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Egan, Gabriel. 2001. "[John Heminges's Tap-house at the Globe](#)." *Theatre Notebook*. vol. 55. pp. 72-77. ISSN 0040-5523

John Heminges's Tap-house at the Globe

The theatre profession has a long association with catering and victualling. Richard Tarlton, the leading English comic actor of the late sixteenth century, ran a tavern in Gracechurch Street and an eating house in Paternoster Row (Nungezer 1929, 354); and W. J. Lawrence found a picture of Tarlton serving food to four merchants in his establishment (Lawrence 1937, 17-38). John Heminges, actor-manager in Shakespeare's company, appears to have continued the tradition by selling alcohol at a low-class establishment directly attached to the Globe playhouse. Known as a tap-house or ale-house, this kind of shop differed from the more prestigious inns and taverns in selling only beer and ale (no wine) and offering only the most basic food and accommodation (Clark 1983, 5). Presumably at the Globe most customers were expected to take their drinks into the playhouse.

The hard evidence for Heminges's tap-house is incomplete and fragmented. Augustine Phillips, a King's man, died in May 1605 and his widow Anne married John Witter. Phillips's will designated Heminges as executor in the event of Anne's remarriage (Honigmann & Brock 1992, 74) and in this capacity Heminges leased the couple an interest in the Globe (Chambers 1923, 418; Wallace 1910, 319). When the Globe had to be rebuilt after the fire of 1613, the Witters could not afford their share and the ensuing case ("Witter versus Heminges and Condell" in the Court of Requests 1619-20) left valuable evidence about the organization of the playhouse syndicate. For our purposes there are two interesting references. The first is from Heminges and Condell's answers to Witter's complaint:

one oth^r estate made to John Atkins gent in trust for the said def^t John Heminges of two little parcells of the said ground by the said def^t John Heminges & the rest of the partners in the said Playhowse and premisses vpon parte whereof the said John Heminges hath built a howse (Wallace 1910, 323)

The second reference is in John Witter's response (his 'replication') to these answers where he says that the defendants failed in their duty of care of the playhouse which they "did in their defaulte suffer to be burnt and consumed

willfullie or at the least verie negligently" and moreover

the said def^t Hemmynges hath adioyninge therevnto vpon the same ground and soile soe therewth demised and letten as is aforesaid a faire howse newe builded to his owne vse for w^{ch} he payeth but twentie shilling^{es} yearlye in all at the most And noe parte of the same rent to the said Complayn^t whose should haue his said p^{ar}t^es and porcions of and in the same howse w^{ch} howse will in a fewe yeares yeild a greater some in rente then the newe buildinge of the said play howse and galleries did cost w^{ch} is and will be more chardgeable to repaire then the former was (Wallace 1910, 332)

In 1919 C. W. Wallace claimed (Wallace 1914) that Heminges had to pay a £2 fee for the right to build his house, but Herbert Berry has shown that the documents do not mention this fee nor would one be payable under the terms of the ground lease (Berry 1987, 180-81).

Berry's continuation of Wallace's work brought to light another lawsuit ("Burbage, Robinson, Heminges, Lowen, and Taylor versus Brend"), one which both corroborates Witter's claim that Heminges's house was attached to the second Globe, and shows that this house cost £200 to build while the second Globe cost £1400 (Berry 1987, 183, 226-234). Simon Blatherwick thought that in the rebuilding of 1613 an additional, second, house was attached to the Globe, and he quoted a "Buildings Return of 1634":

The Globe playhouse, nere Maid Lane, built by the company of players with the dwelling house thereto adioyninge, built wt timber, aboute 20 years past upon an old foundation, worth 14 li to 29 li per ann. and one house there adioyning, built about the same time with timber, in the possession of Wm. Millet, gent., worth per ann, 4 li (Blatherwick 1997, 74)

This faulty transcription of a draft report for the Commissioners for Buildings derives from William Rendle (Rendle 1878, xvii) and Berry realized that it had misled W. W. Braines (Blatherwick's source), E. K. Chambers, and G. E. Bentley (Berry 1987, 185-87; Braines 1924, 26; Chambers 1923, 426; Bentley 1968, 186). Although the document is dated "ffebruarij 1634" the parish officials who wrote it were the kind of men to delay incrementing the year number until Lady Day (25 March), in deference to Christ's conception;¹ we would call this February 1635. The document actually reads:

The globe playhouse nere Maidlane wth ~~the dwelling house thereto adioyninge~~ built built by the company of players wth timber about 20 yeares past vpon w^{an} an old foundacon worth 44 to 20 p Ann & one tent house thereto adioyning built aboute the same tyme wth timber in the possession of W^m Millet gent worth p Ann 4^h p 4^{li}. (Anon. 1635a)

Rendle's transcription, quoted by Blatherwick, does not record that the manuscript's second reference to a "house thereto adioyning" is merely a rephrasing of deleted material. In the final, fair copy, report for St Saviour's parish, the two men responsible for reporting on buildings in the liberty of the Clink, churchwarden John Hancock and constable George Archer, made

these entries:

The Globe Playhouse nere Maidlane built by the Company of Players wth timber aboute 20 yeares past vppon an old foundacon worth 20^{li} p Ann being the Inheritance of S^r Mathewe Brand K^t.

One house thereto adioyninge built aboute the same tyme wth tymber in the possession of William Millet gent also of the Inheritance of S^r Mathew Brand K^t worth 4^{li} p Ann (Anon. 1635b)

Thus there was in fact only one house adjoining the second Globe. Blatherwick noted that Wenceslaus Hollar's "Long View" of London "shows a gabled house immediately to the south of the Globe" (Blatherwick 1997, 75) but this cannot be the adjoining house in question. The "Long View" is an artistic rendering of the more precise preliminary sketch made by Hollar, which shows the same house clearly detached from the theatre (Foakes 1985, 29-30, 36-38). The sketch details no houses west of the Globe (vaguely sketched trees fill the space), and in any case the bulk of the playhouse obscures what might be there.

Heminges owned the only house which abutted the second Globe, but did he use it to sell alcohol? There was certainly an ale-house attached to, or close enough to catch fire from, the first Globe. A ballad about the Globe fire of 1613 "copied from an old manuscript volume of poems" was printed in the The Gentleman's Magazine of 1816 by Joseph Haslewood (Hood [Joseph Haslewood] 1816). Until Peter Beal's rediscovery of the manuscript (Beal 1977) the authenticity of this ballad was uncertain, but it is now known to be a transcript made before 1642 by the Yorkshire antiquarian John Hopkinson of something composed "very shortly after the event it recounts" (Beal 1986, 690). The ballad's sixth stanza, quoted here from Beal's transcription, mentions collateral damage to an adjoining building:

Noe shower his raine did there downe force
in all that sunn-shine weather
to saue that great renowned howse
nor thou O alehowse neither

The tradition of selling ale continued at the second Globe, as shown by the so-called "Sharers Papers" documents. These papers relate to the court case brought by the playing company sharers Robert Benfield, Eliard Swanston, and Thomas Pollard who wanted to buy shares in the second Globe and Blackfriars playhouses, which were held by a smaller, "housekeepers", syndicate including the leading playing company sharers. Having listed the expenses the playing company sharers were put to, the plaintiffs claimed that the housekeepers

out of all their gaines have not till our Lady Day last payd above 65 li. per annum rent for both houses, towardes which they rayse betweene 20 and 30 li. per annum from the tap-howes and a tenement and a garden belonging to the premisses, &c., and are at noe other charges whatsoever, excepting the

ordinary reparations of the houses. (Halliwell-Phillipps 1884, 363)

Chambers guessed that Heminges's house attached to the second Globe was one of these tap-houses (Chambers 1923, 424) but offered no evidence, and within a few pages the hunch hardened into a pseudo-fact which is now repeated as though a certainty (Chambers 1923, 426n1; Berry 1987, 173; Blatherwick 1997, 75).

There is a way to connect Heminges with the tap-houses at the first and second Globe, but it requires a literary reading of the ballad, whose fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas must be quoted in full:

Out runne the Knightes: out runne the Lordes
and there was great adoe
some lost their hattes & some their swords
then out runne Burbidge too
the reprobates thoughe druncke on munday
pray'd for the foole & Henry Condye
oh sorrow pittifull sorrow and yett all this is true.²

The perrywigs & drumme-heads frye
like to a butter firkin
a wofull burneing did betide
to many a good buffe ierkin;
then with swolne eyes³ like druncken flemminges
distressed stood old stuttering Heminges.
Oh sorrow &c.

Noe shower his raine did there downe force
in all that sunn-shine weather
to saue that great renowned howse
nor thou O alehowse neither
had itt begunne belowe sans doubte
their wiues for feare had pissed itt out
Oh sorrow &c

The ballad maker contrasts the fire with liquids (alcohol and urine), as does Sir Henry Wotton in his account ". . . only one man had his Breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broyled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit put it out with bottle ale" (Beal 1986, 690). Indeed, the ballad repeatedly juxtaposes actors, drunkenness, and fearful responses to the ongoing disaster. First Richard Burbage runs from the building, then the drunken reprobates pray that the fool (presumably Robert Armin) and Henry Condell will get out. The next actor named is John Heminges, whose eyes are swollen like those of drunken men of Flanders. The association of the Dutch with alcohol and false bravery was proverbial and persists in the modern expression "Dutch courage" (OED courage *n.* 4d). Heminges was only 46 years when the Globe burnt down (Edmond 1996, 33), so we do not have to take at face value the adjectives "old" and "stuttering", nor the description of his eyes. "Hemming" is the present participle of the verb meaning "to stammer

or hesitate in speech" (OED hem v.²), so possibly the actor's name is being played upon, with an allusion to the old man roles he performed. Chambers thought it possible, and Edwin Nungezer thought it likely, that Heminges retired from acting and devoted himself to business after 1611, and Bentley thought that this must have happened before Shakespeare's death in 1616 (Chambers 1923, 321; Nungezer 1929, 181; Bentley 1941, 466). However, a surviving copy of Jonson's 1616 Folio has a handwritten Jacobean annotation assigning Heminges the part of Corbaccio in Volpone alongside Nathan Field as Voltore, and since the latter did not join the King's men until 1616 Heminges's acting career seems to have lasted until at least his early 50s (Riddell 1969).

If Heminges operated the first Globe's tap-house then this ballad would be an appropriate place for a mocking allusion to that sideline: the ballad follows the description of Heminges with an image of rainfall, and then reference to the ale-house, and to bladder strain. Wotton's account of a man putting out the fire on his breeches with ale has a similar touch of urinary humour, all the more appropriate if Heminges was unable to put out the playhouse fire despite having access to large quantities of ale, consumption of which was inducing incontinence (a symptom of fear) in some and bravery in others at the scene. If this reading of the ballad's ironies is accepted, Heminges ran the tap-house at the first Globe, and in all likelihood his house adjoining the second Globe carried on the same trade.

Notes

¹I am indebted to Herbert Berry for this explanation, given me in a private communication.

²The full version of the refrain, given here as an expansion of "&c", appears only in the first and last stanzas.

³This word is "lipps" in the first printing of the ballad (Hood [Joseph Haslewood] 1816, 114), presumably a transcription error prompted by unconscious association with "stuttering" in the next line. That Beal's reading is right can be seen from the manuscript facsimile conveniently provided in Wells et al. 1987, 30.

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