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come into the semantic fields of 'recitation', 'remembrance', 'recapitulation', and 'telling'. This has a far wider scope than just that of play rehearsals.⁴⁸ If play *rehearsals* were indeed primarily concerned with these notions, then their purpose appears to have been to make sure that individual players had committed their parts to memory by going over them 'without book'. Evidence of this kind of focus may be seen in the Chamberlains' Accounts at New Romney for 1568. Those players selected for rôles who have been given 'parts' are to sign a bond to perform with the Town Council,

otherwyse every player having ... ¹partes¹ shall presently surrender all their partes vpp ... ¹agayne¹ in to the hondes ~~of~~ ~~of~~ arthure bee & so to be no more spoken of, or [*before*] any more repeticion & rehersall thereof had & made'.⁴⁹

Here, 'repeticion' appears to have been a key function of 'rehersall'. This would suggest that the actors were indeed running through their words.

However, where group rehearsals took place, and there is some evidence of this kind of rehearsal, then the focus might appear to be less on the testing and checking of memorised parts, and more on the cues and transitions between them. The need to develop the player's consciousness of the emergent sequences within the play presumably required them to concentrate on this task. An approach sometimes employed today in rehearsal is that known as 'topping and tailing'. The purpose of the technique is to enable the player to absorb and understand the order and sequence of events of the play. The player starts his speech and then cuts to the last line or two in order to cue in the next speaker or action. The bulk of the speech is omitted, and the company concentrates the transitions of sequence.

Both individual and group rehearsals appear in the accounts at Chester. The accounts of the Cordwainers, Smiths, Bowyers, Fletchers, Coopers, Stringers, and Painters all record payment towards an event known as the 'general rehearse'.⁵⁰ This implies a rehearsal involving all or most of the players. Additionally, the Smiths', Bowyers', Fletchers', Coopers', Stringers', and Painters' accounts each record payments for a 'first rehearse' and a 'second rehearse', with the Coopers' records citing a 'third rehearse'.⁵¹ Each of these rehearsals appear to precede the 'general rehearse' where payment is also recorded for the provision of refreshments.⁵²