Introduction

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand orders the murder of his sister, the eponymous heroine of John Webster's play. After she is strangled, the Duchess lies motionless whilst Bosola, the servant who organised her death, and Ferdinand look on. Her guilt-stricken brother seems to inspect her corpse but cannot bear it: 'Cover her face', he orders Bosola, 'Mine eyes dazell she di'd yong'.[1] *The Duchess of Malfi* was the first play performed at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (SWP) when it opened in 2014 and in this performance space the word 'dazzle' took on a particular meaning. The SWP is a reimagining of an archetypal early modern indoor playhouse; like the neighbouring Shakespeare's Globe, it is based on the collation and interpretation of surviving evidence of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playhouse architecture. In this small, 340-capacity space, situated next door to the Globe, actors and directors attempt to recover as much as possible of the conditions of early modern indoor playing, including candlelit performance. In this scene, the stage was lit by seven chandeliers but in addition nearby the prostrate Duchess was a torch, used to indicate a night-time setting, as well as Ferdinand's own candle. Under this quite direct candlelight glow, Gemma Arterton's face, powdered with a small amount of white make-up that caught the light, shimmered, as did her flowing white robes. The picture (Figure I.1) of Arterton's Duchess of Malfi and David Dawson's Ferdinand gives a sense of the visual effect. Ferdinand's response to his sister was apt: his eyes dazzled, a word described in contemporary dictionaries as 'to glimmer. . .to blind the sight' and associated with obscured vision through staring at light.[2] A play performed at an indoor playhouse, *The Duchess of Malfi* is especially attentive to the possibilities of candlelight as Webster darkens and illuminates the stage for key dramatic moments. Indeed Ferdinand's lines are just one instance where the visual aesthetic of candlelight appears woven into the emotion and imagination of a text whose heroine 'lights the time to come' (B4r) but is beset by 'shadowes' (G3v) and 'darkenes' (I1r). Webster joins other playwrights

Figure I.1 *The Duchess of Malfi* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. 2014. Photograph by Mark Douet. With permission of Shakespeare's Globe.

who, writing for the conditions of indoor performance, seem especially attentive to the dynamics, possibilities and effects of controlled lighting. In the context of indoor candlelight, we notice the importance of Shakespeare's 'glistering apparel' (TLN 1868) in *The Tempest*; or the

'*great light*' that '*appears in the midst of the tomb*' in Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*.[3] Such connections between theatre space and text are the subject of this book.

The Duchess of Malfi was staged by the King's Men in 1613, four years into the establishment of a unique playing arrangement. From 1609, the Globe and Blackfriars became, according to perhaps the first account of the early modern stage, 'a Winter and Summer House, belonging to the same Company called the King's Servants'.[4] Unlike any other theatre company of the time, the King's Men were able to afford and sustain two playhouses. The Globe was a large, rounded, wooden open-air playhouse that stood on the south bank of the River Thames in Southwark; it was constructed and used by the King's Men from 1599, before burning down in 1613. The Blackfriars was a smaller indoor playhouse constructed within the frame of a pre-existing medieval stone building situated north of the river, near the City of London. Before the King's Men's occupation, a company of boy actors called the Children of the Queen's Revels performed at the theatre between 1600 and 1608. This book explores how the King's Men and their leading dramatist William Shakespeare adapted to their unique two-venue situation in 1609. It argues that after this time we can see their repertory was increasingly marked by a performance duality, individual plays which combined practices from both playhouses to produce performances with valuable and distinct spatial resonances at the Globe and Blackfriars, respectively. In order to make this argument and to see this performance duality at work, I examine the different spatial conditions at the Globe and Blackfriars and identify their effect on writing and performance before 1609. These conditions include the playhouses' histories, social identities and urban locations, as well as physical and material features.

The Globe and Blackfriars are considered here as theatre spaces in a broad sense – as material but also socio-cultural entities and places of the imagination. I am interested in what society thought of these theatres, how plays were seen, heard and experienced there, and the memories and cultural associations that playwrights, actors and audiences invested in them. In recent years, scholars of early modern drama have established that performance venues of this period were something more than physical containers for the drama of the time.[5] Building on the so-called spatial turn in the humanities and the work of key thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault and Gaston Bachelard, recent work has insisted that such spaces did not exist neutrally; rather early modern performance venues were social, cultural and mental constructs whose uses

reveal insights into a particular society at any given time.[6] Specifically, the playhouses of early modern London were social spaces, significant locations in the urban environment and sites of sensory and imaginative experience. As Jean Howard has shown in her study of early modern London, which draws on de Certeau's concepts of urban space, theatres had a crucial role to play in constructing the social meanings of city locations as sites where Londoners familiarised themselves with the changing behaviours and narratives of their city.[7] More recently, Janette Dillon has brought 'spatial and kinetic evidence to the fore' in her analysis of court performance, in work predominantly informed by Lefebvre.[8] In her reading, the meanings of early modern court are constructed by those who inhabited and performed within it. Studies by Dillon and Howard, amongst others, are very much parallel to the analysis offered here.[9]

However, amongst this work there is not a study dedicated to analysing the social, cultural and imaginative space at individual playhouses, considering specific and possibly unique qualities and assessing the experience of playwrights, actors and audiences in that particular space across time. This book offers a study of the Globe and Blackfriars, two playhouses linked by their connection to the King's Men, the leading company of the period, as well as to Shakespeare, a member of that company. As Shakespeare's playhouses, both have received ample critical attention in terms of their history, architecture and design; but in light of the developed meaning 'space' has undergone, our understanding of both theatres can be enriched and expanded.[10] And so the contrasting environments of the Globe and Blackfriars and their effect on playwriting and performance are considered at length here, and a series of key questions addressed: what did the terms 'public' playhouse, used for the Globe, and 'private', for the Blackfriars, really mean? In what ways were the different urban locations and politics of the two theatres represented on stage? How might actors, audiences and playwrights have experienced the acoustic and visual differences between indoor and outdoor venues? How did past uses of the theatre site come to affect plays performed there in the early modern period?

The answers to these questions, I will suggest, lie in the repertories of the Children of the Queen's Revels and the King's Men. Between 1599 and 1608, the boy company and adult company responded to the distinct spatial conditions of the Blackfriars and Globe. Their repertories contain traces of the spatial practices, by which I mean playwrights' and actors' uses of theatre space, which were created in response to those conditions. For example, Chapter 3 considers the effect of candlelight at the Blackfriars;

contemporary accounts of the theatre describe a wealthy, well-dressed audience who came to '*glit[t]er*' in the latest fashion under the candlelight.[11] In response to these conditions, the Children of the Queen's Revels performed many plays which were especially dense with clothing, and jewellery, thereby matching the visual opulence of the Blackfriars audience. A spatial practice of this repertory therefore was a prominent display of costume and props that, in the words of John Marston in *The Dutch Courtesan*, 'shew[ed] well by candlelight'.[12] Moreover, playwrights began a particularly intense interrogation of the nature of material display, and the vanity and superficiality associated with it in response to the conditions of the indoor venue.

Repertory is critical to the re-evaluation of the Blackfriars and the King's Men that this book offers. Discussions of performance at the indoor theatre have focused predominantly on Shakespeare's response and the handful of plays he wrote post-1609 rather than the full range of plays performed at the theatre from 1600. Paul Menzer's *Inside Shakespeare* and Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper's recent *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* have certainly advanced the debate as contributors draw on a range of Jacobean and Caroline plays to examine indoor performance.[13] But in terms of the Blackfriars, the Children of the Queen's Revels' repertory and non-Shakespearean King's Men's plays post-1609 remain a relatively untapped resource for exploring this theatre space. Moreover, by insisting on the importance of repertory, I respond to Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean's suggestion that company repertory should be studied 'with the kinds of critical and textual attention that are normally reserved for the canons of playwrights'.[14] Similar studies by Mary Bly, Andrew Gurr, Lucy Munro, Roslyn L. Knutson and Lawrence Manley have asserted the collaborative nature of early modern play production and performance.[15] 'It is not', as Munro points out, 'a question of denying the playwright's agency', but rather a question of examining those involved, including 'actors, shareholders, playhouse functionaries, patrons, audiences and publishers'.[16] Works by Munro and others have used the collaborative model of repertory studies to re-assess key ideas about early modern drama, for example, literary genre, commercial trends and patronage.

Such work is undertaken with the knowledge that, as the majority of plays from the period do not survive, extant 'repertories' are incomplete and thus what 'strikes us as dominant or frequent may in fact be an over-represented aberration'.[17] Yet we are fortunate in the cases of the Globe and Blackfriars that (in part because of the Shakespearean association) research

by Gurr, Munro, Knutson and others leaves us with a more complete picture than for some other companies.[18] Moreover, there is no reason to suggest that the plays that survive are either unrepresentative or over-representative of the general performance trends associated with these playhouses because plays were printed (or not) and survived (or not) for multiple reasons. Partial repertories still offer valuable ground for interpretation, whilst we remain sensitive to gaps in the record. This book analyses the relationship between repertory and theatre space and, where possible, speculates about the performance of 'lost' plays.[19] It will demonstrate that there is an interactive relationship between repertory *and* theatre space: the conditions of the theatre space affected the plays performed there but, in turn, these plays came to shape the identities that these theatres had. Thus the analysis of one can illuminate the other.

By analysing spatial practices between 1599 and 1608 and the meanings that they produced we can understand the opportunities and challenges which faced the King's Men in 1609 when they began to perform at both playhouses.[20] Shakespeare's company did not inherit a neutral space from the boy actors: from 1600 the Children of the Queen's Revels had created a set of spatial practices for the Blackfriars, and invested the playhouse with meanings and expectations for audiences through their repertory. The King's Men responded to the Children of the Queen's Revels' previous use of the indoor playhouse, and Shakespeare and other playwrights continued and developed the boy company's spatial practices. For example, in terms of the candlelight conditions at the Blackfriars, when the King's Men inherited the space in 1609 their repertory shows a marked increase of eye-catching items such as *The Tempest*'s 'glistening apparell' (TLN 1868) and 'jewels [. . .] and ropes of pearl' in John Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Valentinian*.[21] The aesthetic of candlelight also began to infiltrate the language of their plays as we have already seen in the reference to light, darkness and dazzling in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Furthermore, like Children of the Queen's Revels' playwrights before 1609, the King's Men begin a particular examination of links between materiality, decadence and corruption at the Blackfriars.

The King's Men's response to the Blackfriars in part emerged from the Children of the Queen's Revels' previous use of the indoor playhouse, but crucially that development could involve deliberate change and innovation and bringing spatial practices from the Globe to Blackfriars. It is possible to see instances when, post-1609, the King's Men staged plays which *combined* practices from both playhouses, thereby responding to their unique indoor/outdoor playing situation. Case studies of *The Tempest* and *Henry*

VIII will explore the ways in which, particularly as they got used to their unique two-venue arrangement over the years, it was possible for the King's Men to produce plays suitable in different but parallel ways for both their theatres. The idea of 'combined practices' I am proposing seeks to break the somewhat binary discussion of Shakespeare's response to the Blackfriars. For G. E. Bentley, writing in 1948, Shakespeare created 'a new kind of play for the new theatre and audience'; whilst, for Bart Van Es, more recently, Shakespeare's post-1609 plays were 'not necessarily pitched at a Blackfriars audience'.[22] Rather than arguing Shakespeare (and other King's Men's playwrights) entirely embraced or rejected writing for the Blackfriars after they acquired this new space in 1609, I contend that something more nuanced occurred: a combination of spatial practices that gave the repertory a performance duality.[23] I hope that such a line of thinking enables the subtlety and sophistication of the King's Men's post-1609 practices to emerge. However, it does raise a wider question about early modern playing culture, playwriting and spatial effects which requires further elucidation.

Multiple Venues, Theatre Space and Combined Practices

The problem when examining the interaction between play and theatre space in the early modern period is simple: plays were not just staged at playhouses like the Globe and Blackfriars. Most theatre companies, including the two under discussion here, at some point toured their repertory around the country playing in venues such as churches, great halls, inns and market places. In London, they gave bespoke performances in private homes and the Inns of Court, and regularly staged plays at court in Whitehall and Greenwich before the monarch.[24] This situation meant that any play could be performed in any space, at any time. Plays might have premiered at the Globe and Blackfriars but they did not stay there; they might first be staged at these playhouses and then moved elsewhere. For example, we know that *The Alchemist* was staged at Oxford in 1610 and *Twelfth Night* at Middle Temple Hall in 1602. Venue changeability was the norm for theatre companies, particularly as many did not perform regularly in one theatre space for long periods of time. Before their secure establishment at the Globe in 1599, the Chamberlain's Men, for instance, had performed at Newington Butts, the Theatre and the Curtain. In light of these conditions, is there any value in considering the interaction between space and repertory? And is it possible to find examples where playwrights wrote plays

with particular spaces in mind? I suggest that the answer to both questions is 'yes' for several reasons.

'Every writer must governe his Penne according to the Capacitie of the Stage he writes too [sic]' notes the printer of *The Two Merry Milkmaids* (1620), suggesting that wherever a play might subsequently be staged its first venue was a priority for playwrights.[25] The multi-venue conditions of early modern playing did not make playwrights impervious to the effects of specific spaces in performances of their work. Indeed surviving evidence demonstrates heightened sensitivities as playwrights complain when performance spaces are unsuitable. For John Webster, *The White Devil* was marred by the conditions of its premiere at the Red Bull where it '*was acted, in so dull a time of Winter*' and '*presented in so open and blacke a Theater*' for an audience of '*ignorant asses*'.[26] It is the material and social characteristics of this playhouse that affected the play's interpretation such that, Webster states, '*it wanted a full and understanding auditory*'. James Shirley shows a similar anxiety about venue in *The Doubtful Heir*, and tries to pre-empt the fate that *The White Devil* suffered with an audience warning in the play's Prologue. The play was first performed at the small indoor Weburgh Street Theatre in Dublin in 1638, but then moved to the King's Men's Globe, for which Shirley wrote a new Prologue. Having created the play for the small indoor Weburgh, Shirley would have preferred his play to run at the Blackfriars, a comparable playhouse, rather than the 'vast' Globe stage.[27] He grumbles about the Southbank venue: 'Our Author did not calculate this Play / For this Meridian' (A3r). The word 'calculate' here, like the word 'govern' used in *The Two Merry Milkmaids*, suggests in this instance a process of writing for a space that was precise, controlled and exact. I am going to identify instances where playwrights creating work for the Children of the Queen's Revels and the King's Men did 'calculate' and 'govern' their plays according to the demands of the Globe and Blackfriars.

For some, these playhouses were uppermost in their mind because of a longstanding or close connection to the space and/or company. Most obviously, Shakespeare was a member of the King's Men, an investor in the Globe and Blackfriars and wrote exclusively for the company from 1599. But playwrights such as Ben Jonson, John Marston, George Chapman and Thomas Middleton also wrote several plays for one or both playhouses and, I suggest, grew accustomed to the spatial conditions at these venues. For example, as I have argued elsewhere, Marston became especially attentive to the acoustic possibilities of the Blackfriars in work that demonstrates an increasingly sophisticated employment of instrument and song.[28] Of course, at times playwrights wrote for, or aspired to,

other spaces, especially the court. Yet the longstanding regular venues of the Globe and Blackfriars, which were built by theatre-makers *for* theatre-makers, offered stability and familiarity. The Children of the Queen's Revels performed at the Blackfriars for eight years running; the King's Men did approximately thirty-three years there and over forty at the Globe. In these spaces used exclusively for performance over many, many years, spatial meanings, practices and expectations developed and offered playwrights rich imaginative resonances to play with, which they did. Theatres are distinct sites in social topography, as Foucault and Lefebvre, to name but two, have asserted, and I wish to attend to their special use and history in the early modern period.[29]

'All performances take place within specific architectural and geographic frames that serve to shape their meaning', writes Ric Knowles in an example of an axiom echoed across the study of performance.[30] Wherever a play is staged, space may become an active agent in providing meaning, alongside the writing, actor delivery and audience response. With a full understanding of the spatial characteristics of the Globe and Blackfriars, it is possible and valuable to analyse the spatial effects of any play in performance there; to identify the 'specific architectural and geographic frames' that shaped actors' and audiences' interpretations of the play at these venues, and this book aims to do so. In addition, the meanings and associations that play created for the playhouse are worth considering, and how these related to other performances seen there. As Gay McAuley points out, whilst 'the reality of the performance space impacts on the fictions that are enacted there [. . .] in return these fictions transform the reality of the space'.[31] In my terms, this process is the dynamic and interactive relationship between repertory and theatre space, as a company's plays produced associations for their theatre over time, transforming the reality of their venue. With its stereotypical London characters, Jonson's *The Alchemist* may well have provided an insight into urban life for students when staged at Oxford. Yet, as we shall see in Chapter 2, when this play set in a fictional house of the Blackfriars precinct was performed at the Blackfriars playhouse it had an enriched spatial meaning, specific to the repertory of plays previously performed there, as well as to the social, material and imaginative conditions of the indoor venue. It is possible to argue, then, that a play was written for and leverages the power of a specific venue, whilst acknowledging it was performed elsewhere with different, less powerful and pointed spatial resonances.

Analysing plays with specific spaces in mind constitutes a worthwhile endeavour, because we can identify instances where playwrights

wrote with keen spatial attentiveness. Furthermore, I will also suggest that this attentiveness could deliberately extend beyond one venue. If companies of actors developed a 'high adaptability' in response to moving plays from place to place so did playwrights: whilst writing for one space, playwrights might also imagine the same play performed elsewhere and shape particular scenes and deploy particular practices for that other space.[32] In other words, they could create plays which combined practices from more than one venue, providing the flexibility that companies required from their repertories. It is only with a full understanding of these playing locations and a discriminating awareness of their meanings and effects (of the kind that early modern playwrights, actors and audiences had) that we can see these combined practices at work. This book establishes the spatial meanings and practices for the Globe and Blackfriars pre-1609 in order to identify King's Men's plays post-1609 that are responsive in different ways to *both* playhouses, demonstrating playwrights' sensitivity to the company's unique two-venue situation. This performance duality exists to some extent in *Coriolanus* (as discussed in Chapter 1), but is especially marked in *The Tempest* (Chapter 3) and *Henry VIII* (Chapter 4).

Since 2014 several plays (including *Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Richard II, As You Like It* and *Measure for Measure*) have been transferred from their runs at the Globe to the SWP for a few nights only. Certainly there were practical changes to staging because of the physical differences between these two reconstructed playhouses. Yet differences were also incredibly subtle, changing scene by scene and as a result of the subjective and experiential qualities of the outdoor and indoor spaces – such as the aesthetic of candlelight, the acoustic environment and the effect of variant proximity between actor and audiences in both. These productions confirmed to me the potential of expanding our understanding of space, as social, sensory and imaginative, when considering the King's Men's post-1609 position. Indeed throughout my examination of Shakespeare's early modern playhouses, at points I will consider the ways in which contemporary performance in 'reconstructions' of these playhouses can inform analysis of early modern conditions and practices. Writing on the difficulties of research on reconstructed theatres, Paul Menzer points out that 'the gap between then and now is too wide [. . .] to treat today's plays and players upon these new/old stages as indicative of early modern theatrical practice'.[33] His point is echoed to a greater extent by John Drakakis who suggests that 'to engage in the business of reconstruction is to engage in a process of inevitable distortion'; or Alan C. Dessen who warns that the process of investigation at reconstructed playhouses 'is highly vulnerable to