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052177117X - From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early
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Douglas A. Brooks

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This original study examines how Shakespeare and his contemporaries made the difficult transition from writing plays for the theatre to publishing them as literary works. Tracing the path from playhouse to printing house, Douglas Brooks analyzes how and why certain popular plays found their way into print while many others failed to do so and looks at the role played by the Renaissance book trade in shaping literary reputations. Incorporating many finely observed typographical illustrations, this book focuses on plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, and Beaumont and Fletcher as well as reviewing the complicated publication history of Thomas Heywood's work. Brooks stakes out new ground by uncovering the continually shifting relationship between theatre and publisher and defining the way in which the concept of authorship changed. His book represents an important contribution to the ongoing refiguration of two histories: English Renaissance drama and the early modern book.

Douglas A. Brooks is Assistant Professor of Early Modern Literature at Texas A&M University.

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In loving memory of Daniel Brooks, Mimi Brooks, and Adele
Gittler

As it is written: “How abundant is Your goodness that You
have concealed for Your reverent ones,” and it is written: “He
guards all of his bones, even one of them was not broken.”

Yisgadal v’yiskadash sh’mei rabbav – Amein.

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Wo es war, soll Ich werden

Sigmund Freud

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Preface

The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and we might say that the former is refuted by the latter.

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*

This book is a study of the profession of playwriting for the early modern London stage. My primary objectives are to reconsider the historical evidence about the authorial status of early modern plays and to show how the authorship of drama in the period was shaped by emergent modes of textual production.

D. F. McKenzie has observed that, “[e]very book tells a story quite apart from that recounted by its text . . . the product of social acts involving the complex interventions of human agency acting on material forms.”¹ This book is largely about books or, more precisely, about the manifold materializing processes that constituted the passage from playhouse to printing house, that transformed acting scripts into published dramatic texts. Accordingly, I have tried to listen carefully to the stories that a half a dozen or so early modern English books tell and to make some sense of these stories by examining the complex interventions of human agency that acted upon them. What I heard, and have tried to pass on here, is a remarkably varied, sometimes contradictory group of tales that stubbornly refuse to be woven together into one coherent narrative. Indeed, what these books record, apart from the plays they were designed to preserve and promote, are dramas of authorship.

In Chapter 1, I focus on three books, the 1570 edition of *Ferrex and Porrex*, the 1612 edition of *The White Devil*, and the 1623 Shakespeare Folio, in order to treat generally some of the legal, material, and cultural issues linked to the authorship and publication of drama in early modern London. By juxtaposing drama-specific elements of the London book trade in the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign with the publication activities of several playwrights in the early seventeenth century that nurtured a potential readership for the 1623 Folio, I show how the printing of plays facilitated the commodification of dramatic authorship and generated,

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consequently, an intensifying preoccupation with individualized authorial agency.

The subject of my second chapter is the pre-1623 Folio publication history of Shakespeare's plays, specifically the printed quarto editions of the two parts of *Henry IV*. Using these two books as a point of departure, I consider the role played by typography, royal authority, and the material status of books in chronicle and martyrological accounts of Sir John Oldcastle and editorial accounts of Shakespeare.

In Chapter 3 my primary concern is with the story told by Jonson's 1616 *Workes* folio. Noting how this collection binds together anomalously authorial play-texts with less authorial masque and entertainment texts, I argue that the hybrid structure of this book captures and preserves the complex struggle of authorship to reconcile the desire for individual autonomy with the need for external authoritative sanction. Because this struggle coheres with the two main performance venues (the theatre and the court) of Jonson's career as a dramatist, I contend that the printed page remains powerfully engaged with the stage.

The focus of the fourth chapter is the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio and what it reports to us about the status of singular and collaborative authorship in the period. By considering the textual apparatus of the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio in the context of evidence about multiple authorship in the period, I suggest that collaboration was incompatible with emergent notions of authorship as an individualized activity, and I argue that the 1647 folio documents its own failure to translate the collaborative writing conditions of the theatre into the single-author format of the printed drama collection.

In the final chapter, I examine a book that never came into being in order to consider what happens when the collaboration between playhouse and printing house falters. My subject is the complicated publication history of Thomas Heywood, whose career typified the profession of dramatist in early modern London. An extraordinarily prolific writer who contributed plays to several companies over a period of fifty years, Heywood's authorial canon remains dispersed and unauthoritative largely because he failed to play and be played by what Elizabeth Eisenstein aptly terms, "the game of books and authors."

The argument of this book frequently required me to reproduce various materializations of play-texts produced in early modern printing houses, and I have done what I can in the incunabula phase of the digital age to offer a conscientious simulacra of early modern orthographic and typographic "practices." Only long S "f" has been willfully modernized. Nevertheless, given that no two early modern books are exactly alike, all acts of reproduction – even photographic – are necessarily acts of

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interpretation and distortion. I can only hope that the facsimiles I have chosen to include will provide the reader with some sense of “being there.”

Finally, although I hope this “little booke,” to borrow from Spenser’s first published work, will “thy selfe present,” it is intended as the first installment of a three-part study of England’s encounters with print. Part II, *All the Kings’ Printers: The Imprint of Royal Authority in Early Modern England*, will examine the institution of the King’s/Queen’s Printer from 1504 to 1642 and the role played by print in the consolidation of the crown’s authority. Part III, *In Such a Questionable Shape: The Imprint of Paternity in Early Modern England*, will argue that the awkward, incomplete transition from manuscript to print temporarily exposed and disturbed the epistemic foundations of patriarchal culture. Obviously – and how could it be otherwise – all three books are already bound between the covers of now and then.

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Acknowledgements: “To the Iudicial Reader”

A certain principle of thrift dictates that only one name mark off the edges of the text you have begun to read. In fact, like so many early modern dramatic texts, this book depended on the introduction and interference of several agents and intentions, and it is the product of a number of collaborations. At the playhouse I had the good fortune of working as an apprentice in a company whose sharers included David Scott Kastan, Anne Lake Prescott, James Shapiro, Jean Howard, Julie Stone Peters, and Peter Platt, all of whom read early versions of the manuscript. In the specific case of David, to borrow from Ben Jonson, “the invention was derived by me, and presented thus,” but it was his “Mai(e)sties will.” For that, and much more, I am very thankful. Anne was an early and ardent supporter, and Jim’s inspired seminar in Tudor/Stuart drama set me on the path to the early modern. This book also benefited significantly from the input of my fellow apprentices, particularly Jim Cain, Bianca Calabresi, Thomas Festa, Moshe Gold, Juana Green, Jesse Lander, Zachary Lesser, Benedict Robinson, and Chloe Wheatley. In the specific case of Ben and Zach, both generously shared their research and pre-publication typescripts of articles with me. The book, as will be clear, has been greatly strengthened by their contributions.

Now as a junior sharer in a new playhouse, I am grateful to work in a company that includes Margaret Ezell, James Harner, and Paul Parrish, all of whom read a section of the manuscript. Finnie Coleman, Don Dickson, Anke Finger, Susanna Finnell, Maura Ives, and Craig Kallendorf, Jimmie Killingsworth, Howard Marchitello, and J. Lawrence Mitchell have also been very supportive. Three of my apprentices, John Gibbs, Christopher Morrow, and Pat Ocanas, have made many helpful suggestions.

Within the larger theatre of the profession, a number of players collaborated on this project. Cyndia Susan Clegg gave me copies of her publisher databases and pre-publication typescripts of articles, and helped me immensely during two visits to the Huntington Library. James

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Riddell generously shared his considerable knowledge of Jonson's texts with me, and made work (and lunch) at the Huntington fun. Glyn Parry read a section of the manuscript, and frequently reminds me that the post-modern condition threatens to put the past "under erasure." David L. Gants was extraordinarily generous about sharing his work with me pre-publication, as were Gordon McMullan and David Norton. Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Julie Stone Peters, I was able to read a typescript of her forthcoming book, *Theatre of the Book: Print and the Stage 1480–1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, forthcoming 2000), a week before I reluctantly sent off the manuscript. While I greatly regret that time did not permit me to draw upon Julie Peters' astonishingly comprehensive research – her elegant and wide-ranging analysis in Chapter 1, "Experimenting on the Page 1480–1630," Chapter 6, "Accurate Texts, Authoritative Editions," Chapter 10, "Dramatists, Poets, and Other Scribblers," and Chapter 11, "Who Owns the Play? Pirate, Plagiarist, Imitator, Thief?" would have greatly informed and refined my argument – I am very happy in knowing that it will be available soon in published form. It is a stunning scholarly achievement. I am also grateful to Mark Bland for doing his best to set me straight on several points, and Peter Blayney showed me a lot of things that only he knows. Heidi Brayman Hackel has taught me a great deal about early modern readers. Paul Werstine and Laurie E. Maguire have inspired, encouraged, and supported my work in many ways.

Since I could not, as John Marston puts it, be "my owne setter out," I've been extremely fortunate at the printing house to work with Josie Dixon, Stephen Orgel and Sara Adhikari. They have been – in the words of Thomas Heywood's dedication to Nicholas Okes – "so carefull, and industrious, so serious and laborious to doe the Author all the rights of the presse." Professor Orgel and a reader whom Virginia Woolf might have called Anon made this a much better book than the one they first read. Sara Adhikari did a superb job of copy-editing the manuscript, and I am grateful for her patience, keen eye, and tenacity.

In light of all these collaborations, I take some comfort in Michel Foucault's notorious assertion that, "[t]exts, books, and discourses really began to have authors . . . to the extent that discourses could be transgressive," because it offers a somewhat narcissistic and masochistic guarantee that I alone will be punished for any of this book's transgressions.

An early version of a section of Chapter 3 appeared as "'If he be at his book, disturb him not': The Two Jonson Folios of 1616" in the *Ben Jonson Journal* 4 (1997): 81–103. I am grateful to Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart for kindly granting me permission to reprint that

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I also want to express my gratitude to those institutions that generously provided funds during the three years this book was researched and written. A George A. Schweppe Fellowship from Columbia University enabled me to spend a year free of teaching. A Faculty Mini Grant from Texas A&M University helped to pay for facsimiles and reproduction fees. A University Research Opportunity Program Grant from Texas A&M paid the salaries of two brilliant undergraduate research assistants, Kimberly Jones and Mathew Reynolds, who worked with me on this book and another project. Grants from the Huntington Library, the A. W. Mellon Foundation, and the South Central Modern Language Association financed two research trips to the Huntington Library. A grant from the Folger Institute enabled me to participate in Professor Blayney’s seminar on the Stationers’ Company and to do research at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

An anonymous musical group known only as the Residents first sparked my interest in authorship many years ago, and their work has continued to inspire me. Satesh Reddy made authoring this book much less dramatic than it would have been without him, and my good friend, Benedict Weisser, was a great source of support and inspiration. My family – Jeff, Ava, Harvey, Naomi, Marshall, Amy, Michael, Claire, Bill, Karen, David, and Eric – have encouraged my work in many ways. For eight years my greatest collaborator in all things day and night has been Victoria Rosner. John Web writes of Beaumont and Fletcher’s collaboration that, “one Soule, informed . . . two wits.” In our case, I pray that it be her Soule and wish I had her wit . . .

Abke yanke buree he
Abke rang safed he