A number of factors operate in the representation of London in the interlude drama, one important material determinant being that this is a largely itinerant theatre that is not normally London-based. Though some interludes were, of course, produced for the court or other patrons in the metropolis, the overwhelming majority were essentially not a part of the cultural life of the capital. Even the royally patronized troupes spent much of their time touring in the provinces, and many of the companies under provincial noble patronage never came to London.¹ There is, however, a dearth of available information on the auspices and specific geographical provenance of many plays. This makes it extremely difficult to establish any reliable relationship between the places of origin and performance of particular plays and the ways in which London is represented in the drama of the period.

Settings are of self-evident importance when it comes to any discussion of the representation of place and, before moving on to a discussion of the representation of London in pre-commercial era drama, a word should be said about settings in this theatre in general terms. Though the interludes were mostly allegorical and non-scenic, with little or no need for clearly defined geographical space, there were also strands of theatrical practice that did have scenic dimensions: scriptural and saint plays with both pageant wagon and place and scaffold staging. There are, for instance, scenic elements in the great scriptural cycles to denote both otherworldly and earthly places such as the throne of heaven and the spatially distinct locations of the creation plays, the ark in the Noah plays, the altar in the Christ in the Temple plays, the tables in the Simon the Leper and last supper plays, and the tombs in the Lazarus and Resurrection sequences. The Digby play *The Conversion of St Paul* (first quarter of the sixteenth century) is likely to
have had either pageant wagons or scaffolds representing Jerusalem and Damascus. But here, as in the interludes and hagiographical plays with place-and-scaffold staging, the places depicted are rarely identifiable geographical locations and, as represented by individual scaffolds, function more than anything else to structure the moral narratives. The Digby Mary Magdalen (late fifteenth/early sixteenth century) has scaffolds for the Castle of Magdalen, Marcyll (Marseilles) and Jerusalem, though none of these shows any indication of visual specificity and the scaffolds are likely to have doubled, reducing the potential for individualization. Most non-cycle and early secular plays are not set in named localities, and in the case of the few that are, there is little to suggest anything more than the most functional elements of set, where it is present at all. Though Richard Edwards’s Damon and Pithias (1564–1567) is set in Syracuse and the action of Thomas Inglelend’s court play for boys, The Disobedient Child (1559–1569), is located nominally in a house in London, neither has any visual indication of set. The anonymous Terence in English (1516–1533) is set in Athens and the only scenic element is the house outside which the action occurs, possibly visually characterized. John Pickering’s Horestes (printed 1567) has the city wall and gates of Mycene, while Jocasta, a 1566 Gray’s Inn play by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe is set in Thebes, featuring two gates of the city and Jocasta’s palace, possibly with some identifying features. Two other Gray’s Inn plays have named settings, Gascoigne’s Supposes (1566) in a street in Ferrara between two of the characters’ houses and John Jefferes’s The Bugbears (1563–1566) in Florence in front of three houses. Represented places in the scriptural and hagiographical drama provide a basic structural frame for the narrative, and also function in terms of moral or mythic iconicity. In the secular drama, named localities are at best a theatrical frame on which to arrange stage action. A secular sense of place emerges only slowly and sporadically in sixteenth-century drama (mostly in academic auspices) before the advent of the commercial theatre.

Plays of foreign or classical source more often than not have their narratives set in identified locations. By contrast, very few of the English plays from the period before the last quarter of the century that are not specifically based on classical or Continental models have any sort of defined geographical setting. Locations are occasionally loosely identified usually by the protagonists, who are mentioned as men of particular places such as Rome (in Fulgens and Lucre), London (in The Disobedient Child) or more loosely Persia (in Thomas Preston’s Cambises). In these instances little or nothing is made of the location. In a very