Staging Matters: Shakespeare, the Director, and the Theatre Historian

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SINCE THE 1970S A SIGNIFICANT PART of the far-flung 'Shakespeare industry' has been devoted to various academic activities on the page and in the classroom loosely classified as 'Shakespeare in Performance'. Underlying such scholarly and pedagogical work is the proposition that these plays should be approached as scripts designed to be staged rather than solely as literary texts to be read. More recent events have added a potential 'historical' dimension to the mix. In particular, the advent of full-scale reconstructions of the Globe and Blackfriars theatres has made possible various experiments with 'original practices' (the current term of choice at the Bankside Globe). Meanwhile, on the academic front theatre historians like myself continue to pore over the limited and often puzzling evidence in the hope of recovering more about those onstage practices—what I term the original 'theatrical vocabulary'.

As a long-time card-carrying member of the 'Shakespeare in Performance' union I confess to being badly conflicted. As a classroom teacher I am wedded to a performance approach, so that I use video materials in my classes, bring in actors whenever possible, and ask my students to imagine how scenes should be staged. Moreover, since the 1970s I have seen a huge number of stage productions in North America and the United Kingdom, more than is either healthy or fruitful, and written extensively about significant choices made by actors and directors. In contrast, my reflexes as a theatre historian lead me down another road

with an emphasis upon how the scripts would have been staged in the first performances in the 1590s and early 1600s and the gaps between then and now. How to link what we know (or think we know) about the original productions by the Lord Chamberlain's or King's Men to what happens on the stage today remains a problem with no handy solution.

Without a magical videotape of one of those first performances at the Globe or Blackfriars, many questions will never be answered, for the evidence is scanty. The few eye-witness accounts are unrevealing; other documents (the Swan drawing, Henslowe's records) are puzzling or incomplete; and the thousands of stage directions in extant playscripts are more notable for their silences than for what they reveal. There are no neat shortcuts, no magic bullets. At the many venues today where these plays are performed, directors, for both practical and conceptual reasons, therefore feel free to ignore any historical considerations and seek instead an onstage vocabulary that will engage their audiences and keep bums on seats. Even at would-be 'historical' sites such as the London Globe and the recreation of the Blackfriars Theatre at Staunton, Virginia, some directors have chosen a modern concept-oriented approach.[1]

The relevance of theatre history to current productions is therefore anything but clear, even at the Bankside Globe, so that Sam Wanamaker's vision of a fruitful dialogue between the academic and theatrical communities has yet to materialise. Rather, the small but vocal theatre historian faction continues to find fault with the practices of Globe directors, whereas both theatrical professionals and reviewers have labelled stage historians 'the Authenticity Police'. As a result, various historical agendas—especially the desire to use the Globe space as a laboratory for testing hypotheses—have collided with rival practical and commercial concerns.

The resistance of directors to the findings of theatre scholars should come as no surprise, for the exigencies of commercial theatre leave little room for historical niceties. Nevertheless, the gap between Globe practitioners and the academic community deserves our attention. In this lecture I would like to explore the bases for this gap and develop some implications.

A primary reason for the resistance to historical scholarship is what I term *theatrical essentialism*. Under this rubric lie a set of assumptions widely held among actors and directors that, regardless of other changes

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[1] e.g. the Globe's 2001 *Macbeth*, 2002 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2003 *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and 2005 *The Tempest*.

in language, culture, and social practice, a basic core of truths about theatrical practice persists and can therefore be best understood by those in the theatre community, regardless of the findings (and strictures) of scholars and other laymen. A representative example is the argument, advanced by Sir Peter Hall and others, that no theatrical professional, then or now, would construct a Globe stage with the two posts supporting the canopy or 'heavens' as positioned in the Bankside reconstruction, because such a configuration interferes with sightlines and impedes the flow of the action.[2] To an essentialist, building upon long-established reflexes, this objection seems self-evident. The theatre historian, however, can respond with a question: was the ability to see all the events onstage from a good vantage point prized as highly then as it is now? Those playgoers seated in some of the most expensive seats at the original Globe (in the area above and behind the stage) could not see tableaux or other special effects presented in the discovery space. In addition, Tiffany Stern has provided evidence that playgoers, whether in the yard or in the galleries, felt free to move when they could not see something onstage.[3] Other forms of essentialism or transhistorical meanings regularly applied to Shakespeare's plays (e.g. about 'human nature') have long been under attack in the scholarly community, but the theatrical strain remains deeply embedded in workaday activities and thinking, as have assumptions about 'character' and psychological or narrative realism.

Along with essentialism, the other major theatrical reflex that conflicts with 'historical' findings at the Globe and comparable sites can be summed up in the phrase: 'if you have it, use it'. To be sure, a director at the Bankside Globe or Staunton Blackfriars does not have access to variable lighting, so that all the scenes *must* be played in the same illumination (as befits an 'original practices' approach). Nonetheless, a theatre historian can cite various other staging practices in recent productions that cannot be documented from the period in question. The best example is how the yard, that area populated by the standees (or groundlings) between the platform stage and the galleries, has been used at the Globe as a playing area or a path for entrances and exits. Such penetration of the playgoer's space is certainly not unique to this venue. It has become a standard feature of Royal Shakespeare Company productions in the main

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[2] For a discussion of the controversy over the placement of the posts at the New Globe, see Paul Nelsen, 'Positing Pillars at the Globe', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), 324–35.

[3] Tiffany Stern, '"You That Walk i'th Galleries": Standing and Walking in the Galleries of the Globe Theatre', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 211–16.

house at Stratford, where a runway between the stage and the audience left aisle has been used to facilitate entrances and exits through the rear of the auditorium (as in the 2004 *Hamlet*, most notably in the first appearance of the Ghost as played by Greg Hicks).

Examples of such movement between the stage and the rear doors are plentiful at the new Globe. Most common are entrances and exits, as in the 1997 *Winter's Tale* where Autolycus made his first entrance (4. 3) thrusting his way through the standees; the 2000 *Tempest* where Ariel made her final exit to freedom through the yard; or the 1999 *Antony and Cleopatra* where a drunken Lepidus was borne away through the ground-lings (2. 7). More elaborate effects include Act 1 of the 1997 *The Maid's Tragedy*, where the masque was presented on the stage but the king watched it from a throne set up in the yard, and the 2003 *Richard III*, where in 3. 7 Richard and Buckingham on the stage sought the support of the Mayor placed on a stand facing the stage amidst the groundlings (I being one of them). In a programme note for his 2001 *King Lear* Barry Kyle stated: 'Since this season at the Globe is not about original practices, we have taken a freer approach to what follows', an approach that, among other things, sought 'to explore the vigour of the yard'. He therefore placed a pole in the midst of the standees which Edmund climbed to deliver his 1. 2 soliloquy and which Edgar scaled for his 2. 3 speech in which he announces his decision to become Poor Tom.

The most elaborate use of the yard was by director Lucy Bailey in her 1998 *As You Like It* [4] which started with a pre-show that used a singer in the yard and a dumb show on the stage to tell the audience about Sir Rowland de Boys and his sons. The yard was used for several key scenes, including the wrestling in 1. 2, Rosalind observing Phebe and Silvius in 3. 5, and the celebration of the killing of the deer in 4. 2. A programme note announced: 'The steps at the front of the stage are not a known original

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[4] For a fuller critique of Bailey's unhistorical choices see Paul Nelsen, 'More Strange Than True: "Difference" at the New Globe', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 17 (Summer 1999), 8–9. For Nelsen, this production's 'festivity was forged in part by rejecting the organic form of the space in order to mould action in a modern carnival manner'. By 'literally deconstructing the stage's formal boundary and thus altering the enunciatory mode of space and performance', Bailey's insertion of the steps provided 'an approach to mobile staging that subverted liminal barriers separating action from playgoers', so as to substitute an 'environmental' approach in which 'audience and performers occupy common space and meld into an interactive event', an 'experiment' for which 'the conclusion is not only self-evident but unremarkable' (here he cites various theatre events from the 1960s). He concludes that this production 'could readily have been transplanted into a variety of "found" performance spaces—a warehouse, a park garden, a Druid henge, or shopping mall courtyard—and played with similar effect'.

feature of the Globe but part of an experiment in the use of the space.' These bleacher-like wooden steps facilitated actors' ascents and descents and therefore made entrances and exits through the yard smoother. Especially effective was the *exeunt* of Duke Senior and his lords through one door at the back of the yard to end the first Arden scene (2. 1) and, after a rapid change of costume, an immediate re-entry of the same actors as Duke Frederick and his lords through another yard door.

As a playgoer I enjoyed many of Bailey's effects—although seated in the lower gallery I was unable to see Orlando's winning ploy in the wrestling (a significant theatrical moment). Similarly, Richard's wooing of the Mayor and citizens (in a production also directed by Barry Kyle) was a rousing success, as we citizens were encouraged to approve, applaud, and eventually to join in with cries of 'God save King Richard'. This approach provided a strong sense of participation in an 'event', an effect often sought in renditions of the orations in the Forum scene of *Julius Caesar*. However, it still struck me as problematic in that 'we' knew the truth about Richard's nature and plans (and moments earlier had seen what happened to Hastings) as opposed to an onstage crowd that could be deceived or intimidated. Similarly, Kyle's placing Edgar in the yard undercut a potentially meaningful sequence (2. 2–2. 4) wherein Kent in the stocks is juxtaposed onstage with Edgar in flight, a juxtaposition that encourages a playgoer to see an analogy between them.[5] The narrative, however, places the two figures in two distinctly different places—Kent in the courtyard of a castle, Edgar emerging from 'the happy hollow of a tree'—2. 3. 2—so that directors wedded to 'geographical realism' regularly resist this moment, often by using variable lighting to black out Kent during Edgar's speech that constitutes 2. 3 in most modern editions. Kyle had no such control over the illumination at the Globe, but, thanks to his use of the yard, he could place Edgar at some distance from Kent. This 2001 Globe production thus sidestepped arguably the most distinctive 'original practices' moment in this script.

Here is the dilemma. To use the yard is often to set up some theatrically exciting effects, as in Bailey's *As You Like It* or Kyle's *Richard III*. On the other hand, as a theatre historian I know of no evidence that the yard was in fact used for entrances, exits, processions, or special effects at the

5 For a discussion of both the Kent–Edgar juxtaposition and the comparable situation in *As You Like It* 2. 5, 2. 6, and 2. 7, see my *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 101–4.

first or second Globe.[6] Yes, silence is not evidence, but, given what we know about acting companies, stages, and audiences then, the absence of such a practice does make sense (e.g., the high value they placed on costumes would preclude close physical contact with the groundlings).[7] However, in the real world of today's professional theatre the 'if you have it, use it' approach will prevail regardless of comments from disgruntled academics.

What then is or should be the role of the theatre historian in discussions of the use of the yard or analogous choices? Such practices may not be Historically Correct (HC as opposed to PC), but directors make such choices—at the Globe, in Stratford-upon-Avon, at Ashland, Oregon— because there are gains to be achieved. Rather, the issue for me remains: what, if anything, is diminished, blurred, or lost in such choices? What is the price tag? Wherein lie the trade-offs?

Here the 2000 Globe *Hamlet* directed by Giles Block can be instructive, for this director not only limited his action to the platform stage (as opposed to his fairly extensive use of the yard in his 1999 *Antony and Cleopatra*) but also adroitly managed the onstage traffic so that exiting figures were still visible while entering figures strode downstage. As a result, an actor exiting and one entering through the same stage door could overlap, as at the end of *Hamlet*, 1. 2, where a departing Hamlet and an arriving Ophelia met and briefly interacted, only to be parted by Laertes, whose disapproval generated the dialogue that begins 1. 3. Given such a dynamic, opportunities for suggestive juxtapositions or counterpoints abound, even if the sets of figures use different stage doors. For example, in Block's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Octavia's first appearance at the beginning of 2. 3 overlapped with Maecenas' speech near the end of

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[6] Earlier scholars had argued that the stage direction *passing over the stage* involved use of the yard, but such signals are now read as signals for movement from one stage door to another. See the 'pass, passing, passage' entry in Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642* (Cambridge, 1999).

[7] Today's playgoers are likely to be better behaved than their Elizabethan-Jacobean counterparts and perhaps more amenable to actors in their midst. Moreover, Richard Burbage and his fellows would probably not have risked damage to their costumes on which they apparently placed a very high value. See, for example a 1614 agreement between Philip Henslowe and actor Robert Dawes which spells out various fines for absenteeism, lateness, and drunkenness; the fine for removing a costume from the playhouse was forty times greater than the fine for missing a rehearsal. See Neil Carson, *Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 73–4.

2. 2 ('If beauty, wisdom, modesty, can settle | The heart of Antony, Octavia is | A blessed lottery to him'—2. 2. 240–2).[8]

Here is one of several situations which are difficult to resolve. Although as a playgoer I can enjoy a Globe director's use of the yard to engage the playgoers, as a theatre historian I am aware of competing hypotheses about how the two or three stage doors were used, and I would therefore relish the opportunity to witness a series of laboratory tests of scenic continuities and juxtapositions. My historical gene prompts me to wonder: are there ways in which the large expanse of this platform, with playgoers standing on three sides, is keyed to the stage doors, the railings, the posts, and other fixed features so as to set up distinctive effects or images? I also sense an analogy to those modern productions of Ibsen and Chekhov that rarely use a proscenium arch stage and a curtain to enclose the action, a change that, however subtly, affects a playgoer's sense of the 'world' of the play as designed by the playwright. To what extent is the large but circumscribed acting area, with no actorly access to the yard, an integral part of the aesthetic or the potential meanings of a script produced for the Globe?

These controversies generated at the Globe call attention to a larger set of problems created when we place Shakespeare-in-performance issues in an historical context. I do not wish to play the zealous defence attorney presenting the case on behalf of theatre historians (who regularly conceal how little they actually know about staging in those first performances). Moreover, I am sympathetic to the problems faced by theatre artists in their attempt to draw in and hold onto paying customers who lack scholarly glosses and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, as teacher, playgoer, and theatre historian my basic question remains: in moving from script to stage at the Globe or elsewhere, what role can or should be played by our knowledge of the original stage conventions or staging conditions? To what extent are such features as much a part of the 'language' of the scripts as the words and metre? The theatre historian may provide some windows into the past, but, to revert to the question regularly raised by my undergraduates, so what?

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[8] Unless otherwise noted, citations from Shakespeare's plays are from the revised Riverside edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston and New York, 1997). Citations from the First Folio are from *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. Charlton Hinman (New York and London, 1968) and are accompanied by Through Line Numbers (TLN). Citations from the Quartos are from *Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto*, ed. Michael J. B. Allen and Kenneth Muir (Berkeley, 1981).

I

The basis of the problem seems to me painfully simple: when putting quill to paper Shakespeare was crafting his playscripts for players, playgoers, and playhouses that no longer exist. Today's actors, directors, and designers take some, many, or most of the extant words, as mediated by editors and adapters, and present them to today's audiences without benefit of glosses or historical contexts. Programme notes are an exercise in futility. Today's theatrical professionals have several assets which were not available to Shakespeare's company (variable lighting, sets, a wide range of costumes), though they also lack some assets then available (e.g. skilled boy actors who could play not only female roles but also children and young men).

What then should be the role of the theatre historian with reference to activity at the Globe, productions in other venues, or interpretation of the received texts? The Old Testament 'Thou Shalt Not' approach is useless, even counterproductive (no one is listening), so how should would-be historians interact both with theatrical professionals and with the majority of academic Shakespeare-in-performance critics who have little investment in historical concerns? Since supposed 'authenticity' for its own sake is a non-starter (as evident in pejorative references to 'museum theatre'), the only strong argument for playing the historical card with both directors and academics is that there is some kind of demonstrable pay-off, something gained that would otherwise be lost or blurred.

To clarify the situation, let us consider some categories that encompass the problems facing both director and theatre historian. At one extreme are those moments where a key choice must be made but the extant texts (or scripts) provide no clear signals, only silence. A good example is the final sequence of *Measure for Measure*: how should Isabella respond to the Duke's offer of marriage? To have her exit hand in hand as Duchess of Vienna provides one sense of an ending, a very different closure from a total rejection, or a 'you can't be serious' look. To leave her decision ambiguous (the standard choice in recent years) may sit well with today's audiences, but given the absence in the Folio of any words from Isabella, or stage directions, a case can be made for any of the three options. Social or cultural historians may invoke contemporary notions about marriage, hierarchy, and patriarchal assumptions; a theatre historian may extrapolate instances from other comparable plays as models; but the silences in the Folio forestall any justification for intervention from the theatre history faction.

At the other extreme are situations where suggestive signals do survive in an early text but are resisted today for practical or conceptual reasons. Here a good example is Romeo's behaviour early in the play's final scene, where directors regularly suppress specifics in both early printed editions in order to sustain a more romantic image. Both the dialogue in the Second Quarto (the basis for our editions) and the stage directions in the First Quarto establish that Romeo and Balthasar enter not with flowers and sweet water, as had Paris a moment earlier, but with a mattock and a wrenching iron. To forestall Balthasar's return, Romeo then threatens him: 'I will tear thee joint by joint, | And strew this hungry churchyard with thy limbs' and announces that 'The time and my intents are savage-wild, | More fierce and more inexorable far | Than empty tigers or the roaring sea' (5. 3. 35–9). Playgoers rarely get to see the mattock and crow-bar (Tim Carroll's 2004 Globe production was a notable exception) and they rarely hear all the dialogue, because Romeo's violent onstage image before finding Juliet in the tomb, as signalled in both Quartos, does not fit with the prevailing romantic interpretation of this moment. The urge to prettify this sequence is very strong, at the expense of the scripted effect, especially if Romeo somehow uses the wrenching tools in his fight with Paris. To what extent should the Romeo about to take poison corre-spond to the Romeo who, confronting Tybalt after Mercutio's death, said 'fire-ey'd fury be my conduct now!' (3. 1. 124)?

Most scenes of interest fall somewhere in the middle between these categories. The early texts provide some combination, of first, signals that make immediate sense in our terms, second, silences when we would expect information, and third, oddities that are puzzling by our theatrical logic. As noted earlier, to have Kent visible in the stocks at the same time as Edgar delivers a speech in flight defies a post-1642 sense of geo-graphical realism, but apparently it was a workable choice then. Gloucester's attempted suicide and supposed fall at Dover Cliffs (*King Lear*, 4. 6) is another moment that seems anomalous today but was somehow part of the original in-the-theatre strategy. Here is where the limitations of theatrical essentialism are most visible.

II

In the second part of this lecture I want to explore several case studies so as to highlight situations where potentially meaningful effects in the original scripts are easily blurred or lost due to interpretative reflexes

linked either to theatrical essentialism or to an 'if you have it, use it'
approach. My examples fall under the broad umbrella of 'imagery', under-
stood as images for the playgoer's as well as the reader's eye. Here are some
good test cases for price tags and trade-offs for both the director and the
theatre historian. What happens to performances or performance criticism
when a significant, even italicised factor for the original playgoers is
blurred or lost today?

I start with two examples linked to the means used by Shakespeare
and other playwrights to signal a specific 'place' or locale. Consider first
three separate and apparently discrete scenes in *Romeo and Juliet*: first,
the first appearance of Friar Laurence (2. 3); second, Juliet's visit to the
friar's cell in which she is given the potion (4. 1); and third, Romeo's
seeking out of the apothecary (5. 1). The first is often designated in our
editions as *in a garden* or *in a field* because the friar enters '*with a basket*'
(2. 3. 0) and talks about gathering weeds and flowers; the second is desig-
nated as the friar's cell as established by the dialogue; the third is placed
in the streets of Mantua outside the apothecary's shop. But in those orig-
inal productions on a bare stage with no set, all that the first scene
requires is an actor with a basket from which he pulls a single flower; the
second and third require only vials of potion or poison that are given to
Juliet and Romeo. Those vials could be picked up from a table (but then
a table would have to be discovered or thrust onto the stage), or pulled
out of a pocket or, to underscore imagistic continuity, pulled out of a
basket carried by the friar or apothecary.

A reader or playgoer wedded to geographical realism will see no con-
nections between the place where the friar gathers flowers and weeds, the
cell where he provides the potion, and the shop where the apothecary pro-
vides poison. Moreover, both theatrical essentialism and the 'if you have
it, use it' reflex (along with the presence at many theatrical venues of a
designer) would call for some form of onstage representation of garden,
cell, and street. However, in the original '*as [if] in*' staging (*as in a garden*,
as in a cell, *as in front of a shop*) the links between the three moments need
not be overly subtle, as something to be teased out after many readings,
but could be *italicised*. In the first of these scenes Friar Laurence notes
that within the same flower (taken from his basket) 'Poison hath residence
and medicine power', and he links these two opposites or options to
'grace and rude will' within humankind (2. 3. 24–30). A playgoer who
then sees two subsequent moments that strongly echo this speech is
encouraged to make connections and to think about issues central to the
play. To impose upon this sequence a later anachronistic sense of place-

locale may blur some potentially meaningful links that could enhance that playgoer's sense of the choices made by the two title figures, choices linked visibly to two contrasting basket-bearing suppliers of vials. Here something of importance can be lost in translation.

Consider next a sequence of scenes in *Coriolanus* (a script yet to be performed at the New Globe). In 2. 1 Coriolanus returns in triumph from the Volscian wars to be greeted in public; 2. 2 moves the narrative to the Senate; 2. 3 takes Coriolanus in his gown of humility into the streets to seek the voices of the plebeians; 3. 1 moves back to the Senate for a major confrontation between Coriolanus and his enemies within Rome. As is the norm throughout the period, the Folio stage directions—with one notable exception—provide no information about 'place' and offer nothing equivalent to the locale headings given in many modern editions. That exception is found in the first of the two Senate scenes: '*Enter two Officers, to lay Cushions, as it were, in the Capitol*' (TLN 1203–4, 2. 2. 0). The locale for this scene is clearly 'the Capitol', but that 'place' is to be created by the dialogue, by the costumes of first the officers, then the senators, and by the laying down of cushions, an action that initially defines the theatrical space. Such '*as it were, in*' thinking in turn makes possible a quick (and efficient) switch to 'the street' in 2. 3 for the gown of humility scene, and then a switch back to 'the Capitol' in 3. 1. For the theatre historian this '*as* [*if*] *in*' technique typifies the narrative flexibility of Shakespeare's chameleon stage.[9]

Such a Jacobean approach to '*in the Capitol*' can in turn italicise images blurred or eclipsed today—in this instance the *cushion*. In the second Senate scene an angry Coriolanus tells the senators that if they give in to the commoners, 'Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians | If they be senators' (3. 1. 100–1). For me, this line suggests that the cushions, although not cited again in a stage direction, were a visible presence here as well as in the earlier Senate scene. Later in the play Aufidius notes the title figure's inability to move 'from th' casque to th' cushion' (4. 7. 43), from war-generalship (as symbolised by the warrior's casque or helmet) to peace-politics (as symbolised by the cushion). These two passages and, more important, the larger process being described will be much clearer if the playgoer has seen the Capitol or the Senate defined onstage not by

[9] For a fuller discussion of *as* [*if*] stage directions, see chap. 7 of my *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge, 1995). In his 1999 Globe *Antony and Cleopatra* Giles Block did use such cushions, not for a Roman Senate but to help place the first three scenes in Cleopatra's Egypt.

furniture or a set but by the laying down of cushions. Two dialogue references are easily missed, but these properties may have had a strong theatrical presence in the first performances of this script, especially if the tumult occasioned by Coriolanus' conflict with the tribunes and plebeians in 3. 1 involved disruption of the cushions.

To extrapolate further, consider the potential effect of casques and cushions in the play's complex final scene. As I have noted elsewhere,[10] directors often rescript this sequence to gain their own desired effect, whether by making the protagonist more heroic, by omitting the Folio's climactic image of Aufidius standing upon the body of Coriolanus, '*Draw the Conspirators, and kills Martius, who falls; Aufidius stands on him*' (TLN 3805–6, 5. 6. 130), or by changing the groups of figures representing the Volscian city. As to the latter approach (that may be caused by a shortage of personnel), the Folio calls for three groups for this final confrontation: Aufidius and his conspirators, who actually commit the murder; the commoners who enter with Coriolanus ('*Enter Coriolanus marching with Drum and Colors, the Commoners being with him*' [69]); and the lords of the Volscian city. Often modern directors pare back or eliminate the voices of restraint or the comments upon the murder provided by the lords (110, 123–7, 130, 141–6), while streamlining the role of the commoners, who initially welcome the returning hero but then turn against him.

As I understand Shakespeare's strategy here, this final scene sets before us in a Volscian city the same elements (lords, conspirators, commoners) that Coriolanus had faced in Rome between 2. 1 and 3. 3 (patricians, tribunes, plebeians), a confrontation that, despite the support of one group (the patricians), had led to his banishment, his defiant 'I banish you', and his 'There is a world elsewhere' (3. 3. 120–35). To include the same elements in the final scene in the Volscian city, again, with one of the groups—the lords of the city—supportive, is to act out the obvious fact that there is no world elsewhere, that the hero's second confrontation with such a city leads to a second defeat, this time resulting in his death, an ignominious death for the conquering war machine of Act 1. Admittedly, such a parallel is hard to realise today for a playgoer unfamiliar with this daunting script, but attention to the original stage practice can be fruitful. Imagine a Coriolanus in armour and bearing a casque-helmet, who twice confronts the Roman senators seated on their cushions (2. 2, 3. 1), only to

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[10] See my *Rescripting Shakespeare: The Text, the Director, and Modern Productions* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 120–3.

be banished from Rome. What if this casque-bearing figure appears again in the play's final moments to confront the Volscian lords also seated on their cushions? As in the second Roman senate scene (3.1), those cushions could be disturbed when Aufidius and his fellow conspirators, cheered on by the same commoners (who moments earlier had cheered Coriolanus), kill him.

To postulate such a running image and series of connections is to move into the realm of conjecture, especially in the final scene, which provides no specific directions. Nonetheless, this approach builds on both the original signals in the script (here a stage direction and two dialogue passages) and the original stage practice, so as to flesh out what may have been a heightened image for the original playgoers. As with the sequence in *Romeo and Juliet*, are we today missing images or linkages that would have been obvious, even italicised, to playgoers at the original Globe or Blackfriars?

<div align="center">III</div>

For a final and more elaborate case study I will focus on evidence found in another play yet to be performed at the New Globe, *1 Henry IV*. Most of the stage directions that survive in plays of this period deal with traffic control, getting actors on and off the stage. Here the 1598 Quarto of *1 Henry IV* is typical, for a majority of the signals are for entrances, with many consisting simply of the word *enter* followed by one or more figures (e.g. '*Enter Gadshill*' and '*Enter Chamberlain*'—C2^v, 2. 1. 31, 47). Also commonplace, along with marked exits, are uses of *manet/manent* where some figures depart but others remain onstage: '*Exeunt. Manent Prince, Falstaff*' (I3^r, 5. 1. 120); similarly, a re-entry is indicated by '*Enter the Thieves again*' (C4^r, 2. 2. 97).

Of greater interest are various examples of theatrical shorthand or coding in which the playwright seems to be talking to his colleagues, one professional to another. Typical are the group entrances that initiate three scenes, 1. 1, 1. 3, and 3. 2 (A2^r, B2^r, F4^r), when the dramatist writes '*with others*' or '*and others*', one of several widely used locutions that leave open the number of actors needed.[11] Typical too are entrances that

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[11] A comparable but less common locution is '*The King enters with his power*' (K1^r, 5. 3. 0). For a fuller discussion see the entry for 'permissive stage directions' in Dessen and Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*. Most of the examples of 'power' are from the Shakespeare canon, as opposed to 'army' which is more widely used.

provide additional details: '*Enter a Carrier with a lantern in his hand*' (C2^r, 2. 1. 0); '*Enter Hotspur solus, reading a letter*' (C4^v, 2. 3. 0); '*Enter Bardolph running*' (E3^v, 2. 4. 481); enter the king's party '*with Worcester and Vernon prisoners*' (K4^r, 5. 5. 0). Also here, and found regularly in other playscripts, are various sound effects: '*They whistle*' (C3^v, 2. 2. 28); '*The music plays*' and '*Here the lady sings a Welsh song*' (F3^v, 3. 1. 228, 244); '*The trumpet sounds a parley*' (H4^r, 4. 3. 29). Similarly, this play's battle scenes call for the usual alarums, excursions, and fights, starting with '*Here they embrace. The trumpets sound. The King enters with his power. Alarum to the battle*' and ending with '*A retreat is sounded*' (K1^r, 5. 2. 100; 5. 3. 0; K4^r, 5. 4. 158).

Those unfamiliar with the stage directions provided by Shakespeare and other playwrights of the period should note as well what is *not* here. Clearly, the Lord Chamberlain's Men needed to know *when* to sound a parley, trumpet, retreat or alarum, or to provide a fight ('*They fight*' is sig-nalled four times), but they did not need a playwright to spell out *how* to do so. Similarly, '*Enter Bardolph running*', '*Enter a Carrier with a lantern in his hand*', and enter two figures '*prisoners*' are widely used directions that incorporate coded signals, readily understood by knowledgeable pro-fessionals who required no further elaboration. An entrance after a battle with the defeated figures *prisoners*, or *as* [*if*] *prisoners*, would call for guards and some form of restraints; a lantern, as opposed to a candle or taper, signalled a night scene outdoors.

What *is* distinctive and therefore of special interest in this Quarto are those items that are *not* part of a stock vocabulary and therefore *do* need more spelling out. Several of these signals are unique, whereas others do appear elsewhere but take on some special meaning here. As to the latter group, three other plays call for a song in Welsh (*John a Kent*, *Edward I*, *The Valiant Welshman*). However, the elaborate scripted dialogue from the end of 3. 1 is highly unusual in that it sets up a language barrier not only between Mortimer and his wife onstage but also between the players and the playgoers, few of whom (then or now) understand the Welsh language. In my reading, this coda to a major political encounter calls attention to the gap, cultural rather than linguistic, in the first part of this scene between the Welshness of Glendower and the impatience of Hotspur. Another potentially symbolic moment is Falstaff's ploy to escape from Douglas, where Sir John first '*falls down as if he were dead*' (K2^v, 5. 4. 76) and then '*riseth up*' (K3^r, 5. 4. 110). Comparable Act 5 sit-uations are to be found with Barabas in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Malevole-Altofront in John Marston's *The Malcontent*. In

all three plays a supposedly dead figure rises and proceeds to demonstrate that what he represents cannot be killed off so easily.

Several Quarto stage directions help establish the distinctive relationship between Prince Hal and Falstaff. One unique signal is provided when the newly martial Prince Hal, who enters '*marching*', is greeted by Falstaff '*playing upon his truncheon like a fife*' (G3ʳ, 3. 3. 87), wherein Sir John shows how he can adapt to the new mood: 'How now, lad? is the wind in that door, i' faith? must we all march?' (88–9). Earlier, Hal had ordered Peto to search the pockets of the sleeping Falstaff: '*He searcheth his pocket, and findeth certain papers*' (E4ʳ, 2. 4. 531). The action of searching pockets is not in itself unusual, but, as the prince observes, the ratio of sack to bread listed in the papers is remarkable, even 'intolerable' (541). That emphasis on sack, Falstaff's drink of choice in the tavern world, climaxes in the first battlefield encounter between the two figures where a weaponless prince three times demands 'lend me thy sword' (5. 3. 40, 43, 49) but is offered instead Falstaff's pistol: '*The Prince draws it out, and finds it to be a bottle of sack*'. With the line 'What, is it a time to jest and dally now?' Hal '*throws the bottle at him*' (K1ᵛ, 5. 3. 54–5), in the process rejecting the tavern world of jests, dalliance, and idleness (his first line in the sequence is 'What, stands thou idle here?' (40)). Indeed, the prince's use of such words as 'time' and 'now' highlight a chain of associations that go back to their first scene together, which begins with Falstaff's, 'Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?' and ends with the Prince looking forward to 'redeeming time when men think least I will' (1. 2. 217). Falstaff carries the tavern and its values with him in his holster in lieu of a weapon, whereas with a kingdom at stake the prince's sense of time and urgency is keyed to 'now'—hence his throwing of the bottle.[12]

Of particular interest are those signals that in turn set up images that, like the vials in *Romeo and Juliet* or the cushions in *Coriolanus*, resonate beyond their scene of origin. A good example is the atypical stage direction that sets up the re-robbing at Gadshill: '*As they are sharing the Prince and Poins set upon them, they all run away, and Falstaff after a blow or two runs away too, leaving the booty behind them*' (C4ᵛ, 2. 2. 101). The use of the initial *as* clause is not unusual, for many signals are keyed to the timing of an action (with clauses beginning with *while* the most common), but this particular action is rare, for *share/sharing* is not to be found elsewhere in a stage direction.

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[12] For a discussion of the staging of the bottle-throwing see Derek Peat, 'Falstaff Gets the Sack', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53 (2002), 379–85.

Why single out this term? Close readers of this play have teased out an analogy between the Gadshill robbery of Act 2 and the rebellion that climaxes with the confrontation at Shrewsbury in Acts 4 and 5, but the original staging could have italicised this analogy. First, as detailed in the Quarto's '*As they are sharing*', when interrupted by Hal and Poins the four thieves (Falstaff, Bardolph, Peto, and Gadshill) are caught in the act of dividing up the spoils of the robbery while grouped around their loot which is laid out in front of them. A few scenes later (3. 1) another set of four figures appear onstage (Hotspur, Glendower, Worcester, and Mortimer), grouped around an object of common interest (this time a map of England), in order again to divide up the spoils (this time the kingdom itself). The two scenes can easily be blocked to highlight the analogy so as to call attention to a link between two seemingly disparate actions and sets of figures which are not as disparate as they first appear, a relationship that can easily elude a reader faced only with the printed page.[13]

Consider next a segment early in the famous tavern scene (2. 4) involving Prince Hal, Poins and Francis the drawer. Readers have provided various interpretations of this sequence, usually with a focus on Prince Hal and frequently with a pejorative evaluation (most interpreters disapprove of such a practical joke); directors often cut it or pare it back. From the evidence in the Quarto the staging is reasonably clear. Shakespeare plays off Hal's offer of money and royal favour, and his testing of Francis's bond to the vintner against first Poins's and then Hal's use of the drawer's name as a stimulus to elicit a mechanistic response, both verbally—'Anon, sir', and physically—a movement towards the speaker. This divided response eventually causes the prince to conclude: 'That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a parrot, and yet the son of a woman!' (2. 4. 98–9). In theatrical terms, the punch line of the episode is provided not in the dialogue but in the stage direction: '*Here they both call him; the drawer stands amazed, not knowing which way to go*' (D2ᵛ, 2. 4. 79).[14]

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[13] The unusually explicit signal from 2. 2 may set up an onstage image, but the silences in 3. 1 are more typical of Elizabethan playscripts. The initial stage direction provides only '*Enter Hotspur, Worcester, Lord Mortimer, Owen Glendower*' (E4ʳ, 3. 1. 0) with no mention of any stage furniture or even the map (as opposed to the citing of the carrier's lantern or Hotspur's letter as properties in 2. 1. 0 and 2. 3. 0).

[14] The stage directions in contemporary plays provide roughly fifty examples of figures who are *amazed* (see the entry in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*), but there is no equivalent to the onstage configuration involving Hal, Poins, and Francis.

For many readers and playgoers, this segment appears less than essential, for it only delays the anticipated entrance of Falstaff that will generate the meat of this scene. However, as with vials, cushions, and sharing of booty, a flummoxed Francis can set up a strong onstage image that cries out for attention like a flashing neon sign. Here interpretations will vary widely depending upon one's approach to Prince Hal. My sense of the moment is that the stage action presents the image of Francis as a puppet jerked by two competing strings until he '*stands amazed, not knowing which way to go*'. Although Poins is left in the dark about the point behind this joke (89–91), the spectator sees that Prince Hal is firmly in control and, indeed, acts as a puppetmaster who can manipulate Francis's actions because of his knowledge of what makes the puppet work, or which strings to pull. Of those on stage in Act 2, only the prince fully grasps the essential nature of his companions and is therefore able to use that knowledge to manipulate others, to be a controller rather than one of the controlled. In contrast, Francis, by being so easily manipulated, calls into question his credentials as a 'son of a woman' and serves as a comment upon Hotspur's subjection to the promptings of Worcester and Northumberland in 1.3. In particular, the young knight's heroic code may be his loftier equivalent to Francis's 'Anon, sir', his version of a predictable response that can be anticipated and hence manipulated. To heighten this parallel, a director need only have Francis's scurrying about the stage echo Hotspur's frenetic movements in the previous scene during his wife's long speech, or have the drawer, trapped between Hal and Poins, correspond to the young knight caught between Worcester and Northumberland in 1. 3.

I have already cited several stage directions from the battle scenes in Act 5, but these unusually informative signals warrant further attention. The norm elsewhere for such encounters can be seen in the climactic Prince Hal versus Hotspur combat, where the Quarto provides only '*They fight*' and '*the Prince killeth Percy*' (K2^v, 5. 4. 74, 76). Of interest, however, is the signal for the fight between Douglas and King Henry and the appearance of Prince Hal: '*They fight; the King being in danger, enter Prince of Wales*' and '*They fight: Douglas flieth*' (K2^r, 5. 4. 38, 43). What is distinctive here is the phrase '*in danger*' which occurs nowhere else in a stage direction.[15] The issue is one of timing—the emphasis on the potential

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[15] The only other use of *danger* in our database is found in another fight scene: '*They make a daungerous passe at one another the Lady purposely runs betwene, and is kild by them both*' (*The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, ed. W. W. Greg, Malone Society [London, 1910], lines 2134–6).

defeat and death of the king, and all the implications therein, were it not
for the rescue by the crown prince.

To provide some context, at the beginning of the battle sequence
Douglas had confronted Sir Walter Blunt, one of several figures whom
Henry IV has 'Semblably furnish'd like the King himself' and 'marching
in his coats'. Having killed him, Douglas commented: 'A borrowed title
hast thou bought too dear' (5. 3. 21–5). When Douglas confronts Henry
IV moments later, he asks the telling question: 'What art thou | That
counterfeit'st the person of a king?' (5. 4. 27–8). The question is generated
by a specific battlefield strategy, with apparent kings growing 'like
Hydra's heads' (25), but, given Bolingbroke's manner of gaining the
throne, the question has other dimensions as well. Just as the rebellion as
a whole challenges the status of the king, so Douglas in physical combat
threatens both the counterfeit kings and a king who may be a counterfeit.

That the subsequent fight does not go well for the reigning king is
therefore not only a tribute to the prowess of Douglas (who is another
war machine like Coriolanus) but also a comment on Henry IV's 'coun-
terfeit' status. Standing alone Henry is '*in danger*', vulnerable to attack by
rebels and malcontents. Prince Hal's presence saves the king and the
kingdom, just as it will, in analogous fashion, at the end of Part Two. In
addition, here as at several other points in the play when the prince is
onstage with his father (see 3. 2. 0 and 5. 5. 0) the stage direction calls
him not simply 'Prince' but '*Prince of Wales*'. The five-line speech with
which Hal interrupts the Douglas–Henry combat starts with a vaunt and
a call for revenge for those whom Douglas has slain and climaxes with a
strong verbal emphasis on his own role: 'It is the Prince of Wales that
threatens thee, | Who never promiseth but he means to pay' (5. 4. 42–3).
Here Hal fulfills the promises he made to Henry IV in 3. 2, for in his
father's eyes he has 'redeemed thy lost opinion, | And showed thou mak'st
some tender of my life | In this fair rescue thou hast brought to me'
(48–50). As demonstrated by the Quarto, the reigning king '*in danger*'
is doomed without the intervention of the crown prince, whereas the
combination of Henry IV and his heir can win the day.[16]

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[16] Shakespeare elsewhere provides comparable combinations of onstage figures to set up such an
effect. For example, in *1 Henry VI*, 2. 1 three figures scale the walls of Orleans to achieve a major
victory for the English forces, but one by one the three are eliminated (Bedford dies, Burgundy
switches sides, and Talbot is killed). The disappearance of the initially victorious threesome
spells out how factionalism triumphs and France is lost.

In my survey of the evidence provided by this Quarto I have post-poned until last discussion of one of my favourite 'historical' examples where Falstaff '*takes up Hotspur on his back*' (K3^v, 5. 4. 129). Moviegoers in 2005 will recognise in contemporary films on-screen allusions to clas-sic films of an earlier generation, such as *Casablanca* or *Gone With the Wind*. Similarly, a 1590s playgoer witnessing X carry off Y at the climax of a play would have been reminded of stage business from the late moral plays, in which either the Vice or a fallen human figure was carried off to Hell on the devil's back.[17] However, that kind of allusion to an onstage image familiar then but obscure to us is particularly problematic for today's theatrical professionals and their audiences, for I see no way to recapture the various associations generated by such a signifier. A theatre historian or an editor can provide suitable commentary, but for a play-goer, as opposed to the reader of an annotated edition, the meaning behind the image is lost.

IV

This final example brings into focus the pluses and minuses of the theatre historian's contribution to today's productions at the Globe or elsewhere. From the vantage point of an actor or director in the twenty-first century, wherein lies the value of calling attention to a configuration that no longer carries its original weight for the playgoer? Is 'museum theatre' after all the goal of the theatre historian?

Since I have no easy answers to these questions, I will conclude with a restatement of my own rationale. Behind my attempts to recover a lost or blurred vocabulary of the theatre lie the twin assumptions, first, that Shakespeare and his colleagues knew what they were doing but, second, that their methods and working assumptions are not what we take for granted four hundred years later. They were *not* benighted primitives

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[17] Examples of figures carried off to Hell in extant moral plays can be found in Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like* and the two plays by W. Wager, *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*. Shakespeare's contemporaries make use of this climactic image, most notably Robert Greene (*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*) and Ben Jonson (*The Devil is an Ass*). For a survey of the allusions to this stage business and a discussion of the implica-tions for *1 Henry IV* see Alan C. Dessen, *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays* (Lincoln, Neb., 1986), pp. 20–1, 87–9. For practical rather than conceptual reasons today's playgoers rarely get to see a padded and weary Falstaff actor pick up and carry off a strapping Hotspur.

who lacked our superior knowhow and technology, but were highly skilled professionals who for many decades sustained a repertory theatre company that is the envy of any comparable group since. However, when putting quill to paper Shakespeare (or Heywood or Fletcher) was crafting his plays for players, playgoers, and playhouses that no longer exist. As a result, in reading their playscripts today we enter into the middle of a conversation—a discourse in a language we only partly understand—between a playwright and his player-colleagues, a halfway point in a process that was completed in a performance now lost to us. Although we will never reconstitute that performance, we may be able to recover elements of that vocabulary and hence better understand that conversation, whether the pre-production concept of the playwright or the implementation by the players.

To understand that language and that conversation more fully, moreover, is to enable us better to recapture or even to reconfigure meaningfully the original idiom for a new age of playgoers. Most theatrical professionals refrain from rewriting Shakespeare's dialogue, but, especially at supposed 'historical' venues, what about the role of that larger theatrical vocabulary that would include vials, cushions, and the dividing up of booty? If we continue to place our trust in the words that have come down to us in the Quartos and the Folio, why not trust as well the stagecraft that lies behind those words? Must theatrical essentialism and the 'if you have it, use it' thinking serve as an insuperable barrier? To call attention to onstage images generated when these plays are treated as scripts for early modern performance is to argue in favour of a richness and complexity that may be lost in translation. Certainly the theatre historian should not make pronouncements to the 'Shakespeare in performance' community in the manner of Moses returning from Mount Sinai with tablets etched in stone, but he or she *can* function as Banquo's ghost disrupting Macbeth's complacency, or the ghost in *Hamlet* telling the protagonist: 'Do not forget! This visitation | Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose' (3. 4. 110–11).