SHAKESPEARE AND THE AUTHORITY OF PERFORMANCE

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CHAPTER 1

Authority and performance

> What is in fact curious about all these gestures, these angular and abruptly abandoned attitudes, these syncopated modulations formed at the back of the throat, these musical phrases that break off short, these flights of elytra, these rustlings of branches, these sounds of hollow drums, these robot squeakings, these dances of animated manikins, is this: that through the labyrinth of their gestures, attitudes, and sudden cries, through the gyrations and turns which leave no portion of the stage space unutilized, the sense of a new physical language, based upon signs and no longer upon words, is liberated. These actors, with their geometric robes seem to be animated hieroglyphs.
>
> Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theater" (54)

Observing the Balinese dancers, Antonin Artaud evokes the challenge of intercultural reading. On the one hand, what impresses Artaud is the immediacy of the performers, the sense that their performance is not an act of re-presentation, but instead a kind of "pure theater, where everything, conception and realization alike, has value, has existence only in proportion to its degree of objectification *on the stage*" (53). At the same time, though, Artaud also sees their performance hollowing out the dancers, objectifying them; they become "animated manikins" making "robot squeakings," and undergo a thorough and "systematic depersonalization" (58). Although their gestures "make useless any translation into logical discursive language" (54), Artaud's account of the dancers nonetheless attempts such a translation: their movements demonstrate the value "of a certain number of perfectly learned and above all masterfully applied conventions," they have the "evocative power of a system," a system that verges, surprisingly

enough, on "mathematics" (55). Artaud, the theorist of "no more masterpieces," working to evacuate the logos-like authority of scripted texts, nonetheless *reads* the Balinese dancers' bodies and their performance as a *text.*[1]

Artaud's reading is arresting for other reasons, too, not least for its imperial dimension; we might suspect that the Balinese bodies become texts so readily because, for Artaud, the Balinese are already just things. I open with Artaud's wild ethnology as a way to tease out some contemporary assumptions about the relationship between texts and stage performances. The relationship between texts, textuality, and performance is deeply inflected by notions of authority – not so much professional authority, but the stabilizing, hegemonic functioning of the Author in modern cultural production. Here, I want to explore some of the ways in which notions of authority are inscribed in discussions of performance, often at just those moments when the apparent insurgency of performance seems most urgently opposed to that Trojan horse of the absent author, the text. How does the Author, whose texts are consumed, transgressed, rewritten by performance, figure in the ways we account for the work of the stage?

This is a book about theatrical performance at the end of the twentieth century. More precisely, it is about how a well-defined and established collection of voices – scholars and journalists, actors and directors – talk about a certain kind of performance: the staging of Shakespearean drama. To be sure, this is an artificial narrowing of the field of performance, sidestepping not only the global variety of nontheatrical performance, but also the range of stage performances that have nothing to do with the representation of dramatic texts, let alone the canonical plays of Shakespeare. Yet, in the West, ideas of performance – both in popular parlance and in more formal academic discourse – are troped by the institutions and practices of Western stage traditions: by a sense of the asymmetry between "acting" and behavior, by a characteristically permeable boundary between mimesis and semiosis, by the slippage between reading plays and staging them. Precisely because "Shakespeare" stands at the center of two articulate and contentious traditions – of reading and the criticism of texts; of performance and the staging of

scripts – Shakespearean theatre affords a powerful way to bring questions of authority and performance into view.

In this book, I listen to how a variety of institutionalized voices – university professors and newspaper critics, actors and directors with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, and similarly visible platforms – talk about the role of "Shakespeare" in the work of performance. Describing performance, performers, scholars, critics, teachers, and directors invoke surprisingly literary valuations of a stable text, and an intending author. The sense that performance transmits Shakespearean authority remains very much in play, most strongly perhaps when the ostensibly free and disruptive activity of the stage is at hand. For despite the "death of the author" (Barthes), or the author's functional absorption into the systems of cultural and ideological production (Foucault), "Shakespeare" – sometimes coded as the "text," its "genre," or the "theatre" itself – remains an apparently indispensable category for preparing, interpreting, and evaluating theatrical performance, at least as much for practitioners as for scholars and critics.

Harry Berger, Jr. remarks that recourse to the author, in accounts of performance as well as in readings of texts, enacts a "principle of closure, of semiotic inhibition, employed in the conflict of interpretations to privilege certain readings and control 'unruly meanings'" ("Bodies and Texts" 153). While the theatre is often described as licentious, promiscuous, innovative, imaginative, or merely haphazard in its representation of texts, to think of performance as conveying authorized meanings of any kind, especially meanings authenticated in and by the text, is, finally, to tame the unruly ways of the stage. In *Shakespeare and the authority of performance*, I consider how both scholars and performers take the stage to be authorized in this way, as a place for authentically Shakespearean meanings. I ask how authority arises in stage Shakespeare, how the interface between page and stage is imagined at three moments in the cultural production of theatrical Shakespeare: in the role of the modern director, in the training and practice of actors, and in the interpretive practice of performance scholarship. How do directors, actors, and scholars represent the authority of Shakespeare in the action of performance?

And, more important, what are the consequences for an understanding of performance – and drama – of seeing the theatre as a kind of paper stage, its work and the audience's response already scripted by the hand of "Shakespeare"? At the end of this chapter, I will have more to say about listening to directors, actors, and scholars, and will chart the specific contours of the argument to follow. First, though, I want to raise some more basic questions about the page, the stage, and the acting of authority.

Stage versus page, literature versus theatre, text versus performance: these simple dichotomies have less to do with an intrinsic opposition between writing and enactment than with habitual ways of describing dramatic performance, of understanding the relationship between the meanings that arise from reading or criticism and the shapes of meaning in the theatre. Not surprisingly, both "literary" and "performative" accounts share an essentializing rhetoric that appears to ground the relationship between text and performance. In a schematic sense, a literary perspective takes the authority of a performance to be a function of how fully the stage expresses meanings, gestures, and themes located ineffably in the written work, the source of the performance and the measure of its success. Though performance may discover nuance and meaning not immediately available through reading or criticism, these meanings are nonetheless seen as latent potentialities of the words on the page. From the performative perspective, stage production is, in a sense, the final cause for the writing of plays, which are fully realized only in the circumstances for which they were originally intended: theatrical performance. Stanley Wells nicely epitomizes this position in his General Introduction to the Oxford *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, remarking that "it is in performance that the plays lived and had their being. Performance is the end to which they were created" (xxxviii).[2] Much as the text-centered view universalizes reading or interpretive practice (the meanings of the play are *in* the text, regardless of the ways readers have been conditioned to read it), so the performance-oriented view universalizes notions of stage performance (the meanings of the play emerge *on* the stage, regardless of how performers and audiences have been conditioned to

produce and see them). In the literary view, performance has an accidental, merely "ministerial" dependence on qualities essential to the text; in the performative view, the text has a heuristic, merely "ministerial" value in helping to reframe the work's animating design, a stage performance.[3]

I have phrased this dichotomy crudely, in part to suggest how notions of authority – a seminal intention, an instigating structure of meaning – trace thinking about dramatic performance, even when "performance" as a critical conception has become widely disseminated in performance art, literary theory, and theatre and performance studies.[4] Although literary critics are sometimes dismissive of what they take to be the vagaries of the theatre relative to the intrinsic meanings of the text, theatre practitioners and performance scholars sometimes indulge in a related romance, opposing "performance" (transgressive, multiform, revisionary) to the (dominant, repressive, conventional, and canonical) domain of the "text" and its minions, scholars and critics of literature. Think of actors, for example, dismissing some baroque interpretation of *Hamlet* or *Trifles* or *Waiting for Godot* as unactable, unassimilable to the discourse of contemporary stage production, and so illegitimate to the realities of drama-in-practice. Or of theatre reviewers dismissing a "conceptual" production as merely trendy, somehow not faithful to the intentions of Shakespeare and/or his play. Or of stage directors talking about letting the stage release the intentions of the author. Or of the more theatrically oriented stage directions of the Oxford *Shakespeare* as opposed to the editorial procedures of earlier editions. Or of the critical and legal fireworks touched off by some productions of Samuel Beckett's plays – *Endgame* at the American Repertory Theatre, *Footfalls* at London's Royal National Theatre – when the plays' dialogue was observed, but stage directions (concerning the setting of *Endgame*, and the pattern of movement in *Footfalls*) were disregarded or revised (where does the "author's" text end and the "director's" text begin?). Or of the controversy surrounding whether Anna Deavere Smith, who uses the recorded words of her interview subjects as the text of her performance, should be considered for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama as "author" of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (she was not). The volatility of these controversies suggests

that texts and performances are not really the issue, but how they are construed as vessels of authority, of canonical values, of hegemonic consensus.

The desire to ground the meaning of theatrical production by attributing it either to the authorial work or to the authorized institutions of stage practice transforms the historically and culturally labile relationship between these modes of production into an inert, apparently ontological opposition. Part of this confusion stems from three interlaced ways of thinking about a text: (1) as a canonical vehicle of authorial intention; (2) as an intertext, the field of textuality; (3) as a material object, the text in hand. In "From Work to Text," his now-classic celebration of textuality, Roland Barthes provides a convenient discrimination between the first two senses, that informs recent discussions of textuality and performance. Barthes describes an "epistemological slide" (155) in the conception of written texts, from "the traditional notion of the *work*" to the more relativized sense of the *text* (156). The *work*, that "fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example)" (156–57), is the vehicle for authorized cultural reproduction, a "signified" approached through interpretation; the work discloses a "secret, ultimate, something to be sought out" (158). The *text*, on the other hand, is the field of production rather than interpretation; its "field is that of the signifier," governed by a metonymic rather than a hermeneutic logic, best approached through "the activity of associations, continuities, carryings-over," through "*playing*" (158). As an object of authorized interpretation, the *work* is "normally the object of a consumption" (161); the *text* is not an object but a field, "that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder" (164). If the *work* is authorized, interpreted, consumed, the *text* is encountered as a field of "play, activity, production, practice" (162).

It's not surprising that Barthes's opposition between the work (authoritarian, closed, fixed, single, consumed) and the text (liberating, open, variable, traced by intertexts, performed) proves so useful to contemporary thinking about performance, in part because Barthes's sense of the text is self-consciously performative.

Barthes's text is the field of the signifier, of textuality, of play, of production, of *jouissance*, that "pleasure without separation" (164). Where interpretation is earnest, concerned with fidelity and "filiation" (160), performance is insouciant, rewriting and disseminating the work in various ways. Contemporary "studies" – literary and theatre studies as well as performance and cultural studies – have gained analytical and theoretical leverage from this textualization of performance, the sense that performed events operate discursively, and that meanings arise from the interplay of signifying formalities.[5]

Despite the widespread application of "textuality" to reading the body and performance, these two conceptions of the text (text-as-*work*, text-as-*textuality*) often become compacted in one another, and compacted with a third sense of the text, the material object in history, the printed text, the *book*. Part of the problem in the way that text and performance are conceived has to do with reductive assumptions of the formal consistency of published texts, of texts as material objects that house the work of the author. For although it is now commonplace to see performance as traced by a variety of gestural, figural, and ideological textualities, the notion that there *is* a text to produce onstage, and that this text is reproduced in some relatively direct manner ("page to stage"), is pervasive, a powerful – even dominant – way of imagining the meanings of the stage. To think of performance either as transgressing the text or as a means of reproducing the text requires a certain confidence in the identity of the text itself. Over the past twenty years, however, editorial theory has widened Barthes's interruption of the identity of works and texts, by challenging the relationship between texts as material objects and the authorial works they represent, multiplying the ways of attributing authority to the text, and the consequences of thinking of any text as an authoritative version of a literary work. Much of this discussion in English studies surrounds the production of Shakespearean dramatic texts, how editorial practice from Heminge and Condell through the "new" bibliography of W. W. Greg and Fredson Bowers evokes the materialization of authority, a strategy for producing books that claim to embody the original, or best, or closest approximation to, the author's intended

inscription, a fleshing out of the spiritualized work. But as Leah Marcus asks,

> What if, rather than flowing effortlessly and magically from Shakespeare's mind onto the unalterable fixity of paper, the plays were from the beginning provisional, amenable to alterations by the playwright or others, coming to exist over time in a number of versions, all related, but none of them an original in the pristine sense promised by Heminge and Condell? Nothing we know about conditions of production in the Renaissance playhouse allows us to hope for single authoritative versions of the plays. (*Puzzling Shakespeare* 44)

Marcus suggests that the notion of a printed text as the embodiment of an organic authorial work is foreign to the circumstances of Renaissance publishing, and perhaps to all textual production, in Shakespeare's era.[6]

The conditions of production in the Renaissance playhouse militate against the final ascription of an ideal, coherent, work to a single animating *author*, and the texts of Shakespeare's plays are the result of dialogue and collaboration, of authorial and non-authorial revision and of the demands of theatre practice. Michael Bristol argues that these circumstances can be deployed as evidence for a variety of reconceptualizations of the field of the author, including a call for a more fully historicized application of Foucault's critique of authorship to the specific situation of dramatic production in Shakespeare's era (see "How Good" 39–43). Indeed, the contingencies of playwriting specific to Shakespeare's theatre hardly exhaust the promise of editorial theory for thinking about authority and performance. Contemporary editorial theory is concerned with the ways that authority is made manifest in texts, the ways that printed texts – and the notions of authorship, literature, and culture they convey – enact changing rather than fixed representations of literary works. For this reason, I want to turn to what D. C. Greetham has called the "antidiscipline" of textual scholarship ("Textual Forensics" 32) to explore some further implications of the relationship between works, texts, and books for thinking about performance. This may seem a surprising move to those who regard textual scholarship, editing, and bibliography as the epitome of the "literary," a

gray and recondite world well removed from the energies of live performance. Even a brief encounter, though, with recent work in this area reveals that editorial theory has provoked unusually searching and meticulous reflection on the authority of various manifestations of a work of art. Textual theory considers how the reproduction of texts encodes and transmits both the literary work and a framework of valuation, an ideology of authority. Moreover, it provides more dynamic models of the relation between works, texts, and performances than the static "text versus performance" or "text to performance" paradigms that have afflicted most discussions of drama and theatre, and of Shakespearean performance in particular. Finally, editorial theory challenges the understanding of the relationship between authority and representation that informs many of the ways both scholars and performers talk about theatrical performance.

In producing a new edition of, say, a Shakespeare play, editors want to establish a consistent relationship between the edited text and the work of the author. This is considerably more difficult than it may at first appear, in large part because the work is always absent, an ideal category known only through manifestations – manuscripts, various printed forms, performances – which can be assigned various kinds and degrees of authority, and stand in various relations to any authorial act of writing.[7] G. Thomas Tanselle, for example, describes verbal works such as poems and novels as employing "an intangible medium. Any tangible representation of such a work – as in letterforms on paper – cannot be the work itself, just as choreographic notation or traditional musical scores are not works of dance or music. The media involved – language, movement, and sound – being intangible, these works can be stored only through conversion to another form, which in effect becomes a set of instructions for reconstituting the works" ("Editing" 5). For Tanselle, a set of editorial practices and commitments follow from this sense of the work, but rather than tracing those, I would like to consider more closely the moment at which the "intangible" *work* is materialized, performed so to speak, as a *text*.[8]

A sense that the text stores the dramatic work, so that it can be

released – as works of dance and music are – in the theatre will be familiar to performers and to many critics of performance as well. Nonetheless, the fact that dramatic texts can be actualized as works in at least two different modes of production, as reading and as stage performance, suggests that musical scores and choreographical notation provide a somewhat misleading analogy to the relationship between dramatic texts and their stage performance. For as Tanselle implies, the "instructions" provided by these forms of storage are not sufficient in themselves to produce the work: without an understanding of the conventional workings of production, these "instructions" are illegible. We need an understanding of theatre practice to see the text of *Hamlet* as providing "instructions" that can lead to a staging – *any* staging, let alone one a particular audience might find adequate or authoritative – of the work. What kind of theatre practice can be used to "follow" *Hamlet*'s "instructions" in the most effective (authoritative) way? The habits of the late twentieth-century (British, Canadian, American) theatre? Some reconstruction or adaptation of early-modern performance practice? How can we speak of an actress in the role of Ophelia (or Lady Macbeth, or Juliet, or Cleopatra) delivering an authentically Shakespearean performance, when an actress cannot be following any conceivably authentic Shakespearean "instructions"? Two moments of ideological labor intervene between the text's "instructions" and the realized work: a conventionalized practice for using those "instructions," and the rhetorical assignment of "authority" to practices that follow the "instructions" in a particular way.

As Peter Shillingsburg argues in *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age*, to see the work as having "no substantial existence," something "only partially represented by any one given printed or written form" (46), is to undermine a traditional sense of the stability of the work itself. A work may be expressed in a variety of texts, but the multiplication of texts complicates the unity of the work and its relation to authorial intention (think of all the different texts of *Hamlet* you may own, have taught from or studied, as well as the different quarto versions published in Shakespeare's lifetime, and the different versions of the 1623 Folio, for that matter). Although the "redundancy of its various

printed and written forms gives a sense of unity which helps us to conceive of the range of forms as one work," the variance between these forms also suggests the "haziness" of the work's "outlines" (46) – this haze deepens if you also think of translations, the marked-up copy you used when you played Ophelia or Laertes in your college production, of your videotape collection of Kenneth Branagh, Mel Gibson, Derek Jacobi, Laurence Olivier, and the different scripts of *Hamlet* they follow. To consider the relationship between the immaterial work and its manifestations, Shillingsburg proposes a series of intermediate terms – *version, text, document* – which localize the action of authority in the transmission of works, and help to clarify the complex relationship between works, texts, and performances.

A "version is one specific form of the work – the one the author intended at some particular moment in time" (47). Since a version is only *intended*, it is also intangible: "A version has no substantial existence, but it is represented more or less well or completely by a single text as found in a manuscript, proof, book, or some other written form. In other words, a version is the ideal form of a work as it was intended at a single moment or period for the author" (47). The *text* might at first appear to be the moment when the intangible work becomes concrete, but Shillingsburg describes the text as a purely formal entity: the moment at which authorial "intention" is rendered in a specific form, in the case of literary works, the ordering of graphic symbols.

> A text is the actual order of words and punctuation as contained in any one physical form, such as manuscript, proof, or book. A text is the product of the author's, or the author-and-others', physical activity in the attempt to store in tangible form the version the author currently intends. And yet a text (the *order* of words and punctuation) has no substantial or material existence, since it is not restricted by time and space. That is, the same text can exist simultaneously in the memory, in more than one copy or in more than one form. The text is contained and stabilized by the physical form, but is not the physical form itself. Each text represents more or less well a version of the work. A manuscript may actually contain two or even more texts: that represented by the original reading including those portions now cancelled and that represented by the final revision or that represented by intermediate readings. (49–50)

The *text* in this sense is an intermediate category. Representing an authorial version, the text is both immaterial – two editions of *Hamlet* published decades apart containing an identical order of symbols represent the same texts – and the point of a version's materialization as a *document*, "the physical material, paper and ink, bearing the configuration of signs that represent a text" (51).

Shillingsburg may seem to be multiplying categories here, but these distinctions are needed to clarify the theoretical problem of how works are transmitted, and what the various, often incompatible, texts mean relative to the performance of the work. Texts can be "accurately reproduced" or not; they "may be transmitted by an authoritative or nonauthoritative agent," and whether "a transmitting agent is authoritative or nonauthoritative will depend on the definition being used for authority" (172). The theatre might seem to be a fully nonauthoritative transmitting agent: using texts Shakespeare never fashioned (modern editions), personnel Shakespeare never knew (the director, actresses), theatres Shakespeare never imagined (modern technology, architectural and scenic conventions), and actors and audiences informed by 400 years of history, how can *any* production claim to stage an authoritative *work* of Shakespeare? Let me quickly point out that this is not to say that readers and critics have any better access to authoritative production: reading and writing about Shakespeare's texts happens under a similar congeries of conditions remote from the circumstances under which Shakespeare and company generated the texts of these plays, making any claim to come to an authentic *reading* of a Shakespearean work equally problematic (especially if what we mean by *reading* is something that approximates what Shakespeare's audiences might have been doing when they sat down to read a *play*). In what sense is a modern Shakespeare scholar, sitting in the Folger Shakespeare Library, holding a text of what is now "the First Folio" in his or her hands, engaging in an authoritative experience of the original work? In what sense is this a more authentic transmission of the work than I might engage, sitting in my office using the apparatus of a modern edition, or consulting several texts and performances on a CD-ROM? I don't mean to imply here that questions of authority are irrelevant or "undecidable." I do mean to suggest that

"authority" is – or can be – part of the rhetorical contingency of transmission. It is the function of transmitting agents – some transmitting agents at least – to claim to reproduce authority: a "definition being used for authority" intervenes in most acts of transmission. We might wonder whether the theatre departs from editing at this point or exemplifies the crisis in which editors now find themselves. Is the theatre engaged in *transmitting* the work, or *producing* it?[9]

The question of how the nonmaterial – author or work – is materialized outlines the ideological problematic of modern stage performance: how the verbal text (a version of the work whose text is recorded in specific documentary form) is transformed into a nontextual event, while this event nonetheless claims to reproduce text, work, author. Is a text or a performance the vehicle of the work, or does it produce the work anew? Jerome McGann has directly addressed this question, in an influential critique of editing that revalues the relationship between work and text. McGann asks, "must we regard the channels of communication as part of the message of the texts we study? Or are the channels to be treated as purely vehicular forms whose ideal condition is to be transparent to the texts they deliver? How important for the reader of a novel or any other text, are the work's various materials, means, and modes of productions?" ("Case" 153–54). Resisting the notion that the text is transparent to the work, McGann moves the work from origin to consequence in the process of production: the work at any time consists in the multiplicity of its versions, the history of its transmission, reception, consumption. Like Shillingsburg, McGann sees the text as intangible, a specific order of symbols. Unlike Shillingsburg, McGann sees each text as restricted by time and space – "a 'text' is not a 'material thing' but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) where certain communicative interchanges are being practiced" (*Textual Condition* 21). Like performances, texts produce the work as an event in time, an event which has its immediate participants (say, the first readers of a given edition of Shakespeare's *Works*), but also becomes part of the ongoing negotiation of the work's changing identity in history (the implicit dialogue between the Pelican, Bevington,

Riverside, Oxford, New Cambridge, and Signet *Shakespeares* on my shelf). The work's authority is also temporal, a function of the rhetorical structure of each textual event, how the event – production and reception – generates its own version of the authoritative experience of the work.

> The "text" is the literary product conceived as a purely lexical event; the "poem" is the locus of a specific process of production (or reproduction) and consumption; and the "work" comprehends the global set of all the texts and poems which have emerged in the literary production and reproduction process. (*Textual Condition* 31–32)

The work is not necessarily immanent in the material text, waiting to be actualized in a performance-as-reading (the "poem"). McGann sees the work as the entire complex of a culture's past and present encounters both with the text and the poem. As D. C. Greetham puts it, for McGann "the concrete is not only the way in which we may know the work but *is* the work itself" ("[Textual] Criticism" 10).

McGann's sense of the work is reminiscent of the condition of Shakespearean performance, where any staging necessarily produces a new work, one in dialogue both with a panoply of texts, and with all other performances, including parodies, spoofs, and allusions in popular culture, as well as stagings in the "legitimate" theatre. This sense of the text is common in the theatre as well, as Philip McGuire notes:

> *The playtext of a Shakespearean play is not its enduring essence abstracted from the particularities that inhere in all performances. It is a verbal (rather than mathematical) construct that describes that ensemble of possibilities.* It establishes a range, a distribution of possible events during a performance, including acts of speaking, but it does not determine in minute and complete detail all of the events that happen during a specific performance. (*Speechless Dialect* 138–39)

But McGuire sees the text as enabling only new versions, not new works. McGuire's text describes – as a mathematical formula describes a circle – the limits of possible forms which the work

might take in performance, and so limits performance to reproducing a "work" which is somehow already inscribed in the text. McGann suggests a more profound reorientation away from the completeness of the text, and its ability to describe – and so prohibit – subsequent works. Much as the work is a record of a culture's representations, it also records a culture's contestation of authority, the various ways in which the "author" has been claimed and reclaimed, disowned, ignored, rejected, compromised, fetishized, scorned, worshiped. McGann implies that rather than seeing performance as a derivative re-versioning of the work, one doomed to be compromised by the untenable claims of the theatre to authoritative reproduction, performance is definitive of the process of cultural negotiation through which works have their continued existence, their ongoing and changing life. To see performance in this way, however, is to see the question of a production's fidelity – to "the play," to "Shakespeare" – as purely tautological. If the stage constitutes the work, it constitutes a sense of "authority" or "fidelity" (or, for that matter, "transgression," or "experiment") as a rhetorical effect, part of the *way* it produces the work rather than as an innate quality being transmitted with (or frustrating the transmission of) the work. "Shakespeare" can speak in the theatre only in the idiom of theatre, an idiom inscribed (or not) with its own contingent rhetoric of authenticity. The only thing we can be sure of is that as audiences change, as a culture and its theatres change, Shakespeare will speak in different accents, in different forms of visibility and embodiment that may (or may not) assert their own (in-)authentic claims to "Shakespeare."[10]

Theorists since Aristotle have been troubled to define the authentic medium of dramatic performance. Is a stage production the original and authentic form of the work, of which the text is merely a record? Is it a variant version of the work, which transmits the work by reproducing a text in a different mode of production? Is it a separate work, which nonetheless asserts a kind of likeness to other productions? This tension is perhaps felt in Shillingsburg's definition of a literary work: "the message or experience implied by authoritative versions of a literary writing. Usually the variant forms have the same name. Sometimes there