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978-0-521-10944-4 - From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage

David Bradley

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David Bradley sets out to discover how Elizabethan theatre companies prepared plays for performance: how playwrights understood the composition of the actor-companies they wrote for, how actors followed their directions for entrances and exits, and what happened when plays were adapted for changes in personnel or for other companies. For his study, Bradley has evaluated documents which survived from the records of Stage Revisers (or Plotters as they were known). Bradley's evidence includes seven theatre plots and seventeen manuscript plays, some from theatre productions which took place at the Shakespearean playhouse, the Rose Theatre. The Stage Revisers worked from plots or lists which indicated the action taking place on stage, the props needed, costume changes, and the actors who should appear.

Of the surviving material, only one work, *The Battle of Alcazar* (published in 1594 and revived at the Rose Theatre in 1599), by George Peele, is represented by both a plot list and a printed version of the play. This places the play in a unique position to be used by Bradley as a test case to formulate and analyse the rules which governed the composition of the text and its reconstruction on stage. Beyond an examination of one work, Bradley's conclusions can be extrapolated to expand our understanding of other companies and their repertoires in the Elizabethan theatre.

The book contains reproductions of the extant plots of the period, an appendix listing playwrights, plays, theatre companies, and the number of actors needed for performance, and an extensive bibliography.

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DAVID BRADLEY
Professor of English, Monash University



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