

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Marlowe's *Edward II* and 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore': Tactical Engagements with Sewers in Late-Elizabethan London

Christopher D. Foley
University of California, Santa Barbara
christopher.d.foley@gmail.com

I

The historical figures of Jane Shore and Edward II would have occupied the same conceptual space in the minds of many early modern Londoners. Given the widespread popularity of the *de casibus* tradition in English chronicle histories, both figures were well known for scandalous court romances that violated sexual and class boundaries. Although the imaginatively recounted histories of these two figures were numerous and circulated in complex, and potentially contradictory, forms throughout the early modern period, this essay explores two instantiations in which Jane Shore and Edward II occupy not only the same conceptual space but also the same geographic space. Dating from the 1590s, the anonymous yet wildly popular ballad entitled 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore' offers a unique, albeit false, etymology of the northern suburb of Shoreditch that emphasises the abject environmental conditions of the area's principal ditch.¹

I would like to thank Paddy Fumerton, Ken Hiltner, Jim Kearney, and Andrew Griffin for their careful and considerate feedback at various stages of this essay's composition. I would also like to thank Julian Bowsher for his private correspondence regarding the general argument of this essay in its early draft form and for his helpful bibliographic suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous readers at *EMLS* for their insightful and stimulating criticisms of my originally submitted manuscript.

¹ 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore, A Goldsmith's Wife, in London, sometime King Edward the Fourth's concubine, who for her wanton life, came to a miserable end: Set forth for the example of all lewd livers'. Euing Ballads 395, University of Glasgow, English Broadside Ballad Archive, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/32020/image>. This ballad exists in a number of extant versions, one indication among many of its enduring popularity throughout the early modern period. For a critical examination of the ballad and its popularity, see James Harner, "'The Wofull Lamentation of Mistris Jane Shore': The Popularity of an Elizabethan Ballad", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 71 (1977), 137–49, especially pp. 139–41. For a critical discussion of the general popularity of Jane Shore in Elizabethan England, see Samuel L. Pratt, 'Jane

Christopher Marlowe's *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II* (1594), meanwhile, was likely first performed in Shoreditch at Burbage's Theatre, also during the 1590s.² Like 'The Woful Lamentation', Marlowe's dramatic adaptation demonstrates an explicit interest in the abject environmental conditions of the conspicuous 'channels' immediately surrounding the play's earliest performance location in London. This conceptual, spatial, and temporal coincidence becomes more significant in light of the fact that the spectacular punishments to which both Jane Shore and Edward II are subjected in these instantiations are nearly identical: both die ignominiously in waste-laden sewers.

This essay proposes that recent historical scholarship on late medieval and early modern waste-management initiatives in London and other urban communities provides an appropriate frame of reference for understanding the tactical revisions that 'The Woful Lamentation' and Marlowe's play make to their respective sources for three primary reasons.³ Firstly, the same medical theories of body-environment interactions that informed these civic waste-management initiatives also informed popular understandings of waste as a threat to public health; equally significantly, particularly with respect to Marlowe's *Edward II*, these same theories also informed the dynamics of playgoing in London during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.⁴ Secondly, the system of 'cooperative sanitation' upon which civic officials relied for effective environmental regulation during the period in question firmly established an ideological link between improperly disposed waste and social disorder.⁵ Finally, however, the unprecedented population growth that London began to experience from the late-sixteenth

Shore and the Elizabethans: Some Facts and Speculations', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 11.4 (1970), 1293–306.

² Christopher Marlowe, *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England: with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer* (London, 1594). All subsequent textual references to Marlowe's *Edward II* (unless otherwise noted) are taken from *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. by Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003). So, too, are the brief references to any other Marlowe plays.

³ For a discussion of civic waste-management ordinances and regulatory practices in Coventry, Norwich, and York, see Dolly Jørgenson, "'All Good Rule of the Citee': Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400–1600", *Journal of Urban History*, 36 (2010), pp. 300–15, as well as 'Cooperative Sanitation: Managing Streets and Gutters in Late Medieval England and Scandinavia', *Technology and Culture*, 49.3 (2008), 547–567. For the considerably smaller town of Prescott, see Walter King, 'How High Is Too High? Disposing of Dung in Seventeenth-Century Prescott', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23.3 (1992), 443–57. For London, see Ernest Sabine, 'City Cleaning in Medieval London', *Speculum*, 12.1 (1937), 19–43, as well as 'Latrines and Cesspools of Mediaeval London', *Speculum*, 12.1 (1937), 303–21. For more recent scholarship on London, see Dolly Jørgenson, 'The Metamorphosis of Ajax, Jakes, and Early Modern Urban Sanitation', *Early Modern English Studies*, 3 (2010), 1–31.

⁴ For a thorough assessment of the degree to which late-medieval waste management initiatives were informed by premodern miasmic theories of body-environment interaction, see N. J. Ciecieszki, 'The Stench of Disease: Public Health and the Environment in Late-Medieval English Towns and Cities', *Health, Culture, and Society*, 4.1 (2013), 92–104. See also Jørgenson, 'Ajax, Jakes, and Early Modern Urban Sanitation'.

⁵ Dolly Jørgenson's cumulative body of recent research probes this ideological link between good governance, limited technologies of waste disposal, and disorderly individual behavior from a variety of related critical perspectives. See especially 'Cooperative Sanitation', most notably pp. 558–59, as well as 'Good Rule'.

century placed this long-standing system of ‘cooperative sanitation’ under increasing socio-environmental strain. Coinciding with the city’s intensive urban and suburban growth, a notable emergence occurs in popular ephemeral media of the period. Tactically occupying the same discursive space as civic waste management regulations, these popular narratives begin to imaginatively expose disorderly historical and fictional figures to the contemporary hazards of sewage in early modern London.⁶ In so doing, however, they not only reaffirm the ideological link between improperly disposed waste and social disorder; they also simultaneously explore the socio-environmental issue of waste exposure on a collective, rather than individual, scale.

In Marlowe’s *Edward II*, for example, the deposed king’s subjection to the fecal matter of his social inferiors is framed with references to the bodily harm that such noxious smells — in accordance with miasmatic theories — would have caused ‘any man’, not just a ‘king brought up so tenderly’ (25.5–6). Marlowe’s play, moreover, puts the ideological, moralistic framework of civic waste-management initiatives under particular pressure insofar as the hazards of early modern sewers are represented both as a symptom of social disorder (primarily through the figure of Edward II) and as a cause of civic unrest. The play’s extensive staging of exposure to waste would have been especially forceful from an historical-phenomenological perspective, I argue, for the play’s earliest audiences at Burbage’s Theatre in Shoreditch — especially in light of the fact that Marlowe repeatedly calls attention to the porous material boundaries between the stage space of the play and the wider, environmentally hazardous spaces of late-Elizabethan London.

From a theoretical perspective, this essay relies on the distinction between ‘strategic’ and ‘tactical’ uses of urban space that Michel de Certeau has identified in his seminal *The Practice of Everyday Life*.⁷ Strategies, according to Certeau, are attempts to exert or extend control over a place; they are motivated from positions of relative power and, in the historical context of early modern London, might include civic ordinances regulating waste disposal, Tudor-Stuart royal

⁶ This claim is supported by a substantial number of moralizing early modern broadside ballads, which include ‘A Lanthorne for Landlords’ (Pepys Ballads 1.146–47, Pepys Library, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20064/image>) and ‘A Most Excellent Ballad of an Old Man and his Wife, Who in their want and misery sought to their Children for succour, by whom they were disdained, and scornfully sent them away succourless, and Gods vengeance shewed on them for the same’ (Roxburghe Ballads 1.332–33, British Library, *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30227/image>). Remarkably, in these and other similar ballads, the socially transgressive individual loses all ties to his or her initial place in society before succumbing ignominiously to death in a dung-filled ditch. Due to the shared conceptual, temporal, and geographic imaginative space between ‘The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore’ and Marlowe’s *Edward II*, however, this essay focuses exclusively on this particular ballad.

⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Los Angeles: UC Press, 1988), pp. 34–39.

proclamations against new building, and even the construction of the Theatre. Spatial strategies, in Certeau's analysis, intend to serve as testaments to the triumph of 'place over time'.⁸

Tactics, by comparison, are motivated from positions of relative weakness. These always occur 'within the space of the other' and, significantly, depend on an opportunistic seizing of the moment in relation to a given place or space for their cultural efficacy.⁹ The two principal works analysed in this essay suggest that the tactical seizure of the moment was one that ephemeral early modern ballads and theatrical performances were well prepared to effect. Through an extended analysis of the subtle yet significant changes that both 'The Woful Lamentation' and Marlowe's *Edward II* introduce into the respective 'histories' of Jane Shore and Edward II, this essay illuminates the spatial tactics that each of these works respectively deploys in relation to the collective problematic of hazardous sewage exposure in Shoreditch during the 1590s. While 'The Woful Lamentation' depends primarily on its false etymology and salient contemporary descriptions of the principal ditch in Shoreditch, the spatial tactics of Marlowe's play include leveraging miasmatic theories of body-environment interaction and drawing repeated attention to the porous material boundaries between Burbage's Theatre and the network of sewers immediately surrounding the play's first performance location. Furthermore, insofar as the spatial tactics of *Edward II* rely on contemporary theories of body-environment interaction in order to draw attention to a socio-environmental issue of collective concern, this reading of Marlowe's play seeks to put the scholarly project of historical phenomenology into a timely dialogue with early modern ecocriticism.

Since its inception approximately fifteen years ago, historical phenomenology has reinvigorated critical approaches to understanding early modern drama's multifaceted relationship to the historically situated and socially constructed body.¹⁰ Recently, two scholars working in this critical vein, Holly Dugan and Hristomir Stanev, have focused on the extensive use of olfactory language on the early modern stage.¹¹ Drawing attention to the unique, historical conditions of Renaissance dramatic performances, Stanev has argued that '[r]eferences to smells were meant not only to evoke the materiality of [the] stage and the bodies of the actors and spectators, but significantly expanded drama's means of incorporating and probing into the material foundations

⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹ Ibid., pp. xix, 37.

¹⁰ Kevin Curran and James Kearney, 'Introduction', *Criticism*, 54.3 (2012), 353–64, p. 354.

¹¹ Holly Dugan, 'Coriolanus and the "rank-scented meine": Smelling Rank in Early Modern London', in *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice, 1550–1650*, ed. by Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 139–59, especially pp. 142–43; Hristomir A. Stanev, 'The City out of Breath: Jacobean City Comedy and the Odors of Restraint', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 3.4 (2012), 423–35. I would like to thank the anonymous reader at *EMLS* for bringing Stanev's work to my attention.

of city life' as well.¹² In the social context of performances at private indoor theaters, which catered to wealthier spectators, both Stanev and Dugan demonstrate that olfactory language could serve as a powerful marker and constructor of spatialised social difference. For Stanev, audiences that frequented plays performed at St. Paul's — which seems to have enjoyed an enviable reputation as the sweetest smelling theater in Jacobean London — would have been particularly receptive to language of olfaction that dramatised hazardous exposures within the environmentally and morally degraded metropolis. For Dugan, performances of *Coriolanus* at the Blackfriars theatre would have been especially powerful for early modern audiences from an olfactory perspective, given the play's discourse of 'rank and rankness' and the proximity of the Blackfriars to the noxious Fleet River/Ditch.

Following a critical approach that shares substantial affinities with those of Dugan and Stanev, this essay analyses the late-Elizabethan play most emphatically concerned with sewage and its dual threat to the body and body politic. Like those Renaissance dramas that Stanev and Dugan have analysed, Marlowe's play tactically deploys olfactory language at key moments in order to highlight the material hazards of human waste within the dramatic narrative of the play and in the surrounding landscape in late-Elizabethan London. Significantly, however, exposure to waste is not merely represented as an olfactory experience in *Edward II*; rather, it proves to be a multi-sensory, spatially determined experience for many of the play's characters and its earliest audiences alike — in ways that previously published interpretations of the signification of sewage in the play have yet to consider. In light of the fact that Burbage's Theatre was the first purpose-built playhouse in early modern London, moreover, and in light of the fact that Marlowe's play explicitly calls attention to the porous material boundaries between the initial stage space of the play and the sewers immediately surrounding Burbage's Theatre in Shoreditch, Finsbury, and Moorfields, this essay ultimately argues that *Edward II* offers a representative example of Renaissance drama's unique ability — given historically situated beliefs concerning disease-transmission and body-environment interactions — to mediate certain urban ecological and public health concerns facing the collective population of London during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.

¹² Ibid., p. 424.

II

The recent body of historical scholarship on late medieval and early modern urban waste management policies and practices provides an important frame of reference for understanding both the material and ideological dimensions of waste in the cultural imaginary of early modern Londoners, as well as the tactical changes ‘The Woful Lamentation’ and *Edward II* introduce into the respective discursive histories of Jane Shore and Edward II. Notably, this same body of scholarship has also identified a marked increase in the persecution of individuals who violated civic ordinances concerning the proper and orderly disposal of waste throughout the seventeenth century.¹³ In London, from the late-sixteenth century onward, this growing concern was obviously and directly tied to the socio-environmental consequences of the city’s explosive, arguably unsustainable, growth.¹⁴ Insofar as ‘The Woful Lamentation’ and Marlowe’s *Edward II* tactically engage the issue of collective exposure to sewers in the decade immediately leading up to the cultural emergence of the modern, principally cloacal understanding of the term ‘sewer’ (which in the *OED* is linked to the 1605 jurisdictional expansion of the ‘Commission of the Sewers’ Act under James I), this essay suggests that ‘The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore’ and Marlowe’s *Edward II* participated in the cultural emergence of the modern understanding of the term; they also arguably participated in the increasingly severe punishments meted out by civic and royal officials in attempts to preserve public health in the precarious midst of extensive suburban development, population growth, and attendant environmental degradation.

In his analysis of fourteenth-century waste management (and related public health) policies, N. J. Ciecieznski has demonstrated that these initiatives represent ‘the practical application’ of widely held beliefs concerning the material transmission of diseases. As Ciecieznski writes, premodern miasmatic theories demonstrated an ‘environmentally-based understanding of disease that focused mainly on the smell of the air and water’.¹⁵ In an overdetermined sense, noxious smells were held to be both a cause and a sensible symptom of corrupted or infected air and water. Thus, for example, Edward III issued a writ in 1355 concerning the environmental degradation of the foss (or moat) surrounding Fleet Prison, which identified two causes ‘to fear’ for the health of the

¹³ Sabine, ‘Latrines and Cesspools’, p. 318. See also King, ‘How high?’, pp. 453–57.

¹⁴ Roger Finlay and Beatrice Shearer, ‘Population Growth and Suburban Expansion’, in *London 1500-1700: The Making of the Metropolis*, ed. by A.L. Beier and Roger Finlay, pp. 37–59. Finlay and Shearer estimate the population of London between 1560 and 1600 grew from 120,000 to 200,000. Notably, during this same window, they estimate that the northern suburban population grew from 5,000 to 20,000. This particular area, according to their analysis, experienced the most phenomenal population growth in the late-Elizabethan period. For a critical analysis of demographic methodologies in the estimation of early modern London’s population growth, see Vanessa Harding, ‘The Population of London, 1550–1700: A Review of Published Evidence’, *London Journal*, 15:2 (1990), 111–28.

¹⁵ Ciecieznski, p. 92.

Fleet prisoners: ‘by reason of the infection of the air, and the abominable stench which there prevails, many of those there imprisoned are often affected with various diseases and grievous maladies’.¹⁶ The ensuing inquisition report identifies the primary culprits of the ‘infection of the air’ and the ‘abominable stench’ as nearly a dozen privies, which had been built by area residents for individual convenience despite the collective health threat they posed to the prisoners and other nearby residents.¹⁷ According to Ciecieznski, city-cleaning initiatives such as Edward III’s 1355 writ, dating from mid-fourteenth century London, were motivated by an urgent desire to prevent any further plague outbreaks, due to the fact that miasmatic theories causally linked the corruption of waste and wastewater to the corruption or infection of the surrounding air, which in turn caused the plague.¹⁸ Furthermore, in Dolly Jørgenson’s analysis of Sir John Harington’s *Metamorphosis of Ajax* — which notably dates from the 1590s alongside ‘The Woful Lamentation’ and *Edward II* — she argues that miasmatic understandings of noxious smells were widely circulating in late-Elizabethan London in relation to public perceptions of the health threat of excess or improperly disposed waste.¹⁹ Thus, miasmatic theories not only informed civic initiatives to regulate waste management from the fourteenth century onward; they also informed popular understandings of excess or improperly disposed waste as a threat to public health in late-Elizabethan London.

In her related research into the waste management initiatives and practices in the smaller urban communities of Norwich, York, and Coventry, Jørgenson has also analysed the ideological basis for the deep-seated association between excess waste and disorderly behaviour. First, civic officials were committed to providing basic sanitation services to residents because such services aligned with ‘visions of good governance’ in the period, which comprised a dual consideration of the ‘common weal’ and civic godliness.²⁰ Because decaying human and non-human waste threatened the bodily health of urban residents, regardless of whether the waste was rotting in the streets or in roadside ditches or gutters, such waste threatened the ‘common weal’ and therefore became a target of social reform.²¹ These civic initiatives also conformed to the vision of civic

¹⁶ H.T. Riley, ed. ‘Memorials: 1355’, *Memorials of London and London Life: In the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries*, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57696#s3>. The concern that Edward III’s writ demonstrates for the Fleet Prison detainees is especially provocative to consider in light of the fact that his father, Edward II, was subjected to environmental hazards of similar fashion in 1327.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ciecieznski, p. 100.

¹⁹ Jørgenson, ‘Ajax, Jakes, and Early Modern Urban Sanitation’, pp. 7–10.

²⁰ Jørgenson, ‘Good Rule’, pp. 302–04. In her analysis, Jørgenson cites Paul Slack’s seminal *From Reformation to Improvement* as the original source for identifying these twin considerations of good governance — the commonweal and civic godliness — in Post-Reformation England.

²¹ Jørgenson claims that decay was opposed to the common weal on principle. However, why it was opposed, especially in terms of human health, is more evident when one considers humoral/miasmatic theories. Although Jørgenson does not rely on such theories in her explication in ‘Good Rule’, she does demonstrate an acute awareness

godliness. Jørgenson cites a number of Norwich council records indicating that its members viewed their statutes as both ‘goode and godly’. Such ‘goode and godly’ statutes were contrasted with ‘disobedient’ and ‘yll-disposed persons’ who violated those statutes and were accused of acting ‘contrarie to all good rule of the Citee’.²²

Secondly, from a more environmentally oriented perspective, early modern civic officials understood waste disposal and urban drainage systems holistically: the failure to keep streets clean and pavements ‘well pavid’ led to increased rubbish or waste matter in road-side gutters or channels. In the event of a subsequent rainstorm, this could lead to flooding in the streets or the ‘pester[ing]’ of the nearby common river.²³ In order to keep this holistic system functioning in a proper, orderly manner, civic governments employed a system of ‘cooperative sanitation’. This system relied on the municipal provision of basic technologies of waste management, such as the creation of designated pits for waste disposal outside the walls of the town or city as well as the service of removing such waste on a regular basis, but it also required the cooperation of (potentially uncooperative) individuals to function properly.²⁴ For example, residents were commonly prohibited from sweeping debris from their streets, or emptying the waste contents of their private latrines, directly into roadside gutters. Despite such prohibitions, however, both the emptying of latrines and sweeping of rubbish directly into roadside gutters, especially just prior to rainstorms, appear to have been frequent occurrences.²⁵ On a number of fronts, then, Jørgenson’s research identifies the deep-seated ideological link between improperly disposed waste and disorderly individual behavior in late-medieval and early modern civic waste-management initiatives.

Furthermore, although the term ‘sewer’ strictly connoted the holistic environmental drainage system as described in Jørgenson’s analysis through the end of the sixteenth century, the term also begins to take on its modern, principally cloacal connotation in the first decade of the seventeenth century, especially in London.²⁶ While the 1531 ‘Commissions of Sewers’ Act

of such theories — including how they inform John Harington’s *Metamorphosis on Ajax* — in her essay ‘Ajax, Jakes, and Early Modern Urban Sanitation’.

²² Jørgenson, ‘Good Rule’, p. 303.

²³ Jørgenson, ‘Cooperative Sanitation: Managing Streets and Gutters in Late Medieval England and Scandinavia’, *Technology and Culture*, 49.3 (2008), 547–67, especially pp. 558–59.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 562–63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 552, 554. King and Sabine (‘City Cleaning’) also cite numerous instances of the disorderly individual behavior of illegally disposing or dumping private waste into public gutters, ditches, and other vehicles of disposal/drainage.

²⁶ A. E. B. Owen, ‘Land Drainage Authorities and their Records’, in *Prisca Munimenta; Studies in Archival & Administrative History Presented to Dr A. E. J. Hollaender*, ed. by Felicity Ranger (London: University of London Press, 1973), pp. 274–81 (p. 275).

issued in the reign of Henry VIII cites recent ‘outrageous Flowings, Surges, and Course of the Sea, in and upon Marshgrounds and other low Places’ as its *raison d’être*, the 1605 expansion of the Act under James I is much more narrowly focused on non-navigable waterways — ‘Ditches, Banks, Gutters, *Sewers*’ — within two miles of London (emphasis added).²⁷ The justification for this 1605 expansion is stated simply enough: ‘the Hurts, Annoyances, and Inconveniences now by daily Experience felt and found in those Places’.²⁸ Following on the heels of royal proclamations against new building in June 1602 and March 1605, the expansion of the Commission of Sewers Act is likewise concerned with the perceived perils of dramatically increased population density in early Jacobean London.²⁹

These concerns seem to have been widely felt. In his analysis of waste disposal practices in late medieval and early modern London, Ernest Sabine identifies a growing controversy concerning the public-health perils of improperly disposed waste — particularly in public channels, ditches, and sewers — dating from the first years of the seventeenth century.³⁰ Sabine’s analysis also suggests that public concern over the hazards of excess or improperly disposed channel waste seems to have been most pressing in marginal suburban locations beyond the City wall.³¹ In light of their tactical engagements with collective waste exposure, and in their prominent staging of abject ditches and channels as sites appropriate for the punishment of disorderly individuals, ‘The Woful Lamentation’ and Marlowe’s *Edward II* evidently register, and in turn helped further generate, this growing public concern over the public health perils of excess waste in early modern London — especially in relation to suburban Shoreditch.

III

In his extensive analysis of the complex relationship between ‘The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore’ and prior instantiations of the historical legend in early modern England, James Harner

²⁷ Ida Darlington, ‘The London Commissioners of Sewers and their Records’ in *Prisca munimenta; studies in archival & administrative history presented to Dr A. E. J. Hollaender*, ed. by Felicity Ranger (London: University of London Press, 1973), pp. 282–98 (p. 283). The quoted language of both the 1531 Act (23 Hy. VIII c.5) and the 1605 Act (3 Jas. I c. 14) are cited and modernized in Darlington, pp. 282–83.

²⁸ 3 Jas. I c. 14.

²⁹ For an extending discussion of these and other Tudor-Stuart proclamations against new buildings, see Thomas G. Barnes, ‘The Prerogative and Environmental Control of London Building in the Early Seventeenth Century: the Lost Opportunity’, *California Law Review*, 58.6 (1970), 1332–63. For a discussion of these royal proclamations, population growth, and the perception of the crowd in early modern London, see Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and its Double* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 15–17.

³⁰ Sabine, ‘Latrines and Cesspools’, p. 318.

³¹ Ibid.

claims that the anonymous ballad was likely composed between 1592 and 1600, soon after either the earliest public performances of Thomas Heywood's *1 & 2 Edward IV* or its first quarto publication, the latter of which occurred in 1599.³² Harner's evidentiary basis for this claim is that the ballad duplicates a number of features otherwise unique to Heywood's sentimentalised version of the Jane Shore legend: the use of Christian names for Shore and his wife (i.e., Matthew and Jane); the naming of Jane's initial female accomplice, Mistress Blague, who later deserts Jane in the midst of her great misfortune; and, most importantly for the purposes of this essay, the depiction and commemoration of Jane Shore's death, by which the northern suburb of Shoreditch was alleged to have received its name.³³ Heywood's version of the Jane Shore legend was, according to Harner, the first to offer this apocryphal etymology.³⁴

Despite the fact that 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore' substantially derives from Heywood's play, however, the ballad significantly departs from its source in both its depiction of Jane Shore's death and in its etymological commemoration of the manner and location of her death. First, in Heywood's highly sentimentalised treatment, Jane Shore reconciles with her husband and they die side-by-side as 'man and wife'.³⁵ In the ballad's depiction, by contrast, Jane remains estranged from her husband at the time of her death. The ballad also features a second part, in which Matthew Shore offers a moralising narrative of his own downfall that further underscores the impact of Jane's transgression (i.e., her 'wanton' behavior). Despite having committed his own crime of 'clipping gold in secrecy', and despite being 'by true Justice judg'd to dye', Matthew Shore's part ends with a moral identical to his wife's:

Thus have you heard the woful Strife,
That came by my Unconstant Wife:
Her fall, my Death, wherein is shew'd
The Story of a Strumpet lewd.
In hopes thereby some Women may
Take heed how they the Wanton [play]³⁶

Although it is clearly indebted to Heywood's play, then, the ballad's unique treatment of the Jane Shore legend emphasises her transgressions against the early modern social order.

³² Harner, pp. 139–41.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 139.

³⁵ Thomas Heywood, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, 6 vols (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), I, p. 182.

³⁶ Euing Ballads 395, University of Glasgow, *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/32020/image>.

The degree to which 'The Woful Lamentation' negatively depicts Jane Shore's transgressive behaviour is also evident in the second major departure the ballad makes from Heywood's sentimental play: the ballad's commemoration of the manner and location of her death. In Heywood's depiction, the association between Jane Shore and Shoreditch is positive. It is the result of the people's enduring love for her despite her past transgression, and it is furthermore in defiant recognition of the ignominious and, significantly, unjust punishment to which Richard III subjects her:

The people, for the love they bear to her
And her kind husband, pitying his wrongs,
For euer after meane to call the ditch
Shores Ditch, as in the memory of them.
Their bodies, in the Friers minories,
Are in one graue entered all together.³⁷

In the ballad's version, however, this positive feeling of the people is entirely absent, and even the ghost of Jane Shore herself acknowledges the justice of her abject punishment. During the course of this punishment, she is reduced to begging for bread unsuccessfully in the streets of London, and the only liquid nourishment she can find is 'such as Channels yield'. Finally, she suffers death in a carrion-infested, 'loathsome' ditch:

I could not get one bit of Bread,
Whereby my Hunger might be fed:
Nor Drink but such as Channels yield,
Or stinking Ditches in the field;
Thus weary of my Life at length,
I yielded up my vital strength,
Within a Ditch of loathsome scent,
Where Carrion-Dogs do much frequent,
The which now since my Dying-Day,
Is Shoreditch call'd as Writers say³⁸

³⁷ Heywood, p. 186.

³⁸ Euing Ballads 395, University of Glasgow, *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/32020/image>.

The ballad's commemoration of Jane Shore's death, in marked contrast to the sentimental play, focuses intently on the abject environmental conditions of the principal ditch in Shoreditch. Furthermore, although the ditch alluded to in Heywood's version is only geographically coincidental, given its proximity to the 'Friers minories' where Shore and his wife receive a proper burial, the play does help locate the physical ditch to which both allude in the Shoreditch area of early modern London. The friary Heywood alludes to is the former Augustinian Friary of Holywell, on which grounds Burbage's Theatre was built in the late-Elizabethan period. Based on a substantial body of evidence, which will be analysed further below in relation to the earliest performances of Marlowe's *Edward II* at the Theatre, there was during the late-Elizabethan period a primary drainage ditch or sewer that ran north-south alongside the western border of the dissolved Holywell priory. Conceivably, then, this is the exact same ditch described in such abject, environmentally hazardous terms in 'The Woful Lamentation'.

These two significant departures from Heywood's play clearly situate the ballad within the ideological framework of waste-management initiatives issued by London's civic officials. The ballad, in fact, makes the association between Jane's transgressive behavior and her punitive exposure to early modern sewage explicit. In the ballad's second part, Matthew Shore locates the spatial origins of his wife's disorderly behavior, not in his goldsmith shop, but in the suburban fields beyond the City wall:

No wife in *London* then had more;
And once a week to walk in field;
To see what pleasure it would yield.
But woe to me that liberty,
Hath brought me to this misery³⁹

Rather than taking in pleasant and wholesome airs, Jane's 'wanton behavior' leads her astray — both socially and spatially. Her eventual subjection to early modern sewage is thus clearly presented as the negative consequence of her transgressive social behavior.

However, even as it reaffirms the ideological link between sewage and social disorder, the ballad draws explicit attention to the collectively inherited legacy of Shore's punishment: the abject hazards of the ditch in contemporary Shoreditch. The etymological origins of Shoreditch were contested in the early modern period, as they remain to this day, and the ballad's rewriting of

³⁹ Ibid.

Heywood's etymology may be understood as a direct contestation of the meaning of social space in Shoreditch.⁴⁰ Refusing to allow the idealistic and sentimentalised elision of the ditch's role, the anonymous balladeer reframes Heywood's etymology to focus on the contemporary, environmentally degraded conditions of the ditch in Shoreditch. In juxtaposing the two terms to provide the false etymology of 'Shore's ditch', and also in staging the contents of the ditch wherein Jane meets her death so explicitly, 'The Woful Lamentation' grants the ditch in Shoreditch a co-generative agency in the commemoration of Jane Shore's death, one that has lasting socio-environmental implications. This co-generative agency would have been more affectively powerful if the abject descriptions of the ditch were contemporary rather than historical, and this is precisely what the logic of the ballad demands: a salient contemporary description of the area's principal ditch. Significantly, the London antiquarian John Stow offered a competing, yet substantially similar, etymology in his *Survey of London*, when he suggests Shoreditch had evolved from 'Soerditch', which had been in usage for 'more than four hundred yeares since'.⁴¹ Stow also uses the name 'Soers ditch' — i.e., Sewers Ditch — to describe Shoreditch, especially the primary thoroughfare. This alternative usage lends credence to the claim that the name Shoreditch was, in fact, derived from the area's principal 'common drain', a conspicuous, and evidently unwholesome, feature of the urban ecological landscape.⁴² Based on the evidence of tactical changes outlined above, 'The Woful Lamentation' opportunistically seizes pre-circulating cultural material from various discursive domains — civic waste management initiatives, the socially contested etymology of Shoreditch, and the popularity of Jane Shore — in order to draw attention to the contemporary concern over collective waste exposure in early modern London.

In light of these tactical changes, how might contemporary audiences have responded to the ballad's exposure of Jane Shore to the environmentally degraded conditions of the principal ditch in late-Elizabethan Shoreditch? Although the moralising framework grants the balladeer the imaginative license to gratuitously expose the body of Shore's wife to such degraded and degrading conditions, it is also likely that countless members of the ballad's audience (including, perhaps, the anonymous composer) would have had first-hand experience of hazardous exposure

⁴⁰ Walter Thornbury, in his *Old and New London: Volume 2* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1878), credits Dr. Percy with the 'erroneous' etymology that claims Shoreditch derived from 'Soers Ditch', although Stow clearly offers his own historical basis for this usage in the 1590s. Thornbury's own historically and culturally class-based bias is evident insofar as he clearly yearns to establish a respectable, hereditary basis for the etymology of Shoreditch. Accordingly, his own postulation may be as erroneous as any of the other etymologies of Shoreditch herein discussed.

⁴¹ Stow, p. 378.

⁴² Walter Thornbury, 'Shoreditch', *Old and New London: Volume 2*, pp.194–95, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45090>.

to improperly disposed waste. In light of both the ideological association between excess sewage and social disorder, and the contemporary relevance of the environmentally hazardous condition of the ditch in Shoreditch, it seems likely that a continuum of affective responses was possible among the ballad's audience. These responses might have ranged from morally or sadistically motivated contempt, on one end, to intense sympathetic identification with Jane Shore (despite her transgressions) on the other, with most of the audience perhaps ambivalently situated between these two poles.

The next section analyses similar tactical changes Marlowe introduces into his dramatic adaptation of the tragic history of Edward II. In many respects, the play's treatment of Edward II is similar to the ballad's treatment of Shore's wife, and *Edward II* would have likely elicited a similar — if amplified — range of affective responses in its earliest audiences. However, insofar as Marlowe depicts the unjustified exposure to sewage as a generator of civic unrest that eventually leads to civil war, and in light of the fact that he draws attention to the porous material boundary between the performance space of the play and the wider environmentally hazardous conditions of life in Late-Elizabethan London, the political implications of Marlowe's extensive staging of waste are substantially more subversive.

IV

As previous scholars have noted, despite a relatively small dramatic corpus, Christopher Marlowe shows a persistent interest in waste and waste-waterways as threats to the body and the body politic.⁴³ In *The Massacre at Paris*, for example, two soldiers enter onstage with a corpse and proceed to discuss how they might dispose of it in the least environmentally hazardous manner possible (11.1–20), while in *The Jew of Malta* Barabas leads the invading Christian army into Malta through the city's sewer line (5.1.87–95). Without question, however, *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II* represents Marlowe's most sustained dramatic engagement with the material and ideological dimensions of sewers and sewage, including its pervasive presence in early modern London life.

Roger Sales was the first scholar to focus on the ideological import of the play's dramatic staging of Edward's death in the 'sink' below Berkeley Castle. Sales notes that 'sewers were inextricably linked with crime and criminality [in the period, and furthermore that] *Edward II* places a

⁴³ Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe: Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), p. 107. See also Roger Sales, *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), p. 114.

monarch in a space that was associated with grotesque characters who threatened order and stability'.⁴⁴ To date, however, the most extensive analysis of the significance of sewage and sewers in *Edward II* has come from queer historicists investigating the play's interrogation of early modern sexual and class politics.⁴⁵ These investigations have demonstrated convincingly that sewage, sodomy, and social disorder are inextricably linked in Marlowe's play. For Jonathan Crewe, the punishment to which the deposed king is subjected by Lightborne and his authorisers, Isabella and Mortimer Junior, is convincing evidence of homophobia prior to the historical invention of the 'homosexual' as a category of identity in the nineteenth century, which Foucault famously analysed in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.⁴⁶ According to Crewe, 'a profound, irrational, culturally induced masculine dread of penetration evidently infuses the rape-murder of Edward'.⁴⁷ Supporting Crewe's analysis of the premodern strand of homophobia evident in the mistreatment of Edward II, the principal historical sources upon which Marlowe draws for his dramatic adaptation also explicitly call attention to the homophobic nature of Edward's historical punishment. Both Holinshed and Stow relate separate scatological tortures (emotional and physical) to which the king is sadistically subjected.⁴⁸

In his dramatic adaptation of these two historical sources, Marlowe consolidates these separate accounts, incorporating the shaving of the deposed king with sewer or 'channel-water' from Stow (Scene 23) and the anally-fixated torture and murder of Edward in the medieval sewer below Berkeley Castle from Holinshed (Scene 25), thereby augmenting the prominence of sewers in his play. Marlowe's imaginative augmentation of the role of sewers, however, does not

⁴⁴ Sales, p. 114.

⁴⁵ Each of the following addresses the signification of waste and its relationship to the policing of sexual politics in Marlowe's play: Viviana Comensoli, 'Homophobia and the Regulation of Desire: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Marlowe's *Edward II*', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4.2 (1993), 175–200, especially pp. 197–98; Jonathan Crewe, 'Disorderly Love: Sodomy Revisited in Marlowe's *Edward II*', *Criticism*, 51.3 (2009), 385–99, especially pp. 394–96; Marie Rutkoski, 'Breeching the Boy in Marlowe's *Edward II*', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 46.2 (2006), 281–304, especially p. 293; David Stymeist, 'Status, Sodomy, and the Theater in Marlowe's *Edward II*', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 44.2 (2004), 233–53, especially pp. 243–47; and Jon Surgal, 'The Rebel and the Red Hot Spit: Marlowe's *Edward II* as Anal-Sadistic Prototype', in *American Imago*, 61.2 (2004), 165–200, especially pp. 186–89.

⁴⁶ Crewe, 'Disorderly Love', pp. 394–96.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

⁴⁸ For a thoughtful, extended consideration of the relationship between the infamous murder scene described in Holinshed's *Chronicles* and the ambiguous staging of Edward's death in Marlowe's play, see Surgal, pp. 186–89. Although Holinshed's account is more well known and more often cited in critical discussions of Marlowe's play, Stow also draws explicit attention to the scatological, and therefore arguably homophobic, mocking to which Edward is subjected just before his beard is shaven with puddle water. The scatological narrative is all the more startling since it is recounted by the buttoned-up Stow: 'that wicked man Gurney, making a crown of hay, put it on [Edward's] head, and the soldiers that were present, [sic] scoffed, and mocked him beyond all measure, saying "Tprut, avaunt sir king", making a kind of noise with their mouths, as though they had farted'. See *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their Sources*, ed. by Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 376.

end there. David Stymeist has analysed the degree to which the description of Gaveston's offstage execution participates in the 'social convention of the fitting end', understood in the context of early modern ritual executions for which the method of execution was expected to symbolically fit the crime.⁴⁹ Marlowe rewrites Holinshed on the manner of Gaveston's death, according to Stymeist, in order to emphasise the 'base' nature of Gaveston's death in theatrical performance.⁵⁰ Marlowe also fittingly locates Gaveston's death in an offstage 'trench'. In Stymeist's analysis, 'the image of the trench as type of open sewer or conduit creates a physical site that parallels the locale of Edward's own torture and execution and hints at and parodies the kind of criminalised sodomitical acts of which he is accused'.⁵¹

Significantly, however, Marlowe's imaginative augmentation of sewers in the staging of his play extends even beyond the ritualistic punishment of Gaveston. There is one other major scene depicting a character's punitive subjection to early modern sewers and sewage in Marlowe's dramatic adaptation. That the character in question is the Bishop of Coventry and not Edward, Gaveston, or Spencer Junior suggests that there may be an additional dimension to the signification of sewers and sewage in the play that these queer historicist readings have not previously considered. Indeed, one of the principal synonyms for a sewer in the period, 'channel', appears numerous times throughout the play, as does the suggestive, repeated use of the word 'brook'. In part through this additional, previously unanalysed language that metaphorically evokes early modern sewage/sewers, as well as through staging techniques that spatially evoke the presence of off-stage sewers that would have surrounded Burbage's Theatre, the play would likely have left its early modern audience with the uncomfortable feeling that there was no escape from sewers and sewage for the duration of the play. This feeling, moreover, may have continued even after the play was over for audiences as they exited the Theatre into the Finsbury Fields.

Marlowe's consolidated and augmented treatment of sewers and sewage in *Edward II*, I argue, represents a tactical convergence of the homophobic, scatological modes of torture to which the deposed king is subjected in the English chronicle histories and the contemporary issue of improperly disposed waste as a matter of growing public concern in late-Elizabethan London. Like 'The Woful Lamentation', Marlowe's *Edward II* probes the ideological link between social disorder and sewage through the gratuitous subjection of its socially transgressive figure to the abject, environmentally hazardous conditions of early modern sewers. Moreover, composed at an

⁴⁹ Stymeist, pp. 243–47.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 245.

historical moment when the civic regulation of waste proved increasingly ineffective due to the city's unsustainable population growth, Marlowe's play ultimately disturbs the moralising framework concerning Edward's dramatic treatment by depicting waste exposure in the play both as a symptom of social disorder (principally through the figure of Edward II) and as a cause of widespread civic unrest. Indeed, the play's precarious sense of social equilibrium is directly and repeatedly tied to the pervasive, inescapable exposure to sewage in its material and ideological dimensions.

As outlined above, miasmatic theories informed the general understanding of waste as an environmental hazard and material threat to human bodies in the period. *Edward II* clearly draws upon language invoking a miasmatic understanding of olfactory threats to individual and collective bodies, especially in scenes involving the deposed king's exposure to sewage and sewers. 'But can my air of life continue long / When all my senses are annoyed with stench?' Edward asks his captors (23.17–18). Just a few lines later, Edward begs for 'water, gentle friends to [...] clear my body of foul excrements' (23.26). This request is cruelly denied, for instead he is exposed to the 'channel-water' with which Matrevis and Gurney shave away his regal beard. The subsequent scene of Edward's murder presents the most extended use of olfactory language to depict miasmatic threats to Edward's body. Marlowe begins the scene by calling attention in recognisably miasmatic terms to the degrading and environmentally hazardous conditions to which Edward's kingly body has been subjected:

MATREVIS Gurney, I wonder the king dies not,
Being in a vault up to the knees in water,
To which the channels of the castle run,
From whence a damp ariseth
That were enough to poison any man,
Much more a king, brought up so tenderly.

GURNEY And so do I, Matrevis. Yesternight
I open'd but the door to throw him meat,
And *I almost stifled with the savor.*
(25.1–9, emphases added)

Matrevis expects the 'damp' that 'ariseth' — i.e., the moist and corrupted air — to poison Edward, as it would 'any man'. Both 'stifle' and 'savor' situate the noxious air, or miasma, as the principal bodily threat, which Gurney experiences alongside Edward. Even through the

play's spectacular subjection of the deposed king's body to the fecal waste of his social inferiors, then, Marlowe's play demonstrates its concern for the hazards of waste exposure to 'any man' — not just the 'king brought up so tenderly' (25.5–6).

As these scenes depicting the sadistic imprisonment and torture of Edward suggest, Edward's hazardous exposure to waste is not merely olfactory. When Edward questions whether Matrevis and Gurney intend to 'choke [their] sovereign with puddle water', the possibility of gustatory exposure is certainly raised, and in numerous other instances, the exposure to waste and sewage is tactile as well. Edward is imprisoned 'up to the knees in water, / To which the channels of the castle run' in the 'sink' below Berkeley Castle, and in the earlier scene in which Matrevis and Gurney shave off his beard, Edward endures a mock-baptism into a highly destabilised social world. Here, the former king's face is exposed to the hazards of 'channel-water' even as he bemoans that 'excrements' have fouled his body (23.27, 26).

Structurally, this scene in which Edward is stripped of his regal beard and forced to endure a sadistic ritual of mock baptism echoes the opening scene of the play, when the newly crowned Edward and recently recalled Gaveston exact their revenge on the Bishop of Coventry for his role in exiling Gaveston while Edward's father was king. As a prelude to stripping the Bishop of his social title and property, Edward instructs Gaveston to 'throw off [the Bishop's] golden mitre, rend his stole, / And in the channel christen him anew' (1.186–187). This scene is crucial to understanding the full signifying potential of sewers and waste for Marlowe and his contemporary audiences for two principal reasons: it thematically establishes the association of channels and social disorder/civic unrest, on the one hand, and simultaneously calls attention to the porous material boundaries between the play's first performance location and the wider urban ecological environment of late-Elizabethan London, on the other.

Situated at the climax of the opening scene, this very early invocation of a channel establishes the dramatic and thematic significance of the image of the channel to *Edward II* from the outset of the play. As mentioned above, this opening scene also serves as a major dramatic counterpoint to the later scene in which Edward suffers a similar form of humiliation and social degradation when he has his beard shaven with 'channel water' (23.27). Given that the *OED* cites Marlowe's usage of 'channel water' in Scene 23 as the only recorded usage of this compound in the history of the English language, it seems certain that he invents this phrase to serve his dramatic purpose — namely, to echo the Bishop's earlier, mock-baptismal subjection in the off-stage 'channel' at

the hands of Edward and Gaveston.⁵² In both scenes, the victim in question is stripped of external signs of his social status and identity: the mitre and stole in the Bishop's case, the masculine, regal beard in Edward's.⁵³ Each victim then becomes further socially degraded when he is forced to endure a christening or mock-baptism in 'channel water'.

The structural similarities between these two scenes (coupled with the reversal of Edward's role, from victimiser to victim) raise vexed interpretive questions regarding the play's extensive treatment of sewage and sewers. Do Gaveston and Edward implicate themselves in their own subsequent subjection via channels and trenches, further supporting Stymeist's reading that Edward's torture and both of their executions are in dramatic accordance with the social convention of the 'fitting end'? On the other hand, would the Bishop of Coventry's status as a Catholic figure in post-Reformation England have made him an easy dramatic target for ridicule and contempt, thereby lessening the severity of Edward's and Gaveston's mistreatment of this character?

Regardless of how one answers the above questions, this much seems certain: the fact that Burbage's Theatre was located within bounds of the former Holywell Priory — so named for a naturally sourced baptismal/healing font located on the property grounds — clearly ironises the Bishop's imminent (offstage) 'christening' in a foul channel on that same property in the 1590s. Stow's late-Elizabethan description of this same 'holy well' further confirms the ironic potency of Marlowe's tactical spatial engagement. Stow begins by citing Fitzstephen's twelfth-century description of the holy well as 'sweet, wholesome, and clear', among the 'most famous' of all the 'special wells in the suburbs' of London, before offering his own description of its unsavory condition in the 1590s: 'Holy well is much decayed and marred with filthiness purposely hid there'.⁵⁴

The references to channels and channel-water in the opening scenes as well as in scenes 23 and 25 also serve to highlight the recurrence of the word channel throughout *Edward II*. In Scene 4, Edward reacts to the news that Gaveston has been banished (yet again) by imagining a series of spectacular punishments to which he wishes to subject his political enemies and social subordinates, namely the Catholic clergy and noble peers:

⁵² Although the *OED* cites Marlowe's usage of 'channel water' as the only recorded instance, an *EEBO* search reveals that the compound did, in fact, have wider usage than Marlowe's *Edward II*. Nonetheless, the same *EEBO* search results support the claim that Marlowe's usage appears to be the first recorded instance of the compound.

⁵³ The dissolution of socially distinguishing characteristics, as well as the dissolution of distinguishing social bonds, is a common feature of the broadside ballads that depict the deaths of their negative moral exempla in early modern ditches.

⁵⁴ John Stow, *The Survey of London* (London: Everyman Library, 1923), p. 16.

How fast they run to banish him I love!
 They would not stir, were it to do me good.
 Why should a King be subject to a priest?
 Proud Rome, that hatchest such imperial grooms,
 With these thy superstitious taperlights,
 Wherewith thy antichristian churches blaze,
 I'll fire thy crazed buildings, and enforce
 The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground,
With slaughtered priests make Tiber's channel swell,
 And banks raised higher with their sepulchres!
 As for the peers, that back the clergy thus,
 If I be King, not one of them shall live.

(4.94–105, emphasis added)

In voicing his extreme displeasure at the clergy and noble peers who have supported Gaveston's banishment, Edward imagines excessive forms of punishment that are justified (in his mind, at least), given the transgressions of the clergy and peers against his particular vision of the social order — within which he (as king) clearly views himself as the figure of absolute authority. This image of the channel's liquid contents exceeding its material structure is fundamentally linked to social division, destruction, and disorder: the imaginative swelling of Tiber's channel results from the blood of slaughtered priests. As discussed further below, this image may suggestively recall the nearby slaughterhouse, which was also situated on the late-Elizabethan grounds of the former Holywell property.

The other scene in which the image of a channel (also exceeding its structure) is evoked metaphorically is likewise concerned with threats to the stability of the social order; even more forebodingly, it is concerned with civic unrest, even the prospect of an English civil war. Having just arrived on the shores of England in anticipation of waging war against the 'misgovern'd' king and his forces, Queen Isabella laments the imminent civil war, over the course of which 'kin and countrymen [will] / Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides / [will be] With their own weapons gored!' (17.9, 6–8). To conclude her lamentation, Isabella invokes her absent king/husband, 'Whose looseness hath betrayed [his] land to spoil / And made *the channels overflow with blood* / Of [his] own people' (17.11–12, emphasis added). Just after Isabella expresses this thought, Mortimer Junior interrupts to assure her (and his companions-at-arms) that they have arrived in England 'by sufferance of heaven' to redress Edward's 'open wrongs

and injuries' against '[them], his queen, and land' (17.21–22). In this scene, just as in the one previously cited, the metaphoric evocation of a channel whose contents are collective bodily waste is fundamentally linked to a vision of social disorder, death, and destruction.⁵⁵

Significantly, despite their structural similarities, these two evocations of metaphoric 'channels' in the play are expressed by opposing political parties: Edward, in the first instance, and Isabella and Mortimer Junior, in the second. That both opposing parties would evoke the same image — that of a channel whose bodily and bloody contents exceed its physical spatial boundaries — shows how fundamentally the image of the 'channel' speaks to the play's central thematic concerns. Like the structural bookends depicting bodily exposure to channel waste/water, these metaphoric uses of the word 'channel' incorporate (materially and ideologically) still more characters into the play's pervasive staging of hazardous exposure to sewage.

The word 'brook', although suggestive as another early modern analogue for 'sewer', is never used as such in Marlowe's play; nevertheless, its conspicuous repetition (the word appears seven times, compared to five appearances of the word 'channel') is still suggestive given the fact that each time the word is voiced, it is used to communicate that something cannot or will not be digested — whether it is the insolence of the noble peers in Edward's case, or the disorderly dalliances of Edward's relationship with Gaveston in the case of the noble peers. 'Brook' is perhaps used most suggestively when Mortimer Junior, voicing what he claims is the opinion of the common people, insists that they — like he and the other noble peers — 'cannot brook a night-grown mushroom' (4.284). Mushrooms grow in manure, of course, and the 1594 quarto's original phrasing of 'mushrump' even more explicitly emphasises the link between fecal waste and Gaveston's disorderly social advancement.⁵⁶ Mortimer's usage notably contrasts with Edward's claim, less than fifty lines later, that the 'gross vapours' of their dispute have perished in the sun (4.340).⁵⁷ This truth claim immediately proves false, of course, as the social strife between king and nobles resumes, suggesting also a return of the 'gross [and miasmically

⁵⁵ As suggested elsewhere in this essay, the image of human blood may have called to mind the slaughterhouse (and its related waste/excremental byproducts), which was also located on the grounds of the former Holywell Property, for the play's earliest audiences. It is also worth noting here that blood was understood to be excremental in the period. See, for example, Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993), p. 80. I thank this journal's anonymous reader for reminding me of this notable connection to my larger argument.

⁵⁶ Christopher Marlowe, *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England: with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer* (London, 1594), sig. C3v.

⁵⁷ In his essay entitled 'Edward II' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), pp. 158–73, Thomas Cartelli offers a thought-provoking reading of early modern humoral theories in relation to the play's representations of humoral imbalance and civic unrest. Although humoral and miasmatic theories share a similar understanding of the material composition of air (including its corruptibility) and the human vulnerability to such corruption, however, Cartelli's analysis never considers the hazards of waste in relation to the question of humoral balance (and bodily health) in the play.

hazardous] vapours'. Marlowe's repeated usage of the word 'brook', by opposing political parties no less, may have simultaneously evoked the intended meaning of digest, or refusal to digest, and the alternative meaning of the small rivulet or waterway for his early modern audience. This repetition is certainly more suggestive of such a connotation when considered alongside his more explicit references to channels, in both a metaphoric and a literal sense.

Given the structural containment of Marlowe's drama by the opening scene involving the Bishop of Coventry's subjection via sewage exposure and the two later scenes involving Edward's similar albeit more sadistic and spectacular subjection, and given the recurrence of 'channels' and 'brook', Marlowe's play may be said to impress upon its audience that there is no escaping sewage for the duration of the play's performance. This feeling likely would have proved inescapable for the play's earliest audiences even upon exiting the Theatre, for in doing so they would have moved from the performance space of Marlowe's play into a wider urban ecological environment in which sewers were conspicuously present. Significantly, Marlowe actually seems to condition the play's audience for this moment insofar as he repeatedly calls attention to this porous material boundary between his play's earliest performance location and the wider environment. To return once more to the opening scene of *Edward II*: after the image of the offstage channel is evoked, Edward and Gaveston discuss what to do with the socially degraded Bishop:

GAVESTON He shall to Prison, and there die in bolts.
EDWARD Ay, to the Tower, the Fleet, or where thou wilt.
(1.196–97)

Their exchange thus situates this offstage channel between two concrete ordinal reference points in the wider urban landscape of early modern London — the Tower to the south/east, and Fleet Prison to the north/west (the Foss or moat surrounding which was, coincidentally, the target of Edward III's previously mentioned socio-environmental reform in 1355). The opening lines of the next scene indicate that the Bishop is ultimately imprisoned in the Tower, further confirming the spatial relationship between the wider urban environment located offstage and the action being performed onstage within the playhouse (2.1–2).

In the play's penultimate scene, Marlowe once more seems to invoke literal waterways surrounding the built structure of the Theatre. Immediately following Lightborne's murder of the imprisoned Edward, Gurney stabs Lightborne in an effort to cover up their conspiracy to kill the deposed king. Then Gurney indicates that he will 'cast [Lightborne's] body in the moat' as he

drags the body offstage (25.118). The image of a rotting corpse cast into the moat, or surrounding waterway that bordered the built structure of the Theatre, draws attention to the material (de)composition of human bodies as one form of non-fecal waste that could (and did) make surrounding waste/waterways environmentally hazardous. Thus Marlowe not only evokes imaginative channels glutted with human blood for his theatrical audience in *Edward II*; he also invokes in a spatially self-conscious manner the literal sewers and channels that immediately surrounded the play's earliest performance site.

According to the 1594 title page of Marlowe's *Edward II*, the play was 'sundrie times publicly acted in the honourable citie of London' by the Earl of Pembroke's servants.⁵⁸ If this title page is historically accurate in its advertisement, then the play most likely would have been performed by Pembroke's Men at the Theatre at some point in 1592–93 when the theaters were not closed as a result of a plague outbreak.⁵⁹ Burbage's Theatre, built in 1576, was situated between Shoreditch to the east and Finsbury and Moorfields to the immediately to the west. Marlowe, who lived immediately south of Shoreditch in Norton Folgate, was involved in a violent altercation at the roadside ditch leading from Shoreditch to Finsbury in 1589, and was '[b]ound over to keep the peace' after brawling with constables in Shoreditch in 1592, would have known the area well.⁶⁰

Although the exact contemporary conditions of the area are impossible to definitively reconstruct, recall the two highly suggestive (albeit competing) etymologies analyzed earlier—those respectively offered in 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore' and Stow's *Survey of London*. Both of these etymologies date from the 1590s and seem to indicate that Shoreditch was well known, even infamous, for its waste-laden channels and sluice waterways. However dubious they may be with respect to historical accuracy, they do nonetheless seem to offer an invaluable glimpse into the abject ecological conditions of this suburban area of London during the late-Elizabethan period. The other two neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Theatre, Finsbury and Moorfields, were just as (if not more) infamous for their marshy fields and sluice waterways as Shoreditch seems to have been. Here is Stow's historical description of the

⁵⁸ Christopher Marlowe, *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England: with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer* (London, 1594).

⁵⁹ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642*, Fourth Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 290. See also Gurr's discussion of Pembroke's Men (pp. 52–60), as well as early performances of Marlowe's plays at the Theatre on p. 50. See also Roslyn N. Knutson, 'Pembroke's Men in 1592–3, Their Repertory and Touring Schedule', *Early Theatre*, 4 (2001), 129–31.

⁶⁰ For a brief recounting of the 1589 event, see Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 178–80. For the 1592 incident, see 'Chronology' in Romany and Lindsey's *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, pp. ix–x.

Moorfields/Finsbury area, also from his *Survey of London*: ‘This fen, or moor field, stretching from the wall of the city betwixt Bishopgate and the postern called Cripples gate, to Fensbury and to Holy well, continued a waste and unprofitable ground a long time’.⁶¹ Stow then goes on to cite the history of sixteenth-century civic initiatives intended to impose social and spatial order on the area, only to lament the state of disrepair in his own day: ‘by degrees was this fen or more at length made main and hard ground, which before being overgrown with flags, sedges, and rushes, served no use; *since the which time*...[these grounds]...have been *so over-heightened with lay-stalls of dung*, that now three windmills are thereon set; the *ditches filled up*, and the *bridges overwhelmed*’ (emphases added).⁶²

Evidently, however, civic officials and similarly civic-minded citizens undertook the reformation of Moorfields in the first decade of the seventeenth century, so that it became better known for its ‘pleasant walkes’ than for its unsavory, noxious ditches. Richard Johnson’s 1607 pamphlet, which commemorates this civic undertaking through a dialogue between a Citizen of London and a Country Gentleman, also bears witness to the area’s previous, environmentally degraded condition. Among the attempts to reform this space included the building of a certain, conspicuous pair of stocks, which were constructed in order to specifically ‘punish those that lay any filthy thing within these fields, or make water in the same to the annoyance of those that walke therein, which evill savors in times past have much corrupted mans senses, and supposed to be a great nourisher of diseases’.⁶³ The conspicuous presence of these stocks in Johnson’s text suggests that the growing concern over the health hazards of improperly disposed waste in the area was itself worthy of public commemoration.

In addition to these written historical accounts, two other visual accounts confirm the prominence of ditches and open sewers in the suburban areas immediately surrounding the property on which Burbage’s Theatre was built. The first is the so-called ‘North Section’ of the Copperplate map, one of only three extant section plates from the large-scale map (from which the less-detailed, yet fully extant, Agas map and Braun and Hogenberg map are believed to have derived). The ‘North Section’ of the Copperplate map depicts the northern suburbs of Moorfields and Finsbury, just west of where Burbage’s Theatre would have stood.⁶⁴ In this scene, the

⁶¹ Stow, p. 380.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 381.

⁶³ Richard Johnson, *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields, Being the guift of two sisters, now beautified, to the continuing fame of the city* (London, 1607), sig. A4r.

⁶⁴ John Fisher, ‘Introduction’ to *The A to Z of Elizabethan London*, compiled by Adrian Prockter and Robert Taylor (London: London Topographical Society, 1979), pp. v–vi. For a general overview of the Theatre’s location based on archeological and historical evidence, see Helen Dawson, ‘Shakespeare’s Theatre? Archeology at 4–6 New Inn Broadway, Hackney’ (London: Museum of London Archeology, 2008), pp. 9–24.

Copperplate artist depicts two running channels along the winding road east of the windmills (which are the same as those referenced in Stow's aforementioned description). These two channels, winding all the way up to the fork in the road, confirm that Burbage's Theatre, which was located to the northeast of this fork, would have been surrounded on nearly all sides by channels, gutters, and open sewers. Although this c.1559 scene predates the 1576 construction of the Theatre and although it also depicts these channels and gutters in the act of flowing (just as it does the Walbrook and Town Ditch immediately north of the city Wall), Stow's late-Elizabethan account of the urban ecological conditions of these suburbs suggests that the experience of walking to and from the Theatre would have been less than savoury and possibly even environmentally hazardous for Marlowe's contemporary audiences. So, too, does Sabine's claim that the problem of improperly disposed channel waste was most threatening to public health in suburban areas beyond the City wall, as does the description of the pre-reformed state of Moorfields prior to its cleansing and repaving in the early seventeenth century.

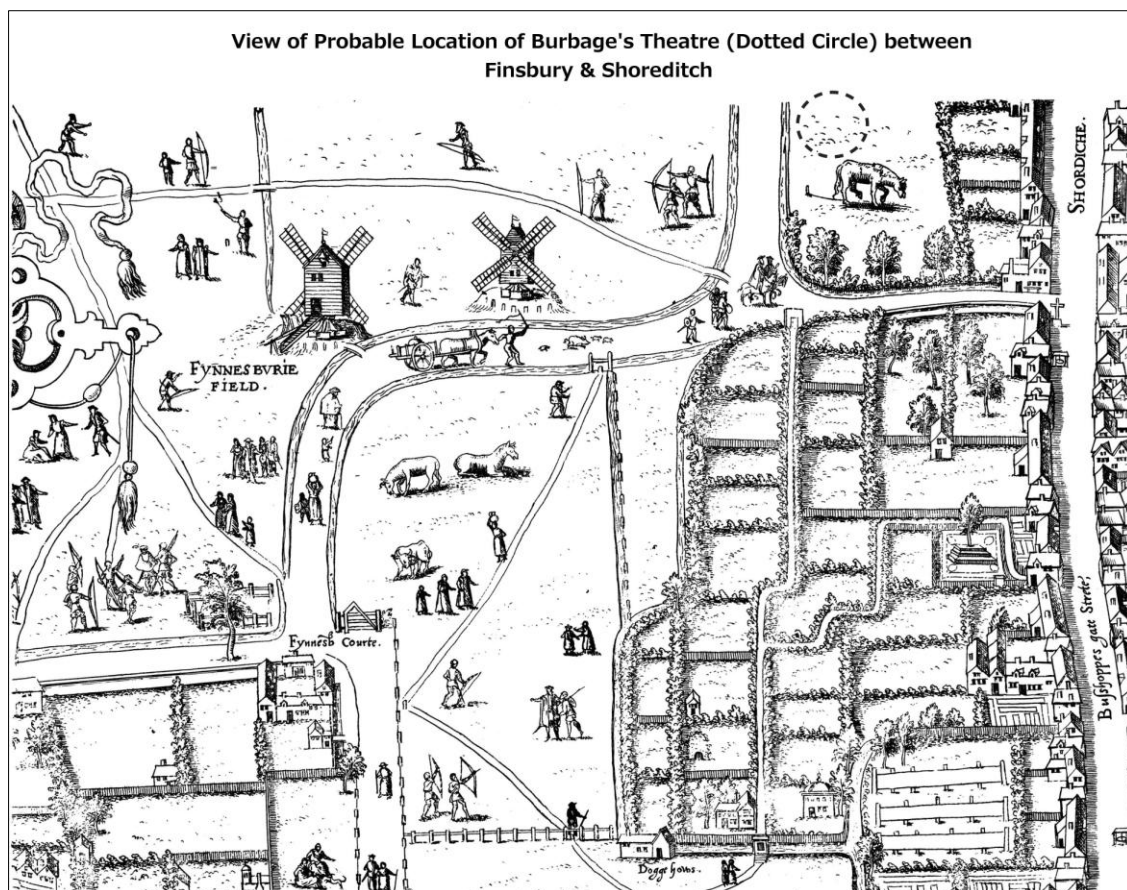


Figure 1: Detail View of the North Section of the Copperplate Map depicting Probable Location of Burbage's Theatre. (c) Museum of London. Used with Permission.

Secondly, in R.A. Foakes's discussion of Abraham Booth's late-Elizabethan sketch of the Theatre and the Curtain in Shoreditch, the Renaissance theatre historian claims that there 'was no right of way to the Theatre from Holywell Lane, and [that] the main entrance seems to have been from Finsbury fields, through a gate made in the brick wall marking the precinct of an old nunnery'.⁶⁵ On several reconstructed maps of this area as it would have appeared during the late-sixteenth century, including 'A Plan of Burbage's Holywell Property' by Joseph Quincy Adams, that side of the priory property immediately bordered the Finsbury (or 'Soer') Ditch.⁶⁶ It seems then, to judge from Foakes's claim in consultation with Adams's reconstructed Holywell/Theatre property site plan, that the only path into and out of the Theatre required the crossing of this principal sewer/ditch, the unsavory and environmentally hazardous contents of which might have exceeded its spatial boundaries on the nights of the earliest performances of *Edward II* — especially if, as I have suggested above, this is the same early modern ditch whose contents are so abjectly depicted in 'The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore'. Notably, Adams's reconstructed property survey also marks a second, relatively minor ditch that drained into the principal sewer from the 'Great Horse Pond'. This minor ditch ran directly past Stoughton's slaughterhouse, a fact Marlowe (and his earliest audiences) may have had in mind when he first evoked the repeated images of channels whose imaginative bounds are exceedingly filled with human blood.

I have suggested above that the audience response to the spectacular subjection of the deposed king to the fecal waste of his social inferiors would have likely elicited an affective response similar to the audience's reaction to the gratuitous depiction of Jane Shore's death in 'The Woful Lamentation'. Insofar as the transgressive social figure in Marlowe's play is the monarch rather than the monarch's mistress, however, the political implications are much more subversive — especially when one considers that exposure to waste in the play is not only depicted as ideologically justified (in the case of *Edward II*) but also as unjust both in a material sense and in an imaginative one. Edward and Gaveston's dubious subjection of the Bishop in the opening scene to a mock 'christening' in channel water and Isabella's lamentation concerning imaginary channels glutted with the blood of Englishmen both depict the arguably unjust exposure to the hazards of early modern sewage as a generator of civic unrest.

⁶⁵ R.A. Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage, 1580–1642* (London: Scolar Press, 1985), p. 8.

⁶⁶ Joseph Quincy Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses* (Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1917), p. 33. See also Walter Besant's 1906 conjectural reconstruction of the Holywell Priory, reprinted in Dawson, p. 10.

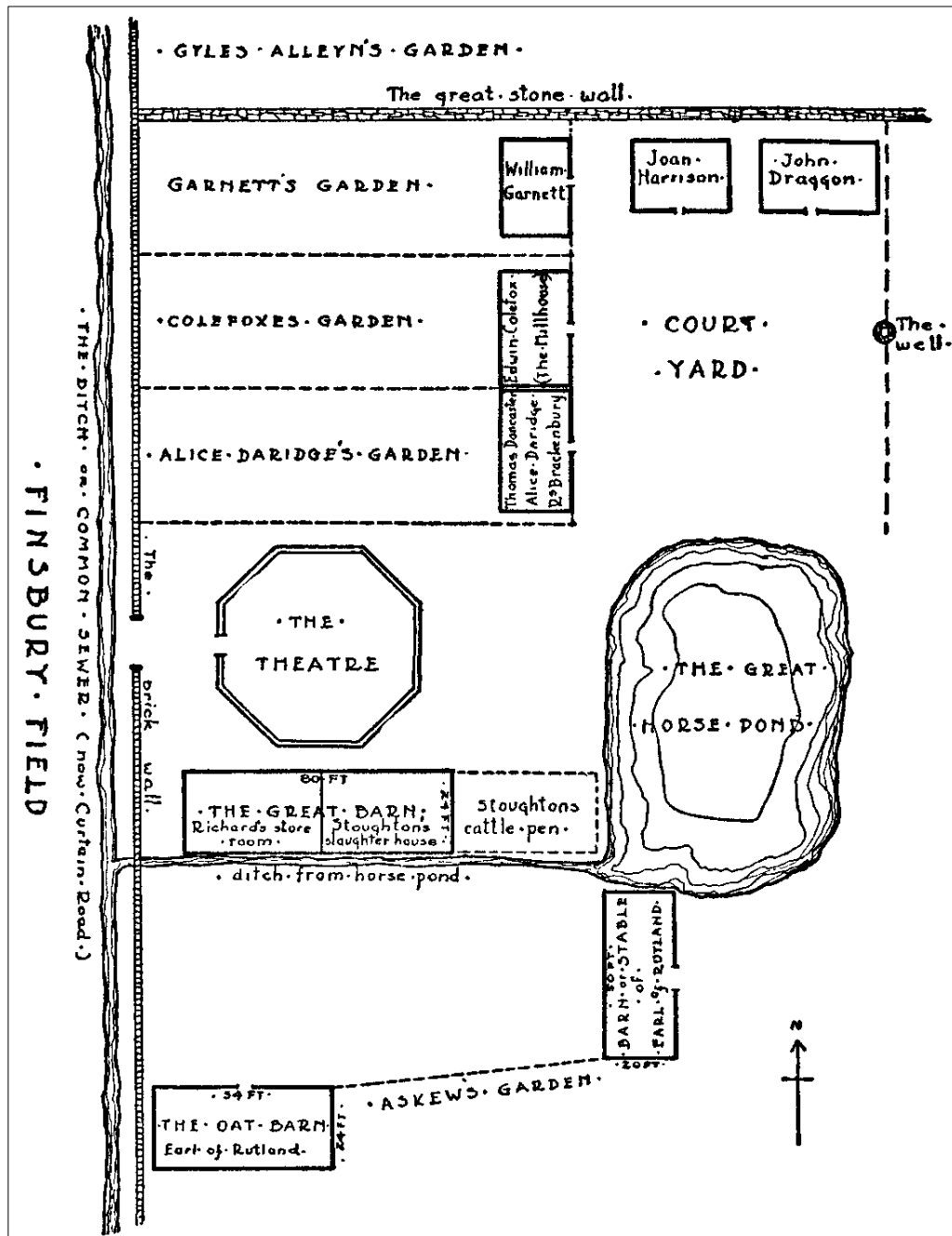


Figure 2: Reconstructed Site Plan of Burbage's Theatre on the Site of the Former Holywell Priory by Joseph Quincy Adams (*Shakespearean Playhouses*, 1917)

The implications of this reading, from a socio-environmental perspective, are profound. Given that the play represents the unjustified exposure to hazardous waste as a generator of civic unrest, and in light of the fact that Marlowe calls attention to the porous material boundaries between the imaginative stage space and the materially hazardous environments of early modern London, the

play quite viscerally registers — and amplifies — the growing controversy Sabine has identified concerning the health hazards of public channels and ditches in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Marlowe’s play provocatively intimates that the stability of the commonwealth depends on the common *health* of its population. To judge from various civic initiatives dating from the early seventeenth century — the expansion of the Commission of Sewers’ jurisdictional control over non-navigable ditches within two miles of London, the increasing severity of punishments meted out for the failure to comply with waste-disposal regulations, and the paving and cleansing of Moorfields — government officials were anxiously aware of the precarious equilibrium of the social order in early modern London. The tactical engagements of Marlowe’s play that I have analysed above — most notably leveraging contemporary theories of body-environment interaction in order to situate the bodies of actors *and* the audience in relation to the hazardous urban ecological environments surrounding the Theatre — offer a representative example of Renaissance drama’s unique cultural potential to mediate certain urban ecological and public health concerns confronting civic officials in the growing metropolis.

V

Admittedly, the socio-environmental issue of collective exposure to waste was salient throughout most parts of late-Elizabethan London, not just in the northern suburbs of Shoreditch, Finsbury, and Moorfields. The 1605 Statute of the Sewers Act expanded jurisdiction over non-navigable ditches, channels, and sewers in every direction, and extant wardmote returns (limited as they may be) indicate that concerns over waste disposal were prevalent from the western ward of Farringdon Without to the eastern one of Portsoken.⁶⁷ Furthermore, proximity to open sewers was not an exclusive reserve of Burbage’s Theatre and the nearby Curtain in Shoreditch. The Agas map, despite its notable elision of the ditches surrounding the Holywell Priory property, depicts a substantial number of Southwark sewers in close proximity to the Bankside theatres. Moreover, according to visual reconstructions of the Rose based on archeological findings, there also seems to have been a liminal sewer or ditch marking the entrance to Henslowe’s first Bankside playhouse.⁶⁸ Thus, performances in the 1590s of Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Jew of Malta* by the Admiral’s Men at the Rose also would have spatially engaged the

⁶⁷ Sabine, ‘City Cleaning’, pp. 2, 30–32.

⁶⁸ Julian Bowsher, *Shakespeare’s London Theatreland: Archeology, History, and Drama* (London: Museum of London Archeology, 2012), p. 73.

audiences' collective experiences of hazardous waste to a considerable degree.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, in light of the fact that Burbage's Theatre was Elizabethan London's first purpose-built commercial playhouse, and in light the fact that Marlowe's extensive staging of sewers tactically engages with the Theatre's surrounding urban ecological environment, this essay suggests certain critical implications with respect to the potential of Renaissance theatrical performances more generally to mediate certain ecological and public health issues confronting the city as a consequence of intense urban and suburban development and exponential population growth.

The critical claim that the geographic marginality of Renaissance theaters made them ripe for exploring the political, social, and economic pressures of the growing metropolis and its evolving social structure, of course, is far from new. Steven Mullaney made just this claim in *The Place of the Stage* nearly three decades ago. Although Mullaney's work has proven to be both enduring and highly influential, it has also been criticised in recent years for its monolithic conception of the liberties as exclusively suburban locales. Mary Bly has argued for the need to attend more particularly to the unique cultural and spatial dynamics of each of the various liberties (and the performances spaces located therein) to more accurately reconstruct the 'mental cartographies' of early modern London and more acutely discern early modern drama's shaping influence on those locations.⁷⁰ More recently, Bruce Bohrer has also critiqued Mullaney's conception of the suburban liberties for its material indeterminacy:

[F]rom the standpoint of ecological concerns, [...] the suburbs might be better understood as an acquisitive processing zone, a belt of territory for the transformation of rural space into urban space. [...] Such change might naturally be of concern to a theatrical tradition sited largely if not wholly [...] at the point where the city's consumption of the country was most clearly on display.⁷¹

The critical interpretation offered in this essay affirms Bohrer's primary claim concerning Renaissance drama's interest in environmental issues related to the city's sub/urban development. However, this reading also importantly raises the critical notion that historically situated understandings of the body, which conditioned the cultural dynamics of popular dramatic performance in the period, are a crucial consideration in the analysis of Renaissance theatre's unique ability to mediate urban ecological and public health issues confronting early modern

⁶⁹ Gurr, p. 292. In the case of *The Jew of Malta*, which was probably also first performed at the Theatre in the late 1580s, it is likely that Barabas' subversive entrance through the staged city of Malta's sewer line would have been equally suggestive to the play's audiences at the Theatre or the Rose.

⁷⁰ Mary Bly, 'Playing the Tourist in Early Modern London: Selling the Liberties Onstage', *PMLA*, 122.1, 61–71.

⁷¹ Bruce Bohrer, *Environmental Degradation in Jacobean Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), pp. 6–7.

London. It also demonstrates that the geographic marginality of public theaters made them especially ripe for tactical spatial engagements of the kind Marlowe demonstrates in his staging of the collective exposure to hazardous sewers and sewage in *Edward II*. In order to fully recognise such tactical spatial engagements, however, we must attend to the particular urban ecological conditions that immediately surrounded the various public and private theaters throughout early modern London.