Essay notes:

Intro:

* Society has a set hierarchy (Purpose of Playing p. 20, *Certain Sermons and Homilies*) (Montrose, 1996, p. 20) (Bond, 1987)
  + The Sermon reminds them of this because of fluctuating Reformation policies (fluctuating because of changing rulers) (Cummings, 2016)
* Theatres performed in “the Liberties”: social diversity, margins of society

Theatre as a voice of the state:

* Minute of City Court of Aldermen, May 20, 1572
  + “written in the favor of certein persones to haue in there howses, yardes, or back sydes, being overt & open places, such playes, enterludes, commedies, & tragedies as maye tende to represse vyce & extoll vertwe, for the recreacion of the people, & therby to drawe them from sundrye worser exercyses” (Chambers, 1923, p. 269)
* “to teach obedience to the King” (Heywood, 1612)

Theatre as a representation of the social hierarchy:

* “Typically, Shakespeare generates dramatic action by combining conflict grounded in […] ethnicity, lineage, generation, gender, political faction, and social rank.” (Montrose, 1996, p. 33)
* “When the margins of society are thus realized on the threshold of the community, shaped into arenas of representation […], part of what is manifested in them will be the vulnerability of the social structure itself.” (Mullaney, 1988, p. 38)
* “The popular theatre was a uniquely threatening phenomenon because it was the physical and ideological site of convergence for a panoply of perceived innovations and perversions.” (Montrose, 1996, p. 35)
* Hamlet in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “The purpose of playing […] is, to hold as’t were the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.20-4)

Theatre allowing actors (and audience) to dress differently, change their social status

* Proteus
  + Edward Alleyn was remembered by Thomas Heywood as “Proteus for shapes” (Heywood, 1633)
  + Richard Burbage was remembered by Richard Flecknoe as “a delightful Proteus” (Flecknoe, 1664)
  + Actors jumping between social classes in performances may inspire the audience to challenge the social hierarchy
* Epicoene
  + The Silent Woman being a man, gender roles
  + Two gentlemen acting as lawyers
  + Final speech addressing audience, linking the play to reality
* Edward II

Theatre as an authority:

* “God onely gave authority of publique instruction and correction but to two sorts of men: to his Ecclesiasticall Ministers, and temporal Magistrates: hee never instituted a third authority of Players” (G., 1615)
  + Theatre was seen by critics as influential enough to criticise and condemn

Edward II:

* King as an imperfect being
  + Prioritises relationship more than royal responsibilities
* Who is the rightful ruler: the church or the state? (White, 2004, p. 80)
* Freedom of sexuality (White, 2004, pp. 84-85)

Epicoene:

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Notes:

Balance of context and text analysis

Signposts to reader

Plan:

1. Intro
2. Context – Early Modern England as a set society
3. Theatre as a voice of the state (opposite of ‘challenging the hierarchy’)
4. Theatre as a representation and mirror to society
5. Example plays:
   1. Epicoene: Actors and characters dressing up and donning different roles in society, inspiring(?) audience to do the same
   2. Edward II: Encouraging audience, England’s citizens, to think about their government, their rulers – the church or the state, demystification of the monarch
      1. Maybe also: freedom of sexuality?
6. Ending