

The Theatre as Gift *Networks and Patronage*

The death of Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, on September 3, 1658, and the succession of his politically enfeebled son Richard augured a return to monarchy and the prospect of commercial theatre in London for the first time since 1642. Even prior to these events, the poet and playwright William Davenant was gingerly testing the Parliamentary government's ban on theatrical performance. In May of 1656, he premiered *The First Days Entertainment at Rutland-House*, a work that carefully substitutes "*Declamations and Musick*" for conventional dramatic scenes.¹ The prologue identifies the performance as an "Opera," and in the ensuing dialogue, Diogenes and Aristophanes debate "against and for, publick Entertainment by *Moral Representations*."² Davenant may have framed *The First Days Entertainment* as a nontheatrical event – albeit one that hints at the moral uses of performance – but he still cautiously withheld his full name from the title page. He exercised the same authorial care with *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656) and for good reason. In a mere four months, Davenant had gone from staging a Platonic dialogue to mounting a "[r]epresentation by the Art of Prospective in Scenes, And the Story sung in *Recitative Music*."³ These formal elements aligned *The Siege of Rhodes* more closely with theatrical entertainment – dangerously so.

Davenant was as careful with performance space as he had been with dramatic form. Initially, he eschewed extant playhouses for a domestic setting. Both *The First Days Entertainment* and *The Siege of Rhodes* were staged at Rutland House, originally the home of the Roman Catholic Countess Dowager of Rutland, Cicely Manners.⁴ After her death in 1653, Parliament sequestered her mansion and handed it over to Davenant. The title page

¹ [William Davenant], *The First Days Entertainment at Rutland-House, By Declamations and Musick: After the manner of the Ancients* (London, 1656), A1r.

² [Davenant], *The First Days Entertainment*, A4r, 4.

³ [William Davenant], *The Siege of Rhodes* (London, 1656), A1r.

⁴ Randall, *Winter Fruit*, 170.

for *The Siege of Rhodes* states simply that the performance occurred “At the back part of Rutland-House in the upper end of *Aldersgate-Street*,” an announcement that underscores the non-commercial nature of the setting. In July 1658, Davenant pushed a bit harder. This time he used the Cockpit Theatre (also known as the Phoenix) to present *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, a series of six “ENTRIES” of sung music accompanied by the “Art of Perspective in Scenes.”⁵ In the winter of 1658–59, Davenant staged at the same theatre *The History of S^r Francis Drake*, “a still more playlike new work,” according to Dale B. J. Randall.⁶ In all likelihood, it was that very combination of dramatic form and performance venue that incited political scrutiny. Richard Cromwell, the new Lord Protector, and the Council of State appointed a special committee to investigate both Davenant and his actors. Nothing, however, came of the investigation: Theatre was creeping back into the capital.⁷

Davenant’s increasingly bold forays into commercial entertainment undoubtedly encouraged other surviving theatre personnel to step forward. In 1659, the actor Michael Mohun quietly organized at the Red Bull playhouse a troupe comprised of the few actors left over from the Caroline stage. The resulting shortage of seasoned performers forced another prospective manager, John Rhodes, to employ inexperienced youngsters, a not entirely inauspicious decision: One of his hires was the twenty-three-year-old Thomas Betterton, the future star of the Restoration stage.⁸ An extant bill of complaint reveals William Beeston, the most experienced of the hopeful cohort, making repairs to Salisbury Court theatre “[o]n or about the latter end of the year 1659, – when it was known that his Majesty was like to return and the times for such ingenuous exercises began to be open, – your orator was minded to repair and amend the said house, and make it fit for the use aforesaid.”⁹ Everyone wanted an acting company in readiness should the country abandon its republican experiment, as seemed increasingly likely.

Amidst this flurry of theatrical activity appeared an anonymous play, *Lady Alimony; or, The Alimony Lady* (1659), advertised on the title page as an “Excellent Pleasant New COMEDY.”¹⁰ Focused on the amorous exploits of six appetitive “Alimonial Ladies,” the comedy shreds the cult of

⁵ William Davenant, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (London, 1658), A2r, A1r.

⁶ Randall, *Winter Fruit*, 177.

⁷ Randall, 177.

⁸ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 88.

⁹ Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, 108.

¹⁰ *Lady Alimony; or, The Alimony Lady* (London, 1659), A1r.

platonic love fostered at the court of Henrietta Maria and Charles I. *Lady Alimony* takes particular aim at the comedies William Davenant penned in the 1630s to ingratiate himself with the queen. Additional allusions to his travels abroad during the Interregnum, to his penchant for “out-landish [stage] Properties,” and to his play *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* clearly identify Davenant as the satiric target.¹¹ Contrasted to his elitism is a more populist Elizabethan tradition. An induction scene, much like the one opening Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1583–91) or Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1590–92), comprises the first act. “Groundlings within the yard” and “Plebeian incivility” suggest the setting is an old-fashioned amphitheatre, such as the Fortune or the Globe, rather than the private playhouses preferred by Davenant and the other courtier-dramatists of the 1630s.¹² Nostalgia for the popular stage envelops *Lady Alimony*. The playwright-manager, one “Timon,” yearns for the “time, indeed, and it was a golden time for a pregnant Fancy; when the Actor could imbellish his Author, and return a Pean to his Pen in every accent.”¹³ The abrupt entrance of “Haxter,” who has been ordered by a “pragmatical Monopolist” – clearly Davenant – to tear down playbills and “obstruct [the] Action,” returns Timon from his reveries to present vexations.¹⁴

This moment in *Lady Alimony* encapsulates what Rita Felski calls “the coevalness and connectedness of past and present.”¹⁵ The past, however, does not erupt into the present in aggregate: Clearly, the experiences and situatedness of individual agents shape their sense of how prior events impinge on the current moment. Certainly, the men organizing prospective acting troupes in 1659 had very different memories of the prewar theatre from Davenant. Rhodes and Mohun knew Davenant through their mutual association with the Blackfriars Theatre, where they would have seen him use his court connections to get ahead while they worked in a modest capacity. In 1640, Beeston had lost the company he inherited from his father to Davenant’s courtly maneuverings. Of more immediate

¹¹ *Lady Alimony*, B2r. Mocked especially is Davenant’s reliance on stage tricks, such as “a Monkey dancing his Trick-a-tee on a Rope, for want of strong Lines from the Poets pen” (A3v). He is also pilloried for “deluding an ignorant Rabble with the sad presentment of a roasted Savage” (A3v). As Dale B. J. Randall points out, these references correspond to the first entry of Davenant’s *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, which features an ape “leap[ing] up to the Rope” and then dancing to “a Rustick Ayre,” and to the fifth entry, which shows one Spaniard “turning a Spit whilst the other is basting an Indian prince.” See Randall, *Winter Fruit*, 310, and Davenant, *Cruelty of the Spaniards*, 6, 19.

¹² *Lady Alimony*, B2r.

¹³ *Lady Alimony*, A3r–v.

¹⁴ *Lady Alimony*, B1r, B1v.

¹⁵ Felski, *Limits of Critique*, 159.

concern to the rival petitioners was Davenant's self-serving collusion with the Protectorate. After his arrest in 1650 and subsequent release in 1652, he used dramatic entertainment to further his ambitions. Amanda Eubanks Winkler and Richard Schoch point out how the anti-Spanish "jingoism" of *The History of S^r Francis Drake* "was designed to curry favour with the government, further evidence of Davenant's ability to adapt his art to current political realities."¹⁶ For good reason, Timon worries that Davenant's skill in manipulating networks of access might work once again to his benefit on the eve of the Restoration: "What Archias may this be, who takes thus upon him to excize the Revenues of our Theatral Pleasure to his purse? Be his monopolizing brains of such extent, as they have power to ingross all Invention to his Coffre: all our Stage-action to his Exchequer?"¹⁷ After 1660, the answer would prove to be "yes."

Davenant was not alone in putting "monopolizing brains" to productive ends. He would share dominion over the theatrical marketplace with Thomas Killigrew, the other successful petitioner. Both men banked on the dividends paid by memory and the *lagniappe* remunerated by experience, and they knew how to spend that surplus in the present moment. The other men seeking theatrical licenses had also served the crown loyally during the Civil War; they lacked, however, networks of access forged over nearly two decades. Killigrew and Davenant's ambitions also intersected fortuitously with the new king's predilection for a continental model of patronage. Unlike earlier English monarchs, Charles II regarded the commercial stage not as a business subject to government regulation but as a perquisite to be dispensed from his royal arsenal of gifts. Adrift in European courts for nearly a decade, he saw firsthand how patronage of the arts could illuminate princely incandescence; his cousin Louis XIV was especially instructive in this regard. Timing mattered too. Killigrew and Davenant's petitions to control the theatrical marketplace landed at the very moment Charles II dispensed monopolies with abandon. Ten years later – the monarch now broke and at odds with Parliament – they could not have secured the same. And, finally, there was the sheer serendipity of a theatre-mad monarch, another unexpected boon for the ambitious

¹⁶ Amanda Eubanks Winkler and Richard Schoch, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Sir William Davenant and the Duke's Company* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2022), 16.

¹⁷ *Lady Alimony*, Biv. The comparison to "Archias" is pointed. Like Davenant, Aulus Licinius Archias, c. 100 BCE, wrote several commendatory poems to those in power. Cicero defended Archias in *Pro Archia* from allegations of dubious citizenship, but he never received the complimentary poem expected in return. See *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 97–98.

duo. Effectively, memories, networks, and contingencies coalesced to create what no one could have predicted: the complex amalgam of the courtly and the commercial that would become the Restoration theatre.

The Limits of Loyalty

No one better illustrates the tangential role played by royalist politics in shaping the contours of the late seventeenth-century theatre than William Cavendish, then Earl and later Duke of Newcastle. Born in 1592, Newcastle knew the early modern stage well – he was fifty when the playhouses were shuttered in 1642 – and he had a definite notion of what the restored theatre should look like. In 1658, he presented Prince Charles with an advice book, which included a section on “Devertisements” that envisioned a theatrical marketplace close to what he remembered from his youth:

Severall play Houſes, as there were five, at Leaste In my time, – Blacke friers, the Cocke Pitt, Salſbury Courte, The fortune, & the Redd Bull, – there were the boyes that playd At black friers, & Paules, & then the kinges, players, playd at The Globe, which is now Calde the Phenix, – Some playd at the Bores heade, & at the Curtine in the Feildes, & Some at the Hope, which is the Bare Garden, & Some at white friers ...¹⁸

Newcastle urged Charles to establish “five or Six playe houses ... for all Sortes of peoples,” a plan that would indeed have “restored” Caroline theatrical culture of the 1630s. Additionally, he thought citizens should have “Pupett playes ... as also Dancers of the Ropes with Juglers, & Tumblers, – besides strange Sightes of Beastes, birdes, monsters, & many other things; with Severall Sorts of Musicke & Dancing, & all the old Hollydays, with Their mirth, & rightes Sett upp agen ...”¹⁹ Even the Red Bull, a rough-and-tumble playhouse in Clerkenwell known for its “place on the margins of society,” was part of his masterplan for reinstating theatre in the capital.²⁰

In principle, Newcastle’s recommendation for restoring theatrical heterogeneity should have exercised considerable force. He had long been an adviser to Charles, and he was committed to the royalist cause. In 1638, Newcastle was named a member of the Privy Council and appointed the

¹⁸ Thomas P. Slaughter, ed., *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle’s Advice to Charles II* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 63.

¹⁹ Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics*, 63–64.

²⁰ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), vii.

first governor to the eight-year-old Prince of Wales.²¹ In that capacity, he established early on, according to Thomas P. Slaughter, “the habit of writing letters of instruction and guidance to the young prince.”²² Newcastle fled England after royalist forces lost to the republicans, and he paid dearly for his loyalty to the crown. His second wife, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, chronicled at length the loss of land and possessions that left them almost destitute during exile.²³ After 1648, they settled in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, where Newcastle trained horses and wrote a major treatise on equestrian training, the *Méthode et invention nouvelle de dresser les chevaux* (1658). Although Newcastle offered his service to the prince, “[Sir Edward] Hyde was firmly entrenched as the new monarch’s adviser and was determined to keep Newcastle out of the inner circle.”²⁴ Charles did nonetheless honor his old tutor in February 1658 with a visit to the Rubenshuis, where he was feted with various musical entertainments, including a song written by the duke and set to music by the exiled English court musician Nicholas Lanier.²⁵

Despite these displays of loyalty, lack of proximity diminished Newcastle’s political capital. He also lacked powerful intercessors. When the time came to present his advice book to Charles in the spring of 1659, Newcastle, still living in Antwerp, solicited the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Nicholas, to make the presentation on his behalf.²⁶ Newcastle had instinctively turned to someone from his own generation, but he could not have made a worse choice. Nicholas’s royalist credentials were not at issue. Like Newcastle, he had followed the royal family into exile at great

²¹ The Duchess of Newcastle noted that Charles I “called him [Newcastle] up to Court, and thought him the fittest person whom he might intrust with the government of his son Charles ... and made him withal a member of the Lords of his Majesty’s most honourable Privy Council.” See Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, 2nd ed., ed. C. H. Firth (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1907), 5.

²² Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics*, xxv.

²³ Newcastle followed the royal family into exile with “no estate or means left him to maintain himself and his family” and therefore was forced “to seek for credit, and live upon the courtesy of those that were pleased to trust him.” Cavendish, *Life of William Cavendish*, 45. After settling in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, they were supported by local gentry and merchants. Upon their return to England, the Cavendishes saw Welbeck, the Newcastle estate, severely diminished: one park remaining out of eight; woods cut down; lands sold. In total, the Duchess reckoned the losses at an astonishing £941,303, most of which was never recovered (70–79).

²⁴ Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle* (New York: Taplinger, 1979), 166.

²⁵ Ben van Beneden, introduction to Ben van Beneden and Nora de Poorter, eds., *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House, 1648–1660* (Antwerp: Rubenshuis & Rubenianum, 2006), 11.

²⁶ Slaughter, introduction to *Ideology and Politics*, xin4.

personal cost. Nicholas, however, had offended Queen Henrietta Maria and her closest confidant, Henry Jermyn (later 1st Earl of St. Albans), by opposing their plans to seek assistance from Catholics in France, Spain, and Ireland. Nichols had also annoyed one of Newcastle's enemies: Sir Edward Hyde, later 1st Earl of Clarendon, who had been named lord chancellor and lord keeper the previous year. So politically etiolated was Nicholas by the Restoration that he was excluded utterly from the inner circles of government, as was Newcastle. In 1662, his post of Secretary of State was given to Henry Bennet, who would become the 1st Earl of Arlington as well as a member of the notorious "Cabal" advising Charles II from 1668 until 1674.²⁷

Newcastle was equally obtuse about his choice of genre, which hearkened back to the letters and manuals he had penned for Charles twenty years earlier. The tone throughout the advice book is avuncular and fusty, better suited to a boy of twelve than a man just shy of thirty about to assume the throne. Overall, it smacks more of the nagging platitudes of a Polonius than the sage advice of an Aristotle. Even more blundering was Newcastle's characterization of the Caroline court as effete and overly Frenchified.²⁸ Between physical distance, choice of form, tacit disparagement of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, and the selection of a politically enfeebled intercessor, Newcastle ruined any chance his manual might mobilize the networks necessary to realize his rival vision of the Restoration theatre. We do not know if Charles II read the advice book. Certainly, he never heeded the recommendations of his former adviser, who remained sidelined from inner court circles. Although Newcastle's lands were reinstated after the Restoration, he did not secure important court offices – a source of humiliation for both him and Margaret.²⁹ His new title was more of an honorific for past services than a harbinger of future rewards.³⁰ Newcastle retreated to his estate, Welbeck Abbey, where

²⁷ This summary derives from S. A. Baron, "Nicholas, Sir Edward (1593–1669)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., 2004, www.oxforddnb.com).

²⁸ Newcastle complains about the "meane people that were aboute the king, & the Queen, [who] would Jeere the Greatest Noble man in England, Iff hee did not make the Laste months Reverance, a La mode, that came with the Laste Dancer, from Paris, packt upp in his fidle Case, & no matter of Regarde of the Nobility." See Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics*, 48.

²⁹ Lucy Worsley cites Newcastle's revealing comment ("many believe ... I retire through discontent") and Margaret's "Oration against those that lay an Aspersion upon the Retirement of Noble men" as evidence of their bitterness after the Restoration. See Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: A Tale of Chivalry, Passion and Great Houses* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 225.

³⁰ Worsley surmises that "Charles II was bound by obligation rather than fondness in awarding the honour, or at least it was so perceived by William himself." Worsley, *Cavalier*, 225.

he concentrated on equestrian training, literary patronage, and dramatic coauthorship until his death in 1676.

In the end, Newcastle's support for the royalist cause counted for little beyond partial economic restitution: He lacked the networks necessary to reinstate the theatrical heterogeneity of the 1630s. Loyalty to the crown similarly failed to benefit the actor-managers who hoped to form their own acting companies after the Restoration. Mohun fought in several important campaigns on behalf of Charles I and was imprisoned for a year in Dublin before joining exiles abroad in Flanders.³¹ Newcastle knew Mohun from exilic circles: He hired him to deliver the prologue and epilogue for the royal entertainment at the Rubenshuis in 1658.³² Beeston remained in London during the Interregnum, working quietly in various businesses while waiting for the theatres to reopen. Although he did not follow the royalists into exile, Beeston appears – unlike Davenant – to have refrained from collaborating with the republican regime.³³ George Jolly dutifully followed the court abroad, where he put together a troupe of actors that performed for the exiled royalist community between 1644 and 1646, first at The Hague and then in Paris.³⁴ Not only were these men loyal to the crown but they also knew far more about the commercial stage than either Davenant or Killigrew.

Of the rival petitioners, William Beeston, another loyalist to the crown, was by far the most seasoned. His immersion from youth in the pre-Civil War theatre “is increasingly recognised as important to the development of British theatre as a whole.”³⁵ As a child, he most likely acted for his father, experience he later put to good use in training actors when he took over management of the Beeston company from his father. The dramatist Richard Brome praised Beeston, “by whose care and directions this Stage is govern'd, who has for many yeares both in his fathers dayes, and since directed Poets to write & Players to speak, till he traind up these youths here to what they are now.”³⁶ The postscript to Richard Flecknoe's *Love's Dominion* (1654) similarly acknowledges Beeston's expertise and expresses the wish that “if ever it be acted, I intitle my right in it ... [to] Mr: Will. Beeston, who by Reason of his long Practice and Experience in this way,

³¹ John H. Astington, “Mohun [Moone], Michael (c. 1616–1684),” in *ODNB*.

³² Astington, “Mohun.”

³³ Andrew Gurr, “Beeston [Hutchinson], William (1610/11?–1682),” in *ODNB*.

³⁴ John H. Astington, “Jolly, George (bap. 1613, d. in or before 1683),” in *ODNB*.

³⁵ Eva Griffith, *A Jacobean Company and Its Playhouse: The Queen's Servants at the Red Bull Theatre, c. 1605–1619* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 69.

³⁶ Richard Brome, *The Court Beggar* (London, 1653), S8r–v.

as also for having brought up most of the Actors extant, I think the fittest Man for this Charge and Employment.”³⁷ Andrew Gurr surmises that, during the Interregnum, Beeston “may have staged some of the surreptitious performances at Gibbons’s Tennis Court and other places.”³⁸ Certainly, these ongoing clandestine activities, along with Beeston’s earlier professional experience, made him the most qualified member of the cohort seeking to start up new acting companies. Within months of the Restoration, Beeston put together “a company of the first rank,” but prior events once again impinged upon the present moment.³⁹ In 1640, William Beeston had produced Richard Brome’s *The Court Beggars*, which – ironically – criticized the Caroline court’s practice of awarding monopolies to favorites. In retaliation, the court jailed his actors and closed his company, which was subsequently awarded to Davenant. The appointment of Davenant as the head of Beeston’s impounded company was, as Gerald Eades Bentley points out, “a very unusual procedure, for there is no indication that the company had anything to do with the appointment; Davenant was a dramatist and an aspiring courtier; there is no evidence that he was ever a player.”⁴⁰ Twenty years later, Davenant would again use court connections to steal away another Beeston company.

Along with Beeston, George Jolly was the other petitioner eminently qualified to manage an acting company. In addition to performing for the exiled court, he appears to have headed up a troupe of fourteen players that performed in a variety of languages. From 1648 onwards, they worked largely in Germany, and John H. Astington believes their activities number “among the most significant contributions of the ‘Englische Komödianten’ to the early German stage.”⁴¹ Jolly is the only person other than Killigrew and Davenant who successfully procured a royal license after the Restoration to form an acting company. His players performed briefly at Salisbury Court and Drury Lane theatres until Killigrew and Davenant, at the end of 1662, bought out his license for £4 a week. That agreement collapsed in 1664, when Killigrew happened upon a far less expensive way to sideline Jolly: He used court connections to have his

³⁷ Richard Flecknoe, *Love’s Dominion* (London, 1654), F8v.

³⁸ Gurr, “Beeston [Hutchinson], William,” in *ODNB*. Richard Schoch thinks it more likely that Beeston quietly staged illegal performances at the rehabilitated Salisbury Court playhouse between 1652 and 1656. See *Writing the History of the British Stage, 1660–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 63.

³⁹ Freehafer, “London Patent Companies,” 13.

⁴⁰ Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 170.

⁴¹ Astington, “Jolly, George,” in *ODNB*.

patent rescinded in 1667. As a consolation prize, Jolly was given management of the “Nursery,” a training school for fledgling actors.⁴² The remaining petitioners had also worked in commercial theatre. Michael Mohun trained up as a boy actor under Christopher Beeston and eventually became a lead performer in Queen Henrietta’s Men.⁴³ John Rhodes worked a variety of jobs, from draper to bookseller to wardrobe keeper at Blackfriars. He also appears to have performed some minor parts, such as in the 1625 revival of the Nathan Field, John Fletcher, and Philip Massinger tragicomedy *The Honest Man’s Fortune* (1613).⁴⁴ As the following section discloses, neither prior theatrical experience nor royalist sympathies guaranteed success. What mattered were influential networks of access.

Networks of Access, Then and Now

Killigrew and Davenant may have lacked Beeston and Jolly’s first-hand working knowledge of the commercial stage, but they both had twenty years of experience in using court connections to raise their social standing, increase their wealth, and advance their interests. These networks of access, carefully forged over the 1630s and 1640s, were instrumental in transforming the theatre into the elite business enterprise it became after the Restoration. Killigrew hailed from a family that, in the words of David Roberts, “were no more than peripheral figures at court, ‘parvenus’ who had wit and money but lacked ‘ancestral prestige’.”⁴⁵ To improve his lot, Killigrew undertook the same strategy used by other members of his ambitious Cornish clan: extending kinship ties to important families and cementing alliances to members of the royal family. His sister Elizabeth is exemplary in both regards. In 1639, she married Francis Boyle, the sixth son of Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork. Francis also happened to be the younger brother of both Roger Boyle, the 1st Earl of Orrery, who would write several plays after the Restoration, and of Robert Boyle, the chemist and natural philosopher. Elizabeth followed the court into exile as Henrietta Maria’s Maid of Honour, and her subsequent affair with Prince Charles produced an illegitimate daughter, Charlotte, born around 1650. After the Restoration, Elizabeth was rewarded accordingly: Her husband

⁴² Astington, “Jolly, George.”

⁴³ James Wright, *Historia Histronica: An Historical Account of the English Stage* (London, 1699), 3.

⁴⁴ John H. Astington, “John Rhodes: Draper, Bookseller and Man of the Theatre,” *Theatre Notebook* 57, no. 2 (2003): 83–84.

⁴⁵ David Roberts, “Thomas Killigrew, Theatre Manager,” in *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth-Century English Stage: New Perspectives*, ed. Philip Major (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 66.

was raised to the Irish peerage as Viscount Shannon, and her daughter entered into two advantageous arranged marriages, first to the dramatist James Howard and later to William Paston, who would become the 2nd Earl of Yarmouth. Through these relationships, Elizabeth connected the Killigrews to the Boyles, the Howards, the Pastons, and, of course, the Stuarts. Like his sister, Killigrew used marriage for advancement. Martin Butler chronicles how Killigrew's first marriage, to Cecelia Crofts, linked him not only to her own distinguished family but also to such dignified gentry as the Mildmays and to members of the queen's circle.⁴⁶ His second wife, Charlotte van Hesse-Piershil, was the wealthy heiress of a courtier serving William II, Prince of Orange. That marriage brought a much-needed dowry and connected Killigrew to the Netherlandish court.⁴⁷

From an early age, Killigrew also used performance and drama to access inner court circles. As the twenty-year-old son of the queen's vice-chamberlain, he performed in several of the court masques staged at Whitehall for Charles I and Henrietta Maria, most notably *Tempe Restored* (1632), one of Inigo Jones's best-known extravaganzas.⁴⁸ The casting of Killigrew as the "Fugitive Favourite" and the lavish costume ordered for him in carnation and white both hint at his rising fortunes at court.⁴⁹ That same spring Killigrew augmented these appearances with the composition of romances, such as *The Prisoners* (1641) and *Claracilla* (1641), that satisfied Queen Henrietta Maria's taste for Neoplatonic drama. The four fulsome tributes that preface the 1641 dual edition also advertised Killigrew's connections to powerful courtiers. Henry Bennet, who would prove especially useful after the Restoration, attributes the excellence of Killigrew's plays to his experience at "Court, where wit and language flow, / Where Iudgements thrive, and where true maners grow."⁵⁰ Through courtly conversation, Killigrew has acquired literary

⁴⁶ Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114–17.

⁴⁷ Philip Major, "Introduction: 'A Man of Much Plot,'" in *Thomas Killigrew*, ed. Major, 12.

⁴⁸ Karen Britland, "Henry Killigrew and Dramatic Patronage at the Stuart Courts: New Perspectives," in *Thomas Killigrew*, ed. Major, 92.

⁴⁹ Britland, "Henry Killigrew and Dramatic Patronage," 92. A warrant issued by the court to the Great Wardrobe details the opulence of his costume: "A doublet, of white Satin, Breeches of Carnation Satin Cloake of the same coloured Satin lined with Carnation coloured Plush trimmed with silver lace; silke stockins of pearle colour white shooes Roses & Garters of Carnation, A Hatt & a feather A falling Band with lace of the newest fashion Gloves Girdle & pointes sutable & such other thinges as shall bee requisite for that purpose." Quoted in Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 139.

⁵⁰ Henry Bennet, "To His Most Honour'd Uncle M^r. Thomas Killigrew, on his two excellent Playes, the *Prisoners* and *Claracilla*," in *The Prisoners and Claracilla*, by Thomas Killigrew (London, 1641), A2v.

taste “by Examples, and best patternes,” not by “ruder precepts.”⁵¹ William Cartwright similarly praises Killigrew’s “Gracefull Negligence” and “Generous Carriage of unwrested Wit” – aristocratic values that would matter again after the Restoration.⁵²

During the Interregnum, Killigrew shuttled between the Duke of York’s household in The Hague and Henrietta Maria’s residence in Paris, thereby protecting the royal connections he had carefully crafted over the previous decade. Killigrew also made himself useful to the exiled queen. He composed several closet dramas for her amusement and undertook missions to raise money for the financially strapped Stuarts. While these activities made him indispensable, they did little to alleviate present poverty. Killigrew thus resorted to smuggling, another time-honored family tradition.⁵³ Ostensibly, Killigrew was in Venice from 1649 to 1652 to raise money for the exiled prince, but he was ejected after authorities discovered his residence was being used for fenced goods.⁵⁴ After the Restoration, Killigrew indulged in a form of sanctioned piracy by resuming his habit from the 1630s of “begging estates.” This dubious practice entailed underwriting the crown’s cost of prosecution in exchange for receiving a portion of a prisoner’s property and goods after sentencing.⁵⁵ On September 12, 1661, for instance, a court warrant awarded to Killigrew £1,275 in fines exacted from one Robert Suckling for offenses of an indeterminate nature.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Bennet, “To His Most Honour’d Uncle,” A2v.

⁵² William Cartwright, “To My Honour’d Friend M^r. Thomas Killigrew, On these his Playes, the *Prisoners and Claracilla*,” in *Prisoners and Claracilla*, ed. Killigrew, A5v.

⁵³ Killigrew’s great-grandmother Elizabeth was an especially notorious smuggler. She regularly received and stored stolen goods at Arwenack House in Falmouth. In January of 1582, she sent a raiding party to loot treasure from a Spanish ship anchored nearby and evidently ordered the deaths of the remaining men on board. She was condemned to hang, but Elizabeth I, who quietly encouraged English piracy, commuted her sentence. For an overview of the Killigrews’ participation in local Cornish piracy, see David Childs, “The Land Rats,” Chapter 9 of *Pirate Nation: Elizabeth I and Her Royal Sea Rovers* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014).

⁵⁴ Killigrew stoutly maintained he had “no idea of offending the republic or infringing its laws, or of doing anything to cause the least scandal.” The smugglers, however, wore his livery. *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, vol. 28, 1647–1652, ed. Allen B. Hinds (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1927), 190.

⁵⁵ For more on Killigrew’s involvement in this corrupt practice, see Alfred Harbage, *Thomas Killigrew: Cavalier Dramatist, 1612–1683* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), 112–13. Killigrew began begging estates on December 5, 1637, when he was all of twenty-five. See *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles I*, vol. 12, 1637–1638, ed. John Bruce (London: Longmans, Green, 1869), 9.

⁵⁶ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1661*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 88. *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas2/1660-1

For the most part, Killigrew emulated his shrewd courtier father rather than his pirate ancestors in using to advantage the kinship ties and patrons he had acquired in the 1630s and 1640s.⁵⁷ His cousin Henry Jermyn, through his close relationship to the queen mother, was especially well positioned to ease the way for the theatrical duopoly. Henry Bennet, who penned one of the commendatory poems to the 1641 dual edition of *The Prisoners* and *Claracilla*, proved equally useful after the Restoration. Bennet's mother was the sister of Killigrew's first wife, Cecelia Crofts, which made him a nephew to Killigrew by marriage. After Bennet's promotion to Keeper of the Privy Purse, which gave him financial dominion over the royal household, Killigrew was made a groom of the bedchamber. Grooms received £500 per annum, in addition to food and lodging when the court was in progress.⁵⁸ It was widely assumed that Killigrew had Bennet's ear. In 1664, a petitioner asked him "to prevail with Sir Hen. Bennet" regarding a fishing lottery matter.⁵⁹ Above all else, Bennet ensured that Killigrew had immediate access to the monarch. As a groom, Killigrew would have waited on Charles II, slept in his bedchamber (or the withdrawing room), ensured that necessities were provided, and, in general, tended to his well-being. The hours for the grooms were long, but the bedchamber was, as Alan Marshall points out, "the best place to catch the monarch at ease, sometimes literally, and to request favours."⁶⁰ The potential for wealth made for intense competition: "Displaying different levels of voraciousness, the grooms of the bedchamber exploited their closeness to the king to petition for grants, annuities, offices, favours and privileges of all kinds."⁶¹ Killigrew availed himself of close proximity to the monarchical body in acquiring a dizzying array of offices, patents, and perquisites after 1660 – including the theatrical duopoly.

⁵⁷ Throughout his career, Sir Robert Killigrew displayed a genius for ingratiating himself with the inner circles at court. He became a favorite of Robert Carr and Sir Thomas Overbury at the court of James I and managed to extricate himself from suspected involvement in the infamous Overbury poisoning scandal. He later allied himself with George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham and likely lover of James I. In 1630, he became vice-chamberlain to Queen Henrietta Maria. He was especially clever at securing patents and farming fees from various offices, a skill he would pass on to his son. See Alastair Bellany, "Killigrew, Sir Robert (1579/80–1633)," in *ODNB*.

⁵⁸ The *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* for England and Ireland regularly list £500 per annum as the standard remuneration for a groom of the bedchamber throughout much of the seventeenth century.

⁵⁹ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II*, vol. 4, 1664–1665, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1863), 141.

⁶⁰ Alan Marshall, *The Age of Faction: Court Politics, 1660–1702* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 27.

⁶¹ Geoffrey Smith, "'A Gentleman of Great Esteem with the King': The Restoration Roles and Reputations of Thomas Killigrew," in *Thomas Killigrew*, ed. Major, 157–58.

Whereas Killigrew amplified his social standing through kinship ties and the access afforded by the bedchamber, Davenant, the son of an innkeeper, “brought mercantile vigour to pursuing his court connections.”⁶² Davenant’s first job as a page in the household of the Duchess of Richmond led to employment with Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had been a patron to Sir Philip Sidney, among other important literary figures. After a disinherited servant murdered Lord Brooke, Davenant was offered rooms at the Inns of Court by Edward Hyde, who would eventually become Lord Chancellor to Charles II and be made 1st Earl of Clarendon. Endymion Porter, another friend acquired through Brooke’s circle, also assisted Davenant; he intervened with Charles I over *The Wits* (1636) when it encountered trouble “from a cruel faction.”⁶³ Davenant was especially astute in aligning himself with influential courtiers who invested in urban developments that dovetailed with his theatrical interests. He dedicated *The Just Italian* (1630) to Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset, shortly after he was appointed the queen’s lord chamberlain on July 16, 1628, and became one of the forces behind the construction of the Salisbury Court Theatre. He dedicated *The Platonick Lovers* (1636) to Henry Jermyn, a first cousin to Killigrew and also Henrietta Maria’s favorite courtier. After the Restoration, Jermyn was awarded a grant to develop St. James’s Square and the surrounding streets – the fashionable West End where both Davenant and Killigrew sited their new playhouses.

Like Killigrew, Davenant penned plays that would, in the words of Mary Edmond, “please his new royal mistress” rather than commercial audiences.⁶⁴ Romantic fare, such as *Love and Honour* (1649) and *The Platonick Lovers* (1636), both produced within months of *The Wits*, specifically paid homage to the Neoplatonism in fashion with the queen and her favorite courtiers such as Jermyn – and later mocked in *Lady Alimony*. Although these plays were written for inner court circles, their lack of popularity with general audiences rankled Davenant. The dedication to Sackville prefacing *The Just Italian* (1630) lambastes “[t]he uncivill ignorance of the People” that would have “depriv’d this humble worke of life; but that your Lordships approbation, stept in, to succour it.”⁶⁵ Thomas Carew’s commendatory poem echoes Davenant’s distaste for the “ignorance” of common spectators: “strong fancies (raptures of the brayne, / Drest in

⁶² Roberts, “Thomas Killigrew, Theatre Manager,” 73.

⁶³ William Davenant, *The Wits* (London, 1636), A3r.

⁶⁴ Mary Edmond, *Rare Sir William Davenant: Poet Laureate, Playwright, Civil War General, Restoration Theatre Manager* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1987), 54.

⁶⁵ William Davenant, *The Just Italian* (London, 1630), A2r.

Poetique flames) they entertayne / As a bold, impious reach; for they'l still slight / All that exceeds Red Bull, and Cockepit flight."⁶⁶ Six years later, Davenant still had not garnered a popular following. In the dedication to *The Platonick Lovers* (1636), Davenant expresses the hope that Jermyn's "liking" will subdue "the severe Rulers of the Stage."⁶⁷ That desire did little to squelch his customary distaste for common audiences. Belittled is the "City audience" that finds the play's title "so hard" that the acting company "knew not how to spell it on the Post."⁶⁸

Ben Jonson's infamous falling out with Inigo Jones, Surveyor of Works to King Charles I, not only opened another avenue of royal access but also provided an escape from the detested "City audience" at the commercial theatres. Into that breach stepped Davenant, who took over from Jonson the penning of court masques. Henrietta Maria found *The Temple of Love* (1634) sufficiently pleasing to bestow upon Davenant the designation of "her Ma^{ties}. Servant," an honorific that appears on the title pages of his plays going forward.⁶⁹ Unlike Jonson, Davenant did not resent Jones's use of technologically advanced, sumptuous staging – quite the opposite, in fact. *Salmacida Spolia* (1640), the last masque produced at court before the outbreak of the Civil War, featured, among other opulent special effects, the descent of a chariot containing a visibly pregnant Queen Henrietta Maria in "a transparent brightness of thin exhalations, such as the Gods are feigned to descend in."⁷⁰ This was the same lavishness to which Davenant would aspire after the Restoration, albeit in a commercial venue.

During the Interregnum, Davenant evinced the same political savvy that had jump-started his career in the 1630s. Initially, he fought for the royalist cause until he was jailed on May 17, 1650, for "having been an active enemy to the commonwealth."⁷¹ Freed at the behest of friends two years later, he was soon jailed again for debt. This time, Davenant appealed to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, in early spring of 1654, promising among other things, "to live as a faithful subject."⁷² He was released on August 4. A year later, in exchange for permission to travel

⁶⁶ Thomas Carew, "To my worthy Friend, M.D'avenant, Upon his Excellent Play, *The Just Italian*," in *Just Italian*, ed. Davenant, A3v.

⁶⁷ William Davenant, *The Platonick Lovers* (London, 1635), A2r.

⁶⁸ Davenant, *The Platonick Lovers*, A3r.

⁶⁹ Inigo Jones and William Davenant, *The Temple of Love* (London, 1634), A1r. Six years earlier, Davenant did not sign his name to the title page of *The Just Italian*, an indication of how quickly his fortunes had changed.

⁷⁰ Inigo Jones and William Davenant, *Salmacida Spolia* (London, 1640), D1v–D2r.

⁷¹ Edmond, *Rare Sir William Davenant*, 116.

⁷² Edmond, 119.

to France, Davenant promised in a letter written on June 15, 1655, to John Thurloe, Cromwell's spy master and secretary to the Council of State, to "dedicate my service to you during my short abode there."⁷³ From this point onwards, he remained in London, organizing his musical medleys, assessing his competition, quietly cooperating with the republican regime, and making the anonymous author of *Lady Alimony* very nervous indeed. As Henry Herbert's subsequent legal challenges to the duopoly pointed out, Davenant was hardly stalwart in supporting the crown during the second half of the 1650s.⁷⁴ Despite questionable royalist credentials, Davenant possessed what Herbert and the other theatrical petitioners lacked: powerful patrons that included the queen mother, Jermyn, Sackville, and Hyde.

Both patentees understood the importance of framing their petition in terms of cultural fears and economic opportunity. Traditional patents awarded exclusive rights over a new commodity or invention to an individual or corporation; expected in return was the generation of new jobs. *Non obstante* patents authorized control over a preexistent business – say, taverns in a particular town – in exchange for public oversight. When Killigrew and Davenant submitted their draft orders on July 9 and 19, 1660, respectively, they carefully justified their duopoly in terms of both benefits. "Authoritie to erect Two Companys of Players" would provide employment to actors and stagehands, while the pledge to curtail "the extraordinary liscence that hath bin lately used in things of this Nature" would guarantee civil order.⁷⁵ Davenant especially appears to have anticipated the legal precarity of requesting a *non obstante* grant to regulate a business that previously had functioned perfectly well without one. Accordingly, he produced a second order on August 20, 1660 – composed as though it had been written by the king – that itemized the various civic horrors an unfettered theatrical marketplace would unleash on an unsuspecting populace: "Prophaneness, scurrility, obscenity, and other abuses tending to the great Scandall of Religion, corruption of Manners, and ill

⁷³ See Simon Andrew Stirling, *Shakespeare's Bastard: The Life of Sir William Davenant* (Stroud, UK: History Press, 2016), 109.

⁷⁴ On August 4, 1660, in the first of what would be a long succession of indignant petitions, the former Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, reminded Charles II that Davenant "had obtained leave of Oliver and Richard Cromwell to vent his operas in a time when your petitioner owned not their authority." Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England, 1660–1788*, 10. Later that month, Herbert pointed out that he had "owned not their [i.e., the Commonwealth's] uniust & Tyranicall Authority, thogh Sir William Dauenant did and obeyned then leaue to Vente His Operas" (Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 229).

⁷⁵ Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, 199.

example of our loving subjects.”⁷⁶ Only if rivals were “suppressed and dispersed” could “the better effecting” of order take place.⁷⁷ Davenant and Killigrew may have self-servingly appealed to the government’s worst fears about mobs in playhouses run amok, but their strategy was largely economic.

The Agency and Insufficiency of Objects

Killigrew and Davenant understood the importance of objects, especially those that carried metonymic weight: ultimately, the success of their duopoly would depend upon a wax imprint. On July 9, 1660, five months after his appointment to the Bedchamber, Killigrew procured from Charles II an order to the attorney general for a grant that would allow him to erect “one Company of players wch shall be our owne Company.”⁷⁸ Davenant was to have the other company by dint of his 1639 patent from Charles I. All others [were] to be “sylenced and surprest.”⁷⁹ Ten days later, Davenant executed an additional order to the attorney general to “prepare a Bill ... containing a Grant” that would give both himself and Killigrew “full power and authoritie to erect Two Companys of Players consisting respectively of such persons as they shall chuse and appoint.”⁸⁰ These orders were extraordinary in several respects. First, no one previously had attempted to “sylence” rival companies. Second, requests for theatrical licenses normally went through the Office of the Revels, not directly to the king. If accepted, they were stamped with the “privie signet” and then issued a license “under the seale of his ma^{ties} Revelles.”⁸¹ The privy seal effectively functioned as a gateway. Once a request was approved and stamped by one of the four clerks in the Privy Seal Office, it would then proceed to its intended destination, such as the Revels Office, for final authorization. Privy seals were valid as a final instrument, as G. E. Aylmer notes, “only when the King was authorizing a money payment or some other financial transaction.”⁸² Not a single entry in the Revels office-book shows the use of the Great Seal for business related to the theatre. Since the time of Edward the Confessor, the Great Seal had authenticated the monarch’s affirmation of important acts of state; by the seventeenth century,

⁷⁶ Hotson, 201.

⁷⁷ Hotson, 201.

⁷⁸ Hotson, 400.

⁷⁹ Hotson, 400.

⁸⁰ Hotson, 199.

⁸¹ See, for instance, the entry on June 6, 1635, in the Revels office-book that verifies the legality of the bill issued to Richard Weekes and John Shanke to play in Norwich.

⁸² G. E. Aylmer, *The King’s Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625–1642* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 16.

it was also used by the crown to circumvent Parliamentary opposition to monopolies.⁸³ Killigrew and Davenant needed the Great Seal to ratify their duopoly, but they also sought its actual embodiment on their document – material evidence of royal assent to an exceptional request.

The singularity of Killigrew and Davenant's request caught the attention of Attorney General Sir Geoffrey Palmer when the sign-manual came to him for preparation, most likely around August 1, 1660. Palmer balked initially and advised Charles II that "the matter was more proper for A tolleration, then A Grant under the greate Seale of England."⁸⁴ By "tolleration" Palmer meant the limited license given to acting companies earlier in the century, which certified their right to existence or to perform in towns outside of London.⁸⁵ The conciliatory language in the note he wrote to Charles II twelve days later indicates Palmer had since retreated from this advice, perhaps in response to angry complaints from Killigrew and Davenant or their patrons. Palmer reassures the king that his "humble rep'sentation" was merely that – a modest recommendation – and additionally promises not "to object against the twoo warrants they haue now produced."⁸⁶ That promise, however, was entirely disingenuous. The final warrant that emerged from Palmer's office nine days later conceded the duopoly; however, it did not have the Great Seal. A shrewd lawyer who had survived imprisonment and the seizure of his estates during the Interregnum, Palmer was both a vigorous prosecutor and legal counsel to the crown after the Restoration.⁸⁷ Additionally, as one of Sir Edward Hyde's inner circle, he was no friend either to Bennet or to Jermyn, both important patrons to Killigrew and Davenant.⁸⁸ By withholding the Great Seal, Palmer quietly canceled out the duopoly, instigated two years of writs and lawsuits, and humiliated his rivals at court. It was a subtle and eminently effective move.

The lack of a Great Seal was seized upon immediately by Sir Henry Herbert, who would prove the most recalcitrant antagonist in the ensuing

⁸³ Christopher W. Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 197.

⁸⁴ Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, 200.

⁸⁵ John Rogers's petition to the king, which was referred to Sir Henry Herbert on August 7, 1660, is a good example of the "tolleration" recommended by Palmer. Rogers asked Charles II "To grant him a Tolleration to erect a playhouse or to haue a share out of them already Tollerated, your Peticioner thereby vundertaking to Supres all Riotts, Tumults, or Molestacions that may thereby arise." Herbert approved Rogers's petition on August 20, but nothing came of it given Herbert's tenuous position at court. See Joseph Quincy Adams, ed., *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623–1673* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917), 83–84.

⁸⁶ Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, 200.

⁸⁷ Louis A. Knafla, "Palmer, Sir Geoffrey, First Baronet (1598–1670)," in *ODNB*.

⁸⁸ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 228.

battle over the theatrical marketplace. Herbert was Master of the Revels prior to the Civil War. Upon the Restoration he reasserted the prerogatives of the office with an eye toward collecting lucrative fees for licensing plays and performances. He also attempted to establish his authority over the new acting companies.⁸⁹ The duopoly eliminated most of Herbert's opportunities for licensing and was, as he put it in a complaint to Charles, "destructive to the powers graunted under the said great seale to yo^r pet^r and to the Constant practice of the said Office [under the said great seale]."⁹⁰ As this statement stresses, his office had been ratified by what Killigrew and Davenant still lacked: the Great Seal. Herbert points out that the transfer of authority away from the Revels Office to the duopoly "cannot Legally be done" and that "the King Cannot grante Away an Incident to an office, thought the office bee in the Kings Guift".⁹¹ According to the Common Law, which Herbert invokes repeatedly with the phrase, "tyme out of minde," he was right. The seventeenth-century legal theorist Sir Henry Finch explains the basic principle: "Things incident cannot be severed. Estovers, or wood graunted to be burnt in such a house, shall goe to him that hath the house, by whatsoever title: for one is inseparable incident to the other."⁹² Even the monarch could not abrogate the authority of an office nor its incidents.

Despite Herbert inundating the court with lawsuits over the next two years, personal access to the monarch eventually trumped rule of law. On April 25, 1662, Killigrew finally received a letter patent under the Great Seal, authorizing his governorship of the King's Company.⁹³ Davenant received an almost identical patent for the Duke's Company, also under the Great Seal, several months later on January 15, 1663.⁹⁴ Herbert retained ownership of the Office of the Revels and several of its "incidents," such as the right to license plays and to oversee itinerant entertainment outside of London, until his death in 1673, when the office reverted to Killigrew.⁹⁵ However, Herbert, along with the other petitioners, lost any future right to

⁸⁹ See, for instance, the warrant Herbert issued to Beeston in June 1660 that gave permission for his company to perform at Salisbury Court Theatre (Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 222).

⁹⁰ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 223.

⁹¹ Bawcutt, 223.

⁹² Sir Henry Finch, *Law, or, A Discourse Thereof in Foure Bookes* (London, 1627).

⁹³ Charles II, Patent for Theatre Royal Drury Lane, issued in 1662, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk>.

⁹⁴ Milhous and Hume, comps. and eds., *A Register of English Theatrical Documents, 1660–1737*, 2 vols., 1:45.

⁹⁵ Bawcutt provides on pages 88–108 a detailed account of Herbert's legal battle against Davenant and Killigrew until matters were largely settled in 1662 and thus obviates the need for me to reproduce that detailed history here.

legal challenges: Davenant and Killigrew inserted language that specifically defended them against further harassment. Their companies were to be run “peaceably and quietly without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons WHATSOEVER.”⁹⁶ They acquired additional powers, such as forbidding actors to seek work “without the consent or approbation of the governor of the companie whereof the person so ejected or deserting was a member.”⁹⁷ Although it would take another five years to bring all of the rebellious players and managers to heel – Beeston especially – the legal groundwork ensuring the success of the duopoly had been laid.

The force of Common Law stood behind Herbert’s mantra-like invocation of the Great Seal in every complaint he filed, but the actual corporeal impression of the wax imprint exerted its own sly agency. Like the immovable stolidity of a speed bump, Herbert’s Great Seal forced Killigrew and Davenant to slow down. Personality also impeded their quest. Killigrew and Davenant’s social proficiencies collided unexpectedly with the contumacy of an aged bureaucrat who defended his patch of territory with terrier-like irascibility. They also came up against a sophisticated lawyer who matched their skill in deploying court connections. As for Newcastle, now sequestered in Welbeck Abbey, had he chosen to impart his counsel in a form that did not resemble the avuncular letters he had written to the young Prince Charles, his advice book too might have functioned as traffic barrier, slowing down Davenant and Killigrew’s mad race to their destination or perhaps forcing them to embark upon an entirely different route.

The Killigrew and Davenant patents clearly represented the will of the monarch – their ostensible purpose. As speech acts, they also put into motion any number of changes, from strengthening administrative authority over performers to bolstering managerial power. Most momentous of all was their transformation of the theatre into a gift. The language in Davenant’s letters patent refers to them as “these presents,” a standard legal phrase dating from the late fourteenth century that signified a “present document or writing” issued under the Great Seal.⁹⁸ “Presents” also meant “something that is offered, presented, or given as a gift,” an earlier meaning that, until the eighteenth century, customarily connoted a beneficence from a superior to someone of lesser status.⁹⁹ As “presents” ratified by the Great Seal,

⁹⁶ “Davenant’s Patent” and “Killigrew’s Patent” in *A New History of the English Stage*, ed. Percy Fitzgerald, 2 vols. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1882), 1:75, 78.

⁹⁷ “Davenant’s Patent” and “Killigrew’s Patent,” 1:76, 79.

⁹⁸ “Davenant Patent,” 1:74; Oxford English Dictionary Online (hereafter OED Online), s.v. “present, n.1,” <https://oed.com>.

⁹⁹ OED Online, s.v. <https://oed.com>.

the letters patent protected Killigrew and Davenant from future challenges and authorized their duopoly. As “presents” from the monarch, the letters patent framed the theatre’s status as royal bounty. This latter meaning was especially apparent in Killigrew’s document, which substituted the plural form used in legal language (“these presents”) for the singular form signifying princely munificence (“this present”).¹⁰⁰ Certainly, Charles II regarded the theatre as such: a royal “guift” that could be dispensed or withdrawn at will. Years later, when the Duke’s Company gave “some disgust ... by acting plays he liked not,” the annoyed monarch was “said to take away their pattennt,” a threat he never carried out but one that underscored royal ownership of the stage.¹⁰¹ The shift in signification, however, that reconstituted the theatre as a gift would exert its own unexpected – and far-reaching – agency.

The “Guift” and Transforming the Marketplace

All monopolies, titles, and offices flowed from the king, of course; the theatre, however, had never been regarded as royal bounty. Effectively by gifting the theatre to two courtiers and then banning all competition, the court transformed the theatrical marketplace from one of specific to generalized exchange. In the former, patrons assist clients, but they neither control the distribution of wealth and opportunities nor establish terms of access, as was true of the early modern stage.¹⁰² Theatrical entrepreneurs such as Richard Burbage and Philip Henslowe controlled the flow of resources by building playhouses and organizing acting companies, which in turn created jobs for actors, stagehands, and dramatists. The government certified these private ventures via a “tolleration” of the kind Palmer recommended for Killigrew and Davenant, while the Revels Office exercised oversight through licensing, fees, and censorship. In principle, the Crown or the Privy Council, through either the Lord Chamberlain or his executive, the Master of the Revels, could decline a request for a playing license.¹⁰³ In actuality, there is no evidence of

¹⁰⁰ “Killigrew’s Patent,” 1:78.

¹⁰¹ Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume think the manuscript newsletter detailing this bit of court gossip may have misidentified the company. They conjecture that Charles responded with “some disgust” when he realized the King’s Company had dressed up *Richard the Second* as *The Sicilian Usurper*. See *Register*, 1:219.

¹⁰² I am deriving the terms “specific” and “generalized exchange” from S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger’s text *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48–49.

¹⁰³ For an overview of the chain of command, see Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 41–50.

theatrical entrepreneurs being turned down prior to the Civil War unless they had skirted the law, as occurred with Francis Langley at the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁴

Theatrical patronage in the early modern period typifies the assistance common to specific exchange markets. Powerful aristocrats lent their name and livery to acting companies to shield them from increasingly harsh vagabondage laws that targeted performers as well as homeless people. The 1597 statute, 39 Eliz. c. 4, specified punishment (“whipped until his or her body be bloody”) and incarceration in a “house of correction” for anyone caught “begging, wandering, or misordering themselves.”¹⁰⁵ Included were unattached “fencers, bearwards, common players, and minstrels.”¹⁰⁶ This anxious response to the rapid growth of commercial theatre made proof of employment all the more urgent for players. Acting companies were thus named after the aristocrat they technically served, a proprietorial relationship underscored by the possessive case in their name (i.e., Queen Henrietta’s Men). By 1603, “all the London companies wore the livery of one or other member of the royal family,” and that patronage protected them from both the 1597 statute and a Puritan-dominated City Council eager to expel players from the city limits.¹⁰⁷ When the patron died, his license immediately lost its validity and “another signatory, another name, another livery” had to be found immediately that could provide an equivalent degree of protection to the acting company.¹⁰⁸ In return for the safeguarding of an acting company, patrons could expect perquisites, such as command performances at court or country estates.¹⁰⁹

The sole instance we have of a short-lived duopoly in the early modern period was similarly protective of individual acting companies and not constitutive of a new marketplace, as it would be after the Restoration. After an outbreak of bubonic plague shuttered the playhouses between 1592 and 1594, the Lord Mayor of London wanted to ban theatre entirely. Henry Carey, the Lord Chamberlain responsible for regulation, and his

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44. Evidently, Langley’s possession of a large diamond of dubious origins resulted in the Privy Council preventing him from opening a third playhouse in 1597.

¹⁰⁵ James Fitzjames Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law of England*, vol. 3 (1883; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 272. Page references are to the 2014 edition.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law*, 3:272.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 33.

¹⁰⁸ Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies*, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Although some scholars have argued that noblemen such as the Earl of Leicester used their company for political ends, Andrew Gurr maintains that “[e]vidence is tenuous in the extreme.” Gurr, 34. See note 65.

son-in-law, Charles Howard, used a duopoly to save commercial stage. They brokered a deal with city authorities that banned performances from the city inns in exchange for the establishment of two companies in the suburbs, an agreement that resulted in the creation of the Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company) and the Admiral's Men (Marlowe's company).¹¹⁰ This arrangement lasted only six years, until 1600, at which point the plague had receded sufficiently to render the duopoly unnecessary. By contrast, the "guilt" of the duopoly to Killigrew and Davenant transformed the commercial stage from a marketplace of specific exchange into one of general exchange. As is typical of these monopolistic marketplaces, access to resources was curtailed, the distribution of wealth was limited, and social requirements for inclusion were established.¹¹¹ Charles II bucked nearly seventy years of tradition in treating the theatre as bounty rather than using princely support to protect acting companies from hostile religious and civic factions. This decision would transform London theatre for nearly two centuries: not until the passage of the Theatre Regulation Act in 1843 would the city have more than two licensed patent companies.

Patronage: The Political is the Personal

Monopolies were a widespread feature of Jacobean and Caroline court life, and they smacked of the royal privilege both Davenant and Killigrew had sought since the 1630s. Also known in the period as "patents," they enriched the royal purse. According to Joyce Appleby, "James [I] found the granting of monopolies a particularly facile way of increasing his income."¹¹² As a result, most early modern Englishmen lived "in a house built with monopoly bricks ... heated by monopoly coal His clothes were held up by monopoly belts, monopoly buttons, monopoly pins He ate monopoly butter, monopoly currants, monopoly red herrings, monopoly salmon, monopoly lobsters."¹¹³ Not everyone was happy with the sale of royal privilege, especially as the century wore on. Free trade mercantilists such as Edward Misselden deplored "the restraint of the liberty of Commerce to some one or few: and the setting of the price at the pleasure of Monopolian to his private benefit, and the prejudice of the publique."¹¹⁴ Parliament two years after Misselden's

¹¹⁰ Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company, 1594–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2–4.

¹¹¹ Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 48–49.

¹¹² Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 33.

¹¹³ Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603–1714* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), 31.

¹¹⁴ Edward Misselden, *Free Trade. Or, The Meanes to Make Trade Flourish*. 2nd ed. (London, 1622), 57.

statement passed the Statute of Monopolies 1624, 21 Jac I, c 3, which subjected individual monopolies to Parliamentary review.¹¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes criticized how monopolies operated to “the particular gain of every adventurer” while the accompanying high prices produced “ill for the people” rather than “a common benefit to the whole body.”¹¹⁶ By the Interregnum, the association between monopolies and the abuse of royal power limited their use. Chartered companies retained the grants they had already received – these were essentially grandfathered in – but Parliament curtailed monopolies dispensed to individual petitioners.¹¹⁷

The practice of gifting monopolies to loyal clients reemerged in full force after the Restoration. Monopolies were once again regarded by the crown “as rewards for service and as instruments for subcontracting its business – one of the resources at hand for administering the realm.”¹¹⁸ Charles II certainly saw the theatre in this light, as one of numerous “royal favours awarded on the understanding that the invention would be in the public benefit, however defined.”¹¹⁹ Monopolies also provided the crown with an inexpensive solution to the problem of finite resources. The widespread sale of crown lands under the Tudors and the early Stuarts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries hampered Charles II’s ability to dispense largesse. As a result, he had little in the way of English land and increasingly few colonial tracts to give to petitioners. As for offices, the few that were truly lucrative could not meet demand, so Charles increasingly turned to reversions to reward clients.¹²⁰ Reversions to offices and titles cost the crown nothing and, especially if the occupant was aged, usually satisfied the next office holder in line. When Killigrew secured the reversion to the Office of the Revels back in 1658, he clearly never expected

¹¹⁵ See Joan Thirsk’s seminal study *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 51–60. Most historians follow Thirsk in seeing the *Statute of Monopolies* as Parliament’s triumph over the nepotism and abuse that characterized the granting of patents under Elizabeth I and James I. More recently, Chris Dent has argued that the *Statute* actually represents a political solution forged carefully between the Crown, the House of Lords, and key constituents within Commons. See Chris Dent, “‘Generally Inconvenient’: The 1624 *Statute of Monopolies* as Political Compromise,” *Melbourne University Law Review* 33 (2009): 416.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Hobbes, “Of Systems Subject, Political, and Private,” in *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 150–51.

¹¹⁷ Lincoln, *London and the 17th Century*, 153.

¹¹⁸ Christine MacLeod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution: The English Patent System, 1660–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 20.

¹¹⁹ Sean Bottomley, *The British Patent System during the Industrial Revolution, 1700–1852: From Privilege to Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 124.

¹²⁰ John Miller, *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2000), 41.

Herbert – born in 1595 – to live for another fifteen years.¹²¹ As for Charles II, the office gave him an inexpensive way to satisfy an importuning client.

For Killigrew and Davenant, their skill in deploying court connections intersected fortuitously with the historical moment. In the 1660s, Charles II emulated his father and grandfather in using “patents covertly as grants of monopoly during the first few years of his reign.”¹²² It was during this narrow window of opportunity that both Davenant and Killigrew secured their hard-fought duopoly. Ten years later, they could not have accomplished the same. Embroiled in financial disputes with Parliament and secret deals with France, Charles II retreated from dispensing similar patents, as he was well aware that their unpopularity had contributed to the overthrow of his father’s regime during a similarly tumultuous political moment.¹²³ By the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the early modern Stuart conception of the patent as “a royal grant of a monopoly” gave way to its reinvention “as a legal property right of the inventor.”¹²⁴ Truly, being in the right place at the right time made it possible for Killigrew and Davenant’s “monopolizing brains” to secure what they so dearly wanted: dominion over the theatrical marketplace. They also benefited from the new monarch’s lived experiences.

If inherited attitudes predisposed Charles toward the dispensation of monopolies, childhood at the Caroline court taught the usefulness – and pleasure – of patronage. He grew up in the most sophisticated English court to date; his parents supported artists, musicians, and, to a far lesser extent, poets and dramatists. As a child, he sat for Anthony van Dyck, who, from late 1632 until his death in December 1641, divided his time between a house in Blackfriars and summer apartments at Eltham Palace.¹²⁵ Between the ages of seven and nine, Charles saw the work of the Italian painter Orazio Gentileschi, who executed the ceiling paintings at Queen’s House, Greenwich, as well as the masterpieces painted by Peter Paul Rubens. The Caroline practice of having artists in residence may very

¹²¹ In his advice book, Newcastle refers to “Mr. Thomas kilagree” as “your Majesties master of the Revells,” which suggests he had already been promised the office by 1658. See Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics*, 64. Although Killigrew did not take possession of the office until May 1, 1673, he nonetheless took legal steps in 1668 to ensure it would pass into the hands of his son Charles (*Register*, 1.94; 1.150).

¹²² MacLeod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution*, 20.

¹²³ MacLeod, 20.

¹²⁴ Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 346.

¹²⁵ Natalia Gritsai, *Van Dyck, 1599–1641* (London: Parkstone International, 2004), 107. Van Dyck, more than any other painter, chronicled Charles II’s development from infancy until the age of eleven.

well have contributed to Charles's delight later in life in watching rehearsals and advising dramatists. Certainly, his father had modeled for his son a love of artistic collaboration: Charles I frequently made suggestions "with such skill that even the greatest painters had to admit he enhanced the harmony of their work."¹²⁶ Prince Charles also attended lavish court masques, which would have included those Davenant penned for Henrietta Maria after Ben Jonson's huffy departure. In addition to viewing or participating in several of the twenty-five masques staged between 1625 and 1640, Charles likely saw a portion of the 368 command performances of commercial plays at court during the same period.¹²⁷

When he turned six, Charles was inculcated into the Caroline custom of one family member bestowing a masque upon another for special occasions – further education in how theatrical performance could function as gift exchange.¹²⁸ The title page to *The King and Queenes Entertainment at Richmond* (1636) discloses how the performance was presented by "the most Illustrious ... Prince Charles" to his parents.¹²⁹ The young prince additionally acquiesced to his mother's "plesure that she would see her Sonne the most illustrious Prince in a dance."¹³⁰ In addition to their value as symbolic bounty, court performances also possessed considerable diplomatic worth – another childhood lesson the future king would draw upon later in life. Charles's own company played Matthew Medbourne's translation of *Tartuffe* (1670) for the signatories of the secret Treaty of Dover, a performance David Roberts characterizes as "a carefully crafted act of diplomacy."¹³¹ Also staged at Dover by the Duke's Company were additional translations of comedies by Molière: Shadwell's *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), based on *Les Fâcheux*, and John Caryl's *Sir Salomon* (1671), loosely modeled on *L'École des femmes*. These performances not only publicized Charles's appreciation of Gallic culture but also circulated as gifts: theatrical displays signaling gratitude for the secret pension of £230,000 he was about to receive from the French government.

Also learned at court was a less admirable aspect of princely patronage that would ultimately affect the fortunes of the Restoration stage. Of Caroline support for the arts, "the only source of centralized control

¹²⁶ Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 141.

¹²⁷ Carlton, *Charles I*, 149.

¹²⁸ John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre, 1558–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5–6.

¹²⁹ *The King and Queenes Entertainment at Richmond* (Oxford, 1636), A1r.

¹³⁰ *King and Queenes Entertainment*, A3r.

¹³¹ David Roberts, "Ranked among the Best": Translation and Cultural Agency in Restoration Translations of French Drama," *The Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (2013): 409.

holding the whole ramshackle structure together was [the king's] own personal initiative and that of his cultural advisers."¹³² This was indeed the paradox of baroque patronage: the desire to dispense bounty rarely correlated to actual princely wealth.¹³³ Charles I and Henrietta Maria often-times forgot – or lacked – the funds to pay artists: “The royal treasuries never had enough ready cash to pay all the pensions Charles granted, so artists were left competing against other household servants and aristocratic suitors the king chose to gratify for whatever funds came.”¹³⁴ Many of the painters and sculptors lured by Charles I and Henrietta Maria to the royal household waited years to receive full payment on their pension.¹³⁵ Even Rubens, the most lionized painter on the continent, waited for over two years to receive the £3,000 he was due. While artists tightened their belts, the monarchs bought jewels and priceless artifacts with abandon – yet another unpleasant usance they would teach their son.¹³⁶ Exile taught another form of *noblesse oublieux*. Charles passed his sixteenth and seventeenth years, between 1646 and 1647, as a pensioner at the court of St. Germain. Cardinal Richelieu, the great architect of French cultural policy, had died four years earlier. With his death vanished the largest single source of financial support for writers and artists in France. Richelieu's successor, Cardinal Mazarin, immediately canceled all royal pensions upon assuming office, but artists and writers continued to petition for support.¹³⁷ Precarious government finances made it impossible to sustain previous levels of patronage.¹³⁸ Consequently, Mazarin sponsored the occasional favorite, such as the dramatist Pierre Corneille, but comprehensive patronage of the arts would not reemerge until the 1670s.

¹³² R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 123.

¹³³ Judith Hook, *The Baroque Age in England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 68.

¹³⁴ Smuts, *Court Culture*, 130.

¹³⁵ Gentileschi's annuity of £100 was “usually in arrears,” while payments to Van Dyck “lagged both in respect of his retainer and for the portraits he painted of the royal family.” See Gabriele Finaldi, Aidan Weston-Lewis, and Ana Sanchez-Lassa de los Santos, *Orazio Gentileschi at the Court of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 12; and Pauline Gregg, *King Charles I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 211.

¹³⁶ Compared to earlier monarchs, Charles I and Henrietta Maria “purchased diamonds and other jewellery at a staggering rate ... [r]ecords for a period of some 18 months in the late 1620s show the king disbursing over £50,000 for diamonds and other jewellery bought in part for the queen.” See Caroline Hibbard, “By Our Direction and for Our Use: The Queen's Patronage of Artists and Artisans Seen through Her Household Accounts,” in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 127.

¹³⁷ Mark Bannister, “The Crisis of Literary Patronage in France, 1643–1655,” *French Studies* 39, no. 1 (1985): 18.

¹³⁸ David J. Sturdy, *Richelieu and Mazarin: A Study in Statesmanship* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 145.

During exile, the adolescent Charles thus witnessed a French system in the late 1640s very much like what he instituted upon the Restoration: a marketplace of general exchange that limited access while promising royal support for the chosen few. That support, however, would prove whimsical at best, as the following section explores.

Contingencies: A Monarch's Love of the Theatre

These early experiences predisposed Charles II to regard the theatre as bounty, an outlook that dovetailed fortuitously with Killigrew and Davenant's desire for a duopoly. No one, however, could have predicted the accident of personality. Charles II is singular among English monarchs for the pleasure he took in plays, performers, and dramatists. He sat in on rehearsals; he made suggestions to dramatists; he lent clothes to productions; and he requested performances by his favorite actors. Charles had affairs with the actresses Moll Davis and Nell Gwyn, both of whom left the stage to become royal mistresses. Determined not to let the English stage lag behind continental developments, he dispatched the actor Thomas Betterton to Paris in 1662 to bring back reports of the latest in stagecraft.¹³⁹ He would send Betterton back to Paris nine years later, in 1671, on what Andrew Walkling calls "a scouting mission ... to glean what he could about the technical specifications of the French theatres."¹⁴⁰ Most notably of all, Charles attended the two patent theatres twice or more a week, especially in the 1660s, when his enthusiasms had not yet waned.

As a point of contrast, Elizabeth I and James I rarely, if ever, visited the public theatres. Elizabeth is known to have attended on one occasion, and she rarely requested performances of commercial plays at court.¹⁴¹ James I and Charles I never attended the public theatres. Henrietta Maria visited Blackfriars, the elite playhouse associated with her favorite courtier-dramatists, on four occasions.¹⁴² As Martin Butler observes, Caroline private playhouses – the venue favored by courtier-dramatists like Davenant – benefited far more from the presence of the "Town" and from country gentry looking for London

¹³⁹ Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhan, "Betterton, Thomas," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, vol. 2, *Belfort to Byzant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 76.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew R. Walkling, *English Dramatic Opera, 1661–1706* (London: Routledge, 2019), 74.

¹⁴¹ Recent scholarship has focused on the entertainments created for Elizabeth on her various "progresses" throughout England. Indeed, she was far more likely to see civic pageants, often laden with local and national symbolism, than a court performance of a commercial play. See Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight, eds., *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁴² Helen Hackett, *A Short History of English Renaissance Drama* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 189.

entertainment than they did from court attendance.¹⁴³ In the early years of his reign, Charles reversed his parents' pattern of attendance: he preferred visiting the patent theatres to seeing performances at court. An extant list compiled by the actor Henry Harris detailing Charles II's attendance at Duke's Company performances discloses the monarch's playgoing habits during these years. Of the twenty-three shows he saw between November 16, 1668, and June 20, 1670 – a period spanning some nineteen months – only six were given at court, roughly 25 percent.¹⁴⁴ The remainder he saw at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane. Pepys reports seeing Charles II frequently at the patent theatres: fourteen times at the Theatre Royal and twelve times at the Duke of York's playhouse between 1661 and 1668.¹⁴⁵ These figures are even more striking if we remember that the plague and Great Fire closed the theatres for nearly two years during that period.

In the early years of Charles II's reign, splashy displays of support accompanied royal trips to the patent theatres. The prompter for the Duke's Company, John Downes, recalled that the premiere of Davenant's play, *Love and Honour*, was "Richly Cloath'd; The King giving Mr. Betterton his Coronation Suit, in which he Acted the Part of Prince Alvaro; The Duke of York giving Mr. Harris his, who did Prince Prospero, And my Lord of Oxford, gave Mr. Joseph Price his, who did Lionel."¹⁴⁶ On December 11, 1667, Pepys learned from Henry Harris, an actor in the Duke's Company, that the king had given £500 toward the making of sixteen scarlet robes for the upcoming production of *Catiline*.¹⁴⁷ When the cost of building Dorset Garden far outstripped initial estimates – ballooning from £3,000 to £9,000 – Charles II presented a gift of £1,000 to help defray some of the expenses.¹⁴⁸ Charles I and Henrietta Maria never made an equivalent gift to any of the five commercial acting companies operating during their reign, nor were they interested in procuring for the public theatres the

¹⁴³ Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 108–9.

¹⁴⁴ See "A Schedule of Plays Attended by Charles II." Part of the Harvard Theatre Collection, this list is one of several reproduced illustrations that follow page 164 in *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, part 1, 1660–1700.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2:131, 155, 164, 174, 177, 194; 4:431; 5:33; 6:73; 8:91, 167, 386, 388, 450, 487–88, 509, 521; 9:54, 81, 85, 183, 203, 270, 322, 398, 458. Van Lennep, ed., *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, part 1: 1660–1700, which encompasses the entirety of Charles's reign, lists forty-three occasions on which he was known to have attended the public theatres (cxcix). Given lost documentation, that figure is undoubtedly much higher.

¹⁴⁶ John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or An Historical Review of the Stage*, ed. Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (1708; repr., London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987), 52.

¹⁴⁷ *LS*, 1:xcii.

¹⁴⁸ *LS*, 1:xxxix.

latest technological innovations. Scenic developments imported from the continent in the 1620s and 1630s were reserved for court consumption, not common, cash-paying spectators.

Also singular was Charles II's fondness for different dramatic forms. He attended performances of heroic plays, such as *Mustapha* (1665), that baldly promoted royalist ideology, but he also adored slapstick fare, like Dryden's *Sir Martin Mar-all* (1667) and Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678). Charles attended three out of the first five performances of Thomas Durfey's rollicking, louché farce *A Fond Husband; or, The Plotting Sisters* (1677).¹⁴⁹ Old plays by Jonson and Shakespeare figured in his playgoing, as did ballets, masques, and opera, especially when performed by visiting foreign companies. That same eclecticism shows in the manuscript catalogue of his personal library: some 234 plays listed over 52 folio pages.¹⁵⁰ Genres and playwrights are tantalizingly variegated: the Earl of Orrery's heroic plays (in both folio and quarto editions) are included, as are plays by other contemporary dramatists, such as John Dryden, Sir Samuel Tuke, and Thomas Shadwell. Old-fashioned Elizabethan comedies like Robert Wilson's *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1588–90) and Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) figure in the collection, as do Jacobean revenge tragedies. The catalogue discloses a keen fan of the drama rather than an aristocrat who prefers specific forms. Indeed, Charles's tastes were more varied than his courtier-managers. When they needed scripts to perform in the early years of the Restoration, they battled exclusively over the 108 old plays that were "part of His Majesties Servants Playes as they were formerly acted at the Blackfryers."¹⁵¹ Charles's personal library, however, suggests that he was as seemingly content with populist potboilers penned for the Red Bull as he was with the chaste Neoplatonic comedies written during exile for his mother.

Charles's catholicity of taste showed too in his collaboration with dramatists. Rather than cultivating writers to produce a favorite genre, as did Henrietta Maria, Charles II proposed a range of plots and forms to playwrights from notably disparate backgrounds. Early in his reign, in 1662, he encouraged Sir Samuel Tuke to attempt the Spanish-style romance *The Adventures of Five Hours*. The prologue, written for the performance at court and apparently delivered by Tuke himself, states that the author "thought to disappear" into retirement but "chanc'd to hear his Majesty

¹⁴⁹ Deborah Payne Fisk, introduction to *Four Restoration Libertine Plays*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xxxiv.

¹⁵⁰ *Catalogue of Charles II's Library*, n.d., British Library, Harley MS 4180.

¹⁵¹ *Register*, 1:101.

once say / He lik'd this Plot: he staid; and writ the Play."¹⁵² That same year, Roger Boyle, 1st Earl of Orrery, mentioned in a letter to James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormonde, that the King had issued to him a similar command, only this time for a tragicomedy:

When I had the Honnor, & unhappyness the Last Time to Kiss his majts hande, he Commanded me, to write a Play for Him ... And therfore, som months [later] I Presumed to lay at his majts Feete, a Trage-Comedi, All in Ten Feet verse, & Ryme. I writ it, in that manner upon two accounts; First, because I thought it was not fit, a Command soe Extraordinary, should have bin obeyd in a way that was Common; Secondly, because I found his majty Relish'd rather, the French Fassion of Playes, then the English.¹⁵³

By the 1670s, Charles turned to the working professionals who had largely taken over from the courtier playwrights that dominated the theatre in its early years. Once again, the monarch's eclectic tastes were very much in evidence. To John Dryden, he recommended a bawdy, rude farce *The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham* (1680). While working on the play in 1677, Dryden boasted in a letter to Lord Latimer that "it will be almost such another piece of businesse as the fond Husband, for such the King will have it, who is parcell poet with me in the plott."¹⁵⁴ To John Crowne, however, he suggested a Spanish romance as the basis for *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685):

This Comedy was Written by the Sacred Command of our late most Excellent King, of ever blessed and beloved Memory The greatest pleasure he had from the Stage was in Comedy, and he often Commanded me to Write it, and lately gave me a Spanish Play called No Puedeser: Or, It cannot Be. out of which I took part o' the Name, and design o' this.¹⁵⁵

Just as his father had offered suggestions to the painters working at his court, so did Charles proffer his opinion to playwrights during rehearsals. Years after the premiere of *Sir Courtly Nice*, Crowne told William Oldys that he had read "the Acts to [Charles II] scene by scene as he writ them. When he had finished the three first, which are by much the best of the Play, he read these over to the King, who liked them very well, only he said, 'Tis not merry enough ...'"¹⁵⁶ According to the postscript of

¹⁵² Sir Samuel Tuke, *The Adventures of Five Hours* (London, 1663), A3v.

¹⁵³ James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 146.

¹⁵⁴ C. E. Ward, ed., *The Letters of John Dryden, with Letters Addressed to Him* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 11–12.

¹⁵⁵ John Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice: or, It cannot Be* (London, 1685), A2r.

¹⁵⁶ William Oldys, "Ms. Additions" to Gerard Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1691), Add. MSS 22,592–93, British Library, I: fol. 110r.

Dryden's opera *Albion and Albanus* (1680), the king attended several "repetitions": "He had been pleas'd twice or thrice to command, that it shou'd be practis'd, before him, especially the first and third Acts of it."¹⁵⁷ Edward Bedingfield in a letter to the Countess of Rutland verifies the opera was indeed "performed at the repetition that has been made before his Majesty at the Duchess of Portsmouth's."¹⁵⁸ Charles most likely attended "repetitions" of other plays, and he may very well have suggested cuts and additions to other scripts.

Unlike his wealthy French cousin, Charles II lacked the means to augment these displays of appreciation with purses filled with gold coins. He could, however, bestow offices and appointments that did not overly tax the beleaguered Privy Purse. Again, the contrast to his forebears is instructive. James I authorized payments of £40 to Ben Jonson for court masques such as *Love Freed* (1611), but we have no record of similar payments for commercial fare.¹⁵⁹ Charles I liked Beaumont and Fletcher sufficiently to give them £40, but that was his only known instance of a cash gift to popular playwrights.¹⁶⁰ Henrietta Maria may have expected her courtiers to pen Neoplatonic comedies that might alleviate exilic boredom, but we have no evidence of compensatory largesse. Charles II, however, rewarded his favorite dramatists, whether they were fashioning court entertainments or commercial crowd-pleasers. As was customary, the makers of masques received a set payment for their efforts: John Crowne boasts in *Calisto* (1675) that he was given "most Princely bounty."¹⁶¹

Generally, though, Charles bestowed offices and appointments that did not cost him money out of pocket. Accordingly, John Dryden was appointed Historiographer Royal in 1669, a post that came with £100 per annum. The following year he was made Poet Laureate, a post that paid an additional "£200 annually in quarterly payments, along with the traditional butt of wine."¹⁶² Elkanah Settle was created a "Sewer in ordinary" on February 27, 1672.¹⁶³ Thomas Otway was reputed to have been offered the position of tutor to one of Nell Gwyn's royal

¹⁵⁷ John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–2000), 15:12.

¹⁵⁸ Dryden, *Works*, 15:341.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Butler, "The Court Masque," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/>.

¹⁶⁰ Carlton, *Charles I*, 147.

¹⁶¹ John Crowne, *Calisto: or, The Chaste Nymph* (London, 1675), a2v.

¹⁶² Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 208.

¹⁶³ Winn, 581, n3.

bastards.¹⁶⁴ William Wycherley was also offered a tutorial post, this time to the seven-year-old Duke of Richmond, the bastard of Louise de Kéroualle, the Duchess of Portsmouth, another royal mistress.¹⁶⁵ Sir Robert Howard acquired the position of Secretary to the Treasury in 1671, with the even more lucrative post of Auditor of the Receipt following in 1673. This latter office, as James Anderson Winn notes, “entitled its holder to £1 from every £100 disbursed; Howard held it until his death in 1698.”¹⁶⁶ Sir George Etherege, who began life as a country lawyer’s clerk, won a series of increasingly important positions as he used his plays, popular with Charles’s inner circle, to work his way up the ladder of preferment. Shortly after the premiere of his second effort, *She Would If She Could* (1668), Etherege was made a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber in Ordinary.¹⁶⁷ He subsequently became secretary to Sir Daniel Harvey, the newly named ambassador to Turkey, a post he retained until 1671.¹⁶⁸ Knighthood followed upon the success of Etherege’s great comedy *The Man of Mode* (1676).¹⁶⁹ Etherege later received a pension from the King’s brother, the Duke of York, in 1682 and a diplomatic post in 1685 after the Duke was crowned James II in 1685.¹⁷⁰

These gestures of munificence made the Restoration theatre a site of doubled patronage. Effectively, the individual assistance typical of a specific exchange marketplace dovetailed with a marketplace of generalized exchange. This amalgam gave purchase to the idea that the Restoration stage, despite being a commercial enterprise, was essentially an aristocratic playground for courtiers of “wit” and “judgment,” a notion that possessed the historical imagination fairly early. The actor, playwright, and manager Colley Cibber idealized the Restoration as a time when the acting companies were “so much the Delight and Concern of the Court, that they were not only supported by its being frequently present at their public Presentations, but by its taking cognizance even of their private

¹⁶⁴ Roswell Gray Ham, *Otway and Lee: Biography from a Baroque Age* (1931; repr., New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 175. Page references are to the 1969 edition. Kerstin P. Warner notes, “[A] record shows that Otway was under contract for payment of £5,000 per annum for preparing the boy for college.” Even if Otway had accepted the post, it is unlikely he would have received this exorbitant salary. See Kirsten P. Warner, *Thomas Otway* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 14.

¹⁶⁵ B. Eugene McCarthy, *William Wycherley: A Biography* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), 134. The post carried the salary of £1,500 per annum, an astonishing amount given the royal tutor’s standard pay: £30 per annum in addition to room and board.

¹⁶⁶ Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 240.

¹⁶⁷ Frederick Bracher, introduction to *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, by George Etherege, ed. Frederick Bracher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), xvi.

¹⁶⁸ Arthur R. Hulseboe, *Sir George Etherege* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 41.

¹⁶⁹ Bracher, introduction, *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, xvii.

¹⁷⁰ Bracher, xviii.

Government, insomuch, that their particular Differences, Pretentions, or Complaints, were generally ended by the King, or Duke’s Personal Command or Decision.”¹⁷¹ Cibber’s reminiscence points not only to the court’s attendance at the public playhouses but also to their extraordinary involvement in daily affairs. As “[t]he Delight and Concern of the Court” the theatre enjoyed the care bestowed upon any precious possession. While Killigrew and Davenant may have been deeded conditional possession of this “guift,” changes to censorship after 1660 made evident that ownership ultimately belonged to the king.

Protecting the “Guift”: Streamlining Censorship

Prior to 1642, censorship and the regulation of the stage fell to the Office of the Revels, which in turn answered to the Lord Chamberlain. It was not an entirely efficient system of oversight, and a startling number of politically sensitive plays sailed past censors. Licensed, for instance, was the lost 1597 play *The Isle of Dogs*, which somehow realized production at the Swan despite containing “sedytious matter” so offensive that Elizabeth I threatened to pull down the playhouses.¹⁷² One of its authors, Ben Jonson, spent two months in prison, while the other, Thomas Nashe, had his lodging ransacked for papers. He fled to Great Yarmouth, where he lived the remainder of his career in self-imposed exile.¹⁷³ After 1603 especially, “violations of nearly unbelievable magnitude occurred,” according to Philip J. Finkelpearl.¹⁷⁴ *Eastward Ho* (1605), which offended James I with its blatant anti-Scottish satire, resulted in imprisonment for George Chapman and another round of incarceration for Jonson. For reasons unknown, their third collaborator, John Marston, escaped jail. John Day was committed to Bridewell for *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), which also commented baldly on tensions between the English and the Scots.¹⁷⁵ In 1608, after writing yet another offensive satire against James I, Marston “sold his interest in the Blackfriars company, abandoned playwriting, disappeared from London, and made an utterly implausible vocational shift to the clergy.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber: With an Historical View of the Stage During His Own Time*, ed. B. R. S. Fone (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 54.

¹⁷² Misha Teramura, “Richard Topcliffe’s Informant: New Light on *The Isle of Dogs*,” *Review of English Studies, New Series*, 68, no. 283 (2017): 46.

¹⁷³ Teramura, “Richard Topcliffe’s Informant,” 47.

¹⁷⁴ Philip J. Finkelpearl, “‘The Comedians’ Liberty’: Censorship of the Jacobean Stage Reconsidered,” *ELR* 16.1 (1986): 125.

¹⁷⁵ Finkelpearl, “The Comedians’ Liberty,” 128.

¹⁷⁶ Finkelpearl, 129.

Middleton, according to contemporaries, risked being “clapt in prison” for *A Game at Chess*.¹⁷⁷

By 1633, so many inflammatory plays had slipped through the net that Sir Henry Herbert, who had assumed the Office of the Revels ten years earlier, ordered all “ould plays ought to bee brought to the Master of the Revels ... since they may be full of offensive things against church and state; y^e rather that in former times the poets tooke greater liberty than is allowed them by mee.”¹⁷⁸ Herbert’s Puritan sensibilities, however, inclined him to detect offenses against the “church” far more readily than the “state.” He would not, for instance, license *The Winter’s Tale* for a revival in 1623 despite being promised by the actor John Heminges “that there was nothing profane added or reformed.”¹⁷⁹ He insisted on first seeing the acting script before signing off on the production.¹⁸⁰ Herbert commended Shirley’s *The Young Admiral* (1633) for “being free from oaths, prophaness, or obsceanes,” and further hoped that when the playwright “hath read this approbation ... it will encourage him to pursue this beneficial and cleanly way of poetry.”¹⁸¹ When it came to political innuendo, Herbert was far less perspicacious. On August 21, 1624, in response to complaints lodged by the Spanish Ambassador, the Privy Council issued a letter demanding that the principal actors in Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* confirm that their “booke” [i.e., acting script] was indeed “an orriginall and p^efect Coppie thereof (as they affirmed) seene and allowed by S^r Henry Herbert.”¹⁸² The players swore they had not altered the script, which Herbert had approved despite its overt anti-Spanish propaganda. In another incident, Charles I in early May 1640 “complaynd” to Herbert about a play (since lost) that “had relation to the passages of the K.s journey into the North ... with commande to punishe the offenders.”¹⁸³ Put on notice, Herbert dutifully shut down William Beeston’s company at the Cockpit for producing the offending script, but once again, he had not detected the “relation” to contemporary events.

The temptation of graft contributed to Herbert’s political myopia. Functionaries in the Revels Office, like other early modern bureaucrats, expected that gratuities, gifts, and “courtesies” would supplement licensing

¹⁷⁷ Finkelpearl, 153.

¹⁷⁸ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 182–83.

¹⁷⁹ Bawcutt, 142.

¹⁸⁰ Bawcutt, 142.

¹⁸¹ Bawcutt, 180.

¹⁸² Bawcutt, 154.

¹⁸³ Bawcutt, 208.

fees. Oftentimes, these gifts functioned as a *quid pro quo*. On July 17, 1626, Herbert received £3 from “Mr. Hemmings for a courtesie done him about their Blackfriars hous.”¹⁸⁴ “Courtesies” also served as a form of damage control. To mitigate the outcry occasioned by the production of James Shirley’s *The Ball* (1632), which “personated ... lords and others of the court,” Christopher Beeston “promiste many things ... should be left out” of future performances, but he also several months later presented Herbert with a “payre of gloves” for his wife.¹⁸⁵ To Herbert’s utter contentment, they “cost at least twenty shillings.”¹⁸⁶ He did not trouble Beeston again. The King’s Company was especially shrewd in manipulating Herbert’s venality to their advantage. Herbert recorded on May 25, 1628, that the company had “with a generall consent and alacritye ... given mee the benefit of too days in the yeare, the one in summer, thother in winter, to bee taken out of the second daye of a revived playe, att my owne choyse.”¹⁸⁷ When their 1633 revival of John Fletcher’s old comedy, *The Tamer Tamed* (1611), incurred “complaints of foule and offensive matters,” Herbert suppressed the October 19 performance and demanded the play be “purgd of oaths, prophaness, and ribaldrye” before it could resume the run.¹⁸⁸ Rather than exacting fines or shutting down the King’s Company for a long stretch, Herbert merely reminded the actors to take more care with “ould revived playes, as of their new, since they may conteyne offensive matter, which ought not to be allowed in any time.”¹⁸⁹ The benefit performances gifted to Herbert were paying off.

This long legacy of desultory oversight in the Revels Office undoubtedly contributed to the decision after the Restoration to shift censorship and licensing to “the said masters or governors of the said respective companies,” who now possessed the right to purge “offensive and scandalous passages” from plays.¹⁹⁰ As Bawcutt points out, these particular provisions in the theatrical patents issued to Killigrew and Davenant “effectively wiped out his [i.e., Herbert’s] *raison d’être* as Master of the Revels.”¹⁹¹ Herbert’s reputation as “an elderly relic” additionally diminished his authority: few people after the Restoration took him seriously.¹⁹² Sir John

¹⁸⁴ Bawcutt, 164.

¹⁸⁵ Bawcutt, 177.

¹⁸⁶ Bawcutt, 181.

¹⁸⁷ On October 30, 1633, the King’s Company changed the agreement with Herbert: in lieu of the two benefit performances, he would receive “the fixed sum of ten pounds every Christmas, and the same sum at Midsummer” (Bawcutt, 166, 184).

¹⁸⁸ Bawcutt, 182.

¹⁸⁹ Bawcutt, 182.

¹⁹⁰ Fitzgerald, *A New History of the English Stage*, 1:80.

¹⁹¹ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 91.

¹⁹² Bawcutt, 94.

Berkenhead, the office press-licenser from October 1660 to October 1663, seized power for overseeing the publication of plays. Herbert balked at the loss of licensing fees, and he ultimately retained the right to authorize travelling troupes in exchange for yielding dominion over the London patent companies. Touring showmen, though, frequently did not bother to procure acting warrants from Herbert, and local officials proved equally dismissive. On October 6, 1660, the mayor of Maidstone sent a high-handed response to the Revels Office that refused to acknowledge Herbert's authority outside of the limits of London.¹⁹³ Not surprisingly, factotums in the Revels office, such as Edward Hayward, complained about the difficulty in collecting fees.¹⁹⁴

Bawcutt surmises that Davenant and Killigrew found censorship "a tedious chore" and largely left "the matter to Herbert," despite the provisions in the theatrical patents enjoining them to scrutinize scripts.¹⁹⁵ Arguably, the scant record of Herbert's involvement in post-Restoration censorship suggests he had been successfully sidelined. He reviewed John Wilson's *The Cheats* (1663), Elizabeth Polwhele's *The Faithful Virgins* (1670?), and perhaps Edward Howard's *The Change of Crowns* (1667). The scribal copy of Howard's play, however, shows manuscript notes in eight different hands, none of which is readily identifiable as Herbert's – even the final license.¹⁹⁶ Herbert may also have licensed two old plays for revivals, William Cartwright's *The Ordinary* (1635) and *The Lady Errant* (1636–37), although here too evidence is tenuous.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, the swift reaction of the court to the furor occasioned by *The Cheats* further hints at their preference for the new chain of command. On March 22, 1663, Charles II ordered the production shut down until Sir John Denham and Edmund Waller could review the script.¹⁹⁸ Like his father before him, Charles II stepped in when a play gave offense. *Unlike* his father, however, Charles turned to trusted courtier-poets for assistance rather than returning the play in question to the Office of the Revels, the earlier – and traditional – course of action. The theatrical patents established the legal grounds for this precedent; moreover, Killigrew was already widely understood to be the reverser for the office.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Bawcutt, 94.

¹⁹⁴ Bawcutt, 95.

¹⁹⁵ Bawcutt, 100.

¹⁹⁶ Edward A. Langhans, *Restoration Promptbooks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 23.

¹⁹⁷ Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama*, 101.

¹⁹⁸ Bawcutt, 102.

¹⁹⁹ See Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics*, 64, n. 113 on page 50.

This streamlining of censorship and licensing after the Restoration mirrors the consolidation of the theatrical marketplace. Just as limiting the number of playhouses ensured easier surveillance, so did vesting censorship and licensing in theatrical management guarantee a tighter chain of command. Entrusting oversight to managers who owed their patents and positions to royal preferment was a far cry from delegating censorship to underpaid functionaries in a ramshackle (and easily bribable) early modern bureaucracy. Overall, the new system worked well: nothing as flagrant as the anti-Scottish satires targeting James I made it to production. Instead, dramatic forms, such as tragicomedy, emerged early in the Restoration that explicitly “promoted kingship in the new circumstances by exonerating themselves of the execution of Charles I while celebrating the restoration of his son.”²⁰⁰ So efficient was the surveillance of scripts that aristocrats intent on using the stage to humiliate their enemies turned to improvisation, the one aspect of performance censorship can neither anticipate nor control. In mid-January of 1669, Charles’s mistress, the Countess of Castlemaine, instructed the actress Katherine Corey in a revival of Jonson’s *Catiline* to mimic Lady Harvey, an ally of her enemy, the Duke of Buckingham. Furious, Harvey went to her kinsman – who happened to be Lord Chamberlain – to have the errant actress jailed. After her release, Corey was ordered by Castlemaine “to act it again, worse than ever,” but Harvey “provided people to hiss her and fling oranges at her” in the playhouse.²⁰¹ Two weeks later, on February 1, Edward Kynaston impersonated Sir Charles Sedley in Newcastle’s lost play *The Heiress*. Sedley was sufficiently enraged to hire thugs, who beat Kynaston so badly that the actor was “forced to keep his bed.”²⁰²

Purely improvisational in nature, these political attacks skillfully side-stepped the provision in the theatrical patents stipulating that management scour scripts for potentially inflammatory material. The lone scripted impersonation of a peer – *The Country Gentleman* – evaded detection by authorial sleight-of-hand. Annabel Patterson thinks the play originally targeted the new excise tax proposed in 1666. By the time *The Country Gentleman* was slated for production three years later, the tax was old news, but the shuffling of court favorites was not.²⁰³ In the interim, Sir

²⁰⁰ Nancy Klein Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration: English Tragicomedy, 1660–1671* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.

²⁰¹ Pepys, *Diary*, 9:415.

²⁰² Pepys, 435.

²⁰³ Annabel Patterson, “*The Country Gentleman*: Howard, Marvell, and Dryden in the Theatre of Politics,” *SEL* 25 (1985): 498.

Robert Howard and his new collaborator the Duke of Buckingham had inserted a scene lampooning Sir William Coventry, an addition that not only made the play timelier but also humiliated their common enemy. Coventry “complained to the King, who then inspected a copy – from which the key scene had been carefully removed,” but Charles refused to shut down the production.²⁰⁴ The outraged Coventry then informed “Killigrew that he would have the impersonator’s nose cut,” a threat that put an end to rehearsals, and he also challenged Buckingham to a duel. Both provocations landed Coventry in the Tower and wrecked his career until 1686.²⁰⁵ As for *The Country Gentleman*, once the incriminating scene came to light, it was banned from production and publication. So complete was the play’s erasure that until Arthur H. Scouten and Robert D. Hume discovered a manuscript copy in 1973, it was presumed lost.²⁰⁶

The Country Gentleman may have momentarily slipped the noose of censorship through authorial chicanery, but the new chain of command ensured oversight of the precious “guift” of the theatre. Tellingly, most plays that offended, such as Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham* – the louche comedy on which Charles was “parcell poet” – targeted contemporary mores, such as the keeping of mistresses, rather than specific government policies or the monarch himself. Gerard Langbaine reported that Dryden’s comedy “so much expos’d the keeping part of the Town, that the Play was stopt, when it had but thrice appear’d on the Stage.”²⁰⁷ Although several plays at the height of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis were banned after complaints from powerful members of the audience, they largely recycled “old themes in new ways: in tragedy the long-standing association of political and sexual excess took new forms, as lust, rape, and sexual perversion were associated with rebellion and republicanism by Tories and with tyranny and popery by Whig playwrights.”²⁰⁸ That very lack of specificity allowed these plays to reemerge once the smoke had cleared. Susan J. Owen maintains that dramas written between 1678 and 1683 were every bit as contestatory as their Jacobean and Caroline predecessors, but she nonetheless acknowledges that “censorship may have worked to some

²⁰⁴ *The Country Gentleman: A “Lost” Play and Its Background*, ed. Arthur H. Scouten and Robert D. Hume (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 7.

²⁰⁵ *The Country Gentleman*, 7.

²⁰⁶ In their introduction to *The Country Gentleman*, Scouten and Hume describe the circumstances surrounding their discovery of the manuscript in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

²⁰⁷ Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 164.

²⁰⁸ Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 4.

extent to limit criticisms of the authorities in performance."²⁰⁹ Also limiting was the narrow political bandwidth of most Restoration playwrights; as Odaï Johnson observes, "visibility for a play in the royal theaters depended largely on political convictions often not shared outside the Court ... the latitude of the theater for political critiques, far from offering 'cognate expressions,' is substantially more narrow than the latitude of critique outside the theater: in the press, petitions, coffeehouse literature, civic pageantry, the fairs, and the polls."²¹⁰ The duopoly may have instantiated Tory values within the local culture of the theatre, but streamlined censorship perpetuated them. It should hardly surprise that most plays written during the Exclusion Crisis supported the crown against its detractors.²¹¹

Tellingly, not a single Restoration playwright saw punishment in the manner regularly meted out to Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline dramatists: they simply did not write plays sufficiently dangerous to warrant a slit nose or time in the Tower. For productions that offended the odd ambassador or courtier, playwrights suffered poor box office, not incarceration. Vinton Dearing surmises that the Duchess of Portsmouth, the most influential of Charles's mistresses at the time, may have caused the *The Kind Keeper* to fail by drawing away audience members to the other playhouse, a ploy she would use two years later to destroy Settle's *The Female Prelate*, another play she found offensive.²¹² According to Langbaine, Dryden was sufficiently chastened by the financial loss to take "a becoming Care, that the things that offended on the Stage were either alter'd or omitted in the Press," but he was otherwise unscathed.²¹³ Even when Dryden tackled subjects more incendiary than the keeping of mistresses, he avoided punishment. *The Duke of Guise* was thought by some "to Levell att the vilifying the Duke of Monmouth & many other protestants."²¹⁴ Although Monmouth took it as such, others did not, which again underscores how dramatists tried to evade tighter controls with stories that either recycled "old themes" or drew upon historical events that could be

²⁰⁹ Owen, *Restoration Theatre*, 12.

²¹⁰ Johnson, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 62.

²¹¹ My reading departs from that of Owen, who deploys the Marxian notion of "sites of contradiction" to counter "assumptions about the hegemony of royalism in the Restoration" (Owen, *Restoration Theatre*, 6). Although she attempts to locate in stalwartly royalist plays signs of the "strenuous and ideological effort" required to paper over these sites, Owen nevertheless admits that "[m]ost plays, and more sharply most prologues and epilogues, were Tory" (page 14).

²¹² Dryden, *Works*, 14:375.

²¹³ Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 164.

²¹⁴ *Register*, 1:229.

read allegorically – and ambiguously. Rehearsals of *The Duke of Guise* went forward, and word circulated that Dryden’s play was “to be acted sometime nixt weik.”²¹⁵ After three, perhaps four, performances it closed on July 18, 1682, felled by pro-Monmouth courtiers who complained to the king. While Charles was furious his illegitimate son was pressing a claim to the throne, he made clear his unwillingness “that others should abuse him,” even if that “abuse” entailed the defense of royal prerogative in the face of filial disloyalty.²¹⁶ Three months later, on October 29, the Lord Chamberlain rescinded the ban, and the production went forward.²¹⁷ As for Dryden, he suffered the loss of a long run; however, he still appears to have pocketed his author’s benefit from the third performance.²¹⁸

As *The Duke of Guise* illustrates, playwrights who stepped into the fray of the Exclusion Crisis forfeited income, not an ear. Most writers refrained – whether from prudence or a shared royalist outlook – from penning overtly inflammatory scripts. Overall, the four decades between 1660 and 1700 are remarkably free of oppositional drama, especially when compared to plays written earlier in the century. The streamlining of censorship indeed ensured the ongoing care – and surveillance – of the precious gift Charles had bequeathed conditionally to his chosen courtier-playwrights.

The Limits of Patronage: Broke and Bored

Despite individual gestures of munificence, Charles II rarely intervened when the companies fell on hard times, largely because of the deplorable state of royal finances. Unlike earlier monarchs, Charles did not receive the fees generated by the Court of Wards. He also did not profit from the host of taxes that were regularly levied prior to the Civil War (although some, such as the unpopular Hearth and Excise taxes, were retained). In exchange for relinquishing these feudal dues, Charles received from Parliament an annual income of £1.2 million, a sum that hardly met expenditures. There were additional financial shortcomings. Catherine of Braganza’s dowry of 2 million Portuguese crowns never materialized after their marriage. The other part of her dowry – the port cities of Tangier and Bombay – cost far more to maintain than they yielded in profit.²¹⁹ The crown also

²¹⁵ *LS* 1:310.

²¹⁶ *LS* 1:310.

²¹⁷ Dryden, *Works*, 14:484.

²¹⁸ *LS* 1:317.

²¹⁹ Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *The King’s Bed: Sex and Power and the Court of Charles II* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2015), 90.

felt the economic fallout from the twin catastrophes of the plague, which killed between 65,000 and 100,000 people in 1665, and the Great Fire of London of 1666, which destroyed the City, including its financial center. Prize money from the sale of ships and goods captured during the Second Dutch War (1665–67) fell short of expectations.²²⁰ Even the annual French subsidy of £230,000 secured after the Treaty of Dover failed to put the court on sound financial footing.²²¹ By January 1672, Charles ordered a stop on all payments out of the Exchequer to relieve the crown of its debt of over £1 million, a decision that ruined his creditors and nearly collapsed the late seventeenth-century English financial system.²²²

Despite chronic insolvency, Charles sought to live like his wealthy French cousin Louis XIV. Years exiled as a poor relation in foreign courts had perhaps quickened his appetite to keep up. Charles dictated expensive structural changes to Whitehall that competitively referenced Versailles: “New withdrawing- and bed chambers were established for the king, allowing the old withdrawing chamber to become a public audience chamber and the old bedchamber to become a room for state audiences.”²²³ Charles altered the royal bedchamber “to resemble that in the Louvre, with the bed with its crimson damask covers set in a special alcove, separated from the rest of the room by a gilded railing with two gates for access and framed with ‘two great draperies with two flying boyes in them.’”²²⁴ He could not, however, afford to spend anything close to the astronomic sums Louis XIV had lavished on Versailles – some 500,000 écus – nor could he sustain an equivalent level of arts patronage.²²⁵ Louis XIV’s wealth allowed him to sponsor, among others, the painter Charles Le Brun, the architect Louis Le Vau, the cabinetmaker André-Charles Boulle, the Italian ballet master and composer Jean-Baptiste Lully, and the landscape designer André Le Nôtre.²²⁶ In 1662, Louis ordered his finance minister, Jean-Baptiste

²²⁰ H. M. Colvin et al., *The History of the King’s Works: Volume 5, 1660–1782* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1976), 150.

²²¹ Ronald Hutton, *Charles the Second, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 271.

²²² Moshe Arye Milevsky’s *The Day the King Defaulted: Financial Lessons from the Stop of the Exchequer in 1672* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

²²³ Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010), 11.

²²⁴ Jenny Uglow, *A Gambling Man: Charles II’s Restoration Game* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 121.

²²⁵ It is, of course, almost impossible to determine modern equivalents. Currency calculators suggest Louis XIV spent somewhere between €80 and €100 million to build Versailles.

²²⁶ Josephine Wilkinson, *Louis XIV: The Power and the Glory* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2019), 160, 164, 166–70.

Colbert, to detail the men of letters worthy of court bounty. The lists from 1664 to 1683 include the playwrights Molière, Pierre and Thomas Corneille, Jean Racine, and Charles Perrault, all of whom received every year a silk purse filled with gold coins in addition to other perquisites.²²⁷

Charles did not have anything close to Louis's resources, but he spent with abandon. As the contemporary diarist John Evelyn observed, the new monarch "brought in a politer way of living" but one that quickly "passed to Luxurie and intollerable expense."²²⁸ Adding to royal insolvency were thirteen illegitimate children, in addition to the Duke of Monmouth, his first natural son, and innumerable mistresses, several of whom proved especially avaricious, such as Barbara Palmer, the Countess of Castlemaine. In addition to bestowing money, jewels, and homes upon the countess, Charles paid off her staggering gambling debts: over two nights alone in February 1668 she lost £10,000 at gaming tables.²²⁹ When Castlemaine left Whitehall for good later that spring, Charles settled upon her an annual pension of £4,700, in addition to the purchase of Berkshire House, for which he had to borrow £4,000.²³⁰ Charles also showered allowances and gifts on women who did not succumb to his advances, such as Frances Stuart, who received £700 out of the Privy Purse and a pearl necklace worth £1,100, amongst other jewels.²³¹ While favorites engorged themselves at the feeding troughs of the court, there was "want of paper at the Council-table" and, far worse, "menial servants of the Court [that] lack[ed] bread," as they had not "received a farding wages since the King's coming in."²³² Pepys regularly lamented the king's neglect of finances in favor of pleasure. On September 3, 1665, he worried about the "King himself minding nothing but his ease – and so we let things go to wrack."²³³ As a member of the Naval Board, Pepys saw firsthand how Charles's profligacy affected war-time funding for the Second Dutch War. On October 31, 1666, he noted that Members of Parliament were "so dissatisfied with the King's management, and his giving himself up to pleasures ... and they observe so much the expense of the war ... that they are backward of giving any more."²³⁴

²²⁷ Molière and Corneille received 1,000 livres each, Racine 600, and Perrault 1,500. See Wilkinson, *Louis XIV*, 179.

²²⁸ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 4:409.

²²⁹ Uglow, *Gambling Man*, 454.

²³⁰ Uglow, 457.

²³¹ Pepys, *Diary*, 8:184.

²³² Pepys, 183.

²³³ Pepys, *Diary*, 6:210.

²³⁴ Pepys, *Diary*, 7:349.

Charles indeed was “giving himself up to pleasures”: concurrent with the Second Dutch War were skyrocketing personal expenditures. Household and wardrobe outlays in 1666 came to £227,678, nearly a fivefold increase over the beginning of his reign six years earlier. In the meantime, interest and loan payments ballooned to £147,021.²³⁵

Although Charles II lent his name to the newly founded Royal Society and resurrected such pre-Civil War projects as the King’s Musick, the Chapels Royal, and the Office of the Works, the court often failed to pay the scientists, musicians, artists, and architects working within these cultural institutions, just as it did not bother with the “farding wages” of desperate servants.²³⁶ In reconstructing lists of payments to the King’s Musick, Andrew Ashbee chronicles the torturous method of bookkeeping deployed by the Exchequer to disguise the deplorable state of crown finances. Money to pay the musicians came from Loans on the Land revenue, such as the Hearth Tax, the Chimney Tax, and Fee Farm rents. Oftentimes a hapless musician’s salary would be charged against income from a particular tax, which technically allowed the Exchequer to balance the books. In reality, money would not be collected for several years, and consequently, musicians went unpaid for long stretches. Several starved to death.²³⁷ So financially strapped was Charles that he went his parents one better in not merely failing to pay artistic clients but in borrowing money from them. The painter John Lely, who was to execute so many of the iconic portraits we associate with the Restoration, lent the king money in 1668, and on June 18, 1673, he was still petitioning for repayment.²³⁸ Dryden too lent money to the crown: £500 on October 16, 1667.²³⁹ By the time Charles died on February 6, 1685, Dryden’s salary was four years in arrears for a total of £800; his additional pension of £100 was four years and one quarter in arrears for a total of £424.²⁴⁰

Even if Charles II had possessed sufficient funds or exercised fiscal prudence, he did not have a bureaucracy, as did Louis XIII and IV, to dispense patronage strategically. Without such a system in place,

²³⁵ See Milevsky, *Day the King Defaulted*, 75, table 4.1.

²³⁶ Michael Foss, *The Age of Patronage: The Arts in England, 1660–1750* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 33.

²³⁷ Andrew Ashbee, *Records of English Court Music*, vol. 1, 1660–1685 (Snodland, UK: Andrew Ashbee, 1991), 11.

²³⁸ C. H. Collins Baker, *Lely and the Stuart Portrait Painters: A Study of English Portraiture before and after Van Dyck*, vol. 1 (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1912), 138.

²³⁹ Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 527.

²⁴⁰ Winn, 530.

the need for personal agents to allocate bounty was especially pressing. Elizabeth I had used William Cecil, Lord Burghley, for this end, and Charles I and Henrietta Maria employed individual agents to assist with building their art collections.²⁴¹ Charles II, however, displayed a habitual distrust of agents and ministers throughout his career. He preferred to have petitioners seek him out directly in his apartments, as Killigrew and Davenant most likely did when petitioning for their duopoly, or during his favorite pastimes, such as sailing, riding, and tennis.²⁴² Indeed, in the early years of his reign, Charles “would have none kept out but gave free accesse to all sorts of people.”²⁴³ Trips to the playhouses further publicized the king’s accessibility. In his diplomatic correspondence, Giovanni Salvetti, the Florentine agent in London, marveled how Charles made himself available by attending public performances: “Though it was a thing seldom done by his father, does much to win the affections of the people, through letting him be seen so often and so openly.”²⁴⁴

Accessibility declined along with the state of crown finances in the mid-1670s. According to Brian Weiser, ministers such as Thomas Osborne (later Earl of Danby) convinced the king “to stop being accessible to every segment of his society” and to adopt anti-Catholic policies that would ease Parliamentary purse strings.²⁴⁵ As a result, by 1674, Charles forbade Catholics from entering the court, abolished the council of trade, changed household regulations, and restricted access to the Privy Council.²⁴⁶ He also increasingly denied the public easy access to his person by curtailing jaunts through St. James’s Park and reducing appearances in the two patent theatres. The Lord Chamberlain’s accounts show a marked drop-off in Charles’s attendance at the public playhouses by the mid-1670s in response to these new economic and political pressures. The warrant for plays acted between October 29, 1666, and August 9, 1668, reveal thirty-three royal visits to the Duke’s Company, roughly seventeen a year. Five years later attendance had dropped to twenty-two visits (eleven annually) for an equivalent period between July 3, 1673, and March 2, 1675. By 1682, Charles attended performances at the United Company only nine times,

²⁴¹ See Graham Parry’s discussion of “The Court of Charles I” in *The Golden Age Restor’d: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–42* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1981), 184–229.

²⁴² Uglow, *Gambling Man*, 84.

²⁴³ Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, 3:247.

²⁴⁴ Giovanni Salvetti, quoted in John Orrell, “A New Witness of the Restoration Stage, 1660–1669,” *Theatre Research International* 2, no. 2 (1976): 18.

²⁴⁵ Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003), 74.

²⁴⁶ Weiser, *Charles II*, 75.

a decline of over 70 per cent from the 1660s.²⁴⁷ That downturn in attendance, along with his command during the same period “that playes should be Acted at Court every Weeke,” reveals the emergence of a more private monarch, one circumspect about his relations with Parliament and chary of petitioners. As his attendance at the playhouses dropped off, so did his interest in supporting the theatre.

Going “to wrack,” to use Pepys’s expression, clearly affected Charles’s ability to dispense patronage in the second half of his reign. Indeed, insolvency produced several breathtaking instances of indifference toward former clients. The dramatist John Crowne, although he benefited momentarily in 1675 from *Calisto*, was especially bitter toward the end of his life about how Charles’s addiction to “luxury,” as he called it in the dedication to *Caligula* (1698), was ruinous for those individuals who did not possess sufficient backing at court to protect their interests.²⁴⁸ Once again dispensing gifts that cost the Privy Purse nothing, Charles gave away Crowne’s expected inheritance, “a great Province of vast value” in Nova Scotia “to the French; half of which was my Fathers rightful Property and mine, as his heir.”²⁴⁹ As a result, Crowne found himself dependent on the court for his dramatic efforts, “for I could have my compensation no where else.”²⁵⁰ A one-time gift of royal bounty for *Calisto* hardly compensated for the loss of ancestral property. It was, Crowne concluded angrily, “a vicious, degenerate age, where men were thought great Wits, that had no more wit, than what wou’d serve vitious pleasures.”²⁵¹ According to James Sutherland, Charles behaved toward poets and playwrights “much as he treated the ducks in St. James’s Park”: he tossed the occasional scrap into ravening beaks when it crossed his mind.²⁵² *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685), Dryden’s funeral Pindaric on Charles II, attempts to reframe habitual royal negligence by suggesting that the “dew” of poetic inspiration sipped from the late monarch’s hand compensated for authorial destitution: “Tho little was their Hire, and light their Gain, / Yet somewhat to their share he threw; / Fed

²⁴⁷ I derived these figures from appendix B in Nicoll’s *A History of English Drama, 1660–1900*, vol. 1, 343–50. Page references are to the 1961 edition.

²⁴⁸ Crowne, in the dedication to the Earl of Rumney, alludes to Charles’s reign as “Fetter’d” in luxury, a condition from which England has since “freed it self” under the rule of William and Mary. See John Crowne, *Caligula* (London, 1698), A2v.

²⁴⁹ John Crowne, *The English Frier: or, The Town Sparks* (London, 1690), A3v.

²⁵⁰ Crowne, *The English Frier*, A3v.

²⁵¹ Crowne, A2r.

²⁵² James Sutherland, “The Impact of Charles II on Restoration Literature,” in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Essays in Honor of Alan Dugald McKillop*, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 257.

from his Hand, they sung and flew, Like Birds of Paradise that liv'd on morning dew."²⁵³ Fifteen years later and suffering from considerable hardship, Dryden was no longer willing to serve as an apologist for the crown. In the epilogue he wrote for an adaptation of John Fletcher's *The Pilgrim* (1647), Dryden inveighed against "a banisht Court, with Lewdness fraught" that writers had been obliged "to serve" or "starve."²⁵⁴ Dramatists were like "*Harlots under Bawds profest*,"; they had taken "all th' ungodly pains, and got the least."²⁵⁵ These were hardly comforting deathbed ruminations: four weeks later, Dryden perished.

Charles's support for the acting companies would prove as capricious as his patronage of individual dramatists. In the 1660s, he had bestowed costumes upon productions and sent Betterton to Paris to investigate the latest stage technology, but regular payment for court performances was spotty at best. The Treasury Books show that his own company waited until 1670 to receive compensation for plays performed at "our Court at Whitehall and at the theaters" over the previous eight years, a sum that totaled a staggering £1,050.²⁵⁶ By the mid-1670s, Charles could offer virtually nothing outside of the requisite £10 payment to attend a public performance or the standard £20 for a court performance.²⁵⁷ Although he reputedly gave £1,000 in 1670 toward the cost overruns for the Dorset Garden playhouse, the stop payment order to the Exchequer two years later stymied his ability to help his own company when the Bridges Street playhouse burnt down, along with years of accumulated scenery, playbooks, and costumes. Charles instead sent a letter to parishes throughout England to collect subscriptions toward the construction of a new building, thereby shifting responsibility for support from the court to the church.²⁵⁸

In addition to the lack of royal support after 1672, both patent companies vied with the continental acting troupes that received permission

²⁵³ Dryden, *Works*, 3:103.

²⁵⁴ Dryden, 16:265.

²⁵⁵ Dryden, 16:265.

²⁵⁶ "Entry Book: November 1670," in *Calendar of Treasury Books*, ed. William A Shaw, vol. 3, 1669–1672 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk.

²⁵⁷ A warrant for payment to the King's Company dated February 29, 1662, shows £10 paid for each play seen at the Vere Street playhouse and £20 for each of the thirty-five plays acted at court (*Register*, 1:31). The companies also received £20 when royalty attended semi-operas, such as Charles Davenant's *Circe* (1677), at the playhouses. To see Shadwell's semi-opera *Psyche* (1673), the court paid an unprecedented £30. See William Van Lennep, "Nell Gwyn's Playgoing at the King's Expense," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 4, no. 3 (1950):406.

²⁵⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, 10:437.

to perform in London. From the outset of the Restoration, Charles rewarded the French and Italian players that would periodically appear in the capital. On December 2, 1661, he sent a warrant to the Exchequer ordering payment of £300 “to the ffrench Comedians as of his Majesties royall bounty.”²⁵⁹ Continental actors visited with some regularity – much to the chagrin of the licensed English companies – but their presence was especially vexing after the burning of the Bridges Street playhouse. Charles saw “all [the] representations” of a French company, which was in residence from December 1672 to May 1673.²⁶⁰ After their departure, he sponsored in late spring of 1673 the arrival of Tiberio Fiorelli’s company of Italian comedians. Charles ordered the Customs Commissioners to admit their “clothes, vestments, scenes, ornaments, necessities and materials” free of duty.²⁶¹ He also stipulated the construction of a stage in Windsor for their exclusive use at a cost of £52.²⁶² For reasons unknown, on June 17, he shuttered the King’s Company for several weeks, ordering “that there shall not bee acted any playes ... untill further order,” a command that further hobbled his own company.²⁶³ By the time Fiorelli’s troupe departed for Paris on September 12, 1673, the visiting players had received, in addition to their takings at the box office, six gold chains and medals weighing 6.5 ounces and 20 ounces of white plate for Fiorelli “as a gift from his Ma^{te} vnto one of his Company.”²⁶⁴ This gift coincided with the King’s Company sending a piteous plea to Charles for financial assistance. The rebuilding of their playhouse “cost them neere Two Thousand pounds more then it did when it was first built”; they had “extended their Creditts to the utmost”; and they were “very much in debt.” The shareholders begged the court to pay the arrears on their playgoing and “for such gracious benevolence as your Majestie shall think fitt to bestow.”²⁶⁵ The plea resulted in an order executed three weeks later for the King’s Company to receive the “£650 due to them from his Majesty.”²⁶⁶ Owed monies for court performances would finally appear; “Gracious benevolence” would not.

²⁵⁹ *Register*, 1:27.

²⁶⁰ *LS*, 197, 267.

²⁶¹ Eleanore Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage, 1660–1702: With a Particular Account of the Production of Calisto* (1932; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 118–19. Page references are to the 1966 edition.

²⁶² Boswell, *Restoration Court Stage*, 118–19.

²⁶³ *Register*, 1:152.

²⁶⁴ *Register*, 1:154–55.

²⁶⁵ *Register*, 1:156.

²⁶⁶ *Register*, 1:157.

Indeed, conditions would only deteriorate. At royal command, Fiorelli's troupe reappeared in June of 1675 and, according to Richard Bulstrode in his correspondence, this time they were "to have y^e King's Theatre in Whitehall for their use ... and all people are allowed to come there & see them, paying as they doe at other houses."²⁶⁷ Turning the court theatre at Whitehall into a commercial venue, he added, is "not much lik'd by our other players, for it will half break both our houses."²⁶⁸ The poet Andrew Marvell was dismayed to see "all Sorts of People" flocking to the theatre in Whitehall "and paying their Mony as at a common Playhouse; nay even a twelve-penny Gallery is builded for the convenience of his Majesty's poorer Subjects."²⁶⁹ In mid-April 1683, Charles began negotiations to bring Fiorelli's company back to England once again. Indeed, so keen was the king to have the actors in residence at Windsor over the summer that he paid £100 "of an old arrear due to them," ordered "some money advanced to them here [in Paris], and sent a yacht to fetch them from Dieppe."²⁷⁰ During the previous year, he had done nothing to save his own company from financial collapse.

That "all Sorts of People" could now attend performances at court for the price of a gallery seat in Drury Lane gave the Fiorelli troupe the clear advantage of a royal venue. Additionally, their performances took place in the afternoon, putting them in direct competition with the patent companies.²⁷¹ Bulstrode's prediction that the visiting comedians would "half break both our houses" quickly became a bitter refrain in prologues and epilogues. John Dryden was especially vocal on the threat posed by foreign players. As a playwright and a shareholder in the King's Company, he understood how foreign troupes adversely affected an already meagre bottom line. In a prologue written for a revival of Lodowick Carrell's *Arviragus and Philicia*, probably in late 1672, he laments that in addition to "sickly Actors and an old House too," the King's Company contended with a "Brisk French Troop" that has become the town's "dear delight."²⁷² Dryden repeated his attack on the French comedians in the defensive

²⁶⁷ Richard Bulstrode, "The Bulstrode Papers, vol. 1, 1667–1675," in *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents Formed by Alfred Morrison*, ed. Alfred Morrison (1882–93, 2nd ser., London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1897), 302.

²⁶⁸ Bulstrode, *Bulstrode Papers*, vol. 1, 302.

²⁶⁹ *LS I*: 234.

²⁷⁰ Boswell, *Restoration Court Stage*, 124–25.

²⁷¹ John Evelyn records seeing "the Italian Comedie at the Court this afternoon" on May 29, 1673 (*Diary*, 6:463).

²⁷² Pierre Danchin, *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration, 1660–1700: A Complete Edition*, 4 parts. 7 vols. (Nancy, France: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1981–88), 2:506–7.

prologue he wrote for the opening of their rebuilt playhouse on March 26, 1674. Already nervous that the new “Plain Built House” in Drury Lane might send audiences “unsatisfy’d away,” he assails “these new Conqu’rors of the Norman Race” as an additional financial threat.²⁷³ Their return to France was little consolation. In an epilogue written for a revival of *The Silent Woman* in July 1675, Dryden turns to the new threat, the “Italian Merry-Andrews” who now “Debauch’d the Stage with lewd Grimace; / Instead of Wit.”²⁷⁴ The attacks continued to no avail. The visiting troupes had another advantage over the resident patent companies insofar as they were long gone before monarchical boredom had set in.

Broke and bored. With the economy of a couplet, John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, encapsulated the traits that overshadowed Charles’s better qualities: “Restless he rolls about from whore to whore, / A merry monarch scandalous and poor.”²⁷⁵ The unfortunate recipients of his restlessness extended from mistresses to various royal projects, but monarchical negligence especially affected the patent theatres. By the second decade of Charles’s reign, the impecunious and distracted monarch increasingly ignored the acting companies that, more than ever, needed royal support after the urban disasters of the 1660s and their own mounting financial difficulties in the 1670s. By the second decade of his reign, Charles was embroiled in secret negotiations with France, at odds with Parliament, and increasingly estranged from his citizenry. Then too, other pleasures and pastimes beckoned, from beautiful women to sleek yachts to glistening racehorses. The monarch’s initial burst of enthusiasm for the companies he had transformed into princely gifts shifted to other preoccupations.

The distractibility of a king, the agency of objects, the desires that cloud judgment, the memories that haunt the present: these are the ineluctable factors that shape events perhaps even more than ideology or large-scale forces. Newcastle and several of the petitioners had clearly hoped to return to a Caroline theatrical marketplace, but they were outmaneuvered by courtier-playwrights with a long legacy of using networks of access to their advantage. Contingency also determined outcomes. Killigrew and Davenant’s unprecedented plan for a duopoly landed at just the right historical moment. They additionally benefited from a monarch who, by dint of his experiences and outlook, was willing to gift the restored theatre to

²⁷³ Danchin, *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration*, 2:581.

²⁷⁴ Dryden, *Works*, 2:549.

²⁷⁵ See John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, “A Satire on Charles II,” in *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11–15.

persistent clients who would enjoy monopolistic control going forward. No one foresaw, of course, the economic repercussions of that gift, namely how the transformation of the theatre from a purely commercial to a hybrid enterprise would require substantial support beyond the box office. Additionally, the duopoly so sought by Killigrew and Davenant exerted its own unexpected agencies. As the following chapter details, its resulting economic and cultural logic galvanized a host of decisions about repertoires and performance practices that would prove both innovative and ruinous.