



THE LIVING MONUMENT

SHAKESPEARE AND THE THEATRE
OF HIS TIME

M. C. BRADBROOK

A HISTORY OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA 6

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M. C. BRADBROOK

*Professor Emerita of English
in the University of Cambridge
and Fellow of Girton College*

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- 1 The Curtain Theatre
[*By permission of The Director, University Library, Utrecht*]
- 2a The Children of the Chapel
[*By permission of the British Library Board*]
- 2b Production of *Titus Andronicus*. Marquess of Bath's collection,
Longleat
[*By permission of the Marquess of Bath*]
- 3 The 'Nova Felix Arabia' arch
[*By permission of the Trustees of the British Museum*]
- 4 'A daughter of the Niger' for Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*.
Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth
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PREFACE

The year 1976 is the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of James Burbage's Theatre, the first in England; today, London remains the theatrical capital of Britain – some would say, of the world.

No physical likeness of Burbage's Theatre survives, although external views exist of its near neighbour, the Curtain (see Plate 1), of the Rose on Bankside which followed, and of the Swan, whose interior, too, was sketched by Johannes de Witt, a foreign visitor. Theatres are for people, so that extensive attempts by scholars to establish the nature of fabric and structure are significant only as these provided an environment where interaction between playwrights, actors and audience eventually produced the work of the greater poet-dramatists.

There have been many significant changes over the past four hundred years, but within the last *thirty* years, the new drama departments in our universities have transformed theatrical history by a keener sense of the living art, which in turn has affected the building of modern theatres; these now provide stages nearer to the Elizabethan model than anything known since the mid-seventeenth century. Leading Shakespearean directors have taken full advantage of the latest scholarship, with the result that all of Shakespeare's plays and many of those of his contemporaries are now being produced. In addition, the history of theatre has been linked with the general history of art, and with social history; the results have been seen in many exhibitions of Tudor and Stuart art, of the work of Inigo Jones, and in the developing projects for a theatre museum.

The present study is first of all concerned with the sociology of the theatre, the subject of Part 1. In the evolution of the new drama, the Theatre of Burbage offered a focus for the manifold pageantry, ceremonies and activities delineated in Chapter 2. These were

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given poetic shape in Shakespeare's English history plays, the most characteristic product of the Theatre. The masque at court, which also had traditional roots, evolved more slowly; but structurally, in terms of stage and auditorium, it proved to be the direct ancestor of yesterday's theatre, with its proscenium arch and curtain that 'flew up suddenly' to show the painted scene. The interaction of various forms of theatre is the subject of Chapter 6, whilst the changing image of London itself is the subject of Chapter 5.

In Part II, the effects of this interaction are traced in the works of the Jacobean Shakespeare. By this time, popular drama had evolved its own conventions, whereas in Elizabethan times the shaping force of non-dramatic poetry and of rhetorical forms was still stronger than the emergent dramatic tradition, as it emerged in the workshop conditions of the nineties. I have dealt with these aspects of sixteenth-century drama in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* and *Shakespeare the Craftsman*, so that Part II of the present study is confined to the fully-developed art of the Jacobean Shakespeare in the theatrical context which had evolved, and which was largely of his own making. The treatment of his Jacobean plays is limited to the social context indicated in Part I; whilst necessarily omitting many important aspects, it shows Shakespeare first reacting against but finally absorbing and transmuting elements of the Jonsonian court masque. 'Shakespeare as collaborator' treats of one early and one late play.

To round off the story, in Part III a final chapter on post-Shakespearean developments brings out what might be called his posthumous relations with Jonson and the young Milton, in the form which predominated in Caroline times, the court masque.

Without attempting the hopeless task of presenting all the evidence, I have tried to give enough selective detail to illustrate and support my general thesis. I hope that the result may be justified as work in progress, in a field where development is constantly bringing about changes of emphasis (a recent example is the growth of information about inn-yard stages).

The field of social relations in dramatic art is perhaps the least explored, and whilst I attempted in *The Rise of the Common*

Preface

Player to treat of the actors and their audience, I hope here to suggest lines of development in the more complex and difficult area of social relations as reflected in dramatic art. Chapters 1 and 2, however, are directly developed from that work.

At first sight it may seem incongruous that in a volume which opens with the Shoreditch Theatre, four chapters should be devoted to Shakespeare's final plays. My justification would be that in these plays, we see reflected in the mirror of dramatic poetry, what Shakespeare had absorbed as pure theatre in his youth. The reflection alone can show truly what, at that time, could not be put into words at all. Of course the plays contain much more; the accumulated experience of a life spent in the theatre. Yet, I would consider it took even Shakespeare the length of his working life to learn to project what he had found. In poetry, and in poetry alone, that moment was fully caught and transmitted, as no records could transmit it, and as no lesser poet could have done. This is the Theatre's living monument. Similarly, we cannot tell what the interior of Burbage's Theatre would look like. But the Globe Theatre was built from its timbers, and we do have more details of 'that virtuous fabric'.

Cambridge

October 1975

M. C. BRADBROOK

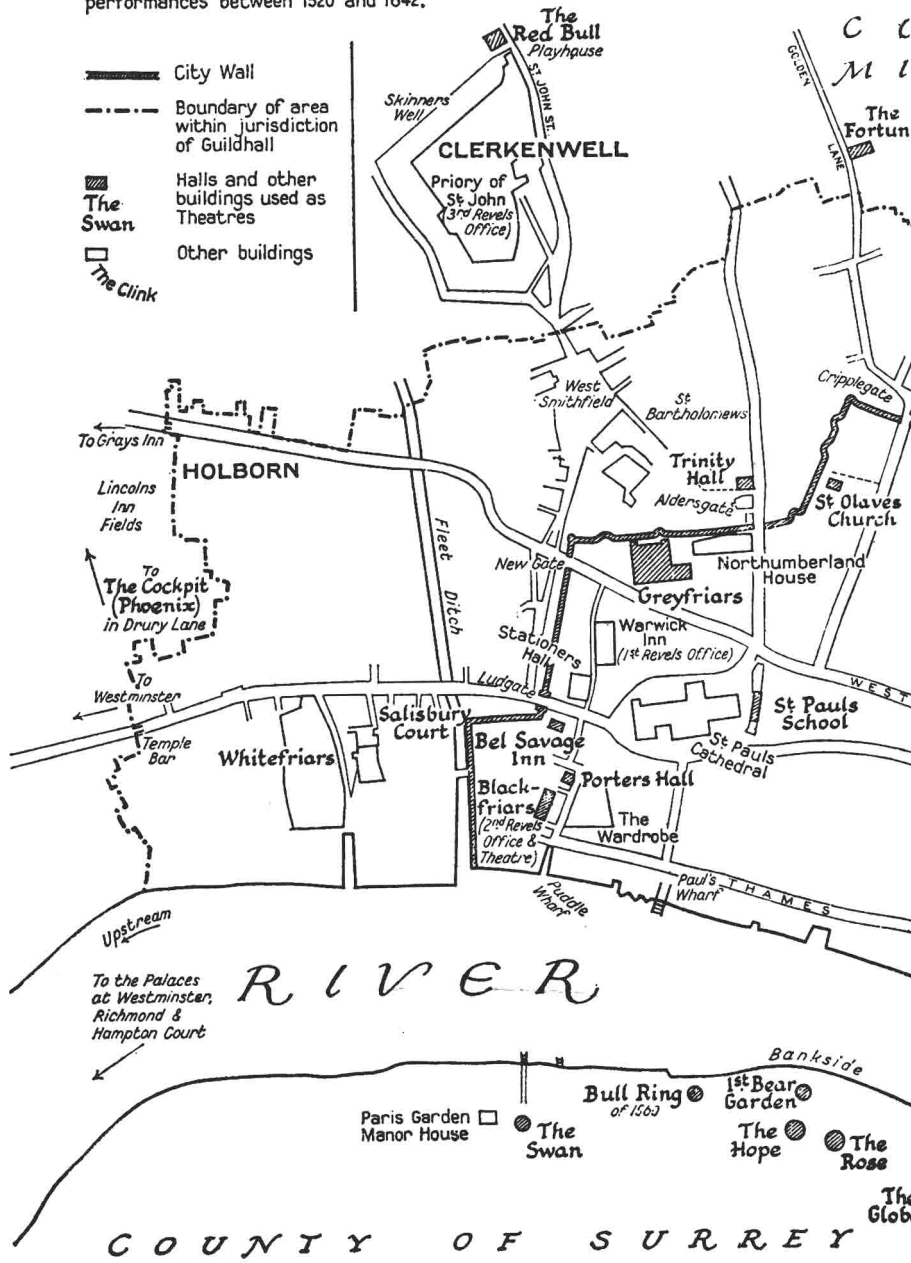
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I wish also to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and cooperation of Mrs P. C. Rignold at all stages in the preparation of this work, and the invaluable contribution made by the staff of Cambridge University Press.

Map showing buildings used as theatres or intimately connected with dramatic performances between 1520 and 1642.

THEATRE MAP



THE LEADING LONDON THEATRES, 1557-1642

	<i>Builder</i>	<i>Acting companies</i>	<i>Opened</i>	<i>Closed</i>
A. INN-YARD THEATRES				
1. The Boar's Head, Whitechapel	John Brayne Rebuilt 1594: Robert Browne John Brayne	Leicester's Men Worcester's/Queen Anne's Men	c.1557	Not heard of after 1608
2. The Red Lion, Stepney		Queen's Men	1567	City
3. The Bell Inn, Gracechurch Str.		Queen's Men	1576	Inns
4. The Bull Inn, Gracechurch Str.		Lord Strange's Men	c.1575	Closed 1597 by order of the Lord Mayor
5. The Cross Keys Inn, Gracechurch Str.		Lord Hunsdon's Men	c.1579	
6. The Bel Savage, Ludgate		Queen's Men	c.1575	Standing at the Restoration in 1660. In use throughout the Commonwealth for Shows, etc.
7. The Red Bull, Clerkenwell	Rebuilt 1604: Aaron Hollond	Queen Anne's Men	by 1594	
B. ARENA THEATRES				
1. The Theatre, Holywell	James Burbage	Leicester's/Queen's Men Lord Strange's Men	1576	1598
2. The Curtain, Holywell	Henry Laneham	Lord Hunsdon's Men Lord Hunsdon's Men Worcester's/Queen Anne's Men	1577	Not heard of after 1627
3. Newington Butts, possibly small roofed house	Jerome Savage	Prince Charles's Men Lord Strange's Men Lord Oxford's Men	1577	1597
4. The Rose, Bankside	Philip Henslowe Francis Langley	Lord Admiral's and others Lord Admiral's Men Lord Pembroke's (caused closure by playing <i>Isle of Dogs</i>)	1587	No record of plays after 1605
5. The Swan		Lord Admiral's/Prince Henry's/Palsgrave's Men Palsgrave's Men	c.1594	Closed for plays after 1597 Standing in 1621
6. The Fortune I	Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn	Lord Hunsdon's/King's Men	1600	Burnt 1621
7. The Fortune II	Edward Alleyn	King's Men	1625	1649 dismantled. 1662 demolished
8. The Globe I	The Burbages and associates	Lady Elizabeth's Men	1599	Burnt 1613 (built from timbers of The Theatre) 1642 (expiry of lease) 1644 demolished
9. The Globe II	The Burbages	Paul's Choir	1614	1656 (built over Bear Garden; theatre and bear-ring)
10. The Hope	Philip Henslowe, Edward Alleyn and Jacob Meade		1614	
C. PRIVATE THEATRES*				
1. St Paul's I (exact vicinity unknown)	Sebastian Westcott Thomas Giles John Lyly		c.1560	1590

2	St Paul's II 'in the Shrouds'	Edward Pearce Edward Kirkham	Paul's Choir	1600	1606 (a 'dead rent' paid 1608 by other theatres) 1584
3	Blackfriars I (The Old Buttery)	William Hunnis Richard Farrant	Children of the Chapel Royal, combined with Oxford's Boys	c.1576	
4	Blackfriars II (The Upper Frater)	John Lyly James Burbage Leased to Giles, Henry Evans, Edward Kirkham and others	Children of the Chapel R. Children of the Queen's Revels; Children of the Revels; Children of the 2nd Queen's Revels	1596	1655 demolished
5	Whitefriars	Philip Rosseter	Children of the Revels	1608	?disused after 1613
6	Cockpit, Drury Lane or Phoenix	Christopher Beeston William Beeston William Davenant	Queen Anne's Men Prince Charles's Men Lady Elizabeth's Men Queen Henrietta's Men Beeston's Boys	1616	Demolished in riot. Rebuilt 1617; standing in 1660—reopened then
7	Salisbury Court (a barn near Whitefriars site)	Richard Gunnell William Blagrave Henry Herbert	Children of the Revels Prince Charles's (II) Men Queen Henrietta's Men	1629	Dismantled 1649. Reopened 1660 as Dorset Garden

D. ROYAL THEATRES

Queen Elizabeth used the Great Hall at Hampton Court, Greenwich, Nonsuch and her other 'standing houses'. At Whitehall she had utilized wooden structures - 'banqueting houses' - of a temporary kind, until 1581.

- 1 First Elizabethan Banqueting House
Built by Inigo Jones
- 2 First Jacobean Banqueting House
Adjoining tiltyard S.W. of Great Hall 120' x 53'
- 3 Second Jacobean Banqueting House
Built by Inigo Jones on same site
- 4 Cockpit-in-Court
Built by Henry VIII. Used for plays from c.1608. Rebuilt as theatre 1629. Reconditioned 1660
- 5 The Masquing House (known as 'The Queen's Dancing Barn')
Timber built in 1637 to replace the Banqueting House for large assemblies. Designed by Inigo Jones. Between Hall and Banqueting House

The Second Jacobean Banqueting House is the only theatrical building to survive, apart from the Halls of the Inns of Court. It was also used for Audiences, and other State functions.

* Private theatres are roofed buildings in which, at first, resident players, incorporated for some other purpose, gave performances. After 1600, the description usually meant roofed and more expensive, smaller theatres, used only by players.

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Part I

THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE THEATRE

I

THE THEATRE AND ITS POET

In the year 1576, the seventeenth year of the reign of Elizabeth I, James Burbage, leader of the Earl of Leicester's Men and by trade a joiner, opened outside the north-east gate of London the first modern public theatre in England, perhaps in Europe. It stood in the parish of St Leonard's, Shoreditch, not very far north of the present Liverpool Street Station. Its honorific classical name *Theatre*, did not prevent the City Fathers from recognizing it as built on an established model – 'the gorgeous playing place erected in the fields' resembled those familiar game places to be found all over England – the circular or polygonal ring, within which scaffolds were erected.¹ In this case galleries for the spectators surrounded the open 'ground', and within there stood also a permanent, or perhaps at first a semi-permanent stage, backed by a 'tiring house' (basically, where the actors attired themselves). The strolling players had found a home, or rather had opened a shop, although the theatre was not restricted to acting nor was acting confined to the theatre. Tumblers, performing animals, swordsmen took the boards, whilst the players were ready to appear on call at a private mansion, a gildhall, or one of the Inns of Court.

Following a favourite custom of strolling players in performing at country inns, players were regularly found in inn-yards both within and outside the city walls; Burbage's brother-in-law, who shared his enterprise, had converted an inn in Stepney and was to convert another in Whitechapel. South of the Thames, the old gamehouses for bull- and bear-baiting were joined in 1587 by a new playhouse, the Rose, built by Philip Henslowe in the garden of an inn; nearby, in 1599, the timbers of the old Theatre were re-erected inside a new ring, to form the Globe Theatre. This became the joint property of the leading members of Burbages'

The sociology of the Theatre

troupe, now known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men; they had moved quarters after a dispute with their landlord, but had dismantled and ferried across the river the timbers of their old Theatre, of which the first Globe was thus the direct descendant.

For some years the Lord Chamberlain's Men had had as their leading playwright and a full member of the company, William Shakespeare – in 1599 aged thirty-five. Shakespeare's settled working life began in the Shoreditch Theatre, and the inn associated with it, the Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street. His name stood first in the lease of the Globe, made out to 'Will(elmo) Shakespeare et aliorum'. The most important kind of play which he had evolved, the English chronicle history, belonged to his days at the Theatre, and remains its living monument; at the end of his life he returned to material recollected from his earlier acting days and refashioned it in his final romances. If anyone has a claim to be regarded as the poet of the Theatre, it is Shakespeare; no other writer had so prolonged an association with that particular 'virtuous fabric'.

By the end of the sixteenth century, a whole family of London theatres, descended from James Burbage's original venture, had appeared. There were other centres of playing; the dwellings of two groups of choristers – St Paul's and the Children of the Chapel Royal – the Revels Office, a court institution, established at one time in the old Blackfriars building and later in the Priory of St John's, Clerkenwell, each of which in consequence became a theatre district. The two men's companies which emerged as the leading troupes were by then based south and north of the river – Burbage's and Shakespeare's company at the Globe, Henslowe's and Edward Alleyn's (The Lord Admiral's Men) at the Fortune near Cripplegate – though Henslowe also controlled the Rose. Two competitors seems to be the natural pattern. A third company, Worcester's, well established at one of the inn-yards outside the city, began to cater for more popular and spectacular needs; just as in the eighteenth century, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, the two licensed houses, were to be supplemented by the 'little Theatre in the Haymarket' (as it was known at that time).

By 1600, Shakespeare was the most seasoned playwright re-