Penny stinkards and proper gentlemen: The demographics of London's theatre audiences, 1567--1642

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PENNY STINKARDS AND PROPER GENTLEMEN: THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF LONDON'S THEATRE AUDIENCES 1567-1642

By

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Bachelor of Arts
West Texas A & M University
2000

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Department of Theatre Arts
College of Fine Arts

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Penny Stinkards and Proper Gentlemen:

The Demographics of London Audiences 1567-1642

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Theatre

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College
ABSTRACT

Penny Stinkards and Proper Gentlemen: The Demographics of London’s Theatre Audiences 1567-1642

by

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Knowing ones audience is crucial to any theatre. How can the marketing staff target new patrons if they know nothing about their immediate audience? This quandary need not be limited to the present. Therefore, the thesis I propose is entitled “Penny Stinkards And Proper Gentlemen: The Demographics of London’s Theatre Audiences 1567-1642.” I have researched the different facets of Elizabethan life that may have played a factor in attendance. Rather than discussing whom Middleton, Kyd, and Shakespeare were writing for, I have discussed who may have actually attended. Whom one writes for and who ends up in the audience are not always one in the same. Many dramatists recognize the rich and the poor in their work. Who were they? Whose finances and work schedule would have allowed them to attend an afternoon performance? If these factors prevented some from attending, who would have attended anyway? Were there religious or moral factors that influenced attendance? These questions are some that I hope to answer.
I approached this with an open mind. I wanted to paint a picture of the potential audience demographic, with no bias to any one theory. I went where my research took me. Much of what has been written is speculation, and I have no illusions that my conclusions are any different. How could they be without the aid of time travel? What I hope to accomplish is a better understanding of the people who may have patronized Elizabethan theatres.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is mid-day. The rays of the afternoon sun gently brush across the spectators’ faces, leaving behind a rosy glow. The air is thick with the scent of warm ale, roasted nuts, and body odor, a salty, sour, musty aroma that coats ones nostrils and is slow to dissipate. Those in the yard have little room to breathe or sit, while those with a fatter purse look down upon the huddled masses in complete comfort, not one hair out of place nor one crease in their latest fashion. The crowd below becomes anxious, rowdy even, while the sophisticates above wink at the person sitting a few seats down and smoke their pipes. An already pungent aroma mingles with the scent of tobacco so that the air now smells stale and bitter. Someone below yells an obscenity. Several more find it funny, and a wave of laughter slowly engulfs the yard. The privileged in the sky, now straining to hear, focus instead on being seen; perhaps by “laugh[ing] aloud in the middle of the saddest scene of the terriblest tragedy”\(^1\) In the shadows lurk “vagrant persons, maisterles men, thieves, horse stealer, whoremongers, cony-catchers, contrivers of treason, and other idele and daangerous persons.”\(^2\) The learned men and young scholars debate the finer points of the drama unfolding before them and opportunistic vendors try to peddle their wares to a captive audience.

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Many facets of society attended the public theatre of Elizabeth’s day and beyond, but which facets? While it is easy to imagine the Globe populated with pasty-faced prostitutes, haughty aristocrats, and portly common dullards, “audiences are never assemblies of caricatures.” However, when conducting a demographic study, people will ultimately fall under certain headings.

In this paper, the privileged refers to “The nobility, the gentry, the wealthier merchants, and the professionals (advocates, clerics, teachers, military officers, and an occasional physician), together with their wives and children,” as defined by Ann Jennalie Cook in her book, The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London 1576-1642. The working class or common men/women refers to artisans and tradesmen and those in their employ. Any other group is self-explanatory or defined in the body of the paper.

I used the following abbreviations to denote English currency: d. for penny or pence, s. for shilling, and of course £ for pound. A chart explaining the value of Elizabethan currency in U. S. dollars is located on page 27. For my purposes, these numbers, while not the most current, are sufficient. The figures give some idea of the financial situation Londoners faced.

I have also used the terms playgoer, audience member, patron, and spectator to describe those in attendance at the theatres. These terms, for the purposes of this paper, are interchangeable. They are all equal. Any historical or modern connotations should be disregarded, as they have no relevance in this work. The term “patron” does not necessarily describe someone of wealth, nor does the term “playgoer” depict someone of

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3 Alfred Harbage, Shakespeare’s Audience (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941) 53.
lesser means. The definition of patron I am using is “a regular customer” as opposed to “sponsor.”

Before compiling any research, I had no preconceived notion regarding my results. I specifically attempted to clear my head of any biases I held regarding audience theory, and followed the path towards which my research led me. I did not want to be burdened with the more romantic view of Shakespeare’s audience, one in which book binders rubbed elbows with Dukes. As I will discuss in later chapters, the admission system did make concessions so that a broad spectrum of people could attend; they were segregated by their rank, divided by what they could afford. Likewise, I did not want to cling to the notion that only the wealthy attended the theatre. I did not set out prove or disprove any one theory.

I have examined the period from the erection of the first public theatre in London, the Red Lion, in 1567, to the ban against public performances in 1642. These seventy-five years cover the conception and fall of the public theatres in London, from the first permanent structure and first paying customer to the ban that prohibited such performances. I have pieced together accounts from the period with what data remains. My goal in doing so was to unearth the probable demographics of London’s theatre going public. It seems that the numbers regarding wages and costs of living conflict with the accounts from witnesses of the day. Both must be considered to create a well-balanced picture.
CHAPTER 2

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF LONDON

London was the fastest growing city in Elizabethan England. The population in 1550 was 12,000, and reached 200,000 in 1600. By 1642 the population had again doubled, with some accounts placing the total over 500,000, making London “the greatest city in Christendom,” and the largest city in Europe. “The theatres . . . were within walking distance of 160,000 people in 1605, slightly fewer in 1601.”

Andrew Gurr, in his book The Shakespearian Stage 1574-1642, suggests that fifteen to twenty percent of people living within reach of the playhouses were “regular playgoers.” So if we are to accept these figures, then 32,000 people living in a tight radius of London’s theatres were “regular playgoers”, which means that at least 6.4 to 8 percent of London’s population patronized the theatre, but these numbers do not consider the transient population. Many wealthy landowners from surrounding areas owned homes in London and would spend part of the year in the city. Merchants, soldiers and seamen were also members of this transient population. John Stow, who wrote Survey of London and Westminster, was saddened by the changes he was privy to in his lifetime, the necessary evils of population growth. He had noted that the common field just beyond Whitechapel Church, “which

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6 Harbage 53-54.
7 Andrew Gurr, The Shakespearian Stage 1574-1642 (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 213.
ought to be open and free to all men [was now] pestered with cottages and alleys." He was especially saddened by the destruction of churches and monuments in order to make "fair stabling for horses."

In order to illustrate the divisions in urban population, look at a muster role taken in 1608 of men between the ages of twenty and sixty years. The data is as follows:

Table 1  Gloucester County Muster Roll of 1608

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division by profession</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentry, professional men, and officials</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealers and retailers</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers, carriers, etc.</td>
<td>c.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants and miscellaneous</td>
<td>c.7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This roll was taken in the towns of Gloucester county: Gloucester, Tewkesbury, and Cirencester. The next largest cities of the day were Norwich and Bristol whose residents numbered somewhere between 12,000 and 13,000 apiece. The towns of Gloucester county had populations that were not quite as large. While this muster roll may not be directly applicable to London, it does provide some frame of reference. For example, the existence of the courts and all the administration pertaining to the courts in London would have increased the percentage of gentry, professional men, and officials, "perhaps

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10 Harbage pg 54-55
as high as ten percent." London’s position as the center of British society would have contributed to the percentage of merchants and retailers as well. However, craftsmen, in all likelihood, would have made up the largest percentage of men in that age group. In Alfred Harbage’s book, *Shakespeare’s Audience*, he defines craftsmen as, “the carpenters, masons, bookbinders, and button makers, with their helpers, the whole contingent of artisans, or ‘handicraft men,’ and those who were dependent upon them.”

Due to London’s population explosion and the city’s astounding growth, men like these were a necessary and valuable demographic, and found work and increased wages in the city. Masons working on the London Bridge received between 14d. and 16d. per day which was 33½% higher than the national average.11 Wages in London, articulated in royal proclamations, represented the maximum paid to “the best and most skillful workmen, journey men or hired servants.”12

While the average wage in London may have exceeded the national average, and it may be assumed that London would attract some of the “best and most skillful” craftsmen, the prices, unfortunately, far exceeded the wages. The craftsmen’s guilds did what they could to ease many Londoners’ burdens. In addition to monitoring standards of trade and apprentice training, they also provided assistance, “charitable relief,” to those in need. “Ten to fifteen percent of London’s population needed regular or occasional poor relief,”13 not ideal candidates for theatrical patronage. As per a law enacted in 1572, the poor were divided into three groups:

the poor is commonly divided into three sorts, ... some are poor by impotency, as the fatherless child, the aged, blind and lame...; the second are poor by casualty,

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12 Harbage 55.
13 Harbage 55.
14 Cook 228.
as the wounded soldier...and the sick person visited with grievous and painful
diseases; the third consisteth of thriftless poor, as the rioter...the
vagabond...and...the rogue and whores.

A small minority, 5 to 10 percent of the entire population, occupied the “upper
levels of society.” Thomas Churchill in *A Generall Rehearsal of Warres* (1579) defined
the privileged as such: “For there is but few sorts of true Nobilitie, or Gentlemen.
The firste is Gouernours, by whom all states and Kyngdomes are guided...The seconde
are Soldiours[officers]...The third are upright and learned Lawyers...The fowerth are
Marchauntes...” He failed to mention “all Ecclesiastical persons professing religion...[and] all students of Artes and Sciences,” which Barnaby Rich included in his *Roome for a Gentleman* (1609.) Apart from mere labels, Sir Thomas Smith surmised that a
gentleman is anyone who “can lie idlely, and without manuell labour, and will beare the
Port, charge and countenance of a Gentleman.”

London was the cultural hub of the Elizabethan world, but it was not with out its
dangers. Criminals flocked to London just as craftsmen did, because of increased
opportunities. The variety of criminals was as motley as the rest of society. There were
“priggers of prancers”(horse thieves), “prigmen” (those who stole clothing that was hung
out to dry), “demanders for glimmer”(women who claimed to have lost everything in a
fire), and “kinchin morts.” In Thomas Harman’s *A Caveat for Common Cursetors*
(1576) a kichin mort is described as “a little girl. The morts their mothers carries them at

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15 Pritchard 163.
17 Cook 12.
18 Cook 16-17.
19 Cook 16-17.
20 Ross 11.
21 Ross 11.
their backs in their slates, which is their sheets, and brings them up savagely, till they
grow to be ripe: and: soon ripe, soon rotten." These little girls often matured into
prostitutes and pickpockets. One might also have a run in with a "whip jack" with some
pitiable tale of a shipwreck, or a "cheater" (fingerer), a well dressed, persuasive offender
who accosted the "young gentlemen which [were] sent to London to study the laws." These more flamboyant degenerates were also met with cutpurses, courtesans, and
cozeners, all of whom would fall under "thriftless poor" heading, and under the
"playgoer" heading as well. An account from Henry Peacham's *The Compleat
Gentleman* (1634), describes a purse snatching while attending a play:

A tradesman's wife of the Exchange...desired him he would give her leave to go see
a play...He bade her take his apprentice along with her...but especially to
have a care of her purse...returning when the play was done...[she] told him she
had lost her purse.

'Wife,' quoth he, 'did I not give you warning of it? How much money was in there?'
Quoth she, 'Truly, four [gold] pieces, six shillings and a silver toothpicker.'
Quoth her husband, 'Where did you put it?'
'Under my petticoat, between that and my smock.'
'What,' quoth he 'did you feel nobody's hand there?'
'Yes,' quoth she, 'I felt one's hand there, but I did not think he had come for that.'

While, this is probably more of a humorous anecdote than a factual account, it must have
rested on a foundation of truth in order for a reader of that time to have found any humor
in it at all. Here is another account given by a youth who attended the Red Bull in 1625:

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22 Pritchard 226.
23 Picard 246.
24 Pritchard 201-202.
Most of my money being spent,
To S. Johns street to the Bull I went,
Where I the roaring Rimer saw,
And to my face was made a daw:
And pressing forth among the folke,
I lost my purse, my hat and clode.²⁵

This poor lad lost everything, and sadly did not have much money left to lose.

The authorities were usually absent from performances, so had a pickpocket been apprehended, they would have been subject to mob rule. Will Kemp wrote in 1600 of such a degenerate being tied to one of the pillars on the stage “for all the people to wonder at, when at a play they are taken pilfering.”²⁶ This incident was later recalled in a play written in 1606 called No-body and Some-body, author unknown: “somebody once pickt a pocket in this Play-house yard, Was hoisted on the stage, and shamd about it.”²⁷

“Beggars, vagabonds, masterless men, whores, panders, thieves, cozeners, rioters, and troublemakers of every kind,”²⁸ attended the theatre quite frequently, not to feed their souls, but their pocketbooks. Arrest records and sermons of the day contain account after account of these types of playgoers. Criminals were not exclusive to the theatre district. Cut-purses and pick pockets honed their craft anywhere a crowd assembled, from fairs to executions. They were proud of their skills and highly territorial. London offered these criminals career advancement as well, for in Billingsgate, pickpockets and cutpurses

²⁶ Gurr, Playgoing 56.
²⁷ Gurr, Playgoing 265.
²⁸ Cook 218.
could enter a training school administered by a former merchant and gentleman born by the name of Wotton.29

Disease was another danger that London presented. Clean water was a rarity due to London’s irrepressible growth. The Fleet ditch and Wallbrook River had become nothing more than raging sewers. The city government attempted to clean out the Fleet ditch and make it run with fresh drinking water, but “by means of continual encroachments upon the banks...and casting of soilage into the stream, [it had] become worse cloyed and choken than ever it was before.”30 The plague was an ever lurking menace casting its shadow over Europe. “Every ten years there was a major visitation of the plague; under the surface of filth, stench, and unsanitariness it smouldered endemically.”31 Plague eventually caused a lengthy closure in 1593 and another in 1596, but several more followed. Thomas Roe wrote to Elizabeth of Bohemia in 1630 of one of these closings:

Your majesty will give me leave to tell you another general calamity; we have had no plays this six months, and that makes our statesmen see the good use of them, by the want; for if our heads had been filled with the loves of Pyramus and Thisbe, or the various fortunes of Don Quixote, we should never have cared who made peace or war, but on the stage. But now every fool is enquiring what the French do in Italy, and what they treat in Germany. 32

Even though a major outbreak occurred every decade, a lengthy closing occurred with far more frequency.

29 Picard 247.
30 Ross 10.
31 Rowse 86.
32 Gurr, Playgoing 139.
Syphilis, then called the foul, French pox or the Neapolitan bone-ache was another highly infectious disease that had London in a panic. The “perilous and infective breath” of Cardinal Wolsey had purportedly contaminated King Henry VIII. While both were devastatingly infectious, Syphilis, plague, and “sweating sickness” changed the way many viewed disease. They “tested the assumption that illness was an internally derived state,” because those who studied disease were now able to characterize the contagion as a foreign body rather than some evil mist or curse. In addition to plague and syphilis, scurvy, malaria, smallpox, and a variety of childhood diseases were ever present around the streets of London town, but residents and play goers alike had to protect themselves against “thoughts” as well. Such was the fate of poor Margaret Russell in 1593 “who before had been tempted with an evil spirit and now died of a thought, as by the crownner’s quest [coroner’s inquest] was supposed.” Perhaps not everyone’s perception of disease and contagion was forever changed. Play going was potentially dangerous, the play houses, like London, a cesspool of crime and disease, and thoughts.

The average Londoner worked hard, so when the time came to relax, he “stretched his limbs and his lungs, feasted himself and entertained himself on a generous scale.” The celebration of the numerous festivals, both religious and secular, throughout the year provided some distraction to the slog of everyday existence. Festival time was cyclical and revolved around the four seasons. This resulted in a marriage between the man-made calendar and the calendar of the natural world, and provided for a

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33 Picard 94.
34 Hibbert 165.
36 Picard 95.
37 Byrne 240.
more “natural rhythm of time.” Naturally, agricultural communities adhered to these festivals more strictly than cities; the “seasonal rhythms and magico-religious beliefs” of rural England “were linked with the mysteries of natural fertility.” As a direct result, the festivities took on a more local flair, but London was not without its festivals. At Christmas, a massive tree was raised in Cornhill, and churches, homes, and streets were adorned with decorations of evergreen. Most homes organized private entertainment during the season, and the waits played for the Mayor and the municipal councilors. The waits were “a small body of wind instrumentalists maintained by a city or town at the public charge...They played for daily diversion of the councilors on ceremonial and festive occasions, and as a town or city band they entertained the citizens, perambulating the streets, often by night or in the early morning.” These musicians also served as night watchmen in London and were bound by decree to give concerts every Sunday and on feast days during the summer period which started on Lady Day (March 25) and ended on Michaelmas (September 29). The waits also participated in the Midsummer Watch, in which every guild and ward joined in a massive armed processional aimed at keeping the peace while Londoners celebrated all night long. Bonfires, pageants, and dancing were met with “vagabonds, rogues, pickpurses, querellers, whorehunters, and drunkards.” While festivals like Midsummer’s Watch were potentially dangerous and most definitely unruly, they were usually encouraged and sometimes sponsored by the city leaders. When the May Day festival outside St. Andrew was declined and the maypole torn down after the “Evil” May Day Riot of 1517, another maypole was erected on the Strand a few

39 Laroque 10.
40 Laroque 58.
decades later, and the festivities were reinstated. Shrove Tuesday was another festival marked by riots. One such instance in 1616 took place at the Phoenix, a playhouse on Drury Lane, and almost resulted in a partial demolition of the space.

The Prentizes on Shrove Tewsday last to the number of 3 or 4000 committed extreme insoslencies. Part of this number, taking their course for Wapping, did there pull downe to the ground 4 houses, spoiled all the goods therein, defaced many others; & a Justice of the Peace coming to appease them. . .had his head broken with a bat. The other part, making for Drury Lane, the beset [the Phoenix] round, broke in, wounded divers of the players, broke open their trunckes & whatt apparel, bookes or other things they found, they burnt & cutt in pieces; & not content herewith, gott on top of the house, & untitled it, & had not the Justices of Peace & Sherife levied an aide, & hindred their purpose, they would have laid that house likewise even with the ground.  

Festival days often ended with a rowsing game of football; matches were played against neighboring towns, schools, and various organizations.  

Various modes of sport were another popular diversion. Hunting was one such sport enjoyed by the wealthiest of kings and the most unfortunate of youth. The aristocracy had their own deer parks. Outlaws and the country folk hunted deer in the countryside or illegally on private land, although not so much for sport, but as a means of providing food for themselves and their families. Even young William Shakespeare was among the poachers who dared to venture beyond the fence lines to enjoy farm fed venison at no cost, as long as they were not caught. Deer hunting was primarily for the upper class. The Institution of a Gentleman states, “there is a saying among hunters that

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41 Laroque 58-59.
42 Inwood 134-135.
43 Hibbert 247.
44 Pritchard 189.

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he cannot be a gentleman which loveth not hawking and hunting." Hawking was exclusive to the very wealthy, because of the equipment and work force necessary to contain them. If one was not of a certain breeding or willing to risk a fine or jail time, then they were limited to hunting "vermin," or foxes, badgers, squirrels and the like. Fishing was another sport enjoyed by all, but the execution of it, as with hunting, differed between the classes. Wealthy Elizabethans had private ponds and waters.

Bear and bull baiting were popular spectator sports. In fact, most theatres were designed to accommodate such events. Elizabeth possessed her own bears and bear ward since the tender age of six; they were useful when entertaining ambassadors and dignitaries. If one went to a bear baiting, their description might read as such:

...the bears were brought forth into the court, the dogs set to them...if the dog would pluck the bear by the throat, the bear would claw him again by the scalp...Thus with plucking and tugging, scratching and biting, by plain tooth and nail on one side and the other, such expense of blood and leather was there between them...It was a sport very pleasant.

Cock fighting was also popular and just as violent, but perhaps the most violent and most accessible was public punishment. This, too, was considered somewhat of a public sport, and crowds would gather to humiliate a thief in the stocks or witness a traitor being drawn and quartered.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not include the sport that is still England's national pastime today, football. Matches between towns, districts, parishes and neighborhoods were played on Sundays and holidays. Elizabethans were no strangers to

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46 Rowse 202.
47 Rowse 201.

As for concerning football playing, I protest unto you it may rather be called a friendly kind of fight, than a play of recreation;..For doth not everyone lie in wait for his adversary, seeking to overthrow him and to pick him on his nose, ..sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their legs...sometimes their noses gush out with blood, sometimes their eyes start out... 50

George Owen points out, “If this be but playe, I cold wishe the spaniardes were here to see our plaies in England. Certes they would be in bodielye feare of our warre.”51

Shakespeare’s London was a city on the cusp of greatness. It was an exciting and, at times, frightening place ripe with drama. “The city was itself a theatre in its own right, a scene of conflicting voices, styles and purposes.”52

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48 Dodd 112.
49 Ross 30.
50 Ross 31.
51 Dodd 113-114.
CHAPTER 3

THE LONDON THEATRE SCENE

Part 1: The Playhouses: Cost and Capacity

Before the mid sixteenth century, acting troupes had no choice but to adapt their productions to any available space. Their options were limited. Inn-yards, city streets, private residences, and other varied structures were the temporary homes of English drama. The Red Lion was constructed in 1567. Its erection marked a watershed and a new age of drama began. "Theater was now a commercial and potentially prosperous business." \(^53\) The Red Lion not only changed the manner in which productions were staged, but its very existence changed the way patrons supported the theatre. John Brayne built the Red Lion, presumably, for his brother-in-law, James Burbage. The seating was a scaffolding of galleries. Burbage probably petitioned for these as a means of controlling the playgoers' purses, although this arrangement provided for a large seating capacity as well. He no longer had to pass the hat, as traveling companies had to do; he could collect admission at the door. \(^54\)

The Red Lion was only the first of many. Seventeen playhouses were constructed in less than sixty years. Thomas Stow wrote in 1631, "Before the space of threescore yeares agon-said I neither knew heard nor read of any such Theatres, set stages, or


\(^54\) Gurr, The Shakespearian 116.
playhouses as haue beene purposely built.” The three major venues for theatre in Elizabethan London, amphitheatres, hall playhouses, and court theaters, served slightly different audiences and had varying ticket prices. Even within these divisions were variations. No two theatres were exactly alike.

The Red Lion was an amphitheatre, as were all of the first generation of playhouses. The Theatre (1576), the Curtain (1577), the Rose (built in 1592, altered in 1597), and the Swan (1595) were the pioneering structures of the new era. These early amphitheatres were “usually round or polygonal buildings, built on a timber frame with plaster infilling, on brick and pile foundations, with a thatch or tile roofing for the galleries.” The yard had had at least one entrance gate, and, once inside, one could take stairs up to the three ranges of galleries. The price of admission at the first gate was a penny; if a playgoer wished to stand in the yard, no more need be paid. In order to enter the first galleries, in which patrons could sit or stand, they surrendered another penny; if they wished for extravagance, or at least the ability to sit in some manner of comfort, the higher galleries charged another penny in addition to the two that had previously been relinquished. Several of the theatres also provided seating in the Lords’ rooms, which were separated from the galleries adjacent to the stage; the admission was a staggering 6d. These prices were only paid by the privileged patron, but not all of the gentlemen playgoers observed from on high. Many preferred to pay the lesser admission fee, opting for a lower gallery where they could “crack Nuts with the Scholars in peny Rooms.” The yard, or the pit, depending on the venue, could easily hold 800 groundlings or more.

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55 Cook 210.  
56 Gurr, The Shakespearian 122.  
57 Gurr, The Shakespearian 122.  
58 Cook 184.
The expansion of the Rose in 1592 took the yard from roughly 1400 square feet to nearly 1800. The capacity was only contingent upon people’s perception of personal space; Alfred Harbage allotted 2.25 square feet of space to each groundling in his book *Shakespeare’s Audience*. The total capacity of the Rose, post renovation, was roughly 2400 patrons. The Swan accommodated 3000. This is fairly typical of all of the early amphitheatres, give or take.

The Rose Theater, as of 1593, was the only playhouse south of the Thames. Situated on a corner lot with Maiden Lane (now Park Street) to the south and Rose Alley to the West, more than thirty extant plays of the 1590’s were staged at The Rose, and records pertaining to the administration of this theatre have survived as well. An estimate of attendance at a popular play was about 2200 paying customers; this was recorded on January 6 1596 for the lost play, *Hercules*. To assume that these houses were often filled to capacity is exceptionally ambitious. According to records a more usual attendance figure was somewhere around 600. Proof of fluctuating houses can be found in the records of Henslowe’s receipts from the galleries of The Rose from July 1594 to June 1597. They ranged anywhere from 3s. to £7 “reaching the upper limits on holidays and at the premiers of new plays.” If an average of 600 playgoers attended The Rose every day, and if we are to assume that this was typical for all theatres (no records survived The Swan, and only one extant play performed at that theatre remains), then it is safe to presume that the early playhouses saw 3000 playgoers combined every day. In

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59 Gurr, *The Shakespearian* 127.
60 Harbage 23.
63 Gurr, *The Shakespearian* 123.
64 Cook 190.
65 Gurr, *The Shakespearian* 127.
1595, the Swan joined the Rose south of the Thames. A description of the two theatres by Johannes de Witt, a Dutch priest, who wrote of his visit to London in 1596: “The two more magnificent of these [theatres] are situated to the southward beyond the Thames, and from the signs suspended before them are called the Rose and the Swan.” De Witt made a sketch of The Swan in 1596, and sent it to his friend, Dutch scholar, Arend van Buchell. The stairs up to the galleries, labeled “ingressus”, were indicated to be on either side of the stage; this meant that gallery patrons, supposedly, ventured through the yard, cutting through the congested, heaving mob to reach their seats. This corresponds with accounts of the admissions system in which a penny granted entry to the yard and another penny bestowed access to the galleries. It seems hard to believe that those who frequented the galleries would trudge through the “penny stinkards”, but it seems just as unlikely that those in charge would hold the mob back until the galleries were full. This flaw in early amphitheatre design was later corrected in the next generation of amphitheatres.

The later amphitheatres, such as the Globe (1599) and the Fortune (1600), perfected the design of their predecessors. The Globe’s entrances to the yard and the galleries were separated from each other in an outer lobby. It was at the Globe that the well-established custom of allowing patrons to enter from, and be seated upon, the stage began. This was permitted for a select few, and the cost of such a distinction, sixpence, was remarkably higher than any other admission price. Construction began on the Fortune on January 17, 1600. The Fortune was built in about six months in order to compete with the Globe. Due to this haste, the design for the Fortune (built by Peter

66 Adams 31.
67 Gurr, The Shakespearian 133-134.
Streete who had also built the Globe) mimicked that of its competition, with one exception. “The shape was to be square inside and out, unlike the ‘round’ Globe, probably imitating the inn-yards instead of the baiting-houses.” 69 The audience capacities of the Globe and the Fortune were slightly larger than the playhouses before them. The Globe’s first two galleries could hold 1000 people on each level, and about 750 on the third level. The yard could hold the usual 800, or so; 70 but on holidays and performances of popular or new plays the “groundlings packed themselves into the yard until there was not an inch to spare.” 71 Regardless, they still hover around the 3000 total capacity figure. The Globe, like the Fortune, stood on marshy ground, and therefore a “good suer and strong foundacion of Piles, brick, lyme, and sand both without and within,” 72 was a necessity. Both of these theatres were constructed with a fair amount of used materials, the Globe more so than the Fortune. When threatened with reversion of their property by the landowner, Richard Burbage and crew tried to salvage as much as possible of their original playhouse, The Theatre. They dismantled this playhouse while the landowner was out of town, and carried “all the wood and timber thereof unto the Banckside in the parishe of St. Marye Overyes, and there erected a newe playehowse with the said timber and woode.” 73 That new playhouse was the Globe.

While these amphitheaters ushered in a new age of drama, they were still used for other forms of entertainment, namely bear and bull baiting. However, bear baiting was not offered everyday, for the animals’ sake; therefore, it was potentially very profitable

68 Adams 33.
70 Gurr, Playgoing 24-25.
71 Adams 45.
72 Adams 17.
73 Adams 18.
for building owners and company managers to form a partnership. A portion of gallery receipts often went to investors. Henslowe took 50% of the profits from the galleries as his share at the Rose, and similar arrangements were made at the Swan and the Boar’s Head. From 1602 to 1603, the gallery attendance brought in £10 to £12 per week.\textsuperscript{74}

Sadly, this did not make for a happy marriage. The players and playhouse owners were forever debating priorities, but often times baiting triumphed over playing. The Hope was rarely used by acting troupes at all after 1620, and in the 1630’s it reverted back to its former name of the Beargarden.\textsuperscript{75} The public even made a case for preserving the “game of beare baytinge.” The minutes of a Privy Council meeting in 1591 reveal the request that “Sundays be reserved for the preachers, Thursdays for the bears.”\textsuperscript{76} Baiting was apparently family entertainment. A casualty list taken after the collapse of the Paris Garden in 1583 gives us some idea of who attended these events. It read:

Mentioned as killed, injured, or miraculously saved when Paris Garden collapsed while a thousand people were watching a bearbaiting on Sunday:

- Adam Spencer, a felmonger of Southwark
- William Cockram, a baker of Shoreditch
- John Burton, a clerk of St. Marie Wolmers in Lombard St.
- Mathew Mason, a servant with Master Garland of Southwark
- Thomas Peace, a servant with Rob. Tasker of Clerkenwell
- Alice White, a servant to a pursemaker without cripplegate
- Marie Harrison, daughter to John, a water-bearer of Lombard St.
- Mrs. Webb, wife of a pewterer of Limestreet
- An unidentified woman and her small child\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{74} Cook 188.
\textsuperscript{75} Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearian} 154.
\textsuperscript{76} Harbage 17.
\textsuperscript{77} Harbage 84.
While the Paris Garden was not used for theatrical performances, it is an interesting sample of a potential theatre audience, with one exception. Bearbaiting, like cock fighting, attracted those with an interest in gambling. The afternoon could be potentially cost prohibitive. In the below advertisement a price of £5 is mentioned.

Tomorrowe beinge Thursdaie shalbe seen at the Beargardin on the banckside a greate Mach plaid by the gamstirs of Essex who hath chalenged all comers what soeuer to plaie v dogges at the single beare for V pounds and also to wearie a bull dead the stake and for your better content shall haue pleasant sport with the horse and ape and whiping of the blind beare.\(^{78}\)

That admission price coupled with whatever wagers a gambler cared to make would make it an expensive afternoon.

A couple of playhouses, the Theatre and the Curtain, also housed the “prize playing” or prize fights sponsored by the Company of the Masters of Defense of London.\(^{79}\) These fights were public exhibitions in which fencing students attempted to qualify themselves as free scholars, provosts and masters of their craft. On November 4, 1598, a challenge was presented at the Rose. Philip Henslowe asked for a percentage of the gate, and received 40\(s\)., which was more than he usually made on theatrical performances.\(^{80}\) Thirty challenges were played in public playhouses, and Richard Tarlton, a notable comedic actor of the day, became a master of defense himself.\(^{81}\)

Although the capacity of the yard was around 800, England’s inhospitable climate may have affected attendance. Reports have indicated every form of extreme weather, save hurricanes and tornados, which would have left the pit uninhabitable. Meteorologists


\(^{80}\) Berry 3.

\(^{81}\)
have christened the years between 1540 and 1680 “the Little Ice Age,” due to massive amounts of snowfall and blistering cold. February 4, 1579 saw two plus feet of snow. “It snowed until the eight day, and freezed until the 10.” In the winter of 1561, the winds were so intense near Charing Cross that an old woman and her three cows died. In the winter of 1564, the Thames froze over above the bridge, and many Londoners were able to frolic and fool about on the frozen river. Even with the low cost of admission, it is difficult to imagine the pit crawling with groundlings during such severe weather. Ale can only warm a body so much.

The second type of theater building was the Hall Playhouse. The auditorium itself obviously differed due to the dissimilarity in structure, but it seems that the playing area was quite similar. The King’s Men had little or no difficulty in switching their repertory between the Globe and Blackfriars. Queen Anne’s Men moved from the Red Bull to the Cockpit and back again with relative ease in one year’s time. Richard Farrant’s Blackfriars (1576) was the first commercial indoor playhouse, and had an advantage shared only with its later namesake. Blackfriars was located inside the city’s walls, yet it was free from the city’s jurisdiction. It was situated on five acres of a former monastic precinct, and was governed by a form of autonomy, much like a rural parish. By the time the Lord Mayor of the City was able to abolish all liberties and bring them under the city’s jurisdiction in 1608, all playhouses were under the royal protection. Farrant’s Blackfriars operated out of the frater of the original monastery. Upon Farrant’s death in 1580, his successor managed to keep the lease for four years more. James Burbage then

81 Berry 1.
82 Cook 189.
83 Picard 215-216.
84 Gurr, The Shakespearian 154-155.
bought a considerable property on the same land in 1596, and converted it into the
“famous Blackfriars” for £600. The building consisted of:

All those Seaven greate upper Romes as they are nowe devided beinge all upon
one flower and sometime beinge one greate and entire room [with] the roufe over
the same covered [with] Leade. . .And also all that great paire of wynndinge
staires [with] the staire case thereunto belonginge [which] leadethn upp unto the
same seaven greate upper Romes oute of the greate yarde.

Grand in its stature, this hall once housed meetings of Parliament. The new Blackfriars
was built in a prime geographical and social locale.

The true capacity of Blackfriars is unknown. There was space enough for three
series of galleries in the auditorium, but the exact number remains a mystery. However,
an observer from the period offers some insight. Thomas Platter observed, “there are
different galleries and places. . .where the seating is better and more comfortable and
therefore more expensive.” Admission started at 6d.; this price granted entry into the
galleries. Another 1s. was required to gain a bench in the pit. Ten stools were available to
playgoers who wished to put themselves on display; that is, if they paid 2s., they could
pass through the tiring house and sit on the stage. Prince Otto of Hesse-Cassel stated that
“it cost half a shilling to enter, but for the other places at least half a crown.” The
admission price at other playhouses was less, some as low as 2d. Some generous patrons
paid the same price regardless of the location, whether at Blackfriars or the Globe. In Sir
Humphrey’s case, that price was one whole shilling. The boxes, at Blackfriars, were

85 Gurr, The Shakespearian 154-155.
86 Gurr, The Shakespearian 155.
87 Gurr, The Shakespearian 156.
88 Cook 181.
89 Cook 181.
90 Cook 184.
relatively close to the stage as a tiff between two playgoers in 1632 suggests. A patron sitting on the stage obscured the view of another patron who was seated in a box. When told to move out of the way, the patron seated on the stage took out his sword and lunged at the disgruntled box-holder.\textsuperscript{91} The overall design and capacity of the other hall playhouses, such as the Cockpit and the Phoenix, were similar, or so the little evidence known dictates. The only differences seemed to be in ticket price and small architectural differences.

The last venue for drama, the halls of the Court, resembled hall playhouses rather than amphitheatres, with the exception of the Cockpit, an enclosed wooden amphitheatre built for cock fighting under Henry VIII. Prince Henry, James’s son had this property converted into a proper theatrical space in 1611. The Cockpit continued to serve as a baiting arena on occasion, as was the Banquet Hall. Even those players fortunate enough to be summoned to perform before royalty still had to contend with their four-legged competition. These audiences of these performances were by invitation only. During Elizabeth’s reign, most court performance were staged in the old Banqueting House in Whitehall. Under James I, the building was torn down and rebuilt in much larger magnitude. It re-opened in 1608 with Ben Johnson’s \textit{Masque of Beauty}.

Besides the lack of variety in audiences, the court theatre differed in the scale with which the plays were produced. The masques performed at court were lavish affairs, performed with music, dancing and verse speaking set in such “visually gorgeous settings designed as banquets for all the senses.”\textsuperscript{92} Such extravagance was reserved only for these court performances; they were too cost prohibitive for the public stages. Archbishop

\textsuperscript{91} Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearian} 157-159.
\textsuperscript{92} Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearian} 208.
Laud donated £100 worth of scenery and costumes for one of these performances. He was understandably anxious about this transaction. The Queen assured him: “you may be confident that no Part of these things y’ are come to our hands, shall be suffered to bee prostituted upon any Mercenary Stage, but shall bee carefully Reserv’d for our owne Occasions and particular Entertainments att Court.”

In order to understand what it was like to witness such an event, I turn to an insider. Orazio Busino, chaplain to the Venetian Embassy, offers an insightful description of a show at court he observed in 1618:

In London, . . . there are theatrical performances throughout the entire year in various parts of the city, and these are always frequented by many people devoted to pleasure, who, for the most part, dress grandly and colorfully, so that they appear, if possible, more than princes, or rather they appear actors. Similarly in the King’s court after Christmas day begins a series of sumptuous banquets, well performed plays, and very graceful masques of knights and ladies . . . in a large hall arranged like a theatre, with well-secured boxes all around, the stage is placed at one end, and facing it at the other end, his majesty’s chair under a large canopy, and near him stools for the foreign ambassadors . . . we entered the usual box of the Venetian embassy, where, unfortunately, we were so uncomfortable that had it not been for our curiosity we would have given up or expired. Moreover we had the additional curse of a Spaniard who came into our box by courtesy of the master of ceremonies, asking for only two fingers of room, though we had no space to turn around in, and by God, he placed himself more comfortably than all of us . . . While waiting for the King we took pleasure in admiring the decorations, in observing the beauty of the hall . . . .There was such a crowd; for though they claim to admit only those favoured with invitations, nevertheless every box was full, especially with most noble and richly dressed ladies, 600 and more in number, according to general opinion . . . At about the 6th hour of the night his majesty appeared with his court . . .

93 Gurr, The Shakespearian 208.
He goes on to describe a lavish production: Mount Atlas with eyes that roll, twelve masked boys falling to earth and then driven off by Hercules, the mountain opening to reveal rolling hills and daybreak, dancing, singing, and more. At one point, the dancers began to lag after performing dances from every country, and the King shouted, “Why don’t they dance? What did you make me come here for? Devil take all of you, dance!” At which point, the Marquis of Buckingham, “his Majesty’s favorite minion,” leaped up and danced a number of “high and tiny capers,” thirty four in all.95

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95 Gurr, *The Shakespearian* 206-207.
Part II: Economic Factors Affecting Playgoing

A ticket price of only a penny sounds fantastic in this day and age. In Shakespeare’s London, a penny was not a huge sum, but other fiscal conditions must be defined. Crippling inflation coupled with wages that could not keep up with ever-rising costs prevented splurging on any frivolities. The cost of wheat had quadrupled since the fifteenth century, but wages had barely doubled.\(^{96}\) For many of London’s workforce, food and drink were provided on site or provided for as part of their wages; however, other necessities such as clothing, shelter, and food for the rest of one’s family were not included in that sum. Food for a family of four could range upwards of 13\(d.\) a day, more if they had apprentices in their employ. Typical rent was £30 per year, and fuel, particularly wood, was very expensive.\(^{97}\) Every quarter one might have spent 22s. 6\(d.\) on wheat, 20s. on malt, and 38s. 8\(d.\) on oatmeal. Beef cost 2\(d.\) per pound, butter 5\(d.\) \(^{98}\)

As an additional cost, many laborers carried apprentices as yet another daily, weekly, or even yearly line item in the family budget. By edict, such laborers in training cost their master 3s. 4\(d.\) a week, as well as whatever food they might consume on a daily basis, as they essentially resided with their teachers/masters.\(^{99}\)

To better illustrate what such prices could mean to a Londoner of the Elizabethan age, one must allow for the conversion of the English pound circa 1600 to the American dollar circa 2001.

\(^{96}\) Byrne 167.  
\(^{97}\) Cook 236.  
\(^{98}\) Cook 236.  
\(^{99}\) Cook 278-279.
Table 2  Currency Conversion Chart\textsuperscript{100}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elizabethan Denomination</th>
<th>U.S. Equivalents (2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 penny (£) (plural: pence)</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 shilling (£) (12 pence)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pound (£) (20 shillings)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To better understand what such seemingly low prices could do to prevent a potential theatre-goer from attending, one must realize, in addition to daily and weekly expenditures, the potential earning capacity for a laborer in Elizabeth’s England. While such wages as Londoners may have enjoyed exceeded those of outlying areas, the financial gains suffered when compared to total expenses. As an example, a carpenter in London held the benefit of legal proclamation dictating that, should he be employed consistently, he stood to earn 4s. 6p. per week, meat and drink included. A goldsmith earned 3s. 4d. a day, meat and drink included. Common laborers, those who performed the manual labor associated with the duties and plans of the trade masters, earned 5d. a day with meat and drink included.\textsuperscript{101}

The newly developed “credit crunch” added to the financial landscape of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. “There was among men and women . . . a dawning, sometimes consuming, awareness that both rural and urban life, agriculture, industry and trade depended on credit.”\textsuperscript{102} Often times one was both a creditor and debtor, which created an interesting dichotomy. Credit ratings were determined by trustworthiness more than one’s solvency. In determining one’s credit, character and

\textsuperscript{101} Cook 278-279.
reputation were considered rather than their assets or ability to repay. Defaulting on a loan meant imprisonment. Mortgage was the only solution for a landowner who had fallen on tough times. There was no such thing as long-term credit; mortgages "might run for a year or more and might be for very large sums. . .bonds and statutes. . .were usually due after a mere six months." The legal limits on interest rates were set, but not always enforced. A Welsh country gentleman and moneylender, Sir Thomas Myddleton, not to be confused with the playwright, collected ten percent interest on his loans. His debtors ranged from "noblemen, admirals, colonels and statesmen down to country clothiers, parsons and landlords—especially the poor but aspiring gentry of his native Wales." If a potential playgoer had a debt to repay, he most certainly would not have any expendable income to reserve for an afternoon at the theatre.

A strict set of regulations governed the Elizabethan workday. Hours allotted for labor, leisure, meals, and rest, were set by law. The following law, passed early in the sixteenth century, set forth the prescribed length of a laborer's day:

Every...labourer shall be at work between the middle of the month of March and the middle of the month of September, before 5 of the clock in the morning. And that he have but half an hour for his breakfast and an hour and a half for his dinner. . . And the that he depart not from his work till between 7 and 8 of the clock in the evening. . . And for the rest of the year they shall be at their work in the springing of the day and depart not till night of the same day.

Judges were required to prosecute workers who did not adhere to these parameters. A penny was deducted for every hour of work missed; if one calculates the time spent walking to a theatre (a working class citizen could not have afforded a coach), the length

103 Leinwand 82.
104 Dodd 41.
of the play, and the time spent walking back, half a day’s pay would have been deducted from their wages. As the price of admission, and everything else, began to rise, salaries did not. If an employer awarded higher wages than those established by decree, he would be subject to a five-pound fine and ten days imprisonment; the “lucky” beneficiary of that employer’s misguided generosity could spend up to twenty-one days in jail.\textsuperscript{106} Those in charge experienced a little more freedom; but if they chose to attend a production, their place of business and those beneath them would have been unsupervised for an entire afternoon.\textsuperscript{107}

Aside from the day-to-day necessities of living, taking a day to trek to the theatre forced upon any potential playgoer a number of additional, more incidental monetary costs. Among these, such a playgoer faced the possibility of such fiscal issues as transportation, concessions, books, tobacco, as well as any funds necessary should such a patron desire what could be construed as “pleasurable and professional” company.

To begin, a potential patron needed to consider the pitfalls of various methods of traveling from home or work to the theatre. The theatres were in walking distance to the Inns of Court, Westminster, and the more fashionable sections of London, and the sum total of London, including Westminster and Southwark, was only three miles long and two miles wide.\textsuperscript{108} Even with London’s manageable radius, many patrons chose to arrive by coach, boat or sedan chair. The watermen ferried three or four thousand playgoers a day\textsuperscript{109} and, until the rise of the coach, the boatmen had somewhat exclusive rights to the play-going public. With a fare of three-penny per person one-way, watermen profited

\textsuperscript{105} Ross 7.
\textsuperscript{106} Byrne 164.
\textsuperscript{107} Cook 225.
\textsuperscript{108} Picard 31.
greatly from theatrical patronage. As the theatres moved from the Bankside, the coach grew in popularity, and was considered a “Benefactor to all...Play-houses...for I bring them their best customers, as they all know well enough.”\(^{110}\) As for the cost, Sir Humphrey Mildmay paid a shilling “to a coachman” on February 3, 1634.\(^{111}\) At one shilling per ride, only the wealthy could utilize this mode of transportation. However, the use of coaches became so prevalent that London’s streets congested to a point “that hardly you could thrust a pole between;”\(^{112}\) for “there is daily so great a resort of people and so great a multitude of coaches whereof many are Hackney[hired] coaches...that sometimes all the streets cannot contain them.”\(^{113}\) Eventually, the residents appealed to the Lord Mayor imploring him to take action. He, along with the common council, prohibited playing at Blackfriars, but the King stepped in three months later and removed the ban. Once again, the streets were impassible. In an effort to reduce the congestion, the Privy Council issued this regulation in 1633:

\begin{quote}
That if any person, man or woman, of what condition soever reapire to the aforesaid Playhouse in Coach, so soon as they are gone out of their coaches the Coach men shall depart from thence and not return until the end of the play, nor shall stay or return to fetch those whom they carried...and in ye time between their departure and return they shall either return home or else abide in some other streets less frequented with passengers and so range their Coaches in those places that the way not be stopped.\(^{114}\)
\end{quote}

The Council also reminded the public that there was a less problematic means of traveling to the playhouse: “there is an easy passage by water unto the playhouse

\(^{109}\) Cook 195.
\(^{110}\) Cook 147-148.
\(^{111}\) Cook 196.
\(^{112}\) Cook 148-149.
\(^{113}\) Picard 32.
[with]out troubling the streets, and that it is much more fit and reasonable that those [which] goe thither should goe thither by water or else on foote."¹¹⁵ George Gerrard reported to his patron, Viscount Wentworth that this practice was “kept very strictly for two or three weeks, but now I think it is disorder’d again.”¹¹⁶

Beyond transportation, a play-goer would likely encounter the need for food and concessions, should such needs not be met by their respective employers. “During the performance food and drink are carried round the audience, so that for what one cares to pay one may also have refreshment.”¹¹⁷ Paul Hetzner, a traveler to London, observed that one could purchase various seasonal produce (apples or pippins, oranges, nuts, pears, etc.) and spirits (wine and ale.)¹¹⁸ Actors and theatergoers made many a complaint regarding the cracking of nuts; and, the actors had to dodge edible projectiles because, unfortunately, the produce was not purchased for consumption alone. Accounts of audience members launching apples and other consumables at the stage are common. In one such instance, as described by Edmond Gayton, “the benches, the tiles, the lathes, the stones, oranges, apples, nuts, flew about most liberally.”¹¹⁹ Nuts and common produce were quite affordable, and well within the means of many a playgoer; oranges and spirits were a little more prohibitive in cost. Oranges were imported, and therefore considered a luxury. If oranges were indeed tossed, then they were tossed by the finest of playgoers. Ale and wine were potentially quite expensive as well. Some ale could be purchased for less than 1d. per quart, but usually a playgoer could expect to pay 2d. to 3d. per quart.

¹¹⁴ Cook 149.
¹¹⁵ Cook 149-150.
¹¹⁶ Cook 149-150.
¹¹⁷ Gurr, The Shakespearian 214.
¹¹⁸ Cook 197.
¹¹⁹ Gurr, The Shakespearian 225.
Regardless of cost, the sale of alcohol was a profitable venture; the first and second Globe, and the Fortune all had tap-houses. The price of claret and sack doubled between 1580 and 1640. Customers who were accustomed to paying 4d. to 8d., now had to pay 7d. to 16d. per quart.¹²⁰

Books and tobacco were other costly pleasures associated with the theatre. Peddlers often sold books outside the theatres, and the prices ranged from 1d. to 2d. for broadsides and pamphlets. If one was in the market for something with a little more meat, a small quarto could be purchased for 6d. to 2 s. and beyond. This became such a common practice that William Fennor addressed it in his work, *To the Gentlemen Readers:* “Worthy gentlemen, of what degree soever, I suppose this Pamphlet will hap into your hands, before a play begin.”¹²¹ Tobacco was becoming more and more fashionable, and the earthy aroma of tobacco smoke was a staple scent of the theatre. Thomas Platter writes of his experience at the newly opened Globe in September 1599:

In the ale-houses tobacco or a species of wound-wort are also obtainable for one’s money, and the powder is lit in a small pipe, the smoke suckled into the mouth, and the saliva is allowed to run freely, after which a good draught of Spanish wine follows. This they regard as curious medicine for deflections, and as a pleasure, and the habit is so common with them that they always carry the instrument on them, and light up on all occasions, at the play, in the taverns, or elsewhere, drinking as well as smoking together, as we sit over wine, and it makes them riotus and merry, and rather drowsy, just as if they were drunk.¹²²

England began cultivating tobacco by 1577, and by 1590 it appeared virtually everywhere. A small pipe-full could be purchased at any playhouse for around 3d., but

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¹²⁰ Cook 197-198.  
¹²¹ Cook 201-202.  
¹²² Gurr, *Playgoing* 46.
this was not “that costlye Gentleman-like Smoak.” Sir Henry Oglander noted in his diary that he spent five shillings for eight ounces of tobacco. Much like movie theatres today, the cost of admission was not the last bit of change to leave ones purse.

Finally, should a male audience member desire “pleasurable and professional” company, the playhouses offered the sale of sex. Cultural enlightenment was not always a chief concern when attending a production. Many women of less-than-hopeful means turned to prostitution as a means of survival. As the alternative, such a woman found herself left with the choices of domestic servitude or begging. At the theatres, prostitutes were able to mingle with proper gentlemen, and subsequently seize the opportunity to negotiate a higher fee. Hundreds of wealthy men, restless after three hours, were perfect targets for a working girl. The connection between playhouses and brothels was not only drawn by their proximity in locale, but in the managers and owners of the theatres. “Most theatre owners-Henslowe, Alleyn, Longley, Aaron Holland and others-were brothel owners too.” Prostitutes were known to impersonate women of “eminence and fashion. Masquerading as people of rank higher than themselves was thus a practice the prostitutes shared with the players.” In Thomas Cranley’s poem, “Amanda,” we see how easily the title character adapts herself to the preferences of potential “patrons” in the audience.

The places thou dost usually frequent
Is to some playhouse in an afternoon
And for no other meaning and intent
But to get company to sup with soon;

123 Cook 200-201.

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The poem goes on describing her efforts to woo prospective clients and ends with: "Thus Proteus-like strange shapes thou vent’rest on And changest hue with the chameleon." 126

126 "Amanda" quoted from Cook 159-160.
CHAPTER 4

THE FACES IN THE CROWD

Within a theatre's walls, in contrast to occasions so rare in and around London, the nobility, the apprentice, the commoner and the criminal gathered in a single place.

John Chamberlain's assessment of those in attendance at a performance of Middleton's *A Game of Chess* in August 1624, supports this statement in the following manner:

I doubt not but you have heard of our famous play of Gondomar, which hath ben followed with extraordinarie concourse, and frequented by all sorts of people, old and younge, rich and poore, masters and servants, papists and puritans, wise men, *et ct.*, churchmen and statesmen. 127

However, as London society was wont to enforce, the rank of a man established his distance from the dirt.

To say that the wealthy, privileged Elizabethans supported the theatre would be no astounding revelation, for who else could "lieu idlely" during the afternoon performances? As was mentioned earlier, the privileged made up 5 to 10 percent of London's population. Privilege was a birthright, but also embraced those who were well educated regardless of their lineage; although lineage often determined who would receive an education. Knowledge did not guarantee wealth or rank, but it did secure one a place among the privileged by association. They would have mingled with those more fortunate while in school. Another group of potential patrons is comprised of sailors and
soldiers. These men had free time during the afternoon, as they were paid at the end of a voyage, and “had little else to do before signing on again, but seek amusement or trouble. A playhouse seemed a likely place for both.” Londoners of this ilk would have the money or time to frequent the playhouses, but they were not standing hip to hip for three hours in the yard.

The majority of the audience. . .were not to be found in ‘the priuate roomes of greater prise’, but in the galleries. . .there was some degree of comfort here, and each gallery housed a different crowd: ‘a Gentleman or an honest citizen. . .with his squirrel by his side cracking nuttes’; or a ‘Puny seated Cheeke by loele with a Punke’; scholars, lawyers’ clerks, earnest young students fresh their books of rhetoric, and eager to hear what new devices and delights the playwrights had for them. These galleries held the majority of the public theatres’ audience, not only because they accommodated the more prestigious patrons, but because they were not subject to the often unaccommodating nature of England’s climate.

Many members of the upper class attended the theatre for no other reason than to be seen. This alone is the reason that seating was arranged on the stage. In that prime seat they could lead the applause or direct the hissing, become acquainted with those involved in the production, or simply show off. Ben Jonson sized up these brazen audience members:

Today I go to the Black-fryers Play-house,
Sit I’the view, salute all my acquaintance,
Rise up between the Acts, let fall my cloake,

127 Cook 134.
128 Cook 226.
129 H.S. Bennett, Shakespeare’s Audience (Annual Shakespeare Lecture. The British Academy. April 26, 1944) 3.
Publish a handsome man, and a rich suite.¹³⁰

Once recognized, the convention of watching from the stage became thoroughly ingrained in playgoing culture. Many a young audience member would “call for a stoole with a commanding rage,” exclaiming “when I come to playes, I love to sit, That all may see me, in a publike place: Even in the stages front.”¹³¹ Much like today, when season ticket holders dust off their fur coats in the middle of August to attend the first production of the year, the theatre was a place to display your good fortune. “Whether you be a foole or a Justice of Peace, a Cuckold, or a Capten, a Lord Maiors sonne, . . . of what stamp soeuer you be, current, or counterfeit, the stage, like time, will bring you to a most perfect light, and lay you open.”¹³² The theatres were places were people could be seen. They could solicit the admiration of their peers in front of a captive of their own-“in a sense getting into the news.”¹³³

Another route to the good life was by the accumulation of wealth. Some were self-made, and worth more than those born with a title. Thus arrived the merchant class. This new cast of self made traders contained within their way of life the sum of all that was all feudal England. Their births bore no more title than those of the stinkards in the pit, but their purses often carried far more than did those of the aristocracy. In some cases, such men rose to a level that those they would have once called “lordship” now asked the trader for loans.¹³⁴ As a result, these new merchants could have easily represented an invasion of the upper galleries by men of no birthright. What dichotomy must have lived in them. By blood they were commoners; by purse they were nobles. In

¹³⁰ Inwood 213.
¹³¹ Cook 151.
¹³² Cook 151.
short, merchants “often change estate with gentlemen, as gentlemen do with them, by mutual conversion of the one into the other.”

It is not very likely that the working class had any real opportunities to attend the theatre, except on holidays and Sundays. Of this group of laborers, the demographic most mentioned were the apprentices. We know that they were at the Phoenix theatre during the Shrove Tuesday Riot of 1616, never mind that they nearly tore the structure down. The extent to which they attended the theatre is, at first glance, somewhat questionable. There were several thousand young men in London who could claim to be apprentices. Many may have taken in an occasional play, but they had to steal that time away. An apprentice was under the authority of his master who assumed all responsibility for his behavior. The Common Council decreed that no master could permit his apprentice “to go at his large Liberty and Pleasure.” Any master lenient enough to allow his charge an afternoon at the theatre risked harsh criticism from his colleagues; in order to circumvent any such negative backlash, many of the guilds imposed laws against allowing apprentices to attend performances. In addition to any disciplinary actions, financial restrictions were placed upon these young men. Most apprentices had no money of their own. According to law, “if any Freeman or Freewoman of this city give any Wages to his or her apprentice, or suffer the said Apprentices to take any part of their own Getting or Gains,” their master was “permanently disenfranchised.” Their apparel was strictly regulated as well. The Council forbade “great breeches” with stuffing and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{133}}\text{ Dawson 183.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{134}}\text{ Dodd 42.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{135}}\text{ Cook 46.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\text{ Cook 219.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\text{ Cook 220.}\]
padded doublets; all they allowed was "A small plain slop" with no frivolous use of material, nothing wasted.\(^{138}\)

Even with these strict regulations, literature from the period serves as evidence that apprentices did attend productions. In "The Actors Remonstrance," author unknown, a case is made for their attendance. "...we shall for the future promise, never to admit into our sixpenny roomes those unwholesome inticing Harlots, that sit there merely to be taken up by the Prentizes or Lawyers Clerks.\(^{139}\) The next passage describes a complaint against theatre voiced by "Petitioners of the Counsaile." "...they corrupt the youth of the Cittie, and withdrawe Prentices from their worke, they heartily wishe they might bee troubled with none of their youth nor prentices.\(^{140}\) At times, apprentices had to rely on their wits to attend the theatre, perhaps even gaining access illegally. A line from Fletcher's *Wit Without Money* states: "swallow that belief...till you break in at playes like Prentices for three a groat."\(^{141}\)

Perhaps they did “break in.” Apprentices have been portrayed as having an affinity for lawlessness; but the next account describes a seating arrangement that would be difficult to acquire by dishonest means. John (or Richard) Gill, an apprentice, was injured at the Red Bull by Richard Baxter, a player, during a performance. "I desire you give to me satisfaction seeing I was wounded by your owne hand...weapon...I am a Feltmakers prentice and have made it knowne to at least one hundred and fortye of our...who are all here present readie to take revenge upon you unless willingly you will

\(^{138}\) Byrne 164.  
\(^{139}\) Gurr, *Playgoing* 299.  
\(^{140}\) Gurr, *Playgoing* 251.  
\(^{141}\) Gurr, *Playgoing* 272.
give present satisfaction." What these examples indicate is that not only were apprentices in attendance, but they were sitting in the more expensive seats, paying admission prices that only the wealthy or privileged could afford. If Mr. Gill was injured by an actor’s weapon, there are only a few possibilities. He may have been in the pit, standing at the front of the yard by the stage. He could have been seated in one of the boxes right next to the stage; although, the boxes at the Red Bull, were not as close to the stage as the boxes at Blackfriars. The last possibility, and the most intriguing, is that this apprentice was seated on the stage. If the last scenario was the correct one, then perhaps the laws governing wages and what money an apprentice was allowed to possess were not as strictly enforced as was previously thought. Apprentices were not the only people bending labor laws. The pit and lower galleries were inhabited with people “glewed together in crowds” with “breath stronger than garlic,” or “the penny stinkards!” They swarmed into the yard, having paid their penny, passed the time with lively banter, ale, and cracking nuts.

As for the question of gender, it seems that women were frequent playgoers. Apart from prostitutes and pick-pockets, women from all backgrounds attended London’s many theatres. It must have been strange watching an event that you could not participate in; women were not allowed to perform, but those at the gate took their money just the same. Women of lesser means joined the privileged. Let us not forget the story of the merchant’s wife whose purse was stolen, or Father Busino of the Venetian Embassy and his account of the “handsome ladies” at the Fortune. And what of the casualty list recorded after the collapse of the Paris Garden? Almost half of the victims were women.

142 Gurr, Playgoing 232.
143 Bennett 4.
Robert Anton wrote, with resentment, in 1617 of the theatres drawing “Swarmes of Wives.”

Going beyond the mere spectator, London theatres were fortunate enough to have many powerful benefactors, a number of whom were women. These female patrons were often able to influence the selection of companies to perform at court. Some believe the Dowager Countess of Derby played a prominent role in shaping the support of Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Lucy Bedford, the Countess of Bedford, has been acknowledged by many scholars to be one of the most important arts patrons of the time. She often invited companies to perform at her home. One such incident took place during the Christmas season of 1595. She invited a “professional company” to present a production of *Titus Andronicus* for her two hundred guests. This is the only known allusion to a performance of this piece in Shakespeare’s lifetime. John Earle wrote in 1628 that “gentlewomen and law students” were the most frequent playgoers. Finally, the decree the Privy Council set forth in 1633, regarding traveling to the playhouses by coach, addressed “any person, man or woman.” Foreigners saw England as a “woman’s paradise” and commented that they “have more liberty than in other lands, and know how to make good use of it.” Women were not coy about attending plays. Thomas Platter said of the theatres in 1599, “indeed men and womenfolk visit such places without scruple.”

The playhouses were known for licentious behavior, regardless of whether payment was involved or not. A Roman Catholic stated that at the playhouses “many a

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144 Harbage 77.
146 White 121.
148 Harbage 76.
149 Harbage 77.
foul sinne is committed, and much unhonest love begunn.” Father Busino of the Venetian Embassy, describes a production at the Fortune:

These theatres are frequented by a number of respectable and handsome ladies, who come freely and seat themselves among the men without the slightest hesitation. ... I was seated ere a very elegant dame, but in a mask, came and placed herself beside me. ... She asked me for my address both in French and English; and, on my turning a deaf ear, she determined to honour me by showing me some fine diamonds on her fingers. ...  

Playwright Stephen Gosson noted in 1579, “In our assemblies at plays in London you shall see such heaving, and shoving, such itching and shouldering to sit by women: ... such tickling, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home, when the sports are ended.”

From time to time the occasional Puritan would enter the gate, if for no other reason than to witness the carnage of sin to which the theatre gave birth. One moralist, John Northbrooke, encouraged the righteous to attend the theatre just once:

To see what reward there is given to these Crocodiles ... If you will learn howe to bee false, and deceive your husbandes, or husbandes their wives, howe to playe the harlottes, to obtayne one’s love, howe to ravishe, how to beguile, how to betraye, to flatter, lye, sweare, foresweare, to allure to whoredone, how to poison, how to disobey and to rebel against Princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to move to lustes, to ransacke and spoyle cities and townes, to bee ydle and blaspheme, to sing filthe songs of love, to speake filthy, to be prowde, how to mocke, scoffe, and deride any nation ... shall not you learn, then, at such enterludes howe to practice them. 

150 Cook 158.
151 Cook 160.
152 Inwood 213.
If that were used in an advertisement today, theatres would have no problem attracting the younger audiences they so desire. No wonder apprentices left work, and risked punishment. Arthur Dent suggests that in order to be saved we must pray “let there be shoaled out all vicious and notorious evil livers, as, swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, worldlings, deceivers, cozeners, proud men, rioters, gamesters, and all the profane multitude,” also known as the inhabitants of the pit and lower galleries. The preachers zealously denounced the heathens that broke the Sabbath in droves and abandoned the churches for the playhouses. The theatres were dens of impropriety, where playgoers were exposed to all manner of evil both on stage and in the house. The plays were full of transgressions—murder, adultery, and lawlessness, the audience teeming with whores and thieves, drunkards and heretics. An earthquake in 1580 and the collapse of scaffolding at a playhouse in which eight people were killed were both attributed to “God’s wrath against plays.” God’s wrath was echoed in every outbreak of plague that resulted in theatre closures. Theatre houses were described as “a continuall monument of London’s prodigalitie and folly,” “an evident token of a wicked time,” and “a bastard of Babylon, a daughter of error and confusion, a hellish device, the divels owne recreation to mock at holy things.” One of the main arguments the Puritans, Phillip Stubbs in particular, had against the theatre involved the seduction of young boys in the companies. During the performance, those privileged few who occupied the stools on the stage had the opportunity “with small cost, purchase the dear acquaintance of the boys” and when the play had ended “every mate sorts to his mate, everyone brings another homeward of their

153 Inwood 213.  
154 Pritchard 118.  
155 Hibbert 248.
way very friendly, and in their secret conclaves covertly they play the Sodomites or worse.\textsuperscript{156}

The Puritans added fuel to an already smoldering fire of prejudice against the theatre. The Privy Council had to deal with complaints daily due to the riots, crime, and disputes that occurred on regular basis. Employers complained that servants were lured away from their responsibilities on afternoons when they should have been productive. City fathers grumbled that “more wholesome practices such as archery were being neglected.”\textsuperscript{157} For those easily swayed, going to the theatre could mean being ostracized from ones peers, and perhaps eternal damnation, not really the kind of endorsement a company manager wants to hear. The Puritanical influence on England was undeniable, and eventually aided the government imposed ban of theatrical performances in public theatres in 1642. The Long Parliament decreed that “Whereas public sports do not well agree with public calamities, . . . public stage plays shall cease and be forborne.”\textsuperscript{158}

While the rank of a man did designate his position relative to the pit, the privileged could not claim exclusive rights to the theatre. Those at the gates would gladly take money from any who would pay it. Thomas Dekker stated that “the place is so free in entertainment, allowing a stoole as well to the farmers sonne as to your Templer: that your stinkard has the selfesame libertie to be there in his Tobacco-Fumes, which your sweet courtier hath: and that your Car-man and Tinker claime as strong a voice in their suffrage.”\textsuperscript{159} It is unlikely that a farmer would have occupied a stool; to my knowledge, no barter system was in place at London theatres. Regardless, those less fortunate did

\textsuperscript{156} Picard 172.
\textsuperscript{157} Hibbert 247.
\textsuperscript{158} Inwood 213.
\textsuperscript{159} Cook 216.
inhabit the audience. The working class attended despite restrictive labor laws and financial concerns. The "common people" in attendance were an "assemblie of Tailers, Tinkers, Cordwayners, Saykers, olde men, yong men, Women, Boyes, Girles, and such like."\textsuperscript{160} When the play concluded, "A thousand townsmen, gentlemen, and whores/Porters and serving-men together throng[ed]."\textsuperscript{161}

What of the truly less fortunate? No accurate tally of the destitute was possible, but the penniless probably comprised at least ten percent of London’s population if not twenty or thirty percent.\textsuperscript{162} The collapse of the feudal system in addition to a series of devastating harvests left many with nowhere to go. London held hope, but no promise, of good fortune. Parliament Enacted the Poor Law of 1597 to cope with the rise of the impoverished. The "legitimate poor were remanded to their local parishes for succor, children forcibly apprenticed or otherwise set to work, vagrants and masterless men severely punished and either imprisoned or forced to work."\textsuperscript{163} An account of the "legitimate poor" attending the theatre comes from a sermon delivered by Henry Cross:

Nay many poore pincht, needie creatures, that lieu of almes, and that haue scarce neither cloathe to their backe, nor foode for the belley, yet cill make hard shift but they will see a Play, let wife & children begge, languish in penurie, and all they can rappe and rend, is little enough to lay upon such vanitie.\textsuperscript{164}

This account is probably no more than Puritan propaganda; perhaps it is in reference to the other classification of impoverished person, the disreputable poor.

\textsuperscript{160} Cook 216.  
\textsuperscript{161} Cook 217.  
\textsuperscript{162} Cook 240.  
\textsuperscript{163} Cook 239.  
\textsuperscript{164} Cook 241.
The disreputable poor, cutpurses and prostitutes, frequented the playhouses in search of a profit. Some broke into the theatre when they did not have the price of admission.

To a play they will hazard to go, though never with a rag of money: where after the second Act, when the door is weakly guarded, they will make forcible entry; a knock with a Cudgel is the worst; whereat though they grumble, they rest pacified upon their admittance. Forthwith, by violent assault and assent they aspire to the two-pennie room; where being furnished with Tinder, Match, and a portion of decayed Barmoods, they smokke it most terrifyingly, applaude a prophane jeast unmeasurably, and in the end grow distastefully rude to all the Companie. At the Conclusion of all, they single out their dainty Doxes, to cloze up a fruitless day with a sinnefull evening.165

By this account, their behavior was unrecognizable from that of a privileged playgoer wishing to make his presence known.

Even with the many factors that could have hindered audience development, the theatres flourished and audiences came back for more. Many patrons attended the same work several times. For instance, in the epilogue of *The Elder Brother* by Beaumont and Fletcher it reads: "'Tis not the hands, or smiles, or common way/ Of approbation to a well lik'd Play,/ Not in your praise, but often seeing it." Also consider the prologue to Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass*: “And when the sixe times you ha' seen't/ If this play doe not like, the Diuell is in't." Both Johnson’s Bartholomew and Shakespeare’s First Folio mention patrons who "arraign Playes dailie." The above suggests that some audience members would attend productions over and over, either out of regular patronage or

165 Cook 242.
166 Cook 84.
167 Cook 84.
because they favored that particular play. Some plays were frequented to the extent that “evey punch and her suire can rand [the lines] out by heart they are so stale, and there fore so stinking.”

Concessions were made by the playwrights to ensure that no audience member, regardless of education or breeding, was left out. It was a balancing act, arranged as a composer chooses his instruments. Some parts of the play might appeal to one demographic while another part appealed to a different sect of the audience. This practice is addressed by Middleton in his play, No wit, no help like a Woman’s:

How is ‘t possible to suffice  
So many ears, so many eyes?  
Some in wit, some in shows  
Take delight, and some in clothes;  
Some for mirth they chiefly come,  
Some for passion—for both some;  
Some for lascivious meetings, that’s their arrant;  
Some to detract, and ignorance of their warrant.  
How is ‘t possible to please  
Opinions toss’d in such wild seas?  
Yet I doubt not, If attention  
Seize you above, and apprehension  
You below, to take things quickly,  
We shall both make you sad and tickle ye.

The task of creating a work that was accessible to all may not have been as daunting as one might assume. Even the illiterate were familiar with certain rhetorical devices. They

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168 Cook 84.  
169 Cook 194.  
170 Bennett 4.
had been introduced to them via sermons, official’s speeches, proclamations, etc.\textsuperscript{171} The realities of everyday life wove a thread between the classes. A stroll through the streets of Elizabethan London would make any modern street hoodlum ill. Elizabethans were surrounded by death, disease, and violence. One might witness outrageous and dangerous crowds reacting to a public execution or a thief in the gallows. An overall more violent society bred a population with iron nerves; it was this aspect of society that dramatists played to. Heads and hearts impaled on spears was not the only way to reach an anesthetized public. The crowd was delighted with horse play and slap-stick.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{171} Bennett 6.
\textsuperscript{172} Bennett 6-7.
CHAPTER 5

EPILOGUE

I began this piece with an impressionistic description of a potential playgoing public. "Audiences are never assemblies of caricatures." I know now that this is true. The stinkards in the pit, the merchant and his wife in the galleries, Father Busino—all seem three-dimensional to me now. When I envision playgoers of this period, I no longer see a hazy Merchant Ivory film, but real human beings.

Any attempt to conclude this paper has left me wanting, perhaps because there is no conclusion. The research is a conclusion in and of itself. Even with the information I have gathered, any picture of the audience I might concoct would be interpretation, or educated speculation. There are so many contradictions. Despite reports of low wages coupled with inflation, spectators from the period described many working class people in attendance. I trust those observations, but are they to be trusted? It is impossible to know what was truly in these men’s minds; but if these descriptions are reliable, they are puzzling. To truly discern who was in attendance, it would be helpful to know why they attended.

The theatre flourished, not only because of the work performed inside, but also because of those eager playgoers waiting outside, anxious for an afternoon of enjoyment. Despite the “Little Ice Age” outside, Londoners and visitors alike trudged their ways to

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the theatre doors. The laborers, whose purses constantly wanted, plugged themselves into whatever groundlings' spaces they could find, amid the odor of the stale garlic and the odor of the unwashed. No matter what their reasons, whether to "be seen," to loot their fellows, to seduce a weary traveler, or to, wonder of wonders, actually enjoy a play, the whole of England found its way inside.

In rare form for Elizabethan or Jacobean England, the theatre also presented a gathering place that was neither church, nor an execution, nor a public humiliation of a neighbor. This type of environment would have provided a freedom that could not be attained in other group settings. While small and private judgments often leapt from the upper galleries, such judgments, even from the mouths of nobles, carried little weight beyond a note or a memory. Though divided within this house, all were united by a pursuit of pleasure for but a moment, whatever that pleasure may have been.

It is no great task to decipher the reasons why the wealthy may have attended a given play. In fact, being the citizens of England more apt to acquire some form of education, it comes as no surprise that either the wealthy or someone in their service penned most written records of the age. As a result, we in this present have more access to their opinions. Yet again, history favors those who can afford to buy it.

That said, though, most of the evidence brought to light over the course of the preceding research would indicate that, according to what funds were available, the labor class should never have breached the theatre gate. At the same time, the very notes in which the upper class and the scholars of the day either tried to leave a piece of themselves to history or cast a judgment upon their unders proved only that, despite

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facing the greatest trials in choosing to take a day for a play, the workers of London often
did precisely that.

Regarding the precise and concrete reasons why a commoner would risk fines,
lost wages, and, consequently, the welfare of a potential family, to see a play staggers
one. Suffice to say that, like so many pieces of the daily life of the English commoner,
such reasons have been lost to time. We may never know the reasons that Londoners
attended. Even so, such assumptions are another paper.

In closing, the theatres of this period succeeded where so many contemporary
theatres fail. They existed with very little subsidy, and did so without excluding the
uneducated working class. Their financial success was based on mass sales of the
common ticket rather than fewer at an exorbitant price. They managed to provide
satisfying experience for all regardless of income or education without pandering to the
educated and wealthy elite. If there is a lesson to be learned, then that lesson may be this;
even though all of this took place in a monarchical society, the theatre owners may have
stumbled upon a social unity that so many owners strive for today.
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