Contents

Prologue
Patrick Stewart

Introduction
Lena Cowen Orlin and Miranda Johnson-Haddad

Part I: Acts of Recovery

"Pass over the stage"—Again
Leslie Thomson
(Re)covering the Self: Hal and the Psychology of Disguise
Daniel L. Colvin
A Double Heuristic for Shakespeare's Doubling
Ellen Summers

Part II: Performing the Moment

Getting Richard Down: The Descent of Richard II into the Base Court: Reflections on a Lesson Plan for a Shakespeare, Theater, or Research Methods Class
Eric Binnie

The Intentional-Fallacy Fallacy
Cary M. Mazer

Permissive, Implied, and Missing Stage Directions: "Exeunt Omnes" and The Tempest
Edward Isser

Part III: Recordings

"That his heels may KICK at heaven": Exploring Hamlet through the Prompt-Script, Film, and Audio Recordings of the Gielgud-Burton Production
Edward L. Rocklin

"This Fearful Slumber": Some Unacknowledged Sources of Julie Taymor's Titus
Michael D. Friedman
CONTENTS

Fooling with Matches in Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night:* Or, Lines, Women, and Song
CAROLINE McMANUS
183

*Part IV: Extensions and Explorations*

Begin the Beijing: Shakespeare's *Shrew* in Jingju
LISA McDONNELL
199

Tragic Humor: The Puppets Take *Macbeth*
SHEILA T. CAVANAGH
227

"His oration": Shakespeare and the Art of Public Speaking
LOIS POTTER
244

A Postscript for Alan Dessen
AUDREY STANLEY
259

Notes on Contributors
262

Index
267
"Pass over the stage"—Again

Leslie Thomson

In the published version of his 1958 Presidential Address to the Society for Theatre Research, Alardyce Nicoll asks "what did 'pass over the stage' actually imply?" He notes that the direction usually "applies to one of two movements—to a stately procession, or to the walking across of one or more persons, passers-by, who do not speak but are observed and commented upon by others" (48). Having established these "facts," he turns to "the more difficult problem of interpretation," asking "Where did the passers-by appear before the audience, what did they do and whither did they go? If, as seems certain from its frequent use, the term was a technical one, presumably with a specific and well-recognized meaning, we need not hope to find any explanations in the texts themselves: neither dramatists nor actors would have felt called upon to elaborate" (49).

Next he dismisses "two possibilities" with the kind of rhetorical high-handedness that few today could or would muster. The first is quickly dealt with:

The characters might have been supposed to come in at one door and go out by another. No very deep theatre sense is required to show that for a processional movement this would have been hopelessly ineffective; after all, the doors in Elizabethan theatres cannot have been much more than 12 ft. apart and any such 'passage over the stage' would certainly have proved flat, stale and unprofitable. This possibility, therefore, may be summarily rejected. (49)

The second possibility requires more discussion because Nicoll is now also introducing material for his own interpretation. Perhaps, he offers, "the characters, entering by one door, moved outwards on the acting area, round the posts, making a great sweep over the platform and turning to make their exit by the other door" (49). Here again extensive quotation of his rhetoric
is necessary, because as he makes his points he also sets out issues that must be addressed in refuting his theory.

Where the term ‘pass over the stage’ is employed for passers-by the situation almost always involves other characters observing them, and generally the processional passages likewise introduce observation and comment by other characters. Thus in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, before the ducal party “passe ouer the Stage” there is an “Enter Vendici”. Vendice, therefore, like all the observing characters, is kept theatrically distinct from the silent figures in the procession, and since he has a long soliloquy-commentary upon the Duke and his companions it is evident that he must take up a position well to the front of the platform. Suppose he does so; suppose the procession perambulates the acting area: how could he effectively be kept distinct from the others, how could he avoid becoming involved in the sweeping train? No skilled actors, no ‘producer’, would permit such a disposition of the players. And if it were to be suggested that instead of moving to the front of the platform Vendice took his stand at, let us say, one of the posts, the situation would not only be worse, it would become absurd; in that case his long poetic commentary could only have been spoken from the midst of a circle, over the heads of the processional figures. This certainly will not do.

His third and final preparatory rhetorical *coup de grâce* deals with “servitors carrying the plates to a banquet” [as in *Macbeth* 1.7]: “it is hard indeed to believe that these servitors entered by one of the doors, uselessly bore their dishes round the full area of the stage and then went out again. Such action would have been meaningless. . . . Once more, the supposition that a mere perambulation of the platform was intended must be set aside” [50].

Nicoll is now ready to present his solution and begin his proof: “Clearly, the interpretation which would best fit the movements suggested in the phrase ‘pass over the stage’ is an entry of actors in the yard and their walking onto and over the platform” [50] before descending again to exit. As this indicates, he is not in fact interested in or concerned with what happened on the stage, possibly because his real aim is to create “a reasonable measure of assurance” that the players “had the opportunity of making their appearances otherwise than by the normally-used doors” [47]. The phrase “passing over the stage” serves his rhetorical purpose because it is vague enough to allow him to call it a “code,” which he can then interpret. Doing so nevertheless requires a series of circular or forced arguments assertively presented, that conclude: “it would appear that we have to accept as the most reasonable, effective and practical interpretation of the phrase ‘pass over the stage’ a movement from yard to platform to yard again” [53]. This would, in fact, have been most unreasonable, ineffective and impractical, and while the interpretation has no evidence to support it, there is much to contradict.

It is therefore curious that few specialists in theater or stage history have paid serious attention to Nicoll’s theory and even fewer have explored its implications; at the same time, many editors have passively accepted it as a staging possibility as valid as any other. Fortunately, however, Mariko Ichikawa’s recent study of how the direction might have been staged will provide guidance for those who seek to understand it in the future.2 Probably the first to address the matter in print was T. J. King, who says, “I interpret the direction *over the stage* to mean ‘enter at one door and exit the other’.” In a note he briefly indicates why he disagrees with Nicoll: “this direction is found in many plays performed at Court where there was no yard, and at other places where perhaps there was no platform stage.” 3 On the other hand, Richard Southern endorsed the idea enthusiastically, and certainly it fits well with his own theories about the relationship between the stage and area around it for the performance of interludes in Tudor halls.4 And Robert Weimann also happily adopted the idea, probably because it supported his argument that “the architecture and stagecraft of the Elizabethan public theater were closer in appearance and structure to the native popular theater than critics have been willing to admit.”5 Andrew Gurr, however, in a brief but pertinent discussion, adds to King’s practical reasons for questioning Nicoll’s theory:

One very spectacular form of display utilising only portable properties was of course the procession. Like a mannequin parade it showed off costumes and accessories to advantage, and as in mannequin parades its members ‘passed over the stage’ in solemn march, probably out on to the stage by one door and into the tiring-house again by the other. It has been conjectured that ‘passing over the
stage’ meant exactly that—climbing onto the stage from the yard on one side and descending to the yard again on the other [Nicoll’s article cited]. I find this doubtful, if only because the stage doors leading straight from the tiring-house were already in existence, and because there is no evidence that steps ever existed from the yard up to the stage. Certainly at the Blackfriars there was no easy way up onto the stage for the Citizen’s wife in The Knight of the Burning Pestle.\textsuperscript{6}

These comments by King and Gurr constitute the main arguments against Nicoll’s theory about the meaning of “pass over the stage”, but although accurate, they have been insufficient to counter its influence. Indeed, a recent reference to it by Frank Hildy indicates that it is still customary to accept Nicoll’s idea as valid and practicable. In his review of A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642,\textsuperscript{7} Hildy comments:

the definition you will find for “crossing over the stage from one door to another” may be a little disappointing. It ignores other possibilities such as Allardyce Nicoll’s 1959 argument that this stage direction indicated an entrance from the yard, over the stage, and back out through the yard, and this is an important omission. If Nicoll was correct, and nothing in the examples provided would make his argument untenable, there are significant implications for the style of production, for the design of the stage, and for our understanding of what the playgoers of this period actually saw, that we are totally missing. Making no reference to legitimate alternative definitions tends to weaken the authors’ stated goal of establishing the theatre vocabulary shared by playwrights, bookkeepers, scribes, and though they do not say this, printers.\textsuperscript{8}

My purposes in this essay are to demonstrate why Nicoll’s argument is not correct, and then to discuss—in a degree of detail not possible in the dictionary format—some directions for figures to “pass over the stage.” The first task is necessary because a surprising number of scholars, especially editors, share Hildy’s belief that Nicoll’s idea is credible; the second takes advantage of the opportunity provided by Hildy’s comments to explore and attempt to interpret an example of the “theatrical vocabulary” shared by those responsible for staging plays—the language or “code” that Alan Dessen has so effectively analyzed and that, as he has shown, we no longer speak.\textsuperscript{9}

A survey of some editions will provide cases for further consideration while at the same time raising questions about how certain editors have come to include information about staging for which there is no supporting evidence. Of the four major series that include detailed notes—Arden, Cambridge, Oxford, and Revels—the last provides by far the most examples of editors citing Nicoll’s theory. The earliest of these is R. W. Van Fossen, in his edition of A Woman Killed with Kindness (1961) when for “Enter over the stage Frankford, Anne, and Nicholas” he first notes that such directions “have usually been taken to indicate that the persons involved come in at one of the stage doors, cross the platform, and leave by the other door,” but then says that Nicoll “has provided a much more likely interpretation: that the characters involved climb a flight of steps rising from the yard to one side of the stage, cross over, and go down a flight at the opposite side. Wendoll, as Frankford, Anne, and Nick ‘cross over’, stands front-stage observing them.”\textsuperscript{10} Whether or not this detailed note was the cause, a number of Revels editors have subsequently either adopted Nicoll’s staging or suggested it as a viable possibility, while several have cited Nicoll even when expressing reservations. Other editors simply ignore the stage direction, perhaps because they have no staging to suggest but more probably because they wrongly assume it is self-evident.

Some of the more notable examples of the kind of editorial treatment of a stage direction that would never happen with dialogue include Akihiro Yamada’s note in The Widow’s Tears for “Enter Argus, barehead, with whom another usher Lycus joins, going over the stage; Hi Haras and Psorabeus next, Rebus single before Eudora; Laodice, Sthenia bearing her train, [and] Ianthe following.” Yamada confidently offers that this is “a technical playhouse term. Argus comes in from one side of the yard, not from one of the doors on the back stage, and walks over the platform; while Lycus in a similar way enters from the other side of the yard, goes over the platform, and joins with Argus.”\textsuperscript{11} Yamada, whose edition is dedicated to Nicoll, cites the article both here and in his Introduction (lxxi), where he discusses it approvingly. For the direction in Women Beware Women 4.3, when the wedding party “Enter in great state” and “pass solemnly over,”
J. R. Mulryne not only describes the Nicoll version of how they would have entered and exited from the yard, but he also advertises more examples: “For other instances of this quite frequent stage-practice see Revenger’s Tragedy, 1.1.0.2 (Revels ed., 3); Atheist’s Tragedy, 2.4.0.1–2 (Revels ed., 40); and White Devil, 3.1.64.1 (Revels ed., 63).”12 Ironically, however, neither Reginald Foakes, editor of The Revenger’s Tragedy (also dedicated to Nicoll), nor John Russell Brown, editor of The White Devil, even mentions this staging as a possibility. But in The Atheist’s Tragedy Irving Ribner explains that when Borachio enters “warily and hastily over the stage, with a stone in either hand” then “Descends,” after which D’Amville “thrusts [Montferrers] down into the gravel pit,” what happens is that “Borachio enters from one side of the yard, crosses the platform, speaking his two lines as he does so, and descends on the other side, where he waits in hiding for Montferrers to be thrust down to him. This area, in the yard at the side of the platform, comes to represent the gravel pit.”13 For support, Ribner quotes Nicoll’s article (54), where this idea originated: “While it is true that the directions are not quite clear, the scene would have been much more effective, acted thus, than it would have been if resort had been made to the use of a trap.”

In a few cases editors offer Nicoll’s theory as a possibility, but with reservations. In the Revels Doctor Faustus, when Helen “passeth over the stage” John Jump’s note explains: “This form of words recurs frequently in the stage-directions of the period.” After summarizing Nicoll, he suggests that “[a]lternatively, Helen simply enters by one door and leaves by the other.” At the second use of the phrase, “Enter Helen again, passing over between two Cupids,” he says that if Nicoll is correct, after praising her “Faustus goes with Helen and her Cupids down from the stage and out by the yard.”14 In the Revels Lover’s Melancholy, R. F. Hill cites Nicoll’s article for “Enter Corax, passing over” then gently qualifies his support: “Although his argument that such directions intended entry by the yard and then on to the stage has force for processional movements and other special circumstances, the staging here would not necessarily require it.”15 According to Arden 3’s David Daniell [citing Nicoll], the entrance of the commoners “over the stage” that begins Julius Caesar can be one of “crossing the stage, or even climbing up from the yard.”16

Rarely, an editor offers Nicoll’s theory but qualifies it with an opposing view, as do E. M. Yearling in his Revels edition of The Cardinal, when he cites T. J. King [quoted above], and Jay Halio in his Oxford King Henry VIII, when he cites Gurr [also quoted above].17 Marvin Spevak, in his Cambridge edition of Julius Cae- sar, however, quotes not Nicoll but G. L. Kittredge: “‘A conventional phrase indicating that the actors enter and cross the stage before they come to a halt.’”18

Sometimes two editions of the same play provide evidence of first Nicoll’s influence then the influence of one editor on another. At the end of the first scene in The Shoemaker’s Holiday is an encounter of the Lord Mayor with at least six others: “They pass over the stage. Ralph falls in amongst them. Firk and the rest cry ‘Farewell’, etc., and so exequintent.” The Revels editors, Robert Smallwood and Stanley Wells, note that the direction “had a technical sense which is of uncertain meaning” then give Nicoll’s theory and add that “he is supported by Richard Southern” [quoted above]. They conclude: “This would be an effective way of staging this episode.”19 In the revised New Mermaids edition, in which editor Anthony Parr thanks Smallwood and Wells, their influence is apparent although the casually offered details are Parr’s: “In Dekker’s theatre, this was probably a movement from the yard to the stage to the yard again, involving a procession through the standing audience.”20 Similarly, the endorsement of Nicoll’s theory for the wedding procession in Women Beware Women, discussed above, develops into something rather more substantial in Richard Dutton’s edition of the play [Oxford World Classics], where the action becomes “not merely a procession across the stage, but grandly entering and leaving through the playhouse yard.”21 Such an expansion into the yard acquires madramatic implications in Philip Brockbank’s Arden edition of Coriolanus. At the signal for the entrance of two senators, Volumnia, Virgilia and Valeria “passing over the stage” he claims that Nicoll “gives reason for believing” that this direction “required a processional movement ‘from yard to platform to yard again’. The ladies may be repeating the route of Coriolanus’ ovation [see II.i. headnote]. If Nicoll is right the senator’s speech becomes an address to the public on and off the stage.”22 That Nicoll might be wrong seems not to have been seriously considered by most of these editors.

But Nicoll’s rhetorical tour de force includes no possible
finding “evidence” for entrances and exits through the yard, he says nothing about how his suggested stagings would have been significantly better than those he dismisses. But “pass over the stage” and its variants account for most of the uses of stage in directions, so any “interpretation” of the phrase needs to address the question of what happened on the platform after the players entered. Where they entered from is part of the answer, but understanding what they might have done once on the stage is essential to any real grasp of what the direction meant four centuries ago.

In Recovering Shakespeare’s Theatrical Vocabulary, Alan Dessen explains [not for the first time] how “the playwright, players, and playgoers would have shared . . . a theatrical vocabulary [linked, in large part, to what could and could not be done on their stage] that is lost or blurred today” because “we no longer speak the same theatrical language as did Shakespeare and his contemporaries.” As Dessen’s own work has persuasively demonstrated, only by studying numerous examples in unedited texts while keeping in mind what we know (or think we know) about original staging conditions can we hope to achieve anything like an accurate understanding of that language.

II

Although pass over the stage is the most common phrasing, the direction also occurs in other forms, including passing or passeth over the stage and a passage over the stage; sometimes the verb is more specific: walk/go/chase/march over the stage; flies over the stage; running/posting/dancing/walking/going over the stage; figures are also led/borne/carried/driven over the stage; an abbreviated form is simply pass/passing over; a less often used alternative is pass/passing by. Often the signal includes an enter and exit or exeunt, but frequently those details are implied rather than stated. One or another version of the direction occurs about 145 times in 115 plays written for performance in London theaters between 1580 and 1642. It is used by virtually every playwright of the period including (by rough count): Shakespeare [11 times], Jonson [10], Heywood [5], Dekker [6], Fletcher, especially with Massinger [13], Chapman [3], Middleton [7], Ford [2], Brome [7], Shirley [6]. The direction is found
in plays performed at the Rose, Fortune, Globe, Blackfriars, Paul’s, Whitefriars, Red Bull, Cockpit/Phoenix, and Salisbury Court theaters, as well as in plays performed at Court. The first use of the phrase is probably in the plot of the second part of The Seven Deadly Sins [dated 1585], the last occurrences are in The Cardinal and The Jovial Crew [1641]. Evidently, it was a standard element of the theatrical vocabulary. Versions of the direction occur regularly through the period: by decade (admittedly an arbitrary division) 1585–89 yields three, the 1590s seventeen, 1600–1609 twenty-nine, 1610–19 twenty-eight, the 1620s nine, the 1630s twenty-four, and 1640–42 three.27

The direction is used for several different kinds of action. Most common are essentially dumb shows—primarily processions [weddings, funerals, royal entries] and the transportation of “food” for an unseen banquet, which traverse the stage in silence. Also frequent is the action of one or more figures passing over while others already onstage observe and comment. As with other directions in these plays, inconsistencies and anomalies are the norm; in this case, while “pass over the stage” typically signals continuous movement from entrance to exit, sometimes figures remain onstage briefly to converse with those already there before leaving, and on a few occasions they stay on until the end of a scene. When there is dialogue, either among the two groups or as commentary by observers, it is typically between two and six lines, suggesting that those passing over are only briefly onstage. The implications of these details are not considered by Nicoll, but they provide strong evidence against his all-inclusive theory. In particular, although he initially distinguishes the several uses of the direction, he does not differentiate between the fleeting appearance of a single figure that is only briefly registered and the spectacle of a procession that would have taken some time to enter, pass over, and exit. When one tries to envisage how these events were performed, however, the difference is important because while a single figure might well have merely crossed at the rear, a procession would almost certainly have used the whole stage.28 Furthermore, since Nicoll is apparently interested only in adding consistent evidence for entrances and exits from the yard, he fails to consider the significance of the action in context. But a study of specific uses of “pass over the stage” fostered an awareness that this direction has a purpose: it creates a dramatic situation with implications that are pertinent to the rest of the play. That is, there is every indication that in the work of experienced playwrights who spoke a common theatrical language, the use of this direction is deliberate, and that it is intended to create an effect that a different kind of appearance on stage would not. Judging from editors’ usual treatment of the stage direction, however—whether by quoting Nicoll or remaining silent—these details of staging and meaning have not been sufficiently appreciated.

The uses of “pass over the stage” fall into several interrelated categories. Most broadly, the direction is for a visual stage event that relies on what is seen to convey information. Within that context, for example, figures passing over with food can signal a change in location and either imply or prepare for an upcoming banquet. When the direction is used more than once in a play, it can illustrate cause and effect or can create a contrast between similar actions. As with many directions in early modern plays, there are conventions that would have affected how playgoers understood and responded to uses of this stage event. Typically, when one figure comments on another passing over, playgoers would have experienced a version of the aside and accepted that only they could hear the comments. They would also have had no trouble accepting that on the nonrealistic and unlocalized stage of the time, events could occur in two places at once, and that one group of characters could be oblivious to the presence of others with whom they shared the stage. Such conventions both permit and foster complex business no longer evident today without editorial or directorial guidance.

The popularity of “pass over the stage” with playwrights is testified to by its use in roughly a quarter of the extant plays of the period from 1580 to 1642.29 The still larger number of stage directions for the action prohibits discussion of no more than a few, but by giving attention especially (but not only) to those instances for which editors have cited Nicoll, I hope to shift the focus away from the yard and back to where it always belonged: the stage and the tiring house doors.

The occurrence of “pass over the stage” in no one but two of the extant theatrical “plots” indicates that the phrase was very much part of the language or code spoken by not only playwrights but also bookkeepers and players.30 The plot of The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins [1585] provides “Then Envy passeth over the stag,” “Sloth Passeth over,” and “Lechery pas-
“PASS OVER THE STAGE”—AGAIN

Leslie Thomson

34

“Pass over the stage” [12–13, 45, 70–1],
this phrase occurs in the plot along with the more common Enter and Exit/Exeunt as well as “Exit then enter againe” [13], enter “at one door . . . at an other” [39] and enter “to them” (passim), a clear indication that each direction meant something slightly different from the others. “Pass over” is used only for the three emblematic figures, and it seems that they merely enter and exit but do not speak: their appearance and what it signifies is what matters. Possibly this is emphasized verbally by Licgate, the chorus figure who seems to be on stage each time (the plots do not include dialogue, so it is impossible to be certain). The plot of The Dead Man’s Fortune [1590] includes “Enter panteloun whiles he speaks validore passeth oer the stage disguise” (21–22). Again, the visual—Validore in disguise—seems to be what is most important here.

The early and continuing use of the basic “pass over the stage” with virtually no added details indicates that it was a well-understood element of stage practice; but it is precisely this conventional quality that results in the cryptic and formulaic usages that pose problems of interpretation centuries later. Occasionally, however, phrasing helps to confirm an entrance and exit through the tiring-house doors: “Enter Lightfoote a country gentleman passing over the stage and knocks at the other dore” [Hog Hath Lost His Pear]. The fairly frequent use of “pass by” to signal evidently the same action is another clue that oer was not code for entrance and exit from the yard. Jonson, for one, seems to have used various phrasings interchangeably: “Enter an armd Sewer: some halfe dozen in mourning coates following, and passe by with service” and “Enter the sewer, passe by with servise againe, the seruing-men take knowledge of Valentine as they goe”; “Enter Deliro, with Malcidente, speaking as they passe over the Stage”; “Corbaccio, Corvino [Mosca, passant] Volpone.” The contexts in which each of these examples occur indicate the same basic stage action. Similarly, although Shakespeare uses “pass over,” he also sometimes omits the verb: “Enter Flavius, Murellus, and certaine Commoners ower the stage”; “Enter with Drumme and Colours, Lear, Cordelia, and Souldiers, ower the Stage, and Exeunt”; “Camidius Marcheth with his Land Army one way ower the stage, and Towrus the Lieutenant of Caesar the other way: After their going in, is heard the noise of a Sea-fight. Alarum. Enter Enobarbus and Scar-

35 Regardless of the particular phrasing, in each case the dialogue (or lack of it) indicates that all these versions (and others) have essentially the same meaning: figures entered, moved across the stage, and exited. What differentiates this direction from others is neither how nor where they entered and exited but what they did while on stage. And what is important for an understanding of why playwrights chose this direction over another are the dramatic purposes it fulfilled and the effects it made possible.

III

The central example in Nicoll’s argument is The Revenger’s Tragedy and although he never says how his idea would improve the staging of this play’s initial procession, it is a good place to begin a brief study of some notable instances of passing over the stage. After the direction “Enter Vendici, the Duke, Duchesse, Lusurioso her sonne, Spurio the bastard, with a traine, passe over the Stage with Torch-light.” Vendici, skull in hand, has a long speech describing the figures as they pass. Thus the scene is like many others that use the convention: one figure comments on others who do not see or hear him; only the audience can do both. But in the context of this play, in which Vendici repeatedly and self-consciously acts and speaks as if he were the playwright, to have him begin it by providing what amounts to his own list of “characters”—both dramatic and literary—is a nice self-referential touch by the real playwright. As to how the action was staged, pace Nicoll it seems to me that it would have been very effective on the Globe stage if the grand procession had entered at one door, paraded forward and across near the front of the stage, perhaps circling more than once, before it departed through either the same or the opposite tiring-house door. Nicoll dismisses this staging on the grounds that Vendici would have nowhere from which to speak effectively. But if Vendici had spoken as the procession began to circle him, then continued to speak while weaving in and out of it, his necessary corruption by association would have been anticipated or simply conveyed emblematically at the start. Alternatively, the procession could easily have left him room to stand near the front of the stage, or he might have sat, legs dangling into the yard,
thereby immediately creating a link between himself and the audience, inviting their complicity. Certainly the movement of the procession on and off the stage while Vindici remained on would have created a contrast between them and him that his words develop. As always when "pass over the stage" is used, it is the visual that is important; but here what the spectator sees is influenced by Vindici’s description.

The effectiveness of simply seeing a figure is probably nowhere more evident than in Doctor Faustus, when Helen twice appears before Faustus [scene 18]. I have already noted Jump’s willingness to consider Nicoll’s staging as possible; but he also seems not to have realized how "pass over the stage" differs from other signals for figures to enter and exit. Frequently when this direction is used there is no subsequent direction for the exit of those who pass over because departure is implied. In both the 1604 and 1616 Quartos of Faustus there is no exit for Helen the first time she passes over and the second time, although there is an "Exeunt!" at the end of Faustus’s "Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships" speech [18.118], there are no details about who exits. Jump adds nothing on the first occasion, but on the second he indicates that Faustus, Helen, and the Cupids exit together, presumably in part because through his speech Faustus refers to Helen as if she were there, using "thou," "thee," and "thy" [106, 109, 112, 114, 118]. But if she were to exit after kissing him [105], near the middle of his speech, his way of referring to her as if present could suggest how completely she has captured his "soul" [102–103]. My point is not that it must have been staged this way, but that the use of "passing over" makes such a suggestion viable and that Jump’s direction precludes the possibility.

The visual can easily be forgotten when reading a play, but tends to dominate in performance; certainly it is an important means of communication for a playwright, and the experienced ones seldom miss an opportunity to use it. In addition, not only can a stage picture save "a thousand words" of dialogue, it can convey information emblematically by condensing several ideas into one reverberating image. In Macbeth, for example, between Lady Macbeth’s effusive welcome of Duncan, and Macbeth’s "If it were done, when ‘tis done, then ’twere well / It were done quickly," Shakespeare inserted "Enter a Sever, and divers Servants with Dishes and Service over the Stage. Then enter Macbeth" (473–74, 1.7.0). Probably these figures (as few as three, or as many as possible), came forward much like the procession in Revenger’s Tragedy, since in this case not only is there no one else on stage, but the effect to be conveyed is of a grand banquet of welcome. Costumes and properties, not to mention minor players or supernumeraries, once mustered would probably have been used for maximum impact. And the point their presence makes about the Macbeths’ duplicity is pithy and important. Furthermore, what the playgoer sees here anticipates the on-stage banquet in 3.4, suggesting the sequence of cause and effect.37

Indeed, many of the processions described as passing over are essentially moving dumb shows used for a ceremonial event important not in itself but as a preparation, context, or consequence of other events in the plot.38 The emphasis on what a spectator should see is illustrated by several examples: "Solemne Musique to a funerall song the Herse borne over the stage. Duke Lurdo, Polymetes, Angelo, Iulio, Horatio and mourners [sic] Exeunt",39 "Enter two Mourners, Atlanta with the Axe, Leonida all in white, her haire loose, hung with ribans; supported on eyther side by two Ladies, Aurelia following as chiefe Mourner. Pase softly over the stage";40 "A Dinner carried over the Stage in covered Dishes. Exeunt"41. "Cornets. Enter Emperesse and Silius crownd attended in state by the Auspices and their faction passing over the stage to the Temple, Lepida with her haire dishevelled wringing her hands meets them, they goe off shee speakes."42 If the occurrence of such processions in plays written for virtually every theater through the period attests to the popularity of this theatrical shorthand, so too does the occasional reworking of the convention. In the Shoemaker’s Holiday quoted earlier, for instance, Dekker has Rafe take advantage of the Lord Mayor’s parade when he “falls in amongst” those passing over, and the amoral wedding procession in Women Beware Women is halted by the lone representative of morality: “Enter in Great state the Duke and Brancha richly attir’d, with Lords, Cardinals, Ladies, and other Attendants, they pass solemnly over: Enter L. Cardinal in a rage, seeming to break off the Ceremony.”43 The point is not that either playwright was consciously working against expectations but that each used a direction calling for movement on and off that could
be interrupted and that doing so would have helped to convey a point about the characters and events.

Versions of "pass over the stage" occur in twelve or thirteen plays in the Shakespeare canon where, unsurprisingly, the action is used in ways pertinent to the particular work. Two examples are especially relevant here. In the second Quarto of Hamlet, 4.4 begins "Enter Fortinbras with his Army over the stage"; the equivalent Folio direction for a much shorter scene is simply "Enter Fortinbras with an Armie." In Q2, the impression made by Fortinbras's brief appearance prompts Hamlet's immediate soliloquy ("How all occasions do inform against me"), whereas the Folio scene seems intended to establish Fortinbras in the playgoer's mind as a military man of action who knows what he wants and is in control. The basic purpose of the device—to make a point visually—also seems to have determined its use in Henry IV, Part 2, the last scene of which begins with three grooms anticipating the arrival of the newly crowned king, then "Trumpets sound, and the King, and his traine passe over the stage: after them enter Falstaff, Shallow, Pistol, Bardolfe, and the Boy." This direction describes two separate actions: first the entrance, procession, and exit of the King and his train, then the entrance of Falstaff and his companions, whose ensuing dialogue establishes that they have not yet seen the King. In his Cambridge edition Georgio Melchiori notes that "'Pass over the stage' was a form of dumb show, when a group of actors entered at one side and exited at the other," but he says nothing about what happened as they did so.46 This is a moment for which Shakespeare, and Hal, have prepared, so the procession would almost certainly have been prolonged and spectacular, encompassing the whole stage. Furthermore, clear evidence of the difference between "pass over" and a normal entrance is soon provided by "Enter the King and his train" [K4v]: here, Falstaff addresses the King, who responds at length before exiting. As these examples indicate, Shakespeare realized the usefulness of an action that not only could be staged virtually anywhere but that could be expected to convey information efficiently and effectively.

Other playwrights realized this, too, and some, especially Jonson (but rarely Shakespeare), use the direction for a brief appearance of one or several figures. The example already cited from Volpone—"[Mosca passant]"—illustrates this clearly. Corbacio says, "See, in our habite? see the impudent varlet!" and Corvino responds, "That I could shooe mine eies at him, like gunstones" [5.8.1–2]. Mosca says nothing, he merely "passes over the stage": the visual—his change of clothing—is all that matters here. The term Jonson uses is unique, but the action is entirely conventional; although rather than having a group come forward on stage to make a strong impression, in this case probably the single figure simply crossed from one tiring-house door to the other (as the Folio parentheses nicely suggest), while being observed and commented on by others.46 Similarly, in The Second Maiden's Tragedy at "Enter Bellarius passing over the Stage," Votarius is already on and says: "ha, what's hee? tis Bellarius my ranke enemie."47 Although the details differ, the business of having figures "pass over" while others on stage take note is a very common use of the direction. Often, as in these two examples, those crossing are not aware of being observed or commented on; in other cases, however, there is a brief exchange of dialogue (not signaled in stage directions) between the two.

On the page, such moments are brief and might seem insignificant, but in performance they allow the playwright to convey information about events and characters with a kind of theatrical shorthand not available in realistic drama on a localized stage.

Editors who are unaware of the conventions and expectations linked to "pass over the stage" will either simply fail to discuss the direction or, worse, accept Nicoll's unsupported argument for entrances and exits from the yard, thereby shifting the emphasis from the stage where it should be. But when the distraction of Nicoll's theory is removed, both the problems inherent in some directions on the one hand, and the dramatic and thematic potential of the action on the other, can become apparent. By way of illustration and conclusion, I want to return briefly to several directions for which further consideration of the action and its implications seems especially warranted. If, for example, the yard had been used for the entrance and later exit of "certain Commoners over the stage" at the beginning of Julius Caesar, the danger of creating unrest among the "commoner" groundlings would have been considerable, especially when their dramatic kin are immediately scolded for idleness and told to go home. In The Atheist's Tragedy, when Borachio "Descends" it is almost certainly not to the yard but into the trap, which
D’Amville’s instruction to the servants (ignored by Nicoll and Ribner) seems to support: “Go round about into the gravel pit, / And help my brother up” (2.4.19–22); emphasis added). The business of going around would certainly be more literally true if the servants exited through the tiring-house door and reentered with Montferrers’s body; furthermore, Borachio later “ascends” (2.4.83.1), and his doing so from the trap would have emphasized his devilish delight in the murder he has committed. Nicoll’s blanket application of his theory to confusing and/or complex directions here and in other plays is perhaps what makes it appealing to editors confronted with the task of interpretation. For such a signal in The Widow’s Tears, Yamada posits that two figures enter from the yard, presumably because they are “not noticed” by others on stage, but similar actions of “not seeing” abound in plays of the period and no special staging was required to make them convincing. Finally, A Woman Killed with Kindness provides evidence of how the direction could be used to add meaning, something that might be more easily perceived if the influential Revels edition had not been the first to have Nicoll’s theory imposed on it. Repeatedly in this play we are reminded of Frankford’s hospitality in opening his house to Wendell. The stage and tiring house are clearly designated as rooms in the Frankford house, so that when Wendell watches Frankford, Anne, and Nicholas “Enter over the stage” (C2v) during his early soliloquy about wronging his host’s “bed,” a playgoer’s awareness of his “villainy” is emphasized. But Heywood uses the direction again, after Wendell has seduced Anne, and Frankford is watching with Nicholas: “Enter Wendol running over the stage in a night-gowne, he [Frankford] after him with his sword drawn, the maid in her smocks stays his hand, and clasps hold on him, he pauses awhile” (F4r). The tiring house has been established as the location of the Frankford bedroom—a place the playgoer never sees—therefore this entrance from and return to it vividly convey the consequences of his hospitality. Heywood’s use of the same kind of silent entrance and exit not once but twice gives visual emphasis to the play’s central concerns.

The extensive use of a direction such as “pass over the stage” by many playwrights in plays written for performance on both the outdoor and indoor stages of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London indicates not only that the action was popular and useful but that those involved knew how to stage it.

Today, however, the potential of such scenes is lost, especially for readers of the plays, unless the actions encoded in the directions can be visualized as theatrical events with thematic significance. The original texts preserve the evidence and it is on them that we should focus when making interpretations.

**Notes**

1. “Passing over the stage,” Shakespeare Survey 12 (1959): 47–55; Nicoll was the journal’s editor at the time.
6. Andrew Gurr, The Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 173. While it is always possible that portable stairs were used occasionally, I know of no evidence of their existence in stage directions, dialogue, or anywhere else.
8. Frank Hildy, Theatre Survey 42 (May 2001): 92. That printers reproduced the vocabulary of their copy in no way implies that they shared it.
9. While doing research for this study I found that “pass over the stage” was one of the topics discussed by a panel consisting of Richard Hosley, Bernard Beckerman, and T. J. King at the 1971 MLA Conference on Renaissance Drama (summarized by Philip C. Kolin, Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama 15–16 [1972–73]: 5–14). I was amused to read that Alan Dessen was the one who raised the matter, asking “if it was not possible to have an entry on the stage from the yard.” In response, Richard Hosley summarized the views of Nicoll and Southern then raised some of the same difficulties as I discuss here. He offered that “it seems unwise to interpret passing over the stage as meaning anything else than that we have an actor enter at one door, march around the perimeter of the stage, the sides of the stage, and then go back out by the other door” (11–12). Had Hosley’s expert opinion been more widely circulated at the time, that article might not have needed to be written.
10. A Woman Killed with Kindness (London: Methuen & Co., 1961), note to scene 6, 16.1. Van Fossen cites this note at scene 13, 67.1, when “over the stage” occurs again.
"PASS OVER THE STAGE"—AGAIN

15. The Lover’s Melancholy [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985].
18. Julius Caesar [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 1.1.0. In fact, the direction usually signals continuous movement from entrance to exit.
20. The Shoemaker’s Holiday, 2nd ed. [London: A&C Black, 1990], 1.1.239 note. More surprising because even less supported by evidence is “procesional movement from the audience to the stage and back or across an upper stage or balcony” (The Shoemaker’s Holiday in Renaissance Drama, ed. Arthur F. Kinney [Malden, MA: Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999], note to scene 2, 262 s.d.
23. Also worth noting is that as a company’s most costly investment, costumes were most unlikely to have been paraded through the yard where they could have been damaged or even removed and stolen.
24. Ichikawa’s chapter takes “the convention of ‘passing over the stage’ as a particular example of the most complex use of entry and exit doors” (91) and she pays considerable attention to what happened on stage between entry and exit.
27. At present I can offer no explanation for the much lower figure in the 1620s.
28. The vagueness of “pass over the stage” is not unusual and suggests a stage code understood by those who implemented it; but it is important to realize that it also leaves room for flexibility in implementation depending on the number of figures entering and the context. A drawing by C. Walter Hodges, in which he puts this direction at the back of the stage for a movement from door to door, and puts “about the stage” for a movement forward and around the platform, creates a differentiation that the evidence does not sup-

LESLIE THOMSON

29. See the entry in A Dictionary of Stage Directions, 1580–1642 for “pass, passing, passage” [158–59] and “stage” [211–12] for most of the examples.
31. Dramatic Documents, vol. 2. At the risk of momentary confusion for readers, I have retained the original spellings as a reminder that we no longer speak or write quite the same “language” today.
32. Dramatic Documents, vol. 2.
33. Robert Tailor [London, 1614], B1r. That we have only this play by Tailor could indicate that he was not a professional, which could in turn explain his use of a more detailed direction for the same action. Certain his phrasing makes it clear that Lightfoote’s passing over the stage begins with him entering from one door and concludes with him knocking at the other; the direction leaves no possibility that he ascends from or descends into the yard.
36. Anon. [London, 1607], A2r.
37. In his Cambridge edition, A. R. Braunmuller says “crossing silently from side to side” [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 1.7.0 sd.2], which is certainly preferable to offering Nicoll’s theory. By “side” Braunmuller presumably means the opposing doors in the tiring-house wall, but he does not indicate whether or not those who enter remain at the rear of the stage or come forward. In his headnote for this scene Braunmuller makes the comparison with 3.4.
38. Ichikawa discusses such dumb shows in some detail [93–96].
40. Anon., Swettenham the Woman Hater [London, 1618], G2r [a Red Bull play].
42. Nathaniel Richards, Messalina [London, 1635], E3v [Salisbury Court].
43. Thomas Middleton, Women Beware Women [London, 1657], N4v. However compromised the Cardinal is in fact, he embodies and expresses the moral values being defied by the Duke.
44. With Quarto signatures and/or Folio TLN references: 2 Henry VI [TLN 1690–91], 3 Henry VI [TLN 2257–59], 2 Henry IV [O, K4r], Julius Caesar [TLN 2–3], Hamlet [Q2, K3r, TLN 2734], King Lear [Q, K3v, TLN 2918–19], Macbeth [TLN 473–74], Antony and Cleopatra [TLN 1973–76], Coriolanus [TLN 3639–40], Pericles [Q, C4r], Cymbeline [TLN 2892–97], Henry VIII [TLN 2444–45]. Titus Andronicus includes a unique phrase: “Enter the Judges and Senators with Titus two sonses bound, passing on the Stage to the place of execution, and Titus going before pleading” (Q, E3r, emphasis added). Stanley Wells has suggested that this is a compositor’s misreading of an abbreviation for “over” (see the edition by Eugene M. Waith [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], 3.1.02 note).


46. In the Jonson canon see also Cynthia’s Revels, vol. 4: 2.3.122, 161; Sejanus, vol. 4: 5.460; Catiline, vol. 5: 4.0. Folio Every Man In, vol. 3: 2.3.4; Poetaster, vol. 4: 4.7.22–23.
