

New Light on the Globe Theater

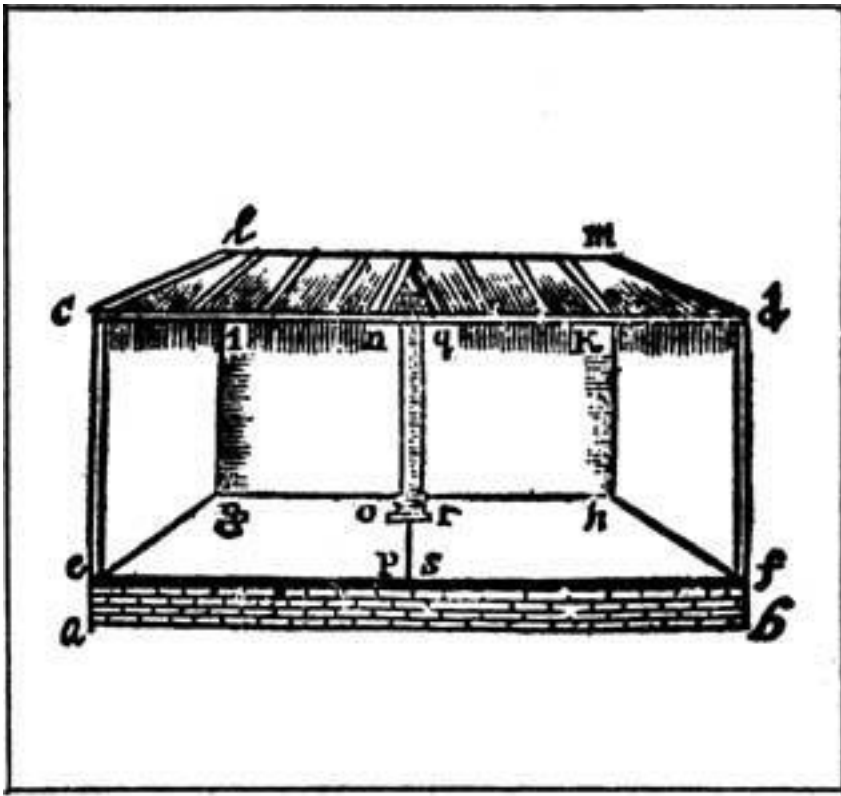
Frances A. Yates [The New York Review of Books](#) May 26, 1966 issue

It may seem impossible that anything new about Shakespeare or his theater could be discovered at this time of day, yet new light can be thrown on the Globe Theater through the pursuit of a neglected subject, the history of the classical art of memory.

The Roman orators used a mnemonic device to help them to memorize their speeches; the technique is described by Cicero and other ancient writers. The user of the classical art of memory began by memorizing places in a building; on these places he memorized images to remind him of the points of his speech. As he gave his speech the orator moved in imagination through his memory building, inwardly seeing the images on the places. The order of the places ensured him that he kept to the order of his points. The images reminded him of those points. The technique relied on strong powers of visualization and on the laws of association, which were fully understood by the ancients. The authorities say that your own house may be used as a memory system, or streets and public buildings, such as theaters. And if you do not know enough of such real places to imprint on your memory, you may invent imaginary buildings to house the contents of memory. Such imaginary buildings were called fictitious places, to distinguish them from real places, memorized in real buildings.

Like the other arts of antiquity, the classical art of memory was handed down in the European tradition. In the Middle Ages it had its Gothic period, when churches, cathedrals, abbeys, were used as memory systems. In the Renaissance, neo-classical influences pervaded the memory architecture and imagery. One of the most famous memory systems of the Renaissance was the Memory Theater of Giulio Camillo, who set out to imprint on memory the whole cosmos, both the world of nature and the world of man. He formed a universal Memory Theater which was an adaptation of the Roman theater as described by Vitruvius. This remarkable effort, which was connected with tendencies in the Renaissance Hermetic movement, excited great interest in the sixteenth century.

In the early seventeenth century the fashion for theater memory systems reached England.



**Memory Theater or
Repository. From J. Willis.
Mnemonica, 1618**

The cut here reproduced from the *Mnemonica* of John Willis represents one of a series of what Willis calls Memory Theaters. He divided each of these constructions into a number of memory places, marked on the cut by letters of the alphabet. If the cut is a reflection of any real building, it is of course not a whole theater but a stage—a stage closed at the sides to form a memory room.

Willis's system is an example of the use of the classical art of memory in a perfectly straightforward way, as a mnemonic technique. But in the following year, 1619, the Hermetic philosopher Robert Fludd published a most elaborate theater memory system in which he aimed, like Giulio Camillo, at a universal memory. This is the curious source from which evidence can be drawn about the Globe Theater.

THE FIRST PAGE of Fludd's treatise on the art of memory, here reproduced, shows a man with a large "eye of imagination" in his head, with which he is looking inwardly at his memory system. He sees the wall of a memory room divided into five places, each containing an image. Fludd nowhere mentions or explains these images in his text, but they obviously illustrate the principles of the classical art of memory, which uses *places* and *images*.

Fludd expounds his Hermetic philosophy in a vast work in many volumes with very long titles, the gist of which can be reduced to that of the running title, *Utriusque Cosmi...Historia*, or The History of Both Worlds. These two worlds are the great world of the universe or the Macrocosm, and the little world of Man or the Microcosm. The first volume, on the Macrocosm, was published in two parts in 1617 and 1618. The second volume, on the

Microcosm, was published in 1619. It is in the second volume that the treatise on the art of memory occurs, for this is an art proper to the Microcosm, through which Man can reflect and hold in memory the Great World.

Though their author was living in England, these great tomes were published in Germany, by the firm of Johann Theodore De Bry, at Oppenheim; they are lavishly illustrated with engravings. The illustration of his works was very important to Fludd for hieroglyphic diagrams of great complexity were necessary for the exposition of his philosophy. He must somehow have conveyed to the engraver in Germany detailed sketches and instructions for the illustrations. Channels of communication between the De Bry firm and England had been established by the elder De Bry (Theodore De Bry) who visited England in 1587 to collect materials for his publications of voyages of discovery, amongst which was the *America*, with engravings after the drawings of John White. The De Bry firm was thus accustomed to procuring sketches in England for engraved illustrations. And we know that, in the case of the De Bry publication of Fludd's works, the author was satisfied that the illustrations carried out his intentions. When taunted by Dr. William Foster for having his books printed beyond the seas, with the insinuation that this was because "Our Universities and Our Reverend Bishops (God bee thanked) are more cautelous than to allow the printing of Magical books here," Fludd indignantly replied that "I sent them beyond the seas because our home-borne Printers demanded five hundred pounds to print the first volume and to find the cuts in copper; but beyond the seas it was printed at no cost of mine, and *that as I would wish*." It thus seems probable that detailed sketches were available to the engraver, since Fludd was satisfied with his performance as accurately representing his wishes. Can we therefore rely on the engraving of a theater in the memory system as representing a sketch of a real theater in London? I believe that we can.

Advertisement



TRACTATUS PRIMI.
SECTIONIS II.
PORTIO III.

De animæ memorativæ scientia, quæ
vulgo ars memoriæ vocatur.

A R S M E M O R I Æ.



TRA.

First Page of the *Ars
Memoriae* in Robert Fludd's
Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia,
Tomus Secundus, Oppenheim,
1619

THE FIRST PART of the History of the Macrocosm (1617) was dedicated to James I in most ecstatic terms. Fludd was at this time very anxious to secure the support of James against his enemies. There is in the British

Museum a manuscript *Declaration* addressed to the King by Fludd, in which he earnestly defends himself as an innocent follower of divine and ancient philosophies, appends testimonials from foreign scholars about the value of his writings, and mentions the dedication of the Macrocosm to James. Fludd's strong wish to interest James in his ideas and to secure his support at this time is important to bear in mind in connection with the theater in the memory system. The original Globe Theater was burned down in 1613 but was at once rebuilt on the same foundations and on the same lines as its predecessor. James I, who had taken Shakespeare's company of players under his protection (the Lord Chamberlain's Company which now became the King's Men), took an interest in the rebuilding of the theater of his own company of players and contributed a considerable sum towards the cost. The second Globe was rather particularly associated with the King, and the second Globe would still have been in its state of fresh magnificence in 1619, the date at which Fludd's theater memory system was published. If Fludd alludes in it to a real theater, as he states that he does, what could be more suitable than the second Globe, the most famous of the London theaters and the one in which the King he wished to ingratiate was particularly interested?

In his treatise on the art of memory, Fludd devotes a whole chapter to a polemic against the use of fictitious or imaginary buildings in memory systems; only real buildings, he says, are to be used in the art of memory. The definitions and arguments about real and fictitious places were constantly repeated in treatises on the classical art of memory and Fludd in treating this theme is in a well-worn tradition. All the more striking, therefore, is his insistence that the use of fictitious places is not to be allowed, as though he wishes to emphasize that his memory system uses a real, not a fictitious theater. And in the text above the engraving of the theater in his system he specifies that by a theater he means "a public theater in which comedies and tragedies are acted." The great wooden theaters of London were technically known as "public theaters." Everything seems to suggest that Fludd intended to use a real public theater in his memory system and in view of his wish to attract and interest James I the most likely public theater for him to have used would be the second Globe.

Practically the only visual evidence hitherto available about the interior of an Elizabethan or Jacobean theater is provided by the famous De Witt sketch of the Swan Theater.

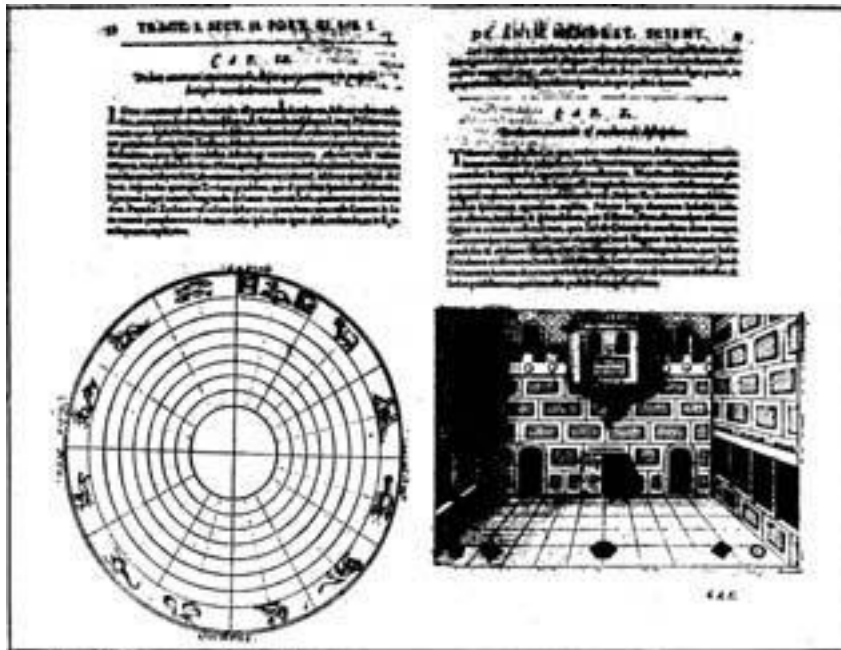


**The De Witt Sketch of the
Swan Theater**

The features shown in this sketch are too familiar to need comment, and have been the basis of all reconstructions of the Globe. I must however emphasize one point. In these theaters the outer stage was open and uncovered, but the inner stage had a covering which projected from the tiring house wall and was supported by two columns, or "posts" as they were called. It is known that the underside of this covering was painted to represent the heavens. The two columns or posts supporting the inner stage cover, the underside of which was painted with the heavens, can be seen in the sketch of the Swan. Imagine that you are standing on the stage of the Swan between the posts. If you look up you will see the ceiling painted with the heavens, but you will not

see the upper story above it, because you are under the heavens. If you look straight ahead you will see that part of the tiring house wall which was under the heavens. I believe that what Fludd can show us is a view of the stage of the Globe taken from just such a position, under the heavens.

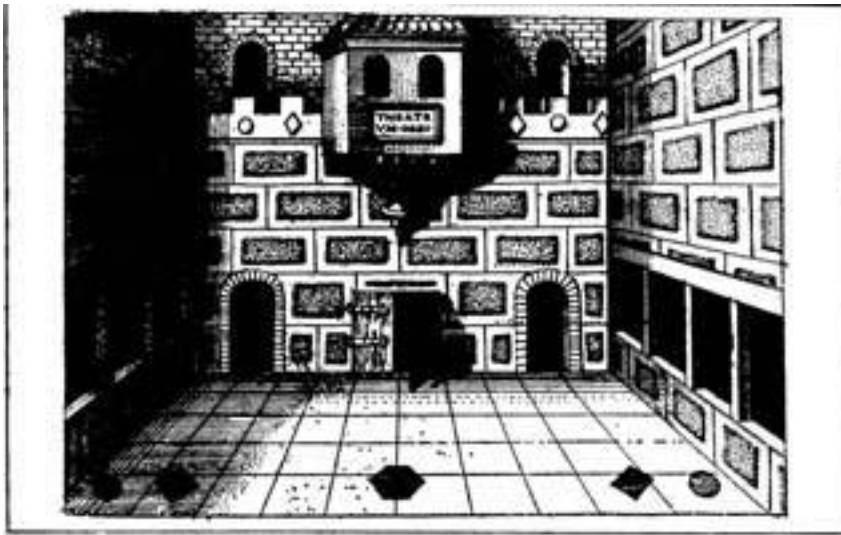
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The Heavens and the Theater.
From Robert Fludd's
Ars Memoriae

Reproduced here are two consecutive pages from Robert Fludd's description of his memory system. On the left-hand page, we see the familiar sight of the Zodiac and its signs; within it are seven circles representing the spheres of the planets. This is what Fludd calls the "round" part of his art, which uses the heavens as a memory system. With this system Fludd uses "memory theaters" in which he proposes to memorize all the contents of the world of nature and of man through gearing them to the stars. The process does not admit of rational explanation though obscure efforts of this kind are not uncommon in the Renaissance. This is one of those Hermetic, astrally organized systems of the type which Giulio Camillo had made popular.

Immediately opposite the page showing the heavens there is a page showing a theater. This is the theater which Fludd says is like a public theater in which tragedies and comedies are acted (the Latin words can be seen in the text above it.) It is one of twenty-four identical theaters or stages which are to be used with the heavens shown on the opposite page in this magic memory system.



The Theater From Fludd's
Ars Memoriae

On the back wall of this stage we see three entrances on ground level; the central one has great hinged doors shown half open. Two entrances on the upper level open onto a battlemented terrace. In the center is an upper chamber with a bay window.

In an article in the *Shakespeare Quarterly* in 1958 the late Richard Bernheimer reproduced this engraving of a theater about which he made the following remarks:

Shakespeareans will recognize the presence of a lower and an upper stage, of two entrance doors flanking an inner stage, of battlements fitted for scenes of siege, and of a bay window, out of which Juliet might lean to drink in the honeyed words of her swain: all things which no one has ever seen, although they have been postulated by research into stage directions and allusions in dramatic texts.

Bernheimer saw something. Unfortunately he spoiled this brilliant intuition by making mistakes in his interpretation of the engraving and of Fludd's text. The basic mistake was that he took the engraving to represent a whole theater, a very small theater with boxes at the sides for the audience rather like those in a sixteenth-century tennis court. Such a theater would obviously be impossible for serious acting purposes and in the later part of his article Bernheimer withdrew his suggestion that the engraving might throw light on the Shakespearean theater.

IT IS ESSENTIAL to observe that this engraving is exactly opposite the one of the heavens on the opposite page. When the book is closed the round diagram of the heavens exactly covers the theater. Does this arrangement not only refer to the magic mnemonics in which stages like this are placed all round the zodiac, but also allude to the arrangements of real theaters in which the heavens were painted on the under side of the inner stage cover?

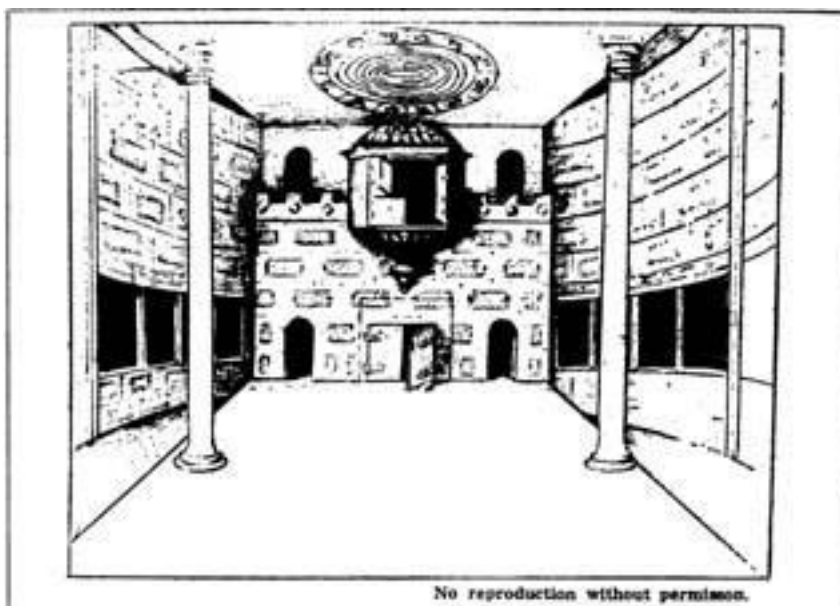
Once one begins to think on these lines one understands the relationship of the engraving to the Globe Theater. The engraving represents that part of the stage of the Globe Theater which would be covered by the stage heavens. What we are seeing as we look straight ahead is the tiring house wall at the Globe, not the whole of it but only the two lower levels. We do not see the third level *because we are under the heavens*.

The only features in the engraving which Fludd mentions in his text and of which he makes use in his mnemonics are the five doors or entrances in the stage wall—three below and two above—and five columns said to be opposite them of which the bases only are shown in the engraving. He never mentions in the text nor uses in the mnemonics the other features so clearly depicted in the engraving—the bay window, the battlemented terrace, the side walls with those openings in their lower part. And though the five doors in the stage wall are constantly mentioned—are in fact the basis of a scheme using five memory places—he never specifies the differences between the five doors which are shown in the engraving, never says that the central one has those great hinged doors which we see opening to display an inner room. What would be the object of showing all these features in the engraving, which he does not mention or use in the text, unless they were real features of a real stage to which he wanted to allude?

But what about the side walls with those box-like apertures near their bases? These side walls close in the stage and make it impossible as an acting space visible from a whole theater. And what about the five columns, of which only the bases are shown, and which, if really in the positions shown, would impossibly obstruct an audience's view of the stage from the front?

My explanation of these features is that they are distortions of the real stage introduced for mnemonic purposes. Fludd wanted a memory room within which to practice his mnemonics with the five doors and the five columns. He wanted this memory room to be based on a real stage but closed at the sides to form a memory theater—rather like one of Willis's memory theaters. To see the real stage of the Globe behind the engraving one has therefore to shift the side walls. Nevertheless these imaginary side walls show a feature of the real theater, namely the boxes or "gentlemen's rooms" occupied by persons of rank and friends of the actors which were situated in galleries on either side of the stage.

The five columns are also both unreal and real. They are introduced for mnemonic purposes; Fludd himself says that they are "feigned." Nevertheless they too have a real aspect, for they are situated on the line on which there would be, on the real stage, not five but two columns or posts rising to support the heavens. Once these points have been grasped we can, by combining the Fludd engraving with the De Witt drawing, cause the stage of the Globe to appear out of the magic memory system.



Sketch of the Stage of the Globe Theater
Based On Fludd
(Drawn by R. W. Yates)

In this sketch of the stage of the Globe as revealed by Fludd the mnemonic distortions are cleared away. The impossible side walls are removed and two columns or posts rise to support the heavens above. The signs of the zodiac are indicated by characters only; this is but a skeletal outline of what the painted heavens at the Globe may have been like. The gentlemen's rooms or boxes are shown in galleries on either side of the stage. Instead of being distorted into a memory room, the stage is now clearly seen projecting from the tiring house wall into the yard, and with posts or columns supporting the heavens over the inner stage. The columns are copied from those in the "Temple of Music" in the first volume of Fludd's work.

If this sketch is compared with the De Witt drawing it can be seen to be in agreement with it in the essentials of tiring house wall, projecting stage, posts, galleries. The only difference—and it is a big one—is that it shows us the stage not of the Swan but of the Globe.

Fludd shows that there were five entrances to the stage, three on ground level and two on the upper level giving onto the terrace. This solves a problem which has worried scholars. E. K. Chambers suggested that there ought to be five entrances, corresponding to the five entrances in the *frons scaenae* of the classical stage. The classical stage was of course all on one level. Here we see the classical theme of the five entrances transposed to a multilevel stage, where there are three entrances below and two above. It is an extremely satisfying solution of the problem and one which suggests that, notwithstanding the battlements and bay window, there may have been some classical and Vitruvian elements in the design of the Globe.

THE QUESTION of inner stages is one which has much exercised scholars. The emphasis on inner stages seems now rather unfashionable but Fludd shows great hinged doors opening in the center to display something and immediately above them he shows the "chamber." The only emendation of Fludd's picture of the tiring house wall which is made in the sketch is the suggestion that the front of the bay window might have opened in two ways, either as windows opening while the lower part was closed, or the whole folding right back. The bay window could then be used for window scenes, or, when the doors were fully opened, an upper inner stage would be disclosed. Such lower and upper inner stages could have extended right through the tiring house to the back of the building where windows would have lighted them from the back.

The position of the chamber as shown by Fludd solves what has been one of the major problems of Shakespearean staging. It has been known that there was a terrace on the upper level which was thought to run right across it, and known also that there was an upper chamber. It has been thought that this chamber was placed behind the terrace which with its railings or balusters—or, as we now see, battlements—would obscure the view into the chamber. Fludd shows us that the terrace ran behind the front part of the chamber which projected beyond it over the main stage. The terrace as it were passed through the chamber, which could be entered from it from either side. No one has thought of this solution of the chamber and terrace problem which is—or so it seems to me—obviously the right one.

The emendations of the Fludd engraving made in the sketch are as follows: the place taken by the title of the engraving (*Theatrum Orbi[s]*) on the window has been made to open up as a door; the side walls with the boxes have been thrown back on either side of the stage; the two posts and the heavens which they support have been inserted, and the stage has been extended and shown jutting out into the yard as in the De Witt drawing.

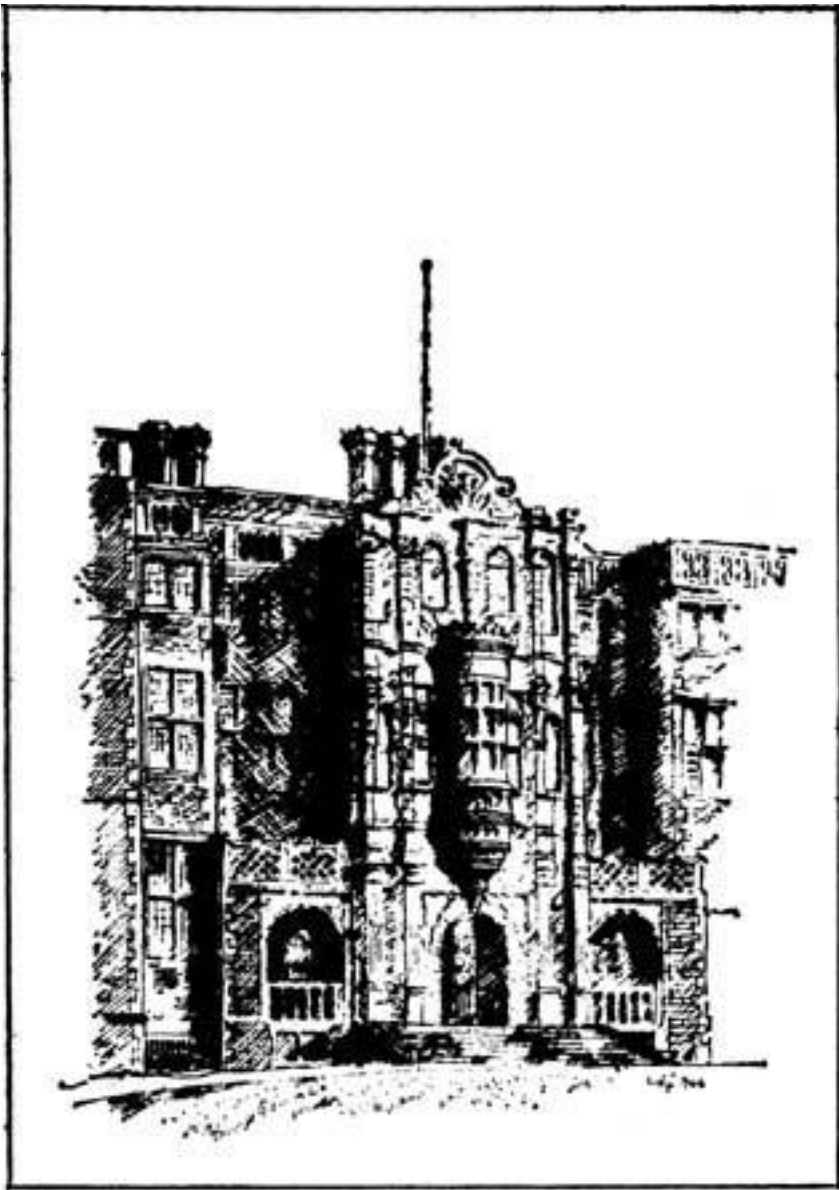
Notice the effect of rustication on the walls in the engraving, roughly reproduced in the sketch. Rustication presupposes a stone building. How then can this be a reflection of a wooden theater? There is an answer to that. We know that the wooden theaters were covered with painted canvas, and we also know that a wooden

banqueting house erected at Westminster in 1581 was covered with canvas painted to resemble rustication. I believe that what we see here is the canvas covering of a wooden theater painted to resemble rustication.

Though the imitation rustication may give quite a modern effect to theater as of some Italian palazzo of the Renaissance, the great gate, battlements, and bay window remind rather of Elizabethan and Jacobean mansions with their prominent gatehouses and battlements. For example the gatehouse of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, built about 1536, has battlements and projecting window with a corbel touching the top of the main door.



And at Bramshill House in Hampshire, built about 1605, the gatehouse-like-entrance, with its three doors, the center one touched by the corbel under the center window which has a terrace on either side of it, is curiously reminiscent of the Fludd engraving. In view of these and other examples the suggestion is made in the sketch of the Globe that possibly the central door should be larger and should extend up to the base of the corbel below the window.



IN THE RECONSTRUCTION of the Globe suggested by Fludd, the stage wall is seen to have something of the appearance of a gatehouse to a great contemporary mansion, yet it could easily turn into the battlemented and fortified entrance to town or castle. The use of rustication with the battlements and bay window gives a hybrid effect yet shows the flexibility of this stage architecture. The illusion aimed at is that of the entrance to a great house, which could turn into a palazzo in Italy, yet be rapidly switched to sterner aspects for scenes of siege and battle.

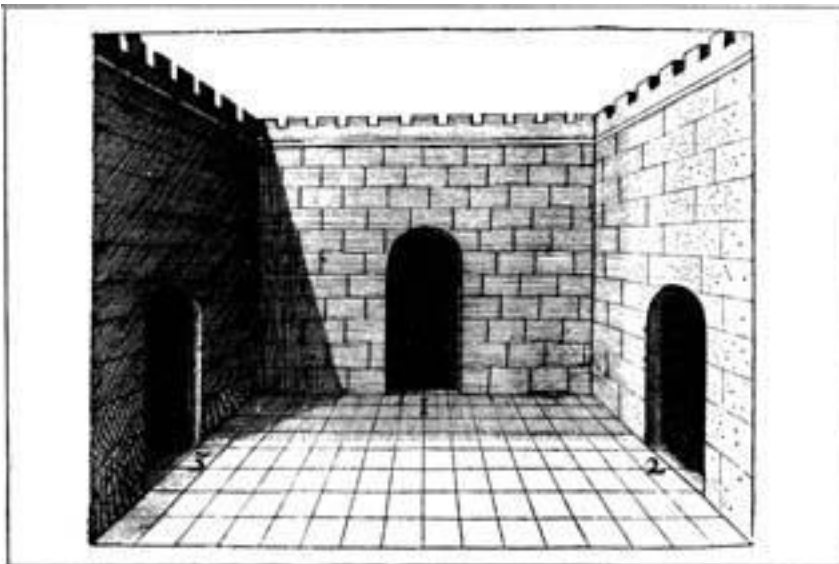
Though mnemonic distortions, German influences (for the possibility of some influence on the engraving at the German end of the publication cannot be altogether excluded), and the splendors of the second Globe may come to some extent between Fludd's engraving and Shakespeare's original theater, there is no doubt in my mind that this Hermetic philosopher has shown us more of it than we have ever seen before. Fludd is in fact the only person who has left us any visual record at all of the stage on which the plays of the world's greatest dramatist were acted.

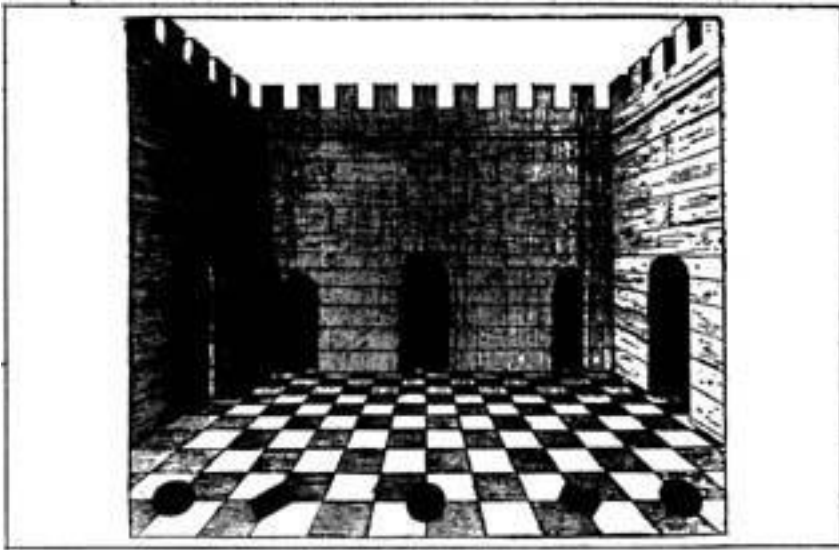
We can therefore begin to people this stage with scenes. There are the doors on ground level for the street scenes, doors at which people knock, at which they talk in the "threshold scenes." There is the "penthouse,"

formed by the projecting bay windows, which affords shelter from the rain. There are the battlemented walls of city or castle with projecting bastion (entered by combatants from the terrace) and under it the great gate, all ready for historical scenes of siege and battle. Or, if we are at Verona, there is the palazzo of the House of Capulet, with its upper chamber whence Juliet leaned “on such a night as this.” Or, if we are at Elsinore, there are the ramparts on which Hamlet and Horatio were conversing when Hamlet saw the Ghost. Or, if we are in Rome, there is the rostrum from which Mark Antony addressed friends, Romans, countrymen, on the stage below. Or, if we are in London, there is the upper room of the Boar’s Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Or, if we are in Egypt, chamber and terrace are dressed to hold the monument on which Cleopatra died.

Shakespearean scholars have puzzled as to how different localities were indicated on the main stage. A case in point is that of the Capulet orchard over the walls of which Romeo leaped to come under Juliet’s window. Chambers inferred that he must have had a wall to leap and pointed to many other scenes, such as those showing camps of rival armies, which seem to demand differentiation by walls or some kind of divisions. He conjectured that possibly scenic constructions resembling walls were brought onto the stage. More recently Glynn Wickham has drawn attention to the numerous references to “battlements” in theater documents and has conjectured that light screens were used to indicate localities. Naturally, no one has ever seen a visual representation of such walls, battlements, or screens, but it may be that Fludd can show us something of the kind.

In addition to his main theater, Fludd illustrates two secondary theaters which are to be used with the main theater as parts of his most elaborate memory system:





Secondary Theaters.
From Robert Fludd's *Ars Memoriae*

As always, Fludd insists that these secondary theaters, too, are real and not fictitious memory places. One is labeled “the figure of a true theater.” These secondary theaters are therefore, I believe, like the main one, not only memory theaters but reflections of something real or true seen at the Globe.

Both are formed of battlemented walls. In one, the walls appear to be made of stone blocks; in the other, of wooden beams. More probably, both are screens covered with canvas painted to resemble stone or wood. One has three entrances, the other five (and a set of column bases to be used in the mnemonics like those in the main theater). These battlemented minor theaters have a matching relationship with the battlemented terrace in the main theater.

I suggest that Fludd’s two subsidiary theaters reflect light scenic constructions resembling battlemented walls which were drawn onto the stage to indicate differences in locality. Fludd makes an important revelation about such constructions by showing that they had entrances, and so could be used for playing scenes in which entrances and exits are made. They could have been placed beforehand on the stage to provide for scenes required by a play which were not playable with the facilities provided by the tiring house wall. For example, extra scenes representing the Capulet orchard and the Friar’s cell—which was in the country, to which his visitors made their way and entered by a door—would be required for *Romeo and Juliet*. Or take the case of the camps of rival armies between which the scenes change so rapidly in *Richard III*. The problem of how such scenes were staged is solved if we can think of constructions like Fludd’s subsidiary theaters being used for the rival camps. Again, Fludd has shown us something for which no visual evidence has hitherto existed, though the actual placing of such screening walls on the stage obviously presents some difficulties which will need careful future discussion and examination.

DOES FLUDD, who tells us so much about the stage, have nothing to tell us about the shape and plan of the Globe as a whole? I believe that if one sets about it carefully and methodically one can draw out of the engraving of the main theater sufficient evidence to enable one to draw a ground plan of the theater as a whole, not of course a detailed architect’s plan, but a plan of the basic geometrical forms used in the construction of the theater. I believe that Fludd gives information about this in two ways, first through the shapes of the column bases shown in the main theater, and secondly through his insistence on the five doors in the stage wall.

We do not have to rely solely on the engraving of the main theater for the shapes of the five column bases which it shows, for the text clearly specifies their shapes. “The shapes of the two at each extremity are to be circular or round; the middle column will have the figure of a hexagon; the two intermediary columns will be square.” The three geometrical forms specified for these columns are thus the hexagon, the circle, and the square.

The only visual evidence about the external shape of the Globe is to be found in those early maps of London in which small representations of the theater are shown on Bankside. On some maps the Globe is indicated as a polygonal building; in others it looks more like a round building. There is also a statement by an eyewitness about the shape of the Globe. Dr. Johnson’s friend, Hester Thrale, lived in the mid-eighteenth century near the site of the Globe, which had been demolished in 1644 under the Commonwealth but of which some remains could still be seen in her time, which she describes as a “black heap of rubbish.” Mrs. Thrale took a romantic interest in the old theater about which she makes this statement: “There were really curious remains of the old Globe Playhouse, which, though hexagonal without, was round within.”

Encouraged by Mrs. Thrale, I suggest that Fludd is alluding through the shapes of the column bases to geometrical forms used in the construction of the Globe—the hexagon, the circle, and the square.

I now ponder on the fact on which Fludd insists so strongly that there were five entrances to the stage shown in his engraving. Fludd’s evidence about this solves the problem raised by Chambers that the Globe ought to have had five entrances like the classical theater. It did have five entrances, not as in the classical stage all on ground level, but three below and two above—an adaptation of the five entrances of the classical stage to a multilevel stage. In spite of the basic difference from the classical stage due to the multilevel stage, do the five entrances at the Globe nevertheless suggest a classical and Vitruvian influence on its design?

According to Vitruvius, the basic plan of the classical theater was determined by four equilateral triangles inscribed within a circle. Renaissance reconstructions of the ancient theater were based on the Vitruvian triangles, as can be seen in Palladio’s plan of the Roman theater which is given in Daniele Barbaro’s commentary on Vitruvius.

The base of one triangle determines the line of the *frons scaenae* while its apex points to the main gangway in the auditorium. Other triangle apices determine the positions of the five entrances in the *frons scaenae*, and of the other six gangways of the auditorium. Vitruvius likens these four triangles to the triangles inscribed by astrologers within the circle of the zodiac to form the *trigona* of the signs—triangles connecting related signs of the zodiac with one another. The classical stage was thus planned in accordance with the structure of the world, as then understood, to reflect the proportions of the world. May we not assume that the Globe Theater—the very name of which suggests the world and in which the heavens hung over part of the stage—would also have been planned in accordance with such a structure and that the four triangles inscribed within a circle would have played a part in determining its plan?

The attempt here made to draw a suggested plan of the Globe works on the assumption that this theater was an adaptation of the Vitruvian theater—it would have to be an adaptation, not an exact copy, for its stage was not all on one level like the classical stage. The other assumption made is that Fludd gives information that the basic geometrical forms used in the design of the Globe were the hexagon, the circle, and the square.

THE EXTERNAL FORM of the theater in this plan is hexagonal. Within the hexagon is inscribed a circle. Within this circle are inscribed four equilateral triangles. The base of one gives the position of the *frons scaenae* or tiring house wall. Its apex points to the opposite part of the auditorium. On the inner circle—which

marks the boundary between the galleries and the yard—seven openings are indicated, opposite seven of the triangle apices. It is possible that these were not actually entrances to the lower gallery, but they would mark the points at which there were boundaries between the seats.

Three other triangle apices determine the position of the three entrances on ground level in the *frons scaenae* or tiring house wall. At the Globe the other two entrances were on the upper level immediately above the two entrances flanking the main entrance on ground level. Thus the five entrances at the Globe needed only three triangle apices to mark their positions. It is a deviation from the classical plan due to the multilevel stage.

The square includes both the tiring house and the stage, and is bounded at the back by the outer hexagonal wall. Since there were acting areas within the tiring house it may be said that the square is the stage as a whole. The part of it in front of the *frons scaenae* is a rectangle jutting out into the middle of the yard. The front of the stage is on the diameter of the yard, just as the proscenium of the classical theater was on the diameter of the orchestra. The two posts are marked, indicating the point at which the inner stage cover, or “heavens,” ends.

The contract for the Fortune Theater, which is said to have been made like the Globe in some respects, specifies that the stage is to extend to the middle of the yard. It gives a dimension of 43 feet for the stage, which has been followed here, though the total dimension of 80 feet given for the Fortune has been increased to 86 feet. However, any dimensions could be used with this plan, provided that the proportions between them remain the same.

This is simply a plan of basic geometrical forms. If this plan is compared with Palladio’s plan of the Roman theater, it is seen that both plans have to solve the problem of placing a stage building and a stage in relation to a circle, and they solve it in much the same way—with the interesting difference that the hexagonal outline of the Globe enables it to get in a square, which is just not possible within the circle of the Vitruvian theater plan.

The square is highly significant, for it relates the Shakespearean theater to the temple and the church. In his third book on temples, Vitruvius describes how the figure of a man with extended arms and legs fits exactly into a square or a circle. In the Italian Renaissance, this Vitruvian image of Man within the square or the circle became the favorite expression of the relation of the Microcosm to the Macrocosm, or, as Rudolf Wittkower puts it in his *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, “invigorated by the Christian belief that Man as the image of God embodied the harmonies of the universe, the Vitruvian figure inscribed in a square and a circle became a symbol of sympathy between Microcosm and Macrocosm. How could the relation of Man to God be better expressed...than by building the house of God in accordance with the fundamental geometry of the square and the circle?” This was the preoccupation of Renaissance designers of round churches. Our plan suggests that it was also the preoccupation of the designers of the Globe Theater.

THE OLD THEORY of the inn yard as the sole ancestor of the theaters of the English Renaissance begins to seem singularly inadequate. There are already signs that the inn yard obsession is on the wane and that scholars are beginning to look for other explanations of the efflorescence of large new wooden theaters in London from 1576 onwards. It was in 1576 that James Burbage erected the “Theater,” the first of the new style wooden theaters which were to house the drama of the English Renaissance. No one has yet come forward however to suggest that the London theaters might belong in the European revival of the classical theater. Yet the very attempt to build large public theaters of wood might suggest classical influence, for Vitruvius states that many of the public theaters in Rome were built of wood. The famous Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza, designed by Palladio, is made of wood and stucco. The remarks of foreign visitors when surveying the new London theaters indicate that they saw classical influence in them. De Witt speaks of the amphitheaters of London. A traveler

who visited London in 1600 says that he saw an English comedy in a theater “constructed in wood after the manner of the ancient Romans.” Were the English public theaters unroofed not because of some rough island inn-yard ancestry but in imitation of the ancient theaters open to the sky? No one has asked this very obvious question.

But now a fundamental question must be asked. Is there any evidence that knowledge of the revival of Vitruvius in the Italian Renaissance had reached England before 1576, when Burbage erected his theater? John Shute’s book on the orders had been published in 1563, but more important in our context is the mathematical Preface of John Dee.

In 1570, six years before the appearance of Burbage’s theater, there was published in London an English translation of Euclid by Henry Billingsley, with a long preface in English by John Dee, the well-known scientist, alchemist, and occultist. In this preface Dee surveys all the mathematical sciences both from the point of view of Pythagoro-Platonic mystical theory of number and also with the purpose of being of practical utility to artisans. James Burbage who was a carpenter by trade, as well as an actor, might well have read this inspiring Preface in which there are quotations from Vitruvius, and also from Alberti, translated into English. When discussing Man as the “Lesse World” Dee urges the reader to “Looke in Vitruvius,” referring in the margin to the chapter in the *De architectura* in which man within the square and the circle is described. Dee states that he is using for his account of architecture not only “Vitruvius the Romane” but also “Leo Baptista Albertus, a Florentine.” Rather curiously, he would seem at one point to be thinking of wooden architecture when he says that “the hand of the carpenter is the architect’s instrument” carrying out what the architect “in mind and imagination determines.” He refers only once to Vitruvius on the theater, when he quotes the description of those mysterious sound amplifiers which Vitruvius states were placed under the seats in theaters, through which, says Dee translating Vitruvius, “the voices of the players will come more clear and pleasant to the ears of the lookers on.” With this poetical passage on the musical voices of the players we may be near to the genesis of the Shakespearean type of theater.

The early attempts in Italy to understand or to reproduce the Vitruvian theater were often misunderstandings or adaptations of it and not archaeo-logically correct reconstructions. The Globe would similarly be a new synthesis, a new creation emerging out of the classical tradition. And if the suggested plan can be relied on, there would seem to be something like an attempt to merge the theater with the church. When discussing the use of the round form for churches in the Renaissance, R. Wittkower quotes from Alberti, who believed that the round form was the form most beloved by nature, and that nature was the best teacher for “nature is God.” Alberti recommends nine basic forms for churches, amongst them the hexagon, the octagon, and other polygonal forms all determined by the circle. The hexagonal outline of the Globe might therefore give it something of the implications of the Renaissance church, endeavoring to express the relationship of man to God through the geometrical symbolism of the hexagon, the circle, and the square.

IN CONCLUSION, let us attempt to summarize the ways in which these investigations shed new light on the Globe Theater.

From the reconstruction of the stage of the Globe, based on the Fludd engraving, we gain new light on positions of entrances, terrace, and chamber. These matters have been unclear and the subject of controversy because there was no visual evidence about them. The test of the validity of this reconstruction will have to come from the experts on stage directions and indications of staging in the plays. Will this arrangement work with the plays? Can it explain the movements of the characters? I have re-read most of Shakespeare’s plays with this stage in mind and I have found that illumination breaks from it. Now that this reconstruction is available, its workability must be tested from the plays.

Fludd's evidence suggests the use of secondary theaters, with entrances, placed on the stage to indicate different localities, somewhat after the manner of the medieval mansions. In examining the staging of a play with this reconstruction in mind, the possible use of such wall-like screens for some scenes should be considered.

The stage architecture has revealed itself as creating the illusion of a great mansion with battlements and gatehouse, and not untouched by modern Italianate influences in the attempted effect of rustication. Nourished as we have been hitherto solely on the rough and makeshift stage of the Swan as shown in the De Witt drawing, this stage appears by contrast infinitely superior. We see that an impressive stage building is presented, flexibly adapted to many uses, but ultimately derivative—I would suggest—from the classical palace the façade of which formed the *frons scaenae* of the classical theater. One may even wonder whether the posts are vestiges of the colonnade on the classical stage.

Symbolically, the theater can be seen as presenting the drama of Man the Microcosm, performing his parts on the square stage of the terrestrial world, while the stars hang above him, and the round of the whole theater, enclosed within a hexagon, represents the divine Macrocosm. The relationship of Man to God is more subtly expressed in this theater than in the obvious hierarchies of Paradise, Purgatory, and Hell of the medieval theater, though influences from the medieval tradition persist and there is a hierarchy here, from the square elemental world, through the middle world of the stars, to a supercelestial world. The third level of the theater, above the heavens, is not shown by Fludd.

“All the world's a stage.” The familiar words take on a new meaning as we begin to see the Globe Theater as indeed a Theater of the World, presenting the history of the Microcosm within the Macrocosm. That such a theater is partly a Renaissance church is not immediately apparent and perhaps should not be too much stressed, yet associations of this kind sometimes make themselves felt in the Shakespearean drama, and the symbolic theater perhaps brought them out more clearly.

THERE IS ANOTHER FACT which I believe that Fludd reveals. He tells us how the World Theater faced in relation to the points of the compass. These are marked on the diagram of the heavens facing the stage; when these heavens cover the stage we learn that the stage was at the east end of the theater, like the altar in a church.

*But see what light through yonder window breaks!
It is the east and Juliet is the Sun.*

Here the World Theater fits with the poetry. Or one may think of those lines spoken by Hamlet to which Francis Fergusson has pointed as an indication of the symbolic character of the stage. Hamlet stands on “this goodly frame the earth” which seems to him but a “barren promontory”—the square stage projecting into the yard—then points upwards to the heavens painted on the roof above him, “this majestical roof fretted with golden fire.” The tragedy of Hamlet was that his world was out of joint, a tragedy the true proportions of which were perhaps seen most clearly when it was originally played in the Theater of the World.

In the course of the publication of his *History of the Two Worlds*, Fludd became involved in controversy with Kepler who attacked his musical theories. Though Kepler himself was far from being entirely divested of Pythagorean influences in his investigations of the courses of the stars, that controversy marks the point at which the ancient Microcosm-Macrocosm tradition, which the Renaissance had carried to new heights, is seen to be breaking down. That for Fludd the Shakespearean type of theater seems almost a symbol of the world view which he defends is illuminating, and may suggest that the Shakespearean drama was a late manifestation of drama played in a theater which was still organically in touch with the world.

This theater seems to me a splendid theater, admirably adapted for acting, plain yet strong, and closely in contact with the audience, like the Vitruvian theater. It is an adaptation of Vitruvius which many people today may think superior to the picture stage within the proscenium arch, which lost the true Vitruvian qualities. Yet the picture stage would supplant the Globe type of theater for centuries, had indeed already supplanted it at court when the Fludd engraving was published. Now that there is such an intense interest in restoring the Shakespearean drama to its original staging this reconstruction may attract the attention of producers. And for my part I cherish a hope that one day the true theater of the world may be built again on the old Bankside in London.

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