

Playing companies and repertories

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On a trip to England in autumn 1599, Thomas Platter recorded attending two performances and capturing the hallmarks of play-going at the end of the sixteenth century: the wherry across the Thames, the thatch of an outdoor playhouse, the early afternoon curtain time, cross-dressing, a substantial cast and a jig. After lunch, Platter and his fellows took in ‘the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar’, possibly by William Shakespeare or one of his contemporaries (1937: 166–7). So taken by the experience, ‘on another occasion’ in the ‘suburb of Bishopsgate, if I remember’ they again took in a meal and play: ‘thus daily at two in the afternoon, London has two, sometimes three plays running in different places, competing with each other, and those which play best obtain most spectators ... How much time then they may merrily spend daily at the play everyone knows who has ever seen them play or act’. That he offers two examples of plays seen is purposeful rather than haphazard recollection, providing a summation of what it was usually like to see theatre in this particular country. Theatre operates as a memory machine here, to use Marvin Carlson’s phrase (2003), organizing Platter’s personal history of watching wherein play-going experiences make meaning by comparison to one another.

In early modern England at court, the Inns of Court and for the public, theatre-going experiences like that of Platter were structured by means of the repertory system, which influenced the composition of plays, spurred innovation in stage technology and mitigated financial risk. Performing a different play up to six afternoons a week, early modern players might have had upwards of twenty different parts in hand at a given moment. Playing companies typically rented playhouses in one-week to six-month periods, during which time one might attend a performance by the Lord Strange’s troupe to see spectacular pyrotechnics or a Lord Admiral’s play for narratives of the ancient world requiring props of epic scale (Manley 2001: 115–29; Tavares 2016: 393–6). By contrast, travelling around the country the Queen’s players offered historical fictions trimmed with tumbling, specialized sound effects and metonymic blocking to effect compelling battle scenes (Calore 2003: 398). The repertory system thus enabled troupes to vary their plays, distributing the labour of performance among their members while capitalizing on

playgoers' personal genealogies of watching. As an invitation to those interested in pursuing the study of repertories, this chapter offers a brief overview of the system's development from court and civic performance practices, a survey of the working conditions employed by playing companies, and five theses from which to foray into the field of repertory study. Interspersed with choral interludes on terms, the extant archive, and that archive's limitations, it concludes with recommendations of databases from which new work might spring and essential reading from which to intervene, thus gesturing towards avenues yet to be explored.

Emphasized in genealogies of repertory's origins in England has been the assumption that this system arose out of playing companies' need to offer a changing diet of plays to a relatively stable population. A recent example typifies the usual narrative: 'The large numbers of Londoners and visitors to the city who flocked to this novel entertainment of professionally staged plays developed an appetite which demanded constant change', presuming one 'could not run a play for long without losing your audiences' (Gurr and Ichikawa 2000: 15). Under-appreciated has been the ways in which this repertory system may have also been shaped by the revels calendar and changes to the Revels Office purview. The essential function of the Revels Office was to devise and produce occasional entertainment for the court. From masques and plays to dances and tumbling feats, the court revel shaped the artistic agenda of religious holidays, such as the twelve days of Christmastide and at Shrovetide, as well as dynastic or diplomatic occasions. Significantly, 'by long-established precedent, revels held on state occasions were connected thematically to the substance of the negotiations then in hand' (Streitberger 2016: 23). Religious and state occasions for revels were typically multi-day to multi-week affairs, requiring the Revels Office to develop a diverse portfolio of artistic experiences. Scheduling of public playing using the repertory system echoes this initial curating of performance for political ends as relied upon in other long-standing civic performance traditions such as medieval religious pageant wagons and Lord Mayor's shows.

The expansion of the Revels Office commission in 1581 (granting the then Master Edmund Tilney both the right to acquire goods and services under the royal right of purveyance and to license playing companies and venues) brought the curated structure of revels performance to the public playhouses, contributing to a spike in the number of playing companies (Wickham et al. 2000: 70–1). In effect, with the new prerogative to use professional playing companies, paid through a system of 'rewards' rather than year-long salaried 'servants', the Master of the Revels Office's 'traditional function as deviser and producer of in-house entertainment' was moved 'out of court and into a quasi-commercial environment' (Streitberger 2016: 154). The different aristocratic titles by which playing companies came to be known in civic records as 'servants', 'players' and 'men' may thus have had legal implications for their relative status. More importantly, however, the Revels Office was now able to outsource the labour of devising, purchasing costumes and props, and the performance of plays to independent playing companies, ensuring the control of production costs by off-loading the risks of developing new work outside the court budget.

Preparing plays for a court season provided a homologous framework within which to perform a rotating repertory of plays for the public. This labour

redistribution produced new problems for the companies, however, specifically in sourcing materials for the production of theatre such as props, personnel, costumes and other materials necessary for storytelling. The Revels Office had come to comprise a large staff, including two to three dozen Yeomen of the Revels, including ‘karvers’ or property-makers, and benefitted from networked relationships between the Great Wardrobe and the Office of the Works. The primary role of a Yeoman was to design and oversee the fabrication of the costumes and headpieces essential to the Tudor masque and to recycle by way of tailoring and embroidery from the sovereign’s standing wardrobe, availed by exclusive contracts with London mercers and milliners (Streitberger 2016: 27–8). While the Office of the Works dealt with the needs for seating arrangements and stages, property-makers were subcontracted for a range of scenery and specialized props. With the move towards outsourcing the work of revels development to playing companies, there was no centralized system for procuring the basic materials of play production beyond playtexts and players hitherto supplied by the highly skilled Revels Office yeomanry.

Understanding the development of the repertory system for public performance as responding not only to playgoers’ presumed desire for variety but also the changing fiscal purview of the Revels Office recasts the unique role of these companies as a privatized solution to civic budget constraints. For example, rather than the Yeomen, playhouse landlord Philip Henslowe indicates the coachman Symes, Steven the ‘tyerman’, and ‘hime wch made ther propertyes’ managed the fundamental gear of their respective troupes (Henslowe 2002: 130, 50, 203; Korda 2011: 32–7, 93–143). While unknown in all other aspects of their lives except for in the passing reference in Henslowe’s diary as contributing artisans to the work of theatre, the tailors Radford and Dover became the go-to craftsmen for specialty needlework, such as the ‘payer of hosse for [Nick] to tvmbell in be fore the quen’ when Goody Watson’s voluminous store of cast-off clothes came up short (Henslowe 2002: 169, 180–1, 186, 160–1). Theatre wives and widows were a cornerstone of the English entertainment industry, as Natasha Korda has shown, owning three of the four major inn-yards that were sites for performance activity (2002: 26–7, 54–92; Kathman 2009: 144–78). Likewise, a Southwark silk weaver, John Reasonable, a ‘blacman’, may have similarly contributed to the costuming of plays at the Rose theatre (Habib 2015: 140). In 1599, Platter encountered a robust public theatre industry re-aligned as a distributed network of contributing artists within and without the walls of the playhouses and relying on its repertory system to bring those labours under one roof.

CHORUS: ON TERMS

To understand its influence on the composition of plays, on the innovation in stage technology and as a strategy for mitigating financial risk, it is useful to think of the repertory system as twofold. First, *repertory* refers to the day-to-day rotation of different plays performed by the same stable of actors, referred to as a ‘company in stocke generall’ or ‘stock company’ (Henslowe 2002: 210). Individual plays were rarely performed twice in the same week, and available records show no signs that organization, regularity or pre-determined scheduling were thematically derived.

Recent work by Holger Schott Syme suggests that companies may have alternated between comedies (ensemble-driven) and tragedies (lead player- or sharer-driven) in their scheduling in order to equitably distribute labour and stave off physical exhaustion (2019: 43). Mounting a new play could take from a few days up to three weeks, with rehearsals largely untaken in private study (Stern 2000: 46–73).

Repertoire, on the other hand, refers to the skills of individual actors, such as being able to play an instrument, fight or dance, and other forms of kinetic intelligence. Evelyn Tribble positions actors' skills within a framework of *cognitive ecology* wherein 'skilled practices are inseparable from expert viewing ... built through the reciprocal and recursive relationships among skill-building, display, competition, and evaluation' (2015: 20). For example, knowing that one always entered stage-left and exited stage-right would mean one less bit of blocking to memorize, off-loading into the playhouse architecture itself cognitive labour. This terminological distinction between 'repertory' and 'repertoire' is crucial in order to mark the aesthetic choices made by individuals (the players) as opposed to financial choices made as a collective (the troupe).

Scholars have offered a range of labels to clarify the agency of playing companies, such as 'actor-collectives', 'syndicates' and 'weak fellowships', to better characterize this dynamic marketplace (Hirschfeld 2004: 17; Keenan 2014: 17; van Es 2013: 106). While few habits of rehearsal, performance or playhouse design can be considered formalized, collaboration is evident from the Elizabethan period through the long eighteenth century. Writing teams could comprise up to four or more contributors, and playing companies averaged between fourteen and twenty players. Within the troupe was usually a three-part hierarchy comprising *sharers* (actors with a financial stake in the company), *hired men* (workers bound to a company for a temporary period including actors, musicians, stage-keepers and other theatre-makers) and *apprentices* or boy actors. It was this ensemble, with their varying repertoires of skills and type-cast specialties, that was recycled through a great variety of new, revised or revived plays. Companies used the repertory system to construct diverse portfolios of dramatic properties in order to manage the risks of innovation, in topic and in staging, against the safety of adapting, revising and reviving old playtexts.

WORKING CONDITIONS

In March 1598, at the north throat of London Bridge, the Sun Tavern in New Fish Street played host to a flurry of theatrical activity. There the theatre company known as the Lord Admiral's players borrowed five shillings 'to spend at the Readyng' of a new playbook they were considering adding to their stock of plays, the now lost 'Famous Wars of Henry I and the Prince of Wales' (Henslowe 2002: 88). A product of a playwriting team comprising Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker and Michael Drayton, the play had been developed through a collaborative process Heather Hirschfeld has demonstrated was typical of English Renaissance drama (2004). In addition to the reading of the newly purchased play, either on the same day or later that month, the company bought a play called 'Earl Godwin and His Three Sons' from Drayton, Dekker, Chettle and Robert Wilson, at which time additional funds

were spent at the ‘tavern in fyshstreate for good cheare’. Another instance of group reading at the Sun suggests that companies may have read plays while in process: ‘layd owt for the companye when they Read the playe of Jeffa for wine at the tavern dd vnto thomas downton’ (Henslowe 2002: 201). Note that by the time Admiral’s read the play *Jephthah* as a group, they had only made a small payment ‘in earnest’ for the work and not for the book in full (Teramura 2016).

The business in the Sun that March shines a rare ray of light on the ways in which playing companies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries developed their stock of plays. Compelling about these two meetings is that the company (or at least some part of it) came together to read the play rather than appoint an individual to vet it on their behalf. While it is unclear the degree to which this was a formal activity or if the sharers read in unison or independently, it is unlikely that it would have looked like today’s table- or staged-readings that are now codified aspects of the play development process. As playbooks were not inexpensive items, it seems unlikely that multiple copies would have been dispersed or that cue scripts had already been produced at this stage. An informal public reading around a pub table, where parts were read over shoulders and the book handed back and forth, seems a plausible scenario, although tavern layouts varied widely. It would provide opportunities for members to comment on the complexity of specific staging requirements as they encountered them such as casting and doubling capabilities, consider specialty expenses and artistically respond to the craft of a given scene, act or speech. This might mean, however, that members of the public would have access to this advance content, which might explain why the companies used a variety of spaces for business, including the Queen’s Head, the Mermaid and the Red Cross (Henslowe 2002: 175, 178, 184–5, 214).

The agenda of company meetings included other business as well, destabilizing the assumption that a de facto individual served the function of an artistic director commonplace today. When ‘reckneyd to geather[,] the company’ seems to have carried out decisions and were perhaps also ‘payd wages’ (Henslowe 2002: 191). Nothing seemed to better lubricate the work of playing than food. In addition to the wine and drink that was a part of readings, company meetings were routinely held over meals:

Layd owt at the A poyntment of the company toward ther supe to mr mason at the quenes head

Lent vnto the company the 29 of auguste 1601 to paye the Jewrey [...] [and] the clarke of the [assizes] [...] [and] ower diner

Layd owt for the company the 21 of septmbz 1601 for ower metynge at the tavern when we did eatte ower vensone

Layd owt for the company at the mermayd when we weare at owre a grement the 21 of auguste 1602 toward our supe (Henslowe 2002: 178, 180, 182, 214)

In all cases, ‘the company’ borrowed money to fund the work of the meeting, suggested by the absolute possessive pronouns of ‘their’ and ‘our’. In another such meeting at ‘the eagell & the chillde’, Chettle borrowed money for a partial payment ‘of A Boocke called the Rissyng of carnoll wollsey’, and Henslowe purchased either

a play called ‘holberd[es]’ or, more likely, halberds – props frequently called for in military plays (Dessen and Thomson 1999: 107–8; Henslowe 2002: 184–5).

References to the Sun not only suggest the site was closely affiliated with the playhouse industry, but curated together the allusions create a little repertory of their own. In the Prince’s Men play *No Wit/Help Like a Woman’s* (Middleton 1657), Master Weatherwise exclaims the ‘Sun’s in New Fishstreet’ after a pageant of the signs of the zodiac (2.1.483–4). The clown Peccadill threads puns about going to the sun to get dry, a euphemism for sobriety, throughout and eventually accuses others of stealing a ‘Sun-cup ... out o’th’Sun-Tavern’ (2.1.377–78). Allusions to bull and bear gardens in the same scene reinforce a connection between the variety of entertainment venues in the parish and the Sun Tavern. John Lyly’s *Galatea* (1592) likewise relies on the topographic allusion in order to undermine the supposed expertise of the Astronomer mid-instruction to one of three boys in search of a profession:

ASTRONOMER

I can tell the minute of thy byrth, the moment of thy death, and the manner
[...] When I list I can sette a trap for the Sunne, catch the Moone with
lyme-twigges, and goe a batfowling for starres [...] Nothing can happen
which I fore-see not, nothing shall.

RAFE

I hope sir you are no more then a God.

ASTRONOMER

I can bring the twelue signes out of theyr Zodiacks, and hang them vp at
Tauerns.

(sig. E1v)

The Sun offers a snapshot of not only how a repertory was developed but also the way in which mnemonic repertories might be demarcated. While *No Wit* and *Galatea* were never performed in a dedicated repertory together, that they both reference the same locale gestures towards a cultural repertory. For example, Robert Herrick conveys the sense of convivial composition in tavern spaces, described as ‘Lyrick Feasts, / Made at the Sun, / The Dog, the Triple Tunne’ where verse derived from poets working in ‘clusters’ to out-do one another (1648: 342–3). Repertory functions here as a cognitive device, activating memory in the context of re-performance, re-hearsal and re-writing both literally in the scheduling of plays, but also in organizing an individual’s interpretation of that drama.

ESSENTIAL KIT: FIVE THESES

As the examples above suggest, available for study are both literal repertory lists of plays as well as more figurative, mnemonic repertories activated by the repetition of other material aspects of the performance event. Studying a repertory requires a middle-distant stance that simultaneously takes in a group of playtexts – an

ecosystem of mutually inflecting art objects – while attending to the narrative, character, and dramaturgy specific to each. In light of this double vision, I offer a set of breakable postulates towards a repertory study methodology, sitting as it does at the intersection of literary study, book history and performance theory.

1. Repertory relies on the primacy of recyclability. From building construction to paper-making, early modern culture relied on habits of up- and re-cycling. In demonstrating the reuse of altar scenes in the repertory of the King's Men – in *Sejanus*, *Bonduca* and *The Sea Voyage*, among others – John Kuhn argues that 'suggested homologies between different pagan sites are only visible when we think across swathes of texts, as the theatre produced this not just within individual plays but also through accumulation and repetition across many plays' (2017: 92). As a cultural priority, recycling materials, plots, costume and even bodies through the use of what we would now call typecasting affords opportunities to consider the ways in which playwrights might have written with specific companies in mind, as well as to consider how repertory activates memory in ways similar to and different from the 'piquancy of surprise' that is adaptation (Hutcheon 2006: 4). Habits of recycling can also be understood as extending outside the set of plays owned by a single company and into other repertories, as Mark Hutchings has shown of the sociopolitical construction of the 'Turk' play (2017: 19).

2. Repertory is a by-product of collective decision-making for ends economic and aesthetic. Between 1592 and 1600, eight of the 117 plays recorded by title in Henslowe's papers were performed by three or more separate companies, including *The Jew of Malta*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. While this percentage may seem small, it is difficult to tell how widespread this practice of buying and selling, revising and reviving plays was because Henslowe's records capture, presumably, such a small segment of the marketplace. Negotiating this lostness does not negate the endeavour but rather suggests the field can be better served by strategies familiar to micro-historians focusing on specific events, locations and other small units of research that resist the *longue durée* meta-narratives to which Shakespeare studies is predisposed. As Lucy Munro has argued,

focusing on the repertory context in which plays were written cannot account for every aspect of dramatic creation – no one approach can possibly do this – but it enables a critic to allow for the input of a far greater range of agents[,] to consider companies and audiences in terms other than those of impediments to authorial genius, and[,] rather than focusing on the individual voice, ... pay attention to the full choir.

(2003: 28)

In allowing a repertory to define the parameters of study, freed from the bands of playwright or back-projected genre ascription, critics can ask new kinds of questions that engage the many lives lived by a play in performance and print.

3. Repertory is a synchronic phenomenon both culturally specific and historically contingent. Considering a play within the context of its immediate repertory schedule captures a snapshot of the work in a particular moment in time as well as how it might have been relationally understood in that moment. Repertories uniquely allow scholars to construct what Susan Bennett calls the *horizon of expectation* established for playgoers who not only attended but returned to theatres (1997: 113, 55). For example, regulars to the Whitefriars would have been cued to anticipate boy company plays deeply invested in homoerotic puns, proto-dramatic irony and a self-aware queer politics (Bly 2000). Long-running collaborative habits of the Lord Strange's players facilitated the staging of human immolation, cuing playgoers to anticipate pyrotechnics 'to represent acts of cruelty and judicial punishment that had an edge of topical relevance to English history and politics' (Manley 2001: 115). Repertory studies offers a mountain path into the study of early modern audiences by way of the expectations established by the plays themselves within groups.

4. Repertory is part of the blueprint to the irrecoverable performance event. It has become commonplace in the field of Renaissance studies to acknowledge that print captures, to varying degrees, a theatrical experience facilitated by a playtext. Performance studies relies on the proposition that the performance event is a priori lost because it is an embodied experience conditioned by the specific ensemble members and audiences, changed by the slightest unexpected sneeze or forthcoming political sea change. A study of repertory thus enables scholars to ask questions about the phenomenology afforded by a play in its repertorial context or, to put it another way, enable them to ask what these plays, curated in this sequence or ecosystem of performance, make available. For example, in her study of the affordances of the Globe and Blackfriars playing spaces and their reconstructed kin, Shakespeare's Globe and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Sarah Dustagheer traces 'a dynamic and interactive relationship between the playhouse and the body of plays performed within it', specifically in the ways in which they capitalized on their respective urban locations, responded to their specific acoustic and visual environments, and activated topical resonances of the quickly dissipating communal memory of the Protestant Reformation (2017: 170). Repertories and the spaces they envision for the production of the performance event both organize and transmit what Diana Taylor describes as 'embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge' (2003: 20). Repertory was one way the population of early modern England developed to view, live with, retell, recycle and ultimately transmit culturally specific knowledge not easily contained to the page.

5. Repertory is polysemous, revealing affordances of theatre rather than its certainties. A theatre historical approach to the study of repertories allows scholars to identify and put in place delimiting parameters from which to draw generically and culturally specific implications. For example, one such parameter is that of typecasting and part-learning (Palfrey and Stern 2007: 40–9). Parts seemed to have

been written with specific actors and their ensembles in mind, as evidenced by an elegy for the player Richard Burbage:

Hee's gone and with him what a world are dead,
Which he reviv'd, to be revived soe,
No more young Hamlett, ould Heironymoe,
Kind Leer, the Greved Moore, and more beside,
That lived in him; have now for ever dy'de.

(Nungezer 1929: 74)

The poem, surviving in various versions and personal commonplace books, curates a little repertory of Burbage's most memorable parts. The repertory system was ideal for cultivating, as Paul Menzer argues, a regular theatre-going public seeing in play after play a somewhat stable body of actors, particularly the sharers and master players by virtue of their financial stake in the company (2011). The repeated use of the body of Burbage threads together *Hamlet*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *King Lear* and *Othello* and serves as the recycled feature by which these plays can be interpreted in relation to one another. It likewise attests, just as Platter, to the fact that plays were experienced and remembered in sets.

As parts were written with specific bodies in mind, so too may plays have been written with specific properties in mind; without a substantially sized yet moveable cauldron, a company would not be capable of executing the basic requirements of *Macbeth* or *The Jew of Malta*, for example. Such requirements alongside their repetitions facilitate a mnemonic phenomenon that Carlson argues is specific to theatre as an embodied, temporally constrained genre:

Ghosting presents the identical thing [playgoers] have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context ... Because every physical element of the production can be and often is used over and over again in subsequent productions, the opportunities for an audience to bring memories of previous uses to new productions are enormous.

(2003: 7–8)

The commemorated body of Burbage gestures to a 'fairly stable ongoing collection of theatregoers, who singly and collectively carry to each new theatre experience a substantial memory of previous experience', including their favourite players, parts, props and speeches (Carlson 2003: 63). To track the materiality of these repetitions of the company and their stuffs, the study of repertorial patterns and trends enriches rather than forecloses consideration of how theatre participated in the construction of early modern dramatic aesthetics.

CHORUS: ON SURVIVAL

The study of repertories relies to some extent on counting – number of plays, afternoons shillings. While such numbers appeal to a sense of representativeness, they ultimately unveil just how unrepresentative the surviving repertory of early modern drama is, to say nothing of Shakespeare's oeuvre. Of the estimated three

thousand plays written or staged before the English civil wars, only approximately 18 per cent, or one in five, survive (Steggle 2015: 8). Another 25 per cent are identifiably ‘lost plays’, where some record exists besides the playtext itself. Not to be understood as an occasion for dismissing the study of repertories altogether, lost play studies has developed a paleontological vocabulary to cope: extant materials are understood as fossils and thus ‘inherently proxies for a missing original’ performance, or, ‘in the language of literary criticism, they are metaphors’ (Steggle 2020: 175). Distinguishing between the hard and soft parts of the fossil record (those documents most and least likely to survive), Matthew Steggle demonstrates the usefulness in thinking of titles as teeth, dialogue bones and playing companies as mudslides, preserving a record synchronically.

By taking stock of the extant archive and its blanks, repertory provides a framework within which to consider anew what is meant by ‘representative’. For example, if Shakespeare had a hand in only 0.1 per cent of all the plays staged in early modern England, to say that *Romeo and Juliet* tells us something normative about early modern visions of amorous love or procreative suitability is problematic. By placing the first performances of that play in the first season after a balcony was installed in the Rose theatre according to recent archaeological finds, and by placing it within a group of plays featuring balconies that season such as *The Jew of Malta* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Romeo and Juliet* might perhaps instead say something representative about the visual hierarchies of gender and sexuality in early modern England. In this vein, repertory studies and dramaturgically sympathetic readings have the potential to productively upset narratives about Shakespeare, his contemporaries and the theatre.

PROVISIONS

Baked into the early modern repertory system is a logic of seasonality, in part borrowed from the court revels tradition where a sequence of plays was curated during the Christmas holidays. Diaries such as those of Platter, Henslowe and later Samuel Pepys and Gordon Crosse indicate playing troupes likewise curated their plays within a stable set of parameters to better leverage specific expertise and thus accrue returner audiences. By the late sixteenth century there were over a hundred different licensed itinerant entertainers – named as individuals, such as bearwards, and as troupes, such as musicians – active in England, according to the Records of Early English Drama (REED) so far collected. Only fifty-one of these were theatrical troupes, the most of which have not enjoyed the benefit of sustained study. While there are traditional avenues by which to approach the archive of English repertory practices, there remains a great deal of work to be done by expanding our definition of playing spaces and entertainer ensembles.

The widespread digitizing efforts of major research libraries, REED and Early English Books Online (EEBO), have excitingly expanded the study of English Renaissance theatre repertories. The cornerstone documents for embarking on such endeavours remain the accounts of the Revels Office for productions by various companies at court, the book of accounts and other manuscripts kept by Henslowe

for the Rose and Fortune playhouses and the office-book of Sir Henry Herbert when he was Master of the Revels (Knutson 2004: 180–92). It was not uncommon to include a playing company attribution on the title page of a play printed in quarto, which has helped to supplement these lists. It should be noted, however, that the distance between known performance run and extant printing varies widely, from a few years to several decades, so a print date should not be understood to have a consistent bearing on the period when playgoers engaged its performance. Likewise, as plays were frequently traded between companies, such title-page attribution best serves as a snapshot or commemorative souvenir of the play ‘as it was acted’ by that company.

These traditional repertory lists are only the most ready-made, and they can benefit from further study. For example, in an effort to uncover the location of the lost Playhouse at Newington Butts, Laurie Johnson framed the eleven days of playing there kept as part of Henslowe’s Rose records as a discrete repertory (2017). If one approaches the study of repertory as place-based, that makes possible the study of repertories specific to the different Inns of Court – law student performances typically grouped together as one unit and in need of differentiation. Future critical editions of plays might experiment with a framework that captures a play for a specific troupe and venue, such as Sonia Massai’s Arden edition of *’Tis Pity She’s A Whore*, specifically framed in the context of Queen Henrietta’s troupe and the Cockpit venue (2011). Following the work of David Kathman (2004, 2009), establishing the repertories circulating at inn-yards such as The Bel Savage, Bell, Boar’s Head, Bull, Cross Keys, Saracen’s Head, the recently excavated Red Lion and possibly The George and Tabard inns has also yet to be undertaken. Repertory offers a dynamic framework to explore other kinds of early modern entertainments beyond these venues. Following the example set by Tracey Hill’s groundbreaking work, the Lord Mayor’s shows, annual civic pageants dating back to the sixteenth century and possibly earlier, offer a rich source: each of the major livery companies, from fishmongers and salters to vintners and goldsmiths, yearly devised performances and pageants within the city and on the Thames (2010). As there was no livery company to administer quality control for the profession of player, actors and their apprentices typically kept membership with one of the established livery companies, such as Ben Jonson’s intermittent quarterage as a member of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers (Kathman 2004).

There are at least three other avenues of future research in repertory studies ripe for attention. First is the study of the relationship between the post-Protestant Reformation repertory of music for boy choristers and the extant dramatic canon. William Byrd and other composers were under pressure to meet the demand of a new soundscape to replace that of the Catholic mass. Following the work of Tribble (2011 and 2017), Tiffany Stern (2000) and others on training and rehearsal of actors, it seems necessary for theatre historians to better compare notes with musicologists such as Linda Austern (1992) and Ross Duffin (2021) in this area. It seems particularly crucial to particularize the strategies by which boy actors and apprentices developed either niche or a broad array of skills, as recently considered of the present-day all-male Edward’s Boys (McCarthy 2020). Second is the study of

repertories of other kinds of entertainers that travelled in troupes throughout early modern England and to which REED and work by Siobhan Keenan (2002, 2014) are invaluable. Tumblers, bearwards, puppeteers, jesters, minstrels, harpers, trumpeters and a variety of other entertainers travelled throughout England carrying with them the license of named patrons, including dukes and duchesses, counts and countesses, earls, abbots and other lords. That women could and did patronize companies long before the well-documented Queen's players seems a crucial next consideration following the work of Korda (2011) and Clare McManus (2002) on women's labour and performance in the early modern theatre industry. Third, comparison to other repertory practices in use in the seventeenth century by Madrid licensed companies, Venetian opera and German wanderbühne would clarify to what extent repertory was an indicative feature of the European Renaissance experience and how different repertory models framed specific cultures' engagement with live performance. To these ends, what follows is offered as a primer of scholarship, databases and other resources to fuel new torches in repertory study.

1. Company biographies. A cornerstone genre in the field of repertory study is the company biography. In part due to their clearly constrained timelines and playsets, biographies of boy companies offer a path into this area of study (Austern 1992; Bly 2000; Gair 1982; Hillebrand 1926; McCarthy 2017; Munro 2005; Shapiro 1977). For the adult troupes – perhaps an unnecessary binary that segments the industry in ways early modern playgoers may not have adopted – multiple biographies consider the Admiral's (Gurr 2009; Rutter 2017), King's (Aaron 2005; Beckerman 1962; Knutson 1991, 2001; Marino 2011; Munro 2019), and Queen's (McMillin and MacLean 1998; Ostovich 2014; Ostovich et al. 2009; Walsh 2009) troupes. Two studies of later seventeenth-century companies continue to focus on royal women's patronage (Collins 2016; Griffith 2014), with further sixteenth-century studies currently in development to accompany the single Strange's survey (Manley and MacLean 2014).

2. Primary sources. These biographies suture the texts of plays as art objects with archival materials that attest to their stage lives. While there is a wealth of archival materials in terms of manuscripts, printed books and paratexts, without a practised palaeographic eye and healthy travel budget these primary sources can be challenging to encounter. Fortunately, repertory study benefits from a variety of carefully curated and evolving online databases. Critical editions of Henslowe's diary (1904, 2002, Carson 2005) sit alongside the high-resolution facsimile of the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project (Ioppolo et al. 2020). Specialized encyclopaedias such as the *Lost Plays Database* (McInnis et al. 2009), *London Stage Database, 1660–1800* (2020), *Shakespeare Documented* (Wolfe et al. 2016), *Early Modern London Theatres* and the suite of online databases linked with the *Records of Early English Drama* (MacLean 2009) can be supplemented with searches in larger clearing houses such as *British History Online* (2003), *State Papers Online, 1509–1714* (2020) and *Internet Archive*, which is particularly useful for locating rare, out-of-print and copyright sources.

Desk references are the necessary twin to these databases. Transcribed collections of documents typically offer editorial apparatus and descriptive headnotes that

position the works within their theatre historical contexts (e.g., Greg 1969; Salgado 1975; Milhous and Hume 1991; Evans 1997; Rutter 1999; Wickham et al. 2000; Archer et al. 2014; Wolfe et al. 2016; Shakespeare's Globe 2020). E. K. Chambers's four-volume *The Elizabethan Stage* (1964) is a central text that offers a wealth of archival breadcrumbs and essential postulates to which scholars still regularly return. Several publications from the Museum of London Archaeology are crucial to understanding how these spaces shaped play, as Johnson's contribution to this volume attests (Bowsher 2012; Bowsher and Miller 2009; Mackinder et al. 2013). When thinking of plays in sets and groups, reference lists can quickly and invaluablely make legible unexpected kinships, such as in playing calendars (Harbage and Schoenbaum 1964; Kawachi 1986), annotated maps and topographic indices (Dustagheer 2021; Jenstad 2020; Prockter and Taylor 1979; Sugden 1925). Like the *Lost Plays Database*, other print and digital encyclopaedias continue to expand our sense of what texts were part of this theatre landscape (Archer et al. 2014; Grantley 2004), perhaps no more so than the magisterial multivolume *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue* (Wiggins and Richardson 2012). Targeted volumes such as *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500–1660* (Berger et al. 1998) and *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642* (Dessen and Thomson 1999) provide productive pathways to identify trends within, between and across companies.

3. Secondary sources. Additional reading in the discipline takes many forms, with new discoveries and approaches typically appearing in their initial stages by way of edited collections (recently Douglas and MacLean 2006; Kanelos and Kuzusko 2010; McInnis and Steggle 2014; Knutson et al. 2020; Stern 2020), special issues and forums (Cerasano et al. 2005; McMillin 2001; Munro 2006; Rutter 2010; Tavares and Johnson 2022) frequently deriving from the theatre history seminars held at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. Tom Rutter's historiographic assessment of the field is a crucial guide (2008). Like Knutson's copious and invaluable articles and monographs, it is hard to overstate the contributions of Richard Dutton between the innovative handbooks (2011), introductory guidebooks (2018) and monographs (2016) he has helmed. Over the last three decades the study of repertory has invested its energies in questions of theatre economics (Astington 1999; Ingram 1992; Syme 2010 and 2012) and company personnel (Baldwin 1961; Bradbrook 1962; Chambers 1963; Craig and Greatley-Hirsch 2017; Matusiak 2014; Murray 1910; Potter 2014; Schlueter 1998, 1999; Schoone-Jongen 2008). Critical race studies should not be overlooked as a necessary component of this area and a great more work to be done (Alsop 1980; Habib 2008; Matar 2005). For methodological complexities, best consulted in addition to Knutson's work is that of McMillin (1987 and 1989) and Erika T. Lin (2012).

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