

# Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies)

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THE PAST DECADE HAS WITNESSED, according to Patrick Cheney, a remarkably uncontroversial “return of the author’ in Shakespeare studies.”<sup>1</sup> Stimulated by Lukas Erne’s fresh engagement with the evidence for *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* in 2003, Shakespeare studies have taken up the case for Shakespeare not only as an entrepreneurial writer for the stage, churning out actable material, but “as a self-conscious, literary author” who used print publishing to shape a career as a “literary dramatist” parallel to his career as a working playwright in the theater.<sup>2</sup> Redressing “an increasingly dated view that threatens to reduce Shakespeare to ‘a man of the theatre’” and restoring a sense of Shakespeare fashioning dramatic works for a reading, as well as a spectatorial, audience Erne marshals evidence ranging from the frequency with which Shakespeare’s plays were published and republished during the first decade of his career in the 1590s (noting the increasing prominence of his name on various editions of those quarto volumes) to an ingenious argument for the essentially “literary,” print- and reader-directed address of many of Shakespeare’s longer plays. Too long for performance, Erne argues, these plays—mainly the tragedies—may witness Shakespeare’s intended appeal to a reading public.<sup>3</sup> As Charlotte Scott puts it, Erne’s Shakespeare “wrote differently for the stage and the page, including in the text to be read things that would normally be performed (mannerisms, entrances, exits, physical behaviour, expressions).”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Cheney, “Introduction,” *Shakespeare Studies* 36 (2008): 19–25, esp. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Lukas Erne, “Reconsidering Shakespearean Authorship,” *Shakespeare Studies* 36 (2008): 26–36, esp. 26; and Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Erne, “Reconsidering Shakespearean Authorship,” 32; and *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*.

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 192.

These claims about Shakespeare's authorship, David Scott Kastan observes, have "remarkably changed our sense of Shakespeare almost overnight," galvanizing a surprising scholarly "eagerness" to confirm the distinctive inscription of a "literary dramatist" and the image of Shakespeare, and of dramatic performance, it appears to summon.<sup>5</sup> Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster locate their reading of *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance* by noting the "swing of the critical pendulum" toward a "renewed stress on the page," and Richard Dutton groups Kastan's *Shakespeare and the Book* alongside *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* and Patrick Cheney's *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* as part of "a concerted backlash against the long-standing certainty that Shakespeare is primarily defined by his role in the theater."<sup>6</sup>

Shakespeare bestrides the book and the stage. Whether directly or indirectly, the "return of the author" requires a sustaining impression of the appropriate function of writing in the theater. Were the plays motivated by an individual conceptualizing himself as an "author" or did they emerge collaboratively from the busy hive of the early modern playhouse?<sup>7</sup> Was the "literary dramatist" a cause or a consequence of the fashioning of plays in print? These questions point to a tangential problem: how conceptualizing the documents and their creator disciplines our conceptions of theatrical propriety. Rescuing Shakespeare from the stage enacts a vision of literature and theater, and of their conjunction, dramatic performance. The "return of the author" (was he ever really gone?) in *Shakespeare studies*, whatever it may say about Shakespeare's responses to and manipulation of the emergent institutions in which he worked, surely says something about us: it points to the ongoing challenges of fashioning *performance* as an object and perspective of inquiry in Shakespeare studies and, perhaps more urgently, to an animating cultural dialectic *between* Shakespeare and performance.

## I. INTOXICATIONS

The "return of the author" dramatizes the challenges of framing authentic Shakespeare performance studies today. Despite the polemical distinction between a "literary" and a "theatrical" Shakespeare, there is considerable common ground between them. Since the seventeenth century at least, the plays

<sup>5</sup> David Scott Kastan, "To think these trifles some-thing': Shakespearean Playbooks and the Claims of Authorship," *Shakespeare Studies* 36 (2008): 37–48, esp. 46.

<sup>6</sup> See Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in the Elizabethan Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 13–15; see also Richard Dutton, review of *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* by Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005): 371–74, esp. 374.

<sup>7</sup> This question sustains the opening chapters of Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare Only* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009).

have been recognized as part of the formation of both literature and theater, although these institutions have not often shared a common perspective on the plays' value, utility, or aesthetic identity. Early modern dramatic writing flourished as an essential element of an expanding commercial theater system; it was also slowly assimilated to nascent canons of vernacular "literature" emerging through the expansion of commercial print publishing and its often-contested relation to more settled modes of communication and models of authorship, and to the uneven spread of literacy.<sup>8</sup> Whether Shakespeare was self-consciously part of a systematic publishing program or not (and regardless of whether supervising the publication of the quartos was even a realistic possibility), as house playwright and company sharer, Shakespeare could not have been unaware of efforts to publish the company's plays, of the general trade in printed drama, or of a potential readership for plays, including his own.<sup>9</sup> He was likely a reader of printed drama, and the plays themselves frequently meditate on the purposes of theater, and more specifically on the varied uses of writing in performance, even on the specificity of writing for performance in print culture.<sup>10</sup>

No one disputes that the theater was the engine for the writing of stage plays: without the market incentive of the entertainment industry's voracious need for new and appealing work, would Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare, and many others have turned such energetic attention to stage plays, let alone to the invention, refinement, and proliferation of the distinctive new genres of vernacular drama?<sup>11</sup> After all, as Scott McMillin notes, theatrical companies

<sup>8</sup> Kastan suggests, though, that for some time printed drama may have remained in "a category of its own, competing in the marketplace with other recognizable categories of reading material like literature, religion, and history" ("To think these trifles," 45).

<sup>9</sup> On the challenges of supervising the printing of quartos, see Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 96. Authors were on many occasions involved in proofing, and Laurie E. Maguire reminds us that John Marston apologized that his "enforced absence" from the printing house obliged him to "rely upon the printer's discretion" in the first quarto of *The Malcontent* (1604); see "The Craft of Printing (1600)," in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999): 434–49, esp. 443. In support of Erne's general position, Richard Knowles similarly notes that "Shakespeare could not have been unaware of his growing marketability or indifferent to his growing literary (not just theatrical) reputation," although it is difficult to say whether his awareness of a literary reputation could have reflected the penetration and popularity of his published plays among readers. See Richard Knowles, review of *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* by Lukas Erne, *Modern Philology* 103 (2006): 545–51, esp. 546.

<sup>10</sup> On the plays' representation of the uses of writing in performance, see Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008); Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*; Weimann and Bruster; and W. B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> As Jeffrey Knapp observes, though, it was possible to write plays whose only—and very successful—life was in print: Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra*, published in 1594, was reissued in eight editions in the next eighteen years (*Shakespeare Only*, 8).

paid as much for a single play as “the run-of-the-mill writer of ‘fine’ literature might earn” in a year.<sup>12</sup> Shakespeare published poems during his lifetime, laden with the identifying apparatus of patronage: he was, and was known as, a poet whose work was worth reading, copying, remembering. He was known and praised as a playwright whose plays were popular onstage and whose published texts were marked for commonplacing, a sign of the perceived—or at least marketable—value of the “fine filed phrase” of his dramatic verse.<sup>13</sup> Although not in great demand, individual volumes of printed contemporary plays were bought and read. Shakespeare’s plays were popular in both print and theatrical arenas. Identifying the playwright on the title page became more—although not universally—common, and in his lifetime, Shakespeare assumed a recognizable and familiar position, “amphibiously occupying the worlds of printed books and of the theater.”<sup>14</sup> By 1623, it was possible to assert the extratheatrical identity of contemporary *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* materially, in an impressive, modestly expensive, folio.<sup>15</sup>

Willy-nilly, Shakespeare contributed to the success of professional theater, to the rise of printed drama, and to something else: the conceptualization of printed play texts as “dramatic literature.” What is surprising about the contemporary “return of the author” is the leverage it seeks from the assertion of Shakespeare’s *intentional* framing of the plays as “literature” and from the apparently consequent necessity to disable “performance” as a critical context for conceiving Shakespearean dramatic writing. Although literature and theater may be, as Kastan has it, “dissimilar and discontinuous modes of production,” here the plays are understood to be indelibly marked by this divided ontogeny.<sup>16</sup> “Literary” and “theatrical” drama are taken to be mutually exclusive, however

<sup>12</sup> Scott McMillin, “Professional Playwrighting,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, 225–38, esp. 227.

<sup>13</sup> On commonplacing, see Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, “The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59 (2008): 371–420; see also Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia, Wits Treasury* (London, 1598), 282.

<sup>14</sup> Colin Burrow, review of *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, by Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004): 322–25, esp. 325. Although, as Julie Stone Peters observes, drama may have been “understood to play itself out in two arenas—on the stage and on the page,” much of this current controversy concerns the cultural status of those pages; see *Theatre of the Book 1480–1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 8. Erne mentions this passage in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (7).

<sup>15</sup> On the economics of publishing plays in quarto, see Peter M. Blayney, “The Alleged Popularity of Playbooks,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005): 33–50, and “The Publication of Playbooks,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997): 383–42; and Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, “The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005): 1–32.

<sup>16</sup> David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 7.

much the use of writing in Western dramatic performance sustains their variable consubstantiality, and however much Shakespeare's plays were affected by the playwright's business—acting and writing for, and investing in, the most influential theater company of the era. Indeed, the “return of the author” urges us not only to discriminate the literary from the theatrical modes of production of Shakespeare's plays, but also to distinguish the literary from the theatrical elements within Shakespeare's dramatic writing.

This dichotomy both reflects and reciprocates the defining gesture of “performance criticism” in the 1970s, nicely epitomized in Erne's critique of J. L. Styan: “When performance critics claim, for instance, that ‘the stage expanding before an audience is the source of all valid discovery’ and that ‘Shakespeare speaks, if anywhere, through his medium’ they are simply ignoring one of the two media in which Shakespeare's plays exist and existed.”<sup>17</sup> Fair enough. Performance criticism has often taken a relatively untheorized and unjustifiably dualistic view of its foundational terms—text, performance—and of the aims and methods of the critical heuristic they support. Even so, Erne characterizes *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* as a “timely intervention” in the wider field, in which performance has not only “become a central component of Shakespeare studies” but is indeed “omnipresent” there.<sup>18</sup> Erne is rightly irritated by the exclusionary cant behind the “claim that his plays were written in order to be performed,” as though their theatrical instigation should or could regulate the kinds of attention appropriately directed to dramatic writing as an instrument of critical performance, whether in scholarly writing or on the stage.<sup>19</sup> It could also be observed—*pace* Styan—that authorial intention falls aslant theatrical practice, which consists of using writing to make an event that reframes verbal signification in the embodied, kinesthetic means of nonverbal action. Nonetheless, the “dogmatic statement that plays were written for the stage,” however inept as a prescriptive instrument of critical practice (and however symmetrical with claims that the literary intentions of plays *written for* readers should determine their cultural use and signification), has apparently had huge and troubling consequences, even leading multivolume editions of the plays to give “ample space to the theatrical dimension as evidenced not only in copious stage histories but, increasingly, throughout the introduction and the annotations.”<sup>20</sup> But while we may wonder what *the* theatrical dimension is (do plays have a single literary

<sup>17</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 22, quoting J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), 235.

<sup>18</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 20, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 132, 20.

dimension?), it seems that if “we have erred in the last thirty years or so, we have erred on the side of performance and at the expense of the text.”<sup>21</sup>

Even though “the return of the author” is typically presented as an historical corrective to the misapprehension of the institutional landscape—publishing, professional theater—of Shakespeare’s career, it rapidly opens out toward the assertion of more essential critical and disciplinary principles. In what sense does attending to Shakespeare’s plays as instruments of performance (not the same thing as a flawed performance criticism) have as its constitutive critical liability the sacrifice of “the text” of those plays? An errant interest in performance “at the expense of the text” has so far hardly cost us much. Although Erne rightly questions the pretensions of the Oxford edition to have produced a more authentically “theatrical” version of Shakespeare’s scripts, editions nonetheless multiply, as does a fundamentally text-centered criticism of Shakespearean plays as literature, critical practice that sustains much “performance criticism,” too.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, setting aside the large body of literature using performance to make Shakespeare appealing as a school subject, performance criticism of Shakespeare is not only a significantly subordinate part of Shakespeare scholarship, but is often, in terms of the critical priority it assigns to the texts and in its general valuation of “Shakespeare,” cognate with the values and practices of literary critique. As I outline below, understanding performance as an “interpretation” of the “text,” Shakespeare “performance criticism,” far from sacrificing the text—as some familiar forms of literary critique (new historicist, feminist, psychoanalytic, name your poison) are sometimes alleged to do—often stabilizes performance on the (apparently) firm foundations of a dramatic script fully imbued with literary value.

While some performance criticism claims to eschew a purely literary approach to Shakespeare’s plays, it rarely challenges the centrality of the text and its meanings to legitimate Shakespearean performance. The determining role of the text in performance criticism is precisely captured in Styan’s presiding metaphors: “the plays as blueprints for performance” and “the text-as-score.”<sup>23</sup> As

<sup>21</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Erne takes issue with the “as they were acted” claims of the Oxford edition, claims no more plausible coming from Oxford University Press than from the title pages of the many sixteenth-century quartos (or indeed from any book). Whether in Folio or quarto versions, Erne argues, Shakespeare’s long plays would have required additional cutting for performance. If the printed texts were intended for a reading audience, projecting them as theatrical artifacts misrepresents their intended use. In the end, no printed play can present the text “as it was acted.” Texts are always misremembered and nearly always cut in performance, as Michael J. Hirrel argues in “Duration of Performances and Lengths of Plays: How Shall We Beguile the Lazy Time?” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61 (2010): 159–82.

<sup>23</sup> Styan, *Shakespeare Revolution*, 235.

a metaphor, the “score” evinces a powerfully text-governed conception of performance. Rightly noting that the “text-as-score” advocated by Styan and others to regulate interpretation to an essentialized notion of stagecraft is a false analogy in historical terms, Erne offers an interesting comment: “For, while musical scores are usually intended for performers, a printed play generally is not, but is (and was) meant for readers instead.”<sup>24</sup> Early modern printed texts—something like trade editions today—addressed readers, not actors, yet the function Styan attributes to the score as a licensed image of the appropriate authority of writing in performance remains. That is, the image of writing ideally determining the order, pacing, and incarnation of performance persists as a sustaining metaphor of performance criticism, despite the fact that most of dramatic performance evades location in the script, whether in manuscript or in print.

However misaligned with stage performance, this appropriation of the score metaphor reflects a pervasive aesthetic ideology. As Lydia Goehr has shown, by the late nineteenth century the post-Romantic conception of the musical work demanded a critical parallel between fidelity to the work (*Werktreue*) and to the score or text (*Texttreue*): “To certify that their performances be of specific works, [performers] had to comply as perfectly as possible with the scores composers provided. Thus, the effective synonymy in the musical world of *Werktreue* and *Texttreue*: to be true to a work is to be true to its score.”<sup>25</sup> A “performance met the *Werktreue* ideal most satisfactorily, it was finally decided, when it achieved complete transparency. For transparency allowed the work to ‘shine’ through and be heard in and for itself.”<sup>26</sup> For Styan, the text-as-score is a similar invocation of *Werktreue* via *Texttreue*, a metaphor that is misplaced for Erne only because Styan misjudges the cultural function of print in Shakespeare’s era, not because he misstates the proper relation between writing and performance.

So, given the relatively low profile of performance criticism in Shakespeare studies, its nearly complete lack of purchase outside academic critique of Shakespeare (in performance studies, for instance), its literary assimilation of *Werktreue* to *Texttreue*, and its constitutive reciprocity with the values of literary drama, we might well wonder whether performance criticism poses much of a threat to Shakespeare’s “return.” The “return of the author” is finally animated by something considerably more important than rescuing the plays from the isolated preserve of performance criticism: the “far-reaching emancipation of Shakespeare’s text from the stage” altogether.<sup>27</sup> Erne writes, “While the New

<sup>24</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 231.

<sup>26</sup> Goehr, 232.

<sup>27</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 77.

Critical obsession with close readings that turned plays into poems needed a corrective, this corrective may have led some to consider Shakespeare's plays exclusively as scripts to be performed, a view that is not justified by the double existence these plays had in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" or that they have enjoyed much more extensively since.<sup>28</sup> Although the label "literary dramatist" appears to restore equilibrium between literary and theatrical senses of the *work* in the changing ecology of early modern writing and performing, in practice this argument urges the priority of Shakespeare's literary intention and imagination to a proper estimation of the works themselves, the appropriate means of their critique, and a proper sense of the genre of "Shakespeare performance."

The reconstruction of early modern text-and-performance is inflected by the revealing panoply of early and late modern labels: *author*, *poet*, *dramatist*, *man of the theater* all license critical practice, justify the attribution of value, and prioritize the means of creation. Ben Jonson was a "poet." Like Shakespeare, he wrote plays "for" performance, all the while irritably announcing their essentially literary status. No danger, then, that Jonson would fall afoul of the "increasingly dated view that threatens to reduce Shakespeare to 'a man of the theatre.'"<sup>29</sup> The "poet" or "dramatist" and the "man of the theater" hardly carry comparable cultural freight. John Heminges, David Garrick, Constantin Stanislavski, David Belasco, Harley Granville Barker, Harold Clurman, and Sir Peter Hall are "men of the theater," although several were playwrights, too; Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen, and Beckett are "dramatists," although all had considerable experience in the practical theater. (*Henslowe in Love?*) Qualifying several of Erne's interpretations, Kastan shares the hesitation that Shakespeare was "simply (!) a practical man of the theater, as many have held."<sup>30</sup> Is the stage-and-page, playwright-and-dramatist double perspective apparently sought by the "return of the author" really possible—or desirable—in contemporary Shakespeare studies?

<sup>28</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Erne, "Reconsidering Shakespearean Authorship," 32. Jeffrey Knapp carefully documents Jonson's effort to arrogate prestige simultaneously to actors and the author, by listing the names of his players in the 1616 *Works*; see *Shakespeare Only*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Kastan, "'To think these trifles,'" 46. As Richard Dutton suggests, arguing against the "'theatre-centric' approach to Shakespearean authorship, which in many ways is the modern orthodoxy," the "nature of the Shakespearean 'author' need not, therefore, be confined to the traditional extremes of 'reader-focus' and 'performance-focus.'" See Richard Dutton, "'Not one clear item but an indefinite thing which is in parts of uncertain authenticity,'" *Shakespeare Studies* 36 (2008): 114–21, esp. 120. Dutton suggests elsewhere that while it "has been usual throughout the twentieth century to pay lip service to the idea of Shakespeare as a 'man of the theatre,'" "the 'writerly' Shakespeare . . . remains the dominant voice in the English-speaking world's construction of its definitive author"; see *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2000), 112.

Even accounts that accommodate the man of the theater to the dramatist find this dichotomy inescapable. Resisting Erne's claim that the "creation of the dramatic author in early printed playbooks preceded the creation of the dramatic author in the playhouse," Jeffrey Knapp takes a surprisingly pro-theatrical position from within the "critical movement . . . titled 'The Return of the Author.'"<sup>31</sup> His Shakespeare is an onlie begetter, a singular creator whose "authorial self-consciousness" is "fundamentally shaped by his immersion in the theater business."<sup>32</sup> Countering the widespread "historicist" argument that the "collaborative" and even "collective" working environment of the early modern theater (at least before the early seventeenth century) obviates the application of a purposeful sense of "authorship" to the practice of writing plays, this Shakespeare intervened in "the standard, received model for understanding how scripts got written." This "essentially literary" notion of authorship "was not equipped to treat the playwright's engagement with other artistic forces in the theater as anything but a struggle for authority." Yet while Shakespeare "did help theatricalize the concept by acknowledging the formative power of actors and audience on his playwriting," the figure of the "author" preserves an intrinsically literary conception of the work of drama as a fact of early modern institutional history: so "dominant was the literary model of authorship that Shakespeare could not or would not entirely dispel its bias against collaborative mass entertainment." He embraced instead "the thought that an author writing plays for the commercial stage must suffer a loss of sovereign authority as well as respectability."<sup>33</sup> Shakespeare's sympathies may not be "wholly on one side or the other of the battle-line Hamlet draws between scripting and clowning," since the figure of the "player-author" perhaps implies a more fluid sense of the "complexity of his means, aims, and methods as a theatrical professional." At the same time, Shakespeare-the-author finally absorbs "the decisive effect of his audience and fellow actors" into "*his* dramaturgy" (emphasis mine) as a means of resisting the theater's innate remaking of the fiction of the "sovereign authority" of the script.<sup>34</sup> Knapp's Shakespeare absorbs the lessons of performance into texts

<sup>31</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, ix; he discusses Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 44, on his page 14.

<sup>32</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, 122–23.

<sup>33</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, 102.

<sup>34</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, 90, 123; I have slightly altered Knapp's wording here, though not, I think, the sense that Shakespeare's achievement is to incorporate the contributions of actors and audiences into his writing, rather than providing actors material for their own labor ("the decisive effect of his audience and fellow actors on his dramaturgy" are Knapp's exact words). Knapp's reading of Hamlet's advice to the players alongside the figure of authorship, and his account of the impact of the boy companies on the traveling players in *Hamlet*, in some ways parallels my own reading of the scene, which attends more narrowly to the ways the uses of print are conceptualized. See Worthen, *Drama*, 94–112.

that will always fail to exert their properly sovereign authority over theater and theater practice. Perhaps the exception proves the rule: Shakespeare the theatrically aware author, reluctantly subduing his scripts to the multifarious purposes of the stage, still had an out in literature: "Shakespeare expected his plays to be read as well as performed."<sup>35</sup>

Like the farmer and the cowman, the literary dramatist and the man of the theater should be friends; but the landscape, and how we want to use it, keeps getting in the way. The "return of the author" has a visibly redressive purpose, expressed in Alan H. Nelson's relief that Shakespeare's plays and poems can once again be approached "as verbal and dramatic art, as—dare I think it?—English Literature," and in John Jowett's measured sense of the benefits of Erne's impact on editorial theory, "a new emphasis at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one that pares back the theatrical dimension and asserts on new grounds the presence of Shakespeare the author in the field of textual study."<sup>36</sup> Patrick Cheney imagines "a collaborative man of the theatre who wrote plays for both page and stage," but unlike Weimann and Bruster, his adjectives sharply belie the bland conjunctions (the "working dramatist or jobbing playwright"), enforcing a critical hierarchy at precisely the moment when book and theater, print and performance, page and stage are supposed to be equitably recalibrated: "During the past five years, a sobering piece of news has awakened some from the pleasures of performance intoxication: if we seek historical accuracy, no longer can we separate theatre from book, performance from print, in criticism of William Shakespeare."<sup>37</sup>

Performance intoxicates, dulls the senses, dizzies the mind, lowers inhibitions: who knew that writing "performance criticism," let alone seeing Shakespeare onstage, was so much fun? Whatever the man of the theater may have been, Shakespeare the dramatist was no mere sensualist. As Erne puts it, "To simplify matters, performance tends to speak to the senses, while a printed text activates the intellect. As I will attempt to demonstrate in the second part of this study, some of the Shakespearean playbooks bear signs of *the* medium for which they were designed" (emphasis mine), the intellectually activating medium of print literature.<sup>38</sup> While theater does address us through what Stephen Gosson

<sup>35</sup> Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, 166n78.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Nelson, "Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles: From the Earliest Years to 1616," in *Owners, Annotators, and the Signs of Reading*, ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle, DE; Oak Knoll; London: British Library, 2005), 49–74, esp. 70, qtd. in Erne, "Reconsidering Shakespearean Authorship," 30; and John Jowett, "Editing Shakespeare's Plays in the Twentieth Century," *Shakespeare Survey* 59 (2006): 1–19, esp. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, xii, xi, 9–10.

<sup>38</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 23. While I do not agree with all of Erne's assessment of "performance criticism," I share much of his sense of its shortcomings, and am grateful for his very productive engagement with my work.

memorably called the “privie entries” of the senses, the theater is hardly incapable of activating the intellect (although we would be wrong to identify its forms of thinking merely with the words it uses), nor is reading essentially an unmixed intellectual activity. Think of all the writing, from romance fiction through propaganda and advertising, designed to speak to the senses, to say nothing of the sensual appeal of imagery, meter and rhythm, paper, typography, illustration, and binding.<sup>39</sup> This way of characterizing performance is tiresomely familiar, and its reappearance foregrounds the deeper and more complicated function of performance at work here, where “Shakespeare in performance yields too easily to our desires.”<sup>40</sup> Despite claims to integrate performance and print, the “return of the author” tends to emancipate text from stage, poet from man of the theater, writing from the body, intellectual judgment from the intoxicating seduction of the senses, and so appears to restore the practices of theater to their proper place in history: subordinate to writing in the work of dramatic performance.<sup>41</sup>

The recourse to “performance” is finally less revealing than the belief in its enabling necessity as the grounding opposition to Shakespeare’s “literary drama.” And while I am aware that for many readers of Shakespeare—many of *us*, that is—the performance of a *Shakespeare play* tends to be conceived in terms of its representation of the fiction encoded in the dramatic text, the calibration and valuation of these terms have been quite differently conceived in disciplines attending more directly to the process, structure, and effect of performance. The most significant work in performance studies has challenged an essential subordination of performance to writing, of what Diana Taylor terms the *repertoire* to the *archive*. While I think this work requires important qualifications—to my mind, Taylor’s searching study tends to reiterate a literary sense of the function of writing in theatrical performance, which she associates with the *archive*—it does invite us to take a different perspective on the construction of writing and performance than has been imagined either in performance criticism or in the current excitement about the “return of the author”: the unscripted *repertoire* of performance practice constantly reshapes the potentialities of the *archive*, the capabilities of the text as an imagined instrument of performance.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse*, in *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literature, 1974), sig. B7r.

<sup>40</sup> Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, 7; see also Knowles, review of *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 546.

<sup>41</sup> This sense of the social and political consequences of the displacement of inscribed forms of knowledge pervades performance studies of the 1990s; see, for instance, Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003).

Despite the overanxious concern that performance “is currently replacing the author as the holy grail of Shakespeare studies,” the return of the author nonetheless depends on a specific, literary orientation to the proprieties of performance.<sup>43</sup> It may not be fair to hold Erne, Cheney, and others to a more plausible conception of performance; Erne’s meticulous encounter with the material life of printed texts is immensely provocative and rewarding, and it should be clear that I am taking issue with the rhetorical framing of “performance,” not with the revisionist account of the process and cultural impact of dramatic publishing. But insofar as the “literary dramatist” gains traction from an implied model of performance, it is fair to consider how it models performance in relation to writing, and what the consequences of this implicit paradigm might be for a Shakespeare performance studies.

Performance takes a specific shape here, described as a means for the enunciation of writing: the “plays as presented on stage.”<sup>44</sup> This is an important choice of words; Cleanth Brooks and Robert Heilman’s influential 1945 New Critical textbook, *Understanding Drama*, also prefers the phrase *stage presentation*, rarely using the word *theater*, and reserving *theatrical* for “artificially contrived effects,” the “melodramatic” and “sensational,” the “highfalutin instead of the truly poetic”—that is, *dramatic*.<sup>45</sup> “Presenting” the play implies a kind of transference, as though the “literary drama” could be preserved from the contamination implied by “performance.” This sense of theater as properly “presenting” a work—rather than making new work—supports Erne’s argument that the long plays in particular contain much writing that was never to be “presented,” and so was not addressed to the stage at all. In this view, Shakespeare didn’t just provide his company with too much material; he encoded elements of his text as “for” print, dramatic literature. He “must have written with an awareness that much of it would not survive the text’s preparation for the stage but that he and his company made available to a readership.”<sup>46</sup> Since this writing was not intended for “presentation,” its identity was never predicated on the theatrical work it might enable. The conception of a theater of textual “presentation” is critical to the discrimination of “literary” from “theatrical” writing: a theater understood

<sup>43</sup> Janette Dillon, “Is There a Performance in This Text?” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 74–86, esp. 85; approvingly cited by Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 181.

<sup>44</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 175.

<sup>45</sup> Cleanth Brooks and Robert Heilman, *Understanding Drama: Eight Plays* (New York: Henry Holt, 1945), 3, 504; and Julia A. Walker, “Why Performance? Why Now? Textuality and the Rearticulation of Human Presence,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 16 (2003): 149–75. I consider the relation between New Critics, including Brooks and Heilman, and theorists of performance studies, including Diana Taylor, in *Drama*, 39–64.

<sup>46</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 196.

to “present” its texts defines writing as literary that exceeds the stage’s presentational practices or capacity. A theater “presenting” writing can be brought to bear to decide which elements of texts are essentially irrelevant to theatrical “presentation” and so to define the “literary” dimension of drama.

I am less concerned with the historical plausibility of the “too long for performance” argument—recently challenged in an essay by Michael J. Hirrel—than with the ways it models an appropriate relation between text and performance, literary drama and theater.<sup>47</sup> For whether dramatic texts were or were not too long for performance is for my purposes less crucial than the critical practice this notion appears to provide for discriminating the “literary” from the “theatrical” factors of dramatic writing, its encoding of distinctive representational and presentational elements. Understanding performance as presentation of text sustains the notion that certain aspects of writing—elements of the dialogue and (surprisingly) paratextual elements such as stage directions—can be seen as essentially literary in intention because they seem to provide “information” either irrelevant or redundant to stage “presentation.” “Literariness” is, of course, “a matter of canonicity; it describes the cultural use to which certain texts are put for those periods (often short, sometimes widely separated, rarely continuous) during which they satisfy hermeneutic needs.”<sup>48</sup> The bits of writing that emerge as decisively distinguishing the literary ontogeny of several Shakespearean texts are not only the “poetic highlights” copied into commonplace books.<sup>49</sup> Instead, the essentially literary dimension of Shakespeare’s writing is signified by words and phrases that seem to narrate dramatic action and behavior and summon the fictional dramatic representation, rather than sustain the presentation by acting in the theater.<sup>50</sup>

The conservation of narrative “information” required to “present” the dramatic fiction provides the principle for discriminating the “literary” from the “theatrical” elements of the printed drama. Text that conveys “information” that

<sup>47</sup> In “Duration of Performances and Lengths of Plays,” Hirrel suggests that both before the mid-1590s and after, when the starting time of performance was moved from around 2 in the afternoon to around 4, the “Elizabethan theatrical event . . . was a flexible vehicle that probably could accommodate full performances of Shakespeare’s longer plays” (159); he notes that cuts in the few existing scripts we have are “seldom substantial” and do not “significantly narrow the range of script lengths” (172).

<sup>48</sup> Robert S. Knapp, *Shakespeare: The Theater and the Book* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989), 37–38.

<sup>49</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 228.

<sup>50</sup> The claim of being “too long for performance” is not really essential to Erne’s case for a literary Shakespeare; even if the long plays could be performed in the allocated time, these elements could nonetheless be seen to differentiate between an appeal to stage presentation and an appeal to a literary audience of readers.

could be duplicated in stage “presentation” (does performance ever duplicate textual “information”?) indicates the literary orientation of the text at hand. Various stage directions in *Antony and Cleopatra*, for instance—“Enter Pompey, Menecrates, and Menas, in warlike manner,” “Enter Ventidius as it were in triumph,” “Enter Caesar . . . with his Counsell of Warre,” “Enter the Guard rustling in”—strike Erne as “descriptive stage directions that are directed at readers rather than at the bookkeeper,” because in the theater the conspirators’ warlike manner would be evident from their appearance, Caesar’s council would be identified by the dialogue, and the guard would enter with the usual bustle of officious underlings.<sup>51</sup> As the pictoriality of such directions is functionally inconsistent with the pure instrumentality of most early modern stage directions, Erne believes that they are intended to provide readers with “information” essential to assembling a dramatic fiction in the mind’s eye.<sup>52</sup> Actors did rehearse from sides or parts, which tended to contain a very modest number of action-oriented directions (*Enter* or, more rarely, *Exit*). But in the absence of clear evidence of the provenience of these directions, we might be wary of denying them the theatrical purpose they appear to claim. As the many controversies surrounding Beckett’s stage directions remind us, discriminating the literary from the theatrical elements of the page is far from straightforward.

The “literary dramatist” argument depends on being able to isolate the representational from the presentational, the fictional from the instrumental elements of dramatic writing. Yet many dramatic texts once provided “presentational” opportunities that now seem untheatrical, un-Shakespearean, or untextual: the bevy of dancing witches in *Macbeth*, Garrick’s bobbing wig, Cleopatra’s barge.<sup>53</sup> Performance history also shows how actors and directors have used elements of a script that were initially seen as baffling or irrelevant to performance: Kate’s exit—or lack thereof—at the close of *The Taming of the Shrew*; the ellipses, *Pauses*, and white space in the texts of Pinter’s plays; the entire action of *Waiting for Godot*.<sup>54</sup> The modern notion of booking the play, of using the formation of print (prefixes, stage directions, layout, type design) in the effort to direct the stage from the page more or less reciprocates the notion that printed texts can be mined for the theatrical practices they once might have engaged.

<sup>51</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> The utilitarian aspect of most early modern stage directions is amply documented in Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> On the many turn-of-the-century productions staging Cleopatra’s barge, see Margaret Lamb, “*Antony and Cleopatra* on the English Stage” (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1980).

<sup>54</sup> I have treated the impact of print on the imagining of modern dramatic action in *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005). On Katherina’s exit, see Barbara Hodgdon, ed., *The Taming of the Shrew* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), 306–8.

For this reason, we should be wary of assuming that the protocols of reading in the emergent discourse of printed drama observe our own, post-Shavian sense of the readerly utility of narrative stage directions (Shaw, after all, used his “novelistic” directions to position the spectator before an imagined proscenium, not in the fictive action). To Erne, Shakespeare’s early modern readers “showed little interest in inferring stage action from the play text”; the only proper function of narrative directions was to appeal directly to early modern readers’ interest in imagining the fictive rather than the theatrical action.<sup>55</sup> This distinction may or may not be convincing as a hypothesis about Shakespeare’s intentions toward different audiences; we might wonder, though, whether it is plausible to segment the potential functionality of dramatic writing along these lines.

Dialogue, too, sometimes appears to serve a more properly “literary” than “theatrical” function. In the Folio version of *Henry V*, Gloucester’s description of Mountjoy after the slaughter of the English boys provides a key piece of evidence: “His eyes are humbler than they vs’d to be.”<sup>56</sup> Noting that this line and its prompting line appear only in the readerly F text and not in the theatrical Q1, Erne argues:

If we understand the Folio text and the script behind Q1 as designed for two different media, what seems significant about the two missing lines . . . is that they can be *acted* and therefore do not need to be *spoken*. In performance, the words would unnecessarily reiterate what the actor conveys through body language. . . . The two lines present in the readerly but absent from the theatrical text are thus crucial for what Harry Berger calls “imaginary audition.” They allow a reader to imagine a point of stage business that could otherwise only be conveyed in performance.<sup>57</sup>

Erne is alert to the tautology of assigning readerly values to F and then deriving a literary origin from them. More important, this argument understands performance as a means of “presenting”—but not violating, enlarging, remaking—apparently textual meanings. In what sense is the performance of these lines redundant? In performance, the line does not merely describe what we can see. Like all language onstage, it works in active, dialectical counterpoint to behavior and gains its sense from the scene in which, and purposes with which, it is performed as action. How does the actor make his eyes “humbler”? Or does he? Must *we* see what Gloucester says *he* sees? Even a slavishly “faithful” performance of humbled eyes will necessarily signify well beyond what Gloucester says of them—defeat, abjection, anger, contempt, all the indescribable meaning

<sup>55</sup> Erne, “Reconsidering,” 33.

<sup>56</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 221.

<sup>57</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 222.

of a single glance. Similarly, when Juliet beseeches her father “on my knees,” as she does in Q2 *Romeo and Juliet*, Erne takes this phrase as stage information (pointing to the “literary” designs of this text), because—as the stage direction in Q1 “*She kneeles downe*” informs us—Juliet is already kneeling; only readers need Juliet to say she is kneeling.<sup>58</sup> And yet pointing out that one is kneeling makes “beseeching” a different act; insofar as performance transforms the language it uses into action, even descriptive words must be made to do something beyond what they say. For this reason, assigning a “literary” origin to language describing action depends on a limiting misconception of the work of words in performance.

Perhaps *Antony and Cleopatra* is larded with narrative stage directions intended for readers. Yet in the context of that play, it is unusually difficult to know how to segregate descriptive directions and descriptive dialogue from writing proper to theatrical performance. Taking Gloucester’s lines about Mountjoy’s “humbler” eyes as paradigm, is Philo’s opening speech, mourning Antony’s transformation into the “bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy’s lust” (1.1.9–10), also expendable in the theater? It is immediately illustrated in action, of course—or is it?<sup>59</sup> A production of *Antony and Cleopatra* without Philo’s lines opening and closing the first scene, without Caesar’s description of Antony’s physical decline from his exploits at Modena, without Enobarbus’s description of Cleopatra, and of course without Cleopatra’s theatrically redundant “boy my greatness” (5.2.219) would omit the play’s determined oscillation between “textualized,” even literary accents of “information,” and information-in-the-making, performance. *Antony and Cleopatra* is remarkable for its use of stage narration to invoke, replace, displace, or challenge the performers and their audiences, as though the scripted “abstract” of character and its embodied action constituted two distinctive, competing, finally incommensurable performances, expectations the play strategically magnifies when the principals leave the stage and then return. The play’s great narrative set piece, Enobarbus’s “the barge she sat in” (2.2.191ff.), provides information and focuses a challenge essential to the play and perhaps essential to the use of writing in performance: how can a boyish Cleopatra—who enters almost immediately thereafter, and of course later reenacts this scene in the climactic suicide—or *any* Cleopatra hope to compete with our narrative expectations, expectations exposed to the materialities of performance? Shakespeare’s adaptation of North’s Plutarch—prose widely celebrated for its stylistic brilliance—asserts a specific text-and-performance problem: narrative and histrionic “information” is shown not to be redundant but

<sup>58</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 223.

<sup>59</sup> I cite from M. R. Ridley, ed., *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Methuen, 1977).

complementary and incommensurable. Perhaps the play that made it into print was imagined by its author as a literary document addressed to readers; but this understanding of how writing functions in performance does not provide much evidence either way.

The “return of the author” polarizes these apparently presentational and representational elements even when, as Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster argue, the early modern theater is taken as the site of “varieties of representation that tended to defy closure and plenitude” and so would tend to frustrate the “unyielding critical contest” between literary and theatrical perspectives on Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>60</sup> Weimann and Bruster see “early modern performances as a miscellaneous assemblage of contingent, formally and culturally variegated practices” in which “relations between the practice of performance and the authority of writing were as yet rather unsettled.”<sup>61</sup> Shakespeare’s plays were written to exploit this interactive milieu. Although *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance* brilliantly interrogates the specific ideological encounter of differently authorized elements in Shakespeare’s theater, it makes more general claims about dramatic performance: “The act of performance is primarily, though not exclusively, anchored in bodily practice. Representation, in particular its world-picturing function, is primarily, though again not exclusively, indebted to scriptural uses of language. It is in and through written discourses that a remote, absent, complex world can be represented.”<sup>62</sup>

Weimann and Bruster are engaged in a searching problem: how to locate the function of the language we value in performance without assigning it a determining value over performance. As the warrant for their extraordinarily rich

<sup>60</sup> A contest in which I have played, admittedly, a perhaps unduly polarizing part; see Weimann and Bruster, 11, 226n32. See also Robert Weimann, *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000). For the record, I’m not “against” texts, textual critique, or indeed “literary” modes of critique that stand apart either from the history of Shakespeare in performance, or from a conception of the texts as intentionally or institutionally involved in performance; but, much as I would, along with Erne, repudiate the notion that the “written for performance” vision of Shakespeare’s plays disables non-performance-oriented forms of critique, I would resist the notion that Shakespeare performance streamlines and simplifies the hermeneusis promised to readers of the plays, or that Shakespeare performance should be evaluated in terms of its apparent restatement or interpretation of “the text.” That is, both versions of the “written-for” dynamic—actors, readers—strike me as artificial, simply false to the rich variety of ways in which Shakespeare’s writing has been made to speak and so to have cultural significance. What I do resist—for now, at least, a still-open question—is the notion that Shakespeare performance functions as a specific genre, in which writing should have a specific, historically extensive, legitimating positionality in both the making and consequences of the work of performance.

<sup>61</sup> Weimann and Bruster, 15, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Weimann and Bruster, 3.

and provocative account of Shakespeare's writing, they suggest that performance combines bodies and words in discernible ways: in performance, the body is the vehicle of the presentational, the poet's language is the vehicle of the represented, and Shakespeare's text documents this relationship. For while the "boundaries between the verbal signs of language and the visible signs of the body became as porous as they were contingent," "the dramatist's language itself has already assimilated the player's *gestus*, speech rhythm, and kinetic thrust prior to any subsequent embodiment," so that "verbal and visible signs come together in the literary as well as the material production, but also in the audiovisual response of auditors-spectators." All three are "conjoined in a dramatic discourse that is an object of, as well as an agency in, the staging of the play." While this sense of performance resonates with Hans-Thies Lehmann's sense of the "fundamental *shift from work to event*" characteristic of some contemporary performance, it also gestures toward a familiar image of writing in performance: "language in the composition of a stage play proceeds by itself to assist in rendering, even directing the swelling scene."<sup>63</sup> Despite the documented variety of performance in Shakespeare's theater, most "theatrical representation," then as now, was "unthinkable without the writing of dramatic texts," giving rise to an interactive, but not unfamiliar, image of dramatic performance: "In our convenient phrase, rather than having the author's pen inspired by player's voices, we should expect to find the author's pen guiding, inspiring, disciplining, and fashioning an excellent actor's voice and body into character."<sup>64</sup> Shakespeare's writing emerges in a decisive moment of autopoietic interplay with performance. At the same time, Shakespeare's writing provides the instrument for asserting a decidable interplay between presentation and representation, the live and the virtual, theatrical playing and the "play" it delivers.

Although Erne stands "with Robert Weimann" in taking Shakespeare to participate "in a residually oral culture that affected certain variant playtexts," we

<sup>63</sup> Weimann and Bruster, 9; and Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), 21.

<sup>64</sup> Weimann and Bruster, 11–12, 19. Not surprisingly, given the care with which this argument is framed, Weimann and Bruster immediately warn us that "such neat juxtapositions (here designed, again, as a summary introduction) can be dangerous as soon as they threaten to obscure the full range of engagements between dramatic language and histrionic bodies," and the argument of *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance* does indeed explore these engagements with a rich sense of their variety. For instance, "Put simply, the making of Shakespeare's *dramatis personae* can be traced on a wide spectrum bracketed by two extreme ways of figuration. One is where writing, in shaping dramatic speech and action of imaginary agents, provides given, more or less authoritative contours for staging images of artificial persons. The other sees the strength of the performative, the material act of staged counterfeiting, as pervasive enough to assert itself in its own right and to affect by its own authority the imaginary figuration of a person even before it comes to be staged" (139).

can nonetheless see how difficult it is to keep the moment of text / performance, literary / oral interplay open; our ways of imagining Shakespeare performance seem to demand that we discover a critical practice—however refined—that enables us to inscribe the presentational in the text's representational work.<sup>65</sup> The question is “to what extent Shakespearean drama constitutes ‘an almost oral art’ or, conversely, ‘is already a fully literary art.’”<sup>66</sup> If it inclines toward the oral, then performance is its essential medium; as “a fully literary art,” though, Shakespearean drama can only be reduced, traduced, or corrupted by performance, at least by performance other than reading. And yet technological change is difficult to capture in a strictly dualistic paradigm, especially at the interface of orality and literacy, performance and writing. Much as theater in the West has been shaped by print and the values—stability, identity, reproducibility—attributed to printed documents, it is difficult to characterize Western theater, with its multiform ways of using writing, as predominantly oral or literary. The tension between writing and performance, the letter and the body, the virtual and the immediate pulses across the textual interface of dramatic performance, from the era of manuscript to those of print and digital media. The “return of the author” witnesses perhaps the largest obstacle to imagining Shakespeare performance studies: engaging a sense of Shakespeare performance that is not conceived as a sensually appealing means of merely *presenting* the text.

## II. SEDUCTIVE INTERPRETATIONS

To seize performance in the theater actively is to engage in a richly materialized semiosis, which enforces an intellectual, sensory, affective encounter with an estranged worldliness: representation balanced within the process of its presenting. The “return of the author” poses “literary drama” as an alternative to “theatrical drama,” by understanding theater as legitimately using its presentational power to sustain the playwright's scripted representation. Emancipating plays from the stage into the liberty of writ produces an “interpretive” sense of theater that defines the proprieties of both literary drama and performance. This vision of theater as the vehicle of a fundamentally literary representation also locates the “return of the author” on the horizon of contemporary performance studies, more or less epitomizing the “antitextual” manner in which dramatic performance (often called “text-based performance”) has been positioned as a conservative, ideologically captive mode of performance.<sup>67</sup> The “return of the author”—much like “performance criticism”—invokes a series of rigid dichoto-

<sup>65</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 220, discussing Weimann, *Author's Pen*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> Erne, “Reconsidering Shakespearean Authorship,” 31.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Puchner, “Entanglements: The Histories of *TDR*,” *TDR* 50 (2006): 13–27, esp. 24.

mies: dramatists (not *men* of the theater), whose texts are traced by the signs of their intentions to write *for* one medium or the other, each appealing to different capacities in their audiences. Although the “return of the author” appears merely to rebalance Shakespearean dramatic writing on the pivot between literature and theater, it articulates a paradigm that provides the most significant obstacle to thinking our way toward a powerful conception of Shakespeare performance studies.

When considering texts in performance, Erne and others rely chiefly on Harry Berger, who had the “courage to ‘state the case against the stage-centered approach’” and who defined an apparently performance-sensitive critical practice in his 1989 *Imaginary Audition*.<sup>68</sup> Berger’s utility stems from the assertion that Shakespeare’s texts are “overwritten from the standpoint of performance and the playgoer’s limited perceptual capacities”; the inherent complexity of Shakespeare’s texts is not seizable on the stage (even a *Texttreue* performance can never, finally, be *Werktreue*).<sup>69</sup> In 1989, Berger effectively forestalled the critical assumptions of much “performance criticism,” claiming “first, that the criterial status of actual performance conditions is self-evident; second, that any interpretation that does not conform to those conditions must be non- or anti-theatrical and violate the Shakespeare text (by treating it as a text rather than a script); third, that a valid interpretation must match or reproduce the experience of actual playgoers.”<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, Berger’s revival as a critical touchstone sustaining of the “return of the author” arrestingly dramatizes the ways “interpretation” models a literary valuation of performance.

Berger brilliantly seizes on the dialogic structure of dramatic writing as the basis for a reader-oriented critical practice, “imaginary audition,” which figures reading as a more complex (ambiguous, multiplex, simultaneous) version of what he takes to be the spectator’s (unambiguous, singular, sequential) activity in the theater.

We practice imaginary audition when, in a dialogue between A and B, we imagine the effect of A’s speech on B; listening to A with B’s ears, we inscribe the results of this audit in the accounts we render of B’s language. But we can also do something else, something persistently encouraged by Shakespearean writing, and this something is central to the practice, distinguishing it from more casual forms of auditory attention: we listen to B’s language with B’s ears.

<sup>68</sup> Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 25; see also Cheney, *Shakespeare’s Literary Authorship*, 9n16.

<sup>69</sup> Harry Berger Jr., *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989), 29–30; and Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 25. It might be noted, though, that for Berger, “Plays, then, like other texts, appear to be intended for interpretation, which includes performances in various media; and like other texts, their apparent ‘intentions’ are dissociated from those of their authors and subject to continual critical revision” (24).

<sup>70</sup> Berger, 32.

We premise that every interlocutionary act is partly a soliloquy in which the speaker constitutes himself as the theater audience he shares confidences with or tries to persuade, affect, deceive. As readers we join B, or B joins us, in monitoring his speech acts. This perspective converts B's speech to continuous self-interpretation or -interrogation so that if at one level we posit B as a speech effect, a character constituted by (our interpretation of) his speech, at another level B reproduces this posit by continuously representing and responding to himself as a speech effect.<sup>71</sup>

The sense that Shakespeare's plays are "overwritten" arises from the belief that as intrinsically literary documents they require a specific mode of production: "decelerated reading," the slow, back and forth, thoughtfully imaginative "imaginary audition" that enables a reader to multiply the potential signification of lines. This critical, imaginary activity generates several plays—or playings—at once, performances not constrained by the materiality of the theater, the practices of acting, or the passing of stage time, but only by the reader's skill at occupying and projecting—*auditioning*—the positions of several simultaneous subjects in the making. But while Berger's reader actively recreates this "mighty world / Of eye, and ear, both what they half-create / And what perceive," his theatrical spectator is dumbly in his being pent, allowed only a wide-eyed, alienated consumption of a single interpretation (the actor's decision to render a given line this way rather than that) in a one-dimensional act of *realized* audition.<sup>72</sup> Reading enables a conceptually multiplex *performance* of the text, imagined as principally auditory, the hearing of words, rather than in the visual, kinesthetic spatial terms of the stage. Attending a performance is at best a streamlined hermeneutic activity, or much worse, merely the consumption of someone else's hermeneusis. As Harold Bloom puts it, "In the theater, much of the interpreting is done for you, and you are victimized by the politic fashions of the moment."<sup>73</sup> Reading a Shakespeare play demands our presence, our active performance, a commitment to creative *jouissance*. Seeing a play is a secondary pleasure, watching someone else doing it.<sup>74</sup>

Berger's challenging conception of reading and spectating, like much of the "text and performance" discussion in Shakespeare performance criticism and elsewhere, uses the notion of *interpretation* to bridge the gulf between literary

<sup>71</sup> Berger, 45–46.

<sup>72</sup> William Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey . . .," in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 119. I also allude to Wallace Stevens, "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 96.

<sup>73</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1988), 720.

<sup>74</sup> For a more extensive reading of Berger's role in the development of performance criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, see W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 151–91.

and theatrical drama: performance gives its audiences an “interpretation” of the text, which they duly consume, much as they might consume an “interpretation” advanced in an article by Harry Berger or J. L. Styan, while they recognize that this “reading” is not the thing itself, the play.<sup>75</sup> While it’s not surprising that we—all of us who richly encounter Shakespeare in books—might be drawn to model performance as a version of textual “interpretation,” this metaphor ultimately distracts at least as much as it delivers.

What is at stake, then, in understanding dramatic theater as fundamentally “the declamation and illustration of written drama,” a form of embodied interpretation?<sup>76</sup> Recently, Peter Kivy has undertaken a critique of reading as a mode of performance. His account deploys several familiar metaphors—the text as score, the text as recipe—often used to express the properly determining role of writing in dramatic theater. For Kivy, musical and dramatic works are similar in that their textual transmission is merely a means for creating performances. We might say that Kivy takes a protheatrical view of dramatic writing: like a musical score, the script is an instrument from which the work of art actually emerges, *as performance*. For Kivy, what performers of any kind—actors, pianists, readers—do when they perform is to “interpret”:

A performance is a *version* of the work performed. And in order for a performer to produce a credible performance, a credible version or “reading” of the work, she must have an *interpretation* of it. She must have her own idea of how the music goes: what makes it tick. She bases her performance on that idea; on that interpretation. Her performance, then, literally displays forth her interpretation. If she had a facility with words she could tell us what her interpretation of the work is, as an analyst or theorist might. But in any event, one can show an interpretation as well as tell it, as we have seen. And what the musical performer does is to show her interpretation through her performance.<sup>77</sup>

Although for Kivy the score and the script have no purpose other than being interpreted in performance, as an interpretation the performance is not a work in itself. The identity of the performance derives from the script it interprets; based on “that idea,” it can be experienced only in relation to that absent authority.<sup>78</sup> Discounting Kivy’s purely technical limitation of “interpretation” merely

<sup>75</sup> As Anthony Dawson notes, Berger takes Shakespeare to stage “the inadequacy and relative superficiality of theatrical meanings”; see “Performance and Participation,” in Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare’s England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 11–37, esp. 35n52.

<sup>76</sup> Lehmann, 21.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Kivy, *The Performance of Reading: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 61.

<sup>78</sup> Although Kivy doesn’t discuss stage performance at length, he does suggest that an actor like Julie Harris reading aloud from *Jane Eyre* performs much the same activity she would per-

to discerning what “makes it tick,” “interpretation” seems to be a principle that both qualifies and guarantees the appropriate transfer of the text’s signifieds to performance. There is considerable interpretation behind both musical and theatrical performance, in the assessment of technical features of the music (pace, tempo, dynamics, phrasing) toward an overall sense of the purposes of the performance, and in the significantly different technical and semantic interpretation of various elements of a play: line readings, blocking and movement, function of the *mise-en-scène*, character psychology and motive (if there are characters, psychology, motive), thematics, and so on. But although interpreting is essential to making the performance, should we understand the performance itself as an act of interpretation?

For Kivy, the significant analogy between music and theater is not between playing a sonata and staging a Shakespeare play but rather between playing a sonata and writing a critical study.

We call what critics say about the meaning and significance of art works interpretations of them, and we call performances interpretations of them. Thus, we contrast A. C. Bradley’s Hegelian interpretation of *Hamlet* with Ernest Jones’s Freudian interpretation; and we contrast Schnabel’s Romantic interpretations of the Beethoven piano sonatas with Brendel’s rather more precise and laid back ones. But these two uses of the term “interpretation” are closely related. To begin with, contrary to what some believe, it is my view that the term is applied univocally to, for example, Bradley’s written interpretations of Shakespeare’s plays and Schnabel’s performances of Beethoven’s piano sonatas. They are all literally, and in the same sense, interpretations, the difference being that Bradley’s book on Shakespeare’s plays *tells* you his interpretations, whereas Schnabel’s performances of Beethoven *show* you his interpretations.<sup>79</sup>

Kivy’s framing here conveniently displays the problems of regarding performance as delivering an interpretation. First, Bradley’s performance is not *Hamlet* at all. If Bradley chose to perform or interpret this material, his rereading of his essay on *Hamlet* would be a different performance, a different essay, lecture, commentary, conversation, even if it attempted merely to restate the original in different words. If Arthur Schnabel could *tell* us his interpretation completely and fully, it would necessarily differ from his performance, and not only because words are not notes of music. Interpretation—Bradley’s essay, Bradley’s commentary on his essay, Schnabel’s verbal account of Beethoven—makes propositions about the performance, and so cannot be understood as the performance itself.

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form in an onstage dramatization of the novel: she “read the simple narration with great expression; and when she came to reciting the speeches of the dramatis personae, she declaimed them as an actor or actress would have if performing in a play” (46).

<sup>79</sup> Kivy, 38.

As David Z. Saltz argues, performances (unlike critical “interpretations”) simply do not make “propositions *about* the text,” a minimal condition of conceiving performance as textual interpretation. Noting that “most of a performance’s ‘excess properties’ bear little relation to anything a literary critic would proffer as an ‘interpretation,’” we might ask where to draw the line between what is properly textual in performance and what is external to it or excessive: remembering that acted and written words are different things, we might argue that nearly all a performance’s properties are in excess of the script.<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Bennett takes a cognate view, suggesting that while performance cannot offer an interpretation, it is an opportunity to participate in the “interpretivity” of the event itself, in an ongoing effort not to seize what the performance is proposing about the text or the work, but to ask where it is going, what it is doing with and to us, what it might mean to participate in this act here and now, happening in this way. For Bennett, a spectator interprets neither the text nor an interpretation of the text (which could not be accomplished without considerable prior familiarity with the text); the spectator’s complex braiding of critical, intellectual, and affective response is not *outside* the play, but part of the playing. The spectator’s constructed positionality in the developing event manifestly inflects the performance of “interpretivity,” the ongoing act of understanding in the event itself. This “interpretivity” is not reducible to “an interpretation”—either delivered by the stage performance or reconstructed afterward by spectators, critics, or historians—because the performance (embracing the activities onstage and our own engagement with them as spectators) “lacks the textlike focus and stability that enable an interpretation (in hermeneutic space) to serve as the text for further interpretation.”<sup>81</sup>

A performance can be reconstructed as propositional: an analysis might read (the word is chosen advisedly) any Shakespeare performance as a commentary on “the play,” as a partial evocation of some construction of textual meaning, as a commentary on early modern or late modern life, and so on. When Lars Eidinger, playing Hamlet in Thomas Ostermeier’s recent production at the Schaubühne in Berlin, eats a mouthful of dirt, it gives rise to a number of interpretive possibilities: Hamlet is as penetrated by corruption as everything else in Denmark, Eidinger is a remarkable showman, the director’s authority is unchallenged at the Schaubühne. But much as dramatic performance is an

<sup>80</sup> David Z. Saltz, “What Theatrical Performance Is (Not): The Interpretation Fallacy,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001): 299–306, esp. 301. Saltz also rejects the notion that dramatic scripts offer instructions or a “recipe” for performance, noting that one doesn’t interpret a recipe but execute it.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Bennett, *All Theater Is Revolutionary Theater* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005), 185; I discuss Bennett, and this passage specifically, in *Drama*, 35–93.

event, not an interpretation, the final cause of our “interpretive” experience is not the climactic reception or achievement of an interpretation, which can only be produced elsewhere, in another medium: it’s our performance itself. Richard Burton’s or Kenneth Branagh’s or Lars Eidinger’s performance as Hamlet is akin to Schnabel’s. They are not making propositions about *Hamlet* nor are they merely re-presenting Shakespeare’s words: they are using writing to make something else. The performance may be based on a prior interpretation, and on differing interpretations that develop over the course of the production’s rehearsals and run. But here and now, during the performance, “interpretation” is set aside: they are making a performance in which we participate, “interpretively” perhaps. An “interpretation” happens only when we withdraw from the performance.<sup>82</sup>

Theater is not a vehicle for textual transmission. Stage performance uses writing not to communicate with words to an audience, but to create those problematic performatives of the stage, the entwining of the fictive in the actual, the drama in the performers’ *doing*, that animates (our appetite for) acting. The words of “the text” (itself a manifest fiction: no performance, of Shakespeare or otherwise, uses a single text) may be spoken, but in a crucial sense actors don’t deliver “words” to their offstage auditors: they *do* things with them, entreat, condescend, wound, instrumentalize the verbal text as one of many means to creating acts in the event of performance.<sup>83</sup> While the rehearsal process often involves acts of interpretation, and while audiences may well interpret a performance they see in a range of ways, the performance itself is not an interpretation of the play, although it can be made to function in that capacity in a critical argument. From this perspective, if dramatic writing is “overwritten” for the theater, the stage realizes the “overtheatrical” utility of the text: the sense that performance always does more with the text, makes more of it than what its mere words say (to us, now, here), more than we can detail in words. “Imaginary audition” is facilitated by the temporal extension of the reader’s decelerated play with potential speech acts; performance facilitates the spatial extension of the spectator’s co-present play with potential social acts, including that special class of theatrical performatives. As Samuel Weber suggests, theater “entails not just

<sup>82</sup> In *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance*, Weimann and Bruster have, justly noting the limitations of my sense that performance should not be understood as merely interpreting a text, suggested that “questions arise which so far have not received satisfying answers.” They ask, “What kind of practice, what type of staged action and delivery do we actually mean when talking about performance in its own right—that is, as an independent, even sovereign force in Shakespeare’s theatre?” (7–8).

<sup>83</sup> I have in mind here J. L. Austin’s famous hesitation with regard to the way “performatives” do and don’t do their ordinary work in the theater; see J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, eds., *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), lecture 2.

space but, more precisely, its disruption and rearrangement. In other words, *theatricality emerges where space and place can no longer be taken for granted or regarded as self-contained,*” or, I would say, regarded as already prefigured by the representational work of the dramatic text.<sup>84</sup> Our play is conducted not merely as the processing of performed language, but through the deep resonance of the theater’s material means, the embodied actions and gestures that position us as agents—*witnesses*, in Freddie Rokem’s terms—within a complex event, between the interinvolvement of present acting and represented action onstage and its reciprocal incorporation and reflection of the behavioral world beyond the stage, both the world of the theatrical audience and the larger social world toward which it extends.<sup>85</sup>

It might be said that this understanding of dramatic performance, in which the literary text is reconceived within theatrical agency, violates both the conventional understanding of theater as a medium of literature and the specific terms of Shakespearean performance as a genre. Institutions (literature and theater) change, and their implication in one another changes, too; so do the terms we use to define, measure, and recognize genre. In thinking about a conception of dramatic performance unmoored from the control of the literary text—unmoored, in other words from “interpretation”—we are moving sharply away from a conventional view of dramatic theater into what Hans-Thies Lehmann terms the *postdramatic theater*. Like the relation between digital and print technologies, the postdramatic both succeeds the dramatic theater and exposes the ideologically overdetermined nature of our apprehension of dramatic performance. However, we should resist merely dichotomizing the old and new, dramatic and postdramatic, in order to pursue a more productive line of thinking. How do the terms of postdramatic theater help us to think through the situation of Shakespeare performance today? What light might they cast on our assumptions about Shakespeare performance historically? How might they help to orient a Shakespeare performance studies?

Lehmann suggests that the contemporary postdramatic theater is predicated on a conception of print and print technology: “With the end of the ‘Gutenberg galaxy’ and the advent of new technologies the written text and the book are being called into question.” Although the specific question remains elusive, the model of technological and cultural succession is clear enough, and sustains an implied paradigm for fashioning both the “dramatic” and the capacities of the “human,” as well: “The mode of perception is shifting: a simultaneous and multi-

<sup>84</sup> Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham UP, 2004), 300.

<sup>85</sup> Freddie Rokem discusses acting, spectating, and witnessing in *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010), 155–60.

perspectival form of perceiving is replacing the linear-successive.”<sup>86</sup> Lehmann is surely right to draw our attention to the practices of contemporary theater and to the range of ways written documents are (and are not) used *in* performance and conceptualized within a justifying rhetoric of performance. As Robert Weimann implies, turning to contemporary European productions of Shakespeare, perhaps we’ve always been postdramatic. Understanding that now “the Gutenberg paradigm does not go unchallenged by other modes and channels of information, among them such vastly different forms as oral, pictorial, and digital means,” we can conceive a “theatre that is not necessarily and not entirely dominated by one (scriptural) mode of utterance and expression.”<sup>87</sup> Rather than prolonging the rhetoric of dramatic performance in print culture, we might take postdramatic theater as a means to review and revise the “logic” of the technology it seems to displace, which has held us captive for too long.

For Lehmann, “dramatic theater” is a specific genre of performance in which written texts are assigned a perdurable function and sustain a specific ideology of performance. Lehmann’s dramatic theater is fundamentally a theater of *speech*, a logocentric theater whose purpose is to represent existing literary works: “Dramatic theatre is subordinated to the primacy of the text. In the theatre of modern times, the staging largely consisted of the declamation and illustration of written drama.”<sup>88</sup> Insofar as the literary work encodes a “*fictive* cosmos,” the purpose of dramatic theater is to deliver this “world” to its audiences.<sup>89</sup> This cosmos is a closed totality: the dramatic theater (as conceived by Aristotle and developed for over two millennia) stages the “‘whole’ of the plot, a theoretical fiction” governing “a flow of time, controlled and surveyable.” “Wholeness, illusion and world representation are inherent in the model ‘drama’; conversely, through its very form, dramatic theatre proclaims wholeness as the *model* of the real.”<sup>90</sup> Despite the material presence of actors, clothing, objects, and audiences, “world representation” demands “the internally necessary *exclusion of the real*” from the determining form of dramatic theater.<sup>91</sup> In Lehmann’s account, dramatic theater absorbs and subordinates its material vehicle to the fiction it conveys. From the Greeks to Ibsen and Strindberg, even to the theater of the absurd—despite astonishing differences in theater architecture and technology, political orientation, audience

<sup>86</sup> Lehmann, 16.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Weimann, “Performance in Shakespeare’s Theatre: Ministerial and/or Magisterial?” *International Shakespeare Yearbook* 10 (2010): 3–29, esp. 16.

<sup>88</sup> Lehmann, 53, 93, 21.

<sup>89</sup> Lehmann, 31.

<sup>90</sup> Lehmann, 40, 22.

<sup>91</sup> Lehmann, 54, 43.

disposition, practices of performance, habits of participation—dramatic theater “could thus be experienced as variants of one and the same discursive form.”<sup>92</sup> This structural dependence on the text defines dramatic performance as a parasite of literature, where the focus “on the questions whether and how the theatre ‘corresponds to’ the text . . . eclipses everything else.”<sup>93</sup>

Lehmann’s dramatic theater should seem relatively familiar. Yet he is surely right to point out a “fundamental *shift from work to event*” in much contemporary performance. In many respects (although clearly not in all theaters) this shift refuses to locate performance as the mere reproduction of dramatic fictions in theatrical form; the “*withdrawal of representation in theatre*” transforms the dramatic theater’s sequestration of the presentational and the represented into something else, an “unsettling that occurs through the *indecidability* whether one is dealing with reality or fiction.”<sup>94</sup> Yet, while postdramatic theater—like postmodernity and posthumanism—may include “the presence or resumption or continued working of older aesthetics,” it is surprisingly difficult to find the older aesthetics of dramatic theater in practice.<sup>95</sup> What we find instead is an insistent rhetoric of textual fidelity, a scriptural determination alleged—by actors and directors, audiences, scholars, and theorists—to structure the dramatic theater, a theater that confirms our efforts to distinguish the poetic from the merely practical, the represented from its vehicle in present acting.

However, most of what happens even in a conventional performance has no specification in the text at all. “Who’s there?” Barnardo asks at the opening of *Hamlet* (well, more or less the opening line of two of the three early versions). Although these are the play’s first words, the production of *Hamlet* is already underway, asserting (through nonverbal means) a significant space continuous with, yet distinct from, the space we inhabit in the audience. Even when the actor begins to speak, we are positioned by how he acts and moves, and by how the words are contextualized—given their performative force—within the circumstance of their utterance, an act that transforms them from words into deeds. While the actor speaks, how do his actions position us? What does he use these words to do? Challenge? Question? Where is the actor facing? Toward the actor playing Francisco? Does he see him? How tall / short / thin / heavy is s/he? Is it dark onstage? Is it dark in the theater? When does Barnardo recognize Francisco? Is the actor speaking English? Is Barnardo? Although commentators often reduce this complexity to the actor’s or director’s “choice” with regard to a

<sup>92</sup> Lehmann, 48.

<sup>93</sup> Lehmann, 56.

<sup>94</sup> Lehmann, 61, 172, 101.

<sup>95</sup> Lehmann, 27.

character's motives, this framework of meaning clearly extends well beyond the text to the ideological structuring of the event in which the text plays a part.<sup>96</sup> Much as digital textuality has helped to dramatize the difference between the ideological and material structure of print—are two differently published editions of the “same” text the “same” thing?—the postdramatic resituation of writing among the signifying practices of performance allows us to reconsider what was there all along: that the text was never “suitable material for the realization of a theatrical project,” if that project is the direct, uncomplicated representation of distinct fictions, the reduction of performance to the *presentation of the play*. The “text-based,” “faithful,” “dramatic theater” has always been a mirage, used to enforce a specific vision of the appropriate hierarchy of artistic relations.<sup>97</sup>

How might postdramatic theater refigure our assumptions about Shakespeare performance (studies)? Lehmann's postdramatic theater poses a suggestive problem. Is “dramatic theater” now part of residual culture, a distinct genre of “text-based” performance, of which Shakespeare performance is a specific subgenre; or are the categories—*dramatic* and *performance*—themselves in constant flux, both formally and in relation to other means of social action and signification? As Weimann remarks, “enthusiasm” for “nonderivative and non-ministerial performance practice” is qualified by a “stubborn resolve to differentiate historically the sources of this relationship and to specify the spaces of an independent performance practice,” a practice authorized independently of textual evocation, however spurious it may appear to students of literature.<sup>98</sup> I, too, think it is crucial to develop a rich, detailed account of the practices and attitudes toward the functions of writing in the theater that animated and sustained Shakespeare's own. At the same time, I am reluctant to distinguish between “performance-oriented productions of Shakespeare” (however “virulent”) and whatever the alternative to that might be: text-oriented productions? theater-oriented productions? the real deal?<sup>99</sup> For while we can be certain that Shakespeare's theater produced nothing akin to Ostermeier's, Besson's, or Gregory Doran's *Hamlet*, we cannot anticipate how emergent modes of production will, far from “interpreting” the text's intrinsic meanings, show us what we might use the text to do, what work it might perform, what work it might

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, John Russell Brown's commentary on the opening scene of *King Lear*: “Exchanges between the two older men can be accompanied by Gloucester's laughter or by signs of his embarrassment, affection, or pride, or a little of each: the actor's choice here will begin to establish the inner nature of each character.” See *The Shakespeare Handbooks: “King Lear”* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13.

<sup>97</sup> Lehmann, 56.

<sup>98</sup> Weimann, “Performance in Shakespeare's Theatre,” 14–15.

<sup>99</sup> Weimann, “Performance in Shakespeare's Theatre,” 15.

once have performed. I don't think we have to be concerned about "the fate of Shakespeare's text on stages exposed to these unsettled relations of language and performance"; more richly than Lehmann, Weimann has shown that the interinvolvement of writing and performance has always been considerably more unsettled than it appears, even in the small-bore notion of "dramatic theater."<sup>100</sup>

A significant motif in the tradition of Western dramatic writing is the foregrounding of the independent work of theatrical process: the dithyrambic chorus and the dramatic role as instruments of internecine competition in Athens, Herod raging in the village street, Queen Anne dancing among the masquers descending from the House of Fame, the Officer praising Louis's magnanimity and wisdom at the finale of *Tartuffe*, nineteenth-century popular melodrama, to say nothing of Brecht, Beckett, Churchill, Artaud, Grotowski, Bogart. Defining theater by its representation of the dramatic fiction ignores a deep channel of theatrical pleasure, pleasure to which dramatic writing and dramatic performance have long been alert, a pleasure that Shakespeare's plays both record and can be used keenly to stimulate and satisfy. The postdramatic theater may be an historical and essential alternative to dramatic theater, but what Lehmann's work more effectively documents is a tension within dramatic performance itself, arising from where and how it locates mimesis (if it locates it at all), and whether that mimesis is conceived in fundamentally literary terms, as "subordinated to the primacy of the text."

Theater and the book, theater of the book, theater in the book: our conception of Shakespeare performance studies is captive to our ways of modeling writing and performing. The polemical "return of the author" is about more than academic turf; it points to a cultural anxiety about the persistent incommensurability of writing and theater that haunts and perhaps constitutes Western drama, an anxiety configured in different ways by early modern and late modern dramatic performance. Like "postdramatic theater," the "return of the author" underlines the difficulty of conceptualizing dramatic performance without predicating it on literary representation, while simultaneously underlining the inadequacy of that paradigm, staging the productive incommensurability of writing and performance. Just when dramatic performance appears to require that the Aristotelian "'whole' of the plot, a theoretical fiction, founds the logos of a totality, in which beauty is intrinsically conceived of as mastery of the temporal progress," it summons its dialectical alternative: a sense of performance as the opportunity to remake rather than reiterate the dramatic, an opportunity to instrumentalize writing and so to insist on the signifying capacity of the text in an event incommensurable with the text's origins or the fictive world it may

<sup>100</sup> Weimann, "Performance in Shakespeare's Theatre," 15, 23.

appear to represent.<sup>101</sup> Needless to say, this writing comes to us fully involved in contemporary ideologies of art, literature, and theater. We cannot ignore these implications (including Shakespeare's imputed motives for writing too-long plays, if they were in fact too long). But we must also recognize that the purchase this body of work can have on performance will be decided *by* performance, *in* performance. As Erika Fischer-Lichte observes, "Performance does not consist of fixed, transferable, and material artifacts"; nor does it consist of fixed, transferable, mental artifacts, "interpretations."<sup>102</sup> Perhaps this is a defining lesson of an emerging Shakespeare performance studies: that the author is always returning, and invariably fails to appear, as the priorities we attribute to writing are necessarily deployed, displaced, disidentified—even "dedramatized"—in the purposeful, aleatory fashioning of dramatic performance.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Lehmann, 40.

<sup>102</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (New York: Routledge, 2008), 75.

<sup>103</sup> On the postdramatic theater's "dedramatizing" tendencies, which we might understand as involved in any effort to remake writing into performance, see Lehmann, 74.

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