

# Hamlet

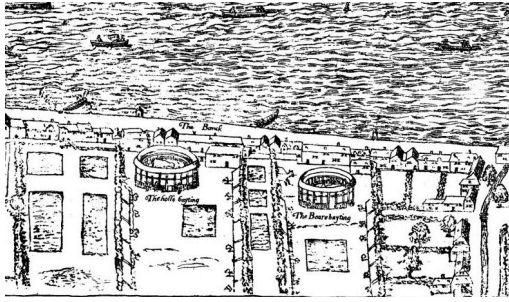
## Act III



*Interior of Swan Theatre, c. 1596, by Johannes de Witt*

# Primary Documents

(Theater and Acting)

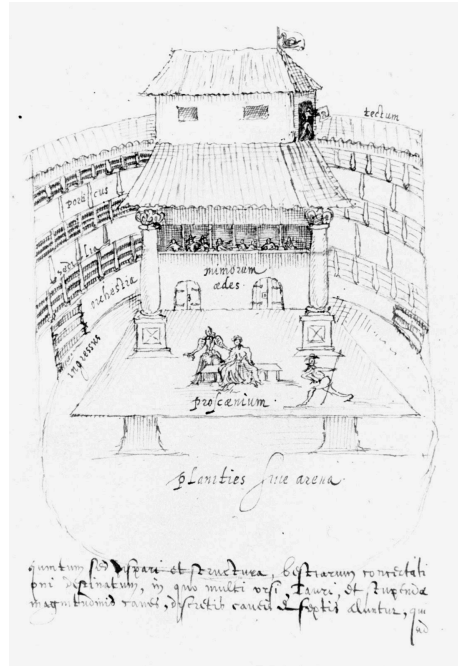


Prior to construction of Globe, The Agas Map of London (1591).



Wincelas Hollar's pictorial of The Globe (1647)

## For Players By Players



Johannes DeWitt's sketch of the Swan Theatre (1596)

“The Globe clearly had a lot to do with the great surge of energy and creativity at this moment in Shakespeare’s career. His surroundings could only have contributed to this vitality...it was notorious for its criminality, prostitution, inns, theaters, and blood sports – both bull - and bearbaiting. Puritans called it a ‘licensed stew’...”

It was agreed upon that, unlike the Rose, the stage at the Globe would be entirely in afternoon shadow. Playgoers rather than the actors would have the sun in their eyes; they’d have to squint at times, but they’d feel warmer.”

Shapiro, James. “The Globe Rises.” *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599*. Harper Perennial, 2005. pp. 107-109.

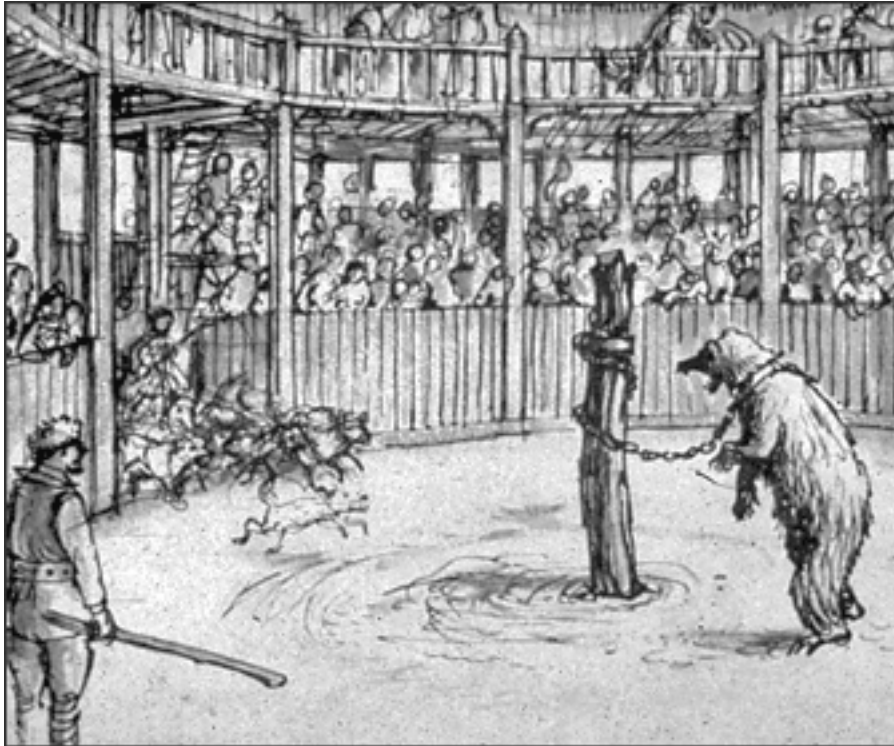
*Thus daily at two in the afternoon, London has two, sometimes three plays running in different places, competing with each other, and those which play best obtain most spectators. The playhouses are so constructed that they play on a raised platform, so everyone has a good view. There are different galleries and places, however, where the seating is better and more comfortable and therefore more expensive. For whoever cares to stand below only pays one English penny, but if he wishes to sit he enters by another door, and pays another penny, while if he desires to sit in the most comfortable seats which are cushioned, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he pays yet another English penny at another door. And during the performance food and drink are carried around the audience, so that what one cares to pay one may also have refreshment.*

“I’ll go to the Bull and Fortune and there see a play for two pence.”

*Shakespeare’s England*. 29 Aug. 2011. 29, July 2016,

<http://www.shakespeareengland.co.uk/2011/08/29/ill-go-to-the-bull-or-fortune-and-there-see-a-play-for-two-pence/>.

## Bearbaiting



A foreign visitor wrote this account of what he saw at the first Beargarden as early as 1584:

There is a round building three storeys high, in which are kept about a hundred large English dogs, with separate wooden kennels for each of them. These dogs were made to fight singly with three bears, the second bear being larger than the first and the third larger than the second. After this a horse was brought in and chased by the dogs, and at last a bull, who defended himself bravely. The next was that a number of men and women came forward from a separate compartment, dancing, conversing and fighting with each other; also a man who threw some white bread among the crowd, that scrambled for it. (Chambers [ESII] qtd. in Gurr 227)

Henslowe and Alleyn constructed the Hope in 16714, primarily out of their interest in bull- and bear-baiting, though they did sign the contract barely a month after the nearby Globe burned down... The players and the playhouse owners quarreled frequently over the priorities the owners gave to bating over playing, and after 1620 the Hope was hardly used by players at all... By then there were enough open-air playhouses – the Globe and Fortune were both rebuilt more lavishly after their fires. (Gurr 188, 190)

The Puritan attacks on the stage were aimed fairly precisely at all the purveyors of entertainments, such as bull- and bear-baiting, tumbling, fencing displays and plays. They saw no difference between bear-baiting, fencing matches, plays and prostitution. (45)

Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 45, 188, 190, 227.

## *Anatomy of Abuses*

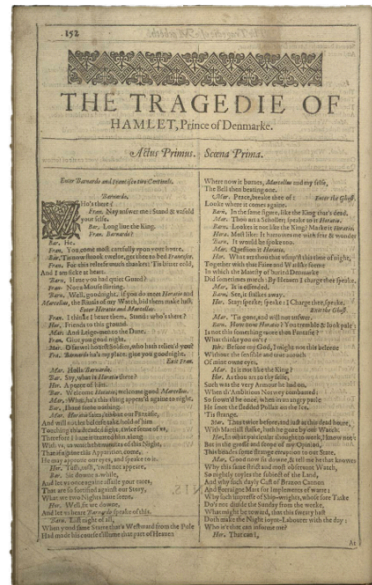
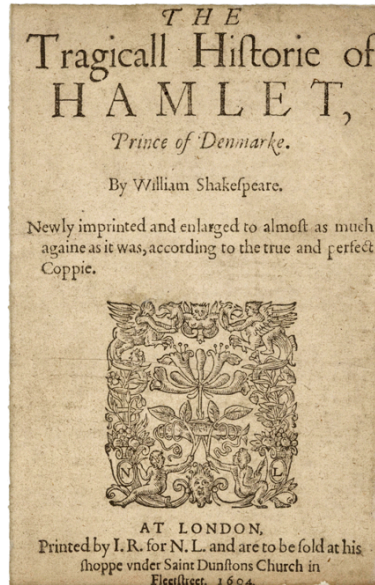
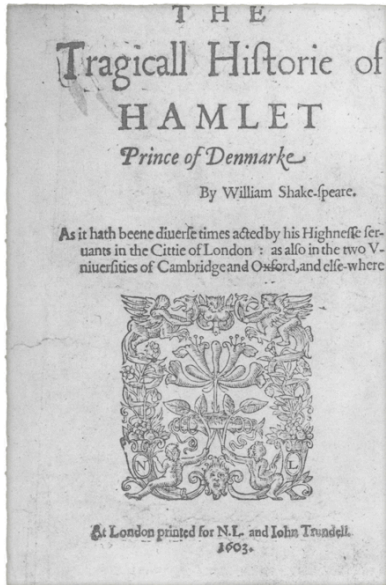
### **Of Stage-plays and Enterluds, with their wickednes.**

ALL Stage-plays, Enterluds and Commedies, are either of diuine, or prophane matter: If they be of diuine matter, than are they most intollerable, or rather Sacrilelgious, for that the blessed word of GOD, is to be handled, reuerently, grauely, and sagely, with veneration to the glorious Maiestie of God, which shineth therin, and not scoffingly, flowtingly, & iybingly, as it is vpon stages in Playes & Enterluds, without any reuerence, worship, or veneration to y<sup>e</sup> same: the word of our Saluation, the price of Christ his bloud, & the merits of his passion, were not giuen, to be derided, and iested at as they be in these filthie playes and enterluds on stages & scaffolds, or to be mixt and interlaced with bawldry, wanton shewes & vncomely gestures, as is vsed (euery Man knoweth) in these playes and enterludes...

All the holy companie of Heauen, Angels, Archangels, Cherubins, Seraphins, and all other powers whatsoever, yea the Deuills themselues (as *Iames* saith) doo tremble & quake, at the naming of God, and at the presence of his wrath, and doo these Mockers and Flowters of his Maiesty, these dissembling *Hipocrites*, and flattering *Gnatoes*, think to escape vnpunished? beware therefore you masking Players, you painted sepulchres, you doble dealing ambodexters, be warned betymes, and lik good computi tes cast your accompts before what wil be the reward therof in the end, least God destroy you in his wrath: abuse God no more, corrupt his people no longer with your dregges, and intermingle not his blessed word with such prophane vanities. For, at no hand, it is not lawfull, to mixt scurrilitie with diuinitie, nor diluinitie with scurrilitie...

Trulie, so there are: if you will learne fallshood, if you will learn cosenage: if you will learn to deceiue: if you will learn to play the Hipocrit: to cogge, lye and falsifie: if you will learn to iest, laugh and fléer, to grin, to nodd, and mow: if you will learn to playe the vice, to swear, teare, and blaspleme, both Heauen and Earth: If you will learn to become albawde, vncleane, and to deuerginat Mayds, to deflour honest Wyues: if you will learne to murther, s aie, kill, picke, steal, robbe and roue: If you will learn to rebel against Prinlces, to co~mit treasons, to consume treasurs, to practise ydlenes, to sing and talke of bawldie loue and venery: if you will lerne to delride, scoffe, mock & flowt, to flatter & smooth: If you will learn to play the whore-maister, the glutton, Drunkard, or incestuous person: if you will learn to become proude, hawtie & arrogant: and finally, if you will learne to comtemne GOD and al his lawes, to are neither for heauen nor hel, and to commit al kinde of sinne and mischéef you néed to goe to no other schoole, for all these good Examples, may you see painted before your eyes in enterludes and playes: wherfore, that man who giueth money for the maintenance of them, must néeds incurre the damage of *premunire*, that is, eternall damnation except they repe~t.

Stubbes, Phillip. *The Anatomy of Abuses*.  
1583, *EEBO*. STC (2nd ed.) 23380.5,  
*Copy from British Library*.



## Shakespearean Stage

"*Hamlet* makes highly sophisticated use of the theatre conditions of its time. The company of players who arrive in 2.2 were real, not the caricatures of players...not a parody. Despite Polonius's interruptions, the player delivers his passionate speech about rugged Pyrrhus with such good inward accompaniment to his outward appearance of passion that he changes colour and tears come into his eyes. And all this, as Hamlet bitterly tells himself afterwards, is monstrously for a fiction, a 'dream of passion':

what would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have?

All that is monstrous, of course, is that Hamlet has no more motive or cue for passion than the player; he himself is as much a fiction as the player. What Shakespeare is doing in this scene is to refine the familiar Elizabethan paradox of 'tragedy played in jest', the view that sees murders done for entertainment, and appearances pretending to be reality. The fictitious Hamlet rails at the fiction of the player. Shakespeare's refinement is to make this paradoxical situation not a joke but an emphatic assertion of Hamlet's reality.

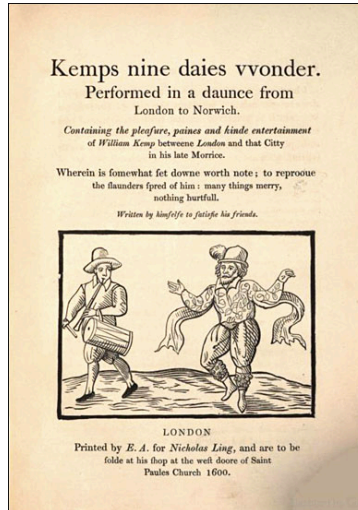
Many other details of the play's staging depend on life in Shakespeare's own time. The disposition of the stage for the play-within-the-play, for instance, which has exercised the ingenuity of some commentators, must have followed the pattern for plays at Court. The performers of the play stand at the back of the stage by the largest opening in the tiring-house wall, King Claudius and Queen Gertrude sit on the 'state' or throne at the front of the stage in the middle of the amphitheatre yard, facing the tiring house, Hamlet and Ophelia to one side with a view of both (3-4)...

*Hamlet's* ending raises many questions, not the least of which is whether it originally ended with a jig...what happened to the ignored bodies of King Claudius, Hamlet's mother and Laertes? Either they got up and walked off, or stage hands came on to carry them off, or else, as



I think most likely, they got up and started to dance the closing jig...Hamlet himself had mocked Polonius for liking jigs, so perhaps he came back to life to join the others in the dance...A closing jig would go with the basic need of every play's conclusion, restoring the sense of reality, that vital awareness of the falsity of the illusion, that we today have lost but that Shakespeareans could never forget" (12-13).

"Kemp was the last of the better known for probably served his turn sketches that normally stages. He is rightly or culprit charged by Hamlet down for him, and it has departure from the because he took a hand in Falstaff play, *The Merry* the role of the clown in markedly in value as plays tragic actors. Hamlet's impatience with duties as a clown with a role in almost every play of his company's repertory probably did not decline, but his occupancy of the stage during the performance proper may have shrunk" (108).



famous Elizabethan clowns. He was harlequinade and jigs than wit, and mainly for the dances and jiggling followed performances on the public wrongly thought to have been the with speaking more than was set even been suggested that his Chamberlain's Men in 1599 was the illicit publication of the last *Wives of Windsor*. What is clear is that adult company plays had diminished began to offer more scope for the reprimand reflects an aristocratic knockabout and extempore. Kemp's

"The jig reached the height of its fame with Tarlton and then Kemp...In the eyes of satirists it epitomized all that was disgusting in popular entertainment...Mostly it was the obscenity that drew attacks from the satirists but jigs did get associated with uproar generally.

*Complaynte have beene made at this last Generall Sessions that by reason of certayne Lewde Jigges songs and daunces used and accustomed at the playhouse called the Fortune in Goulding-lane divers cut-purses and other lewde and ill disposed persons in great multitudes doe resorte thither at th' endof everye playe many tymes causing Tumults and outrages whereby His Majesties peace is often broke and much Mischief like to ensue thereby.* (Qtd. in Gurr 214. C.R. Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig*, 1929, p. 102)

It is probably significant about the divergence in taste and fashion that after 1600, or to be precise after Kemp left the Chamberlain's Men in 1599, the only playhouses that were named as presenting jigs were the three to the north of the city, the Fortune, Curtain and Red Bull. (214)

Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearean Stage: 1574-1642*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Cambridge UP, 2009.

## *The Defense of Poetry*

[Poetry in England]

...How then shall we set forth a story which containeth both many places and many times?

I have a story of young Polydorus,<sup>1</sup> delivered for safety's sake, with great riches, by his father Priam to Polymnestor king of Thrace, in the Trojan war time; he, after some years, hearing the overthrow of Priam, for to make the treasure his own, murdereth the child; the body of the child is taken up by Hecuba; she, the same day, findeth a sleight to be revenged most cruelly of the tyrant. Where now would one of our tragedy writers begin, but with the delivery of the child? Then should he sail over into Thrace, and so spend I know not how many years, and travel numbers of places...Even with the finding of the body, leaving the rest to be told by the spirit of Polydorus...

But besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion...<sup>2</sup>

But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter; which is very wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet cometh it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter...for delight we scarcely do but in things that have a conveniency<sup>3</sup> to ourselves...laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath only a scornful tickling.

For example, we are ravished with delight to see a fair woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter; we laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances: we delight to hear the happiness of our friends...we shall, contrarily, laugh sometimes to find a matter quite mistaken.

Sidney, Sir Philip. *The Defense of Poesy*. 1595. Reprod. in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Vol. B, W.W. Norton & Company, 2006, pp. 970-971.

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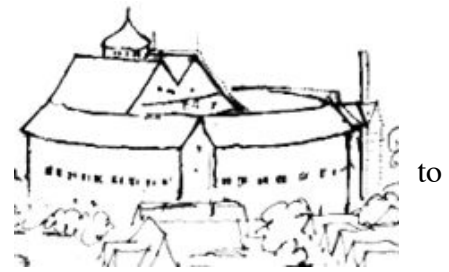
<sup>1</sup> In Euripedes *Hecuba*

<sup>2</sup> Famous attack; 15 years later Shakespeare would have proved him wrong.

<sup>3</sup> Agreement, correspondence

## Later Playhouses...the new Globe Theatre

The Globe's beginning was unpromising...To identify the original Globe we have to weigh the likelihood of improvements to the design that were made in the rebuilding against the probability that the nostalgia which persuaded the company to rebuild it would have required any changes to be fairly minimal. A testimony in the 1630s asserted that the new Globe was built on the foundation of the old. This indicates that the outline in Hollar's illustration of the second Globe and the fragment of the foundations dug up in 1989 should reflect the dimensions of the first Globe...



Wecestlas Hollar's 1630 sketch

One thing the main particles of archaeological evidence do confirm about the first Globe is also a distinctive feature of Hollar's depiction of the second Globe...Hollar positioned the second Globe's stage cover precisely adjoining what John Orrell calculated was the point where the sun rose in Southwark at midsummer. In other words the stage had its back to the summer sun, the "shadow" or cover or "heavens" over the stage providing shelter from direct sunshine as well as rain...Elizabethans had constant trouble with the sun, which not only turned faces an unseemly brown and forced many omen to walk abroad wearing headscarves or face-masks but made its ultra-violet light fade the bright colours of their velvets and satins all too quickly...

We should not forget that Elizabethans routinely wore hats, and that ladies wore black face masks, both of which helped to shelter faces against the sun...

It does seem that the globe's yard was markedly larger than the Rose's and its stage may in consequence have had a distinctly different configuration...It had a large trap, big enough for two men (Hamlet and Laertes, for instance) to descent at once, and two stage pillars supporting the heavens, which Hamlet says were fretted with golden fire...Its cover of hangings was the cloth of arras that Hamlet stabs through to kill Polonius. It was used for regal entries and for clowns, who usually made their presence known first by sticking their heads through the hangings...

Thirteen scenes in descents from the and five require of the tiring-house occupies the time of verse.

Action above (in the usually brief, lines there... Drums, flutes were standard were most employed



Shakespeare need upper area to the stage, ascents, three by way interior, a climb which two or three lines of

upper playing area) was averaging only [37] trumpets, fiddles and accessories...but these on stage or "within."

Gurr, Andrew. "The Playhouses." *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 174-181.