

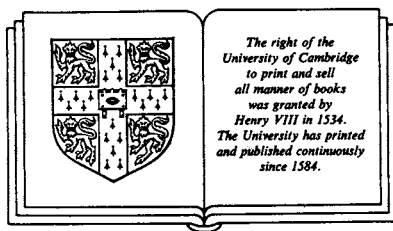
SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF SHAKESPEARE STUDIES AND PRODUCTION

41

with a General Index to Volumes 31–40

EDITED BY
STANLEY WELLS



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THE SHAKESPEARIAN STAGES, FORTY YEARS ON

ANDREW GURR

The year when Allardyce Nicoll published the last survey of studies in Shakespearian playhouses and their software, 1948, was a year of abrupt demolition. Along with Nicoll's overview in the first *Shakespeare Survey* came I. A. Shapiro's study of the early Bankside engravings, which cut the foundation from John Cranford Adams's long labour of reconstructing the Globe by showing that Cornelius Visscher's tall octagon published in 1616 was not an accurate depiction of Shakespeare's playhouse.¹ Adams's work had so dominated scholars of the theatre that its demolition might be said to have left a bombsite. This image, used by Herbert Berry for Chambers's *Elizabethan Stage* volumes and their service of 'marmorealising' the age of document discoveries,² applies more aptly to the multitude of attempts to reconstruct the physical features of the time than to the recording of its documents. Even there it is not quite an appropriate image, because lifesize reconstructions based on the Adams model still stand at the Folger Shakespeare Library, at Hofstra College, and in San Diego, Ashland (Oregon), Cleveland (Ohio), Cedar City (Utah), and Odessa (Texas), together with several more removed Fortune-imitating structures. Nonetheless it is true that some of the debris from Shapiro's demolition is still in need of being cleared away (the shop at the Folger Shakespeare Library, that magnificent resource for book-scholarship, still sells paper cut-outs of the Cranford Adams Globe and pictures of

Visscher). Debris from the old reconstructions, whether in the form of inner-stages or angled entry doors, still causes the occasional stumble.

As students of the postwar Germanies know, demolition can be an invigorating prelude to reconstruction. Cranford Adams had set an important precedent with his exact work on his three-dimensional model, carefully articulated and with each structural member tested against known techniques of Tudor building. His exemplar has prompted the construction and testing in the last forty years of models for the Fortune, the Boar's Head, the second Blackfriars, and the Inigo Jones Cockpit as well as the Globe. Even De Witt's teasingly graphic picture of the Swan has been adjusted to make a plausible structure. With much of this painstaking detail being strongly confirmed by a reassessment of the significance of Hollar's drawings of the Globe, tangible, or at least plausible, models for the various physical playhouse structures are emerging as the most tangible product of the last forty years.

As points from which to measure the distance which has been covered since Nicoll

¹ Allardyce Nicoll, 'Studies in the Elizabethan Stage since 1900', *Shakespeare Survey* 1 (1948), 1-16; I. A. Shapiro, 'The Bankside Theatres: Early Engravings', *Shakespeare Survey* 1, 25-37.

² Herbert Berry, Introduction to David Stevens, *English Renaissance Theatre History: A Reference Guide* (Boston, 1982).

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wrote his survey, two comments he made about the state of the business in 1948 stand out. First, he lamented that 'we do not possess a practicable stage of Elizabethan proportions on which the theories [about Elizabethan stage practices] can be worked out' (p. 10). Apron and thrust stages as large as the Globe's are not rare now. Moreover, while the London South Bank's Olivier stage may not resemble the Globe very closely in anything, even its dimensions, there is certainly now the prospect of a full-scale reconstruction of the Globe in Southwark where at least the dimensions and the weather, if not the acoustics, should provide the testbed for reconstructions of the original performances that Nicoll wanted. His survey ended with 'the dream of a practical stage for the trying-out of theories . . . it would appear as though only something of this sort can aid us towards fuller and further accomplishment in the study of the Elizabethan theatre' (p. 16). We have come some way towards realizing that dream.

And, to a degree, the dream has expanded. The complete scheme for the International Shakespeare Globe Centre is of course not only Globe-centred. It includes plans for a second theatre, a hall playhouse, based on the plans which Inigo Jones probably drew for Beeston's Cockpit in 1616. That enhancement of the original dream gives some sharpness to the second point made by Nicoll which can serve to measure our distance from 1948. This is his conclusion that in the period covered by his survey 'the preponderating interest of the Globe and its associates has tended to outweigh that of the indoor houses' (p. 10). In the last forty years, no doubt partly because of the bomb-site, we have on the whole dwelt indoors. A full-scale reconstruction of a playhouse design (drawn in precise detail by Inigo Jones for a playhouse to rival the Blackfriars) is a more tangible prospect, a better, much more reliable basis for experimentation about the original staging, than anything that was on the horizon in 1948.

Slowly we are developing a sense of how the playhouse designs evolved historically and how they varied. The documentary evidence which Chambers made into marble has been evaluated, sifted, and used, on the whole, to good effect – a close imitation in plastic of marble, if not the real thing. But the documents of course cover a great number of matters besides the physical structure of the playhouses. It is the less tangible matters, the different repertoires, the staging, the sociology, and the mental equipment of Shakespearean playgoers, that are still a long way beyond our confident grasp.

This is not for lack of work in the field. The forty years since 1948 have seen more than twice as many publications as the three hundred years before that date. We are much more sure now, you might say, about what we do not know. What we seem to be less sure of is why we are doing what we are doing. The recent upheavals over theory were inevitable, and not just because of the way they stimulated a necessary rejection of the innate conservatism inherent in the marmoreal views and their Tillyardian extensions. The more that the main facts are turned into marble, whether they affirm that the sacred canon is still chewing its cud or whether they are the products of archaeological and touristic enthusiasm for a lost idyllic past, the more they will prompt shifts in ways of thinking about them. The more fixed the so-called canon becomes, the more pressure there is to find new ways of looking at it.

Stephen Greenblatt's 'poetics of culture', and the 'New Historicism' to which his name has been attached, are rightly more concerned to alter the perspectives than the fixities. Indeed, this approach depends on the fixities to validate its basic premise of the need to re-set the texts in their original contexts. One still winces when the New Historicists write that Shakespeare's company staged *Richard II* on the *night* before the Essex rebellion, conjuring up images of an anachronistically floodlit

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Globe, though they have a regrettable precedent in Nagler's chapter about the first night of *The Tempest*.³ Such slips only emphasize the need to identify more facts and fixtures. The radical and alternative Shakespeares prevalent on the eastern side of the Atlantic have even more need to cultivate a strong sense of historical change and the distance between Shakespeare then and Shakespeare now.

The most rewarding developments in recent theoretical arguments may come, a little surprisingly perhaps, from semiotics. In particular the methods of Saussurian linguistics, with its concern for non-verbal signifiers and the complexity of speaker-audience interaction, have a great deal to offer the study of plays as performance texts. They avoid the difficulties inherent in thinking of the written text as a fixity, and emphasize the importance of iconic and emblematic visual signifiers, while demanding caution over any attempt to 'fix' the fluid intricacies of the intimate and constantly shifting exchange between actors and audience. Since the main thrust in the study of staging Shakespeare through these last decades has been towards identifying emblematic significances, this is potentially a powerful new tool.

The range of work done on Shakespearian staging covers a broad territory: from the fixities of the physical playhouse structures, at one end, to the wildest conjectures, unfixed in principle and place, about the significance (or even the presence) of iconic and emblematic devices, at the other. When work on the plans for the reconstructed Globe on Bankside turned up the point that the stage was placed with its back to the sun, for instance, putting the stage platform in permanent shadow, it prompted a flurry of questions and conjectures about such interpretational matters as the likelihood of *Hamlet's* having been written for artificial lighting.⁴ There is no easy separation between the tangible achievements of identifying fixities and the business of interpretation

and pattern-making which create the link between the timber of the playhouses and the texts of the plays performed in them. Since those links are the chief justification for the amount of attention paid to the timbers, and since they often influence profoundly any reading of the evidence about the fixities, it is necessary to cast a broad net in this survey.

The first major landmark to be set up after Shapiro's demolition was Walter Hodges's *The Globe Restored* of 1953. Hodges's elegant drawings created a vivid though still heavily conjectural history for the evolution of the amphitheatres. Backed by a combination of careful study of the evidence and an architect's eye for practical structures, they set down the first stones of the post-Adams path towards a fresh concept for the Globe. The linkage Hodges identified between the early booth stages and the later tiring-house structures finally closed down the long debate about inner and upper stages which formed the core of the Adams reconstruction. Richard Hosley's scrupulous studies of the structural evidence for the Globe and the other amphitheatres have developed the ideas of Hodges and have led to the concept, developed by John Orrell, on which the projected Bankside reconstruction is to be based. Hosley and Richard Southern have also been the principal advocates of hall screens as a model for both amphitheatre and hall playhouse tiring-house fronts. This is a dubious model, since hall

³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980); Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display* (New York, 1986), p. 88; A. M. Nagler, *Shakespeare's Stage* (New Haven, 1958), chapter 13.

⁴ The point was originally noted by Leslie Hotson in *Shakespeare's Wooden O* (London, 1959). Alan R. Young in 'The Orientation of the Elizabethan Stage: "That Glory to the Sober West"', *Theatre Notebook*, 33 (1979), 80-5, and John Orrell in 'Sunlight at the Globe', *Theatre Notebook*, 38 (1984), 69-76, present the evidence in full. One development was Keith Brown's 'More light, more light', *Essays in Criticism*, 34 (1984), 1-13.

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screens for the most part appear to have been fairly passive bystanders when plays were staged in their halls. But they provide the only close analogy to use if we are to elaborate the raw evidence of De Witt's plain-fronted tiring house.

Anchored firmly in the physical features of the amphitheatre but floating freely among the plays, Bernard Beckerman's *Shakespeare at the Globe* has been consistently and widely influential since its publication in 1962. The first book on the original staging to confine itself scrupulously to the evidence about one playhouse and the plays written for it, and covering the whole array from the repertory to the acting, its sane and careful conclusions set the standard for subsequent studies of other playhouses. The principles first set out by George Reynolds in his classic study of the Red Bull repertory, with its careful evaluation of stage directions in relation to the playhouse for which they were written and a hierarchy of reliability based on how distinctly a play belonged to a particular playhouse at a particular time, are fully ratified by Beckerman's book.⁵ What he added, though, was equally valuable. Along with the hardware of the building he looked at the software of players and their parts, their audiences, their repertory system, and the entire substructure of production and performance which put the play-scripts onto the stage. Subsequent studies, including T. J. King's analyses of the stage directions in plays written for particular playhouses⁶ and Richard Hosley's current massive project to survey and relate the stage directions of all the plays known to belong to specific playhouses to the relevant structures, have benefited from the breadth of Beckerman's conspectus.

In recent years narrowness of range has become a chronic problem in stage studies. The students of architecture are hesitant to make pronouncements about practical staging, the actor-directors import unspoken (and often unthought-of) assumptions based on

modern stage structures. Growing enthusiasm for the principles of emblematic staging has intensified this problem, since the emblematisers can approach the Shakespearian stages from so many different directions. The traditions of Elizabethan pageantry examined by David Bergeron,⁷ and the mysteries of iconic devices exemplified in the masques, merge insidiously into Alan Dessen's study of popular stage devices used as shorthand signals, where the entry of a character wearing a nightcap makes a bedroom scene, or riding boots signify travel.⁸ The difficulty lies partly in the impossibility of identifying the many contradictory demands on the original stagers, the constant choices they had to make between the urge to be lavishly expressive and the need to be practical and economical, the choice between expenditure on properties for the sake of realism, or reliance, conveniently cheaper, on traditional emblematic forms. It is a necessary caution to remember Reynolds's point about how easily, in the absence of the stage directions, we could have misread the Red Bull's presentation of a scene (in *The Two Noble Ladies*, 1619–23) in which two soldiers, trying to cross a river, are drowned on stage.⁹ This mild challenge to stage realism the company answered in a strikingly non-realistic way by introducing two Tritons who enter and drag the soldiers off, sounding their trumpets. Whether this distinctive way of staging a fairly realistic event was chosen for emblematic purposes, out of a traditional

⁵ G. R. Reynolds, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays at the Red Bull Theater* (Oxford, 1940); Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599–1609* (New York, 1962).

⁶ T. J. King, 'The Staging of Plays at the Phoenix in Drury Lane, 1617–42', *Theatre Notebook*, 19 (1964), 146–66, and *Shakespearean Staging 1599–1642* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

⁷ David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558–1642* (Columbia, 1971).

⁸ Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge, 1984).

⁹ Reynolds, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays*, p. 13.

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reluctance to offer the banality of mere realism, or because divine providence was expected to intervene at that point in the story it is impossible now to tell. That, perhaps, is one measure of how far there is still to go in the study of staging.

Most of the broad shape of stage studies in the last forty years has been dictated by the need to evaluate a limited body of familiar evidence and to re-use it with a sufficient amount of the especial caution which bomb disposal experts use after an explosive demolition. The general recognition after Reynolds that there was not any 'typical' playhouse, but a wide diversity, has had the effect of producing narrower and closer studies of particular areas. If we ignore the risks inherent in excessive specialization, it can be said fairly that the results have been uniformly beneficial.

That irritable reaching after fact and reason which Keats characterized as so unShakespearian has had significant victories in identifying the shape of several playhouses. Herbert Berry's work on the legal documents and land-maps has finally made possible a reliable reconstruction of the shape of the Boar's Head amphitheatre.¹⁰ Richard Hosley's reconstructions of the Fortune and the Swan,¹¹ Janet Loengard's discovery of the legal papers about the Red Lion, precursor to the Theatre,¹² the identification of the Inigo Jones drawings in Worcester College as a set most likely made for Beeston's Cockpit¹³ – studies such as these have both lengthened and broadened the perspective on theatre-building traditions as they developed between 1567 and 1616. By learning about particular playhouses we know more about the traditional building concepts, if not the playing traditions, which led James Burbage to the Red Lion and the Theatre, and eventually to the Blackfriars. Some of the playacting necessities which dictated the new shape when the Boar's Head was adapted from a tavern into a playhouse in 1601 are recognizable too. Most notably of all, John Orrell's

analysis of Wenceslas Hollar's meticulous work with his perspective glass has finally justified Shapiro's conclusion that Hollar's is the only reliable view of the Globe, while taking the evidence Hollar provides a good way further towards a reconstruction of the shape of the first Globe than the sceptical Shapiro thought it could possibly go.¹⁴

A few more significant documents, supplied in accurate transcripts, have extended the Chambers and Bentley records. R. A. Foakes has done a great deal to make the Henslowe papers more accessible to the kind of scrutiny that is only now beginning to be applied properly to those unique records.¹⁵ Herbert Berry's work on legal records has considerably clarified the available facts about the Theatre and the Boar's Head.¹⁶ Ann Haaker's work on the legal tangles surrounding Brome's contracts with the players, extended in Bentley's book about the conditions under which the professional playwrights worked, has

¹⁰ Herbert Berry, *The Boar's Head Playhouse* (Washington, DC, 1986).

¹¹ Richard Hosley, 'The Playhouses', in J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggatt, Richard Hosley, and Alvin Kernan, *The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. 3: 1576–1613 (London, 1976), pp. 119–235.

¹² Janet S. Loengard, 'An Elizabethan Lawsuit: John Brayne, his Carpenter, and the Building of the Red Lion Theatre', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (1984), 298–310.

¹³ John Orrell, 'Inigo Jones at the Cockpit', *Shakespeare Survey* 30 (1977), 157–68. The same author's *The Theatres of Inigo Jones and John Webb* (Cambridge, 1985) develops the case further and provides an effective history of early seventeenth-century theatre design.

¹⁴ *The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe* (Cambridge, 1983).

¹⁵ R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, eds., *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge, 1961). Foakes also has edited a facsimile edition of the Henslowe papers (London, 1977). His *Illustrations of the English Stage, 1580–1642* (London, 1985) is another useful addition to the list of books reproducing the material evidence.

¹⁶ Herbert Berry, ed., *The First Public Playhouse: The Theatre in Shoreditch 1576–1598* (Toronto, 1980). The same author's work on the Boar's Head is listed in note 10.

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improved practical knowledge of the conditions for playwriting.¹⁷ There is much more demystifying to be done even in the familiar documents, though. The Henslowe papers throw up more teases than answers, over such matters of staging as the occasional use of large scenic structures and backcloths or painted cloths depicting such things as the city of Rome. In the Henslowe records there is also the basis for a closer look at the techniques of collaborative writing, the standard timetable for the mounting of new plays in the 1590s, casting and doubling in plays, and above all the intricate business of distinguishing the finances of the financier from those of the playing companies he ran.

Facts are nothing without interpretation, of course, and interpretation has flourished even more mightily in the last forty years than it did under Cranford Adams. Perhaps these years have been notable above all for a swing of focus away from the Globe and the other amphitheatres to the hall playhouses. It was probably an inevitable process, since whatever the quality of the plays there is certainly much more useable evidence in the new area than the old. The swing seems to have begun about the time of G. E. Bentley's article suggesting that Shakespeare's last plays were written for the Blackfriars (it appeared in 1948 in the same *Shakespeare Survey 1* as Allardyce Nicoll's survey drawing attention to the generally Globe-centred emphasis and Shapiro's demolition of the credibility of the Visscher engraving).¹⁸ This view was given some help by the presumed link between the hall or 'private' playhouses and court staging. It was ramified strongly by the coincidence of Glynne Wickham's long and meticulous labours, and the heightening of awareness of emblematic staging which they provided, with the Orgel/Strong work on iconic devices used in the court masques.¹⁹ Supported by the completion of Bentley's *Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (which extended the Chambers marmorealizing from 1616 to 1642 and drew attention to the pre-

dominance of the Blackfriars over the Globe after 1608) and strengthened by a new enthusiasm for city comedy, especially the boy company plays, the real shift of focus has been from the amphitheatre plays to the hall playhouse plays.²⁰

Even without Ann Jennalie Cook's demolition of Alfred Harbage's concept of a 'popular' audience at the Globe, this was in some ways bound to be the anti-Harbage or 'coterie' era.²¹ His *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952) was an awesome extension of his book about Elizabethan audiences, and its analysis of the evidence has lasted much better.²² *Shakespeare's Audience* (1941) set up as an archetypal theatregoer the London artisan. Harbage's politics were democratic and populist, and he wanted his Shakespeare to be written for industrious workingmen. *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* developed the implications of that view by distinguishing two playwriting traditions, one for the populist amphitheatres and the other for the exclusive coterie in the more expensive hall playhouses. One was Shakespeare's, the other was satirical and elitist, inimical to all that Harbage thought Shakespeare stood for. Harbage's position, both as historian of the theatre and critic of the plays, was the dominant one in the

¹⁷ Ann Haaker, 'The Plague, The Theater and the Poet', *Renaissance Drama*, NS 1 (1968), 283-306.

¹⁸ G. E. Bentley, 'Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre', *Shakespeare Survey 1* (1948), 38-50.

¹⁹ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300 to 1660*, 4 vols. (London, 1959-81). Volume 5 on 'Plays and their Makers' from 1576 to 1660, is still to be published. Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (London, 1973).

²⁰ Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1941-68), and E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1903) and *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1923).

²¹ Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton, 1981).

²² Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York, 1952); *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York, 1941).

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forties and fifties. Since then the shift of focus from populist theatre to coterie theatre has brought about something like a complete reversal of preferences, and indeed of priorities. In the study of the sociology of the theatre this shift went furthest with Ann Cook's *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (1981), which in place of Harbage's archetypal workingman playgoer established the typical playgoer as privileged and gentlemanly. Both Harbage's and Cook's studies, in their concern to identify a uniformly typical and unified audience, ignored most of the evidence for diversity and swift change which is emphasized in the more recent *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*.²³ Taking social sides in this way is one of the more seductive ways of oversimplifying the evidence.

The chief reason for this general shift of focus towards the plays of the hall playhouses is, I suspect, that in the seventeenth century the hall playhouses had all of what academics are likely to regard as the most interesting plays. There were plays written for the boy companies, especially the satirical and parodic plays they staged at Blackfriars between 1600 and 1608; there was Shakespeare's own shift (according to Bentley) from writing for the Globe to writing for the Blackfriars in his last years; and the fact that almost all the new plays were written for the hall playhouses after *The White Devil* in 1611. There was the corpus of Middleton, Chapman, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford. Against all this the amphitheatres could offer nothing except the old and much-parodied populist favourites of Marlowe, Kyd, and Shakespeare. The hall plays, with their sophisticated theatre of estrangement replacing the amphitheatres' simple theatre of enchantment, also offered scholars vastly more work and more pleasure with their theatrical in-jokes, their webs of satirical allusions, and their intertextual cross-references.

At the same time, study of the plays and

their staging at the hall playhouses gained what I think ought to be regarded as an illusory strength from the work done on court staging, both of masques and plays. Because the hall playhouse audience was assumed to be composed largely of the courtiers and the ladies and gentry who went to plays at Court, it was (and is) also assumed, all too easily, that the staging of the plays in the hall playhouses was more like the staging designed for court shows than like the amphitheatre tradition. The masque-like seductions of *The Tempest* have deluded many students besides Ferdinand and Miranda.

In some respects Glynne Wickham's monumental *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660* has been a party to this shift in perspective. Publication of this work began in 1959 and is still not yet complete; this has to be the main reason for not yet pasting a Wickham label over the anti-Harbage label for the period. Wickham's volumes have two massive advantages over the great works of Chambers and Bentley. First, as the product of a single mind, conceiving the whole period as a continuum, they enjoy a cohesion which is not available in the earlier works, even when Chambers's two-volume *Medieval Stage* is tacked on to the four volumes of his *Elizabethan Stage*. Secondly, freed by the existence of Chambers and Bentley from the marmoreal labour of supplying all the factual materials in accessible form, the Wickham volumes can afford to concentrate rather more on their own priorities and their own hypotheses. Wickham is a much more interpretative and more speculative scholar than Chambers. He is manifestly more intrigued and excited by his materials. He may go wrong in his theorizing at times, but the target is always the same, the changing traditions which dictated the staging of plays over a period of more than three hundred years.

²³ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, 1987).

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

Reading through the four books (which constitute three parts) of *Early English Stages* which have so far appeared, it is easy to see why scholarly attention has seemed to retrace the upward social path of the plays from the Robin Hood maygames of the country towns in 1400 to the masques at court in 1640. Playgoing itself did not move up the social scale in these centuries. It was, with some local variations, as much a popular feature at fairgrounds as it was at court throughout the whole period. What the early Stuarts helped to give it was a strengthened social cachet amongst the London gentry and courtiers, so that it came to flourish in print as never before. It is, I think, fair to say that the attention we give to the plays now reflects their availability in print much more than it reflects their currency on English stages. Gerald Bentley's dismissive attitude towards the Red Bull repertory in the later volumes of *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* reflects the many stock expressions of contempt for the Red Bull players and audiences published by courtly and gentlemanly commentators. But it also reflects the fact that very few of the Red Bull or other amphitheatre plays ever got into print. From the second decade of the seventeenth century publishers were far more ready to claim on their titlepages that a play had appeared at the Blackfriars or Cockpit than that they were the products of the Red Bull or Fortune. Buyers of play-quartos were largely gentry and titlepages advertising what playhouses a play belonged to reflected their interests, which were not expected to be engaged by anything on offer at the amphitheatres. So we, inevitably, tend to follow the gentry interests with the kinds of play we have in our hands.

The chief work which has swum against this current is Robert Weimann's study of the 'popular' dramatic tradition.²⁴ On the whole it adds little to our understanding of staging that is not also present in Wickham, but it is invaluable in its analysis of the traditions out of which Shakespeare's culture emerged. This is

something that cannot easily be done by reading the culture of Shakespeare's afterlife backwards into his plays and his staging.

Preoccupation with the interests of the gentry and the court has not greatly inhibited work on the traditions of staging at the amphitheatres and the halls. Thanks partly to the growth in confidence which Chambers and Bentley have given by their labours, ramified by Wickham's historical sweep, more than ten books on the original staging have appeared in this decade, three of them in 1984 alone. In the main their concern has been to apply the fixities about the playhouses and the consequent deductions about emblematic signifiers to the plays, so cementing the link between the archaeological study of the playhouses and the critical study of the playtexts.²⁵ More than most areas of current concern, though, studies of the staging seem prone to the danger of presuming that there was a 'typical' pattern. This is not a matter of allocating particular stage directions to particular playhouse structures. We know far too little, for instance, about the differences in staging between the amphitheatres and the halls. The Red Bull, with its 'drum and trumpet' plays, was evidently notable for staging plays with battles, while the Blackfriars preferred wit-combats. But were there no plays with battles in them staged at the Blackfriars? Did Shakespeare's company exclude any presentation of the English history plays, or *Macbeth*, or *Hamlet* with its dangerous duel, from the company's winter repertory

²⁴ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (London, 1978).

²⁵ Besides Alan Dessen's *Elizabethan Stage Conventions* listed in note 8, the more rewarding books include David Bevington's *Action is Eloquence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984); Jean E. Howard, *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration* (Urbana, 1984); Ann Pasternak-Slater, *Shakespeare the Director* (Brighton, 1982); Warren D. Smith, *Shakespeare's Playhouse Practice* (Hanover, NH, 1975); and John Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* (Cambridge, 1967).