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Taking Liberties

In her recent study of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595–1610*, Janette Dillon remarks on a kind of complacency in the view ‘modern critics’ continue to espouse of London’s best-known public amphitheatres: ‘the Bankside theatres are frequently described by modern critics as being outside the city boundary because they were across the river in Southwark, but this is incorrect. It was because they were located within the liberties of Paris Garden and the Clink in Southwark that they were outside city jurisdiction’.¹ The difference between ‘across the river’ and ‘in the liberties of Paris Garden and the Clink’ is a simple matter on the surface level, and the misunderstanding is easily cleared up by a quick survey of the jurisdictional areas into which Southwark was divided. But the mistake is symptomatic of a much broader and more significant set of conceptual indiscretions on the part of contemporary literary critical approaches to early modern drama. Other missteps attendant on this idea – that the Bankside theatres were, in fact, outside of city jurisdiction, or that the Bankside was a ‘suburb’ of license and sin – are more difficult to set straight. Indeed, Dillon’s correction itself needs revising. The Liberty of the Clink and Paris Garden were, as she notes, outside of London’s twenty-six wards, but as David Johnson demonstrates in his study *Southwark and the City*, jurisdiction in Southwark is an especially complicated matter,² and the flat insistence that the Bankside theatres, or their peers in to the north, were untouchable by the lord mayor, the court of aldermen, or other manifestations of city authority, must be reconsidered. I want to suggest that the city authorities, insofar as they can be taken as a uniform entity, were not powerless over the suburbs, and that the suburbs were neither the lawless repositories of criminals and outcasts they are often taken to have been, nor a class of homogenous spaces made uniform by their exemption from city authority. Both suggestions are of considerable importance in assessing the geographical, juridical, and cultural place of the stage in early modern London.

The current critical conception of city jurisdiction and the theatre’s marginal place in early modern London is the product of a shaky historical

record – the tattered and incomplete paper trails from which we have had to construct what we know about the playhouse at Newington Butts, for example, raises as many questions as it does answers – but it is also in part a matter of literary critics contentedly inheriting a streamlined and simplified picture of the emergence of the popular theatre in early modern London. Seminal studies such as Stephen Mullaney’s *The Place of the Stage* have offered compelling but ultimately disputable visions of the role and orientation of London’s theatres with regard to the city authorities and the city itself, and these visions have been canonized by studies that follow them. As a result, the relationship between the city and its theatres has come to have a storybook simplicity built on generalized distinctions between central and marginal in the culture and geography of greater London. One can understand from Mullaney’s study that the stage was ‘effectively banished’ from the city proper by aggressive legislation to ‘the Liberties’, a homogenous class of spaces made uniform by their freedom from city jurisdiction. As theatres moved into these areas, they acquired a particular cultural valence and a particular cultural liberty traditionally associated with London’s margins. Having left the city for the green world outside the walls, the theatre reinvented itself as a marginal spectacle with the ‘culturally and ideologically removed vantage point’ necessary to help London make sense of itself.³ Mullaney offers an inviting connection to Rosalind in *As You Like It*: ‘like Rosalind’s withdrawal from court in *As You Like It*, the withdrawal of drama from the city was a flight “to liberty, and not to banishment”’.⁴

While historians such as Joseph Ward and Ian Archer, and theatre historians such as Dillon and William Ingram, have exposed problems with this model, it persists in the critical mainstream.⁵ ‘Modern critics’ are generally not engaged in re-examining available data, resting instead on a conjectural paradigm or heuristic that has hardened, over the years, into the new historicist version of ‘fact’. A recent study by David Kastan echoes the argument that the theatres ‘were banished – by the city fathers – to the Liberties’ and notes that ‘as recent scholarship on the institution of the Elizabethan theatre has demonstrated, Shakespearean theatre was oddly liminal – geographically, socially, and politically’.⁶ Kastan cites Mullaney, who popularized the notion that ‘liberty’ and license were connected – a notion that is mistaken. Clearly, there is a sense in which Mullaney is merely taking a liberty, as it were, with his account of ‘liberties’, and there is something compellingly entertaining in his wordplay. But it is also misleading, as we can see more than fifteen years after the publication of *The Place of the Stage*, from where its punning on

'liberty' has been casually adopted as a foundational fact in various scholarly accounts of the theatre industry.

Alan Somerset has provided the only direct and sustained critique of this model in his 1999 article, 'Cultural Poetics, or Historical Prose?', which offers a basic refutation of Mullaney's use of the term 'liberties'.⁷ My own argument here may be taken as a supplement to the work begun by Somerset, whose treatment of jurisdiction in Southwark in particular needs to be refined, and whose survey of 'liberties' usage leaves some important questions unresolved. But I am also interested in furthering arguments made by Somerset and others, such as historian Joseph Ward, regarding the conception of London's suburbs as culturally, geographically, and juridically distinct from the city. Despite a wealth of new work on the subject, both the mistaken sense of 'liberty' and the notion that London's suburbs were lawless enclaves of license and sin continue to stand in literary criticism.⁸ In 2004 alone, we find three major studies that invoke some form of the ageing model. In *The Age of Shakespeare*, Frank Kermode cites Mullaney's *The Place of the Stage* and notes that 'Southwark', to which lepers were shipped to live out their days, was 'regarded by the London authorities as a moral refuse dump'.⁹ Marjorie Garber, in *Shakespeare After All*, concludes a discussion of the place of the stage with the familiar refrain: 'the great new public institution of the theatre, then, the birthplace of the greatest drama in the English-speaking world, was located on the margins of the city, and on the margins of society'.¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, the venerable father of the past two decades of new historical scholarship, rehearses the 'liberties' argument in his *Will in the World*, noting that the 'exemptions' from city authority enjoyed by the church liberties remained when they those liberties passed into lay ownership, 'enabling the owners to flout any attempt by the city fathers to stop activities – such as performing plays – that they regarded as nuisances or scandals'. He refers also to the suburbs: 'moreover, ringing the city were sprawling suburbs that were virtually without regulation of any kind'.¹¹

It is hardly useful to dismiss the pronouncements themselves as wrong. They are grounded in decades of scholarly precedent and they tally nicely with accounts left by contemporaries in the church and in the city government. The problem is that contemporary accounts are neither objective nor representative, and so much of today's scholarship perpetuates a simplified and misleading characterization of the metropolis and of the theatre. That characterization persists to some degree simply because it is attractive: the anti-theatrical prejudice Jonas Barish traces through previous centuries has become in the hands of literary critics something of a point of pride, even a

badge of rebellion.¹² Where early modern Puritans tended to demonize the stage, and Victorians to degrade it, we tend today to romanticize the stage in literary criticism. Its marginal cultural agency has a kind of countercultural currency, the rugged appeal of a misfit, particularly as we negotiate a space in today's popular culture for the period's most marketable figure, Shakespeare. While it may be enchanting to think of the popular theatre as born in the margins of society, we have to ignore decades of playing in city inn-yards and halls to do so. And while 'Southwark' was home to theatres, baiting arenas, and stews, it was also home to livery company commerce, to freemen and citizens of London – indeed, to the city's twenty-sixth ward, Bridge Ward Without – which must temper the notion of a moral refuse dump.

More generally, the literary critical approach to the particulars of the relationship between the city and the theatres is too tidy in its treatment of the complex questions of jurisdiction, especially with regard to the Liberty of the Clink and Paris Garden. There is little point in arguing that city jurisdiction did not play an important part in James Burbage's or Francis Langley's decisions to build theatres where they did, outside of the city's twenty-six wards. Justices of the peace in Middlesex to the north and Surrey to the south were notoriously less severe about enforcing regulations than were the city authorities,¹³ and if the city wished to take matters into its hands, it generally had to petition the Privy Council on a case-by-case basis. We should not, however, allow these particulars to obscure other equally important reasons, including the availability of land and the difference in operating costs attendant on sites in the city centre versus those more removed. Building outside the city jurisdiction may have complicated city attempts to clamp down on playing, but it also prevented the city from collecting taxes on box office intake.¹⁴ Besides, the city did impose its jurisdictional will on the suburbs, and in various forms. Perhaps as aldermen, the city fathers had difficulty exercising jurisdiction over the suburbs, but as prominent members of livery companies – or indeed, as justices of the peace in Surrey, for, from 1606, the city began to employ its old right to nominate appointments to the commission of the peace for the county of Surrey – some of the same officials had 'jurisdiction' stretching as far as several miles beyond the city's walls and wards.¹⁵ Nor should we forget that legislation restricting stage plays is not necessarily the same thing as opposition to playing itself. The city's attempts to legislate public performances were motivated by economic or public health interests perhaps as often as they were motivated by concerns of morality.¹⁶ Finally, issues of jurisdiction when it came to theatres were only part of a much larger and more complicated picture involving far more than straight-

forward anti-theatrical sentiment. The city had been competing for jurisdiction or ‘liberty’ in Southwark, in particular, for hundreds of years before the neighbouring liberties came to harbour public amphitheatres, and again economics was as much a motivating factor as public safety or questions of morality, if not more of one.¹⁷

Working with these observations in more detail, I would like to revisit our understanding of the ‘place’ of playing and playhouses, first by challenging the notion that the theatres built outside of the city’s primary jurisdiction were in fact beyond its reach. I begin by examining a particularly vulnerable spot in an influential critical paradigm: the notion that ‘London’s liberties’ were lawless enclaves of license and subversion, and that the theatres moved to these liberties to escape hostility of the city rule. The notion is deeply flawed.

Liberties of the Law

Current confusion over theatres and city authority fetches its first head and spring from the term ‘liberties’ itself, and we can address the issue of jurisdiction in and around London with a survey of its early modern usage. Curiously, people used the term in two related, but distinct – and sometimes contradictory – senses, to refer either to the extent of city authority, or, more rarely, to the extent of some other authority. Taken in context, confusion is minimal, but the ambiguity of multiple usage has led to widespread misunderstanding today. Mullaney has popularized the notion that ‘the Liberties’ were areas outside of London proper – or within it, but ‘outside the purview of the sheriffs’ – that did not fall under the city’s explicit jurisdiction:

The Liberties were free or ‘at liberty’ from manorial rule or obligation to the Crown, and only nominally under the jurisdiction of the lord mayor. While belonging to the city, they fell outside the purview of the sheriffs of London and so comprised virtually ungoverned areas over which the city had authority but, paradoxically, no control. Liberties existed within the city walls as well, but they too stood outside of London’s effective domain; like the Liberties outside the walls, they were a part of the city yet juridically set apart from it.¹⁸

It is not especially clear what ‘liberties’ Mullaney has in mind here.¹⁹ The liberties that did belong to the city bore no resemblance to the former ecclesiastical Liberties, such as Blackfriars – at least, no resemblance deriving from the term ‘liberties’. Those ecclesiastical liberties were indeed outside the

city's jurisdiction. Any liberties that belonged to the city, however, were very much under its control, even though they may have fallen outside the city wall. And as Mullaney is erecting the framework for a discussion of public theatres, we must presume that the 'liberties' he has in mind are those in which the Burbages, Henslowe, Langley, and other built theatres. But those areas, as we will see, did not belong to the city, nor were they even nominally in its control.

In any case, what this definition neglects – indeed, works precisely against – is the very strong semantic link between 'liberty' and authority in early modern London. The freedom or 'liberty' operative in the term refers, in the early modern period, to a privilege of a governing body to exercise jurisdiction over a particular area – a liberty of the law. Instead, Mullaney emphasizes the sense of liberty from law – "at liberty" from manorial rule'. In fact, far from being free from manorial rule, the Liberty of Paris Garden, for example, in which stood animal-baiting arenas and Francis Langley's Swan theatre, was itself a manor, with a lord and with courts leet and baron.²⁰ Predominant in documents of the period are instances of 'liberties' that refer specifically to an area of jurisdiction, rather than to an area that was 'virtually ungoverned'. When the court of common council passed an act in 1574 aimed at regulating plays in the city's inn yards, it insisted that 'henceforthe no playe, Commoditye, Tragidy, enterlude, nor publycke shewe shalbe openlye played or shewed within the liberties of the Cittie' without first meeting criteria outlined by the act.²¹ Nowhere does the document distinguish between the city's twenty six wards and any 'liberties' that surround them. Here, then, 'liberties' denotes not the anomalous spaces Mullaney describes, but rather the area of primary municipal jurisdiction. Similarly, a minute of the court of aldermen from 1549 outlines a procedure for the screening of 'all suche enterludes as hereafter shalbe pleyed by eny comen pleyr of the same within the Citie or the liberties therof, reserving to the lord mayor the privilege 'to suffer them to go forward, or to stey'.²² Given the date, we can be quite certain that the specific spaces in question here are none of the public amphitheatres we have come to associate with the suburbs, and it is hardly likely that 'liberties' here refers even to the spaces in which the Theatre, the Rose, the Globe and their brethren came eventually to stand. 'Liberties therof' here contrasts starkly with 'liberties without' elsewhere;²³ again, it refers not to a liberty from the law, but rather to a liberty of the law – a liberty of specific authorities to exercise their power. Neither does the letter offer a sense of these liberties as 'virtually ungoverned'. If they were 'outside the purview of the sheriffs of London', they were not, according to these documents, beyond the reach of the lord mayor.

Alan Somerset cites *Black's Law Dictionary*, which casts 'liberty' in terms of authority, but which does not speak directly to the specific context of early modern London.²⁴ The *OED* offers for 'liberty': 'a person's domain or property. The district over which a person's or corporation's privilege extends. Also (in England before 1850), a district within the limits of a county, but exempt from the jurisdiction of the sheriff, and having a separate commission of the peace', with two specific usages: '*liberty* or *liberties of a city*: the district, extending beyond the bounds of the city, which is subject to the control of the municipal authority', and '*liberties of a prison* (esp. the Fleet and the Marshalsea in London): the limits outside the prison, within which prisoners were sometimes permitted to reside.'²⁵ Tempting though it may be to seize upon 'exempt from the jurisdiction of the sheriff' and 'having a separate commission of the peace', the more suitable sense is given first: the district over which the privilege of a corporation – here, London – extends. The sub-definition, 'liberties of a city', indicates a specific usage – those areas extending beyond the bounds of a city but still subject to its municipal authority – to which we will return later. Generally speaking, the liberty or liberties of London are those areas over which the city held authority, whether they were within its geographical boundaries or not. Instances of such usage are abundant in surviving documents, particularly as the issue of jurisdiction over entertainment occasioned more and more written exchanges between the city and the Privy Council. A 1577 minute of the Privy Council suppressing playing for health reasons specifies the queen's pleasure that 'as the Lord Mayour hath taken order within the Citee, so they immediatlie upon the receipt of their Lordships' letters shall take order with such as are and do use to play without the Liberties of the Citee within that countie, as the theatre and such like, shall forbear any more to play until Mighelmas be past, at the least, as they will aunswer to the contrarye'.²⁶ Here, what appears to be a reference to the Theatre in Shoreditch and to 'such like' – probably the Curtain and perhaps the theatre at Newington Butts – places them 'without the Liberties of the Citee'. 'Without' denotes 'outside', and so the term 'Liberties' here refers to the area immediately under the lord mayor's jurisdiction. Again, a letter to Lord Burghley from Lord Mayor Sir Nicholas Woodrofe in 1580, outlining plans for 'preseruing the Citty from infection', points to the danger of the 'frequenting of howses verie infamous for incontinent rule out of our liberties and iurisdiction'. 'Liberties' refers not to the plot in Shoreditch on which the Theatre stood, but rather to the liberty, or jurisdiction, of the city, outside of which the lord mayor 'lack[s] power to redresse'.²⁷

When the lord mayor writes of ‘liberties’, he refers to the scope of his own authority. Having ‘published orders’ to stop gatherings at public amphitheatres within the city to help curb the spread of plague, Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke²⁸ wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham on May 3, 1583, saying ‘it auaieth not to restraine them in London, vnlesse the like orderes be in those places adioyning to the liberties’, or areas in which the lord mayor could not restrain plays without help from the Privy Council.²⁹ Shortly after, in July, Thomas Blanke again wrote the Privy Council for ‘allowance of our proceeding in such reformation [of playing on Sundays] within our liberties’, asking the council ‘to send your Lps. lettres of request and comandement to the Iustices of the counties and gouernours of precinctes adioining to this citie to execute like orders’, suggesting continuity and comparability between the terms ‘liberties’ and ‘precinctes’.³⁰ The Privy Council, too, uses ‘liberties’ to denote the lord mayor’s jurisdiction. A November letter of 1583 to the lord mayor asks him to ‘geue order’ that ‘hir maiesties playeres may be suffered to playe within the liberties as heretofore they haue done’, presumably indicating inn-yards within the city and clearly suggesting that the liberty to permit playing lay with the lord mayor.³¹

When the city bought the king’s interests in Southwark in 1550, it paid £647. 2s *Id.* for land, and an additional 500 marks for liberties.³² The charter of Edward VI, which documents the purchase, lists in fine detail the boundaries and attendant rights of these lands and liberties, including in the latter category that the ‘mayor and commons and citizens and their successors, may have in the borough, town, parishes, and precincts aforesaid forever, all and all manner of liberties, privileges, franchises, immunities, customs, and rights, which we [Edward VI] or our heirs should or might there have, if the same borough or town were to be and remain in the hands of us or our heirs’.³³ ‘Liberties’ here are not lands themselves, but attendant rights. The city’s interest in purchasing the crown’s land in Southwark was in large part a matter specifically of rights, over which the city, the justices of the county of Surrey, and other authorities in the area, such as the king and other land owners, had long clashed in conflicting claims. The city, rather than continue to fight for a clearer definition of its rights in the borough – confined, for the most part, to the Guildable Manor, prior to 1550 – sought to settle the matter decisively by purchasing outright the king’s lands and liberties.

A more extensive survey of usage, across records excerpted by Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage* and more recently by Wickham, Ingram, et al. in *English Professional Theatre, 153-1660* to full-length contemporary pieces like John Stow’s *Survey of London*, bears out the pattern established here. It is

useful, then, to think of the primary sense of ‘liberties’ as referring simultaneously to a collection of ‘privileges, franchises, immunities, customs, and rights’ held over a particular, delimited area, as well as to individual plots or larger areas of land themselves. William Page dates ‘the earliest reference to the Liberty of London, meaning the district over which the city courts had jurisdiction’ to the thirteenth century, when the bars that marked the boundaries of the suburbs abutting the city first appeared.³⁴ The ‘liberties’ we are thus most likely to encounter in documents of the period – particularly those that pertain to playhouses, playing, and jurisdiction – are districts ‘over which a person’s or corporation’s privilege extends’, in this case, the Corporation of London.

It is relatively easy thus to correct the mistaken notion of ‘liberty’ as an absence of the law, and to establish that ‘London’s Liberties’ were areas under city control. But ‘London’s liberty’ remains a difficult phrase to decode, for it can refer, especially in the plural variant, ‘London’s liberties’, specifically to portions of the city that fell within its jurisdiction, but outside of its walls or across the river. The geographical distinction seems to have been common in early modern conceptions, particularly in matters of public health. The city’s primary administrative divisions were its twenty-six wards. Each ward had an alderman, common councilors, constables, scavengers, and a ward-mote inquest. Though the city wall (or the Thames) marked the boundary of many of the wards, some stood partly or entirely outside the walls: Portsoken Ward, Bishopsgate Ward Without, Cripplegate Ward Without, Aldersgate Ward Without, Farringdon Ward Without, and Bridge Ward Without.³⁵ Thus, portions of the city fell outside the geographical boundaries but were nonetheless within city jurisdiction. As a result, records that use variations of ‘the city and liberties’ refer generally to the city’s jurisdiction, but they often imagine it in two parts: the geographically bounded city on the one hand, and the portions of the city that fell outside its walls or across the river, but that remained nonetheless within its jurisdiction, on the other.

Recalling for a moment the *OED* definition discussed above, ‘liberties’ could be ‘a district within the limits of a county, but exempt from the jurisdiction of the sheriff, and having a separate commission of the peace’, or ‘the district, extending beyond the bounds of the city, which is subject to the control of the municipal authority’. These two senses are contradictory insofar as we find them in the context of early modern London. The first usage, which is relatively rare in documents involving city authority or the theatres, has ‘liberties’ refer to areas that punctuated the city or stood just outside of it, and lay outside of its jurisdiction. Somerset finds the ‘exempt from the jurisdic-

tion' sense in a 1581 letter from the Privy Council to the lord mayor. Stating concerns about the plague, the Privy Council forbids plays and interludes 'within the Citie or liberties thereto adioyning', which Somerset sees as distinguishing between the city's liberty and the other liberties that lay further out from the city. Somerset points also to a 1601 minute of the Privy Council, which records 'a letter to the Lord Mayour requiring him not to faile to take order the playes within the cyttie and the liberties, especially at Powles and Blackfriers, may be suppressed during this time of Lent'.³⁶ Though the Privy Council's meaning in the 1581 instance is debatable,³⁷ it clearly refers in the 1601 minute to former ecclesiastical liberties, which remained outside the city's jurisdiction.

The second usage, 'the district, extending beyond the bounds of the city, which is subject to the control of the municipal authority', matches the sense of 'liberties' I have offered here in connection with extramural and transpontine spaces to refer to London's jurisdiction, but specifically to the areas under its control that fell outside of its walls. It is common in records that involve administration of the greater metropolitan area, such as bills of mortality.³⁸ Compiled by order of the city to help track mortality rates, especially in plague years, the mortality bills used parishes, not wards, to divide the metropolis – the large wards were impractical as a means of keeping track of mortality rates, and so the city made secular use of the smaller parochial units. Early bills of mortality followed three groupings of parishes, 'London within the Walls', 'London without the Walls and within the Liberties', and 'out Parishes' adjoining the city. According to the parishes listed in each category, only the third category, 'out Parishes', was entirely outside of city jurisdiction. The first category refers to the city and the second to the extramural and transpontine areas within its jurisdiction, confirming the *OED* sense at 'liberties of a city'. But since parish boundaries were not necessarily coterminous with ward boundaries, some extramural parishes listed by the bills as 'within the Liberties' were actually partly outside the Liberties, in Middlesex or Surrey – that is, they straddled lines of state jurisdiction. St Saviour parish south of the river, for example, lay partly in Bridge Ward Without (London's twenty-sixth Ward), but most of it, including the portion covering Paris Garden, fell to the west of the city's jurisdictional boundary. The technical mistake was of no concern for the bills, which were concerned with tallying deaths, rather than with lines of jurisdiction. By 'within the Liberties', then, the bills invoke the primary sense of 'Liberties' as London's jurisdiction, but they conceive of 'liberties' specifically as areas outside the geographical boundaries – and, confusingly, they include therein some areas outside London's jurisdiction.

Later bills use the more precise phrasing, ‘standing part within the Liberties and part without, in Middlesex and Surrey’,³⁹ which resolves the ambiguity and clarifies the intent of the earlier bills.

In this nuanced sense of ‘London’s liberties’, we can see the early modern roots of what is an especially tenacious misunderstanding today. Because these liberties of London were so near to other liberties that did in fact fall outside city jurisdiction, it has been easy for contemporary critics to mistake the one for the other, and to claim that public theatres were located in London’s liberties. They were not. The Theatre and the Curtain both stood in Hollywell – a liberty, to be sure, but located in the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch, an out parish ‘without the liberties’. Similarly, the Red Bull and the Fortune both stood in the out parish of St James Clerkenwell. The Red Lion was well east of the easternmost boundaries both of the liberty of the city and of the city’s liberties, and the playhouse at Newington Butts lay a good half of a mile beyond the southernmost boundary of the Liberty of the Clink and Paris Garden. In no instance that I have found are these areas ever referred to as ‘London’s Liberties’. Rather, in John Stockwood’s now-famous phrasing, the theatres were ‘houses of purpose built ... and that *without* the liberties’.⁴⁰ By ‘liberties’, he does not mean Shoreditch (location of The Theatre and the Curtain) or Clerkenwell (location of the Red Bull and the Fortune) or Newington (location of the Newington-Butts theatre). We may also recall the 1577 minute of the Privy Council suppressing playing for health reasons: ‘such as are and do use to play without the Liberties of the Citee within that countie, as the theatre and such like, shall forbear any more to play untill Mighelmas be past’.⁴¹ The city was indeed ringed with various liberties and out parishes, but rarely does the contemporary usage of the term ‘liberties’ refer to the out parishes in which the theatres were located. To return for a moment to Janette Dillon’s phrasing – and to revise her pronouncement – we may say that ‘modern critics’ often describe the major purpose-built theatres in early modern London as being outside of the city’s jurisdiction because they were located in the city liberties, which is not entirely correct: it is because they were in fact outside the city’s liberties, in the liberty of Hollywell, in the suburbs north of Cripplegate Ward Without, in the out parishes east of the tower, that they were outside of the city’s jurisdiction.

To be fair, it is difficult to fix a single definition for the term ‘liberties’ and, in early modern London, multiple senses of the word obtained without any apparent or notable confusion.⁴² In the context of the public theatres, however, the term ‘liberties’ refers to places under city jurisdiction, and the term ‘suburbs’ is used to locate theatres. Moreover, generally speaking, to

delimit a space by calling it a ‘liberty’ was to associate with one jurisdictional body or another, and though often inactive or dormant, an association with authority almost always inheres in the term. Use of ‘liberty’ in any of its forms to indicate a freedom from authority is comparatively rare in surviving documents of the period, and any sense of license from authority that recent criticism has associated with ‘London’s Liberties’ is ill-advised.

Liberty and Responsibility

Still, the extent of the city’s authority in the spaces outside of London’s official liberty should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, as even in a generous estimation, the areas outside of the twenty-six wards and the jurisdiction of Guildhall – that is, the spaces falling either outside the ward boundaries or within them but technically exempt from city authority – cannot be said uniformly to have fallen outside the city’s effective jurisdiction. We may look more closely at a few instances that involve city authority and the theatres. In 1583, Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke wrote to a justice of Middlesex, ‘Mr. Young’, to explain the lord mayor’s refusal to license certain fencers to ‘play a prise at the Theatre on Tuesday next’:

Ther ar certain fencers that haue set vp billes and meane to play a prise at the Theatre on Tuesday next, which is May eue. How manie waies the same maie be inconuenient and dangerous, specially in that they desire to passe with pomp through the citie, yowe can consider ... For these causes, in good discretion we haue not only not geuen them licence, but also declared to them the dangers, willing them at their perill to forbear their passing thorough the citie, and their whole plaieng of such prise.⁴³

Citing ‘a statue against men of that facultie’, together with the danger of infection, disorder, and the standard run of objections, the letter further requests that Young, who as Justice of Middlesex presumably had immediate jurisdiction of the Theatre, ‘both looke vnto it your self, and so deale with the rest of the iustices, that no such prise be suffred, or assemblie had, specially in this time of infection and those daies of speciall danger, considering also the like danger in plaies at that place’. The lord mayor closes the letter warning Young ‘to remember that, if we be blamed for suffering, we must say that we admonished yowe of it in time’.⁴⁴ It is not clear whether the fencers, who seem to have advertised their plans in posted bills, actively sought the city’s permission to present their entertainment, and the fact that the lord mayor petitioned

the help of the justices of Middlesex strongly suggests his power was not primary or absolute. But he did suppose a say in the matter. Since the letter notes the fencers' 'desire to passe with pomp through the citie', it may be that the 'licence' the lord mayor declined to give pertained specifically and only to the component of the affair that was to involve London proper, though asking them 'at their peril' to forebear 'their *whole plaieing* of such prise' (italics mine) appears to extend the city's say out into Shoreditch. In any case, the lord mayor saw fit to include the disclaimer at the end of the letter specifying that in the event of any suffering, the city had done what it could. The cumulative effect of all the ambiguity in this document suggests at least that the issue of jurisdiction was not a simple matter. The city had no established jurisdiction over the Theatre, so it is no surprise that the lord mayor wrote to the local justices to request aid. But if the city had no claim whatsoever to jurisdiction, why would the lord mayor presume to withhold his blessing from the event, and why would he feel compelled to exempt the city from any blame that might come of a mishap?

An oft-cited incident at Paris Garden earlier the same year may shed some light on this latter question, for, issues of official jurisdiction aside, the city appears to have borne the brunt of the blame for failing to police recreation in its suburbs, technically outside its liberties. On the fourteenth of January, 1583, the same Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke wrote to the Lord Burghley to request 'redresse' for 'a greate mysshappe at Parise gardeine' that had, the day before (a Sunday), resulted in injuries and casualties at a bear baiting arena (Paris Garden's Beargardens):⁴⁵

It maye please your Lp. [Burghley] to be further advertised (which I thinke you haue already hard) of a greate mysshappe at Parise gardeine, where by ruyn of all the scaffolds at once yesterdaie a greate nombre of people are some presentlie slayne, and some maimed and greavouslie hurte. It giveth greate occasion to acknowledge the hande of god for suche abuse of the sabboth daie, and moveth me in Consciens to beseche your Lp. to give order for redresse of suche contempt of gods service. I haue to that ende treated with some Iustices of peace of that Countie, who signifie them selves to haue verye good zeale, but alledge want of Comysson, which we humblie referre to the Consideracion of you honorable wisdomes.⁴⁶

The lord mayor offers his account as a matter of conscience and links the disaster with 'contempt of gods service.' He then reports that the 'Iustices of peace of that Countie' – that is, Surrey – had been unable to address the matter because, as they claimed, they lacked a 'Comysson'. Burghley's response is intriguing:

I am also hartely sorry for the mischance, whereof I haue vnderstanding bothe by your Lps. lettres and otherwise at my being now at Westminster, mishapened at Parrise Garden on Sunday last, and althoughe I thinke your learning derely bought by the losse of so many bodies, to haue the Saboth daie so prophaned to see wilde beastes bayted, yet I think it very conuenient to haue both that and other like prophane assemblies prohibited on the Saboth daie, and if it shalbe requisite to haue such like worldly pastimes, I think some other daie within the weke meter for those purposes, and to that ende I minde to treat with my LLs. of the Counsell, that some good order may be taken for that purpose ; wishing neuerthelesse that your Lp. in the meane time, hauing rule of the whole Citie, might thinke it conuenient to make a generall prohibition within euerie ward of that Citie and liberties, that no person vnder your comaundement shold on the Saboth daie resort to any such prophane assemblies or pastimes, which I leaue to your Lps. discretion to be considered by the aduise of the Aldermen your bretheren.⁴⁷

He expresses his sorrow for the ‘mischance’ and indicates that the Privy Council will shortly look into the matter, ‘wishing neuerthelesse’ that the lord mayor, ‘hauing rule of the whole Citie’, would issue a city-wide order prohibiting citizens under his ‘comaundment’ from resorting to Beargardens or (and other similar profane pastimes) on Sundays. The troublesome ambiguity of what is meant here by ‘liberties’ – ‘euerie ward ... and liberties’ seems in context to indicate some area supplementary to the twenty-six wards – again complicates an easy sense of jurisdiction. Perhaps Burghley wished the city to prohibit playing and animal-baiting on Sundays only where it had strict authority to do so: the Privy Council would address issues in Paris Garden and other places outside the city’s jurisdiction; the lord mayor might proceed ‘neuerthelesse’ to address similar issues inside the city. Conversely, Burghley’s ‘neuerthelesse’ may suggest that the lord mayor did have some immediate authority in the case: the Privy Council will take up the matter, but nevertheless, the lord mayor might exercise his own right, under consultation with his brethren, to forbid playing and animal baiting on Sundays, not only in the city, but in adjoining suburbs as well. If nothing else, the city may have presumed a provisional authority over its citizens – people ‘vnder your comaundement’ – even when they left the bounds of the city proper. Probably the most likely and least problematic of the possibilities, this last has considerable implications in the question of jurisdiction. Then again, if a lord mayor could presume to govern London’s citizens during their daily excursions out of his jurisdiction, he could not do so unreservedly. In April of 1582, the previous lord mayor had issued a precept that survives at least for the Iron-

mongers, who were commanded to 'call before you all the freemen of your said companie, and give to everie one of them straightlie charge' not to 'suffer any of ther sarvants, apprentices, jourmenen, or children, to repara or goe to annye playes, pieces, or enterludes, either within the cittie or suburbs thereof, or witehout the same'.⁴⁸ Here, apparently, different lord mayors sought different means of regulating citizens' behaviour within or without the liberty of London.

Whether any such means were successful is beyond the point. Whatever the particulars, the tenor of Blanke's exchange suggests a perceived connection between the city authorities and the suburbs into which their 'liberty' did not extend, and that connection is crucially important. Official jurisdiction aside, the lord mayor's intent here is clearly to have the city's will imposed on the suburbs, and the city's response does little to separate the wards and liberties of London from the areas immediately outside of them. The lord mayor felt blamed, anyway, if not here by Burghley, then certainly by 'sermons at Poules crosse' and various unnamed publications that followed the incident. Writing again to the Privy Council in July of 1583, some six months after the Paris Garden incident, Thomas Blanke complains of revived attendance at 'vnlawfull spectacles' and the building of new scaffolds: 'these thinges are objected to vs [city authorities], both in open sermons at Poules crosse and elsewhere in the hearing of such as repaire from all partes [of] to our shame and greif, when we cannot remedie it. The reproach also to vs as the sufferers and maintainers of such disorders is published to the whole world in bokes'.⁴⁹ Alan Somerset smartly notes that the lord mayor could not be blamed, but official fault, here as elsewhere, was immaterial; having repeatedly borne objections, it is clear that the city was blamed, and it is surely with this in mind that Blanke excused himself from responsibility in the matter of the fencing prise in April.

Official jurisdiction is difficult to establish. Somerset points to the 1550 Charter, noting that 'according to Burghley (and the wording of the 1550 charter)', it fell to the lord mayor.⁵⁰ Somerset refers here to David Johnson's translation of the charter, in which the crown grants to the city the areas 'in and through all the parish of St. Saviour's, St. Olave's and St. George's in Southwark', St. Saviour's including Paris Garden.⁵¹ Johnson himself explains that

the greater part [of St Saviour's parish] lies to the west, comprising the Clink Liberty and the Manor of Paris Garden. Neither of these was ever within the jurisdiction of the City so we must conclude that the parishes were mentioned only as a way of defining the manors and not as areas of jurisdiction in their own right.⁵²

The charter's language is tantalizingly imprecise here, and Somerset's reading is inviting. But the fact that surviving records bear no trace of the city ever having cited this right argues against Somerset's reading, and Johnson's tidying of the charter's meaning is probably safe. What the city purchased in 1550 was the lands and liberties of the king, and those did not extend westward of the Guildable Manor into the Clink or Paris Garden.⁵³ Indeed, most of the city-Privy Council correspondence from the period supports the notion that the city had no fixed jurisdiction over activities at any of the theatres surrounding the city. Time and again, letters to the Privy Council request that action be taken where the city has no authority to do so. The city's complaint about insufficient authority is widely cited in studies of the period today, and it is not surprising that repeated readings and repeated discussions have concluded, along with the lord mayor, that the city had no explicit jurisdiction over the Theatre, the Curtain, and their Bankside counterparts through the middle years of Elizabeth's reign.

But to leave the matter of jurisdiction here is to miss the larger point: as Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke and his brethren well knew, people who lived in and around London, people who published books and delivered sermons at Paul's Cross, perhaps even Lord Burghley and the Privy Council itself, thought differently. The city did feel the need to resolve the question of jurisdiction itself, in part because it was already taking the blame for negative consequences. Primary state jurisdiction belonged, in this case, to the justices of Surrey, but the associations that the local population made at the time – and that literary studies of the period must begin to make again today – between the city authorities and the policing of activities in the city suburbs is clear. Thus, perhaps the best reason for us to associate the city with the suburbs in the same administrative arena is that the local citizens and higher authorities themselves did so. The January 1583 exchange between Lord Burghley and Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke discussed above addresses, in the portions not reprinted by Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage*, a second issue of authority and city safety. Elsewhere in his fourteenth of January letter to Lord Burghley, Thomas Blanke notes that certain 'vitailers [victuallers]' howses infected [with the plague] within the liberties of this Citie' had been 'reformed' according to Burghley's requests, and that the lord mayor had determined where relevant notices concerning public health might best be posted. Lord Burghley responded by asking the lord mayor to have similar notices posted in the city's 'suburbs' as well: 'I pray your Lp to cause the officers in the Citie of Westmr, and other officers in the suburbs to be acquainted wth the maner and forme thereof, to the intent that the like forme

of the Certificat may be kept in all other places about your Citie'.⁵⁴ On the one hand, these instructions clearly indicate that it was not Thomas Blanke's or any lord mayor's business to post flyers in the city's suburbs (the same areas that harbored the major amphitheatres) but on the other hand, they indicate equally clearly that the lord mayor's office was the vehicle through which emergency action was to be taken in those suburbs. The lord mayor did not have jurisdiction, but he was saddled with the responsibility of seeing these things accomplished.

This responsibility is especially evident in matters of public health, and particularly when it came to plague orders and bills of mortality. After the 1562 and 1563 plague outbreaks, for example, bills of mortality returned to the lord mayor included a growing number of out parishes in suburbs, outside the bars and outside the city's jurisdiction. Such arrangements are representative of a general trend of necessity trumping bureaucracy: the city and the suburbs, though heterogeneous in the sense that they were in different jurisdictions, had the same sorts of problems, and it was more efficient to administrate homogeneously as necessary. The particulars of jurisdiction separate the city of London officially from its suburbs, but the reality of day-to-day administration lumps those suburbs in as part of the city's immediate business.

In summary, the Liberty of the Clink, Paris Garden, and Shoreditch were for the most part safe from immediate and effective aggressive legislation or action from the city authorities, and the comparative freedom performers and owners might thus enjoy was part of the reason so many purpose-built theatres went up just outside of London's jurisdiction. But beyond this, the particulars of place and authority are far too complex to support the kinds of categorical statements current in literary critical approaches to the place of the stage. The city and the suburbs that surrounded it were indeed separate spaces, often governed by different bodies. Those distinctions, however, were neither fixed nor absolute, and by perpetuating the notion that the liberties and suburbs were liminal boundary lands between the city and the alien countryside that loomed north in Middlesex or South in Surrey, we are only acknowledging part of the picture.

The spaces in which the major public theatres stood in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, moreover, were neither homogeneous nor ungovernable; they were no more reducible to representation in a single example – Bankside or Shoreditch; the Rose or the Theatre – than were the city's wards, parishes, or craft guilds, and the layers of jurisdiction and administrative procedures in the several spaces that harbored theatres were

neither simple enough to be summarized in a phrase, nor were they firmly established for the duration of the period. If we can understand by the act of the common council of 1574⁵⁵ that inn-yard playing was a profitable enterprise by that year, we can say with some certainty that for a full two decades, the phenomenon conceived of widely in literary criticism as ‘liminal’ or ‘marginal’, or otherwise removed from our sense of the city proper, had in fact flourished in the very heart of the city. Early in his introduction to the space of the city, Stephen Mullaney asks us to ‘keep well in mind the fact that, in the sixteenth century, what has come to be known as popular drama situated itself neither at the heart of the community nor even within it’, and the pronouncement is echoed by Marjorie Garber: ‘the birthplace of the greatest drama in the English-speaking world, was located on the margins of the city, and on the margins of society’.⁵⁶ But the continued use of playing locations along Gracechurch street and just west of St Paul’s well into the 1590s should compel us to keep in mind just the opposite.⁵⁷ As the sixteenth century came to a close, popular drama did take increasingly to areas of looser jurisdiction, in suburbs and liberties outside of London. But even then, in what conclusive sense can we say that such areas were not part of ‘the community’? The suburb-going citizens who worried Thomas Blanke in 1583 were certainly part of the London community, and indeed, he hardly had the opportunity to distinguish between victims of ‘mysshappes’ who lived in London and those who lived elsewhere. Blanke’s anxiety, so abundantly evident in all the 1583 letters, concerns the people of the greater metropolis as a whole. Likewise, Burghley’s recommendation to Blanke that he make a general prohibition regarding the abuse of the Sabbath does not stand on technical points. These letters reflect the conditions and frustrations of practical administration, in which the lord mayor and the Privy Council and the justices of Surrey or Middlesex worked both within and across boundaries to govern greater London. Whatever use it has been to separate city from suburbs, the obligation remains to us to undo the misconception that the two worlds were separate.

Joseph Ward has recently emphasized the connections that linked the city with the suburbs economically and socially. His work on guilds suggests that freemen found the suburbs not ‘dangerous, foreign territory’, but ‘hospitable places in which to work and live’.⁵⁸ Alan Somerset has reminded us that contemporary writers (he points to Stow) also saw associations, rather than separations, between the city proper and its suburbs.⁵⁹ My object is to endorse such associations and encourage an approach to the literary critical study of early modern drama that sees connections between the city and the suburbs alongside those conventions and situations that separated them. Keeping in

mind that characterizations of the suburbs in the negative extreme were often rhetorically pointed and that for many purposes the city and its suburbs were regarded by citizens and administrators alike as one unit, we may look at playhouses and the entertainments they hosted not as marginal spectacles enacted in social and administrative limbos, but as culturally central spectacles enacted in and around the metropolis, wherever companies could find affordable land and spaces to hold both performances and the sizeable crowds that patronized them. The city and religious authorities often saw the theatres, like animal baiting arenas, as offering morally dubious entertainment, but we must remember that the surviving anti-theatrical sentiment from which we induce the popularity of this attitude is neither representative of general attitudes at the time, nor objective. Those records are, after all, the surviving voices of a portion of London's population, and they speak no more loudly than the voices of the theatre's supporters, who were numerous enough to keep the theatres profitable as long as the government did tolerate them. Andrew Gurr cautiously offers that fifteen to twenty percent of people in the greater London area were regular playgoers and that 'well over fifty million visits' to playhouses were made between the opening of the Red Lion in 1567 and the closing of all the theatres in 1642.⁶⁰ Other accounts are more generous.⁶¹ If we are to believe contemporary writers, theatre patrons were most often wayward apprentices and other profligate social renegades who either went to plays with assorted nefarious designs or emerged having learned them. But as Gurr has demonstrated, it is more likely that members of all classes and backgrounds, citizens of all motivations, went to theatres. Insofar as the people of a metropolis are representative of its culture, its practices, and its beliefs, the popularity of stage plays in theatres of all types suggests that the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage play was not at all the 'oddly liminal' phenomenon depicted in current literary critical approaches to the stage, 'geographically, socially, and politically' separated from the city that spawned it.⁶² We need a model for understanding the 'place' of the stage that does not presuppose the stage's essential marginality. For some religious zealots and social critics, the theatre was a glaring offense to God; for some government officials, it was dangerous, sinful, and corrupting; for some neighbourhood alliances, it was a threat to order and manners; for many theatregoers, it was apparently entertaining and stimulating; for the queen and her royal successors, it was a desirable diversion, a mode for the expression of culture and learning, and a means of displaying the material wealth of the kingdom. For different people, it apparently was different things, and though there is sufficient evidence to suggest the theatre was generally thought of as outside the centre of the cultural vision the state had for its people,

to say that popular drama was ‘banished by the city fathers – to the Liberties’, where it skirted the law and transformed itself into a marginal phenomenon, will no longer do.

The argument I make here is, at its core, a matter of theatre history. But it concerns the broader practice of scholarship in early modern drama, and it comes at a time when such scholarship is opening up to historical inquiry of a more responsible, if less fanciful, kind than it has known in recent decades. Douglas Bruster has recently argued persuasively for ‘thin description’ – ‘a process that involves reading widely in literary “culture”’ – to supplement the ‘thick description’ of the new historical anecdote.⁶³ Bruster’s is not the first critique of historical anecdotes, but it is notable for its care, and it poses the question of historical research in a constructive terms. I cannot claim to have read widely in my analysis of ‘liberties’ and jurisdiction. The evidence offered here is restricted to a sampling of correspondence between the city and the crown, together with excerpts from related documents, and all of the sources I cite have long been available. I offer instead a reminder that the historical anecdote, so rich and inviting for readers and for writers, runs the danger of overtaking the historical snapshot it seeks to present. How do we get from the word ‘liberty’ to the notion that the theatres, like *Rosalind*, were exiled from the city ‘to liberty, and not to banishment’?⁶⁴ By wanting to read *As You Like It* and to read the text of culture in the same place, at the same time. Points of connection between plays and the cultural moments that critics want to illuminate are always sites of great interest and great potential.⁶⁵ But they are also sites of critical responsibility. When we look to literary texts to resonate with the broader set of cultural texts in which we situate our studies, we have to manage the broader set more carefully. Again, the documents examined here have been long available and widely discussed. That their relatively plain import continues to go unrecognized is a cause for concern and, I hope, an occasion for renewed consideration.

Notes

- 1 Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595–1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge, 2000), 151, note 1.
- 2 David Johnson, *Southwark and the City* (London, 1967).
- 3 Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago, 1988), 22, 30. See especially chapter 2, ‘The Place of the Stage’, 26–59.

- 4 Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 23.
- 5 See especially William Ingram, *The Business of Playing: The Beginnings of the Adult Professional Theater in Elizabethan London* (Ithaca, 1992), 22. Ingram considers specifically the place of the theatres in London. For general perspectives on the relationship of city and suburbs, see Joseph P Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, 1997); Joseph P. Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis in Elizabethan and Stuart London', *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, Gerald Maclean et al. (eds) (New York, 1999), 24–40; Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph Ward, 'Introduction', *ibid*; and Ian Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London: the Challenge of the Suburbs', *Two Capitals. London and Dublin, 1500–1840*, P. Clark (ed) (Oxford, 2002), 133–47.
- 6 David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York, 1999), 126.
- 7 See Alan Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics or Historical Prose? The Places of the Stage', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 11 (1999), 34–60.
- 8 Such work includes principally Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics', and Ward, *Metropolitan Communities* and 'Imagining the Metropolis'.
- 9 Frank Kermode, *The Age of Shakespeare* (New York, 2004), 110–11.
- 10 Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York, 2004), 24.
- 11 Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (London, 2004), 165.
- 12 See Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Los Angeles, 1981).
- 13 See E.K. Chambers (ed), *The Elizabethan Stage*, rev. ed (Oxford, 1951) 4:304–5, for a telling example, in which citizens of Southwark complain to the Privy Council of lax enforcement of restrictions on playing; see also Johnson, *Southwark*, 224–5. Much of the material quoted here from Chambers has recently been collected in Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, et al. (eds), *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660* (Cambridge, 2000). As this new volume does not reproduce all of the documents available in *The Elizabethan Stage*, I cite Chambers (hereafter noted as *ES*) for consistency, with references to Wickham, et al as needed.
- 14 For a discussion of the economic motivation for legislating public performances, see Ingram, *The Business of Playing*, 128–49, and Alan Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics'.
- 15 See Johnson, *Southwark*, 73 and 229.
- 16 For many, of course, morality and public health were effectively the same thing, and legislating one meant maintaining the other. The city's concern for public health was fueled in part by fears that plague was spread at public gatherings,

and by accidents at theatres, which some understood as acts of God visited upon theatregoers as punishment. Further discussion at 1583 Paris Garden accident below, but see also F.P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (New York, 1927, reprinted 1963).

- 17 On the city's economic interests in claiming jurisdiction in Southwark, see Johnson, *Southwark*, especially chapter 12, 'The Justice of the Bridge Yard'.
- 18 Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 21.
- 19 The ambiguities in Mullaney's account may be attributable in part to his sources. See Virginia Gildersleeve, *Government Regulation of Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1961).
- 20 See William Ingram, *A London Life in the Brazen Age, Francis Langley 1548–1602* (Cambridge, 1978), 73–4.
- 21 *ES*, 4:274.
- 22 *ES*, 4:261.
- 23 A 1577 minute of the Privy Council, for instance, refers to Shoreditch, north of the city's walls and wards, as 'without the Liberties of the Citee' (Chambers, *ES*, 4:276).
- 24 Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics', 38.
- 25 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 'liberty', 7c.
- 26 *ES*, 4:276.
- 27 *ES*, 4:281.
- 28 Much of the correspondence I examine between the lord mayor and the Privy Council involves Thomas Blanke, who served as lord mayor in 1583. I occasionally use 'lord mayor' in lower case to refer to the office generally.
- 29 *ES*, 4:294.
- 30 *ES*, 4:295.
- 31 *ES*, 4:295. The Queen's Men were given permission the same month by the Guildhall to play at two city inns. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996), 200–12.
- 32 Johnson, *Southwark*, 114.
- 33 Johnson, *Southwark*, 114.
- 34 William Page, *London: Its Origin and Early Development* (New York, 1923), 179.
- 35 The twenty-sixth ward, Bridge Ward Without, on the south bank of the Thames, did not have any representation in the Court of the Common Council, and its alderman was not nominated by the ward. Bridge Ward Without was an administrative anomaly in many respects. See Johnson, *Southwark*, especially chapter 10, for a full discussion.

- 36 *ES*, 4:332 and 4:228. See Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics', 39.
- 37 Though complicated by the likelihood that the 1581 letter refers to the Theatre and the Curtain, outside the city's liberties, it is possible that the Privy Council uses 'liberties' in the 1581 letter to denote areas outside the walls but still in the city's jurisdiction.
- 38 For an overview of Bills of Mortality, see Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, F.P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*, and Vanessa Harding, 'The Population of London, 1550–1700: a Review of the Published Evidence', *London Journal* 15 (1990), 111–28.
- 39 Harding, 'The Population of London', 125.
- 40 Quoted in *ES*, 4:200; italics mine.
- 41 *ES*, 4:276.
- 42 In an especially telling example, the Privy Council interpreted a patent issued to the amalgamated Queen's Revels and Lady Elizabeth's players giving them permission to build a theatre 'in the Suburbs of London' as excluding any land – including the Blackfriars liberty – within the city proper. See Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages* (New York, 1963), 139–40; and G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (Oxford, 1941–1968), 78–9.
- 43 *ES*, 4:293.
- 44 *ES*, 4:293–4.
- 45 So identified by Wickham, *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*, 87, 1n.
- 46 *ES*, 4:292
- 47 *ES*, 4:292.
- 48 *ES*, 4:287. Chambers lists John Nicholls's *Ironmongers* as the source.
- 49 *ES*, 4:295.
- 50 Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics', 47.
- 51 Johnson, *Southwark*, 118; translation of charter, 399.
- 52 Johnson, *Southwark*, 118.
- 53 The city's purchase, and thus the boundaries of Bridge Ward Without, were effectively coterminous with the combined areas of the Guildable Manor, the King's Manor and Great Liberty Manor.
- 54 *Malone Society Collections*, vol. 1, E.K. Chambers and W.W. Greg (eds) (Oxford, 1911), 61.
- 55 On the 1574 act as a move to tap the considerable revenue of stage plays in the city, see William Ingram, *The Business of Playing*, 127–49, and Somerset, 'Cultural Poetics', 42–3.
- 56 Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 8; Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 24.

- 57 E.K. Chambers recognized half a century ago that ‘originally stageland was in the heart of the City itself. With the building of the first theatres, it was transferred to the Fields of the northern suburbs. During the last decade of the sixteenth century the Fields in their turn gave way to the Bankside’ (*ES*, 2:370).
- 58 Ward, ‘Imagining the Metropolis’, 25. See also Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*.
- 59 See Somerset, ‘Cultural Poetics’, 48.
- 60 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 3rd edition (Cambridge, 1992), 213. For additional work on audiences at early modern theatres, see Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare’s Audience* (New York, 1964); Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London, 1576–1642* (Princeton, 1981); and Ann Jennalie Cook, ‘Audiences’, *A New History of English Drama*, John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (eds) (New York, 1997), 305–20.
- 61 Most recently, James Shapiro suggests ‘it’s likely that over a third of London’s adult population saw a play every month’. See James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York, 2005), 9.
- 62 Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory*, 126.
- 63 See Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn* (New York, 2003), especially chapter 2, ‘Deep Focus: Toward the Thin Description of Literary Culture’, 29–62.
- 64 See Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 23.
- 65 The New Historicism traditionally understands the arrangement as strictly reciprocal: the historical component is meant to illuminate the literary component, and vice versa. Often, however, the analysis is expressly partial to the literary component. Prominent critiques include Joel Fineman, ‘The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction’, *The New Historicism*, H. Aram Vesser (ed) (New York, 1989), 49–76; and Edward Pechter, ‘The New Historicism and Its Discontents: Politicizing Renaissance Drama’, *PMLA* 102 (1987): 292–303.