The First Cut is the Deepest: The Short Quarto of Romeo and Juliet

Scholars have long accepted that Shakespeare’s plays were performed in shortened versions by the Lord Chamberlain/King’s Men but most have also thought that there was a limited amount that we could know about the company’s abridgment practices given the lack of direct evidence.

However, most recent scholarship on the first quarto of Romeo and Juliet (Q1, 1597), especially that of Jay Halio and Lukas Erne, posits that far from being a “bad” quarto without authority as it has long been treated, the text represents a legitimate theatrical cutting of the play by and for Shakespeare’s company. (Both Halio and Erne, in fact, openly speculate that the edits are authorial.) Katherine O. Irace has produced a study that concludes that R&J Q1 is precisely the kind of direct evidence that has been believed missing.

Rather than re-argue this point, my essay begins by accepting the premise, then explores what might be ascertained about the company’s practices from categorizing and analyzing the cuts, and considers the possible implications for contemporary theatrical practice.

Bibliography:


This paper will argue that the Falstaff’s “play extempore” at 2.4 has its origin in an actual improvised scene and as such was a late addition to the play. Of course, any discussion of Shakespearean revision will be partially based on speculation and informed guesswork. Nevertheless, I believe there is enough evidence to make the case that the section of the text starting around 2.4.270 (when Falstaff announces his intention of a “play extempore”) to around 2.4.470 (when Bardolph announces the Sheriff) was not included in the original performances at court in the winter season of 1596/1597. Instead, this scene was inspired by an actual improvisation during an inn performance in the summer of 1597, and then incorporated into the playtext before it was printed in 1598. To make this argument I will use details about Lord Chamberlain men’s performing habits, close attention to some of the gaps or seams in the text, and existing scholarship on clowning, improvisation and rehearsals. Taken together, I hope to convince you that this scene was not exactly “written by Shakespeare,” in the sense that Shakespeare, as a self-directing agent, planned for this scene to be part of the performance. Rather, this scene represents a collaborative effort produced through a series of contingences, most of which were outside of Shakespeare’s authorial control. The narrative I propose may help us rethink what we mean by authorship in the early modern theatre and offer a glimpse into the way that playtexts were produced.

Marino, James J. “Parts and the Playscript Seven Questions,” in Rethinking Theatrical Documents in Shakespeare’s England, edited by Tiffany Stern (London: Arden, 2020). [Marino challenges anyone thinking about revision and the path from stage to page to think through how additions or subjections to the playtext would affect performance.]

Menzer, Paul. The Hamlets: Cues, Qs, and Remembered Texts. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008. [Menzer’s introduction provides a useful framework for understanding how playtexts were assembled out of what he calls “textual debris.”]


When My Cue Comes Call Me: Imagining Non-Verbal Alternatives to Scripted Cues

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom, awaking from sleep, speaks lines that appear to belong to the rehearsal of “Pyramus and Thisbe” just before his transformational experience in the woods outside Athens: “When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, ‘Most fair Pyramus’.” As we now surmise, his “part” likely contained the words “Most fair Pyramus” but why does Bottom seemingly ask for an extra-textual addition (“call me”)? Is he asking that the cue be called out to him? Or be be given a heads-up that his cue is imminent? Is he worried about hearing his cue, as he is theoretically “off-stage” at this point?

It is widely recognized that “cue scripts” or “parts” were the fundamental building blocks of early modern performance on the English stage. But were there non-verbal ways to ease the mnemonic load of cue-learning? Would it help an actor to learn fewer cues in order to concentrate on their own lines? In this paper, I explore non-verbal cueing mechanisms that actors could have used (and in fact, use today, even when not working with cue scripts). Beyond looking at how the text facilitates cueing in two- to three-person scenes, I will draw on my own work with deaf actress and performance artist Terry Galloway to investigate and examine various strategies that take the place of verbal cues. I will also consider non-vocal physical markers involving gesture, movement, and breath. Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey argue that repeated, withheld, and mistaken cues could be productive on the stage. But the sorts of obstacles that cue scripts conceivably presented, and continue to present to contemporary actors working from parts, can also promote collaboration and cooperation amongst actors and reveal the consequences of an over-reliance on text when conceptualizing practice.

Partial Bibliography:


Note: The paper described in this abstract is different from what the one I described in November. I switched projects when it became apparent that my initial plan was not as good a fit with the seminar.

The core of this essay is a brief look at texts and prompt books for early productions of Two Gentlemen of Verona, framed with Alan Sinfield’s critique of Shakespeare’s comic heroines. Reading early revisions to the text of Two Gents alongside early prompt books suggests the moments that trouble modern audiences—Proteus’s attempted rape of Silvia, and Valentine’s apparent gift, of her, to Proteus—have always been problematic. I try to make the case for a kind of continuity of practice, drawing on evident similarities in the affective agenda of staging choices and textual revisions then and now. The theoretical framework for the essay is appropriation studies: without resorting to the theoretically compelling but practically useless reduction that reads all productions of Shakespeare as adaptations or appropriations, I note that staging choices, and alterations to the play text, might be best understood as appropriations.

- Jeffrey Masten, Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time (U of Penn P, 2016)
- M.J. Kidnie, Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation (Routledge, 2008)
SAA Abstract 2022

James Loehlin

“Unkindest Cuts: Julius Caesar, Text and Performance”

From the point of view of text and performance, Julius Caesar is often considered relatively unproblematic. All scripts ultimately derive from the First Folio, which provides a clean and consistent text with few major cruxes; W. W. Greg called it the best-printed play in the Folio. The play is quite short and doesn’t require the extensive cutting associated with the longer tragedies, and with its historical tone and setting, it has tempted adaptors and rewriters less than plays with more obvious contemporary tie-ins. Yet it provides ample material for considering the question of text in/as performance. This essay will examine a few points of interest: (1) the reshaping of the text to throw focus on one or more of the characters, and/or to advance a particular political reading of the play; (2) the renaming and conflating of characters and reassigning of lines for logistical, dramaturgical, or political reasons; (3) changes in language related to the production’s setting, whether getting rid of anachronisms like doublets and clocks or accommodating modernizations like firearms; and (4) the significant textual crux of the two reports of Portia’s death, and the performative possibilities thereof.

Selected bibliography:


Text as Performance: Shakespearean Text, Motion, and Haptic Experience of the Artist’s Book

This paper is concerned with performative texts—specifically, manipulable artists’ books that make use of Shakespearean text. Artists’ books are art works in book form that manifest self-consciousness about their status as material object; Johanna Drucker describes the genre in even narrower terms as artworks in which the artist’s intent is to experiment with the form of the codex.

I am interested in how manipulable artists’ books generate kinaesthetic or haptic experience in the interaction they require with human readers, their bodies, and their senses. These works can be experienced only by being handled (or by watching them be handled). They engage with the space that form occupies in the world; their meaning emerges from manipulation and can involve only a small group of people at a time. It is this interactivity that raises questions about performance in the experience they provide—performance that might be said to be enacted by the art work itself, by the person handling it, or by both at once. This paper will investigate this dimension of performance and will consider the role of both material culture and the text itself in the process of initiating this aesthetic experience.

Bibliography:

Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists’ Books* (New York: Granary, 1995). Drucker begins by providing a definition of artists’ books, but most of the volume offers a (more or less) chronological history of the artist’s book—one organized according to changes in the fashions of the genre, and one that is frequently based on the expectations of the avant-garde. The artist’s book may be conceived as a book form, a visual form, a verbal exploration, or a conceptual space; it may be intended purely as an aesthetic object or it may have explicitly political dimensions.

Guy Brett and Marc Nash, *Force Fields: An Essay on the Kinetic* (Barcelona: ACTAR, 1999). This catalogue for an exhibit of kinetic art isn’t directly concerned with my topic but it provides a comprehensive study of art that depends on motion for its effect. It discusses a number of artists who were concerned with art and motion including Duchamp, Calder, and Tinguely.

Thomas Ingmire, “Remembering Arne Wolf,” October 28, 2014 [http://www.thomasingmire.com/blog/remembering-arne-wolf](http://www.thomasingmire.com/blog/remembering-arne-wolf). This memorial retrospective of the life and work of Arne Wolf, calligrapher and book artist, “key figure in the San Francisco Bay Area calligraphy and book arts world,” presents the most crucial ideas and phrases from Wolf and contextualizes Wolf’s art. It also includes images of some of Wolf’s art. (Wolf’s work *Hamlet II:2* is one of the books whose performance I will be discussing.)
Title: Adapting *Othello* on the long eighteenth-century stage and in modern film: reconciling textual cuts around infidelity with the impetus for homicide

Abstract
In 2021, criminologist Jane Monckton Smith published her eight-stage homicide timeline, offering a critical resource in the prevention of domestic homicide and a tool for early intervention in cases of domestic violence (DV) and coercive control. While her findings have been critical for legal studies, literary scholars have also begun to make connections between literary representations of DV and the homicide timeline. But nothing as yet has been published on intersections between Monckton Smith’s timeline and Shakespeare in performance. In text, adaptation, and performance, I argue, *Othello* provides critical insights into the psychology of abuse, escalating coercive control, and the link to domestic homicide. This paper will explore cuts, additions, and adaptations of two *Othellos* in order to argue that Shakespearean performances of DV are an underexplored way of understanding the psychology of abuse and coercive control and can offer important insights into the prevention of not only domestic homicide, but also the coercive control and abuse known to precede such tragic outcomes.

Alongside the 1785-1805 production of *Othello* starring Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble, this paper will consider Laurence Fishburne’s 1995 film adaptation to explore how textual changes—including, most notably, cuts and references to sexuality and infidelity—impact the play’s representation of domestic violence and its explanation of the impetus for murder / suicide. As an extension of this investigation, I intend to develop an argument around the ways in which each production’s textual and performative choices around domestic violence impact *Othello’s* fidelity to criminologist Jane Monckton Smith’s eight-stage homicide timeline. Ultimately, I contend, Shakespeare’s ongoing popularity continues to create greater cultural interest in DV, and in turn provides a basis to drive social and legal change.

Annotated Bibliography
This chapter provides a detailed overview and analysis of Oliver Parker’s 1995 *Othello*—a central text for my paper. Crowl foregrounds the film against the backdrop of the then-occurring O.J. Simpson trial, the movie’s American reception, and Laurence Fishburne’s reputation in other roles involving domestic violence (most notably *What’s Love Got to Do with It* where he plays Tina Turner’s violent and abusive husband, Ike Turner). Crowl’s focus on Parker’s deployment of visual imagery—including Iago’s game of chess, the final burial at sea, and the use of camera angles and zooming techniques to provide insights into Iago and *Othello’s* inner psychological perspectives) will be valuable for my discussion of
representations of the psychology of abuse. In addition, this chapter contains useful references to other resources on the 1995 film, including Barbara Hodgdon’s cultural commentary on the movie and its link to the Simpson trial, and Judith Buchanan’s 2003 article on the film and Othello’s otherness.


This groundbreaking study of the stages of domestic violence and coercive control has been influential on my current research on representations of DV in Shakespearean performance. Though Monckton Smith is a criminologist and former police officer and not a literary scholar, her book provides critical insights on the eight stages of what she has identified as a “homicide timeline” and is central to my planned discussion of how the timeline plays out in productions and performances of *Othello.* Monckton Smith identifies stages that are readily identifiable in Shakespeare’s text, including a history of abuse and coercive control, how coercive control plays out in the early stages of relationships, living with control, a trigger event, escalation, a change in thinking, planning, and murder (and, in some cases, suicide). The book’s detailed examples and case studies at each stage of the timeline inform my analysis of the progression to domestic homicide in *Othello,* and Monckton Smith’s discussion and analysis of DV will inform the way I build a case for the timeline’s representation in the play, both in text and performance, on stage and in film.


Since the stage history of *Othello* is central to the way my paper will address the cuts, additions, and general adaptation of *Othello,* and I have selected a key production from the eighteenth century as one of my central texts, Rosenberg’s detailed history of the play’s “refinement” in this era will be one of my key secondary sources. Rosenberg provides a detailed overview of the major eighteenth-century productions of *Othello,* and bases his discussion primarily on the 1755 acting edition. Rosenberg discusses the ways in which the 1755 edition informed John Philip Kemble’s staging of the play, and then proceeds to provide an intricate look at the changes—including cuts and additions—Kemble made to *Othello* beginning around 1785, but which he argues had been at play in preceding years. Rosenberg’s central argument is that *Othello* was “refined” during the period in question in order to appeal to pre-Victorian era sensibilities around morality, religion, and sexuality. Accordingly, major changes Kemble initiated include cutting Othello’s trance, eliminating his “pity” in 4.1 prior to murdering Desdemona, cutting Bianca (Cassio’s mistress), and omitting the “wavering scene.” I plan to apply this paper’s discussion of such textual changes to the way in which Kemble’s adaptation of *Othello* affected the representation of domestic violence, coercive control, and Monckton Smith’s homicide timeline.

**Additional Resources**

*Prompt Books, Acting Editions, and Film*

*Othello* . . . as it is now acted at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. London: Printed for T. Witford, 1755.

*Othello* . . . Marked with the variations in the Managers book, at the Theatre-Royal, in Drury Lane. London: Printed for C. Bathurst ... (etc.), 1784.
Othello . . . Revised by J. P. Kemble; and now first published as it is acted at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. London: Printed for Longmani, 1804.


Secondary Sources


Richard Schoch  
Queen’s University Belfast  

SAA 2022

Paper for Seminar ‘Text In/As Performance’, led by Denise A. Walen

‘Syncopated Time: Staging the Restoration Tempest’

As part of the research project ‘Performing Restoration Shakespeare’ (2017-20), for which I was Principal Investigator, our research team staged scenes and songs from the Shadwell-Dryden-Davenant version of The Tempest at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2017 and 2019. In my paper, I will reflect on how our scholar-artist collaboration in making performance functioned as sustained moments of what Rebecca Schneider (following Gertrude Stein) has called ‘syncopated time’ – in this instance, a collision of textual/archival past and embodied present, in which each dimension punctured the other. I suggest that what can emerge through such syncopations are insights about the Restoration theatrical repertoire—including insights generated by audiences—that neither the recorded past nor the embodied present can fully apprehend on its own.

Bibliography


Rebecca Schneider, Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment (Routledge, 2011)
Deb Streusand  
Lycoming College  
SAA 2022

Author's Pen, Director's Scalpel: What I Learn from Cutting the Late Plays

Shakespeare's late plays are notoriously difficult to cut down for performance, due primarily to their heavy use of enjambment. In order to condense a long speech in one of the later plays, one must often do what Matthew Davies calls "line surgery." That is, rather than cutting an entire pentameter line at the beginning and the end of the cut section, one cuts part of a pentameter line at the beginning and a complementary part at the end, so that an enjambed speech can be cut down leaving both its grammar and its meter intact, like this:

I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated  
To closeness and the bettering of my mind  
With that which, but by being so retired,  
O'er-prized all popular rate, in my false brother  
Awaked an evil nature, and my trust,  
Like a good parent, did beget of him  
A falsehood in its contrary as great  
As my trust was, which had indeed no limit,  
A confidence sans bound. He being thus lorded,  
Not only with what my revenue yielded  
But what my power might else exact, like one  
Who, having into truth by telling of it,  
Made such a sinner of his memory  
To credit his own lie, he did believe  
He was indeed the duke, out o' th' substitution  
And executing th' outward face of royalty  
With all prerogative.  
(1.2.89-105)

My experience cutting these texts, as well as others from the second half of Shakespeare's career, has led me to a theory: some opportunities for line surgery in early modern plays may be built into the text by a skillful playwright for theatrical use. I have noticed that, as in the example above, many of these instances—places where a self-contained grammatical structure can be cut out and leave a complete line of pentameter available to be sutured—occur where the cut-able section can also be removed without harming the scene's ability to convey the plot. Though loath to get into the weeds about "intent," I want to argue that these moments in the later plays reflect an experienced theatre artist, familiar with production conditions in which cuts would be necessary, building a text that is designed to allow for cutting while preserving a unified artistic product.

Bibliography:


Wielding the Blue Pencil with Meticulous Care;  
Or, the Incredible Shrinking *Hamlets* of Maurice Evans

What makes a whole *Hamlet*? In 1938, the actor-producer Maurice Evans staged a nearly-five-hour *Hamlet* at the St. James Theatre in New York. *Hamlet, in Its Entirety*, he called it. *The Stage* agreed, certifying the spectacle as a “whole *Hamlet*, an uncut *Hamlet*.1 During the war, Evans staged a pared-down version of the play while he was stationed in the South Pacific. With a cast largely made up of soldiers, Evans called the two-hour 15-minute production the *G.I. Hamlet*. The *G.I. Hamlet* was a hit with the troops, inspiring Evans to take the show to Broadway after the war. New York audiences raced to the theater, and Evans gave 147 performances before taking his war-inspired production on tour. By 1953, Evans was again in the black tights, for what was, by his own tally, his 778th performance of the role.2 This last performance shattered Evans’s previous audience records. Beamed live into living rooms across the country as part of the Hallmark Hall of Fame series on NBC, Evans brought Broadway to broadcast with a 108-minute telecast of “all the essential scenes and characters.”3

I want to focus on the 1953 telecast for this seminar. Even with generous airtime and sponsorship, to keep “the essential” bits of *Hamlet*, Evans and his team had much to cut—“we wielded the blue pencil with meticulous care,” Evans wrote in an unpublished op/ed.4 My seminar paper will examine the editing process behind what is considered to be the first “full” production of a Shakespeare play broadcast in the United States. Evans was aware (and proud!) of the trailblazing nature of his broadcast. How did Evans’s earlier two productions prepare him for this adaptation? What persisted from Broadway, and what changes did the new medium demand? How did Evans balance his understanding of what’s essential, of what makes a *Hamlet* a whole *Hamlet*, with the new technology’s needs?

**Working Bibliography:**
Griffin, Alice Venezky. “Through the Camera's Eye—*Julius Caesar* in Motion Pictures; *Hamlet* and *Othello* on Television.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 4.3 (1953): 331-36.

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3 Ibid.