Frances A. Yates. *Theatre of the World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969. Pp. xiv, 218. \$8.50.

In *The Art of Memory* (1966) Frances Yates argued that the engraved drawing of a theatre in Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi ... Historia* (published in four parts, 1617-1621) is an accurate sketch of the stage of the Globe theatre. Her latest book repeats the arguments advanced earlier and attempts to buttress them by tracing Vitruvian influences, principally through John Dee and Robert Fludd, upon the architecture of the Elizabethan public playhouse.

Theatre of the World, especially in its treatment of Vitruvian concepts within both Neoplatonic theory and neoclassical architectural practice, is an important inquiry into aspects of the English Renaissance that have been largely overlooked. Because of its originality, that inquiry is necessarily tentative rather than exhaustive. Miss Yates sees her task in dealing with much of her subject as 'the following of rough tracks through an as yet unsurveyed forest,' as the putting up of 'signposts' to direct the more thorough mapping still required. Miss Yates's arguments are sufficiently suggestive to warrant the further research that she solicits. However, those arguments are not, in their present condition, convincing.

One is struck repeatedly by doubts and queries as one follows Miss Yates's presentation. There is, for example, the curious case of the unmarked entry. In the catalogue of his library John Dee systematically entered a small triangle beside the title of every book he considered especially important. Miss Yates includes a facsimile of a page from the catalogue to illustrate Dee's practice. One wonders, however, why, if Daniele Barbaro's text of Vitruvius was the particularly significant influence on Dee that Miss Yates claims, there is no triangle beside that title on the photocopied page. Similar questions affect more serious matters. Miss Yates never altogether overcomes the discrepancy between her assertions that Dee and Fludd were important influences on English thought and her frequent admissions that they were 'cold-shouldered,' held in distrust, and, with the exception of Dee's Preface to Henry Billingsley's Euclid, little read in England. A principal difficulty in Miss Yates's task is that the elaborate sequence of arguments that she presents depends almost entirely upon inference. There is no actual evidence to establish any single significant conclusion. There is no actual evidence that Fludd was a 'disciple' of Dee. He does not acknowledge any debt and never even mentions Dee's name. There is no actual evidence that James Burbage was familiar with Vitruvian principles, that Robert Fludd prepared his own diagrams and illustrations, that Fludd's publisher used illustrations provided by the author. At times what evidence is adduced does not demand assent. On the important point that Fludd did have control of the illustrations used in his text (an important point because it is otherwise difficult to claim that a German printer would possess and use a drawing of the Globe theatre) Miss Yates relies to a considerable extent on the comment by Fludd that overseas his book 'was printed at no cost of mine, and that as I would wish.' (I have restored the comma omitted in Miss Yates's text.) Miss Yates interprets the last remark to mean that the printers arranged the text in the manner desired by Fludd – using illustrations

prepared or selected by him. But the meaning is not absolutely clear. The subject of Fludd's comments is money. The next sentence, which is not quoted by Miss Yates, continues to explain the superiority of the financial arrangements offered by the De Bry printing house. The context suggests that the saving of money is the 'that' wished by Fludd.

There are two consequences of the reliance upon inference forced on Miss Yates by the nature of the evidence. The first is that the distinctions of probability among arguments become blurred or neglected. Some points in the argument are less probable than others, but ultimately they all tend to be treated as if they enjoyed the same degree of certitude. This process of forgetting one's own qualifications is illustrated by Miss Yates's treatment of a minor point. On one page the possibility is advanced that Fludd may have been personally acquainted with Sir William Paddy, physician to James I. Two pages later, the suggestion that the medical profession did not altogether despise Fludd is advanced on the basis that Paddy 'was Fludd's friend.'

The second consequence of the inferential nature of the discussion is that the degree of improbability increases with each addition to the chain of conclusions. The longer the series of possibilities, the more improbable is the sum of arguments. This principle cannot, of course, be taken to outlaw all evidence that fails to be incontrovertible or explicit. But it does suggest that where the arguments are almost wholly implied one must provide the fullest possible elaboration of the circumstances. The further research that Miss Yates invites is required. Especially, one needs to know more about the practices of the De Bry firm and more about the training of and sources of information for the artisans who, by default, were the architects of Elizabethan England.

Aside from what might be called the internal questions of sources and transmission, there is another kind of evidence that must be considered in the assessment of Miss Yates's claim to have found a drawing of the Globe stage. To what extent does the Fludd engraving correspond with what is known of the Globe by means of contemporary documents and by the evidence of the plays themselves? In some respects the stage suggested by Fludd's drawing fits very well. Historians of the theatre have frequently argued that the stage business of Elizabethan plays could not be accomplished with only the two entries shown on the de Witt drawing of the Swan. Fludd's theatre satisfies such objections by providing three openings at stage level on the *frons scaena*. The central doors, larger than the flanking openings, allow a discovery space. The protruding bay window of the upper level is placed in front of the terrace, allowing a free passage behind and presenting an unobstructed view of characters looking from an upper window. The projecting chamber may explain – although Miss Yates does not mention this important corroborative evidence – the reference to a 'Bay-window' in *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* and to 'bay-windows' in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, two plays known to have been produced at the Globe. The arrangement of a terrace and a separate windowed chamber may also explain why in the Globe plays stage directions refer to the upper level sometimes as a 'window' or 'casement,' sometimes as 'walls.' Two distinct locations in the upper structure may have been intended.

However, in other respects, Fludd's stage as it is interpreted by Miss Yates does not conform with alternative sources of evidence or with reasonable speculation arising from such sources. Even when the walls drawn on each side of the stage in Fludd's drawing are pushed out and curved to become the walls of the theatre itself, they do not agree with contemporary descriptions of the 'galleries.' It is inconceivable that the 'three Stories in heighth' of the galleries specified by the contract for the Fortune (and supported by other evidence)

should be, as in Fludd's drawing, one level of 'gentlemen's rooms' topped by at least twenty feet of blank and unremunerative wall. Miss Yates places great stress on Fludd's insistence that the building used in establishing a memory system must be a real building. But if the side walls are not the real ones, the force of that argument for the accuracy of the *frons scaena* is weakened. Moreover, Miss Yates's reconstruction of the Globe theatre on the basis of the Fludd engraving makes no allowance for entry from the wings. The management of stage-movement is so much more convenient if one assumes the possibility of entry from the side as to suggest with considerable authority the existence of such a feature. Miss Yates argues that the five-door arrangement of the Fludd-Globe *frons scaena*, three entries at platform level and two at the upper level, represents a re-arrangement of the five-entry Vitruvian stage with the wing entries transferred to the upper level. It is most unconvincing that the Burbages, simply in order to preserve the classical number of five doors, should deny themselves the convenience of side-entries instead of merely adding an upper level to the five of the lower level. Aside from the presence of five entries, the main basis for Miss Yates's claim of a Vitruvian influence on theatrical architecture is the round shape of the wooden buildings. So anomalous a design in the essentially medieval architecture of Elizabethan London, she argues, must represent an imitation of the classical theatre described by Vitruvius. But the medieval circular theatres offer an alternative source if any source beyond good common theatrical sense is needed. According to the plan on the last page of the manuscript of *The Castell of Perseverance* the audience is to be enclosed by a moat or a circular palisade 'strongly barryd al a-bowt.' Other documents indicate that the circular theatre was not uncommon. There is no need to seek beyond native sources to find a model for the circular public theatre of Elizabethan England.

Perhaps Miss Yates, because of her emphasis on the 'real' accuracy of Fludd's drawing and of her insistence on the Vitruvian character of the Globe theatre, is unnecessarily rigid in her interpretation of Fludd's drawing. If one considers the drawing simply a sketch from memory of the tiring-house wall of the Globe, one can deal with it much more satisfactorily. One can adjust what appear to be obvious errors in scale – a distance of at least twenty-five feet from the platform floor to the top of the terrace – and incorporate such features as side-entries. Unfortunately, to set aside the considerations that make the drawing unconvincing is also to set aside some of the main sources of Miss Yates's arguments.

No book written by Frances Yates can fail to be informative and stimulating. But many of the most useful aspects of *Theatre of the World* – the further 'explanation' of Robert Fludd, for example – are somewhat peripheral to Miss Yates's thesis. Perhaps Fludd did himself make the drawing of his memory theatre, and he may have based it on the Globe stage, but the argument that he did so and the reconstruction of the Globe suggested by Miss Yates are both matters that, without further research, do not command belief.

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