

NOT SO TEDIOUS WAYS TO THINK ABOUT THE LOCATIONS OF THE EARLY PLAYHOUSES

In 1590, having been ordered to vacate the Rose playhouse and perform instead at the smaller venue at Newington Butts, Lord Strange's Men petitioned the Privy Council to allow them to return to their Bankside venue.¹ The Councillors relented, claiming they were "satisfied ... by reason of the tediousness of the way" to the alternative venue (Foakes, 285). This notion that Newington Butts was too remote to be viable remains widely accepted, with many scholars reiterating the Councillors' claim (see, for example, Jolly, 161; Schoenbaum, 136; Thomson, 67; Wickham, 60). Such a view props up an abiding logic that oscillates between what Henri Lefebvre calls the "paradigmatic" and "symbolic" approaches to the history of space, but it crucially ignores the "syntagmatic" approach (230). The paradigmatic distinction between travelling players and those who settled in London playhouses supports the symbolic focus given to playhouses in descriptions of the golden age of the London theatre. A key feature of this distinction is the relative absence of roads from one side of the binary: a London-centric bias at the symbolic core of these histories positions roads as a focus for travelling players, but roads disappear from narratives of the rise of the purpose-built "permanent" playhouses around London. A syntagmatic approach allows us to put the London playhouses back on the roads, so to speak, by understanding how the mobility of prospective audiences, rather than simply the push for permanence by travelling players, contributed to the rise of the early modern playhouses. By mandating the practice of archery, Elizabeth and her predecessors ensured a steady stream of Londoners to the fields

¹ While the Privy Council warrant and the petitions by the players and the watermen to which it responds are undated, they have often been assumed to be linked to the 1592 Southwark "riots" or the plague closures of 1593 to 1594. I accept instead the dating evidence provided by Alan H. Nelson—chiefly, that two signatories on the watermen's petition were buried in 1591, the first of them on 5 January. See Nelson; also see Manley and MacLean, 51-52, 302.

surrounding the city, making the roads to these fields profitable sites for the establishment of the playhouses.

“LONDON COMPANIES” AND STROLLING PLAYERS

In “Space and the State,” Lefebvre explains that a history of space should decipher how it has been represented (229). One way to do this is to “compare space to a language and study its dimensions: the *paradigmatic* (relevant oppositions ...)—the *syntagmatic* (sequences and linkages: roads, avenues and boulevards, routes, etc.)—the *symbolic*” (230). Space in and around Elizabethan London has long been construed in Shakespeare studies principally on the basis of only the first and third of these dimensions. Shakespeare, of course, is symbolically positioned at the epicentre of the Shakespearean theatre. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was established that Shakespeare had been a key member of a company of players and that his plays were performed at the Globe and the Blackfriars. Accordingly, Edmond Malone’s monumental “Historical Account of the English Stage” was principally confined to the study of these two venues, with only cursory treatment of others. Regarding the Theatre, Malone supposed that it was the “first building erected in or near the metropolis purposely for scenick exhibitions” (52), but he knew only that it was “*erected in the fields*” (italics in the original, 53n8-9). His focus thus turned inward toward the symbolic centre of the “English” stage as the sites that housed Shakespeare’s company, which at the time was believed to include only the Blackfriars within the City of London and the Globe on the Bankside.

This Shakespeare-centric focus contributed to a paradigmatic opposition in Malone’s work between the “Companies of London” and the “strolling players” (see 48-49n3), with his interest directed exclusively toward the former. While theatre historians have for over one hundred years been more interested than Malone in studying provincial playing, their studies

of the period tend invariably to be shaped by this paradigm. John Tucker Murray's *English Dramatic Companies 1558-1642* gave readers in 1910 records of known performances by all playing companies in the period from the start of Elizabeth's reign to the Interregnum, but he organised the study into two volumes: the first for the "London Companies" and the second for "Provincial Companies." His first volume runs to 370 pages, without appendices—lists of both court and provincial performances are included with the scholarly commentaries offered on each of the companies—but his second volume devotes just 117 pages to documenting the known dates of performance of 159 different companies, with almost no commentary save for the occasional biographical note on a patron. Edmund Kerchever Chambers could have been expected to expand this model in his four volume study, *The Elizabethan Stage*, in 1923, but the 352 pages he devotes to "The Companies" (Volume II, Book III) focus almost exclusively on those London companies to which Murray lent only his first volume.

More recently, Andrew Gurr's influential *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, follows in the same vein by focusing mainly on companies that fill out Murray's first volume. His first two substantive chapters explain Gurr's reasoning: in "The First London Companies," he explains that the attraction of performing in the theatres in and around London, together with proximity to the Court, was the biggest influence on the development of playing companies from 1574 to 1642 (19); in "Travelling," he describes the 1572 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds as the precipitating cause for companies to bind themselves to patrons, which saw companies deployed in London to fulfil each patron's goal of providing entertainment for the Queen (Gurr, 37; 55-57). Gurr's argument is that players quickly came to think of London as their "home" (21). This argument is replicated by Simon Blatherwick in the "London" entry for *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (256-59), pointing out how the repressive poor laws drove players to permanently locate their businesses in London (257). Similarly, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early Modern Drama, 1576-1642* begins by asking why London

by the early seventeenth century became “the epicentre of an unparalleled theatre industry” (Sanders, 1). Although it is an introductory volume on “Early Modern Drama,” the focus rarely shifts beyond this epicentre.

The paradigmatic distinction between London companies and touring companies is maintained even when the same group of players is known to have been ostensibly involved in both—it has become customary to view the touring cohort as a lesser offshoot, reduced in size, limited in resources, performing the “bad” quartos, and only one poor return away from “breaking.” At the heart of this distinction is thus not necessarily the players themselves, who from one moment to the next could readily be identified either as “at home” in London or “on tour” in the provinces. A language of proximity to London defines the representation of space in which the players conduct their business and is, as such, characterised by the presence or absence of movement: the touring player is *on the road*, strolling from one playing stop to the next; the London player is well established *in a permanent playhouse*. It is perhaps ironic that a syntagmatic view is most often apparent in studies of individual companies (McMillin and MacLean; Manley and MacLean; Ostovich, Syme, and Griffin), where having the scholarly gaze fixed on a single object allows opportunities to map touring routes, trace networks of connections, and so on. Yet when an individual company is studied in connection with one or another playhouse or when the playhouse itself is the object of study, a syntagmatic approach gives way again to a paradigmatic one—understandable when the playhouse is understood as a fixed object.

TEDIOUSNESS OF THE WAY

When Glynne Wickham describes the decision by Phillip Henslowe to purchase the land at the Little Rose in 1585, he notes that the earlier playhouse at Newington Butts was “badly

sited,” and supposes that Henslowe “knew he could reduce ‘the tediousness of the way’ to Newington by perhaps as much as 50 per cent” (60). By using the Privy Council’s wording to differentiate between a badly sited venue and Henslowe’s Rose, Wickham reinforces the old paradigmatic opposition by configuring a fixed object (the Playhouse at Newington Butts)² as an object *on the road*. While I want to suggest that putting playhouses on the road is the right way to proceed, I will do so by reinforcing the syntagmatic dimension of the spatial language through which we may understand their locations rather than, as Wickham does, to reinforce a problematic paradigm that has enabled Newington Butts to be dismissed on the basis that it was sited too far away from London to have been viable. To this end, I shall first examine how and why the phrase “tediousness of the way” was used by the Privy Council in their response to the players in 1590.

The phrase in question was by 1590 already in common use, but what is perhaps most striking is how recently it had come into use. The earliest example found using the EEBO-TCP Key Words in Context search facility via Early Modern Print (Washington University in St. Louis) is in Matteo Bandello’s *Certaine tragicall discourses written out of Frenche and Latin*, translated in 1567 by Geffray Fenton. Writing of the travels of Dom Diego and Geniuera, Bandello notes that “they toke away the tediousnes of the way with the pleasaunt deuises, whych passed between the two louers” (304). The word “tediousness” only dates in English to around half a century earlier,³ almost exclusively to refer to an unpleasant length of time in one place or state. Of the 133 appearances of the word from 1520 to Fenton’s translation of Bandello, only one ties tediousness to a “longe iourney”—Edward Hall uses this wording in his chronicle of the houses of Lancaster and York (1548) in the context of

² On the evidence for adopting this name for “the Playhouse,” see Johnson, 77-79.

³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, “tedious, *adj.*” and “tediousness, *n.*” While “tedious” is dated to as early as John Lydgate’s “Troy Book” (c. 1412-20), though the long gap until the next examples suggests that Lydgate might merely be using a transliteration from the Latin used in Colonne’s *Historia Troiana*. A couple of examples are offered from around 1475, but then “tedious” only appears more regularly after about 1520, at which time the noun form “tediousness” also begins to appear with greater frequency in English texts.

explaining what circumstances would prevent certain Christians from travelling to Rome for the Jubilee of 1500, with comparable obstacles including being “letted by warre, enemyes, infirmitie, weaknes” (lii). Not until Bandello, then, is there tediousness “of the way,” and even here tediousness is of the inability of the lovers to “consommat the rest of their desiers” rather than of the journey itself (304).

As a translation, of course, Fenton’s text presents the prospect that the phrase derives directly from its Italian source. A cursory glance at Bandello’s tale proves the opposite: in the source text, the passage from the hermit’s cave to Roderico’s castle is parsed without mention of the difficulty of the journey and there is no “tediousness” (*tediosità*) or any term based on the adjectival *tedioso* (143). While the young don is certainly treated to his share of “*miseria*” and “*tormento*” in this brief episode, the cause of his anguish is attributed solely to being in the presence of the woman he loves without being able to act upon his feelings, and even then it is “*le forze dell’amore*” (the power of love) that makes this trial easy (143). Thus, Fenton’s “tediousness of the way” is in no respect conveying either a metaphrastic (word-for-word) or a paraphrastic (sense-oriented) equivalence with its original. These two approaches had been the focus of translation method since antiquity (Goodwin, 109), but Fenton seems to be more inclined to want to add *new* flavour to the tale by linking Diego’s misery to the distance being travelled. Fenton may have been adhering to the approach to translation adopted by Martin Luther, whereupon the focus is on neither metaphor or paraphrase but shifts instead to the distinct form and spirit of the target language (Nida, 14). William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible (1525-26) had adopted this approach and, by doing the same, Fenton altered the source text to suit “the spoken language of the people” (Nida 14).

The phrase “tediousness of the way” may therefore have already circulated in English in common parlance. Philip Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry*, most likely written around 1580,⁴

⁴ In his 1965 edition of the *Apology*, Geoffrey Shepherd considered the date to be between 1581 and 1583, but R.W. Maslen’s 2002 update to the edition opts for a date closer to the 1579 release of Stephen Gosson’s *School*

uses the phrase in comparing the inability of the philosopher to move a reader as well as the poet:

The philosopher showeth you the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way, as of the pleasant lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by-turnings that may divert you from your way. But this is to no man but to him that will read him, and read him with attentive studious painfulness (Sidney, 94).

Sidney's work was not published until 1595, so it cannot be considered a source from which others acquired the phrase. Sidney's use of it merely indicates its availability to writers by the start of the 1580s, but throughout this decade it appears to have been exclusively deployed by translators of foreign texts, suggesting common use in speech. Jeannette Fellheimer pointed out 21 unusual words in Fenton's translation of Bandello, from "biggined" to "tossplot," and observed that several were "not represented in the *New English Dictionary*, and a number he uses earlier than the other instances noted" (539). It seems reasonable to assume that these unusual words are present in his work because they exist previously in common speech. His use of "tediousness of the way" fits into a pattern of translation toward the target language by adopting common phrases. Fenton used the phrase again in his 1579 translation of Francesco Guiccardini's *Historia d'Italia* (1130), and three other translators followed his initial example between 1576 and 1587,⁵ before Anthony Munday also used the phrase in his translation of

of Abuses, to which Sidney is clearly responding with the *Apology* (2-4). If we accept that Sidney was writing in response to Gosson, we can at least confirm a *terminus a quo* of 1579.

⁵ The Early Modern Print search reveals use of the phrase in Abraham Fleming's translation of Claudius Aelian (1576), William Goodyear's translation of Jean de Cartigny (1581), and Edward Aggas's translation of François do La Noue (1587). The search also reveals, *inter alia*, two examples of the phrase being used in the sermons of John Prime (1583 and 1585), which may constitute the earliest examples of the phrase being used in English that was not written as a translation.

the first book of *Amadis of Gaule* in 1590 (17). By the time the Privy Council used the phrase in their response to the players, then, “tediousness of the way” appears to have been adopted as a peculiarly English expression of the difficulties of travel—it is worth asking whether this is an accurate description of the journey from London or Bankside to Newington Butts.

CLEARING THE KING’S HIGHWAY

In all of the examples of the use of the phrase “tediousness of the way” considered above, the implied distance was substantial. What makes the way tedious is the length of the journey. In the case of Newington Butts, the distance from the river to the junction is just one mile, so it is unlikely that the Privy Council seriously considered Strange’s Men endured any hardship. For the players, the distance from the Rose to Newington Butts, heading south from Maiden Lane via one of several streets onto Borough Street and then directly to the turnpike, would have been considerably less than the mile from the river to the Playhouse. Indeed, any player who performed at both the Rose and the Theatre knew that the distance between these two venues significantly exceeded that between Bankside and Newington Butts—a player would wind his way through the streets of the Clink to travel the 400 yards to the main thoroughfare, cross the river, and then travel the further mile from the north bank to the site of the Theatre in Shoreditch, or else cross the river 100 yards to the north of the Rose via ferry, then traverse crooked streets to make the journey that covers a further mile and a half.

With distance not being a valid basis for associating the trip to Newington Butts with tediousness, Gurr imagines conditions that must have contributed to the difficulty. He points out that the location “must have been less advantageous than the Theatre’s in Shoreditch on the northern side, being a good mile, or rather a muddy and difficult mile” from the bridge and adds that the “mud on the route” was a “serious drawback” for the venue, guaranteeing

its failure (171). There is no evidence provided to support the claim that the mile in question was any more muddy or difficult than any other stretch of road in or near London at the time. Where does Gurr's mud come from? The image may have come from Samuel Schoenbaum, whose description of the passage to Newington Butts reckons on it being "reachable by foot on the road which, continuing Southwark High Street, cut across St. George's Fields" (136). Schoenbaum expresses relief for those who "no longer had to cross the fields to see a play" after the venue was closed (136). It is true that St. George's Fields were established on what was marshland on a tidal flood plain and were frequently wet, yet nobody ever had to cross one of these fields to get to Newington Butts. It is instead ironic that in 1618, Edward Alleyn and other residents of Bankside were sued by the innkeepers of Borough High Street for loss of business because a path through St. George's Fields (later dubbed "Dirty Lane") was being used by the people of Surrey as a shortcut to reach the Bankside attractions (Darlington, 40; Roberts and Godfrey, 133-35). Here the potentially muddy route was the one used to cross the fields from the south to Bankside, not the other way around, and it was to *bypass* the main thoroughfare.

Regarding Gurr's comparison, the reality of both the Newington Butts and Shoreditch playhouses is that they were situated along the same road: the King's Highway. The Theatre was closer to the City, just over half a mile to the north of Bishopsgate, but to anybody who lived inside the City, the distance could be a mile or more, depending on which streets they traversed to get to Bishopsgate. On either the north or south of London, the condition of the road was comparable not simply due to them being opposite stretches of the same highway. Both Shoreditch Street to the north of the city and the Newington Causeway to the south were established atop sections of the ancient Roman road network. The road leading north from Bishopsgate was what the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants called "Earningas" (later Ermine) Street (Blair, 256-57), and formed the basis of the modern A10 into Hertfordshire. The southern

stretch of the highway is not as easy to identify with the road that the Anglo-Saxons named “Sten” (later Stane) Street, but archaeological surveys of London have long confirmed that the Newington Causeway was one section of the road which lasted from Roman through to modern times.

The Roman city of Londinium consisted of settlements on both sides of the river, with the southern settlements making up about one-quarter of the city but scattered across islands dotting the south side of the river (Cowan, Seeley, Wardle, Westman, and Wheeler, 10-11). The earliest bridge here connected the central thoroughfare on the north settlements to Stane Street, which then connected two islands on the site of modern Southwark and continued on through the mainland to modern Chichester. As the banks of the Thames took shape in later centuries, and the site of the bridge shifted, the stretch of Roman road that extended through these islands faded into disuse, and it was presumed even by the great historian of Roman roads, Ivan Margary, that some remnants of Stane Street align with Borough High Street in the direction of Kennington but that the curvature of the Newington Causeway took a sharp deviation from the alignment of the Roman way from Londinium to Noviomagus Reginorum (76). Yet in 1952, roadworks 300 yards north of the Newington Butts juncture unearthed a section of metalled road on top of the gravel sub-soil, some four feet below the surface, and consistent with Roman road construction (Darlington, 1-2). The deviation could be explained by the topography, with the Elephant and Castle (at the northern point of the Newington Butts juncture) and St. George’s Church (halfway toward the juncture) being the two highest points in that area to the south of the river (Darlington, 1).

The Roman preference for straight lines was superseded in the construction of Stane Street by the issue of having to cross the floodplain. As Ida Darlington explains, evidence can be found throughout the region that it was liable to flooding even in Roman times, so it was probable that “the line of the Newington Causeway was the only route through St. George’s

Fields that could have been made into a firm road without the use of piles” (2).⁶ Darlington adds that in the great tidal flood of 29 September 1555, as described in John Stow’s *Annales*, the waters reached inland from Lambeth as far as the causeway but the elevation of the road acted as a barrier preventing the water spreading any further to the west (2). Stow adds some harrowing but pertinent detail:

That morning y^e kings palace at Westminster, & Westminster hal was ouerflowne unto the staire foot going to the Chancerie and Kings bench, so that when the lord maior of London should come to present the sherifes to the barons of the exchequer, all Westminster hall was full of water, and by report there that morning, a whirrie man rowed with his boat ouer Westminster bridge into the pallace court, and so through the Staple gate ... and all the marshes on Lambeth side were so ouerflowne, that the people from Newington church could not passe on foote, but were caried by boate from the said church to the pinfold, neare to Saint Georges in Southwarke.

(627)

This day in 1555 being the Sabbath, the parishioners attended church but were stranded by the inundation, so boats conveyed them safely to the north of the turnpike.

Based on the available evidence, then, rather than the muddy and difficult mile across the fields as imagined by Gurr and Schoenbaum, the passage to Newington Butts would have been a relatively high and dry stretch of highway. Darlington notes also that in Tudor times the road was paved from London Bridge to Stones End, which is about two-thirds of the way to Newington Butts (2-3). Instead of a muddy mile, the walk south from London would have normally consisted of a trek on paved roads for two-thirds of a mile, followed by a little over

⁶ For a summary of more recent archaeological evidence of flood events during Roman occupation, reinforcing the claims made by Darlington, see Cowan, Seeley, Wardle, Westman, and Wheeler, 32.

550 yards on an elevated dirt or gravel road that even during periods of rain would drain quicker than the surrounding fields. Against the persistent fantasy of mud and drudgery, I therefore posit a reality of paving stones and high ground the highway offered to anybody seeking to make the trek south of London.

FOLLOWING THE ARROWS

The Red Lion was erected as a temporary performance space in Whitechapel in 1567, but its exact location has remained a mystery. Only from the lawsuit by the proprietor John Brayne against the builder of some of the scaffolds have scholars been able to piece together clues to the building's location, as William Ingram does in *The Business of Playing*: "it was built a fair distance from the City—as far to the east as the later Newington Butts playhouse would be to the south—and on a site near, though not on, the main eastern highway out of the City" (110). Speculating on the choice of location, Ingram notes that the Red Lion Farm was just off the main road to the famous green in Mile End, which was used each May for the drill and muster of the City militia, so it would have provided occasion for the locals to be able to profit from providing ale and entertainment to both the militia and the many who gathered to witness the spectacle (110-11). Suppose however that Brayne had more permanent goals in mind and that the poor quality of the scaffolding (which gave rise to his suit) merely cut these goals short—in this case, the annual muster would not be sufficient to support such a venture, but the expense of building the stage seems excessive for only a short-term enterprise. What else could justify Brayne's choice of location? One answer can be found, I suggest, by seeing the choice in terms of the syntagmatic dimension of the space, understanding its location as a prominent node along a path to somewhere else.

The green at Mile End was of course used for more than the annual muster. Scanning the less busy sections of the so-called “Agas Map” which purports to depict London *circa* 1560,⁷ a careful eye might catch the two small stick figures in the open field to the north of Whitechapel: one has a drawn bow in preparation to shoot and the other is leaning against what we might assume, given the activity of his companion, to be a longbow—the artist has clearly intended to convey the presence of archers. Mile End had been since at least the reign of Henry VII the site of the range used by the Society of London Bowmen, with whom both princes Arthur and Henry (the later Henry VIII) regularly participated (Harewood, 20). The importance of archery in Tudor society cannot be understated—since 1363, when Richard II sought to ban all amusements on Sundays and holidays excepting archery (12 Rich. II c. 6), there was a succession of statutes and ordinances to maintain the practice, and Henry VIII alone made no fewer than eight separate statutes ultimately intended to mandate possession of bows in every household and commanding every adult male to use them regularly (Gunn, 53). As recently as 1565, Elizabeth handed down three statutes to update those of her father and predecessors with respect to the price and construction of bows, and ordered that every bowyer within the city and suburbs of London, Southwark, and Westminster must stock at all times a minimum of 50 bows for sale (8 Eliz. c. 11). In 1567, the green at Mile End would thus have been a frequent destination for many in and around eastern London to practice at shooting, making the road at Whitechapel a popular site for any additional pastimes.

Mile End was not the only option available to Londoners seeking to practice at the butts. A further glance at the top line of plates on the “Civitas Londinum” (“Agas Map”) reveals a number of similar representations of archers in various fields to the north and west of the city walls. Again, the artist is representing a well-known activity associated with the

⁷ The provenance of the “Civitas Londinum” is disputed, but the attribution to Ralph Agas is almost certainly erroneous: the map is most likely based on the earlier “copperplate map” which has been dated to no later than 1559, and as late as 1588 Agas claimed to still be wanting to produce his first survey of London—see Marks; and Mitton, 8-11.

fields—on 20 January 1561, a bill was recorded in the Middlesex Session Rolls reinforcing existing statutes ensuring the availability of practice ranges for archers:

whereas the citizens and other inhabitants of London have been accustomed from time beyond the memory of man to shoot with bows in all the open fields in the parish of Stebbynith co. Midd. and elsewhere near the said city, viz. in the common lands called Stebbynhyth feyldes, Ratclyff feyldes, Mylende feyldes, Blethnall grene, Spyttefeildes, Morefeldes, Fynnesbury feyldes, Hoggesdon feyldes, co. Midd. without hindrance from any person, so that all archers have been able to go out in the same open fields to shoot with the bow. (Jeaffreson, 37)

In accordance with the bill, one John Draney, “citizen and clothier,” was fined at the Session of the Peace at Westminster on 21 May for trenching deep ditches and planting green hedges to prevent archers practicing on Stepney (“Stebbynith”) Close (Jeaffreson, 37). In addition to Mile End (“Mylende”), then, the bill refers to the longstanding freedoms given to archers within the vicinity of London in Middlesex. After the failure of the Red Lion venture, Brayne tried again to establish a playhouse space in 1576, when he and James Burbage leased land in Shoreditch to build the Theatre, and it is noteworthy that the highway passing by this location could be used by Londoners to make their way to the northern stretches of Finsbury Fields (to the west of the highway) as well as to Bethnal Green (to the northeast).

Could it be that proximity along a main road to archery butts was a determining factor in the selection of sites for the early playhouses? This was unlikely to be a factor in the rise of the Bankside venues, where proximity to the baiting arenas—or indeed the double use of the same spaces—was the more significant determinant (Mackinder, Blackmore, Bowsher, and Phillpotts, 17-20). Yet even as late as 1604, Aaron Holland’s decision to convert the yard at

the Red Bull inn into a playhouse might easily be seen to fit the pattern of the Red Lion and the Theatre. It is more commonly thought that the location of the Red Bull was chosen for its proximity to Smithfield markets, but because the markets were located more than 400 yards south of the playhouse location, this theory relies on the assumption that the site was chosen to capture the traffic along St. John's Street by those who were bringing their stock to market from outside London (Griffith, 1-3). Apart from the fact that stock was more likely to have been brought to market on the western side of Clerkenwell Priory via Turnmill (colloquially known as Turnbull) Street, leading into the aptly named Cow Cross,⁸ one problem with this theory is that a marketplace relies on more customers than there are vendors. A venue built 400 yards from such a lucrative customer base seems ill-advised if it is designed only to draw money from the purses of the vendors. It seems more reasonable to suppose that St. John's Street was chosen because it was on the way to some other destination that draws the market customers further north again. At the time of its construction, the Red Bull playhouse was at the upper end of St. John's Street with not much more to the north that might attract potential playgoers except for the open fields of Islington—these fields, as William Howitt confirmed in his antiquarian history of *The Northern Heights of London*, were all being used for archery “from time immemorial” (444).

In the case of the Red Bull, of course, the location was first adopted for the inn, and the name given to it suggests that proximity to the stock route was clearly a factor—any sense that “Red Bull” references an archer's bullseye is quickly dispelled by confirming that “bull” was not used as a term for the centre of a target until the late eighteenth century.⁹ One venue

⁸ Eva Griffith notes that travellers from Islington would know by the street names that they were approaching a region in which a venue called the Red Bull would not be out of place. Yet the 1682 map on the previous page of her book demonstrates that the streets with these bovine names are *not* in the path of the traveller approaching London from Islington; rather, they run convergent to St. John's Street, meeting at Smithfield (see Griffith, 2-3).

⁹ OED, “*bull's-eye*, n. 7a”—the earliest reference given in this entry is 1833. Hargrove's *Anecdotes of Archery* contains an earlier reference, with the collection published in 1792, and a report on the matches at Blackheath on 27 May 1791 noting that the “Loyal Archers shot once into the Bull's Eye of the Target” (101). I have found no evidence to suggest the term was in use two centuries earlier.

that leaves no doubt about the link to archery is the Playhouse at Newington Butts. Despite claims from several scholars during the last sixty years that the “butts” in the name of the location was not a reference to archery butts (Darlington, 84-85; Ingram, 155; Wickham, Berry, and Ingram, 320), it has recently been confirmed from evidence in the Acts of the Privy Council that there was indeed an archery range on the southern side of the location, which the Council noted in 1577 “hathe of long tyme ben mainetayned” there (APC, 1577-1578, 272; Johnson, 60-62). In choosing the site at Newington Butts, Jerome Savage was no doubt keen to draw custom from among the people who regularly made their way across the river to enjoy Southwark Fair or to use the fields for bowling, ball sports, horse riding, and duck baiting (Darlington, 39-40). Yet just as the Red Bull needed crowds to have a reason to continue beyond the nearby markets, the Playhouse needed its audiences to continue south beyond the fairs and fields—that reason could very well have been the mandatory practice of their archery skills.

REDEFINING THE FIELD

Evelyn Tribble asks where the archers are in Shakespeare, observing that in only one play is there a direction for arrows to be shot on stage: in *Titus Andronicus*, a group of archers enters at the beginning of Act 4, Scene 3, and at the request of Titus that their arrows be shot to the gods, Marcus orders them to “Shoot all your shafts into the Court” (Tribble, 803). Pointing out the inherent risks of shooting inside a theatre in any era, but also of shooting blindly into a residential district from an open air theatre, Tribble concludes “early modern actors would have shot as ‘feebly’ as modern actors, and for similar reasons” (803). Yet if the stage was located adjacent to or very near an archery range, such an exercise becomes viable. *Titus* was performed twice by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (possibly together with the Admiral’s Men)

when they stayed for a short time at the Playhouse in Newington Butts in June 1594, and this venue was separated from the archery range potentially by as short a distance as the dwelling on the southern end of the playhouse property and a sewer (see Johnson, 67-68). Earlier that year, the same play (or a version of it) debuted at the Rose with Sussex's Men—Henslowe's Bankside venue would have required the feeble display described by Tribble, prompting me to ask whether the archery scene in *Titus* was added for the Newington performance and was retained due to the success of the spectacle?

The play was also likely to have been performed at the Theatre in Shoreditch by the Chamberlain's Men or, earlier, by Pembroke's Men (both of which are credited with having performed the play on the title pages of the quartos of 1594 and 1600). John Stockwood had written in 1578 that the Theatre was "*erected in the fields*" (Malone, 53n8), indicating that there were no residences to the north of the location at that time, so it was also viable for the play to have included the archery spectacle when performed in Shoreditch. One other play that may have included an archery spectacle, when occasion and location allowed, is *Hamlet*, the Second Quarto of which ends with the relevant order given by Fortinbras:

Take vp the bodies. Such a sight as this

Becomes the field, but heere showes much amisse.

Goe bid the souldiers shoote. *Exeunt.* (TLN 3902-4)

The Folio adds the direction "*Exeunt Marching, after the which a Peal of Ordenance are shot off,*" which clearly requires the "peal" of gunshots offstage (and which can be made by using gunpowder without discharging a firearm), but without this requirement the quarto could be interpreted as calling for a salvo of arrows to be shot into "the field" and, perhaps, due to the lack of visible targets, "much amiss." A version of *Hamlet* was certainly staged at the Theatre

when, in 1596, Thomas Lodge reported having watched it, and a play called *Hamlet* was also staged at Newington Butts during the short run there by the Chamberlain's Men—the closing lines may record a key element of these performances.

While I am suggesting here that being next to a range could allow the stage archers to avoid deploying their arrows in feeble form, Tribble's broader point about the rarity of such spectacles is undeniable. It could indeed be that *Titus* and the early versions of *Hamlet* were test cases for the shooting of arrows from stage to nearby fields, but the practice was short lived, and so the ending of *Hamlet* was changed to suit. Both plays contain demonstrations of another martial skill that would remain far more prevalent in early modern drama: fencing. As Mary McElroy and Kent Cartwright have argued in relation to the English fascination with public fencing throughout the sixteenth century, the makeshift stages on which bouts could be held evolved to accommodate drama as well, so the rise of the popular theatre went hand in glove with the popularity of fencing contests: between 1578 and 1585, numerous bouts were recorded to have been hosted at the Theatre and Curtain in particular (207). In the case of early modern drama and fencing, then, the capacity to share the same stage space was always going to lead to dramatists using the dynamic action of a fencing contest to heighten the conflict and entertainment value of their plays. For those who frequented the archery butts around London to meet their civic duty, the spectacle of fencers crossing weapons was surely an attractive way to round out a day on the outskirts of the city.

By viewing the locations of the playhouses in terms of existing routes that drew their potential audiences to a mandated pastime, we add the syntagmatic dimension that Lefebvre adds to the paradigmatic and symbolic approaches to the history of space. The conventional narrative of the rise of the playhouses has for too long pursued the tedious line about their permanence, and these buildings have been fixed in the landscape of London as timber beacons of this golden age. By casting an eye to the roads that passed by them, though, we

may remind ourselves that their placement along these roads was every bit as purposeful as their “purpose-built” construction. It thus becomes possible to imagine a mobile audience making their way to the playhouses through the gates and out into the fields around the city, particularly for a mandated activity like archery. Too big a risk for Brayne, Burbage, Savage and the others who followed to simply construct their purpose-built playhouses in the fields, assuming the populace would be drawn toward these beacons. The more likely scenario from a business perspective is to picture them being placed in the path of an existing and reliable flow of people. The roads on which these people made their routine trek to the outskirts of the city were paved, well-maintained, and well-drained, protected at times by royal proclamation. This is equally as true for the “tediousness of the way” to Newington Butts as it was for the pathway to Bethnal Green or Mile End. By casting our minds to the roads on which the early modern playgoers went about their other routine activities, we might finally arrive at a point from which the tired old binary of the London playhouses versus the strolling players might be allowed to dissipate. Are we there yet?

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