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Players, Puritans, and 'Theatrical' Propaganda, 1642-1660

In what was to be his final entry for nearly two decades, the King's Master of the Revels noted in his office book: "Here ended my allowance of plaies, for the war began in Aug. 1642."[1] Sir Henry Herbert's plaintive tone and use of the past tense seem decidedly understated. But the conditions of the time were grim, as rehearsed in the parliamentary order that banned playing officially on September 2, 1642:

> Whereas the distressed Estate of Ireland, steeped in her own Blood, and the distracted Estate of England, threatned with a Cloud of Blood, by a Civill Warre, call for all possible meanes to appease and avert the Wrath of God appearing in these Judgements; . . . and whereas publike Sports doe not well agree with publike Calamities, nor publike Stage-playes with the Seasons of Humiliation, this being an Exercise of sad and pious solemnity, and the other being Spectacles of pleasure, too commonly expressing lacivious Mirth and Levitie: It is therefore thought fit, and Ordeined by the Lords and Commons in this Parliament Assembled, that while these sad Causes and set times of Humiliation doe continue, publike Stage-Playes shall cease, and bee forborne.[2]

That this proclamation still exercises some authority today is evidenced by the fact that it is not unusual for scholars of English Renaissance drama to end their investigations by quoting the above document. Their colleagues in Restoration drama generally pick up the narrative in 1660, with the crowning of Charles II and the playgoing reports of Samuel Pepys. The interregnum period of the London stage is thus regarded as a disorganized hiatus, or glanced at as a dark age of belligerence and Philistinism. Sixty years ago the investigations of Leslie Hotson and Hyder E. Rollins began to illuminate this shadowy place in theatre history.[3] Since then, revaluations of the period in general by historians such as Lawrence Stone, Christopher Hill, and Anthony Fletcher have given fresh angles of observation to scholars of the drama.[4] The stage, however, was no longer to be found on the

Bankside or at Blackfriars; it was a forum for argument in Parliament, a battlefield of life and death in the English Civil War. The theatre offered a variety of propagandist possibilities in the period 1642-1660—a period which had ostensibly outlawed theatre. And although "play-hating" Puritans as well as "playloving" Cavaliers are no longer quite the absolute symbolic figures they once were, political events of the period were both denounced and supported through incessant theatrical metaphors. In this essay, then, I plan to consider the proscribed performances of the Interregnum, the police actions that often accompanied them, and the "theatrical" propaganda that invariably ensued.

Propagandists for both sides struck theatrical poses and invoked theatrical metaphors: according to the Royalists, now that plays were abolished the only *real* comedy was the one acted daily in Parliament; the Parliamentarians believed that the defection of players to Royalist forces was only proper because the Royalist vision of the world was masque-like and illusory to begin with. A study of political reportage in the period, as it coexisted with the theatre's struggle for survival, shows that the banning of stage plays only licensed a wider political modality for drama. As the ordinances against playing became more repressive, so the theatrical quality of the propaganda became more pronounced. In this period of paradoxes it seems only a metaphor of drama could describe a body politic which had abolished drama.

That the period is best known for its sectarian acrimony is a truism. Propagandist slogans both of public demonstration and parliamentary dissent voiced religious sentiment because the vocabulary of ideology was an essentially religious one. Likewise, the semiology of ideological presentation was theatrical, as witnessed in the court masques of both James and Charles. Correct Protestant ideology was the law of the land, and the royal masque celebrated the power of a divinely-ordained monarch. Thus, iterated charges from the Commons of a "Popish conspiracy" line up with traditionalist countercharges of "Puritan lawlessness." And both sides naturally accused the other of theatrical illusion. Yet the main problem of the body politic was a social one; and the edict that banned stage plays was clearly a social expedient that concluded a year of political instability and suspicion. The Westminster riots between Christmas and the New Year issued in a charge of treason being read against key parliamentary leaders in January 1642. The King's presumptuous attempt at arresting the Five Members personally from the Speaker's chair only hastened his exit from an increasingly hostile capital later that same

month. Ideological fervor and public confusion exacerbated the breakdown of trust between King and Commons, inspiring propaganda and leading the country into a civil war practically by default. What all this meant for the theatre is illustrated in the parliamentary proclamation quoted in the first paragraph of this essay.

Such an uneasy, indeed dangerous, time dictated extreme measures to curb assembly, debate, and public demonstration. Social conformity is demanded at any time of crisis, and the more so in this period when one considers that England in 1642 was a pre-pluralistic society in which dissent was nearly synonymous with treason. The playhouses were bound to suffer because of their ambivalent relationship with the political authorities—authorities who intimated, even then, that a thriving theatre necessarily exploits current passions that are often threatening to the status quo. The terrible social and medical fact of pestilence was also a consideration, with sixty plague deaths reported on the day before Parliament proclaimed its closing order. After a two-year remission (1638-39) the plague had become virulent again, with theatre-closings in September 1640 and August 1641 of two and four months respectively.[5] Ever since the establishment of the first theatre in 1576, the playhouses had been forced to shut down repeatedly due to the pestilence. It was customary also to close them during any period of crisis or national mourning such as the infirmity and death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, Prince Henry in 1612, or the death of James in 1625. The prevailing political instability and civil unrest in 1642 certainly qualified as a national crisis.

Closing the theatres was a significant gesture in the direction of public order. In fact, Parliament had attempted to close the theatres earlier in 1642 but the motion had been quashed by the unlikely alliance of parliamentary leader John Pym (one of the notorious Five Members) and the royalist M.P. and poet Edmund Waller, as noted by another M.P. John Moore in his diary entry for January 26, 1642:

> Ordered, that the lord chamberlain be desired to move his majesty that in these times of calamity in Ireland and the distractions in this kingdom, that all interludes and plays be suppressed for a season. This was SIR EDWARD PARTRIDGE['s] motion, but laid aside by MR. PYM his seconding of MR. WALLER in alleging that it was their trade.[6]

Some parliamentarians were themselves theatregoers. Within a few days of the notation above, Peter Legh, M.P. for Newton, Lancashire, received a mortal wound in a playhouse fracas.[7] The general consensus that playing was a trade like any other certainly insulated the theatre against undue action.

The first we hear of the actors after Parliament's official prohibition is in a small pamphlet dated January 24, 1643. Entitled *The Actors Remonstrance or Complaint for the silencing of their profession, and banishment from their severall Play-houses* (Wing A453), the tract appeals to the respectable audiences of the Blackfriars, Phoenix, and Salisbury Court playhouses, acknowledging all former scurrility and announcing a concerted effort to "suite our language and action to the more gentile and naturall garbe of the times" (4). The cowed tone of this "remonstrance" fulfils the bleak prophecy of two years before, voiced in a pamphlet entitled *The Stage-Players Complaint* (Wing S5162; London 1641). Here in dialogue form two leading performers, Andrew Cane and Tim Reade, debate prevailing social upheavals that only complicate the usual plague-closings endured by the actors: "Monopolers are downe, Projectors are downe, the High Commission Court is downe, the Starre-Chamber is downe, & (some think) Bishops will downe: and why should we then that are farre inferior to any of those not justly feare lest we should be down too?" (4). Their fears had been realized, but the outright banning of public performances included a large measure of official indifference as well. In fact the playgoer Sir Humphrey Mildmay records attendance at plays in London through the summer and late fall of 1643 (Bentley *JCS*, II, 680).

What the players were up against was a welter of bureaucratic ordinances designed to interfere with playing rather than actually stop it. As Martin Butler notes in *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642*: "Parliament's hostility to plays was of an uneven intensity, and was most active at times of increased political instability." Butler goes on, "Not only was the 1642 order issued at a moment of unprecedented crisis, but the second wave of repression (the three orders of July 1647 to February 1648) coincided with renewed agricultural depression and economic distress, with the growing militancy of the Levellers, with parliament made desperately weak by its chaotic internal struggles between Presbyterians and Independents, with riots in Westminster and the army occupying London, and with the outbreak of the second Civil War."[8] The political stage, of which the London players were a part, was a crowded one. Parliament's problem with the actors was one of degree: how to prevent nonviolent, basically nonpartisan forms of assembly such as theatre performances without appearing tyrannical. Plays were carried on informally, and a blind eye was turned to both the players and their detractors. But after the Globe playhouse was torn down in 1644, the players faced increasing alienation—not to mention loss of earnings—and, according to a contemporary report,

even looked toward Parliament for help: "The Kings very players are come in, having left Oxford, and throwne themselves upon the mercy of the Parliament, they offer to take up the Covenant, & (if they may be accepted) are willing to put themselves into their service."[9] In fact, early in 1646, Parliament actually voted monies to be paid out to the King's theatrical company, including the salary they were owed from a time prior to the outbreak of war (see Hotson, 19-20).

If all this sounds contradictory, one must bear in mind that confusion and contradiction seemed to be the predominant political stance in this period—a period marked by extremist rhetorical posturing in which the opposition was denounced as "theatrical" and therefore unreal. Royalist sympathizers characterized parliamentarians as the actual purveyors of farce and illusion in the commonwealth, while the then moral majority delighted in extending the play metaphor further, as recorded in the *Weekly Account* of October 4, 1643

> The Players at the Fortune in Golding Lane, who had oftentimes been complained of, and prohibited the acting of wanton and licentious Playes, yet persevering in their forbidden Art, this day [Monday, October 2] there was set a strong guard of Pikes and muskets on both gates of the Playhouse, and in the middle of their play they unexpectedly did presse into the Stage upon them, who (amazed at these new Actors) it turned their Comedy into a Tragedy, and being plundered of all the richest of their cloathes, they left them nothing but their necessities now to act, and to learne a better life.[10]

Likewise, the newsbook *Mercurius Britanicus* (28 April-5 May 1645) could not help characterizing the Royalist headquarters in Oxford as "a three daies wonder, a kind of an *Anti-masque*, one of her *Majesties mock-shows*, which hath cost the *Kingdome* as much as all those at *White-hall*," while *Mercurius Anti-Britannicus* (correcting the misspelled title of its rival) wondered aloud about better days ahead for the King's theatrical company:

> For when the Stage at *Westminster*, where the two Houses now Act, is once more restored back againe to *Black-Fryers*, they have hope they shall returne to their old harmlesse profession of killing Men in Tragedies without Man-slaughter. Till then, they complaine very much that their profession is taken from them: and say 'twas never a good world, since the Lord *Viscount Say and Seale* succeeded *Joseph Taylor*.[11]

The satire is pungent, wishing that the parliamentary stage (where things are taken only too seriously) yield to the nearby Blackfriars stage (where passion is rightly subsumed in mimetic action). Thus, the parliamentary peer Say and Sele is an actor who believes his illusion is

reality, while professional actor and King's Man Joseph Taylor has a much greater sense of proportion. Perhaps, in terms of strict characterization, no better polemic exists than that symbolized by Joseph Taylor, star performer of the King's Company, and William Fiennes, Lord Say and Sele, leader of the opposition Peers. But the turmoil of the times clearly dictated character with the passion of tragedy or propaganda.

Public antagonism seems to have moderated enough by 1647 to allow what Bentley calls a "recrudescence of playing at several theatres" (*JCS*, VI, 112). Most notable was a production of Fletcher's *A King and No King* at Salisbury Court. Perhaps the irony of the title was too much for the collective insecurity of the times. In any case, this revival was cut short by strict order of Parliament, and the players were effectively returned to the vagabond status of pre-Elizabethan days. *Perfect Occurrences* (October 6, 1647) reports the raid on Salisbury Court along with the arrest of Tim Reade, he of *The Stage-Players Complaint*, while *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, for the same date, editorializes on what it considers to be Parliament's undoing:

> Though the House hindred the Players this weeke from playing the old Play, *King* and no *King*, at *Salisbury* Court, yet believe me,
> *He that does live, shall see another Age,*
> *Their Follies* stript *and* whipt *upon the* Stage.[12]

How could the puritanical *Mercurius Anti-Pragmaticus* restrain itself from a counterblast? Here is its editorial advice for 28 Oct.-4 Nov. 1647:

> I would counsell them [the actors] to imitate the heroick acts of those they have personated, and each help destroy his fellow, since they are not onely silenced, but branded with a name of infamie, ROGUES; but this word perhaps doth the lesse distaste them, on consideration that a famous Queene bestowed upon them the same Epithete.

Mercurius Pragmaticus responded in kind:

> Unlesse the *houses* take some speciall Order, *Stage-playes* will never downe while the heavenly *Buffones* of the Presbyterie are in Action, all whose *Sermons* want nothing but *Sence* and *Wit*, to passe for perfect *Comedies*. And therefore seeing the *houses* condemne all Stage-players in an Ordinance, to be prosecuted as *common-Rogues* at the *Sessions*, I see no reason why *Rogues* should be parted.[13]

The July 1647 ordinance expired with the new year, and plays were duly started up again. The social, economic, and military crisis of the summer before must surely have passed. In this regard, ordinance

limitations seem to suggest a modicum of moderation in addition to wishful thinking on the part of the authorities—wishful thinking that tries to put time between itself and its problems. But the hiatus seems to have done little to dissipate public enthusiasm for entertainment. And *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* for January 18-25, 1648 grudgingly describes the renewed popularity of London playgoing: "It is very observable, that on Sunday *January* 23, there were ten Coaches to heare Doctor *Ushur* at *Lincolns* Inne, but there were above sixscore Coaches on the last Thursday in Golden lane to heare the Players at the Fortune."[14]

A short-lived but vigorous revival of playing appears to have ensued. Hotson (31-34) traces out the circumstances of the King's Men at this time, as they proceed to pay off an old Blackfriars debt and look forward to treading the boards again. The year 1647 had also seen publication of the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio, brought out by Humphrey Moseley and Humphrey Robinson. Whether or not the "impoverished players," as R.C. Bald conceives the King's Men at this point, sought publication as a way to raise money, a collection of the most popular plays of pre-war England would not likely appear unless the times were propitious; and Bald calls the occurrence "a literary event of the first importance."[15] Doubtless, it was a theatrical event too. In addition to the plethora of commendatory verses that preface the actual plays, there is a genuine sense of pride in the list of actors—led off by the King's main men, Lowin and Taylor—that is included in the dedication; a dedication, incidentally, to Philip, the parliamentarian 4th Earl of Pembroke.

On February 5, 1648, John Evelyn recorded the following note in his diary: "I saw a *Tragie Comedie* acted in the *Cock-pit*, after there had been none of these diversions for many Yeares during the Warr."[16] On the same day, however, Parliament passed a further ordinance with its toughest rhetoric to date. Plays and players were to be physically interfered with, and spectators, as well as performers, were to incur the punishment of the state. Had the players overstepped the bounds of political decorum yet again? Parliament was demanding conformity in light of continuing unrest, but little action appears to have been taken on the strength of this February indictment. Indeed only after *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*—a full seven months later—reported that "Stage-playes were daily acted either at the *Bull* or *Fortune*, or the private House at *Salisbury-Court*,"[17] did Parliament lurch into action. What follows, in the winter of 1648/49, seems to have been a general

police dragnet, and Hotson reproduces a contemporary account of the happenings of January 1, 1649:

> The Souldiers seized on the Players on their Stages at Drury-lane, and at Salisbury Court. They went also to the Fortune in Golden-lane, but they found none there, but John Pudding dancing on the Ropes, whom they took along with them. In the meane time the Players at the Red Bull, who had notice of it, made haste away, and were all gone before they came, and tooke away all their acting cloathes with them. But at Salisbury Court they were taken on the Stage the Play being almost ended, and with many Linkes and lighted Torches they were carried to White-Hall with their Players cloathes upon their backs. In the way they oftentimes tooke the Crown from his head who acted the King, and in sport would oftentimes put it on again. . . . They made some resistance at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, which was the occasion that they were bereaved of their apperell, and were not so well used as those in Salisbury Court, who were more patient, and therefore at their Releasement they had their cloaths returned to them without the least diminution: After two days confinement, They were Ordered to put in Bayle, and to appeare before the Lord Mayor to answer for what they have done according unto Law.[18]

James Wright, in *Historia Histrionica*, focuses on the treatment of the King's Men at the Cockpit, in describing the same raid:

> In the winter before the King's Murder, 1648, They ventured to Act some Plays with as much caution and privacy as cou'd be, at the *Cockpit*. They continu'd undisturbed for three or four Days; but at last as they were presenting the Tragedy of the *Bloudy Brother*, (in which *Lowin* Acted Aubrey, *Tayler* Rollo, *Pollard* the Cook, *Burt* Latorch, and I think *Hart* Otto) a Party of Foot Souldiers beset the House, surprized 'em about the middle of the Play, and carried 'em away in their habits, not admitting them to Shift, to *Hatton-house* then a Prison, where having detain'd them sometime, they Plunder'd them of their Cloths and let 'em loose again.[19]

Wright makes no mention of "resistance" at the Cockpit, but the actual time (Wright uses old-style dating), loss of costuming, and rude treatment coincide in both accounts. Ironically, *The Bloody Brother*, better known as *Rollo Duke of Normandy*, would enjoy great success on the Restoration stage. Regardless, physical resistance on the part of the King's Men on New Year's Day 1649 was probably light. John Lowin, leading the troupe in the role of Aubrey, would have celebrated his seventy-second birthday less than a month before.

January 1, 1649 was also the day that Parliament accused Charles I of treason against the state. No doubt plays were plundered on this day in order to remove any further threat of public disorder in advance of trial and sentencing. The overwhelming performance of a king's

impeachment and execution was not something to be upstaged. In fact, a few years later Andrew Marvell would explicate the incident in terms of its theatrical suggestiveness: its "*Tragick Scaffold*," "memorable scene," and distinctly "*Royal Actor*."[20] But Charles's image as royal martyr was already circulating in printed form on the day of his death. The frontispiece of *Eikon Basilike—The Pourtraicture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings* (Wing E268; London, 1648) depicts Charles meditating on the crown of glory that awaits him in Heaven, even as he grasps a crown of thorns and spurns his earthly crown. To John Milton this "conceited portraiture," as he calls it, "drawn out to the full measure of a Masking Scene, and sett there to catch fools and silly gazers," was nothing more than belated pose-striking. Milton, having put away the "childish things" of his own *Mask at Ludlow* (1634), argued that "quaint Emblems and devices begg'd from the old Pageantry of some Twelf-nights entertainment at *Whitehall*, will doe but ill to make a Saint or Martyr."[21]

Eikon Basilike—the "King's Book"—enjoyed significant public support, however, and saw forty-three reprintings before the end of 1649. It provoked controversy as well, Milton's *Eikonoclastes* being only the most notable rebuke. The idea of theatrical prominence or shame was the dominating metaphor. Milton's effort was antedated by the anonymous *Eikon Alethine* (Wing E267; London 1649), which cast aspersions on Charles's authorship and included a frontispiece showing the clergy to be behind it all. A satirical verse beginning "The Curtain's drawne; All may perceive the plot," accompanied the picture of a clergyman, exposed and embarrassed upon a stage. The cartoon itself was titled with an ironic line from Horace: "Spectatum admissi risum teneatis"—at a private view, who could keep from laughing?[22] This attack was answered by the royalist *Eikon E Piste* (Wing E314; London, 1649). The stage metaphor continued with a cartoon depicting a behind-the-scenes view of the contemporary power struggle (see illustration, following page): a cavalier figure restrains a puritanical figure intent on replacing Charles's crown with a commoner's hat. Charles, of course, strikes the pose of a contemplative martyr with *memento mori* at elbow and a copy of *Eikon Basilike* opened before him. The cavalier places a fool's cap on the head of the renegade, from which proceeds the same (if misquoted) line from Horace used by *Eikon Alethine*. The verses too are an ironic echo of the previous pamphlet. Charles had lost the political struggle, but a war of theatrical image and representation continued over his dramatic exit.

The Curtain's drawne, all may perceive the plot:
And eas'ly see, what you'r my friend, have got.
Presumptuous coxcomb th'art, that thus would'st faine,
Murder the issue of the Kings owne braine.
If in the essence and the name of King,
Their is Divinity: know then, you bring,
That which conduceth to the Kings owne praise,
As much as Crown's of Gold, or wreath's of bayes.
Though as a King in's actions he did shine,
Yet in his writings he may be Divine.
Do not then say one skips into his throne;
The Docter and the King may both be one.

Frontispiece to *Eikon E. Piste.*

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A contemporaneous war of closet drama was carried on in earnest as well. Two anonymous playlets appear to be the most extreme: *A New Play Called Canterburie His Change of Diot* (Wing N702; London, 1641); and *The Famous Tragedie of Charles I. Basely Butchered* (Wing F384; London 1649). The *Famous Tragedie*—written, as Alfred Harbage notes, "in a white heat of rancor in the year of the regicide"[23]—spends its royalist energies satirizing Oliver Cromwell, but begins with a "Prologue to the Gentry" that is a virtual roll call of successful pre-war dramatists:

> Though *Johnson*, *Shakespeare*, *Gosse*, and *Devenant*,
> Brave *Sucklin*, *Beaumont*, *Fletcher*, *Shirley* want
> The life of action, and their learned lines
> Are loathed, by the Monsters of the times;
> Yet your refined Soules, can penetrate
> Their depth of merit, and excuse their Fate.

Cromwell is portrayed as the chief "Monster of the times," as he decries "that perilous disease, call'd *Speaking truth*" (3). A subplot details the dirty tactics of his army at Colchester; and, at the same time as the King is undergoing execution, Cromwell seduces the wife of Colonel Lambert with the grotesque promise, "Our time we'l spend in various delights, such as *Caligula*, were he againe on earth would covet to enjoy" (35). Likewise, the earlier play *Canterburie His Change of Diot*—attributed to the Leveller pamphleteer Richard Overton[24]—is really a satiric attack written in dialogue form. In it the hated Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, beheaded in 1645, undergoes a punning change of "diet" from cropped ears—ear-cropping was a current punishment for Puritan dissidents—to common humility; from the archbishopric to a birdcage. Both playlets are topical and sensational, and use dramatic form as a front for pure propaganda. Conflict in these playlets is strictly "either/or." Extremism is the only permissible stance. Their scurrility is conveyed through dramatic terms but any allusions to performance are a part of the satire itself and not a record of actual production (see Bentley, *JCS*, V, 1299, 1360). Contemporary polemicists recognized the power of fictional dialogue and were not above using it to report and distort the harsh realities of power politics. It was the fortunate who could maintain distance from these dangerous imbroglios, described pointedly by Sir Thomas More nearly a hundred and fifty years before:

> These matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scafoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther.[25]

And what of the poor men who had led the kingdom's entertainment industry since the days of James I? It seems as though the only recourse for the actors during this belligerent period was a pitiful gesture in the direction of Parliament. According to Hotson, "they offer[ed] to submit to a Parliament censor and to contribute a portion of their takings to the state."[26] But the professional players of England were *personae non gratae* during the period of collective guilt and insecurity that followed Charles's execution. By this time the theatre had gone underground, as recounted in Wright's memorable description:

> In *Oliver's* time, they used to Act privately, three or four Miles, or more, out of Town, now here, now there, sometimes in Noblemens Houses, in particular *Holland-house* at *Kensington*, where the Nobility and Gentry who met (but in no great Numbers) used to make a Sum for them, each giving a broad Peice, or the like. And *Alexander Gosse*, the Woman Actor at *Blackfriers*, (who had made himself known to Persons of Quality) used to be the Jackal and give notice of Time and Place.[27]

And of the individual players themselves? Wright is forthcoming (if a little gossipy) on the fate of some:

> Most of 'em, except *Lowin*, *Tayler* and *Pollard*, (who were superannuated) went into the King's Army, and like good Men and true, Serv'd their Old Master, tho' in a different, yet more honourable, Capacity.... I have not heard of one of these Players of any Note that sided with the other Party, but only *Swanston*, and he profest himself a Presbyterian, took up the Trade of a Jeweller, and lived in *Aldermanbury*. (7-8)

This testimony has something of typical war-story bravado about it. Wright mentions players who saw military action too, but of most interest is the obviously declining age of the more notable King's Men, along with what appears to be the treachery of their fellow shareholder Ellaerdt Swanston. Yet Swanston's name stands third behind Lowin and Taylor in the list of King's Men who signed the dedication of the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio of 1647. St. Mary's Aldermanbury, where Swanston lived, was also the time-honored residence and burial place of Heminges and Condell—Shakespeare's first editors, and active members of the King's Men in 1624 when Swanston joined the company. It is also interesting that, as a jeweller, Swanston's trade would be related to that of other key players free of the Goldsmith's Company: Robert Armin, Andrew Cane, and John Lowin. In fact Cane, "the *quondam* foole of the Red Bull," comes in for satiric treatment as a coiner of debased royalist currency in the parliamentary newsbook *Mercurius Britanicus*.[28] A notorious "parliamentary" player was John Harris, sometime printer and, it would appear, full-time

rogue whose life, as Rollins puts it, "reads like a picaresque novel."[29] He stood on the scaffold at Charles's execution, amassed wealth through a particular talent for forging Cromwell's signature, and was finally hanged in 1660 for theft and burglary among other crimes. To find a "role" in this confusing period seems to have been a real problem for the professional players of what appeared to be a bygone age. And prosecution for playing could be a matter of stiff, perfunctory example when invoked; as in the case of Charles Cutts, barber of Westminster, who was fined £40 on November 13, 1650, "for being taken redy drest in cloths and goeinge to act a stage-playe, as hee confesseth himself."[30]

London playhouses suffered the punishment of the state as well, with the Fortune and Salisbury Court theatres both torn down in the same year as the King's execution. The Globe had been destroyed five years before in 1644. A series of later manuscript notes discovered in a copy of the 1631 edition of Stowe's *Annals* rehearses the destruction of the individual theatres. For example: "The playhouse in Salsbury Court, in fleetstreete, was pulled downe by a company of Souldiers set on by the Sectuaries of these sad times"; as well, the fate of Shakespeare's indoor stage: "The Blacke Friers plaiers play house in Blacke Friers, London, which had stood many yeares, was pulled downe to the ground on Munday the 6 daye of August. 1655. and tennements built in the rome."[31] The only theatre to maintain some semblance of a repertory throughout the period was the Red Bull in Clerkenwell. It enjoyed the geographical luxury of being somewhat beyond the pale, and Bentley (*JCS*, VI, 231) speculates about the possibility of "inside help" on behalf of this particular theatre—"inside help" that appears to be corroborated by the priviledged information of Wright's *Historia Histrionica*: "At Christmas, and at Bartlemew-fair, they used to Bribe the Officer who Commanded the Guard at *Whitehall*, and were thereupon connived at to Act for a few Days, at the *Red Bull*" (9). But the emasculated performances that were generally permitted at the Red Bull during this time seem to be something of a punishment in themselves. Thus Francis Kirkman's apologetic preface to his collection of contemporary "drolls":

> When the publique Theatres were shut up, and the Actors forbidden to present us with any of their Tragedies, because we had enough of that in earnest; and Comedies, because the Vices of the Age were too lively and smartly represented; then all that we could divert our selves with were these humours and pieces of Plays, which passing under the Name of a merry conceited Fellow, called *Bottom the Weaver*, *Simpleton the Smith*, *John Swabber*, or some such Title, were all that was permitted. . . . I have seen the *Red Bull* Play-House, which was a large one, so full,

> that as many went back for want of room as had entered; and as meanly as you may now think of these Drols, they were then Acted by the best Comedians then and now in being.[32]

Clearly, an epoch had passed. What succeeded on the public stage was a kind of theatre very different from that of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Massinger: the abridged "drolls," Davenant's "Opera," declamations on patriotic themes, and the ever-popular gymnastic of rope dancing. Davenant had lost his governorship of the Cockpit theatre in 1641 because of his part in the Army Plot against Parliament. Royalist in sympathy, he was imprisoned from 1650-52, but returned his energies to the stage upon release to produce unthreatening musical spectacles such as *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), and the politically correct (at least by Commonwealth standards) *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658).[33] He was aided in his efforts by the endorsement of Bulstrode Whitelocke, an influential M.P. and Cromwellian confidant. As Master of the Revels for the Middle Temple (1628-34), Whitelocke had been part of the production team for Shirley's royal masque *The Triumph of Peace* (1633). No doubt with Whitelocke's blessing, Shirley even composed an interregnum masque, *Cupid and Death* (1653), featuring a Host and a Chamberlain who ruminate on the misbehavior of Cupid's entourage. The criticism is a thinly-veiled glance at the former administration: "These rantings were the badges of our gentry. / But all their dancing days are done, I fear."[34] By the time Thomas Heywood's *Apology For Actors* enjoyed reprinting in 1658, newly titled *The Actor's Vindication*, the scene was set for a return to normalized relations between public entertainment and political authority.[35]

A period of combativeness had played itself out on a public stage of bureaucratic confusion and instability. The passion of the stage had always been suggestive, and both sides used its metaphorical vehemence for propagandist effect in real political struggle. Extremist passions dictated heightened rhetoric and theatrical pose-strikings in order to convey a strong self-image while destroying the image of a polemic political opposition. In this regard, each side attempted to teach the other how to "act," at the same time as it criticized the other's "performance." With the restoration of the Crown, however, came the revival of a nonconfrontational theatre, and the drama which was to ensue would be very different from that which had gone before.

In the early summer of 1660, Sir Henry Herbert opened his office book again with the satisfied preamble,

> Whereas the allowance of Playes, the ordering of Players and Playmakers, and the Permission for Erecting of Playhouses, Hath, time out of minde whereof the memory of man is not to the Contrary, belonged to the Master of his Majesties Office of the Revells. . . (81).

But Herbert failed to consolidate and reassert his influence over a new style of theatre where entrepreneurs like Davenant and Killigrew were to flourish. His official petition, characterizing Davenant as "a person who exercised the office of Master of the Revells to Oliver the Tyrant"[36] was an embittered and inappropriate polemic strategy in what was now a period of assuagement. The stage had become polite and exclusive. But the theatres of London paid a numerical price for relinquishing their hold on the popular mind. According to the nostalgic account in *Historia Histrionica*, the pre-war theatres were decidedly more successful: "The Town much less than at present, could then maintain Five Companies, and yet now Two can hardly subsist" (5). The two theatre companies of which Wright speaks competed under Carolean patent for a fashionable audience that craved unthreatening entertainment. This was the new politic of the renewed theatre—a theatre that was less polemic, more urbane, and relatively homogeneous in restored royalist ideology.

NOTES

1. *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, ed. Joseph Quincy Adams (New Haven: Yale UP, 1917), 39.
2. The parliamentary order is reproduced in its entirety by Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941-68), II, 690. Throughout, when quoting from old-spelling texts, I silently regularize all *i/j* and *u/v* reversals as well as the use of long *s*.
3. See Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1928), and Hyder E. Rollins, "A Contribution to the History of the English Commonwealth Drama," *SP*, 18 (1921), 267-333. A useful recent survey is Lois Potter's "The Plays and Playwrights: 1642-1660," in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, IV, ed. Lois Potter et al (London: Methuen, 1981), 261-304.
4. Key works of these prolific authors include: Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964); Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965); Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981). On drama and doctrine specifically, see Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981).
5. For specific data, see Bentley, *JCS*, II, 652-72. Earlier plague records are included in E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (1932; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), IV, 345-51.
6. See *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, ed. W.H. Coates et al (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), I, 182.
7. The incident is traced out by Martin Butler, "Two Playgoers, and the Closing of the London Theatres, 1642," *Theatre Research International*, 9 (1984), 93-99.

8. Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 138-39. Primarily a revaluation of the drama of Massinger, Brome, and Shirley, Butler's book includes compelling chapters on contemporary politics and socialization. Another widely-informed study along similar lines is Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980).
9. From the newsbook *Perfect Occurrences of Parliament* (19-26 September, 1645); cited by Hotson, 19.
10. Cited by Rollins, 277-78. It should be noted that *The Weekly Account* did make feeble attempts at impartiality; see Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620-1660* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1961), 53.
11. Both *Mercurius* quotations are cited by Hotson, 9, 19. On Joseph Taylor, see Bentley, *JCS*, II, 590-98. Throughout, I am indebted to this volume for specific biographical data concerning the players. See also Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984).

    The shadowy figure of Lord Saye and Sele is being illuminated gradually by historical revaluations of the period. For now, see entry in *DNB*; also *The Complete Peerage*, ed. George Edward Cokayne (London: St. Catherine Press, 1936), XI, 486-88.
12. The quotation is cited by Bentley, *JCS*, VI, 113, who traces the controversy, 112-13.
13. Both *Mercurius* passages are quoted by Hotson, 28.
14. Cited by Hotson, 29.
15. R.C. Bald, *Bibliographical Studies in the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio of 1647* (Oxford: Bibliographical Society, 1938), 1. On the condition of the King's Men, see p. 6.
16. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), II, 539.
17. September 12-19, 1648; cited by Rollins, 291.
18. *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, January 2-9, 1649; cited by Hotson, 40-41.
19. James Wright, *Historia Histrionica: An Historical Account of the English Stage* (1699; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1974), 8-9. See also Bentley, *JCS*, I, 109.
20. See Andrew Marvell, "*An* Horatian *Ode upon* Cromwel's *Return from* Ireland" (ll.53-64), in *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 3rd Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), I, 91-94.
21. John Milton, *Eikonoclastes*, in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, III, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New Haven: Yale UP, 1962), 342, 343.
22. The Latin tag is from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, l. 5: "spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?" I have translated it loosely with the help of Smith Palmer Bovie, *The Satires and Epistles of Horace* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959).
23. Alfred Harbage, *Cavalier Drama* (1936; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 179.
24. See Don M. Wolfe, "Unsigned Pamphlets of Richard Overton," *HLQ*, 21 (1958), 167-201. Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 238-42, and Heinemann, 245-47, provide interesting if at times overenthusiastic commentary on this playlet.
25. Sir Thomas More, *The History of Richard III*, vol. II of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963), 81.
26. Hotson, 43. Hotson reprints (43-44) the petition of the players to Parliament.
27. Wright, 9. Hotson suggests (23-24) that Wright's account describes activity of 1647, but the strictly covert nature of the circumstances must surely place the activity described here after Charles's execution, and "in *Oliver's* time."
28. Reported by Hotson, 7.
29. Rollins, 274. See also the account of Harris's later career in J.B. Williams, *A History of English Journalism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 106-7.
30. *Middlesex County Records*, III, ed. J.C. Jeaffreson (London: Middlesex County Records Society, 1888), 98.
31. Both examples are quoted by Bentley, *JCS*, VI, 114, and 41-42 respectively. Bentley, in this volume, traces the fate of all the London playhouses. The manuscript source for the information is at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Phillipps MS. 11613.
32. Francis Kirkman, ed. *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport* (Wing W3220a; London, 1673), A2r-A2v.
33. See Arthur H. Nethercot, *Sir William D'avenant: Poet Laureate and Playwright-Manager* (1938; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).
34. James Shirley, *Cupid and Death*, in *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, ed. William Gifford and Alexander Dyce (London: John Murray, 1833), VI, 348. Whitelocke's

biography is by Ruth Spalding, *The Improbable Puritan: A Life of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605-1675* (London: Faber, 1975).

35. See Richard H. Perkinson, Introd., *Apology For Actors* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1941).
36. Adams, 122.