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Titus Andronicus and Trapdoors at the Rose and Newington Butts

The first playhouse constructed on the Bankside and another, built a decade earlier about a mile south of London Bridge at Newington Butts, stand at opposite ends of the knowledge spectrum for theatre historians.¹ Three invaluable kinds of evidence exist for the Rose, erected by Philip Henslowe and John Cholmley in 1587: the *Diary* and associated documents held by Dulwich College; the archaeological site excavated in 1989; and printed texts of a number of the plays known to have been staged there.² But for the playhouse at Newington Butts, which may have been London's first purpose-built theatre, even its name, if it had one, has not survived.³ Thanks to William Ingram and most recently Laurie Johnson we now know rather more than we did, but it remains on the periphery of the playhouse landscape – not only geographically but quite literally, its relative obscurity in the historical record taken to reflect its apparent failure.⁴ It may be that 'the tediousnes of the waie', as a Privy Council memorandum described it when an order instructing Strange's Men to play there rather than at the Rose was rescinded, and the distance from the populated areas on which the Shoreditch and Bankside playhouses drew disadvantaged it, though Johnson challenges this traditional view.⁵ We do know that this playhouse was active in 1594: even if it was out of use sometime before the end of the century it operated for a not inconsiderable period, as Ingram shows.⁶ Scholars have regarded the 1594 episode, when the newly-formed Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men were based together there for a short time, as something of a puzzle. Yet the fact that *Titus Andronicus* was staged successively at the Rose and at Newington Butts may well be significant, given its particular staging requirements which, this essay will argue, were atypical. While it is sensible to conclude that '[w]e have no grounds for assuming

that the Newington structure looked like the Theater or Curtain',⁷ the other two playhouses constructed in the 1570s, there are grounds to suppose that it shared several features in common with the Rose.

Until recently theatre historians have tended to assume that the playhouses between which companies moved, and upon which later impresarios drew for experience-based knowledge and inspiration when constructing their own venues, were in essence similar. The *frons scenae* may not have been universally flat, as apparently was the case at the Swan (at least according to the not unproblematic drawing discovered in the late nineteenth century): the Rose excavations revealed that its *frons* was angled. But most theatre historians concur in the view that playhouses featured a tiring house with a stage, onto which two flanking doors and a discovery space opened, while above an upper stage was accessible to actors and musicians, and below a trapdoor gave alternative access for ghosts and such and the introduction of elaborate stage properties.⁸ Few would contest the validity of this schema, but the assumptions underpinning the last of these features are worth excavating further. The use of the trap in *Titus Andronicus* is unexceptional, according to the prevailing view that this facility was readily available as a staple component of purpose-built venues, and thus featured widely in performance. Yet this view is open to challenge, and in the wake of such a re-evaluation the use of the trap in this play assumes a new significance.

The most famous scene in the entire corpus of English drama features the device. The graveyard scene in *Hamlet* resonates far beyond the theatre, serving as an icon of the 'Shakespearean' stage in the history of modern revivals, cinematic treatments, and visual art.⁹ But its (unconscious?) influence on theatre historians, over four centuries of

theatrical and other forms of cultural production, is worth probing. Just how frequently was a trap used – or indeed available? This is a question as much about how scholars reconstruct the ‘timbers’ of theatre history as it is about the weighing of evidence. With the (possible) exception of the title-page illustration for Nathaniel Richards’ *Messalina* (1640) there is no surviving visual evidence for the existence of a trap.¹⁰ The Arend van Buchell copy of a lost original sketch by Johannes de Witt does not feature one (the foreground of the Swan stage taken up by two figures and a bench).¹¹ The design for an indoor playhouse held in Worcester College, Oxford details the flanking doors, central opening, and upper stage but there is no indication of a trap.¹² And perhaps most surprisingly and disappointingly for theatre historians the surviving contracts for the Fortune (1600) and Hope (1614) playhouses provide scant information about the stages themselves: again, there is no mention of a trap.¹³ Nonetheless, its existence is taken for granted, in part because the evidential trace has not been subjected to sustained analysis.¹⁴

One of the established narratives of the early modern English theatre depends on a sociological-theological model that interprets playhouse design as reflecting and articulating a stratified social hierarchy and shared religious belief system. The audience surrounding the stage was placed in what Andrew Gurr has described as a kind of ‘vertical sociology’, ranging from the poorer spectators, who stood, to the more wealthy, seated in the galleries, of which the lords’ rooms were the most prestigious.¹⁵ This socially-demarcated auditory in turn saw in front of it (whatever its vantage point) another kind of vertical symbolism that neatly replicated the governing theological paradigm of the early modern world – heaven above, hell below, and humankind playing

out their lives on the stage suspended in between. A well-known poem widely attributed (on not altogether secure grounds) to Sir Walter Raleigh neatly captures this conceit:

What is *our* life? it is a play of passion
what is *our* mirthe? the musicke of diuision
Our mothers they the tyringe howses be
where we are drest for times short tragedye
Earthe is the stage, heauen the spectator is
who dothe behould who heare dothe act amisse.
The graues *which* keepe vs from the parchinge sunne
are as drawne curtaynes till the play be done.¹⁶

But perhaps theatre historians have taken too literally – or interpreted too absolutely – the theological modeling as expressed in witty analogies such as this. Tiffany Stern, for example, remarks that ‘the trap-door in the centre of the stage was the entrance from hell’: a reasonable enough remark, on the surface, but prescriptive in its use of the definite article – ‘*the* entrance’ implying that it was the sole entry point for characters so condemned – and generalizing in its supposition that this device was common to all playhouses.¹⁷ If it was, this has yet to be proven. Such a statement is based on an accretion of assumptions that ought to be reevaluated in light of the actual evidence that has survived. Our knowledge of the trap rests on very slim grounds and a great deal of conjecture – poor foundations indeed for such a widely-voiced belief.

Once we investigate further a considerable gap opens up between assertion and grounds. For example, stage directions in surviving texts yield little direct evidence for the use of the trap. According to Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson a mere three instances indicate unambiguously when a trap was employed.¹⁸ They cite rather more examples that refer to fictional places in the play-world where a trap (if available) could have come into play – for example, where a ‘cave’, ‘grave’, ‘tomb’, or ‘vault’ features, as we infer in *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. In addition, stage directions sometimes signal the position or movement of a character or stage property, such as in the descriptors ‘arise’, ‘below’, and ‘beneath’; however, none of these offers conclusive proof, and often there are plausible alternative possibilities available, such as the central opening. This is a stark indication of the problem, the lack of *conclusive* evidence on a scale that would justify theatre historians in their confidence that the trap was an integral feature of London playmaking. Thus we encounter a chicken-and-egg problem. If theatre-builders did go to the trouble of constructing traps this effort and expense was surely embarked upon because of anticipated need based on existing practice and expectation of future use. So scholars are left with a choice: to assume that this second group of stage directions *does* indicate the presence and use of a trap, a supposition that sustains if only in general terms the view that this device was widely if not necessarily universally available; or to doubt that the trap was so used, except in specific instances, and yet at the same time acknowledge that it was a staple feature of purpose-built and converted playhouses. But even with the first option we find that use was rather low. T.J. King’s survey suggests that of the surviving plays composed between 1599 and 1642 a mere forty-two plays required the trap – a figure that might be revised downwards significantly if the second

option is taken, since King does not discriminate between the kinds of evidence documented in Dessen and Thomson's survey.¹⁹ Another example offers a useful snapshot of the problem. Half a century ago Glynne Wickham pointed out that 'in none of Marlowe's plays do any stage-directions exist authorizing us to assume the existence of a stage-trap at floor level'.²⁰ And yet scholars habitually assume that the devils who visit Faustus do so via the trap, and that it is there that Barabas meets his end.²¹ Such statements about apparent practice reinforce the belief that such a device was available and employed for specific purposes. But Leslie Thomson is surely right in finding another solution to explain how this kind of business could be staged: 'while none of the stage directions we can safely attribute to Marlowe requires the stage trap, he often made repeated use of the tiring-house wall and its openings'.²² Part of the problem lies in our recognition of the Senecan influence on late sixteenth-century drama and the stage logic that implies a hellish 'underworld' beneath the stage;²³ and yet few critics would argue that the trap was used for supernatural events on *every* occasion. Even the question of how the entrances of the Ghost of King Hamlet were staged provokes debate, and it is surely unlikely that the eleven ghosts who invade Richard III's dreams on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth do so via the trap.²⁴ Here, in a nutshell, we have the central point of tension: the clash between the theological model on the one hand and the practicalities of stagecraft on the other. The bigger question is whether the use of a trap was a matter of choice at all.

If we make a counter-assumption and suppose that not all playhouses had traps, that the trap was not necessarily a staple feature – if we remind ourselves, too, that the recent archaeological work on early modern London's theatres suggests difference rather

than sameness – it may prove useful to examine afresh instances where there *is* firm evidence of its use. In this way what appears to be a familiar aspect of playmaking takes on a new significance. *Hamlet* has long been taken to ‘prove’ that the Globe had a trap, and it is difficult to imagine how the graveyard scene could have been performed without such a device – though actors were adept at fitting their plays to a range of conditions, when they went into the country or played at court.²⁵ It is similarly difficult to conceive how the sequential scenes in *Titus Andronicus* where Bassianus’s body is thrown into the ‘pit’ and Quintus and Martius successively fall into it could have been staged using any other part of the stage, or how the play could work without this business.²⁶ If such use was exceptional, relative to the varying evidence in the surviving corpus, then perhaps the repertorial trace this play has left may be significant. In other words, matching a play which must have required a trap to a playhouse or playhouses where it is known it was performed may thus lead to reasonable conclusions about the facilities available at such venues – facilities, in the case of the trap, that very possibly were less common than is conventionally supposed. This, it will be proposed, is the case with *Titus Andronicus* in 1594.

Whether the play was relatively old in 1594, dating from the late 1580s as is often argued, or comparatively recent, it will be maintained here that Q1 (1594) probably best represents (or at least approximates to) the text that was staged that year: if an earlier date in the range c.1588-94 is preferred, and if it is supposed that Q1 represents that performance trajectory, then it is nice (further) question as to what the text might lead us to deduce about the playhouse(s) it was performed at before it came to the Rose; but in the absence of new, concrete evidence about this earlier period we could do no more than

speculate.²⁷ What we do know is that Henslowe's *Diary* tells us that Shakespeare and Peele's play was staged on several occasions in 1594, initially at the Rose and subsequently at Newington Butts.²⁸ Henslowe first marks the appearance of *Titus Andronicus* in January 1594, where it appears under the colours of Sussex's Men, who enjoyed a brief sojourn at the Bankside playhouse between 27 December 1593 and 6 February 1594. Like other theatres the Rose had been closed for most of 1593 due to plague. The first company Henslowe identifies as operating there, Strange's Men, had enjoyed a long run in 1592, but then had subsequently gone to the country while London's playhouses remained closed. When Henslowe was permitted to reopen it was Sussex's who benefitted from Strange's absence, until another visitation of the plague shut the Rose once more. According to the title-page of the quarto published that year the play seems to have passed through the hands of Derby's Men (as Strange's had become when Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, became the fifth earl of Derby in September 1593) and Pembroke's Men before reaching Sussex's; what this may tell us about its staging history prior to this, the earliest record, has been a matter for debate.²⁹ Henslowe marks it as 'ne', which is taken to indicate variously that it was new in 1594, or new to the Rose.³⁰ At any rate, Sussex's put it on three times during their run of thirty performances, using a total of thirteen plays, as follows:

Ne – Rd at titus & ondronicus the 23 of Jenewary [1594] ...iiij^h viij s

Rd at titus & ondronicus the 28 of Jenewary [1594] ... xxxxs

Rd at tittus & ondronicus the 6 of febery 1593 [*sic*]xxxxs³¹

As Jonathan Bate conjectures, ‘[i]t must have taken some preparation, for it was not until four weeks of the season had passed that Henslowe recorded’ the first entry for the play, the twenty-fifth of the troupe’s run;³² whether or not this preparation was related to its complex stagecraft, this it will be argued was a factor in its next appearance in the *Diary*. Following further closure due to plague deaths Sussex’s then combined with the Queen’s Men, ‘begininge at easter’, to give eight performances (1-8 April), but *Titus Andronicus* did not feature, perhaps by design or because the run was cut short; nor was it staged when the newly-constituted Admiral’s Men first played at the Rose, for a mere three days (which also suggests curtailment) in mid-May. But in the next, rather puzzling sequence since it pertains not to the Rose at all and implies some sort of collaborative arrangement between the Admiral’s Men and the Chamberlain’s Men, Henslowe records two entries for the play (out of a total of ten) at Newington Butts. The puzzle is that we know of no other link between Henslowe and this playhouse. At this point Henslowe introduces a new form of notation he would carry forward into the subsequent Rose entries; spanning the period 3-13 June, the relevant entries are as follows:

¶ 5 of June 1594 Rd at andronicousxij s

¶ 12 of June 1594 Rd at andronicousvij s

Theatre historians are skeptical of the idea that these two newly-formed companies *performed* together, and the identity/ownership of the plays entered may support this.³³ It seems that whatever the nature of the arrangement each troupe

contributed plays which were presumably fresh from their recent scheduling in the respective repertories. The full sequence runs:

¶ 3 of June 1594	Rd at heaster & asheweros	viiij s
¶ 4 of June 1594	Rd at the Jewe of malta	x s
¶ 5 of June 1594	Rd at andronicous	xij s
¶ 6 of June 1594	Rd at cvtlacke	xj s
¶ 8 of June 1594	ne – Rd at bellendonx	xvij s
¶ 9 of June 1594	Rd at hamlet	viiij s
¶ 10 of June 1594	Rd at heaster	v s
¶ 11 of June 1594	Rd at the tamyng of A shrowe	ix s
¶ 12 of June 1594	Rd at andronicous	vij s
¶ 13 of June 1594	Rd at the Jewe	iiij s ³⁴

(A horizontal line divides this sequence from the next entry, beginning two days later, which theatre historians agree indicates that at this point the Admiral’s Men returned to the Rose.) *Titus Andronicus*, *The Jew of Malta*, ‘cvtlacke’, and ‘bellendon’ were clearly ‘Rose plays’: the two extant plays had been staged there, Shakespeare and Peele’s by Sussex’s and Marlowe’s by all the company configurations known to have performed for Henslowe up to this date (Strange’s, Sussex’s, Queen’s and Sussex’s, and Admiral’s); ‘cvtlacke’ had been performed by the Admiral’s at the Rose on 16 May 1594 (Henslowe does not mark it ‘ne’, which suggests it was an old play that had previously been staged prior to the entry-keeping that began on 19 February 1592) and it would be the second

play put on at the Rose when the Admiral's returned there following this sojourn at Newington Butts, 'bellendon' being the first. Together with *The Jew of Malta* these two lost plays would feature frequently in their repertory for the remainder of the year; since one of these plays is marked 'ne' it is likely it had been in rehearsal at the Rose immediately prior to the company's departure south to Newington Butts. Of the remaining plays, given that they do not feature elsewhere in the *Diary* scholars confidently ascribe them to the Chamberlain's Men, the lost 'hamlet' a precursor to Shakespeare's extant play of that name, *The Taming of a Shrew* (also a possible influence on or derivative of Shakespeare's play) and 'heaster & asheweros', the only play this company put on for a second time – unless, of course, they had some involvement in the staging of *Titus Andronicus*, which would follow them to the Theatre.³⁵

Shakespeare and Peele's play disrupts this neat division between Admiral's and Chamberlain's offerings and may well complicate our reading of this curious episode, specifically the nature of the inter-company collaboration. Carol Chillington Rutter points out that it might be considered unlikely that a 'ne[w]' play, 'bellendon', was offered by a combination of actors from both troupes when only a week later the Admiral's would perform it at the Rose;³⁶ yet similarly we ought to caution against automatically allocating *Titus Andronicus* to the Chamberlain's Men at this juncture on the grounds that it would migrate with them to the Theatre: this play, after all, had appeared at the Rose in February. However, *who* staged the play in June 1594 – perhaps including members of the Sussex's Men behind its production at the Rose four months previously (particularly if they had joined the Chamberlain's Men in the interim)³⁷ – is less important here than

what this performance record might suggest about the play's staging requirements and hence the facilities available at these playhouses.

Titus Andronicus calls for sophisticated staging resources. In addition to a trap it requires an upper playing area and three doors.³⁸ Of course, not all of these facilities were available outside London, when companies toured, in which case adjustments must have been made. In 1596, when the play was staged at a private house in Rutland (company unknown), presumably the action involving the trap and the upper stage was modified accordingly, though quite how such integral action was carried out brings with it its own questions, and we know nothing for certain about the resources available on that occasion.³⁹ But on the London stages for which plays were principally designed and realized it is logical to assume that there was *some* correlation between the plays and the resources available, a correlation that the printed texts, albeit imperfectly and incompletely, record. The extent to which playwrights were conscious of writing for specific venues remains a matter of debate, and raises once again the thorny issue of theatre design, and whether the earliest playhouses were similar or significantly distinctive in terms of playmaking conditions and staging options.⁴⁰ This question is further complicated by the fact that we know comparatively little about company-playhouse affiliation prior to 1592; moreover, if our understanding of the characteristics of purpose-built theatres is largely speculative, we know even less about the facilities at the four London inns where plays were staged during this period.⁴¹ Quite what the impenetrably vague 'shewed upon Stages in the Citie of London' proclaimed on the 1590 octavo title-page of the *Tamburlaine* plays actually means is indicative of the problems theatre historians face. Scholars tend to assume that the 1594 reorganization meant that in

the second half of the 1590s (some) playwrights composed with the Rose or Theatre (and, after 1599, the Globe) respectively in mind, but before that date our understanding of the relationship between play composition and theatre space is largely speculative. Moreover, those playwrights who eked out a living by selling their work to more than one company must have recognized the need to be flexible rather than specific in their stagecraft.

Where surviving evidence makes it possible to match a play to a venue or venues, however, specific elements of the play – as indicated in the earliest witness – invite particular consideration. If the stage directions of Q1, published in the year with which this discussion is principally concerned, lead us to conclude that a trap (as well as upper stage and probably a discovery space) was essential for the play to work – and *perhaps* that it was specifically scripted with these stage spaces envisaged – then we may draw some conclusions about the Rose stage in 1594 and the playhouse at Newington Butts. Given the reevaluation proposed here that reads firm evidence of trapdoor use as exceptional rather than commonplace, positing the existence of a trap at these venues takes on a new importance. We do not know when the two newly-constituted companies learned they were to play at Newington Butts, but we may assume that, the choice of repertory being their own (there is no evidence to the contrary), they selected plays they could mount readily. Marlowe's play was a mainstay at the Rose and perhaps an obvious choice – not least because it was a popular draw – and *Titus Andronicus* would surely not have been nominated had the staging resources at Newington Butts presented any kind of logistical challenge. The two lost Admiral's plays, 'cvtlacke' and 'bellendon', similarly fall into that category; we may assume that the same logic obtained for the Chamberlain's

contributions, 'heaster & asheweros', 'hamlet', and *The Taming of a Shrew*, though for this we must rely on inference rather than evidence.

From this the following may be proposed. In 1594 a trap (as well as an upper stage, together with two and very probably three doors) was available at both the Rose and the Newington Butts playhouses. If 'hamlet' required such a device, as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* does – and it has been argued that the later allusion to Richard Burbage as Hamlet leaping into the 'grave' after Laertes (stage business recorded in Q1 but not Q2 or F) is in fact to the lost play, rather than to the later extant *Hamlet* – then we have further support for there being a trap available at Newington Butts.⁴² An unanswerable question is when such a device might have been installed: at the outset or later; but we can speculate that Henslowe and Cholmley may not have included a trap at the Rose in 1587.⁴³ We do know that in spring 1592 Henslowe (Cholmley having disappeared from the record) recorded making renovations to the Rose, and three years later made further alterations. In the second of these works the *Diary* is quite specific, recording for example 'Itm pd for carpenters work & mackinge the / throne In the heauenes the 4 of June 1595'.⁴⁴ This certainly indicates a technological development, presumably invested in because of a perceived need, as perhaps expressed by the actors. The 1989 excavations shed considerable light on the *Diary*'s otherwise rather opaque itemizing headed 'A note of suche charges as I haue layd owt a bowte / my playe howsse in the yeare of o^r lord 1592'.⁴⁵ Until the archaeology revealed that Henslowe had enlarged the Rose, increasing audience capacity in the yard and of necessity moving the stage back, while marginally increasing its size, the *Diary* information was considered too general to allow specific conclusions to be drawn. Matching the 'story' told by the archaeology to the payments in the *Diary*

revealed that the alternations were far from cosmetic. Henslowe paid out a total of £108: as Carol Chillington Rutter points out, this amounted to a quarter of the total cost of the Fortune he would build at the end of the decade.⁴⁶ Yet audience capacity (and Henslowe's share in receipts) did not increase significantly: given that the stage was moved and rebuilt, might it be that the original Rose did not have a trap, but that one was installed in 1591-92,⁴⁷ and like the 'throne In the heauenes' introduced three years later was a sign that Henslowe knew his playhouse needed considerable modernizing, to the extent that in 1600 (and almost certainly before) he reached the conclusion that a wholly new theatre was required?⁴⁸

The performance records Henslowe began to keep in 1592 would appear to have coincided with or followed closely on the heels of the completion of the renovations. The scheduling of *Titus Andronicus* in January and February 1594 is the best evidence we have that a trap was available at the Rose at this time, though because of the absence of pre-1592 records we cannot be certain that the facility was a recent innovation. That the Strange's Men repertory featured a distinctive (though not necessarily unique) penchant for staging pyrotechnics, as Lawrence Manley has shown, might point in the direction of a trap, but in fact only in the play *Looking Glass for London and England* (performed on four occasions during the company's interrupted run, the first on 8 March) is there a possible indication that a trap featured: 'a flame of fire appeareth from beneath and RADAGON is swallowed',⁴⁹ which Dessen and Thomson gloss, reasonably enough, as signifying 'under the stage';⁵⁰ perhaps more persuasive, from the same play, is 'The Magi with their rods beat the ground, and from under the same riseth a brave arbor'.⁵¹ The absence of more qualitative as well as quantitative evidence is not evidence of absence,

of course, and if Henslowe did introduce a trap to the Rose stage in 1591-92 we might reasonably expect that playwrights and actors made use of it; whether the printed texts of the plays that survive from this decade register that is a difficult question: the earliest quarto of *Titus Andronicus* may be the exception that proves the rule. Of the Strange's Men's plays staged at the Rose in 1592-93 that survive the evidence they offer is not helpful either way. *Friar Bacon*, *The Battle of Alcazar* ['Mully Molocco?'], *Orlando Furioso*, *The Jew of Malta*, *1 Henry VI*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Massacre at Paris* ['Gyves?'], *A Knack to Know a Knave*, and *John of Bordeaux*: none of them required a trap – but, perhaps, if a trap had been installed, and there was occasion for it, it was used when these plays were revived.⁵²

Yet in the absence of secure evidence we can draw on the surviving repertorial record. If *Titus Andronicus* could not have been staged at the Rose without a trap it surely would not have been chosen for the Newington Butts repertory had not that playhouse also had such a facility.⁵³ But if the Rose in 1594 offered the facilities needed to put Shakespeare and Peele's play on – including an upper stage and probably a discovery space – then presumably so too did the theatre at Newington Butts. This neglected playhouse *may* therefore have been rather more sophisticated than is sometimes assumed, and if so this *may* partly explain why these two newly-established companies elected to perform there in June 1594, if it was their choice to make. Although theatre historians have been reluctant to countenance the possibility of a collaboration between the Chamberlain's and Admiral's Men – particularly when the Privy Council's reorganisation of the London companies has been read as the official endorsement of a 'duopoly' that would tidy up a messy entertainment environment – this episode provides evidence of

precisely such a scenario, muddily opaque though it is. To recap: actors who may have been involved in the production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Rose in January and February 1594 *may* have contributed to its production at the Newington Butts performances four months later. But more significantly, since Shakespeare and Peele's play required a trap, as the 1594 quarto and subsequent quarto and folio texts indicate, it is contended that both playhouses must have had one in 1594.

If the installation of a trap was part of Henslowe's plan in 1591-92, which he augmented in 1595 with a device in the heavens, then this raises several questions about theatre technology and construction at this time. The archaeology and *Diary* show that Henslowe drastically remodeled his playhouse, and we know that in 1600 he embarked on a new venture with the Fortune, the Rose's long-term replacement. Might this suggest that the Rose – about which we know the most, from an archaeological/historical perspective – was a poor relation of the already established theatres in Shoreditch and at Newington, though it was built a decade later? We know now that the Rose was small, compared to the Globe, and Henslowe seems to have identified this as a problem, the Fortune contract stipulating that the contracted carpenter, Peter Street, follow the Globe design in essentials; and we know that only seven years after constructing it Henslowe thought it wise to make rather drastic changes, which nevertheless in 1595 were apparently deemed insufficient for his (and the Admiral's Men's) purposes, since further alterations still were made. We know little about the Newington Butts theatre, but if we cannot *assume* that it was similar to the Shoreditch playhouses the Curtain and the Theatre we might venture that it was at least equivalent in facilities and appeal to the Rose, despite the theatre narrative its obscurity has engendered. Although commentators

have posited a model of ‘progression’ in theatre design, ‘a sequence of development, in which old forms and construction methods were adapted, new elements prototyped and refined,’⁵⁴ we ought not to assume that the Rose was an *improvement* on playhouses constructed a decade earlier. Henslowe recognized its shortcomings, both in terms of audience capacity (and hence revenue) and acting facilities. Though much more celebrated and documented than the Newington Butts playhouse, the Rose may originally have been inferior to it: for whatever reason it may be that Henslowe (and Cholmley, at the outset) not only were unable to improve on the ‘first wave’ of construction of permanent theatres in 1576-77 but in fact erected an inferior playing space.

Much more work is needed on the trap in early modern playhouses, and what this may tell us about both construction and use, and the relationship between these elements. It is convenient to speak in the singular, as if all traps were the same. How such assumptions have hamstrung theatre historians is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is worth considering that, unlike other forms of entry/exit the trap facility may have varied across the theatre landscape – both in form and function. Ironically, in the light of the common assumption identified in this essay that the trap was common to most or all playhouses, analysis of the Rose archaeology has cast some doubt on whether less than four feet of headroom under the new, post-1592 stage was sufficient for actors to access the stage through a trap.⁵⁵ But perhaps this view should be revisited. In point of fact, *Titus Andronicus* does not require movement between the trap and tiring house – the principal objection, it seems, to the feasibility of a trap when there is apparently little under-stage space: Quintus and Martius are hauled out of the ‘pit’ into which they have fallen and on to the stage, according to Saturninus’s order, and it is surely the case that

Bassanius's body is brought up from the trap and removed from the stage for burial,⁵⁶ it remains a matter of conjecture whether the trap was also used for the tomb, rather than, say, the discovery space. But given the apparently low frequency with which traps were apparently used we ought perhaps not to lay so much emphasis on the seeming difficulty of accessing the trap from the tiring house. And as we ponder that 'there is much evidence to suggest that the playhouses were significantly different from one another',⁵⁷ and even when 'similar' *not* 'same', we may find that our modeling of theatre characteristics requires nuance rather than categorical certainty. The example of *Titus Andronicus* suggests that the stage architecture at Newington Butts – trap, upper stage, and probably three entrances – was sufficiently similar to that at the Rose (and the Theatre and perhaps Curtain also) to make the plays selected by the Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men viable; but this does not mean that in either playhouse the trap, for example, was identical, or indeed used in the same way. At any rate, on the evidence of the repertory scheduling of *Titus Andronicus* in June 1594 the Newington Butts playhouse was no less sophisticated than the Rose, and may have been superior to it; it is by chance that so little information about it has survived, rather than a value judgement that confirms the comparative significance of the richly-documented Rose and the deserved obscurity of a playhouse that lasted at least as long as Henslowe's first venture.

NOTES

¹ Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the Sederi conference in Oviedo in May 2014, the Henslowe Symposium at Shakespeare's Globe in June 2016, and at the University of Lisbon in December 2016. I would like to thank the organizers of these

events and participants for their helpful comments, and in particular Grace Ioppolo, Julian Bowsher, Brian Vickers, Berta Cano Echevarría, and Roger Clegg.

² For the documents and relevant recent scholarship see R.A. Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Dairy* 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and 'The Discovery of the Rose Theatre: Some Implications', *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1990), 141-48; Christine Eccles, *The Rose Theatre* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1990); Julian M.C. Bowsher, *The Rose Theatre: An Archaeological Discovery* (London: Museum of London, 1998); Julian M.C. Bowsher and Patricia Miller, *The Rose and the Globe – Playhouses of Tudor Bankside, Southwark: Excavations 1988-91* (London: Museum of London, 2009); Julian M.C. Bowsher, *Shakespeare's London Theatreland: Archaeology, History and Drama* (London: Museum of London, 2012); and Grace Ioppolo's Henslowe Digitalization Project, <http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk>. Cholmley appears nowhere in the *Diary*; the most thorough examination of this figure is William Ingram's 'John Cholmley on the Bankside', *Early Theatre* 15:2 (2012), 43-65. On Cholmley's absence from the *Diary*, see Laurie Johnson, *Shakespeare's Lost Playhouse: Eleven Days at Newington Butts* (London: Routledge, 2017), 18-23.

³ William Ingram, *The Purpose of Playing: The Beginnings of the Adult Professional Theater in Elizabethan London* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 150, 152; in addition, see Laurie Johnson, 'The Two Names of Newington Butts', *Shakespeare Quarterly* (forthcoming).

⁴ William Ingram has assembled all the known data in *The Purpose of Playing*, 150-81; see also Johnson, *Shakespeare's Lost Playhouse*, 46, who suggests that 'the venue was a

converted interior space rather than an outdoor stage': the evidence for this conclusion is set out in Chapter 2.

⁵ Cited in Edmund Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 2: 404-5, 4:313; the relevant Privy Council memorandum is probably from 1592: see W.W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe Papers: Being Documents Supplementary to the Diary* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1907), 43. For a reappraisal, see Johnson, *Shakespeare's Lost Playhouse*, 86-90.

⁶ Ingram, *The Purpose of Playing*, 157, 176, concludes that the playhouse was no longer extant by 1596 and may have been dismantled as early as the summer of 1594, for at this time the lords of the manor, the dean and chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury, decreed that the playhouse should be taken down.

⁷ Ingram, *The Purpose of Playing*, 180.

⁸ The principal challenge to the assumption that playhouses provided – and plays required – a discovery space has been made by Tim Fitzpatrick; see his *Playwrights, Space, and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁹ See Alan R. Young: 'Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Visual Representations of the Graveyard Scene in *Hamlet*', in Hardin L. Aasand, ed., *Stage Directions in 'Hamlet': New Essays and New Directions* (London: Associated University Press, 2003), 189-213.

¹⁰ For the possibility, see Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages* 4 vols. (London: Kegan Paul & Routledge, 1959-1981), II: ii, 88; R.A. Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage 1580-1642* (London: Scolar Press, 1985), 81, is more cautious, and John H. Astington, 'The Origins of the *Roxana* and *Messalina* Illustrations', *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1990),

149-69, argues that the title-page is derivative and impressionistic, and thus has no independent authority as evidence of an actual theatre trap.

¹¹ R.A. Foakes expresses considerable skepticism about van Bushell's drawing skills, and consequently cautions against our relying on the sketch as evidence; see his 'Henslowe's Rose/Shakespeare's Globe', in Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, eds., *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11-31.

¹² Long considered to be associated with Inigo Jones, this design is now thought to postdate 1642. On this re-dating, see Gordon Higgott's unpublished paper, 'Two Theatre Designs by John Webb in 1660', cited in Francis Teague, 'The Phoenix and the Cockpit-in-Court Playhouses', in Richard Dutton, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 240-59; 244.

¹³ For the respective documents see Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 306-10 and Greg, ed., *The Henslowe Papers*, 19-22.

¹⁴ Mariko Ichikawa devotes a chapter to each of the other areas of the stage in *Shakespearean Entrances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) but not to the trap; in *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 141-44, the device is discussed briefly in a chapter on the logistical issues arising from the disposal of corpses.

¹⁵ See Andrew Gurr, 'Traps and Discoveries at the Globe', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 94 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 85-101; 101.

¹⁶ There are a number of versions of the poem; this is the text that appears in the Marsh Manuscript, held in Dublin, and is quoted in Peter Stallybrass, 'Afterword', in Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, eds., *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2011), 204-19. Stallybrass challenges the attribution, based on the inclusion of ‘Rawley’ at the head of the transcription, which is omitted here (214-18).

¹⁷ Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), 25.

¹⁸ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 235. These are: the MS of *Believe As You List*; *The Fatal Contract*; and *Queen’s Exchange* – the last of which is less secure than the other two.

¹⁹ T.J. King, *Shakespearean Staging, 1599-1642* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1971), 79-96.

²⁰ Glynn Wickham, “‘Exeunt to the Cave’”: Notes on the Staging of Marlowe’s Plays’, *The Tulane Drama Review* 8:4 (1964), 184-94; 189.

²¹ For a conjectural exploration of how the denouement in *The Jew of Malta* was staged, see Mark Hutchings, ‘Barabas’s Fall’, *Theatre Notebook* 69:1 (2015), 2-16.

²² Leslie Thomson, ‘Marlowe’s Staging of Meaning’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005), 19-36; 21.

²³ See Andrew J. Power, ‘What the Hell is under the Stage? Trapdoor Use in the English Senecan Tradition’, *English* 60 (2011), 276-96.

²⁴ On the ghost’s entrances and exits in *Hamlet*, see Stanley Wells, ‘Staging Shakespeare’s Ghosts’, in Murray Biggs et al, eds., *The Arts of Performance in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama: Essays for George Hunter* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 50-69, and Gurr, ‘Traps and Discoveries’, 96-99; Wells follows

recent critics in arguing against the use of the trap for the procession of ghosts on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth in *Richard III*.

²⁵ Both Q1 and F (but not Q2) indicate that Laertes leaps into the grave; only Q1 gives ‘Hamlet leapes in after Leartes’, but as G.R Hibberd points out, further support is evidenced in an anonymous elegy for Richard Burbage which includes the line, ‘Oft have I seen him leap into the grave’. See G.R. Hibbard, ed., *Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15. The fullest discussion of this crux is S.P. Zitner, ‘Four Feet in the Grave: Some Stage Directions in *Hamlet*, V.i’, *Text 2* (1985), 139-48. For a conjectural staging of the scene, see Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare’s Theatres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 153.

²⁶ On the staging of this scene see Alan C. Dessen, ‘Two Falls and a Trap: Shakespeare and the Spectacles of Realism’, *English Literary Renaissance* 5 (1975), 291-307.

²⁷ Alan Hughes, ed., *Titus Andronicus* rev. edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6, judiciously weighs the evidence and inclines to a date of around 1588, principally on the grounds of the play’s similarities to the plays of Marlowe and Kyd. Eugene M. Waith, ed., *Titus Andronicus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 20, concludes that the play was ‘first performed in the years 1590-2, and was revised for the first recorded performance [in Henslowe’s *Diary*] in January 1594’. Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus* (London: Routledge, 1995), 78, argues that the play ‘was written in late 1593 and first performed in January 1594’.

²⁸ See Foakes, ed., *Henslowe’s Diary*, 21-22.

²⁹ See Scott McMillin, ‘Sussex’s Men in 1594: The Evidence of *Titus Andronicus* and *The Jew of Malta*’, *Theatre Survey* 32 (1991), 214-23; Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus*

Andronicus, 69-79; and Martin Wiggins in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue. Volume 3, 1590-97*, 180.

³⁰ For the first possibility see Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, 78; for the second, see Hughes, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, 1-6.

³¹ Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 20-21.

³² Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus*; all subsequent references to the play are to this edition.

³³ See for example Carol Chillington Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse* 2nd edn. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 82, who remarks 'Neither company would have been happy with the arrangement'. However, in *Shakespeare's Lost Playhouse* Laurie Johnson argues that the choice of plays was thematically consonant with a collaborative enterprise, the Admiral's 'cvtlacke' and Chamberlain's 'hamlet', for example, sharing complementary subject matter; see especially 169-90.

³⁴ Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 21-22; the 'x' in middle of the entry for 8 June has not been explained.

³⁵ On these lost plays, see the relevant entries in the *Lost Plays Database*, www.lostplays.org Eds. Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, and Matthew Steggle. Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2009. Web. The fullest discussion of this sequence to date is in Johnson, *Shakespeare's Lost Playhouse*, 135-204.

³⁶ Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, 83.

³⁷ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 174, notes that 'some of [Sussex's Men] may have joined the new Chamberlain's Men'. This would go some way to explaining the absence of *Titus Andronicus* from the Rose stage when Sussex's subsequently combined with Queen's.

³⁸ See G. Harold Metz, 'The Early Staging of *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981), 99-109, and 'Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977), 154-69. Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance*, 282-83, challenges the view that the play requires *three* doors, arguing that since the opening stage direction in Q1 does not specify that Saturninus and Bassianus enter by separate doors, only one door is needed, rather than two as maintained by Mariko Ichikawa, *Shakespearean Entrances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 79. However, Fitzpatrick does not consider the relevance of the staging of the tomb to this question later in the scene, for which see Metz, 'The Early Staging of *Titus Andronicus*', 104.

³⁹ The relevant documentary material was uncovered by Gustav Ungerer; see his 'An Unrecorded Elizabethan Performance of *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Survey* 14 (1961), 102-9.

⁴⁰ The uncovering of the archaeological remains of the Rose and Globe in 1989, and more recently Museum of London Archaeology digs at the sites of the Hope and Curtain, provides firm evidence that stage construction and design did not conform to a particular model, as had long been assumed. This development gives renewed impetus to repertory-focused studies, especially where, as with the present essay, specific plays can be mapped on to particular performance spaces.

⁴¹ On the importance of recognizing the role played by London's inns see David Kathman, 'Inn-Yard Playhouses', in Richard Dutton, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153-67.

⁴² See John C. Meagher, 'The Stage Directions, Overt and covert, of *Hamlet* 5.1', in Aasand, ed., *Stage Directions in 'Hamlet'*, 140-57; 146-49.

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- ⁴³ For an alternative view, arguing that the Rose had a trap facility from 1587, see Andrew Gurr, 'The Rose Repertory: What the Plays Might Tell Us About the Stage', in Franklin J. Hildy, ed., *New Issues in the Reconstruction of Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 119-134; 129-32.
- ⁴⁴ Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 7.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9; for the entire list of costs of labour and materials, see 9-13.
- ⁴⁶ Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, xiii; see also 47-49.
- ⁴⁷ Neil Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 15, considers that the alterations were completed before the Strange's Men are recorded playing at the Rose in February 1592: the 'receipts are for large bills which were probably presented some months after the work was completed'.
- ⁴⁸ As Andrew Gurr points out, 'a possible redesign of the stage' is one explanation for the 1592 changes: 'Why else choose that end of the polygon for the rebuilding?' See his 'The Rose Repertory', in Hildy, ed., *New Issues in the Reconstruction of Shakespeare's Theatre*, 119.
- ⁴⁹ Lawrence Manley, 'Playing with Fire: Immolation in the Repertory of Strange's Men', *Early Theatre* 4 (2001) 115-29; *Looking Glass for London and England*, 3.2.166, quoted in Manley, 117.
- ⁵⁰ Dessen and Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*, 29.
- ⁵¹ Cited in *Ibid.*, 105.
- ⁵² Queries over attributions are indicated in brackets.
- ⁵³ While the play requires a trap for the pit scene, it may also have been used for the tomb of the Andronici, as for example Power, assumes; 'What the Hell is under the Stage?'

294. However it is also possible the discovery space was used. It is difficult to see how the trap could be used as ‘the bloody hole in which Lavinia is raped’, as Tiffany Stern asserts in *Making Shakespeare*, 26 (quoted in Power, ‘What the Hell is under the Stage?’, 277). There is no textual evidence to support this view: the rape takes place offstage, at the same time, as it were, as Quintus and then Martius fall into the pit into which Bassianus’s body has been thrown at 2.2.186 (‘This is the hole where Aaron bid us hide him’).

⁵⁴ Jon Greenfield, ‘Reconstructing the Rose: Development of the Playhouse Building between 1587 and 1592’, *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007), 23-35; 23. For a divergent reading of the archaeological evidence, see Julian M.C. Bowsher, ‘The Rose and its Stages’, *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007), 36-48.

⁵⁵ Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, xxiin; Rutter cites Bowsher, *The Rose Theatre*, 61.

⁵⁶ See Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus*: ‘Sirs, drag them from the pit unto the prison’ (2.2.283).

⁵⁷ Greenfield, ‘Reconstructing the Rose’, 25.