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0521787351 - Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre - Robert Weimann - Edited by Helen Higbee and William West

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This study redefines relations between writing and playing in Shakespeare's theatre as marked by difference as well as integration in both the provenance and the production process of early modern stages. In his close readings in *Richard III*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens* and other plays, the author traces contrariety but also liminality between the imaginary world-in-the-play and the visible, audible playing-in-the-world of the playhouse. Engaging both worlds, Shakespeare's stage projects verbal and performance practices each to "double business bound"; together they inform his theatre's most potent impulse then and, the author suggests, now, in our own theatre.

Robert Weimann is Professor of Drama at the University of California, Irvine, and member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Arts. In the field of Shakespeare and early modern studies, his most recent book-length study is *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (1996).

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*Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 39*

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# Author's Pen and Actor's Voice

## *Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*

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Robert Weimann

*edited by*

Helen Higbee and William West



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For **Barrie Stavis**,  
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## Preface

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If I may use old-fashioned tropological language that must seem recklessly at odds with the idea of authorship as set forth on these pages, then this book is an offspring that willfully and irresistibly upset a long established order of succession. According to this order, the present study was devised as a second, contextualizing chapter to a work in progress provisionally entitled, "Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Authority and Representation in the Elizabethan Theatre." Sharing the fate of what originally was the Introduction thereto – now available under the title *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (1996) – the present offshoot has grown up with an unforeseen dynamic all of its own. Caught up in the current upheaval in Shakespeare criticism, with its exhilarating rapprochement among textual scholarship, theatre history, and performance studies, this book owes its exposition and arrangement to an attempt to conjoin variegated perspectives on its subject. The deliberate criss-crossing between title and subtitle underlines the idea that, in Shakespeare's theatre, "author's pen" is in "actor's voice" just as players' voices and bodies, with all their contrariety, resonate in the writings of the pen. Hence, the result is no longer what, as in the case of the first volume, may be called a companion study but rather a self-contained sequel that henceforth will dictate some of the terms of the third and final volume in the project at large.

Genealogies tend to be perceived as tedious these days, but here I need to recapitulate at least part of the story of this project in order to do justice to the contributions of my editors. Helen Higbee's share in the present volume is the largest, my debt to her the greatest. Together with me, she went through draft after draft, eliminating verbiage and repetitions, helping to improve the flow of the argument, insisting on clarifications, pointing out contradictions and, all along, doing most of the checking and retyping. And although she joined the project only after I had written and revised a first, much briefer version, I am especially indebted to her for composing the index and helping to see the book through the press.

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Following in the footsteps of my former student, my friend and collaborator David Hillman, William West continued to edit most of the chapters in what is now going to be the final, as yet unfinished volume in this series. Before Helen took over, it was he who first encouraged me to single out and helped revise, in its first draft, the present *offspring* from what then was the block of the larger project. In view of my long-standing cooperation with Will, I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude both to him and Helen. Their enthusiasm and intelligence, their patience and resourcefulness have been invaluable.

Next to my two editors, I wish to thank all those who, both practically and through their criticism, contributed to the completion of the present book. Over almost a decade's work on these volumes, I enjoyed and benefited from the research assistance of three of my students in the Drama Department at the University of California, Irvine. Michael Fox, Erin Johnson, and Bryan Doerries each in his own way gave dedicated support, working in libraries, on the computer, and asking good questions. In the concluding phase of the work I was fortunate (and grateful to Ingeborg Boltz) to have access to the Shakespeare-Bibliothek at Munich University just as, at earlier stages, I felt privileged to avail myself of the unique resources of the Huntington Library and again became indebted to the hospitality of the Stratford Shakespeare Institute Library and its friendly staff. Finally, when all seemed (but was not nearly) said and done, I found wonderfully adroit help from Silke Meyer (Bonn University) who, thanks to a grant by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, put finishing touches on the entire typescript, after she had already contributed to the as yet unpublished part of the project. Great thanks to Silke and my assistants at UCI.

At the same time, it was a pleasure and a source of inspiration for this project to teach graduate courses in my department, with welcome attendance by PhD students from the Theater and Literature departments of UC San Diego, among them, first and foremost, Helen Higbee and D. J. Hopkins, who provided a fantastic first design for this book's cover. What pleasure and profit accrued from my work at UCI would have been unthinkable outside the friendly and thoroughly congenial atmosphere that, together with the material support for research assistance, I owe to colleagues and, especially, two chairs of my Department, Stephen Barker and Cameron Harvey, along with the encouragement coming from the Dean of the School of the Arts, Jill Beck, and the head of our PhD program, David McDonald.

The present study in particular has been enriched by friends and colleagues who, at various stages of its composition, took time off from their own work to read draft versions of individual chapters or even the entire

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typescript. Altogether I cannot here do justice to what their criticism, encouragement, and stimulating readings have meant for me on top of the actual improvements they provided for this book (whose failings of course remain exclusively my own responsibility). Let me just record the extremely thoughtful responses that William Dodd, Bryan Reynolds, and James Siemon gave to an early version. At a later stage Laurie Elizabeth Maguire graciously read and commented on two chapters that touched on issues of textual scholarship. I owe a very special debt indeed to William Worthen who richly annotated the Introduction and had sagacious comments on several other chapters. I am equally indebted to Michael Bristol who shrewdly helped to sharpen the book's 'topical hook' and stimulated its historical perspective. Stephen Greenblatt and David Scott Kastan generously agreed to read the entire final draft version; the help and the support they gave was much greater than they perhaps would believe. Last not least, it was Stephen Orgel who, as series editor, gave thoroughly helpful criticism and unfailing encouragement to a project that he had generously accepted when far from being finished. Finally, the greatest debt of all is, as ever, nearer home: it is impossible here to express my gratitude to Maja for her sustained help, patience, and forbearance.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank both the editors and publishers of *New Literary History*, *Representations*, and *Shakespeare Quarterly* for permission to use and reproduce material previously published on their pages. This material is taken from essays – with one exception listed in Works Cited – which are either heavily revised or reproduced after a largely selective fashion in the present study. The exception is the more recent essay, "Playing with a Difference: Revisiting 'Pen' and 'Voice' in Shakespeare's Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999). Additionally, a somewhat earlier version of Chapter 1 appeared in the collection, *Die Wunde der Geschichte: Aufsätze zur Literatur und Ästhetik* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1999), whose editors I thank for permission to use that material.