

the framing text in early modern english drama

The Art of the Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama

the framing text in early modern english drama plays a fascinating role in shaping how audiences and readers engage with plays from this vibrant literary period. Early modern English drama, flourishing roughly between the late 15th and early 17th centuries, is renowned not only for its compelling characters and plots but also for the ways playwrights structured their works. The framing text—comprising prologues, epilogues, stage directions, and other paratextual elements—serves as a crucial gateway into the theatrical experience, influencing interpretation, setting tone, and even guiding performance.

If you've ever dived into Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Jonson, you might have noticed these framing elements peppered throughout their plays. But what exactly is the framing text, and why does it matter? Let's unpack this intriguing aspect of early modern drama, exploring its functions, forms, and significance within the broader theatrical and cultural landscape of the time.

Understanding the Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama

At its core, the framing text refers to the material that surrounds the main body of a play but is not part of the direct dialogue between characters. This includes prologues, epilogues, dedicatory verses, stage directions, and occasionally marginal notes. These elements frame the dramatic action, guiding audience expectations and providing context for the unfolding narrative.

In early modern drama, the framing text was much more than mere formalities. It served as a dynamic communicative tool between playwrights, performers, and audiences, often engaging with contemporary social, political, or literary issues. For instance, a prologue might appeal directly to the spectators, asking for their indulgence or setting up a thematic lens through which to view the play.

The Role of Prologues and Epilogues

Two of the most prominent components of the framing text are prologues and epilogues. These short speeches, usually delivered by a character or a chorus figure, bookend the play, offering insights or commentary.

- **Prologues:** Introduced before the play begins, prologues often prepare the audience emotionally and intellectually. They might summarize themes, address potential controversies, or invoke classical precedents to legitimize the work. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, for example, the Chorus's prologue invites the audience to use their imagination to "piece out our imperfections."

- **Epilogues:** Delivered at the play's conclusion, epilogues frequently seek to elicit applause, offer

moral reflections, or provide closure. They sometimes break the fourth wall, directly addressing the audience to thank them or to comment humorously on the performance.

Both prologues and epilogues are vital tools for managing audience reception, creating a shared space between the stage and the spectators.

Stage Directions and Their Importance

While modern readers often skim over stage directions, in early modern drama, these instructions were key framing devices. Though not as detailed as contemporary scripts, early modern stage directions gave essential cues about movement, entrances, exits, and even tone. They helped actors interpret their roles and provided readers with clues about the intended staging.

Interestingly, some plays included elaborate descriptions of costumes or settings, which contributed to the visual framing of the drama. These textual signposts helped bridge the gap between written word and theatrical performance, especially in an era when detailed sets and props were limited.

The Cultural and Theatrical Context of Framing Texts

The framing text did not exist in isolation; it was shaped by and reflected the cultural milieu of early modern England. The period was marked by shifting political power, religious upheaval, and evolving notions of authorship and audience engagement. The framing elements of drama often mirrored these tensions.

Negotiating Censorship and Authority

During the early modern period, theatrical productions were subject to strict censorship and regulatory oversight. The framing text could subtly navigate these constraints. For example, a prologue might disclaim any offense caused by the play, distancing the playwright from controversial content. This rhetorical strategy was a way to appease authorities while preserving creative freedom.

Moreover, framing texts sometimes asserted the playwright's or company's authority, positioning the drama within a respected tradition. Dedications and prefatory verses might praise patrons or align the play with classical ideals, enhancing its cultural legitimacy.

Engaging the Audience: A Two-Way Interaction

Unlike many modern theatrical conventions, early modern plays often fostered a direct dialogue with the audience through framing texts. This interaction created a communal atmosphere, where spectators were invited to participate intellectually and emotionally.

Prologues and epilogues could include humor, rhetorical questions, or appeals that made the

audience co-creators in the theatrical experience. This dynamic approach helped maintain engagement and shaped how the narrative was received and interpreted.

Examples of Framing Text in Notable Early Modern Plays

To get a better sense of how framing texts functioned, it's helpful to look at specific examples from key plays of the era.

Shakespeare's Use of the Chorus in Henry V

As mentioned earlier, Shakespeare's *Henry V* famously opens with a prologue spoken by the Chorus, who asks the audience to use their imagination to fill in the gaps of the modest stage. This framing text prepares the audience for the play's grand historical sweep despite the limitations of the theatrical space. The Chorus returns at key moments, guiding spectators' interpretations and enhancing the epic tone.

Ben Jonson's Meta-Theatrical Epilogues

Ben Jonson was known for his witty and self-aware epilogues, which often commented on the nature of theater itself. His epilogues sometimes poke fun at critics or invite the audience to judge the play fairly, blurring the lines between performance and reality. This meta-theatrical framing creates a reflective space that deepens the audience's engagement.

Christopher Marlowe and the Power of Stage Directions

Marlowe's plays, such as *Doctor Faustus*, include vivid stage directions that contribute to the atmosphere and meaning of scenes. The framing text here not only organizes the physical performance but also highlights thematic elements like temptation and damnation, enriching the audience's understanding.

Why the Framing Text Matters for Modern Readers and Performers

Today, the framing text in early modern English drama offers invaluable insights for scholars, actors, and directors. Understanding these elements helps illuminate how plays were originally experienced and how they might be adapted for contemporary audiences.

Enhancing Literary Analysis

For students and researchers, framing texts are rich sources of interpretive clues. They reveal authorial intent, cultural context, and the play's relationship with its audience. Ignoring these elements risks missing critical layers of meaning.

Informing Theatrical Production

Directors and performers can use framing texts to shape tone, pacing, and audience interaction. For example, delivering or adapting a prologue can set expectations or highlight themes. Similarly, epilogues offer opportunities to engage the audience beyond the narrative, creating memorable theatrical moments.

Preserving Historical Authenticity

Reviving early modern plays with attention to framing texts helps preserve their historical authenticity. It allows modern productions to honor the original theatrical conventions while exploring new creative possibilities.

Tips for Exploring Framing Text in Early Modern Drama

If you're interested in delving deeper into the framing text of early modern English drama, here are some practical tips:

- **Read the play aloud:** Prologues and epilogues often reveal their full impact when spoken.
- **Consider historical context:** Research the social and political background to understand subtle references.
- **Attend or watch performances:** Seeing how different productions interpret framing texts can broaden your perspective.
- **Compare editions:** Look at various printed versions to spot differences in stage directions and paratextual elements.
- **Engage with scholarship:** Literary criticism often discusses the significance of framing texts in illuminating early modern drama.

Exploring these dimensions enriches appreciation and opens new windows into the theatrical artistry of the period.

The framing text in early modern English drama is more than a peripheral feature; it is a vital component that shapes the entire theatrical experience. From setting the stage to addressing the audience directly, these textual elements weave a complex dialogue between playwrights, performers, and spectators. Recognizing and appreciating the framing text brings us closer to the vibrant world of early modern theater, where words and performance converged to create timeless art.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the framing text in early modern English drama?

The framing text in early modern English drama refers to the introductory or concluding material that surrounds the main play text, such as prologues, epilogues, prefaces, and stage directions, which help contextualize the drama for the audience.

How did framing texts function in early modern English plays?

Framing texts functioned to guide audience interpretation, establish the play's themes, address the audience directly, and sometimes provide moral or political commentary that framed the main action of the drama.

Why are prologues and epilogues important framing texts in early modern drama?

Prologues and epilogues are important because they create a direct dialogue between the actors and the audience, setting expectations before the play and offering reflections or moral lessons afterward, enhancing audience engagement.

In what ways did framing texts reflect the social and political contexts of early modern England?

Framing texts often incorporated contemporary social and political references, allowing playwrights to comment on or critique issues like monarchy, religion, and society, sometimes using allegory or subtle satire to navigate censorship.

How did the use of framing texts differ between public and private theatres in early modern England?

In public theatres, framing texts were typically more direct and accessible to a broad audience, while in private theatres, they could be more elaborate or sophisticated, catering to a more elite and literate audience.

Can framing texts in early modern English drama influence

the interpretation of the main play?

Yes, framing texts can significantly influence interpretation by highlighting particular themes, providing historical or political context, or shaping the audience's emotional response before and after the play.

What role did the playwright have in creating framing texts during the early modern period?

Playwrights often wrote or collaborated on framing texts to control how their plays were introduced and concluded, ensuring that the intended message or tone was effectively communicated to the audience.

Are framing texts unique to early modern English drama or found in other literary traditions?

Framing texts are not unique to early modern English drama; similar devices appear in classical Greek drama, medieval mystery plays, and other Renaissance literatures, serving comparable functions of contextualizing and engaging audiences.

How do modern editors and scholars approach framing texts in early modern English plays?

Modern editors and scholars study framing texts to better understand the original performance context, authorial intent, and audience reception, often providing annotations and commentary to clarify their significance in printed editions.

Additional Resources

The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama: An Analytical Exploration

the framing text in early modern english drama serves as a crucial interpretive lens through which audiences and scholars can understand the multifaceted nature of theatrical works from the 16th and 17th centuries. This period, marked by a vibrant flourishing of English literature and drama, saw playwrights employing various framing devices that not only structured the narrative but also influenced audience reception and thematic emphasis. From prologues and epilogues to metatheatrical commentary, the framing text in early modern English drama functions as a boundary between the performance and the audience, setting expectations, guiding interpretations, and often reflecting on the act of drama itself.

The significance of the framing text extends beyond mere structural convenience. It encapsulates the socio-political context of the era, the playwright's intent, and theatrical conventions, making it a rich area for scholarly inquiry. This article investigates the characteristics, functions, and implications of framing texts in early modern English drama, drawing on key examples and engaging with contemporary critical perspectives. The analysis also considers how framing texts interact with the dramatic content and how they contribute to the overall impact of the plays.

Understanding the Role of Framing Text in Early Modern Drama

Framing texts in early modern English plays typically include introductory and concluding elements such as prologues, epilogues, prefaces, and sometimes interludes. These texts often lie outside the main dramatic action, yet they are integrally linked to the play's thematic and performative dimensions. They serve as a mechanism to prepare the audience, manage expectations, and in some cases, address controversies or censorship issues related to the content.

For example, Shakespeare's use of prologues and epilogues in plays like **Henry V** and **The Merry Wives of Windsor** not only frames the narrative but also establishes a dialogic relationship with the audience. The prologue in **Henry V**, delivered by the Chorus, sets the tone for historical grandeur and patriotic sentiment, while also acknowledging the imaginative leap required from the audience to "piece out our imperfections with your thoughts." This framing text invites viewers to engage actively with the drama, blurring the boundaries between the fictional world and reality.

Functions and Features of Framing Texts

The framing text serves multiple key functions in early modern English drama:

- **Contextualization:** It situates the play within a broader social, political, or literary context, often providing background information or framing the narrative's moral or ideological underpinnings.
- **Audience Engagement:** Through direct address, the framing text can create intimacy between performers and spectators, appealing to their sympathies or preparing them for the play's themes.
- **Metatheatrical Commentary:** Framing texts frequently comment on the nature of theatre itself, acknowledging the artificiality of the performance and inviting the audience to reflect on the act of storytelling.
- **Censorship and Self-Justification:** In an era of strict censorship, playwrights used framing texts to defend their work or preempt criticism from authorities or moralists by positioning the play within acceptable ideological boundaries.

In terms of features, framing texts often employ rhetorical devices such as apostrophe, irony, and humor. They may be poetic, as in the case of Shakespeare's prologues, or more straightforward and didactic, as seen in some of Ben Jonson's prefaces and prologues.

Comparative Perspectives: Framing Text Across

Different Playwrights

Examining the framing text in early modern English drama across various playwrights reveals interesting divergences and stylistic nuances. While Shakespeare's framing texts are notable for their poetic richness and layered meanings, other dramatists employed these devices differently.

Shakespeare vs. Ben Jonson

Shakespeare's framing texts often blend poetic artistry with metatheatrical awareness. His prologues and epilogues invite the audience into a collaborative imaginative space. For instance, the epilogue of *The Winter's Tale* humanizes the actors and appeals to the audience's mercy, thereby softening the boundary between performance and reality.

Conversely, Ben Jonson's framing texts are more formal and sometimes serve as explicit justifications of the playwright's artistic choices. In *Every Man in His Humour*, Jonson uses the prologue to assert the moral purpose of the play and to defend his adherence to classical dramatic principles. Jonson's framing texts reflect his intellectual rigor and his engagement with contemporary debates on dramatic theory.

The Role of Framing Text in Popular and Courtly Drama

The use of framing texts also varies depending on the performance context. In court masques and aristocratic entertainments, framing elements often took the form of elaborate speeches or allegorical introductions, emphasizing the spectacle and political symbolism. These framed the performance as a celebration of royal authority and social order.

In contrast, popular public theatre productions employed framing texts to foster communal engagement and address a diverse audience. Prologues and epilogues in these settings often included humor, topical references, and direct appeals to the audience's sensibilities, enhancing accessibility and entertainment value.

Metatheatricality and Self-Reflexivity in Early Modern Framing Texts

One of the most fascinating aspects of the framing text in early modern English drama is its metatheatrical quality. This self-reflexive feature underscores the constructed nature of theatrical representation and invites audiences to think critically about the distinctions between fiction and reality.

For example, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Induction serves as a framing device that presents a play within a play, foregrounding questions about performance, identity, and social roles. The framing text here complicates straightforward narrative consumption by layering multiple levels of reality.

Similarly, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* employs a prologue in the form of a sonnet that outlines the tragic destiny of the "star-crossed lovers," setting a frame of inevitability and forewarning that shapes audience expectations and emotional engagement.

Advantages and Challenges of Framing Texts

- **Advantages:** Framing texts enable playwrights to guide interpretation, manage audience response, and navigate censorship constraints. They also enrich the theatrical experience by adding layers of meaning and encouraging active spectatorship.
- **Challenges:** At times, framing texts can disrupt narrative immersion or be perceived as overly didactic. Their effectiveness depends on the skillful balance between commentary and storytelling, which not all playwrights consistently achieve.

The Evolution and Legacy of Framing Texts

The framing text in early modern English drama also represents a transitional moment in theatrical history, bridging medieval performance traditions and modern dramatic conventions. Its legacy can be traced in later dramatic forms where framing devices continue to serve as tools for narrative control and audience engagement.

Modern adaptations and performances of early modern plays often reinterpret or even omit original framing texts, which raises questions about the preservation of authorial intent and the dynamics of theatrical reception across time. Scholarly attention to framing texts thus remains vital for understanding both historical context and contemporary staging practices.

As research into early modern drama deepens, the framing text emerges not simply as a peripheral element but as a central component that shapes the theatrical work's identity and meaning. Its study offers insights into the interplay between text, performance, and audience, illuminating the complex artistry of early modern playwrights and their enduring influence on drama today.

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treated in depth, very little scholarship has been published on early modern framing texts as a whole. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama* fills a gap in the literature by examining the origins of these texts, and investigating their growing importance and influence in the theatre of the period. This topic-led discussion of prologues and epilogues deals with the origins of these texts, the difficulty of definition, and the way in which many prologues and epilogues appear to interact on such subjects as the composition of the theatre audience and the perceived place of women in such an audience. Author Brian Schneider also examines the reasons for, and the evidence leading to, the apparently sudden burgeoning of these texts after the Restoration, when prologues and epilogues grace nearly all the dramas of the time and become a virtual cottage industry of their own. The second section—a comprehensive list of prologues and epilogues—details play titles, playwrights, theatres and theatre companies, first performance and the earliest edition in which the framing text(s) appears. It quotes the first line of the prologue and/or epilogue and uses the printer's signature to denote the page on which the texts can be found. Further information is provided in notes appended to the relevant entry. A final section deals with 'free-floating' and 'free-standing' framing texts that appear in verse collections, manuscripts, and other publications and to which no play can be positively ascribed. Combining original analysis with carefully compiled, comprehensive reference data, *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama* provides a genuinely new angle on the drama of early modern England.

the framing text in early modern english drama: Making and unmaking in early modern English drama Chloe Porter, 2015-11-01 This electronic version has been made available under a Creative Commons (BY-NC-ND) open access license. Why are early modern English dramatists preoccupied with unfinished processes of 'making' and 'unmaking'? And what did the terms 'finished' or 'incomplete' mean for dramatists and their audiences in this period? Making and unmaking in early modern English drama is about the significance of visual things that are 'under construction' in works by playwrights including Shakespeare, Robert Greene and John Lyly. Illustrated with examples from across visual and material culture, it opens up new interpretations of the place of aesthetic form in the early modern imagination. Plays are explored as a part of a lively post-Reformation visual culture, alongside a diverse range of contexts and themes, including iconoclasm, painting, sculpture, clothing and jewellery, automata and invisibility. Asking what it meant for Shakespeare and his contemporaries to 'begin' or 'end' a literary or visual work, this book is essential reading for scholars and students of early modern English drama, literature, visual culture and history.

the framing text in early modern english drama: The Arden Handbook of Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama Michelle M. Dowd, Tom Rutter, 2022-12-15 How does our understanding of early modern performance, culture and identity change when we decentre Shakespeare? And how might a more inclusive approach to early modern drama help enable students to discuss a range of issues, including race and gender, in more productive ways? Underpinned by these questions, this collection offers a wide-ranging, authoritative guide to research on drama in Shakespeare's England, mapping the variety of approaches to the context and work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. By paying attention to repertory, performance in and beyond playhouses, modes of performance, and lost and less-studied plays, the handbook reshapes our critical narratives about early modern drama. Chapters explore early modern drama through a range of cultural contexts and approaches, from material culture and emotion studies to early modern race work and new directions in disability and trans studies, as well as contemporary performance. Running through the collection is a shared focus on contemporary concerns, with contributors exploring how race, religion, environment, gender and sexuality animate 16th- and 17th-century drama and, crucially, the questions we bring to our study, teaching and research of it. The volume includes a ground-breaking assessment of the chronology of early modern drama, a survey of resources and an annotated bibliography to assist researchers as they pursue their own avenues of inquiry. Combining original research with an account of the current state of play, *The Arden Handbook of Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama* will be an invaluable resource both for experienced scholars and for those beginning work in the

field.

the framing text in early modern english drama: The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama Brian W. Schneider, 2011 Though individual prologues and epilogues have been treated in depth, very little scholarship has been published on early modern framing texts as a whole. Combining original analysis with carefully compiled, comprehensive reference data, the author fills a gap in the literature by examining the origins of these texts and investigating their growing importance and influence in the theatre of the period.

the framing text in early modern english drama: Magical Transformations on the Early Modern English Stage Lisa Hopkins, Helen Ostovich, 2016-05-13 *Magical Transformations on the Early Modern Stage* furthers the debate about the cultural work performed by representations of magic on the early modern English stage. It considers the ways in which performances of magic reflect and feed into a sense of national identity, both in the form of magic contests and in its recurrent linkage to national defence; the extent to which magic can trope other concerns, and what these might be; and how magic is staged and what the representational strategies and techniques might mean. The essays range widely over both canonical plays-Macbeth, The Tempest, The Winter's Tale, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Doctor Faustus, Bartholomew Fair-and notably less canonical ones such as The Birth of Merlin, Fedele and Fortunio, The Merry Devil of Edmonton, The Devil is an Ass, The Late Lancashire Witches and The Witch of Edmonton, putting the two groups into dialogue with each other and also exploring ways in which they can be profitably related to contemporary cases or accusations of witchcraft. Attending to the representational strategies and self-conscious intertextuality of the plays as well as to their treatment of their subject matter, the essays reveal the plays they discuss as actively intervening in contemporary debates about witchcraft and magic in ways which themselves effect transformation rather than simply discussing it. At the heart of all the essays lies an interest in the transformative power of magic, but collectively they show that the idea of transformation applies not only to the objects or even to the subjects of magic, but that the plays themselves can be seen as working to bring about change in the ways that they challenge contemporary assumptions and stereotypes.

the framing text in early modern english drama: "Ecclesiae et Rei Publicae": Greek Drama and the Education of the Ruling Class in Elizabethan England Marco Duranti, 2022-02-12 In sixteenth-century England only two Greek plays in Greek were published: Euripides' *Troades* (1575) and Aristophanes' *Equites* (1593). This book raises questions on the scarceness of editions of Greek dramas and their late appearance in the English Renaissance, compared to continental editorial practices. It also seeks to reconstruct the intellectual and political context in which these two dramas were published. To this end, it examines the paratexts, especially the prefatory letters addressed either to patrons or to the readers, contained in contemporary Greek grammars and catechisms. *Troades* and *Equites* were probably published for educational purposes and their lack of paratexts invites further investigation as to the status of knowledge of Greek and how these editions were to be used in teaching. Against this backdrop, *Troades* and *Equites* appear as part and parcel of a humanistic programme connected with the education of the ruling class. The book shows that the Elizabethan age witnessed a growing interest in Greek as part of an overall project of consolidation of the Church of England and the monarchy, inspired by Protestant nationalism. In this context, reading and staging Greek dramas was regarded as a means to acquire rhetorical, ethical, philosophical, and political knowledge. These paratexts help us to understand the role of Greek and Greek literature held in the making of modern England.

the framing text in early modern english drama: Paratexts in English Printed Drama to 1642 Thomas L. Berger, Sonia Massai, 2014-04-24 The paratexts in early modern English playbooks – the materials to be found primarily in their preliminary pages and end matter – provide a rich source of information for scholars interested in Shakespeare, Renaissance drama and the history of the book. In addition, these materials offer valuable insights into the rise of dramatic authorship in print, early modern attitudes towards theatre, notorious literary wrangles and the production of drama both on the stage and in the printing house. This unique two-volume reference is the first to

include all paratextual materials in early modern English playbooks, from the emergence of print drama to the closure of the theatres in 1642. The texts have been transcribed from their original versions and presented in old-spelling. With an introduction, user's guide, multiple indices and a finding list, the editors provide a comprehensive overview of seminal texts which have never before been fully transcribed, annotated and cross-referenced.

the framing text in early modern english drama: *The Children's Troupes and the Transformation of English Theater 1509-1608* Jeanne McCarthy, 2016-11-25 *The Children's Troupes and the Transformation of English Theater 1509-1608* uncovers the role of the children's companies in transforming perceptions of authorship and publishing, performance, playing spaces, patronage, actor training, and gender politics in the sixteenth century. Jeanne McCarthy challenges entrenched narratives about popular playing in an era of revolutionary changes, revealing the importance of the children's company tradition's connection with many early plays, as well as to the spread of literacy, classicism, and literate ideals of drama, plot, textual fidelity, characterization, and acting in a still largely oral popular culture. By addressing developments from the hyper-literate school tradition, and integrating discussion of the children's troupes into the critical conversation around popular playing practices, McCarthy offers a nuanced account of the play-centered, literary performance tradition that came to define professional theater in this period. Highlighting the significant role of the children's company tradition in sixteenth-century performance culture, this volume offers a bold new narrative of the emergence of the London theater.

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the framing text in early modern english drama: *Functions of Medieval English Stage Directions* Philip Butterworth, 2022-07-29 When we speak of theatre, we think we know what a stage direction is: we tend to think of it as an authorial requirement, devised to be complementary to the spoken text and directed at those who put on a play as to what, when, where, how or why a moment, action or its staging should be completed. This is the general understanding to condition a theatrical convention known as the 'stage direction'. As such, we recognise that the stage direction is directed towards actors, directors, designers, and any others who have a part to play in the practical realisation of the play. And perhaps we think that this has always been the case. However, the term 'stage direction' is not a medieval one, nor does an English medieval equivalent term exist to codify the functions contained in extraneous manuscript notes, requirements, directions or records. The medieval English stage direction does not generally function in this way: it mainly exists as an observed record of earlier performance. There are examples of other functions, but even they are not directed at players or those involved in creating performance. More than 2000 stage directions from 40 or so plays and cycles have been included in the catalogue of the volume, and over 400 of those have been selected for analysis throughout the work. The purpose of this research is to examine the theatrical functions of medieval English stage directions as records of earlier performance. Examples of such functions are largely taken from outdoor scriptural plays. This book will be of great interest to students and scholars in theatre, medieval history and literature.

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book analyses interruptions as a specific form in dramatic literature, arguing that these everyday occurrences, when transformed into aesthetic phenomena, reveal illuminating connections: between characters, between actor and audience, and between text and reader. Focusing on the works of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and John Fletcher, Michael M. Wagoner examines interruptions that occur through the use of punctuation and stage directions, as well as through larger forms, such as conventions and dramaturgy. He demonstrates how studying interruptions may indicate aspects of authorial style – emphasizing a playwright's use and control of a text – and how exploring relative power dynamics pushes readers and audiences to reconsider key plays and characters, providing new considerations of the relationships between Othello and Iago, or Macbeth and the Ghost of Banquo.

the framing text in early modern english drama: Performing Gods in Classical Antiquity and the Age of Shakespeare Dustin W. Dixon, John S. Garrison, 2021-05-20 The gods have much to tell us about performance. When human actors portray deities onstage, such divine epiphanies reveal not only the complexities of mortals playing gods but also the nature of theatrical spectacle itself. The very impossibility of rendering the gods in all their divine splendor in a truly convincing way lies at the intersection of divine power and the power of the theater. This book pursues these dynamics on the stages of ancient Athens and Rome as well on those of Renaissance England to shed new light on theatrical performance. The authors reveal how gods appear onstage both to astound and to dramatize the very machinations by which theatrical performance operates. Offering an array of case studies featuring both canonical and lesser-studied texts, this volume discusses work of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Plautus as well as Beaumont, Heywood, Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. This book uniquely brings together the joint perspectives of two experts on classical and Renaissance drama. This volume will appeal to students and enthusiasts of literature, classics, theater, and performance studies.

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engagement and proposes the typographic imaginary as a framework for its analysis. Certain texts, Rachel Stenner states, describe the people, places, concerns, and processes of printing in ways that, over time, generate their own figurative authority. The typographic imaginary is posited as a literary phenomenon shared by different writers, a wider cultural understanding of printing, and a critical concept for unpicking the particular imaginative otherness that printing introduced to literature. Authors use the typographic imaginary to interrogate their place in an evolving media environment, to assess the value of the printed text, and to analyse the roles of other text-producing agents. This book treats a broad array of authors and forms: printers' manuals; William Caxton's paratexts; the pamphlet dialogues of Robert Copland and Ned Ward; poetic miscellanies; the prose fictions of William Baldwin, George Gascoigne, and Thomas Nashe; the poetry and prose of Edmund Spenser; writings by John Taylor and Alexander Pope. At its broadest, this study contributes to an understanding of how technology changes cultures. Located at the crossroads between literary, material, and book historical research, the particular intervention that this work makes is threefold. In describing the typographic imaginary, it proposes a new framework for analysis of print culture. It aims to focus critical engagement on symbolic representations of material forms. Finally, it describes a lineage of late medieval and early modern authors, stretching from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, that are linked by their engagement of a particular aesthetic.

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Dewar-Watson, 2017-09-18 The startling central idea behind this study is that the rediscovery of Aristotle's Poetics in the sixteenth century ultimately had a profound impact on almost every aspect of Shakespeare's late plays—their sources, subject matter and thematic concerns. Shakespeare's Poetics reveals the generic complexity of Shakespeare's late plays to be informed by contemporary debates about the tonal and structural composition of tragicomedy. Author Sarah Dewar-Watson re-examines such plays as *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest* in light of the important work of reception which was undertaken in Italy by pioneering theorists such as Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio (1504-73) and Giambattista Guarini (1538-1612). The author demonstrates ways in which these theoretical developments filtered from their intellectual base in Italy to the playhouses of early modern England via the work of dramatists such as Jonson and Fletcher. Dewar-Watson argues that the effect of this widespread revaluation of genre not only extends as far as Shakespeare, but that he takes a leading role in developing its possibilities on the English stage. In the course of pursuing this topic, Dewar-Watson also engages with several areas of current scholarly debate: the nature of Shakespeare's authorship; recent interest in and work on Shakespeare's later plays; and new critical work on Italian language-learning in Renaissance England. Finally, Shakespeare's Poetics develops current critical thinking about the place of Greek literature in Renaissance England, particularly in relation to Shakespeare.

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