

1 Introduction

When the theatres reopened following the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, one of the most pressing issues that they faced related to repertory. The absence of professional playing since 1642 meant that there were few, if any, active playwrights working in London who could be called upon to produce new scripts on demand, and in the scramble to establish viable enterprises there was considerable tussling over what were known as the ‘Old Stock Plays’ (Downes 1987, p. 24) – the pre-war texts that could be dusted down and presented afresh to audiences (Sorelius 1965; Hume 1981).¹ The very earliest months of the decade saw a number of different groups attempt to establish a foothold in the new industry. John Rhodes (*fl.* 1624–65), for example, assembled a company of young, inexperienced actors, including Thomas Betterton (1635–1710), who moved into the Cockpit on Drury Lane, the site of several licensed performances of operatic entertainments, complete with painted perspective scenes, in the 1650s (Watkins 2019); the veteran King’s Men actor Michael Mohun (1616?–84) organized a troupe of older actors at the Red Bull theatre; while the theatre proprietor and manager William Beeston (1606?–82) anticipated the King’s return in 1659 (and thus the return of the theatre) by arranging repairs to Salisbury Court, the theatre he had run back in the 1630s (Hotson 1928, pp. 82–132; Freehafer 1965). Eventually, though, two men emerged as the sole beneficiaries of the new regime, handpicking actors and, for the first time, actresses from these more amorphous groupings to create their own companies. Thomas Killigrew (1612–83) and William Davenant (1606–68) were granted patents by King Charles II that effectively bestowed upon them a theatrical duopoly that subsisted (barring a period in the 1680s when they merged into the United Company) until the nineteenth century. Between them, Killigrew’s King’s Company and Davenant’s Duke’s Company – named for its patron, James, Duke of York – dominated the theatre industry in the 1660s, driving out all other

¹ Of the professional playwrights who had written dramas before 1660, only James Shirley, Thomas Killigrew, and William Davenant were still alive; none of them wrote any new original plays after the Restoration.

competition (Hume 2004; Payne 2024; Watkins forthcoming). Having set the scene for their own success, they now needed to secure rights to the old stock plays and begin performing for audiences.

This was more complicated than it initially appeared. As the manager of the King's Company, which consisted mainly of older actors who were original King's Men from before the war – actors like Mohun, Theophilus Bird (1608–63), Walter Clun (d. 1664), and Charles Hart (1625–83) – Killigrew felt entitled to claim the plays produced by the pre-war company as his property. This included of course all of Shakespeare's plays as well as the majority of plays from the likes of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, John Webster, and Philip Massinger. It even included many of Davenant's own plays written during the Caroline period, which represented a real problem for the Duke's Company manager – he could not even rely on his own back catalogue of scripts to furnish his new enterprise. We do not know exactly what the rationale was for dividing up the old stock plays, but, after much pleading with the Lord Chamberlain, a compromise was reached and Davenant was eventually granted access to his own works as well as nine Shakespeare titles: *Hamlet*, *Henry VIII*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night* (Hume 1981, pp. 158–159). He also picked up other important texts, like Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. With both companies now in possession of a set of producible scripts, they began performing, training up their actors, building an audience, and commissioning new writers to compose new works that could supplement the old as quickly as possible.

As Amanda Eubanks Winkler and Richard Schoch (2022, p. 73) acknowledge in their recent book on Davenant, 'it remains beyond doubt that the Duke's Company was seriously disadvantaged from the outset in terms of the range and variety of dramatic works that it could produce'. Certainly, Killigrew's company retained the rights to the vast majority of pre-war texts, and Davenant's plays amounted to a paltry number in comparison. To compensate, Davenant relied on theatrical innovation. In June 1661, he moved into his new theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields (hereafter LIF). This had been converted from a tennis court and was now equipped with a system of wing-and-shutter scenes; this meant that he could stage

plays with painted perspective scenery that changed between scenes to represent a number of different locations. Davenant had been a pioneer of this technology, which he had imported from the continent during the 1650s in productions of his first through-composed opera, *The Siege of Rhodes*, staged initially at his private residence, Rutland House, in 1656 before transferring to the Cockpit in 1658 (Southern 1952; Lewcock 2008; Watkins 2019). Indeed, Davenant chose to open his new theatre in 1661 with *Rhodes*, this time presenting it as a spoken play rather than an opera (Davenant 1973). This kind of technology represented for English audiences a sensational and revolutionary transformation from pre-war practice. While it was perfectly feasible to produce pre-1642 repertory with scenes, Davenant desperately wanted to present plays that were specifically designed to showcase this new asset to best advantage (Hume 2004, pp. 54–55). Killigrew, on the other hand, had in 1660 moved his actors into a theatre on Vere Street. This was also converted from an earlier tennis court – Gibbon’s – but boasted no scenic technology of any kind. Instead, it resembled much more closely the kinds of Jacobean indoor theatres like the Blackfriars, with their naked stages, with which his older company had been familiar before the wars (Leacroft 1973; Langhans 1982; Keenan 2017). While the King’s Company could not entice audiences with the latest in theatrical technology, then, they nevertheless produced a wide range of shows to engage a performance-hungry audience – these were experienced actors working with known scripts on more-or-less familiar terrain. If he wanted seriously to compete with the King’s Company, Davenant had to level the field of play by devising productions that could show off what his theatre and its company were really capable of.

These were the institutional and material circumstances that precipitated the Shakespeare adaptations for which Davenant became notorious.² From this, we can see that ‘Shakespeare held the predominant place’ (Eubanks Winkler and Schoch 2022, p. 73) in the LIF repertory. He had to, by necessity: Davenant did not have the luxury of selecting from a wide range of old stock scripts as Killigrew did. He could not afford to be

² See Summers, ed., 1922; Spencer 1927; Harbage 1935; Edmond 1987; Dobson 1992; Murray 2001; Eubanks Winkler and Schoch 2022.

picky. Over the course of five years, between 1662 and 1667, Davenant produced four outright adaptations: *The Law Against Lovers* (1662), which grafted the Beatrice and Benedick plot from *Much Ado About Nothing* onto the Isabella and Angelo narrative from *Measure for Measure*; *The Rivals* (1664), a reworking of Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; *Macbeth*, which provided elaborate musical episodes for the witches and enhanced the character of Lady Macduff; and, in collaboration with John Dryden, *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* (1667), which gave Miranda and Caliban sisters (Dorinda and Sycorax respectively), as well as a love interest for Dorinda, Hippolito. During the same period, he staged performances of the other Shakespeare plays in his possession in either unaltered or in heavily cut forms. *Henry VIII*, as we shall see, was performed as originally written but with lavish scenes that proved extremely popular; *Twelfth Night* was likewise revived as written but received only isolated performances in the early years of the company; *Romeo and Juliet* may have been produced in both its original form and an adaptation by John Crowne (Spencer 1965–66). Most famously, Davenant produced a heavily cut version of *Hamlet* for performance in 1661, which would become one of Thomas Betterton's most celebrated roles. Back in 1927, Hazelton Spencer made the case that the 1676 edition of that play represented Davenant's performance text. The printed edition contains a 'Note to the Reader', which states that, '*THis Play being too long to be conveniently Acted, such places as might be least prejudicial to the Plot or Sense, are left out upon the Stage: but that we may no way wrong the incomparable Author, are here inserted according to the Original Copy with this Mark*' (Shakespeare 1676, sig. [A2 r]). While *Hamlet* is not an adaptation as such, it was nevertheless 'ruthlessly cut' (Spencer 1927, p. 176) by Davenant in such a way as to alter the overall balance between the actors' parts in ways that reveal much about his approach to the production. However, because *Hamlet* displays very limited evidence of responding directly to the wider repertory, I have refrained from extensive comment on it in what follows.

Restoration Shakespeare scholarship to date has tended to discuss Davenant's adaptations as discreet entities, isolating them from the larger group of plays – both old stock and new – that Davenant deliberately curated in order to compete commercially with his rival, Killigrew. Indeed,

while there has been a consistent and growing interest in Restoration Shakespeare in recent decades, it is conspicuous that critics all too frequently neglect to attend to the repertory contexts in which it was produced. For an earlier generation of scholars, for example, it was enough simply to compare how the adaptations by the likes of Davenant, Dryden, and Nahum Tate (*King Lear* [1681]) matched up to their source texts. Invariably, these critics found the Restoration versions wanting, deploring the ways in which their adaptors sacrificed the sublime poetry and psychological complexity supposedly inherent in Shakespeare in favour of insipid (modernized) language and meaningless spectacle. The nineteenth-century editor of the Variorum *Tempest*, Horace Howard Furness (1892, p. viii), for example, wrote of Davenant and Dryden's version that 'No imagination, derived from a mere description, can adequately depict its monstrosity, – to be fully hated it must be fully seen'. Spencer, writing in *Shakespeare Improved* (1927, p. 203), concurred: 'Gone is the noble serenity that makes us eager to regard *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's farewell message to the world; in its place we have a licentious farce. Everything that the authors lay their hands on is defiled.'

More recent commentators (on the whole) have moved away from such hostile invective and have instead tried to take the texts on their own literary and dramaturgical terms. This kind of criticism covers three broad and often overlapping areas: textual and verbal differences between an adaptation and its source text; the politics of authorship and politico-ideological critique; and the conditions of performance, especially in relation to music and spectacle. In *Restoration Shakespeare: Viewing the Voice* (2001), for example, Barbara A. Murray charts the divergences between the source play and its adapted version on textual grounds, arguing that the adaptations resulted from a desire on the part of Restoration playwrights to 'make his [Shakespeare's] language operate more like speaking pictures' (p. 32). This approach has the virtue of seeing the new works as worthy of study in their own right, but Murray tends to enumerate the verbal alterations made by the adaptors while ignoring material factors such as casting and costume that might also inform how a play was adjusted in the period. Others have been more successful in illuminating the adaptations on literary-critical grounds, opening up their engagement with contemporary (i.e. Carolean)

politics. Michael Dobson (1992), Nancy Klein Maguire (1992), Susan J. Owen (2002), and Emma Depledge (2018), for example, all read the adaptations as coded responses to the peculiar political circumstances of the Restoration and its aftermath in the Exclusion Crisis and Popish Plot (c.1678–82). In these accounts, Shakespeare's rise to cultural prominence, to use Depledge's phrase, is a direct result of the ways in which Restoration playwrights reworked the plays to comment on potentially incendiary topics. Venting their ideas through the lens of Shakespeare rather than through an original work, Restoration theatre makers and adaptors could fall back on what Annabel Patterson (1984, p. 18) terms 'functional ambiguity' should the authorities take offence at what was being staged. These studies have revealed precisely how Restoration playwrights mobilized Shakespeare's texts to broach controversial ideas while telling us something important about changing notions of authorship – and bardolatry – in the later seventeenth century.

Finally, in the last decade or so another area of study has begun to preoccupy scholars interested in Restoration Shakespeare. This relates to the practical questions of how these texts might have been performed in the period and, as an extension, how we might go about restaging them meaningfully for audiences today. Prompted by exponents of Practice-as-Research (PAR) in Shakespeare and early modern theatre studies, scholars such as Tim Keenan (2009), Tiffany Stern,³ Sara Reimers (2023), and others have used performance methodologies to explore what kinds of challenges and opportunities these scripts offer to actors in performance. Most significantly, between 2017 and 2019, Amanda Eubanks Winkler and Richard Schoch, along with their Research Fellow, Claude Fretz, brought together actors, early music specialists, and theatre scholars to investigate how plays like Davenant's *Macbeth* (1664) and Thomas Shadwell's expanded operatic version of the Davenant-Dryden *Tempest* (1674) worked on stage, given their demanding technological requirements (including flying machines and

³ In 2015, Stern worked with the Texas-based theatre company, the Hidden Room, on an historically informed production of Tate's *King Lear* (1681). The production is available to view at <<https://vimeo.com/452882823>> [accessed 12 November 2024].

trapdoors), their extensive use of music and dance, and their new characters and plot scenarios. Under the aegis of their project, ‘Performing Restoration Shakespeare’, which was funded by the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council, they collaborated with Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London and the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC, to explore how these adaptations might be realized on stage. The project culminated in a professional production of Davenant’s *Macbeth*, directed by Robert Richmond with music direction by Robert Eisenstein at the Folger Theatre in September 2018 (Payne 2017; Reimers and Schoch 2019). I had the extreme good fortune to be invited along to the Folger, along with six other scholars, to advise on rehearsals and to discuss Davenant’s text with the actors and musicians. (The other scholar-consultants were Sarah Ledwidge, Lisa A. Freeman, Deborah C. Payne, Sara Reimers, and Andrew R. Walkling.) I also contributed a chapter on Davenant’s *Macbeth* to a collection of essays deriving from our time on the project (see Eubanks Winkler, Fretz, and Schoch 2023).

The opportunity to test out our ideas about Davenant’s adaptations in a PAR context transformed our thinking about Restoration Shakespeare texts in performance, enabling us to take them seriously as works of theatre, demonstrating beyond doubt that they are compelling dramatic vehicles, even if – or especially when – they depart radically from their Shakespearean parent texts. In their book-length study, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Sir William Davenant and the Duke’s Company* (2022), which resulted from their work on the project, Eubanks Winkler and Schoch provide us with a detailed historical and practical account of the kinds of performance issues that attend Restoration Shakespeare, ranging from how actors were trained and rehearsed to their use of gesture, vocal technique (e.g. singing), and stage movement. Devoting special attention to Davenant’s most musically complex adaptations, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, Eubanks Winkler and Schoch (2022, p. 3) mount a compelling argument for approaching Restoration Shakespeare ‘as a complex theatrical – indeed, intermedial – experience and not merely as a dramatic text, let alone a dramatic text presumed inferior to its precursor’.

This Element seeks to contribute to this growing body of scholarship on Davenant’s adaptations in particular and Restoration Shakespeare more

generally by asking how and why Davenant altered his scripts in the ways that he did. It argues that in order to answer those questions fully we need to place Shakespeare's works – both in unaltered *and* altered forms – within the wider repertory of which they made up a substantial part. This contention is predicated on the belief that the Restoration theatre was, in the end, an actor's theatre rather than a writer's one, and that plays only reached the stage if management was confident their performers could make a success of them. In his survey of Restoration drama, Robert D. Hume (1976, p. 22) emphasized the necessity of placing plays within their theatrical contexts in order to fully gauge their significance:

Reading a play here and a play there, and very probably not even knowing which house put it on, we get a very inadequate sense of the circumstances in which late seventeenth-century drama flourished. Experienced writers almost invariably wrote specifically for one company or the other; consequently, they knew precisely what actors would be available and for what sort of roles. When one house did well, the other might try to steal its thunder [. . .] by imitation, or produce a novelty as a counter-attraction, or mock the success.

Davenant, like every playwright in the period, wrote with particular actors in mind, and his knowledge of their talents and skills would have informed how he approached his Shakespearean scripts. By comparing which actors played which parts in the adaptations with their other roles in the same season (when we have evidence for these), we can build a picture of how Davenant envisaged his adaptations working in performance. Indeed, as the company manager, Davenant oversaw casting decisions for every production; as such, he could use his adaptations to push an actor in a particular direction or type of role. He might offer an opportunity for a minor actor to step into a leading part or punish a leading one for some slight (real or perceived) by demoting them to a bit-part. Thus, examining Davenant's adaptations within the context of LIF's broader repertory has the potential

to reveal how far inter-personal relationships developed and changed across the 1660s between actors and management.

The approach to Restoration Shakespeare adopted in this Element has been influenced by recent studies of the early modern theatre repertory by, among others, Roslyn L. Knutson (1991), Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean (1998), and Tom Rutter (2017). Early modern repertory studies offer Restoration theatre historians a useful line of attack because they focus on contextualizing surviving play-texts within a ‘company-oriented’ (Rutter 2017, p. 4) paradigm. The emphasis here is on how a particular play came to signify within the repertorial logics of a particular company (or across companies), and what this might tell us about the ways a company constituted its sense of identity. In their study of the Queen’s Men repertory, for example, McMillin and MacLean (1998, p. xii) argue that through their decision making about personnel, acting style, staging methods, verification, and repertory, playing companies developed ‘special characteristics’ that came to be peculiarly associated with them. This helped to foster a sense of shared corporate identity among company members even as it enabled the company to distinguish itself clearly from its competitors in an increasingly crowded marketplace. As McMillin and MacLean (1998, p. xii) summarize: ‘organizations within a profession always develop identities of their own, widely recognized features which stand out from the procedures they share with other organizations’. This corporate identity in turn went on to determine the kinds of plays that a company prioritized for inclusion in their repertory – they needed to maintain a recognizable and distinctive style (or brand) in order to encourage potential patrons to spend their disposable incomes with them rather than their competitors – and this began to affect the kinds of work playwrights produced. Eventually, these ‘special characteristics’ developed into a ‘house style’. Tom Rutter (2017) builds on this notion of a company house style in his study of the ‘evolving and reciprocal relationship’ between the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and their rivals, the Admiral’s Men. His investigation into the development of their respective repertories shows that playwrights working for the opposing companies nevertheless ‘drew on each other’s work’ (p. 6) even as they adjusted their plays to accommodate the ‘distinctive qualities’ (p. 12) of their particular playhouse. In his analysis, Rutter shifts ‘the focus from the

dramatist to the playing company’ to better reflect ‘the priorities of early modern theatrical culture, which did not privilege playwrights over players as modern criticism often has’; instead, his company-oriented approach ‘opens up space for the discussion of practices that originated as much, or more, in the company as in the playwright, such as acting style, staging and repertory management’ (p. 12).

Shakespeare and the Restoration Repertory thus aims to contribute to our understanding of Davenant’s adaptations by showing how they responded to other plays – both new and ‘Old Stock’ – that were already present in the Duke’s Company’s repertory as well as in that of their rival, the King’s Company. Doing so will enable us better to understand how the intense commercial rivalry between Davenant and Killigrew in the 1660s determined how the repertory came to look in these years, and especially how the pressures of economic competition affected the ways Davenant adjusted Shakespeare’s texts. As well as telling us something about LIF’s internal company dynamics, then, a repertory approach to Restoration Shakespeare also sheds light on a major scholarly contention of the period: the nature of the competition between the two patent theatres. Hume (2004, p. 54) insists that ‘[t]he importance of competition to the writing and staging of new plays can hardly be overemphasized. When two companies competed vigorously, quite a lot of new plays got staged each year.’ This was certainly the case, as Riki Miyoshi’s survey (2012) of the plays produced by both companies during the years 1663–8 demonstrates. However, while there has been a considerable and concerted effort to take a repertory approach to the Restoration theatre in recent years, this has thus far failed to account adequately for how individual plays responded to commercial imperatives on the micro-level of script development. While we know that Davenant and Killigrew were in fierce competition in, say, 1663–4, no one has yet explored how that competition impacted the repertory of that particular season directly. Instead, Restoration repertory studies, as traditionally practiced, either survey the establishment and growth of dramatic genres in general (using heuristics dissociated from commercial-industrial factors) or they concentrate on the day-to-day management, economics, and rivalrous squabbles between managements (leaving the plays themselves