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"VERY WELL LIKED"
SIR HENRY HERBERT AND PROFESSIONAL DRAMA AT THE COURTS OF JAMES I AND CHARLES I

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ABSTRACT

The office-book of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623–1642, is a key document for our understanding of early modern English theatre. It contains details of many of the plays which he commissioned from professional players for performance at the courts of James I and Charles I—details we often do not have from other sources, including titles, which members of the royal family were present, and which plays were liked or not liked by his royal masters. These have never been systematically examined to see, for example, how they related to the current repertoires of companies under his authority or whether he arranged them in what we would recognize as extended events, as in the staging of *The Taming of the Shrew* and its sequel, *The Tamer Tamed*, a day apart; Thomas Heywood's two parts of *Fair Maid of the West*; and Herbert's multiple showings of the now neglected two-part plays of Lodowick Carlell. We can also trace something of court taste correlating with the play-buying of the day, especially in the choice of works from the "Elizabethan revival" of the 1630s. Only parts of the office-book have survived, so there are large gaps in all of these narratives. But they do show us something of how the *commercial* side of 1620s and 1630s court theatre complemented the much more widely studied masques, ballets, etc. of the era which the court generated for itself.

KEYWORDS

court plays; Sir Henry Herbert; office-book; James I; Charles I; Queen Henrietta Maria; King's Men; Lady Elizabeth's Men; Queen Henrietta's Men; Beeston's Boys; Caroline theatre; royal taste; "Elizabethan revival"; insolence of plays

HERBERT'S OFFICE-BOOK: CONTEXTS

Sir Henry Herbert's office-book stands alongside Philip Henslowe's *Diary* as one of our key sources of information about early modern English theatre. As Master of the Revels to James I and Charles I Herbert oversaw the theatrical profession from 1623 to the closing of the theatres in 1642, licensing its plays and playhouses on behalf of his royal masters.[1] His office-book is most commonly consulted for what it tells us about his practice in censoring the plays he licensed for public performance.[2] But it also affords us many insights into what was, in fact, his primary responsibility: the selection and presentation of drama from the public playhouses to entertain the royal court. For reasons which will become apparent, this side of the office-book has avoided the detailed study which the censorship has received. Yet I suggest that we can learn more from it about court theatre in the period than has commonly been supposed and that is the focus of this essay. What I shall be doing is, in effect, defining the field, showing what it amounts to, and suggesting its potential, rather than engaging with what others have said about it, which is (as I have said) very little.

One of Herbert's predecessors, Edmund Tilney (in post 1579–1610), was the first Master of the Revels to hold a Special Commission, from which he derived his authority to control the public stage. This gave him authority to license all "plays, players and playmakers, together with their playing places, to order and reform, authorize and put down" (and to make money for doing so); but it was not its primary purpose, which is more truly suggested by the provision that the players must "appear before him with all such plays, tragedies, comedies or shows as they shall have in readiness, or mean to set forth and them to present and recite before our said servant."[3] They were required to rehearse their plays before the Master on demand. This allowed him to assess their potential for presentation at court, something he would then work on in subsequent rehearsals. Thomas Heywood speaks in *An Apology for Actors* of the former priory of St. John's in Clerkenwell, where Tilney housed the Revels Office, and "where our court plays have been in late days yearly rehearsed, perfected and corrected before they come to the public view of the prince and the nobility."[4] Tilney was required to leave St. John's in 1607, but he and his successors found quarters suitable for such rehearsals. By August 1612 "it was

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1 He formally resumed office after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, but was never able fully to reassert his authority in that era. See N. W. Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623–73* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88–107. This volume contains the most authoritative edition we have of Herbert's office-book (133–217). Bawcutt gives each entry from it a number in **bold** and I cite them accordingly (**43**, **100**, etc.). References not in bold are to page numbers within the book. All old spelling in Bawcutt's edition, and elsewhere, has been silently modernized.

2 See Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of Early Modern English Drama*, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

3 From Edmund Tilney's Special Commission, 24 December 1581; cited from *English Professional Theatre 1530–1660*, ed. Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71. Tilney's successors, Sir George Buc (1610–1622) and Sir John Astley (1622–1623) received identical Special Commissions. Herbert bought out Astley, but technically served as his deputy and so was not granted such a commission in his own right.

4 Cited from G. E. Bentley, *The Seventeenth-century Stage: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 14.

located between Paul's Wharf and Paul's Chain. It was moved at least once more in the period; Herbert mentions in the Restoration that it had been located in the parish of St. Mary-le-Bow in the parish of Cheapside."[5]

In some respects, Tilney's responsibility for court theatricals was more circumscribed from the 1590s onwards. Like his predecessors he and other personnel in the Revels Office had initially been responsible for most entertainments which the court staged for itself, notably masques. But as these became more costly much more senior figures at court assumed responsibility, usually the Lord Chamberlain or Master of the Horse. And the business of staging them was taken on by the Office of the Works, with the Revels Office handling only relatively minor items such as the provision of copper wiring for lighting. Moreover, once James I came to the throne, royal courts proliferated, but the Revels Office was not responsible for the new ones: Queen Anne had her own court, eventually settling in Somerset House; and Prince Henry's court was located in St. James's Palace. The younger royal children, Princess Elizabeth and Prince Charles, would also in time have their own establishments. In consequence, as John Astington points out: "The Revels staff did not carry out all the work in creating court theatre spaces, and many plays were staged entirely without their participation. . . . Prince Henry, for example, kept his own court, with his own budget and his own household staff and officers, through whom he might commission play performances without any participation from the Revels Office."[6]

Nevertheless, the Masters of the Revels retained an important core function in the courts of the early Stuart monarchs, where the consumption of theatre expanded prodigiously. As W. R. Streitberger notes: "Of the twenty-three plays staged at court in 1604–1605, thirteen were prepared by the Revels . . . in 1611–1612 forty plays were staged at court, thirteen of which were presented by the Revels. The pattern is similar in the Caroline period. Of at least twenty-three plays at court in 1631–1622, thirteen were staged by the Revels, and of at least thirty-seven in 1632–1633, twelve were under Revels supervision."[7] Thirteen plays is about double what Tilney and the Revels Office had been used to staging by the end of Elizabeth's reign—so their responsibilities in this area increased significantly, even if this only represented a proportion of the total offered.

Moreover, while it is true that the Stuart queens and royal children had the means to commission play performances independently of the Master of the Revels, it must be doubtful if they did so entirely without his advice. Except for the period 1604–1608, in which Samuel Daniel and others acted as licensors for the Children of the Queen's Revels, the Masters continued to license all the plays of companies under royal patronage [i.e., all those usually resident in London], and had an incomparably better grasp of the theatrical scene than anyone else. And *someone* must have kept an overview of all the performances being commissioned at the various courts, to prevent awkward clashes. The Masters of the Revels were the only royal officers paid allowances to attend court for the *entire* Revels season (broadly, 1 November

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5 Cited from W. R. Streitberger, ed., *Collections Vol. XIII: Jacobean and Caroline Revels Accounts, 1603–1642* (Oxford: The Malone Society, 1986), xiv. See also Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship*, **R34.**

6 John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

7 Streitberger, *Revels Accounts*, xxi–xxii.

to the moveable February feast of Shrovetide)—allowances eventually expanded to cover the dates of all performances, whenever they fell.

The first accounts which Sir Henry Herbert returned covered the Revels seasons of 1623/1624, 1624/1625, and 1625/1626; for himself and his four attendants he claimed respectively for 103 days and 24 nights, 122 days and 24 nights, and 114 days (plus in each case an extra eight days' attendance at Easter and Whitsuntide) "for rehearsals, and making choice of plays and comedies, reforming them."[8] He may not have been directly responsible for all the plays being presented, but he was omnipresent wherever they were staged, often in a supervisory capacity, possibly sometimes in more a ceremonial role, but always the most professionally-informed person present.

Herbert's role expanded even further once Queen Henrietta Maria's love of theatre combined with that of Charles I. From 1628/1629 the Revels season was formally expanded beyond its Jacobean limits; under a warrant from the Lord Chamberlain, Herbert was paid for attendance from 30 September rather than the traditional 31 October.[9] Although always listed as a special item, this extra payment was claimed every subsequent year; it recognized that plays had been staged as early as September in recent years, and sometimes between Shrovetide and Easter. The month's added allowance covered all attendance outside the Revels season, whenever it fell. The royal couple's love of theatre was such that it was no longer to be confined to the traditional dark depths of winter. Nor indeed was it confined to court premises. Between 1632 and 1638 Henrietta Maria attended several performances by the King's Men at the Blackfriars playhouse (**231**, **291, 295**).[10] It is highly unlikely that these were *public* performances; attendance would have been restricted to the queen and her invited guests. For events in 1636 and 1638 the King's Men were specifically paid as if they had performed at court, while Herbert himself actually listed the latter as one staged by the Revels.[11]

HERBERT'S OFFICE-BOOK: ITS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Much of this information is, of necessity, derived from the records that have survived best—those of payments to playing companies and to the royal offices responsible for creating the playing-spaces used, as well as the annual claims for payment put in by Herbert. More often than not this tells us how many plays each company may have presented in the previous season, but not precisely when—or what they were. In Herbert's term of office we are lucky enough to have better documentation of titles between 1633 and 1642, particularly in respect of the King's Men, than we do for most of the previous fifty years, all admirably explained

8 Ibid., 93. The other officers of the Revels, who played no part in the licensing of plays or their selection and rehearsal for court, but dealt only with practicalities of staging Revels-sponsored plays, each claimed for approximately one third of Herbert's attendances.

9 Ibid, 96.

10 Herbert's entries **231** and **291** were not known to Bentley when he drew up his list of Henrietta Maria's visits to the Blackfriars. See Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 1:48–49.

11 Streitberger, *Revels Accounts*, xxiii.

in Streitberger's *Revels Accounts*. But the one dimension this lacks is the unique and more personal record that Sir Henry Herbert made in his office-book of those court performances for which he was directly responsible; that is the focus of this paper.

We need, however, to start by recognizing that we do not have Herbert's office-book in full. The original has disappeared completely and what remains comprises transcripts made by scholars and antiquarians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the most notable being the Shakespearean scholar, Edmund Malone. This is all explained by Bawcutt in his admirable edition.[12] None of the transcripts was complete, nor indeed did all transcribers attempt to reproduce Herbert's wording precisely. People extracted what interested them, which has left not only gaps but also a degree of distortion in what remains. As Eleanor Collins explains:

> The opening years of Herbert's office received much attention: forty office-book entries are recorded in 1623 and fifty-six in 1624 by Malone and Ord, while entries deriving from Ord's transcriptions are also recorded by Chalmers and Burn. . . . These numbers drop off to an average of seven records a year from 1626 to 1628, rising slightly until the numbers peak again at twenty-three records in 1633, before gradually diminishing through to 1642. The numbers are affected by factors such as plague closures, but when closer attention is paid to the detail, patterns begin to emerge. Attention to the King's Men provides one example. In the opening years with which the broadest range of transcribers are engaged, a total of ten records pertaining to the King's Men in 1623 compares with nineteen records relating to other companies. . . . In 1624 the ratio is similar: fifteen entries for the King's Men; thirty-two for the other companies. . . . Yet from 1626 the pattern of extant records tells a very different story. Until 1628, there are four or five times as many entries for the King's Men as there are for other companies, and in 1629 over twice as many.[13]

Malone's interest in the King's Men, with their lingering Shakespearean association, may thus have left serious distortions. Bawcutt calculates that "for the sections of the office-book where Malone is virtually the sole witness . . . we may have only a sixth or less of the full contents."[14]

Collins further notes that:

> The frequency of court performances [by the King's Men] also plays its part in this narrative. Malone pays close attention to these, recording every extant record relating to them with only one exception. Aside from a 1636 appearance by the Salisbury Court company, every court performance by a professional troupe that Malone transcribes relates to the King's Men or Cockpit company.[15]

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[12] Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship*, 13–26.

[13] See Eleanor Collins, "Ghosts in the Archive: Edmond Malone, Craven Ord, and the Missing Texts of Henry Herbert's 'Office-Book'," *Critical Quarterly* 55.4 (2013): 34.

[14] Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship*, 21.

[15] Collins, "Ghosts in the Archive," 38. Between 1629 and 1636, the Cockpit playhouse was occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria's Men; between 1636 and 1642 Beeston's Boys played there. Both companies were regularly called to court.

Malone wrote that "his Manuscript does not furnish us with a regular account of the plays exhibited at court every year."[16] Independent evidence suggests that Prince Charles's Men, based at the Salisbury Court, the Red Bull, and then the Fortune over these years, also performed at court at least sixteen times between 1633 and 1640, while the King's Revels played there at least three times in 1635–1636.[17] But there is scarcely any trace of these performances in the extant transcripts, while a sense of the Caroline theatre as dominated by the King's and Queen's Men can be read directly from Malone's presentation of the office-book.[18]

The omissions which Malone notes were almost certainly, in good part, because Herbert's own attention was primarily focused on that proportion of court performances for which he and the Revels Office were specifically responsible, notably those that fell during the traditionally intensive Revels period between Christmas and Shrovetide (the latter date extending to Easter under Charles). The focus on the King's, and latterly also Queen's, Men must reflect his own choice of performers at these times. And that focus has been intensified by later transcribers, who excluded material that was of less interest to them. We need therefore to bear in mind that what has survived in Herbert's office-book about the court performance of plays has been selected for us by people with their own agendas, including Herbert himself. One rather curious consequence of all this is that the surviving record of court performances falls into three distinct sections rather than spreading evenly through the whole book: the last three years of the reign of James I (1623–1626); 1633–1634; and, more diffusely than the other two, from 1636 to 1642. We need to be very careful in all this, therefore, about assuming that what the office-book reveals is typical of early Stuart theatre, or even of early Stuart *court* theatre. Even so, it is of particular interest.

Let me say in advance that, in a broad survey of this nature, it will not be possible to comment in detail on the choice of many specific plays. Where I do so comment, it is in the spirit of inviting others to look for a range of possible agendas at work behind Herbert's records.

THE JACOBEAN PERIOD

1622–1623.

Sir Henry Herbert took over Sir John Astley's office-book when he bought the position of Master of the Revels from him, and the surviving entries from May 1622 to early July 1623 (items **5** to **35**) were actually made by Astley himself or by his deputy, Sir Francis Markham, though the transcribers often did not understand this. Only from 23 July 1623 did Herbert start making his own entries. But the earlier entries allow us to see that Astley left him the example of listing court play performances, as probably his own predecessors had done before. Astley started a list of "Revels and plays performed and acted at Christmas in the court at Whitehall, 1622"

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[16] Edmond Malone and James Boswell, eds., *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators* (London: C. Baldwin, 1821), 3:228.

[17] See Astington, *English Court Theatre*, Appendix: *Performances at Court 1558–1642*, 221–67.

[18] Collins, "Ghosts in the Archive," 38.

on 26 December 1622 (**19**), and subsequently recorded "Upon St. Stephen's Day at night *The Spanish Curate* [by Fletcher and Massinger] was acted by the King's Players" (**20**); "Upon St. John's Day at night was acted *The Beggar's Bush* [also by Fletcher and Massinger] by the King's Players" (**21**); "Upon Childermas Day [28 December] no play" (**22**); "Upon the Sunday following [29 December] *The Pilgrim* [Fletcher] was acted by the King's Players" (**23**); "Upon New Year's Day at night, *The Alchemist* [Jonson] was acted by the King's Players" (**27**);[19] "Upon Twelfth Night, the masque being put off, the play called *A Vow and a Good One* [anon., lost] was acted by the Prince's Servants" (**28**); "At Candlemas [2 February] *Malvolio* [Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*] was acted at court, by the King's Servants" (**31**).[20]

There are several points of note. One is that Astley was conscious here of following a strong Revels tradition of packed play performances on the festival days immediately after Christmas. Under Elizabeth, plays did not begin until St. Stephen's Day, but either St. John's Day or Childermas [the Feast of the Holy Innocents] usually then followed in rapid succession, with New Year's Day and Twelfth Night both being strong fixed points. Candlemas at the beginning of February became a regular additional date under James, and then there would be one or two dates at Shrovetide (Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday) before Ash Wednesday and Lent. Also under James (and later), the Twelfth Night play was commonly replaced by masques, barriers, or other courtly productions. And as royal households proliferated other items might be added to this schedule, either earlier in December or later in January and February.

We do not know why Childermas was passed over in 1622, but Astley evidently thought that some replacement was required before New Year's Day and so chose the Sunday: playhouses closed on the sabbath, but the court followed its own rules. Jonson's masque, *Time Vindicated to Himself and to His Honours*, due for Twelfth Night, had to be postponed until 19 January, because the king was unwell. This perhaps gave Prince Charles's Men an unexpected opportunity to make an appearance; the Master of the Revels quite often had to make last-minute changes to the schedule. The season is otherwise totally dominated by the King's Men. But this is not a distortion created by Malone and the others. We know that Prince Charles sponsored plays at his own St. James's Palace between September and Christmas, but have no idea how many or what players were involved. During the dates Astley covers, we know that Lady Elizabeth's Men performed twice; and between February and March the King's Men performed four unnamed plays. But during the immediate Christmas season, Astley's list

[19] Although England was still on the Julian calendar, and recognized the legal first day of the year as Lady Day (25 March), 1 January (when gifts were traditionally exchanged) was celebrated as New Year's Day.

[20] Whitehall Palace was James's principal residence and centre of government. Most Jacobean court plays were staged there, either in the Hall (approx. 100ft x 60ft), the Great Chamber (60ft x 40ft), or the Cockpit—not to be confused with the commercial playhouse of that name built in 1617. The Hall and Great Chamber had to have stages and tiered seating installed, with extra lighting, when used for plays. The smaller, circular Cockpit also had to be adapted: it was still otherwise used for cock fighting. Masques were normally mounted in the Banqueting House, initially a wooden structure built in 1607 and latterly (after a 1619 fire) Inigo Jones's surviving building, first used in 1622. See Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 40–55, and for details of which spaces were used on specific nights, his appendix, 221–67.

appears to be complete and might well have been fully occupied by the King's Men, but for the postponement of the masque.[21]

The choice of plays is also of interest. We know that Astley had only licensed *The Spanish Curate* on 24 October 1622, so it was a new item in the King's Men's repertory. *The Beggar's Bush* is not known before this date and is probably another fairly recent product of the prolific Fletcher/Massinger collaboration. *The Pilgrim* had been performed at court only the year before, so Astley had presumably taken note that it had been well received. *The Alchemist* had become a mainstay of the King's Men's repertoire; we know it was performed at court in 1613 and in 1631 Herbert chose it as the play for his own winter benefit from the King's Men (**226**).[22] *Malvolio* was the title by which Charles I knew *Twelfth Night*—he wrote it into his own copy of the Shakespeare Second Folio. It too was probably an established favourite and associated with the festive season; it is first recorded on Candlemas [2 February]—the festival date Astley assigned it—at the Middle Temple 1602; and it was also brought to court in 1618. So, out of the five, there was a mix of three quite recent works all involving the favourite of the era, Fletcher, and two dependable old standbys; three of the items are known to have aired at court before. In this sense Astley, only newly in position, was playing it very safe.

But it is also worth noting that the first three items all have Spanish connections: *The Spanish Curate* was based on a newly-translated Spanish novel, *Gerardo, the Unfortunate Spaniard*, and *The Pilgrim* on a Lope de Vega novella; *The Beggar's Bush* is set in the territories of Brabant and Flushing, parts of the Spanish Netherlands which had featured in the Dutch struggle for independence. Even *The Alchemist* has a character who sees through its confidence tricksters but reveals his own limitations while dressed in a Spanish costume. This Spanish interest should come as no surprise, since Spain was very much at the forefront of the court's mind. On the one hand Catholic forces backed by Spain had driven James's daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband, the Elector Palatine (known as the Palsgrave), out of the kingdom of Bohemia which they had claimed, and latterly out of their home-base, the Palatinate itself. There was strong support in the country for military action against Spain to reclaim these territories, but it was resisted by James, who was negotiating a match between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta as a way of resolving the continent's religious controversies. It was inevitable, therefore, that plays relating to Spain would be seen at the time through these lenses. It is more difficult, however, to determine whether specific plays could implicitly be read as arguing for particular courses of action. What is notable, however, is that Astley seems to have had no compunction about licensing such plays or bringing them to court.

1623–1624.

Herbert seems to have followed Astley's suit. He similarly drew up a list of the plays he was sponsoring at court, though this was to include "all such plays as were acted at court in 1623

[21] Ibid., 254–55.

[22] The King's Men kept Herbert happy with offers of summer and winter benefits, from which he took the daily profits of a public performance—choosing the play himself. His choice of *The Alchemist* must speak to its continuing popularity (**178**).

and 1624" (**57**), between August one year and July the next. The first item to survive is: "Upon Michaelmas night [29 September 1623] at Hampton Court, *The Maid in the Mill*, by the King's Company" (**59**).[23] Herbert had in fact licensed this "new comedy," also based on *Gerardo, the Unfortunate Spaniard*, and written by Fletcher and William Rowley, exactly a month earlier (**54**); and immediately recognized it—by two veteran professionals—as having court potential. The Michaelmas performance obviously went over well, since we find "Upon Allhallows night [1 November] at St. James's, the prince being there only, *The Maid in the Mill* again, with reformations" (**66**). The reference to Charles "being there only" means that he was the sole member of the royal family present; there would of course also have been courtiers and guests in the audience. But this was something of a command performance for the prince, at his own court, and he may well have chosen the play himself. "[W]ith reformations" is intriguing. It most likely refers to alterations Herbert required following the Michaelmas performance, perhaps in line with comments by the king or the prince—"choice-making and reforming" as his attendance claims attested. These would have been attended to in rehearsals before the play was staged again at court. No such "reformations" are recorded in respect of other plays, but it is likely they were not uncommon when plays came to court more than once.[24]

The next entry reads: "Upon the fifth of November, at Whitehall, the prince being there only, *The Gypsy*, by the Cockpit company" (**67**). The fifth of November was the anniversary of King James's escape from the Gunpowder Plot, remembered in prayers and sermons but also celebrated at court. The king's absence was probably down to illness—he was increasingly frail and unable to walk unaided. The play was Middleton and Rowley's *The Spanish Gypsy*, the last play licensed by Astley (**35**), so some five months old. The company then occupying the Cockpit playhouse were Lady Elizabeth's Men, also known as the Queen of Bohemia's. Their presence would inevitably have reminded everyone of the situation on the continent outlined in the last section. Indeed, Charles himself and the king's favourite, Buckingham, had returned only the previous month from a bizarre trip to Madrid, having failed to resolve the marriage negotiations. Their failure was widely celebrated on their return and they themselves were turning against James's policy. The play itself does not directly touch on these matters, but its Spanish sources and themes would inevitably have evoked the recent trip. Herbert might well have consulted Charles before agreeing to invite such a play, and indeed this company, to court at that time.[25]

The packed post-Christmas festivities started with a sure-fire winner: "Upon St. Stephen's Day, the king and prince being there, *The Maid in the Mill*, by the King's Company. At Whitehall"

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[23] Herbert actually calls it *The Maid of the Mill* in each of its three performance entries.

[24] These "reformations" are to be distinguished in purpose from those Herbert required when licensing new plays for public performance (see, e.g. **49**, **78**, **145**). Those related to material that was objectionable for one reason or another. These related to making a play even more acceptable at court. There may be an example in the scene added to Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* (1617). See Richard Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 114–15.

[25] In January 1624 Herbert ordered major changes in Thomas Drue's *The Duchess of Suffolk* (**78**). This was written for the company patronized by Princess Elizabeth's husband, the Palsgrave, and clearly alludes to the couple's plight. It was never shown at court.

(**73**). This was its third appearance in three months and would not have happened without enthusiastic support from at least one of the royals. “Upon St. John’s Night, the prince only being there, *The Bondman* [Massinger], by the Queen of Bohemia’s Company. At Whitehall” (**74**). This play had only been licensed by Herbert on 3 December, so there must have been a tight schedule to get it on stage at the Cockpit and rehearsed to court standards (**70**). It is set in an ancient Syracuse (albeit one where the characters wear Jacobean ruffs), under threat of invasion from Carthage—a threat ultimately repulsed. It did not have the same immediate association with Spain that *The Spanish Gypsy* had, but still offered ample scope (like Massinger’s later *Believe as You List*) for those who wished to see in it comment on Spanish Habsburg ambitions in Europe. “Upon Innocents’ Night, falling upon a Sunday, *The Buck is a Thief* [anon., lost], the king and prince being there. By the King’s Company. At Whitehall” (**75**). “Upon New-Year’s Night [1624], by the King’s Company, *The Wandering Lovers*, the prince only being there. At Whitehall” (**76**). This was another very recent work, licensed by Herbert on 6 December, where he stated that it was “written by Mr Fletcher” (**72**). No play of that title has survived, but there is a good chance that *The Lovers’ Progress*, published in the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio (1647), is a version of Fletcher’s play as revised in 1634 by Massinger, licensed under the title of *The Tragedy of Cleander* and seen by Henrietta Maria at the Blackfriars on 13 May 1634 (**294**, **295**).[26] “Upon the Sunday after, being the 4 of January 162[4], by the Queen of Bohemia’s Company, *The Changeling*, the prince only being there. At Whitehall” (**79**). Astley had licensed Middleton and Rowley’s tragedy on 7 May 1622 (**7**); set in Alicante, Valencia, in modern times it has specifically been interpreted as anti-Spanish in its sympathies.[27]

“Upon Twelfth Night, the masque being put off, *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, by the King’s Company, the prince only being there. At Whitehall. (*In margin*) The worst play that ere I saw” (**80**). Jonson’s *Neptune’s Triumph for the Return of Albion* was postponed because of diplomatic wrangling over the precedence in seating of the Spanish and French ambassadors; but since it celebrated Charles’s return from Spain *without* his Spanish bride it may be that James preferred not to have his own failed foreign policy advertised—it was never actually staged. Herbert had encountered the play that replaced it on 17 October 1623 when it was brought to him as “an old play . . . allowed by Sir George Buc, and being free from alterations was allowed by me” (**61**). He perhaps did not anticipate its performance at court; it may have been the only play not already committed to the court season which the King’s Men had to hand. What Herbert disapproved of is unstated, but yet again it is not difficult to see how the play might have acquired resonances in current circumstances, prompting the King’s Men to revive it: “it deals with the fortunate breakdown of a match that involves a head of state

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26 See Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:227.

27 See Cristina Malcolmson, “‘As Tame as the Ladies’: Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 20 (1990): 320–39. Annabel Patterson denies that the play is “hostile political allegory” but admits the possibility “of a European-political sub-text.” Introduction to Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. Douglas Bruster, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1634–35.

(as Charles was destined to become) and is based on a compromising infatuation (such as Charles initially conceived towards the Infanta). At the revival, the final affirmation of the Duchess' celibacy might well have acquired new political overtones of national independence and uncompromised national virtue."[28] Later that month, outside the regular festive cycle, Herbert recorded: "To the Duchess of Richmond, in the king's absence, was given *The Winter's Tale*, by the King's Company, the 18 January 162[4]. At Whitehall" (**82**). This was another old play Herbert had relicensed (24 August 1623, **43**), though there seems to be less of a case here for finding subversive sub-texts within it. The Duchess of Richmond was the wife of Ludovic Stuart, Duke of Lennox in the Scottish peerage and Richmond in the English; he was James's closest relative outside the immediate royal family and this was a gracious gesture to their pre-eminence among the aristocrats at court.

All in all, the 1623–1624 Revels season is striking for the number of plays given by the Lady Elizabeth's/Queen of Bohemia's company, itself a reminder of its patron's plight and their repertoire hardly less so. The ailing king only attended two of the performances and Herbert may well have been following Charles's lead in what was to be shown, after the prince's unfruitful romantic adventure in Spain.

1624–1625.

On 1 November 1624, the usual start of his Revels season, Herbert noted that the king was again absent, being at his hunting lodge at Royston, and no play was given; indeed the whole season went forward virtually in the king's absence (**130**).[29] The following day "my Lord Chamberlain had *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* for the ladies, by the King's Company" (**131**). William, Earl of Pembroke—Herbert's cousin and patron—was probably the most senior royal official left at Whitehall and indulged the court's taste for theatre in the royals' absence; Herbert had licensed Fletcher's play only two weeks earlier, so again there must have been a rush to get it rehearsed for court. It was evidently a success, since it led off the subsequent post-Christmas festive sequence on 26 December, "the prince only being there" (**135**). "Upon St. John's Night, <the prince> and the Duke of Brunswick being there, *The Fox*, by the ---. At Whitehall" (**136**). Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneberg, was James's nephew and Charles's cousin (his mother was Queen Anne's sister) and an ally in the expedition which James had finally, reluctantly, agreed to send to help his daughter and the Palsgrave recover the Palatinate. Jonson's *Volpone* was an established favourite in the King's Men's repertoire; by this time John Lowin was a celebrated Volpone, while Joseph Taylor was equally famous for his Mosca: both probably performed on the night.[30] "Upon Innocents' Night, the <prince> and the Duke of Brunswick being there, *Cupid's Revenge*, by the Queen of Bohemia's Servants. At Whitehall" (**138**). This was an old Beaumont and Fletcher favourite, originally with the Children of the

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[28] John Jowett, introduction to Thomas Middleton, *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, in Taylor and Lavagnino, *Thomas Middleton*, 1034.

[29] There would be no play at Candlemas either, the king then being at Newmarket (**146**).

[30] *Volpone* was staged at court in 1630 and again in 1638; there is no mention of these performances in Herbert's office-book, a measure of what is missing there. See Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 258, 266.

Queen's Revels, who had staged it twice at court in 1613.[31] It would return with Beeston's Boys on 7 February 1637 (**361**). Catherine Clifford has focused on it as a notable example of Charles's taste for nostalgic revivals, particularly of plays we know he saw with Princess Elizabeth and the Palsgrave "during the early autumn of 1612 or the first three months of 1613," a period for which we have unusually detailed records of the plays performed.[32] "Upon New Year's Night [1625], the prince only being there *The First Part of Sir John Falstaff*, by the King's Company. At Whitehall" (**142**). What we know as *1 Henry IV* was a long-standing favourite, and all the more so now that John Lowin was an acclaimed Falstaff. "Upon Twelfth Night, the masque being put off, and the prince only there, [*Greene's*] *Tu Quoque*, by the Queen of Bohemia's Servants" (**143**). This rounds off a sequence of established old favourites which comprised most of the 1624/1625 festive season. John Cooke's play had originally been a hit for Queen Anne's Men and performed twice at court in 1611–1612. The king, in his fragile state, attended no performances and Herbert again seems to have deferred to Charles's taste for a fondly-remembered play. The Spanish theme has been dropped now that marriage to the Infanta was off the agenda (and indeed negotiations to marry Henrietta Maria of France were in progress) and military action was now being prepared.[33] Instead, Herbert commissioned a number of old favourites, but even they may have carried subtexts: *1 Henry IV* in particular shows a son emerging as a fit successor to his father by his prowess on the battlefield. And for Charles, like the great majority of Shakespeare's histories, it traced events with a direct bearing on his claim to the English throne. James did attend the masque, *The Fortunate Isles*, when it was finally staged on 9 January but may never again have witnessed theatricals in Whitehall; he died on 27 March and was succeeded by King Charles.

THE CAROLINE PERIOD

There are no further references in what survives of Herbert's office-book to performances at court until November 1633. Even allowing for what we know is missing, this is an unaccountable gap, not least since the period was (as we learn from elsewhere) very heavily dominated by the King's Men—the one company to survive the major plague of 1625 relatively unscathed—and saw the emergence of Queen Henrietta Maria's Men at the Cockpit playhouse and then at court, two narratives Malone is supposed to have been interested in. Interestingly, there is a very marked change in Herbert's entries when the records do resume. The king and queen—Charles and Henrietta Maria—are almost always in attendance; Herbert begins to keep a record of royal reactions to what they see; and there are interesting links between some of the early 1630s entries and other material in the office-book.

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[31] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996), 363.

[32] Catherine Clifford, "A Decade of Dramatic Revivals at the Caroline Court," unpublished seminar paper (Shakespeare Association of America, 2016). Quotations by kind permission of the author. See also Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 244–47.

[33] The expedition, led by Count Mansfeld, left in January 1625 and was an unqualified disaster. Herbert was busy at this time writing warrants to save personnel of the King's Men's from being conscripted for the army during the Revels period (**137, 139**).

1633–1634.
"On Saturday the 17th of November, being the queen's birthday. *Richard the Third* was acted by the King's Players at St. James, where the king and queen were present, it being the first play the queen saw since her Majesty's delivery of the Duke of York" (**271**). St. James's had been the birthplace of the future Charles II as well as (now) James II and seems to have been favoured for its domestic associations. *Richard III* seems an odd choice for a lady recovering from childbirth but Henrietta Maria (like her husband) had a seemingly inexhaustible appetite for theatricals of all sorts; and Charles could trace his claim to the English throne, via the Tudors, in the events of the play. Moreover, the Second Shakespeare Folio had been published the year before—the one in which Charles changed the name of *Twelfth Night* to *Malvolio*—in line with a clear revival of interest in the theatre of earlier generations, including Shakespeare, Jonson, and Heywood, the so-called "Elizabethan revival" (though it also extended to early Jacobean plays). This may explain why *Richard III* was in the King's Men's current repertoire (it was reissued in quarto in both 1629 and 1634).[34]

"On Tuesday the 19th of November, being the king's birthday, *The Young Admiral* was acted at St. James's by the Queen's Players, and liked by the king and queen" (**272**). Royal birthdays had apparently become a new fixture in the theatrical festive season. *The Young Admiral* is a tragicomedy by James Shirley, written for the Queen's Men now resident at the Cockpit, the main rivals to the King's Men from 1629 to 1636; they appeared at court in that period an almost exactly equal number of times (sixty-six to sixty-seven). Herbert had licensed the play on 3 July that year, paying it a unique compliment:

> The comedy called *The Young Admiral*, being free from oaths, profaneness, or obsceneness, hath given me much delight and satisfaction in the reading, and may serve as a pattern to other poets, not only for the bettering of manners and language, but for the improvement of the quality [acting profession], which hath received some brushings of late.[35]
> When Mr. Shirley hath read this approbation, I know it will encourage him to pursue this beneficial and cleanly way of poetry, and when other poets hear and see his good success I am confident they will imitate the original for their own credit and make such copies in this harmless way as shall speak them masters of their art, at the first sight, to all judicious spectators. . . .
> I have entered this allowance for direction to my successor, and for example to all poets that shall write after the date hereof (**259**).

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[34] From here on I note the dates of early plays reissued or printed for the first time in this period. They are taken from *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks*, http://deep.sas.upenn.edu (last accessed: 26 February 2021). Recent notable studies of the Caroline "Elizabethan revival" include Thomas L. Berger, "Looking for Shakespeare in Caroline England," *Viator* 27 (1996): 323–59; Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, "Canons and Classics: Publishing Drama in Caroline England," in *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage, 1625–1642*, ed. Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 17–42; Lucy Munro, "Marlowe on the Caroline Stage," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 27 (2009): 39–50; and Clifford, "Dramatic Revivals."

[35] The "brushings" probably refer to William Prynne's anti-theatrical *Histriomastix* (1633), for which his ears were eventually cropped, after being convicted of libelling the king and queen for appearing in court theatricals.

Modern scholars have been at something of a loss to understand why Herbert should have felt impelled to pay this play such an extraordinary tribute; it is seen as one of Shirley's better tragicomedies but otherwise unremarkable. Moreover, as recently as November 1632 Shirley had been anything but in Herbert's good books: "In the play of *The Ball*, written by Shirley and acted by the Queen's Players, there were divers personated so naturally, both of lords and others of the court that I took it ill and would have forbidden the play, but that [Christopher Beeston, their manager] promised . . . that he would not suffer it to be done by the poet anymore, who deserves to be punished" (**246**). From villain to hero in half a year: the critical issue seems to be Herbert's emphasis on *The Young Admiral* being "free from oaths, profaneness, or obsceneness," a formula that reverberates around several entries in the office-book at this time, once in respect of Walter Mountfort's *The Launching of the Mary* (**258)** and twice in respect of Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* (**265c, e**). While it sounds like an injunction against bad language and taste, it is almost certainly coded warning against plays "full of offensive things against church and state" (**265c**). As we noted earlier, plays from the public stage were commonly understood as alluding (even if only by inference) to the politics of the day, something Herbert permitted as long as they stayed within given parameters (as *The Ball*'s personations had not). Two matters, however, had severely disturbed the politics of the early 1630s: one was the reforms to the Church of England pursued by Archbishop William Laud, and encouraged by the king, along High Church or so-called Arminian lines; the other was the presence of Henrietta Maria, who was openly allowed to practice her Roman Catholic faith at court and whose influence over her husband was widely thought to be dangerous.[36]

Herbert's praise of *The Young Admiral* was thus almost certainly because he judged it *not* to be "full of offensive things against church and state," so he may have been disappointed that it was only "liked" by the king and queen. On other occasions, as we shall see, they could be more effusive. Herbert seems not to have kept such records of royal reactions in James's reign, but it may speak to Charles and Henrietta Maria's enthusiasm for theatre—and to his own determination to keep track of their tastes—that he now made a point of noting such responses. Perhaps he was now such a familiar figure in their lives that he even felt able to solicit them, although other comments in the office-book make clear that he was not on regular speaking terms with the king; he was at best a middle-rank court official.

"On Tuesday night at St. James, the 26th of November 1633, was acted before the king and queen, *The Taming of the Shrew*. Liked" (**274**; reissued 1631, 1632). "On Thursday night at St. James, the 28th of November 1633, *The Tamer Tamed* was acted before the king and queen, made by Fletcher. Very well liked" (**275**). There is a backstory to this pairing of "Elizabethan revival" plays. On 18 October Herbert had sent a peremptory message to the King's Men (**265b**), ordering them not to perform *The Tamer Tamed* that afternoon "upon complaints of

[36] Only a month before Herbert had, with Ben Jonson, been exonerated by the Court of High Commission—the high court which dealt with church matters, presided over by Laud—over his licensing of *The Magnetic Lady*, almost certainly in respect of its satire of Arminianism (**266**). Herbert and Jonson were exonerated and the players admitted responsibility for what caused offence.

foul and offensive matters contained therein" (**265a**). The play, also known as *The Woman's Prize*, was an old one, written *c*. 1611 and, as we have seen, Herbert's usual procedure with plays licensed by his predecessors was to relicense them quite casually. Now all that changed. He called in "the book" (the licensed copy) and returned it "purged of oaths, profaneness and ribaldry," spelling out the reasons why he had handled matters as he had and would continue to do so: "the rather that in former times the poets took greater liberty than is allowed them by me" (**265c**). In the case of *The Tamer Tamed* there is little doubt about what that "greater liberty" had generated, since the text survives in three versions—a manuscript almost certainly earlier than this date and later copies in both of the Beaumont and Fletcher Folios (1647 and 1679).[37] The play is a sequel and a response to *The Shrew*. Katherina is dead and Petruchio marries a new wife, Maria—who proceeds to subjugate him as he had Katherina. That a play showing a wife called Maria subjugating her husband might be seen as a comment on Henrietta Maria's supposed hold over her husband is self-evident. Moreover, the earlier version of the play contains examples of the casual anti-Catholic satire typical of Jacobean plays. No wonder that Herbert felt that the dramatists back then "took greater liberty than is allowed them by me."

What is surprising, after Herbert's alarm about the play, is that he should then have brought it to court in what was effectively a double-billing with *The Shrew*, which could only have underscored the theme of the dominant wife in the sequel, for all his efforts to tone down some of the more offensive features of Fletcher's play. And on top of all that it was "Very well liked," a higher rating than Shakespeare's play and indeed the highest level of praise in his regular scale of such comments. Yet Herbert may have suspected such an outcome; in the course of his contretemps with the King's Men over the revival of the play, the Earl of Holland had intervened to ensure that they got the licensed copy back (**265c**). The earl had no official reason to be involved in the matter, but he was a notable figure at the queen's court and this may have intimated that the queen was not offended by what she knew of the play—which may in turn have led to its being staged at court. Interference in Herbert's business by courtiers of consequence is a recurrent theme in the office-book.

There is at least one earlier apparent instance of Herbert staging a play and its sequel back-to-back, although there is no reference to it in the office-book. Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*, Parts 1 and 2, are held on grounds of style and subject matter to be respectively a late-Elizabethan original and a Caroline sequel, published together in 1631 "As it was lately acted before the King and Queen, with approved liking. By the Queen's Majesty's Comedians." This text has only a prologue to the first part and an epilogue to the second, both addressed to the court, suggesting that they may well have been played there back-to-back.[38] Lodowick Carlell's double-parted *Arviragus and Philicia* and *The Passionate Lovers* were to

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[37] See Lucy Munro, introduction to John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 2010), xxii–xxiii.

[38] Robert K. Turner Jr. suggests that they may have appeared at court in 1630–1631 (introduction to Thomas Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West Parts I and II* [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1967], xix), among the sixteen unnamed and undated plays for which Queen Henrietta's Men were paid (Streitberger, *Revels Accounts*, 108).

prove the most successful of all works staged back-to-back at court, suggesting a growing taste for longer and more complex drama: see pp. 24–25.

If the king and queen were not in fact offended by *The Tamer Tamed*, this may help to explain Charles's response some twelve days later: "On Tuesday night at Whitehall, the 10th of December 1633, was acted before the king and queen *The Loyal Subject*, made by Fletcher, and very well liked by the king" (**276**). Herbert had agreed to re-license this old King's Men's play of Fletcher's ("allowed by Sir George Buc, 16 November 1618") as recently as 23 November, but only "with some reformations" (**273**). It is a play of royal tyranny, about a duke who shamefully mistreats the general of his armies, Archas, who despite extreme provocation is the loyal subject of the title. The dissipated duke even attempts to seduce one of Archas's unworldly daughters, who nevertheless manages to outwit him, and in the way of tragicomedies they end the play married. As Herbert had clearly learned, Charles could be extremely thick-skinned about plays which are far from deferential about royalty, however much they may try to steer the blame on to evil advisors and hope that misdeeds may be forgotten in providentially happy endings. Charles apparently took none of it personally—a point to which I shall return. Six days after *The Loyal Subject* the Queen's Men staged Samuel Rowley's *Hymen's Holiday, or Cupid's Vagaries* before the royal couple, another old play which Herbert had relicensed with "some alterations in it" and it was "liked" (**277**, **262**). But the play is not extant, so we cannot comment on its subject matter.

We do not get a list of the post-Christmas festival performances for 1633–1634, presumably a reflection of transcribers' changed interests. We do learn that "On Wednesday night the first of January 163[4], *Cymbeline* was acted at court by the King's Players. Well liked by the king" (**279**). Shakespeare's play with the king's three children, two boys and a girl, is commonly taken as a celebration of James's family, the beginning of a dynasty. The death of Prince Henry in 1612 mocked the play's optimism but installed Charles as heir apparent, a fact he must often have reflected on; the later travails of Princess Elizabeth may also have cast shadows over the promise of years gone by, but not over Charles who now had two sons of his own and every reason to "well like" a play he probably first saw in childhood; something of the same may also have been true of *The Winter's Tale*, which was brought to court again on the sixteenth "and liked" (**284**). The Shakespeare revival still had legs at court.

Before that, on the 12th, Massinger's recent play *The Guardian* (licensed by Herbert in October: **269**) was staged by the King's Men and "well liked" (**282**), and on the 14th "*The Tale of a Tub* was acted . . . at court . . . by the Queen's Players, and not liked" (**283**). This was Ben Jonson's last completed play. It is deliberately antiquated in style, harking back to an earlier era, but seems not to have caught the taste for revivals of genuinely older plays like *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*.[39] Its poor reception by the royals may also have been connected to issues outlined by Herbert in an entry of 7 May 1633, concerning his "allowing of *The Tale of the Tub*, Vitruvius Hoop's part wholly struck out, and the motion [puppet play] of the tub, by command

[39] *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* were, like all Shakespeare's Jacobean plays other than *King Lear* and *Pericles* (and eventually *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), never issued as quartos.

from my Lord Chamberlain, exceptions being taken against it by Inigo Jones, surveyor of the king's works, as a personal injury unto him" (**254**).

Jones had for nearly thirty years staged most of the masques at court, including the majority of those by Jonson, collaborations which for many years had been marked by jealous rivalry. Jonson had satirized Jones before, but in this case simply went too far; Jones evidently caught wind of it and went to Herbert's superior, Lord Chamberlain Pembroke, to insist that the offensive material be removed.[40] If the version of the play staged that night was anything like the one eventually published it could be said that Jonson had honoured the letter of Herbert's ruling but hardly the spirit of it; it still satirizes Jones as a mere mechanic of theatre with no touch of poetic inspiration. It is difficult to see why Herbert would not have drawn the line at this for the court—as recently as Twelfth Night, Jones had staged Fletcher's pastoral, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, at Henrietta Maria's residence, Somerset House, for the royal couple (**280**). The king and queen also knew Jones in other capacities—as the designer of the great Palladian banqueting house at Whitehall and the architect of the Queen's House at Greenwich, started for Queen Anne but belatedly nearing completion for Henrietta Maria. He had also designed Roman Catholic chapels for her at both St. James's Palace and Somerset House. It is difficult not to believe that it was a misjudgement staging *A Tale of a Tub*, a play very likely not to be "liked."[41]

"*The Wits* was acted on Tuesday night, the 28th January 163[4], at court, before the king and queen. Well liked. It had a various fate on the stage and at court, though the king commended the language, but disliked the plot and characters" (**286**). This is another play that had a history with Herbert; he had licensed Davenant's work the previous month, but only after "crossing" a significant number of oaths, as required by the 1606 "Act of Abuses," which forbade "jestingly or profanely speak[ing on stage] . . . the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost or of the Trinity." Davenant, not yet the figure at court he was to become, sent Endymion Porter to Herbert to complain; Porter was a diplomat and courtier, very close to the king. The outcome of this was an audience for Herbert with the king himself, who handled everything very decorously to avoid humiliating Sir Henry: "This morning, being the 9th of January, the king was pleased to call me into his withdrawing chamber to the window, where he went over all that I had crossed in Davenant's play-book. . . . The king is pleased to take *faith*, *death*, *slight* for asseverations, and no oaths, to which I do humbly submit as my master's judgement; but under favour conceive them to be oaths, and enter them here to declare my opinion and submission" (**281**). Asseverations are solemn or emphatic assertions and not true oaths; Herbert, however, considered that terms like *slight*—"By God's light"—were indeed oaths, yet had no option but to submit to the king's judgement. He probably then also had no option but to bring the play to court and it irked him that *The Wits* was "well liked" there—hence the additional comments which suggest that it did not do so well on the public stage and that the king's opinion of it was not wholehearted, commending the language but disliking its plot and characters. One detects quiet satisfaction in his recording these.

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40 This was Philip, fourth Earl of Pembroke, younger brother of William who was Lord Chamberlain 1615–1626.

41 The play was published as *A Tale of a Tub*, though Herbert always refers to it as *The Tale*.

On 30 January Queen Henrietta's Men put on *The Night Walker* before the king and queen; Herbert had licensed it on 11 May 1633, describing it as "a play of Fletcher's corrected by Shirley" (**255**). The royal judgement was that it was "Liked as a merry play" (**287**). On 6 February the same company staged "*The Gamester* . . . at court, made by Shirley, out of a plot of the king's, given him by me; and well liked. The king said it was the best play he had seen for seven years" (**289**). It is difficult to know exactly what the king approved of, apart from his own apparent part in its composition (could this have been a joke?). The play's most striking feature is its detailed and realistic depiction of gambling. The King's Men staged a revival of Chapman's old play *Bussy D'Ambois* "on Easter Monday night (7 April), at the Cockpit-in-Court" (**292**), another example of the taste for old plays, which earned an encore on 27 March 1638 (It was reissued in 1641).

This is Herbert's first surviving mention of the Cockpit-in-Court, Inigo Jones's 1629 redesign of the Cockpit at Whitehall, which had previously been used for plays only on an occasional basis (see Note 20 on p. 13). Since then it had become virtually the default location for them when the king was resident there—the royals' own private theatre, which did not require the repeated construction and deconstruction of theatrical spaces that court drama had hitherto necessitated. This development complements the run of plays we have observed since *The Loyal Subject* on 10 December 1633, virtually all of which in fact were staged there.[42] The plays mentioned are no longer confined to the old Revels season, but booked to suit the schedules and tastes of the royal patrons.[43] They are a mix of old plays revived, some of them revised, and plays quite new to their companies' repertoires—very much the fare on offer at the Blackfriars or the Cockpit in Drury Lane. Indeed, April and May mark two of the occasions when Herbert mentions Henrietta Maria visiting the Blackfriars, first to see Lodowick Carlell's *The Spartan Lady* and latterly to see *The Tragedy of Cleander* (**291**, **295**: see p. 16). The distinctions between court theatre and its commercial counterpart have grown very thin.

1636 ONWARDS.

There is then another major gap in the record of court performances drawn from the commercial playhouses, between May 1634 and February 1636.[44] The record recommences with "*The Second Part of Arviragus and Philicia* played at court the 16th February . . . with great approbation of king and queen" (**338**). This was the second half of one of the most successful court plays of the whole era—and logically the king and queen must have seen the first half earlier, probably only days before. "*The First and Second Part of Arviragus and Philicia* were acted at the Cockpit, before the king and queen, the prince, and Prince Elector, the 18th and 19th April 1636, being Monday and Tuesday in Easter Week" (**347**), and identical back-to-back

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[42] See Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 260–61. *The Loyal Subject* was probably staged there; all the rest certainly were.

[43] It should be said that there almost certainly was an intensive Christmas schedule in 1633–1634. The King's Men were paid for eleven undated and unnamed plays between May 1633 and April 1634. But for some reason they are not recorded in Herbert's office-book.

[44] This gap, as before, does not include masques and pastorals. Nor does it include a visit by "a French company of players . . . commended by her majesty to the king," who played in the Cockpit-in-Court (**314**).

performances led off that year's Christmas festivities on St. Stephen's Night and St. John's Night (**353**, **354**).[45] The play was staged by the King's Men and written by Lodowick Carlell, a courtier who had been writing plays since the early 1620s. He was Gentleman of the Bows to Charles I, and Groom to the King and Queen's Privy Chamber; he was also Keeper of the Great Forest at Richmond Park, in which position he assisted the king in his hunting. So he was known to the royal couple. Arviragus is one of the sons of Cymbeline in Shakespeare's play (the other, Guiderius, also appears in the play), an early Briton prince supposed to have led the resistance to the Emperor Claudius's invasion of Britain. Their story goes back to Geoffrey of Monmouth, though Shakespeare probably found it in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Carlell wraps it at length in the romance mode developed by Fletcher and seems to anticipate the later heroic drama of Dryden, Davenant, and Otway. Like Shakespeare's late plays in their own time, it was close in spirit, if not exactly in form to the court masques and pastorals of their day—and received "great approbation," possibly even higher praise than being "very well liked." Carlell apparently had similar success with his two-part *The Passionate Lovers*, which the King's Men staged at Somerset House on 26 and 28 July 1638 and in the same location on 20 and 22 December that year. But none of these performances is mentioned in Herbert's office-book.[46]

It is likely that the first performances of *Arviragus and Philicia* were at the Cockpit-in-Court, as the ones in Easter Week certainly were. But other productions early in the year were at St. James: Jonson's *The Silent Woman* by the King's Men (18 February, **339**); Shirley's *The Duke's Mistress* by Queen Henrietta's Men (22 or 25 February, **342**; licensed by Herbert 18 January **337**); (anon. and lost), *The Proxy,* or *Love's Aftergame* by the King's Revels Company resident at Salisbury Court (24 February, **341**); and Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* by Queen Henrietta's Men (28 February, **344**; reissued 1635)—a familiar mix of old plays revived and new offerings. Herbert notes the closure of the theatres for plague, which it was his responsibility to enforce, on 12 May 1636; with one brief break in February this continued until October 1637 (**351**, **366**).

Christopher Beeston saw fit during the plague to break up Queen Henrietta's Men and replace them at the Cockpit playhouse with the King and Queen's Young Company, commonly known as Beeston's Boys.[47] Herbert seconded Beeston in this, representing it as in the future interest of court theatre: "I disposed of Perkins, Sumner, Sherlock and Turner [from the Cockpit] to Salisbury Court, and joined them with the best of that company [i.e., the King's Revels]," a unit which became the new Queen Henrietta's Men (**367**).[48] He also steered four of the old Queen's Men to the King's Men. This starkly reveals how much the London theatrical world had changed since Tilney's Special Commission; the King's Men apart, the players had only notional

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45 The prince was the future Charles II and the Prince Elector [Elector Palatine] was Charles Louis, son and successor to the Palsgrave who had married Princess Elizabeth. He and his younger brother, Rupert of the Rhine, were honoured the following week in Davenant's masque, *The Triumph of the Prince D'Amour* (**340**).

46 See Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 265–66.

47 Beeston's Boys did not entirely replicate the Elizabethan boy companies, since there were some adults among them. The company had a training function as well as offering something new and distinctive in the late 1630s.

48 Richard Perkins was one of the finest actors of the era. Herbert does not mention here that he himself had a one-ninth share in Salisbury Court (**225**).

connections with their patrons and were very much employees of those who controlled the playhouses. Beeston, who controlled both the Cockpit and the Red Bull, frequently reorganized the companies in them to pursue his own commercial agendas. The king retained ultimate authority over London playing but was usually happy to let it run on such lines as long as it supplied the court with adequate entertainment.[49] And Herbert was his agent for ensuring that.

Playing at court seems to have ceased shortly after Easter 1636, and when it recommenced in November it was at Hampton Court—the palace furthest from the city and plague. That is where the last recorded performances of *Arviragus and Philicia* took place; they occupied the slots at the head of the traditional Christmas festivities, but no effort was made to follow that pattern thereafter, except for *Love and Honour* by the King's Men on New Year's Night 1637 (**355**). This is a Davenant play Herbert had licensed on 20 November 1634 under the title *The Courage of Love*, changing it to *The Nonpareilles*, or *The Matchless Maids* at the author's request (**305**). Herbert also records Fletcher's *The Elder Brother* on 5 January (**355**; printed 1637), Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* on 10 January (**357**; reissued 1631, 1639), *The Royal Slave* on 12 January (**358**), and *Rollo, Duke of Normandy* on 17 January (printed 1639); these were all by the King's Men, mostly old favourites or early Jacobean revivals, and all at Hampton Court.[50] The only one to elicit comment is *The Royal Slave*: "Oxford play, written by Cartwright. The king gave him forty pounds." There is a backstory to this: the play was by William Cartwright, an Oxford scholar, written for a visit to the university by the king and queen the previous year, using students from his college, Christ Church. It had scenery by Inigo Jones and music by Henry Lawes. The queen asked if the costumes might be given to the King's Men so they could perform it again in London. Archbishop Laud as chancellor of the university grudgingly agreed, but asked the king and queen "that neither the play or clothes, nor stage, might come to the hands of the common players abroad, which was graciously granted."[51] Presumably this means that the King's Men were not to use the play at the Blackfriars or elsewhere. It was to remain an exclusive gift to royalty. Herbert says nothing about the reaction of the King's Men at having to learn a play for a single performance.

Then the court removed to St. James's, presumably deemed safe enough from the plague in Westminster. Herbert records *Julius Caesar* there by the King's Men (31 January, **360**; reissued 1632); *Cupid's Revenge* (yet again—see p. 17), staged by Beeston's Boys (7 February, **361**; reissued 1631, 1635); Fletcher's *A Wife for a Month* by the King's Men (9 February, **362**); *Wit Without Money*, also by Fletcher, staged by Beeston's Boys (14 February, **363**; printed 1639); *The Governor* (anon., lost), by the King's Men (17 February, **364**); and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* "by the King's Players at St. James's, Shrove Tuesday, the 21st February

[49] There were limits, however, to this *laissez-faire* policy, as Christopher Beeston's son, William, found in May 1640, when he staged a play—despite explicit orders not to—which Herbert had refused to license. He was stripped of his royal warrant to manage the Cockpit and the Red Bull, which was transferred to Davenant.

[50] *Rollo, Duke of Normandy* (aka *The Bloody Brother*) is a play of disputed authorship, though Fletcher and Massinger both had a hand in it. It was popular at court, being staged there twice in 1630/1631, but this is its only mention by Herbert. What has survived of the office-book unaccountably does not record a performance of *Hamlet* on 24 January, which would surely have been of interest to Malone and other transcribers (**359n**).

[51] Quoted in Gurr, *Playing Companies*, 382.

1. The Great Hall at Hampton Court, contemporary view. Photo Alamy / BE&W.

163[7]" (**365**; reissued 1634, 1639). All of these appear without comment; there is a very heavy reliance on old plays, probably because the plague meant that new ones were not being produced in the playhouses.

One of these performances has been seen as ironic, in view of the king's eventual fate: "twice (like Cæsar), in 1636 and 1638, Charles I would hear Shakespeare's Soothsayer pronounce the most uncanny of warnings, itself the quotation of a quotation, to 'Beware the Ides of March' (I.2.18)."[52] *Julius Caesar* was performed again on 13 November 1638, but that is not recorded in the office-book. Was Charles deaf to the play's warnings, or perhaps alert to the play's ambivalence: does it celebrate the death of a tyrant or demonstrate the fate of those who dared perform such an act? It is of a piece with his seeming imperturbability in the face of whatever Herbert staged before him that there is no record of Charles being disturbed by this play, any more than by any other.

[52] Richard Wilson, "A Savage Spectacle: *Julius Caesar* and the English Revolution," in *Histoire et secret a la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), online: https://books.openedition.org/psn/4245 (last accessed: 20 April 2021), #7.

Thereafter references to court plays in the office-book dry up almost completely, but two entries are worth noting. "On Thursday the 9th of April 1640 my Lord Chamberlain bestowed a play on the king and queen, called *Cleodora, Queen of Aragon*, made by my cousin, Habington. It was performed by my lord's servants out of his own family, and his charge in the clothes and scenes, which were very rich and curious. In the hall at Whitehall. The king and queen commended the general entertainment, as very well acted and well set out. It was acted the second time in the same place before the king and queen" (**411**). The tragicomedy was almost certainly Pembroke's personal attempt to use theatre to urge the king to be more conciliatory in his dealings with his subjects. If so, it fell on deaf ears; the lukewarm praise of the king and queen suggests as much, although they were polite enough to sit through a second performance. How much Henry Herbert was himself involved is not recorded, but this was very much a Herbert family initiative, the text being provided by Sir Henry's cousin, the poet William Habington; so it would be surprising if his own professional skills were not called upon. Pembroke would be removed as Lord Chamberlain the following year and would later be a leader of the Parliamentary party in the Civil War. The entry for Twelfth Night 1642 speaks eloquently of the end of court theatricals as that crisis loomed: "the prince [later Charles II] had a play called *The Scornful Lady*, at the Cockpit, but the king and queen were not there; and it was the only play acted at court in the whole Christmas" (**431**; reprinted 1630, 1635, 1639).[53]

For all the gaps in Herbert's records of court theatricals, they offer some fascinating insights into the royal engagement with plays throughout his tenure as Master of the Revels: Prince Charles avidly watching Spanish-themed plays as plans for his marriage to the Spanish Infanta collapsed and James I was clearly nearing his end; Charles and Henrietta Maria "very well liking" a play which they very well understood to speak to their own relationship; the 1630s "rediscovery" of Shakespeare and other earlier dramatists, playing into Charles's established and possibly nostalgic taste for plays seen in his youth;[54] players who once owed allegiance to aristocratic patrons and formed self-governing companies now largely in thrall to the owners of the playhouses; the expansion of playing at court so far beyond the traditional Elizabethan Christmas festivities as to become almost commonplace—that is, for a pampered courtier class brought up on the plays of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher, several of whom now felt empowered to write plays of their own.

Lastly, one other entry in Herbert's office-book applies to the royal consumption of commercial drama. Massinger's lost *The King and the Subject* clearly worried Herbert in June 1638, with (in the context of Charles I's Personal Rule) some outspoken lines about forced loans and the absolutist tendencies of monarchs; he took the playbook for the king himself to review, "who reading over the play at Newmarket set his mark upon the place with his own hand, and in these words—This is too insolent and to be changed.—Note, that the poet makes it the speech of a king, Don Pedro, King of Spain, and spoken to his subjects" (**386a**). The

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[53] Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy was one of the most revived and reprinted plays of the era. A fitting note on which to end.

[54] Clifford, "Dramatic Revivals," citing J. S. A. Adamson, "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart* England, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (London: Macmillan, 1994), 161–97.

key words here are "*too* insolent" (my emphasis). Charles was quite used to insolence from his subjects' plays: it ran through so many of their sub-texts, as I have tried to suggest. And the evidence is here that he (and Henrietta Maria) enjoyed it, if wittily done and discreetly handled, as they clearly enjoyed *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Loyal Subject*. It would be beneath their royal dignity to take offence. But there was a point which must not be crossed: the point when a play ceased being merely impertinent and became *too* insolent. Herbert's first responsibility was to recognize that point and stop it appearing either in public or on stage at court. But short of that his royal masters seem to have been game for almost anything.

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