy, companies appear to have frequently performed a wide variety of individual plays in rapid succession.

Performance critics have rightly drawn attention to the contradictory conditions surrounding the performing of new plays by a company whose attention was necessarily splintered. While new plays certainly satisfied audience demands for novelty, many new plays failed to garner enough interest for a second performance. Of the fourteen plays performed by the Lord Admiral’s Men in January of 1596, six of them appear to have been performed only once. Consequently, despite the necessity of novelty, economic pressures are thought to have prevented companies from expending valuable resources on the preparation of too much untested material; new plays are thought to have been produced in as little as three days with somewhere between zero and three group rehearsals. The theatrical economy of early

\(^{10}\) G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare’s Time* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 148. Bentley also suggests that the fever for new plays attested to by Henslowe may have been unique to the 1590s. Even if older plays became more common and the pace with which plays were added to the repertory slowed, all plays were difficult to perform.
modern London simply couldn’t afford the luxury of extended periods of rehearsal in which the play was to be learned collaboratively; Palfrey and Stern suggest that a single rehearsal was normative for new plays.¹¹

Despite the interest in a play’s initial performance, there is little evidence to suggest that older plays became any easier to perform over time. While actual performance theoretically eased the difficulty of subsequent performances, the amount of time between two performances of a single play could stretch to more than one-hundred days; Richard II is but one of many plays that had fallen out of regular use only to have been hastily dug out of storage at the behest of a noble or patron. In addition to the difficulty caused by extended periods away from a text, we remain uncertain of the degree to which texts did or did not change between performances. Recently, Tiffany Stern, Paul Menzer, and James Marino have all forwarded notions of constant revision that would suggest that re-learning a play frequently included re-learning sections or parts that had been changed, expended, or cut entirely.¹² Finally, current critical assumptions hold that older plays were afforded even less rehearsal than new plays. Concerning plays that had been previous performed, Tiffany Stern (2000) asserts that “with so little time to learn or relearn parts for performance, it is unlikely, in these instances, that there was any collective rehearsal at all.” Though it is intuitively easier to perform a play that has been previously played, very few plays appear to have been performed so frequently or in such close proximity to each other

¹¹ Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 71.
that each individual performance would not have required some form of preparation.  

Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern suggest that the individual study of parts likely took up enough of a player’s time that a company simply couldn’t have increased the amount of rehearsal available to a play without decreasing the number of plays that a company offered. They go on to suggest rehearsal that focused on “moments rather than the full text” with a specific emphasis on “particular group elements of the play,” while remaining agnostic as to whether or not full plays or even full scenes frequently received rehearsal. While time devoted to collective rehearsal appears to have been intermittent, players are thought to have spent much of their professional lives at study.

The practice of individual study obviously centered upon the “conning” of lines. However, it is important to distinguish the practice of individual study from the modern practices of actors working on lines. A number of twentieth-century acting theories are based upon learning one’s lines blank, without preconception as to how they might be delivered, so that characterization is allowed to rise organically out of an extended and collaborative rehearsal process with one’s co-actors and, when appropriate, guided by one’s director. Twentieth-century notions of performative discovery based upon collaborative trial and error appear to be diametrically opposed to performative practices governing the early modern player whose first performance of a particular scene may have frequently happened during a play’s public debut.

13 Stern. Rehearsal, 57. Because plays typically needed to earn second performances, a successful performance can be understood as a performance in which the play was performed in a condition that earned it revival.
14 Palfrey and Stern. Shakespeare, 72.
Given the limited amount of rehearsal and the lack of a figure that modern theatre practitioners would recognize as a director, early modern players are thought to have developed nuances of an individual performance on their own. Surveying meta-theatrical evidence, Tiffany Stern (2000) has gone so far as to suggest that individual study amounted to the preparation of a finished, individual performance complete with gestures and individual action, often on the playwright’s instruction. Likewise, Palfrey and Stern (2007) assert that “more than one rehearsal was rarely desirable” for “actors who were anyway concentrating on solo performance.”

While modern actors are taught to understand a focus on their own performance as a performative liability, the isolated and private creation of mostly-finished, individual parts is thought to have made possible the exhausting repertory schedule of the early modern playing calendar.

Although the practice of private study made the learning or re-learning of plays more efficient, we should be cautious not to undervalue early modern rehearsal. Despite claiming that more than one rehearsal was rarely advantageous, Palfrey and Stern allow that rehearsal frequently served the purpose of identifying plays that weren’t ready for performance: “should, for instance, rehearsal reveal a play to be grossly under-prepared, the performance could be called off, and another play substituted while further learning took place.” Furthermore, they argue that “Accounts suggest that a ‘bad’ actor was someone so intent on his part—and his part alone—that he adopted his character only for the moments in which he himself was to ‘act.’” In other words, while it does appear that private study was integral to the early modern rehearsal, we should be cautious not to undervalue the role of rehearsal in the early modern theatre.

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15 Stern, Rehearsal, 72-76; Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 71.
modern repertory system, there is plenty of evidence to suggest it created nearly as many challenges as it resolved.\endnote{16}

Of the challenges created by early modern study, one, in particular, is the primary subject of this chapter: the ratio of private study to collective rehearsal made it difficult for players to know when to deliver individual portions of their “finished” solo performances. The real-time difficulty of determining when to speak had everything to do with what, in textual terms, players were given to study when they learned their parts. Players were not provided the entirety of a play text. Player’s scrolls were limited to a character’s speeches, entrances, exits and relevant stage directions, tethered to the play as a whole by the tenuous thread of cues, the last one-to-three words of the utterance that were intended to spur the appropriate player to enact the appropriate portion of his privately prepared performance.

Based on the small sample of surviving early modern parts, players were most frequently provided one-to-three words to initiate their lines or actions; cues appear to have been provided without any other information. For the 1601 command performance of Richard II, the player responsible for Gaunt would have re-learned his performance of the first scene from something that looked like the following:

\begin{verbatim}
[Thomas] Moubray ?

Gaunt. I have my liege.

[treacherie] [in] him.

Gaunt As neere as I could sift him on that argument,

On some apparent daunger seene in him,
\end{verbatim}

\endnote{16} Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 75.
Aimde at your highnes, no inueterate malice.

--------------------------------------------
[you] [your] sonne.

Gaunt To be a make-peace shall become my age,

Throw downe (my sonne) the Duke of Norfolkes gage.

--------------------------------------------[throw] [down] his.

Gaunt When Harry? when obedience bids,

Obedience bids I should not bid againe. 17

Without rehearsal, the player responsible Gaunt would have had no way to determine that each of his four cues would be spoken by Richard II. As important, he would have had no way of knowing that fourteen speeches would transpire between his second and third cue. Even a single rehearsal would have served to inform or remind the player that he ought to look to the king for his cues and that he would have an extended break between his second and third speeches. Theoretically, the scene is playable even if the player’s only provocation to deliver his line would have been his cues. However, even a single rehearsal would have provided context for the cues that would have made repeated performance easier.

In cases where cues were the only link between one speech and the next, each and every successfully navigated intersection between one player’s lines and the next was composed of several steps. The speaking character needed to remember and say the final words of his speech correctly. Those words needed to be correctly heard and

17 Borrowing the method of representing cued parts from Tiffany Stern, Rehearsal, extended dashes mark cues. The bracketed words symbolize words that may not have been included in an actual cue. Only the inclusion of the final words is a certainty.
recognized as a cue. Finally, the cue needed to be correctly correlated to the speech it was to initiate. In addition to the errors that could occur at any point in this process, anyone on stage could mishear an ordinary line as a cue and begin an incorrect speech. Perhaps most importantly, all of this needed to happen quickly. The estimates offered by Alfred Hart (1934) and corroborated by Michael Hirrel (2010) suggest that rates of early modern performance averaged roughly twenty lines per minute, a rate of performance that allowed almost no time between speeches to identify and respond to cues.\(^{18}\)

Shakespeare’s average printed play text includes 914 cues for speech or action. Conventional wisdom holds that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men expected to accurately and quickly remember, say, hear, recognize, and respond to nearly 1,000 cues during the course of a typical performance, all while holding somewhere near 10,000 cues in their collective memory at any one time. The critical explanation offered by performance critics is that playwrights created memorable cues that were given additional focus during private study.\(^{19}\)

While it is undoubtedly true that players and playwrights alike paid significant attention to cues, it must be pointed out that, in the Folio edition of Act II, scene 2 \textit{Hamlet}, the part of Hamlet hears twenty-three cues that end with the word “Lord.” While Palfrey and Stern suggest that one of the purposes of potentially two- or three-word cues was to differentiate between common final words, an examination of


\(^{19}\) Menzer, \textit{The Hamlets},65; Palfrey and Stern, \textit{Shakespeare}, 2-6.
Hamlet’s cues from that single scene demonstrate the difficulty of relying exclusively upon cues to trigger specific speeches. Hamlet’s first twelve 2.2 cues:

- [good] [Lord] Hamlet?
- [me,] [my] Lord?
- [I] [my] Lord.
- [Honest,] [my] Lord?
- [True,] [my] Lord?
- [have] [my] Lord.
- [read] [my] Lord.
- [matter] [my] Lord.
- [meane,] [my] Lord.
- [ayre] [my] Lord?
- [leave] [of] you.
- [well] [my] Lord.

In addition to his twenty-three cues that end with the word “Lord,” Hamlet would have, in this scene, heard the word lord an additional thirteen times in capacities that were not cues. It is certainly possible that Richard Burbage’s memory was truly exceptional and that he was capable of quickly differentiating one “Lord” from the next. However, a playwright attempting to provide playable cues could have most certainly provided the longest part written for the early modern stage with ones that were easier to keep separate.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{20}\) Hamlet from Q2 *Hamlet* is the lengthiest part measured by either lines or speeches. I do not mean to suggest that this scene would have been unplayable, only that it wasn’t cues alone that made it possible. I will return to this scene later in the chapter.
Most scenes did not present a player with such challenges. As Palfrey and Stern painstakingly demonstrate, many scenes do indicate careful attention to individual parts and their cues. The content of cues often provide emotional context for a player’s part and even prove “a fundamental tool of Shakespearean characterization.” However, as they acknowledge, large stretches of Shakespeare’s printed corpus consist of cues that are unremarkable: “of course, many cues do nothing, as it were, but their basic job.” Even the most significant cues, though they may help direct the delivery of speeches, appear to have offered little in the way of making it easier for players to know when to speak; in fact, one of the major arguments forwarded in Shakespeare in Parts centers on the emotion generated by repeated cues that intentionally cause false starts or simultaneous utterances. In contrast to my argument here, Palfrey and Stern suggest a model in which cues are so trustworthy and consistently executed in performance that a playwright could direct the emotional content of the scene by making individual cues more difficult or confusing. Players, they argue, thrived from the exciting condition of having no idea where cues were coming from.\footnote{Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 91, 94.}

Not all performance critics assume that cues were so easily followed. Paul Menzer (2008) asserts that playwrights would have gone to great lengths to avoid repeated or confusing cues. While Menzer’s solution would suggest the creation of a more feasible system of cues by eliminating confusing cues from playable texts, its implementation would have required a prohibitive amount of labor on the part of playwrights. In order to avoid repeated or unclear cues in his average play,
Shakespeare would have needed to comb through the endings of speeches in order to ensure that each of its 914 cues was clear and unique. While this was certainly possible in important sections of a play, it is a method that seems unlikely for entire texts as 2.2 *Hamlet* demonstrates.

Likewise, the assumption that cues alone were able to inform the delivery of speeches would have required players to expend a great deal of energy not only conning cues but coordinating specific and often similar cues with their specific speeches, a process that is not the same as simply learning a role. In other words, in order for cues to function in isolation, each cue would have to be learned so closely – and correlated perfectly with its corresponding speech – that, upon hearing it, a player could immediately respond with his appropriate speech. For parts featuring between one- and three-hundred speeches, such memorization would be cumbersome. Much of the efficiency gained by the extensive work that players were able to do on their own would have been lost if the process created a great deal of exacting and tedious secondary work for all parties involved.

Finally, stretches of text in which the succession of speeches relied exclusively upon cues alone would have left each performance especially vulnerable to catastrophic error. While errors can arise from any performance process, early modern or otherwise, staging practices relying exclusively upon cues to link one speech to the next ran the risk that a scene would either grind to a halt or proceed in a completely improvised fashion: a single error involving a cue could derail the exchange of speeches in such a way that no player was certain how to proceed. Performances that had been created in private lacked contextual knowledge of a
scene’s shape – not the story, necessarily, but the pacing and general position of one’s speeches within the larger whole. Accordingly, errors in cuing frequently led to a condition in which at least one player was out of sync with the rest of the performance.

Historically, the condition of uncertainty was referred to as being “out of” or “besides” one’s part. There is ample meta-textual evidence suggesting both that the condition was common on the early modern stage and that playwrights were acutely aware of it. Dekker’s *Noble Spanish Soldier* features speculation regarding the consequences “if you being the King, should be out of your part.”22 In Brome’s *Sparagus Garden*, Gilbert advises a player to “Act but thine owne part, and be not out, *Sam*, / and fear nothing.”23 The bumbling Medice in Chapman’s *The Gentleman Usher* (1606) exclaims, “swounds they haue put me out.”24 Even Shakespeare’s Sonnet 23 describes an actor who was “with his fear put besides his part.”25 These and other meta-textual references all attest to the importance of staying “in” one’s part.

It is tempting to associate being “out of” one’s part with the modern connotation of being “out of” one’s character. While being out of character is a reflection upon one’s acting or mindset, the early modern condition of being “out” does not appear to be: the early modern player could be “put out” by the mistakes of others. Accordingly, being “beside” one’s part appears to have really been the

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condition of being out of the rhythm of the scene as a whole, uncertain of what to say or when to say it. In the best of cases, a player who was “out” of his part could be quickly nudged back “in” by the apparatus of the book-holder and his team of boys who appear to have been ready to provide a first line in the event of a pause in which a player clearly didn’t know how to proceed. However, players who were “out” would not have necessarily known they were out; on a crowded stage, players may not have been certain which of them had missed a cue or to whom the prompter was whispering.

Furthermore, an initial error in cuing could easily be compounded by the delivery of an incorrect speech which could skip an indefinite amount of material, potentially creating confusion for the book-holder attempting to prompt a corrective line. This could easily lead to a tangled mess of individually prepared parts incapable of being sorted out. Given the rapidity of early modern performance, it is optimistic to assume that in the event of error the book-holder and prompter were always capable of identifying what needed to be said fast enough to return players to their parts. Palfrey and Stern’s (2007) assertion that “the kind of things that might not be gathered from a part in advance – could be controlled or ‘conducted’ from backstage by the prompter ” may have been true for very particular kinds of errors. However, in stretches of text in which cues alone were responsible for allowing a scene to continue, the potential existed for situations in which no one, including the backstage personnel, would have been sure who was “in” and who was “out.”

Menzer, Palfrey, and Stern are obviously correct to assert that every cue was memorized with precision and care: the intersections between speeches were simply too important for that not to have been the case. Furthermore, as Shakespeare in Parts demonstrates, critical analysis of cues can provide valuable insight as to how playwrights instructed players. However, the insights that carefully chosen cues provided players appear to have been most useful during private study. As we have seen, cued parts most certainly explain how players were able to prepare an extraordinary number of roles in isolation, but they do not fully account for how a company was able to deliver a play’s speeches in the correct order, frequently without rehearsal or much in the way of advanced warning.

Perhaps the best evidence of the difficulty regarding the performance of cues is the fact that, across the printed corpus, Shakespeare and his company appear to have gone to great lengths to ensure that players were rarely responsible for very many cues in a single scene. This chapter’s next section introduces the textual unit of the speech as an alternative means of understanding cues and cuing. I do not intend to displace or supplant critical attention regarding the cue, only to suggest that early modern companies seem to have regulated cues by regulating speeches.

Speeches

Though referred to by R.B. McKerrow as a “minor detail,” the addition of a speech prefix to lines of poetry is arguably the most important textual step in the making of a
play intended for the early modern stage.\textsuperscript{27} The prefix transformed a group of lines into a speech capable of being uttered, misspoken, or changed by a person other than the playwright. More practically, the creation of speeches marked the transition of a play from authored to collaborative by assigning responsibilities regarding the conning of each speech to an individual player. The boundaries of speeches were the seams by which the book-holder and company scriveners knew how to take the authorial manuscript apart while preparing scrolls to be distributed to the players for private study. Through cuing, those same boundaries of speeches provided players the means with which to put plays back together every afternoon in performance. Speeches represent basic, easily observed units central to the creation of early modern texts and performances alike.

Given the importance of cues, it is logical to assume that a player learned his part one entire speech at a time; there would be little incentive to learn the first lines of a speech without learning the part of the speech that included the cue. Being “out” had little to do with forgetting an individual line; in the case of a forgotten line, a player could always skip to the end of his speech without damaging the scene. A forgotten speech, however, would have not only put the forgetful actor “out,” it would have done the same to his fellow players waiting for subsequent cues.

For the early modern playwright, speeches presented a basic unit by which to distribute the practical responsibilities of playing. Speeches constituted a readily available and easily visible mechanism by which playwrights could keep track of the practical demands being placed upon particular players. Referred to for the remainder

of this chapter as “speech burden,” the number of speeches assigned to a player within a scene or play is also indicative of the number of cues for which an individual player was responsible in performance.

The characters of Othello and Iago provide unlikely evidence that Shakespeare was aware of a player’s approximate speech burden. In both the Folio and Quarto versions of Othello, the rivals are given an identical number of speeches despite the fact that Iago’s part includes 300 more lines than does Othello’s. An identical number of speeches between two of Shakespeare’s most inextricably linked characters is certainly a coincidence; the similar totals are not. Proteus and Valentine, characters with an analogous if tempered relationship in Two Gentlemen of Verona, are each assigned 149 speeches. Four more pairs of linked characters – King John and Philip in King John, Viola and Olivia in Twelfth Night, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse in The Comedy of Errors, and Richard II and Bolingbroke in Q1 Richard II— are built from a nearly identical number of speeches.

More important, attention to speech burden provided an opportunity for playwrights to limit the difficulty of individual parts by reducing a player’s cues, thereby reducing the number of opportunities a player had to fall “out” or put his fellow actors “out.” For example, when measured by lines, the part of Morocco in the Folio Merchant of Venice contains 103 lines and is the ninth largest part in the play. By lines, it appears to be more demanding than the parts of Jessica (86 lines), Nerissa (84 lines), the Duke (57 lines), and Salanio (56 lines). However, the part of Morocco

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28 In Q1, both players are given 268 speeches. In F, the identical number of 272 depends on how one resolves what appear to be two compositior errors that create an impossible speech order in which Othello would answer himself.
comprises only four speeches. Even if a potential player were to forget every one of his lines but the four containing cues, some form of his only scene could still be played. If we think in terms of speech burden, a part like Morocco’s potentially offered experience for a novice player who was ready for longer speeches while at the same time limiting the chances of serious error. Or, for a more experienced actor, Morocco’s four speeches may have amounted to a day off for a player who, most afternoons, played kings.

While parts like Morocco demonstrate the restriction of speeches and cues over an entire play, the distribution of speeches is more meaningfully observed in the context of scenes. Scenes offer ways of thinking about exchanges of related speeches. As such, it is important to recognize that early modern companies would have likely understood scenes in two distinct but related ways. Based on the seven extant plots for plays, early modern companies frequently thought about scenes as being divided by periods of an empty stage. Referred to from here on as “plot scenes,” such scenes represent narrative breaks and are the most common way that we continue to think about scenes in Shakespeare’s plays. Hamlet 2.2, for example, is a plot scene.

While plot scenes obviously mattered to early modern companies, they were not the only way of thinking about speeches in relationship to one another. Early modern playwrights were most certainly familiar with the Classical stage and its use of what eventually became known as the French scene. Because the classical theatre was much more concerned about the strict observance of Aristotelian unities than was its early modern counterpart, a classical play’s location rarely changed throughout the entirety of the play. Accordingly, a change in narrative direction did not require an
empty stage. Aided by the chorus, the French scene changed with every actor’s entrance to or exit from the stage. Because neo-Aristotelian notions of the scene were created by every entrance and exit, such scenes potentially allowed early modern playwrights to think about plot scenes in terms of its sub-scenes. A lengthy plot scene could be formed by creating and linking shorter, more easily played French scenes. While the remainder of this section of the chapter will focus on plot scenes, French scenes figure heavily in this chapter’s final sections.

The easiest plot scene to reconstitute upon the early modern stage would have likely consisted of a single player speaking a single speech. Soliloquies, especially lengthy soliloquies, presented a narrative division of the play that relied exclusively on the labor of a single player. Moreover, in the likely even that such plot scenes would not have received group rehearsal, soliloquies would have proven especially efficient. Assuming a player had conned the speech accurately and had learned any necessary actions that went along with it, there would be no reason for the company to rehearse the whole of the speech. Finally, soliloquies offered two safeguards against serious error. In the event of a problem with recall, a speech could be altered mid-performance without putting anyone “out,” so long as the final line of the speech was pronounced correctly. Second, though soliloquies did end with a cue for another player’s entrance, it is likely that off-stage players were more easily assisted by the book-holder and attendants.

And yet, while the occasional soliloquy remains a useful device throughout Shakespeare’s corpus, plot scenes built entirely from a single speech are rare. A mere 3% of Shakespearean plot scenes consist of a single soliloquy. The vast majority of
plot scenes consist of an exchange of speeches between multiple characters; in performance, the average plot scene assigned speeches to five players. At their least romantic, speeches represent bits of theatrical labor that were to be executed at specific intervals. A player’s speech burden corresponded to his portion of the plot scene’s most challenging and important labor: cues.

Across the printed corpus, the typical character in an average plot scene has a speech burden of eight speeches. Each player was responsible for the delivery and reception of fewer than ten cues. It is true that, over the course of an entire play, a player could have been in any number of plot scenes, especially in the event of double casting. However, only 3% of Shakespeare’s characters appear in more than three consecutive plot scenes and even Shakespeare’s principle characters receive frequent time off stage. Even if players were provided no additional clues as to when to speak, the pattern of a relatively small speech burden suggests that cues were most easily navigated by players who were responsible for very few of them in a given plot scene, especially if they received time off stage between plot scenes.

The play texts demonstrate further attention to speech burden by featuring multiple characters responsible for the largest speech burdens within at least one of the play’s individual plot scenes. For example, despite Falstaff’s significant presence in the Folio version of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, sixteen different characters are assigned the greatest number of speeches in at least one of the play’s twenty-three

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29 The 59 play texts include 47,902 speeches. The play texts’ 1,178 scenes assign speeches to an average of five players. In performance, the printed corpus would have required a player to enter and speak at least one speech in a scene 6,019 times. The average speech burden (6,019/47,902) is 7.9. Because of a few scenes that are genuine outliers, the median speech burden is six, nearly two speeches fewer. The point is that most scenes assigned relatively few speeches to individual players.
plot scenes. This pattern potentially served four purposes. First, it may have allowed
early modern playwrights a way of keeping each of their players invested in the
afternoon’s performance by providing at least one plot scene in which they were the
busiest player on stage. Secondly, the practice of distribution may have increased
audience interest by offering a variety of players and voices in important roles at
different points of the play. Thirdly, it allowed sixteen of the play’s twenty-three plot
scenes to be led by a player who very well may have been, at least in relative terms,
fresh and focused. Finally, sharing the burden of uttering the greatest number of
speeches in an individual plot scene ensured that the burden would not always fall to
the player responsible for Falstaff. While Falstaff’s overall speech burden is far and
away the largest in the Folio text, individual plot scenes in which other players spoke
more frequently very likely provided brief interludes of assistance for the player
responsible for Falstaff.

Nearly all of Shakespeare’s printed play texts feature a distribution similar to
that offered by the Folio version of *Merry Wives*. Except for *Comedy of Errors* and
*Love’s Labor’s Lost*, they distribute the task of uttering a plot scene’s greatest number
of speeches to seven or more characters. It is worth noting that the range of seven-to-
sixteen is the same range used by many scholars to think about a typical cast size.
Even in plays with leads responsible for most of the speeches in the play as whole,
the play texts consistently provide the entire cast with the opportunity, and
responsibility, of speaking most frequently within at least one plot scene.

30 The largest speech burdens in the remaining seven scenes are divided among Falstaff, Evans, and
Mistress Page.
Even if cues were the only mechanism by which players knew when to speak, Shakespeare’s plays appear to have mitigated the demands of cuing by limiting the number of cues players were responsible for in individual plot scenes and rotating the heaviest speech burdens in individual plot scenes throughout the company. Returning to the command performance of Richard II, we find examples of both patterns of distribution. Assuming that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performed some version of the play that was printed in Q1, each player would have been responsible for delivering fewer than six speeches per plot scene. Moreover, the play’s nineteen plot scenes feature ten different characters responsible for an individual plot scene’s heaviest speech burden. While the players responsible for Bollingbroke and Richard II would have each delivered the greatest number of speeches in multiple plot scenes, both players would have spent considerable time off stage to recover or, if necessary, examine their parts. If the practice of cuing allowed the parts of Richard II to be re-learned in time to receive their extra fee from friends of the Earl of Essex, the play text’s distribution of speeches appears partially responsible for the company’s ability to perform the play.

As performative and textual units, speeches provided playwrights and companies with a relatively efficient means of easing the difficulty of performance. Practices of limiting the number of speeches assigned to characters and varying the focus of individual plot scenes from character to character appear so frequently across

\[^{31}\text{Q1 Richard II contains 513 speeches. Its characters deliver at least one speech 90 times. The average speech burden is 5.7 per player.}\]

\[^{32}\text{Bollingbroke appears in ten of the play’s nineteen plot scenes, only two of which are consecutive. Richard II appears in eight scenes. However, after the play’s first four plot scenes, he is only in four of the plays final fourteen plot scenes.}\]
the corpus that they very likely became habitual. While attention to individual speech burdens would have likely made any plot scene easier to perform, these patterns of distribution are most important in stretches where speeches were ordered by an exclusively narrative logic.

Though speeches were distributed carefully amongst the entire company throughout Shakespeare’s printed corpus, many of Shakespeare’s play texts feature principal characters responsible for a disproportionate share of their play’s speeches and lines. Seventeen of Shakespeare’s thirty-eight plays assign at least one character 150 or more speeches. In these plays, individual players appear to have required assistance beyond that provided by the distribution of speeches. In a theatrical culture in which plays were prepared without much rehearsal, discernible and predictable patterns of speech order seem to have made it easier for players to identify their cues. Additionally, predictable patterns of speech would have reduced the chances for error in large stretches of the texts where cues were unremarkable, repeated, or easily confused. Players who had some idea of when they were to speak beyond listening for a particular cue would have been more capable of proceeding with the appropriate speech in the event of errors made by their fellow players.

As we shift our attention from the number of a player’s speeches to the pattern in which they are spoken, we will also shift our focus from plot scenes to French scenes. The simplest and most common way to provide players with a sense of when they were going to speak was to put them in situations in which they were obviously responsible for every other speech because they were one of only two speaking characters on stage.
Two-Player scenes

The two-player French scene is the most common stage configuration in Shakespeare; a full one-third of all speeches in the corpus would have been delivered by players with only one scene partner. If he was on stage with only one person, a player would have known by default that it would be his turn to speak again as soon as his partner finished talking. This is not to say that cues would have become irrelevant; there is no reason to think that players learning two-player exchanges would have paid any less attention to cues than they would have while studying any other set of speeches. If anything, cues would have been easier to use in two-player French and plot scenes because a player would not have been waiting for an indefinite period while listening to speeches that may or may not have contained his next cue. Still, it is a departure from conventional understanding of cuing to suggest that easily identifiable and usable cues may have had little to do with the cues themselves. Furthermore, even if they likely made cues easier to identify, two-player scenes also made cues much less crucial for actual performance than they would have been on a more crowded stage; in the event of a forgotten or misheard cue, the exchange of speeches could continue as soon as a player realized that his partner had finished speaking or was struggling to remember a line. Because a player knew, at all times, that the next speech belonged to him, a moment of silence could have proven as useful as a cue. Actual cues could be skipped, misheard, or completely forgotten in performance without a two-player exchange grinding to a halt.

33 Of the 47,902 speeches in the corpus, 16,095 are exchanged in two-player French scenes.
Cited earlier as an example of nearly impossible cuing, Hamlet’s first twelve cues in Act II, scene 2 of *Hamlet* are all part of a two-player French scene. Richard Burbage wouldn’t have needed to distinguish one “Lord” from the next because there would have been only one other player on stage. Every time Polonius ended a speech with “Lord,” Burbage would have responded with his next speech. The constant use of “Lord” as a cue would only have been problematic in models of performance where cues were inextricably linked to the speech they were to prompt in a one-to-one relationship, functioning as specific cues for specific lines: in such a model, the same cue would have had twelve different antecedents. In the context of a two-player French scene where players were effectively trading speeches in the order they had been conned, a repeated final word may have actually made cues easier by providing a repeated marker of finished speech.

Shakespeare’s earliest uses of two-player exchanges tend to maximize the benefits of predictable speech order, featuring a large number of speeches and running the duration of an entire plot scene. For example, the second plot scene of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* includes seventy-three speeches, nearly twice as many as the average Shakespearean scene. The plot scene starts with Julia and Lucenta entering the stage and concludes with their exit. Provided that both of the boys playing women in the plot scene could remember their speeches in order, the entire, lengthy plot scene could have hypothetically run without the use of cues so long as one player spoke every time his partner stopped.

Especially in Shakespeare’s earliest plays, two-player French scenes frequently occupy an entire plot scene. Of his 1,185 plot scenes in Shakespeare’s
printed corpus, 242 feature only two players. However, the versatility that the form
offered Shakespeare and his players is best understood in terms of French scenes. Plot
scenes featuring more than two characters frequently end in two-player French scenes
created by the departure of all but two players. The characters involved in the newly
created French scene are often marked by the Latin stage direction “manet.” Though
W. W. Greg (1969) finds the direction for one or two players to “remain” an
apparently useless direction, it takes on additional import if I am correct in asserting
that early modern companies understood two-player French scenes to be inherently
easier to perform than French scenes featuring more than two characters. The
direction manet may not have been a description of the obvious but a meaningful
direction intended to designate the creation of a more easily played French scene.

Likewise, plot-scenes featuring more than two characters frequently begin
with a two-player French scene. In fact, nearly half of all plot scenes in the corpus
begin with a two-player French scene. Many of these initial French scenes feature
very few speeches. Nonetheless, the frequency with which plot scenes begin with two
people on stage suggests a desire to begin new narrative sections with an easily
played French scene, perhaps to establish a brisk pace or settle an inexperienced
player’s nerves.

Finally, two-player French scenes were frequently linked together to create a
compound plot scene. Plot scenes constructed from multiple, two-player French
scenes are marked by the particularly early modern convention wherein one character

34 The corpus contains 1,185 plot scenes: 582 scenes begin with two players alone on stage. Perhaps
obviously, this figure includes the 242 plot scenes that are composed of a single two-player French
scene.
enters precisely as another departs, ensuring that no more than two players are on stage at the same time. While uncommon in Shakespeare’s very earliest work, plot scenes constructed from linked, two-player French scenes become more common in play texts believed to have been written after 1595.  

In addition to the conjoining of two-player French scenes, Shakespeare and his company appear to have found other ways to add theatrical interest to two-player French scenes. Two-player exchanges frequently occur in both French and plot scenes that include silent “ghost” characters. In Q1 Richard III, Richard inappropriately woos Lady Ann while the pallbearers remain on stage. After a pallbearer utters a single line, Richard and Ann exchange eighty-nine speeches without interruption. The play text features a clutter of non-speaking characters when Richard and Queen Elizabeth later share an eighty-eight-speech exchange in 4.4. Understood by critics, including R.B. McKerrow, as mistakes, the inclusion of characters who are named but do not utter a line may have been purposeful. In the company of silent players, a two-player plot or French scene created the ease of a two-player exchange while providing its audience with the look of a more crowded stage.

Along these lines, plot scenes in The Tempest and A Midsummer Night’s Dream employ the device of sleep to create unexpected two-player French scenes. In the second plot scene of the Tempest, Miranda is put to sleep following an expository two-player French scene with Prospero. With the sleeping Miranda still on stage, Prospero initiates a lengthy, two-player exchange with the newly arrived Ariel. In 2.2

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35 Two-hundred-twenty-two plot scenes feature strings of two-player French scenes. The thirteen printed versions of plays believed to have been written before 1595 include only twenty-two of these strings.
of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia and Lysander arrive on stage alone, exchange speeches and fall asleep. Puck then applies Oberon’s “love juice” while speaking a soliloquy. After Puck finishes, Helena and Demetrius enter for a two-player French scene with Hermia and Lysander still asleep on stage. When Demetrius breaks free of Helena, he exits and leaves her alone on stage to deliver a soliloquy that ends when she finds and wakes Lysander for a final, two-player French scene. Though the choreography of entrances and sleep likely required rehearsal, the actual exchange of speeches took place between players who knew from whom their cues were coming: everyone else on stage was feigning sleep.

Finally, the arrival of messengers frequently created yet another type of two-player exchange. The intrusion of a messenger often brought a third player to the stage who spoke exclusively to one other player. This sort of messenger-related interlude is found in Act IV, scene 7 of Q2 *Hamlet*. The arrival of the messenger ends a two-player French scene between Claudius and Laertes. The messenger exchanges three speeches with the king before leaving the stage. Claudius’s and Laertes then begin another two-player French scene that ends when Gertrude arrives to disclose the news of Ophelia’s death in a French scene in which only she and Laertes speak. Of the forty speeches in the plot scene, only Claudius’s final utterance is not a part of a two-player exchange.\(^{36}\)

Continued attempts to shorten, subordinate, or otherwise disguise the two-player French scene draw attention to its potential dramatic limitations. Extended two-player plot scenes were inherently lacking in terms of narrative scope, especially

\(^{36}\) That said, this dissertation only counts two-player scenes as those in which no other speaking character is on stage.
in a theatrical environment that favored stories featuring large casts. Without furniture or set pieces on the large outdoor stage, extended two-player French scenes likely ran the risk of seeming small or static. And yet, the continued use of two-player French scenes also suggests that the performative advantages by which players knew when to deliver their speeches were such that Shakespeare and his company were compelled to find ways to get two players into isolated conversation. Those advantages are perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that two-player French scenes appear most frequently in the seventeen plays that feature characters responsible for more than 150 speeches; plays requiring a disproportionate number of speeches from their leads were most likely to have been written to use two-player French scenes to ease the difficulty of those speeches.

The use of two-player plot scenes in Othello is particularly illustrative. In comparison to other Shakespeare plays, Othello is an unusually demanding play, featuring five plot scenes of more than 100 speeches and more total speeches than any other Shakespeare play. More to the point, nearly 1,000 of the play’s speeches are assigned to the play’s six main characters; in performance, nearly two-thirds of the play’s 1,178 speeches would have been delivered by the players responsible for Othello, Iago, and Desdemona. Taken together, their 709 speeches signify a greater number of speeches than are in the entirety of twenty-one printed versions of Shakespeare’s plays, including Macbeth, Merchant of Venice, The Tempest, and Q1 Romeo and Juliet.

If played according to cues alone, the play would have been incredibly difficult. However, over half of the play’s speeches are located in two-player French
scenes. Interestingly, not one of the play’s forty-one two-player French scenes fills an entire plot scene.37 While the succession of two-player French scenes is particularly appropriate for the play’s plot, the structure also creates a constantly changing stage while also offering considerable assistance to the players responsible for Othello, Iago, and Desdemona.38

Most important, the extensive use of two-player French scenes provided extended stretches in which three players working at the very edge of what was thought to be possible for the early modern actor could make mistakes without drastic consequences.

While plays like Othello and Hamlet feature more extensive use of two-player French scenes than the typical Shakespeare play, the scenic form is prominent in most of Shakespeare’s plays believed to have been written after 1594. Even if it was not likely considered one of Shakespeare’s most challenging plays, Richard II contains a typical number of two-player scenes that likely made the command performance of 1601 easier. Of Q1’s fifty-five French scenes, twenty-four feature only two characters. Consistent with a typical Shakespeare play, roughly a third of the play’s speeches would have been exchanged by two players who were the only speaking characters on stage.

Two-player plot and French scenes are the most obvious scenic forms by which Shakespeare and his company offered textual assistance regarding when players were to deliver their speeches. However, nearly half of Shakespeare’s

37 Folio Othello contains a total of ninety French scenes.
38 Four hundred thirty of the 709 speeches assigned to Othello, Iago, and Desdemona are delivered in two-player scenes.
speeches located outside of two-player plot and character scenes appear to have been written in a specific order that would have likely provided players with similar assistance. Nearly half of the corpus’s French scenes featuring three or more speaking characters are composed of an extended sequence of speeches wherein one character speaks every other speech. In this chapter’s next section, I describe this scenic form as a “stem” of speeches and argue that it offered players in crowded scenes many of the same advantages as two-player exchanges. If two-player French scenes made it clear when players were to speak by eliminating other options, stems of speeches offered players similar assistance through a commonly occurring pattern that would have been easily recognized in even a single rehearsal.

**Speech Stems**

The second plot scene of *A Midsummer Night Dream* creates what is essentially a two-player exchange between Peter Quince and a collective interlocutor that is the rest of his company of mechanicals. This pattern creates a stem of speeches; in the botanical metaphor, Quince’s speeches are internodes, spanning between one partner and the next; all of the speeches assigned to the scene’s other five characters branch off of the cues provided by Quince’s speeches. To clarify my nomenclature, the second plot scene in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* comprises a forty-one-speech stem in which Quince’s twenty speeches are internodes and the scene’s remaining twenty speeches, divided among five characters, are branches.\(^{39}\)

\(^{39}\)There is an additional speech attributed to “all.”

61
The advantages that a stem of speeches may have presented to the player responsible for its internodes are both considerable and more or less identical to those afforded to players by a two-player exchange; I am suggesting that, after a single rehearsal, the player responsible for Quince would have known that every speech, regardless of who was speaking, held his next cue. In most circumstances, he would more easily have heard his cue; in the event of a forgotten, misspoken, or misheard cue, however, he would have known that his best plan of action was to begin his next speech. While these benefits are the most likely reason for such stems, it is worth examining how, as internodes, Quince’s speeches serve to direct the speeches I am describing as branches. Each of Quince’s twenty speeches either directly prompts Bottom’s next utterance or literally calls upon another player. For example, when Quince moves from exchanging speeches with Bottom to exchanging speeches with Flute, his line ends with “…Flute, the bellowes mender.” He calls on each player by name; in performance, the ends of Quince’s speeches would have essentially directed the players responsible for the stem’s branches. All that would have been necessary for the player responsible for Quince’s internodes to connect the speeches of his fellow players into the plot scene as it was written is the knowledge that every other speech belonged to him.

Players responsible for the stem’s branches would still have relied heavily upon cues to know when to speak. However, the fact that stems of speeches appear prominently throughout the corpus suggests that players would have recognized the scenic form in rehearsal and very likely have known to look to Quince for their cue: the 1,185 plot scenes in the corpus include 1,190 stems of ten or more speeches. Of
the 31,805 speeches uttered with more than two speaking players on stage, nearly half (14,850) create stems.⁴⁰

Even if they did not remember their cues, the content of Quince’s speeches should have suggested that his fellow players were to speak when he called them by name. Additionally, four players in the scene would have been responsible for three or fewer speeches and should have, by virtue of being allowed on stage at all, been able to identify one-to-three cues in a single plot scene. While a stem of speeches is obviously more advantageous for the player speaking the stem’s internodes, simple math requires that stems effectively reduce the speech burden of players responsible for its branches. This is especially true in stems built from speeches assigned to five or more characters.

Like two-player exchanges, stems of speeches reduced the likelihood of catastrophic error. Assuming Bottom was played by Will Kemp, it is worth pointing out that in a situation where an utterance turned extempore for any reason, the player responsible for Quince would simply have needed to wait until his improvising partner stopped talking in order to right the ship by delivering his next speech. Even if his next line may have lost comic resonance, the player responsible for Quince could have stayed “in” his part and allowed the plot scene to continue with a good chance that his fellows would follow.

By literally ending with the names of other characters, Quince’s speeches are particularly suited to their metaphorical roles as internodes; few early modern plot

⁴⁰For the purposes of this study, a stem of speeches is defined as one that is at least ten speeches long unless the plot scene contains fewer than ten speeches.
scenes involve a role-call that so clearly and definitively moves from one player to the next. However, other plot scenes with three or more characters create a stem of speeches within a variety of dramatic circumstances. Act V of *Henry the Fourth, Part Two* creates a twenty-four speech stem; the internodes provided by Shallow’s twelve speeches also name characters every time Shallow addresses a new character. In slightly different fashion, Falstaff’s forty-one speeches act as internodes for the eighty-three-speech stem composing 3.2 of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, linking extended two-player exchanges with Mistress Quickly and Master Ford to a French scene that contains five speaking characters. While two of these exchanges are technically two-player French scenes, the result is that, for the entirety of the plot scene, Falstaff is given every other speech. Other characters whose speeches serve as internodes for a stem of speeches spanning an entire plot scene include Portia, Antipholus of Syracuse, Cleopatra, Angelo, Duke Vincentio, and the Bastards of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *King Lear*. While these stems do not present all of the advantages of Peter Quince’s—in that they do not call on their fellow players by name one character at a time—the repeated use of the device suggests that the kind of directing offered by player responsible for a stem’s internodes could take more subtle forms.\(^4\)

For example, in the second scene of *Much Ado About Nothing*, John the Bastard is conspiring with Conrad when they are joined by Borachio. Though no

\(^4\) *All’s Well that Ends Well*, 1.3; *Merchant of Venice*, 1.2; *Comedy of Errors*, 3.2; *Anthony and Cleopatra*, 1.3 and 3.2; *Measure for Measure*, 2.4 and 4.3; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.3; *King Lear*, 1.2. Cleopatra’s second stem includes a single break that I believe resulted in simultaneous or competing speeches. The device, in this instance and elsewhere, is dealt with at length in the fourth chapter.
character leaves the scene, the three-player French scene is essentially a pair of two-
player French scenes linked by a cue that overtly names Borachio. The plot scene’s
only four speeches that fall outside of two-player exchanges conclude the plot scene:

*John.* …you are both sure, and will assist mee?

*Conr.* To the death my Lord.

*John* Let vs to the great supper…
shall we goe prove whats to be done?

*Bor.* Wee’ll wait vpon your Lordship.

John’s speeches do not overtly indicate which player should respond to his final two
questions. If they knew to look to the player responsible for John for their cues, the
players responsible for Borachio and Conrad would likely have been more easily able
to hear and respond correctly to their cues. However, if the answers happened to be
reversed, the story of the plot scene would still make sense; the subtle, though
arguably distinct, adjustment in meaning would likely have been lost in real-time
performance. Even if wasn’t, the scene would still end have ended without derailing
the play. In the corpus, internodes unmarked in terms of who is to answer frequently
amount to a series of questions, commands, or greetings that could be answered in
any order without putting a player “out.” So long as the character delivering the
stem’s internodes knew to begin his next speech when anyone else on stage finished
talking, the answers he received wouldn’t have prevented the French or plot scene
from continuing.

While, as in the above examples, a stem of speeches occasionally runs the
length of a plot scene, stems more often follow the logic of player’s individual
entrances and exits. Of the 1,185 plot scenes in Shakespeare’s printed plays, nearly one in three (380) contains at least one character who, for the duration of his or her stay upon the stage, is responsible for every other speech.\textsuperscript{42} Stems of speeches not only placed individual players in a position that allowed them to direct the theatrical and narrative action, they also allowed a playwright to shift a plot scene’s momentum from one character to another by transferring the role of internode to a different player’s speeches. Usually, though not always, this transition happened upon an entrance or exit. Accordingly, stems of speeches frequently compose entire French scenes.

While stems running the length of an entire plot scene were likely easier to perform, shorter stems that were lost or surrendered to other characters were well suited for plot scenes in which narrative focus shifted from one character to another. The second plot scene of F Hamlet, for example, begins with Claudius providing the internodes for the scene’s first ten-speech stem. However, once he asks Hamlet a direct question, focus is transferred to Hamlet, who provides internodes for the scene’s next sixty-eight speech stem; the stem of speeches extends through three French scenes.

In addition to shifting focus among characters in plot scenes, shorter stems of speeches could have allowed player to control individual parts of a longer plot scene. Act III, Scene 2 of Q2 Hamlet is essentially a lengthy stem interrupted by two moments of meta-theater. Hamlet begins and ends the plot scene with speeches functioning as internodes for two stems of fifty-four speeches each; in the middle of

\textsuperscript{42} While some stems extend into two-player scenes, this figure does not include plot scenes created exclusively by two-player scenes.
the plot scene, his speeches direct another twenty-speech stem between the dumb show and *The Murder of Gonzago*. A seemingly chaotic eleven-player plot scene with 138 speeches is made far more orderly when Hamlet is able to guide 128 of those speeches by speaking half of them in sequence. The plot scene’s remaining ten speeches, though not ordered to ease the difficulty of performance, would have been delivered by players with the scene’s smallest speech burdens. Furthermore, those ten speeches are located in the scene’s meta-plays, moments that almost certainly qualify as what Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern refer to as “group actions,” meaning that those ten speeches would have likely required at least one period of collective rehearsal. Hamlet’s guidance of the plot scene is steady but flexible enough to make room for stretches of other theatrical business.

Stemmed speeches provided the advantages of a two-player plot or French scene to stage compositions featuring three or more speaking characters. Unlike two-player plot and French scenes that were usually made obvious by the number of players on stage, stemmed speeches would not have been inherently obvious to players before performance or rehearsal. This is especially true for plot scenes that included multiple stems. In order to take advantage of the benefits provided by patterns in which a single player delivered every other speech, players needed to recognize the presence of the pattern. Certainly, one purpose of collective rehearsal may have been to take note of where stems began and ended, work that would have made the play easier every single time it was performed. However, even if scenes were unrehearsed or stems were not singled out in rehearsal, two patterns exist in Shakespeare’s plays that would have assisted players in identifying a stem of
speeches. First, certain types of roles are more likely to provide a stem’s internodes. Intuitively, the speeches of Kings, Dukes, and Ladies were more likely to provide internodes for a stem than were the speeches of their attendants. Also intuitively, clowns and fools are frequently responsible for a stem’s branches; this position allowed potential improvisation. Second, most stems begin with a player’s first speech in a scene. In other words, the entrance of a new player frequently resulted in a stem of speeches. Once recognized, a stem of speeches made it easier for all players to identify their cues.

The importance of stems is most easily observed in combination with two-player plot and French scenes. Between the two forms, Shakespeare and his company provided assistance locating cues and knowing where to speak. Roughly two-thirds of all speeches in the corpus feature at least one character delivering every other speech. This chapter’s final section details the proliferation of ordered speeches and offers theories to explain sections of the play texts in which speeches appear to be ordered by an exclusively narrative logic as opposed to patterns designed to aid performers looking for cues.

Theatrical Logic vs. Narrative Logic

The actor playing Q2 Hamlet, initially Richard Burbage, was responsible for 346 speeches. Between two-player exchanges and speech stems in which he was responsible for internodes, 314 of his 346 speeches are ordered; I am defining ordered speeches as those delivered in sequences where at least one character is responsible for every other speech. In performance, especially repeat performance, Burbage
would have known that, usually, every other speech was his. This is especially useful in scenes like 2.2 where most cues would have ended with the same word.

While Q2 *Hamlet* goes to greater lengths to accommodate a single role than does any other of Shakespeare’s plays, the vast majority of Shakespeare’s principle characters receive similar consideration. Of the ninety-two parts with more than one hundred speeches in a single play text, only twenty do not have half of their speeches in ordered exchanges.43

One might expect early modern power hierarchies to determine which players were given the accommodation of speaking primarily ordered speeches, and they often do. However, it is interesting to note how frequently accommodation is made for parts likely to have been played by the youngest members of the company. The players responsible for Beatrice, Juliet, and Isabella would have each delivered greater than 80% of their speeches in ordered exchanges; between 60-80% of speeches assigned to Rosalind, Cleopatra, Viola, Olivia, Desdemona, Imogen, and *All’s Well’s* Helena are ordered. If critics are right in asserting that parts were frequently written for specific players, the textual assistance offered by partnered and stemmed speeches very likely allowed early modern playwrights to assist any player who had a need for it. The texts appear to offer aid to principals, boys, and any player who was “slow of studie” in the form of extended stretches in which, every time a

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43 A note regarding methodology: when noting ordered exchanges for individual parts, only speeches providing internodes for stems of speeches were counted. In general, this means that individual percentages will be lower than scenic percentages that count entire speech stems. Sixty-three of the ninety-two parts assigned greater than one-hundred speeches feature at least 60% of their speeches in ordered exchanges, and a full forty do so at a rate greater than 70%.
stage partner stopped speaking, he simply needed to pronounce his speeches in the order they had been conned.44

However, if ordered speeches were designed to alleviate the work of specific players, their benefits extended to entire casts. Even if supporting players in Q2 Hamlet would have frequently had to rely upon cues alone, they would have known that if Burbage was on stage, he was likely the person responsible for their cue. Additionally, 132 of Burbage’s speeches were delivered in two-player French scenes, meaning that 132 speeches assigned to supporting roles were also in two-player exchanges. As important, Q2 Hamlet was written so that 184 speeches are located in two-player French scenes that don’t feature Hamlet. In other words, supporting players were also given ordered speeches. Perhaps more important still, despite the play text’s length, Hamlet’s supporting cast has a lower average speech burden per scene than the corpus as a whole.45 Even if Shakespeare and his company built Q2 Hamlet to allow Richard Burbage to determine when to deliver his 346 speeches, the play text would have likely offered considerable assistance to all who played it.

As a typical Shakespeare play, Q1 Richard II features roughly two-thirds of its scenes in scenic forms designed to help players recognize their cues while reducing the likelihood that players would be put “out” by cuing errors. Though only twelve of the play text’s fifty-five French scenes consist exclusively of a speech stem, speech stems constitute nearly a third of the play’s speeches.

44 For discussions concerning the relationship between parts and players, see G.E. Bentley, The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s Time (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 206-234; Palfrey and Stern, Shakespeare, 40-44; and Stern, Rehearsal, 84-86.
45 Q2 Hamlet is 1,102 speeches long. It contains more speeches than any play besides Othello and Troilus and Cressida.
Interestingly, though the parts of Bollingbroke and Richard II appear to have been intentionally assigned a similar number of speeches, the player responsible for Richard II would have received much more assistance in performance than his rival. Only twenty-six of Bollingbroke’s seventy-eight speeches are ordered; of Richard the Second’s eighty-three speeches, fifty-eight are ordered. It is certainly possible that the player originally responsible for Richard was older, more frequently responsible for leads in other plays, or even slightly less efficient (and therefore more in need of assistance) than his fellow player studying Bollingbroke. It is worth noting that several pairs of leading, male characters feature similarly uneven percentages of ordered speeches.

If it is impossible to explain the variance between the levels of textual assistance offered to the obviously linked parts of Bollingbroke and Richard the Second, the differences between levels of assistance provided to individual plays are much easier to theorize. In the aggregate, the 47,902 speeches that make up Shakespeare’s plays, two thirds are located in ordered exchanges designed to make the plays easier to rehearse and perform. However, deviation regarding the percentage of ordered speeches is significant: ordered speeches compose only 26.9% of the speeches in Q1 The First Part of the Contention (2 Henry VI, 1594) while making up 89.3% of the speeches in F Two Gentlemen of Verona.

In general, plays in which a high percentage of speeches have been located in ordered exchanges also feature one or more characters responsible for a potentially
prohibitive total number of speeches. Consider the twelve plays in which 70% or
more of the plays’ speeches are ordered.46

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>F Richard III</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F As You Like It</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>F Measure for Measure</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F I Henry IV</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>F Othello</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1 Pericles (1609)</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>F Hamlet</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F Anthony and Cleopatra</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>F Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F All's Well that Ends Well</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>F Two Gentlemen of Verona</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
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With exceptions of All’s Well that Ends Well and Pericles, each of these twelve plays
is a play that, in its first performance, would have presented a challenge to the
company. Rarely considered at all, Two Gentlemen of Verona is likely the first play to
have assigned more than 100 speeches to four players, something done by only three
other plays in the corpus. Richard III is the earliest play to feature a part responsible
for more than 200 speeches.47 I Henry IV is the earliest to require two players to
deliver more than 150 speeches. Othello is the earliest to assign more than 150
speeches to three players and the only to require more than 250 from two. Hamlet
places unprecedented demands upon its titular character in the form of 346 speeches
comprising over 1,400 lines. Furthermore, these twelve plays include the characters
of Juliet, Portia, Rosalind, and Cleopatra, each of which would have required, at the
time of their respective playing, more speeches than had ever been asked of a boy

46 All play texts referenced here are Folio texts with the obvious exception of Pericles. Deviations
between Folio and Q1 texts will be explored at length in a later chapter; the percentages are within 5%
for each pair of play texts.
47 Q1 Richard III is the only play text besides Q2 and F Hamlet to require more than 300 speeches
from a single player.
player in a Shakespeare play. Finally, these plays include seven of the eight parts in the corpus comprising more than 200 speeches. At first glance, it is logical that texts placing heavy speech burdens upon individual players would have been written to provide players more assistance in performance. However, it is worth asking why all play texts weren’t as carefully ordered as *Othello, Hamlet, or Romeo and Juliet*. In this chapter’s second section, I argued that even non-theatrically ordered speeches were carefully distributed among players in order to mitigate the difficulty associated with cues. However, once Shakespeare wrote a play as obviously ordered and, I am arguing, relatively easy to play as *Romeo and Juliet*, it is hard to understand how a company would tolerate a return to more chaotically patterned plays like *The Tempest* (54% ordered) or *Coriolanus* (50% ordered). The persistence of speeches ordered according to an exclusively narrative logic suggests some affirmative purpose for a speech order that I have argued was inherently more difficult and prone to error.

A number of possibilities may explain the persistence of speeches ordered by an exclusively narrative logic. Such dialogue may have been easier to write because no attention had to be given to speech order. Likewise, speeches ordered by narrative logic alone may have been able to help a playwright to tell stories focusing on spectacle. Speech stems are rarely found in French or plot scenes including more than six characters. Speeches ordered according to an exclusively narrative logic were likely necessary for French scenes featuring seven to fifteen players. Additionally, plot and French scenes featuring a higher percentage of speeches ordered according to

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48 The exception is Timon.
a narrative logic may have been written under different conditions with more rehearsal time.

One correlation that appears across the corpus is the relationship between narratively ordered speeches and what I will attempt to define as collaborative action. Similar to the notion of “group action” forwarded by Palfrey and Stern, a collaborative action is one that could not have been learned in private study. Collaborative action would have been built by the simultaneous efforts of at least two players. This is obviously difficult to define exactly, though certain actions could not be planned without working with a second actor. One could hypothetically practice “he stabs him” on one’s one; one would at least know what the action was. However, one could not practice “they fight.” I am defining collaborative actions as those which would remain undefined in some way until they were performed. Such actions, including dances, songs, swordfights, murders, the discovery of corpses, plays within plays, and even hiding could not have been conned in isolation. Obviously, just about any action could become collaborative if it involved a second or third player. However, many French and plot scenes in which speeches are ordered by a narrative logic feature actions that, at least in my mind, would have required rehearsal to stage at all.

Though open to some debate, Hamlet’s collaborative actions certainly include the dumb show, The Murder of Gonzago, and the variety of poisonings, stabbings, and duels in the final plot scene between Laertes and Hamlet. Each of these three collaborative actions is located in three of the only four French scenes in the entire play in which speech order appears to have been chosen according to narrative logic.
alone. Throughout Shakespeare’s plays, most French and plot scenes written according to narrative needs alone include collaborative action that would have all but guaranteed group rehearsal. *Romeo and Juliet’s* only similarly written scenes are those with the opening riot, the extended swordplay that kills Mercutio, and the final scene involving another fight and two suicides. *Twelfth Night’s* similarly written scenes include collaborative actions involving the Sir Toby and cohorts hiding while Malvolio finds Mariah’s letter, Malvolio’s revelation of the “twice gartered yellow stockings,” and multiple swordfights. The similarly written scenes in *1 Henry IV* include the robbery and several instances of stage combat. Though I would argue that all early modern French and plot scenes would have benefited from group rehearsal, it is entirely possible that speeches written according to a narrative logic persist in Shakespeare’s texts because they were in the French scenes the company knew they were going to rehearse most frequently with the entire company.

**Conclusion**

Shakespeare and his company built plays for a crowded stage in which plays were broken into parts, studied in private, and reassembled with little to no rehearsal. Because players were responsible for so many parts, parts were learned in private where the delivery of speeches was practiced, complete with gestures. In performance, the parts of individual players were stitched back together through the use of cues. Given the requirements of individual study and the demands of a typical Shakespearean play, performance according to this process was incredibly difficult.
As a company playwright, Shakespeare wrote plays to be more easily playable. In general, Shakespeare made cues easier to recognize by distributing speeches across his company, thereby reducing the number of cues players had to locate in a single plot scene. More important, Shakespeare frequently provided his players with clues as to when they were to speak which would have likely made cues easier to identify while reducing the chance of error in the event of mistaken, misspoken, or misheard cues. Roughly two-thirds of Shakespeare’s speeches are ordered so that at least one character delivers every other speech. These speeches exist in two forms. In two-player plot and French scenes, two characters exchange speeches; both characters speak every other speech. In speech stems, one character provides “internodes” by speaking every other speech while the scene’s remaining characters provide “branches,” taking cues from the stem’s central character. Shakespeare’s most demanding plays, in terms of length and number of speeches, feature the largest percentages of ordered speeches.
Chapter 2: “For look you where my abridgement comes”:
The Playability of Shakespeare’s Variant Play Texts

Sometime in 1599, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men opened the Globe with what very well might have been a performance of Shakespeare’s recently finished Henry V. Even if we assume that the roughly 3,000 Londoners who first filled Shakespeare’s most famous theatre did indeed see the final installment of his second tetralogy of history plays, we cannot be sure of what exactly they saw and heard. Like many of Shakespeare’s plays, Henry V was printed in two, very different forms that complicate our understanding of how the play was originally written and/or played. Though questions of the competing texts’ relative authorial and performative authority have frequently been contentious, the last thirty years or so have seen many critics adopt a theoretical middle ground in which both disputed texts of Henry V are understood to be of critical interest and historical value.¹

This compromise is made possible by a narrative in which early modern playwrights wrote plays in their idealized, maximal form before turning them over to companies that would, necessarily, reduce and alter the texts according to the needs of performance. It is oversimplification to suggest that any single narrative represents critical consensus regarding Shakespeare’s variant texts; indeed, critics continue to forward a variety of explanations for the play texts of Henry V. However, if the narrative of theatrical abridgment does not represent a critical consensus, the narrative itself has only rarely come under direct attack. Even as Janette Dillon (1994) cautions against “A model that puts playhouse and author on either side of text and demands commitment to the first at the price of total rejection of the second…,” the narrative by which “maximal”/authorial texts were converted into “minimal”/performance texts has remained for the most part free from serious examination. By separating Shakespeare’s surviving, variant texts into maximal texts that approximate the plays as they were written and minimal texts that represent the plays as they were likely performed, the schema has appeased critics interested in Shakespeare the author as well as critics interested in Shakespeare the company playwright. Like many good compromises, the theory neatly cleaves the corpus of varying texts in half, designating the longer texts as the province of what Lukas Erne calls a “literary Shakespeare,” while protecting the shorter texts as imperfect but vital proxies for the ephemeral “Shakespeare in performance.”²

Though the distinction between minimal and maximal texts understands the competing versions of plays like Henry V according to the play texts’ relative fitness

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for early modern stage, it relies almost exclusively upon the most rudimentary metric of comparison: length according to a play text’s total number of lines. In this chapter, I introduce a more nuanced means of assessment, one that evaluates textual features in the context of early modern performance practices that depended on the individual preparation of parts and cues while limiting the amount of group rehearsal. By questioning the theoretical distinction between minimal/performance and maximal/authorial texts, I mean to rethink several of the most common and fundamental assumptions about Shakespeare’s variant play texts.

The earliest printing of *Henry V* (1600), less than a year removed from its hypothetical first performance, is roughly half as long as the version published twenty-three years later in the 1623 Folio. Early readers understood the relationship between the printed play texts in a relatively straightforward fashion: critics including Alexander Pope suggested that shorter, less poetically accomplished Q1 text was written previous to the 1599 performance and that, sometime between the show’s hypothetical opening of the Globe and Shakespeare’s death in 1616, it was revised into the extended, “finished” form printed in the First Folio. However, this chronologically straightforward explanation was for the most part abandoned at the turn of the twentieth century as critics began to take more seriously the “diurese stolne, and surreptitious copies” denounced by Heminges and Condell in their introduction to the 1623 Folio.³ Thanks to the work of the loosely united group of critics referred to as the New Bibliographers, a critical narrative emerged in which the Folio text was understood to have been printed from an authorial copy of the text

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written prior to the opening of the Globe and the subsequent preparation of the manuscript from which Q1 was printed.  

Initially, the narrative constructed piecemeal by the New Bibliography reduced Q1’s status to that of a non-Shakespearean text, created via piracy or memorial reconstruction on the part of one or more of its actors. However, in the century since A.W. Pollard (1909) first introduced the idea of a “bad quarto,” critical opinion has gradually re-evaluated the historical value of Shakespeare’s early quartos; in the last two decades, we have moved increasingly close to a critical consensus returning to the notion that Q1 best represents the play with which the Lord Chamberlain’s Men hypothetically opened the Globe. While it is true that many critics have restored the performati

ve authority of Q1, the New Bibliographical schema has remained more or less intact. Even if critical opinion has returned to a position in which the earliest printed text is understood to bear a likely resemblance to the play in performance, most critics appear to believe the manuscript behind the Folio text to have been written first.

As early as 1953, Leo J. Suschko suggested that the Q1 and F texts of Henry V were equally authorial, with the shorter Q1 text representing a performance version of the longer, literary Folio. The idea that the texts shared authority but differed in

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5 For five divergent arguments that each suggest or imply a performative function for Q1 Henry V, see Alfred Hart, ‘Stolne and Surreptitious Copies’ (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1942); Leo J. Suschko, Können die ‚schlechten‘ Quartos der Shakespeare-Dramen abgekürzte Provinzfassungen sein? (Friedrich-Alexander Universität: Erlangen, 1953); Eric Rasmussen, “The Revision of Scripts,” in A New History of Early English Drama, eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (Columbia: Columbia UP, 1997), 441-460; Gurr, The First Quarto, 1-34; and Erne, Shakespeare.

6 Suschko, Können, 42.
purpose would languish for a few decades in the wake of the New Bibliographical certainty that Q1 *Henry V* was set from “a bad, or reported, text much abbreviated, often inaccurate and unmetrical, and published, we may be certain, without the authority and consent of the author or his Company.” Gradually, however, Suschko’s schema found support from critics ranging from Andrew Gurr (2000) to Lukas Erne (2003). Like Suschko before them, both critics suggest that *Henry V* was written in a form best represented by F, a text “of a length which actors found impossible to reconcile with the requirements of performance.” Both critics suggest that theatrical preparation resulted in a much shorter text very likely represented by the play as it was printed in Q1.

In his introduction to the Cambridge edition of Q1, Gurr suggests that we can be uncommonly certain that the play’s first printing closely resembles its first performance:

> The quarto text of *Henry V* printed in 1600 is probably the best surviving example of a Shakespeare play-script as it was first performed by the company that bought it…. The author’s script was designed from the outset to be an idealised, maximal text, and every early performance altered it into more realistic or realizable shapes, often at a quite drastic remove from the ideal…. The Folio version of *Henry V* probably approximates to such a “maximal” text. The quarto

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version represents something much closer to the “minimal” text that was actually performed.¹⁰

Even as such treatment of Q1 avoids charges of memorial reconstruction or piracy, the basic relationship governing the two play texts is largely understood to be the same as it was for Pollard and the New Bibliographers: the play was written in its lengthiest form and altered for, through, or because of performance.

Though varied in terms of particulars, a majority of recent narratives explaining the relationship between the texts of *Henry V* now resemble the paradoxical arguments of Suschko, Erne, and Gurr, suggesting both that Q1 best represents the play as it was first performed and that, despite being printed nearly a quarter of a century later, the 1623 Folio text best represents the play as it was first written. Some version of this two-pronged explanation figures prominently in recent critical assessment of all of Shakespeare’s plays printed in varying forms: Shakespeare is understood by many critics to have written plays resembling those printed in the Folio while his company is understood to have performed plays that much more closely resembled their shorter, simpler counterparts.

Certainly a text containing more lines would have required additional memorization than one containing fewer. It stands to reason that there may very well have been a point at which a text became absolutely too long to be performed on the public stage. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, our insistence that the lengthiest versions of Shakespeare’s variant play texts were inherently unplayable has endured even as critics have complicated our understanding of the “two-hour play,”

¹⁰ Gurr, *The First Quarto*, 3.
theatrical cutting, and the general narrative surrounding Shakespeare’s career. If we have reason to believe that length alone may not have rendered a text unplayable, narratives relying upon the distinction between minimal/performance and maximal/authorial texts require a more sensitive and descriptive means of evaluating a text’s relative fitness for the early modern stage.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I introduced a methodology designed to read Shakespeare’s play as they were intended to be performed by focusing on features of the printed texts specifically designed to negotiate the unique set of staging practices that governed early modern production, many of which were literally enacted upon the text itself. I posited that not all texts would have been inherently playable according to a process in which the play was sundered into parts, studied by individual players on their own, and reassembled in as few rehearsals as possible. Focusing on the distribution and patterning of speeches across fifty-nine of Shakespeare’s printed play texts, I identified several textual features intended, I believe, to ease the difficulty of early modern performance. I argued that Shakespeare and his company distributed speeches in order to minimize the number of cues for which players were responsible during individual scenes and provide extended and frequent time off stage for each player to recover, refocus, or, more hypothetically, review his part. Furthermore, I identified two distinct forms – two-player scenes and speech stems – that would have allowed a player to deliver every other speech, patterns that may have allowed a player to recognize his next cue more easily while providing contingency in the event that the cue was misspoken, misheard, or
This chapter applies the analysis of speech distribution and speech order to questions surrounding Shakespeare’s variant texts. In terms of their readiness for performance according to early modern stage practices, there is little difference between the maximal/authorial and minimal/performance text: each of Shakespeare’s versions demonstrates the same patterns intended to make performance according to parts easier.

In addition to blurring the distinction between maximal/authorial and minimal/performance texts, the analysis of speeches and speech order complicates related narratives perpetuated by that distinction. If Shakespeare’s lengthiest texts were playable, there is little reason to believe they were radically shortened and changed for the sake of performance. While it is possible to imagine a scenario in which a long, playable text was cut into a shorter playable text, comparison with patterns of emendation recorded by the eighteen surviving manuscripts believed to be of theatrical origin suggests that the plays were not abridged by any method attested to by surviving documents. I am more inclined to side with the few critics who have asserted that the later, lengthier plays are the products of later moments of revision.12

If we return to the question of Henry V, the suggestion that both texts appear to have been prepared to ease the burdens of performance is made less confusing when one remembers that the play’s potential debut at the Globe is not the play’s only performance of note. While the 1599 performance is shrouded in uncertainty, there is little debate concerning a court performance on 7 January 1605. Both performances

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11 For the purposes of this study, two-player scenes are defined scenes in which only two speaking characters are on stage. Speech stems are sections of a text containing three or more speaking characters in which one character delivers every other speech.
12 Proponents of revision are discussed in the final section of this chapter.
appear to be in some way inaugural, worthy of a new or newly revised text. I posit here that, if the Lord Chamberlain’s Men did indeed open the Globe with *Henry V*, it is likely that the performance was based upon a text closely aligned with Q1, not because the 1623 Folio was unfit for performance but because there is little reason to believe that the equally-performance-friendly lines and speeches unique to the 1623 Folio had even been written. While it is impossible to prove that some of those lines and speeches were written specifically for the 1605 performance, such a schema would make sense of two performance-friendly texts by suggesting that the shorter, “less accomplished” text was written first and revised for a second debut at an important court performance between 1600 and 1623.

Though speculation regarding subsequent performances worthy of theatrical revision is for the most part beyond my scope here, this chapter advocates a general narrative in which Shakespeare’s variant texts were both written *and* enlarged in order to make performance according to parts easier. More specifically, the chapter documents and categorizes the variations between competing printings of the four plays most commonly understood in terms of maximal/authorial and minimal/performance texts: *Henry V, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet,* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Ultimately, I theorize a method of revision by which play texts may have been expanded in such a way that consciously maintained their playability or, in many cases, made them easier to perform. Drawing on contextual studies that support a chronological relationship among Shakespeare’s variant play texts, I argue that Shakespeare’s later variant play texts are the results of one or two authorial revisions – as opposed to incremental changes made by players – designed both to
alter the content of the plays and to ensure that Shakespeare’s company would be able to perform the enlarged texts.

Before demonstrating the playability of Shakespeare’s variant play texts and hypothesizing about the relationship between them, it is necessary to examine the logical but problematic assumptions responsible for the widespread notion that the best measure of a play texts’ relative fitness for the early modern stage is its total number of lines.

“This is too long”
A survey of the last fifty years of textual criticism demonstrates that brevity and playability appear to be inextricable qualities. Critical assessments of the inherently performative nature of Shakespeare’s quartos frequently begin and end with their relative shortness in comparison to later printings. Robert E. Burkhart (1975) refers to the bad quartos as “shortened versions designed for performance.” In defense of Q1 Hamlet, Brian Holderness and Graham Loughrey (1992) insist that “what we do know is that neither the Second Quarto nor the Folio texts… are likely to have represented an acting version: they are both, and especially Q2, inconveniently long.” David Farley-Hills (1996) argues that Q1 Romeo and Juliet is “a shorter version of the text… intended for performance”; his evidence is “the 26 percent reduction or so” that he believes was necessary for production. Also describing Romeo and Juliet, Jay J. Halio (1995) argues that Shakespeare “first wrote out a full draft of his play…. Since the draft was too long for a performance lasting two hours or so, a shorter draft was made…. This became the acting version of the play.” Stephen Orgel (2002)
states that “with very few exceptions, every printed Shakespeare text is far too long for the two to two-and-one-half hours that is universally accepted as the performing time of plays in the period.” Andrew Gurr (2004) puts this logic into numbers, suggesting that “2,500 [lines] was close to maximal for a play-script.” Finally, the chapter in which Lukas Erne offers backhanded praise for the performative value of the quartos is, tellingly, called “Why Size Matters:….” Though many critics appear to heed Paul Werstine’s caution against assuming that a single explanation need govern the relationship between every pair of varying texts, this survey demonstrates the extent to which a single criterion, length as measured by total number of lines, has dictated the terms of comparison across the corpus of variant texts.  

Because length is the principle means of comparison, frequently understood to be more important than when the play texts were printed, pairs of variant texts are most easily described in terms that are binary and oppositional: one text is short while the other is long. The critical assumption that a text’s relative brevity is self-evident of its proximity to performance is therefore conjoined with the critical assumption that Shakespeare’s longest play texts were “considerably too long ever to have been performed in anything close to their entirety.” Both assumptions are reinforced by – and in turn help reinforce – three inter-related assessments of early modern theatrical

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14 Erne, Shakespeare, 192.
practices. First, playing companies have been thought to limit typical performances to just over two hours. Second, playwrights – or at least Shakespeare – are thought to have frequently written plays much longer than that length limit. Finally, to reconcile a playwright’s lengthy finished product and the limitations of performance, companies are understood to have routinely cut texts for performance, perhaps by as much as half. Taken together, these three features of an early modern theatrical ecology justify the ubiquitous conflation of brevity and playability. However, these three related features warrant closer investigation.  

Following the lead of Alfred Hart (1934), most critics have understood the typical early modern play to have lasted two hours, a length attested to by *Romeo and Juliet* as well as a number of other early modern plays. Moreover, critics have understood the “two hours traffic” self-reflexively reported in *Romeo and Juliet* not as an estimate but as a maximum, asserting that “the actors associated with Shakespeare maintained the two-hour time limit with some rigidity.” If true, this limit would certainly render Shakespeare’s lengthiest texts unplayable: most estimates suggest that early modern companies performed at a rate of roughly twenty lines per minute, a performance speed that would render an uncut performance of *Henry V* more than a full hour longer than that two-hour standard.

If the “two-hour play” was, in fact, a maximum that was enforced by playing companies, early modern playwrights frequently and knowingly wrote plays that were much too long for performance. A number of critics have turned to the claims made

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by title pages and printed introductions as evidence that playwrights wrote plays that were necessarily shortened for performance. David Scott Kastan (2001) collates authorial complaints lodged in printed play texts as evidence that “although all playwrights would have anticipated that their plays would be shaped by the demands of performance… many playwrights consciously turned to print to preserve their creation in its intended form.” For example, in the forward to the 1640 quarto edition of his Antipodes, Brome informs the reader that “[y]ou shal find in this Booke more than was presented upon the Stage, and left out of the Presentation, for superfluous length (as some of the Players pretended).”¹⁷ Brome goes on to insist that the printed text is as “good as should be intended to the allowed Original; and as it was, at first intended, for the Cock-pit Stage.” These claims have become oft-cited evidence regarding one early modern playwright’s response to the seemingly commonplace practice in which a performing company made alterations for the sake of a performance constrained by maximum duration. Though Brome’s disclaimer is noteworthy, it is also worth noting the relative scarcity of similar complaints. If plays, including the four that are the primary subjects of this chapter, were knowingly written in a form that would have been an hour too long, most playwrights are assumed to have welcomed, or at least been resigned to, the necessary and often significant reduction of their work.¹⁸

Such a culture of theatrical abridgement has been, in part, substantiated by William B. Long’s (1999) comprehensive examination of eighteen extant manuscripts believed to have been used for theatrical purposes. Long found these manuscripts

¹⁷ Richard Brome, Antipodes (London: 1640), L4r.
record “extensive cuts” for performance. Each of the eighteen manuscripts features a number of sections that have been systematically marked with a single line indicating that they are not to be spoken on stage; there is little question that companies frequently cut lines and entire speeches for the sake of performance.\(^{19}\)

However, Long suggests that theatrical cuts had more to do with narrative clarity than length. Long ultimately concludes that most companies did relatively little to the authorial text: the changes they made served to make the play better, as opposed to simply making it shorter. In describing Charlemagne or the Distracted Emperor, Long writes:

> These cuts may have been made to shorten the play; but removing these lines does make Orlando a more active and a more interesting character. I suggest that this is a more theatrically valid reason for the cuts than that of sheer length.\(^{20}\)

In addition to configuring theatrical cutting in terms of narrative and character demands, as opposed to strictly temporal ones, Long points out than no existing theatrical manuscript demonstrates the kind of cuts that would have been required to reduce F Henry the Fifth to the form printed in Q1. The three most heavily cut theatrical manuscripts, Charlemagne (c. 1600), The Second Maiden’s Tragedy (1611), and The Honest Man’s Fortune (1625) cut 159 (6%), 174 (7%), and 175 (7%) lines respectively; in stark contrast, Q1 Romeo and Juliet is 800 (26%) lines shorter than Q2; the shorter versions of Hamlet, Henry V, and Merry Wives of Windsor would


\(^{20}\)Long, “Precious,” 416.
represent even more severe abridgments, being roughly half as long as their Folio counterparts. If playing companies frequently reduced plays by the “26 percent or so” forwarded by David Farley-Hills, they did so without leaving evidence in our extant corpus of theatrical manuscripts. Of the eighteen manuscripts investigated by Long, none cuts more than 7% of its lines. 21

Furthermore, a theatrical environment in which texts were so severely abridged does not accommodate meta-theatrical evidence suggesting that playwrights were intimately involved with their plays in performance. Tiffany Stern (2000), Paul Menzer (2008), and James Marino (2011) all suggest some version of a process in which a playwright’s presence, input, and pen were all central to a play’s limited rehearsal and any necessary textual changes. Meta-theatrical references to playwrights as “Poeticke furies” who threaten their actors for the changing of a syllable imply that playwrights would have been unlikely to knowingly write inherently unplayable texts. 22 The relative lack of authorial complaints about theatrical changes in printed play texts suggest that, if they happened at all, theatrical changes similar to those necessary to reduce F Henry V to Q1 Henry V must have been quite rare. Returning to Brome’s complaints, we might remember that he intended the play to be performed on “the Cock-pit Stage” and that he did not personally believe the play to be superfluously lengthy. If Kastan is correct to suggest that printed play texts offered the playwright a corrective to theatrical treatment of his play, much of our surviving evidence suggests occasional frustration with the

21 I am indebted here to Aaron Pratt’s unpublished essay “Promptbooks and Abridgment: Were Shakespeare’s Foul Papers Performed?”
treatment of a specific text, as opposed to a culture in which every play above a certain length was bound to be redacted for the stage.23

Not only does our presumption of a culture of reduction potentially extend beyond the scope of existing evidence, it contradicts one of the few principles we can be fairly certain did, in fact, guide the practices of London’s professional companies: thrift. Ros Knutson’s essential study of Henslowe’s Diary (1985) concludes that “From the evidence in the diary, the Admiral’s Men and Worcester’s Men (and by association, all adult companies) operated their business as economically as possible.” Because we have no evidence of a company expenditure for the sake of reduction, critics have traditionally glossed over the fact that cutting a text to the extent that F Henry V would have needed to be cut in order to create Q1 Henry V would have constituted a kind of substantial revision. The lack of evidence attesting to such payments by Henslowe suggests that, if such reductions were routine, members of adult companies were willing to engage in a highly specialized and time-consuming textual endeavor without compensation. Even if the companies did not need to pay for textual reduction, the generally sound business practices attested to by Knutson render unlikely the expenditure of resources – including the costs of paper and the labor of writers, scriveners, and copyists – required to sustain a culture in which plays were routinely written overly long and shortened for the sake of performance.24


24 Roslyn L. Knutson, “Henslowe’s Diary and the Economics of Play Revision for Revival,” Theatre Research International 10 (1985):1-18, 15. I should acknowledge that the converse of this argument is
Recent critics have problematized the widespread notions of an early modern theatrical economy in which playwrights routinely submitted overly long texts to companies despite knowing full well that at least a quarter of that text would go unplayed; moreover, such critics have recently challenged our understanding of the two-hour play as a standard that would have required such practices in the first place. Steven Urkowitz has argued that, in attempting to create a standard, 2,400 line play, Alfred Hart “misrepresents and massages his data to support conclusions directly contradicted by many documents that he either did not know of, misrepresented, or suppressed.”

Michael C. Hirrel (2010) draws attention to the unreliability of early modern time keeping, suggesting that the two-hour play may have been a commonly used phrase that had more to do with a play’s duration as a completed experience than it did a standard 120-minute increment of time. He points out that early modern timekeeping was hardly exact: our extant examples of two-hour plays would have varied from each other by as much as an hour and a half in performance. Many of play texts self-identifying as two-hour plays would have been as long as or longer than that of F Henry V.

In addition to questioning the historical category of the two-hour play, Hirrel proposes a typical theatrical event that included a variety of entertainments, lasted most of the afternoon, and created much more flexibility for lengthier performances.

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than previously thought possible. This extended theatrical event corroborates the
dramatic records of Sir Henry Herbert who, in 1619, complained that theatre traffic
routinely lasted “from one or twoe of the clock till sixe att night.” In the context of a
theatrical event that included other entertainments which could be shortened or cut
entirely, the play texts of Q2 Romeo and Juliet, F Henry V, and even Q2 Hamlet
appear to have, at least potentially, fit quite comfortably into a typical afternoon of
theatrical entertainment lasting four to five hours.

The possibility that a few plays may have been performed in excess of two
hours certainly doesn’t mean that all long plays were performed, or that the lengthiest
versions of Shakespeare’s variant texts were performed as printed. However, the
dominant theories explaining how Shakespeare’s longest play texts were used in
performance have started from the position that Shakespeare’s lengthiest play texts
could not have been performed on the English Renaissance stage. The distinction
between minimal/performance and maximal/authorial texts offers a broad explanation
for the relationship between Shakespeare’s variant texts only if the maximal texts
were uniformly and inherently unfit for performance.

Conversely, theories of theatrical abridgement are only necessary because of
the existence the shorter quartos. After all, relatively few early modern plays exceed
2,500 lines; the critical tradition may have very well understood these longer texts as
outliers had it not been for the fact that many of these lengthier plays were printed in
shorter forms. In other words, it is the existence of the shorter variant texts that
created the incentive for Hart’s normative 2,400 line play as a limit to performance.

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27 The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-1673, ed. J.Q. Adams (New
Surveying the arguments regarding which variant text most closely resembles a particular play in performance, one cannot escape a tautology in which a text’s relative brevity is understood to be the product of performance practices that have been, at least in part, defined and necessitated by the existence of shorter texts themselves: their shortness becomes evidence both of a proximity to performance and of the practices of radical abridgment which supposedly indicate that a play text’s shortness is evidence of performance.

In addition to problems of circular logic, the existence of the short quartos points to a culture of radical theatrical abridgement only if one has reason to disregard the chronology attested to by the printed play texts themselves. The shorter play texts are only capable of being self-evident products of theatrical practices regarding long scripts if one believes the longer texts to have been written prior to the printing of the shorter versions. As James Marino (2011) points out, there is zero evidence demonstrating that the manuscripts behind Shakespeare’s longer play texts, many of which were published twenty or more years after their shorter quartos, existed at the time that their respective quartos were printed. Marino asserts that theories explaining the shorter quartos as the products of theatrical abridgement rely upon “a general narrative in which the version of a play first published was almost presumptively treated as a preposterous derivative of a version printed much later.” He argues that an adherence to this general narrative has less to do with the relative authority of the respective play texts than it does a critical predisposition toward a narrative in which Shakespeare was the sole author of the plays in their “finished” forms.²⁸

²⁸ Marino, Owning, 41.
Because our understanding of the relationship between brevity and performance is inconclusive, circular, and over-determined according to the needs of related narratives of textual authority, length alone is not a trustworthy measurement of a play text’s relationship to the early modern stage. In order to address the questions most important to critics of Shakespeare’s variant texts, we need to be able to compare how individual versions of the plays would have functioned independently of one another according to early modern staging practices.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that a printed text’s distribution and ordering of speeches presents the most reliable picture of how a theatrical manuscript was sundered into parts, privately studied, and reassembled in performance. By shifting our attention from questions of length to questions of speech distribution and patterning, we can see Shakespeare’s variant play texts as a corpus in which, long and short alike, the play texts appear equally suited for the rigorous processes by which plays were mounted and performed in English playhouses.

“As it hath been sundry times publiquely acted”

In contrast to the clumsy metric of length as measured by total number of lines, speech patterns provide a period-specific means by which to evaluate the playability of printed early modern play texts, one that is simultaneously quantifiable and descriptive. Like the number of lines in a scene, speeches and speech patterns can be easily counted. However, where comparisons of length alone cannot distinguish a scene featuring a single speech of fourteen lines from a scene featuring fourteen characters speaking a single line each, a focus on speeches and speech order allows a
more specific and practical picture of how a scene or play text may have actually taxed the capabilities of players and companies.

Analyzing speech distribution allows us to compare how versions of the same play attended to the practical needs of their players, providing them with time onstage. Further, speech distribution allows us to compare how Shakespeare’s variant texts would have distributed the most important tasks required to perform a play prepared according to parts: cues. We can compare the extents to which related texts were written to limit what I have elsewhere called speech burden, the number of speeches and cues a player was responsible for in a single scene. Likewise, by examining speech order, we can compare the extent to which play texts may have been written to provide players with assistance in recognizing cues and adjusting to cuing errors that were likely inevitable in performance conditions that allowed only minimal rehearsal.

If, as Gurr and Kastan assert, playwrights wrote plays in an “idealized” or “desired form” knowing that they would be subsequently shaped by the demands of performance, one would expect the organization of Shakespeare’s lengthiest play texts to be governed primarily by a literary/narrative logic since the imposition of a theatrical logic intended to ease the burdens of performance would ostensibly have happened after the play had been turned over to the company for necessary abridgment. Given that the early modern theatrical ecosystem was one built around efficiency, it is illogical to assume that a playwright would take the time to anticipate the performative needs of his company while knowing his text was inevitably going to be cut by as much as half for the sake of performance. Playwrights writing an
idealized, overly long version of a play would have little reason to accommodate
double-casting, create space for costume changes, provide players with time off stage,
or pattern speeches to provide players with intuitive cues as to when they were to
deliver their lines because such concerns would have necessarily guided the
inevitable events of theatrical abridgment and preparation. 29

However, when examined according to the method theorized by the first
chapter of this dissertation, each of Shakespeare’s variant play texts appears to have
been written to make performance possible. Shakespeare’s variant play texts appear
neither to have been written in an unplayable form nor to have been shortened to
enhance their playability. Among Shakespeare’s plays printed in variant forms, seven
offer the best examples of the distinction critics have made between
minimal/performance and maximal/authorial texts. The next chapter will examine the
initial years of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and the play texts corresponding to the
plays Taming of the Shrew, 2 Henry VI, and 3 Henry VI. For now, I am limiting the
primary focus of this discussion to the four most famous of Shakespeare’s later
Despite the likelihood that the multiple editions of these four plays cannot be
explained by a single narrative or theory of textual emendation, these plays’
competing texts have striking similarities, both in terms their distribution of speeches
and in terms of the relative prevalence of speech patterns which I believe were
intended to ease the difficulty of performance according to cued parts.

29 I am here limiting my discussion to the possibility that the shorter play texts are the result of
theatrical cutting intended to render playable texts from unplayable texts. The next section of this
chapter will examine, and ultimately argue against, the possibility that Shakespeare may have written
playable texts to ease the process of creating shorter playable texts.
Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that an early modern player’s most difficult task had to do with determining when to deliver his speeches. The appropriate delivery of every speech relied upon the successful delivery and reception of a one-to-three word cue. Because players were provided with substantially more time for individual study than they were for collective rehearsal, I believe that a play text’s number of speeches constitutes a more accurate measure a play text’s relative difficulty than does its total number of lines. A cursory analysis of speeches in the competing play texts reveals an important pattern: the oft-scrutinized differences of length regarding Shakespeare’s variant play texts are more pronounced when measured by number of lines than when measured by number of speeches. This disparity has to do with the fact that lines unique to the lengthier texts are frequently attached to speeches that appear in the shorter quartos. Ultimately, this pattern of variation means that, despite being substantially longer in terms of lines, the enlarged play texts would have, in relative terms, minimally increased the number of speeches and cues for which its players were responsible. Twice as long as Q1 when measured by lines, F Henry V is only 40% longer when measured by number of speeches. The discrepancy of length between the competing printings of Henry V is more than twice as pronounced (100% vs. 40%) when measured by number of lines than it is when measured by number of speeches.

Whenever possible, Shakespeare and his company limited the number of speeches and cues that a player was responsible during a single scene. A player with

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30 See pages 45-53 of this dissertation for a more detailed discussion of speeches.  
31 Q2 Hamlet is twice as long as Q1 when measured by lines; it is 53% longer when measured by speeches. F Romeo and Juliet is roughly 36% longer than Q1 when measured by lines and only 16% longer when measured by speeches.
seven speeches, for example, would need to identify his seven cues, correctly deliver his seven corresponding speeches, and provide his fellow players with seven accurate cues before exiting. By distributing speech burden relatively evenly, Shakespeare and his company minimized the actual number of tasks a typical player was responsible for before he could return off stage where he would have access to the offstage apparatus including the bookholder, prompter, and perhaps even his part. Players responsible for relatively few speeches and cues had fewer opportunities for catastrophic error than did players unable to get offstage.

When examined in terms of speech distribution, Shakespeare’s lengthiest, variant texts appear to have been written, like the rest of Shakespeare’s corpus, to minimize speech burden. The lengthiest printings of Henry V and Romeo and Juliet contain smaller average cue burdens than that of Shakespeare’s corpus as a whole; in comparison to their first quartos, the lengthiest printings of Henry V and Romeo and Juliet increase a player’s average cue burden by roughly a single speech per scene. Even the famously long versions of Hamlet contain an average speech burden that is roughly the same as that of Shakespeare’s shortest play, A Comedy of Errors. Despite their obvious length, Shakespeare’s so-called maximal play texts appear to have been written so that theatrical labor was divided into the same basic units – scenes where players delivered between six and ten speeches per entrance – that made it possible for the company to perform all of Shakespeare’s plays.

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32 Throughout this dissertation, I have defined speech burden as the number of speeches assigned to a player in the period between an entrance and an exit.
33 Shakespeare’s lengthiest plays in terms of speeches typically distribute the speeches among more characters and entrances in order to minimize the average number of speeches and cues for which a player is responsible at a given time. Shakespeare’s lengthiest variant play texts are no exception,
Because averages can be misleading, it is worth pointing out that differences between variant texts in terms of median cue burden per scene are even smaller than differences between play texts in terms of average cue burden. The lengthier variant texts feature an increased number of entrances wherein players are responsible for five or fewer speeches. Across the corpus, roughly half of Shakespeare’s 6,019 entrances feature characters assigned five or fewer speeches. This pattern holds true for the lengthiest of Shakespeare’s variant texts; in comparison to their ostensibly performance-friendly counterparts, the longer versions of *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet,* and *Henry V* actually feature an increased percentage of entrances in which players would have been responsible for five or fewer speeches before exiting. In other words, speeches that are unique to Shakespeare’s lengthiest texts are frequently assigned to players with a minimal speech burdens.34

In addition to limiting players’ average and median speech burdens, early modern playwrights very likely made early modern texts more playable by providing featuring roughly identical speech burdens as Shakespeare’s other plays. In the corpus as a whole, characters enter the stage and deliver at least one speech 6,019 times; the corpus includes 47,902 speeches; the average cue burden for the average Shakespeare play is just under eight speeches per entrance. F *Henry V* features an average cue burden of just six speeches per entrance (739 speeches divided by 119 entrances). Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* features an average of seven (832 speeches divided by 111 entrances). F *Merry Wives of Windsor* features an average of eight (1018 speeches divided by 126 entrances). F *Hamlet* features an average of ten (1102 speeches divided by 104 entrances). F *Hamlet* features an almost identical average (1088 speeches divided by 102). While the lengthiest play texts of *Hamlet* ask for two more speeches per entrance than a typical Shakespeare play text, so do play texts of seven other plays, including the shortest play in Shakespeare’s canon. Like the lengthiest printings of *Hamlet, A Comedy of Errors* also features an average of ten (609 speeches divided by fifty-eight entrances).

34 Of the 111 times that actors deliver at least one speech in F *Romeo and Juliet,* sixty-two times (55%) the player would have been assigned five or fewer speeches. Q1 assigns five or fewer speeches a stingier fifty-two of the 106 times (49%) that a player is to speak at least once. The numbers for Q1 and F *Henry V* are fifty-four of ninety-two (59%) and seventy-eight of 119 (65%) respectively. The numbers of Q1 and F *Hamlet* are forty of eighty-eight (45%) and forty-six of 102 (45%) respectively. Even F *Merry Wives of Windsor,* a text that does feature a much higher average speech burden than its Q1 printing, assigns five or fewer speeches seventy-one of the 126 times (56%) that a character delivers at least one speech, close to the sixty-five of 108 (60%) in the Q1.
players with time off stage. Pragmatically, such breaks would have been crucial for performance, allowing for the needs of costume changes and double casting.

Furthermore, such breaks would have provided periods of recovery and preparation for the players themselves. Across the corpus, Shakespeare appears to have frequently and consistently anticipated the needs of the stage by staggering plots and sub-plots. Shakespeare’s lengthiest variant texts are no exception. In the lengthiest texts of *Henry V* and *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, the vast majority of scenes in which a player delivered at least one speech would have been surrounded by scenes in which that player was not on stage. In comparison to its minimal text, the lengthy Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* actually features fewer occurrences of characters delivering speeches in consecutive scenes.35

In his “Casting the Hamlet Quartos,” Scott McMillin asserts that Q1 *Hamlet* would have been in some ways more difficult to stage than the lengthier *Hamlet* texts because cuts would have made it difficult to change costumes in the case of doubled characters. McMillin suggests that lengthier texts were ultimately easier to double because they provided players extended periods off stage. My suggestion here is that McMillin’s assertion holds true for all players, not just those who may have been doubled; even for larger roles, the enlarged texts would have allowed more time off stage. Players responsible for Romeo, Juliet, Falstaff, Ford, Page, and Henry V would not have appeared in consecutive scenes more frequently in their plays’ longest forms.

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35 In Q1 *Henry V*, characters deliver at least one speech in a scene 92 times; 14 of those (15%) are located in consecutive scenes. In F *Henry V*, characters deliver at least one speech in a scene 119 times; 18 of those (an identical 15%) take place in consecutive scenes. Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* features characters delivering speeches in a scene 106 times; forty of those (38%) are consecutive. F *Romeo and Juliet* features characters delivering speeches in a scene 111 times; thirty-seven of those (33%) are consecutive.
than they would have in the shorter quartos. Even when playing Q2 Hamlet, Burbage would have found himself with seven full scenes off stage.36

Like their shorter equivalents, Shakespeare’s lengthiest variant texts appear have been written in order to distribute speeches to make performance easier. As important, Shakespeare’s lengthiest variant texts feature the recurring speech patterns that, in the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued were written to provide players assistance locating their cues and/or recovering from cuing errors. For example, F Henry V opens with an extended conversation between the Bishops of Ely and Canterbury. The scene features twenty-two speeches; in performance, the players responsible for the bishops would have entered together, delivered eleven speeches apiece, and exited together. They would have known that each of their partner’s speeches contained their next cue. Assuming they had properly conned their lines and knew their eleven speeches in order, the players would have simply needed to identify when their partner had finished speaking in order to properly deliver their next line; in the event of an extended pause or a forgotten, misspoken, or misheard cue, the players would have known to proceed with their next speech. For players working according to cues, the scene is likely one of the easiest scenes in the corpus. And yet, the scene does not appear in Q1 Henry V, a text ostensibly developed from F for the sake of performance.

In each of the lengthier variant texts, a high percentage of additional speeches are located in two-player scenes. F Hamlet, for examples, contains 390 speeches that

are not in Q1; well over half of these (251) are located in two-player exchanges.

Compare the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play Text</th>
<th>Total Speeches</th>
<th>Two-Player Speeches</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average for All Plays</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Hamlet</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Hamlet</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Hamlet</td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Henry V</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Henry V</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Merry Wives</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Merry Wives</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, the lengthiest versions of Hamlet, Henry V, and Romeo and Juliet feature roughly the same percentage of two-player speeches as do their shorter counterparts. Furthermore, each of the lengthier play texts features relatively more speeches in two-player scenes than does Shakespeare’s corpus as a whole. While critics have been right to assert that the lengthiest printings of Hamlet would have been challenging in performance, it is worth pointing out that the Q2 and F play texts were written so that nearly half of their speeches are exchanged between two speaking characters.

Two-player scenes are not the only structure that allowed Shakespeare’s players to identify their cues more easily. The first chapter of this dissertation defines

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37 The sample includes fifty-nine play texts including the thirty-six plays printed in the 1623 Folio, the nineteen early Q1 printings of Folio plays, Q1 printings of Pericles and Two Noble Kinsmen, and Q2 printings of Hamlet and Romeo Juliet.

38 The Merry Wives of Windsor is the outlier, though it should be pointed out that the disparity of two-player speeches is corrected by the fact that F features an increase in the next kind of innovation introduced by this dissertation.
a speech stem as a structure in which one character is assigned every other speech; in the botanical metaphor, the player responsible for every other speech provides the stem’s internodes while every other character in the scene provides the stem’s branches. For the player responsible for the stem’s internodes, the advantages of a speech stem were numerous and more or less identical to those provided by the two-player scene. Knowing that every other speech belonged to him, a player would know his next cue was coming immediately; in the event of an errant cue, the player responsible for a stem’s internodes would have likely known to simply proceed with his next speech. While the advantages that speech stems provided to players responsible for a stem’s branches were likely less obvious, even those players would have known that each of their cues would be uttered by the player responsible for the stem’s internodes.\(^{39}\)

For example, the Latin lesson in Act 4, Scene 1 of F Merry Wives of Windsor is essentially a scene in which Evans utters every other speech. The player responsible for Evans would have uttered twenty of the scene’s forty-seven speeches; despite early interjections by the Host and Quickly, Evans still provides internodes for a stem of thirty-two speeches that concludes the scene. Likewise, the player’s partners would have been provided assistance; in the lengthy speech stem, all players would have known that their cue was coming from Evans. Like the two-player scene that initiates F Henry V, this scene would have been relatively easy to perform and yet does not appear in the shorter printing of Merry Wives.

\(^{39}\) For a more detailed explanation of speech stems, see pages 60-67 of this dissertation.
Across the corpus of variant texts, speech stems are prominent. The first quarto texts of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Merry Wives of Winsor*, and *Henry V* contain a total of sixty-two speech stems of ten or more speeches. Of the sixty-two speech stems, all but six exist in the longer versions of the plays. Of the fifty-six stems that exist in both play texts, twenty contain more speeches in the play’s extended versions. More tellingly, an additional thirty-five speech stems are unique to the longer variant texts. As was the case with two-player scenes, speech stems appear as frequently in the longer variant texts as they do in their shorter counterparts and the corpus as a whole.

In the aggregate, each pair of divergent texts features a similar percentage of their speeches in two-player scenes and speech stems. The following table defines ordered speeches as those located in two-player scenes or speech stems of ten or more:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play Text</th>
<th>Total Speeches</th>
<th>Ordered Speeches</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average for All Plays</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Hamlet</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Hamlet</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Hamlet</td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Henry V</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Henry V</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Merry Wives</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Merry Wives</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the aggregate, Shakespeare’s variant play texts order a nearly identical percentage of their speeches. Furthermore, with the exception of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,
the lengthiest printings of Shakespeare’s variant texts demonstrate a higher total percentage of ordered speeches than does the corpus as a whole.

Even if the uncanny similarity in aggregate percentages is understood as mere coincidence, the lengthiest versions of Shakespeare’s variant plays most certainly bear the marks of texts I have argued were written to accommodate being sundered into parts and performed with limited rehearsal. Like the element of speech burden, patterns in speech order suggest that Shakespeare’s “maximal” texts were at least as fit for the early modern stage as were their “minimal” counterparts. If Shakespeare’s maximal texts were written to provide assistance to players working from parts, we need to re-think the suggestion that shorter texts are inherently closer to performance.

While the most common theories of theatrical abridgment imply that the maximal texts were unplayable in order to justify the convoluted chronology implicit in theories of theatrical abridgment, it is worth investigating the notion that companies may have had reasons to cut performance-ready texts in order to create shorter performance-ready texts. These reasons may include the need for touring scripts or even scripts for a variety of performance occasions, some of which demanded a strict two-hour play, some of which did not. Finally, one might imagine a culture in which Shakespeare wrote lengthy playable texts in order to ease the difficulty of cutting. Even if both the minimal and maximal forms of the script were intended for performance, the timeline suggested by the New Bibliographers may still hold; Shakespeare and his company may have had reason to drastically shorten a playable text.
We do, after all, know that playable texts were frequently cut. We have a corpus of manuscripts that preserves such cuts. The previously mentioned eighteen theatrical manuscripts studied by William B. Long provide underutilized evidence of the practice. On the surface, the possibility that Shakespeare’s playable maximal texts were abridged is bolstered by the existence of playable manuscripts that were obviously modified for or because of an initial performance. However, closer examination of the eighteen manuscripts demonstrates a pattern of alteration that simply doesn’t accommodate the kinds of changes potentially made to Shakespeare’s variant texts. As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, the two groups of altered plays share the preservation of cues; however, the two patterns of emendation differ in vital ways that suggest that, unlike cuts made to the extant theatrical manuscripts, Shakespeare’s variant play texts were written short and made longer.

“*It shall to the barbers with your beard*”

Given the confidence critics have demonstrated regarding the abridgement of plays upon the early modern stage, it is interesting that relatively little work has been done cataloguing how the eighteen manuscripts preserving such abridgements were cut. Beyond William B. Long’s assertion that the texts were not reduced simply to create shorter texts but to create *better* plays, little speculation has been offered to explain or contextualize the effects of changes made to the eighteen surviving theatrical manuscripts. Some measure of this critical lacuna might be explained by the difficulty of the task: the extant manuscripts preserve writing in a variety of hands and likely demonstrate at least a few different kinds of theatrical cuts, including those made to
remove superfluous or overly lengthy material, those made to clarify character or streamline action, and those made to remove sensitive material at the behest of the Master of Revels.

More puzzling than the relative absence of critical speculation regarding why the manuscripts were cut is the fact that little critical energy has been spent considering those aspects of the cuts of which we can be certain. Even if we can’t know which changes were made for which reason, the manuscripts do definitively demonstrate patterns of changes. In other words, we can be certain what was changed.

Concerning cuts, there are essentially three categories of emendation:

- Lines located inside speeches
- Lines that conclude speeches
- Entire speeches

Importantly, these three classifications of emendation would have had different implications for a company producing plays according to parts. Of these classifications, only the first would have been guaranteed not to affect cues; lines that were added to or cut from the interior of speeches would have only affected the work of a single actor. The second and third classifications would have inherently altered cues thereby requiring the adjustment of more than one player. In addition to the three varieties of cuts, the eighteen theatrical manuscripts demonstrate two additional categories of emendation featuring changes instead of cuts:

- Lines inside speeches in which one or more word has been changed
- Lines concluding speeches in which at least the final word has been changed
Again, only the first of these final categories of emendation is limited to a single player.

Of the five types of emendation, the eighteen theatrical manuscripts feature cuts to lines inside of speeches more often than any other type of emendation. Overwhelmingly, cuts made to theatrical manuscripts tended to preserve cues. In the 1611 *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, sixty-three speeches feature lines that have been cut; only eighteen of those cuts affect the speech’s cue. The interior cuts made to *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* are consistent with those made to the other seventeen theatrical manuscripts. This pattern suggests something important about when the theatrical manuscripts were altered. If cuts were made prior to the distribution of parts, one would expect changes to alter cues as often as interior lines; the fact that cuts target interior lines suggests that players had already coned their parts – or had begun to con their parts – when the cuts were made.

Like the eighteen theatrical manuscripts, Shakespeare’s variant texts tend to preserve cues. Tiffany Stern (2000 and 2004), Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern (2007), Paul Menzer (2008), and James Marino (2011) have each pointed out that, in comparing the variant texts, one finds a higher degree of fidelity between cues than in lines located inside speeches. In the case of *Hamlet*, Paul Menzer demonstrates that roughly half of the cues in Q1 appear as cues in both Q2 and F. 40 While the fact remains that the longer texts would have required players to re-learn half of their cues, Menzer’s exhaustive cataloguing of cues demonstrates that the three texts share

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far more cues than they do other, internal lines. Seemingly, whoever prepared the secondary texts did so with an eye to preserving cues that had already been conned; if the longest texts were never intended for performance, there is no reason to believe that players would have seen their cues. Like the theatrical manuscripts, Shakespeare’s plays appear to have been changed with at least some attempt to preserve the work of players who had already conned one version of the play.  

However, patterns of emendation in Shakespeare’s plays differ from cuts made to the surviving theatrical manuscripts in three important ways. For starters, the extant theatrical manuscripts demonstrate very few instances where one or more words have been changed; lines are much more likely to be cut entirely than to be modified. In the case of the Second Maiden’s Tragedy, only nine lines feature re-writes; eight of those nine lines change a single word; six of those altered words are prepositions. In stark contrast, the play texts of Hamlet, Merry Wives of Windsor, Henry V, and Romeo and Juliet demonstrate a substantial number of lines that have been re-written. The first act of Q1 Romeo and Juliet features ninety-three lines in which one or more word has been changed, sixty-eight of which involve more than one word. In comparison with the cuts made to the eighteen theatrical manuscripts, the changes to Shakespeare’s variant texts were made by an agent or agents much more willing to re-write. While last-minute cuts would have required players to skip lines of their previously-conned parts, the kinds of rewrites demonstrated by Shakespeare’s variant texts – changes specifically avoided by the agents cutting the

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41 Menzer, The Hamlets, 177-189, 214-223
theatrical manuscripts – would have required players to re-learn often significant portions of their speeches.

In addition changing words more frequently, Shakespeare’s variant texts vary by many more lines than are accounted for by the cuts made to the extant theatrical manuscripts. As indicated earlier, no theatrical manuscript cuts more than 175 lines; such cuts represent no more than 7% of the original text’s length. The least significant changes made to the four plays that are the subject of this chapter, those made to Romeo and Juliet, represent four times as much material (800 lines) than changes made to the most heavily cut theatrical manuscript. The lengthiest printed play texts of Hamlet, Merry Wives of Windsor, and Henry V feature between 1,100 and 1,500 lines not appearing in their shorter quartos. The relative scarcity of changes made to the theatrical manuscripts suggests that players could easily adjust their parts through simple notes and cuts; the number and nature of changes made to Shakespeare’s variant texts suggests additional work for the company. As I have been arguing throughout this chapter, I do not believe that parts belonging to Shakespeare’s lengthiest parts would have been prohibitively more difficult to learn or perform than their shorter counterparts; my point here is that the number and variety of changes is significant enough that Shakespeare’s maximal and minimal play texts contain different parts. If, as I believe he did, Richard Burbage conned multiple versions of Hamlet, it is safe to assume that he did so from two (or three) different documents.

The final difference between the two patterns of emendation regards the treatment of entire speeches. The three most heavily cut theatrical manuscripts – Charlemagne or the Emperor (c. 1600), The Honest Man’s Fortune (1625), and The
Second Maiden’s Tragedy (1611) – remove a total of three, four, and twelve speeches respectively. F Romeo and Juliet, on the other hand, is 74 speeches longer than Q1; each of the lengthiest printings of Hamlet, Merry Wives of Windsor, and Henry V is between 267 and 431 speeches longer than its Q1. Hesitation to cut speeches is consistent with the theatrical manuscripts’ tendency to preserve cues by cutting internal lines. However, the willingness either to cut or to add entire speeches so liberally suggests that Shakespeare and his company were willing to run the risk that the new version of scenes would require additional conning and rehearsal. It is impossible, of course, to know at what point a reduced or expanded text would have required additional rehearsal; however, the changes to Shakespeare’s texts demonstrate a willingness to affect the work of multiple players, suggesting either that players were not familiar with both texts or that enough time had passed between the performance of the first and the creation of the second that Shakespeare and his company were willing to ask players to re-learn and re-rehearse the new scenes. I do not mean to suggest that the longer play texts would have required more rehearsal. I have been arguing throughout that the longer texts were designed to minimize rehearsal; in the final section of this chapter, I will argue that the speeches unique the lengthiest of Shakespeare’s texts are for the most part located in two-player scenes and speech stems, suggesting a desire to minimize the requisite quantity of rehearsal. My point here is that just as Shakespeare’s minimal and maximal texts would have required players to be given two different parts to con; the plays would have required two different rehearsal processes, even if both were equally economical.
To review, like the cuts made to the eighteen theatrical manuscripts, the changes made to Shakespeare’s plays appear to have, when possible, preserved the cues found in the shorter text. However, unlike the theatrical manuscripts, the amount of re-writing present in Shakespeare’s variant texts would have required players to relearn speeches. Further, the sheer volume of changes made to Shakespeare’s variant texts would have likely required the creation of new parts. Finally, the amount of new or cut speeches would have ensured that the two versions of Shakespeare’s plays required two different rehearsal processes. Taken in their entirety, the two patterns of emendation suggest two different narratives. Employing methods of cutting that were minimally invasive and appear not to have required additional rehearsal or the creation and conning of new parts, theatrical agents appear to have made cuts to the eighteen surviving theatrical manuscripts not long after the text was originally sundered into parts and coned. In contrast, Shakespeare and his company created substantially re-written parts that preserved original cues while adding many new speeches, implying a narrative in which changes were made to the text after the initial text had already been coned and performed, potentially numerous times. If it is theoretically possible that Shakespeare and his company shortened a long, playable text into a shorter, playable text, it is still unlikely. Our surviving theatrical manuscripts suggest that it is more likely that Shakespeare’s plays were written and performed in their shortest forms only to be, later, expanded and performed again.

Theatrical Enlargement
As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I am not alone in suggesting that
Shakespeare’s variant play texts were written or prepared in the order that they were
printed. While decidedly less common than critics adhering to the non-chronological
timeline advocated by the New Bibliography, a number of critics have suggested that
shorter plays were revised into longer versions. However, the model of theatrical
expansion theorized by this chapter differs from other models of revision. In
opposition to the suggestion that Shakespeare’s plays may have been re-written for a
literary audience, I suggest that the changes made to Shakespeare’s texts were made
specifically for performance, carried out in such a way that playable texts stayed
playable. However, departing from other performance-minded theories of revision, I
suggest that the texts were revised in one or two moments of significant, authorial
revision, as opposed to a series of gradual, incremental changes made by the playing
company.

The argument of gradual revision for and through performance is at the heart
of James Marino’s *Owning Shakespeare* (2011), in which he constructs the Lord
Chamberlain’s Men as a company whose success was built in part from constant,
collaborative revision. The argument is also implicit in the work of Tiffany Stern
(2000 and 2004), Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern (2007), and Paul Menzer (2008);
gradual revision is in many ways embodied and particularized by the suggestion that
Shakespeare’s plays were subject to localized modifications made by and affecting a
single part at a time. However, while correcting traditional oversights regarding
play texts in their performative contexts, such arguments tend to remove the texts

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from the political and fiscal contexts in which playhouse manuscripts – however one conceives of them – were allowed to become performances. In doing so, such critics tend to overlook practical considerations that would have made gradual revision unlikely.

Given the unstable condition of early modern texts, printed and performed alike, the suggestion that revision could be gradual and collaborative makes intuitive sense. Early modern texts were nothing if not in flux. Play texts were sundered into parts, reassembled physically and performatively in nearly inhospitable conditions, and printed in a variety of errant and conflicting forms; it is logical to suggest that a company that continued to perform such a fluid and flexible text for an extended period in the highly competitive theatrical market of Shakespeare’s London might very well have continued to “improve” the play a few lines at a time. However, while it is easy to imagine a process of gradual textual evolution through the trials and errors of a collaborative performance process, such revision would have been inefficient and perhaps even impossible in a theatrical system in which companies needed to work from a text that had been approved by the Master of the Revels.

Certainly, one might posit that companies routinely risked performances that deviated from the approved book in just a few lines. However, in order for Q1 *Henry V* to become F *Henry V* through sedimentary alterations made to localized scenes and individual parts, there would have clearly been a point, and more likely multiple points, at which the text the company was performing would have clearly exceeded the scope of what had been approved. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that gradual improvements of a text would have made individual performances of a play
more profitable: in order to advertise a play as new and improved, if such claims even garnered larger crowds, a company would have needed to have the expanded and perfected text approved. To posit a schema of gradual textual evolution through and because of performance is to suggest either that the importance of a book’s approval was less significant than we have typically thought or that Shakespeare’s company went to the trouble of getting a new book approved each and every time a text naturally and collaboratively evolved. Both scenarios seem unlikely.

Richard Dutton (2011), one of the first critics to question the logical implausibility of creating a second version of an approved and playable text, wonders whether Merry Wives of Windsor might have been revised for a court performance in which extra-textual references made by the Q1 text would have suddenly been inappropriate or unwise. Dutton’s sensitive reading of historical allusions made by the competing play texts is beyond my scope here. Of vital importance to this discussion, however, is his suggestion that a court performance may have meant enough to the future of the company itself that it justified the expensive practice of creating a costly new text from an already popular one. Furthermore, Dutton’s argument foregrounds the fact that each pair of Shakespeare variant texts, other than printings of Romeo and Juliet, was first performed before 1603 and the death of Queen Elizabeth. It is certainly plausible to suggest that revision was warranted and justified for the first Jacobean performances of Hamlet, Henry V, Merry Wives of Windsor, and the other plays typically thought of in terms of minimal and maximal texts.43

It is important to note that not all court performances or theatrical revivals necessitated the expensive and time-consuming process of expansion. The previously mentioned study by Ros Knutson (1985) asserts that “we may argue that the repertory companies in the 1590s did not see the payment for revisions to accompany a revival as a commercially necessary or profitable venture.” And yet, she does find sixteen instances in Henslowe’s diary when a payment was made for revision and notes that “In several cases, however, the company paid sums seemingly out of proportion with the return they could have expected for a single performance at Court….” In agreement with the argument forward by Dutton, I believe the printed play texts discussed in this chapter to be examples of such extreme cases.  

Dutton’s argument addresses the fundamental question of why an early modern company would create a second playable text from a first. However, arguments made by proponents of gradual revision provide a useful caveat: even if special and uncommon circumstances may have offered additional time and resources to work, as attested to by Thomas Heywood, with “the office of the Revels where our Court playes have been in late daies yearely rehersed, perfected, and corrected before they come to the publike view of the Prince and the Nobility,” the changes to the revised and extended play texts appear to have followed a template established by the original texts as they were first performed in the public playhouses. If some or all of Shakespeare’s variant texts plays were revised for court performance, Shakespeare and his company used many of the same techniques designed to create playable texts for the public stage.

45 Thomas Heywood, An Apology for Actors (London: 1612), E2r
Both Dutton and Knutson suggest that plays revised for court may have returned to the public playhouse to recoup some of the costs of revision. For both, the possibility is mentioned quickly and speculatively; questions of length and playability are beyond the scope of their arguments. Without pondering how the results of theatrical expansion may have been able to recoup requisite expenditures, Dutton presents a convincing argument that, even with modest payment of £10, the importance of favor curried with the court may have been important enough, in terms of assuring that companies would be allowed to perform year round, to justify the expense and bother of expansion. However, given the textual features of the changes made to Shakespeare’s plays, it appears that court favor was not the only factor guiding revision: by making a singular, significant revision in such a way that the text’s performative features remained intact, Shakespeare and his company appear to have created new texts intended to please the court that were also playable upon a potential return to the public playhouse.46

The potential public performance of enlarged versions of plays like Henry V and Hamlet in the repertory of the King’s Men is obviously conjectural on my part. We can no more prove that Globe performances of Henry V after 7 January 1605 or some other court performance resembled the Folio than we can be certain that the Globe was opened with a version resembling Q1. This possibility is made more likely, however, by the fact that Shakespeare’s variant play texts were changed according to two relatively straightforward principles by which Shakespeare and his company preserved and extended the theatrical logic of an original text, even as it

was “enlarged to almost as much againe as it was.” In addition to the general policy by which many new or revised lines were located inside existing internal speeches, plays were expanded in such a way that any necessary new speeches were evenly distributed among the smallest units of performance: French scenes.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that the French scene was the basic unit by which plays performed according to cued parts should be understood. French scenes can be understood as units separated by any entrance or exit. Unlike more conventional “plot” scenes spanning moments of a cleared stage, French scenes do not break a story into smaller moments of dramatic action so much as they serve to change stage composition by literally adding or removing characters. Shakespeare’s careful attention to speech order suggests that early modern playing relied upon rhythms created among speaking characters: each entrance or exit necessarily changed the potential pattern of speaking order by adding or subtracting players. If the plot scene represents the smallest unit of narrative, and the part represents the smallest unit of theatrical preparation, the French scene represents a combination of the two, the most basic unit in which individually prepared performances were combined, in real time, to tell a portion of the story.

Shakespeare’s shortest variant play texts contain nearly every French scene that appears in the longer texts. Q2 Romeo and Juliet is 120 speeches and 800 lines longer than Q1. However, of its ninety-eight French scenes, all but twelve appear in Q1. Even that disparity is misleading. Of the twelve French scenes unique to Q2, one is an additional speech by the chorus and three compose a more fleshed out description of action that is left to a stage direction in Q1:
They draw, to them enters Tybalt, they fight, to them the
Prince, old Mountague, and his wife, old Capulet and
his wife, and other Citizens and part them.

In the later play text, this action is tuned into a series of staggered entrances and
dialogue. One could argue, in fact, that the above stage direction does contain all
three of the French scenes appearing in the Folio. Furthermore, four additional scenes
unique to the Q2 are located in 2.2 where, in Q1, Juliet remains on stage for the
duration of the plot scene; in Q2 she comes in and out, creating additional French
scenes without adding additional characters. Something similar happens in 3.5; in Q1,
the nurse enters earlier than she does in Q2; in Q2, she enters with Lady Capulet; the
pace of their entrances creates two French scenes that are unique to Q2 and one that is
unique to Q1. Ultimately, the only French scene that truly is unique to Q2 features a
speech stem of six speeches where a servant bandies with three, unnamed characters
at the beginning of 1.5. In other words, with the exception of a bit of stage business
seemingly intended to flesh out the festivities at the house of Capulet, Shakespeare
and his company did not add new combinations of theatrical action to Romeo and
Juliet. Read to forgive slightly different pacing of entrances, the two play texts share
ninety-six French scenes; even by the strictest of definitions, the plays share eighty-
six French scenes.

Tracking additional speeches across French scenes, we can see two important
patterns suggestive of the methods by which play texts were likely enlarged. First, the
120 speeches that are unique to Q2 Romeo and Juliet are located within forty-six
different French scenes. This distribution creates a pattern that inherently limits the
number of new speeches a player would have been responsible for at a given time, thereby limiting the relative increase in a player’s speech burden. Only one French scene contains more than seven additional speeches; thirty-two French scenes contain between one and three additional speeches. Second, the additional speeches are overwhelmingly located in two-player scenes and speech stems. Of the forty-six French scenes containing new speeches, all but three are either two-player scenes or scenes including a speech stem of ten or more. Furthermore, speeches are frequently added in pairs in order to extend two-player exchanges: sixteen times, a two-player French scene is extended by an additional two speeches.

The speeches I believe were added to the Q2 were done in such a way that only a few speeches were added to each scene. By distributing additional speeches evenly across the entire play and matching them to existing patterns of speech order, Shakespeare and his company assured that a play stayed playable: the even distribution of new speeches that extended structural forms of assistance meant that a play’s new material would remain ordered at roughly the same rate as the original play text.

This basic methodology appears to have been applied to Shakespeare’s other variant texts. Though their competing versions vary by significantly more lines and speeches than do the two texts of Romeo and Juliet, the plays of Henry V, Hamlet, and Merry Wives of Windsor appear also to have been enlarged so that additional speeches were distributed evenly across French scenes. Q2 Henry V contains thirty-three French scenes that have been increased by three or fewer speeches. Likewise, the 400 speeches that are new to Q2 Hamlet are distributed across sixty-five French
scenes; forty-three French scenes receive five or fewer additional speeches. Of the twenty-two French scenes that were given more than five additional speeches, all but one is a two-player scene or a scene containing a stem of ten or more speeches. In other words, even if Shakespeare and his company added hundreds of new speeches to plays like Henry V and Hamlet, they added a few speeches to a large number of French scenes; when they did add several speeches, they did so to specific French scenes that were likely among the easiest scenes in the play to perform according to cued parts. This technique allowed Shakespeare and his company to double a text’s length while preserving the ease with which it might be sundered into parts and performed according to cues.

Conclusion

Theories that divide Shakespeare’s variant play texts into minimal/performance and maximal/authorial texts conflate a play text’s length with its suitability for performance. Such theories create a tautology in which shorter printed play texts become both examples of play texts printed from manuscripts used for performance and evidence for the theatrical practices thought to have created shorter performance materials from longer authorial manuscripts in the first place. By shifting our critical attention from length as measured by line to the distribution and patterning of speeches, we can see that both categories of printed play texts – those thought to be set from maximal, authorial manuscripts and those thought to be set from materials reduced and abridged for the stage – exhibit features potentially designed to ease the difficulty of performance in a theatrical economy in which plays were sundered into...
parts to be prepared individually and performed according to cues. Both types of printed play texts were set from materials written to distribute their speeches so as to limit the cue burden of actors in individual scenes while providing players with ample time off stage. Likewise, both categories of play texts were written to locate more than half of their speeches in structures that very likely provided players with intuitive clues as to when they were to deliver their next speeches.

Because Shakespeare’s lengthiest variant play texts appear to have been written in anticipation of performance according to cued parts, there would have been no incentive to turn them into the shorter play texts printed as early quartos. Additionally, the specific changes made Shakespeare’s pairs of variant play texts do not support a model in which shorter, playable texts were cut from longer, playable texts. If the short quartos were the result of theatrical practices readying a text for performance, one would expect variations to be consistent with those cuts preserved by the eighteen surviving manuscripts that we associate with use in the professional theatres of London. However, where Shakespeare’s plays do echo the theatrical manuscripts’ hesitation to alter existing cues, they demonstrate hundreds of additional changes and a willingness to rewrite lines and cut or add entire speeches. In contrast to the theatrical manuscripts which appear to have been changed so that cuts did not require the re-learning of cues, the creation of new parts, or the re-rehearsal of scenes, Shakespeare’s variant play texts appear to be, in practical terms, different plays. While it is not impossible that the lengthiest of these plays was written first, it is more likely that the shorter versions were written and performed first.
Moreover, the pairs of variant texts exhibit nearly identical theatrical forms, suggesting that the agents responsible for changing Shakespeare’s plays did so in order to create new performance texts that looked and functioned a lot like expanded versions of the existing performance texts. Proponents of gradual revision, while drawing our attention important textual tendencies and correctly restoring the chronology of the printed play texts, frequently remove the question of revision from the precarious context in which companies were operating under the auspices of the Master of the Revels. A scenario more likely than the continued, collaborative evolution of play texts is that, in the relatively uncommon event of circumstances warranting theatrical revision, plays were made larger for the sake of a singular performance, most likely at court.

It is my contention that in these cases of expansion, Shakespeare and his company followed two strategies. In general, they added or changed lines instead of adding new speeches; when impossible to avoid, new speeches were evenly distributed across French scenes. In the event where speeches were added, they were done so to preserve and extend patterns of speech order in the existing French scene, thus ensuring that two-player scenes and speech stems remained intact. Because the enlarged plays were created according to the same principles by which Shakespeare wrote the shorter originals, it is likely that Shakespeare himself was responsible for the later revisions.

In addition to relegating the creation of performance texts to a secondary, non-authorial process, the notion that plays were originally written in states that were never performed in the public playhouse casts Shakespeare’s public audience in a
condescending light. As early as the 1599 publication of the enlarged *Romeo and Juliet*, at least some portion of Shakespeare’s audience would have been aware that plays existed in forms unavailable in performance. No evidence survives to suggest that a single Londoner in 1599 demanded to see the version of the play that, according to its title page, had been “newly corrected, augmented, and amended.” It is almost certain that at least a few members of that audience would have read the larger version. It seems unlikely that such an audience would have happily received the shorter, less accomplished version. The lack of outcry – or of this sort of outcry concerning any early modern play – may very likely have something to do with the claim on the same title page that the expanded play text had “been sundry times publiquely acted.”

If, that same year, the Globe was opened with a production of *Henry V*, there is little reason to believe that it didn’t closely resemble the text as printed in 1600. However, following a subsequent court performance, the same crowd at the Globe may have seen *Henry V* as it would eventually be printed in the Folio. If so, the play would have begun with the Bishops of Ely and Canterbury exchanging twenty-two speeches in a scene that resembled any number of scenes played upon the public stage. If one engages in speculation, it is easy to imagine that this initial, newly written scene would have been greeted with enthusiasm. Given playing companies’ penchant for self-promotion, it is likely that the gathered crowd would have been aware that the scene was new, and that they were about to see an “enlarged” version of a shorter play they had memories of seeing a few years earlier.
Chapter 3: “vse your manners discreetly in all kind of companies:”

Shakespeare Before the Lord Chamberlain’s Men

Henslowe’s diary records a performance of “the tamynge of A shrowe” on 11 June 1594. The play was the sixth of seven performed at Newington Butts by a group of players Henslowe describes as “my Lord Admeralle men & my Lorde chamberlen men.” Closer to London, the plague-related prohibitions that had kept the outdoor theatres closed for the better part of two years had recently been lifted; the end of the summer would see the companies installed in their respective theatres (perhaps with some reluctance on the part of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men) and the start of the much ballyhooed rivalry that would span the remainder of Shakespeare’s career.

The eleven days at Newington, however, have traditionally been understood in more co-operative terms. James J. Marino (2011) raises the possibility that the two companies performed together; Arthur F. Kinney (2003) goes further, suggesting that, for those eleven days, “the newly formed Lord Chamberlain’s Men briefly merged with the Admiral’s Men.”1 Such joint ventures appear to have been relatively common prior to the company realignment of 1594. Henslowe marks a similar collaboration between companies a month before the Admiral’s Men were re-formed.

“begininge at easter 159[4] the Quenes men & my lord Susexe to geather.”² At least one member of the Admiral’s Men, Edward Alleyn, was no stranger to collaboration, having spent roughly two years working with the Strange’s Men in what E.K. Chambers (1923)optimistically refers to as the “amalgamated” company.³ Even if, as other critics have posited, such arrangements were not long term ventures but situational arrangements resulting from forced touring and difficult times, joint residencies like the one at Newington are evidence of a period of theatrical activity distinct from the playing and competitive conditions that governed the Admiral’s and Chamberlain’s Men for the majority of Shakespeare’s career.

The companies performed ten times – every day but Sunday. The ten performances featured six plays evenly distributed from the repertories that would come to define both companies, with an additional play – “heaster & asheweros” – that is mentioned nowhere else in the diary. Staples of the Admiral’s men included “the Jewe of malta,” “cvtlacke,” and “bellendon.” In addition to Shrew, plays eventually belonging to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men included “andronicus” and “hamlet.”⁴ The performances alternated between companies; “the Jewe,” “heaster,” and “adronicus” were played twice. The seeming attention to the alternation of company plays might suggest that the companies were not collaborating so much as they were sharing a venue. However, critics have been reluctant to rule out the possibility that players from opposing companies performed together because we

⁴ The Diary, 21-2.
have so little definitive evidence about company membership and court records show that Thomas Heywood’s *Silver Age* was performed jointly by the King’s and Queen’s companies in 1612.⁵

The years leading up to the stay at Newington had seen players move freely among companies.⁶ Many of the players in attendance would have worked with each other in a variety of configurations before. According to Marino, “The leading players in the Admiral’s Men and the Chamberlain’s Men were collegial competitors, or at the very least had been colleagues before becoming rivals.”⁷ Of these collegial arrangements, the most notable is the previously mentioned “amalgamated” company that, according to a traveling license from May 1593, included “Edward Alleyn servant to the right honorable the lord high Admiral, William Kemp, Thomas Pope, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, and George Brian, being of one company, servants to our very good lord the Lord Strange.”⁸ All of these men were likely present at Newington.

In addition to the potentially amicable relationship among players themselves, there is some evidence that the Admiral’s and Chamberlain’s companies were not created as rivals but as colluding entities. Andrew Gurr (2004) argues that, in May of that year, the companies had been formed, or re-formed, as a sanctioned duopoly:

> The duopoly’s membership was drawn from the best available resources, and [The Lord Chamberlain, Henry] Carey licensed a

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⁶ For a detailed and exhaustive interrogation of the evidence regarding company membership, see Schoone-Jongen, *Shakespeare’s*.
specific playhouse for each of them to use. He made himself patron of one company while his fellow Privy Councilor, his son-in-law Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral, took on the second…. Each of the new companies got half of the best players and plays available.  

While other critics are somewhat reluctant to theorize the political and practical terms upon which the relationship between the two companies was formed, there is little question that the companies’ relationship with each other was not fully developed by June 1594. The opposing companies weren’t opposing companies yet, at least not in the way that we rightly think of them throughout the next decade.

The year 1594, then, signifies the transition from an environment of theatrical flux marked by roster shuffling and company dissolution to a period of unprecedented stability that created and allowed the theatrical circumstances in which Shakespeare’s most famous plays were written and played. The eleven days in June offer a cross-section of that transition, a liminal period of potential collaboration in which performative conditions likely contained elements of both the last chaotic months of company instability and the period of manic play creation that would mark the first years of the rival companies’ competition for the substantial but finite support of London’s play-going audience. The liminality of the Newington performances is encapsulated by the fact that the newly formed Chamberlain’s Men performed plays that could not have been written for them.

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9 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 1. I should mention that, though it was not originally intended to carry the weight and determinative power attributed to it by Gurr, the idea of a sanctioned duopoly was first forwarded by Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991), 111.
Despite the fact that the performances at Newington Butts predated the entrenchment of the competitive and professional conditions that would constrain both companies for the remainder of Shakespeare’s career, it is tempting to read the performances at Newington exclusively in the context of the companies that the Admiral’s Men and Lord Chamberlain’s Men would become. Because, from our critical vantage point, the two companies eventually separated themselves by some distance from all of their pre-1594 competitors, it may appear inevitable that the companies of Marlowe, Alleyn, Burbage, and Shakespeare would emerge from the scrum of touring and uncertainty that marked the early 1590s. It may appear that the canonical plays performed at Newington and, later, the holiday season of 1594 would play central roles in that emergence. Reading this way, one might conceptualize the performance of “the tamynge of A shrowe” on 11 June to be among the very first performances of one of Shakespeare’s first comedies, The Taming of the Shrew, by the London company that would make it immortal. One might conceptualize the performance as having been more or less identical to later performances of the same play by the same company over the next twenty years. One might imagine the work of a man who “by 1592 or earlier… was indeed a Shake-scene, who dominated the London and provincial theatre world as a competent actor and leading playwright.”

The problem, of course, is that we know virtually nothing for certain about Shakespeare’s early career. Particularly vexing is the fact that the text of Taming of the Shrew that we recognize as one of Shakespeare’s first comedies wasn’t printed until it was included in the first Folio in 1623, twenty-nine years after the 11 June

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performance of “tamynge of A shrowe.” The tendency to imagine Shakespeare’s early years in the context of his eventual career leads to what Marino calls a “teleology that makes young Shakespeare into an image of the mature Shakespeare, and the 1623 Folio into the alpha and omega of his working life.” The primary problem with this tendency is that many of Shakespeare’s plays were printed in early versions that vary substantially from the versions we have come to know as definitive: an anonymous _Taming of a Shrew_ was entered in the Stationers’ Register prior to the performance at Newington Butts (2 May 1594) and printed in quarto before the end of the year. The teleology described by Marino is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that many critics continue to hold that “Although the reported text had been entered into the Stationers’ Register only one month before the performance on [11] June 1594, and although the name of the play in Henslowe’s diary more closely corresponds to the actor’s reconstruction, the Chamberlain’s Men probably staged Shakespeare’s text since Shakespeare himself was associated with them at about this time.”

In chapter two of this dissertation, I examined four of Shakespeare’s plays printed in varying forms. Contrary to the timeline proposed by the New Bibliographers a century ago, I argued that the manuscripts behind the printed play texts were written and re-written in the order suggested by their printing. This chapter turns to the play texts associated with Shakespeare’s early years, extending the logic of theatrical revision and expansion to these early plays. Based largely on the

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11 Marino, _Owning_, 22.
argument forwarded in the last chapter, I treat the earlier, simpler, shorter printings of these plays as though they were written prior to the longer and more sophisticated versions collected in the 1623 Folio. It is entirely likely that Henslowe’s choice of article is not misleading and that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performed a text close to the one that was printed before the year was out.

My concerns regarding our teleological tendency to superimpose the totality of Shakespeare’s career upon his early years, however, go beyond the question of which play text best represents the performance at Newington. Unlike the play texts examined in the last chapter, each of which was immediately attributed to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, Shakespeare’s earliest play texts have been associated with a variety of companies. Based on its title page attribution, *The Taming of a Shrew* originated with and for the Lord Pembroke’s Men, a company for which “little evidence survives to cast light on where this company came from, how it was able to attain immediate success, and what players were active in it during its brief life.”13 Given that dearth of evidence, we simply can’t be certain that Shakespeare was ever affiliated with the company mentioned by the play’s earliest printing. Claims regarding a chronological relationship between this play text and the Folio printing of *The Shrew*, therefore, present complicated possibilities of authorship.

While my argument here might bolster proponents of a model in which Shakespeare and his company revised non-Shakespearean texts into the plays we know as Shakespeare’s, the question of authorship is for the most part beyond my scope here. This dissertation has largely set aside questions of textual authority and

authorship in order to focus on how individual play texts would have functioned if performed according to early modern stage practices. Nonetheless, this chapter begins with the assertion that, unlike other shorter versions of Shakespeare’s variant plays, *Taming of a Shrew* and the three other potentially Shakespearean play texts printed in or before 1595 — *Titus Andronicus* (1594), *The First Part of the Contention* (2 Henry VI, 1594), and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (3 Henry VI, 1595) — would have functioned differently in performance than the rest of Shakespeare’s printed corpus. In order to understand these differences, and the implications of these differences, we must consider this dissertation’s primary argument — that early modern staging practices shaped the way Shakespeare wrote plays — in the context of a time period in which playing companies and their practices were still very much in flux.

Our tendency to understand the events of Shakespeare’s early career in terms of his eventual career removes the composition of plays from the context of an evolving theatrical ecosystem and a period of radical company restructuring. Throughout this dissertation, I have aligned myself with critics cautioning against the tendency to think of “early modern performance” as a set of practices that were enacted upon “finished” early modern texts, arguing instead for a model in which the writing of early modern plays might be considered a vital part of those performance practices. Throughout Shakespeare’s career, players were not given the entirety of a script. Parts were conned in isolation and combined in as few rehearsals as possible, relying almost entirely on one-to-four word cues. Throughout the period, the most difficult aspect of early modern performance had to do with the recognition of cues.
In the first chapter of this dissertation, I suggested that the practice of sundering texts into parts to be conned individually and played according to cues with only minimal rehearsal began with the composition of plays that were written to ease the difficulty of subsequent aspects of that process. In that chapter, I cite Richard II as a typical Shakespeare play, written to mitigate the demands of 1590s professional London in three ways related to the distribution and ordering of speeches. First, it was written to distribute speeches and thereby minimize the number of cues for which individual players were responsible at a given time. Second, it was written to feature the work of two prominent players, assigning a similar number of speeches to the players responsible for Richard II and Bollingbroke. Finally the play was written to provide players with recognizable patterns of speaking order – two-player scenes and speech stems – that eased the difficulty of recognizing cues and determining when to speak. In other words, Richard II was written in anticipation of its own performance, one informed and shaped by the theatrical practices, company membership, and particular competitive conditions of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

Because the play texts pertaining to Shakespeare’s earliest plays were originally written prior to the creation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and the establishment of the material conditions of its rivalry with the Admiral’s Men, the play texts that are the primary subject of this chapter are not typically written Shakespeare plays. While each of these play texts was written, in part, to ease the difficulties of performance according to parts, their playwrights did so in ways that appear inextricably bound to the conditions of professional theatre prior to 1594 and,
more speculatively, to the specific companies for which the plays were likely first
written.

My interest in the pre-1594 companies in terms of their theatrical form –
defined throughout this dissertation as the textual means by which company
playwrights managed theatrical resources and made performance possible without
extended rehearsal – marks a significant departure from the traditional methodology
applied to Shakespeare’s early career. With few exceptions, previous studies have
made arguments regarding the controversial company affiliation of these early play
texts in order to make subsequent arguments regarding Shakespeare’s professional
activities prior to the 15 March 1595 warrant naming him as member of the Lord
Chamberlain’s Men.\textsuperscript{14} Even when understood as corrupted versions, these play texts
have typically been used as data points to clarify company membership and to locate
Shakespeare, because the one relatively uncontroversial element of the pre-1594
puzzle is the eventual repertory of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.\textsuperscript{15}

Accordingly, the formation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men has largely been
understood in terms of the formation of its repertory and the assumption that texts
accompanied players to the company. As Marino suggests:

\begin{quote}
The temptation of conclusions has proved very strong in the case of
the Chamberlain’s Men’s initial personnel, leading scholars to
construct speculative stories about the Pembroke’s Men and Sussex’s
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Reproduced in Chambers, \textit{The Elizabethan}, 4:164. The warrant for £20 is made out “To Will”
Kempe Will\textsuperscript{16} Shakespeare & Richard Burbage seruantes to the Lord Cham\textsuperscript{17}leyne… for twoe seueral
comedies or Enterludes shewed by them before her Ma\textsuperscript{18}e in x\textsuperscript{19}mas tyme laste paste….”
\textsuperscript{15} For a detailed and nuanced study of the search to locate Shakespeare’s theatrical exploits previous to
his joining the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, see Schoone-Jongen, \textit{Shakespeare’s}.
Men by working backward from later evidence…. That individual players cannot actually be traced moving between companies does not serve as a sufficient deterrent to speculation, and when necessary speculative biographies for the players are cobbled together in order to support the speculative company histories.  

The plays themselves have been understood primarily in terms of the players who may have held custody of them and, upon joining the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, brought the plays with them. The critical interest in the plays as markers of player migration has a tendency to treat the plays as artificially over-stable and unchanging entities; such treatment makes it possible to imagine the Newington performance of “the tamynge of A shrowe” as a performance of “The Taming of the Shrew” more or less as it was printed thirty years later.

If one study serves as a model for the methodology guiding this chapter, it is Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean’s *The Queen’s Men and Their Plays* (1998). Departing significantly from traditional analyses of authorial style, McMillin and MacLean shift their attention to the stylistic concerns of an entire group of plays belonging to a single company. They explain:

> We think that each company would have had its own style, its own textual procedure, its own sense of purpose, and its own impact upon audiences and other acting companies. To some extent these characteristics would have been shared among the other companies,

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and sometimes actors moved from one troupe to another. The Queen’s Men was first formed of actors from other troupes. But organizations within a profession always develop identities of their own, widely recognized features which stand out from the procedures they share with the other organizations, and we feel that the more urgent consideration is the extent to which each company was unique.\textsuperscript{18}

For McMillin and MacLean, the company’s style was, in part, a matter of design: “The Queen’s Men were formed to spread Protestant and royalist propaganda through a divided realm.” This agenda translates directly to content in which “their approach to English history combines broad anti-Catholicism with a specifically Protestant style, ‘truth’ and ‘plainness’ intertwined.”\textsuperscript{19}

More pertinent to my interests here, McMillin and MacLean assert that the company’s style developed not just to meet political and artistic needs but to accommodate practical needs related to performance. McMillin and MacLean hold that the Queen’s Men were designed, at least in part, to tour the provinces: “From the year of their formation 1583, the Queen’s Men were the most active touring troupe on record.”\textsuperscript{20} This assertion is a reversal of earlier notions that touring was a last resort brought about by plague closings, arguing instead that touring was central to the company’s mission for reasons equally steeped in politics and profit: “Provincial performances could foster stronger ties between the nobility and local communities, yoking pleasure, profit and political advantage in ways which we would assume were

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., xxii-xxiii.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 166, 36.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 37.
recognized by all involved.”

McMillin and MacLean catalogue the ways the repertory of Queen’s Men functioned to alleviate the burden of touring. Specifically, they suggest that the play texts of Queen’s Men cast a fixed number of players and used a number of strategies to ensure that plays could be double-cast, including “interspersing small groups among the large and removing some characters from scenes where they would be expected.” Such strategies would have allowed members of the company to change costumes. Such strategies were textual and would have been preserved as theatrical manuscripts were transmitted into print. More important for my purposes, such strategies were authorial; in opposition to the New Bibliographical position that performative concerns were most frequently met by changes that a company made to a finished script, McMillin and MacLean suggest a model in which the performative needs a company were tended to by the playwright.

Because plays were created in anticipation of specific theatrical processes, an individual play text’s allocation of theatrical resources tells a story of how a specific company functioned at a particular moment, in a particular context. Regardless of who was in a company, or how a play eventually ended up associated with Shakespeare, the theatrical forms of these early play texts tell a story of evolving theatrical conditions and practices. The Chamberlain’s Men’s early repertory was a combination of earlier repertories written for other companies; the surviving play texts survive as extant witnesses of divergent theatrical practices. Accordingly, this chapter examines play texts of early plays – some Shakespearean, some not – offering textual evidence to clarify our understanding of the material conditions and practices.

21 Ibid., 38.
22 Ibid., 106.
of the Queen’s, Pembroke’s, Strange’s, and Sussex’s companies so that we might understand them independent of their relationship to Shakespeare.

Alternately, early printed play texts offer a narrative of textual influence regarding the theatrical form that would guide the remainder of Shakespeare’s career. Marino understands the formation of the Chamberlain’s Men’s repertory as a process that accumulated the play texts that would provide Shakespeare with material for revision.\textsuperscript{23} This chapter suggests that, for a playwright who knew what to look for, the accumulation of plays – written according to what McMillin and MacLean refer to as different company styles – would have also provided models for negotiating the rigors of early modern performance. Even if, like Marino, we remain uncertain which pre-1594 companies, if any, included Shakespeare as a company playwright, we can more confidently determine which early companies’ practices continued to shape Shakespeare’s approach to writing plays after the creation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

The three printings of Shakespeare plays attributed solely to Pembroke’s Men were written according to an approach for negotiating performance that dead-ended with the company’s disappearance: unlike a typical Shakespearean play text such as Richard II, plays attributed to Pembroke’s Men were written to ease the difficulty of early modern performance simply by limiting the opportunities for players to make mistakes. Though I continue to have lingering doubts about Shakespeare’s authorship of these three play texts, the first printed allusion to Shakespeare as a playwright – Robert Greene’s famous warning of a “Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde” –

\textsuperscript{23} Marino, Owning, 90.
associates him with a version of 3 Henry VI circulating prior to 1592. Unlike Marino, I am unable to convince myself that the object of Greene’s attack is ambiguous. Following the logic adhered to in other parts of this dissertation, I am inclined to believe that the version of 3 Henry VI in existence in 1592 closely resembled The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York printed in 1595. What’s more, whether or not Shakespeare wrote the play texts printed as Taming of a Shrew, The First Part of the Contention (2 Henry VI), or The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York (3 Henry VI), he followed their same, anomalous approach as he turned them into their Folio incarnations: other than the Folio versions of the same plays, these three play texts are the only printed play texts in Shakespeare’s corpus written to meet the needs of a company performing according to cued parts primarily by limiting the number of speeches assigned to individual players. This chapter works from the admittedly tentative position that Shakespeare wrote these three plays for Pembroke’s Men.

Sometime between potentially writing for Pembroke’s Men and the printing of Richard II, Shakespeare’s approach to writing for performance was influenced by two specific company’s styles. Plays written for the Queen’s Men – while almost never attributed to Shakespeare – were written by playwrights utilizing the structural innovations that Shakespeare would soon appropriate to write A Comedy of Errors and Two Gentlemen of Verona. While several Queen’s Men’s plays are thought to have influenced Shakespeare’s history plays in terms of content, this chapter suggests

25 Marino, Owning, 19.
that the influence went all the way to theatrical form: the original plays of the Queen’s Men contain the same patterns of speech order present in Shakespeare’s later plays involving similar subject matter.

Additionally, two Christopher Marlowe plays written for Henslowe’s London companies demonstrate a strategy – the reliance upon the talents of one celebrity player – for writing plays according to parts and cues while making the majority of one’s profits from a finite London audience. Although Shakespeare ultimately turned to writing plays with two leads who were responsible for similar numbers of speeches, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1592) and *The Jew of Malta* (1633) appear to have directly influenced the way that Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and *Richard III* (1597) respectively. Moreover, sometime after *Tamburlaine* and *Titus* were written, but before the writing of *Malta* and *Richard III*, both playwrights encountered the formal innovations made by the playwrights of the Queen’s Men.

Neither of these interlocking narratives of textual influence will definitively answer the question of Shakespeare’s relationship to these texts or these companies. However, taken in combination, these textual narratives may refine our understanding of the relationship between competing playing companies; the play texts of the period speak to a distinction between touring companies and London companies who occasionally toured. Further, the narratives of individual company practice create practical and theatrical contexts in which, even if we can’t locate the historical Shakespeare with certainty, we may locate his influences. This chapter tells a story of an early-career Shakespeare who, as a playwright, actor, audience member, and reader became familiar with the practices and tricks of multiple companies and used
them, to varying degrees, to create the ambitious but playable corpus that would make him famous in his own lifetime.

**Pembroke’s Men**

Though there is evidence of earlier and later incarnations of a company with the same name, the company of the Lord Pembroke’s Men that is of particular interest to Shakespeare scholars first appears in Leicester in 1592. We know very little about who was in the company or how it was formed, only that this incarnation of the company rose to prominence quickly, performing twice at court less than a year after its emergence. However, the company seems to have fallen into hard times shortly thereafter. In September 1593, Henslowe wrote a letter responding to his son-in-law Edward Alleyn’s concern about the company’s financial situation:

> As for my lorde a penbrockes w^ch^ tiy desier to knowe wheare they be they are all at home and auffe been t[his] v or sixe weackes for they cane not saue ther carges [w]\(^{th}\) trauell as I heare & weare fayne to pane the[r] parell for ther carge….\(^{26}\)

Though the description of the company needing to sell their costumes provides little evidence of anything pertaining to Shakespeare or his plays, it has spurred critics to a variety of conclusions.

Andrew Gurr (1996) imagines the company as a direct antecedent to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, suggesting that the failure on the road forced the members of the

\(^{26}\) *The Diary*, 280.
company to reconfigure with a new patron as one of the “duopoly” companies.\textsuperscript{27} Chambers (1923) asserts that “there is therefore really some basis for the suggestion that [Shakespeare] is to be looked for during these years in Pembroke’s company, until its collapse….”\textsuperscript{28} Others, namely A.S. Cairncross (1960) and David George (1981), have held the financial collapse of the company to be evidence that Shakespeare was not a member of the company and that, shortly after September, the players of the company took to selling pirated versions of their plays; George’s logic regarding Shakespeare’s lack of membership is of particular interest: “Had Shakespeare been with Pembroke’s he could certainly have helped them produce better texts than they did.”\textsuperscript{29} Finally, a third group of critics, typified by Marino, have suggested that the company may have simply sold the custody of their plays to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. The implication of this theory is that the plays may have changed hands without any common membership between companies.\textsuperscript{30}

While divergent, all three of these theories are mainly concerned with how Pembroke’s texts ended up in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men; each critic’s speculation about the ultimate resolution of this doomed incarnation of Pembroke’s Men, and of the short-lived company’s relationship to the eventual company of Shakespeare, tends to suit that critic’s conceptualization of the play texts themselves. One’s opinion regarding piracy, memorial reconstruction, revision, and even the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Andrew Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearian Playing Companies} (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996), 72-73.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Chambers, \textit{The Elizabethan}, ii: 130.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Marino, \textit{Owning}, 31, 34-37.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
authorship of *The Taming of a Shrew* tends to shape one’s opinion regarding what happened to the company itself.

Unfortunately we know even less about the company’s origins than we do its conclusion. Working with almost no documentary evidence, save the inconclusive will of Simon Jewell, the printed play texts themselves, and a general consensus that Shakespeare was not personally responsible for versions of plays that one does not like, critics have imagined the company primarily as a touring division splintered from a previously existing company. Based largely on the unusual title page of Q1 *Titus Andronicus*, which I shall examine in more detail shortly, J. D. Wilson (1952) and E. K. Chambers (1923 and 1930) describe the company as an offshoot of an “amalgamation” of the companies of the Admiral’s and Lord Strange’s Men.\(^{31}\) The possibility bolsters the argument of critics who, like George, believe the quartos to have been pirated: if Shakespeare were a member of Strange’s Men, the splinter group may have been loaned Shakespeare’s plays (only to, in turn, sell pirated versions of them). More specifically, C. W. Wallace (1913) and Gurr (1996) hypothesize that the company was formed in 1591 as a result of a contention between Burbage and his eventual rival, Edward Alleyn; Gurr imagines a falling out that would frame the rivalry between the “duopoly” companies in terms of enmity between celebrity players.\(^{32}\) Finally, drawing on the Jewel will and other means of

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\(^{32}\) C.W. Wallace, *The First London Theatre: Materials for a History*, Nebraska Univ. Studies 13 (1913), summarized in Chambers, *Elizabethan*, ii: 387-95; Gurr, *The Shakespearean*, 72-74. It should be noted that Wallace and Chambers depict the argument as one primarily between Alleyn and the Burbage *family*; Gurr alone describes the argument as one between London’s eventual stage luminaries.
speculation concerning company membership, Mary Edmond (1974) and Scott McMillin (1972), suggest that the company was formed from players who had left the Queen’s Men. These three divergent theories of origin, while obviously disparate, share a central assumption, namely that the company was formed in a difficult theatrical economy, most likely to tour the provinces. The performative features of the play texts themselves justify this assumption.

For starters, Pembroke’s repertory appears to have been small. Only four plays printed in the 1590s – Taming of a Shrew, The First Part of the Contention (2 Henry VI), The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York (3 Henry VI) and Christopher Marlowe’s Edward II (1594) – bear title page claims to having been played exclusively by the company; additionally, the company is named, along with three others, on the title page of Titus Andronicus. Though the company may very well have owned other plays, a touring company would have been able to get by with relatively few plays in their repertory because their audiences changed from day to day.

Secondly, the plays attributed to Pembroke’s Men suggest a company without a star actor. Shakespeare’s potential Pembroke’s texts were written so that no player was assigned more than 100 speeches. While the figure of 100 speeches may seem arbitrary, it is worth pointing out that only four Shakespearean play texts thought to be written after 1594 – Q1 and F Midsummer Night’s Dream, F Henry VIII, and Q1 Richard II – do not feature a character with more than 100 speeches. In comparison

with the plays of the Queen’s Men, Lord Strange’s Men, and Lord Chamberlain’s Men, plays written for the Pembroke’s Men suggest that the company comprised an ensemble of players of relatively equal stature.

The relative equality of players belonging to the Pembroke’s Men goes beyond the lack of a prominent leading role. Though Shakespeare’s typical play texts were written to limit the number of speeches players were responsible for in individual scenes, the typical Shakespeare play features a small group of players who, over the course of an entire play, were responsible for a disproportionate amount of the play’s speeches and cues. Even Shakespeare’s plays not featuring a single part as prominent as Richard III or Hamlet tend to rely upon the company’s principal players; this pattern is present in Shakespeare’s play texts written around the same time as the plays attributed to Pembroke’s Men. For example, the first printings of *A Comedy of Errors, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Love’s Labour’s Lost, Romeo and Juliet*, and *Merchant of Venice* assign their seven largest roles between 70-80% of the play’s total speeches. By creating a number of smaller parts, this pattern is consistent with accepted London practices regarding apprentices, lesser players, and hired men. In comparison, the seven busiest players in Pembroke’s Men were responsible for just over half of their plays’ speeches: the seven texts pertaining to *Shrew* and the *Henry VI* plays were written to assign a modest average of 57% of their speeches to the seven largest characters.\(^{34}\) Relatively smaller roles for leads would have left more

\(^{34}\) While one might be tempted to dismiss the difference here as one primarily of genre, it should be pointed out that the history plays written for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men feature much more prominent leading characters including Henry V, Richard III, Falstaff, Prince Hal, Hotspur, Richard II, and Bolingbroke. The company-wide distribution of the *Henry VI* plays is not a typical feature of the Shakespearean history play.
speeches for supporting players; though leading players certainly may have played more than one role, the plays include so many characters that all of the company’s players were likely assigned multiple parts. I do not mean to suggest that Pembroke’s Men did not include apprentices or inexperienced players, only that its plays were written to distribute speeches relatively evenly among the entire company and not just among a smaller, core group.

Finally, plays associated with Pembroke’s Men were written without great attention to patterns of speaking order that, in other play texts, appear to have been used to help players recognize cues. Shakespeare’s corpus of printed play texts comprise plays that, on average, include 34% of their speeches in two-player scenes where, with only a single partner, players would have been able to recognize cues with relative ease. In contrast, the six printings of the three Shakespeare plays unambiguously connected to the Pembroke’s Men – Taming of a Shrew, The First Part of the Contention (2 Henry VI), and The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York (3 Henry VI) – feature roughly half as many two-player scenes (15%). Similarly, the average play in Shakespeare’s printed corpus was written with another 31% of its speeches in what I have been calling speech stems, structures in which one player was responsible for every other speech. The printings of the three plays that Shakespeare may have written for Pembroke’s Men feature relatively few (25%) stems of ten speeches or more.35 It should be noted that the other play text most frequently

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35 Shakespearean play texts first attributed to Pembroke’s Men were written so that 40% of their speeches are either in two-player scenes or speech stems of ten or more. The difference between this figure and the average printed Shakespeare play text becomes more significant if we remove plays first printed in or before 1595 from the sample: Shakespeare’s remaining play texts feature 41,920 speeches, 28,521 (68%) of which are located in two-player scenes or speech stems of ten or more.
attributed to the company, Marlowe’s *Edward II* (1594), is equally stingy with these forms, featuring only ninety-one (10%) of its 953 speeches in two-player scenes and 181 (20%) speeches in stems of ten or more speeches. In other words, the relative lack of predictable patterns of speech order appears to be a feature of plays written for Pembroke’s Men.

The lack of such patterns can be explained by the company’s apparent ensemble: a company approach to storytelling meant that Pembroke’s plays were relatively easy to perform according to parts simply because no player had very many cues to remember or identify over the course of a single performance. Moreover, unlike London players of the 1590s, members of a touring company without the need for a large repertory or constant stream of new plays were not busy conning new parts. With the entire company of players responsible for relatively few speeches per play, and very few plays overall, the even distribution of speeches was likely the only form of assistance the company needed.

It is certainly possible that Shakespeare wrote these plays for Pembroke’s Men and later revised them; it is equally likely that Shakespeare revised non-Shakespearean versions of these plays that resembled their first printings. We can’t be certain of who wrote the play texts attributed to the Pembroke’s Men, or if and when they were revised into the play texts collected in the 1623 Folio. Nonetheless, we can be relatively certain that the play texts were originally written for theatrical circumstances unique to this upstart company. Although it appears that the pressures of the road were ultimately too great for Pembroke’s company, their small corpus of
plays is consistent with the theory that the company was founded to slough unneeded players from a larger company for the sake of continual touring.

As mentioned previously, the play texts associated with Pembroke’s Men are the only texts attributed to Shakespeare that were written (and re-written) according to such assumptions. While tours of the provinces did not come to an end after the formation of the “duopoly” companies, the corpus associated with Pembroke’s Men speaks to a distinction between a touring company and a company tour. Later tours of Shakespeare plays appear to have been armed with play texts that were written to provide players with the number of two-player scenes and speech stems we might expect from a typical Shakespeare play.

Ultimately, the texts of the Pembroke’s Men were written according to a strategy for making plays that Shakespeare either moved away from or never actually utilized in original composition. Though I have offered a qualified argument that he did, in fact, write the first versions of these plays, it is worth wondering why he is more closely associated with these anonymous play texts than he is with the anonymous play texts written for the Queen’s Men, especially since, as we shall see, those plays much more closely resemble the plays he wrote for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

The Queen’s Men

Like Pembroke’s Men, a company also designed to take to the wagon, the Queen’s Men likely had little use for a massive repertory. However, unlike Pembroke’s, we have reasons to believe that the Queen’s operated under special conditions. In
addition to asserting that, for the Queen’s Men, touring was not a fallback activity but one of the prime reasons the company was formed, McMillin and MacLean posit that the “breaking” of the company was not, as it is often understood, a sign of financial difficulty for the company but a feature of the company from the start:

…we are now looking at the virtual certainty that they divided during their first summer’s tour…. If the Queen’s Men were formed to reach far and wide into the kingdom, the best way was for the company to divide and send branches in different directions. The political intentions behind the formation of the company … fit with the early signs of a divided company in the provinces was not a sign of despair, but a sign of purpose. The largest company ever formed in the professional theatre had the resources to divide and it may have occurred to some minds that income would approximately double as well.36

By observing that the Queen’s company was designed to “break,” McMillin and MacLean theorize a company for which playwrights would not have been able to write for specific actors, at least not for one specific actor per part. Company playwrights would have known that their plays would be played by multiple configurations of company players, that their players would have likely have to con multiple roles for different performances of the same play, and that any starring role would necessarily be shared by two actors with potentially different strengths and weaknesses.

36 McMillin and MacLean, The Queen’s, 44.
In contrast to the “duopoly” companies typically understood to have featured a single player – Alleyn and Burbage respectively — whose star shone brighter than his fellows, the Queen’s Men appear to have been a company of several stars. In 1592, Thomas Nashe turned to hyperbole describe the young Alleyn: “Not Roscius nor Esope, those tragedians admyred before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous Ned Allen.”37 A few paragraphs later, Nashe expands the list to include three deceased members of the Queen’s Men: Richard Tarlton, John Bentley, and William Knell, three actors who “shall be made knowen to Fraunce, Spayne, and Italie.”38

The inclusion of more than one famous player was a necessity for the Queen’s Men, not simply because of its tendency to break into smaller companies but because the company had, on a number of occasions, to survive the loss of principle players. McMillin and MacLean:

Tarlton’s death in September 1588 was certainly their most serious loss, but there is a tendency to suppose that the company more or less collapsed a result. In fact, death had affected the Queen’s Men almost from the beginning: John Bentley and Tobias Mills were both buried in 1585 and the actor who probably replaced Bentley in tragic and heroic parts, William Knell, was killed at Thame…. Tarlton’s death was the worst blow but it came at the end of a series of losses which

37 Thomas Nashe, Pierce Pennilesse’s supplication to the Devil (London: 1592).
38 Ibid., 63. Nashe’s list suggests that, contrary to our teleological tendencies, Richard Burbage was not a star prior to the formation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.
would have sunk a small company or a company which depended on only one star. The Queen’s Men did not founder in 1588.\textsuperscript{39}

Playwrights working in the company style alleged by McMillin and MacLean would have been expected to write plays featuring leading roles that could be played by multiple players. Such expectations explain the most important features of the nine play texts McMillin and MacLean identify as having belonged to the Queen’s Men, including the development of two-player scenes and speech stems. The particular needs of a company featuring a number of famous actors and a penchant for breaking into smaller, touring units likely necessitated the use of extra-textual assistance that took the pressure off of players trying to remember specific cues.

Unlike the earliest printings of plays later attributed to Shakespeare, the scripts of the Queen’s Men offer a relative abundance of two-player scenes. \textit{Selimus} (1594), \textit{The Famous Victories of Henry V} (1598), \textit{The Chronicle History of King Lier} (1605), and \textit{The True Tragedy of Richard III} (1594) feature 32\%, 33\%, 35\%, and 51\% of their speeches, respectively, in two-player scenes. In relative terms, plays made famous by the Queen’s Men are twice as likely to locate speeches in two-player scenes than are plays written for Pembroke’s Men. While several of Shakespeare’s play texts rely even more heavily upon two-player scenes than do three of these four play texts, the percentages ranging from 32-35\% are perfectly in keeping with the 36\% average of Shakespeare’s plays written after the formation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Company.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} McMillin and MacLean, \textit{The Queen’s}, 52.
\textsuperscript{40} The selection of these four Queen’s Men’s play texts, as opposed to all nine of the texts identified by McMillin and MacLean, will be explained shortly. \textit{Selimus} features 32\% (eighty of its 247) speeches in
Consistent with their use of two-player scenes, *Selimus, The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *The Chronicle History of King Lier*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard III* feature 31%, 35%, 28%, and 17% of their speeches, respectively, in stems of ten or more. Examined in combination with two-player scenes, the exemplar texts of the Queen’s Men feature between 63-68% of their speeches in one of the two forms designed to make performance according to parts easier. This number is consistent with the 68% of speeches in the fifty Shakespeare play texts I believe to have been written specifically for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and King’s Men.

The use of these forms is also consistent with the use of small group scenes described by McMillin and MacLean as a means by which the Queen’s Men made double-casting and costume changes easier. Additionally, both forms would allow players to proceed with their next speeches in the event that a partner improvised or moved far from the original text. The flexibility afforded by formal assistance is especially relevant to the Queen’s Men working with what McMillin and MacLean describe as a “knock-about improvisation.” Finally, the assistance offered by recognizable speech patterns would have been especially useful for the Queen’s Men given the particular challenges of a large company that frequently broke and reformed. The likelihood that players would, over time, play different roles within the same play – or that new players could be expected to take over leading parts – suggests that playwrights interested in easing the difficulty of performance would

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41 These percentages are comparable with that present in corresponding Shakespeare plays: see page 159 of this dissertation.
42 McMillin and MacLean, *The Queen’s*, 85.
have found *structural* assistance particularly effective; the effectiveness of two-player scenes and speech stems would not have relied upon the intricacies of cueing or of players’ familiarity with each other so much as it would have relied upon everyone in the company recognizing and knowing how to take advantage of two basic and frequently occurring patterns. Innovations regarding the ordering of speeches were perhaps inevitable for a large, flexible company designed to tour in a variety of configurations while performing plays according to parts.

It should be pointed out that not all of the nine play texts McMillin and MacLean attribute to the Queen’s Men are heavily ordered. In fact, the two parts of *The Terrible Reign of King John* feature only 29% of their speeches in two-player scenes or stems of ten or more, a percentage that is the second-lowest of the nearly seventy play texts examined for this study. However, the four plays that appear to pioneer the use of ordered speeches share other features to set them apart from the remainder of the Queen’s Men’s texts. McMillin and MacLean divide the Queen’s Men’s texts into three groups based on the date in which they were either printed or registered.\(^4\) The four, heavily ordered play texts – along with *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* – were all printed or registered in 1594. McMillin and MacLean point out that the 1594 texts appear to have been written for a cast of fourteen; Queen’s Men’s plays printed prior to 1594, including *The Terrible Reign*, require a larger cast; Queen’s plays printed or registered later require a smaller cast. Excluding *Friar Bacon*, a text which appears to have originally belonged to Strange’s company, the consistent use of two-player scenes and speech stems among the plays printed or

\(^4\) Ibid., 100.
registered in 1594 suggests that a particular formation of the Queen’s Men made these formal innovations.

Somehow, Shakespeare became aware of these techniques. Though the Queen’s Men’s plays exhibiting the innovations are thought to have been written in the mid-1580s, a printing/Register’s entrance date of 1594 suggests that the textual materials of this iteration of the Queen’s Men were circulating close to the formation of Shakespeare’s company when Shakespeare began to write two-player scenes and speech stems with more regularity. Additionally, though there is no evidence to support such speculation, it is quite possible that one or two members of this iteration of the Queen’s Men were founding members of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. More speculatively, it is worth remembering that McMillin and MacLean assert that “Shakespeare belonged to the Queen’s Men early in his career, perhaps in some other capacity than as a writer.”\textsuperscript{44} This position, reinforced by thematic analysis of the texts themselves, is argued more forcefully by Sams (1995): “Shakespeare is thereby identifiable as an actor or a writer, or both, for the Queen’s Men.”\textsuperscript{45} It is certainly possible that Shakespeare became familiar with speech stems and two-player scenes as a player; he may have simply chosen not to use such structures while writing for Pembroke’s because the company didn’t need them.

Even if we remain skeptical regarding theories of player movement or Shakespeare’s potential affiliation, however, the Queen’s Men undoubtedly influenced Shakespeare through the plays themselves. Shakespeare’s\textit{King John, King Lear, Henry V,} and \textit{Richard III} have long been understood to owe some sort of debt

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 165.  
\textsuperscript{45} Sams, \textit{The Real}, 59.
to plays performed by the Queen’s Men. James Marino (2011) asserts that the plays of the Queen’s Men were acquired by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and directly revised into the versions attributed to Shakespeare. Focusing on when and how Shakespeare’s histories were distinguished from the corresponding play of the Queen’s Men, he points out that a 1611 edition of the Queen’s Men’s *Troublesome Reign of King John* was printed with a title-page reading “Written by W. Sh,” an error suggesting that “Clearly, not everyone viewed the old Queen’s Men’s play and the later King’s Men’s play as distinct.”

In addition to this confused attribution, claims that the plays were reworked by Shakespeare are bolstered by similarities among the plays themselves. Richard Dutton (2009) forwards a theory in which the Queen’s Men’s *The Famous Victories of Henry V* explicitly shaped the writing of Shakespeare’s Q1 *Henry V*, both in terms of rhetorical strategy and in terms of dramatic shape. Dutton’s argument is consistent with examples from the other paired plays. Each pair shares much in the way of “dramatic shape.”

Obviously, two plays concerning the historical figure of King John will share content and possibly even plot. However, looking more closely at the first scenes of each play, we can see a shared approach to performance. The first scene of *Terrible Reign* opens with a large ensemble on stage; Chattilion exits; immediately thereafter a sheriff brings Robert and Philip in; after an extended exchange of un-stemmed speeches, everybody leaves except Philip and his Mother. Shakespeare’s *King John*

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46 Marino, *Owning*, 34.
opens with a scene featuring identical, though proportionately longer, sections. The only distinctions, in terms of theatrical form, are that Chattilion exits with one other character and that Philip’s Mother leaves the stage for a single speech before returning with James Gurney. Where the Queen’s Men closed on a two-player exchange, Shakespeare uses a slightly more sophisticated speech stem before Gurney exits and the scene ends in a fashion identical to the earlier play text. Given the similarity between the two scenes in terms of stage traffic, I am inclined to believe that Shakespeare had a copy of the first in front of him that served as a source for the second.

The plays of the Queen’s Men provided more for Shakespeare than source material or dramatic shape. Comparing speech order of the Queen’s Men plays with their Shakespearean cousins, one finds the same correlation I identified between Shakespeare’s variant texts in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. In that chapter, I outlined a revision process by which Shakespeare’s plays were expanded. Shakespeare’s revisions tended to favor the addition of internal lines over the creation of new speeches; when additional speeches were added, they were distributed relatively evenly across plays and scenes in order to ensure that patterns of distribution and speech order were maintained. Scenes were understood in their smallest units of dramatic action, moments separated by each entrance and exit. This method accounts for why, even when nearly all of the words of individual a scene were re-written, the basic shape of the scene’s entrances and exits – as well as its use of two-player exchanges and speech stems – can be found in both versions of the text. While there is even more variation between the plays of the Queen’s Men and their
Shakespearean counterparts than there is between Shakespeare’s “minimal” and “maximal” texts, many scenes, like the first scene of *King John*, conform to the same pattern of revision outlined in Chapter 2:48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>% of Speeches in 2-Player Scene</th>
<th>% of Speeches in Stems</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Terrible Reign</em></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>King John</em></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>King Leir</em></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>King Lear</em></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Famous Victories</em></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 <em>Henry V</em></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>True Tragedy</em></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Richard III</em></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The texts and company style of a particular incarnation of the Queen’s Men appear not only to have provided Shakespeare with two basic tools that he would employ for the remainder of his career, but to have directly shaped the way he, in his corresponding plays, wrote for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

48 Percentages of the two play texts corresponding to *King John* are obviously much further apart than the other pairs examined here. Nonetheless, the lack of theatrical logic at work in the speech order of *The Terrible Reign* seems to have influenced the fact that Shakespeare’s *King John* is decidedly less carefully ordered than the typical Shakespeare play.
Though developed in service of particular touring constraints, the techniques of the Queen’s Men appear to have helped make possible a London-centric theatrical culture of the mid-1590s. In order to fully understand the significance of these structural innovations upon the development of London theatre, we must examine the texts and practices of the companies working closely with Philip Henslowe.

**Henslowe’s Companies**

If the Queen’s Men and Pembroke’s Men can safely be thought of as companies designed from their inception to negotiate the pressures of provincial touring, the same cannot be said for the company that most frequently played in Henslowe’s Rose theatre during the brief periods that it was open between 1591-1594. Early in the 1590s, the Rose was the London home of the Lord Strange’s Men: they performed twenty-three plays there between 19 February and 22 June 1592; the company returned to the Rose when it was reopened in December 1592 and stayed there until 1 February 1593 when plague forced them to return to touring.⁴⁹ In September 1593, Fernando Stanley became Earl of Derby and the company became know as Derby’s Men; the change might have simply been one of nomenclature, but the company did not return to London when the theatres were re-opened. Instead, the Rose became the short-term home of Sussex’s Men, a company that played there between 27 December 1593 and 6 February 1594. Three months later, Sussex’s Men were joined at the Rose by the Queen’s Men for an eight-day stretch.⁵⁰ A month after that, on 14

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⁴⁹ *The Diary*, 20-21; Gurr, *Shakespearian*, 91.
May 1594, the period of instability ended with the first performance of the newly re-organized Lord Admiral’s Men.

There is no shortage of speculation regarding these companies and their potential connections to the two companies that would dominate London in a few short years. As early as 1885, J. O. Halliwell-Philips suggested that Shakespeare had almost certainly been a member of Strange’s Men.51 The hypothesis became an immensely popular one, to the point that Schoone-Jongen’s (2008) assessment of arguments regarding Shakespeare’s early years asserts that “the belief that Shakespeare performed with Strange’s is probably the most popular of all the arguments considered in this study…. Generally, all these proponents agree on the evidence used to make this argument; the only major disagreement is over when Shakespeare joined Strange’s.”52

In addition to the typical inquiries regarding Shakespeare’s potential activities, critics have speculated about a formal relationship between the company and the Admiral’s Men. Borrowing language used by E. K. Chambers, critics have frequently thought of Strange’s as a part of a super-company referred to as the “amalgamated” company. I have used “amalgamated” throughout this chapter, though it is likely misleading. It is certainly true that Edward Alleyn was a consistent adjunct to the Strange’s Men. Based upon the previously mentioned travel warrant from 1593, a surviving “plot” for 2 Seven Deadly Sins, and the fact that he married Henslowe’s stepdaughter on 22 October 1592, he appears to have been a de-facto member of the

52 Schoone-Jongen, Shakespeare’s, 103.
company. Speculation regarding amalgamation is rampant, however, because it is also true that, throughout the period, Alleyn is referred to as a member of the Admiral’s Men. Critics have floated a variety of explanations for Alleyn’s contradictory status as a player identified as a member of Admiral’s company who seems to have played, almost exclusively, with Strange’s.

In his assessment of arguments regarding the “amalgamation,” Schoone-Jongen (2008) dismisses the notion of anything more complicated than the simple loan of one player to another company during a period in which economic pressures limited the Admiral’s Men; he asserts that theories of amalgamation are akin to “saying that Manchester United amalgamated with Real Madrid when David Beckham switched teams.” This sentiment of dismissal is echoed by James Marino: “the group is better described as Lord Strange’s Men and the Admiral’s Man.” Nonetheless, theories of amalgamation persist. Given the likelihood that Strange’s Men included several players (Cowley, Philips, Pope, Bryan, Heminges, and Kempe) who eventually resurface as members of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, the desire to imagine the company in a partnership with an early incarnation of the Admiral’s Men can be seen as a yet another teleological impulse, a desire to create a prologue for the rival companies that would thrive throughout the remainder of Shakespeare’s career.

In any event, the last company to enjoy a relationship with Henslowe prior to the re-formation of the Admiral’s company, Sussex’s Men, appears to have gained

53 The Diary, 6.
54 Schoone-Jongen, Shakespeare’s, 77.
55 Marino, Owning, 26.
56 Gurr, Shakespearian, 69-71, 265.
custody of the plays performed by Strange’s Men while literally taking their place at
the Rose. Debates regarding company membership are, again, steeped in speculation
having more to do with what we know about the late 1590s than what we can prove
about the years prior to 1594. One popular theory holds that Sussex’s Men originally
comprised players from Strange’s Men who, mid-stream, were joined by players from
the recently-failed Pembroke’s Men.57 Alternately, critics have suggested that, just
before the previously-mentioned joint performances with the Queen’s Men, Sussex’s
company split into two groups of players, one that set out to become the
Chamberlain’s Men, the other that stayed behind and was absorbed into the re-
organized Admiral’s company.

Independent of speculative links between the personnel of these two
companies and the two companies who played at Newington Butts in June 1594, we
do know that the period was especially volatile and that all of the companies involved
shared ties to Henslowe and a substantial number of plays that changed ownership in
name but “in practice [were] always a Henslowe play.”58 Accordingly, in examining
circumstances that appear to be precursors of those under which the majority of
typical Shakespeare plays would be written, I am less interested in disambiguating
Strange’s Men from Sussex’s Men than I am in documenting how Henslowe’s
demonstrable desires for a permanent and thriving Bankside theatre culture affected
the writing of plays.

58 Marino, Owning, 26.
Henslowe’s ambitions to play London exclusively can be seen in an undated petition to the Privy Council written sometime during the plague closures of 1592-1594 wherein Strange’s company requested that the Council reopen the Rose:

…oure Companie is greate, and thearbie o’ chardge intollerable, in travellinge the Countrie, and the Contynuaunce therof, wilbe a meane to bringe vs to division and seperacōn, wherebie wee shall not onelie be vundone, but alsoe vnreadie to serve her maic, when is shall please her highnes to commaund vs, And for that vse of o’ plaiehowse on the Bankside… is a greate releif to the poore watermen theare.\textsuperscript{59}

This petition is frequently understood as potential evidence of the kind of splintering responsible for the creation of Pembroke’s Men. It may very well be exactly that, though it was quite possibly written after the formation of Pembroke’s Men. Furthermore, as we shall see momentarily, the Council relented and allowed the Rose to reopen.

In addition to the complaint’s potential relevance to company composition, the petition has traditionally been a centerpiece of evidence regarding all the companies’ relationship to touring; a century of critics understood touring to be “an uncomfortable, dirty, grueling, and not especially rewarding activity undertaken only to offset London misfortunes.”\textsuperscript{60} First forwarded by Chambers (1923), this position was echoed by many critics, most notably Bentley (1984).\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{59} The Diary, 283-284.
\textsuperscript{60} Schoone-Jongen, Shakespeare’s, 43.
Certainly, Strange’s Men do appear to have taken to the road only as a last resort. However, critics have tended to apply this reticence a bit too generally; it is worth remembering that the most powerful company of the 1580s, the Queen’s Men, appear to have found provincial touring quite profitable. Further, Schoone-Jongen refers to a “growing scholarly consensus that playing companies—London and otherwise—regarded touring as the norm, not as a last resort.”62 This consensus can be summed up by Siobahn Keenan’s (2002) observation that even when they “had access to permanent, purpose-built theatres and larger audiences,” London companies “continued to travel the country on a regular basis.”63 More boldly, Gurr (1996) declares “Traveling dictated all the early playing practices.”64 Accordingly, we might think of the theatre climate of the late 1580s as less London-centric than previously considered; read in that context, the protestations of Strange’s Men might be understood as unusual or novel. The company may have been uniquely interested in performing exclusively at the Rose, serving as a precursor of the London-centric companies of the mid-1590s.

We should remember that, in addition to complaining of the difficulty of touring as a large company, the petition shows an affirmative preference for conditions correctly associated with the “duopoly” companies in the middle of Shakespeare’s career: the petition argues that the company is best served by a permanent and open theatre that can allow the company to be ready for court performance while bolstering the economic needs of a specific, Bankside community

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62 Schoone-Jongen, Shakespeare’s, 43.
64 Gurr, Shakespearian, 36.
and its “poore watermen.” Interestingly, the “poore waterman” appear to have sent a follow-up petition of their own; eventually, though we can’t be sure of the date of the response, the Council allowed the company to return to the Rose, again citing the needs of “a number of poore waterman.” Ultimately, the argument was won because an appeal to the commercial benefits of a permanent, Bankside theatre culture. By the time this petition was made, at least one company, theater owner, and local community advocated for a scenario in which the company would need to draw the majority of its audience and profits from the ample but finite population of London theatergoers.

A company desiring to play in London exclusively would have needed a specialized inventory of plays, capable of being mounted with as little rehearsal as possible while simultaneously showcasing players capable of drawing similar crowds on consecutive afternoons. Though plenty of uncertainty surrounds Strange’s Men, the size of its known repertory is consistent with a company desiring to please the same audience again and again. According to Henslowe, the company played twenty-seven plays from 1592-1593, with twenty-three of them being staged at the Rose. Many of these plays were performed by Sussex’s Men a year later. Contrasted with the much smaller working repertories of the Queen’s and Pembroke’s Men, we can see the repertories of Henslowe’s companies, in terms of the sheer quantity of plays, as early examples of the repertories on display during the mid-to-late 1590s.

In terms of the theatrical form of the plays themselves, many of the texts written for the company – *Friar Bungay and Friar Bacon*, for example – do not

65 *The Diary*, 284-286.
display an overt authorial awareness of the particular demands of the Rose and consistent suburban playing. However, several play texts offer interesting examples suggesting that playwrights experimented with the structural innovations of the Queen’s Men. The evidence of this experimentation is not definitively chronological; the corpus affiliated with Henslowe is large enough, with enough questions surrounding authorship, that it resists an obviously linear evolution. Nonetheless, it is worth looking in more detail at the earliest Henslowe play to feature a definitive star: 1 Tamburlaine.

Written for the first incarnation of the Admiral’s Men around 1589, Tamburlaine the Great is rightfully thought to have influenced the next decade of playwriting. There is no mistaking the influence of its verse and content; furthermore, the size and prominence of the play’s lead, given 106 famously bombastic speeches, appears to have directly led to Shakespeare’s Titus, a character assigned 110 similarly bombastic speeches. However, in terms of theatrical form, the play text has little in common with those plays Shakespeare would write for his London companies. For starters, despite being thought of as a demanding and lengthy play, the play text of 1 Tamburlaine features only 387 speeches, a full 114 fewer than any Shakespeare play text included in the 1623 Folio. The play text locates a mere 10% of its speeches in two-player scenes while featuring a meager six speech stems totaling only 57 speeches. Despite the significant leading role and lack of structural assistance, the Admiral’s Men were likely able to perform their parts simply because no player – other than Alleyn – was responsible for a large number of speeches and cues.
The only Shakespearean play written consciously to emulate the theatrical form of *Tamburlaine* is *Titus Andronicus*. Because of an unusual 1594 title page claiming to be the play “As it was Plaide by the Right Honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earle of Pembroke, and Earle of Sussex their Servants,” the origin of the play is uncertain. Nonetheless, most critics believe it to have been originally written for a company playing at the Rose, positing that the play moved from Strange’s (Derby’s) to Pembroke’s and back again to Sussex’s Men. In any case, as printed in 1594, the play assigns four more speeches (110) to Titus than *Tamburlaine* did to Tamburlaine. Like *Tamburlaine*, the play features relatively little in the way of structural assistance for its players. Only 38% of its speeches occur in two-player scenes or speech stems of ten or more.

On its surface, the play text appears much more closely aligned with *Tamburlaine* than with more typical Shakespeare plays such as *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Richard III*, all of which were written at roughly the same time as *Titus*. However, the play text of *Titus* does demonstrate a concentration of speeches upon a small, core group of players: the seven largest roles are responsible for 412 (75%) of the play text’s 546 speeches. Further, if one removes the scenes of the text that Brian Vickers (2004) believes were written by George Peele, we are left with a rate of structural assistance much more in line with that of a typical Shakespeare play. The 164 speeches appearing in 1.1, 2.1, and 4.1 – the scenes Vickers believes to have been written by Peele – feature no speeches in two-player scenes and only two speech stems. Removing those numbers from the play as a

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whole, we are left with 386 speeches, 183 of which (47%) appear to have been
ordered to ease the difficulty of performance. While the Shakespearean portions of
Titus Andronicus adhere to a performative logic less closely than does the typical
Shakespeare play, they likely would have been substantially easier to play than the
sections ostensibly written by Peele. More to the point, Shakespeare’s scenes would
have been more easily played than each of the play texts attributed to Pembroke’s
Men. Titus demonstrates a nod towards the implementation of structural forms of
assistance that would be crucial to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

The pressures at work upon playwrights writing for Henslowe appear to have
most fully come to fruition in Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta, a play written for
Strange’s Men sometime around 1592 that, in terms of theatrical form, appears to
have influenced Shakespeare more fully than 1 Tamburlaine. Judged simply by the
quantity of recorded performances, no play appears to have been more important to
companies performing at the Rose than The Jew of Malta. After its first recorded
performance on 26 February 1592, the play was performed at least seventeen times by
Strange’s company; it was performed on 4 February 1594 by Sussex’s Men; it was
performed in April 1594 while Sussex’s Men shared the Rose with the Queen’s
company; it was the first play performed by the re-constituted Admiral’s Men on 14
May 1594; three days later it was registered in the Stationers’ Register, though no
surviving copy was printed until 1633; finally, in June 1594, it was performed twice
at Newington Butts. All of these performances are believed to have featured Alleyn as
the lead.
Though not traditionally considered in these terms, the *Jew of Malta* required Alleyn to deliver what may have been his most demanding role, one containing nearly two-and-a-half times as many speeches (255) as either Tamburlaine or Titus. However, like the leading roles written by Shakespeare during the next twenty years, the part of Barabbas was written to provide Alleyn help; 87% (223 of 255) of his speeches would have been performed in two-player scenes or speech stems in which Alleyn would have delivered every other speech. In comparison, only 27% (twenty-nine of 106) of Tamburlaine’s speeches would have received similar assistance.

As important, *Jew as a Malta* extends structural assistance to the entire company. Over half (386) of the play’s 749 speeches are in two-player scenes. Another 20% are in speech stems of ten or more. Thus, 72% of the play’s total speeches appear to have provided players extra-textual clues regarding when to deliver their lines. This kind of structural assistance is especially important given the fact that from 4 February to 14 May 1594 the text was played by three different companies.

Though its implementation of structural elements present in the work of the Queen’s Men can be seen to influence the entirety of Shakespeare’s career, *The Jew of Malta*’s influence upon Shakespeare appears to be immediate, particularly in regards to *Richard III*. Featuring a lead responsible for 291 speeches, Q1 *Richard III* was written so that 44% of the play’s speeches appear in two-player scenes; likewise, Q1 *Richard III* was written so that another 30% of its speeches were located in speech stems of ten or more.
The immediate influence of *Jew of Malta* can also be seen, more speculatively, in the 1594 Newington performance described by Henslowe as “hamlet.” If one can ignore all of the things we don’t know for sure about Q1 *Hamlet* (1603) and read simply for the way it utilizes its theatrical resources, the play text demonstrates characteristics that would make it a transitional text somewhere between Q1 *Titus* and Q1 *Richard III*; the play text would have offered a lead player and company a combination of challenges and assistance distinct from but closer to *Richard III* than any other Shakespeare play believed to have been written prior to the formation of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Q1 offers a provocative surrogate for the performance, one that would make the demands of *Richard III* – a play featuring a part comprising twice as many speeches as any other Shakespearean part written previously – the next step in a gradual evolution as opposed to the enormous leap it otherwise appears to be.

The possibility that *Hamlet* was written earlier than we might think is made slightly more plausible by the fact that *Richard III* and *Hamlet* are the only Shakespearean plays that, like *Jew of Malta*, negotiate the demands of performance by assigning a single player roughly 33% of the play’s speeches. Despite mythologies related to Richard Burbage, Shakespeare’s plays were typically written to assign a similar number of speeches to two or more leading characters. While Shakespeare followed Marlowe’s lead, applying the structural innovations of the Queen’s Men in order to mitigate the demands of a play featuring a massive leading part, Shakespeare’s more typical application of those innovations would appear in plays like *Richard II* and *2 Henry IV*. 
In any case, the printed play texts attributed to companies associated with Alleyn, Henslowe, and the Rose exhibit practices suggesting that at least two playwrights were encouraged to experiment with the application of structural assistance in the service of plays that demanded more work from individual players.

**Conclusion**

Returning our attention to Newington Butts in June 1594, we will remember that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men played some version of three plays eventually attributed to Shakespeare: *Shrew, Titus Andronicus*, and what has traditionally been understood to be the *ur-Hamlet*. These three plays were likely written for three different companies with three distinct sets of practices. *Taming of a Shrew* appears to have been written for a company without a star, touring with a relatively small repertory of plays. The play text offers little in the way of structural assistance to players attempting to locate cues while working from parts. In comparison, early play texts played by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men — including Q1 *Richard III*, F *Comedy of Errors*, F *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* — offer players considerable assistance in locating cues while specifically catering to the previously unprecedented needs of a single player. The 1594 printing of *The Taming of a Shrew* exists as an admittedly hypothetical “before” picture, documenting the practices of the Lord Pembroke’s Men and demonstrating, via contrast, the textual innovations at work in the earliest typical Shakespeare plays.

In addition to differing from Shakespeare’s corpus as a whole, *The Taming of a Shrew* and the other play texts most frequently attributed to Pembroke’s Men differ
from those believed to have been written for the Queen’s Men. Owing perhaps to the size of the company and the fact that it apparently toured in multiple, smaller configurations at the same time, a specific incarnation of the Queen’s company appears to have, prior to 1594, begun regularly to implement the structural forms I believe were designed to provide players with assistance locating cues and proceeding in the case of improvisation. Though Shakespeare’s affiliation with the company remains speculative, the structural innovations at work in specific plays are present in related Shakespearean plays.

The innovations of the Queen’s Men appears to have first influenced Christopher Marlowe. In *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe incorporates structural forms of assistance to cater to a star performer, Edward Alleyn, and the London crowds we might imagine clamoring to see him. Though Shakespeare seems to have responded to *Jew of Malta* with the structurally similar *Richard III* (and, possibly, *Hamlet*), he quickly turned away from plays featuring one massive lead, using two-player scenes and speech stems to create plays about complicated relationships between two leading characters such as in *Richard II, Two Gentleman of Verona*, and, eventually, *Othello*.

Independent of the specifics of Shakespeare’s theatrical activities prior to 1594, the rise of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men was made possible in part because of the development of a theatrical form well-suited to the competitive conditions in which the company began its career. Attributing that form to Shakespeare, we can see a conscious choice to turn away from the company style of Pembroke’s Men and toward plays integrating the structural innovations of the Queen’s Men in order to
meet the particular needs of companies who desired to play in suburban London as exclusively as possible.
Chapter 4: “Parted you in good terms?”:

Variation, Revision, and Shakespeare’s ‘Good Quartos’

On 26 December 1606, King James I attended a Whitehall performance of *King Lear*. Most critics imagine that the play was initially a popular one, printed within a few years of having been written. Nonetheless, the performance invoked by the title page of the first printing of *King Lear* (1608) is the play’s only recorded performance during Shakespeare’s lifetime.¹ The Whitehall performance was quite possibly a debut: plague closures throughout much of 1606 suggest that the play about an ancient ruler of Britons may have “began its life with Britain’s royal patriarch at the center of its audience.”² Because of the potential conflation of spectator and subject matter, the court debut of *King Lear* holds potential clues concerning the relationship between professional playing companies and their King.

However, as was the case regarding the specific performances of *Henry V* and *Taming of a/the Shrew* discussed in the second and third chapters of this dissertation respectively, our attempt to determine what James I saw and heard at Whitehall is complicated by the fact that *King Lear* survives in two different versions. Based on the political content of the Q1 printing and the fact that “The title page claims fidelity

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¹ The title page of the Q1 reads: “As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall upon | s. Stephans night in Christmas Hollidayes.”
to that performance and sets forth its special institutional and liturgical context,” Leah S. Marcus (1988) asserts that the Whitehall performance more or less corresponded to the play as it was first printed.\(^3\) Though I will be taking a similar position here, many critics do not. As early as 1910, R.H. Cunnington declared, “it is certain that the Folio version is cut for the stage,” suggesting that it was the F play text that was performed in 1606. This certainty is tempered but reinforced ninety years later by Stephen Orgel (2000), who, in his introduction to the Penguin King Lear, suggests that it is “generally, though not universally, agreed” that the “quarto represents the play before it was performed, the play as it went to the acting company to be transcribed and turned into a performing text.”\(^4\)

The debate surrounding King Lear differs from those surrounding other variant text plays. Orgel and Marcus alike understand the earliest printing of King Lear to represent the play as it was written. In comparison to other quartos – often theorized as play texts that were reconstructed, abridged, or otherwise corrupted versions of their longer, authorial counterparts – Q1 Lear is thought to be credibly and authentically Shakespearean. Along with Othello (1622), Richard III (1597), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1600), and ten other quartos that differ far less significantly from their Folio printings do the play texts of Henry V (1600) or Taming of a Shrew (1594), the play text is thought to be one of the “good quartos.”\(^5\)

Although debates surrounding the potentially corrupt quartos have dominated the last decades of Shakespeare studies as well as the first several chapters of this

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\(^4\) Orgel, King Lear, xxxiii.

\(^5\) I am including Q2 play texts of Hamlet (1604/5) and Romeo and Juliet (1599) as “good quartos.”
dissertation, it is worth remembering that when A.W. Pollard (1909) first forwarded the notion of a “bad quarto,” he did so primarily to suggest that some quartos were “good.” In many ways, the category of “good quartos” has remained intact even as critics have worked to problematize the notion of “bad quartos.” Though contemporary textual critics tend to oppose the hard and fast distinction, most readers continue to distinguish between quartos like Q1 Lear or Q1 Othello and quartos like Q1 Hamlet or Q1 Henry V.

In the second and third chapters of this dissertation, I argued that even the most divergent of Shakespeare’s variant texts should be understood to represent plays as they were written (and, later, re-written) for performance. One of this dissertation’s core claims – that the chronology of Shakespeare’s printed play texts corresponds with the order in which plays were written or prepared – would suggest that all of Shakespeare’s variant texts are the products of a general timeline in which plays were written, performed, revised, and performed again in that order. In terms of Shakespeare’s “good quartos,” it is immediately obvious that these play texts were changed much less substantially than the play texts examined in the last two chapters. This chapter begins by wondering whether the relatively few variations present in the “good quartos” should be explained according to a different set of practices than those I have suggested were responsible for the changes made to the bulk of Shakespeare’s variant text plays.

One potential explanation for the scarcity of changes made to the “good quartos” has to do with the most obvious characteristic shared by this loosely

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affiliated group of play texts: they’re long. Nine of the fourteen quartos typically understood as “good quartos” include more speeches than the average Shakespearean play text. Six of those nine consist of more than 1,000 speeches. While I have argued against a hard and fast time limit for performance, Shakespeare’s corpus of play texts suggests that plays over a 900 speeches were relatively long. It follows that fewer, or at least less obvious, changes were made to play texts approaching the limits of what a company was capable of producing. Likewise, the length of the “good quartos” may suggest that early modern companies considered lengthy plays to be finished plays. Regardless of the reason, these plays were obviously changed less dramatically than other variant text plays. But were they changed in the same way?

To localize these questions, we return to the two texts of King Lear and the popular theory that F corresponds to a performance text cut from Q. To this point in the dissertation, I have argued against a model in which Shakespeare composed plays in their lengthiest or maximal form and turned them over to his company or companies for the abridgment and potential corruption responsible for textual variations. I have argued that Shakespeare’ variant play texts do not represent texts abridged for the sake of performance because each version of Shakespeare’s variant texts appears to have been identically suited for playing according to parts and because the pattern of differences between play texts does not conform to the pattern

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7 Q2 Hamlet (1604/5) and the Q1 editions Love’s Labour’s Lost (1599), 2 Henry IV (1600), Richard III (1597), King Lear (1608), Othello (1622), Troilus and Cressida (1609), and Much Ado About Nothing (1600) include more than 880 speeches. The other six “good quartos” are Q2 Romeo and Juliet (1599) and Q1 editions of Merchant of Venice (1600), 1 Henry IV (1598), Richard II (1597), Titus Andronicus (1594), and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1600).
of alteration preserved in the very few extant manuscripts with cuts believed to have been made for performance.

The two texts of *King Lear* signify a potential exception to my theory, in part because the longer text was printed first; unlike the “minimal” play texts examined in earlier chapters, we might take *F Lear* seriously as a play text cut for performance because we have good reason to believe that the “maximal” text existed at the time the “minimal” text was prepared. Further, a cursory examination of the two texts of *King Lear* suggests that, unlike changes made to the play texts that have concerned the previous two chapters, the changes made to *King Lear* are consistent – at least in terms of number of lines – with the cuts made to the eighteen extant theatrical manuscripts examined by William B. Long (1999). The three most heavily abridged manuscripts in Long’s sample, *Charlemagne* (c. 1600), *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* (1611), and *The Honest Man’s Fortune* (1625) cut 159, 174, and 175 lines respectively, signifying roughly 7% of their initial version; not including the 115 lines that appear exclusively in the shorter *F*, differences between the two texts of *King Lear* represent a cut of 285 lines, or 10% of the play’s lengthiest printing. Unlike arguments that hold Q1 *Henry V* or Q1 *Hamlet* to be performative abridgments of their “maximal”/authorial equivalents, theories suggesting that *F King Lear* is the result of theatrical abridgment do not ask us to believe that Shakespeare intentionally

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9 Because of the additional lines in *F*, the two play texts are only differ by a total of 170 lines.
wrote a play twice as long as it would be performed: in theory, the King’s Men cut a historically appropriate amount of Q1 *King Lear* to create F.

However, while the quantity of potential cuts made to Q1 *Lear* is in keeping with the quantity of cuts attested to by our extant theatrical manuscripts, the specific nature of the changes themselves is not. Most obviously, changes made to the extant theatrical manuscripts identified by Long do not add new material; F *King Lear* contains 115 lines that were not in Q1. Furthermore, changes made to Long’s extant theatrical manuscripts focus almost exclusively on lines located inside of existing speeches, suggesting that cuts were made after players had “conned” and rehearsed the exact version of the play they were to perform; the variant texts corresponding to *King Lear* each include unique speeches and differ by a total of sixty-three speeches. The cutting (and adding) of speeches and cues would have likely required players to receive and “con” new parts. A process requiring new parts and, ostensibly, additional rehearsal suggests that F was not a version of Q1 prepared for performance but a version of Q1 revised and prepared for subsequent performances.

The suggestion that both printings of *King Lear* also existed as performed versions of *King Lear* is consistent with this dissertation’s general advocacy of chronological revision for performance. Likewise, the pattern of changes at work in the two texts of *Lear* provide further evidence against the notion that Shakespeare’s variant texts amount to printed versions of the same text before and after performative interference.

More specific to the play itself, the suggestion of a *King Lear* revised for subsequent production is consistent with the narrative forwarded by the polarizing
cadre of editors and critics who argue that both play texts of King Lear should be understood as authorial and worthy of study independently of one another. Since the publication of The Division of the Kingdoms (1983), no variant play texts have been taken more seriously as distinct, ontologically intact entities with thematic differences than have the two printings of King Lear. In contrast to earlier theories that held the play texts to be similar corruptions of a lost, true text of King Lear, proponents of the “two-text” Lear argue that each printed text functions according to a divergent and authorial narrative logic. Though editors and scholars in favor of a conflated text remain vocal opponents of theories of a revised King Lear, the immediate gains of “two-text” advocates were considerable. The 1986 Oxford edition of the Complete Works prints both play texts separately, in their entirety, granting them equal authority. The Norton Shakespeare (1997) follows the practice, though it also includes a conflated version not in the Oxford edition.

The “two-text” debate has typically been understood as a question of whether or not the play texts were written to mean different things. In the broader scheme of Shakespeare’s corpus of variant play texts, the stakes of “two-text” debate include fundamental assumptions regarding the historical practices of Shakespeare and his company. Reading a potential narrative justifying the Oxford decision to print both versions of King Lear, we can see that the conceptualization of Lear as a “two-text” play is tantamount to a hypothesis that the play was performed in both; printed

10 Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, eds., The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare’s Two Versions of King Lear (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983).
incarnations:

Before long – probably in 1610 – the same company put on performances also based on the script that Shakespeare had first written, but with many differences… it is reasonable to assume that [Shakespeare] made the changes, even if in doing so he may have well responded to suggestions made by his colleagues. The First Folio text, then, represents the first known theatrical adaptation of the play, and the only one in which Shakespeare himself had a hand.\textsuperscript{13}

Though “two-text” advocates haven’t framed it such, the question of whether or not critics, editors, and readers ought to understand the two texts of \textit{King Lear} as two distinct plays is also a question about when and how changes were made to Q1. If a Jacobean theatergoer is unlikely to have encountered both texts in performance, “two-text” editions are not historically justified; if Q1 was cut prior to its first run of performances, “two-text” versions are not comparing two different plays so much as simply drawing attention to authorial lines that ended up on the early modern cutting-room floor.

To this point in the dissertation, I have steered clear of issues of textual authority. I enter the fray of editorial policy here only because “two-text” theorists forward a schema for \textit{Lear} that loosely corresponds with the one I have advocated for Shakespeare’s plays in general. By arguing that each of Shakespeare’s most significantly varying texts amounts to a play as it was performed, I have argued the plays like \textit{Henry V} and \textit{Merry Wives of Windsor} are the products of deliberate

revision for the stage; each of Shakespeare’s variant play texts examined in the previous chapters might best be understood as a multi-text play.

This chapter’s initial question – whether or not the variant play texts associated with Shakespeare’s “good quartos” might be products of something other than theatrical revision for performance – might be restated as a question of whether or not any of Shakespeare’s variant text plays ought to be understood as “single-text” plays existing – in performance – as single plays. In order to answer this question, I mean to re-think the means by which we identify authorial revision; while differences in meaning and thematic importance are the precise reasons we would want to read plays multi-textually, such differences cannot be the only means by which we decide which plays to understand as having been performed as two different but equally authorial plays.

The potential trouble with our current, thematic approach to the multiple-text question can be demonstrated by the arguments made in favor of reading Othello as a “two-text” play. While editors were preparing The Division of the Kingdoms, E.A.J. Honigmann (1982) declared that “A strong case can be made for ‘revision’ of Othello and of King Lear.”14 Later, when the “two-text” Othello had not received the same treatment given to the “two-text” Lear, Leah S. Marcus (2004) suggested that our reluctance to embrace a “two-text” Othello had to do with a reluctance to “imagine a Shakespeare who deliberately intensified what look from our modern perspective like

racist elements of the play.” Marcus’s argument is a convincing one. Much of the material potentially added to Othello does concern more explicit racial and sexual material. Furthermore, Marcus might very well be right to suggest that our tendency to overlook Othello as a two-text play is bound up in our own unwillingness to contemplate the implications of a play text was made to become increasingly troublesome to our cultural sensibilities.

However, Marcus’s concerns about our subjectivity foreground a larger methodological problem concerning the identification of “two-text” plays. As she admits, the fact that the two texts construct race and gender in different terms doesn’t necessarily prove revision. She raises the possibility that the text may have been censored for performance: “if the F-only passages are cuts… then someone – Shakespeare? his company? The Master of the Revels? – deliberately took out the most racially explicit material of the play, presumably to meet the demands of a specific performance.” Changes in meaning aren’t conclusive evidence of revision. Furthermore, any textual alteration, for the right reader, could be construed as evidence of thematic difference. While contextual arguments remain useful tools for the dating of play texts, perceived differences in meaning are inclusive and subjective diagnostics of how and when play texts were changed. This chapter therefore attempts to ground the “two-text” debate in the context of historical theatrical practices.

16 Ibid., 33. It is worth noting that her proposal of censorship would be an unusual instance of censorship. See Richard Dutton, Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama (Iowa City: U of Iowa, 1991).
To this point, I have forwarded two processes by which plays were changed: theatrical abridgment where lines were cut for an initial performance and theatrical revision involving more substantial changes including the addition of entire speeches and cues. Both processes appear to have operated according to a consistent logic spanning across a sample of similarly altered manuscripts and/or play texts; both processes appear to have left fingerprints that can be seen in the types of changes made to play texts. Examining the changes made to Shakespeare’s “good quartos” in the context of a functioning professional theatre, we are able both to identify plays that appear to have existed, in performance, as two different plays and to complicate our sense of the mechanics of theatrical revision.

Like the texts of *King Lear*, the variant texts associated with Shakespeare’s other “good quartos” do not appear to be the products of theatrical abridgement. However, not all of the “good quartos” appear to have been later revised for subsequent performances. To be sure, the quartos lumped together as “good quartos” do resemble one another; all of them more closely resemble their Folio equivalents than do other quartos. However, the categorical focus on relative authority has led critics to overlook other aspects of the quartos’ relationships with their Folio texts. Because the New Bibliographers were primarily concerned with identifying which of Shakespeare’s play texts were most likely written by Shakespeare, the fact that these play texts are relatively in sync with their later cousins became more important than the fact that the differences between paired play texts demonstrate distinct types of alteration.
Previously, distinctions between the kinds of changes made to the “good quartos” have been observed almost exclusively in terms of quantity. When discussing *King Lear* as a “two-text” play, Stanley Wells admits that all revision could be thought to create a “multi-text” play but insists that “of all the Shakespeare plays surviving in two authoritative texts *King Lear* is the one in which differences are greatest.” Bearing in mind that the addition or subtraction of entire speeches would have amounted to a revision requiring the adjustment of cues, the alteration of at least two parts, and the labor of at least two players, variations affecting performance did not necessarily need to feature a large number of changes to have forced a playing company to create a new parts or re-rehearse altered scenes. Conversely, the eighteen theatrical manuscripts identified by Long demonstrate significant cuts (7%) that, by involving cuts to internal lines, would have often left cues intact and required adjustments by only a single player at a time. In other words, a play could be significantly altered without requiring a second set of theatrical materials or rehearsals in order to be played.

Based on how and when changes were made relative to the play’s initial performances, the plays affiliated with the “good quartos” can be understood as a collection of three different kinds of variant texts: plays that were unrevised, plays that were revised in the context of continual performance, and plays that, like *King Lear* and the plays examined in previous chapters of this dissertation, appear to have been revised via the creation of a new book with new parts requiring additional rehearsal.

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17 *The Oxford Shakespeare*, 8.
Unrevised Plays

A cursory examination of Folio plays reveals six pairs of play texts that would have almost certainly been printed from materials used for a single version of the play in performance. We might safely think of the six plays as “single-text” plays. A few quartos – *1 Henry IV* (1598), Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), and *Merchant of Venice* (1600) – appear to have been more or less reprinted in the First Folio. A second cluster – *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598), *2 Henry IV* (1600)\(^{18}\), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) – each vary by three speeches in their Folio printings.\(^{19}\) Without the presence of other alterations, we might best understand the cut/added speeches as aberrations of the printing process.

In any event, these six pairs of play texts are the only paired Shakespeare texts in which some form of revision does not appear to have been responsible for textual variation. Curiously, all six of these pairs were first printed between 1598 and 1600. Though I cannot hope to provide a conclusive answer here, it is worth wondering why the plays printed during these three years proved resistant to change. One possibility has to do with the fact that five of these play texts bear Shakespeare’s name on their title pages; they are the earliest play texts to been printed as “Shakespeare plays.” It is

\(^{18}\) Q1 *2 Henry IV* was printed in two issues. The first, known as Q1(a), is missing a scene (3.1) present in Q1(b) and F. It is Q1(b) that resembles the other three play texts in this sub-group. Q1(a) and questions regarding its relationship to Q1(b) are examined on pages 187-94 of this dissertation.

\(^{19}\) Perhaps obviously, Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* represents a substantial revision of Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* (1597). Q1 *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is also quite possibly the play’s second printing. Based on the printing’s title page claiming the printing to be “Newly corrected and augmented | By W. Shakespere,” an earlier play text, one which the New Bibliographers almost certainly would have found “bad,” was quite likely lost. Based on catalogue of his library, Edward, 2nd Viscount of Conway (1594-1655) appears to have owned an edition printed in 1597. See Arthur Freeman and Paul Grinke, “Four New Shakespeare Quartos?,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5 April 2002, 17-18.
possible that the printing of these texts as advertised products of a single author effectively served to freeze them in a state close to that in which they were printed.\textsuperscript{20} Obviously, if this is the case, the effect wore off by 1603 and the printing of Q1 Hamlet. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the only play text printed between 1598 and 1600 that appears in a significantly altered later printing is Q1 Henry V, a play text printed without a title-page attribution to Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Revised but Not Restaged}

In addition to the six play texts printed with minimal alteration in the Folio, six pairs of play texts feature revisions that, while quite possibly adjusting the meaning of the play, do not appear to have required a new book, new parts, or re-rehearsal to have been performed. These plays include: Titus Andronicus (1594), Richard II, (1597), 2 Henry IV (1600),\textsuperscript{22} A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1600), Troilus and Cressida (1609), and – most interestingly – Othello (1622). Changes to these play texts appear to have been made within a series of regular performances based on a single set of theatrical materials: those performances may have stretched across a decade or more and enjoyed extended periods of dormancy.

All six pairs of play texts include changes unlikely to have been the products of theatrical abridgement, both because the shorter play texts were printed first and

\textsuperscript{20} Again, two of these six play texts were likely expanded versions of previous play texts; however, their earlier versions were not attributed to Shakespeare. It is these versions that appear in the Folio.
\textsuperscript{21} A Midsummer Night’s Dream was first printed in 1600 with Shakespeare’s name on the title page. But for the final scene, the play would most certainly be in this category of play texts; its play texts vary by only seven speeches. The play, examined in more detail later in this chapter., does little to discount the notion that plays printed as “Shakespeare plays” from 1598-1600 were the most stable texts of Shakespeare’s career.
\textsuperscript{22} I am here examining changes made to Q1(a) in order to create Q1(b).
because the alterations include far more new speeches than they do altered speeches. However, in addition to differing from the extant corpus of theatrical manuscripts, all six pairs appear to have been revised according to techniques distinct from the methods used to remake Shakespeare’s other variant play texts. In other words, this group of variant text plays appears to include products of a third process, one distinct from the processes of abridgment and extensive revision we have seen. We might think of this third process as one of evolution through performance: each of the six pairs of play texts suggests a process by which Shakespeare and his company made a single batch of relatively small changes to emphasize or clarify specific moments of the play in performance while carefully ensuring that performance materials would not need to be remade and additional rehearsal would be minimal.

In order to contemplate the differences between changes made to these plays and the changes I have to this point associated with theatrical revision involving the creation of new materials requiring renewed approval from the Master of the Revels, we must review the principle means by which I believe Shakespeare wrote plays to ensure that they were playable. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that Shakespeare’s plays were written to make it easier for players to locate and identify their cues. Knowing that his players would be given their parts individually, to study in isolation and reassemble in as few rehearsals as possible, Shakespeare appears to have written his plays to limit the number of cues a player was responsible for at a single time and, when possible, to provide assistance in the form of recognizable speech patterns. I have been calling the first of these structural forms of assistance two-player scenes. With only one speaking partner on stage, a player would have
known that each of his partner’s speeches should terminate in a cue. This knowledge would have made it easier to identify cues. Further, in the case of misheard or forgotten cues a player would have known to proceed with his next speech.

A second formal structure – previously metaphorized as a stem – appears to have offered similar assistance to players in more crowded scenes. By structuring an exchange so that one player was responsible for every other speech, a playwright could ensure that one player – responsible for the speeches that served as the stem’s internodes – knew that every speech contained his next cue. As important, the remaining players on stage would have known that their next cue was coming from the player responsible for the stem’s internodes. In addition to making cues easier to locate, the structure offered a solution in the not unlikely event of a botched cue; a player recognizing that he was responsible for a speech stem’s internodes would know that, in the event of trouble, he should deliver his next speech.

Both of these kinds of structural assistance could have been easily disturbed by revision. Because two-player scenes relied upon a specific stage composition to provide players with assistance, any revision that added characters to a scene would have made cues more difficult to identify and use. Likewise, because stems of speeches functioned as a recognizable pattern of speech order, every revision that added or subtracted speeches from an existing script had the potential of disrupting the pattern.

In this dissertation’s second chapter, I outlined a revision process by which plays could be revised and expanded while preserving features designed to make playing easier. Shakespeare and his company appear to have understood plays in
terms of their smallest units of theatrical action, the French scene. By dividing scenes according to every entrance and exit, we might understand a play text as a linked series of theatrical compositions. The variant texts examined in previous chapters evenly distribute additional speeches among French scenes so as to minimize the number of additional speeches for which players were responsible in individual scenes. Further, when inserted into French scenes featuring two players or containing speech stems, additional speeches were incorporated into those forms of structural assistance. By evenly distributing speeches across French scenes, Shakespeare and his company could be reasonably assured that changes to a playable text would produce a playable text.

While all six of the plays that I believe to have been revised in the context of continual performance make efforts to remain playable, three of the six blatantly disregard the usual technique of even distribution. The play texts of Q1 Titus Andronicus (1594), Q1 Richard II (1597), and the first state of Q1 2 Henry IV (1600) are more or less identical to their later printings with the exception of the fact that, in all three cases, they lack a single chunk of the latter play. Q1(a) 2 Henry IV is missing what, modern editions, has become 3.1; Q1 Titus is missing 3.2; most famously, Q1 Richard II is missing a French scene from 4.1 that has come to be known as “the deposition scene.” Critics have hypothesized that censorship may have been responsible for these exclusions; likewise, critics have hypothesized that pages of the manuscript may have been somehow forgotten or misplaced in the actual printing of
the play texts. If either of these theories accounts for the missing French scenes, we might understand the plays to have been written as they were eventually printed in later editions.

However, following the chronology advocated by the whole of this dissertation, I am inclined to understand the additional scenes as the products of later revision. In *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, Tiffany Stern (2009) demonstrates the frequency with which play texts acquired additional, separately written materials – including songs, prologues, and epilogues – when they were printed. While the additional scenes may have been censored or lost, it is just as likely that they were added to the play after its initial composition and thereafter included in the materials from which later printers set their copy.

It is true that the writing of a single scene is not consistent with the kinds of expansion modeled by the plays examined in the previous two chapters of this dissertation: when adding hundreds of speeches to a play, knowing that a new book and parts would be the result, even distribution was likely the best guarantee that a play would remain relatively easy to play. However, in the context of a play that was still being played on a semi-regular basis, the addition of a single scene would have offered playwrights an efficient way to modify a play while affecting the work of relatively few players. None of the scenes added to these three plays contains complicated stage traffic or additional entrances or exits. The French scene added to

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scene 4.1 of *Richard II* adds speeches to four parts; the new scenes added to *Titus Andronicus* and 2 *Henry IV* affect four and two characters respectively. Furthermore, all three of the French scenes feature structures designed to make playing easier. Scene 3.1 in 2 *Henry IV* is a two-player scene. The addition to 4.1 in *Richard II* is a single speech stem with Richard II responsible for its internodes. Likewise, scene 3.2 in F *Titus* comprises a speech stem built around the utterances of the player responsible for Titus.

Finally, these three plays may have been revised in this manner because, in all three cases, Shakespeare and his company did not need to worry about taxing individual players. Even with the additional speeches, F *Richard II* contains only 541 speeches; F *Titus* comprises 562. Both play texts are more than 300 speeches shorter than the typical Shakespeare play. Even after the additions, the players responsible for Richard II and Titus would have been required to speak the relatively modest totals of 100 and 118 speeches respectively. While 2 *Henry IV* is longer than the other two play texts, its new scene features King Henry IV and Warwick, roles that even after expansion were responsible for a total of thirty-two and twenty-six speeches apiece. In all three cases, there was no pressing need for the usual care regarding the distribution of speeches.

While it is impossible to prove that censorship or sloppy printing-house practices were not responsible for variation between these three texts and their later incarnations, it seems unlikely that three unrelated instances of censorship/sloppiness would each involve a single French scene that would have been relatively easy to play according to parts. It is more likely that these scenes were written to be self-contained
and relatively easy to play because they were being added to theatrical materials currently in use as semi-active parts of the company’s repertory.

The additional scenes of 2 Henry IV, Titus Andronicus, and Richard II are obvious departures from the usual changes made to Shakespeare’s plays. Though they do so in more subtle ways, the three other pairs of play texts I believe to have been revised in the context of continued repertory performance also deviate from the method of distribution outlined in chapter 2 of this dissertation. The least altered of these play texts is F A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a play text that, though it does not add a new French scene, also features all of its eight unique speeches in a single scene. More interesting, the eight speeches unique to F 5.1 are built from lines that already existed in Q1 5.1; a single speech of the Duke’s in Q1 is broken into a nine-speech, two-player exchange between the Duke and Lysander in F. Obviously, the shift from a monologue to a dialogue cannot be accounted for by censorship or printer error. It’s possible that, next to the meta-theatrical chaos of the mechanicals’ performance later in the scene, the extended speech felt out of place in performance. Perhaps it wasn’t getting the laughs the company thought it ought to have been getting. Perhaps the player responsible for the Duke was consistently altering the speech. Whatever the reason for the change, the scene was altered in such a way that left every cue in the original scene intact, provided a few additional cues for only two players, and didn’t require any re-writing (or re-learning) of lines. The only other change in the scene – the inclusion of Egeus, who inherits five of the six speeches given to Philostrate in Q1 – also relied entirely upon existing dialogue while leaving

25 F A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 5.1, TLN 1841-1857

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cues intact. Given the demonstrable proficiency of Shakespeare’s players, there is little reason to doubt that Shakespeare and his company could have made these changes while leaving the play in the roster of plays in active use.

The final two play texts I believe to be printed from a revised but singular set of performance materials both create additional speeches from existing lines in their quartos. In Q1 2.1 of *Troilus and Cressida*, Thersites’s line reads: “Hee would punne thee into shiuers with his fist, as a sayler breakes a bisket, you horson curre. Do? do?”26 In F, the speech becomes an exchange between two players:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ther:} & & \text{He would pun thee into shiuers with his fist, as a Sailor breaks a bisket.} \\
\text{Aia:} & & \text{You horson Curre.} \\
\text{Ther:} & & \text{Do. Do?}27
\end{align*}
\]

The original speech was written in a way that perhaps, in performance, failed to ignite the confrontation that continues to escalate through the remainder of the scene. The change alters little in terms of meaning. The only differences are performative: players are more effectively forced into conflict through a shared exchange of rapid insults. Admittedly, the suggestion that these three speeches do little but intensify conflict and pacing via performance is steeped in the same kind of subjective reading necessary to perceive revised intentions. More objective is the fact that these three additional speeches add no new words and leave original cues intact as cues; furthermore, the cue burden created by splitting the single speech into three speeches is mitigated by the fact exchange is located inside a two-player scene.

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26 Q1 *Troilus and Cressida* C4v, 2.1.  
27 F *Troilus and Cressida*, 2.1, TLN 392-395.
Similarly, in 2.1 *Othello*, a single speech given to 2. *Gentleman* is split in two as it is printed in F. While the character keeps the first line of his speech from Q, the remainder is given to Cassio. Beyond the potential dramatic value of a more rapid exchange, Cassio’s additional speech in F creates a speech stem. In Q, the speech order is *Gentleman* / Montano / Cassio / Desdemona / Cassio / Desdemona / Cassio. In F, where the gentleman’s speech is broken to create a new speech for Cassio, the order becomes *Gentleman* / Cassio / Montano / Cassio / Desdemona / Cassio / Desdemona / Cassio.²⁸

In addition to fashioning new speeches from existing lines, the F printings of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello* introduce a second, related strategy by inserting a new speech into the middle of an existing speech. While this alteration did involve the writing and conning of a new speech along with two new cues, it would not have altered any of the original’s existing cues. For example, in the middle of seventy-nine-line speech in Q1 1.3 *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses asks Agamemnon for permission to continue speaking; permission is assumed by never given.²⁹ In F, Agamemnon actually gives consent. While his additional speech adds a speech and a cue to both parts, it also breaks an abnormally long speech into two smaller speeches.

Like *Troilus and Cressida*, speeches added to F *Othello* are used to split existing speeches, clarifying or augmenting dramatic action while preserving surrounding cues. News of the “Ottamites”’ fleet, located in a messenger’s single speech in Q1.3 is, in F, split into two by a clarifying question given to 1. *Senator*.³⁰

²⁸ Q1 *Othello*, D3v-D4r, 2.1; F *Othello*, 2.1, TLN 822-58.
²⁹ Q1 *Troilus and Cressida*, B3v-B4v, 1.3.
³⁰ F *Othello*, 1.3, TLN 364-374.
Likewise, in F 3.3, Othello twice interrupts a speech of Iago’s at a point where, in Q1, the speeches contain subject changes marked by colons; Othello’s additional speeches allow the first halves of Iago’s speeches to end with a full stop and provide prompts for their second halves.\(^{31}\) Finally, in Q1 5.1, while pleading for her life, Desdemona says, “But halfe an houre, but while I say one prayer.”\(^{32}\) In F:

- Des. But halfe an houre.
- Oth. Being done, there is no pawse.
- Des. But while I say one prayer.\(^{33}\)

By separating the request for a half hour from its justification, F intensified the exchange’s pacing in performance.

All four of these examples involve the insertion of a new speech into the interior of an existing speech for what I believe is a performative reason. Even if one isn’t convinced by my theatrical explanations for the new speeches, all four were added in such a way that every cue in Q1 remained a cue in F, suggesting that the scene was still being performed regularly when the speeches were added.

Preservation of Q1’s cues also guides blocks of additional speeches in 4.3 and 5.2 of F Othello, the only two scenes in F to receive more than two additional speeches. The eight speeches added to F 4.3 include the “Willow Song.”\(^{34}\) The speeches are added to a two-player scene; every cue in Q1 functions as a cue in F. Likewise, the additional speeches to 5.2, emphasizing Emilia’s reaction to

\(^{31}\) F Othello, 3.3, 1775-1783; 3.3, TLN 2025-2039.
\(^{32}\) Q1 Othello, M2r, 5.2.
\(^{33}\) F Othello, 5.2, TLN 3339-41.
\(^{34}\) F Othello, 4.3, TLN 2994-3039.
Desdemona’s murder, do not disrupt existing cues. In both cases, these additional speeches add performative elements: a song and a heightened emotional response.

In general, the few global changes made to *Othello* are also governed by performance. In observation of the 1606 *Acte to Restraine Abuses of the Players*, F changes the wording of dozens of speeches to remove oaths from Q1. Given the fact that Q1 was printed in 1622 with the oaths, observation of the act was not a precondition of printing; the rewritten lines were intended to be spoken aloud in performance. Likewise, the changes that Leah S. Marcus identifies as adding intensified racial and sexual material might also be understood as adding spectacle in the form of explicitness.

Again, I am aware of the subjective nature of my assessment of the performative nature of the material added to *Othello* and the other five plays I believe to have been revised in the context of sustained performance. Independent of such speculation, all six plays were revised by adding thirteen to thirty-four new speeches, each of which was added in such a way that cues were only minimally disturbed and actors were provided the structural assistance of two-player scenes and speech stems. Because cues were preserved and existing speeches were, by and large, neither rewritten nor cut, such changes could have been made to a single set of theatrical materials: for three of these six plays, revision amounted to the distribution of a single two- or four-person scene; the other three “good quartos” added one or two speeches at a time with only one character – Emelia in *Othello* – receiving more than four new speeches.

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35 F *Othello*, 5.2, TLN 3464-82.
Obviously, one reason I am inclined to believe that these changes were made to plays that were actively being performed is that none of these plays was revised very heavily. In contrast, however, the three plays I’ve identified in this chapter as “two-text” plays feature comparable amounts of revision to these six plays; these six play texts are not “single-text” plays because of a relative lack of changes but because, despite those changes, an early modern playing company could have played any of these quartos on a Monday and learned the appropriate Folio text by Tuesday or Wednesday. Nearly every cue that they used Monday afternoon would have still functioned as the same cue later in the week. There would have been no moments when a cue was no longer a cue; there would have been no moments when a cue suddenly was meant for someone else; there would have been no moments where they needed to remember not to do or say something. The value of these small luxuries will become more apparent when examining plays that were revised without such consideration.

Two-Text Plays

King Lear, Richard III, and Q2/F Hamlet appear to be “two-text” plays, though we might think of them more as “twice-approved” plays. All six of the printed play texts pertaining to these three plays were, I believe, eminently playable. The revisions made to King Lear don’t make the play any harder to perform; in fact, they do the opposite. However, the revision made to produce F Lear, Q4 Richard III (1608), and F Hamlet, would have made it difficult for every player to reprise their original role, at least without significant time and/or rehearsal to re-learn the new play; while we
have good reason to believe that the company would not have re-cast the plays’ leads, we shall see that other roles – as significant as Kent in Lear – were likely given to a different actor upon the play’s return to the active roster. Furthermore, the physical apparatus by which players would have learned these changes are such that these three plays imply the creation of a new book and, at the very minimum, several new parts.

For two of these texts – King Lear and Hamlet – a major complication has to do with the fact that the plays add speeches and cues while, ultimately, becoming shorter plays. More conventionally, Q4 Richard III is longer than Q1; however, Q1 features its share of speeches that do not appear in F.\textsuperscript{36} That said, the cutting of speeches, in and of itself, would not have required these plays to re-write parts; the patterns that recommend these plays as “two-text” plays are most apparent in the ways the play texts became larger.

Unlike changes made to the six plays examined in the last section, the material unique to these three Folio play texts follows the logic of distribution modeled by Shakespeare’s most radically changed texts. The thirty-four speeches unique to F Richard III are spread evenly across twenty-three French scenes; no French scene receives more than four speeches. Similarly, in comparison to Q2, F Hamlet contains twenty-nine unique speeches distributed among nine French scenes: seven of the French scenes containing additional material include only one or two additional speeches.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{36} Q1 has traditionally been thought of a memorial reconstruction of touring text. See Peter Davison, Ed., The First Quarto of King Richard III (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 35-49. Interestingly, the changes to the text do suggest that they were made for a different configuration of the company, though I see no evidence that Q1 would have proven easier to take to the provinces than F, especially since we have no reason to believe that the manuscript from which F was printed existed in 1597.
speeches. Finally, the 115 lines unique to F *King Lear* are located primarily in existing speeches: only seven new speeches, distributed among six French scenes, appear in F. To the extent that the plays were enlarged, they were made larger by the same principles by which the variant text plays examined in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation were made larger.

More evenly and widely distributed than the additions made to the six “single-text” plays discussed in the previous section, the additional material in these three Folio play texts does continue to serve a theatrical function. Unique speeches to the F play texts frequently enlarge two-player scenes and speech stems; further, additional speeches often clarify dramatic action. However, unlike the instances where one or two speeches were added to *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello*, speeches added to *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* are, in general, neither built from lines existing in their earlier play texts nor inserted into a previously existing speech. As was the case with revised play texts examined in chapters 2 and 3, the insertion of one or two new speeches between existing speeches would have severed a cue from the speech it was originally connected to. In general then, the additional speeches of these three plays – while adding to structures designed to make playing according to parts easier – altered cues more often than the speeches added to the previous six plays, resulting in more frequent and complex changes to parts.

This complexity regarding parts is present even in the few instances in these three plays – all in F *Hamlet* – where new speeches were inserted into previously existing speeches. In the F texts of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello*, new speeches were frequently short; the previously existing speech split by the insertion of the new
speech neither gained nor lost words. In F Hamlet 2.2, however, a stem of fourteen speeches is inserted into a speech that belonged only to Hamlet in Q2. Beyond the fact that all three players in the scene receive additional speeches and cues, Hamlet’s original speech is re-written in the process.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, in F 3.2, Polonius offers a simple line, “I will say so,” that functions more or less like the interjections in Othello; however, as was the case in 2.2, Hamlet’s response is an altered version of his original speech.\textsuperscript{38} In terms of the result on stage, the technique is similar to that used to expand the F texts of Troilus and Cressida and Othello; however, both instances in F Hamlet require more significant changes to parts.

In addition to adding speeches differently from the six “single-text” plays, the F printings of Richard III, Hamlet, and King Lear each reassign a significant number of speeches to new players. When we saw this move in F A Midsummer, the exchange was a relatively straight-forward transfer from one player to a player who was not in the previous incarnation of the scene; since the scene involved the final speeches both players would have uttered in the entire play, it is possible that the player responsible for the Philostrate may have literally given the physical artifact of his speeches to the player responsible for Egeus. The instances of speech reassignment in Hamlet, King Lear, and Richard III are more complicated.

For example, in both printings of 4.5 Hamlet, Gertrude and Ophelia exchange nine speeches in a two-player French scene. In both cases, Gertrude receives news concerning Ophelia immediately before Ophelia enters. However, in Q2 Hamlet, the news is given to Gertrude by two characters, Horatio and a Gentleman. Speeches are

\textsuperscript{37} F Hamlet, 2.2, TLN 1284-1316; Q2 Hamlet, F1v, 2.2.
\textsuperscript{38} F Hamlet, 3.2, TLN 2257-8; Q2 Hamlet, H4v, 3.2.
exchanged in the following order: Queen / Gent / Queen / Gent / Horatio / Ophelia / Queen / Ophelia. In F, the Gentleman is cut from the scene; his two speeches are added to Horatio’s part; Horatio’s final speech is given to Gertrude so that the resulting speech order is Queen / Horatio / Queen / Horatio / Queen / Ophelia / Queen / Ophelia. This speech stem is created by alterations that would have affected the parts of three different players. Horatio’s part would have required both the addition and subtraction of speeches and cues.

In addition to 4.5, F Hamlet reassigns speeches in 1.1, 1.5, 3.2, 3.3, and 5.1. Reassigned speeches would have affected the parts of Marcellus, Horatio, Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Gentleman, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern; each change would have affected two parts at a time; if no parts were re-cast, each change would have ensured that, in performance, at least one player was hearing a cue that was no longer his cue.

The reassignment of speeches figures heavily in the revision of all three “two-text” plays, none more so than Richard III. Most notably, F 1.4 completely reconfigures the parts of the murderers. The First Murderer loses four speeches that were his in Q1 to the Second Murderer; in return, the First Murderer receives two of the Second Murderer’s speeches. Additionally, three speeches that were assigned to both murderers in Q1 are divided, two to the First and one to the Second. Finally, each part gains two new speeches written for F. While the part of Clarence remains untouched, even in terms of his cues, both of the Murderers would have almost

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39 Q2 Hamlet, K3v-4r, 4.5.  
40 F Hamlet, 4.5, TLN 2746-2765.  
41 F Hamlet, TLN 21, 801-802, 1900, 2141, 2191, 2300, 3462, and 3482.
certainly required new parts and rehearsal. Changes to the re-worked scene suggest that the physical part of Q1 Clarence may have been re-used in a performance of F. Further, while Clarence was almost certainly assigned to the same player, Shakespeare and his company seem to have revised the play knowing that the Murderers would be re-cast: though they may have simply been re-learned, the new parts of the Murderers would have required both players to ignore lines of Clarence that remained in the scene but were no longer their cues.

The reassignment of speeches extends throughout Richard III. Though he remains in F 1.3, speeches spoken by Rivers in Q1 are given to Queen Elizabeth and Grey in F; in the same scene, a Q1 speech assigned to Hastings is given to Buckingham. In 2.1, Rivers once again loses a speech that was his in Q1, this time to King Edward IV. In 2.4, a speech belonging to the Archbishop in Q1 is given to Prince Edward in F. Finally, though speeches themselves are not reassigned, three scenes in F – 2.2, 3.3, and 5.3 – alter speech order, effectively reassigning cues.

For its part, F King Lear famously reassigns the final speech of the play from Albany in Q1 to Edgar in F. Though speech reassignment is less common in Lear than in the other “two-text” plays, F Lear 4.7 consolidates the Q1 parts of Gentleman and Doctor, creating a stem of speeches led by Cordelia in the process.
Additionally, at the end of F 2.4, speeches assigned to Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan in Q1 are shuffled, changing speeches and cues for all three parts.\(^{48}\)

In addition to the adding and swapping of speeches, the F texts of *King Lear* and *Hamlet* were changed by a great deal of cutting. In comparison to the cuts made to Long’s eighteen theatrical manuscripts, the method of cuts demonstrated by these play texts is one based primarily on the efficient excision of entire speeches. Where Long’s eighteen manuscripts tend to cut lines from individual speeches, the cuts made to Q1 *Lear* and Q2 *Hamlet* are not interior cuts. Only nine speeches in Q2 *Hamlet* appear in a shorter form in F. Conversely, the manuscripts did not often cut speeches in their entirety. Where the three most heavily cut theatrical manuscripts – *Charlemagne or the Emperor* (c. 1600), *The Honest Man’s Fortune* (1625), and *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* (1611) – remove a total of three, four, and twelve speeches respectively, F *Hamlet* and F *King Lear* were created by cutting forty-six and seventy speeches. Following the pattern we have seen throughout this last section, the cuts made to *King Lear* and *Hamlet* would have altered cues and, by extension, parts.

The logic by which *Lear* and *Hamlet* were cut also differs from the logic by which they were expanded; cuts from Q1 *King Lear* and Q2 *Hamlet* are unusually focused in a few French scenes. Two extended French scenes, both featuring Kent and Gentleman, are unique to Q1 *King Lear*; the first exchange of twenty-two speeches takes up the entirety of Q1 4.3; the second is located at the end of Q1 4.7. Similarly, Q2 *Hamlet* contains two French scenes absent from the F text. In Q2, Hamlet enters 4.4 to converse with the Captain; in F, he does not. In Q2 5.2, a Lord

\(^{48}\) 2.4, F *King Lear*, TLN 1395-9.
enters the scene to exchange six speeches before leaving; in F he does not. Like the
cutting of speeches as opposed to internal lines, the cutting of an entire French scene
likely amounted to an efficient way to change the play, provided that the company
was able to re-con their parts and relearn the shape of the play.

Entering the realm of speculation, I am inclined to think that the scarcity of
cut speeches in Shakespeare’s corpus suggests that players did not respond well to
losing material. Obviously, lines were cut from Long’s surviving theatrical
manuscripts. However, Tiffany Stern (2000) suggests that such changes were made
with mixed results in terms of whether or not they were actually omitted from
performance.49 Revisions to the parts of Kent and of the Gentleman in King Lear, the
Lord and Captain in Hamlet, and Rivers in Richard III would have each asked players
to relinquish several speeches and, frequently, entire entrances. These sorts of
changes would have been easier to make for parts that a company was going to re-
cast because the new player wouldn’t have necessarily known that he was losing
speeches.

While speculative, the possibility that players did not enjoy the removal of
speeches is made more likely by the fact that the cuts made to Lear and Hamlet are
among the only changes to Shakespeare’s plays that do not evenly affect all members
of the company. Though cuts made Q2 Hamlet and Q1 Lear include forty-six and
seventy speeches respectively, the parts of Hamlet and Lear only lose a net of four
and three speeches respectively. In other words, the parts received roughly the same

49 Tiffany Stern, Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2000), 81-120.
number of speeches that they lost. While both plays became shorter in performance, their titular leads became more prominent.

There is another reason parts that had lost speeches were likely to be recast, one less speculative than the potential vanity of players: speeches forfeited to other players would have required a player to remember not to say a speech that had recently been his for, perhaps, dozens of performances. Such changes would likely have been possible for a company of professionals; however, such changes happen so rarely in the corpus that I am inclined to believe that, at the very least, players were coming back to shorter parts upon a play’s retrieval from storage rather than being asked to make such changes in the context of a play’s semi-regular performance.

Ultimately, the difference between a “single-text” play and a play that I believe to have been revised between separate productions requiring distinct casts and playing materials can be seen most acutely in terms of changes made to cues. With the exception of these three play texts, nearly every cue that was learned in order to play the “good quartos” would have functioned as an identical cue while playing the corresponding F text. As we have seen, the F texts of Lear, Hamlet, and Richard III were created by cutting, adding, reassigning, combining, and reordering speeches, processes that, in application, necessarily altered the function of cues in their corresponding “good quartos.” Performances of these three “good quartos” featured dozens of cues that, in the performance of their corresponding F texts, would have either no longer functioned as cues or, even worse, functioned as different cues. In all three cases, the F texts of Hamlet, Lear, and Richard III appear to have required new playing materials for a majority of the company.
Conclusion

The fourteen plays printed as “good quartos” were more stable than other variant text Shakespeare plays. This stability might be explained, in part, by their relative length. Whatever the cause, six “good quartos” – five of which were the first play texts to bear Shakespeare’s name on the title page – were more or less reprinted in the First Folio. However, nine other “good quartos” appear in the Folio in a revised state, though no variant text printed as a “good quarto” appears to be the product of theatrical abridgement as documented by the eighteen extant theatrical manuscripts. Accordingly, these nine play texts appear to have been re-written, albeit in limited ways, for the sake of performance.

Six plays feature changes made according to a few basic principles that would have allowed a single incarnation of the play in performance to incorporate such revisions relatively easily. What’s more, by avoiding the necessity of a new book, such revisions may have avoided the necessity of additional approval from the Master of the Revels. King Lear, Hamlet, and Richard III bear evidence of a second set of theatrical materials, likely conned and performed by a different or re-combined cast.

By disambiguating plays that evolved in the context of performance from “two-text” play revised to create new materials ostensibly requiring a second approval from the Master of the Revels, we might be inclined to indulge editorial desires to read all texts of King Lear, Hamlet, and Richard III in parallel editions; likewise, we might be inclined to bracket F-only material in singular editions of
Othello, Troilus and Cressida, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Richard II, 2 Henry IV, and Titus Andronicus. Perhaps more important, we might understand that only a handful of Shakespeare’s plays printed in quarto – all of which were printed in a three-year span – appear to have been truly stable texts. The mechanisms by which a popular play may have been revised, likely for an important performance, while being semi-continually performed give us reason to imagine that many of the eighteen plays first appearing in the Folio have likely survived in a revised condition. Based on the “best” of the “good quartos,” we have little reason to believe that plays like Twelfth Night or Measure for Measure have come down to us in the form in which they were first written.
Coda: “What is the ende of study, let me know?”

In 1598, William White printed an edition of Love’s Labour’s Lost for Cuthbert Burby. The slim playbook is distinguished by the fact that it is the earliest surviving playbook bearing Shakespeare’s name: its title page advertises itself as “Newly corrected and augmented | By W. Shakespere.” Less famously, the title page also claims to represent the play “As it was presented before her Highness | this last Christmas.” Centuries of critics have understood these claims to be oppositional or at least incongruous; a textual ambition to represent a play “as it was performed” has been understood to be at crossed purposes with claims of fidelity to the play as it was authored, corrected, and augmented. These two title-page claims serve as distillations of the binary conceptualizations dictating the terms of the debates that have most fully occupied the time and energies of Shakespeareans for the better part of 400 years.

The bulk of this dissertation has attempted to rethink this binary by focusing on the peculiarly textual performance practices that affected the activities of early modern playing companies and playwrights alike. I have argued that the acts of correcting and augmenting a play were – like the writing of plays – done with an awareness that the text would be broken into parts to be learned in isolation by players and reconstituted upon the stage according to cues. By understanding a
“performance text” not as a record of a text in performance but as a text intended to be sundered into parts and prepared with as little rehearsal as possible, I have attempted to offer a comprehensive reassessment of Shakespeare’s authorial practices and surviving corpus of printed play texts.

The 1598 printing of Love’s Labour’s Lost gives us no reason to believe that the play text is not the product of authorial correction and a text that had been played in the previous year. Like each of Shakespeare’s printed play texts, it preserves a method by which an authorial manuscript was written in order to ease the burden of performance according to parts. To make cues easier to identify, Shakespeare and his company focused specifically on the distribution and ordering of speeches. At their most basic level, Shakespeare’s plays were written to evenly distribute and minimize the number of speeches and cues a player was responsible for at a given time: over half of the entrances in Shakespeare’s corpus of extant play texts feature a character responsible for six or fewer speeches before leaving the stage.

Furthermore, when characters were responsible for a significant number of speeches and cues in an individual scene, Shakespeare frequently provided his players with recognizable and intuitive speech patterns that not only allowed the company to anticipate and more easily recognize cues but provided assistance in the event that lines containing cues were misspoken, misheard, or forgotten. Roughly a third of all of Shakespeare’s speeches appear in scenes with only two speaking characters. With only a single partner, an early modern player would have known to listen for his cue at the end of every speech his partner delivered; in the event of an errant cue, the player would have known to proceed with his next speech.
In the aggregate, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* features fewer of its speeches in two-player scenes (16%) than the typical Shakespeare play. However, closer investigation reveals a more sophisticated pattern. The long scenes of 2.1 and 5.2 are large-group scenes organized by a pattern in which players pair off and exchange two-player dialogue; a similar device is employed in scene 1.1 of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Players would have been provided with the benefit of short two-player scenes with the only difference being that they wouldn’t have left the stage after delivering their speeches. Importantly, the two longest two-player scenes taking place on an otherwise empty stage – located in 1.2 and 3.1 – feature the boy, Moth, a character likely played by one of the youngest members of the company. In other words, even as *Love’s Labour’s* deviates from the typical ratio of two-player scenes, its action is broken into similar chunks that provide assistance to the players most likely to need help or make mistakes. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* illustrates that Shakespeare’s use of the basic structure of the two-player scene evolved over time and was flexible depending upon the needs of a particular play.

Throughout the corpus, structural assistance was extended to more densely populated scenes in the form of speech stems: roughly half of all speeches delivered in scenes containing three or more characters are located in stretches of ten speeches or more wherein one player would have been responsible for every other speech. Because of large-group scenes, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* relies much more heavily upon speech stems than it does two-player scenes. All told, 675 of the play text’s 1,034 speeches (66%) are located in two-player scenes or speech stems of ten or more; this percentage is perfectly in keeping with Shakespeare’s typical play texts.
Again, however, Shakespeare’s use of structural assistance is revelatory, both in terms of the structural assistance that was actually used in the service of different types of plays and in terms of how such structures might change the way we read Shakespeare’s plays. For example, not one of the final 169 speeches of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is structured according to a performative logic; no speech stems of ten or more exist from the first entrance of the Worthies to the end of the play. While I do not believe that this portion of the play was unplayable, I do believe that it was intended to be rehearsed, likely more than once. Many of Shakespeare’s plays (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* to name a few) end with stretches featuring speeches ordered according to a purely narrative logic. If I am right to assert that these sections would have required additional performance, it is likely that Shakespeare had particular designs as to how these sections should be performed. In other words, sections ordered according to a performative logic created patterns of speeches that would have, through predictable rhythms, worked in consistent ways; I have implied that patterns of speech order were a means by which Shakespeare could direct action. Sections lacking this kind of direction might be understood to be of particular importance or difficulty since they appear to be marked for additional rehearsal.

In part, the suggestion Shakespeare wrote his plays in such a way that they would be easier to play according to parts and cues simply serves to re-conceptualize his relationship with his company. The corpus includes patterns suggesting that Shakespeare paid active attention to amount and kinds of work he was asking from his players. Thematically paired characters – such as Othello and Iago – are
frequently given nearly identical numbers of speeches; likewise, as Shakespeare’s plays became more demanding in terms of the number of speeches assigned to its principal players, the plays offered the company a higher degree of support. For example, *Hamlet*, required one player to deliver nearly a third of all of its speeches; accordingly, 83% of *Hamlet’s* speeches are located in one of the two forms of structural assistance I have identified in this dissertation. In contrast, no character in the earliest printing of *The First Part of the Contention (2 Henry VI, 1594)* was assigned more than 8% of the play’s speeches; because individual players would have had relatively little to do over the course of the play, the play text was written to include only 29% of its speeches in formal structures designed to make playing easier. In part, then, this dissertation serves to refine the clichéd notion of Shakespeare as a man-of-the-theatre in terms of a simple and practical awareness of how difficult it was to put on plays in an English repertory company.

In addition to this conceptual shift regarding what it meant for Shakespeare to write plays as a company playwright, this dissertation has offered a wholesale reconceptualization of Shakespeare’s corpus of often-divergent play texts. All but one of Shakespeare’s plays printed in varying texts exhibit nearly identical attention to playability; in suggesting that Shakespeare’s longest plays were written to be performed, I have argued against the position that performance was responsible for cuts that turned the manuscripts underlying Shakespeare’s longest variant texts into scripts approximating those printed as the shorter, earlier quartos. Because each of Shakespeare’s variant texts appears to have been written to accommodate the process by which it would have been performed, we should understand the corpus as one that
records a career in which Shakespeare’s plays were written, performed, re-written, and performed again.

In contrast to other theories of textual revision, I have found that changes made to conflicting play texts were made according to one of three specific processes, each of which was shaped by the larger context of early modern performance practices. I have differentiated changes according to how they would have affected a playing company working according to parts under the auspices of the Master of the Revels. Though it is the most common critical explanation for changes made to Shakespeare’s play texts, wholesale theatrical abridgment does not appear responsible for Shakespeare’s variant play texts.

In contrast, most of Shakespeare’s variant texts were the product of a revision process that, while preserving the features of the play text designed to make the original play easier to perform, almost certainly resulted in a separate set of theatrical documents, including parts, that needed to be re-conned and a book that needed to be re-approved by the Master of the Revels. To employ this method of revision, Shakespeare and his company needed to understand plays in terms of their smallest units of performance; by thinking of a play in terms of French scenes marked by every entrance and exit, and distributing changes evenly across those units of distinct stage composition, Shakespeare and his company were able to ensure that the elements of an original text designed to ease the burdens of performance would remain intact even as hundreds of additional speeches and cues were added to the play.
Finally a small group of plays demonstrate a pattern of changes indicating a process distinct both from the process of theatrical abridgement and that of wholesale revision requiring a second set of performance materials. Such changes frequently address issues that would have become apparent through performance, clarifying a scene’s performative logic or adding elements of spectacle such as songs. These plays, represented by *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus*, suggest a process by which alterations were made to a play that was at least a semi-active part of the company repertory.

Considered in combination, these three processes suggest that individual play texts in Shakespeare’s corpus are not the product of theatrical intervention or corruption; instead, we ought to understand each play text as one representing a particular incarnation of a play as it was intended to be sundered into texts, coned, and performed. Read in this light, Shakespeare’s corpus is not only one produced by an authorial man-of-the-theatre but one in which plays were frequently returned to and re-worked in predictable ways.

Far from hindering Shakespeare’s artistic expression or singular authorial voice, Shakespeare’s intimacy with the theatre in which plays were produced appears to have been essential both to the writing of plays and to what we might think of as Shakespeare’s artistic development. For example, *The First Part of the Contention* (*2 Henry VI*, 1594) and Shakespeare’s other plays printed in 1594/5 ease the difficulty of performance by limiting the number of speeches for which actors are responsible. *Titus Andronicus* (1594) creates a character clearly intended to be a leading role; however, because of the difficulty of performance according to cues, the part is
limited to 110 speeches. After becoming familiar with two-player scenes and speech stems, likely from contact with the plays or playwrights of the Queen’s Men, Shakespeare followed a template established by Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, creating *Richard III* – and possibly Q1 *Hamlet* – to provide a player with nearly 300 speeches, almost all of which would have been delivered in speech stems or two-player scenes. Though the theatrical form allowed the development of dynamic leading character, its performance relied so heavily upon a single player that Richard Burbage may have had difficulty or Shakespeare’s other players may have become disinterested: whatever the cause, Shakespeare moved away from a single lead to plays featuring two leading parts assigned roughly the same number of speeches, plays including *Richard II* (1597) and *1 Henry IV* (1598).

Not only did an awareness of how plays were performed allow Shakespeare to explore more fully what his company was capable of playing, it also allowed him to create more complicated kinds of performances. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1623), and other plays believed to have been written around 1594, two-player scenes tend to start at the beginning of a scene and end when both characters leave the stage; the players were frequently alone on stage for exchanges of 70 or more speeches. Eventually, plays like *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) incorporated a technique where players on a crowded stage are paired off to exchange short two-player dialogues. Likewise, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* uses the device of sleeping characters to create a series of two-player scenes that retain an element of spectacle.
Ultimately, Shakespeare’s career was one in which his plays not only became more complicated linguistically and thematically but also theatrically; as his plays became more demanding in performance, he developed increasingly sophisticated methods by which to ensure that even the most difficult of his plays could be performed according to parts.
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