Introduction
'To the great Variety of Readers'

When Shakespeare's First Folio reached the bookstalls in 1623, it became the first collection printed in the prestigious folio format to feature plays exclusively from the commercial stages.[1] It was also the first collection to construct and advertise history as a clearly defined dramatic genre. The Folio divides its plays – eighteen of which had not been printed before – into three theatrical genres, which are indicated by the 'Catalogue' (omitting *Troilus and Cressida*) and also by the title of the collection – *Master William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. The Folio selectively collects its 'Histories', excluding, for example, the Scottish history of *Macbeth* and classical histories, such as *Julius Caesar*, and arranges them according to the historical order of English kings, rather than the plays' order of composition. By doing so, the collection effectively publishes its own statement about the parameters of the genre: the history play's proper subject is English monarchical history after the Conquest.

This design was not, of course, undertaken by Shakespeare, who died in 1616. It was the product of a collaboration between Shakespeare's former colleagues John Heminges and Henry Condell and the syndicate of stationers who invested in the project – William and Isaac Jaggard, Edward Blount, William Aspley, and John Smethwick. The Folio categories are therefore a retrospective division propelled by the publication process – and specifically by *this* publication venture, which has had an immense (and sometimes unproductive) influence on critical approaches to early modern history plays. Rather than revealing something inherent about the form, style, subject, or ideology of Shakespeare's plays that dramatize the past, the Folio division offers a *reading* of them, and its construction reflects the interests and strategies of those who took part in its publication. The impact of this venture cannot be overstated: the Folio's design has subsequently entrenched critical expectations about the generic

[1] Ben Jonson's *Works* (1616) contains poetry, masques, and entertainments, alongside his plays.

identity of Shakespeare's plays and those of other early modern dramatists. *Publishing the History Play in the Time of Shakespeare* aims to show that the publication process, rather than simply reflecting established views and exempla of dramatic genres, has played a crucial role in constructing them. Publication agents have defined, shaped, and marketed history plays in ways that have affected the experiences of 'the great Variety of Readers' – from early modern to modern.[2]

A key premise of this study is that genre offers mediating frameworks through which writers and readers create meaning, but it involves a kind of participation that, as Jacques Derrida proposes, 'never amounts to belonging'.[3] Statements about genre are part of the 'aftermarket' of plays in print and are subject to revision and reappraisal.[4] Many of the Folio 'Histories', such as *Richard II*, are described as tragedies in their earliest single-text editions, which demonstrates the mutability of genre labels. The cultural capital that Shakespeare and his plays subsequently accrued, however, has led to the 1623 Folio being used uncritically as a touchstone, rather than as a single and not necessarily representative example of participation in categorizing dramatic 'kinds'. Andy Kesson proposes that the Folio has standardized generic expectations of comedies, with the effect of marginalizing and problematizing the plays of other dramatists.[5] Similarly, in relation to its 'Histories', Gary Taylor argues that the 'posthumous Shakespeare folio [has] retrospectively conquered, solidified, legitimized and singularized the genre'.[6] Many history-play studies have concentrated on the plays listed in the Folio's catalogue, defined the genre (explicitly or implicitly) as the dramatization of English monarchical history, and developed a rise-and-fall narrative trajectory that is tied to Shakespeare's *oeuvre* and typically identifies the 1590s as the heyday of the history play, arguing

[2] William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (London, 1623; STC 22273), A3r.

[3] Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. Avital Ronell, *Critical Inquiry*, 7:1 (1980), 55–81 (p. 65).

[4] Peter Berek, 'Genres, Early Modern Theatrical Title Pages, and the Authority of Print', in *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), pp. 159–75 (p. 160).

[5] Andy Kesson, 'Was Comedy a Genre in English Early Modern Drama?', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 54:2 (2014), 213–25.

[6] Gary Taylor, 'History, Plays, Genre, Games', in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton*, ed. Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 47–63 (p. 51). See also Adam G. Hooks, 'Making Histories: or, Shakespeare's *Ring*', in *The Book in History, the Book as History: New Intersections of the Material Text*, ed. Heidi Brayman, Jesse M. Lander, and Zachary Lesser (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 341–74.

for its swift decline in the early seventeenth century.[7] Lawrence Danson claims, for example, that 'it would only be a small exaggeration to say that "history play" is the only genre [Shakespeare] actually invented'.[8] Insightful reappraisals in chapters and collections by Michael Hattaway, Richard Helgerson, Paulina Kewes, Teresa Grant, Barbara Ravelhofer, Gary Taylor, and Adam Hooks have challenged the enduring critical emphasis on Shakespeare's English histories and assumptions about the uses and ideology of history plays.[9] However, no study has yet concentrated on publication and the fact that the ways in which plays make books of themselves encourage particular interpretations of them and their genres.[10]

Publishing the History Play in the Time of Shakespeare is the first book-length study of history plays to examine the genre through the publication process, an approach that crucially recovers evidence for early readings of these plays and their position within the period's historical culture and the geopolitics of the book trade. In doing so, it draws on the methodologies of genre criticism and book history, bringing together two areas of study that are often considered separately. This method is vital for history plays because of the overlooked and outsized influence of the publication process in creating expectations for a dramatic genre that, unlike the

[7] See E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944); Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1947); Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare's History* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985); Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled: The Making of Historical Drama* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); Paola Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); John W. Velz (ed.), *Shakespeare's English Histories: A Quest for Form and Genre* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1996); Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare's History Plays: Rethinking Historicism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Ralf Hertel, *Staging England in the Elizabethan History Play: Performing National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[8] Lawrence Danson, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 87.

[9] Michael Hattaway, 'The Shakespearean History Play', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 3–24; Richard Helgerson, 'Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists of History', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume II: The Histories*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 26–47; Paulina Kewes, 'The Elizabethan History Play: A True Genre?' in *Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, ed. Dutton and Howard, pp. 170–93; Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (eds.), *English Historical Drama, 1500–1660: Forms outside the Canon* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Taylor, 'History'; and Hooks, 'Making Histories'.

[10] For other ways of approaching Shakespeare's genres, from the early modern period through to contemporary performance, see Anthony R. Guneratne, *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For a linguistic analysis of genre using DocuScope, see Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore, 'The Hundredth Psalm to the Tune of "Green Sleeves": Digital Approaches to Shakespeare's Language of Genre', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61:3 (2010), 357–90.

classically derived comedy and tragedy, lacks established discursive parameters. Indeed, the term 'history play' was not in use during the period, the preferred descriptor being 'a history' or 'histories'. Because of the overlap between 'history' as a dramatic category and as an emerging field of enquiry about the past, the over-dominance of the Shakespearean model of English history inhibits our access to the period's historical culture, including the evidence of trans-temporal and transnational exchanges that take place within and across publications (including plays) that address some kind of historical past.

This book concentrates on the publication of history plays from the commercial stages during Shakespeare's 'time' – that is, from the early 1590s (when his working career in London was beginning) to the publication of the Folio in 1623. The reasons for this time frame are twofold: first, to re-evaluate the generic markers of Shakespeare's plays in print, showing how they are part of competing discourses of genre, rather than reflecting clear-cut perspectives; and second, to contrast these playbooks with the evidence of other dramatists' history plays – both in print and on the stage.[11] The emphasis on commercial plays is sustained further to reappraise modern critical accounts of history plays, which typically concentrate on those performed on public stages in front of paying audiences, but also because publication patterns suggest that stationers developed different strategies for commercial and non-commercial plays during the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.[12] This book proposes that publication agents have actively defined and shaped the printed history play through two interlinked agendas: strategies of selection (seen through print contexts) and strategies of presentation (seen through print paratexts). By choosing to invest in certain history plays, publication agents determined, to a considerable degree, the survival of plays from the commercial stages, and this selection process also suggests how stationers read the plays alongside their wider output and the interests of the reading public. Through the preparation of paratextual materials (such as title pages, woodcut ornaments, contents pages, and addresses to readers), the

[11] For clarity, it is worth pointing out that I reserve the term 'playbook' exclusively for the book of the play produced through the publication process, and not in application to any playscripts.

[12] I use the terms 'professional' and 'commercial' for plays performed by adult and boys' companies in front of paying audiences, whereas I use 'non-professional' or 'non-commercial' for plays that were written and staged at universities or Inns of Court, as well as closet plays, translations, and other forms of entertainment, including pageants and masques. Because they emphasize the different economies of staging plays for paying audiences and do not carry an additional evaluative judgement, I favour the terms 'commercial' and 'non-commercial'.

publication process also shapes the presentation of plays as books, which both discloses and directs how history plays were used and categorized. In turn, these practices shed light on three kinds of readings: those of publication agents who oversaw the process; those of early modern readers who encountered history plays as books; and those of modern readers, who have been significantly influenced by some early uses (such as Shakespeare's Folio), but not others (such as the play catalogues issued by booksellers in the seventeenth century, including Edward Archer's 1656 list of 'all the Plaies that were ever printed', that sometimes included an assessment of genre).[13]

Through four chronological case studies, this book argues that the twinned acts of selection and presentation have led, in conjunction with Shakespeare's emerging cultural capital, to a narrow definition of the 'history play' that is not only detrimental for understanding Shakespeare's *oeuvre* but actually distorts the evidence of performance and print, which reveals that historical drama existed in a variety of forms and contexts. By concentrating on stationers' investment patterns, this book shows that history plays, alongside non-dramatic texts about the past, were a vital part of the period's historical culture. It demonstrates that stage and print patterns for history plays differed considerably, and that a thorough understanding of the publication process is necessary for determining what can – and cannot – be claimed about theatrical repertories. Despite the tendency of history-play studies to group together plays on the same historical past, this book argues that plays dramatizing different temporal and national histories were read together, a practice which should be reflected in our own critical approaches. To clarify the parameters and methodologies of this study, the Introduction first considers early modern ideas of history and history plays, and how the publication process contributes to this discourse. It then explores in more detail the print contexts and print paratexts that reveal how publication agents participate in and shape history as a genre.

Defining Histories: What's in a Name?

H: The plaies that they plaie in England, are nor right comedies.
T: Yet they doo nothing else but plaie euery daye.
H: Yea but they are neither right comedies, nor right tragedies.

[13] Archer's catalogue is appended to Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley's *The Old Law* (London, 1656; Wing M1048), a1r–b4v.

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G: How would you name them then?
H: Representations of histories, without any decorum.
John Florio, *Florio's Second Fruits* (1591)[14]

Many history-play studies have concentrated on Shakespeare's English histories as if they define and largely constitute the genre, rather than reflecting the critical dominance of the 1623 Folio's design. Graham Holderness, for example, claims that accepting the Folio's division of plays and parameters for its histories presents 'few problems of a generic kind'.[15] The genre has been seen as synonymous with medieval English monarchical history in studies by Phyllis Rackin (1990), Benjamin Griffin (2001), and Ralf Hertel (2014). A terminological slipperiness can be witnessed in accounts that use 'history play' and 'English history play' interchangeably, which marginalizes – or indeed effaces – plays featuring non-English pasts.[16] This narrow definition and the influence of Shakespeare's Folio have also constructed a rise-and-fall trajectory for the genre – one that erases large chunks of theatre history and is too neatly linked to Shakespeare's *oeuvre* during the 1590s.[17] Such studies, as Kewes summarizes, have propagated 'the myth that there is a definable dramatic genre called the history play, which is distinct from both comedy and tragedy, which features the "English" past, and which reaches its artistic maturity with Shakespeare, swiftly declining thereafter'.[18] In *Stages of History*, for example, Rackin connects the (English) history play to a teleological narrative of historiographical development, suggesting that the genre died out when history became a clearly defined autonomous discipline by the early seventeenth century.[19] This approach overlooks enduring diversity in both dramatic and non-dramatic historical writing and closely follows the plays of Shakespeare, which move away from English history by the early Jacobean period. Ivo Kamps does not follow Rackin's Shakespearean emphasis, but similarly develops a rise-and-fall narrative that connects the history play with patterns in historiography, delaying the genre's

[14] *Florios Second Frvtes* (London, 1591; STC 11097), D4r.
[15] Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled*, p. 1.
[16] Kewes, 'Elizabethan', pp. 170–93. See also Helgerson ('Shakespeare', p. 26), who argues that the cultural and critical emphasis on Shakespeare has resulted in 'a considerable narrowing in our understanding of the variety of perspectives on the English past – and thus on the English nation – that were available to Elizabethan theatregoers'.
[17] Accounts that offer rise-and-fall narratives include: Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled*; Rackin, *Stages of History*; Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama, 1385–1600* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2001).
[18] Kewes, 'Elizabethan', p. 187. [19] Rackin, *Stages of History*, pp. 21–32.

decline until the Stuart era. Kamps tends to dismiss non-dramatic historical sources as inferior to the history play: 'dramatists often show themselves to be better expositors of history than the historians; they show themselves to possess a clearer understanding of historiography's literary origins and its limitations as a knowledge-producing practice'.[20] This kind of approach, while rooted in discussions of historiography, reveals a relatively static reading of the connection between plays and their sources, depending on an assumption that plays are more sophisticated than other forms of historical writing and that there is some consensus about the purposes of history during the period, neither of which can be comfortably supported.[21]

As this study considers throughout, there is little evidence to suggest that Shakespeare's approach to history on stage neatly reflected the practices of other dramatists, that the strategies of the publication agents involved in the 1623 Folio offered representative ways of defining the genre, or that 'history' as a 'kind' of play was ever precisely or consistently defined. The term 'history', of course, applied to both dramatic and non-dramatic texts (that is, as Gérard Genette describes, to different 'modes of enunciation').[22] While tragedy and comedy also had non-dramatic traditions, they nevertheless had a classical heritage as dramatic categories, and, in particular, 'tragedy', as Tamara Atkin discusses, seems to have been used on printed title pages by the mid-sixteenth century to invoke a 'direct or suggestive association with classical drama'.[23] Setting aside the issue of mode, 'history' carried a wide range of meanings, including, as the *OED* outlines, a sequence of past events – real or imaginary – such as those relating to the life of an individual, group of people, or nation; a branch of knowledge and enquiry into past events; and any account of such events.[24] 'History' is, as David Scott Kastan describes, a 'radically ambiguous' term

[20] Kamps, *Historiography*, p. 13.

[21] See also Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled*; Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian*. Irving Ribner's *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1965), first published in 1957, acknowledges the artificiality of a Shakespeare-centric evaluation of the history play and examines a much wider range of plays. However, Ribner's account is still driven by, in common with his contemporaries Tillyard and Campbell, an assumption that history has a clearly defined aim (to 'use the past for didactic purposes') and that plays about the past having 'little historical sense' or neglecting the 'legitimate purposes' of history must not be confused with the 'true history play', criteria which cannot be properly upheld or proposed (pp. 8, 25).

[22] Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 61–64.

[23] Tamara Atkin, *Reading Drama in Tudor England* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 33–35.

[24] See 'history, n.', *OED Online* (revised March 2021; accessed 12 April 2021).

that applies both to past events and to accounts of them.[25] It does not refer exclusively or self-evidently to those based on historical records or an accepted historical tradition (which is, however, the emphasis of this study), but also applies to entirely fictional events in a range of forms. The terms 'history' and 'story' were used interchangeably, and one of the dominant meanings of 'story' during the period was a narrative of events that were believed to have taken place in the past, an application that further limits the precision and usefulness of these terms in isolation.[26] For these reasons, understanding 'history' is a process of understanding how certain people have preferred to use and treat it. A discussion of historical drama involves both the modern critic's choice of how to define the genre and early modern forms of 'participation' – which, in this study, concentrate on the publication process and the way it continually reshapes the parameters and purposes of the history play through stationers' strategies of selection and presentation. Before addressing the print contexts and paratexts that reveal this negotiation, this section explores in more detail the semantic flexibility of history during the period and then clarifies this study's use of the term 'history play'.

Early modern discourses on genre – or, more accurately, on 'kinds' – confirm that history as a dramatic form did not have fixed parameters.[27] An interest in defining dramatic kinds is suggested by the extract from *Florio's Second Fruits* quoted above, but the exchange remains tantalizingly elusive. The characters in Florio's dialogue seem concerned with generic purity. Histories from the commercial stages are said to lack decorum: they are not part of a 'pure' or classical genre like comedy and tragedy, but no further indication of subject, style, or theme is suggested. Indeed, the dialogue does not make it clear whether 'history' is being used to refer to an account of the past or one of fictional events. In *A Survey of London* (1598), John Stow describes London's playhouses as offering 'Comedies, Tragedies, enterludes, and histories, both true and fayned', which attempts a generic distinction, but provides no firm sense of history's scope or expectations.[28] Stow seems to differentiate between plays that have a certain degree of historical veracity and those that are imagined or distorted, having a tenuous connection to a recognizable past. He nevertheless includes both forms within the category of 'history'.

[25] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), p. 11.
[26] See 'story, n.', *OED Online* (revised March 2021; accessed 12 April 2021).
[27] See also Kewes, 'Elizabethan'; Janette Dillon, 'The Early Tudor History Play', in *English Historical Drama*, ed. Grant and Ravelhofer, pp. 32–57.
[28] John Stow, *A Suruay of London* (London, 1598; STC 23341), F3r.

Similarly, Thomas Heywood includes mythological subjects that can be presented 'in the fashion of a History' as part of his *Apology for Actors* (written *c.*1608, published 1612). In contrast to Stow, Heywood constructs 'Hystories' as a theatrical genre with classical origins: 'I will begin with the antiquity of Acting Comedies, Tragedies, and Hystories.'[29] The genre seems to feature the worthy and memorable acts of individuals from the past, but further clarification proves difficult. Heywood separately discusses 'our domesticke hystories' (including *Edward III* and *Henry V*, B4r) and 'forreigne History' (involving 'the liues of Romans, Grecians, or others', F3v). He makes distinctions between histories of different national origins, but includes them all within the category of 'History'. For Heywood, the history play is not synonymous with English history. He aims instead to associate 'History' with as many profitable and laudable attributes as possible, which serves the *Apology*'s purpose of offering a defence of the theatre: 'there is neither Tragedy, History, Comedy, Morrall or Pastorall, from which an infinite vse cannot be gathered' (F4r). If any overarching consensus can be detected in the *Apology* it would be that the history play typically engages with some kind of recognizable past, whether native or foreign, true or feigned, recent or deriving from ancient or legendary history.

Plays from the period also directly explore ideas of dramatic genre. One of the most sustained examples appears in *A Warning for Fair Women*, which presents history as a character on stage.[30] This anonymous play from the Chamberlain's Men, written between 1596 and 1599 and published by William Aspley in 1599, dramatizes the murder of a London merchant, George Sanders, which took place in 1573, and includes an induction featuring 'Tragedie', 'Comedie', and 'Hystorie'.[31] Hystorie is presented with the attributes of a 'Drum and Ensigne', which suggests that the genre is dominated by battles, military subjects, and concerns of state. Tragedie is initially presented with a whip and a knife and identified with stories of revenge, murder, violence, and punishment, while Comedie favours material that is 'but slight and childish' (A2v). Grant and Ravelhofer suggest that the induction helps us to understand what contemporaries thought about these three dramatic kinds, but, to my mind, the distinctions are elided as the scene progresses and the personified

[29] Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612; STC 13309), B3r.

[30] See also Robert Wilson's *The Coblers Prophesie* (London, 1594; STC 25781), which features a scene (C1v–C3v) involving the classical muses Thalia (Comedy), Clio (History), and Melpomine (Tragedy).

[31] *A Warning for Faire Women* (London, 1599; STC 25089), A2r.

genres appear to overlap.[32] Descriptions of Tragedie merge with features that had seemed to be unique to Hystorie: Tragedie also involves accounts of monarchs and tyrants who strive 'to obtaine a crowne' (A2v). When Tragedie is declared the victorious genre for the play, the summary of its action recalls the concerns and attributes of Hystorie:

> My Sceane is London, natiue and your owne,
> I sigh to thinke, my subiect too well knowne,
> I am not faind: many now in this round,
> Once to behold me in sad teares were drownd.
> (A3r–v)

The subject matter of the play is 'not faind': it is based on a recognizable, 'too well knowne' historical past, and it blends the characteristics of tragedy and history. The fact that the actors playing the parts of Comedie, Hystorie, and Tragedie would have reappeared in other roles within the main action could serve as a reminder, in performance, of the interplay of different genres in one text and the impossibility of clear-cut categories.

The participation that is part of defining, using, and negotiating history as a dramatic form reflects the similar processes involved in approaching history as a branch of knowledge and subject of enquiry about the past. The history play transverses the categories of history and poetry that Philip Sidney discusses in his *Defence of Poesy* (published in 1595, but written during the early 1580s). The *Defence* proposes, in theory, clear distinctions for history, philosophy, and poetry (which is 'subdiuided into sundry more speciall denominations' and includes drama); but the treatise is informed, as Blair Worden points out, by Sidney's agenda to defend poetry as the superior form.[33] Poetry aims 'to teach and delight' (which echoes Horace's *Ars Poetica*) and involves invention: it borrows 'nothing of what is, hath bin, or shall be' (*Defence*, C2v). In contrast, history is 'so tied, not to what should be, but to what is, to the particular truth of things' and is therefore 'lesse fruitfull' (D1r–v), while philosophy 'teacheth obscurely' (D2v). The examples Sidney gives and the discussions he offers elsewhere, however, demonstrate that these 'pure' genres or kinds are impossible in practice. Sidney acknowledges that plays – which he largely divides into the two

[32] Grant and Ravelhofer, 'Introduction', in *English Historical Drama*, ed. Grant and Ravelhofer, pp. 1–31 (pp. 12–15). See also Emma Whipday, *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies: Violence in the Early Modern Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 14–15.

[33] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595; STC 22535), C2v; Blair Worden, 'Historians and Poets', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68:1–2 (2005), 71–93 (pp. 81–82).

classical genres of comedy and tragedy – sometimes dramatize the historical past, but claims that they are 'tied to the lawes of Poesie, and not of Historie' (H4v). At the same time though, history – because of the 'clowdie knowledge of mankinde' (G1r) – cannot offer an accurate account of the past, and so historiographers 'haue bene glad to borrow fashion and perchance weight of the Poets' (B2v). It becomes difficult to distinguish between poetry that draws on the past and history that uses the techniques of poetry. '[R]yming and versing' (C3r), according to Sidney, are not the defining features of poetry – indeed, history may be written in verse. For Sidney, poetry is characterized by invention, and it is therefore an important part of many different kinds of writing, with one of its key purposes being, as Kamps summarizes, 'to educate its readers and to spur them on to noble action'.[34]

These aims, however, were also directly connected, by other writers, to the purposes of history. The address 'A. B. To the Reader', prefacing Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus (1591), argues that 'there is no learning so proper for the direction of the life of man as Historie', as 'we are easlier taught by example then by precept'.[35] History, according to the address, is important because it profits readers, providing them with exempla to imitate or avoid. George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* (1589) outlines a similar purpose for history: he claims that historiographers use 'not the matter so precisely to wish that al they wrote should be accounted true, for that was not needefull nor expedient to the purpose, namely to be vsed either for example or for pleasure'.[36] For Puttenham, written history brings profit and pleasure to readers (and therefore overlaps with the features of Sidney's poetry and the Horatian commonplace). It also does not need to remain tied to records of the past, but can incorporate invention to further its aims. John Hayward used the same defence when he came under examination for *The First Part of the Life and Reign of King Henry IV* (1599), claiming that it is 'lawfull for any historiographer to insert any hystorie of former tyme into that hystorie he wright albeit no other hystorian of that matter have meued the same'.[37] History-writing has a complicated relationship to ideas of truth and invention. For writers such as Savile, Puttenham, and Hayward, techniques of invention – including

[34] Kamps, *Historiography*, p. 82.
[35] Henry Savile and Tacitus, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba; Fower Bookes of the Histories of Cornelivs Tacitvs; The Life of Agricola* (Oxford, 1591; STC 23642), ¶3r.
[36] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589; STC 20519.5), F4v.
[37] See Margaret Dowling, 'Sir John Hayward's Troubles over his *Life of Henry IV*', *The Library*, 4th ser., 11:2 (1930), 212–24 (p. 216).

the addition of speeches as if they had taken place and the incorporation of large chunks of fictional writing (as in Savile's extended narrative that bridges the gap between the *Annals* and *Histories* of Tacitus) – could add to the truthful sentiment of an account, while departing from historical accuracy.[38]

Early modern readers may not have drawn sharp distinctions between historical drama and the writings of historians, including such varied authors as 'Holinshed', Savile, and Samuel Daniel. As Worden observes, many historians were also poets (including playwrights): Thomas Heywood wrote plays based on the reign of Elizabeth I (*1* and *2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*) in addition to a prose account on the same subject (*England's Elizabeth*), which recycles material from the plays.[39] Samuel Daniel wrote a classical history – *Philotas* – for the Children of the Queen's Revels, as well as a narrative poem on the Wars of the Roses (*The Civil Wars*) and a prose history beginning with the Saxons before the Conquest (*The Collection of the History of England*). A copy of Camden's *Britannia* contains, as D. R. Woolf identifies, marginalia by an early modern reader named John Thomas, who engaged in intertextual historical study, adding his own comments to Camden's text, as well as extracts from poetry, other histories, and other kinds of writing.[40] In Jonson's *The Devil Is an Ass*, Fitzdottrell claims that he is not 'cunning i'the Chronicle', but instead learns his history 'from the Play-bookes' because 'they are more authentique'.[41] Although Jonson satirizes this practice of reading history play*books* as accurate accounts of the past, his criticism suggests that it was relatively common. The fact that plays dramatizing the past were sometimes referred to as 'histories', and not by the modern critical term 'history play', further encourages a reading that places them alongside non-dramatic histories.

While some modern critics have attempted to describe the period's dominant historiographical methods, typically outlining a progression from providential to humanist to antiquarian approaches to history, there is a danger in eliding forms of participation that endured but do not fit easily into a linear narrative of development.[42] Woolf's important

[38] Grant and Ravelhofer, 'Introduction' in *English Historical Drama*, pp. 2–3; Worden, 'Historians', p. 84.
[39] Worden, 'Historians', p. 72.
[40] D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 90. See also F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1967), which counts drama amongst historical forms of writing.
[41] Ben Jonson, *The Diuell is an Asse* (London, 1631; STC 14753.5), Q3v.
[42] See, for example, F. Smith Fussner's teleological account: *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580–1640* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

monographs on historical thought have drawn attention to the experiences of a wide range of writers, readers, and, indeed, hearers of history, including playgoers, and an emerging critical trend is to be suspicious of master narratives.[43] Alex Davis opens his insightful study, *Renaissance Historical Fiction*, by acknowledging the importance of 'a historical tradition that is fractured and discontinuous rather than smoothly evolutionary'.[44] Even individual early modern historiographical treatises, such as Thomas Blundeville's *The True Order and Method of Writing and Reading Histories* (1574), offer contradictory views on the purposes and methodologies of history. Blundeville devotes much of his treatise to emphasizing causation, but then also claims that histories must affirm God's overarching plan and authority.[45] His treatise conflates a providential approach to history with a humanist drive, which leads to some conflicting statements: on the one hand, the purpose of writing and reading history is to understand why certain events took place, learn from them, and apply them to current times; but on the other hand, the treatise claims that the aim of history is to 'acknowledge the prouidence of God, wherby all things are gouerned and directed' (F2v). What my brief survey aims to show, in other words, is that there was no dominant method, purpose, or form for writing about history during the period – and history plays, for many of their audiences and readers, were a part of this fractured and varied discourse.

Modern genre theory offers some useful perspectives for approaching early modern texts. Already mentioned, Derrida describes genre as 'a sort of participation without belonging – a taking part in without being part of, without having membership in a set'.[46] More specifically, Rosalie Colie's and Alastair Fowler's work on Renaissance genre systems draws attention to the confusion and mutability of classification that dominates in the period, but also highlights the ubiquity of 'distinctive generic repertories' (Fowler) that offer 'a set of interpretations, of "frames" or "fixes" on the

Kamps offers a concise discussion of these three approaches in 'The Writing of History in Shakespeare's England', in *Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, ed. Dutton and Howard, pp. 4–25.

[43] D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); *Reading History in Early Modern England* (2000); *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979).

[44] Alex Davis, *Renaissance Historical Fiction: Sidney, Deloney, Nashe* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), p. 19.

[45] Thomas Blundeville, *The true order and Methode of wryting and reading Hystories* (London, 1574; STC 3161), F2v–3r.

[46] Derrida, 'Genre', p. 59.

world' (Colie).[47] Genette carefully explores the conflation in genre theory between mode (as a linguistic category that specifies a means of enunciation – 'pure narration/mixed narration/dramatic imitation') and genre (as a literary category that takes account of both thematic and formal elements).[48] Indeed, ideas of history and historical drama are marked by an uncertain relationship between content and form. Parameters cannot be established only on the basis of means of enunciation: texts blend different modes (chronicle histories contain dramatic speeches, for example), and many efforts at categorizing reflect a partial assessment of formal and thematic features to serve a particular purpose. Genre is a lens for viewing: it focuses on certain aspects of a text and depends upon participation – not just of the writer, but of everyone who encounters a given text. Its negotiation is as active during the text's 'afterlife' as during the time of composition. All classifications and accounts of the history play, rather than being definitive, represent attempts at organizing, counting, and collecting according to different agendas. Indeed, Sidney shows what Derrida, Colie and others tell: his *Defence* is an example par excellence of participation informed by a clear agenda – in his case to elevate poetry above history and philosophy. Similarly, Florio's short dialogue on genre is part of a larger project. Taken as a whole, *Florio's Second Fruits* is a manual for learning Italian and developing colloquial conversation skills. Its main purpose is not the consolidation of dramatic categories, but rather the development of refined language skills and manners, which perhaps informs the emphasis on decorum in the dialogue's dismissal of 'histories'. As a final example, Francis Meres aims in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), a commonplace book and 'comparatiue discourse', to elevate English drama and compare it favourably to classical writers of comedy and tragedy.[49] It is this agenda that directs his classification of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV* (no part specified), and *King John* as tragedies.[50] While *1 Henry IV* was printed in the same year as a 'history', Meres's assessment of genre depends on his overarching argument that Shakespeare is 'the best for Comedy and Tragedy' as Plautus and Seneca are 'among the

[47] Rosalie L. Colie, 'Genre-Systems and the Functions of Literature', in *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 1–31 (pp. 8–9); Alastair Fowler, 'Genre and the Literary Canon', *New Literary History*, 11.1 (1979), 97–119 (p. 102).

[48] Genette, *Architext*, pp. 64–70.

[49] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (London, 1598; STC 17834), Nn7r.

[50] It is unclear whether Shakespeare had written *2 Henry IV* by the time of Meres's account. The fact that *Palladis Tamia* does not distinguish between the two parts could indicate that he had not, although Meres could be referring to both plays collectively.

Latines' (O02r). There is no room for an alternative lens or frame for viewing the plays.

While both Sidney and Derrida draw attention to the ways in which *texts* can be part of several genres or kinds, this study concentrates on *agents* of participation, because the individuals who collect, organize, and assess plays about the past are those who decide how a given text takes part. Their 'active participation', to quote Hans Robert Jauss, determines 'the historical life of a literary work'.[51] Rather than examining dramatists as the main makers of meaning, this study focuses on the agents involved in publication, as the playbooks they produce all make statements about genre – although these are rarely uniform across a large number of publications. For example, the classificatory labels that appear on title pages are one of the most prominent types of genre statement in playbooks; yet these labels often lack clarity because the applications vary so widely. An eclectic range of plays are described as histories, which sometimes carries the sense of an account of the past (*The Chronicle History of Henry V*, 1600), sometimes refers to the life of a central character (*The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley*, 1605), sometimes applies to a story of fictional events (*The History of the Trial of Chivalry*, 1605), and often blurs the boundaries between these meanings (which can be inferred from most of the above examples, as well as *The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, 1594, a play that loosely follows the lives of historical individuals).[52] This terminological slipperiness does not mean that plays dramatizing the past could not be understood and described as a distinct category. Shakespeare's Folio is an example of using 'history' to refer to plays based on the lives of English monarchs. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 2, Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* (1598) is the first commercial playbook to be advertised as a 'history' with the unambiguous meaning of an account of the past. But the enduring malleability of genre labels suggests that they should not be one of the main ways of classifying and examining the history play. Even if a play or non-dramatic text is not described in print as a 'history', its account of the past was often a primary factor in shaping its use and reception. Most of Shakespeare's English histories were first published as 'tragedies'; however,

[51] Hans Robert Jauss, 'Literary History As a Challenge to Literary Theory', trans. Elizabeth Benzinger, *New Literary History*, 2:1 (1970), 7–37 (p. 8).

[52] Similarly, Griffin observes that, in the Elizabethan revels accounts after 1571, 'the word *history* is indiscriminately applied to any kind of dramatic show', as evidenced by the occasions on which the court recorder was clearly unaware of the title of a performed play and wrote only 'the history of' in the account book, leaving the remainder of the line blank (*Playing the Past*, p. 10).

as this book will argue, the fact that they dramatized the past informed their selection and printed presentation in important ways.

Somewhat surprisingly, the material conditions of textual production have been overlooked by history-play studies and no sustained account has examined history plays as books to be read – despite a prevailing interest in connecting history plays to works and patterns of historiography. In *Reading History in Early Modern England*, Woolf does concentrate on, as he puts it, the 'history of the history book *as* book', but plays do not feature centrally in his account.[53] History-play studies have tended to be dismissive of publication. While Benjamin Griffin observes that a significant number of history plays were printed between 1598 and 1613, which he sees as disclosing 'an unsuspected Jacobean passion for the histories', he claims that 'this consideration of the tastes of the play-reading public does not contradict the view that the history play was "obsolete" after about 1600; it merely reminds us that whatever becomes obsolete for the retailer thereby becomes valuable for the antique-shop'.[54] Griffin's focus is on performance patterns and theatre companies, which he describes here as the 'retailers' of history plays, while the actual booksellers are positioned as traders in antiques and obsolete goods. However, play*books* were not out-of-date commodities: if they were, it would have made little sense for publishers to invest in them.[55] Print offered a new medium and a new readerly audience, and history plays were often marketed for their 'currency', contemporaneity, and connection to non-dramatic texts. The interests of a play-reading public are integral for understanding these plays and their position within the wider historical culture of the period. Moreover, our access to the history plays that were performed on the early modern stages has been, as Marta Straznicky describes, 'decisively mediated' by publication and the fact that individuals working in the book trade chose to invest in them.[56]

At this stage, it is necessary to provide my own working definition of a history play, a key example of participation on my part. Drawing on early modern discourses about history and 'histories' outlined briefly above, I describe as a history play any dramatic text that engages with a recognizable historical past, regardless of whether this past is English/British or 'foreign', ancient or recent, closely following the evidence of primary

[53] Woolf, *Reading History*, pp. 1–5; see chs. 5 and 6. [54] Griffin, *Playing the Past*, pp. 144–45.
[55] For archaism as a deliberate style and publishing strategy, see Lucy Munro, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590–1674* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[56] Marta Straznicky, 'Introduction: Plays, Books, and the Public Sphere', in *Book of the Play*, ed. Straznicky, pp. 1–20 (p. 4).

documents and records of a particular past or drawing significantly on legendary traditions. This definition is informed by Kewes's proposal: '[i]f we want to understand the place and uses of history in early modern drama, we should be willing to consider any play, irrespective of its formal shape or fictional element, which represents, or purports to represent, a historical past'.[57] Of course, what constitutes a historical past is open to debate, and the criteria suggested by this study are by no means definitive. I consider plays to be dramatizing a recognizable past if their characters or events are connected to a written or oral historical tradition and have at one time been thought to have existed or taken place. These broad parameters include plays that dramatize the legendary British past, as in *Locrine* (1595) and *King Lear* (1608); biblical history, as in *The Love of David and Fair Bathsheba* (1599); popular quasi-historical figures, including Robin Hood and his followers (who were included in accounts such as John Leland's *Itinerary* (written *c.*1540s)); and real people and events through an allegorical design, as in *The Whore of Babylon* (1607) and *A Game at Chess* (1625). Although it could be argued that all plays dramatize some sort of past, whether 'true or fayned', this study does *not* consider as a 'history' those plays which show few signs of being linked to an identifiable historical account. I do not discuss plays that are merely set *in* the past as histories, or those which evoke a specific location and time but are not otherwise associated with external sources or traditions that suggest the events were once regarded as part of a common past.[58] For example, Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, which is set within the broad context of historical battles over Spanish and Ottoman control of the island (including the siege of Malta in 1565), is not counted, because the main characters and events are not clearly part of another oral or written account of the past.

There are particular advantages to the way this study loosely outlines the parameters of the genre. It avoids the problems associated with other attempts at classification: it does not privilege Shakespeare's English histories, nor does it suggest that history plays can be identified by their subject, style, patterns of conclusion, title-page descriptions, or ideology. Instead, it closely approximates the hybrid generic status of 'history' during the period and the fact that early modern writers and readers habitually made comparisons across a range of texts dealing with different historical pasts. It is, however, only a starting point. Genre becomes meaningful

[57] Kewes, 'Elizabethan', p. 188.

[58] This approach differs, therefore, from the scope of Davis's *Renaissance Historical Fiction* (2011), which defines historical fiction as anything set in the past (see pp. 1–39).

when specific statements are made about it. The examples given in this introduction testify to the fact that writers and readers make their own decisions about genre. My definition offers a broad framework that helps to recover how specific readers have understood history and historical drama. Each of my chapters explores how publication agents have chosen to define and use history – and makes a clear statement about their 'set of interpretations'.[59] My approach allows the evidence of early modern participation to emerge more vividly than if it were viewed through a narrow template that might overlook, for example, a reader's interest in legendary histories alongside Tudor histories (a case study featured in Chapter 3); but it does not use this openness to eschew genre definitions and specificity. My emphasis is on the prevalence of multiple perspectives that sometimes overlap, diverge, fracture, and contradict, and attest to the diversity of the period's historical culture.

Print Contexts: Strategies of Selection

The vast majority of early modern history plays that have survived have done so because they were printed. Our access to history plays is substantially determined by the publication process and the strategies of selection that have motivated stationers' investment in them.[60] This process not only unequivocally affects the survival of plays from the commercial stages, it also, as Zachary Lesser has shown, reveals readings of them.[61] The stationers who invested in plays *speculated* (one of Lesser's key terms) on their meanings for readers and how they respond to trends in the book market. Stationers also *specialized* (another of Lesser's core concepts) in certain kinds of texts, such as sermons, law books, plays, music books, schoolbooks, or news pamphlets – to name just a few (loosely defined) categories.[62] Richard Tottell, for example, specialized in law books; John

[59] Colie, 'Genre-Systems', p. 8.

[60] David McInnis and Matthew Steggle estimate that around 3,000 different plays were written and performed between 1567 and 1642 and, of these, approximately 543 are extant and 744 are 'identifiable as lost'. See McInnis and Steggle, 'Introduction: *Nothing* Will Come of Nothing? Or, What Can We Learn from Plays That Don't Exist?', in *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England*. ed. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1–14 (p. 1).

[61] Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–9.

[62] For his discussion of these two terms, see *Renaissance Drama*, ch. 1. They were used earlier by Peter Blayney in 'The Publication of Playbooks', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 383–422. For a short overview of specialization, see also Kirk Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing and the Makings of Literary Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 70–76.

Day specialized in Protestant texts; and Matthew Law, during the early Jacobean period, specialized in texts by William Barlow. Publication involves an assessment of categories and belonging – which is one of the reasons why the actions of stationers provide an important point of entry for a study of the history play.[63] When stationers invest capital in a play, they make a decision about its meaning; they assess how it responds to their other publications and dominant specialisms; and they speculate how other readers will engage with it. These strategies of selection are not often visible in the playbooks themselves. But an analysis of patterns in the book trade and of stationers' published outputs helps to recover these strategies and reveal evidence of how 'real historical readers', rather than the ideal, implied readers of reader-response criticism, engaged with history plays.[64]

A pressing issue for this study is identifying which agents connected to the publication process controlled the transmission and preparation of plays from the stage as printed books. Ultimately, this question needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, but a few general points can still be offered.[65] A play's dramatist(s) and/or the company that performed and owned the script sometimes collaborated in its publication and acted as overseers of the process. Ben Jonson regularly contributed signed paratexts to his playbooks – in, for example, *Sejanus* ('To the Readers', 1605) and *The Alchemist* (in his dedication to Lady Mary Wroth, 1612) – that announce his involvement. Shakespeare's First Folio contains a dedication and address from members of the King's Men – John Heminges and Henry Condell – that outline the company's role in providing 'True Originall Copies' for the collection (A1r). However, as Joseph Loewenstein and others have shown, these instances were more the exception than the norm, especially during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[66] Most playbooks from the commercial stages do not indicate the direct involvement of dramatists or companies. For this reason, these agents do not occupy a central position in my study, which

[63] See also Farmer and Lesser, who describe 'categorizing books [as] an inherently critical exercise' (p. 22) in 'What Is Print Popularity? A Map of the Elizabethan Book Trade', in *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 19–54 (pp. 22–23).

[64] Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink, 'The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73:3 (2010), 345–61 (p. 346).

[65] For early Tudor drama, see Atkin (*Reading Drama*, p. 104), who argues that 'author–publisher–printer relationships resist systematic categorization; the arrangements between playwrights and stationers are likely to have varied from person to person, and might even have varied from text to text'.

[66] See Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 2.

is primarily concerned with the publication of history plays as printed books. Indeed, irrespective of whether dramatists and companies assisted in the process or stationers acted independently, publication remained a stationer-controlled enterprise. The Stationers' Company protected the activities of its members: only stationers could enter texts in the Register and hold the rights to them.[67] Even if dramatists (such as Jonson) or companies (such as the Chamberlain's Men) played a role in the publication of their plays, stationers were still responsible for the final decision on whether or not to invest in a play and how, in light of their knowledge of the book trade, to market it.

The significant influence stationers had over the publication of playbooks has often been considered pejoratively or dismissively. New Bibliography aimed, in Fredson Bowers's phrase, to 'strip the veil of print' to access underlying 'authorial' playscripts, thereby relegating the role of stationers to mere transmitters of plays, who were often denigrated as unscrupulous and incompetent.[68] New Bibliographers, including W. W. Greg, R. B. McKerrow, and Alfred W. Pollard, tended to assert that stationers had an antagonistic relationship with dramatists and companies, and that they published stolen or reconstructed plays without the consent of their authors.[69] Thanks to the work of textual scholars over the past thirty years or so, these views have started to change. Rather than framing stationers as meddling, piratical, or underhand in their acquisition and transformation of texts, critics including D. F. McKenzie, Peter Blayney, Zachary Lesser, Alan Farmer, Sonia Massai, Lukas Erne, Marta Straznicky, Adam Hooks, Tamara Atkin, and Kirk Melnikoff have shown that the actions of stationers in the publication of drama were in line with the

[67] Blayney, 'Publication', pp. 390–99; Loewenstein, *Possessive Authorship*, ch. 1. For a history of the Stationers' Company and its practices, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, 'The Stationers' Company of London', in *The British Literary Book Trade, 1475–1700*, ed. James K. Bracken and Joel Silver, Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 170 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), pp. 275–91. See also Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501–1557*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[68] Fredson Bowers, *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library for the Philip H. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation, 1955), p. 87.

[69] R. B. McKerrow, 'Booksellers, Printers, and the Stationers' Trade', in *Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), II, pp. 212–39; Alfred W. Pollard, *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates and the Problems of the Transmission of His Text* (London: Alexander Moring, 1917); W. W. Greg, *Some Aspects and Problems of London Publishing between 1550 and 1650* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956). For a dismissal of the players' alleged opposition to print, see Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare As Literary Dramatist*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 5.

normal operations of the book trade.[70] From a critical perspective, it is increasingly problematic to seek lost 'authorial' manuscripts and remove the mediation of the print process. Stationers are important collaborators in the construction of meaning: they speculate on how a text could be read (Lesser); they act as correctors and annotating readers who edit the text itself (Massai); and they create bibliographical and biographical identities for the dramatists they publish (Hooks). As this study explores, they also played a crucial role in assessing genre – an act that discloses their own readings of history plays and directs the readings of others.

Peter Blayney's seminal essay 'The Publication of Playbooks' helped to change the field by clarifying the different roles played by stationers in the publication process and the influence they had over the presentation of texts, which are important for me to summarize at the outset. 'Stationer' is an umbrella term that applies to those involved in book production or, more exclusively, to members of the Stationers' Company. As outlined by Blayney, the most influential agent is the publisher – a somewhat anachronistic term for the period, but which has recently featured prominently and productively within book history studies.[71] Stationers generally identified themselves as printers (who were responsible for producing the material texts) or booksellers (who were responsible for selling them). As Blayney observes, 'the early modern book trade had no separate word for what we now call a publisher', because 'publishing was not usually thought of as a profession'.[72] It is possible and, indeed, essential for modern critics to identify the stationer who, by investing, 'caused the text to be printed' and therefore acted as its publisher.[73] This identification is made possible by entries in the Stationers' Register (where the rights to titles are assigned to specific stationers) and/or by the texts' imprints (which provide publication details). For example, the 1597 edition (STC 22307) of *Richard II* claims that the play was 'Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise',

[70] McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999); Blayney, 'Publication'; Lesser, *Renaissance Drama*; Farmer and Lesser, 'The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56:1 (2005), 1–32; Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Straznicky (ed.), *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare: Biography, Bibliography, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Atkin, *Reading Drama*; and Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*.

[71] See, for example, Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare*; Lesser, *Renaissance Drama*; Massai, *Rise of the Editor*; Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*.

[72] Blayney, 'Publication', p. 391.

[73] Laurie E. Maguire, 'The Craft of Printing (1600)', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 434–49 (p. 435).

which follows a common descriptive formula for imprints. It indicates that Simmes printed the text and Wise acted as the publisher, and is further corroborated by the Stationers' Register entry to Wise (dated 29 August 1597).[74] Wise was, by profession, a bookseller (he did not own a printing press) and, in addition to investing in the play, he stocked copies of *Richard II* for individual and wholesale purchase in his shop at the Sign of the Angel in Paul's Cross Churchyard. When booksellers or places of purchase are given in imprints, they usually indicate wholesale locations where copies of the edition could be purchased by other booksellers and individual readers. The same play could be traded and sold by booksellers throughout London, across the country, and further afield. The wholesale location was, nevertheless, the most important one for facilitating this exchange and was a permanent part of the book through the imprint.

In the case of *Richard II*, the *role* of the publisher was taken on by the wholesaler, Wise, rather than the printer, Simmes; but printers could act as publishers and, in theory, all three roles of printer, publisher, and bookseller could be undertaken by the same individual. These three key terms are more accurately function-specific, than agent-specific. The incorporation of the Stationers' Company in 1557 and the introduction of decrees that limited the number of master printers and new presses, however, pushed many printers into working for others as trade printers (meaning they did not invest capital in the texts themselves). By the end of the sixteenth century, the role of the publisher was most often taken on by booksellers, rather than printers – indeed, Melnikoff proposes the term 'bookselling publisher' to highlight their influence and ubiquity.[75] Printers still did act as publishers and some, including Thomas Creede and John Danter, switched between working as a printer-for-hire and a printer-publisher, a variation in their role that is indicated by imprints and entries in the Register. For example, the imprint in *Locrine* ('Printed by Thomas Creede', 1595; STC 21528) and corresponding Register entry suggest that Creede printed and published the play, whereas he acted as trade printer for *The First Part of the Contention Between the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* ('Printed by Thomas Creed, for Thomas Millington', 1594; STC 26099).[76] Akihiro Yamada's monograph on Creede remains the most detailed study of his output to date, but it does not distinguish between

[74] SRO3977; Arber, III, p. 89. [75] Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*, pp. 17–19.
[76] *Locrine* (STC 21528) is entered in the Register to Creede (SRO3644; Arber, II, p. 656), whereas *The First Part of the Contention* (STC 26099) is entered to Millington (SRO3582; Arber, II, p. 646).

Creede's work as a trade printer and as a printer-publisher.[77] In this study, I follow Lesser and others in suggesting that an understanding of stationers' selection strategies can most securely be reached when their *published* output is assessed (rather than their total output). The collaborative nature of the book trade and the networks that exist between printers and booksellers sometimes, however, make it difficult to untangle the roles performed by different individuals. The printers William and Isaac Jaggard (who occasionally acted as publishers) and bookseller Thomas Pavier worked together on the 1619 so-called Pavier Quartos (which I rename, in Chapter 4, the Jaggard–Pavier collection). It is not clear who took on the lead role in this venture, including who was the main investor and who directed the appearance of the playbooks. The concept of a publishing syndicate or collaborative network of exchange is a useful one when it is difficult to prise apart agency in the publication of plays.

Whether the role of the publisher was taken on by printers or booksellers, or was entangled within a network, stationers who invest in plays – or, indeed, in any text – are in the business of specializing in different 'kinds'. Although these specialisms were rarely declared through, for example, discursive paratexts, a contrastive analysis of publishers' outputs reveals them. An evaluation of bookseller Nathaniel Butter's extant output (discussed at length in Chapter 3) shows that he was a major publisher of topical pamphlets and newsbooks alongside history plays, and suggests that his investment in plays such as *King Lear* (1608) and *The Whore of Babylon* (1607) can – and should – be understood in relation to his non-dramatic output. For Butter, these are plays that engage with topical issues of church and state and blur the temporal distinctions between different 'pasts' in the service of contemporarily focused readings. Stationers' *strategies of selection*, as this study argues, not only determine the survival of many early modern texts but also help to reveal an evaluation of genre and a reading of the texts themselves.

Print Paratexts: Strategies of Presentation

Stationers not only chose which history plays to invest in, they also directed the plays' presentation as books and shaped their content. They oversaw the incorporation of print paratexts – one of the main textual sites in which readings of history plays can be witnessed. Genette brought the

[77] Akihiro Yamada, *Thomas Creede: Printer to Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Tokyo: Meisei University Press, 1994).

term 'paratext' into critical use, describing it as 'the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public'.[78] In this study, I primarily use the term to refer to the new print features that surround the main play and can include title pages, dedicatory epistles, addresses to readers, commendatory verses, actor and character lists, and contents pages (for collections). Because they carried the financial risk of the investment, publishers probably exerted the greatest influence on a text's presentation in print, including the *incorporation* of paratexts. A number of individuals may have participated in their *composition*, including the publisher, but also, in some cases, the play's dramatists, printers, and other writers. This section briefly considers some of these paratextual categories, the readings they offer, and the agency behind them.

Most readers first encountered history plays through their title pages, which were also used, as Tiffany Stern discusses, as advertisements that were pasted around the stalls, posts, and walls of a city.[79] Title pages needed to provide a snapshot of the texts they prefaced and, as satirized in Thomas Nashe's *Terrors of the Night* (1594), some early modern book browsers looked no further:

> [A] number of you there bee, who consider neither premisses nor conclusion, but piteouslie torment Title Pages on euerie poast; neuer reading farther of anie Booke, than Imprinted by Simeon such a signe, and yet with your dudgen iudgements will desperatelie presume to run vp to the hard hilts through the whole bulke of it.[80]

Rushed, inattentive reading did not stop book browsers from having opinions about certain texts, and the same goes for the agents who contributed to title pages, whose reading practices could vary between careful consideration of a play's content and quick 'position-takings', to adopt Pierre Bourdieu's phrase.[81] These key promotional materials often feature a main title, a short description of a few plot highlights or commentary, an ornament, and an imprint giving details of the stationers

[78] See Gérard Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', trans. Marie Maclean, *New Literary History*, 22:2 (1991), 261–72. Genette (pp. 263–64) also distinguishes between 'peritext' (the elements that surround the actual text in the same volume) and 'epitext' (the 'messages' that are situated outside the book, including relevant letters, correspondence, and interviews).

[79] Tiffany Stern, '"On each Wall and Corner Poast": Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London', *English Literary Renaissance*, 36:1 (2006), 57–89.

[80] Thomas Nashe, *The Terrors of the night* (London, 1594; STC 18379), A4r.

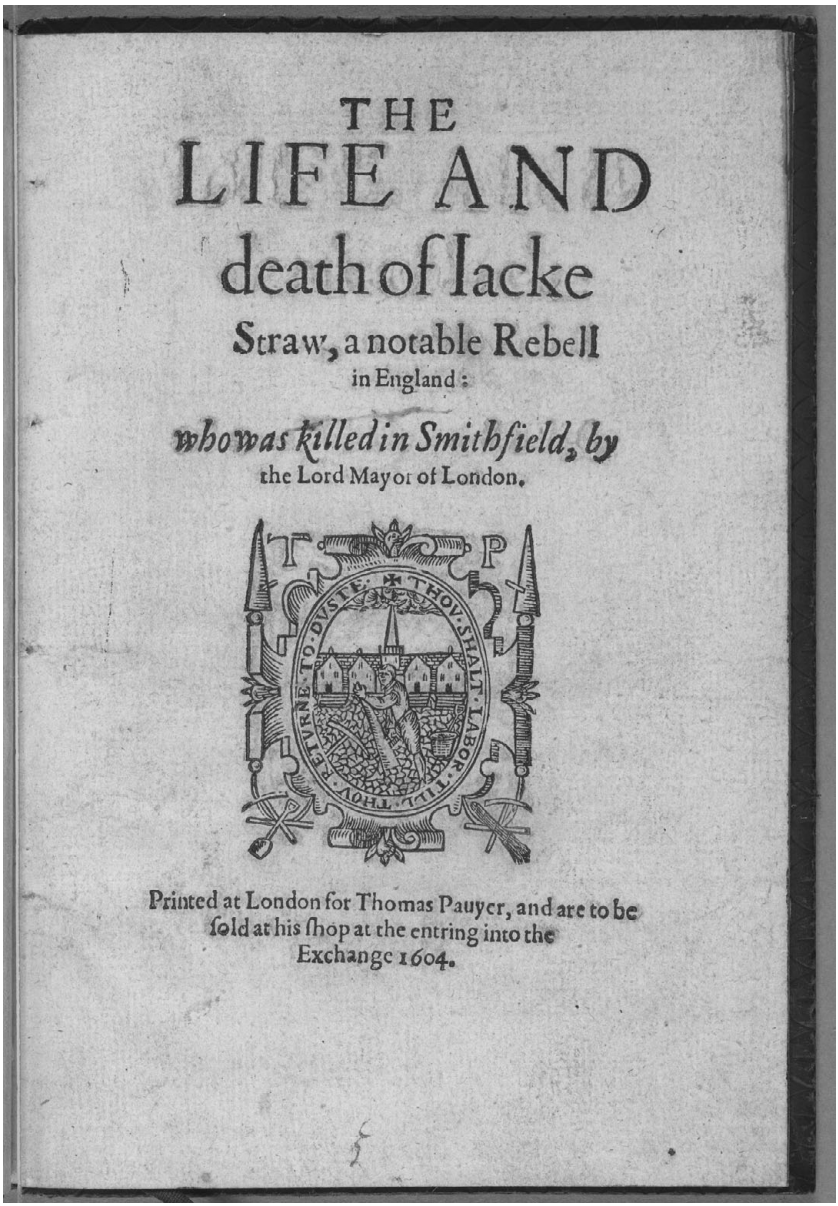
[81] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p. 30.

involved in the edition. Some title pages also contain attributions to dramatists and to theatre companies and performance spaces. Many of these features have implications for understanding, categorizing, and reading history plays.

Most title pages include some kind of genre label, as in *The First Part of the Tragical Reign of Selimus* (1594) or *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck* (1634). As mentioned already, these labels rarely offer consistent or precise statements about dramatic genres, but they sometimes encourage certain ways of reading the plays. For example, Peter Berek suggests that the label 'tragedy' is regularly (but not always) used during the sixteenth century to indicate the death of a character – historical or fictional – who behaves badly.[82] In Chapter 3, I propose that 'Chronicle History' is used during the early Jacobean period to promote the 'truthfulness' of the play's subject, a pattern influenced by James I's interest in legendary British history. The plot descriptions or commentaries included on title pages also offer readings of the histories they contain; they are often, as Lesser proposes, the earliest examples of literary criticism for a play.[83] *The Valiant Welshman* (1615) has an extended title which describes it, approvingly, as 'The Trve Chronicle History of the life and valiant deedes, of Caradoc the Great, King of Cambria, now called Wales'.[84] The summary directs attention towards a monarchical figurehead, implying that the actions featured in this history are worthy of remembrance, celebration, and emulation.

Title pages sometimes include woodcut ornaments that carry interpretative significance for the history they preface. Creede's signature device showing the figure of Truth informs the reading of history plays from Queen Elizabeth's Men, a company that has become associated with the promotion of royalist and Protestant sympathies (discussed in detail in Chapter 1). As another example, the second edition of the anonymous play *Jack Straw* contains a striking woodcut (McKerrow #345) that displays publisher Thomas Pavier's initials and an image of a labourer with the inscription 'Thov shalt labor till thov retvrne to dvste' (see Figure 0.1).[85] While this woodcut is, as Hooks discusses, intended to be a paviour and thus recall Pavier's own name, I believe it takes on additional political

[82] Berek, 'Genres', p. 171. [83] Lesser, *Renaissance Drama*, p. 8.
[84] Anon./'R.A.', *The Valiant Welshman* (London, 1615; STC 16), A2r.
[85] *The Life and death of Iacke Straw* (London, 1604; STC 23357), A1r. See Ronald B. McKerrow, *Printers' and Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland, 1485–1640* (London: Printed for the Bibliographical Society at the Chiswick Press, 1913), p. 134.


THE
LIFE AND
death of Iacke
Straw, a notable Rebell
in England:
who was killed in Smithfield, by
the Lord Mayor of London.

T P

THOV SHALT LABOR TILL THOV RETVRNE TO DVST

Printed at London for Thomas Pauyer, and are to be
ſold at his ſhop at the entring into the
Exchange 1604.

Figure 0.1 Title page from *Jack Straw* (Q2 1604; STC 23357).

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significance in a history play about the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.[86] It recalls the plight of the workers, and the inscription seems to reflect directly on their hardships, prompting a reading that is sympathetic to their uprising against Richard II.[87]

The various attributions that appear on playbook title pages also have implications for the history play. By naming specific dramatists, companies, patrons, and stationers, playbooks associate these individuals and their reputations with the content of the history. Attributions to the Queen's Men in history playbooks published by Creede connect these plays to Elizabeth I and her authorizing influence as reigning monarch. The consistent appearance of Shakespeare's name on playbooks published by Andrew Wise in the late 1590s advances his print identity as a dramatist of English monarchical history (discussed in Chapter 2). Nathaniel Butter's prominent advertising of his own name and bookshop location in title-page imprints helps to establish his reputation as a well-known bookseller in Paul's Churchyard, which, in turn, could also direct the ways in which readers responded to his histories (discussed in Chapter 3).

Determining who was responsible for the different components of playbook title pages remains a matter of speculation and varies from play to play.[88] Title pages are a site of multiple agency and authorship. Stern suggests that dramatists and theatrical companies were involved in the preparation of title pages, arguing that these paratexts resemble the playbills that were used to advertise performances.[89] If playbills did shape title-page content, they would still need to be edited and updated to take proper advantage of the new medium in which plays were being presented. No title page would exactly reproduce the content of a playbill, which was designed to advertise a specific performance. Final decisions relating to title-page presentation were probably, therefore, the reserve of stationers. Farmer and Lesser take this position and clarify agency even further, claiming, as does Erne, that the 'responsibility for designing a book's title page typically fell to its publisher'.[90] Blayney has examined the connection between a rare example of an extant manuscript title page, prepared during

[86] Hooks, *Selling*, p. 118.

[87] See also Stephen Schillinger, 'Begging at the Gate: *Jack Straw* and the Acting Out of Popular Rebellion', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 21 (2008), 87–127 (pp. 89–91).

[88] See also Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1–14.

[89] Stern, 'Playbills', pp. 80–87.

[90] Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, 'Vile Arts: The Marketing of English Printed Drama, 1512–1660', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 39 (2000), 77–165 (p. 78). In *Literary Dramatist*, Erne claims that the title page is 'usually the publisher's rather than the writer's' (p. 60).

the publication of *Scala Coeli: Nineteen Sermons Concerning Prayer* (1611; STC 605), and the final printed version. Revealingly, the manuscript is in the hand of the text's publisher, Francis Burton, which intimates his agency in its design.[91] We should not, however, expect practices to be uniform for all stationers and I depart slightly from Blayney and other critics by suggesting that different agents – including trade printers – could have played important roles in the design of title pages. Ornaments, *mise en page*, and even some of the title-page descriptions may have been determined by the printer hired to manufacture the book. A quick comparison between two plays published by the same stationer but produced by different printing houses tends to reveal different design practices (see, for example, Wise's publications of *Richard II* (1597), printed by Valentine Simmes, and Q2 *Richard III* (1598), printed by Thomas Creede). These contributions could be significant and, in Chapter 2, I propose that the first appearance of Shakespeare's name on a playbook title page could have been the decision of a trade printer striving to distinguish between two history plays about similar subject matter.

Dedications, addresses to readers, and commendatory verses also reflect to some degree on a play's contents and offer a framework for reading it. Unlike title pages, many (but not all) of these paratexts were signed, making it possible to identify the individual responsible. One significant example of a publisher's paratext appears in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1590), which features a dedication from stationer Richard Jones to the 'Gentlemen readers' who 'take pleasure in reading Histories'.[92] Not only is this, as far as I have identified, the first paratextual address ever to be affixed to a commercial playbook, it is also emphatic about the influential role taken on by a text's publisher in preparing the edition:

> I haue (purposely) omitted and left out some fond and friuolous Iestures, digressing (and in my poore opinion) far vnmeet for the matter, which I thought, might seeme more tedious vnto the wise, than any way els to be regarded, though (happly) they haue bene of some vaine conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what times they were shewed vpon the stage (A2r).[93]

[91] Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of 'King Lear' and Their Origins, Volume I: Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 259–62. The manuscript is held in the Public Record Office (SP.14.48, art. 15).

[92] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London, 1590; STC 17425), A2r.

[93] In 1578, Jones published *1* and *2 Promos and Cassandra*, which also contain an address contributed by him. The theatrical origins of these plays are uncertain, so this playbook could offer an earlier example than *Tamburlaine*; but in either case, the precedent is established by Jones.

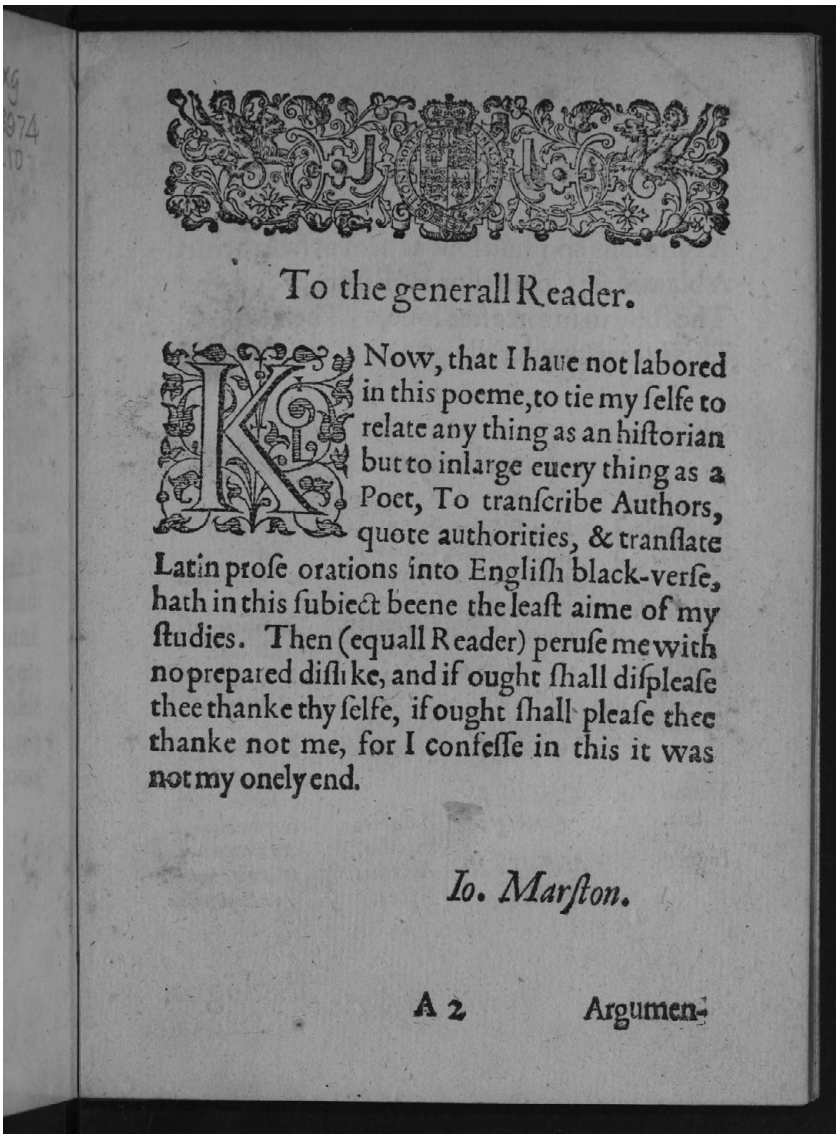
Jones (who acted as the printer, publisher, and bookseller for this edition) positions himself as an active reader and editor who has transformed Marlowe's plays as they were performed on stage and adapted them to suit a projected image of his reading public. The epistle, as Melnikoff explores, makes a sharp distinction between the stage and print versions of *Tamburlaine*.[94] Although Jones's claims of improvement cannot be securely confirmed or dismissed because no earlier version of the play is extant, his address implies that reading plays – especially those based on the past – is a serious and profitable activity for 'Gentlemen Readers'. His playbook also demonstrates the fluidity and hybridity of genre labels. *Tamburlaine* is loosely based on the fourteenth-century Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur or Tamerlane (1336–1405). Jones associates *Tamburlaine* with the 'Histories' enjoyed by 'Gentlemen Readers' in his preface (A2r), but the title page describes the plays as 'two Tragicall Discourses' (A1r) and the Stationers' Register entry on 14 August 1590 records them as 'the twooe commicall discourses of Tomberlein'.[95] As Tara L. Lyons proposes, the labels that appear in the playbook itself – 'Tragicall Discourses' and 'Histories' – could position the plays in the *de casibus* tradition where the central character's ambition is ultimately humbled and the history offered to readers for moral instruction.[96]

Interestingly, the first dramatist's paratext to reflect on 'history' as a genre appeared in 1606, years after the supposed heyday of the history play during the 1590s. *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* contains a signed address to the reader (see Figure 0.2) from John Marston that is alert to the distinctions between poetry and history explored by writers such as Sidney:

> Know, that I haue not labored in this poeme, to tie my selfe to relate any thing as an historian but to inlarge euery thing as a Poet, To transcribe Authors, quote authorities, and translate Latin prose orations into English bla[n]ck-verse, hath in this subiect beene the least aime of my studies.[97]

Marston seems anxious that readers might object to the 'invention' that is part of his classical history based on the Carthaginian princess Sophonisba.

[94] Kirk Melnikoff, 'Jones's Pen and Marlowe's Socks: Richard Jones, Print Culture, and the Beginnings of English Dramatic Literature', *Studies in Philology*, 102:2 (2005), 184–209 (p. 187).
[95] SRO3094; Arber, II, p. 558.
[96] Tara L. Lyons, 'Richard Jones, *Tamburlaine the Great*, and the Making (and Remaking) of a Serial Play Collection in the 1590s', in *Christopher Marlowe, Theatrical Commerce and the Book Trade*, ed. Kirk Melnikoff and Roslyn L. Knutson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 149–64.
[97] John Marston, *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedie of Sophonisba* (London, 1606; STC 17488), A2r.



To the generall Reader.

KNow, that I haue not labored in this poeme, to tie my ſelfe to relate any thing as an hiſtorian but to inlarge euery thing as a Poet, To tranſcribe Authors, quote authorities, & tranſlate Latin proſe orations into Engliſh black-verſe, hath in this ſubiect beene the leaſt aime of my ſtudies. Then (equall Reader) peruſe me with no prepared diſlike, and if ought ſhall diſpleaſe thee thanke thy ſelfe, if ought ſhall pleaſe thee thanke not me, for I confeſſe in this it was not my onely end.

Io. Marſton.

A 2 Argumen-

Figure 0.2 Address to readers in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women* (1606; STC 17488), A2r.

According to his address, the role of the historian is to transcribe, translate, and quote authorities, rather than engage inventively with the events of the past – which instead marks out the terrain of a 'Poet'. Marston's concern about the truthfulness of his history echoes a similar refrain in the works of

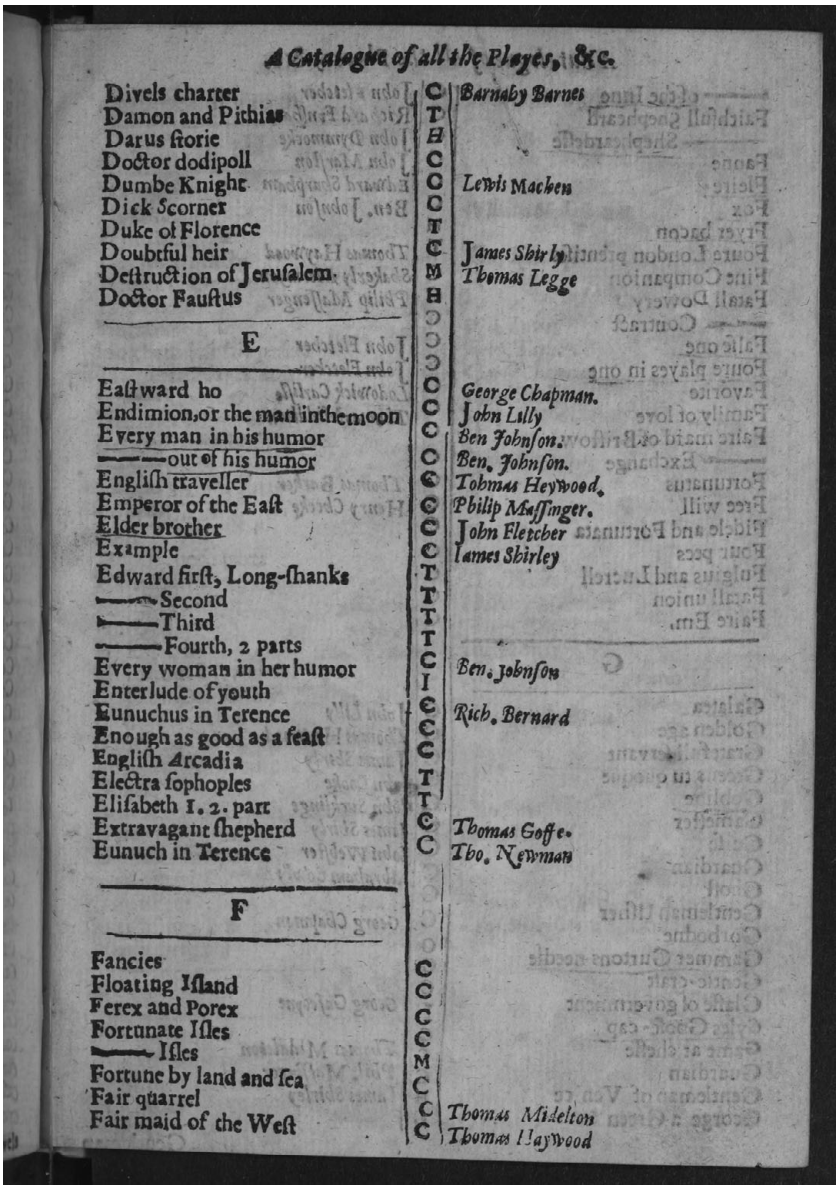
historians including John Hayward, quoted earlier, and Abraham Fleming (discussed in Chapter 1). Because this kind of paratextual statement was used so widely, it rather seems to underscore generic blurring and hybridity than establish clear distinctions between poets and historians. Instead, Marston uses Sidney's well-known – but primarily theoretical – divisions to advertise, in the form of an apology or defence, the superiority of his play (which 'inlarge[s] euery thing') over history (which ties down and limits).

The ways in which plays were bound together in stationers' shops – as planned and nonce collections – also make statements about genre and sometimes involve specially prepared paratexts. Shakespeare's First Folio and its contents page is perhaps the most influential example for modern criticism. Strikingly, this collection of commercial drama is the only one for the entire period to solidify history as a dramatic genre, which reveals how unrepresentative this publication venture actually is. In contrast, the contents page of Beaumont and Fletcher's 1647 Folio privileges the two classical genres, underscored further through the collection's title, *Comedies and Tragedies*. While they do not represent bound collections of plays, booksellers' catalogues – a number of which were published during the seventeenth century – advertise available stock, compile lists of the period's printed drama and other texts, and sometimes assign plays a generic category, usually indicated by a letter.[98] Edward Archer's 1656 catalogue (see Figure 0.3), for example, groups together Peele's *Edward I*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, the anonymous *Edward III*, and Heywood's *Edward IV* as tragedies ('T'), while Shakespeare's *1* and *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *1–3 Henry VI*, and *Henry VIII* are histories ('H').[99] Characterized by idiosyncratic classifications, these catalogues highlight the mutability of genre labels to suit specific publishing agendas, which in this case might reflect the influence of Shakespeare's Folio classifications, as well as the plays' alphabetical ordering and proximity in the table. Together with other strategies of print presentation – involving title pages, discursive paratexts, and the preparation of collections – these materials contribute in important ways to the negotiation of the history play as a genre and reveal the central position of stationers in this construction.

Early Histories: The Example of *Gorboduc*

The strategies of selection and presentation outlined above did not emerge with the appearance of the first commercial plays in print, but developed

[98] For an account of publishers' catalogues, see Hooks, *Selling*, ch. 4.
[99] See *The Old Law* (M1048), a3r, a4r.



A Catalogue of all the Playes, &c.

Divels charter	C	Barnaby Barnes
Damon and Pithias	TH	
Darus ſtorie	C	
Doctor dodipoll	C	
Dumbe Knight	C	Lewis Machen
Dick Scorner	T	
Duke of Florence	C	
Doubtful heir	M	James Shirly
Deſtruction of Jeruſalem.	H	Thomas Legge
Doctor Fauſtus	C	
E		
Eaſtward ho	C	George Chapman.
Endimion, or the man in the moon	C	John Lilly
Every man in his humor	C	Ben Johnſon.
——— out of his humor	C	Ben. Johnſon.
Engliſh traveller	C	Tohmas Heywood.
Emperor of the Eaſt	C	Philip Maſſinger.
Elder brother	C	John Fletcher
Example	C	James Shirley
Edward firſt, Long-ſhanks	T	
——— Second	T	
——— Third	T	
——— Fourth, 2 parts	T	
Every woman in her humor	C	Ben. Johnſon
Enterlude of youth	I	
Eunuchus in Terence	C	Rich. Bernard
Enough as good as a feaſt	C	
Engliſh Arcadia	C	
Electra ſophocles	T	
Eliſabeth 1. 2. part	C	
Extravagant ſhepherd	C	Thomas Goffe.
Eunuch in Terence	C	Tho. Newman
F		
Fancies	C	
Floating Iſland	C	
Ferex and Porex	C	
Fortunate Iſles	M	
——— Iſles	C	
Fortune by land and ſea	C	Thomas Midelton
Fair quarrel	C	Thomas Haywood
Fair maid of the Weſt	C	

Figure 0.3 Page from Edward Archer's catalogue, appended to *The Old Law* (1656; Wing M1048), a3r.

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through the publication of pre-playhouse and non-commercial plays. As Atkin proposes, 'well before the opening of London's commercial theatres' early printers of plays '[made] drama legible as a distinct category of text' – a process that has crucial implications for understanding how stationers shaped the history play as a print genre.[100] *Gorboduc*, an Inns of Court play written by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, provides a useful opening example for this study. The play dramatizes the reign of the ancient British king Gorboduc and the disorder and destruction ensuing from his attempt to divide Britain between his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex. These events feature in Tudor chronicles (such as Holinshed), and although the historicity of these legendary pasts was challenged during the sixteenth century, they were still considered by many to be accurate accounts of early British history.[101] *Gorboduc* was first performed in the Inner Temple on Twelfth Night 1562 and at Whitehall on 18 January 1562 at Elizabeth I's command and was printed in three editions in the sixteenth century – 1565, *c.*1570, and 1590 – the second of which contains an address by its printer-publisher, John Day. This 1570 edition, which retitles the play *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex*, is especially revealing for my purposes. It displays, as Atkin identifies, a dual interest in the play's status as a *performed* history (by advertising, on its title page, the royal audience it received) and as a *book* to be read, underlined through its paratextual materials.[102] These two, potentially competing, authorizing strategies would be variously taken up by later publishers of commercial plays. Day's edition reveals how he attempted to direct an understanding of the play, the history it offers, and its position as a book, particularly through his address to readers and by binding *Gorboduc* with a selection of non-dramatic texts.

This new paratext, 'The P[rinter] to the Reader' (A2r), is the very first address written by a stationer to appear in any English playbook (Jones's address in *Tamburlaine* is the first for a commercial play).[103] As Atkin identifies, discursive paratexts started to become common in playbooks

[100] Atkin, *Reading Drama*, p. 3.

[101] See Kim Gilchrist, *Staging Britain's Past: Pre-Roman Britain in Early Modern Drama* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2021).

[102] Atkin, *Reading Drama*, p. 94. The title page describes the play as 'the same [as] was shewed on stage before the Queenes Maiestie, about nine years past, *vz.* the xviij. [18] day of Ianuarie. 1561 by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple'. See Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *The Tragidie of Ferrex and Porrex* (London, [1570]; STC 18685), A1r.

[103] When the heading 'The P. to the Reader' is encountered, the abbreviation should be expanded to 'printer', because the terminological distinction between printer and publisher had not yet stabilized. However, such addresses were usually written by the individual taking on the role of publisher, often distinct from the individual undertaking the printing (although not in the case of Day). See Maguire, 'Craft', p. 435.

after the publication of Jasper Heywood's translation of Seneca's *Troas* in 1559 and tended to mark out plays as either translations of classical or continental drama or as having connections with the Inns of Court or the universities – in other words, those with academic associations.[104] Day's address condemns the play's first edition, published in 1565 by 'W. G.' (William Griffith), and admonishes Griffith for procuring a copy of the text from some unscrupulous 'yongmans hand' and putting it forward in an 'excedingly corrupted' state. Day vividly compares the maligned printing of *Gorboduc* to the defiling of a 'faire maide', who is left 'beraryed and disfigured', unrecognizable to those who knew her previously (A2r). In this case, Day's accusations of textual piracy are a marketing strategy designed to promote the new edition: his text of the play does not differ significantly from Griffith's edition. Strikingly, Day does not refer to either dramatist on the title page of his edition, despite the prominence he affords to their authorizing function in the prefatory address and their central position on Griffith's title page, which even specifies the contributions made by Norton and Sackville.[105] It is, instead, Day's authority that is most conspicuous in his edition, the title page displaying his name in large type and all other authorizing references remaining vague, including the description that the play has been 'Seen and allowed &c' (A1r). As Douglas Brooks argues, Day's primary purpose is 'the re-embodiment and commodification of a play-text that had already been printed and marketed by someone else', an approach adopted by later publications, including Shakespeare's First Folio, which claims it was 'Published according to the True Originall Copies' and not the 'diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies' that had appeared previously (1623; A1r, A3r).[106] Above all, Day's address draws attention to *his* agency in the publication process and his control over reader reception.

Day's wider output further clarifies how he read *Gorboduc* and highlights the new meanings a play could acquire throughout its reception history. While the first performances of the play were seen, by one playgoer, to reflect on Elizabeth I's marital prospects, the play's publication introduced new interpretive imperatives.[107] Day's edition appeared on the London bookstalls shortly after the Northern Rebellion of 1569, which

[104] Atkin, *Reading Drama*, pp. 8, 15.

[105] On the 1565 title page (STC 18684, A1r), Griffith specifies that 'three Actes were wrytten by Thomas Nortone, and the two laste by Thomas Sackuyle'.

[106] Douglas A. Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 35; see also pp. 27–37.

[107] An Elizabethan courtier, Robert Beale, saw the play as favouring Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, as Elizabeth's suitor. See his testimony quoted in Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ch. 6 (pp. 210–11).

saw the uprising of disaffected Catholic earls in the north of England. An influential stationer, Day was a supporter of Reformation politics: he was the printer and co-editor of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583); he was protected by William Cecil and Robert Dudley; and he was Thomas Norton's primary publisher.[108] Norton, in addition to his contributions to *Gorboduc*, was a pamphleteer of the Elizabethan government against the Northern Rebellion, and Day printed some of these treatises, which he compiled, alongside *Gorboduc*, in a nonce collection – that is, a group of independently printed texts bound together by a stationer. The general title page for *All Such Treatises As Have Lately Been Published By Thomas Norton* ([1570]) describes the collection as 'Seen and allowed according to the order of the Queenes Injunctions' and it contains two pamphlets directly opposing the Rebellion: 'To the Queenes Maiesties poore deceiued subiects of the Northe countrey drawen into rebellion by the Earles of Northumberland and Westmerland' and 'A warning against the dangerous practises of the Papistes, and specially the parteners of the late Rebellion'.[109] By binding *Gorboduc* in this nonce collection and preparing a general contents page (see Figure 0.4) that lists the play and the treatises with their extended, descriptive titles, Day encourages a contemporarily focused, religio-political reading of the play that is attentive to the dangers of a divided nation (as Gorboduc instigates).[110]

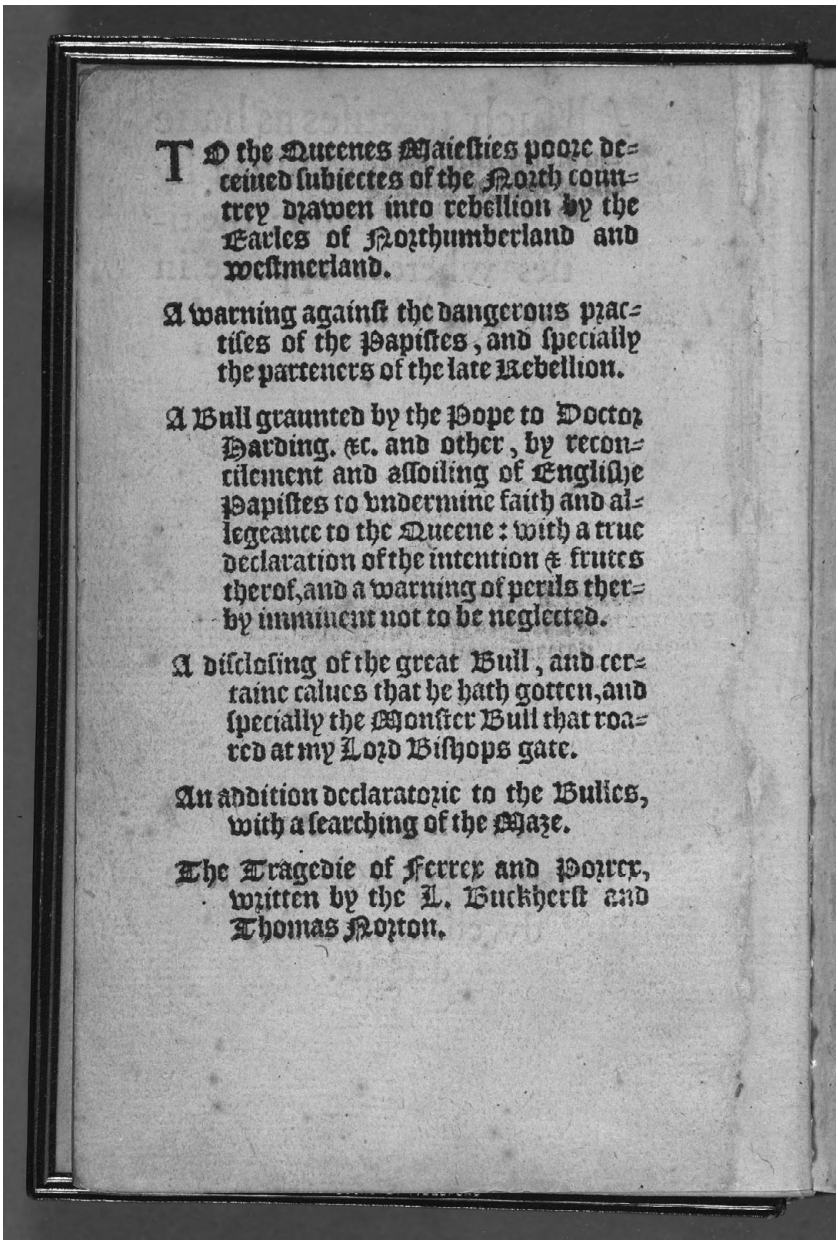
The play, following its 1565 edition, is described as a tragedy on the title page, in the argument, and on the contents page, but this label does not reveal any clear distinction between history and tragedy (or between history and poetry) – a point which attracted Sidney's criticism of *Gorboduc* in his *Defence*.[111] Rather, the use of 'tragedy' seems to emphasize its position as an admonitory play, which is also a theme of Day's paratextual address, urging readers to harbour and protect the previously violated text. By the mid-sixteenth century, this genre label frequently accompanied dramatic and non-dramatic texts that consider the story of a

[108] John N. King, 'John Day: Master Printer of the English Reformation', in *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 180–208.

[109] Thomas Norton, *All such treatises as haue been lately published by Thomas Norton* (London, [1570]; STC 18677), title page r–v. Publication date from STC.

[110] *All Such Treatises* is, in fact, the first printed collection containing a play to include a general list of contents (see Appendix), which is advertised on the title page: 'the titles whereof appeare in the next side'.

[111] Sidney praises *Gorboduc*, but claims that 'it is verie defectious in the circumstances, which greeues mee, because it might not remaine as an exact moddell of all Tragidies' (H4r).



TO the Queenes Maieſties poore de-
ceiued ſubiectes of the North coun-
trey drawen into rebellion by the
Earles of Northumberland and
weſtmerland.

A warning againſt the dangerous prac-
tiſes of the Papiſtes, and ſpecially
the parteners of the late Rebellion.

A Bull graunted by the Pope to Doctor
Harding. &c. and other, by recon-
cilement and aſſoiling of Engliſhe
Papiſtes to vndermine faith and al-
legeance to the Queene: with a true
declaration of the intention & frutes
therof, and a warning of perils ther-
by imminent not to be neglected.

A diſcloſing of the great Bull, and cer-
taine calues that he hath gotten, and
ſpecially the Monſter Bull that roa-
red at my Lord Biſhops gate.

An addition declaratorie to the Bulles,
with a ſearching of the Maze.

The Tragedie of Ferrex and Porrex,
written by the L. Buckherſt and
Thomas Norton.

Figure 0.4 Contents page from Thomas Norton's *All Such Treatises* ([1570]; STC 18677).

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fall and, as Berek proposes, it 'seems to be a mediating term in the process by which English readers come to see something that can be called English history as part of the same narrative as Continental history, biblical history, and the history of Greece and Rome'.[112] 'Tragedy' can be seen to authorize English/early British history in print. The collection's contents page spatially and thematically connects this approved history with topical political treatises to suggest that the volume as a whole is interested in the containment of rebellion.[113] All of these factors – the timing of Day's edition of *Gorboduc*, his reputation as a publisher, his contribution of a new prefatory address, and his inclusion of the play within a collection that promotes Elizabeth's authority – provide evidence of how he read this early British history and understood its connection to contemporary politics. As printed books, history plays could be used in analogous ways to political treatises and non-dramatic accounts of the past – and they could, as *Gorboduc* shows, authorize this use through advertising their performance auspices *and* their status as a book.

When commercial drama started to be published during the 1580s, very few playbooks contained discursive paratexts. Jones's practices in *Tamburlaine* (1590) were not representative, and most playbooks had limited prefatory material, often only a title page.[114] It was not until the late Jacobean and early Caroline period that playbooks from the commercial stages regularly included dedications, addresses to readers, and commendatory verses.[115] The publication history of pre-playhouse plays suggests that these materials became, during the late Elizabethan period, associated with non-commercial plays (specifically translations and those from the Inns of Court and universities) and that plays from the commercial theatres became legible in print by, as Atkin argues, underlining their status as *plays* – an issue that is explored in Chapter 1.[116] For this reason, understanding how stationers marketed, read, and shaped history plays from the commercial stages depends primarily on an assessment of strategies of selection (with reference to publishers' wider outputs) and the presentation of title pages as the main playbook paratext. The discursive

[112] Peter Berek, 'Tragedy and Title Pages: Nationalism, Protestantism, and Print', *Modern Philology*, 106:1 (2008), 1–24 (p. 7). See also David Bevington, 'Tragedy in Shakespeare's Career', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 50–68.

[113] See also Jaecheol Kim, 'The North–South Divide in *Gorboduc*: Fratricide Remembered', *Studies in Philology*, 111:4 (2014), 691–719 (pp. 699–701).

[114] Melnikoff, 'Jones's Pen', p. 189.

[115] See Conclusion, pp. 232–38.

[116] Atkin, *Reading Drama*, p. 69.

paratexts that Melnikoff examines in his recent study of dramatic and non-dramatic 'literary culture' or David Bergeron considers in his study on textual patronage are simply not available or representative for the majority of commercial playbooks published in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.[117] This absence does not, however, mean that stationers did not evaluate and respond to history as a dramatic genre, but that critics need to look elsewhere for the evidence.

Publishing the History Play in the Time of Shakespeare

This book consists of four main case studies spanning the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, which overlap with Shakespeare's lifetime and the years, following his death, when the Folio was prepared and published. By concentrating on the conditions of textual production during the lifetime of the dramatist with whom the history play has been most closely associated, this book reveals how publication agents constructed and defined the genre and the implications of these strategies for modern criticism. It retains an interest in Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, because of the need, as Helen Smith proposes, to 'restore Shakespeare's early texts to the contexts of the bookstalls on which they first appeared', a process that clarifies the position of his 'histories' (broadly defined) and the plays of other dramatists within the period's historical culture.[118] In doing so, this book takes the case-study approach forward: it shows how individual examples of participation in genre-making are part of a diachronic discourse about history and its uses. Each case study has been selected on the basis of publication patterns, privileging those stationers who seem to specialize in history plays and non-dramatic historical texts. For this reason, stationers who publish only one or two history plays (such as Walter Burre, who invested in Jonson's *Catiline*, 1611) are not heavily featured. It is by concentrating on individuals who are clearly invested in ideas of history that ways of reading genre can be most fully explored.

One consequence of this approach is that, despite the broad parameters for 'history' that this study adopts, some types of history plays – including those based on classical and biblical pasts – do not take up a prominent place. Strikingly few biblical histories were published during the period:

[117] Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*; David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570–1640* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[118] Helen Smith, '"To London all"? Mapping Shakespeare in Print, 1593–1598', in *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 69–86 (p. 86).

George Peele's *The Love of David and Fair Bathsheba* (printed by Adam Islip in 1599) is one of a handful of examples, although they were clearly popular on stage.[119] Several influential classical histories were printed – such as Jonson's *Sejanus* (published in 1605 by Thomas Thorpe; first entered in the Register to Edward Blount) and Daniel's *Philotas* (published in 1605 by Blount and Simon Waterson). None of these stationers, however, invested regularly in history plays from the playhouses. Blount's involvement in Shakespeare's Folio is considered in Chapter 4; his collaboration with Waterson for *Philotas* and his edition of George Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1606) are the only commercial plays he published prior to 1623. Blount and Waterson display an interest in non-commercial classical histories, such as Daniel's *Cleopatra* (1594, Waterson), Matthew Gwinne's *Nero* (1603, Blount), and William Alexander's *Monarchic Tragedies* (1604, Blount). It is possible, therefore, that some classical histories from the playhouses were seen as distinct from other histories – including those dramatizing English, ancient British, European, and recent pasts – and could be more easily marketed as prestigious publications, especially when they were written by individuals, such as Daniel, who were connected to important literary coteries. During the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, investment and print presentation practices seem to differ for commercial and non-commercial plays (especially those with 'academic' associations); and printed playhouse histories tend to feature biblical or classical pasts much less frequently than other kinds of historical subject matter, despite their prevalence on stage.[120] While classical histories appear prominently in non-commercial playbooks with elaborate, discursive paratexts, the printed history play from the playhouse tends, on balance, to favour English/British, European, Middle Eastern, and recent histories and, as will be shown, is often in conversation with a publisher's non-dramatic output.

Given the fact that the past was often used in 'politic' histories, such as Savile's Tacitus (1591), to comment on the present, it is not surprising that publishers were alert to the potential of their history plays for providing topical applications. For this reason, many of the discussions

[119] For biblical drama on the stage, see Annaliese Connolly, 'Peele's *David and Bethsabe:* Reconsidering Biblical Drama of the Long 1590s', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 16 (2007), 9.1–20.

[120] It may be worth observing that, of Shakespeare's plays, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* were not printed until the Folio (despite the fact that *Antony and Cleopatra* was entered in the Register to Blount in 1608 but not published), while one of the two issues of *Troilus and Cressida* in 1609 tried through its paratexts to sever its connection to the playhouse stages.

offered in this study will be politically focused – not because of an assumption that history plays are inherently so or that all individuals read them for their political cachet, but because publishers often seem to approach them in this way. Helgerson objects that 'the success the politic historians had in imposing their views has had a significant part in moving latter-day critics to accept a definition of the history play that puts a high premium on its political focus'.[121] It is therefore important to recognize that politic readings are not the only ones available for history plays – either for publishers or the wider book-buying public. In consequence, each chapter takes account of other factors that have informed a publisher's investment and that may have little to do with a detailed reading of a play's history and politics. The cultural cachet of a particular dramatist could be more important in the selection and presentation of a playbook; and the availability of playscripts also shapes investment patterns. Any playbook is a document that reflects a range of readings, strategies, and contexts. My emphasis on publishers' practices helps to avoid the critical problem of overstating the political force of a history play, as if it were the only measure of meaning.

Chapter 1 begins with printer-publisher Thomas Creede, who was the first stationer to invest significantly in history plays from the commercial stages. His playbooks feature diverse historical pasts, such as medieval English history in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, Scottish history in *James IV*, and Turkish history in *Selimus*. Because several of them contain attributions to Queen Elizabeth's Men, Creede's playbooks have been used by critics to expand and extrapolate patterns in the company's repertory. This chapter shows, however, that the enduring view of the Queen's Men as a company that promoted Protestant and Tudor sympathies is a consequence of the publication process and its strategies of selection and presentation. Creede's wider output demonstrates a sustained interest in history as a (true or invented) looking glass for readers that is not limited to plays from the Queen's Men. Not only is an analysis of publication strategies necessary for understanding the history play in print, it should also be a key component in assessing theatrical repertories and dramatic genre on the stage.

Chapter 2 continues to drive a wedge between history plays on the stage and in print at the end of the sixteenth century. It concentrates on publisher-bookseller Andrew Wise and his editions of *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *1* and *2 Henry IV*, and argues that they constructed a print identity

[121] Helgerson, 'Shakespeare', p. 27.

for Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Men as dramatizers of medieval English history. In contrast, performance records and the evidence of lost plays indicate that a wide range of historical subjects held sway on the playhouse stages. While Creede's interest in history as a model to emulate or avoid seems to have been independently maintained, Wise's investment may have arisen out of a publication network involving Shakespeare, the Chamberlain's Men, and their patron, George Carey, second Baron Hunsdon. This chapter draws attention to collaborative networks of exchange in the book trade that not only direct the selection of texts for publication, but also construct meaning. For Wise, the most useful kinds of history plays were those based on the lives of medieval English monarchs, because they responded to non-dramatic publications in the book market, appealed to the cachet and political interests of Shakespeare's patron, and could be applied to pressing concerns that dominated the end of Elizabeth's reign.

It is often claimed that the history play died out at the accession of James I in 1603; however, this is demonstrably not the case. New historical drama continued to be written, staged, and published. Chapter 3 concentrates on publisher-bookseller Nathaniel Butter, whose investment in dramatic and non-dramatic histories was directed by his interest in newsworthy texts that commented upon the religio-political issues dominating the beginning of James's reign. For Butter, history and news were two sides of the same coin; the temporal boundary between them was of minor consequence. This chapter offers a fresh perspective on early Jacobean historical drama, and explores the important, but neglected, parallels between plays that dramatize Tudor history – including Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me*, Heywood's *1* and *2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, and Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* – and early British history, such as Shakespeare's *King Lear*. A detailed reading of these histories in light of Butter's wider output suggests that, for him, the plays reflect positively on James I's reign and the monarch's own use of legitimizing histories, but also register some dissenting views in relation to religious toleration and the extent of monarchical authority. This case study pushes, as far as possible, the evidence that can be recovered for one historical reader and uses it to draw attention to competing models and interpretations of history.

Chapter 4 examines collections of history plays to show that the ways in which plays are bound together make statements about genre and promote specific reading strategies. It proposes that the two earliest multi-play collections to prioritize histories from the commercial stages are the

Jaggard–Pavier collection in 1619 and Shakespeare's Folio in 1623. This chapter evaluates the principles of collection that underlie these publication ventures and how they participate in and construct 'history' as a dramatic genre. For both collections, the history play is mostly 'Shakespearean'. But, in contrast to the exclusivity and fixity suggested by the Folio, the Jaggard–Pavier collection promotes inclusivity and flexibility: it requires readers to draw their own connections between different types of historical pasts, including medieval English history and the legendary British past. The chapter ends by considering the impact of Shakespeare's Folio on subsequent publishing ventures and draws attention to the continuing malleability of genre reflected in booksellers' catalogues. Finally, the Conclusion briefly addresses some shifting patterns in Caroline playbook publication – the regular inclusion of discursive paratexts that directly announce play readings, and a split in the market between first and reprint editions – which have consequences for looking, both forwards and backwards, at the early modern history play.

Publishing the History Play in the Time of Shakespeare approaches historical drama through the strategies of its publishers, an emphasis that reveals what these plays meant to some of their earliest and most influential readers. History – as a subject of enquiry about the past – is substantially (although not exclusively) a history of reading, of engaging with and re-evaluating historical records, documents, and narratives. In a similar way, the early modern history play is a history of publishing interests and publishers' readings. It is not my aim to replace or uproot other critical methods for discussing history plays, but to offer a different perspective that draws on overlooked evidence to tell new stories of participation in the genre. As Hooks succinctly puts it, '[b]ook historians must engage in rigorous historical scholarship, but they should also derive compelling narratives from that research'.[122] Thus far, book history has tended to remain separate from the study of history plays, despite the fact that these plays – and, indeed, many of their sources – only survive because of print publication. In this study, I aim to show that applying the practices of book history to an evaluation of dramatic genre reveals compelling narratives that shed light on the period's historical culture and our access to it.

[122] Hooks, *Selling*, p. 33.