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Playwriting Manuals, 1888–1925: Jerome K. Jerome, Alfred Hennequin, Agnes Platt, and Moses Malevinsky

Since the 1990s, there has been a large number of 'how-to' manuals published in English for aspiring playwrights. By and large, these texts treat the pedagogy of playwriting as a recent phenomenon. However, a series of relatively unknown books from the mid-nineteenth century were written with the purpose of teaching the craft of dramatic writing, emphasizing the importance of a hands-on understanding of the theatre and the individual roles within it. This article argues that, while these books are representative of the historical context in which they were written, they also contain advice which is still useful for playwrights, along with fascinating individual characteristics. Texts featured include one of the earliest manuals discovered, written by the anonymous 'A Dramatist'; a text by the first (known) woman to write a how-to manual in English; and a book which uses a mathematical formula as a foundation for writing a script. Karen Morash is Lead Academic Tutor on the BA Theatre Studies at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance. She is a playwright and poet, and works as a dramaturg with the theatre company Head for Heights.

Key terms: pedagogy of playwriting, dramaturgy, George Pierce Baker, Steve Waters.

IN HIS 2013 article 'How to Describe an Apple: A Brief Survey of the Literature on Playwriting', the playwright Steve Waters (author of *The Secret Life of Plays*) claims that until recently, books providing advice for playwrights 'barely existed except as an outpost of literary criticism', and that pedagogical literature for playwrights diminished 'to a trickle' between William Archer's seminal 1912 text *Play-Making: A Manual of Craftmanship* and Steve Gooch's 1988 book *Writing a Play*.[1] Given the sheer volume of titles published since Gooch's text, it is clear that the writing of instructional manuals for playwrights has become a popular pursuit in the last three decades. These range from David Edgar's weighty *How Plays Work*, which examines dramatic construction with a strong focus on maintaining popular conventions, to others such as Tim Fountain's *So You Want to Be a Playwright?* and Angelo Parra's *Playwriting for Dummies*, which take a more informal approach, akin to that of a writing coach, covering the basics of both play construction and getting one's work seen.[2] Many of these, particularly the ones with a more serious outlook, are in discourse with each other and challenge or develop what has already been written about the craft of writing a play. However, this intertextuality seems mainly focused on books published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, apart from references to the dramaturgical analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, with occasional nods to Gustav Freytag, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, George Pierce Baker, and William Archer. This seems to confirm Waters's observation that, with a few exceptions, the playwright's manual is a relatively recent phenomenon.

However, a basic search of the term 'playwriting' in the British Library catalogue quickly reveals a rich seam of early manuals in English that have gone unnoticed by Waters and his contemporaries. Starting with Edward Mayhew's 1840 text, *Stage Effect: The Principles which Command Dramatic Success in the Theatre*, a number of manuals written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been identified, which not only provide useful advice for playwrights – some of which is still

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applicable to contemporary practice – but document English-language theatre practice of this period, including the details of productions which were popular at the time, but have now, for various reasons, been forgotten.[3]

This article represents a first step in documenting these texts and evaluating their approach to issues of both dramaturgy and the practicalities of writing a play, placing them within their historical and cultural context. It begins with *Playwriting: A Handbook for Would-Be Dramatic Authors* (1888), a fascinating – and enjoyably caustic – text written by the intriguingly anonymous 'A Dramatist'. The decision to begin here is strategic: the 1880s have been identified by a number of scholars as the beginning of a particularly energetic time for English-language playwriting, following the decline of the patent theatres in England and other significant changes which led to greater freedoms and opportunities for writers and audiences.[4] The influence of such writers as Ibsen and Chekhov encouraged a move away from melodrama, although it took a while for the latter to disappear completely, towards new forms, embraced by homegrown (or at least Irish) writers such as Shaw and Wilde.

Playwriting: A Handbook and the others featured (including books by Alfred Hennequin, Agnes Platt, and Moses Malevinsky) predominantly focus on helping a writer to understand the demands of writing effective dramatic texts for the commercial theatre. They have also been chosen as each has a slightly different, and sometimes left-of-centre, approach to the craft of playwriting, which can reveal intriguing details about the theatre ecology of the time. All four writers featured here did not reach prominence through playwriting (although three out of the four did write plays) but used expertise gained in other professions to influence their advice to nascent writers in a way that makes each text distinctive. In recognizing these texts as significant, an argument could be made for them to be included within the discourse of the pedagogy of playwriting.

The year 1925 marks an end point, when cinema was in ascendance, in that audiences once again shifted their viewing habits, and there were significant cultural swings within performance. Just over ten years later, John Howard Lawson's *The Theory and Technique of Playwriting* was published. Lawson's text, published in a second, expanded edition in 1949, widening the author's gaze to encompass screenwriting technique, altered the direction of the discourse of these manuals away from a more practical approach towards one which embraced dramaturgical theory and history. Although a large number of manuals written after Lawson's exist, pedagogical books from this point onwards generally note shifts that were taking place within English-speaking theatre-making in general, including the emergence of expressionism from continental Europe and new dramaturgical approaches in response to cinema's growing dominance of realism.[5]

Whilst certain writers, such as Archer, Baker, and Lawson, have received significant coverage elsewhere, the authors examined in this article have had less attention. However, their books deserve further scrutiny. This is not only because they document important aspects of theatre history, but also because some of the advice offered to playwrights is not always temporally rooted, and can have application beyond the time span identified.[6] Many of these early texts claim that it is important for a playwright to gain a practical understanding of the medium and industry they wish to work in before they undertake the act of writing for performance, which is not always the case in more contemporary 'how-to' texts. Yet aspects of these books may well remain useful for the playwright of today, and should be included in the discourse on the methodologies of writing for the stage. It is inevitable that the advice given by the identified writers was shaped by the temporal context in which they were writing; after examining that context, the texts are explored thematically in order to identify alignments and departures.

Sketches: Writers and Manuals Featured

Playwriting: A Handbook, the earliest text in this study, is also notable because it provides an acerbic and insightful account of the late-

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nineteenth-century British theatre industry; it concerns, in its essence, comic writing. In the preface, 'A Dramatist' states that the purpose of the book is to 'discuss the question of getting in' to an industry with 'high strong walls that guard the city of Dramatic Art'.[7] It is addressed to an imagined playwright to whom he speaks directly, often naming them affectionately as 'my dear young reader'.[8] The tone of the book is conversational: a hardened and experienced writer who has seen it all warns the new entrant of some of the pitfalls of the industry to save them from making the same mistakes he did: 'All I can hope to do is to guide you along the right path, to save you from walking at the rate of five miles an hour down the wrong lanes, and puffing and blowing round the wrong turnings.'[9] Replete with similar metaphors, it is clear that the book's author is as keen to entertain as he is to educate. He indulges in a bit of dramatic writing himself in order to make a point about the vagaries of popular taste, imagining a scenario where Shakespeare approaches a London manager with his idea for *Hamlet*:

HARRIS (*opening and reading letters, and speaking without turning round*): Well, my boy, what is it? You must be quick; I've only a minute to spare.

SHAKESPEARE (*with a rather meaningless chuckle, nervously twisting his hat the while*): Er-er, 'bout that play of mine, you know. Left it with you 'bout a week ago. Said you'd glance it over, you know, er—

HARRIS: Oh, ah, yes *Prince Claude; or, the Castle Spectre.* I—

SHAKESPEARE (*apologetically*): *Hamlet; or, the Prince of Denmark*, I think I—

HARRIS: Oh yes, so it was. Yes, very pretty thing; nothing much in it though—undramatic—hardly the thing to suit us.[10]

Whilst certainly not the only person to imagine such a scenario, this comic approach reminds new playwrights that talent is only part of the equation when it comes to having work produced.

But who was this mysterious writer? Cautionary tales appear throughout the text, and although they are written with the intention of entertaining the reader, they also provide the evidence of lived experience within the industry, even if communicated in a tongue-in-cheek fashion. For example, the author includes a description of how the first reading of a play usually unravels, beginning with the initial tentative arrival at the theatre in search of the manager, where the would-be playwright is regarded by the stage door-keeper with great suspicion, asserting that 'no, the manager isn't there, his tone implying that it is the last place in the world where any sensible man would expect to find him'.[11] In other words, aspiring playwrights should expect certain barriers in their path to success, including less-than-friendly (literal and metaphorical) gatekeepers; playwrights of our time might observe that not a great deal has changed in that respect.

'A Dramatist' also draws on the work of playwrights of the time to provide examples of what *not* to do, including the unnecessary and heavy-handed exposition in a play called *Barbara* by a young writer named Jerome K. Jerome, who is better known as the author of the comic travelogue *Three Men in a Boat.* Whilst researching these early manuals, it became clear that 'A Dramatist' was very likely Jerome himself, which casts an amusing shadow over the critical comments above; it is worthwhile noting, however, that the author does state that the weighty exposition of *Barbara* was 'the one weak point of the play'.[12]

The evidence that Jerome was likely 'A Dramatist' is compelling. Along with a writing style heavily dependent on amusing, ironic, and self-deprecating anecdote, which is emblematic of much of his work, *Playwriting: A Handbook for Would-Be Dramatic Authors* is peppered with observations that closely match Jerome's lived experience. He had a short-lived career as an actor before becoming a writer, and much of the advice in the book is rooted in having a first-hand understanding of how plays are produced and what an actor does with the lines she or he is given. In addition, Jerome published two other books connected to stagecraft under his own name.

His first published book was *On the Stage—and Off: The Brief Career of a Would-Be Actor*

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(1885; note the appearance of the phrase 'would-be' both in this title and in that of *Playwriting: A Handbook*).[13] Similar to the documentation of his efforts as a novice playwright, this text is an amusing account of his struggle to get acting work. Aligning with the advice above about joining a country company, Jerome states that his 'short career was passed among the minor London theatres, and second and third rate travelling companies'. Additionally, he published a short, delightfully odd, book titled *Stageland*, dedicated to 'The Earnest Student of the Drama'.[14] It is a handbook, of sorts, of use to both the actor and writer, which documents various standard character types, including 'The Hero', 'The Villain', 'The Comic Lovers', and others, along with those less seen on twenty-first-century stages, including 'The Good Old Man' and 'The Irishman'. In a way, the text, much like *Playwriting: A Handbook*, serves as instruction on what *not* to do, as much as it advises on standard practice. All three texts are rooted in a practical experience of the theatre, and show that the author understands both the process of writing a play and having it produced, and how an actor might approach a script.

Alfred Hennequin's background is not as securely planted within lived experience as a writer and theatre-maker as Jerome's, but his 1890 text *The Art of Playwriting: Being a Practical Treatise on the Elements of Dramatic Construction* similarly roots the playwright within the practicalities of stagecraft. As the title suggests, the tone of the book is more serious, and explores dramaturgical elements of play construction to a much greater extent than *Playwriting: A Handbook.* Hennequin (1846–1914) was a French-born academic who came to the United States in 1872 and was employed for many years as an instructor in French at the University of Michigan. He wrote a number of French–English textbooks and established his own school of languages, whilst keeping an active interest in theatre and dramatic writing. His interest in drama therefore was not his central academic concern, but his passion.[15]

His introduction states that the book was written for two types of playwrights: '1) those who know much about the practical workings of the theatre, but have little constructive knowledge; and 2) those whose instinct for dramatic construction is strong, but who, through lack of opportunity, have acquired little insight into the practical details of stage representation.'[16] As such, the book is structured in two sections, the first focusing on the practicalities and realities of the theatre industry, and the second on dramaturgical construction. The recognition that there is not only one route into playwriting is noteworthy in that it is an unusual observation, both within the early texts and those written more recently.[17] Many contemporary (to us) manuals do not acknowledge the significant number of playwrights who started in different roles within the theatre, including some of our best-known dramatists – Shakespeare, Pinter – who began as actors. Equally, there is often the assumption that anyone interested in writing for the stage will know about the technical aspects of theatre-making. Yet some playwrights come into the job having only experienced drama as spectators or readers, and are therefore ignorant of the workings of the backstage. The dual focus of Hennequin's text recognizes that neither the entirely practical nor entirely theoretical background offers a full picture of the complexities of creating a written text that will eventually be performed within the freedoms and limitations of the stage.

Agnes Platt, author of *Practical Hints on Playwriting* (1919), also provides an entry-level guide for dramatic writers, using a structure akin to the type of 'domestic tips' texts popular in homes of the time. Significantly, Platt is the only woman of this period to write a how-to text (and remains one of only a handful to have written them at all).[18] She reveals that she worked in a 'managerial office' and read 'over a thousand plays a year'.[19] This rather underplays her status within the London theatre landscape of her time. Platt was an established critic, and archival research reveals that she 'presented' West End plays such as an adaptation of

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William Black's *Green Pastures and Piccadilly* (Ambassadors, 1919), and worked as a translator and writer.[20] She was also the author of a number of 'practical hints' texts based in the performing arts – *Practical Hints of Training for the Stage* (1921) and *Practical Hints on Acting for the Cinema* (1923), among others – which suggests a prestigious career firmly rooted in professional theatre and film.[21]

In addition, Platt's expertise was called on by newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror*, for which she wrote an article in 1917 with the by-line 'Agnes Platt: The Well-known Authority on Dramatic Authorship'.[22] In the article, written in the midst of the First World War, she argues that there had been a lack of serious plays in the last few years and wonders how a new generation of writers will emerge. She refutes the 'popular theory' that theatre managers did not want plays by new writers, stating that she was in a position to deny that idea 'with authority', and that most 'managers are only too glad to give a trial to anybody who has something to say, and will say it in a way that will attract the paying public to the box-office'.[23]

It is not clear whether Platt structured *Practical Hints on Playwriting* in a handy-hints form that would be familiar to female readers of texts dedicated to providing domestic advice because of a desire to encourage women to write for the stage – there is no indication of this in the text – but it is notable that the book emerged in the wake of the success of a number of female playwrights and managers, as well as the rise of suffrage drama. Like Jerome and Hennequin, Platt writes from the point of view of one who is well versed in the practical aspects of stagecraft, including, unusually, producing.[24] She details the process of play selection by managers, which bears a resemblance to the processes literary teams go through today at new-writing theatres such as the Royal Court:

> Plays, when they reach a managerial office, are read by someone whose business it is to weed out the impossible and write reports upon those deemed sufficiently promising for the manager's own eye. These reports take the form of a short synopsis of the plot and a brief criticism. The essence of both synopsis and report is brevity.[25]

Novice playwrights may not understand how literary departments work, or why it is so difficult to catch the attention of one who might commission the work. Without discouraging writers, it is important for their resilience within a difficult industry that they understand the theatre–playwright relationship and why it might be useful in the early stages of their career to stage their own work and make important connections with other theatre artists.

Although all four writers featured here are distinct in their own way, Moses Malevinsky is perhaps the outlier of the group in terms of how unusual his approach was to the pedagogy of playwriting. His curious 1925 text *The Science of Playwriting* proposes an algebraic formula for successful dramatic writing:

> The Algebraic Formula of a play is:
>
> (A) A basic emotion, or an element in or of a basic emotion, constituting the theme; plus
> (B) Personified by character; plus
> (C) Motivated through:
>
> 1. Crucible,
> 2. Conflict,
> 3. Complication and/or intrigue to ultimate
> 4. Crisis and
> 5. Climax; plus
>
> (D) Progressed by narrative, plot or story; plus
> (E) Compartmented by derivative situations; plus
> (F) Dressed up by incidental detailed construction; plus
> (G) The underlying idea orientated through its constituent elements as dramaturgically expressed; plus
> (H) Articulated by words; plus
> (I) Imagined with artistry – Equals 'X' – A PLAY.[26]

Malevinsky was an American lawyer and sometime playwright who dealt with a number of high-profile copyright cases, including [*Anne*] *Nichols vs. Universal Pictures Corporation* in 1930, where the plaintiff claimed her highly commercially successful play *Abie's Irish Rose* (1922) had been plagiarized by Universal in their picture *The Cohens and the Kellys*.[27] During the trial he called himself to the stand as an expert witness, testifying for seven days and drawing on the formula above.

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The lower court judge 'refused to adopt Mr Malevinsky's test and rejected any idea of dissection of the works'; his book therefore may be more successful in terms of dramatic analysis than legal defence.[28] In the text Malevinsky outlines his long-standing engagement with live performance: his 'reasonable familiarity with literature dealing with theatre' (as evidenced in his first chapter, introducing the ideas of some of the most prominent dramaturgical theorists), and that he has undertaken a 'systematic study of playwriting'. Along with the actual writing of plays, he undertook 'constant attendance at [the] theatre'; however, none of these activities helped him to answer the question '*What is a play?*'[29] It was only through the development of his formula that he was able to find an answer to that conundrum.[30]

Malevinsky devotes a large portion of his text to discussing particular legal cases concerning plays; the lawsuit against playwright Max Marcin and producer A. H. Woods, for example, which claimed Marcin's play *Cheating Cheaters* (1916) had plagiarized another, unproduced, script titled *Wedding Presents*.[31] He arrived at this formula whilst attempting to construct a definition of what a play is, for the purposes of copyright disputes. Although the idea of reducing the elements of a play to a mathematical formula is unconventional, the elements of the formula are not particularly radical in terms of the advice given to playwrights in general. On the other hand, there is an assumed precedence in the ordering of the elements, and Malevinsky is rare amongst the 'how-to' manual writers (early and late) in suggesting that a play begins with a 'basic emotion'. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Owen Davis wrote an introduction to the text, and though he is somewhat hesitant in his praise, and states that Malevinsky's method of determining the emotion that underlies a play is 'rather arbitrary', he argues that 'plays are dominated by emotion', and that it is affect which 'brings about the plot, not the plot the emotion'.[32]

Whilst, due to its unorthodox approach, *The Science of Playwriting* is not likely to appear on postgraduate reading lists, the first chapter, which is reminiscent of the opening statement in a trial, is a precis of what others, including Archer, Gustav Freytag, Baker, and William T. Price, have written about the craft of dramatic writing. As such, it is a useful reference text for playwriting students for its simplified outline of key dramaturgical theories. Despite the peculiarity of the manual, Malevinsky's formula is a reasonable starting point for the aspiring playwright more comfortable working within clear principles for dramatic construction, and it is broad enough to allow individual creative interpretation. As Malevinsky states, critics of his formula 'lose sight of the fact that the organic structure of a play is one thing, its artistry another'.[33] The book, while entertainingly odd, is written from a sound knowledge of dramaturgical construction and understands what makes a play an original piece of creative expression. This, particularly in the light of some of the cases Malevinsky fought involving cinematic interpretations of dramatic texts, marks a significant moment when the need to distinguish the craft of writing for the theatre from that of writing for the screen became increasingly important. In order to understand how Malevinsky, and the other writers under discussion, were influenced by their temporal contexts, it is useful to provide information on the cultural and creative climate from which they emerged.

Setting the Scene: Commercial Theatre, 1840–1925

The decades leading up to the writing of Jerome's *Playwriting: A Handbook* was a time of considerable change within British and American theatre that initially seemed slow but eventually paved the way for what became known as the 'new drama' of the early twentieth century. Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright claim that much of the nineteenth century was part of a 'two-and-a-half-century-long-coma' in 'a time so bleak and unsettling that we prefer to forget all about it'.[34] While this ignores the fact that theatregoing was a highly popular pursuit in the 1800s, and that significant (if not particularly new or British) work was being produced, it was undoubtedly a difficult time to be a dramatist.

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Mayhew's *Stage Effect* (1840) features a lengthy introduction which serves both as a justification for writing a book of advice for playwrights and an impassioned account of the detrimental effect of the patent theatres on the quality of English writing.[35] Coming towards the end of the patents' dominance, in the midst of the 1833 Dramatic Copyright Act and the 1843 Theatrical Reform Act, the text seems to be a plea for a regeneration of that most beleaguered of artists, the dramatic writer. Mayhew stated that it 'were an act of treachery to write anything intended to promote a dramatic taste, if it were thought possible the legal oppression of the drama could much longer continue'; the fact that he felt it timely to write his text indicates that the industry was on the cusp of change.[36] Previously, dramatic work was restricted to the two patent theatres, controlled by a series of managers. This meant that only a small selection of what was called 'legitimate' spoken drama was produced, although other theatres were allowed to perform melodrama, burlesque, farce, and other less serious forms.

Work produced at the patent theatres was at the whim of managers, who were under a great deal of pressure to make profits, and the professional play readers they hired. Rather than undertake the risk of an unknown writer, many preferred to stage translations of well-known French plays than original domestic fare. Playwrights who wanted any chance of having their work produced were forced to pen scripts which were often bawdy and emphasized spectacle over plot in order to appeal to popular taste; as James Woodfield states, 'playwriting, an unhonoured and unrewarded profession, was scorned by the *literati*'.[37]

In addition, playwrights had few rights over their work, and fees were low. According to John Russell Stephens, between 'roughly the early 1840s and the late 1850s almost no dramatist made any money out of plays'.[38] As Mayhew explains, if the dramatist managed to have their work accepted by one of the two patent managers, but refused their terms or 'disputed their judgements, and in his own validation dared to publish his own drama, the patentees could seize on it as their own property' and 'make use of it as they pleased', without giving any production profits to the writer. Until the 1833 act, playwrights had little control over their work, and piracy 'was so widespread that it became almost an accepted hazard of theatrical life'.[39] Given these conditions, it is not surprising that playwriting was not a profession for the faint of heart, although, as Stephens argues, plenty of writers still attempted to have their work produced, and 'drama was not dead . . . but actually full of vibrant (if not literary) life even at its darkest period towards the middle of the century'.[40]

Conditions for writers, for English theatre in general, improved in the second half of the century. Many new theatres, both in London and the regions, were constructed, and the middle classes showed a renewed thirst for a drama that was less bawdy and more refined. As Woodfield explains, whilst this offered more opportunities for playwrights, they weren't entirely liberated: the Lord Chamberlain still exerted a great deal of control over what was produced, and taste 'demanded conformity to the prevailing moral code, the triumph of virtue over vice, and a happy ending regardless of the probabilities of plot or character'.[41] The industry was now dominated by the actor-managers, and marked by the rise of the 'star' player, leading to the tendency 'to produce plays especially chosen, written, or rewritten to give the actor-manager opportunities to display his special talents, and the practice of insuring against a poor piece by offering expensive palliatives by way of spectacular scenic illusion'.[42]

In addition, economic conditions favoured the 'long run', meaning that the actor-managers generally opted for safe, crowd-pleasing choices that would offer a stable income. This is the environment in which Jerome was writing, and his accounts of the difficulties of getting the attention of managers (or indeed anyone working in a theatre) are a comic testament to the precarity of the new writer at the time. Although based in America, Hennequin's advice to writers also steers them towards the type of conventional drama that would increase their chances of

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being hired; Arthur Colby Sprague argues that he was 'no reformer'.[43]

Those who managed to get their work staged were, however, in a stronger position financially than in previous decades. This was in part due to the efforts of the Dramatic Authors' Society (founded in 1833), but also to the enormously popular actor-writer Dion Boucicault, who, influenced by his observations of the American and French theatre industries, used his star power to negotiate contracts in Britain that, in opposition to outright-purchase schemes, provided writers with a share of the profits. This type of contract became standard by the 1890s and meant that, for well-known playwrights at least, there was more chance of a stable income, particularly with long runs.

On the other hand, authors also participated in the financial risks of a production.[44] It is easy to see why a handbook providing insider advice to would-be playwrights about both the industry and writing techniques that would enhance chances of success would be an attractive proposition for publishers. As Stephens states, the 'commercialized theatre of the 1890s was tougher than ever on the lame-duck play, and managers moved quickly to remove from the bills any play whose receipts fell below the line generally understood to be fixed at about £100 a night'.[45] Both Jerome and Hennequin recognize these pressures and attempt to guide their readers to produce audience-pleasing, safe work, as opposed to breaking new ground.

Hennequin's personal interest was in European drama, but his text still had relevance for American writers. Although there were some differences (notably in issues of copyright and contracts), in terms of the type of work produced, the United States aligned with popular tastes in Britain, with a particular interest in melodrama, and, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, a preference for long runs and star vehicles.[46] Plays from Europe dominated, though with perhaps a richer cultural mix than in London: French, Italian, German, and Irish performance was popular, particularly in regions where immigrant groups wanted work representative of their native homes.[47] As the development of original British work had been hampered by a dependence on translations of French plays, ironically 'the emergence of a strongly based native American drama' was hindered by easy and cheap access to productions from London.[48] This is the industry that Hennequin addresses in his manual.

Towards the end of the century, melodrama loosened its hold on both sides of the Atlantic and started to be replaced with a type of realism influenced by the work of continental European writers such as Ibsen and Chekhov, promoted by critics like William Archer. In America, this style of 'new drama', closely associated with writers such as Eugene O'Neill and Paul Green, was firmly rooted in family dynamics, similar to the European writers, but spoke more to distinctly American political and racial concerns in an age of rapid change and the growth of capitalist culture. In Britain 'new drama' writers like George Bernard Shaw 'held a strong appeal for progressives of various hues, particularly those who supported the socialist movement'.[49] However, commercial theatre remained lukewarm to the radical approaches of the new dramatists, and Edwardian theatre 'pandered to the materialistic tastes of its predominantly middle- and upper-class audience . . . by staging sumptuous productions and by presenting plays in a world of opulence', and in the first few decades of the twentieth century, Woodfield states, 'London commercial theatre remained obstinately commercial'.[50]

This is not to say that commercial theatre completely rejected the new. Agnes Platt was a strong advocate for new writers, particularly as she complained of the 'frivolous' work that was populating stages in 1917.[51] This might be what led her to write *Practical Hints*; she wanted to encourage new life and voices into the industry, including women. In 1907, the Royal Court had one of its 'most unexpected hits': *Votes for Women* by Elizabeth Robins.[52] The play arrived at a time when audiences had been warming to the idea of women having agency in their own lives, thanks in part to Ibsen's robust female characters; Robins, an American actress, had previously played

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Hedda Gabler. However, Ibsen cannot be entirely credited with creating space for a re-consideration of the rights of women: women themselves were actively arguing to be allowed full participation in society. Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt note that the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL), formed in 1908, was active in its support of suffrage organizations, and is seen as a key player within the protest movement. While the 'masculinist managerial and organization structures of Edwardian theatre offered little, if any, support to the woman playwright', suffrage groups understood how powerful a tool agitprop drama could be in convincing a reluctant public to back their calls for women's voting rights.[53] Many of these plays, however, did not take the form of more commercial theatre touring the nation. According to Maggie Gale, pageants and processions, focused on examining women's history and identity, were the predominant form.[54]

Platt's *Practical Hints on Playwriting* was published the year after some women (those over thirty who owned property or were married to a property-owning man) got the vote. Suffragette theatre is not what Platt writes about (although she did support the work of women writers), but it is important to recognize the work of the AFL, which cut a path for a significant number of women to emerge as playwrights in the 1920s.[55] As Gale observes, many women who had acted or written for the AFL 'continued their work during the interwar years in a far less "political" and often more commercial context', including Cicely Hamilton, Elizabeth Baker, and Gertrude Jennings. Platt argues that 'it is evident that the whole financial side of the theatre depends upon the knack of pleasing the public', and it seems that, in the 1920s, women turned away from more overt suffragist causes to writing work that was more generally commercial.

However, Gale notes, this does not mean that politics were completely absent; in centring women's stories, and writing plays featuring better roles for women, the playwrights working at the same time as *Practical Hints on Playwriting* was published were challenging tradition in a commercially palatable way. A woman composing a playwriting manual in 1919 is not the anomaly that it may initially seem, and this text should be included in the documentation of women's activity in the professional theatre. It is important to note that this is not a feminist (or pre-feminist) text; Platt's pronoun of choice when discussing figurative playwrights is 'he'.

The United States was going through a similar period of reckoning in terms both of gender – Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* (1916) stands as one of the most emblematic theatrical examples of this – and race, to a greater extent than Britain. Unlike in Europe, the First World War 'barely impinged on national life' and American theatre was slower to break away from the dominant styles of the nineteenth century; although similar to the UK in terms of 'sheer audience numbers', 'classical and commercial theatre far outweighed any avant-garde experiments'.[56] As Gerald Berkowitz states, whilst there were whisperings of societal shifts within some dramatic work, particularly that which fell under the category of dramatic realism (in the plays of Edward Sheldon and James A. Herne, for example), 'the trappings of realism and contemporary relevance effectively disguised the conventional morality, contrived plots, and cardboard characters'.[57] The Provincetown Players and their star writer Eugene O'Neill were creating groundbreaking work which would leave an indelible mark on twentieth-century American drama (and cinema), but inhabited only a small corner of the theatre landscape; according to Berkowitz, 'some of the most popular playwrights of the period made little or no pretence of writing anything different from the kinds of plays that were the mainstays of late nineteenth-century drama'.[58]

Although films were exerting an enormous pull on audiences, there was still money to be made in commercial theatre, including in cinematic adaptations of play-scripts. There was no single overriding popular style; Berkowitz states that the early 1920s saw a mix of 'romantic comedies, costume dramas, mystery thrillers, local colour pieces, and domestic melodramas'.[59] The need to protect intellectual and creative property was the driving force behind Malevinsky's *The Science of*

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Playwriting, but also, in its unique way, it sought what was at the heart of audience engagement with performance, whether Broadway comedy or serious domestic drama. Although the reasons for the success of one playwright over another remain slippery, Malevinsky (like Jerome, Hennequin, and Platt before him) understood that there were fundamentals to writing for the stage, which the aspiring playwright needed to know, including the practicalities of the industry and the principles of dramaturgy. It is useful to examine their commentary on particular aspects of writing to observe where they align or differ, but also to identify what may still prove useful to writers.

How to Be a Playwright: Models of Training and Identity

Although there are now countless university-level playwriting courses in Britain and North America, teaching stage writing within the confines of Higher Education is a relatively recent phenomenon. It first appeared as a distinct subject in American universities in the 1914 with the founding of George Pierce Baker's 'English 47' class at Harvard. Baker went on to publish *Dramatic Technique* in 1919, and founded the now-famous graduate playwright programme at Yale in 1926 (the year after Malevinsky's text was published). In the UK, playwriting was mainly taught informally within the frameworks of other courses or practice-based training in small centres such as Dartington Hall. It was only in 1989 that David Edgar founded the first British MA course in Playwriting at the University of Birmingham.

The four authors featured here were writing for aspiring playwrights who had little access to formal training; on-the-job experience was all that was available, but the difficulty lay in being able to access opportunities in the first place. In order even to begin dialogue with a manager, it was important to produce work that showed that the writer understood the industry and the fundamentals of writing for the stage. Thus, there was a market for the type of 'how-to' book written by (among others) Jerome, Hennequin, Platt, and Malevinsky. It is worth considering how the overriding 'practical' nature of these texts, based within lived experience of the industry (in most cases), compares to the more academic nature of university-level courses, since this has implications for how playwrights are taught today.

Whilst Jerome believed that being a successful writer was a case of 'instinct' and that a 'book-worm never made a great author',[60] Hennequin and Baker, along with latter-day writers such as Waters, argue that playwrights are made rather than born. The two differ in their beliefs about *how* dramatists realize their craft. Hennequin takes the approach that practical knowledge of the stage and study hold equal weight. Baker – often treated in more recent playwriting manuals as a godfather-like figure – states that learning the craft of dramatic writing should be led by 'three great Masters: Constant Practice, Exacting Scrutiny of the Work, and, above all, Time'.[61] This approach continues to be influential, as playwriting courses and training initiatives predominantly utilize close examination of the work of established playwrights, alongside workshops where playwrights create and read their work to other playwrights as the overriding structure for programmes. This limits the exposure that writers have to other theatre artists, including actors, designers, and directors, which means they may not emerge from training with a holistic understanding of the full possibilities of embodied performance and design, or practical knowledge of how plays are actually staged.

Many playwrights who undertake formal training have noted the absence of opportunities within their programme of study for collaboration with other theatre artists.[62] Indeed, in surveying the course content of British postgraduate degrees in playwriting, the majority are taught in ways that mean playwrights have limited contact with other theatre-makers, yet many writers pinpoint this as something they would have liked to experience in their training. By contrast with many playwriting courses, and some recent manuals, Jerome emphasizes the importance of practical industry experience. He advises

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would-be playwrights to familiarize themselves 'with how things look on the stage, not how they read by the fireside', and that they 'must go upon the stage. If you can afford the time and money, join a country company for a few months [as Jerome himself did], or enter as utility at some small London theatre.'[63] This is key; the actor is noticeably absent from contemporary discourses about approaches to playwriting, despite the fact that dramatists are entirely dependent on actors to realize their writing on stage, and that theatre-making is a collaborative process. Jerome's observations are thus apt for contemporary playwrights, for, in the absence of opportunities to work in devising, if the playwright wants a good understanding of the particular skill-set of the actor, director, or designer, then the writer must observe the processes of theatre-making or acquire these skills first-hand.

Similarly, Hennequin recognizes that experience as a performer allows a would-be playwright to 'acquire so intimate a knowledge of the highways and by-ways of the world behind the scenes'.[64] However, in opposition to *Playwriting: A Handbook*, he also acknowledges that there are drawbacks to this approach; the young playwright who tries her/his hand at acting 'may not know what to observe', but he also admits that it might not always be practical for a writer to invest a great deal of time on a stage career. Therefore, 'books' (by which he means playwriting manuals) are as important as practical experience in the training of the playwright, although he notes the dearth of such texts in English at the time of writing.[65] Platt also emphasizes the importance of first-hand knowledge of the theatre; she instructs playwrights to visit the theatre 'again and again' in order to gain an understanding that 'some lines, which are really very witty in themselves, miss their effect upon the stage because they give but little chance to the actor. They may appeal to the mind but they do no appeal to the eye.'[66] This is a recurring theme throughout her book: she often reminds playwrights that they are writing for a visual medium, and that the 'stage speaks to the brain through the eye, and what we *see* is of paramount importance'.[67] Such advice is more pertinent now than ever, given postdramatic theatre's de-throning of dialogue as the primary arbiter of meaning.

Because Malevinsky was more concerned with the identity of a *play*, his text does not address the identity of the playwright to any great extent. While he does state that a 'play must be conceived the crucible of *life*',[68] unlike Jerome, Hennequin, and Platt, he does not suggest how playwrights might gain the right kind of experience to help them to translate life experience into effective drama. For Malevinsky, plays are 'written sub-consciously and instinctively', not after gaining experience as an actor or backstage, or careful scrutiny of other plays or manuals.[69] Arguably, this could be reflective of an industry which, thanks to the proliferation of the long run and the resulting increase in status of the star writer, treated the playwright more as an independent artist than a collaborative one, whose talents arose through their own genius, rather than learning the ropes of the industry and careful study. This aligns with a general twentieth-century reverence for 'the text' within Britain and North America, with the actor and director's goal of 'serving' the author's intentions in a script and approaching playwrights like Shakespeare with a fidelity not present in the nineteenth century.

Negotiating the Industry

As suggested above, the period focused upon in this article was one of major shifts within the theatre industry, and by the time Malevinsky published his book, it was much closer to the commercial landscape of today than that of much of the nineteenth century. In some ways, however, the system of plays being sent directly to managers was a less convoluted path to commercial success for writers than what happens currently. In today's environment of literary managers, readers, and assistants, graduate degrees in playwriting, and writer development groups, most playwrights must negotiate with a number of gatekeepers before having even a small-scale staged production of their work, and many never achieve this at all. This is not to say that all writers were successful during the

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period of focus. Platt tells us that plays 'come in shoals, in hurricanes, in whirlwinds', and that when they reach the managerial office many 'of the impossible' are weeded out.[70] Gatekeepers existed then, as they do now, and success required a degree of understanding of the industry and how to find one's way in.

Much of *Playwriting: A Handbook* is focused on personal anecdotes about the author's struggles to get his work staged. This is probably due to Jerome's predilection for a comic tale, but is also a recognition that many writers benefit from insider knowledge. His focus, then, is less on examining the minutiae of dramaturgical devices and more on how a writer might get the attention of those in positions of power:

> let me urge you to be, above all things, practicable. A theatre is not a temple of art, but a house of business, and the question that a manager will ask himself when considering whether to accept your piece or not, will be, not how much merit, but much money there is in it. Keep your grand ideas and your experiments until you have got the ear of the public.[71]

This advice was given at a time when playwrights were only just starting to be seen as artists. It would be decades still before the theatregoing public embraced the more experimental approaches associated with 'new drama'. If a new entrant to the industry wanted to be considered, the profit potential of a play was more important than artistry; Jerome therefore instructed that 'early pieces' must 'not be too expensive to produce'.[72] Callouts for new writers today often request small casts and limited requirements in terms of staging.

Jerome also outlines some of the more practical concerns for writers, such as how readings and rehearsals function. Some of the details are dated, but a good deal of advice remains sound. He notes the popular practice of the writer 'reading' the play to managers, an act which often took place before a decision was made to produce the play or not (a practice still popular today, although it is generally actors, not the playwright, who do the reading). This is reminiscent of the problem identified by some of the playwrights I surveyed who complained of a lack of access to actors whilst training; it is difficult to get the full measure of a script if it is read by other non-actor writers, rather than trained performers.

Jerome notes that 'a play is written to be acted, not read', and therefore the dramatist should not 'despair' if 'other people yawned and dozed while listening'.[73] He also addressed monetary considerations, including information about royalties: 'if you do get £10,000 for a play that has taken you three months to write, don't go reckoning your income at £40,000 per annum for the rest of your life, and start living up to it.'[74] Similarly, the four final chapters of his book, which are dedicated to copyright matters (suggesting that this was rather a minefield at the time), contain information on regulations which may have since changed, but general principles apply, such as noting the difference between what is generally considered to be ethical behaviour when it comes to the ownership of creative material and what is law. These questions still plague those involved in devising and collaborative creation. Jerome also documents some of the difficulties of well-known playwrights – George R. Sims and T. W. Robertson, for example – whose respective *The Lights o' London* (1881) and *Caste* (1867) experienced long spells of rejection before they were finally produced.[75] Again, whilst this is of historic interest, it is also useful for the neophyte playwrights in the twenty-first century in that it helps them to understand some of the barriers they might experience in getting their work staged.

Hennequin, in combining the practical 'how-to' approach with a more formal deconstruction of dramatic technique, devotes his first four chapters to defining, glossary-fashion: various job titles in the theatre industry; the sections of the stage; elements of scenery; and 'stage plans', including diagrams. Although some of the conventions have changed since the 1890s, these chapters are useful for anyone, regardless of their interest in writing, who wants to develop a technical vocabulary of the stage. Malevinsky was, again, not as concerned as the others

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with providing advice about negotiating ways into the industry, but his detailed descriptions of copyright cases and the plays involved are suggestive of the themes, structures, and content of plays that were catching the eye of commercial managers. In this respect, his book is less useful to new writers in the twenty-first century wanting models of plays that will appeal to contemporary audiences. However, as detailed below, his dramaturgical analysis may prove valuable as a starting point for stage writing.

Like Hennequin (but unlike most of the more recent pedagogical texts), Platt's advice combines tips on the nitty-gritty of getting a play produced with instruction on developing aspects of a script, such as character and structure, and information strongly rooted in an understanding of audience behaviour, gained from her experience as a critic. The would-be playwright is under no delusion that she or he is writing a literary text, and, in line with the discourse that emerges from the world of contemporary collaborative theatre-making (but not, with a few exceptions, contemporary playwriting manuals), she claims that 'a successful stage production is always a question of ensemble', and that one of 'the wonders of the stage, to my mind, is the number of arts that are called upon to contribute to its productions'.[76] This stands in opposition to some more recent pedagogical writers – Micheline Wandor, for example, who claims that dramatic writing is 'not intrinsically a collaborative art form, any more than writing novels or poetry is collaborative' (although she does point out the benefits for the playwright of a good understanding of the various artistic roles within theatre making).[77] Platt, as someone who wore many hats within the theatre industry, understood that playwrights should not see themselves as solo artists, but as playing one part within an artistic team.

Dramaturgical Technique

Jerome was not always encouraging to the would-be writer. He rather disingenuously notes the limitations of his manual, stating that beyond 'a few rudimentary hints and technical rules . . . nothing can be taught, no help can be given'.[78] He does not believe time advising new playwrights in aspects of dramaturgy is well spent, as a 'man that needs to be told how to write a play, it is useless telling, for he will never write one, and a man that can write a play does not need to be told how to do it'.[79] Rather, he advises: 'Attend the theatres constantly.' Writers should watch carefully and make notes about what is successful and not successful, analyzing plays 'scene by scene as a chemical student analyzes a new drug'.[80] In so advising, Jerome abdicates from any responsibility in advising on dramatic technique, although he does offer tips on techniques for observation ('Note, above all things, how the story is told and the suspense maintained'),[81] and notes that watching plays is far more important than reading them – advice which is often surprisingly absent from more recent manuals.

While Hennequin and Platt also recognize the importance of being a spectator, they attempt to offer suggestions for dramaturgical considerations to help the novice playwright understand the components of a play. Hennequin's later chapters suggest ways of creating effective stage directions, recognizing and working within genre, and the structure of the action. He outlines standard dramaturgical conventions of the time, including how the 'catastrophe' might manifest. For example, on the 'Tragic Catastrophe' he writes: 'The most important rule regarding it is that it must be the direct outcome of the whole action of the play, and therefore, be seen to be necessary and inevitable. An arbitrary, needless death is in the highest degree inartistic.'[82] This advice remains valid, particularly within naturalistic/realistic styles of writing, and is indeed echoed by many of the contemporary manual authors, including film-writing guru Robert McKee, who states that a 'story must build to a final action beyond which the audience cannot imagine another'.[83]

The series of chapters titled 'How to Write a Play', which conclude Hennequin's book, after the 'theoretical construction of a play has been set forth', return to a more practical approach, where he takes the student on a step-by-step journey through the process of

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writing, starting with the first step of being commissioned (although he doesn't mention how one actually gets the commission), then selecting the story, expanding it, making notes/synopses, and considering the arrangement of scenes.[84] Using an imagined first-time playwright as an example, he even outlines potential characters and scenarios that the writer could explore, providing a concrete example of the process for his reader. The example he used is what he imagined the process Eugène Scribe (the writer most strongly connected to the idea of the 'well-made play') undertook when writing *The Ladies' Battle* (1851).[85]

Throughout, Hennequin ensures that the would-be playwright understands the conventions of the time, including stock characters and abbreviations within stage directions.[86] In its rather formulaic approach, Hennequin's text resembles recent books on screenwriting more than those focused on writing for the stage. However, his efforts to make accessible the terminology and workings of the theatre, which can be intimidating to those without practical experience of the stage, are still of value to new playwrights.

Platt, although rather dictatorial in her approach to the construction of dialogue ('Keep your emphatic words for the end of your sentence'), is also somewhat unusual, for her own time and amidst some contemporary pedagogical authors, in that she rejects the Aristotelian action-led model for drama, but argues that 'the plot of a play must proceed from the character writing'.[87] Considering that she was writing at a time of considerable activity for female playwrights, and early challenges to hegemonic principles of gendered behaviour, it is notable that she was open to questioning traditional dramatic conventions and was 'no believer in hard and fast rules'.[88] She urges writers not to 'gnash' messages to the world 'between your teeth' (which could be seen as a subtle riposte to the more political work associated with the AFL), but rather to adapt the form of the play in accordance to what will 'get into the brains of those to whom you wish to speak'.[89] She does not propose rules for playwrights, but writes from the perspective of one who has seen and read thousands of plays, and, instead of strict guidelines on structure, provides general prompts.

Although Platt's approach to form is more fluid than Malevinsky's, he aligns with her in assigning character a high level of importance: it comes second, after emotion, in his equation. He does not state what defines character, but it is notable that the next steps of the equation, which further refine the process, are Crucible, Conflict, Complication, Crisis, and Climax (see above, p. 366), which are generally seen as the building blocks of conventional drama, following on from Aristotle. It is also noteworthy that 'artistry' is listed as the final element of the equation. Whilst this hierarchy may suggest that creativity is not as important an element as others, it could be argued that it situates artistry as the crucial final ingredient of a successful play – without it, the rest of the ingredients would amount to nothing. However, Owen Davis's Introduction suggests that good work 'is almost always careful work. Good technic [*sic*] at least cannot hurt a writer.'[90] In other words, knowledge of technique must come first, before playwrights can put their own creative stamp on a theme. This makes playwriting more accessible. Rather than it being a birth-given craft, it can be learned by anyone with the inclination to do so. The assumption seems to be that, by focusing on technique, 'artistry' will arrive naturally.

The back of Malevinsky's text has a fold-out section that provides an example of a work sheet, using the structure of his formula, in which he compares two plays (*Arms and the Man* and *You Never Can Tell*, both by G. B. Shaw). The emotion of the plays investigated is listed as 'adventure' (whether this is an emotion or not is debatable), and, whilst both 'characters' have different names ('Bluntschli' and 'Valentine'), the 'crucible' is man and woman, suggesting romantic entanglement. However, from this point onwards, the structure of Malevinsky's formula reveals that the plays are in fact quite different. While it works well as a legal function of identification where two works mirror and differ in the case of copyright dispute, it might also serve as a tool

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for a new playwright to lay out his or her ideas, using Malevinsky's equation.

There are as many ways to generate ideas for plays as there are routes to getting them finished; Malevinsky's advice, like that of Jerome, Hennequin, and Platt, emerged from the particular nature of his professional background. He offers – again, like the others – a particular approach which may serve some writers better than others, but one which should not be disregarded simply because it is unusual, or from a century different from ours. Theatre evolves in terms of form, but some constants, such as the emotional engagement of spectators, remain.

Conclusion

There are many ways to train as a playwright, and reading instructional manuals constitutes only one avenue for learning. However, given the popularity of these texts (evident in the large number published and their inclusion on the reading lists of playwriting courses), it is clear that many writers, including those with experience, look to these types of books for advice.[91] Books such as Waters's *The Secret Life of Plays* have a great deal to offer playwrights, including new ways of thinking about structure, and reminders of conventions that have worked well for other dramatists. However, in ignoring the existence of older manuals, the more recent 'how-to' authors mistakenly assume that they are offering something new and addressing gaps in playwriting pedagogy. As evidenced here, this is not the case. Not only have playwrights had access since the late nineteenth century to books which provide advice, but in some cases this instruction is highly valuable and addresses knowledge of stage terminology and issues of collaboration, which are ignored by more recent offerings. As both a playwright and academic, in surveying these early texts I found much that was of use within my own creative practice (and, admittedly, some that was not), including advice from Platt on how to construct lines to take the best advantage of the performer's voice, and Malevinsky's list of emotions, which can be used as writing prompts as well as a teaching tool. The manuals featured here should be of interest to teachers of playwriting and theatre historians, and, as such, should not be forgotten or ignored. While some of the information contained in these early texts is inevitably dated, and deals with conventions now considered archaic, there is a great deal of advice that is still relevant and useful to playwrights and those who train them.

Notes and References

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1. Steve Waters, *The Secret Life of Plays* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2013); 'How to Describe an Apple: A Brief Survey of the Literature on Playwriting', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, XXIII, No. 2 (2013), pp. 137–45 (p. 138); William Archer, *Play-Making: A Manual of Craftmanship* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1926); Steve Gooch, *Writing a Play* (London: A & C Black, 1988; second edition, 1995). Waters co-edited the issue of the *Contemporary Theatre Review* to which he contributed, which focused on pedagogical practices in playwriting.

2. David Edgar, *How Plays Work* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2011); Tim Fountain, *So You Want to be a Playwright?* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2013); Angelo Parra, *Playwriting for Dummies* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2011).

3. Edward Mayhew, *Stage Effect: The Principles which Command Dramatic Success in the Theatre* (London: C Mitchell, 1840).

4. These scholars include James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition, 1881–1914* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm, 1984); and John Russell Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright: British Theatre 1800–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

5. It is important to note that the majority of playwriting manuals from 1936 to today are strongly rooted within the mainstream theatre ecology of the Northern English-speaking world which still positions Aristotle's *Poetics* as the bible of playwriting, and the writer as a central figure within the performance-making process.

6. The texts identified from this period are: 'A Dramatist' [Jerome K. Jerome], *Playwriting: A Handbook for Would-Be Dramatic Authors* (London: The Stage Office, 1888); Alfred Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting: Being a Practical Treatise on the Elements of Dramatic Construction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1890); William Archer, *Play-Making: A Manual of Craftmanship* (Boston, Massachusetts: Small, Maynard, & Company, 1912); Charlton Andrews, *The Technique of Play Writing* (Springfield, Massachusetts: The Home Correspondence School, 1915); George Pierce Baker, *Dramatic Techniques* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1919); Agnes Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting* (London: Stanley Paul & Co, 1919); Moses L. Malevinsky, *The Science of Playwriting* (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1925); Arthur Edwin Krows, *Playwriting for Profit* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1928); Horace Wingfield,

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Writing the Stage Play (Amberley: Blue Gate Press, 1930); Basil Hogarth, *How to Write Plays: A Guide to Successful Playwriting* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1933); Clayton Hamilton, '*So You're Writing a Play!*' (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1936); and John Howard Lawson, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1936). There may be more to discover. It is worth noting that many of these texts are now available freely online. Further details of these texts can be found in the appendix to Karen Morash, 'An Investigation into How Engagement with the Context and Processes of Collaborative Devising Affects the Praxis of the Playwright', unpublished PhD thesis (Goldsmiths, University of London, 2018).

7. [Jerome], *Playwriting*, p. vii.
8. See e.g. ibid., p. 5.
9. Ibid., p. vii.
10. Ibid., p. 22.
11. Ibid., p. 35.
12. Ibid., pp. 17–18. The Jerome K. Jerome Society attributes *Playwriting: A Handbook* to Jerome, and there are a number of striking similarities in style and tone between this text and the author's other works: <https://www.jeromekjerome.com/bibliography/books/playwriting-a-handbook-for-would-be-dramatic-authors/> (accessed 25 November 2018). See also Karen Morash, 'Playwriting: A Handbook for Would-be Authors', *Idle Thoughts*, XL (2019), p. 54–6.
13. Jerome K. Jerome, *On the Stage—and Off : The Brief Career of a Would-be Actor*, in *The Complete Works of Jerome K. Jerome* (Hastings: Dephi Classics, 2014), Kindle [unpaginated].
14. Jerome K. Jerome, *Stageland*, in ibid.
15. Arthur Colby Sprague, 'Dr Hennequin and the Well-Made Play', in *Essays on Nineteenth-Century British Theatre*, ed. Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 145–54 (p. 145). His interest in drama can be observed in his contributing chapter, 'Characteristics of the American Drama', in *The Arena*, I, ed. B.O. Flower (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1890), pp. 700–9. This Alfred Hennequin is not to be confused with the Belgian playwright of the same name (1842–1887).
16. Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting*, p. v.
17. Sprague, 'Dr Hennequin', p. 145.
18. Notable exceptions include Sheila Yeger, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping: A Guide to Writing for the Theatre* (Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1990); Micheline Wandor, *The Art of Writing Drama: Theory and Practice* (London: Methuen, 2008); and Lisa Goldman, *The No Rules Handbook for Writers: Know the Rules So You Can Break Them* (London: Oberon Books, 2012).
19. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 22.
20. A collection of her reviews for the *London Musical Courier* is available: Agnes Platt, *The Stage in 1902* (London: Simpkin, Marshal, Hamilton, Kent, 1903). For *Green Pastures and Piccadilly*, see 'Listings', *The Globe*, 19 August 1919, p. 2.
21. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 22.
22. Agnes Platt, 'Will the British Drama Revive? War and the Present Taste for Frivolity', *Daily Mirror*, 7 March 1917, p. 5.
23. Ibid.
24. It is important to note that the role of 'producer' was not defined as it is today; rather, the job would then have been called 'managing', although there were variations on what the duties of a theatre manger entailed.
25. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 22.
26. Malevinsky, *The Science of Playwriting*, p. 38.
27. Dana Bullen, 'The Role of Literary Experts in Plagiarism Trials', *The American University Law Review*, VII, No. 2 (June 1958), pp. 55–69 (p. 59).
28. Jessica Litman, 'Silent Similarity', *Chicago-Kent Journal of Intellectual Property*, XIV, No. 1 (2014), p. 11–47 (p. 27).
29. Malevinsky, *The Science of Playwriting*, p. 40.
30. Ibid., p. 41.
31. Ibid., p. 19–20. (The author of *Wedding Presents* is not stated. However, the case is titled *Eichel v. Marchin* [*sic*].)
32. Owen Davis, in ibid., p. vii.
33. Ibid., p. 321.
34. Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright, *Changing Stages: A View of British Theatre in the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 59.
35. Following the Restoration of Charles II, only two London companies were granted the royal patent to perform drama: in the nineteenth century they were based at Drury Lane and Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. The monopoly of the patents was revoked in the 1843 Theatrical Reform Act. See Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 9, 26.
36. Mayhew, *Stage Effect*, p. 11.
37. Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, p. 1.
38. Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright*, p. 22, 48.
39. Ibid., p. 87.
40. Ibid., p. 2.
41. Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, p. 2.
42. Ibid., p. 6.
43. Sprague, 'Dr Hennequin', p. 145.
44. Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright*, p. 52, 58, 67.
45. Ibid., p. 74.
46. See Theresa Saxon, *American Theatre: History, Context, Form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 137; and Oscar G. Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (sixth edition; Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), p. 453.
47. Saxon, *American Theatre*, p. 112–15.
48. Stephens, *The Profession of the Playwright*, p. 104. British writers were not protected by American copyright laws; if their play was performed in the USA, it was considered 'published' and the playwrights lost their rights.
49. Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, p. 19.
50. Ibid., p. 17, 19.
51. Platt, 'Will British Drama Revive?', p. 5.
52. Eyre and Wright, *Changing Stages*, p. 91.
53. Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt, 'A Century in View: From Suffrage to the 1990s', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*, ed. Aston and Reinelt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1–19 (p. 4). In 1928 women in England, Scotland, and Wales over the age of twenty-one were given the right to vote on the same terms as men (but this still excluded those who did not own property).
54. Maggie B. Gale, 'Women Playwrights of the 1920s and 1930s', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*, ed. Aston and Reinelt, p. 23–37 (p. 24).
55. Platt took out a listing in *The Stage*, 13 September 1917, to advertise the production rights of a Christmas play 'written by Dr Marie Stopes'.
56. Christopher Innes, 'Theatre after Two World Wars', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*,

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ed. John Russell Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 380–444 (p. 383–5).

57. Gerald M. Berkowitz, *American Drama of the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 15.

58. Ibid., p. 21.

59. Ibid.

60. [Jerome], *Playwriting*, p. 10–11.

61. Baker, *Dramatic Techniques*, p. iv.

62. Morash, 'An Investigation', p. 82–4.

63. [Jerome], *Playwriting*, p. 14, 19.

64. Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting*, p. vii.

65. Ibid., p. vii–x.

66. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 10.

67. Ibid., p. 11 (original emphasis).

68. Malevinsky, *The Science of Playwriting*, p. 43 (original emphasis).

69. Ibid., p. 45.

70. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 22.

71. [Jerome], *Playwriting*, p. 19–20.

72. Ibid., p. 20.

73. Ibid., p. 39.

74. Ibid., p. 81.

75. Ibid., p. 26.

76. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 13.

77. Wandor, *The Art of Writing Drama*, p. 21.

78. [Jerome], *Playwriting*, p. 11–12.

79. Ibid., p. 10.

80. Ibid., p. 12.

81. Ibid., p. 13–14.

82. Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting*, p. 135–6.

83. Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (York: Methuen, 2014), p. 140.

84. Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting*, p. 157–87.

85. Ibid., p. 187.

86. Ibid., p. 18.

87. Platt, *Practical Hints on Playwriting*, p. 71–2, 80.

88. Ibid., p. 5.

89. Ibid., p. 31.

90. Davis, in Malevinsky, *The Science of Playwriting*, p. viii.

91. For a comprehensive list of playwriting manuals published up until 2016, see the bibliography in Morash, 'An Investigation'.

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