

1 The Rose Theatre, London, and Stage Movement in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Many readers will have visited Shakespeare's Globe, the reconstructed early modern theatre in London, for a performance or a guided tour of this round, outdoor venue. An experience of the Globe will help put readers in the mindset for considering the Rose Theatre (1587–1603), which was a popular neighbouring theatre. But first, we must forget many features of the reconstructed Globe: the box office with orderly queues, the numerous entrances to provide relatively quick access in and out, a limited repertoire, toilets, the gift shop, the education centre, the staff who prohibit sitting in the yard or on the steps, the greater amount of physical space allotted per person, and the fire safety features, all of which post-date the early modern theatre experience. In terms of staging, we must forget about women acting on stage, since boys played women's parts in public theatres in England until 1660. Early modern outdoor theatres in the late 1500s were noisy (sounds from the nearby streets competed with those inside the building) and smelly (unwashed bodies, smoke, excrement). Rather than being repelled by the ramshackle Rose, patrons visited *because* this venue promised excitement. Having to jostle for position and, for those standing in the yard, endure whatever London's weather offered were small prices to pay. The Rose bears some similarities to the Globe, but its value to performance history is for its *differences*, especially from today's Globe.

This chapter offers a virtual-reality (VR) reconstruction of the Rose, which we use as a theatre laboratory to investigate performance history.¹ The Rose saw the staging of William Shakespeare's early work and all of Christopher Marlowe's plays; it was a proving ground for playwrights in perhaps the most formative moment for western theatre history. Early modern theatre developed in and because of the venues in which it was performed. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw a rise

¹ For another virtual version of the Rose that focuses on the environs, see Clegg and Tatham (2018). Our virtual model can be found at <https://ortelia.com> and the website that accompanies the book: <https://losttheatres.net>. It is also available at the Rose Playhouse Trust site: <https://roseplayhouse.org.uk>.

in the popularity of public performance in amphitheatres (in addition to inns and the more exclusive indoor hall and court performance traditions).² This era saw an explosion of theatrical writing, the new possibility of publishing playtexts, and the generation of other documents that have survived. Nevertheless there remain gaps in its performance history; we contribute to filling some of these gaps via a VR immersive version of the Rose Theatre, beyond the research undertaken at Shakespeare's Globe over several decades to explore original performance practices.³ This chapter takes an innovative methodological tack, investigating the specificities of the Rose through the use of virtual tools that foreground the space itself; we deploy this knowledge in conjunction with the available critical material to understand better early modern performance and the social forces with which it intersected.

The Rose, like other amphitheatres of the late 1500s, represents an arrest of flow, as it contributes to the establishment of fixed locations in London. Until about the time of the Rose, theatre was mostly itinerant, with town halls, guildhalls, and inns around the country serving as venues (Gurr, 1996a: 36). The popular plays on the travelling performance routes (most of which are lost) included comedies and tragedies, the latter often about historical or classical figures, judging by the titles. At least one company, the Queen's, included acrobats among their players, and clowning routines were well liked (Gurr, 1996a: 205). Many companies also appeared at court to entertain a demanding Queen Elizabeth. The medieval cycle play tradition, based on religious narratives, would have underpinned some of these plays.⁴

Specifically, amphitheatres offered a new kind of venue at greater scale by bringing together a large audience in one place, an ever-widening repertoire of plays, and a pool of actors to perform them.⁵ These stages combined dramaturgical techniques from contemporary flows of itinerant performance that catered for different strata of society, from peasants at a county fair to the royal household at Court. Much has been written about the source materials used by playwrights, particularly Shakespeare and Marlowe, in establishing the English-speaking theatre repertoire that

² See Gurr (1992) for descriptions of all these venues. This chapter is heavily indebted to Gurr's extensive research of the stages, performance, and audiences of the day.

³ These include early modern acting styles, costumes, casts consisting solely of men, and original pronunciation.

⁴ Medieval plays staged Bible stories on tiered wagons (funded by different guilds). Wagons moved through a town in procession, inflecting the narratives with a contemporary relevance.

⁵ As theatre companies became more settled in London, actors experienced some job security and the possibility of a larger income, but companies did not abandon the country, especially during London's plagues.

continues to underpin the genre today. There is a rich tradition of scholarship on textual sources for plots and narratives, but we ask different questions: how were the body skills plucked from the contemporary flows of performance integrated into the physical scores of single plays? And more importantly, how did the architectural constraints of the Rose stage and auditorium shape those processes of integration? The virtual recreation of the Rose has made it possible for actors and scholars to work together in an immersive environment. We begin to answer these questions by excavating the physical from written texts to reconsider staging practices used in 1594 and their influence on the stagecraft of future generations. In this chapter, we address the blocking requirements for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, from which we are able to discern a fuller understanding of the venue, of staging early modern theatre and its legacy in stagecraft, and of the play itself.

The Architecture and the Model

While Shakespeare's Globe takes most of the critical spotlight, archaeological foundations for other theatres have emerged from under London's surface, notably the Curtain (discovered in 2012), the Theatre (revealed in 2008), and, in the greatest detail, the Rose, which was excavated under an office block in 1989 (Eccles, 1990; Bowsher, 1998: 8). The Rose's foundations (which can be visited) indicate just how different this venue is from others of the day in terms of size, shape, and the stage configuration. Given the location of the foundations amid expensive London real estate, the site may not be excavated further (although the Rose Theatre Trust plans additional work when the lease of the building above it comes to an end). Virtual options can activate the venue now; our immersive model recreates the theatre's volume, essential features for judging its atmosphere, how its patrons traversed it, and what types of performance features it could have seen staged.

Far more archival documentation exists about the Rose than the Globe or any other theatre of the day; even before the archaeological evidence, a rich collection of the venue operations was found in Philip Henslowe's account books. Henslowe (1555–1616), the Rose's owner and one of theatre's first entrepreneurs, kept detailed records from 1592 until its closure in 1603 (it was demolished in 1606). His diary names more than 200 plays performed there, the costumes and props he purchased, the loans made, the renovations undertaken, and the dates the theatre was closed because of plague. Yet the Rose is generally overlooked in favour of the Globe in the historical record because of, as Julian Bowsher puts it

bluntly, ‘the death of Marlowe [associated with the Rose] – and the survival of Shakespeare [known through the Globe]’ (2000: 40).

The virtual Rose animates the existing archival record, taking into account period building practices (from the foundations up to the roof), Henslowe’s inventory, and other historical records. The foundations fix the shape and height for the venue and contribute to the positioning of the inner and outer walls. They also indicate the basic location and dimensions of the galleries. Other factors such as the need for load-bearing beams assist with decisions about where entrance points and doorways need to be. The excavation uncovered evidence of previous iterations of the stage, but we focus on the 1594 renovation that saw the enlargement of the theatre’s capacity, its stage, and its *frons scenae* (the permanent backdrop). Two upper galleries stood above a gallery surrounding the yard, as at the Globe.⁶ The tiers are based on the 1600 Fortune Theatre, also built by Henslowe (and for which the building contract survives), at what we assume to be the rough standard of the day. On the Rose’s stage, we followed the scholarly conventions of two side doors and a central double door, with the possibility of the latter being curtained off for discovery scenes.⁷

The venue was very compact, with steep stairways leading to the galleries. The single entrance (and exit) through a double door added to the sense of being squeezed, even when we abandon current assumptions about safety regulations.⁸ Additional information for the exterior plaster and wood walls (“Tudor style”), roofing thatch, windows, doors, and stairs comes from images such as the panorama etchings of London by John Norden (1593) and Claes Visscher (c. 1600), as well as structures of similar age. Information on the framing timbers comes from descriptions of Tudor building techniques and materials (Schofield, 1991: 7). The Rose’s stage area was known to have been brightly painted, particularly the underpart of the roofed section which symbolised the heavens (Gurr, 1992: 182), although no description remains.⁹ The model currently retains an unpainted look.

⁶ The decision on the number of galleries stems from the height of the Rose’s roof, which is discernible from dripline erosion in the yard, enabling a calculation of the roof’s height. For an account of how the foundations make some decisions inevitable, see Kastanis (2019).

⁷ Fitzpatrick argues that there were two doors in the Globe (2011: 54–61). In the Rose, given the very limited space between the inner wall and the outer wall that operated as a backstage area, we struggle to see how only two doors could have sufficed, given the large-scale props that needed to be brought on and off, as well as the need for a discovery space. See Tompkins and Delbridge (2009) for some structural questions raised in developing the model.

⁸ It is almost certain that there was a backstage exit, but limited erosion around the foundations suggests that this was not a well-trodden thoroughfare.

⁹ See Ronayne (1997) on decisions about decorating this section of Shakespeare’s Globe.

When the Rose's scale is considered in critical commentary, it is generally thought to be simply a smaller version of Shakespeare's Globe, since both were polygonal. But the Rose's significantly smaller scale increases its intimacy, which affects performance and reception. The 1594 Rose could house just over two-thirds of the patrons who could fit the Globe. Carol Chillington Rutter describes the small scale thus: 'standing on the edge of this stage . . . an actor at the Rose would have been barely 50 feet away from the *furthest* spectator in the top gallery overlooking the stage' (1999: xii; original emphasis); this close relationship of audience to actor is replicated in the virtual Rose model. Further, the 'lozenge' shape of the Rose's south-eastern-facing stage presents a different spatial dynamic to the larger thrust rectangle at the Globe, reinforcing that the Rose needs to be understood through its own features.¹⁰

Our first experiment in the VR Rose immersive space was an attempt to reconstruct the physical score of stage movement, or blocking, of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* for its 2 October 1594 performance. This is the first performance of the play listed in Henslowe's diary, and the afternoon when it took the most money in a remarkably long three-year run (in this iteration), as well as one of the highest takings of any play in this diary.¹¹ The play had just returned after a few years' rest, and the amphitheatre was full.

To understand how stage conventions translate into stage movement for specific plays, it is necessary to consider the ways in which the architecture of the venue and the arrangement of spectators shape actors' movement on a stage. For this reason, detailed research examining the impact of a venue's spatial dynamics on the making of a live performance needs to be undertaken inside its architectural volume. This same experiment could be conducted with a scale model of the performing space, a technique used by many directors and designers when preparing the blocking of a production today; we agree that using scale models is efficient for working out the logistics of stage movement, but a card model at 1:25 can never communicate the visceral qualities of a theatre's spatial dynamics that are so important to performers moving in and with a playing space. The VR Rose provided our actor-researchers

¹⁰ See Hume contrasting Shakespeare's Globe with the Kingston-upon-Thames theatre based on a loose sense of the Rose's dimensions: 'the difference in performance impact between this space and that of the Globe reconstruction in Southwark beggars description' (2007: 24).

¹¹ Henslowe's share was three pounds and twelve shillings. The recording of dates varies at this time, depending on the diary practice. We are grateful to Roger Clegg for clarification on this matter.

with an immersive environment to explore the staging of *Doctor Faustus* while simultaneously responding to the theatre's unique spatial dynamics. As our research throughout this volume demonstrates, the architecture of a venue cannot be separated from its audience; for this reason, before conducting an analysis of the Rose playing spaces, we consider the people who flocked to Henslowe's theatre in Southwark.

The Audience at the Rose

Theatre in the 1590s was thought to be 'a troublesome and potentially subversive social phenomenon that threatened religious and civic hierarchies and yet, despite considerable antagonism, could neither be outlawed nor put down' (Mullaney, 1988: vii). Its precarious role is confirmed by laws that determined it could take place only outside the city walls; lawmakers mistakenly assumed that audiences would be unwilling to venture into these more dangerous areas. In practical terms, attending theatre could be hazardous given the prevalence of fire and plague, but theatre's greatest risk was that it provided a forum for the exchange of ideas. Despite all potential threats, the Rose and Globe together 'were visited by about 15,000 people weekly' in 1595, at a time when London's population was roughly 200,000–400,000 (Gurr, 1992: 213),¹² suggesting that playgoers attended theatre approximately every two weeks (Gurr, 2009: 2). Henslowe's takings suggest that the Rose's full capacity was roughly 2,200 patrons.¹³ Audience members must have felt very close to their neighbours, literally touching four people.

Unlike the more expensive hall performances, the cost of visiting an amphitheatre (at least to stand) could be borne by almost all Londoners: a penny in the yard, a further penny for the gallery, and then half a shilling for the Lords' room (Gurr, 1996b: 50). Roughly two-thirds of the audience sat or stood in the galleries. To reach the galleries, patrons entered through the main doors and moved to the side of the pit to pay the extra fee for unreserved space on a wooden bench in the galleries (with the option of paying more for a cushion). These patrons may not have remained in one place like today's audiences with assigned seats do; they would have moved to find the best viewing position (Stern, 2000: 211). Standing patrons,

¹² London's population grew exponentially at this time, drawing in communities of Jews, Flemish, Huguenots, and Africans, in addition to migrants from other parts of the country, following land enclosures and poor harvests (Cummins, Kelly, and Ó Gráda, 2016); many of these migrants lived near the Rose.

¹³ Gurr bases this on 'the half-gallery takings plus a guess at the yard figures' for the 6 January 1596 performance of *Hercules*, a lost play (1996b: 157–8). The Rose was more often half full, but still lucrative for Henslowe.

about 700 in a full house at the Rose (Gurr, 1996b: 18), also moved around as action on stage (or even among other spectators in the pit) took their attention.

Amphitheatres brought together people from across London's social and economic hierarchies. While audiences occupied areas of the venue according, mostly, to their differential economic status in society, they physically interacted, since gallery dwellers entered and exited beside local labourers. Detailed knowledge about who attended is limited, but given the theatre's proximity to the Thames, geographical access wasn't difficult; patrons would travel across the river and then walk the short distance to the venue.

Women did attend theatre, but it is impossible to provide numbers. Respectable ladies didn't appear on their own in such venues until about 1633 (Gurr, 1992: 222), but they could and would visit if they were accompanied by their husband or his apprentice (Gurr, 1996b: 8). In fact 'women were presumed to be respectable if they were accompanied by a man, and to be whores if alone' (Gurr, 1996b: 59).¹⁴ Another group attending included thieves, who could, then as now, pick the pockets of the unwary in congregations of distracted people, especially in the galleries (Gurr, 1996b: 66). A select group of patrons could afford the highest-priced seats in the Lords' box, directly above the stage, which was built into the 1592 renovation (Bowsher, 1998: 41–2). These seats were considered the best in the house for being seen, but while they afforded an excellent auditory experience, they gave a distorted view of the stage and no view at all of action in the discovery space (as we discuss below, p. 24–5).

The Rose mounted 'a different play every afternoon from Monday to Saturday, almost always to much the same audiences' (Gurr, 2009: 49). Taking account of closing times for religious holidays and the plague, as well as repeat performances, actors appeared in approximately thirty-five different plays each year (Gurr, 1996b: 122–3). The atmospherics would have been quite different from today: theatre began at 2 pm and lasted about two hours. Artificial lighting was not a part of this tradition (beyond torches on stage simply to indicate that a scene took place at night).

Perhaps the sense of sound is the greatest challenge for us to imagine today, when we are used to the regulated hush of contemporary venues (Smith, 1999: 49–58). First, there are the sounds of London itself: forges, animals, church bells, and conversation. Then there are the sounds of a crowd of several thousand conversing, eating, shuffling, and hissing or

¹⁴ He notes that a prostitute determined only to ply her trade (and not to watch a play) would likely have had found a better return at a tavern (1992: 223).

applauding to make their responses known. Finally, there were the sounds of performance, and Bruce R. Smith recalls Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* in which 'playhouses rank high on [the character] Morose's list of the noisiest places in London' (1999: 217). Actors projected over crowd noise and competed amid the clinks of swords, the alarums, musical instruments, and the sounds of performing thunder and lightning.¹⁵ Amphitheatres were 'instruments for producing, shaping, and propagating sound' (206), augmented by their building materials.

The weather and available light could contribute significantly to a performance. A sunny summer's day provides a very different atmosphere for *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* than a winter's afternoon. Many plays would conclude in the growing darkness of a dreary day's end (Graves, 1999: 94–5). When little light was cast on the yard and stage, even less penetrated the galleries. The firecrackers used for spectacular flashes of explosion produced considerable smoke, further reducing visibility. Firecrackers also raise the presence of the sense of smell since they were made from saltpetre (Harris, 2007: 466). In a cylindrical auditorium, smells and smoke must have dissipated slowly, particularly if the air was damp.

One of the most popular plays of the period that made full use of firecrackers was *Doctor Faustus*, likely written in 1588.¹⁶ Henslowe ensured its success by commissioning new scenes in 1602 to cater to audiences who knew the original plot very well. About a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power, it explores the limits of the human against the divine, mirroring the philosophical shift that was taking place at the time as part of the development of early modernity. Our target performance of this play came at the end of a wet, cold summer, after several years of drought, and followed by a very harsh winter (Weatherweb, 2020). There are no reports about the specifics of this or any other performance at the time, but we are not interested in attempting to recreate it per se; rather our experiment concerns the ways in which the variety of physical techniques that were drawn from the flows of contemporary itinerant genres of performance were combined in the dramatic action and given shape through the

¹⁵ Thunder was produced by rolling cannon balls along wooden floorboards off stage or by drums (Thomson, 1999: 14). Butterworth enumerates thunder sheets (made of metal) and several other methods (1998: 45).

¹⁶ The 'A-Text' was published in 1604, with the 'B-Text' in 1616. Between 30 September 1594 and 5 January 1597, it had twenty-four performances, a long run in an era when new plays were constantly sought. It may have been 'rested' from 1597 to 1602, having perhaps played itself out of popularity, before it returned, with the new sections that characterise the B-Text. It also played at the Theatre (Gurr, 2009: 143), and later at the Fortune, until 1642 (46).

specifics of the Rose architecture. While our study deals with a single play, it exemplifies the conventions of stage movement and comic business that developed here and helped establish the flow of early modern drama.

Virtual Praxis in the Rose

Virtual praxis refers to the experience of working in the immersive, virtual model as if it were an actual stage; it charts the overall possibilities of performance in a venue, as well as the specific demands of individual scripts, via digital technology. We began our virtual praxis by studying early modern stage conventions inside the immersive space. Such conventions have received critical attention from, among others, Alan Dessen's (1995) and Dessen and Leslie Thomson's (1999) detailed accounts of stage directions; Tim Fitzpatrick's wider-ranging discussion of the use of the playing space (2011); and research by Andrew Gurr (1992, 1996a, 1996b) and Tiffany Stern (2007) on the functioning of early theatres. Our actor-researchers embodied these stage conventions on the virtual stage of the Rose, testing the spatial dynamics of this playing space, before considering the stage movement required in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. This laboratory experiment facilitates a fuller understanding of how the complex arguments in this play could be staged using physical techniques drawn from the convergence of performance flows captured in the Rose.

Analysing the playing spaces in the Rose – to ascertain dominant patterns of stage movement, strengths and weaknesses of the entrances and exits, and positions on the thrust stage with the best views of the audience – was a prerequisite for reconstructing the blocking of *Doctor Faustus*. As there was minimal opportunity for collective rehearsals, it is likely that stage conventions were standardised. Actors worked on their lines and cues in isolation without access to the whole playscript, which suggests that they must have relied on standard patterns of stage movement. During the performance they were aided by the book-holder who prompted them with major pieces of stage business and forgotten lines; call-boys told them when to make their entrances; and stagehands (dressed in the blue livery of servants) assisted them with large and small properties, costumes, and the setting of furniture (Stern, 2007: 94–8). If this description of the working practices in the Rose is accurate, then the stage movement in *Doctor Faustus*, which we argue combined corporeal knowledge from a variety of genres, was standardised into a formula that still reverberates in stagecraft today.

The Rose's main playing space is an open thrust platform with two roof-supporting columns that are narrower and closer to the edge of the stage than those at the Globe. Additional playing spaces consist of

a curtained space at the back of the stage that can be used to ‘discover’ or reveal an inner playing space, and the Lords’ box, at the back of the stage on the same level as the second tier of seating. This area is primarily used by musicians, but a handful of actors could stand at the balustrade to use it. From there, they could be visible to all the spectators (but without any access to the stage). The top gallery level above the stage, its ceiling painted to indicate a celestial realm, signifies the heavens.¹⁷ For *Doctor Faustus*, this upper region would have represented the highest authority in the imaginary world of the play. The theatre was small enough to create an exaggerated vertical spatial dynamic, as it required the groundlings to crane their heads significantly to see action at the height of the theatre and those in the top tier to crane forwards towards the trap.¹⁸ Major entrances are located on either side at the back of the stage; between them is the central doorway opening to the discovery space. The trap offers an entrance and exit below the stage.

The actor-researchers explored the spatial dynamics embedded in these playing spaces and the optimal use of entrances and exits, moving on to experiment with reconstructing stage movement in the VR Rose. When they stood for the first time on the stage in the virtual model looking out at the yard and the three tiers of seating, they were struck by an overwhelming sense of intimacy, but their enthusiasm was dampened by the realisation that the influential patrons were sitting in the Lords’ box in the second-level gallery directly behind them; given that theatre enacted a microcosm of the status-conscious society outside it, actors paying deference to an onstage monarch had to also defer to those occupants in the Lords’ box who were their social superiors (Gurr and Ichikawa, 2000: 11). Presented with the conundrum of how to respond to a demanding pit audience while not offending those in the Lords’ box, the actor-researchers concluded that the blocking techniques used at the Rose were probably similar to those practised today for performances in-the-round; that is, the staging worked with diagonal and triangular stage

¹⁷ In 1595 Henslowe installed a throne at the top of the theatre, but stage machinery existed in the theatre for items to be winched up and down from this upper area to the stage before then, and even to take the weight of several actors, lowered for a *deus ex machina* effect.

¹⁸ Janet Hill quotes Meg Twycross discussing this spatial effect of medieval performance in a manner that translates well to the Rose:

when you stand in the street in front of a *Last Judgement* pageant wagon, and your head tilts back to follow the angels climbing up top to take their places on the Heaven deck among the rooftops, you get a real sense of height, and of hierarchy: the three layers – the highest of Heaven, the area ‘in the clouds above the earth’ where God comes to judge and the ground from which the dead rise and out of which the mouth of Hell opens. (2002: 21)

patterns to ensure that all the spectators can see the face of least one actor at all times. Any notion that centre stage is the dominant position on the Rose stage is a fallacy. The actor-researchers found that the strongest acting positions on the stage are downstage to the right or left of centre, where they could maintain eye contact with spectators both in the yard and in the Lords' gallery.

The next playing area we delved into was the discovery space at the back of the stage. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, among others, consider this location both as an 'inner space' and one where action might be pushed out from between the central doors onto the main playing space (1993: 43); these options informed our experiments. In *Doctor Faustus*, the stage directions twice indicate that Faustus's study is 'discovered'. Working inside the VR model, we found that sightlines for action within the discovery space are obscured for about a quarter of the spectators in the first two galleries, for more patrons in the top galleries, and for all patrons in the Lords' box, the most expensive seats in the house. While an initial tableau may have been discovered in this space – and the action that takes place in such locations is generally well described (Gurr, 1996b: 22) – playing a scene of any length here would have been impossible. We concluded that even if Faustus's study had been discovered within this inner space, the props and furniture necessary for the dramatic action must have been quickly moved onto the stage.

Having explored the stage and discovery space, the actor-researchers turned their attention to entrances and exits. The doorways on either side of the stage are the major passageways. Fitzpatrick suggests that the stage-right opening signifies offstage space that is interior to the onstage space, while the stage-left opening signifies offstage exterior space (2011: 144). Texts from the time indicate that a logic was applied to the stage movement to preserve a consistency for spectators regarding the relationship between offstage spaces and the onstage location. In the Rose, the entrances at the back on the left and right of the thrust stage are slightly angled in line with the polygonal shape of the theatre. Moving through them on the virtual stage reinforced the importance of diagonals as the natural trajectory for entering the playing space; our actor-researchers felt confident that they only needed to take a few steps on the stage through these entrances to command the attention of all spectators, including those in the gallery above the stage. These doors were also used for processions, which, given the kinds of parades of characters required for Marlowe's plays, suggests an opening wider than a single door. These processions probably maximised the distance between the two back entrances by tracing a path along the edge of the

stage. The Rose also has an upstage central double-width entrance that was separated from the discovery area by cloth hangings, offering both dynamic movement down the centre-line of the stage, as well as an element of surprise and even status subversion when ‘clowns poked their heads through the hangings and pull faces before entering’ (Gurr, 1997: 162).

Finally, we studied the use of a stage trap as an exit and entrance. The trap is positioned centrally in the relatively narrow stage, given the stage construction. In the vertical spatial dynamic embedded in *Doctor Faustus*, the space below the stage signified hell, an association likely reinforced with smoke generated by braziers and bellows coming up through the stage floorboards. We examined the practical use of the trap, by the actor-researchers experimenting with a real stage trap of similar dimension and depth (four metres). Exiting through the trap was comparatively easy; while emerging from it had obvious dramatic potential, it was easier to exploit the difficulties involved in climbing onto the stage for comic purposes than to evoke fear or horror. As the earth floor underneath the Rose stage was no doubt damp and dank, Henslowe’s valuable costumes were unlikely to be worn for entrances from this muddy area; this reality limited our work with the trap to comic scenes.

Within the interior of the virtual model of the Rose Theatre (Figure 1.1), we took all the information from the actor-researchers’ exploration in the VR Rose and devised a formulaic system to determine hierarchies of stage positioning, trajectories of movement, and the use of entrances and exits. As decisions about stage movement are never merely a question of logistics, we considered two elements in Marlowe’s play that would inform our choices when applying this formula to *Doctor Faustus*: the embodied subjectivity of characters and the metaphysical and physical locations for the action in the drama.

Doctor Faustus: Bodies and Spaces

This deliberately ambiguous play (Sofer, 2009: 14) entwines both physical and metaphorical worlds, toying with perceptions about subjectivity in a theatre that at this time ‘can be seen as a laboratory for new versions of identity’ (West, 2002: 22). *Doctor Faustus* typifies the shifts occurring from a God-centred medieval subjectivity that left little room for human agency to a more humanist early modern subjectivity that was not defined solely by strict Christian doctrine and Church authority. The implications of this shift in agency were being performed and workshopped on this stage through actors’ bodies (and, given their sheer proximity, the audience’s bodies), making it not just an abstract philosophical or religious



Figure 1.1 Interior of the virtual model of the Rose Theatre. Courtesy of Ortelia.

concept but an embodied practice.¹⁹ For Lisa Hopkins, the play ‘take[s] the pulse of the most urgently-felt fears and hopes of early modern England, allowing us to see both what it most dreaded and what it most wanted’ (2016: 140). Magic was the metaphor for surveying ‘both the darker political purposes . . . and the lightening effect’ of these ideas (Hopkins, 2016: 140), which were presented in multiple versions to the same audience.

The focus on corporeality is typical of an outdoor theatre that did not rely on scenic adornment. Rather than altering the stage via a set, the early modern stage transformed subjectivity through actors’ bodies, their actions, and the affects that they could create. Playwrights responded to this love of spectacle in bodily terms with ‘the gory physicality of eyeballs dripping with blood and spitted on sharp pokers’ (Lin, 2012: 4) and, in the case of *Doctor Faustus*, the severing of characters’ limbs in front of the audience.²⁰ *Doctor Faustus* freely mixes spirits (Helen of Troy) with humans (both characters and actors); Marlowe then contrasts them with both the divine (depicted through the Good Angel) and the devilish, providing a range of ‘roles’ for humans, readily recognisable to all audience members.

The treatment of space and subjectivity in *Doctor Faustus* reinforces the audience’s fascination with and ambivalence about the supernatural. Assumptions about the power of the divine over humans were changing radically not just in theatrical innovations but also in social and philosophical transformations that Marlowe kindled. For Garrett Sullivan, Marlowe’s plays typically stage a ‘collision’ of geographies (2004: 232), producing ‘experiments in which the meanings and significances of old and new geographies are, largely through their juxtaposition, developed, explored, and exploded’ (233). It is not simply the mapping of these different geographies that is essential to understanding his plays but also ‘the *affective* geography’ of his locations that ‘can serve a crucial function in Marlowe’s exploration of the interrelatedness of space and identity’ (236; original emphasis).

¹⁹ Such shifts take place over a longer period of time, but the play epitomises the staging of these questions to some considerable extent. At this time, authorities were anxious to regulate theatre that could question the power of the monarch; the increased mobility of subjectivity was less overtly a threat, perhaps because it was a slower shift that had implications that were less clear-cut than treason (see Greenblatt, 2018).

²⁰ For Genevieve Love, the power of the actor’s body, so imbricated with character, is augmented in this play: ‘Faustus and the Faustus actor, both appropriating a disability logic that combines amputation and prosthesis, achieve theatrical power through the simultaneous amplification and diminishment of the body, colossal force through corporeal falsification. Faustus’s leg, excessive and missing, is a metonym for what is required of the actor’s body: to exist in excess and to disappear’ (2018: 91).

We break down the geographies of *Doctor Faustus* to address how and where these locations took place and signified meaning in the Rose. Marlowe's plays are renowned for their theatrical extensions to terrestrial and celestial geographies, and for humans' wrestling of knowledge and autonomy from the domain of the divine in the early modern world.²¹ The play's geography includes locations in Europe and, more profoundly, the realms of heaven and hell. In accommodating more than earthly locations and stage action, it needs to house devils and hell, and with them 'room' for a range of philosophical and religious meanings. While the Rose situates audience members according to their economic powers, the play suggests a very different arrangement whereby all patrons are collected in the 'cauldron' of the venue to consider their place in a larger world order.

The combination of the vertical and horizontal represents visually the Great Chain of Being that depicts humans' place in relation to God and angels. It also registers the social order of the day, providing an opportunity to pay further deference to those sitting in the Lords' box. Marlowe's play repositions the human vis à vis the divine, taking account of verticality but effectively 'horizontalising' social relations between humans. Horizontalising reaches out to more members of the auditorium, embracing them in the action and in its implications, surrounding patrons, just as much as hell does. The play thus encapsulates an effect of circularity in this venue. The verticality connects all patrons in a more profound, global manner, combining both planes. This is clearest in Mephistophilis's provocative statement to Faustus, that even in Wittenberg, 'this is hell, and nor am I out of it' (I, iii).

To examine how the horizontal and vertical spatial dynamics might intersect in the stage movement and business in the performance of the play in 1594, we analysed specific locations in the play, how they are signified on the stage, the patterns created by their sequencing, and the dramatic impact of their repetition and juxtaposition. Faustus's study in Wittenberg is stipulated in the stage directions, with all other locations identified in the dialogue. Earthly interiors include the Vatican in Rome, the Court of Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in Brussels, and the Court of the Duke of Vanholt, while the exteriors are a 'solitary' and 'lustful grove' (I, i) and a road leading to Wittenberg. There are several unspecified locations, but the action suggests they are Wittenberg streets. The sequence of geography follows a cyclical logic that begins and ends with the interior space of the Wittenberg study; Faustus and Mephistophilis

²¹ See Cartelli (1991); Hardin (2010); and de Somogyi (1996) for mapping in Marlowe's theatre; for more on his physical and metaphorical worlds, see Lunney (2002: 179–80).

travel all across the world and beyond only to return to their starting point. In addition, all the earthly locations have a metaphysical dimension, where good and evil engage in timeless struggle.

From Henslowe's inventory, we know that two of the play's locations were created using scenic art: the City of Rome and hellmouth.²² It remains speculation whether the City of Rome was a three-dimensional object or a painted cloth and if it was used for the brief mention of this location in Act III (Hattaway, 1982: 177). Hellmouth was probably a three-dimensional portal that disgorged devils to torment humans and drag them to purgatory, resembling similar objects in medieval theatre. There are no other settings mentioned in the inventory that fit locations in *Doctor Faustus*, but this is not surprising. Large scenic elements were less common, not least because of the difficulty of storing them in the limited backstage area that was shared with actors (a company consisting of about twelve men and up to four boy actors), together with props and costumes, and that overlapped with the discovery space. Despite the spare use of scenic art, the dramatic action requires furniture and small props in many scenes, the most elaborate being the Vatican banquet table with food and drink and Faustus's study with his chair and multiple books. Books are the most used props in this play; they are read, discarded, consulted for magic incantations, gifted by Lucifer, and stolen by servants. Finally, early modern costumes signal place in their denotation of social functions: 'doctors' gowns of scarlet, lawyers' gowns in black, blue coats for serving-men, a "friars gown of gray", a "cardinals gowne" in scarlet, shepherds' coats, fools' coats with cap and bauble, and of course soldiers' coats. . . . Nightcaps and candles signified night scenes and bedrooms, riding boots signified travel' (Gurr, 1992: 198; see also MacIntyre, 1992). Yet despite the plethora of theatrical codes that indicate location through costume, properties, and verbal clues in the text, it is ultimately the actors' bodies that tell spectators if the action takes place in the court, a street, or the spirit realm.

To investigate how actors might have created the world of *Doctor Faustus* on the Rose stage, we looked for the physical actions embedded in the spoken text and then grouped the scenes accordingly. We identified four types of scenes: disputations and discussions; apparitions and magic acts; clowning routines; and carnivalesque events. These groupings revealed a compelling dramaturgy of stage movement with dramatic physical contrasts and different performance energy levels. Order is contrasted with chaos; stillness with movement; disciplined bodies with

²² The inventory also lists a 'dragon for Fostes' (in his phonetic spelling of 'Faustus'), but this property does not appear in the A-Text version of the play.

slapstick; and physical spectacles of wonder with images of horror. The interjections of the Chorus frequently create transitions between these physical modes. Refining this physical score structure further, we divided the blocking in *Doctor Faustus* into four distinct physical patterns: sustained energy and stillness for disputations and descriptions of the physical and metaphysical worlds; comic routines based on objects; lavish visual spectacles filling the stage with ordered processions and tableaux in which spirits represent classical and allegorical figures; and high-energy violence resulting in mayhem on the stage. In order to reconstruct aspects of the blocking embedded in the text, our actor-researchers tested out the physical dynamics associated with these patterns.

Some of the play's most beautiful poetry can be found in the disputation scenes, particularly those between Faustus and Mephistophilis on the nature of the universe. Our blocking experiments placed these two disputants facing each other diagonally across the stage, with the upstage and downstage positions reversed at appropriate points to allow spectators alternate access to the actors' faces. We know that Faustus was played by Edward Alleyn, known for his large physique, booming voice, and dominating stage presence (Gurr, 2009: 21–2); it is likely that he controlled this reversing movement. Other scenes that demanded a formality and stillness to privilege language over action include encounters between Faustus and the Old Man and the Good and Bad Angels. The entrances and exits for these sub-scenes have metaphysical designations that override the interior and exterior designations of material space. One is associated with hell and used by Mephistophilis, the Bad Angel, and assorted devils, the other with heaven and used by the Good Angel and the Old Man. It is possible that the slow triumph of evil over good during the course of the play could have been signified by the gradual distancing of the Good Angel from Faustus, while his proximity to the Bad Angel may have increased. Less physically formal than these disputations, but still comparatively measured in movement and pace, are the discussion scenes between Faustus and his Wittenberg colleagues, who appear in pairs of named or unnamed scholars. The stage patterns we used for these scenes placed Faustus/Alleyn at the apex of a triangle, with the positions of his two interlocutors constantly reconfigured as he moved around the stage maximising his contact with all the spectators in the theatre.

In contrast to the disputations' stillness and concentration on language, the comic scenes are physically complex and involve considerable prop-based interactive comedy. The text holds clues about this comic stage business, which required highly developed skills not only of the physical manipulation of objects by two or more actors but also of precision timing. Given that collective rehearsals were minimal, the comic stage

business inserted into the play must have been drawn from routines already known to the company's players. Marlowe integrates elements of both the Vice and clown traditions,²³ even though the two are more commonly separated: 'while the Vice exists in a moral/philosophical dimension, the clown exists in a social dimension. While the Vice represents a negative pole in relation to virtue and wisdom, the clown is a negative pole in relation to urbanity and status' (Wiles, 1987: 23). John Singer, who took the clown role in *Doctor Faustus*, reimagined this role differently to the previous two most famous clowns, Richard Tarlton and Will Kemp. Singer's performance was characterised by significant 'physical energy', frequently with 'running' and other physical actions noted in the stage directions (Wiles, 1987: 105).

The majority of the physical gags in *Doctor Faustus* occur in the street: the passing back and forth of an unwanted object; the hiding, juggling, and passing of an object between two characters who have stolen it from a third; theft of objects by a character designated as invisible within a scene; and the false limb trick where one character pulls the limb of another and it comes away in his hands. This prop joke is an instance of grotesque horror and draws attention to Marlowe's adapting of object-comedy to suit his dramatic purpose. We explored how to perform these gags at the Rose, the most significant factor being that none of the business could be hidden from the all-surrounding audience. The precise details of the blocking were governed by the centrality of the objects, but we followed David Wiles in locating clowns at the front of the stage:

the clown's separateness is effected through plot, through language, and through his position on the stage. His use of prose relates to his characteristic use of a downstage position, close enough to all the spectators for some facial expression and breathing to register, close enough for him to seek inspiration from the audience as he seems to extemporise. (1987: 102)

We reconstructed the detail of the blocking for the first comic scene in the play. It is built around a master/servant routine, parodying the previous scene in which the highly problematic master/servant relationship between Faustus and Mephistophilis is established. Faustus's servant Wagner tries to make the Clown his servant, despite the fact that they have the same status, but Wagner already has a master and the Clown doesn't. Wagner uses a series of techniques to establish his authority over the Clown: he offers him livery, then money, and finally subdues him with the use of the devils. We began the scene with Wagner on the stage and the Clown discovered in the yard. There is no evidence that characters

²³ 'Clown' can mean 'countryman' and 'principal comedian' (Wiles, 1987: 12) at this time, as well as a 'rustic who by virtue of his rusticity is necessarily inferior and ridiculous' (61).

entered or exited through the yard, but there is proof that actors could be 'planted' among the spectators for effect (Stern, 2007: 93). As the opening of the scene is based on a 'Who, me?' comic routine in which the Clown refuses to respond to Wagner's hailing of him as a street vagabond, or masterless man, we decided to tap into the comic potential of discovering the Clown in the crowded yard and having Wagner pull him up onto the stage. We played the next part of the scene downstage, with the precise blocking determined by the physical interaction of Wagner and the Clown performing/improvising a lice/flea infestation act, and the 'you take it/no, you take it' transfer of money. We opted for the entrance of the comic devils through the trap, followed by an acrobatic chase incorporating improvised slapstick violence that used the whole stage as well as its two columns to hide, to hold on to, to stretch the clown's body sideways as his arms hold the pillar while his legs are pulled by devils. During this physically high-energy sequence, the Clown transformed from heroic poser to crying child. The blocking concluded with the two characters exiting stage left, their status established, with the Clown following at the heel of his master. Establishing this scene for the Rose was a pleasure, since the process of excavating comic business from *Doctor Faustus* reveals the genealogical link to gags still in use today.

While objects define the blocking of comic business, the scenes featuring apparitions are organised through visual spectacle. They are designed to engender not laughter but wonder, desire, horror, and terror within the human characters. In our physical score reconstructions, the actor-researchers applied an underlying spatial logic to the use of the playing space that distinguished apparitions from the social worlds of the clowns and Wittenberg scholars. This logic involved the stage trap, the use of the gallery where the musicians played, and physical referencing of the heavens located over the top of the stage.

The first apparition in the play occurs in a secluded grove where Faustus has inscribed a large circle on the ground 'by which the spirits are enforc'd to rise' (I, iii). As the trap sits within the circle as described to the audience by Faustus, it is logical that the terrifying first apparition of Mephistophilis should emerge from under the stage. For this trap entrance, we experimented with an obscure shape surrounded by smoke designed to trigger fear of the uncanny in the audience's imagination. As Faustus orders Mephistophilis to disappear and return in a more pleasing shape, the difficulties for an actor of embodying a horrific manifestation while clambering out of a trap in broad daylight is avoided. Four lines later, Mephistophilis reappears dressed as a friar (his erstwhile manifestation no doubt having been performed by an apprentice) through the stage-right door.

Once Mephistophilis assumes the role of intermediary between Faustus and the spirit world, most apparitions in the play follow the tradition of court masques in depicting familiar religious and classical icons. The implied blocking in these sub-scenes consists of processions moving close to the edge of the stage, thus stretching the distance separating their entrance and exit. The spirits exist in another time and place; they probably glided in a sustained and ordered manner across the stage and, like statues, froze momentarily in upstage tableaux for the human characters to examine them. Helen of Troy pauses long enough to be kissed by Faustus. When he leads her from the stage, we suggest that they exited between the curtains in front of the discovery space, as this area typically signified an inner bedchamber.

The actor-researchers spent some time reconstructing the blocking of the scene in which the Seven Deadly Sins are summoned by Lucifer. Although there is no mention in the stage directions of entrances from above, our actor-researchers used the musicians' gallery/Lords' box for the dramatic arrival of Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephistophilis, which left the side doors clear for the entrance of the Seven Deadly Sins. They experimented with a procession from one side of the stage to the other, but the action takes place in a metaphysical and not a literal space, so it was more effective to bring the Sins onto the stage from alternate entrances using crossing processional pathways. Faustus occupied the centre of the stage. Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephistophilis looked down on him, and the Sins moved around the edge of the stage, stopping to introduce themselves, and moving upstage to join a tableau.

The physicality of the apparition scenes seems to have relied on the visual spectacle of lavishly costumed bodies intent on stimulating wonder. Nothing could contrast more than the carnivalesque, the final pattern of stage movement that we investigated. Whereas the dignity of the apparitions mirrored court masques, the carnivalesque scenes are physically violent, choreographically anarchic, filled with firecrackers, echoing celebrations of the Lord of Misrule. Some of these scenes are predicated on unruly clown bodies that elicit laughter by transgressing social norms. The sexual extremes of the cross-dressed devil who enters in response to Faustus's demand for a wife, together with the antics of the clown-thieves transformed by Mephistophilis into an ape and dog, would have pleased the crowd. No doubt our experiments with this physicality were tamer than those of Marlowe's actors, as taboos on violence, sex, and the unruly body are more easily triggered into laughter today.

If sexual excess, defecation, and urination were the basis for the unruly clowns, it is violence that underpins the moments of chaos and anarchy in *Doctor Faustus*. These scenes are the kinetic high points of the

performance, though they are signified by only a few lines in the text. As they involve the entire cast, we could only reconstruct fragments of this stage movement with our limited number of actor-researchers. The first of the sizeable carnivalesque scenes is a violent attack on the Vatican Friars, the theatrical conceit being that the aggressors, Mephistophilis and Faustus, are invisible. This scenario is a familiar theatrical device that relies on the acrobatic skills of visible characters fighting the air while receiving shattering blows delivered from unexpected directions by invisible characters. The balance of power is reversed in the last and most extensive carnivalesque scene, which is also the finale of the play. Now Faustus is the victim of an army of devils emerging from every orifice of the stage, including the discovery space, from where we imagine that hellmouth was brought onto the stage. The horrific violence with which the anarchic devils torment the screaming Faustus as they haul him around the stage before dragging him through the open jaws of Hell must have been a suitably triumphant climax to the play.

Conclusions

This chapter has reimagined the nature of the Rose Theatre as a broad ecosystem, focusing on what the model reveals about the logistics of stagecraft, and delved into the performance depths of *Doctor Faustus*, providing a much fuller understanding of the importance of this venue than it frequently attracts. The specific work on blocking *Doctor Faustus* in the VR Rose has brought to life the extraordinary richness of the physical text embedded in Marlowe's play. Its multiple theatrical influences of tragedy in blank verse, medieval morality plays, interludes, masques, dumb-shows, spectacles, and *commedia dell'arte* have received considerable critical attention, but we are still surprised by the variety and vivid theatricality of its physical score. The short-lived but influential era of amphitheatres marks a convergence of flow that sees the concentration of these different forms reshaped into new textual and performance structures. The Rose's contribution to this fashioning of western theatre is, we have demonstrated, more significant than much of the existing documentation might suggest.

Among the most interesting findings from our virtual praxis are the echoes in the comic routines and carnivalesque excesses that still exist in theatrical practices today. Perhaps we are retrofitting our contemporary knowledge into the Rose, but it is remarkable how many puzzles and logistical problems we encountered were solved using techniques that are still current in theatre practice. If corporeal knowledge is passed between generations in rehearsal rooms about the stage craft of moving bodies in

theatrical space, then our experiment within the virtual Rose uncovered some interesting practices from a London amphitheatre in the late sixteenth century that are still echoed in productions today.

Some will argue that our project is flawed because the technology doesn't yet afford two actors working together in the VR model; instead, we improvised with piecework, not dissimilar to the distribution and learning of early modern actors' parts. We show how it is possible to move back and forth from the VR to the traditional rehearsal room to simulate the actor-to-actor experience. Actors are skilled at holding spatial memory in their work, which allows them to rehearse outside of the space in which they will perform, whether a large proscenium theatre or a fantasy world realised digitally in post-production.

What new knowledge emerges from our research? For theatre history and practice, our work on stage movement in the venues opens up discussion about the history of spatial dynamics and the creation of meaning through the performance of proxemics. By working with actors as co-researchers, we move far closer to understanding what performance in the past might have looked, sounded, and felt like. By focusing on the practical problems of reconstructing lost venues, we continue to raise new questions that have not been asked by scholars working within conventional paradigms of theatrical, literary, architectural, and social history. Knowing that something existed is not the same as knowing how it worked. This methodology reveals far more about the Rose Theatre because it enables an active assessment of its detail and function in a way that flat images or card models cannot. It facilitates a practical, phenomenological analysis of performing *Doctor Faustus* at a venue it played in. For actor training, we are filling gaps about the use of the body to communicate meaning to audiences before the introduction of psychological realism. This knowledge has the potential to challenge some of the assumptions currently underpinning tertiary training in theatre performance and generate possibilities in creative production.

Different audiences and traditions collide in the Rose and merge into a new form of playwriting and performance. The cauldron effect of amphitheatres generated an intensity of feeling and the potential for a much greater community response to significant ideas of the day, ideas which are magnified in *Doctor Faustus*. The arrest of flow – the collection of a range of performance traditions within a fixed venue that catered to large audiences whose response determined the repertoire – would have been experienced at all the amphitheatres in London at this time, but our attention to the Rose enables us to investigate the detail of

a small theatre and to push these findings regarding the performance and the effects of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* there. Our next example sees a venue contribute to a more overtly political intervention in Norway; its laboratory experiment on set design via the virtual model produces novel conclusions about Ibsen's stagecraft.