



THREE LADIES OF LONDON AND THE RED LION WORKSHOP

Sunday 22 January, Urban Bar, Whitechapel

- 1 “[. . .] William Buttermore, John Lyffe, William Smellinge, and Richard Kyrbie, carpenters, shall with expedition go and peruse such defaults as are and by them shall be found as in and about such scaffolds as he the said William [Sylvester] hath made at the house called the Red Lion in the parish of Stebinyhutte [Stepney Heath] and the said William Sylvester shall repair and amend the same with their advice substantially as they shall think good [. . .] and that after the play which is called the story of Sampson be once played at the place aforesaid, the said John [Brayne] shall deliver to the said William such bonds as are now in his custody for the performance of the bargain. . . .” (1567; GL MS 4329/1, 128v)
- 2 “The condition of this obligation is such that if the withinbounden John Raynolds [. . .] do frame, make, or build and set up for the within named John Brayne within the court or yard lying on the south side of the garden belonging to the messuage [property] or farm house called and known by the name of the sign of the Red Lion; about the which court there are galleries now building and situated, and being at Mile End in the parish of Saint Mary Matfellow, otherwise called Whitechapel without Aldgate of London, sometime called Stark’s House: one scaffold or stage for interludes or plays of good, new, and well-seasoned timber and boards, which shall contain in height from the ground, five foot of assize, and shall be in length north and south forty [. . .] foot of assize, in breadth east and west thirty foot of assize [. . .] and if the said John Reynolds [. . .] do make, frame, or set up upon the said scaffold one convenient turret of timber and boards, which shall contain and be in height from the ground set upon plates thirty foot of assize with a convenient flower of timber and boards [. . .] And do also make, frame, and set up upon the top of the same turret some sufficient compass braces of good and well-seasoned timber [. . .].” (1568; TNA KB 27/1229/m, 30)

Living in . . . E1 (back then):



- 3 6 August 1501: [An entry in the account book of John Heron, Treasurer of the King’s Chamber] “Item: [Paid] to the players at Mile End, 3s 4d.” (TNA E101/415/3, fo.61v)

4 The Boar's Head, Whitechapel, 1557: "[Privy Council orders the Lord Mayor] to give order forthwith that some of his officers do forthwith repair to the Boar's Head without Aldgate where the lords are informed a lewd play called *A Sack Full of News* shall be played this day, the players whereof he is willed to apprehend and to commit to safe ward . . . and to take their playbook from them and to send the same hither." (PC 2/7)

5 John Brayne took a lease on another property in Whitechapel, the George Inn, in 1580: George Ceeley testifies in 1604 "That he knoweth the Inne in Whitechappell [. . .] Howbeit the said Brayne hoping that he might do some good upon it, intending to build a playhouse therin, adventured to take a lease therof of thirty pounds a year [in 1580 . . .]." (TNA C24 314 84, 18).

6 "From Aldegate East [. . .] without the Barres, both the sides of the street be pestered with Cottages & Allies, even up to white Chapple church: and almost half a mile beyond it . . . : all which ought to lye open & free for all men. But this common field, I say, being sometimes the beautie of this City on that part, is so encroached upon by building of filthy Cottages, and with other prepesterous like inclosures and Laystalles [. . .] that in some places it scarce remaineth a sufficient high way [. . .] which is no small blemish to so famous a city, to have so unsavoury and unseemly an entry or passage therunto." (John Stow, *Survey of London*, 1598).



Early discussion of plays, authorship, Wilson, and *Three Ladies*:

7 **Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse* (1579):** "And as some of the players are far from abuse, so some of their plays are without rebuke, which are as easily remembered as quickly reckoned. The two prose books played at the Bel Savage, where you shall find never a word without wit, never a line without pith, never a letter placed in vain. *The Jew* and *Ptolemy*, shown at the Bull, the one representing the greediness of worldly choosers and bloody minds of usurers, the other very lively describing how seditious estates, with their own devices, false friends, with their own swords, and rebellious commons in their own snares are overthrown, neither with amorous gesture wounding the eye, nor with slovenly talk hurting the ears of the chaste hearers. *The Blacksmith's Daughter* and *Catiline's Conspiracies* usually brought into the Theatre, the first containing the treachery of Turks, the honourable bounty of a noble mind, and the shining of virtue in distress; the last because it is known to be a pig of mine own sow, I will speak the less of it, only giving you to understand that the whole mark which I shot at in that work was to show the reward of traitors in Catiline, and the necessary government of learned men in the person of Cicero, which foresees every danger that is likely to happen, and forestalls it

continually ere it take effect. [. . .] These plays are good plays and sweet plays, and of all plays the best plays and most to be liked, worthy to be song of the Muses, or set out with the cunning of Roscius himself, yet are they not fit for every man's diet, neither ought they commonly to be shown."

- 8 **Thomas Lodge, pamphlet section beginning 'Protophenes can know Apelles by his line though he see him not' (1579):** "But after your discrediting of playmaking, you salve upon the sore somewhat, and among many wise works there be some that fit your vein: *The Practice of Parasites* is one, which I marvel it like you so well since it bites you so sore. But sure in that I like your judgement, and for the rest too, I approve your wit, but for the pig of your own sow (as you term it), assuredly I must discommend your verdict. Tell me, Gosson, was all your own you wrote there? Did you borrow nothing of your neighbours? Out of what book patched you out Cicero's oration? Whence fet you Catiline's invective? This is one thing, *aliena olet lucerni non tuam*, so that your helper may wisely reply upon you with Virgil, *Hos ego verisculos feci tulit alter bonores*: I made these verses, other bear the name. Believe me, I should prefer Wilson's *Short and Sweet* if I were judge, a piece surely worthy praise, the practice of a good scholar, would the wiser would overlook that, they may perhaps cull some wisdom out of a player's toy."

- 9 **Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582):** "This may be gathered by the Epistle of Horace to Augustus, and by other famous writers, which having curiously searched the laws of the Romans, confess in plain words, that the overlashing of players was so restrained. Whether this be the practice of poets in these days you may perceive by the drift of him that wrote the play termed *The Three Ladies of London*, which in the catastrophe maketh Love and Conscience to be examined how three good ladyships like of plays. Love answers that she detesteth them, because her guts are turned outward, and all her secret conveyance is blazed with colours to the people's eye. Conscience like a kindhearted gentlewoman doth allow them.

In this point the poet makes so much haste to his journey's end that he throws himself headlong down the hill. For neither Love disliked them, before he had married her to Dissimulation, whose property is to say one thing and think another, nor Conscience allowed them, before he had spotted her with all abomination, whose nature is to allow that which is like herself, filthy, corrupt, spotted and defiled. The writer of the play called *London Against the Three Ladies* confesseth in his prologue that he made it partly for envy, partly for a vainglorious mind. For envy: because his stomach would not bear the commendations that other men gave to *The Three Ladies* in his hearing. For vainglory, because he strave to do better himself, and used the cushion. Somewhat I grant he bettered it in show. Touching the substance he doth but cavill as I would declare, if it were not from the matter I take in hand. By these few you may gather of all the rest, and persuade yourselves that as stages and theatres are not allowed by the laws of God, or man, to meddle with disorders, so is it not the mark that their authors shoot at when they fill these rooms. If any deformity be reprehended there, it is to be done by the player's mouth. He that will show another man his fault must purge himself first."

10 Patent for Leicester's Men, 1574

"Know ye that we of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion have licensed and authorised, and by these presents do license and authorise, our loving subjects James Burbage, John Perkin, John Laneham, William Johnson, and Robert Wilson, servants to our trusty and well beloved cousin and counsellor the Earl of Leicester, to use, exercise, and occupy the art and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies interludes, stage plays, and other such like as they have already used and studied, or hereafter shall use and study, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure when we shall think good to see them; as also to use and occupy all such instruments as they have already practiced, or hereafter shall practise, for and during our pleasure. And the said comedies, tragedies, interludes, and stage plays, together with their music, to show, publish, exercise, and occupy to their best commodity during all the term aforesaid, as well within our City of London and liberties of the same, as also within the liberties and freedoms of any our cities, towns, boroughs, &c. whatsoever as without the same, throughout our realm of England [. . .]. Provided that the said comedies, tragedies, interludes, and stage plays be by the Master of our Revels for the time being before seen and allowed, and that the same be not published or shown in the time of common prayer, or in the time of great and common plague in our said City of London." (PRO C66/1116 memb. 36)

11 Deeds from 1688 and '89 describe property "being on Mile End Greene . . . Abutting and bounding . . . South upon the said Red Lyon, and North vppon the Kinges Highway leading from London to Bow"; the second lease describes adjoining land "on the Southside of Milend Greene neere the Red Lyon Inne or farme in the parish of St. Mary Whitechapel aforesaid Conteyning in ffront att the North end there of ffrom East to West Thirty and two ffoote of Assize little more or Lesse and att the South end which adjoyneth to an other peece or parcell of Ground belonging to the said John Mitchell which ffronteth the Redd Lyon Inne Thirty and four foote of like assize more or lesse and in Depth from North to South one hundred foote of assize little more or lesse Abutting and bounding East on a messuage or Tenem^t vnfinished lately Erected [. . .] West on a Cartway or passage Leading from the Kings Highway there to the Redd Lyon Inne aforesaid, and South on the aforesaid peece of ground belonging to the said John Mitchell which ffronteth the before mencioned Redd Lyon Inne [. . .]."

In 1689, a portion was described as sitting "South on the ffoote path or Causway Leading from White Chappell to Stepney Church [. . .] and North on the way or passage therein after mencioned to be left ffour foote wide Together with free ingresse egresse & regresse [for Jackman et al.] to passe & repasse to & from the Cart or Driftway there which Leads from the Kings Highway to the Redd Lyon Inne or farme North on the [four-foot-wide] way or passage . . . from the Cart or Driftway there which Leads from the Kings Highway to the Redd Lyon Inne or farme aforesaid."

(Tower Hamlets; P/LAP/2687,8,9)