**Flash Essay Assignment: Title Pages**

(weekend assignment)

**Introduction:** The digital repository *Shakespeare Documented* offers unparalleled visual access to Shakespeare’s plays as they first appeared in print. As with today, these printed plays made their first impressions through their title pages. Early modern title pages shared many conventions that we can find on our own books: title, short descriptions, and the printing house. But, early modern quartos often lacked the author’s name, presenting the name of the performing company instead.

**General Description:** Peruse the title pages for as many Shakespeare plays as you can in *Shakespeare Documented*, and write an essay about your discoveries. Navigate to “Plays in Print,” under “Playwright, actor & shareholder.”

**Specifics:** Please respond to the following questions in your essay: What do the title pages emphasize? Does a common printer or place name within London reappear? Where do title pages differ in their presentation or content? What can you learn just by reading the title page.

Please also address how early modern title pages differ from modern title pages. What might account for the difference? What do you learn or start to think from modern title pages, as opposed to early modern?

5 pages, 12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced

**NB:** As a flash essay, this assignment is intended to grab your initial thoughts and following reflections, not careful research or scaffolded arguments. Present logical, well-crafted paragraphs with original observations, but focus on your reaction first.

*Post-assignment reading:*

Heidi Brayman Hackel, “Framing ‘gentle readers’ in Preliminaries and Margins,” in *Reading Material in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005)

Philip Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography Oak Knoll, 2009), 52, 116-18

Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (Yale, 2010), 21-42