THE BEESTONS AND THE ART OF THEATRICAL MANAGEMENT
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines three generations of the Beeston family and its revolutionary impact on the developing world of seventeenth-century London theatre management. Like other early modern businesses, the Beeston enterprise thrived on commercial innovation, the strategic cultivation of patronage, and a capacity to perpetuate itself dynastically. England’s mid-century political crisis disrupted the family’s commercial supremacy but its management system would endure as the de facto standard structuring successful theatre business long after the Restoration. Following a critical introduction to the early history of theatrical management, the thesis’s four chapters chart the creation and institution of the Beeston management model. Chapter One examines the early career of Christopher Beeston, a minor stageplayer from Shakespeare’s company in the 1590s who set out ambitiously to reshape theatrical management at Drury Lane’s Cockpit playhouse in 1616. Chapter Two analyzes Beeston’s later career, particularly his unique appointment as “Governor” of a new royal company in 1637. New evidence suggests that the office was a reward for service to the aristocratic Herbert family and that traditional preferment was therefore as important as market competition to the creation of the Caroline paradigm of autocratic theatrical “governance.” Chapter Three explores the overlooked career of Elizabeth Beeston who, upon inheriting the Cockpit in 1638, became the first woman in English history to
manage a purpose-built London theatre. New evidence concerning her subsequent
husband, Sir Lewis Kirke, an adventurer to Canada, ship-money captain, and Royalist
military governor, indicates political ideology motivated their joint effort to keep the
Beeston playhouse open during the civil wars. Chapter Four addresses the question of
why the larger Beeston enterprise eventually collapsed even as the management system it
refined continued to support later theatrical entrepreneurs. During the Interregnum,
contemporaries anticipated that William and George Beeston, Christopher's son and
grandson, would eventually dominate a reascent London stage; however, managers such
as William Davenant and Thomas Betterton ultimately adapted the Beeston system more
efficiently to the political environment after 1660. Thereafter, exhausted patronage, lost
assets, and the abandonment of family tradition marked the end of the Beestons’
influential association with the London stage.
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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>CKS</td>
<td>Centre for Kentish Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>Guildhall Library</td>
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<td>MSC</td>
<td><em>Malone Society Collections</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>National Library and Archives of Canada</td>
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<td>LMA</td>
<td>London Metropolitan Archives</td>
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<td>LRO</td>
<td>Lancashire Record Office</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>National Archives</td>
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<td>Records of the Court of Chancery</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Records of the Lord Chamberlain</td>
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<td>PC</td>
<td>Records of the Privy Council</td>
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<td>PROB</td>
<td>Probate Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury</td>
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<td>REQ</td>
<td>Records of the Court of Requests</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Records of the State Papers Office</td>
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<td>OED</td>
<td><em>Oxford English Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>REED</td>
<td><em>The Records of Early English Drama</em></td>
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INTRODUCTION
The Beestons and the Idea of Theatrical Management
in Seventeenth-Century London

The Beestons in Theatre History

The first informed debate about the theatrical Beestons of London occurred quietly, not in the pages of a learned journal or monograph but in the private correspondence of a family genealogist. Two weeks before Christmas in 1932, H.M. Beeston of Bognor Regis, Sussex, wrote to the theatre historian Joseph Quincy Adams of Cornell University to express her admiration for his book *The Life of William Shakespeare* (1923). Particularly impressive, she thought, was its emphasis on “the pioneer work of Christopher & William Beeston” (Appendix A).¹ Scholars had only recently begun to acknowledge Christopher Beeston (c.1580-1638) as a significant theatrical presence in early modern London, first as a young player in Shakespeare’s company of the 1590s and later as a leader and shareholder in companies performing at the Cockpit, the fashionable playhouse he built in Drury Lane in 1616. His son William Beeston (c.1608-1682) had also made a distinct impression on the London theatrical scene, initially by instructing the younger players at his father’s theatre, then as the owner of the Salisbury Court playhouse and a transmitter of prewar theatrical practices to the Restoration stage. For these reasons, father and son occupied proud places in the “Beeston pedigree” their descendant had just completed, a document purportedly tracing the family’s roots back to the thirteenth century. In addition to Adams’s research, H.M. Beeston carefully read the work of his academic colleague, Leslie Hotson of Haverford College. Hotson’s recently published *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (1928)

¹ Folger, MS Y.c.123. Two years later, Adams became acting director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, which preserves the letter among his papers.
had been widely praised for breaking new ground in the study of London theatre during the civil wars and had unearthed a wealth of new facts about the Beeston family, yet Beeston found much to criticize in it.\textsuperscript{2} In particular, she viewed as “singularly unjust” Hotson’s claim that William Beeston had traitorously reported an illegal performance by fellow players to Parliament during the Interregnum, thereby prompting a pamphleteer to castigate him as an “ill Beest” who had “beshit his own nest.” This conclusion could only be “based upon ignorance of the actual facts,” Beeston argued, for the pamphlet attack was “originally aimed at Theophilus Bird” and “in any case was too trifling to deserve Professor Hotson’s limelight.” Her letter to Adams concludes with a request for his opinion on the matter and vows to write next to Hotson, “altho’” she says, “I ‘feel in my bones’ that he is not a sympathetic & understanding person like yourself, & that he will probably say ‘What is done is done, & cannot be undone.’”\textsuperscript{3}

Before Adams and Hotson published their research in the early decades of the twentieth century, knowledge of the theatrical Beestons remained too limited to generate much contention within the discourse of academic theatre history. A Romantic fascination with Shakespeare thoroughly dominated the scholarly agenda of the previous century and the detailed study of his theatrical contemporaries remained a marginal practice, valued primarily for whatever dim light it might cast on the genius from Stratford. Consequently, although the Beestons left substantial traces of their activity in parish registers, records of litigation, probate documents, and other sources, scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries largely overlooked them.

\textsuperscript{2} See, for instance, Allardyce Nicoll’s review in \textit{Modern Language Notes} 44 (1929) 395-396.

\textsuperscript{3} Folger, MS. Y.c.123. For Hotson’s analysis, see \textit{The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928) 49-50.
The recovery of basic facts about the family began only incidentally as broader-minded antiquarians like Edmond Malone and John Payne Collier began systematically to explore these archives for evidence concerning Shakespeare. Malone’s *Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage and of the Economy and Usages of our Ancient Theatres* (1821) is regarded as the first work of modern English theatre history for its methodical collection, transcription, and enumeration of documentary materials relating to Shakespeare’s working conditions. By carefully inspecting rare printed books such as James Wright’s antiquarian dialogue *Historia Histrionica* (1699) and manuscripts such as Sir Henry Herbert’s official papers (pulled from a damp Ribbesford trunk in 1789), Malone was the first to establish as an underpinning fact of theatre history that Christopher and William Beeston once “had the management” of London’s successful Cockpit playhouse.

John Payne Collier was quick to build upon Malone’s foundational work, although not always honestly. In 1846, a diligent audit of Shakespeare’s social and professional connections led him to announce to fellow members of the Victorian Shakespeare Society that Beeston had once been an “extremely well known” name. By analyzing cast lists in Ben Jonson’s *Workes* (1616), Collier demonstrated that Christopher Beeston had once acted with Richard Burbage, William Kemp, and Shakespeare himself in the Lord Chamberlain’s company of the 1590s. He discovered Augustine Phillipps’s will, a document indicating that Beeston had once been a “servant” to that distinguished

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player. In church registers, he found the identity of Beeston’s first wife, Jane, and the names of several children baptized in the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, a neighbourhood once heavily populated by London players. Collier, moreover, wrote the first informed account of the Beestons’s Cockpit playhouse, also known as the Phoenix, unfortunately embellishing authentic evidence with one of his notorious fabrications.  

A significant feature of this early scholarship is its general uncertainty about Christopher Beeston’s precise relationship to William Beeston. Collier speculated that they might have been brothers who oversaw the Cockpit’s business together. This idea would linger until 1849 when Peter Cunningham, another Shakespeare Society member and a prodigious literary and historical scholar in his own right, published documents decisively detailing William Beeston’s involvement in the affairs of the Salisbury Court playhouse three decades after his father’s death.  

During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the intensification of archival research brought further clarifications. James Greenstreet presented a paper to Frederick James Furnivall’s New Shakespeare Society in the 1880s reporting his discovery of depositions taken in the Court of Chancery by members of Queen Anne’s Men and by Susan Baskervile, the widow of Thomas Greene, the company’s popular clown. These documents revealed an important fact, that between Greene’s death in 1612 and the company’s dissolution in 1619, Christopher Beeston “altogether ruled” the

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6 John Payne Collier, The History of English Dramatic Poetry and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration. 3 vols. (London: 1831) and Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1846) xxxi-xxxii. Collier’s awareness of a Shrove Tuesday riot at the theatre in March 1616/17 led him to forge “A BALLADE IN PRAISE OF LONDON PRENTICES, AND WHAT THEY DID AT THE COCK-PITT PLAYHOUSE IN DRURY LANE.” He purportedly found it in “a contemporary print” and applauded its “spirit and cleverness,” going so far as to provide scholarly annotations for its allusions (History of English Dramatic Poetry 1: 385-388).

Queen’s actors and had “the sole managing of their affairs.”

The American scholar Charles William Wallace soon located further legal depositions confirming that Beeston once held a “place of greatest chardge & trust” among his fellows, a position he apparently owed to his social standing as “a thriueing man & one that was of abilitie & meanes.”

Early twentieth-century scholars working under the auspices of the Malone Society soon uncovered even more evidence of the Beeston family’s forgotten significance. The Malone Society’s mandate, established in 1906 by “new bibliographers” such as Alfred W. Pollard, Ronald B. McKerrow, and Walter W. Greg, was to provide scholars with reliable texts of early English plays, but the Society also regularly published diplomatic transcripts of historical material illustrating the wider economic and political contexts of early theatre. Of the many records printed over the next decade, Allardyce Nicoll and Eleanore Boswell’s transcriptions of the Lord Chamberlain’s office registers would prove especially illuminating. They preserve, among other treasures, unique records showing that Christopher Beeston was appointed to a court post known as the “Gouuernour of the new Company of the Kings & Queenes boyes” in 1637 and that William Beeston was subsequently installed in that office in 1639.

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By 1911, sufficient data had accumulated for Edmund K. Chambers, a prominent Malone Society member, to append a brief biographical portrait of the Beeston family to an article concerning John Aubrey, the antiquarian who famously collected anecdotes about Shakespeare and other seventeenth-century personalities.11 Chambers chose to characterize the Beestons for the first time not merely as minor contemporaries of Shakespeare but as significant theatrical figures in their own right, deeply entrenched in the business of playing. Six years later, John Quincy Adams echoed Chambers’s assessment in his book *Shakespearean Playhouses* (1917), describing Christopher Beeston as “one of the most important actors and managers of the Elizabethan period.”12 Chambers then went a step further in “The Actor’s Economics,” his landmark chapter of *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), by discussing Beeston as a representative “Elizabethan” manager alongside James Burbage (c.1531-1597), Philip Henslowe (c.1555-1616), Edward Alleyn (1566-1626) and John Heminges (1566-1630). The same year, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, Allardyce Nicoll would publish the first article to focus exclusively on the career of William Beeston, opening with the pronouncement: “Save for the Burbages and the Alleyns, there is probably no theatrical family in the seventeenth century which is so important as that of the Beestons.”13

Chambers’s influential organization of documents designed to “throw light upon the history of the institution which produced them” prompted theatre historians of the 1920s to ask new questions about the composition of playing companies, forms of


theatrical patronage, staging practices, and, most notably, the architectural design and use of London’s early playhouses. This reprioritization of buildings and those who worked in them had the effect of decentring Shakespeare and cleared space for the deeper consideration of contemporary theatrical achievements. Hotson’s *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* remains the finest work of scholarship produced during this period. By systematically analyzing hundreds of documents in London’s Public Record Office, it definitively established the circumstances in which Christopher Beeston built the Cockpit playhouse in 1616. Hotson was able to determine that Beeston’s second wife and widow, Elizabeth Beeston (later Kirke), maintained possession of the property until 1656. He found and published Christopher Beeston’s will, a lengthy and informative document revealing, among other things, that the Cockpit’s manager maintained a controlling interest in his theatre’s resident playing company at the time of his death in 1638. Hotson also had much to report about William Beeston. Most importantly, he learned that the younger man’s heavy financial investment in the Salisbury Court playhouse during the Interregnum provided a base from which attempted to relaunch his interrupted managerial career after the Restoration.

Perhaps to H.M. Beeston’s chagrin, Hotson’s treasure trove of new information inspired William B. Markward to write the first doctoral dissertation on the Cockpit theatre in 1953, “A Study of the Phoenix Theatre in Drury Lane, 1617-1642.” Influenced also by George F. Reynolds’s empirical analysis of printed stage directions, Markward’s thesis is a comprehensive and illuminating study of the Cockpit’s surviving repertory, its

14 Chambers, *ES* 1: viii.
costumes and properties, and the audience these aimed to satisfy. Gerald Eades Bentley would make extensive use of it a decade later while compiling his own multi-volume *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (1941-1968). This massive work represents a culmination of the historiographical method that Malone introduced in the nineteenth century and that Chambers and the Malone Society afterwards institutionalized as an academic standard. Having synthesized the aggregate data of a century and a half, Bentley could confidently pronounce Christopher Beeston “the most important theatrical figure in London” during the two decades between the opening of the Cockpit in 1616 and Beeston’s death in 1638.

S.P. Cerasano has recently written that although “the infrastructure provided by Chambers and Bentley remains sound, happily there are many related structures to be built.” Enumerative histories like *The Elizabethan Stage* and *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* remain valuable digests of fact, but the ongoing discovery of unexamined archival information and the perpetual reconsideration of earlier scholarly conclusions make it necessary periodically to renovate – and sometimes to refashion totally – prevailing historical narratives. In a recent meditation on this fundamental practice of

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16 See Ron Vince, “Theater History as an Academic Discipline,” *Interpreting the Theatrical Past*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989) 1-18. “Like other kinds of historical investigation, theatre history proceeds in two stages: the collection, organization, and description of data, selected on the basis of hypotheses or assumptions either conscious or unconscious; and the interpretation of data at the level of ‘cultural-historical integration,’ a concept drawn from the science of archaeology” (14-15).


theatre history, William Ingram employs a metaphor of map-making to stress a similar theoretical point. I quote him at length for his eloquence on the subject and for the appropriateness of his example:

I like to think of the ongoing process of Elizabethan and Jacobean theater history as an evolving series of maps, each of them intended similarly to place me in comparable relationships to the data – in this case historical – that is their specialty. And if I aspire to be a mapmaker, I must ensure that the components of my own map – in my case verbal – are adequate to the task of representing the particular terrain of historical reality (or what I take to be the historical reality) whose landmarks I aim to reveal. For example, a much-needed biography of Christopher Beeston, that most elusive of theatrical entrepreneurs, would tell us more about some things and less about others than would a history of the Cockpit, the play-house with which he was connected for many years. Each study – *Christopher Beeston: A Biography* and *The Cockpit: A History* – would leave, as indeterminacies round its edges, matters that might well be made quite explicit and central in the other. Such indeterminacies surround all scholarly studies and are often declared by inexperienced book reviewers to be “inadequacies” in an author’s scholarship, as though a composite *Christopher Beeston and the Cockpit Playhouse* would solve such problems rather than simply move the fuzzy fringe further out. One might well urge such a study to include Beeston’s playing companies, Queen Anne’s and Prince Charles’s, along with studies of Thomas Greene and Thomas Heywood, two of Beeston’s closest associates. It’s unlikely that *Christopher Beeston, the Cockpit Playhouse, Queen Anne’s Players, Prince Charles’s Players, Thomas Greene, and Thomas Heywood* would ever reach full fruition, much less find a publisher. And there would still be fuzzy edges and alternative narratives.19

The purpose of my dissertation will be to “structure,” or as Ingram would say, to “map,” a new narrative of the Beeston family and its seventeenth-century theatrical fortunes. By bringing together existing evidence and new archival material located during the course of my research, I aim to address a considerable scholarly gap by providing Ingram’s “much-needed biography of Christopher Beeston” and integrating it with fresh accounts of other contributors to the Beeston enterprise, particularly Elizabeth Beeston, Sir Lewis

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Kirke, William Beeston, and George Beeston. As Ingram shrewdly observes, the piling of components in a narrative of this kind could potentially signal a quixotic desire to clarify the endless “indeterminacies round its edges.” My purpose in adopting a multi-generational perspective, however, is to determine what role the larger Beeston family played in the development of theatrical management in seventeenth-century London. Theatre historians routinely echo Bentley’s claim for Christopher Beeston’s central importance but we lack a comprehensive analysis of his managerial policies and an explanation of why his seemingly stable and profitable enterprise eventually fell into decline during the tenure of his widow and son. Given the broad historical context required to address these matters, this thesis deliberately covers a period of roughly a century, from Christopher Beeston’s youth in the late Elizabethan period through to William Beeston’s death, two decades after the Restoration. My overarching thesis – the sum of separate arguments made in the four chapters that follow – is that the autocratic and court-backed management model that Christopher Beeston devised between 1602 and 1638 became the de facto standard that would structure successful theatrical management for the remainder of the century, even, paradoxically, as the commercial fortunes of the larger Beeston family deteriorated.

To present this argument, the study divides into two parts. Chapters One and Two discuss the design and implementation of Christopher Beeston’s highly efficient configuration of managerial policies during the early decades of the seventeenth century. Chapters Three and Four then examine efforts by Elizabeth Beeston, Sir Lewis Kirke, William Beeston, and George Beeston to preserve the family’s business in a dynastic manner and the circumstances that ultimately prevented them from doing so. It is a
notable paradox of their story that even as the management model they inherited
continued to invigorate the enterprises of later entrepreneurs such as William Davenant
and Thomas Betterton, the Beestons’ own grip on the west London theatrical market
slipped and, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the playing community had largely
forgotten them. Before outlining these claims in more detail, it will be necessary to
discuss briefly this study’s frequent use of the terms “manager” and “management.”

The Idea of Theatre Management in Seventeenth-Century London

Theatrical art is complex and collaborative, and perhaps, as James W. Donohue
has argued, the managerial “function” has always been “the first essential for theatrical
performance.” In an English context, the roots of its organization by an executive are
traceable to the medieval period. According to Glynne Wickham, “from the days of the
trouvère, the head of a professional troupe of entertainers (first minstrels, then
interluders) had given the troupe its name, secured the right to perform and received the
financial reward for performances.” The mounting of civic Biblical pageants in
medieval towns also clearly generated theatrical leaders. A surviving contract from mid-
fifteenth-century Coventry for instance outlines terms by which a local skinner took on
“þe Rewle of þe pajaunt” during the city’s Corpus Christi festival, a role that obliged him
to “find þe pleyers and all þat longeth þerto.” By the early sixteenth century,
churchwardens in Kent and Essex had begun to engage the services of semi-professional

20 James W. Donohue Jr., “The Theatrical Manager and the Uses of Theatrical Research,” The Theatrical

21 Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages 1300 to 1660, Volume Two, 1576 to 1660, Part 1 (New York:

22 Records of Early English Drama: Coventry, ed. R.W. Ingram (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1981) 27-28, 548n. In 1453, a skinner, Thomas Colelow, agreed to procure, along with the “keper of craft,”
the pageant’s actors’ “cloyes,” “garments,” and “Rushes.”
“property players” from London to help construct temporary stages, fashion scenery and properties, and keep accounts for local festival productions.\(^{23}\) It was the commercial industry of later sixteenth-century London, however, that gave rise to a more recognizably modern managerial position. The complexity of this new industry, according to Bentley, called for a form of leadership more sophisticated than ever before:

Hundreds of costumes had to be ordered and paid for; theater rents had to be paid; plays had to be commissioned, paid for, licensed, and fees paid to the Master of the Revels not only for licenses but for various privileges; court and other private performances had to be arranged and payments collected; transportation to palaces and great houses had to be provided; liveries had to be received and distributed; hired men had to be employed and paid; new properties had to be collected; rehearsals and other meetings of the company had to be scheduled; provincial tours had to be arranged and financed; playbills had to be printed and distributed. The number, complexity, and interdependence of these chores were such that they could not have been divided among six to eighteen sharers without producing chaos. Clearly the administrative affairs of a London company had to be concentrated in the hands of one or two men.\(^{24}\)

Although theatre historians habitually refer to this array of practices as the domain of the “manager” and the responsibilities of “management,” this language is anachronistic. Available evidence suggests the term “manager” entered the professional theatrical lexicon only in the later seventeenth century, and although it remains undoubtedly useful, its unreflective application can misleadingly suggest that earlier practitioners recognized a fully formed professional position by that name.

Various ideas, or concepts, of professional management in fact seem to have been taking shape by the early seventeenth century. Surviving records indicate that certain


core practices were conducted “accordinge to the custome of players,” such as entrusting a company’s profits to the care of leading player-sharer. Yet conditions were constantly changing, experimentation was habitual, and theatrical leaders needed to align their policies pragmatically with an economic and political environment that was frequently unstable. The unpredictable use of the designations “master,” “chief,” “warden,” and the catch-all term “player” to describe those individuals who performed managerial functions before 1642 strongly implies the absence of a single idea of what constituted the early seventeenth-century “manager.” For this reason, we need to resist the impulse to abstract a single “ideal type” of professional manager from the scattered and particular records that survive and, thereby, avoid replicating the distortion of scholars who once sought to establish the essential features of the “Elizabethan Playhouse.” Just as there were many playhouses, each with unique dimensions and occupying a distinct location, so were there many theatrical managers, each with a particular motivation for entering the business and an individual approach to its art and practice.

Edward Alleyn and his father-in-law Philip Henslowe collaborated, for instance, for three decades at the Rose and the Fortune playhouses, and although they shared certain responsibilities – like finding money and materials for theatrical productions –


26 Richard Grassby argues a similar point in relation to “ideal” views of capitalism as a trans-historical category: “Ideal types are neither theoretical postulates nor empirical categories, but fictive generalizations about the predominant characteristics of a particular society, projected from selected historical facts and intended to serve as a basis for universal analysis.” The Idea of Capitalism before the Industrial Revolution (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999) 2. Theatre historians often rely on this sort of “ideal type” in generalized statements about theatre “managers,” “players,” and “playhouses.”

27 W.J. Lawrence, for instance, regarded theatre historians as “scientific workers” pursuing an “inquiry into the physical conditions and stage conventionalisms of the Elizabethan Playhouse,” as though immutable laws might be determined in the manner of physics, The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1912) vi.
their respective managerial roles were otherwise very different. Alleyn, the celebrated actor, maintained a controlling interest in the playing companies with which he performed, he managed a private stock of plays and costumes, and he trained covenanted servants in the art of stage playing. Henslowe’s managerial function, by contrast, was essentially playhouse-based and financially oriented rather than artistic. According to the records known collectively as his “Diary,” he contracted with carpenters to build and renovate his playhouses, he hired and oversaw tiring-house workers, he invested in theatrical properties, and he structured loans so that his tenant playing companies could purchase new plays and costumes. The duties structuring the Alleyn-Henslowe partnership do bear resemblances to the managerial functions of contemporaries such as Francis Langley (c.1548-1602), Robert Browne (1563-c.1622), and Martin Slater (c.1560-1625), but, upon closer inspection, these careers are more readily defined by differences than similarities.

From 1595 to 1602, Francis Langley owned the massive Swan amphitheatre, which stood a competitive distance from the Rose on the south bank. A draper by trade and a moneylender, Langley seems to have regarded the theatre business purely as an opportunity for financial speculation. His callousness and lack of interest in the actual art

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of playing appears to have alienated the resident actors in Pembroke’s company, as did an effort to bind their services with obligations of £100 each.\textsuperscript{30} Robert Browne, by contrast, was a veteran player who once shared with Alleyn in a rich stock of “playinge apparrelle playe Bookes, Instrumentes and other commodities,” and who, in 1609, joined a patented syndicate to oversee the Children of the Queen’s Revels at the Whitefriars. These activities were mere interludes, however, in a much longer managerial career spent leading the horses and carts of English acting companies between the courts and fairgrounds of the Netherlands, Germany, and France.\textsuperscript{31} Martin Slater was also a seasoned associate of Henslowe and Alleyn and, like Browne, a leader of touring companies, but, once again, the picture of his managerial activity is exceptional rather than conventional. He was apparently an equal-opportunity theatrical entrepreneur who involved himself in several ventures. He helped to plan the construction of the Red Bull in 1605. He worked to install a young company at the playhouse in Whitefriars in 1608. Throughout the 1610s, by the spurious practice known as “exemplification” (the duplication of an existing patent), he led a contingent of Queen Anne’s players on provincial tours. Then, in 1618, he leased a patent to direct a company of child actors serving the Queen in Bristol.\textsuperscript{32}


Individuating these men and their practices remains an ongoing challenge. Bentley, who was sensitive to anachronism, drew a useful early distinction between the player who served as his company’s “representative” or “administrator” (such as Alleyn, Browne, and Slater) and the non-player who served as “landlord and financier” at the playhouse (such as Henslowe and Langley).\textsuperscript{33} Ingram has proposed a similar broad distinction between “those who were themselves involved in some way in the business of playing, like the Burbages, Ned Alleyn, Robert Browne, Thomas Swinnerton, or Christopher Beeston” and those “whose interest seemed to be largely if not wholly financial … [for instance,] those who built and maintained playhouses, like Henry Laneman, Francis Langley, Oliver Woodliffe, or Aaron Holland and those who speculated in leases of playhouses or in company properties or in management, like Thomas Woodford, Phillip Rosseter, or Robert Kaysar.”\textsuperscript{34} Andrew Gurr has made creative use of \textit{hendiadys} to separate John Lyly, “playwright and manager” of the Chapel Children, from Richard Burbage, a “financier of sorts and leading sharer in the King’s Men,” Cuthbert Burbage, “a non-playing manager of sorts and investor in the company,” Philip Rosseter, a “musician and former manager” of the Revels Children, and Robert Keysar, a “financier and manager” of the Blackfriars children.\textsuperscript{35} Most recently, Rebecca Rogers and Kathleen McLuskie have analyzed three kinds of “entrepreneurial engagement” in a “prescriptive taxonomy” recognizing the “financier” who functioned

\textsuperscript{33} Bentley, \textit{Profession of Player} 147-176.


as a banker but was otherwise uninvolved in theatrical affairs, the “investor” who
speculated in theatrical ventures and received income directly from its returns, and the
“manager” who “[took] an active part in organizing the company’s personnel / repertory / venue, and who share[d] in the playing / property profits.”

Such analysis, while illuminating, generally does not communicate a sense of the
dynamic process of development that Donohue’s managerial “function” seems to have
been undergoing during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Assuming
managerial roles were neither prescriptive nor homogenous, what pressures brought
specific management models into being? What caused them to change? Why did some
managers succeed and others fail? These are critical questions relative to the history of
the Beestons, and we must address them within the precise economic and political
contexts in which individuals first sought to organize London’s actors, playwrights,
venues, and patrons as part of a sustainable commercial business.

The Emergence, Transmission, and Impact of the Beeston Management Model

Recent scholarship has enlarged our understanding of how a commercial theatre
industry came to flourish in London during the latter half of the sixteenth century.
Between the 1550s and 1590s, in an expanding capitalist climate, a stable market for
theatrical performance was established and professional stageplayers joined the ranks of
the city’s fencers, animal baiters, and puppeteers as popular commercial entertainers.


London’s population had grown exponentially over the course of a generation along with its wealth and prestige as a major European port and hub of trade. Most early stageplayers were trained joiners, grocers, goldsmiths, and weavers and they reflexively adopted entrenched organizational habits by forming joint-stock enterprises and interacting fraternally like the city’s trade companies. They pooled money borrowed at interest with the capital of speculators and ventured to build large, fixed playing venues, they amassed valuable stocks of costumes and stage furniture in their tiring houses, and they tailored a system of reportorial playing to the city’s working and leisured tastes. According to Gurr, fifty million inhabitants and visitors to London may have attended performances at the city’s different playhouses between the late 1570s and 1642, approximately Christopher Beeston’s lifetime. Elizabethan municipal authorities and members of the Privy Council regulated the emerging business by decree and by patent, relegating it to designated precincts and locations beyond the old walls. The Revels Office attended to matters of arbitration and censorship, presided over by Lord

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40 Ingram points to a London Court of Alderman’s decree of 1550 as a turning point. Thereafter, players required official licence to act and Ingram suggests that this “impelled the players in turn to consider their own self interest and to devise new ways of managing their affairs.” Some disappeared and others adapted by securing the protection of noble patrons and locating “ways to control, or even to take into their own hands, the terms and circumstances under which they played,” namely by building and managing their own fixed venues (Business of Playing 67-91).
Chamberlain and his deputy, the Master of the Revels.\textsuperscript{41} The stage soon integrated with the wider economy surrounding it as players and playhouse proprietors formed mutually supportive relationships with book publishers, second-hand clothing retailers, tavern keepers, and watermen.\textsuperscript{42}

It was in this burgeoning commercial theatre world that Christopher Beeston formulated his own profitable and durable system of theatrical management. It broke sharply from the predominant mode of organization that had taken hold in which separate groups of player-sharers and theatrical housekeepers designed and implemented business policies collaboratively. Beeston’s alternative model put the majority of an enterprise’s managerial duties, assets, and profits into the hands of a single executive figure. As Bentley has noted, a “Beeston’s Diary” – a set of records comparable to Henslowe’s unique manuscripts – might be invaluable in charting this development.\textsuperscript{43} In its absence, however, we may still learn much by observing the way the Beeston enterprise adhered to the principles and structures of other forms of early modern business. Risk-taking and innovation energized it, the strategic cultivation of patronage reinforced it, and it perpetuated itself in the manner of a dynastic, household firm.

Richard Grassby, a foremost historian of seventeenth-century English business, argues that entrepreneurialism, “the willingness to take risks and the impulse to innovate,” involves, in every age, a striving to create new commercial strategies, new


\textsuperscript{42} For instance, see the “Petition from the Watermen of the Bankside to Lord Howard, July-Aug 1592” (Greg, \textit{Henslowe Papers} 42-43) and Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, \textit{Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) passim.

\textsuperscript{43} Bentley, \textit{JCS} 1: 364.
products, and new markets for their distribution. The first two chapters of this study will examine Christopher Beeston’s adeptness as a risk-taker and innovator in this tradition. Chapter One, “Christopher Beeston’s Early Career and the Development of Jacobean Theatrical Management,” presents a new narrative of Beeston’s remarkable social and professional ascension during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Initially a minor player in the Lord Chamberlain’s company, he completely transformed his status in 1616 when he became the sole proprietor of the Cockpit playhouse and the leading sharer in its tenant acting company, Queen Anne’s Men. The circumstances underlying Beeston’s climb to professional prominence have long been obscure but new evidence indicates that it had much to do with his marriage to Jane Sands (Sandes, Sandys) in 1602. As I will demonstrate, she belonged to a wealthy and influential Lancashire family whose money and social connections helped to define Beeston in the eyes of his fellows as “a thriueing man & one that was of abilitie & meanes,” the basis of his promotion to a “place of greatest chardge & trust” in Queen Anne’s Men. The first chapter then explores the way Beeston (with calculated dishonesty, it seems) proceeded to test the limits of existing customs within his sharing partnership. A close reading of the evidence of his earliest activity suggests that his familiarity with London’s second-hand clothing markets enabled him gradually to finance and then build the Cockpit playhouse in 1616. His relocation of the Queen’s Men to Drury Lane that year effectively completed his formulation of a management system in which both the leadership of a playing company and the control of its commercial venue became his

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45 See above, p. 5.
combined responsibility. By collapsing what had conventionally been a two-tiered system of management into a single executive role, Beeston gave definitive shape to the professional position that would later be designated the theatrical “Manager.”

The London marketplace did much to reshape the relationship between poets, actors, and audiences, but even as performance assumed the status of a commercial commodity, traditional habits of patronage and clientage continued to structure theatrical business. Chapter Two, “Christopher Beeston and the Caroline Institution of Theatrical Governor,” argues that the sponsorship of influential courtiers was, in fact, essential to managerial success in the early seventeenth century. Theatre historians have long been aware of Beeston’s unique appointment to the office of “Governor” of the King and Queen’s Young Company in 1637, but the circumstances underlying the office’s creation have remained clouded. New evidence strongly suggests that the office was conceived as a reward for service, both theatrical and non-theatrical. Beeston’s previously unexamined financial investments in two architectural landmarks of Caroline London – Covent Garden and Shaver’s Hall – situate him among the clientele of the aristocratic Herbert family, notably of Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke and of Sir Henry Herbert, his kinsman. Pembroke was Lord Chamberlain of the King’s household and among the most politically powerful men at the Stuart court. Sir Henry served as the Master of the Revels throughout the Caroline period. Together, they were perfectly positioned to prefer Beeston by creating for him an adjunct post in the Revels Office.

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That Beeston had the support of private benefactors – patrons other than the Stuart royal family members who sponsored his playing companies – underscores a need to rethink our understanding of theatrical patronage, particularly as it functioned for those in managerial positions. Increasingly, it is becoming apparent that early seventeenth-century commercial theatre resembled other London businesses in its susceptibility to monopolization by individuals connected at court. This becomes especially evident during the 1630s, a decade that witnessed the rise of what Gurr has called an “impresario system,” an “autocratic form of rule imposed on a profession which had grown into being by means of a long tradition of collaborative and democratic practices.” Gurr understands the phenomenon of the single manager to be largely an effect of ruthless commercialism and characterizes Beeston, in particular, as a highly efficient, market-driven dictator. The new evidence nevertheless reveals that Beeston pragmatically negotiated traditional routes to preferment and suggests that existing sponsorship habits shaped the “impresario system” as significantly as the pressures of market competition.

Beeston’s court office would provide an opportunity to codify and institutionalize the managerial policies he had developed over the previous two decades. The strength of the Beeston model therefore lay in its careful balance of practical commercial control (ownership of the playhouse and other assets, a controlling stake in the resident acting company), technical and aesthetic expertise (training of actors, costuming, adapting the

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47 Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies* 9. “Impresario” is another anachronistic construct, though a useful one. The term technically belongs to eighteenth-century Italian opera (*impresa, “undertaking”), but Gurr sees the role as essentially rooted in the commercial “managerial system” that Henslowe established late in his career, which “was imitated widely in London and spread into the rest of Europe.” (18).

48 S.P. Cerasano arrives at a similar conclusion in a recent study of Henslowe’s negotiation of the “two seemingly disparate but complementary worlds – the world of the Court and the world of the capitalist playhouse.” See “Philip Henslowe and the Elizabethan Court,” *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007) 49-57.
repertory to meet the current taste), and political protection (the patronage at the Stuart
court and the Revels Office). As the second part of this study will demonstrate, the
Beeston system would structure successful theatre business for the rest of the century,
even as the family itself slipped from its position of commercial dominance in London.

Chapters Three and Four trace the paths by which the Beeston management model
migrated into the later seventeenth century and account for the paradox of the troubled
fortunes that Christopher Beeston’s descendents experienced. Elizabeth Beeston,
Christopher’s second wife, and William Beeston, his son, were closely involved in the
Drury Lane enterprise before and after its founder died in 1638. Like other family firms
of early modern London, the Cockpit functioned as a household business whose mistress
worked as an agent on her husband’s behalf and in which the patriarch groomed at least
one child to take over his investments in the event of his death.49 Hereditary involvement
and the compartmentalizing of duties enabled one generation to bequeath its household
business to the next, but there were many potential complications. As the second part of
my study will show, war, politics, and accidents of nature would combine to frustrate
efforts made by the second and third generations of London Beestons to preserve their
theatrical dynasty.

Chapter Three, “Elizabeth Beeston, Sir Lewis Kirke, and the Cockpit’s
Management during the English Civil Wars,” offers the first comprehensive analysis of
Elizabeth Beeston’s theatrical activity between the late 1630s and the early 1650s. As
recent scholarship is at pains to emphasize, women, although barred from performing in

49 Grassby, Business Community 317-328, 370-373, 401-404. Grassby’s Kinship and Capitalism:
Marriage, Family and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580-1740 (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2001) argues that the early modern economy “would have grown at a much slower pace
without corporations and lone adventurers, but it would not have functioned at all without family networks”
(417).
public, nevertheless participated in various kinds of offstage theatrical work. As early as 1634, Elizabeth Beeston appears to have contributed to her husband’s enterprise both as a manager of the tiring house and a keeper of accounts. In 1638, she inherited the Cockpit’s lease and proceeded to demonstrate an entrepreneurial impulse of her own. Indeed, a central contention of the third chapter is that she was the first woman in English history to formally own and manage a purpose-built London playhouse. The second argument advanced in the chapter is that we stand to gain considerable insight into her career by exploring the biography of the man she later married, Sir Lewis Kirke. Kirke legally owned the Cockpit from 1646 to 1655 but he has yet to become a figure of interest to theatre historians. An overlooked body of evidence shows him to have been a wine merchant, an adventurer to Canada, a Caroline naval captain, and a military Governor during the wars, and his reconstructed biography provides a detailed new context in which to consider persistent efforts to keep the Cockpit theatre open for business between 1646 and 1650. Politically, these were tumultuous years: the Stuart cause faltered, radical Parliamentarians were readying the King’s trial and execution, and the fear of counter-revolution was rampant. Throughout it all, the Kirkes remained ideologically committed to the Stuarts and the latter part of Chapter Three relates the untold story of their effort to operate the Beeston playhouse in an atmosphere tense with Parliamentary political censorship and downtrodden Royalist resentment.

Chapter Four, “William Beeston and the Decline of the Family Enterprise,” examines finally the question of why the theatrical prospects of later generations of Beestons collapsed, even as the management system they inherited continued to support successful theatre business in Restoration London. Informed onlookers during the
Interregnum confidently forecast that William Beeston and his son, George Beeston, would one day reassert their family’s prewar commercial supremacy. William had been, in his own words, “bred vp in the art of Stage playing” and “skild in that science” at the hands of his father. After his father’s death, he inherited both the office of theatrical Governor and joint control of the Beestons’ Drury Lane enterprise. As other players fought in the wars, he groomed George for a theatrical career and readied a new commercial venture at the playhouse in Salisbury Court, a project sponsored, according to new evidence, by noble patrons in the Sackville family. By the time the Stuarts regained power and resanctioned London playing in 1660, William Beeston had successfully reconfigured all the components of his father’s once stable and profitable theatrical business. Yet problems ensued and although theatre historians have characterized these as the consequence of incompetence, I will suggest that emerging entrepreneurial figures such as William Davenant simply learned to apply the Beeston managerial model more efficiently to the new political environment of the restored Stuart court. Hints of Davenant’s adeptness at garnering courtly favour are evident before 1642, and Chapter Four reinterprets the controversial staging of Brome’s *The Court Beggar* at the Cockpit in 1640 as emblematic of a larger contest for favour. In this instance, Beeston pitted self-perceived professional merit against Davenant’s powerful court connections and lost. The scenario would play out again when Davenant’s carefully cultivated relationship with Charles II overshadowed Beeston’s weaker ties to the Restoration court. Beeston’s accumulated assets and experience enabled him to persist for a time but court favourites eventually succeeded in displacing him. Within a few

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50 NA C10/80/15. Leslie Hotson discovered this suit and discusses it in *CRS* 107.
more years, natural disasters and defections from the family’s traditional vocation brought the Beestons’s association with the stage to an end.  

Taken together, then, these chapters aim to enlarge and refine our knowledge of the Beeston family and its impact on the development of seventeenth-century theatrical management. They add significant new information to our existing biographical pictures of the family’s central members, and they explain the creation, application, and transmission of the model of theatrical management that was the family’s legacy to the early modern theatre business. By foregoing the scholarly tendency to focus exclusively on events before 1642 or after 1660 and adopting instead a long perspective on the entire seventeenth century, this dissertation offers the first comprehensive study of the theatrical Beestons and their place in theatre history. Transcriptions and photographic facsimiles of previously unexamined archival sources appear in fourteen appendices and twelve figures following the thesis’s conclusion.
In 1601, twenty-one-year old Christopher Beeston alias Hutchinson was a journeyman player in search of his first share in an acting company. By 1616, according to G.E. Bentley, he was “probably the most important theatrical figure in London” and capable of exerting unprecedented control over the finances, material assets, and playing venue of Queen Anne’s Men. Precisely how Beeston orchestrated this remarkable professional ascension has proven difficult to determine, and with limited and fragmented evidence at their disposal, theatre historians have tended to avoid the question, cutting forward sharply instead to the period after 1616 when Beeston’s activity comes into clearer focus. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate what we overlook in doing so. In particular, an imperfect picture of Beeston’s early career obstructs our understanding of its genuine impact on the developing art of theatrical management in London for, as I will argue, it was during these years that Beeston’s risky and innovative experiments in managerial policy helped to shape a system that eventually came to dominate the Jacobean and Caroline theatre business. At the core of Beeston’s practice would be the concentrated authority of a single theatrical “manager,” a nascent professional category that he crucially helped to define.

To demonstrate this, the chapter first presents a new account of Beeston’s fifteen-year transformation from a minor Elizabethan player into a Jacobean theatrical magnate. Previously unexamined documents shed new light on bonds of kinship and London property that Beeston acquired at the time of his first marriage in 1602, gains which

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1 JCS 2: 363.
explain why his theatrical partners came to recognize him as a man of substance during the first decade of the seventeenth century. The chapter then closely studies evidence of Beeston’s trade in costumes and his apparent familiarity with London’s second-hand clothing market in order to more precisely explain how he generated increasing levels of authority within his playing companies. He completed his professional climb by building the Cockpit playhouse in Drury Lane in 1616, a move that at once irrevocably changed his relationship with his fellow Queen Anne’s players and gave rise to a new executive role in London’s commercial theatre. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the inconsistent attempts by Beeston’s contemporaries to describe his new position. Theatre historians conventionally refer to Beeston’s new role as that of a theatre “manager,” a term of obvious utility but one that remains anachronistic and imperfectly defined. Attending closely to the language actually used in early theatrical parlance, I attempt to clarify Beeston’s position in relation to other theatrical leaders of the Jacobean period, particularly Philip Henslowe and John Heminges, whose policies for handling company and playhouse business he appears to have consciously adapted to his own ends.

Servant to the Lord Chamberlain, c. 1598-1601

The earliest traces of Christopher Beeston’s experience suggest that the business and culture of the Elizabethan stage shaped him at an impressionable age. Testifying in a legal dispute in 1623, he gave his age as “43 yeares or thereabouts,” so was therefore born in about 1580. Records of his birth and childhood have not emerged, nor has an

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explanation for his use of the alias “Hutchinson.” He first comes into focus in London during the 1590s as a teenaged player in the service of George Cary, Lord Hunsdon and the Queen’s Lord Chamberlain. When Augustine Phillipps, a veteran of Hunsdon’s company, died in 1605, he left Beeston 30s in gold and identified the younger man as his “servaunte,” by which he likely meant his former acting apprentice. The circumstances under which Beeston entered the older player’s service remain unknown but he was performing with the Chamberlain’s Men in 1598. Ben Jonson’s comedy Every Man in His Humour debuted that autumn and when its author memorialized its first cast in his folio Workes of 1616, he named “Chr. Beeston” one of its “principall Comoedians.”

An earlier trace of Beeston’s theatrical work potentially survives if he corresponds to the figure of “Kitt” referred to six times in the Dulwich manuscript known as The platt of the secound parte of the Seven Deadlie Sinns. Much depends on the dating of this important theatrical document. If W.W. Greg’s longstanding hypothesis that Strange’s Men used the plot as a backstage choreographic tool in 1590-1591 is correct, it likely does not refer to the then ten or eleven-year old Beeston. More recently,

3 “Beeston” was a common surname in sixteenth-century Cheshire and in Nottingham, the latter its apparent point of origin. Numerous “Christopher Hutchinsons” also lived in early modern Lincolnshire, the county that produced Beeston’s friend Thomas Heywood, though none can be definitively linked to the man of the theatre, Lincolnshire Pedigrees, ed. A.R. Maddison, vol. 3 (London: Harleian Society Publications, 1902-06) 535-536. A family of vintners lived in Aldersgate Ward, London during the early seventeenth century, descended from “Christopher Hutchinson of Berkhouse in Skelton,” The Visitation of London anno domini 1633, 1634, and 1635, ed. H. Saint-George, vol. 1 (London: Harleian Society Publications, 1880-83) 408. In April 1616, a sixteen-year old Christopher Hutchinson of Hutton Bushel was whipped in the streets of Thirsk, Yorkshire, along with a small company of fellows, for being “players of Enterludes,” North Riding of the County of York Quarter Sessions Records, ed. J.C. Atkinson, vol. 2 (London: North Rising Record Society, 1884) 121-122. His age does not correspond to that of the London actor, but he may have been a relative. Another “Xpofer Hutchinson,” a promising candidate for the London player, was baptized 19 June 1580 in Stokesley, Yorkshire (Family Search International Genealogical Index, http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp, accessed October 10, 2007).


5 The Workes of Beniamin Ionson (London, 1616) A1r, F7v.
however, David Kathman has persuasively reassigned the Sinns plot to the Chamberlain’s Men, c. 1597 or 1598. If this is accurate, and assuming “Kitt” refers to no other member of that company, the plot displaces Jonson’s cast list as the earliest record of Beeston’s acting and affords a glimpse of his work in supporting roles such as “Captaine,” “attendaunt,” and “soldier.”

Surviving evidence places Beeston in the Chamberlain’s Men between 1598 and 1601. In this time, he would have shared the stage with the celebrated tragic actor Richard Burbage, the great clown William Kemp, and indeed Shakespeare himself. As Phillipps’s servant, he would have lived in both St. Botolph’s without Aldgate (near the Theatre and Curtain) and St. Saviour’s Southwark (near the Rose and Globe), parishes densely populated by players. It is tempting to imagine this period as having inculcated a range of professional insights in the young performer, both about the craft of acting and the larger business of company and playhouse management. Nothing links Beeston formally to any profession apart from playing, and his later career is certain proof that he remained intent on theatre work after leaving the Chamberlain’s Men. Given that company’s depth of talent and longevity, it is at least safe to infer that Beeston departed with a clear idea of what was necessary to succeed in London’s developing professional theatre.

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7 London Metropolitan Archives P92/SAV/244/6, cited in Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry and William Ingram, eds., *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 192. Between 1593 and 1596, Phillips lived in Horseshoe Court in the Clink Liberty of St. Saviour’s parish, between Paris Garden and Southwark. This was a short distance from the Rose where he acted with Strange’s/Derby’s Men. The communion token book for these years records three mature individuals in the household: Phillips, his wife, and an unnamed servant. By September 1597, they had moved to the parish of St. Botolphs without Aldgate, nearer the Theatre and the Curtain where the Chamberlain’s Men worked.
Servant to the Earl of Worcester, 1601-1604

Leaving the popular Chamberlain’s Men seems to have been the practical move of an ambitious young player who saw little room for advancement in his present situation. Company shares in the mid-1590s were worth roughly £50, perhaps more after the opening of the Globe in 1599. The dividends must have been handsome, for the Chamberlain’s Men had a repertory that included the plays of Shakespeare and after 1599 a splendid new amphitheatre. The company’s principal sharers were Richard and Cuthbert Burbage, William Shakespeare, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, William Kemp, Thomas Pope, and Henry Condell, the first six of whom jointly financed the Globe’s construction and stood to earn additional profit as its housekeepers. Hired personnel and servants occupied lower positions in the company hierarchy and worked for either a wage that amounted to significantly less than the value of a share or the basic material necessities of room and board. This tripartite structure (housekeeper / company sharer / hired man and servant) remained fixed throughout Beeston’s term with the company, with shares apparently changing hands only upon a shareholder’s death or retirement. Shortly after the company’s relocation to the Globe, for instance, Kemp left to dance his “nine daies wonder” to Norwich and his interest passed to William Sly. The

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9 The “Sharers’ Papers” of 1635 record the grievance of certain King’s actors excluded from the sharing arrangement and provide valuable information about the history and practices of the Chamberlain’s / King’s Men (LC 5/133 f. 44-51, transcribed in MSC 2.3: 362-373).
deaths of Pope and Phillips freed up two more shares in 1605.\textsuperscript{10} From his perspective in 1601, Beeston seems to have faced an uncertain future as a hired player with no immediate opportunity to share in either the company or its playhouse. His likely reason for leaving that year, therefore, was the pursuit of economic security.

Another company was at that time reorganizing under the auspices of Edward Somerset, fourth Earl of Worcester. Somerset had sponsored a busy touring company during the 1590s but, early in 1601, a segment of it was “ioyned by agrement togeather” with actors formerly in the service of the Earl of Oxford and other patrons. The new company was to wear Worcester’s livery and identify itself as in his service.\textsuperscript{11} In June 1601, John Duke, Thomas Heywood and four other unnamed players identified themselves as sharers of this new troupe while contracting with Robert Browne, a leading figure from Derby’s Men, to bring Worcester’s Men to the recently remodeled Boar’s Head playhouse in Whitechapel.\textsuperscript{12} John Duke’s presence in the company is telling, for he had previously served neither Worcester nor Oxford but rather the Lord Chamberlain.\textsuperscript{13} Two other former Chamberlain’s players – Robert Pallant and Beeston – were soon recorded as Worcester’s Men as well, and were therefore likely two of the four unnamed

\textsuperscript{10}Nine daies vvonder Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich (London, 1600); Andrew Gurr, The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 89, 94. The sharers presumably recruited those with the most skill or experience, but this tells us little about Beeston’s talent, only that Sly’s was highly valued. Some argue that Beeston left in 1599 based on his absence from the cast list for Every Man out of His Humour that year. It is dubious evidence, however, since only the company’s eight sharers appear in the list, which ignores the many hired actors and apprentices required for the play’s large cast.

\textsuperscript{11} Outlined in a letter from the Privy Council to the Lord Mayor on 31 March 1602 (Bentley, JCS 6: 123).


\textsuperscript{13} “IOH. DVKE” appears in the cast list for Every Man in His Humour, and “I. Duke” appears in the Sinns plot, like “Kitt,” in the roles of “attendant” and “soldier” and in the parts of “Will foole” and “Lord.”
sharers who signed bonds with Browne that summer.\textsuperscript{14} Duke, Pallant, and Beeston, it would seem, faced the same limited prospects for advancement in 1601 and migrated as a bloc, seizing a chance to take up shares together in Worcester’s new group, joining the promising ranks of the recently returned William Kemp, John Lowin, Richard Perkins, John Thayer, and Thomas Blackwood.

Insofar as a playing company’s reputation reflected the prestige of its patron, contemporaries probably regarded Worcester’s Men as a significant troupe on the rise. The fifty-year old Earl was among the most powerful and cultivated noblemen of the late Elizabethan period, a Knight of the Garter, a celebrated equestrian, an expert on courtly ceremony, and a respected patron of the arts. Although allied with the Earl of Essex during the late 1590s, Worcester deftly shifted his allegiance before Essex’s self-destructive insurrection of February 1600/1 and ascended rapidly at court thereafter. The Queen appointed him Master of the Horse in the spring, and he joined the Privy Council that summer.\textsuperscript{15} That the reorganization of Worcester’s players was a consequence of his enhanced political standing seems clear, given that they replaced Derby’s Men at the court revels that Christmas and that, on 31 March 1602, the Privy Council licensed them to play in London, a privilege hitherto reserved, at least officially, for the Chamberlain

\textsuperscript{14} In Trinity term 1599, Robert “Shaw” of the Admiral’s Men sought sureties of the peace against Robert “Pawlet” and Beeston (NA KB 29/236), see Mark Eccles, “Elizabethan Actors IV: S to End,” 
\textit{Notes and Queries} 238 (1993) 168. The \textit{Sinns} plot assigns Pallant (like “Kitt” and Duke) the parts of “attendant,” “soldier,” and “Captain.”

and Admiral’s companies. The prevalent notion that Worcester’s troupe was a second-string organization is therefore a deceptive one, predicated only on its fewer recorded court performances and perhaps on aesthetic prejudices against the few surviving remnants of its repertory, such as *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad*.

If Beeston’s move to Worcester’s company enhanced his professional standing, immediate commercial problems likely dulled his enjoyment of it. In the autumn of 1601, shortly after the company’s debut at the Boar’s Head, the players were thrust into the middle of a high-pitched legal dispute between Browne and the inn-yard’s other leaseholders, Oliver Woodcliffe and Francis Langley. Woodcliffe and Langley legally controlled specific segments of the yard, including its stage, tiring house, and western gallery and they claimed these entitled them to profits that were not forthcoming. To ratchet up the pressure, the two began to demand (or rather extort) a sum of £3 a week from the players, threatening them with violence and crippling legal action should they refuse to pay. Rather than face Langley’s gang of thugs and his proven ability to bankrupt men in the courts, Beeston and his fellows opted to default on their bonds with Browne. They reportedly paid Langley for half a year (until Shrove Tuesday 1602). Browne retaliated by suing the players in the Court of Requests. The players countersued, and when the court threw out their case in June 1602, they were compelled to pay Browne costs. By then, Beeston and the players were understandably ready to distance

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16 Bentley, *JCS* 6: 123. On this occasion, the Privy Council gave Worcester’s Men the permission afforded the Chamberlain’s and Admiral’s Men in earlier letters of 22 June 1600 and 31 December 1601.


18 Berry explains this complicated case in *The Boar’s Head Playhouse*, 37-71. Langley filed six simultaneous suits against Woodcliffe’s former partner, Richard Samwell, bankrupting him and forcing his family into prison for debt (43-44). In the midst of a performance by Worcester’s Men, Langley and “a
themselves from Whitechapel and so turned their attention to the south bank where another playhouse stood empty.

On 21 August 1602, Philip Henslowe paid for a supper at the Mermaid Tavern to seal an agreement that would bring Worcester’s Men to the Rose playhouse.¹⁹ The company performed steadily thereafter until March 1603 and Henslowe’s memoranda for this period preserve a helpful impression of Beeston’s place and function among his fellows. Since the players required ready money to purchase plays, costumes, and properties, Henslowe periodically issued them loans, usually “at the apoyntment of John Ducke” or “vpon John duckes noote,” indicating Duke’s initial position of leadership.²⁰ Occasionally, Heywood also oversaw the company’s finances but he was more significantly its primary playwright.²¹ Thayer sometimes handled money, too, though in a manner suggesting special connections with the London tradespeople who provided the company’s material properties. Beeston occupied a position similar to that of Thayer.²² Two entries represent him directing Henslowe’s loans towards the purchase of

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¹⁹ Foakes, *Henslowe’s Diary* 214.

²⁰ Duke bought apparel and paid writers on fourteen occasions, Thayer on eight, Beeston on four, Blackwood and a “tyreman” each on three, Lowin on two, and Kemp and Pallant on one occasion each (Foakes, *Henslowe’s Diary* 213-226).

²¹ Heywood wrote seven of the company’s sixteen recorded plays: “albe[ll]re galles,” “marshalle oserecke,” and “cvttyng dick” that September, “Ladey Jane” in October, “cryssmas comes but once ayear” and “the blinde eates many a flye” in November, and “A womon kylld wth kyndnes” in February (Foakes, *Henslowe’s Diary* 215-216, 218-221, 223).

²² Thayer dealt specifically with “the merser,” “the armerer,” “the paynter of the properties,” and “M’s call” who provided him with “ij cvrenetes for hed-tyers” (Foakes, *Henslowe’s Diary* 216-218, 221).
playscripts, and two further entries show the company paying him to procure stage apparel.23

The payment of playwrights seems straightforward, but Beeston’s clothing transactions require further consideration. On 28 August 1602, in preparation for Dekker’s comedy “medsen for a cvrst wiffe,” Duke gave Beeston the healthy sum of £6 for a doublet and a “manes gowne of Branshed velluet,” a garment which, to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at least, carried an air of aristocratic leisure.24 Two months later, on 26 October, Beeston was paid another 20s “for the Jerkin wch the company had of him,” possibly for use in the “new play of the ij brothers tragedy” they were readying.25 Neither notation refers to an intermediary, which suggests Beeston was selling garments already his possession to his company. The uniqueness of Henslowe’s records creates the impression that these were *ad hoc* transactions, as though Beeston was stepping forward with specific garments that he just happened to have just as the company happened to need them. Further analysis, however, suggests a deeper involvement in the provision of costumes, a practice now barely perceptible because largely undocumented. Most telling is the fact that within two or three years, Beeston would become the sole provider of apparel and properties for his acting company. I will shortly address the evidence for this, but first it will be necessary to examine a significant event in Beeston’s life that took place between his sale of the branched velvet gown that August and the jerkin in October.


On 10 September 1602, a month after Worcester’s Men took the stage at the Rose, the twenty-two-year old player married nineteen-year old Jane Sands.

**Beeston and the Sands (Sandys) of Shoreditch**

Although he was a resident of the parish of St. Botolph without Bishopsgate and she of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, the couple married in the Church of St. Mildred the Virgin in the central London parish of St. Mildred Poultry. The Great Fire later destroyed the church, but the wills of benefactors preserve descriptions of its “great East window” and its porch decorated with “an ymage of seynt Christofer in stone embossed,” perhaps explaining Beeston’s preference for it. When Anthony Munday revised Stow’s account of this “proper little church,” he was at pains to stress that it was so named “surely for distinction, not for superstition,” perhaps implying that St. Mildred’s was a fashionable location for Catholic unions. Christopher and Jane Beeston would later christen at least six children in the parishes of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, and St. James,

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26 Guildhall Library Ms 4429: “September / The xth daie Married Christopher Hutchenson of S’t Botulphes w’out B’gate and Jane Sands of the p’[ar]’ishe of S’ Leonard’s in Shorediche.” On 27 October 1602, a month after the wedding, one Margery White alleged that in June “one Christopher Beeston a player at one Winter’s house in Star Alley without Bishopsgate had the use of her body, but as she saith, he did it forcibly, for, said he, ‘I have lain with a hundred wenches in my time.” When called to Bridewell to answer the charge, “Beeston and others his confederates, players, did very unreverently demean themselves to certain governors and much abused the place” (Wickham, Berry and Ingram, *English Professional Theatre* 175).

Clerkenwell, though only two survived childhood; these were their daughter, Anne, who later married the actor Theophilus Bird, and their son, William, whose long stage career is the subject of Chapter Four. Theatre historians have been aware of connections between Jane Sands’s family and Shoreditch’s large theatrical community but her background has remained obscure. Three newly discovered documents in the “Muniments of the Sandys Family” collection in the Lancashire Record Office therefore merit attention, both for what they disclose about Jane Sands and for what they reveal about Beeston’s social standing when he married her in 1602.

It will be useful to review briefly the known facts concerning the Sands (Sandys, Sandes) family of Shoreditch. During the late 1570s and early 1580s, one Anthony Sands lived in the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, where he baptized at least three children in the local church: Cicely Sands (on 11 April 1576), Edwin Sands (7 January 1581/82), and Jane Sands (16 June 1583). A decade before the youngest Sands sister would marry Beeston, her older sister Cicely also married a stageplayer. In 1593, Philip Henslowe informed Edward Alleyn by letter that the summer outbreak of plague had killed “whole howsholdes” and, in particular, “Robart brownes wife in shordech & all her chelldren & howshowld be dead & her dores sheat vpe.” This was not Robert Browne of the Boar’s Head but rather another player of that name, celebrated abroad as “Robertus Braun der

28 The known Beeston children are Augustine (bapt. 16 Nov. 1604 / bur. the next day); Christopher (bapt. 1 Dec. 1605 / bur. 15 July 1610 in St. Leonard’s); Jane (bur. 22 Sept. 1607 in St. Leonard’s); Robert (bapt. 1 Apr. 1609 / bur. 26 Dec. 1615); Anne (bapt. 15 Sept. 1611 in St. James’s); and William, whose birth record is missing but likely falls between Robert’s in 1609 and Anne’s in 1611. See GL Ms 7493, GL Ms 7499 and A True Register of all the Christenings, Marriages and Burialls in the Parishe of St. James, Clarketwell, ed. Robert Hovenden, vol. 1 (London: Harleian Society, 1884) 62.

29 GL Ms 7493. “Margaret Sands the daught[er] of Anthony Sands,” baptized 21 June 1579, likely also belonged to the family but died young. The same may be true of “John Sanders ye son of Anthony Sanders” buried 29 August 1585 (GL Ms 7499). I am grateful to John H. Astington for sharing with me his transcriptions of the register.

30 Foakes, Henslowe’s Diary 277-278.
Englische Commoediant,” a leader of English playing companies known for touring the courts and fairgrounds of continental Europe.\textsuperscript{31} Aged about thirty, his family wiped out, Browne returned to London late in 1593 to rebuild his household. On 7 March 1593/94, he married eighteen-year old Cicely Sands in St. Leonard’s church,\textsuperscript{32} and as he returned to touring, she integrated into the London theatre community. They raised yet another Robert Browne with links to the theatre.\textsuperscript{33} In 1608, William Sly assigned the Brownes “his parte of the globe,” left their eight-year old daughter, Jane, a house in Shoreditch, and appointed “Sisley Browne” his estate’s executrix.\textsuperscript{34} The Brownes soon relocated to Clerkenwell and, early in 1610, the travelling actor returned to London to instruct the Children of the Queen’s Revels at the playhouse in Whitefriars.\textsuperscript{35} When that enterprise amalgamated with Lady Elizabeth’s Men in 1614, he seems to have resumed touring for he was in Nuremberg and Strasbourg in 1618 and Frankfurt in 1620. Joining him was Robert Reynolds, a young player from Queen Anne’s Men who married Browne’s daughter, Jane, in 1616. Reynolds would lead continental troupes of his own during the 1620s and 30s and Jane would accompany him. Browne returned to London before the summer of 1620, when he and Cicely christened twin boys, Christopher and William.

\textsuperscript{31} Berry carefully separates “Browne of the Boar’s Head” and “Browne of the foreign tours” in \textit{The Boar’s Head Playhouse} (191-197). See also Schlueter, “English Actors in Kassel” 257-261.

\textsuperscript{32} GL Ms 7493.

\textsuperscript{33} He may be the “Rbt. Browne son of Rbt. A stageplayer” baptised on 19 October 1595 in St. Saviour’s Southwark (Schlueter, “English Actors in Kassel” 238-261, 260 n.)

\textsuperscript{34} Honigmann and Brock, \textit{Playhouse Wills} 80-81. Sly also left £40 to fellow King’s actor James Sands (like Beeston, a former servant to Augustine Phillips). This suggests he was a relative of the Shoreditch Sands family but firmer evidence, regrettably, remains elusive.

\textsuperscript{35} The Revels patent (NA C66/1801) is transcribed in \textit{MSC} 1.3: 271-272.
likely naming them after Christopher and William Beeston. Browne died about a year
later, in his sixties. Cicely remarried in 1622, again to an actor (and an associate of
Beeston’s), Willam Robbins (Robinson). If she corresponds to the “Cicely Robinson, a
petitioner” buried in St. James, Clerkenwell, on 21 February 1656/57, we can
comprehend the full span of her eighty years.

Three unpublished documents do much to explain why the Sands sisters made
attractive matches to the pragmatic players who married them. The first is a tripartite
indenture dated 21 November 1605 (Appendix B) that outlines an agreement between a
widow named Alice Burnell, a Lancashire gentleman named “Edwin Sands,” and
“Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston” to partition a property in St. Leonard, Shoreditch,
known “by the name and Signe of the Kings Head.” Hotson’s research first revealed
Beeston’s interest in the King’s Head property; the 1605 indenture now explains how
he acquired it. The widow Burnell owned a third and Edwin Sands owned two-thirds of
the property’s buildings, stables, and gardens, which stood along Shoreditch’s

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36 “Xpofer & William sons of Robart & Cicilye Browne” were baptised together on 20 August 1620 in St.
James, Clerkenwell. Eight Browne children are known: Robert (bapt. 19 Oct. 1595); Jane (bapt. 13 Jan.
1599/1600); Judith, James, Elizabeth, Audrey (named in their brother Robert’s will in 1623); and “Xpofer
& William,” see June Schlueter, “English Actors in Kassel,” 260 n.4. That five of them share names with
Christopher Beeston, his wife (Jane), his son (William), his probable brother (Robert) and that man’s wife
(Audrey) indicates close ties between the two families. The will of another Shoreditch player, Robert
Pulham (d. 1611), leaves £10 both to his “Godchilde Robert bestone” (Christopher’s then two-year old son)
and to then eleven-year old “Ieane [Jane] Browne the daughter of Sislie browne” (Honigmann and Brock,
Playhouse Wills 84-85).

37 “William Robins & Cisley Browne” were licensed to marry on 30 July 1622, A True Register of all the
Christenings, Marriages and Burialls in the Parishe of St. James, Clerkenwell, ed. Robert Hovenden, vol. 3
(London: Harleian Society, 1887) 51. For the burial of “Cicely Robinson,” see A True Register of all the
Christenings, Marriages and Burialls in the Parishe of St. James, Clerkenwell, ed. Robert Hovenden, vol. 4

38 LMA O/251/001. The indenture refers throughout to “Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston” and his
signature appears at the bottom in a hand corresponding to other surviving autographs.

39 Hotson, CRS 92.
southernmost boundary, just at the point where Bishopsgate Street became the high street of Holywell (or Halliwell). The property’s frontage was situated on the northwest corner of the intersection of Holywell Street (running north), and Hog Lane (running east to west). Stretching westward behind the property’s buildings, and abutting on Hog Lane to the south, lay a plot of land called “Little Close” and the indenture indicates that Beeston already had the freehold of this “meadowe or pasture lyenge on the backsyde of the saide mesuage … towarde a place there called the Curtayne.” Since the King’s Head property offered easy access to Little Close from the high street, it was agreed that in exchange for “way & passage” to the meadow, Beeston would allow Sands and Burnell access to its “pale or watering place” for the purpose of “washing and watering” their “horses, kine & sheepe.” Moreover, they agreed that Beeston would become a “tenant of some part” of the King’s Head, a reapportioning owing to the recent death of a former occupant named Jane Man, “sometimes the wife of Robert Man of the sayde parishe of St Leonard’s deceased.” She was likely the widow of that name buried two

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41 LMA O/251/001. The copperplate map known as the “Agas” view represents the close with a staked horse grazing in sight of the archers and windmills of Finsbury Fields, see A Collection of Early Maps of London, 1553-1667, ed. John Fisher (London: Guildhall Library, 1981) sheet 1. Mark Eccles notes a “widow Beston” living on the Curtain estate in 1600 (Close Roll extract, NA, C54/1693), Christopher Marlowe in London (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 123. The playwright Thomas Middleton had the freehold of her dwelling house before surrendering it to his brother-in-law Allan Waterer amid financial trouble that year. One “Alice Beeston,” aged 54, was buried in the nearby churchyard of St. Botolph’s without Bishopsgate on 28 September 1604. Her son “Robert,” possibly the player and a relative of Christopher’s, had the administration of her £20 in goods on 29 February 1604/05 (Commissary Court of London Act Book, GL Ms 9161/16), see Mark Eccles “Elizabethan Actors I: A-D,” Notes and Queries 236 (1991) 40.
months earlier in St. Leonard’s churchyard and, as I will demonstrate shortly, she was Sands’s grandmother.\(^{42}\)

Three weeks later, on 8 December 1605, Edwin Sands leased Beeston his two-thirds interest in the King’s Head at a rate of £30 a year for 31 years. The lease no longer survives but its conditions are set out in a second indenture, dated 12 February 1617/18 (Appendix C).\(^{43}\) Having returned to Lancashire, Sands (signing himself “Sandys”) sought to settle a jointure owed to the family of his wife, Elizabeth Knipe. He agreed to transfer to the Knipes, for the duration of his marriage, the £30 *per annum* then being paid to him by “Christofer Hitchinson alias Beestone” for the King’s Head in London. While this second indenture corroborates and illuminates the terms of Beeston’s interest in that property, it also usefully clarifies Edwin Sands’s background. In addition to his London rents, Sands agreed to give the Knipes a portion of his moiety in the rectory of Hawkshead parish in Lancashire. This association with Hawkshead is significant for it allows us to place him squarely within the aristocratic Sandys family whose history is so closely interwoven with that of Lancashire.

The landowning Sands (Sandys) family first settled in the northern town of Furness Fells, Hawkshead in the fifteenth century. Its seat was Esthwaite Hall from which it controlled Hawkshead’s lucrative fishery, and its name still adorns a choir and family tomb in the local St. Michael’s church, a sign of its influence and wealth. “Edwin

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\(^{42}\) GL Ms 7499. “Jane Man widowe was buryed the vijth of August – Halliwell,” while one “Robert Man Inholder was buryed the xith daye of March [1582/83] Halliwell Street” and another “Robert Man was buried the same day [20 August 1603] – Hoxton.” A deed of sale dated 18 March 1581 (NA C54/1098) names “Roberte manne” as a leaseholder on the Curtain property alongside Henry Laneman, the early proprietor of the Curtain playhouse (Ingram, *The Business of Playing* 224-225). “George Burnell,” possibly Alice Burnell’s husband, was buried on 21 September 1603. I am grateful to Alan H. Nelson for sharing with me his transcriptions and comments about St. Leonard’s register.

\(^{43}\) Lancashire Record Office DDSA 30/2/3.
Sandys” (uncle of the aforementioned Edwin) was the most significant family figure in the sixteenth century. He was the fifth of seven sons born to William Sandys (d.1548), Henry VIII’s Receiver of the Liberties in Furness, and he enjoyed a distinguished ecclesiastical career under Elizabeth, whom he served as Bishop of Worcester in 1559, Bishop of London in 1570, and then Archbishop of York in 1577/78. He married Cicely Wilford (or Wilsford), daughter of a prominent Kentish family, in St. Leonard, Shoreditch on 19 February 1559/60. A zealous protestant, and an acquisitive one, Archbishop Sandys devised a detailed will before his death in 1588. Among its legatees was his youngest brother, Esthwaite’s seventh son, “Anthony Sandys.”

The will of this “Anthony Sandys,” dated 22 October 1591, confirms that he was the aforementioned “Anthony Sands” of St. Leonard’s (Appendix D). His three children – Cicely, Edwin, and Jane – were therefore nieces and nephew to an Archbishop of York and members of a lower branch of the wealthy and powerful Lancashire family. Beeston’s leasing of the King’s Head from Edwin Sandes makes better sense when we recognize that he was Jane’s brother, and Beeston’s brother-in-law. Anthony Sands (Sandys) had the reversion of Esthwaite but occupied it for only four years before his

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45 LRO DDSA 30/2/1.

46 The names of the first two children, Cicely and Edwin, suggest that their distinguished aunt and uncle may have been godparents. The will records a £20 bequest to Cicely in particular, which “my L:G: of Yorke bestowed vpon hir & me,” confirming a closeness between the two households. Two of Archbishop Sandys’s sons (Cicely and Jane’s first cousins) had historically significant careers. Sir Edwin Sandys (1561-1629) was a pupil of Richard Hooker, a politician, and central figure in the Virginia Company. His younger brother George Sandys (1578-1644) was a poet and world traveller.
death and burial in Hawkshead on 13 November 1591. He had spent much of the 1570s and 80s awaiting his inheritance in London with his wife Ann Mann. She was the daughter of a Lincolnshire couple, Robert and Jane Mann. It will be recalled that Robert and Jane “Man” are described in the 1605 indenture as late residents of the King’s Head property in St. Leonard’s, Shoreditch. While the elder Man(n)s would seem to have been close to their grandchildren, there were bitter domestic problems between Anthony and Anne before his departure for Lancashire to inherit Esthwaite. In his own words:

my wife did Eloupe and goe frome me with hir adulterer and adulterers and hath nowe for many yeares together lyved from me in adulterye with divers and sundry adulterers and by them hath had dyvers and sundry children and remayneth still vnreconcyled vnto me.  

He excluded her from his will on this basis but remained generous to their three children: “Edwyne, Cycely and Jane which three I take to be myne owne.” To Edwin he left Esthwaite and the aforementioned rents from Hawkshead’s rectory. Cicely received a trust of £20, a gift from her uncle, the Archbishop, and both Cicely and Jane received 100 marks, or about £65 each, for dowries.

The Sands siblings, despite the marital problems of their parents, therefore grew up in enviable economic circumstances and a stage player marrying into the family was certain to enjoy some degree of material and social benefit. We lack direct information about Christopher Beeston’s lineage but precise knowledge about his wife now affords a better idea of why his colleagues came to recognize him as a man of substance in the early 1600s. Andrew Gurr has noted that Beeston started styling himself a “gentleman”

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47 LRO DDSA 30/2/1.

48 A mark was about 2/3 of a pound and often used to calculate dowries.
at this time, but there has hitherto been “no evidence as to how he qualified for the title.” The 1605 indenture presents the earliest instance of Beeston identifying himself this way and suggests he did so on the basis either of previously inherited land on the Curtain estate or because he had married into the respectable Sands family. Aside from Jane’s dowry, the most tangible economic benefit of the union was the King’s Head property, leased from his new brother-in-law. At the considerable value at £30 a year, the property was likely subleased for income when the Beestons moved their household to Clerkenwell after 1607.

Since the Sands family had already integrated into London’s theatre community when Cicely Sands married Robert Browne, Beeston’s kinship network expanded in 1602 to include individuals with whom he shared a professional interest. The most intriguing of these relationships is certainly with the seasoned Browne, who we may now recognize as having been Beeston’s brother-in-law for a period of two decades. Browne was a well-connected man in London, a longtime associate of Henslowe, a friend to Edward Alleyn, and professionally affiliated with numerous players in the service of King James and Queen Anne. Roslyn Knutson has illuminated the tendency of players bound by kinship to develop “cooperative commercial strategies” that transcended company boundaries, and the apparent movement of plays between companies to which Browne and Beeston belonged potentially reflects a sharing of theatrical resources between the

49 Andrew Gurr, “Beeston [Hutchinson], Christopher (1579/80-1638),” *DNB* 4: 826-827.

50 A deed of sale dated 3 January 1588/89 refers to Browne’s joint ownership with Edward Alleyn (and John Alleyn and Richard Jones) of a stock of “playinge apparrelle playe Bookes, Instrumentes and other commodities,” while in 1612 (two decades later) Browne signed a business letter to Alleyn “yo’ loung ffrend” (Greg, *Henslowe Papers* 31-31, 63). For his connections to the King’s Men and Children of the Queen’s Revels, see above (p. 42-43).
brothers-in-law. On the immediate question of Beeston’s rising status, however, we are now in a better position to recognize how his marriage in 1602 was an important first step in his steady professional climb over the next decade.

“A place of greatest chardge & trust”: Furnishing Queen Anne’s Men, 1604-1612

The Stuart accession early in 1604 brought Worcester’s players the patronage of Queen Anne of Denmark. Reinforced by his recent material and social gains, Beeston superseded John Duke as a company leader, notably heading up a list of “Officers to the Queene” issued red cloth for the royal procession of 15 March 1604. Until 1612, Beeston shared leadership of the company with its charismatic new clown, Thomas Greene. In Heywood’s appreciative terms, “there was no Actor … more applaudent by the audience, of greater grace at the Court, or of more general loue in the Citty,” yet Greene’s emergence as company figurehead evidently owed as much to his financial substance as to his stage work. In 1603, he had married Susan Browne, the widow of Robert Browne of the Boar’s Head, and he had assumed possession of her interest in that playhouse. Greene had also acquired “tenure and occupation” of a portion of the Curtain estate that included the Curtain playhouse. A stake in two playing venues assured a player authority within his company and a licence drafted in 1604 accordingly authorized

51 Knutson, Playing Companies and Commerce 47. Browne travelled Europe with versions of Nobody and Somebody and The Rape of Lucrece, plays Beeston apparently controlled while managing Queen Anne’s Men. Beeston, in turn, gradually acquired some of the older plays that Browne may have had access to, such as George a Greene (originally with Sussex’s Men), Hoffman (Admiral’s), The Jew of Malta (Strange’s / Sussex’s / Admiral’s), Cupid’s Revenge, Wit without Money, and Knight of the Burning Pestle (Children of the Queen’s Revels’s).

52 NA LC 2/4/79 transcribed in MSC 2.3: 323.

53 Io. Cooke, Greenes Tu quoque (London, 1614) A2r.

54 NA C54/2075/17 cited in Wickham, Berry, and Ingram, English Professional Theatre 416.
the Queen’s Men to act at the Boar’s Head, the Curtain, or any other house which Greene “elected, or by hym hereafter to be builte.” Beeston, meanwhile, continued to shore up his own standing by directing his new credit toward the control of another critical playing resource. I suggested earlier, with reference to Henslowe’s records, that Beeston was a more seasoned dealer in London clothing markets than we have previously recognized. His timely provision of specific garments for Worcester’s Men in 1602 hints at this possibility. It gains further credibility from the fact that when the Queen’s Men moved into the Red Bull playhouse in about 1607, they assigned to Beeston the onerous task of furnishing all of their productions with suitable costumes, furniture, and other properties.

Evidence for the decision emerges from a legal suit filed against Beeston several years later in the Court of Requests. In November of 1619, a London fishmonger named John Smith attempted to recover from Beeston an alleged debt of £46 5s 8d. A purveyor of gold and silver cloth as well as fish, Smith testified that between 1612 and 1616 Beeston regularly bought from him parcels of “diverse tinsell stuffes and other stuffe.” Further testimony by former Queen’s Men reveals that after the company’s formation, it settled on a policy whereby, “for the better orderinge and settinge forth” of plays, all the sharers would “take vpon them some place & charge.” They regarded the “provison of the furniture & apparel” as “a place of greatest chardge & trust” which

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55 NA SP 14/2/247, transcribed in MSC 1.3 (1909) 265-267. Greene reportedly had “for divers years the taking and receiving of the profits of the half galleries” at the Red Bull (NA C24/500/103). The money probably covered expenses such as paying for scripts or licensing performances; it may also have covered ad hoc costs such as paying Martin Slater £12 in 1607 not to post playbills in the name of Queen Anne’s Men without the consent of the London-based sharers. On the Greene v. Slater case, see Bentley, Profession of Player 147-148, 165.


should “of necessitie fall vpon a thriueing man & one that was of abilitie & meanes.”

Beeston’s recent marriage into the Sands family undoubtedly recommended him as just such a “thriueing man.” Furthermore, as Henslowe’s records show, he understood how to locate quality materials for performance, thus satisfying the criteria of “abilitie & meanes.” The Queen’s Men agreed that Beeston would thereafter:

Deffaultke out of the collection and gatheringes wch were made continually whensoever any playe was acted a certen some of money as a comon stock towards the buyeing & Defraying of the charges of … all the furniture apparrell & other Necessaries wch should be requisite for their condition & qualitie.

This “comon stock” amounted to “one half of the proffitt that came of the gallyryes” and the sharers expected Beeston to redistribute any “surplusage” so that “every one of them should haue a share & part according to their place & qualitie.” Furnishing the company would be Beeston’s responsibility alone, with “noe other of the companie … troubled or ymployed in this business.” It is not clear whether he petitioned for independence or whether it simplified matters to delegate the whole task to him. His later predilection for control suggests he may have sought to operate alone. In any case, for a “space of seaven or eight yeeres” (between about 1608 and 1616) Beeston proceeded to buy “of Divers men Divers commodities” for use on the Red Bull stage.58

His performance of this specialized function has yet to receive detailed consideration. The Smith v. Beeston proceedings identify at least two of the “Divers men” with whom Beeston dealt: Thomas Somerskales, an armourer, and William Freshwater, a merchant tailor. Somerskales claimed to know Beeston well and was undoubtedly a useful contact for a man needing to locate “pikes and Targeters,” “the

Armour of Achilles,” and the many other martial properties forged in the epic imagination of company playwright, Heywood.\textsuperscript{59} Seventy-two year old Freshwater claimed to have long been a “workman” for the Queen’s Men. As one of Beeston’s personal agents, he delivered “token” sums for materials that Beeston “did bargen for and bye,” and “in Beestons name and by his direccion & appoyntm’” he transported stuffs from the shop to the playhouse.\textsuperscript{60} If the elderly figure is the same “goodman freshwatr” whom Henslowe paid in 1602 to make a “canves sewt & skins” for Worcester’s lost play “the black doge of newgate,” then his professional association with Beeston may have extended over two decades.\textsuperscript{61}

Each of the playhouses in which Beeston acted prior to 1616 stood in proximity to busy second-hand clothing markets. Within walking distance of the Rose in Southwark, for instance, local retailers sold used garments in makeshift wooden stalls and from the doorsteps of small household businesses.\textsuperscript{62} From his home in Shoreditch, Beeston’s most direct route to the Boar’s Head would have carried him down the long arc of Houndsditch, a cluttered street running parallel to the old wall from Bishopsgate to Aldgate, described as “for the most part possessed by Brokers, sellers of olde apparel, and such like.”\textsuperscript{63} Just within the walls, also, was Birchin Lane, where salesmen-tailors

\textsuperscript{59} Thomas Heywood, \textit{The Rape of Lucrece} (London, 1608) 11r; \textit{The Iron Age} (London, 1632) K1r.

\textsuperscript{60} Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 331-332.

\textsuperscript{61} Foakes, \textit{Henslowe’s Diary} 222; Henslowe also paid “fresh watr” in August 1602 for work on Worcester’s revival of “owld castell” (214).


displayed racks of ready-made suits for purchase.\textsuperscript{64} Near the Red Bull, Long Lane ran perpendicular to St. John Street, filled “on both the sides with tenements for brokers, tipplers, and such like.”\textsuperscript{65} With the right connections, it was possible to buy the nobility’s cast finery, as Thomas Platter’s famous account testifies. There may also have been opportunities to buy old masquing materials when the Office of the Wardrobe thinned its store.\textsuperscript{66} Beeston’s work in this area remains for the most part undocumented, but we must assume that he dealt with a wide and perhaps constantly changing network of retailers and tradespeople. The portion of his company’s repertory that survives indicates a substantial material contribution to theatrical productions at the Red Bull.

Apparel was a crucial means of representing social status, gender, and location on the early seventeenth-century stage.\textsuperscript{67} An eclectic Red Bull play such as \textit{The Four Prentices of London} instantly evokes the diverse range of national, cultural, and occupational costumes Beeston needed to acquire for the actors. In Heywood’s \textit{Ages} plays, “Greekish habits” contrast with distinctly Trojan costumes, down to Priam’s “night-gowne and slippers.” Ghostly attire is called for in \textit{The White Devil} in the form of Bracciano’s “leather Cassock & breeches, bootes, [and] coule,” possibly the same outfit donned by the “Ghoast, cole-blacke” in Dekker’s earlier \textit{If It Be Not Good the Devil is in


It. If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody required a garment referred to as “the Angels
habit.” Jupiter’s “Imperiall Robes,” Pluto’s “burning Roabe,” and the robes of other
gods were variously called for, as were emblematic costumes for figures such as the
“Prologue attired like fame” in The Travails of Three English Brothers. If quarto
engravings for No-body and Some-body and Greene’s Tu Quoque recall actual stage
attire, they point to the measure of inventiveness that Beeston and his agents were
capable of bringing to their workmanship.68

Responsibility for this work benefited Beeston in at least two ways. First, it
solidified his importance to his fellows. Absolute trust was required and the Queen’s
Men freely gave Beeston leave to work “as he listed … wthoutt the privatie Direccion or
knowledge” of the other sharers.69 Over time, it became difficult for them to account for
his modus operandi. Even from their privileged vantage point in 1619, his fellow players
were unsure about “whether [Beeston] payd readie money” for materials or whether he
took them “vpon his creditt & accompt.”70 According to Heywood, at one time the
company trusted Beeston for “three yeares together {or thereabouts} with their moneys
gotten by their labours and paynes in Acting or Playing, without any accompt thereof by

68 Thomas Heywood, The Foure Prentises of London (London, 1615); Thomas Heyood, The Second Part of
the Iron Age (London, 1632) E3v, E4r; John Webster, The White Diuel (London, 1612) L2v; Thomas
Dekker, If It Be Not Good, The Diuel is in It (London, 1612) M3v; Thomas Heywood, If You Know Not Me,
You Know Nobodie: or, The Troubles of Queene Elizabeth (London, 1605) sig. E3r; Thomas Heywood, The
Golden Age (London, 1611) L2v, K2r; John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins, The Trauailes of
the Three English Brothers (London, 1607) A2v. For the engravings, see R.A. Foakes, Illustrations of the
English Stage 1580-1642 (London: Scolar Press, 1985) 94-95, 102. No-body and Some-body (c. 1606)
depicts No-body in oversized breeches and Some-body in a grotesque doublet that falls as far as his knees.
The frontispiece for Greene’s Tu Quoque represents the socially dislodged servant Bubble in a doublet and
hose slashed and paned like a backgammon board. John H. Astington advocates approaching such pictures


him made.” The sharers seem to have so relied upon Beeston’s expertise that basic transparency became a low priority.

It is difficult to ignore signs that Beeston exploited this good faith and privately enriched himself. There are hints, for instance, that his personal household wardrobe grew during his term as furnisher of the Queen’s Men. Although he denied any debt to Smith in 1619, Beeston admitted to sometimes buying fabric from the fishmonger “for himself or for his Children, for which he allwayes payd ready money.” This may reveal more than he intended in his typical reticence. Did he not always distinguish his professional budget from his personal one? Might he have sometimes considered company property interchangeable with his own? The Middlesex Sessions Rolls record a case of burglary in July 1614 in which an unmarried Clerkenwell woman stole three women’s ruffs and a petticoat from Beeston’s house in Turnbull (or Turnmill) Street. The accessories may simply have belonged to Jane Beeston, but they may also have been stage materials, intermingled. If the latter is true, were they so stored with the consent of the other sharers? Nothing in the Smith v. Beeston pleadings points to such a policy as part of their agreement, and in other playing enterprises, the removal of apparel from the playhouse was actively discouraged. Beeston’s home was burglarized again in 1617, this time by a tailor from a neighbouring parish. At the same time, someone invaded the home of the Queen’s player Robert Beeston and stole a cloak “color de roy,” a rapier, and

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73 Calendar to the Sessions Records 2: 26.
74 Articles of agreement drawn up between Henslowe and Lady Elizabeth’s Men in 1614 prohibited actors “going out of the howse with any of their apparel on” (Greg, Henslowe’s Papers 123-125).
looking glass.\textsuperscript{75} Although punishable by the pressing of stones and hanging, housebreaking was a common enough crime in the period; it is also true that most successful players kept what the will of Simon Jewell calls “playenge thinges in a box.”\textsuperscript{76} Yet these repeated strikes against the Beestons possibly point to something more, their penchant for hoarding perhaps, certainly an awareness that valuable garments were kept in their houses. As regular dealers in apparel and accessories, the Beestons seem to have made tempting targets for London’s Pilia-Borza-like thieves.

The Queen’s Men gradually grew to suspect Beeston of worse than removing company property from the Red Bull. When the company dissolved in 1619, former members accused him of “vnconscionable and extreame Dealinges,” claiming he had manipulated his office “from the beginning” with “greater care for his owne privatt gaine” than for their collective welfare. Remarkably, they allege that he abused his “place & trust” and “much enrichted himself” by appropriating “divers greate somes of money outt of the colleccions” and submitting what they “verily thinke” to have been a “false accompte of fower hundred poundes.”\textsuperscript{77} Theatre historians have typically shared this suspicion, pointing to Beeston’s “unsatisfactory manner of handling the money” as the means by which he “feathered his own nest.”\textsuperscript{78} If these suspicions are justified, the unanswered technical question remains, how exactly did Beeston embezzle £400?

A solution presents itself if we posit a player familiar with London’s extensive, backstreet clothing trade. Theoretically, Beeston might easily have laundered money

\textsuperscript{75} Calendar to the Sessions Records 1: 145, 4: 307, 309.

\textsuperscript{76} Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 59.

\textsuperscript{77} Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 322, 324.

through the “Divers men” of his citywide network and since the players probably never had so large a sum as £400 to hand, their accusation implies just such a gradual leeching from their common stock. Keeping the company wardrobe was a role “of the greatest charge and trust” precisely because apparel had no fixed value and therefore posed a challenge to accurate accounting. As the supervisor of the Red Bull’s tiring house, Beeston could lay claim to whatever garments or properties he wished, and as the Middlesex Sessions Rolls suggest, these might then be stored in household trunks, sometimes possibly in the homes of family members, until Beeston chose to resell or relinquish them for credit. In the absence of an established banking system, a seventeenth-century wardrobe often functioned like a present-day savings account. A stable material investment, it could be sold wholesale or disassembled and dispersed piecemeal. If Beeston indeed skimmed from the company’s surpluses, his method may well have been to sell or exchange confiscated company materials inconspicuously, thereby pooling ready money or extending his personal credit across the financial network to which he belonged. Although evidence of fraud remains circumstantial, the opportunity and means undoubtedly lay before him. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, a motive had also taken shape; whether for the company’s good, or his own, Beeston planned to build the Queen’s Men a new playhouse.

79 In 1615, Lady Elizabeth’s Men charged Henslowe with a similar breach of trust; having “Ceazed all the stocke,” Henslowe allegedly “sould tenn pound[s] worth of ould apparrell out of the same wthout accomptinge or abatinge for the same” (Greg, Henlowe Papers 86).

80 The analogy is Beverly Lemire’s: “A good wardrobe could be the equivalent of a savings account, as articles of clothing were commonly used as a ready source of cash in emergencies.” See “The Theft of Clothes and Popular Consumerism in Early Modern England,” Journal of Social History 24.2 (1990) 270.

81 On London’s “credit economy in which everything was measured by monetary prices, but where money was not the primary means of exchange,” see Craig Muldrew, The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998) 101, passim.
“A kynde of powerfull Comaunde”: The Cockpit Venture, 1612-1616

Queen Anne’s Men came fully under Beeston’s leadership when Thomas Greene died in 1612. Testimony in the case of Worth v. Baskervyle indicates that “at that tyme and long before and since,” the sharers “put the managing of [their] whole businesses and affaires belonging vnvo them [j]oyntly … in trust vnvo Christopher Hutchinson alias Beeston.” According to Heywood, sheer personality was an important factor in Beeston’s total authority: “the rest of their then Company, both befor[e] and synce the decesse of Thomas Greene did repose their mayne Trust and Confidence in Hutchinson, alias Beeston, for and concerning the Managing of their Affayres, he havinge a kynde of powerful Comaunde over … [his] then fellow Actors.” Over the course of the next four years, whether by persuasion or coercion, this “powerfull Comaunde” led the Queen’s Men to restructure their theatrical operation and irrevocably altered Beeston’s professional relationship with the company.

It began with Beeston’s plan to build a new commercial playhouse. S.P. Cerasano’s analysis of Henslowe and Alleyn’s ventures has demonstrated the complexity of such a project and the extensive planning required. Foremost among Beeston’s considerations would have been the theatre’s location, the type of venue to construct, and its potential clientele. On 9 August 1616, he leased “the premisses called the Cockpitts” in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields at the rate of £45 a year for 31 years. A former bird-fighting arena and accompanying tenements, yard, and garden, the property stood at

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82 Greenstreet, “Documents Relating to the Players” 495.
84 S.P. Ceresano, “Edward Alleyn’s ‘Retirement’ 1597-1600,” Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England 10 (1998) 98-112. Ceresano views Alleyn’s break from playing with the Admiral’s Men in 1597 as a consequence of his absorption in planning the Fortune venture. The playhouse was finished three years later.
the centre of a triangular block between Drury Lane and Great Wild Street.\textsuperscript{85} That winter, the Beestons moved their household into an adjoining dwelling house in “Cockpit alley” and there assumed managerial responsibility for adjacent tenements while overseeing renovations of the Cockpit’s auditorium.\textsuperscript{86}

In opting to erect an indoor venue in the suburbs west of the old city, Beeston was following a trend set by the managers of the King’s Men and the Children of the Queen’s Revels at their respective playhouses in Blackfriars and Whitefriars.\textsuperscript{87} The demographic profile of the Cockpit’s projected audience was narrower than that of the Red Bull, but smaller auditoriums like the one Beeston planned could charge six times the admission price and remain open in any weather.\textsuperscript{88} Drury Lane’s social character and built

\textsuperscript{85} NA C2/Chas.I/H44/26, discovered and discussed by Hotson (\textit{CRS} 88-89).

\textsuperscript{86} Graham F. Barlow discusses the property in “Wenceslas Hollar and Christopher Beeston’s Phoenix Theatre in Drury Lane,” \textit{Theatre Research International} 13.1 (1988) 30-44. No details about the conversion survive, but a parallel case might be found in Inigo Jones’s 1629 conversion of the Cockpit-in-Court. Surviving architectural plans for this project and accounts kept by the presiding Office of Works point to the many carpenters, carvers, and painters needed for such work. See, Glynne Wickham, “The Cockpit Reconstructed,” \textit{New Theatre Magazine} 7.2 (1967) 26-36. The Beestons also wisely ingratiated themselves by donating to local churchwardens. \textit{The Liber Domus Dei Anglice, or Doomes-day Booke} records “The plaiers of the Cockpit Plaiehouse” paying £20 toward repairs of the decayed St. Giles’s church. A separate assessment book records a payment of £8 15s 5d from the “Phoenix playhouse,” and another “from Mr. Biston, as from y'' Cockpit for and toward y'' building of y'' church, y'' sm of tenn pounds & seaven shillings.” John Parton, \textit{Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, Middlesex, London} (London: 1822) 194, 196-197

\textsuperscript{87} Robert Browne, Beeston’s brother-in-law, held an interest in the Whitefriars before it fell out of the market in about 1614, perhaps influencing Beeston’s plans for his new theatre. In 1615, a consortium led by Alleyne and Philip Rosseter also tried, unsuccessfully, to open an indoor theatre in Porter’s Hall in the precinct of Blackfriars, see S.P. Ceresano, “Competition for the King’s Men?: Alleyne’s Blackfriars Venture,” \textit{Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England} 4 (1989) 173-186.

\textsuperscript{88} Inner Temple students John and Richard Newdigate went to several playhouses between 1618 and 1621, paying an average of 1s 6d, “The Undergraduate Account Book of John and Richard Newdigate, 1618-1621,” \textit{Camden Miscellany} 30 (1990) 149-269. Bulstrode Whitelocke of the Middle Temple saw plays “Att the cockpit playhouse” in 1629 and 1632, and paid 1s 6d and 8s, John R. Eliot, “Four Caroline Playgoers,” \textit{Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England} 6 (1993): 179-193, 186. Sir Humphrey Mildmay saw three plays at the Cockpit between 1633 and 1635, twice paying 1s, and once 1s 6d (Bentley, \textit{JCS} 2: 674). Shirley locates playgoers on the Cockpit’s stage, contrasting “hee that … has a place / Here on the Bench, for six pence, and dares sit, / And boast himselfe a commissioner of wit,” with “Some ill-look’t stage-keepers,” who “like Lictors wait, / With Pipes for faces, while another beares / Three-footed stooles instead of Juory chaires,” \textit{The Example} (London, 1637) I4r. An unpublished expense account kept for Edward,
environment was in the midst of transformation. An influx of noble persons and place-seekers were taking up residence in the area, conscious of its proximity to Whitehall. A few blocks south of Drury Lane, the Strand stretched from Temple Bar to Westminster, lined with the stylish, terraced townhouses of the Duke of Buckingham and the Earls of Arundel, Bedford, Salisbury, Dorset, and Essex. Another segment of the Cockpit’s projected audience, the Inns of Court with its fraternities of barristers and law students, occupied countless rooms along Drury Lane, Holborn, Chancery Lane, and the many narrow streets surrounding Lincolns Inn Fields. Beeston recognized in the area a growing demand for amenities and sought to exploit the emerging market, like the many silk-weavers, lace-makers, portrait painters, tobacconists, and other artisans who gravitated westward in the early decades of the century. Prologues and epilogues to Cockpit plays would make frequent appeals thereafter to the “Ladyes,” “Cavaliers,”

Viscount Conway in 1634 and 1635 shows that “goeing into the pleae at the Cockpitt” could cost as much as 4s. This perhaps included access to a private box, or the hiring of a coach. Conway also paid for supper and music at the nearby Bear and Hieronimo taverns and shopped for playbooks in the area (SP 16/285, f. 43-50).


90 Wilfed R. Prest estimates that the Inns admitted 10,000 students between 1610 and 1639, The Inns of Court under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts 1590-1640 (London: Longman, 1972) 30, 41. Men attended the Inns to study law and to refine their knowledge of music, dancing, fencing, and literature while absorbing London fashion and pursuing court connections. John Greene of Lincoln’s Inn records the wedding of a Bencher’s son in 1635, after which “all the batchelors” headed to plays, “some at cockpit, some blackefriers,” see E.M. Symonds, “The Diary of John Greene (1635-59),” English Historical Review 43 (1928) 389.

Within a month of purchasing his lease, Beeston hired a group of labourers to remodel an existing tenement and to convert the baiting house into a theatrical auditorium. They faced immediate complications. A 1608 “Proclamation for Buildings” dictated that all new edifices be built of brick atop existing foundations. On 10 September, Justices of the Peace questioned Beeston’s bricklayer, John Shepperd, after he reportedly dug a new foundation in Drury Lane. Construction halted and the Justices threatened the workers with arrest. Shepperd agreed to “endeavour to bring forth Mr. Beeston to-morrow in court,” but it is unclear whether Beeston appeared.\footnote{Stuart Royal Proclamations, eds. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) 193-195; Calendar to the Sessions Records 3: 310-311.} A week later, the Privy Council ordered that a “base tenement, not of bricke” belonging to Beeston “be pulled downe.” By 29 September, “Christopher Bastone’s house” was reportedly “for the most part puld downe, not to be inhabited,” but he saw that it was soon “buylt up agayne,” and “his Majesty of late passing that way [took] speciall notice therefore, being highly offended with the presumption.” The Privy Council once more ordered that the tenement “be pulled downe to thegrownde and utterly demolished.”\footnote{Acts of the Privy Council, vol. 36 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1927) 14-15, 36, 334.} Work on the site
nevertheless continued and perturbed benchers at Lincoln’s Inn decided on 15 October to send a committee to Queen Anne’s council “touchinge the convertinge of the Cock Pytte in the Feildes into a play house.” Work on the theatre proceeded apace, and John Orrell has argued that a well-timed intervention by Inigo Jones, the royal surveyor, may have facilitated its continuation. This may be so, or it may simply have been that only Beeston’s “base” wooden tenement violated the proclamation against new building and was halted, while construction of the theatre utilized brick and existing foundations and so continued legally.

A further complication arose when rioters overran the playhouse shortly after its opening in 1617. According to contemporary reports, several thousand apprentices flooded the streets during the annual Shrove Tuesday festivities that March and committed “extreame insolencies.” The brickbat-wielding mob besieged several houses “especially in Lincolns Inne Fields and Drewry Lane, where in attempting to pull downe a Playhowse belonging to the Queenes Ma[ts] Servants, there were diuerse p[er]sons slayne and others hurte and wounded, the multitude there assembled being in the number of many thousands.” One newsletter reports that “they besett the house round, broke in, wounded divers of the players, broke open their trunckes, & what apparrell, bookes, or other things they found, they burnt & cutt to pieces & not content herewith, gott on the top of the house & untiled it.” By the time Justices of the Peace and a Sheriff arrived to prevent further damage, “one prentise was slaine, being shotte through head with a pistol, & many other of their fellows were sore hurt.” John Chamberlain confirms the damage.

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done to the “new play house (sometime a cockpit) in Drurie Lane,” and his account suggests Beeston may have been among those firing pistols at the invaders: “though the fellowes [the Queen’s players] defended themselves as well as they could and slew three of them with shot and hurt divers, yet they entered the house and defaced yt, cutting the players apparel all in pieces, and all theyre furniture and burnt theyre play bookees and did what other mischiefe they could.”

If Gurr’s intriguing suggestion is correct, it may be “something less than a coincidence” that the mob targeted Beeston soon after he moved the Queen’s players out of Clerkenwell in order to serve socially elevated patrons in an upscale market. Repairs to the property and its tiring house meant a further financial investment and as business resumed, the Cockpit appears to have acquired its alternate name of “The Phoenix.”

It is not known precisely how Beeston generated the capital to launch (and relaunch) his venture. Theatre historians believe that the Queen’s Men may have been in an economically fragile condition after Greene’s death in 1612. Pleadings in the Worth v. Baskervyle case point to an arrangement to pay Greene’s widow, Susan Greene (later Baskervile), a pension in the form of a company share (valued at £80), but she spent years trying unsuccessfully to claim it. It remained unpaid in July 1615 when she and her new husband agreed to invest £57 in the company in exchange for 1s 8d for each day the company performed. A year later, she claims, the company still had not paid her but did

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96 See the Privy Council’s letter to the Lord Mayor, 5 March 1616/17 (MSC 1.4-5: 374-375) and news-letters by Edward Sherburne and John Chamberlain, both dated 8 March 1616/17 (Bentley, JCS 6: 54-55).

97 Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London 176. That the playhouse was one of many buildings attacked, however, may suggest the violence was indiscriminate. Authorities suppressed the apprentices the following March and the assault proved to be an isolated incident.
promise to increase her pension if the Baskerviles agreed to loan it another £38.\textsuperscript{98} Once more, the company did not to pay and the matter remained unresolved when the Queen’s Men dissolved in 1619. Some theatre historians regard the failure to meet this obligation as a sign of the company’s “general improvidence and financial instability,” the mark of an enterprise “chronically short of the income to pay its legitimate debts.”\textsuperscript{99}

However, with Beeston managing its “whole businesses and affaires,” the Queen’s Men may simply have resisted paying Baskerville. According to Heywood, the daily takings at the Red Bull’s doors and galleries was usually £8 or £9, earnings sufficient to cover a 1s 8d pension, and probably enough to preclude the Baskerviles’ subsequent loans. This suggests, then, the actors exaggerated their poverty to evade paying Greene’s share and that Beeston, as the company’s fiscal supervisor, exploited the Baskerviles further by opportunistically soliciting from them an additional £95 in loans. The Baskerviles presumably would not have continued to loan money to Beeston and the Queen’s Men without some confidence in their ability eventually to repay the debt. Susan Baskerville even went so far as to offer incentives in the form of “money, Beaver hatts, and silke stockins” to “drawe the Rest of the Company to allow of her demands” for repayment, hardly a wise decision if it was the improvident organization theatre historians have envisioned. Baskerville evidently pressured Beeston in particular, knowing that his fellows “putt much affiance” in his leadership.\textsuperscript{100} Finding him at first

\textsuperscript{98} Greenstreet, “Documents Relating to the Players” 495-508.

\textsuperscript{99} Charles Sisson, “Notes on Early Stuart Stage History,” Modern Language Review 37 (1942) 31; Gurr, Shakespearian Playing Companies 324.

\textsuperscript{100} Sisson, “The Red Bull Company and the Importunate Widow” 64; Greenstreet, “Documents Relating to the Players” 506.
“something Backward” and unwilling to help her, she allegedly tried to bribe him with £20. He appears to have taken her money and then stalled her repayment anyway.\(^{101}\)

Is this a piece of the puzzle of the Cockpit’s financing? G.E. Bentley was non-committal but speculated that alleged ill dealing on Beeston’s part was “surely not unconnected” with the plan to move the Queen’s Men west.\(^{102}\) Gurr proposes that the £95 milked from the Baskerviles could have constituted the core funding for the house.\(^{103}\) This is plausible, though if the recorded costs for other playhouses are an indication, an expenditure of four or five times that amount was necessary to build the new playing venue in Drury Lane. A reasonable conclusion is that Beeston privately combined the Baskerviles’ money with the £400 he allegedly siphoned from his company’s “comon stock” to launch the Cockpit venture.\(^{104}\) A conservative approach to the facts gestures toward this conclusion, though it stubbornly refuses to confirm it. Beeston independently handled the Queen’s company’s clothing and properties budget for at least seven years. He submitted no accounts for three of these years. He solicited at least £95 in loans from investors with no apparent intention to repay them. Then, in 1616, he purchased the Cockpit’s lease and began to convert it into a theatre.

\(^{101}\) Greenstreet, “Documents Relating to the Players” 495-496.

\(^{102}\) But Bentley erroneously understands Beeston to have raised the money by seizing the tiring house’s contents, something he allegedly did in March 1618/19, three years later (\textit{Profession of Player} 159-160).

\(^{103}\) Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearian Playing Companies} 324.

\(^{104}\) John Brayne and James Burbage spent £700 in 1576 to build the Theatre. A consortium of investors spent £700 (£70 a share) in 1599 to build the first Globe. Twice that amount rebuilt it in 1613 (£120 a share). Henslowe hired Peter Street to build the Fortune in 1599 for £440 but eventually paid £520. In a petition to the Privy Council, Aaron Holland and Martin Slater claimed they paid £500 in 1605 to have a structure, probably the Red Bull, “all framed and almost sett vp” (\textit{English Professional Theatre} 331, 496-497, 534-537, 611-612). William Ingram analyzes the last document in detail in, “Playhouses Make Strange Bedfellows: The Case of Aaron and Martin,” \textit{Shakespeare Studies} 30 (2002) 118-127.
From a modern point of view, the building of the Cockpit reflects above all Beeston’s self-interest. However, the Queen’s Men apparently thought their “affiance” in Beeston well placed at the time, and Beeston seems to have maintained the appearance of good stewardship, reportedly assuring his partners “that he had Disbursed [unaccounted funds] for the good and benefitt of the Company.”\(^{105}\) The potential rewards of working indoors in a gentrifying suburb and charging six times the rate of admission as at the Red Bull would have been obvious to the whole company. However, the Queen’s Men could not have overlooked the way the Cockpit’s operational structure now set Beeston apart from them. As the primary investor in the venue, Beeston effectively became a landlord to his fellows, who were now his tenants. His was the riskier position but also the more profitable one. Beeston now stood to receive income as the primary housekeeper in addition to earning money from one or more shares in the acting company. As a result, his conception of his own professional authority seems to have changed, evident in a striking move made shortly after the Queen’s Men ceased to function in 1619.

During the *Smith v. Beeston* case, the former Queen’s players who charged Beeston with defrauding them of £400 also testified that amid the “greate variance & strife” of their disbanding Beeston grew intent on “carriing awaie … all the furniture & apparel” that they had collectively purchased.\(^{106}\) Protocol called for a fair redistribution of assets, in adherence with what the players described as their custom of “equetie and good conscience.”\(^{107}\) Sequestering the whole stock defied this principle utterly. No evidence illuminates Beeston’s rationale for doing so, but the move has the appearance of

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\(^{105}\) Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 322.

\(^{106}\) Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 324.

\(^{107}\) Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 324.
calculated risk. Arguably, he broke decisively with company custom because the benefit of doing so outweighed its danger.

The lingering resentment expressed by the former Queen’s Men sharers points to their lack of legal recourse. They worried that Beeston had acted deceitfully but they “could nott tell howe to disprooue” him, so to sue him would have been futile.\textsuperscript{108} As their fiscal manager, Beeston possessed whatever accounts might assist the sharers’ case and his silence on the matter indicates he understood this well enough not to incriminate himself. Acting shares, furthermore, were not of the same legal status as a share in property and Beeston shrewdly understood this as well.\textsuperscript{109} When questioned about the value of a Queen’s company share in the \textit{Worth v. Baskervyle} proceedings, Beeston’s terse answer was that “every man’s share ends, whensoever the Company dissolveth.”\textsuperscript{110} It was this attitude that evidently informed his seizure of the company’s stock, for he saw that when the legal status of the company evaporated upon the death of its patron, so too technically did the sharers’ claims on materials within the Cockpit’s tiring house.

Beeston’s testimony at court deliberately obfuscated the issue: the “vsuall manner” he said, “was, that sometymes one, and sometymes another of the said Company Did provide Clothes and other necessaries,” and as to “what parcelles of stuffes or other provisions the rest of them bought or procured,” he was “alltogeather ignorant.”\textsuperscript{111} There

\textsuperscript{108} Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 322.

\textsuperscript{109} Sisson, “Notes on Stuart Stage History” 34.


\textsuperscript{111} Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 326.
was no way to prove what belonged to whom, so he would keep it all. Simple
evasiveness apparently kept Beeston out of further legal trouble.\textsuperscript{112}

By 1616, then, Beeston had reframed his professional relationship with Queen
Anne’s Men. His new position was a unique one in the London theatre business. He
fiscally controlled the playing company to which he belonged and simultaneously
oversaw daily operations in its playing venue, a set of responsibilities that radically
reoriented his relationship with, and obligations to, his fellow players. Only in retrospect
did the Queen’s Men fully recognize the “kynde of powerfull Comaunde” Beeston had
imposed on them. Their claim to have been “altogether ruled” was as much to say
Beeston had established a managerial autocracy in Drury Lane.\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{“Our Usual Manager of Mirth?” Beeston’s Model of Theatre Management}

Underscoring the novelty of Beeston’s new authority are several uncertain
tries by observers to describe it. Non-actors such as the fishmonger Smith and Susan
Baskerville could plainly see that the Queen’s Men were following Beeston’s “dirección”
and “appointment” but knew of no specific designation for his position. The players who
worked with him appear to have had no professional title for him either, referring to his
role simply as “a place of greatest charge & trust.” They variously claimed he had “the
managing of [their] whole businesses” and “the sole managing of all [their] affayres,” and

\textsuperscript{112} Beeston’s characterization of suits against him assert the conventional defence that the charges are “soe\nuncertain, and otherwise insufficient in lawe, as it is vnpossible to make any Directe answere” (Wallace,\n“Three London Theatres” 325). He further delayed Smith’s case in 1619 by naming Emmanuel Read a
material witness, a man who had moved to Ireland and did not plan to return. According to Smith, Beeston
also bragged prior to the proceedings that “it was nothing for him to put in a false answere into this Court
of Requestes, for that it was not punishable” (Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 335-336).

\textsuperscript{113} Greenstreet, “Documents Relating to the Players” 497.
that he “altogether ruled” them.\textsuperscript{114} For his own part, Beeston characteristically downplayed his authority, calling himself merely one of the “Comedians attendinge vpon the late Queenes Maiestie.”\textsuperscript{115} No records identify Beeston as a “Manager” \textit{per se} – no one actually seems to have regarded him as having ascended to a prescribed professional position by that name. The term, in fact, does not appear to have entered the professional lexicon until decades later. Shakespeare provides perhaps the earliest use of the term in relation to the theatre in \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} when Theseus asks his court:

“Where is our usual manager of mirth?”\textsuperscript{116} In context, however, the Duke’s uses the term metaphorically, asking not for the professional leader of a playing company but rather for the master of his court revels. In late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century usage, “manager” typically meant “handler,” adapted from the Italian and French verbs \textit{manneggiare} and \textit{manier}, meaning to handle, wield, or touch. Only later in the century did it come to refer specifically to the controller of finances in a household or a business, a connotation that eventually migrated into theatrical discourse just before the turn of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{115} Wallace, “Three London Theatres” 326.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{The Riverside Shakespeare}, 276.

\textsuperscript{117} Florio translates the Italian \textit{maneggiatòre} as “a manager, a handler” from the verb \textit{manneggiare} (“to manage, to handle, or touch with the hands … to exercise, to trade, to solicite or follow businesse”), \textit{Queen Anna’s New World of Words, Or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues} (London, 1611) 298. Cotgrave translates the French \textit{manieur}, from the verb \textit{manier}, as “handler, manager, wielder, vser, toucher of,” \textit{A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues} (London, 1611) Eeee3v. The \textit{OED} dates “manager,” in the sense of a “person skilled in controlling or regulating finances and expenditure, esp. of a household,” to 1670. A more specific late seventeenth-century usage denotes a Parliamentary member of a committee “appointed by one house to confer with a similar committee of the other house” (\textit{OED}). This meaning may have informed its later use in the theatre insofar as a theatrical manager brings together the key elements of performance.
The commercial theatre of the earlier seventeenth century apparently recognized no “usual manager of mirth.” In practice, theatrical management was comprised of a variety of sometimes settled but more often changing and experimental policies, configured according to changing economic and political circumstances by numerous individuals. Cuthbert Burbage, who oversaw finances for the King’s Men at the Globe and Blackfriars fulfilled a very different function, for instance, than Philip Rosseter, the court musician who brokered patronage for the Children of the Queen’s Revels. Labelling both “managers” without qualifying the different permutations of their respective functions is misleading and obscures important distinctions in their contributions to the history of the practice. Beeston’s key contribution to this history was the unification of the two prevailing kinds of professional authority recognized in the London commercial theatre, what William Ingram has called “the double paradigm for the age.”118 Since at least the 1570s, the authority of the leading player-sharer and the authority of the playhouse owner had functioned in tandem but had remained essentially separate. Beeston’s innovation was to remove this distinction and combine the two forms of authority in a single executive position, creating a prototype for the professional position later recognized widely as the all-purpose “Manager.”

To appreciate the uniqueness of Beeston’s position and his boldness in adopting it, let me outline briefly the traditional dimensions of these two forms of theatrical authority, beginning with that of the leading player-sharer. The Elizabethan and Jacobean playing company was typically structured like a cell whose nucleus of patented shareholders made decisions on behalf of a surrounding body of non-sharing hired men and apprentices. For efficiency in the busy repertory system, the sharers apparently

divided between them executive tasks such as securing scripts and playing licences, contacting artisans for properties, training apprentices, conducting rehearsals, keeping accounts, and paying wages. The shouldering of company finances was the weightiest of these duties and company treasurers tended to occupy correspondingly prominent places in surviving records. John Heminges provides a well-documented example. A sharer in the Chamberlain’s Men after 1594, his role in the company grew increasingly important after the turn of the century. As Bentley observes, the company initially authorized Heminges to manage the income it earned for its court performances. As a freeman in the Grocer’s company, Heminges was in a position to bind and maintain apprentices, which may have solidified his importance insofar as players utilized the institution as a formal means of instructing young actors. By the Jacobean period, Heminges evolved into what Bentley calls “a sort of general manager;” he received scarlet cloth for the company’s livery; he dealt with the Master of the Revels; and the company even built a “fair house” adjacent to the Globe in which he could conduct business. Prior to 1616, players such as Edward Alleyn, Robert Shaw, Thomas Downton, Robert Browne of Shoreditch, John Duke, and Thomas Greene all occupied positions analogous to

119 Bentley, *JCS* 1: 3. After the company’s first court appearance, Kemp, Shakespeare and Burbage were joint company payees. During the next ten years, the Accounts of the Treasurer’s Chamber steadily record Heminges’s name, once with George Bryan, three times with Thomas Pope, once with Richard Cowley and on four times by himself. The pattern suggests a gradual overriding of a policy of two payees for security, with trust in Heminges becoming complete by about the turn of the century. By 1630, he had collected over £3000 on behalf of the company (Chambers, *ES* 4: 164-167).

120 Heminges bound ten apprentices between 1595 and 1628 and most went on to act in the King’s Men, see David Kathman, “Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freemen and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004) 1-49. In Jonson’s *Masque of Christmas* (1616), Venus contemplates hiring Cupid “out by the weeke to the King’s Players: Master Burbadge has been about and about with me; an[d] so has old M. Hemings too, they had need of him” (Bentley, *JCS* 2: 467).

121 Bentley, *JCS* 2: 466; *Profession of Player* 151, 154.
Heminges’s and exerted varying degrees of control over the financial stability, the artistic direction, and the composition of their respective companies.

The second important form of professional authority belonged to those who built and owned playhouses. Theatre proprietors became an increasingly important part of the business from the 1580s onward. Philip Henslowe’s memoranda, though sometimes cryptic and untidy, remain the best evidence for how playhouse ownership functioned and, according to Neil Carson, “the indispensable foundation upon which any theory of theatre management must be based.” Where player-sharers like Heminges looked to the licensing of playbooks, company money, properties, and personnel, proprietors such as Henslowe bought performance licences and paid parish taxes, and hired and directed a separate staff of money gatherers, wardrobe attendants, and stage keepers. Henslowe’s relationship with playing companies at the Rose during the 1580s and 1590s seems to have been essentially that of a landlord with contracted tenants; he rented out his performance space at a rate equivalent to half the money taken in at the galleries while the players performed their commercial repertory. Gradually, and perhaps to ensure the quality and profitability of his business, Henslowe began investing in his own stock of plays, costumes, and other assets. By 1602, when Beeston and Worcester’s Men played at the Rose, Henslowe had instituted a system of issuing small loans to help the players purchase new scripts and properties. Early scholars misinterpreted this policy, framing Henslowe as a usurer, who “regarded art as a subject for exploitation” and whose “selfish hand to mouth policy” crippled artistic freedom by shackling players and playwrights


123 Henslowe records several payments to “m’ Edmond Tyllney Esquire m’ of the rueells” (Foakes, Henslowe’s Diary 162-164).
with debt. More nuanced assessments have since characterized him as a “pioneer in the matter of theatrical finance” and a “reasonably able, reasonably decent businessman” who sought to enable players and their work rather than simply to exploit them.

Two species of management therefore co-existed and supported each other in London’s early commercial theatre. The administrative priorities of each were independent of each other at first, but the line separating player-sharers and theatre proprietors had begun to wear away. The decision in 1599 to build the Globe playhouse was an important moment in this respect. The Chamberlain’s players who financed the construction of their new theatre on ground they simultaneously leased and controlled proved innovative in that it effectively allowed a consortium to function as both player-sharers and theatrical housekeepers. Their later economic stability and personal wealth seems to have owed much to their merging of these previously separated interests. A similar movement toward integration occurred at the Rose, however there the balance of authority shifted in the other direction, favouring the playhouse proprietor. After two players defected from the resident Admiral’s company to Francis Langley’s Swan theatre in 1597, Henslowe reacted by instituting policies that in some respects infringed upon the conventional managerial domain of the playing company. He bound several of the Admiral’s company sharers as his “covenante Servantes” for periods of two and three years, thereby ensuring their continued labour in his theatre and influencing the

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composition of the acting company. At the same time, he began to compile a personal stock of playbooks, treating directly with playwrights rather than simply providing money for his tenant company to do so. His initial motivation was apparently to protect his primary investment by ensuring the availability of both players and plays for his playhouse. Later, however, as his investments diversified with the opening of the Fortune and Hope theatres, Henslowe encroached more aggressively upon the autonomy of his partnering companies. In 1613, members of an aggrieved company filed articles alleging that he (along with partners Jacob Meade and Philip Rosseter) was exercising an unreasonable amount of authority. He had begun to “make vpp” entirely new companies by individually bonding company sharers and hired men “to plaie wth: him for three yeares att such house and houses as hee shall appointe.” Theoretically, what he could “make” he could also “breake” and over a period of three years, he is said to have “broken and dissmembred five Companies,” having, on one occasion, “Ceazed all the stocke” as a means of satisfying a debt owed to him. Even allowing for exaggeration in this complaint, Henslowe’s authority had clearly expanded and put uncomfortable pressure on the management conventions of the playing company.

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127 After paying Henry Porter for Two Merry Women of Abington on behalf of the company on 28 February 1598/99, Henslowe wrote: “& in Resayte for that money [Porter] gaue me his faithfulle promysse that I sholde haue alle the boockes wth he write ether him sellfe or wth any other” (Foakes, Henslowe’s Diary 105).

128 Henslowe’s method of company breaking was allegedly to withdraw those hired men bound to him and reconstitute them with a more amenable core of sharers (Greg, Henslowe Papers 86-90).
In this context, there is a perceptible logic in Beeston’s consonant effort to fold together company and playhouse managerial authority in 1616. I have discussed the way Beeston’s early career exposed him to both the Chamberlain’s venture and to Henslowe’s enterprise, and it may well be that both directly influenced his attempt to establish a hybrid management model of his own. Like other hybrids, the Beeston model retained elements of the systems it adapted, but it also presented the London theatre with something novel. From Beeston’s perspective, control of the Cockpit playhouse would remove any potential interference by second-party owners of ground and building leases. Unlike the syndicate of sharers at the Globe, however, Beeston evidently refused to extend to his fellow Queen’s players an equitable interest in the Cockpit. The precedent set by Henslowe showed Beeston that limiting the number of housekeepers concentrated profit in the hands of the proprietor and ensured him greater professional stability. That both Beeston and Henslowe allegedly sequestered whole stocks of playing materials during the 1610s without ramification strongly suggests the kind of advantage they had attained over the companies with which they worked. In Beeston’s case, however, he also dominated the playing company from a position of internal, as well as external, authority. Perhaps for the first time in English theatre history, a single executive figure dictated the business affairs of the playing company as well as its playhouse.

Bernard Beckerman has argued, in a thoughtful analysis of the development of early management, that Philip Henslowe might have become the first all-purpose handler of theatrical affairs had not his “inclination toward extending his authority” been blocked by a “fundamental enmity” between landlords and actors, as well as his own “inability to breach the system of sharers.” Henslowe took a “first step toward genuine management”
Beckerman argues, but “the days of the manager would not arrive until a generation later” during the Restoration.¹²⁹ As I have argued in this chapter, there is a missing link in Beckerman’s evolutionary narrative. What Beckerman characterizes as “genuine management” – a bridging of the gap between the authority of the player-sharer and the authority of the playhouse proprietor – in fact took shape in Drury Lane just months after Henslowe’s death in 1616. As Beeston continued to refine his new professional position over the two decades that followed, the struggle to give linguistic definition to his monopolization of authority went on. Contemporaries reached for terms as various as “master,” “warden” and “chiefe” until, as the next chapter will demonstrate, Beeston’s efficient and profitable managerial system was finally institutionalized in the Caroline office of theatrical “Governor.”¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Beckerman, “Philip Henslowe” 59-60.

CHAPTER TWO
Christopher Beeston and the Caroline Institution of Theatrical “Governor”

The first chapter has analyzed the way Christopher Beeston transformed his professional status in the London theatre world between 1598 and 1616. Experience gained as an apprentice in Shakespeare’s playing company and the economic benefit of marrying the niece of an Archbishop of York propelled the young player into a leadership position in Queen Anne’s Men during the early 1600s. A capacity to furnish the Red Bull with costumes and properties thereafter made him indispensable to his company, and after replacing erstwhile leaders John Duke and Thomas Greene, he assumed full responsibility for his company’s finances. In 1616, he tightened his grip even further by converting a popular bird-fighting arena known as the Cockpit into a state of the art indoor playhouse. His venture resembled similar theatrical enterprises in the precincts of Blackfriars and Whitefriars, but its establishment by a single player-sharer who also functioned as the building’s principal proprietor was something new. Indeed this was the distinctive achievement of Beeston’s early career: five decades before the Restoration, a professional player (rather than a syndicate of playing company sharers or a non-acting playhouse entrepreneur) took upon himself the two-tiered responsibility of overseeing the daily operations of both a playing company and its primary commercial venue.

This chapter will now examine the twenty years that followed the opening of the Cockpit, a period that culminated in the Stuart court’s formal recognition of Beeston’s executive position as a professional standard. On 21 February 1636/37, the Lord Chamberlain authorized a warrant to grant Christopher Beeston “ye place of Gouuernor
of the new Company of the Kings & Queenes boyes” (see fig. 1).  

The office would have the effect of codifying practices Beeston had refined over the previous two decades, yet the circumstances underlying its creation and its relation to other professional developments of the 1630s have long remained obscure.  

This chapter argues that Beeston’s theatrical governorship was not merely the result of his commercial efficiency as a manager. Undoubtedly, he exerted enormous practical and aesthetic control over theatrical production at the Cockpit between 1616 and 1636 and the first part of the chapter surveys three key policies that contributed to his commercial success. But as the second part of the chapter demonstrates, patronage was crucial to both the viability of the Cockpit venture and the creation of Beeston’s court office in 1637. Previously unexamined records of Beeston’s investments in non-theatrical property during the 1630s reveal a pattern of social and financial involvement in the affairs of the aristocratic Herbert family, particularly of Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke and Sir Henry Herbert. Pembroke was the Lord Chamberlain and a nobleman of considerable political influence at court while Sir Henry served as the Master of the Revels throughout the Caroline period. Both men were therefore uniquely positioned to prefer Beeston and their apparent patron-client relationship reveals for the first time the way Beeston’s economic stability as a theatrical manager depended as much on his ability to negotiate the traditional system of court patronage as on the commercial ruthlessness typically attributed to him. It provides, moreover, an answer to the question of why

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1 NA LC 5/134, f. 151. Chapter Four discusses William Beeston’s succession to this post on 5 April 1639 (see fig. 2), followed by William Davenant on 27 June 1640 (see fig. 3).

2 Bentley, Profession of Player 163.
contemporaries came to perceive Beeston’s management model as a professional standard.

**Commercial Success and Managerial Policy at the Cockpit, 1616-1636**

A variety of sources indicate that Beeston enjoyed two decades of commercial prosperity after opening the Cockpit in Drury Lane, and it will be useful briefly to survey this evidence before examining the management apparatus that supported his venture. Between 1616 and 1636, three successive companies took up residence at the Cockpit: Prince Charles’s Men (1619-1622), Lady Elizabeth’s Men (1622-c.1625), and Queen Henrietta Maria’s Men (c.1626-1636). Frequent references to these companies and to their venue as the foremost competitors of the preeminent King’s Men at the Blackfriars perhaps provide the best measure of their commercial fortunes. In Shakespeare’s folio of 1623, for instance, Heminges and Condell allude to the “Magistrate of wit” who daily arraigns plays “on the Stage at Black-friars, or the Cock-pit,” equating the two playhouses as key locations to take in the latest theatrical fare.³ A 1624 letter by the diplomat James Howell corroborates this view, assuring an acquaintance headed for London that “Black-Friars will entertain you with a Play spick and span new, and the Cockpit with another.”⁴

Competition between the two venues and their personnel grew heated in the autumn of 1629 when the King’s Men presented *The Just Italian*, the first commercial effort of the young courtier, William Davenant. When that play failed to attract an

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audience, Davenant’s friend Thomas Carew published a verse blaming Beeston’s interloping enterprise in Drury Lane. Carew’s lines chastise playgoers who “admire, nod,” and “shake the head” as “noyse preuayles,” reserving a special barb for those who “stil[l] slight / All that exceeds Red Bull, and Cockpit flight.” Beeston’s “rabble”:

… are the men in crowded heapes that throng
To that adulterate stage, where not a tong[ue]
Of th’untuned Kennel, can a line repeat
Of serious sense: but like lips, meet like meat;
Whilst the true brood of Actors, that alone
Keepe naturall vntrayn’d Action in her throne
Behold their Benches bare, though they rehearse
The tearser Beaumonts or great Johnsons verse.  

Beeston and Shirley responded by rushing a recent Cockpit play The Grateful Servant to the press along with a series of poetic rebuttals. Thomas Craford, taking up Carew’s tropes, characterized the attack as a “discourse of cocke and bull” and argued that Shirley’s play would make the critic “blush at cockeqpit flight.” Thomas Randolph added: “I hear the Muses birds with full delight, / Sing where the birds of Mars were wont to fight.” Shirley also defended Queen Henrietta Maria’s players, whom, he said, Carew had “most iniuriously thrust … into the Kennell”:

I must ioyne with them that have written, to doe the Comedians iustice, amongst whom, some are held comparable with the best that are, and have bee in the world, and the most of them deserving a name in the file of those that are eminent for gracefull and unaffected action.

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5 “To my worthy Friend, M. DAVENENT, Vpon his Excellent Play, the Iust Italian,” in William Davenant, The Iust Italian (London, 1630) A3v-A4r.
Despite Carew’s rhetorical association of the “adulterate” Cockpit with the Red Bull’s generally less sophisticated reputation, it was exaggeration to liken Beeston’s Drury Lane operation to an “untuned Kennel.”

When Shackerley Marmion’s *Holland’s Leaguer* debuted at the Salisbury Court playhouse in 1631, its humble prologue articulated the less contentious view that the King’s Men and the Queen’s Men worked in equally reputable houses:

[…](c) though on each hand
To over-top us, two great Lawrels stand;
The one, when she shall please to spreade her traine,
The vastness of the Globe cannot containe;
Th’ other so high, the Phoenix does aspire
To build in, and takes new life from fire
Bright Poesie creates

The regular presence of eminent courtiers in boxes and galleries at the second of these “two great Lawrels” is another mark of its success. The Earl of Montgomery (later Earl of Pembroke) – soon to become one of Beeston’s most significant patrons – appears to have sponsored Beeston’s regular collaborator, Philip Massinger, and attended the first

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6 Herbert licensed *The Just Italian* on 2 October 1629 and *The Grateful Servant* (or *The Faithful Servant*) on 3 November 1629 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 168-169). Davenant’s play was entered into the Stationers’ Register on 10 January 1629/30, Shirley’s on 26 February 1630. Craford’s “To my deserving friend Mr. James Shirley, upon his Grateful Servant,” Randolph’s untitled verse, and Shirley’s “The Author to the Reader” appear in *The Grateful Servant* (London, 1630) A3r-A4r. The quarto also contains commendatory verse by John Foxe, Jo. Hall, Charles Alleyn, Robert Stapatlon, Philip Massinger, and William Habington. Other verses in this contest circulated in manuscript. A “Prologue to ye Mayde of honour” by Massinger scornfully glances at Carew’s “single Calumny / publish[d] to our Disgrace.” An anonymously authored verse entitled “To my honored friend M’ Thomas Carew” attacks Massinger in turn as one who basely “pleads his Master’s cause, receiues the pay / And salary of a hirelinge, which brings / The oyle to grease his hinges when hee sings.” By “Master” the poet appears to refer to Beeston. See Peter Beal, “Massinger at Bay: Unpublished Verses in a War of the Theatres,” *Yearbook of English Studies* (1980) 190-203. Francis Lenton also notes a contest between the two houses in his description of the fickleness of the young Inns student: “The Cockpit heretofore would serue his wit, / But now vpon the Fryars stage hee’ll sit, / It must be so, though this expensiue foole / Should pay an angel for a paltry stoole.” *The Young Gallant Whirligig* (London, 1629) C3r.

performance of *The Bondman* at the Cockpit in December of 1623.⁸ The Duke of Buckingham saw Heywood’s tragedy *The Rape of Lucrece* there on 6 August 1628, shortly before his assassination.⁹ The Earl of Holland reportedly enjoyed the first performance of Shirley’s popular topical comedy *Hyde Park* in April of 1632.¹⁰ Arthur M. Clark has suggested that even the King and Queen travelled to the Cockpit in November 1635 for an exclusive exhibition of Heywood’s masque, *Love’s Mistress.*¹¹

Throughout the Caroline period, Beeston’s companies played regularly before noble audiences at court, and this may have stimulated an interest beneficial to the commercial enterprise in Drury Lane. During the Christmas seasons of 1623/24 and 1624/25, Lady Elizabeth’s Men presented five plays before the royal family, making the company the second most prominent presence after the King’s Men.¹² Between 1629 and

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⁸ Massinger dedicates the quarto to Montgomery: “When it was first Acted, your Lordships liberall suffrage taught others to allow it for currant; it having received the undoubted stamp of your Lordships allowance,” *The Bond-Man an Antient Storie* (London, 1624) A2r. Herbert licensed it on 3 December 1623 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 147).

⁹ Bentley, *JCS* 1:223.

¹⁰ Herbert licensed the play on 20 April 1632 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 174). Shirley dedicates the printed play to Holland, stating: “This Comedy in the title, is part of your Lordships Command, which heretofore grac’d, and made happy by your smile, when it was presented,” James Shirley, *Hide Parke* (London, 1637) A2r.

¹¹ Thomas Heywood, “The Prologue to this Play, the first time it was Presented on the Stage,” *Loves Maistresse: or The Queens Masque* (London, 1636) A3r. It was “Publikey Acted by the QUEENS Comedians, At the Phoenix in Drury-lane” and “three times presented before their two Excellent MAIESTIES, within space of eight dayes; In the presence of sundry Forraigne AMBASSADORS.” It was presented on 19 November (the King’s birthday) at Denmark House, and again using scenery and machines made by Inigo Jones (A3v). Fleay interpreted Midas’s preference for the songs of Pan to those of Apollo as an allegory of Christopher Beeston’s preferment of Shirley over Heywood. Arthur M. Clark refutes the theory in *Thomas Heywood, Playwright and Miscellanist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931) 129-142.

¹² On 5 November, 1623 “The Gypsye” (probably Middleton and Rowley’s *The Spanish Gypsy*) was acted at Whitehall before Prince Charles by “the Cockpitt company.” At Whitehall again on 27 December, 1623, the “queen {of Bohemia’s} company” acted Massinger’s *The Bondman*, and on 4 January 1623/24 *The Changeling*, with the Prince once more in attendance. During the revels of 1624/25, they acted Fletcher’s *Cupid’s Revenge* on Innocent’s Night and Cooke’s *Tu Quoque* on Twelfth Night (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 146-148, 159-160). Beeston is identified as “one of the Lady Eliz’ Plaiers” and the company payee in the Treasurer’s account for 1623/24 (*MSC* 6: 78).
1636, Queen Henrietta Maria’s company acted at least seventy plays before royal
audiences at Whitehall, St. James’s palace, and Hampton Court, earning no less than
£920. Courtly audiences were especially fond of the Cockpit playwright, Shirley. The
Master of the Revels admired his “beneficial and cleanly way of poetry” and thought
1633’s *The Young Admiral* in particular “a patterne to other poets, not only for the
bettering of maners and language, but for the improvement of the quality, which hath
received some brushings of late.” The same year, Herbert wrote that Shirley had
devised *The Gamester* “out of a plot of the king’s, given him by mee.” When Charles
saw it acted during the revels that February, he thought it “the best play he had seen for
seven years.”

Beeston’s purchase of a longer lease on the Cockpit offers a final indication that
his theatrical venture had developed into a formidable commercial enterprise. On 5 May
1633, the owner of the ground, Katherine Best, added an additional nine years to
Beeston’s thirty-one year lease, extending it to 26 September 1656. After nearly twenty
years of robust business, Beeston obviously foresaw no impediment to continued good

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13 The Queen’s Men received £100 for ten plays between October and February 1629/30 (*MSC* 2.3: 352). £170 was paid “vtnto M’ Christopher Beeston” for sixteen plays between October February 1630/31, to which “his Lo9 added (aboue the ordinary Allowance of 10l for every play) 10l more in consideration of their Charge in Attending at Hampton Court where they Acted three plays” (*MSC* 2.3: 355). £80 was paid “vnto Christopher Beeston” for eight plays at £10 each, plus £20 for one play at Hampton Court with its added “travaile & charge” in 1631/32 (*MSC* 3.2: 359). £240 was paid for fourteen plays in 1632/33 (*MSC* 3.2: 361). £70 was paid “vnto Christopher Beeston” for a unidentified number of plays (presumably seven) at court in 1633/34 (*MSC* 3.2: 374). £90 was paid “vtnto M’ Chier Bieston” for eight plays, one at Hampton Court in 1635/36. £150 was paid “vnto M’ Christopher Bieston for Playes Acted by the Queenes servant[s] (vizt) fower at Hampton Court for xxl {per} play in Anno 1635 5 at Whitehall in y9 same yeere and two Playes Acted by the new Company. May 10 1637” (*MSC* 3.2: 383).

14 Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 180. Shirley prepared the play for Beeston in the summer of 1633 and it was printed in 1637.

15 The Gamester was licensed on 11 November 1633 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 184, 187). One suspects that Beeston made some promotional use of this praise when publicly presenting the play.

16 Hotson, *CRS* 91.
fortune. But to what extent was his managerial practice instrumental in this success? To address this question, I turn to three policies that appear to have crucially strengthened his enterprise. First, Beeston recruited and instructed specific personnel for the Cockpit’s playing companies, in some cases privileging actors bound to him by kinship. Second, he personally acquired playbooks for the theatre’s repertory and staged specific kinds of plays to capitalize upon current commercial trends. Third, he maintained responsibility for the Cockpit’s tiring house and wardrobe, thereby influencing the aesthetic character of theatrical production.

(a) Recruitment and Instruction of Playhouse Personnel

Throughout his years at the Cockpit, Beeston sought to maximize his authority over those with whom he collaborated. He left no records comparable to Henslowe’s, but like that earlier proprietor, he would have supervised a playhouse staff of money gatherers, wardrobe keepers, tailors, and stage sweepers. He also would have contracted musicians, since virtually every play in the Cockpit’s extant repertory calls for instrumental music. This consort contributed an important aural dimension to theatrical productions and catered to the refined taste of elite playgoers between the acts.17 Beeston also apparently sought to influence, where possible, the composition of the playing companies to which he belonged. Analysis of his relations with different companies

17 Stage directions in Cockpit plays variously call for wind, string, and percussive instruments to perform both loud and soft music: lutes, recorders, flutes, cornets, hautboys, trumpets, violins, fiddles, bagpipes, bells, and drums. The names of six musicians who played in Drury Lane in 1634 are known: Jeffrey Collins, Nicholas Underhill, Thomas Hunter, John Levasher, Edward Wright, and John Strong, see Murray Lefkowitz, “The Longleat Papers of Bulstrode Whitelock: New Light on Shirley’s Triumph of Peace,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 18.1 (1965) 42-60. William Beeston maintained a good relationship with Collins, who headed up a consort at the Middle Temple where the Cockpit actors played regularly in 1638-1640, see J.R. Elliot, Jr., ed., “Musical and Dramatic Documents from the Middle Temple,” MSC 15 (1993) 171-194.
suggests that maintaining a consistent stable of talented players proved challenging and
that Beeston’s response was to exploit traditional forms of loyalty by installing players
bound to him by kinship and household service.

Following Queen Anne’s funeral on 13 May 1619, Beeston separated himself
from Richard Perkins, Robert Leigh, Ellis Worth, and the other sharers of the Queen’s
company and by his own testimony “entred into the service of the most noble Prince
Charles.”18 His move was apparently opportunistic. For the next three years, he played
to “singular applause” with a talented group that included the playwright and clown
William Rowley and the emerging leading man Joseph Taylor.19 During this period,
Beeston may not have enjoyed the kind of control he desired over the composition of his
tenant playing company. After less than a year of playing at the Cockpit, Taylor left to
take the deceased Richard Burbage’s place in the King’s company, and in 1621, another
experienced player, Hugh Atwell, may have died.20 A weakening of the company’s first
tier was perhaps then the impetus for the more “active hand” scholars attribute to Beeston
thereafter. In 1622, Beeston seized an opportunity to collaborate with Joseph Moore, a
patent holder in the Lady Elizabeth’s Men and replaced the weakened remainder of
Prince Charles’s Men at the Cockpit. The Master of the Revels described Beeston that
year as “chiefe” of a Cockpit company that included Eyllaerdt Swanston, Andrew Cane,

18 Beeston made the claim during the Smith v. Beeston depositions (Wallace, “Three London Theatres”
326). Needing a new company to occupy the Cockpit, he promptly made the change during the six months
between May and November.

19 See the title page of William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, The Witch of Edmonton (London:
1658).

20 Bentley, JCS 1: 351-352, 591. Bentley cites a broadside reputedly by William Rowley that describes
Atwell as a “little man” who succumbed to a six-year “wrastle and tugge with Death,” on 21 September
1621. Collier initially reported the text’s existence, offering no source other than “the Library of the
Society of Antiquities,” which may imply a forgery.
The migration of players continued, however, when Cane and Greville became Palsgrave’s Men later that year and Swanston moved to the King’s Men in 1624. The problem of maintaining consistency of talent at the Cockpit evidently remained.

It may be for this reason that Beeston cultivated a series of relationships with players connected to him by experience, kinship, or service. In 1622, William Robbins (Robinson) took Cane’s place in the company and distinguished himself in a comic part in *The Changeling*. Robbins had earlier worked with Beeston in Queen Anne’s Men and, perhaps more importantly, he married Beeston’s sister-in-law, Cicely Browne, in July 1622. The 1630 quarto of Massinger’s *The Renegado* lists the company’s main players in 1624; they included Robbins, John Blaney, John Sumner, Michael Bowyer, William Reignalds, William Allen, Edward Shakerley, Edward Rogers and Theophilus Bourne (*alias* Bird). It seems likely that Beeston had an active hand in organizing this configuration of actors for most were still performing at the Cockpit in 1626 when Queen Henrietta bestowed her patronage upon its resident company. Moreover, bonds of kinship and service would continue to link them.

We have no evidence of Beeston’s activity in 1625 or 1626, but he may have used the long plague closure of these years to assemble a playing company and offer its

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21 Bentley, *JCS* 1: 183-4; Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 136. The Lady Elizabeth’s company patent was issued to John Townshend and Joseph Moore on 27 April, 1613 (*MSC* 1.3: 274-275). William J. Lloyd suggests that Beeston invited Moore to the Cockpit tactically, to validate a new company he had already organized, “A First Performance and an Imaginary Performance: Lady Elizabeth’s Men, Queen Henrietta’s Men and *The Renegado*” (seminar paper presented at the Shakespeare Association of America meeting, Philadelphia, 14 April, 2006).

22 See Chapter One above, page 42.

service to the Stuart court following Charles’s accession. If so, his bid was successful for by about 1626 or 1627 the Cockpit was hosting Queen Henrietta Maria’s Men. It included Richard Perkins and John Blaney both of whom had previously worked with Beeston in Queen Anne’s Men. William Sherlock, a comic performer from Lady Elizabeth’s company, lodged in a dwelling house adjoining the Cockpit, possibly, as Hotson has suggested, as the “keeper of the theatre,” providing maintenance and security. Another holdover from Lady Elizabeth’s Men was Anthony Turner, a veteran whom Beeston entrusted to collect large sums of money from the court treasurer on the manager’s behalf after the company’s winter service at court.

Even closer relationships bound Beeston and several young players in the Queen’s new company. William Allen, retained from Lady Elizabeth’s Men, was identified in 1614 as Beeston’s “servant,” meaning he lived in Beeston’s household in

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24 No information about this company’s patent survives. Since the King’s Men’s new patent was issued on 24 June 1625, Bentley proposed that a Queen’s Men patent was issued at the same time (JCS 1: 187, 219). The company’s first certain performance was Massinger’s *The Great Duke of Florence*, licensed by Herbert on 5 July 1627 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 165). It may earlier have acted Shirley’s *The Maid’s Revenge*, licensed on 9 February 1625/26, and possibly Shirley’s *The Wedding* in 1626 (it was not printed until 1629). On 19 June 1629, Beeston and thirteen other of “y’ Queenes Comedians” received scarlet cloth for liveries (*MSC* 3:2: 350). On November 20 1630, the liveries were received by William Allen “& thirteene others his ffellowes the Queenes Players” (*MSC* 2:3: 352-353). No name is given on the 1632 livery warrant, but Beeston was again issued the livery cloth in 1634 (*MSC* 2:3: 374).

25 Their resentment at his seizure of their common stock in 1619 apparently dissipated in light of the opportunity to wear the Queen’s livery again. The Caroline period appreciated Perkins, in particular, as one of its best actors and Beeston presumably handled their relationship with care.

26 Hotson, *CRS* 90. Security may have been warranted in light of the Shrove Tuesday assault of 1617. Sherlock’s roles included Lodam the fat gentleman in *The Wedding*, Brand in *King John and Matilda*, Ruffman the bragart in *1 Fair Maid of the West*, and Maharaball and Prusias in *Hannibal and Scipio*. He buried a son in St.Giles in the Fields in 1638, Bentley “Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields,” *The Review of English Studies* 22 (1930) 163.

27 On 4 July 1630, Turner gathered £100 for the previous winter’s revels performances (*MSC* 4: 78). His acting roles included Justice Lanby in *The Wedding*, elder Lord Bruce in *King John and Matilda*, a kitchen maid and Bashaw Alcade in *1 and 2 Fair Maid of the West*, and Piston in *Hannibal and Scipio*, all of which suggest an older figure.
Clerkenwell and was probably his acting apprentice. By the 1620s, he was playing leading masculine parts at the Cockpit, often heroic and with a violent edge.

Theophilus Bird (*alias* Bourne), formerly of Lady Elizabeth’s Men, was the son of William Bird (*alias* Bourne), a veteran of several London playing companies. Like Allen, Bird was probably Beeston’s servant and acting apprentice, and he married Beeston’s daughter, Anne, sometime during the 1620s. He was approximately the same age as Beeston’s son, William, who later claimed to have been “bred vp in the art of Stage playing and…skild in that science” by his father. Bird likely also benefited from his father-in-law’s instruction, and he acted exclusively at the Cockpit between 1624 and 1641. A third young player, Hugh Clark, gained a reputation for playing major female parts at the Cockpit in the 1620s and 30s and was also a member of Beeston’s extended family. On 6 May 1627, Clark married “Judith Brown *alias* Robins,” one of Robert and Cicely Browne’s daughters (her *alias* deriving from her mother’s subsequent marriage to

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28 Stanfield and Hansom, “Proceedings against Catholics” 122-126.

29 Cast lists show Allen playing Captain Landby in *The Wedding*, Pandolph in *King John and Matilda*, Grimaldi in *The Renegado*, King Mullisheg in *Fair Maid of the West*, and Hannibal in *Hannibal and Scipio*. He may be the “William Alleyne” who married “Elizabeth Blane” in St. Giles in the Fields on 29 June 1629. If she was related to the aforementioned John Blaney the company’s bonds would have been further strengthened (Bentley, “Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields” 155).

30 John H. Astington, “Bird, Theophilus (bap. 1608, d. 1663),” *DNB* 5: 824-825. One “Theophilus Borne” was baptized 7 December 1608 in Shoreditch (GL Ms 7493) and, if the actor, he was between 16 and 18 when he began playing female parts in 1624. He played Paulina in *The Renegado*, Toota in *Fair Maid of the West*, and Massanissa in *Hannibal and Scipio*. Theophilus and Anne Bird had seven children, one of whom they named Christopher, presumably after his grandfather. The 1625 testament of Mary Bird leaves a “Cockpitt lease” to her son, Theophilus Bird, perhaps pointing to a lease-sharing agreement and further suggesting close ties between the two families (*Playhouse Wills*, 147).

31 NA C10/80/15 (Beeston v. Fisher and Silver, 1666), discovered by Hotson and discussed in *CRS* 107.

32 This relationship has not (to my knowledge) been noted. Clark played Gratiana in *The Wedding*, Hubert in *King John and Matilda*, Bess Bridges in *1 Fair Maid of the West*, and Nuntias and Syphax in *Hannibal and Scipio*. 
William Robbins). Clarke, therefore, was Beeston’s nephew, like Robert Reynolds, the former member of Queen Anne’s Men and travelling player who married Jane, another of the Browne daughters.

The bonds of kinship and professional connection established by Beeston’s marriage to Jane Sands in 1602 (discussed in the previous chapter) proved longstanding and usefully stabilized the Cockpit’s personnel during the Caroline period. By strategically working with former colleagues and with kin, Beeston may have sought to enhance an atmosphere of trust and commitment at his playhouse. Moreover, he clearly found it advantageous to bind promising young players to his household since the traditional master-servant relationship inculcated loyalty as well as practical skill. Allen, Bird, and Clark each regarded Beeston as something more than their theatrical business manager; to Allen he was also a former household master, to Bird a father-in-law, and to Clark an uncle. The kinship that connected Beeston to Robbins, Blaney, Allen, Bird, and Clark (and possibly others) may in part explain why, between 1626 and 1636, Queen Henrietta Maria’s company enjoyed a much longer period of stability at the Cockpit than had Prince Charles’s Men or Lady Elizabeth’s Men. Although the seventeenth-century acting company was foremost an economic partnership, Beeston was apparently alert to the benefits of what Richard Grassby has called “familial capitalism.” By emphasizing his authority as the patriarch and legal master of key participants in his theatrical

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33 Bentley, “Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields,” 155; “Judeth d of Roberte Browne” was baptized in St. James Clerkenwell on 28 October 1611 and was fifteen at the time of her marriage to Clarke (True register of ... the Parish of St. James, Clerkenwell 1: 62).

34 Grassby, Kinship and Capitalism 413-417.
business, he commanded forms of respect deeply engrained in seventeenth-century society.

(b) Playbook Acquisition

Beeston committed himself to print on one known occasion, in a short verse prefacing Heywood’s *An Apology for Actors* (1612):

Let others take things honest: and to please
Some that pretend more strictnesse than the rest,
Exclaime on plays: know I am none of these
That in-ly loue what out-ly I detest.
Of all the modest pastimes I can finde,
To content me, of plays I make best vse,
As most agreeing with generous minde.
There see I virtues crowne and sinnes abuse.
Two houres well spent, and all their pastimes done.
Whats good I follow, and whats bad I shun.  

By 1619 and probably earlier, Beeston had begun to “make best vse” of plays in another sense, amassing a large collection of these valuable assets. There is no complete record of Beeston’s playbooks, but a partial reconstruction of his repertory is possible using information from printed quartos, records of Revels licences, and a unique list of titles protected for the Cockpit by the Lord Chamberlain in 1639 (see fig. 4). The latter document provides the best illustration of the manager’s policy of personally possessing play manuscripts rather than sharing them with other stakeholders in the playing companies to which he belonged.

Beeston apparently acquired his playbooks cumulatively and from a variety of sources. His extensive professional and family connections, especially to Robert Browne

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and William Bird – both connected to the Henslowe-Alleyn circle of the 1580s and 90s – may have facilitated his purchase of older plays such as George a Greene, The Jew of Malta and Hoffman, each revived at the Cockpit during the 1630s.\textsuperscript{36} Browne’s years as a patentee with the Children of the Queen’s Revels between 1609 and 1613 may also explain how four of that company’s plays – Cupid’s Revenge, The Knight of the Burning Pestle, Wit without Money, and Chabot, Admiral of France – travelled to the Cockpit.\textsuperscript{37}

Beeston may have stipulated that playing companies relinquish ownership of their plays when performing at the Cockpit. As successive companies passed through Drury Lane, many of the playbooks they brought later remained in Beeston’s hands. When Prince Charles’s Men departed in 1622, for instance, Beeston retained Hymen’s Holiday (lost), A Fair Quarrel, The World Tossed at Tennis, All’s Lost by Lust, and The Witch of Edmonton. At the departure or restructuring of Lady Elizabeth’s company in 1625, Beeston kept at least eight of its plays: The Bondman, The Changeling, The City Nightcap, The Parliament of Love, The Renegado, The School of Compliment, The Spanish Gypsy, and The Sun’s Darling. He may simply have seized these assets when his association with the companies ended or, in a less socially corrosive manner, he may have offered to purchase them from exiting player-sharers. In the case of Lady Elizabeth’s Men, for instance, his partnership appears to have concluded during the long plague summer of 1625, and the financial stress on the unemployed actors was likely

\textsuperscript{36} For Beeston’s connection to Browne, see Chapter One, pages 45-46. William Bird was a sharer in the Admiral’s Men and joint lessee at the Fortune and his surviving correspondence with Henslowe and Alleyn points to a longstanding partnership (Greg, Henslowe Papers 26-27, 85-86). Bird’s will, dated 17 January 1624/25, leaves to his son Theophilus a “wainscot Cupboa{rd} with particons therein and the Bookes now remaying [therein],” which may indicate that playbooks passed from father, to son, to father-in-law (Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 131).

\textsuperscript{37} Beeston may in turn have shared certain Queen Anne’s Men plays with Browne. Browne’s travelling companies, which included Beeston’s nephew Robert Reynolds, carried with them No-body and Somebody and The Rape of Lucrece, both of which Beeston probably acquired while at the Red Bull.
acute. Under such circumstances, they may have required very little persuasion to sell their assets for ready money.

Beeston also regularly commissioned new plays. Playwrights associated with the Inns of Court provided a majority of these between 1622 and 1636. Encomiastic verses in printed quartos show that Beeston maintained a substantial network of literary friends in the Inns. John Webster, for instance, belonged to the circle of “learned gentlemen and … friends” in the Middle Temple responsible for Overbury’s *Characters* in 1611.

Webster wrote two early plays for the Cockpit, both depicting the law and lawyers in a way calculated to appeal to this community.\(^{38}\) John Ford pursued a legal education and lodged at the Middle Temple while writing and collaborating on eight new plays for Beeston.\(^{39}\) James Shirley, the manager’s frequent collaborator, lived next to Gray’s Inn during the 1620s and was officially admitted in January 1633/34 while writing *The Triumph of Peace*, performed for the King and Queen by gentlemen of the four Inns.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) See the title-page to *Sir Thomas Ouerburie his Wife* (London, 1611). The text includes the character “An Excellent Actor,” attributed to Webster (M2r-M2v). Webster’s Cockpit play *The Devil’s Law-case* in particular (c. 1618) bears signs of having been written for Inns gentlemen, for instance, the extreme litigiousness of Leonora, two trial scenes, the figures of Contilupo and Sanitonella, and abundant legal language. He presents another lawyer in the figure of the Orator in *Appius and Virginia*. Webster’s earlier *The White Devil* contains a notable trial scene and though written for Beeston’s Queen Anne’s Men at the Red Bull in 1612, it was revived at the Cockpit where it perhaps found an audience better attuned to its complex tone and intrigue. Henry Fitzgeffrey of Lincoln’s Inn lampoons “Crabbed (Websterio) / The Playwright, Cart-wright” in *Satyres and Satyrical Epigrams* (London, 1617) F6v.


\(^{40}\) Shirley’s friends at Gray’s Inn included Robert Harvey, who contributed verse to the publication of *The Wedding*, John Ogilby, who managed a dancing school in Gray’s Inn Lane, and Captain Drury Cooper, commander of the Fifth and the Ninth Whelp in the Caroline navy, see Sandra A. Burner, *James Shirley: A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1988) 46-48.
Thomas Heywood also maintained connections to Gray’s Inn through his friendship to Richard Brathwaite, author of *The English Gentleman* (1630) and *The English Gentlewoman* (1631). Thomas Nabbes, the author of three plays for the Cockpit in the 1630s, dedicated his comedy *The Bride* to “His Noble friends, Gentlemen of the severall Honorable Houses the Inns of Court.” The logic of resorting to Inns coteries for new plays is clear: they had practical experience in revelling, they demonstrated social and literary sophistication, and they attracted fellow Inns students to the playhouse.

A clue about Beeston’s procedure for commissioning new plays emerges from a contract dispute between the owners of the Salisbury Court playhouse and the dramatist Richard Brome in the Court of Requests in 1640. In July 1635, after “many Parleys and treaties,” Brome was “imployed” by the “Owners and Actours of and in the said howse” to apply his “best Art and Industrye” to the writing of plays. “Artickles of Agreement” were drawn up stipulating that in return for 15s a week and “the Benefitte of one dayes proffitte of playeing” Brome would “applie all his studdye and Endeavours” to produce three plays a year for a term of three years. When the plague of 1636 interrupted his weekly salary, Brome claims to have been “put to his shifts in that hard sadd and dangerous tyme of the sickness.” He repaired “vnto Christopher Beeston gent or William Beeston” (perhaps both father and son), and they lent Brome £6 on the condition that he write “a play for the Cockpitt Company,” a deal that resulted in Brome’s play *The Antipodes*. Eager to regain Brome’s service, the Salisbury Court management renegotiated his contract in 1638. Again finding his salary inconsistently paid, Brome

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42 NA REQ 2/622 and 723. Anne Haaker transcribes these documents in “The Plague, the Theater and the Poet,” *Renaissance Drama* 1 (1968) 283-306.
“contracted and made other agreements with the said William Beeston,” with whom he hoped in the future “to enjoy the fruites of his labours more beneficially and peaceably.”

The involvement of the Beestons in this unique case is illuminating. It confirms that Christopher Beeston (and then his son) directly negotiated for new scripts on behalf of the Cockpit’s actors. We also learn that writers were as likely to approach Beeston as he was to seek them out, and indeed, if it was standard practice to offer a playwright the “Benefitte of one dayes profitte of playeing,” then writing for the popular Cockpit must have been an appealing prospect. Brome’s claim to have “contracted” with the Beestons in the late 1630s suggests that the managers formally retained writers whose work generated profit. The pattern of productivity underlying James Shirley’s work for the Cockpit – an average of two plays a year for ten years – strongly implies a contract similar to that employed by the Salisbury Court management.

Ownership of playbooks enabled Beeston to revise and reshape his repertory as necessary. That he edited playscripts when called upon to do so by the Master of the Revels is apparent in one of Sir Henry Herbert’s notes:

For allowing of an ould play, new written or forbisht by Mr. Biston, the 12 of January, 1631, – £1 0 0. 

43 Several company sharers may normally have purchased playbooks. See the 1613 articles of agreement indicating it was Philip Henslowe and Jacob Meade’s policy to “disburse and lay out such some or somes of monny as shalbe thought fittinge by fower or ffive of the Sharer{[s]} [of Nathan Field’s Lady Elizabeth’s company] … for any play w the they shall buy or condic{[i]}on for” (Greg, Henslowe Papers 23-24).


45 Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 174. It is unclear whether Beeston’s refurbishment of scripts was extensive and artistic, or merely involved excisions and brief emendations.
Passages scored for deletion by a bookkeeper in the single surviving fair copy of a Cockpit manuscript, Massinger’s *The Parliament of Love*, may also record managerial influence. Beeston probably exerted a greater influence, however, when selecting plays for performance on given occasions. The diversity of his audience’s tastes helps to account for his tendency to hoard playbooks and for the eclectic nature of what remains of his repertory. His stock included plays of exotic adventure, travel, and ethnic conflict (*All’s Lost by Lust*, *The Spanish Gypsy*, *The English Traveller*), dark tragedies (*The Witch of Edmonton*, *The Traitor*, *'Tis Pity She’s a Whore*), topical social comedies (*Covent Garden*, *Hyde Park*, *Lady of Pleasure*) mythological, ancient, and national histories (*Appius and Virginia*, *Hannibal and Scipio*, *King John and Matilda*, *Perkin Warbeck*), pastoral romances (*Shepherd’s Holiday*, *The Arcadia*), tragicomedies of love and honour (*The Maid of Honour*, *The Young Admiral*, *Claracilla*), masques (*The World Tossed at Tennis*, *The Sun’s Darling*, *Love’s Mistress*), and plays for revival (*The Jew of Malta*, *Hoffman*, *Fair Maid of the West*). The dramatic feature most highly prized in new Caroline plays was “wit” – the skilful weaving together of sophisticated dialogue and

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46 Victoria and Albert Museum, Dyce MS. 10, transcribed in *The Parliament of Love*, ed. Kathleen Marguerite Lea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929). This manuscript once bore a Revels licence, indicating it was an “allowed” book. Noting its lack of playhouse annotations, Grace Ioppolo argues it “was probably kept locked up by the company and was not used as the company book.” In other words, it was Beeston’s copy. See *Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood* (London: Routledge, 2006) 117-119.

47 As the Prologue to Shirley’s *The Duke’s Mistress* observed before the Cockpit audience in 1636:

So various are the pallates of our Age,  
That nothing is presented on the Stage  
Though nothing were so square, and apted to the Laws  
Of Poesy, that can winne full applause.  
This likes a story that a cunning plot,  
This wit, that lines, here one he knows not what. (A2r)
meticulous plotting. Cockpit plays of the 1630s also conspicuously court women, and advertise themselves with titles such as *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), *The Lady Mother* (1635), *The Lady’s Privilege* (c. 1636-1639), *The Lady’s Trial* (1638), and *The Swaggering Damsel* (c. 1638). In Shirley’s *The Coronation* (1635), the Prologue enters in a petticoat and greets the gentlemen in the audience before asking:

But what have I omitted? Is there not
A blush upon my cheeks that I forget
The Ladies, and a Female Prologue too?
Your pardon noble Gentlewomen, you
Were first within my thoughts, [I] know you sit
As free, and high Commissioners of wit,
Have cleare, and active soules, nay though the men
Were lost in your eyes, they’l be found agen,
You are the bright intelligences move,
And make a harmony this sphere of Love,
Be you propitious then, our Poet sayes,
Our wreath from you, is worth their grove of Bayes.49

The prologue to Thomas Nabbes’s *Hannibal and Scipio* (1635) similarly informs the ladies present that the impending tragic action will not make them “blush / Nor smile under their fannes” as they might at the Cockpit’s occasionally immodest comedies.50

The general cloudiness of the concept of taste makes it difficult to track precisely when changes in audience interest occurred over time, but one incident demonstrates that Beeston did attend closely to contemporary trends.

48 See the prologue to John Ford’s *The Ladies Triall* (London, 1639): “Wit, wit’s the word in fashion, that alone / Cryes up the Poet, which though neatly showne, / Is rather censur’d often times than knowne” (A4v). See also Michael Neill, “‘Wit’s Most Accomplished Senate’: The Audience of the Caroline Private Theatres,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 18 (1978) 341-361.


A sudden vogue for French playing swept over London in February 1634/35 following performances at court by the travelling company of Josias de Soulas, also known as “Floridor.” The visiting French players performed Du Rocher’s comedy *Mélise* before the King and Queen at Whitehall on 17 February with “good approbation,” and three days later, on 20 February, Charles commanded that “this French company should playe the too sermon daies in the weeke, during the time of Lent, and in the house of Drury-lane, where the queenes players usually playe.” The same day, the Master of the Revels brought word of the King’s pleasure to Beeston, “who obeyd readily.” The popular interest generated by Floridor’s troupe, perhaps stimulated by the presence of women on stage, surprised observers. After two days in Beeston’s house, Herbert notes, the French actors “gott two hundred pounds at least; besides many rich clothes were given them.” They performed George Scudéry’s tragicomedy *Le Trompeur Puni* (based upon Honoré d’Urfé’s fashionable romance *L’Astrée*) on 4 April (Easter Monday), and when the holiday ended, interest in the French players remained strong. On 16 April, Herbert says, they played Pierre Du Ryer’s *Alcimedon* at court “with good approbation.” On 18 April, intent on giving the company further London exposure, the King ordered that a stage, scaffold, and seating be erected for Floridor in the manage house of one Mr. Le Fevure.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) For this incident, see Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 191-192. What Herbert identifies as “a French comedie called Melise” may have been Pierre Corneille’s popular *La Mélite*. See H.C. Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929-1942) 418-419.

\(^{52}\) *MSC* 2.3: 375-376, 378. Herbert delivered the warrant on 5 May 1635: “A warrant granted to Josias D’Aunay, Hurfries de Lau, and others, for to act playes at the new house in Drury-lane, during pleasure … The king was pleased to commande my Lord Chamberlain to direct his warrant to Monsieur Le Fevure, to give him power to contract with the Frenchmen for to build a playhouse, which was done accordinglye by my advise and allowance” (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 193).
Le Fevure’s property stood in Drury Lane, down the street from the Cockpit. Beeston’s response to this unexpected commercial competition is revealing. He and Shirley quickly revised an old play on a French theme, George Chapman’s *Chabot, Admiral of France*, and obtained a licence to perform it on 29 April, one week before Floridor’s company was to take up residence in Le Fevure’s riding house. The surviving text of *Chabot* presents an unusually static, classically structured, political tragedy, punctuated by lengthy lyrical monologues in the French style. The decision to stage the play might be otherwise inexplicable but the context outlined above suggests a calculated managerial decision to exploit the recent intoxication with French theatricals that spring. The baroque formality of *Chabot* – a departure from the typical smooth naturalism of Shirley’s style and unlike anything else in Beeston’s repertory – perhaps even reflects an experimental attempt to replicate for English audiences the aesthetic of French declamatory chanting (or singing), a convention Floridor famously abandoned years later. A moment of parody in Glapthorne’s *The Ladies Privilege*, performed later in 1635, confirms that Beeston and his actors had closely studied the French company’s technique. The genial lieutenant Adorni in Glapthorne’s play recalls a visit to a Parisian theatre and then apes “the quaintest sport” of its “ayry” acting to entertain a court matron. Stage directions indicate that Adorni “*Acts furiously*” in a tragic mode while his playing partner sportingly appeals to their onstage audience: “gentlemen entreat the man / to pacifie his wrath, tell him Ile love him, / Rather than see him rage thus.” Floridor’s

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actors offered their last recorded performance at the end of 1635\textsuperscript{55} but English interest in French acting persisted. The observant Beeston continued to suit his repertory to the fashion, eventually overseeing the first English production of Corneille’s great tragicomedy \textit{Le Cid}, translated by Joseph Rutter.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{(c) Tiring House and Wardrobe Management}

Beeston continued to provide his playing associates with “a sufficyent and good stock of apparell fitting for theire vse” throughout the Caroline period.\textsuperscript{57} The budget allocated to maintaining a sufficient wardrobe was equivalent to two company shares, or a third of the company’s profit, a clear indication of the importance of costumes and physical properties to the visual field of Cockpit productions. T.J. King’s analysis suggests that the Cockpit made rather conventional use of large properties: a bed, an arbour, trees, a bar, a chair of state, a table, a cage, stocks, a hearse, a coffín, and a tomb. William B. Markward has shown that Beeston also deployed an impressive number of smaller properties: “haire” (wigs), masks, books, bottles, needle-work, fans, flowers, bags of coins, jewels, ropes, medals, china, pictures, wax-lights, a dark lanthorn, a hobby-horse, a spy glass, a looking-glass, a urinal, a carpet, hangings, torches, pistols, swords, daggers, shields, whips, pan and irons (instruments of torture), halberds, truncheons,

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\textsuperscript{55} Floridor’s players performed a tragedy before the King in December 1635 during a revels season that included another unidentified French play and the French masque \textit{Florimène}, see David Cook and F.P. Wilson, eds., “Dramatic Records in the Declared Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber 1558-1642,” \textit{MSC} (1960-61) 4: 88, and Astington, \textit{English Court Theatre}, 263.

\textsuperscript{56} Joseph Rutter, \textit{Le Cid} (London, 1637).

\textsuperscript{57} Honigmann and Brock, \textit{Playhouse Wills} 193.
drums and colours, chains and fetters, a gambling box and dice. Special props occasionally demanded ingenuity: the “token” of Alonzo’s severed finger in *The Changeling*, for example, “a Cage with variety of Birds in it” in *The Bird in the Cage*, “a child in a couered Dish” in *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, “a paire of Asse eares” in Love’s *Mistress*, and Annabella’s heart upon Giovanni’s dagger in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*.

Beeston’s most significant contribution to productions, however, was the Cockpit’s large, flexible wardrobe. No inventories survive such as those kept by Henslowe but printed plays give us a vivid idea of the specific costumes and accessories stored in Beeston’s trunks and presses. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, a “Satten-doublet white, but crimson lin’d; / Hose of black Satten, Cloak of Scarlet” and “Cloak branch’d Velvet black” falsely identify Warbeck and Somerton as murderers. In the same play, the demonic Dog appears in both black and white manifestations. “Divells dauncing, with Fire wo[r]kes, and Crackers” are called for in *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil*. In *The Bondman*, Asotus enters “in an Apes habit, with a chain about his necke.” The Bashaw of Aleppo “puts of his yellow Pantophles” before the exotically clad Donusa in *The Renegado*. When Beatrice Joanna drops a Spanish leather glove in *The Changeling*, it

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becomes De Flores’s fetish, prompting his memorable utterance: “I should thrust my fingers; / Into her sockets here.”

“They should not trust me with her, / She is a slippery girl.”

Possibly those Beeston supplied for If It Be Not Good at the Red Bull, are worn by Francisco in The Renegado, Bonaventura in Ford’s ’Tis Pity She’s a Whore, and Bernard and John in Davenport’s A New Trick to Cheat the Devil. In Webster’s The Devil’s Law-Case, Romelio puts on “the habit of a Jew” and experiences a strange desire to “Betray a Towne to’th Turke,” suggesting that he has self-reflexively put on Barabas’s costume from The Jew of Malta. Russet-coloured “Shepheards weedes” worn by Selina in Shirley’s first play,

64 Middleton and Rowley, The Changeling B4r. The inspiration for this moment might be an earlier play written for Beeston, Dekker’s Match Me in London, in which the disguised King models a glove on the hand of a shopkeeper’s wife, hoping that, like the leather, she will be “affable and apt to bee drawn to any generous disposition,” Thomas Dekker, A Tragi-Comedy called Match Mee in London (London, 1631) D1v-D2v. In the same play, a haberdasher, Bilbo, advertises “richgarters, spangled roses, silke stockins, embrodered gloues … / rich Tuscan hatbands, ventoyes, [and] Barbarian shoqstrings,” all perhaps ostentatiously drawn from Beeston’s tiring house (C3v-C4r). A “poison’d Glove” is deployed in Davenport’s King John and Matilda (London, 1655) H4r.

65 Massinger, The Renegado; Ford, ’Tis Pity Shee’s a Whore; Robert Davenport, A Pleasant and Witty Comedy called A New Tricke to Cheat the Divell (London, 1639). The potential resonance of these costumes is intriguing given that St. Giles in the Fields was the reputed haunt of Catholics. In 1628, MP Lawrence Whitaker characterized the parish as “a little Rome or a little Douai,” where lived “3 papists to one Protestant,” especially “in Drury Lane [where] more go to mass than to church,” see Commons Debates 1628, eds. Robert C. Johnson et al., vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) 153. The monks in Henrietta Maria’s service were plainly visible walking the Strand about the Queen’s chapel in Somerset House. “There are 3 masses in the morning there,” said Sir William Bulstrode, “one for the Queen and 2 more for the papists in Drury Lane and other places” (Commons Debates 1628 4: 325). George Garrard informed the Earl of Strafford on 23 March 1636/37 that “Dr. Heywood, late Household Chaplain to my Lord’s Grace of Canterbury, now the King’s, Parson of St Giles in the Fields, where he lives, brought a Petition directed to my Lord’s Grace and other Lords of his Majesty’s Council, complaining that in a very short time, a great Part of his Parishioners are become Papists and refuse to come to Church. The Wolf that has been amongst them is a Jesuit, one Morse, who since this Complaint is, they say, by Order apprehended and committed to Prison. Popery certainly increaseth much amongst us, and will do so still, as long as there is such Access of all Sorts of English to the Chapel in Somerset-House, utterly forbidden and punishable by the Laws of the Land,” The Earl of Strafforde’s Letters and Dispatches, ed. William Knowler, vol. 2 (Dublin: Robert Owen, 1740) 59.

The School of Complement are deployed frequently, from Daborne’s early The Poor Man’s Comfort to Shirley’s late, pure pastoral The Arcadia. 67

Between 1616 and 1636, the Cockpit’s tiring house must have resembled The Renegado’s Tunisian market, an apparent “confluence of all nations,” 68 stocked with distinctly Scottish, Irish, and Welsh, 69 Turkish, 70 French, 71 Danish, 72 Spanish, 73 and Italian 74 styles, as well as fanciful, antique modes of dress. 75 Indecorous costumes could be patched together to represent the “gipsified” characters in Middleton and Rowley’s The Spanish Gypsy. As one character says of the gypsy attire: “your strange habits /


68 Massinger, The Renegado C1v.


70 Webster, The White Divel; Thomas Heywood, The Fair Maid of The West [parts 1 and 2] (London, 1631); William Rowley, A Tragedy called All’s Lost By Lyst (London, 1633); Massinger, Renegado; Marlowe, Jew of Malta.

71 Shirley, The Ball (London, 1639); Shirley, Chabot; Massinger, Parliament of Love.

72 Webster, The Deuils Law-case.

73 Dekker, Match Mee in London; Middleton and Rowley, The Changeling; Ford, ’Tis Pitty Shee's a Whore.


75 Heywood, The Rape of Lvrece; Massinger, The Bond-Man; Nabbes, Hannibal and Scipio; Webster, Appius and Virginia a Tragedy (London, 1654).
Invite me with desire, to understand / Both what you are, and whence, because no
Country / (And I have measur’d some) shew me your like.”^76

The elite audience’s love of luxury helps to account for the size of Beeston’s
costuming budget. Frequent stage directions calling for characters to enter “gallant” or
“brave” are indicative of the increasing need to appeal to contemporary metropolitan
fashion.^77 In *The Devil’s Law-Case*, to cite an early example, the meaning of a
confrontation between the youthful Julio, the wise advocate Ariosto, and the by-standing
Romelio depends upon the discerning participation of the audience. After a moment of
faulty hat etiquette degenerates into insult, Julio mocks the older Ariosto’s “round slop”
for being “iust of the bignes, and no more, of the case for a Vrinall,” which is to say, too
small to be *à la mode* in a time of massive Jacobean breeches. The older men chastise
Julio for his pride and invite spectators to gaze at his “numerous Wardrobe” while
judging the excesses of his “daintie embroydered stockings,” his “ouerblowne Roses,”
and the fact that he wears “more taffaty for a garter than would serue the Gally dung-boat
for streamers.”^78 The final comparison of the youth’s giant breeches to a manure boat is
characteristically Websterian, but it may also owe something to Beeston. Presumably,
Cockpit playwrights wrote with an idea of the sorts of garments a manager could provide,
and Webster perhaps wrote with specific breeches in mind.^79

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^77* See, for instance, Cooke, *Greene’s Tu Quoque* D4v; Daborne, *The Poor-Mans Comfort* D3v; Heywood, *Mayden-head Well Lost* E2r-E2v; Shirley, *Bird in the Cage* F4r.

^78* Webster, *The Deuils Law-case* C3r, C4v.

^79* The scene is clearly aimed at young Inns gentlemen, challenging them to weigh their superficial love of clothes with the moral need to reject pride in apparel.
In the 1620s and 30s, appeals to fashion increased. According to Henry Peacham, the importation of styles from continental Europe quickened the pace of change: “Now this thing we call fashion is so much hunted and pursued after, like a thief with a hue and cry, that our tailors dog it into France even to the very door.”80 As the preference for French dress swept over London, the gentrified silhouette exchanged its former bombast and whalebone stiffness for a silkier, more ethereal look. Women began to wear the high-waisted gowns, puffed sleeves, lace collars, and curled hair prevalent in the art of Van Dyck and Hollar. Men adopted the shorter doublets, longer breeches, bucket boots, broad-brimmed, feathered hats, and long hair characteristic of the Cavalier style in the drawings of Callot and Bosse.

Staying up to date with these current styles may well have been as high a priority as having a repertory that exhibited the latest literary refinements. The Cockpit’s many social comedies about London life would not be convincing, for instance, without clothes that could satisfy the sartorial sophistication of patrons whose own wardrobe budgets had climbed to fantastic new heights.81 At the beginning of Nabbes’s Covent Garden, Ralph and Dobson, servants who have just moved “nere the Cock-pit,” provide a self-reflexive comment on its players and their costumes:

Dobs[son]: But tell me Ralph, are those Players the ragged fellowes that were at our house last Christmas, that borrowed the red blanket off my bed to make their Major a gowne and had the great Pot-lid for Guy of Warwicks Buckler?


Ralph: No, Dobson; they are men of credit, whose actions are beheld by every one, and allow’d for the most part with commendations. They make no yearely Progressse with the Anatomy of a Sumpter-horse, laden with the sweepings of Long-lane in a dead Vacation, and purchas’d at the exchange of their owne whole Wardrobes.  

Praising the players by emphasizing the quality of their wardrobe clearly points to the strategic importance of conspicuously displaying theatrical luxury.

Beeston’s frequent collaborator Shirley acutely saw the need to stage fashion with verisimilitude and precision. His scenes frequently emphasize the *au courant* character of Beeston’s wardrobe, even when deconstructing fashion in order to warn of the danger posed to virtue by obsessive superficiality. Shirley’s plays commonly include three major female parts requiring the Cockpit’s younger players to don the full, fashionable ensemble of the Caroline gentlewoman. Moreover, frequent calls for costume changes indicate that Beeston provided multiple outfits for each of these characters. In *The Ball*, for instance, staged the same year as *Covent Garden*, Rosamond, Honoria, and Lucina wear fashionable gowns and accessories in their early scenes, and then wear three separate sets of finery at the formal social gathering that closes the play. The offence taken by the Master of the Revels at “divers personated so naturally, both of lords and others” during *The Ball*’s first performance leaves little doubt about the Cockpit’s capacity for authenticity.  

Shirley’s popular *The Lady of Pleasure* of 1635 best illustrates their mastery of the preferred male silhouette. When Frederick travels to London from university in

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82 Nabbes, *Covent Garden* B1v-B2r.

83 Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 177.
overly modest black, the gallant Littleworth redresses him at the behest of Frederick’s pretentious aunt:

Lit[tleworth]: Your French tailor
Has made you a perfect gentleman, I may
Converse now with you, and preserve my credit,
De’ee find no alteration in your body
With these new clothes?

Fre[derick]: My body altered? No.

Lit[tleworth]: You are not yet in fashion then, that must
Have a new motion garbe, and posture too,
Or all your pride is cast away, it is not
The cut of your apparrell makes a gallant,
But the geometricall wearing of your clothes.

Ste[ward]: Mr. Littleworth tells you right, you weare your hat
Too like a citizen.

Lit[tleworth]: Tis like a Midwife,
Place it with best advantage of your haire,
Is halfe your feather molted? this does make
No shew, it should spread over like a Canopy,
Your hot reind Monsieur weares it for a shade,
And cooler to his backe, your doublet must
Be more unbutton’d hereabouts, you’le not
Be a sloven else, a foule shirt is no blemish,
You must be confident, and outface cleane linen!
Your doublet and your breeches must be allow’d
No private meeting here, your cloak’s too long,
It reaches to your buttocke, and doth smell
Too much of Spanish gravitie, the fashion
Is to weare nothing but a Cape, a coate
May be allowed a covering for one elbow,
And some to avoid the trouble, choose to walke
In quirpo thus. \(^84\)

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\(^84\) Shirley, *The Lady of Pleasure* (London, 1637) G3r-G3v.
For this satiric representation of fashion to be convincing, the performers needed studiously to master the acceptable “motion,” or deportment, accompanying the “geometricall” angling of the “garbe” Beeston provided for them. Similar knowledge enabled the Cockpit’s manager, playwrights, and actors to devise a whole spectrum of indecorous variations on this theme. Cockpit plays often represent the breakdown of decorum as a sign of failed social climbing. For instance, Spruce, a gentleman-usher in *Covent Garden* briefly apes the “motion” and appearance of his social betters before he betrays his inexperienced carriage and is accused of purchasing “laundry in Long-lane or Houndsditch with the impudence of a cheater.” When Spruce and another pretender are robbed of their “Cloakes and Beavers,” Spruce shamefully admits he has no replacement; his “plentifull Wardrobe” actually consists of a single suit that will “not be quite paid for til the next quarter.”

Related jests are aimed at those ignorant of London fashion. Jonson’s *A Tale of a Tub*, written or revised for Beeston in 1633, gently sends up the awe with which Turf the High Constable praises the “wisps,” “straw-coloured stockins” and other démodé rustic accoutrements of his hopeful son-in-law, John Clay, the tile-maker:

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Turf:   And his new shamois Doublet too with points;
       I like that yet: and his long sawsedge-hose,
       Like the Commander of foure smoaking Tile-kilns,
       Which he is Captaine of, Captaine of Kilbourne:
       Clay with his hat turn’d up, o’ the leere side, too:
       As if he would leape my Daughter yet ere night,
       And spring a new Turfe to the old house …
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85 Nabbes, *Covent Garden* D1r-D1v, F2v.

86 *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1641) 73.
Characters in Marmion’s *The Antiquary* similarly prod Veterano when his devotion to the past leads him to reject loudly all “fresh tricks, and new inventions of fashions.” In a moment of drunken pride during the fifth act’s feast, the antiquary proudly declares himself to be wearing “*Pompeys* breeches,” “*Iulius Caesar’s* hat,” and “*Hanniballs* spectacles,” that is, clothes dated or worn-through to the point of being unrecognizable by his younger, well dressed contemporaries. These characters proceed to wrap “*a fools coat*” around Veterano and dupe him into believing that it “did formerly belong unto *Pantolabus* the Roman Jester, and Buffon to *Augustus Caesar*.”

London’s fashion mongering provides the context for such humour, but these scenes also illuminate the economic reality of maintaining the Cockpit’s tiring house. Beeston needed to provide a regular supply of new costumes, expensive as they may be. Over time, a surplus would have accumulated, with garments gummed and drained of their lustre by degrees, but these still usefully represented the declining scale of poverty and sartorial incompetence that visually defined the social failures of Caroline comedy. We tend to assume that playwrights wrote with their available resources in mind. If Beeston had a surplus of used garments, this may explain why the ratio of comic travesty to mimetic imitation of fashion remains roughly equal throughout the 1630s at the Cockpit. Worth several hundred pounds, Beeston’s wardrobe served the additional economic function of insurance in times of financial crisis, such as when plague closed the playhouses. As the first chapter has shown, costumes were valuable assets that could be pawned or sold as need arose. A capacity for “living meerly out of the stock” perhaps

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87 Marmion, *The Antiquary* E1r, H4r-H4v, l2v, K4v.
best explains how Beeston remained on good financial footing when others struggled
during the plague closures of 1625, 1630 and 1636.88

**Beeston’s Non-theatrical Investments and the Herbert Family**

The decision in February 1637 to appoint Christopher Beeston “Gouuernor of the
new Company of the Kings & Queenes boyes” crowned twenty years of commercial
success but was not prompted by Beeston’s practical management alone. Seventeenth-
century theatrical managers always conducted business under the umbrella of court
patronage and new evidence suggests that personal connections to patrons at the Stuart
court were crucial both to the economic stability of Beeston’s Drury Lane venture and his
preferment to his Governor post during the 1630s.

In 1636, Beeston was London’s preeminent theatrical entrepreneur, having led
Queen Henrietta Maria’s fashionable company for ten years and amassed a personal
treasury of playbooks, acting apparel, and other tiring-house materials. However, in May
of that year the worst outbreak of plague in three decades closed the theatres and
suppressed business until the following October 1637. Under the stress of eighteen
months of enforced idleness, acting companies buckled, setting patents and personnel
adrift. Among the casualties was Beeston’s relationship with the Queen’s Men. From his
vantage point at the competing Salisbury Court playhouse, the manager Richard Heton
observed that: “When her m18 servants were at the Cockpitt, beinge all at liberty, they
disperst themselves to severall Companies, so that had not my lo: of Dorsett taken Care to

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88 See *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint* (London, 1643) A3v.
Another onlooker, Dorothy Blagrave, wife of the deputy Master of the Revels, claimed that Beeston deliberately antagonized his colleagues “to the end hee might have a Company that would take what hee would be willing to give them.” Beeston soon emerged from these troubles to lend his name to a troupe of boys performing at St. James’s palace on 7 and 14 February 1637. It was at the conclusion of these revels a week later, on 21 February, that a clerk in the Lord Chamberlain’s office registered the warrant entitling Beeston to “govern” a newly patented young company. The dormant London theatres briefly reopened on 24 February and, according to the Master of the Revels, Beeston’s “company of boyes ... began to play at the Cockpitt,” while prominent members of the old Queen’s Men and their patent were moved to the playhouse in Salisbury Court. Almost immediately, plague restricted public playing again, but when the Privy Council lifted the ban in the autumn of 1637 and steady business resumed, the King and Queen’s Young Company flourished, confirming Beeston’s status as Caroline London’s foremost man of theatrical business.

Theatre historians generally agree that a power struggle of some form late in 1636 precipitated the disbanding of Beeston and Queen Henrietta Maria’s Men. The observations recounted by Heton and Blagrave led G.E. Bentley to conclude that Beeston must have conspired to “to get rid of one company at his theatre and to start another,” an


90 Undated petition to the House of Lords (cited by Bentley, *JCS* 6:67).

91 Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 200.

end he achieved forcibly during the extended plague closure by “evicting his old tenants” and thereby “consolidating his dominant position” at the Cockpit. Andrew Gurr has similarly suggested that Beeston “dislodged” and “dismissed” the Queen’s company, viewing Beeston’s move as indicative of an “autocratic form of rule” that had begun to take hold in London as the dominant professional practice. In an emergent Caroline “impresario system,” Gurr argues, theatre owners came to recognize that an organization composed mainly of juveniles – such as the Revels company managed by Richard Gunnell and William Blagrave at the Salisbury Court in 1629 – was more financially dependent, and therefore more obedient, than a cooperative of adult sharers along the lines of the King’s Men. In this commercial context, Gurr suggests, and in an effort to bring his Drury Lane enterprise more strictly under his control, Beeston strategically abandoned the adult Queen’s Men and “secured his new patent” to govern a company of boys in 1637.

This narrative remains compelling, but it raises a critical question about the authority required to dissolve and reconstitute acting companies. Was an individual sharer, even one as apparently strong-willed as Beeston, entitled to break apart the patented Queen’s Men? If so, who authorized his decision and how was his post as the Governor of a new company subsequently “secured”? Martin Butler has recently proposed that the success of Beeston’s ambitious contrivances may owe as much to “powerful friends” as to the ruthless commercial instincts theatre historians typically

93 Bentley JCS 6: 66-68.
94 Gurr, The Shakespearian Playing Companies 9, 96, 156, 383, 423. J.P. Collier seems first to have articulated this idea: “We are to understand, therefore that at this date Christopher Beeston separated himself from the Queen’s players, at whose head he had been for some years, in order to undertake the charge and instruction of an independent company of juvenile performers, hereafter called the King’s and Queen’s Young Company” (The History of English Dramatic Poetry 2: 78).
attribute to him. “If Beeston was acting as impresario,” Butler points out, “he could do so only because of a hand-in-glove relationship with great authorities at Whitehall.”

New evidence strongly supports this observation. During the 1630s, Beeston repeatedly involved himself in the social and financial affairs of the aristocratic Herbert family—particularly of Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke. As Lord Chamberlain of the King’s household and a nobleman of considerable political influence at court, Pembroke was the man to authorize any managerial changes that Beeston may have pressed for in 1636 and 1637. The Earl’s patronage, furthermore, appears to have been critical to the creation of the office of Governor of the King and Queen’s Young Company in 1637.

Beeston’s nominal patrons for over thirty years were members of the Stuart royal family, yet the everyday complexities of the London theatre business necessitated numerous professional and political connections. It is becoming clear that Beeston carefully cultivated relationships with a variety of social superiors, the most influential of whom belonged to the Herbert family of Montgomery and London. Theatre historians have long been aware of one significant point of contact with this family. Between 1623 and 1638, Beeston worked steadily and cordially with Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels. Herbert supervised and licensed all aspects of Beeston’s enterprise and the surviving remnants of his office book illustrate the due reverence afforded him by the playhouse owner during their fifteen years of regular interaction. In 1632, for instance, when caricatures of English courtiers offended Herbert during the readying of James

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96 Beeston typically paid £2 for the licensing of a new play, £1 for re-licensing an old play, £2–3 for a Lenten dispensation, and a £3 fee for securing a place at the Christmas court revels.
Shirley’s comedy *The Ball*, Beeston “promiste many things that [the Master had] found faulte withall should be left out” and assured him “he would not suffer it to be done by the poett any more.” Similarly, as mentioned above, Beeston “obeyd readily” when Herbert requested that he host a company of visiting French actors at the Cockpit on behalf of their royal sponsors in 1634.\(^{97}\) Ready obeisance in such moments was of course rational and professional but something more complex also seems to have been taking place below the surface, structuring relations between the two men.

Beeston’s practice of supplementing Herbert’s standard fees brings another dimension of their relationship into focus. Like John Heminges and others who worked with the Master of the Revels on behalf of their companies, Beeston dutifully paid Herbert “Occasionall Gratuityes,” small sums in acknowledgment of professional courtesies such as the approval of a play list for court revels.\(^{98}\) At the same time, however, in an evidently unique habit, he also gave Herbert distinct, non-monetary “gifts” which exceeded the Master’s normal perquisites. On 10 March 1623/24, for example, he delivered “Sir Walter Rawleys booke worth 1 li” to the Revels Office as a “Newyeres gift.”\(^{99}\) And following a rendezvous to conduct business in the summer of 1633, Herbert describes an even more elaborate presentation:

Received of Biston, for an ould play called Hymen’s Holliday, newly revived at their house, being a play given unto him for my use, this 15 Aug. 1633, [£3] … Meetinge with him at the ould exchange, he gave my wife a payre of gloves, that cost him at least twenty shillings\(^{100}\)

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\(^{97}\) Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 177, 181, 191.

\(^{98}\) Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 146, 164-165, 167, 173, 262-264.

\(^{99}\) Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 149.

\(^{100}\) Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 181.
Herbert here suggestively appends his memorandum about the gift of gloves to a record of having licensed a play “given unto [Beeston] for my use.” He does not state the “use” he has in mind, nor the precise nature of Beeston’s involvement but it seems reasonable to speculate that he had enlisted Beeston’s expertise to stage the old play privately, perhaps, given its title, to celebrate the nuptials of someone in his social circle. Certainly the entry hints at a more complex and reciprocal partnership between the two men than is normally assumed and calls into question existing characterizations of Beeston’s gifts as “good investments,” “blandishments of the censor,” or bribes calculated to “stay on the good side” of a man of influence.101

More precisely, Beeston’s gifts have the appearance of a client’s traditional offerings to a sponsor. Social and economic historians have amply demonstrated that patronage structured most forms of business in the seventeenth century. Personal connection was the primary mechanism by which a person realized entrepreneurial or artistic talents and gifts functioned as nurturing instruments in this system, testifying to a patron’s honour and power while serving as a reminder of the obligation to bestow favour upon a client.102 Something other than mere commercial self-interest may therefore have motivated Beeston’s liberality toward the Master of the Revels. If we recast Herbert as Beeston’s “friend” – his link to a wider patronage network maintained by the influential


Herbert family – the encoded meanings likely communicated by his tokens become clearer: Raleigh’s folio *History of the World* respectfully acknowledges the intellect on which Sir Henry prided himself, while the gloves given to his wife Susan signal his fidelity to the larger Herbert clan. 103

New information about Beeston’s money and property supports the likelihood that he looked to the Herbert family for patronage. It has been observed that by building the Cockpit in the western parish of St. Giles in the Fields, Beeston aimed to capture a theatrical market stimulated by the growing population and circumambient wealth of Westminster. Also evident now is the fact that he sought to capitalize on the area’s rising demand for accommodation. By the 1630s, the suburbs and fields surrounding the Cockpit were thick with speculators and builders working to renovate or construct new lodgings for the many gentle families, office-holders, and place-seekers striving to settle near Whitehall. With capital at his disposal – presumably playhouse revenue – Beeston involved himself in the development of two architectural landmarks of Caroline London.

The first of these was Covent Garden, transformed from a grassy pasture into a Parisian-style civic space by the Earl of Bedford in 1631. His scheme involved leasing parcels of the site to speculators who then bore the cost of building architecturally uniform residences around its neoclassical centrepiece, the new St. Paul’s chapel and adjoining piazza designed by Inigo Jones. Bedford’s lessees were primarily speculating tradesmen, many with court connections. 104 Using his Hutchinson alias, Beeston bought


104 F.H.W. Sheppard, ed., *The Parish of St. Paul Covent Garden* (London: London City Council, 1970) 27-34, 230. An invective by William Prynne describes the lessees as Catholic monopolists: “All her Majesties servants, who doe suck the marrow of our estate … when they first came hither they were but poore beggers, & now they keep Coaches: what houses have they built in the Covent-garden, and what faire
two leases to the joined lots (numbers 6 and 7) at the southeast end of newly laid out Henrietta Street. By 1634, he had raised a pair of three-storied, arcaded houses of brick facing the south wall and churchyard of the chapel, with a view onto the piazza to the northeast (see fig. 5). His will later put the value of these “Twoe howses lately erected and built, in Couent Garden” at £600. Bedford’s plan had been to establish a socially elevated neighbourhood containing “howses and buildings fitt for the habitacons of Gentlemen and men of ability” and Beeston obliged by taking William Herbert, first Baron Powis, for his tenant at 7 Henrietta Street.

Powis hailed from the Welsh Marches but was frequently in London. As a Parliamentary representative of Montgomeryshire in the 1620s, he ardently promoted the interests of his namesake, the third Earl of Pembroke, a service that helped to earn him his title in 1629. For much of the Personal Rule, he was at leisure in the city and may

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105 The lease of “Christopher Hutchinson,” a “gentleman” of “St Giles in the Fields,” is catalogued in “Appendix III: Leases of the Piazza and Surrounding Streets within the Area of the Brick Boundary Wall, 1631-37” in Sheppard, The Parish of St. Paul Covent Garden 298-299, fig. 45.

106 Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 191-193. Beeston’s will also records his purchase of a piece of ground ‘inclosed with a Brick wall’ in Lincoln’s Inn Field, likely one of thirty-two plots on Purse Field, a few hundred feet from the Cockpit, then being developed by the Bedfordshire gentleman, William Newton. Like Beeston, Newton was a lessee in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. He also oversaw the rebuilding of Great Queen Street in 1635, a half block north of the Cockpit. See W. Edward Riley and Sir Laurence Gomme, eds., The Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, Part 1, Lincoln’s Inn Fields (London: London City Council, 1912) 9-16.

107 Sheppard, The Parish of St. Paul Covent Garden 7. Beeston’s other tenant at 6 Henrietta Street in 1634 and 1635 was William Monson, Viscount Castlemaine. He was the son of Sir William Monson, the famous Elizabethan naval captain and associate of Beeston’s friend Captain Lewis Kirke (whose career is set out in the next chapter). Personal connection clearly factored into Beeston’s tenant selection.

have been a regular playgoer. That his son-in-law was the poet William Habington, a close friend of Beeston’s frequent collaborator Shirley, may account for his association with the theatre owner. However, the more pertinent connection was probably the one between Powis and his first cousin, Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke (see fig. 6). Having inherited his brother’s office of Lord Chamberlain in 1626 and his earldom in 1630, Pembroke was Powis’s most consistent and powerful ally at court throughout the 1630s. A newsletter written about the time the Baron took up residence in Covent Garden captures the flavour of their intimate, sometimes stormy relationship. As they dined together early in 1634, it recounts, a quarrel erupted between the two noblemen; Pembroke, famously hot-tempered, shouted, “See how this Rascal, that cannot eat Bread without me, useth me,” to which Powis reportedly “made so sharp a Reply, that the whole Table was forced to rise, to keep them asunder.” Powis was a devout Catholic and Pembroke a man of reformed conviction, which perhaps contributed to the customary friction between them. Religion would prove a serious point of contention in 1637 when

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109 Powis wrote to Sir Henry Vane on 5 November 1630: “I thank God we are free men now and look and laugh at the follies of others … I wish you here that we might be merry together and laugh at plays unto which we are much given, for seldom there passeth a week without a play or two; there was never such subject for mirth and laughter as now, and we may now be merry at a play without danger.” In this context, “plays” is clearly code for “spectacular conflicts between court factions” but the metaphor could hint at an interest in the stage, Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Charles I, 1625-1649 Addenda (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1897) 381-382.

109 Habington wrote verses commending two of Shirley’s Cockpit plays in quarto, The Wedding (1629) and The Grateful Servant (1630). Powis’s daughter, Lucy, was the model for ‘Castara’ in Habington’s lyrical poems. See The Poems of William Habington, ed., Kenneth Allot (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1948) xxii-xxix.

111 Cokayne, Complete Peerage 10: 643-644. Pembroke was the son of Mary Herbert and the nephew of Sir Philip Sidney. He and his brother William, third Earl of Pembroke, were the “Incomparable Paire of Brethren” to whom Shakespeare’s folio was dedicated in 1623. The fourth Earl’s temper was notorious; he famously broke his Chamberlain’s staff over the shoulders of Charles’s private secretary, Thomas May at a masque in 1634. He nevertheless dispensed favour generously. Aubrey notes that he granted a £30 pension to the Cockpit playwright Philip Massinger and “others also had pensions, that I have forgot,” see The Natural History of Wiltshire (London: J. Nichols & Son, 1847) 97.

112 See Garrard’s letter to Strafford, 9 January 1633/34 (Strafforde’s Letters 1: 177-178).
the Earl strongly advocated a proposal before the Privy Council to “take away the eldest Sons of all who were popishly affected, and breed them up in the Religion established in the Church of England” – a policy that threatened to remove the Baron’s grandson from his son’s household. The durability of kinship nevertheless prevailed and Powis’s Catholic descendants remained in line to inherit Pembroke’s massive estate. It is just possible that religious affiliation connects Powis directly to Beeston, a known recusant with ties to London’s Catholic community. However, given the theatre manager’s familiarity with the Herberts in the Revels Office, and given the crucial part social connection played in the procurement of housing in London’s competitive market, the stronger likelihood is that Pembroke arranged his cousin’s tenancy in Beeston’s new, desirable townhouse.

There is further evidence suggesting that Beeston served Pembroke in a non-theatrical capacity in 1634. That summer, a violent quarrel among gentlemen provoked the King to bar public access to the Spring Garden, near Whitehall. The royal pleasure garden had been a popular resort for walking, bowling, and “drinking Wine all day under the Trees” and its enterprising groundskeeper, Simon Osbaldeston, wasted no time obtaining a license to create “a new Spring-Garden” with which “to entertain Gamesters and Bowlers, at excessive rate.” At the northeast corner of the Haymarket in the parish of St. Martin in the Fields, on a pasture known as Scavenger’s Close, Osbaldeston oversaw construction of an imposing brick gaming house, soon to be called Shaver’s Hall. Ornate wooden stairs within led up to rooms set out for cards, dice, and dining;

113 Garrard to Strafford, 7 February 1637 (Straffordes Letters 2: 147).

114 Garrard to Strafford, 3 June 1634, and 24 June 1635 (Strafforde’s Letters 1: 262-263, 435).
above these, terraced lodging chambers overlooked “a pleasant prospect” of a “faire Tennis Court” and “fayre Bowling Alleys, Orchard gardens, gravily walks, and other green walks.” Magnificence of this sort was costly, with building and landscaping expenses reportedly exceeding £5000. Osbaldeston financed much of the work on credit and his failure to repay his debts later provoked legal action on several fronts. A surviving answer to a bill of complaint in one of these suits (Appendix E) reveals that, to finance his venture, Osbaldeston relied upon the assistance of Christopher Beeston.

The project was already underway in 1634 when Osbaldeston and a group of partners negotiated to borrow £413 6s 8d from a distinguished resident of nearby Chelsea, Sir John Danvers. A loan that sizeable required security, and Beeston’s second wife, Elizabeth, explained several years later that:

Christofer Beeston … this Defendant’s deceased husbande … was drawne and persuaded to enter into the bond … vnto the sayd Sir Iohn Danvers as surety with the sayd Symon Osbaldeston <vpon the promise of the said Symon Osbaldeston> and the said defendants John Barrowe and Thomas Osbaldeston to give him the sayd Christofer Beeston counter securyty by bond to saue him harmeles against the said principal bond.

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116 NA C3 423/42. John Barrowe, one of the project’s investors, reported the cost as “ffive thousand Pounds and upwards.”

117 NA C2 ChasI/P6/6.

118 NA C2 ChasI/P6/6. Beeston’s counter bond was designed to protect him should Osbaldeston fail to repay Danvers. It happened that Osbaldeston honoured the terms of neither the original bond nor the counter bond and Danvers pursued Elizabeth Beeston for the money in the Court of Common Pleas after her husband’s death.
She does not indicate how her husband was “drawne and persuaded” to reinforce the Shaver’s Hall syndicate but the pattern of affiliation that emerges suggests a plausible answer. Simon Osbaldeston was the Earl of Pembroke’s gentleman barber and his gaming house licence was the latest of several lucrative commissions awarded him by his master for loyal service.  

119 John Barrowe was also Pembroke’s creature and owed the Earl his position as the King’s falconer and as a verderer in the royal forest of Dean.  

120 Sir John Danvers, Osbaldeston’s creditor, was married to Sir Henry Herbert’ mother, Magdalene, and was another of Pembroke’s clients.  

121 Pembroke’s own attitude to the venture was not disinterested; Garrard noted in 1635, “My Lord Chamberlain much frequents that Place, where they bowl great Matches” and the following spring he remarked upon the Earl’s concern for the hall’s reputation:

Simme Austbisonts house is newly christned, It is callld, Shauers Hall, … At first noe conceyte there was, of the builders beinge a Barber; but it came vpon my Lord of Dunbarrs loseing 3000li at one sitting; wheron they said a Northerme Lord was shaued there; But now Putting both togetheer, it will be a Nickname of the Place … My Lord Chamberlayne knows not of yet; but hele chafe abominably when he comes to know yt.  

122 Beeston’s financial pledge on behalf of this dense grouping of Pembroke’s servants is suggestive and arguably represents another courtesy to the Herbert family. Indeed, if his association with the gaming house investors reflects his own status as one of Pembroke’s servants:

119 Pembroke arranged his offices of knight harbinger on 30 September 1629 (NA SP 16/149 f. 111) and keeper of the king’s gardens in April 1630 (NA LC 5/132 f. 252).


122 Gerrard to Strafford, 24 June 1635 (Strafforde’s Letters 1: 435); Gerrard to Viscount Conway, 30 May 1636 (NA SP 16/322 f. 41).
clients – like Osbaldeston, like Berrowe, and like Danvers – he may well have been “drawne and persuaded” to participate by the Earl himself.\textsuperscript{123}

The Caroline Institution of Theatrical “Governor”

Beeston’s social and financial connection to the Herberths invites us to reexamine the striking changes undergone by the professional theatre in 1636 and 1637, particularly the creation of Beeston’s unprecedented office of “Gouvernor of the new Company of the Kings & Queenes boyes” in February 1636/37. By the time the London playhouses had closed in the spring of 1636, the internal dynamic of Queen Henrietta Maria’s company seems to have become unstable. Michael Bowyer, William Allen, Theophilus Bird and other younger actors of the 1620s had begun to assume leading parts in place of ageing veterans such as Richard Perkins, William Sherlock, and John Sumner. A new generation of acting apprentices was also distinguishing itself, led by sixteen-year old Ezekiel Fenn, reputed to be of extraordinary ability.\textsuperscript{124} We detect the presence of these polished younger actors especially in plays newly written for the Cockpit in the months just prior to the plague closure, with their emphases on female characters, vocal performance, choreographed procession, and stage dance. Thomas Nabbes’s Hannibal

\textsuperscript{123} Pembroke served as Lord Chamberlain from 3 August 1626 to 23 July 1641 so surely knew Beeston personally (MSC 2.3: 322). He commissioned dramatic works on at least three occasions: a masque in 1633 at Whitehall for which only Thomas Carew’s prologue and epilogue survive; Henry Killigrew’s The Conspiracy at York House in 1635; and The Queen of Aragon by his cousin William Habington in 1639. Habington’s play was presented by Pembroke’s own servants and, according to the Master of the Revels, he provided them with “clothes and scenes which were very rich and curious.” See Michael Brennan, Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family (London: Routledge, 1988) 192.

\textsuperscript{124} A list of “speaking persons” in the 1637 quarto of Thomas Nabbes’s Hannibal and Scipio (“acted in 1635”) identifies younger men with each of its leading heroic parts: William Allen (Hannibal), Michael Bowyer (Scipio), Hugh Clarke (Nuntio, Syphax) and Theophilus Bird (Massanissa). By contrast, their older colleagues Richard Perkins (Hanno), William Sherlock (Maharball, Prusias), and John Sumner (Himulco) appear infrequently (A4r). Henry Glapthorne commemorates Fenn’s ability to evoke ‘Innocence and timorous Modestie’ in women’s parts in “For Ezekiel Fen at his first Acting a Mans Part,” Poems (London: 1639) 28.
and Scipio, for instance, introduces Fenn in the central female role of Sophonisba with a call for “Musicke” and a train of “Ladies all in white, and veil’d: who to the musicke of the song, place themselves in a figure for the daunce”; at its conclusion, they “discover themselves in order, Sophonisba last.” Beeston revived The Knight of the Burning Pestle at the Cockpit in 1635 and at court that winter. Initially written for a Jacobean company of boys, it would have given Beeston’s younger actors many opportunities to display virtuosity in singing, dancing, and acting in different styles. The 1635 quarto closes the first three acts with the directions “Boy danceth, Musicke,” “Musick,” and “Musicke” while between the fourth and fifth act Ralph calls for a Maying, again implying an elaborate musical interlude. Shirley’s final play for Beeston was The Duke’s Mistress, licensed on 18 January 1636. In its second act, the Duke and Ardelia enter accompanied by “Musicke, and Song in Dialogue,” closely followed by three anonymous “Ladies” who dance at length with the courtiers Leontio, Strozzi, and Silvio. John Ford’s The Fancies Chaste and Noble twice prompts the “art in motion” of dance and presents a wedding procession, “[p]assing neat and exquisite,” at which a group of ladies “turne Songsters.” And in Henry Glapthorne’s The Hollander, licensed on 12 March 1636, a month before the closure, an elaborate interlude calls for the Cockpit music to play “through the doore” while several characters “frisk” about the Dutch gallant Sconce in an absurd “Twibill dance” designed to steal his clothes. Examples such as these make it reasonable to

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125 Nabbes, Hannibal and Scipio E1v; Francis Beaumont, The Knight of the Burning Pestle (London, 1635) C4v, E4r, G4r; Shirley, The Dukes Mistris D1r-D1v; John Ford, The Fancies Chaste and Noble D2r, F2v, K4r; Henry Glapthorne, The Hollander (London, 1640) H1r-v. For the licenses, see Bawcutt, Control and Censorship, 196-198.
suspect that the dysfunction soon to grip the Queen’s Men was rooted in the emphatic display of younger actors at the expense of veterans.\(^\text{126}\)

If Beeston did want to replace his existing company with a new one, as Bentley and Gurr argue, he may have found it a challenge. Ownership of the playhouse was certainly to his advantage; antagonists might simply have been barred access to his stage and playing materials. However, no evidence confirms that he possessed the authority to deny fellow actors their liveried status, at least not yet. The complication of 1636 probably therefore had the effect of polarizing, even paralyzing, the Queen’s company, but not breaking it. Some players must have become estranged, presumably those veterans soon to migrate to Heton’s theatre at Salisbury Court – Perkins, Turner, Sumner, and Sherlock. Others remained loyal to Beeston, certainly his son-in-law, Bird, and those young men bound to his household, as probably was Fenn.\(^\text{127}\)

If this scenario is correct, then the Queen’s Men were in disarray when the court revels began in the winter of 1636 but not extinct, their ranks divided but their official status essentially unresolved. This state of affairs remains consistent with Heton’s remark that some of the Cockpit actors found themselves “at liberty” and so “disperst themselves”; it also conceivably informs Blagrave’s cryptic charge that Beeston wanted “a Company that would take what hee would be willing to give them.”

\(^{126}\) An idea first proposed by Markward in *A Study of the Phoenix Theatre* (143-146).

\(^{127}\) Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies* 424. Richard Perkins, Anthony Turner, John Sumner, and William Sherlock formed the nucleus of the new Queen’s Men at the Salisbury Court theatre. The King’s Men absorbed Michael Bowyer, William Allen, William Robins, and Hugh Clarke, while Theophilus Bird, Ezekiel Fenn, John Page, Robert Axen, and George Stutville remained with Beeston. Five or more actors were drawn from other companies: William Trigg and Nicholas Burt from the King’s Men; Edward Gibbs from the King’s Revels; and Samuel Mannery and John Wright from the Prince’s Men. By 1639, Michael Mohun, John Lacy, Edward Davenport, and Robert Cox had also joined. Andrew Pennyuicke later professed to being ‘the last that Acted Matilda’ in Robert Davenport’s *King John and Matilda* (London, 1655, A2v) so was probably also a recruit between 1639 and 1642.
If the Queen’s Men were in professional limbo around the turn of 1637, what then was the status of the actors Beeston led at court that winter? “Beeston’s Boys” are typically thought to have been the product of a well-plotted management strategy, formed in anticipation of the Queen’s Men’s demise, and intended at their inception for royal patronage. However, as is often true, skilful improvisation may have shaped events more than meticulous planning. According to Herbert’s records, the King’s Men busily provided the bulk of the court’s dramatic entertainment that Christmas, acting all of the recorded court plays between 26 December and 31 January 1636/37. The absence of the Queen’s Men probably did not go unnoticed since its regular appearances stretched back to the mid-1620s. Beeston’s actors were recorded twice that February and, going by Herbert’s inconsistent nomenclature, there was something unconventional about their status:

Cupides Revenge, at St. James, by Beeston’s boyes, the 7 Febru.
...
Wit without Money, by the B. boyes at St. James, the 14 Feb.\(^\text{128}\)

If this was a long gestating, well-practiced company, why was it not exhibited earlier? Its late appearance in the two weeks before the revels wound down suggests instead a rather hastily assembled group, perhaps cobbled together only after final efforts to reconcile the Queen’s Men failed in December or January. If so, the “boyes” Herbert refers to were likely an *ad hoc* assemblage of Beeston loyalists from among the Queen’s actors, many obviously youthful, rounded out with hired men. It is worth noting that Herbert’s phrasing – “Beeston’s boyes” – appears nowhere else in extant theatrical records. Its phrasing – “Beeston’s boyes” – appears nowhere else in extant theatrical records. Its

\(^{128}\) By “Beeston’s boyes,” Herbert appears to mean “the youths Beeston has brought to court.” The definite article in his second notation – “the B. boyes” – may imply William Beeston’s presence (i.e. “the Beestons’s boys”).
disproportionately frequent use by modern scholars, coupled with the routine assertion that the Caroline public adopted the name colloquially, has solidified the impression that Beeston’s court actors were a finished, formal company. It is certainly possible that Beeston telegraphed the potential impact of “boyes” that season. His selection of Cupid’s Revenge and Wit without Money from his repertory reflects that season’s courtly vogue for Beaumont and Fletcher revivals and both plays contain opportunities to display the singing and dancing talent of his young stable. The Queen was eight months into her fifth pregnancy in February, perhaps also contributing to an atmosphere more than normally receptive to the charms of young performers. However, managerial considerations such as these would have been futile had Beeston not first secured a place at the festivities. The Master of the Revels and the Lord Chamberlain were responsible for selecting the court’s entertainers and we may assume they did so with their obligations as patrons firmly in mind. Beeston’s access to the court that winter was for this reason assured, to the detriment of any other faction of the troubled Queen’s company.

129 The roster of the young company London playgoers saw in October 1637 was changed by the incorporation of actors from other companies. Herbert’s usual designation from this point was simply “Cockpit Company.” Printed plays refer to “their Majesties Servants” and “the servants to both their Majesties,” never (to my knowledge) to “Beeston’s Boys.”

130 Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 200-201. In the first play, a Priest of Cupid leads “four young men and Maydes” on stage where their “feete / in an euuen Measure meet” and “cheerfull voices rise” to celebrate the love deity, John Fletcher, Cupids Revenge (London, 1630) B4r-v. The second play concludes with a group of youths (“Enter Musitions, Fount, Hare. Bell”) serenading Lady Hartwell; Valentine cues the song: “come boy sing the song I taught you, / And sing it lustily … thou hast got the start boy, / But ile so tumble after, come my friend leade, / Lead chearefully, and let your fiddles ring boyes,” Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Wit without Money (London, 1640) 13v.

131 On 13 February 1636/37, the Venetian ambassador noted that the Queen was “near her delivery [of Princess Anne] and she imagines that it will not turn out well in any other house but St. James’s” (CSP Venetian 24: 147).
Herbert patronage must also have prompted the speedy licensing of the “boyes” and the creation of Beeston as a court officer seven days later. 21 February, the final day of the court’s revels, the Lord Chamberlain’s clerk registered the warrant appointing Beeston “Gouuernor” of this troupe. Herbert communicated the news three days later:

Mr. Beeston was commanded to make a company of boyes, and began to play at the Cockpitt with them the same day. I disposed of Perkins, Sumner, Sherlock, and Turner to Salisbury Court, and joynd them with the best of that company.¹³²

On 28 February, the Queen’s treasurer granted £30 to “Xpofer Beeston Maister of a Company of Boyes of the Revells newely erected for the king and Queenes service … in consideracion of his chardges and paines in breeding and keeping them all the tyme of the sicknes.”¹³³ Henrietta Maria supported the company, but like other minor offices in the royal household, the Governor’s post was specifically within the Lord Chamberlain’s gift and circumstances suggest it was part of a larger policy to resolve the lingering problem of the destabilized Queen’s company. In collaboration with the Earl of Dorset, the Queen’s Chamberlain, Pembroke redistributed royal patronage throughout London’s

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¹³² Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 201. In J.Q. Adams lists this record as of uncertain date, The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert Master of the Revels, 1623-1673 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917) 66. John Tucker Murray thought it referred to 2 October and “to the reassembling of the boys who had, no doubt, been considerably scattered during their long idleness on account of the plague,” English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642, vol. 1 (London: Constable, 1910) 367. Gurr agrees and takes the entry to mean “not that he commanded Beeston to organize a new company and they sprang into being immediately [in February], but that he licensed a company which Beeston had already set up. He had secured his new patent as ‘Govvernor of the new Company of the Kinges & Queenes boyes’ eight months before … on 21 February 1637.” Bawcutt properly contextualizes the entry by connecting it to events of 23 and 24 February: “On Thursday morning 23ʳᵈ feb: 1636[/37] The Bill of Plague made the number at 44 upon which decrease the king gave the players ther liberty & they began 24 feb: 1636[/37]” (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 201). This simplifies matters: Beeston’s warrant as Governor was drawn up on 21 February and delivered by Herbert on 24 February, on which day Beeston formally presented his young company to the public at the Cockpit. By 1 March 1636/37, plague deaths were again too many and public playing stopped.

¹³³ National Library of Wales, Wynnstay MS 181, f. 15v. Karen Britland discovered this record in the Queen’s treasurer’s records and Butler cites it in “Exeunt Fighting” (112, 126 n52).
three operative hall playhouses: the King’s Men had passed through the disorders of the plague in relative stability and continued at their Blackfriars auditorium; the broken Queen’s company and its patent were reconstituted at the playhouse in Salisbury Court (where Dorset held an interest); and to fill the gap that remained in Drury Lane, Pembroke brokered for Beeston the King and Queen’s combined patronage and a chance to manage a new, young company in their name.

An establishment list of 1641 represents the theatrical Governor’s distinct standing within the King’s household. In prestige, it was comparable to the great crowd of limners, librarians, clothing surveyors, herbalists, organ keepers, and perfumers who made up the lower tier of chamber service, but, in practical terms, it apparently established for Beeston something like an adjunct position in the Revels Office:

Revells
S⁰ Henry Herbert Mr
Alexander Stafford Clarke
Ioseph Taylor yeoman
Geo: Wilson Groome

Gouvernor of yᵉ Cockpitt Players
William Bieston
Bowes
Lodowick Carlile gent¹³⁴

Integration into the Revels hierarchy may have brought modest wages and allowances as well as a ticket of privilege; it may also have been honorific.¹³⁵ More significantly, it


¹³⁵ Analogous warrants named Lodowick Carlisle Master of Bows on 29 September 1635 and Joseph Taylor Yeoman of the Revels on 29 September 1639 (Malone Society Collections, 3.2:377, 391). Records entitled “Revels Allowances” (25 May 1636) and “Allowance vnto Officers of the Revells” (13 February 1636/37) show that the Master of the Revels earned a monthly stipend of £12, the Clerk Comptroller, the Clerk, and Yeoman £3 6s 8d, and the Groom £1 13s 4d (MSC 3.2:379, 381).
gave Beeston the opportunity to codify his managerial practices (as autocratic as they might be) and to operate his commercial enterprise with greater, institutionally-sanctioned authority; indeed if “governor” carried its seventeenth-century educational connotation, the office may have been viewed as a mechanism for transmitting skill and nurturing young actors for future royal service. By all accounts, the office was inextricable from the Cockpit and, possibly, the Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Revels viewed that theatre’s rich tiring house as a useful new resource with which to supplement their outdated Revels budget. Pembroke’s more immediate concern, however, must have been to clearly delineate Beeston’s managerial prerogatives and prevent further disorders such as had paralyzed the Queen’s Men. Only in his new position does Beeston appear to have gained the authority to make and break acting companies. Even then, Pembroke vetted the process, as is evident in the detailed warrant he issued William Davenant in June 1640 (see fig. 3):

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\text{I doe authorize and appoint William Dauenant Gent’ … to take into his Gouernment & care … [the King and Queen’s Young Company] to gouerne, order & dispose of them for Action and presentsments, and all their Affayres … as in his discretion shall seeme best to conduce to his Majest\’s seruice in that Quality. … Which power or prevelidge Hee is to continue & injoye … Provided he bee still accontreble to mee for his care & well orderinge of the sayd Company.}
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136 According to the *OED*, the verb “govern” derived from the Latin *gubernare* (to steer a sea-vessel). By the early modern period, it had its familiar administrative and educational connotations and was used to describe one who rules, directs, or influences the actions, behaviour, or development of others, in order to ensure a consistent pattern or a desired result. That the new company was “young” suggests it may have been regarded as a “nursery” intended to regulate the quality of acting and to ensure a pool from which to draft new talent. When William Beeston assumed the post on 5 April 1639, “Instructor” was appended to the office’s title, as discussed in Chapter Four.

137 Astington notes that “large successful London companies of the 1630s … were far better equipped to mount plays than was the Revels Office” (*English Court Theatre* 27-28).

138 NA LC 5/134 f. 405.
In return for accountability, the Lord Chamberlain protected the Governor’s commercial interests. In the spring of 1637, when the plague again seized London, Beeston rather boldly defied the renewed order against playing and publicly exercised his actors. On 12 May 1637, the Privy Council summoned him to explain his insubordination and one imagines he addressed his responding petition more or less directly to Pembroke:

"your Petitioner being commanded to erect and prepare a Company of young Actors for their Majesties’s service, & desyrous to know how they had profetted by his instructions, Hee inuited some noble Gentlemen to see them Act att his Howse the Cockpit. For which (since he perceaes it is imputed a fault) hee is uery sorry, humbly crauing your Honnourable pardon, & promiseth not to offend in the like Nature."\(^\text{139}\)

Beeston’s emphasis on his status as a royal servant and on his affiliation with “noble Gentlemen” strikes a balanced note of deference and confidence. That there were no apparent consequences to his infraction would seem to confirm the privileged environment in which he was now working.

During the five years that followed, “governor” displaced “master,” “chief,” “steward,” and “warden” as a preferred term of authority in the professional idiom. In March 1639, for example, William Davenant secured a royal patent to erect a playhouse in Fleet Street. Although the project was ultimately suspended, the wording of the patent records Davenant’s clear ambition “to gather together, entertain, govern, privilege, and keep, such and so many players and persons, to exercise action, musical presentiments, scenes, dancing and the like, as he, the said William Davenant … shall think fit and

\(^{139}\) NA SP 16/339 f. 7. The council’s warrant reads: “A warrant to Jaspar Heyley and some of ye Messengers to fetch before the Lords Christopher Beeston William Beeston Theophilus Bird, Ezekiel Fenn and Michaell Moone with a clause to Command the Keepers of ye Playhouse called ye Cockpit in Drury Lane that either live in it or haue relacion to it not to permit Plaies to bee acted there till further ordre” (NA SP 16/356 f. 11).
approve for the said house” (italics added).\textsuperscript{140} Inflected by its courtly origin and unambiguously connoting a power to order, the word also clearly impressed Richard Heton, the leading housekeeper at the Salisbury Court playhouse. In the spring of 1639, he drafted a document entitled “Instructions for my Pattent,” outlining a set of rules and prerogatives by which he hoped to structure affairs at the playhouse in Salisbury Court. His foremost priority was to be recognized as the “sole governo” of the theatre’s actors, a position that would enable him “to select, order, direct and sett upp \textit{and governo/ a Company of Comedians}” and to direct their business affairs. Toward the end of the document, his rhetorical stress on “governing” intensifies. After considering “such of the Company as will not be ordered and governed by me as their governo,” he entreats the “power to dischardge [these disobedient actors] from the Company, and w\textsuperscript{th} the Advice of the m’ of the revells to putt new ones in their places.”\textsuperscript{141} Undoubtedly, this recalls privileges already granted to Beeston. Yet Heton’s proposed patent seems never to have materialized because he lacked the particular advantage of social and financial ties with decision makers in the Revels Office. Indeed, by the 1630s, an aspiring impresario’s need for the backing of personal patrons appears to have become paradigmatic.\textsuperscript{142}

I have argued in this chapter that the creation of the position of theatrical Governor and its integration into the hierarchy of the Revels office in 1636/37 resulted from both the efficiency and stability of Christopher Beeston’s management and his


\textsuperscript{141} Bawcutt, “Documents of the Salisbury Court Theater,” 186-188.

\textsuperscript{142} Heton likely owed his theatrical standing to his position as “one of the Sewers of the Chamber to o’ deare Consort the Queene” (Bawcutt, ‘Documents of the Salisbury Court Theater’, 187). Taylor, a leader in the King’s Men, was appointed Yeoman of the Revels in 1639 (see n 44). On the importance of social connection to the success of earlier Jacobean entrepreneurs, see S.P. Cerasano, “The Patronage Network of Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn,” \textit{Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England} 13 (2001) 82-92.
ability to secure personal patronage in the second half of his stage career. The twenty years between 1616 and 1636 saw him refine a management system that prioritized his personal control over the playhouse’s personnel and playing materials. By recruiting and training actors, Beeston ensured loyalty and consistency of skill in the Cockpit’s tenant companies. His ownership of a large stock of playbooks enabled him to tailor his repertory to London’s changing tastes. Responsibility for the Cockpit’s wardrobe enabled Beeston to influence the aesthetics of production while keeping a firm grasp on a theatrical asset especially valuable in times of economic hardship. New evidence discussed in this chapter has revealed that Beeston’s social network continued to expand and advance his interests in the latter half of his career. Personal ties to members of the Herbert family, especially to the Lord Chamberlain, led to the institution of a new bureaucratic division within the Revels Office and Beeston became the first formally recognized theatrical “Governor” in 1636/37. His family’s theatrical enterprise was now closely linked to an administrative office of the Stuart court. When Beeston died in October 1638, he left to his second-wife Elizabeth and son William one of London’s most sophisticated and lucrative theatrical businesses. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, their challenge would not be to refine their inheritance further but to shield it from civil war and the crippling effect of dislocated patronage.
CHAPTER THREE:
Elizabeth Beeston, Sir Lewis Kirke, and the Cockpit’s Management
during the English Civil Wars

In 1638, Christopher Beeston was London’s foremost man of theatrical business. He owned a popular Drury Lane playhouse containing a personal treasury of playbooks, costumes, and other material resources. He had developed an efficient, autocratic system of managing his enterprise that integrated the duties of the leading player-sharer and the theatrical housekeeper. Moreover, powerful sponsors in the Revels Office had carved out an institutional niche on his behalf, sheltering his commercial interests and granting him special prerogatives as the Governor of a company sponsored by the King and Queen. The previous two chapters have discussed Beeston’s formulation of this management model and his ascension to a commercially dominant position in the London. Late in 1638, however, Beeston became terminally ill. Between 4 and 7 October, “sick and weak in body,” he drafted his last will and testament, a document that yields unique information about the structure of his business, his wider social network, and, importantly, a final policy problem. How would he ensure the continued integrity of a business so dependent upon his individual style of management?

Two immediate factors prevented him from passing on all of his accumulated responsibilities and resources to a single successor. First, certain inherent skills and professional attributes are simply non-transferable – the delicate art of maintaining a patronage relationship, for instance, or the capacity to manage a complex professional network. Second, seventeenth-century testators felt intensely the moral obligation to provide for dependents, usually by redistributing their estates equitably between spouses

1 Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 191-193.
and children. The manager’s second wife, Elizabeth, and his children, William, Margaret, and Elizabeth Beeston, and Anne and Theophilus Bird, depended, to varying degrees, upon the continued profitability of the Cockpit. A combination of professional pragmatism and familial obligation therefore appear to have informed the dying manager’s final policy decision. He chose to break his single, centralized managerial position into constituent parts: his wife would now preside over the business of the playhouse and his son would govern its actors. Both would prove devoted custodians of their inheritance but they would also face serious challenges that Christopher Beeston could not have foreseen.

Theatre historians have curiously overlooked Elizabeth Beeston’s theatrical work despite good evidence that suggests she was the first Englishwoman to formally own and operate a purpose-built London playhouse. Surviving records consistently link her to the affairs of the Cockpit between 1634 and 1656, a period of over twenty years, and insight into her activity is to be gained, this chapter argues, by exploring the remarkable biography of her second husband, Sir Lewis Kirke. Hotson was the first theatre historian to acknowledge this relationship, but the evidence available at the time made it possible only to identify Kirke as “a gentleman pensioner and Royalist officer” tangentially connected to the Cockpit after the outbreak of the civil wars. New documentary sources enable the reconstruction of a far more detailed picture of his exploits as a colonial

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2 Anne Lancashire cautions against too easily imagining theatrical “firsts” given the incomplete condition of surviving evidence, “Early London Pageantry and Theater History Firsts,” *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002): 84-92. Illustrating her point, David Kathman has recently located evidence of women owning innyards where plays were performed during the sixteenth century, see “Alice Layton and the Cross Keys,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 22 (2009) forthcoming. Currently, however, we know of only two female proprietors of purpose-built London playhouses, the first being Elizabeth Beeston, the second Lady Mary Davenant after 1668.

3 Hotson, *CRS* 94.
governor in Canada, a captain in the Caroline navy, a Royalist soldier in the civil wars, and indeed the legal owner of the Cockpit for a decade following his marriage to Beeston. The involvement of the Kirkes in the management of the Beeston business remains unexplored ground in what Martin Butler has called “the one true piece of terra incognita left” in theatre history, the chaotic years between the prohibition of playing in 1642 and the Restoration of 1660. I argue in this chapter that Elizabeth Beeston and Lewis Kirke not only continued to manage the playhouse for commercial purposes during these years, but also attempted to turn it to their ideological advantage during the conflict between King and Parliament, particularly between 1646 and 1649, when other political efforts to support the Stuarts had been suppressed.

“Mrs Beestones Playhouse”: Elizabeth Beeston and the Cockpit, 1634-1642

Elizabeth Beeston alias Hutchinson became the Cockpit’s proprietor in 1638, a fact occasionally distorted when theatre historians assume William Beeston inherited the playhouse that year along with the management of its actors. The point requires clarification for upon it hinges much of the discussion that follows. Christopher Beeston’s will left to William the freehold of the King’s Head property in Shoreditch and a parcel of land enclosed by a brick wall in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. William’s sister Anne and her son Christopher each received legacies of £300, the estimated resale value of Beeston’s two houses in Covent Garden. Beeston then entitled his widow to “the residue of all and singuler [of his] goodes and Chattells whatsoever.” A lease was legally considered moveable property, so the papers granting Elizabeth Beeston proprietorship of

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5 Gurr’s influential Shakespearian Playing Companies misleads, for example, by describing William as the “property-owner of the playhouse” (425).
the Cockpit and its adjoining buildings would have been among the assorted “goodes and Chattells” she inherited. All subsequent sources recognize her as the playhouse’s owner. When Drury Lane residents complained of a noisy tavern in June 1639, for instance, they located it next to “Mrs Beestones Playhouse,” while in June 1640, the Lord Chamberlain agreed to license William Davenant’s government of the Cockpit’s players “during that lease which Mr Elizabeth Bieston alias Hucheson hath or doth hold in the sayd Playhouse.”

Her ownership of the theatre raises a critical question about the division of labour Christopher Beeston sought to institute before his death in 1638. Why did he leave the Cockpit to his wife, rather than to his son? He clearly aimed to provide her with a source of sustainable income, but the move also strongly implies confidence in her ability to take on the potentially burdensome task of managing an active playhouse and its adjoining tenements. Economic historians argue that it was relatively common for widows to take over the assets of their deceased husbands’ household businesses, especially in trades to which they might already have substantially contributed, such as the keeping of inns and taverns, the manufacture of clothing, brewing, baking, and the book trade. Probably, then, Elizabeth Beeston’s proprietorship was understood to extend duties she had already

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6 She confirms in a Chancery complaint of 1651 that “Christopher Beeston did by his last will in writing giue and bequeath all the term & interest and estate of the said Christopher with the said Lease vnto her this defendant … [and] shee … after the decease of the said Christopher Beeston into the said premises entred and was lawfully possessed thereof” (NA C10 35/29). On the transmission of leases, see Jeff and Nancy Cox, “Probate 1500-1800: A System in Transition,” When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England. eds. Tomas Arkell, Nigel Goose, Nesta Evans (Oxford: Leopard’s Head Press, 2000) 14-37.

7 NA SP 16/424 f. 240. This incident is described in greater detail below.

8 NA LC 5/134 f. 405, transcribed in MSC 2.3 (1931) 395.

performed before 1638. Had she no prior experience in the playhouse, or had the profession been distasteful to her, she likely would have liquidated her holdings as did other, less adventurous business widows of the period.\textsuperscript{10} Instead, for the next eighteen years she actively retained an interest in the Drury Lane venture, even as plague and war compromised commercial conditions around her. This fact, above all others, points to a more committed and competent theatre owner than theatre historians have previously assumed.

Unfortunately, we know little about her life before 1638. No evidence has emerged of her birth, her youth, her marriage, or the fate of Jane Beeston, Christopher’s first wife. An unpublished probate inventory composed in June 1671 indicates the terminus for her biography (Appendix F).\textsuperscript{11} That she survived Christopher Beeston by thirty-three years may indicate she was rather younger than he was at the time of their marriage. They had married before 11 September 1634 when the player Thomas Basse left rings of remembrance to his “Louinge freindes Mr Christopher Beeston and Elizabeth his wife.”\textsuperscript{12} There is no further direct evidence of her activity before 1638, but the terms of husband’s will that year imply that she was participating in the family business prior to her husband’s death.\textsuperscript{13}

Evidently, her involvement was in two areas: the supervision of the theatre’s finances and the provision of its wardrobe. When selecting her to administer his estate,

\textsuperscript{10} Grassby, \textit{Business Community} 319.

\textsuperscript{11} NA PROB 14/13220. Elizabeth’s sister, “Mary Haynes,” administered the estate. The “marke of MH Mary Haines” appears also at the bottom of Christopher Beeston’s will as a witness (Honigmann and Brock, \textit{Playhouse Wills} 193). The will of Lewis Kirke identifies “Mrs Mary Haynes” as the recipient of a £50 bequest in 1663 (appendix L).

\textsuperscript{12} Honigmann and Brock, \textit{Playhouse Wills} 178.

\textsuperscript{13} A point made but not explored by Bentley in \textit{JCS} 2: 370.
her husband emphasized her knowledge of his fiscal situation: “by reason I doe owe many greate debtes, and am engaged for greate sommes of money, which noe[t] one but my wife vnnderstandes, where or how to receaue pay or take in, I therefore make her … my full and sole executrix.”14 After her husband’s death, she retained an attorney, “William Small the younger gentleman” to hold for her in trust certain bonds, counter bonds, and other financial instruments involving her husband.15 Chapters One and Two have shown that Beeston’s complex financial picture involved dealings with tradesmen and retailers in London’s clothing industry and investments in Shaver’s Hall and other building projects. Elizabeth Beeston’s assistance in auditing these affairs would not have been unusual. In addition to taking on prescribed domestic duties of child-rearing, purchasing food and fuel, and supervising servants, seventeenth-century businesswomen usually acted as family agents in London markets, kept account books, and helped to generate household credit through small loans and pawn-broking.16 The case of Agnes Henslowe, the wife of Philip Henslowe, offers a useful precedent. She loaned money to players in her husband’s name and collected silk stockings and cloaks for security – these made good collateral since they had a practical value onstage should the actors fail to repay.17 Conceivably, Elizabeth Beeston oversaw a similar system in Drury Lane. Another conjecture is that she performed early work as one of the Cockpit’s “box-holders,” since gathering admission money at the doors and galleries was a task typically

14 Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 192.

15 NA C2 ChasI/P6/6 (see Appendix E). Hotson calendars this document in CRS but does not discuss it.


17 Foakes, Henslowe’s Diary xxv-xxvii, 60, 62, 230.
carried out by women as well as men. In 1638, Christopher Beeston gave to his wife two of six shares in the King and Queen’s Young Company, making her a major stakeholder and something like the company’s general treasurer:

whereas I stand possessed of fflower of the Six shares in the Company for the King and Queenes service, at the Cockpitt in drury lane I declare, that twoe of my said fflower shares bee deliuered vp, for the advancement of the said Companie, and the other twoe [be] to remaine vnto my said Executrix, as fullie and amplie as if I lived amongst them

Implicit here is the expectation that after she had allocated company shares from out of the theatre’s fluctuating “overplus,” the widow Beeston would pay her own shares toward a sizeable portfolio of fixed and incidental playhouse expenses. These included quarterly installments of the theatre’s annual £45 rent, salaries for hired playhouse employees and musicians, wax or tallow for lights, coal for heat, rushes and flowers, printed playbills, the Revels Office’s licensing fees, and taxes for local poor relief.

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18 Beeston’s brother-in-law Robert Browne wrote to Edward Alleyn in 1612 asking him to grant “a gathering place” to the wife of a servant (Foakes, Henslowe Papers 63), while William Condell identified his “old servant Elizabeth Wheaton” as a longstanding holder of that “place or privilege” at the Blackfriars and the Globe (JCS 2: 616).

19 Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 193. A codicil added four days later modified this bequest to one and half shares; the remaining half share was to go to William Beeston “for his Care in the business.” The intention may have been to promote cooperation between son and stepmother.

Her second area of expertise was the Cockpit’s tiring house. According to an explicit stipulation of her husband’s will, she was to reinvest the bulk of her shares in costumes and properties:

my said executrix shall for the said twoe shares prouide and finde for the said Companie, a sufficiyent and good stock of apparell fitting for theire vse; shee allowing and paying to my said sonne William Hutchinson for his Care and industrie in the said Companie Twenty poundes of lawfull money of England per Annum […]

Organizing a “sufficient and good” wardrobe required conceptual skill, an eye for the quality and style of materials, and contacts within London’s textile and clothing trades. Like other women of the period who furnished their families and servants with clothing, Beeston had probably already acquired some familiarity with these markets, and she undoubtedly learned much from her husband’s experience navigating the second-hand goods market in search of apparel for Queen Anne’s Men and other companies. It was apparently also conventional for London tiring houses to employ women’s traditional needle skill in the manufacture and upkeep of wardrobes. Henslowe’s records refer to the position of “tyerman,” a hired person who bought fabrics and accessories and designed costumes for the playhouse while an agreement sealed by the housekeepers of the Whitefriars theatre in 1608 makes provision for a “tyrewoman.” An entry in Thomas Crosfield’s diary in 1634 records the formalized nature of the position by the Caroline period, noting that Richard Kendall, a tailor, served as “one of y² 2 Keepers of the Wardrobe” at the Salisbury Court theatre. Elizabeth Beeston may have occupied a

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similar position. If so, she and her agents will have moved frequently between city markets and the tiring house, buying textiles and accessories, tailoring, repairing, and cleaning costumes, organizing trunks and presses, and attending to countless necessary backstage arrangements of the players’ cosmetics, periwigs, head attires, falling bands, cloaks, scarves, ribbons, gloves, belts, buttons, and shoes during performances.22

The relative importance of the wardrobe during the 1630s did not fundamentally differ from previous decades, but as discussed in Chapter Two, the kinds of plays written and revived for Drury Lane’s socially elevated audience increasingly emphasized sumptuousness. Three sources allow us to identify a significant segment of the Cockpit’s repertory during the five-year period between 1638 and 1642. Printed play texts preserve ten plays,23 Sir Henry Herbert’s office book records the titles of five others, now lost,24 and the Lord Chamberlain’s register preserves a list of forty-five plays and masques described as the property of William Beeston on 10 August 1639.25 The ten new plays specifically written for this period neatly encapsulate the larger repertory’s emphasis on social comedy set in contemporary England, tragicomedy involving heroic European courtiers, and masque-like pastoral. Caroline playgoers enjoyed detailed, colourful

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22 Sixteenth-century Revels accounts refer to women’s skill in styling hair, and preparing wigs, head attire and make-up for court entertainments. Similar work was probably especially important at the Cockpit during the 1630s given the repertory’s emphasis on female characters and the refinements of elite society.


24 “Princely Lovers, allowed Cockpit Company, 1638”; “The Courte and the Cuntrye, by Damport, all’d. 1639, Pastoral”; “The Challenge alld 1640; it was acted without licence by Beeston at Cockpit”; “The Noble Ryveles, T.C., by Coxe, all’d Cockpit Company 1640”; “The Chevallers, allowed to Cockpit Company, 1641” (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 202-209).

25 NA LC 5/134 f. 337, transcribed in *MSC* 2.3 (1931) 389-390.
representations of everyday fashions as well as richly stylized dress of heroic and romantic fantasy. During these five years, Elizabeth Beeston needed to locate “fitting” apparel for a host of distinct characters such as Philarcus the Arcadian Lord, a masque of dancing swains (*Argalus and Parthenia*), Constable Busie (*Wit in a Constable*), Kickshaw the French cook (*The Bride*), Monticelso in his disguises as a necromancer and ghost (*The Cunning Lovers*), Alicia Saleware the fashion-conscious shopkeeper, Amie/Bellamy the Epicene-like cross-dresser (*A Mad Couple Well Matched*), Patrico a fiddling hedgepriest, and a banquet of singing, dancing, countryside beggars (*A Jovial Crew*).

At the same time, Beeston set in motion a scheme to increase the Cockpit’s revenue. An incident in the spring of 1639 offers a rare glimpse of the entrepreneurial instinct she apparently shared with her late husband. Six months after becoming a widow, she entered into an agreement with a vintner, George Lilgrave, and his partner, a shady figure known only as “John with the one eye,” to convert one of the Cockpit’s neighbouring buildings into a tavern (Appendix G).26 The edifice, known as the “George,” faced onto Drury Lane, with a back wall “abutting on the Cockpitt” in the triangular block behind it; both buildings were the property of Elizabeth Beeston by right of her lease. Playgoers were apparently entering the theatre through a courtyard accessible both from Drury Lane to the west and Great Wild Street to the east,27 but Beeston and Lilgrave planned to create an additional entrance that would join the two

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26 NA PC 2/50 f. 132r. This incident was overlooked when portions of the register were transcribed in “Dramatic Records of from Privy Council Register, 1603-1642,” *Malone Society Collections* 1: 4 & 5 (1911): 370-395.

27 NA C2 Chas/I/H28/26; NA C 2 Chas/I/H44/66. Graham F. Barlow reconstructs the dimensions and position of the playhouse, “Wenceslas Hollar and Christopher Beeston’s Phoenix Theatre,” 30-44
premises by “a back door from the said playhouse to the said Taverne.” Their rationale for doing so is clear: an adjoining tavern would increase foot traffic around the playhouse and potentially enlarge its clientele, while the added door would usher playgoers through the George after an afternoon’s performance, promoting the sale of wine and food. However promising the project, it violated a ban on new taverns in Drury Lane. On 17 April, the Privy Council issued “a Warrant to commit Elizabeth Beeston alias Hutchinson Widdow, safe prisoner to the ffleeet” where she was held for two nights before agreeing by bond not to collude further with Lilgrave. The tavern remained open, to the consternation of Drury Lane residents. Lord Montague, the Earl of Cleveland, Sir Francis Windebank, and “divers other persons of qualitie” promptly petitioned the Privy Council, reporting that contrary to the prohibition, “wine hath … been drawn and sold in that House adioyning to Mrs Beestones Playhouse.” On 28 April, to prevent “manifold inconveniences” and “great annoyance and disturbance to divers noble personages and others of the qualite inhabiting nere the same,” Justices of the Peace were ordered to arrest anyone attempting “contemptuously… either to drawe any Wyne in the said house or to hang vp a Signe, Bush, or any other signall of a Taverne there.” Out of options, Lilgrave abandoned the venture, and Beeston set aside her plan to run the Cockpit and the George concurrently.

Further financial and political difficulty beset her over the next three years. Elizabeth’s stepson and business partner, William, had replaced his father as Governor of

28 NA PC 2/50 f. 150v.

29 NA PC 2/50 f. 131r, 135v.

30 NA SP 16/424 f. 240, undated petition, calendared June 1639 but properly April 1639.

31 NA PC 2/50 f. 150v.
the Cockpit’s royal company on 5 April 1639, two weeks before Elizabeth’s arrest for the George affair. In May 1640, he and other company members were jailed for performing an unlicensed play allegedly critical of the King’s recent military action against the Scots. The Revels Office shut the Cockpit down completely for four days. Elizabeth seems to have supervised the family business on her own until 27 June, when William Davenant briefly replaced William Beeston as the Governor of the Cockpit’s players.\textsuperscript{32} It is unclear how Elizabeth Beeston responded to these changes in personnel but there seems to be little foundation for the commonplace assertion that Davenant seized total control of the family’s business at this time.\textsuperscript{33}

Ten days later, on 7 July 1640, Beeston mortgaged her property’s lease to secure a loan of £150 from the player William Wilbraham.\textsuperscript{34} The move has long eluded explanation. Bentley proposed that this was necessary to fund elaborate theatrical productions mounted by the ambitious Davenant.\textsuperscript{35} A less speculative solution, however, appears in Beeston’s own testimony in the Court of Chancery during a lawsuit in February 1640/41. She explains that by 1639, having proven her late husband’s will and satisfied the better part of his many creditors, the residue of her estate was “very much weakened and impayred.”\textsuperscript{36} To compound difficulties, on 23 November 1639, the appointed day passed by which the Shaver’s Hall syndicate, discussed in the previous

\textsuperscript{32} Bawcutt, \textit{Control and Censorship} 207-208; NA LC 5/134 f. 326, 405. These changes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{33} Bentley, for instance, speculates that “the Cockpit under William Davenant’s management” saw him institute policies later to become standard during the Restoration (JCS 6: 75).

\textsuperscript{34} NA C2 ChasI H28/26; Hotson, \textit{CRS} 94.

\textsuperscript{35} Bentley, JCS 6: 75.

\textsuperscript{36} NA C2 ChasI/P6/6.
chapter, was to have repaid over £400 borrowed from Sir John Danvers. Simon Osbaldeston, Thomas Osbaldeston, and John Barrowe (Berrow) forfeited their bond and reportedly absented themselves from London in order to avoid prosecution. Frustrated by the loss of his investment, Danvers sought to collect the security that Christopher Beeston had pledged on behalf of his fellow Pembroke clients. Finding the theatre manager deceased, Danvers pursued Beeston’s widow and prosecuted a successful suit against her in the Court of Common Pleas. During the affair, she says, she was “enforced to defend such goods as she had and to obscure her selfe and [was] put to greate cost and chardges” while travelling “at severall tymes and to severall Countyes” in search of members of the Shaver’s Hall syndicate to compel them to honour the terms of the original bond. By February 1642, she was “still in greate danger and feare” of having to bear the full cost of the debt, having by then partially satisfied it with a payment of £200. The pressure of setting her husband’s financial affairs in order, then, provides the most plausible context for her mortgaging of the Cockpit property in July 1640.

Another “heavie and Contagious time of the Plague” closed the theatres between August and December 1641. The war between the King and Parliament and an economic recession in London combined thereafter to put further pressure on the business. Although Beeston claimed to be “much incumbred,” she may have formulaically exaggerated her financial insecurity. Her probate inventory shows that she loaned £200 to “Robert Lord Rich” on 29 September 1640, a mere two months after borrowing £150

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37 NA C2 ChasI/P6/6.

from Wilbraham and roughly at the time she was “put to greate cost and chardges” pursuing the Osbaldestons beyond London.\textsuperscript{39} We are unlikely ever to have to a truly detailed picture of her finances, but the loan to Lord Rich does complicate the existing conception of a widow merely hampered by her husband’s debts. Matters were obviously more complex. Craig Muldrew’s study of early modern credit networks has demonstrated that most seventeenth-century business households were in this way “enmeshed within the increasingly complicated webs of credit and obligation” that structured the English urban economy. Webs of economic dependency linked relatives, friends, neighbours, and professional associates “through the numerous reciprocal bonds of trust in all of the millions of bargains they transacted.”\textsuperscript{40} One family friend willing to shore up Beeston’s credit at this time was Captain Lewis Kirke. According to Wilbraham, when Beeston approached him to request a £150 loan in 1640 she offered him “an assignem\textit{ent} of ye playhouse” as security. At first, he refused, uncomfortable perhaps with the risk. They negotiated further and he eventually accepted when she assured him “other collarall security” in the form of “ye bond of Leawys Kirke” (Appendix H).\textsuperscript{41} As the next section of this chapter argues, the relationship between Beeston and Kirke has not received the attention it requires and indeed sheds new light on the management of the Cockpit during the English civil wars.

\textsuperscript{39} NA PROB 14/13220.

\textsuperscript{40} Muldrew, \textit{The Economy of Obligation} 95, 97.

\textsuperscript{41} NA C 10/36/118. Hotson does not mention this document in \textit{CRS}. 
Lewis Kirke’s “valiant exploytes,” 1599-1642

In 1928, Hotson published the few scattered facts that established Lewis Kirke’s modest place in English theatre history. Christopher Beeston’s will of 1638 left a gold ring to his “Noble friend Captaine Lewes Kirk” and requested that for the “loue of a true & dying freind [sic]” he oversee his widow’s administration of his estate. Kirke afterwards married Elizabeth Beeston and after returning to London from the civil wars, he became enmeshed in a legal dispute over the ownership of the ground on which the Cockpit stood. The property’s lease expired in September 1656, after which the Kirkes ended their association with the London stage. Because Hotson focused primarily on the history of theatre buildings, he avoided delving into the relevance of Kirke’s association with the Beestons or the potential significance of his ownership of the Cockpit during the 1640s and 50s. New evidence sheds light on both matters.

Since the nineteenth century, Anglo- and Francophone historians of early Canada have recognized Kirke as a significant figure in the history of English-French conflict in the New World, the early fur trade, and the colonization of Newfoundland. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography nowhere acknowledges Kirke’s career but The Dictionary of Canadian Biography contains articles on both him and two of his brothers. A survey of this scholarship reveals that just as theatre historians have

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42 Hotson, CRS 91-100, 129 n37.

43 The important early studies are, Samuel de Champlain, Oeuvres, publiées sous le patronage de l’Université Laval par C.H. Laverdière, 3 vols. (Québec: G.E. Desbarats, 1870) and Henry Kirke, The First English Conquest of Canada (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1871).

overlooked the larger scope of Kirke’s biography, historians of early Canada have yet to recognize his involvement in the London theatre.

Lewis Kirke belonged to an industrious merchant family with roots in both England and France. His father Gervase (or Jarvis) Kirke (1568-1629) was a Derbyshire mercer who made his living importing French wine to London and speculating in early voyages in search of the Northwest Passage. While trading in Dieppe in the late 1590s, Gervase married Elizabeth Goudon, a French woman, and they had eight children (David, Lewis, Thomas, John, James, Peter, Catherine and Mary). Lewis was born in 1599 and his nationality remained French until 1622, when Parliament declared the Kirke siblings naturalized English subjects. Given his father’s trade and his own later career, Kirke probably spent much of his youth on the water with his brothers, trafficking Bordeaux and Cognac wines across the English Channel on their father’s sack ships. Wine was the core family business for decades, but like other merchants of the period, the Kirkes were adaptable. When an English and French coalition against Spain fell apart and degenerated into military conflict in 1627, the family changed course decisively. Rather than contribute ships to the Duke of Buckingham’s naval campaigns against French ports, the Kirkes channeled their knowledge of trans-Atlantic shipping and New World trade

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into war profiteering. That winter they secured letters of marque authorizing vessels captained by three of Gervase Kirke’s sons to target French colonial interests abroad under the auspices of a Company of Adventurers to Canada.\textsuperscript{48}

In March 1628, David, Lewis, and Thomas Kirke led a small English fleet across the Atlantic and by June, they had sailed down the “River of Canada” (the St. Lawrence) into territory claimed by the French. Their objective was to seize Québec, the strategic heart of New France, and monopolize the lucrative trade in fur then underway between the French and Aboriginal peoples of the St. Lawrence valley.\textsuperscript{49} While the brothers laid siege to a smaller French settlement at Cape Tourmente, word arrived of a second, larger fleet approaching through the Gulf. It consisted of French ships, laden with colonists, priests, and provisions bound for Québec. Its Admiral, Claude de Roquemont, represented Cardinal Richelieu’s Compagnie des Cent-Associés, the Company of One Hundred Associates. The Kirkes surprised him near Gaspé, and English and French ships exchanged fire for several hours before the unprepared French exhausted their ammunition, forcing de Roquemont to surrender. With Québec isolated and the spoil of the French ships before them, the Kirkes postponed their assault on the fort and transported their prisoners back to England for ransom.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{48} SP 16/115 f. 99, SP 16/130 f. 17.

\textsuperscript{49} Kirke, \textit{First English Conquest} 27-28; Pope, \textit{Fish into Wine} 80-82.

In the wake of English humiliation at La Rochelle that autumn, London welcomed news of the Canada expedition. The sensational ballad *Englands Honour Re[v]iued by the valiant exploytes of Captain Kirke, and his adherents* circulated (see fig. 7), the jingoistic doggerel of its penultimate stanza reading:

Thus our valient Captaine Kirk,  
Did the French men soundly ierk,  
And pur[ch]ast honour vnto h’s natiue land  
Oh had we many like to him,  
Then England would in credit swim,  
And France nor Spaine could not against us stand.

In London, the Kirkes exhibited a Huron Indian at the Royal Exchange, touting him as the “Prince of Canaday” in an effort to solicit investments for a return voyage. The French revolted at what they perceived to be an act of treason. The Kirkes reportedly received “fowle discourtesies” in Dieppe while repatriating their prisoners and their

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51 On 11 October 1628, Rev. Joseph Mead reported that “one Captain Kirke hath been among the French at Canada, taken their ships and ordnance, but sent home 900 French in smaller vessels to Dieppe, and brought home some seven ships and many pieces of ordnance.” *The Court and Times of Charles I*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1848) 405, 409.

52 M[artin] P[arker?], *Englands Honour re[v]iued by the valiant exploytes of Captain Kirke, and his adherents, who with three Ships, vis. the Abigale Admirall, the Charitie vice Admirall, and the Elizabeth the reare Admirall: did many admirable exploytes... [and] The Second Part: To the Same Tune* (London: “M. Trundle, Widdow,” n.d.) The National Library and Archives of Canada holds the unique copy.

53 French traveller Louis Hennepin later noted an ironic dimension of this triumph: “The English Admiral [David Kirke] designing to return [to Canada] the next Year satisfied himself, I say, at this time, with making abundance of Prisoners, whom he carried into England, and amongst the rest a Young Huron Savage, called Lewis de Sta. Foy, who had been baptized two Years before by the Arch-Bishop of Roan. The other prisoners doubtless with a design of being the better used, pretended that the Savage was the Son of the King of Canada. The English General was pleased at it, and Fansied a Prisoner so considerable, would facilitate his Conquest of the whole Country the Following Year. But was strangely surprized, when after the taking of Quebec [sic], he came to understand that the Father of the Savage was a poor miserable Wretch, that had neither Credit nor power in his Country. Upon which he caused him to be Stript of his accoutrements, which had hitherto been something suitable to his pretended quality, and turned him going to his Father with hardly any thing to cover him.” *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* (London: Bentley, Tonson, Goodwin and Manslip, 1698) 158. This is a translation of Hennepin’s book, printed the previous year, *Nouvelle découverte d’un tres grand pays situé dans l’Amérique entre le Nouveau Mexique, et la mer glaciale* (A Utrecht: Chez Guillaume Broedelet, Marchand Libraire, 1697), 343.
effigies were executed and burned in a Paris street.\textsuperscript{54} Their notoriety intensified early in 1629, when letters of marque authorized them to return to Canada “in a warlike manner” to seize Québec’s fur trade.\textsuperscript{55} The fort’s governor, Samuel de Champlain, was dangerously compromised. Deprived of de Roquemont’s provisions and guns, and leading fewer than fifty French settlers, he could do little but negotiate favourable terms when the Kirkes arrived in early July (see fig. 8). The articles of Québec’s capitulation survive and preserve an early example of Lewis Kirke’s signature (see fig. 9).\textsuperscript{56} On 20 July, Lewis and Thomas Kirke marched English soldiers up the promontory to occupy the fort and raise their ensign.

Champlain’s \textit{Les voyages de la nouvelle France occidentale}, published in 1632, contains an illuminating description of Lewis Kirke, then thirty years old. Each of the brothers was generally civil, Champlain says, but “Capitaine Louis Guer” especially so. He showed the French many courtesies (“toutes sortes courtoisies”) and “although the son of a Scotchman who married at Dieppe, he was French in disposition and always had a liking for the French nation” (“Louis Quer estoit courtois, tenant tousiours du naturel Frânçois, & d’aymer la nation, bien que fils d’vn Escossois qui s’estoit marié à Dieppe”). His civility, Champlain thought, derived from the way he generally “[found] intercourse


\textsuperscript{55} The royal commission of 4 February 1628/29 is reprinted in \textit{Royal Letters, Charters, and Tracts Relating to the Colonization of New Scotland, and the Institution of the Order of Knight Baronets of Nova Scotia, 1621-1638}, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: G. Robb, 1867) 47. The letters of marque are dated 19 March 1628/29 (SP 16/130 f. 42). Sir William Alexander, the Earl of Stirling, represented a company of Scottish adventurers that helped to plan and execute this voyage. Better known as a poet, politician, and Jacobean favourite, the Earl was granted control of “New Scotland” (Nova Scotia) in 1625 (\textit{CSP Colonial} 1: 84).

and conversation with them more agreeable than with the English, to whom his nature seemed to be adverse” (“il desiroit obliger en tant qu’il pouuoit ces familles & autres François à demeurer, aymant mieux leur conversacion & entretien que celle des Anglois, à laquelle son humeur monstroit repugner.”)\(^{57}\)

This regard for the French informs his appointment as the English governor of Québec between 1629 and 1632 while his brothers escorted Champlain and a fortune in animal skins back to London. His occupation was apparently a benevolent one. He offered wine from his stores to the Jesuit and Recollét religious orders for mass and in turn accepted gifts of books and pictures (“liures & tableaux”). He urged farmers to remain and stood as godparent to a French child born at the habitation in 1631. Religious tolerance and care for the settlers perhaps came effortlessly but were also wise policies, as the English required French experience to manage relations with Aboriginal tribes and to survive the climate.\(^{58}\)


\(^{58}\) On Kirke’s religious tolerance, see Champlain, Works 6: 64, 67-68, 70-71. David Kirke “reproved” him for permitting mass (“que le General Quer estant à Québec, auoit tancé son frere Louys Quer, de ce qu’il auoit permis de celebrer la saicte Messe”) and ordered the confiscation of sacred items, Works 6: 70-71, 124-125. Hennepin confirms Lewis and Thomas Kirke’s tolerance: “so far were they from interdicting the exercise of the Roman Religion, that they desired [the French] to accept of some Wine, and carry it home with them for the Mass which was to be said for the Ordinary Service of the Church, which likewise they bid them freely make use of” (A New Discovery of a Vast Country 167). On the English in Québec, see Bernard Allaire, “The Occupation of Québec by the Kirke Brothers,” Champlain: The Birth of French America, eds. Raymonde Litalien and Denis Vaugeois (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004) 245-257. Kirke traded swords, hatchets, liquor, clothing, blankets and hats with Native peoples and governed 100-200 people, English, French and Native. Among them was a boy from Madagascar, brought by David Kirke and sold to the French for 50 crowns, christened Olivier Le Jeune by the Jesuit superior in Canada. He is considered the first black African to live in the St. Lawrence region, Paul Le Jeune, “Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Novvelle France, en l’année 1633,” Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1610-1791, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 5 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1897) 196-197 and Marcel Trudel, “Le Jeune, Olivier,” DCB, 452. Kirke stood godfather to a French infant Elizabeth Couillard (named for Kirke’s mother), Gérard Filteau, Par la bouche de mes canons! La ville de Québec face à l’ennemi (Québec: Septentrion, 1990) 31. The wills of two of Kirke’s soldiers who died in Canada survive: “Robert Lambert being entereteyned in the service of Captaine Lewis Kirke at Kebecke in
The fortunes of the Canadian Adventurers took an immediate downturn in Europe. Less than a month after the second voyage, London and Paris brokered a peace treaty and vowed mutually to restore all settlements and shipping seized in the conflict. By 1630, the King had decided to return Québec in exchange for an unpaid moiety of Henrietta Maria’s dowry, and the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye in 1632 required Lewis Kirke to relinquish his command of the fort. French merchants pressed for the return of merchandise, compelling the Kirkes to fight for the prizes and pelts they had taken. A court of Admiralty eventually ordered the bulk of the stock returned to the Company of One Hundred Associates. Although the King promised the Kirkes compensation in the order of £50,000, it was never paid. There were other honours,

59 Secretary Viscount Dorchester informed the English ambassador to Paris, Isaac Wake on 15 April 1630 that “Kebec (which is a strong fortified place in the River of Canada, w̃h the English took) his Ma’y is content should be restored because the French were removed by strong hand and whatsoever was taken from them in that Fort shall be restored likewise” (Royal Letters, Charters, and Tracts 56). John Pory reported to Sir John Puckering on 13 January 1631 that “the bait” to “allure” the French into negotiation “is the fort of Kebeck, in Canada, to get it out of Captain Kirk’s clutches; the trade in beavers and otters, which they want to enjoy by the possession whereof, having been worth unto them, communibus annis, £30,000 by year” (Court and Times of Charles I 2: 89-93). Charles authorized Wake by letter on 12 June 1631 to negotiate “the rendition of Quebec [sic]” and “the retyring of o’ subjects out of Canada,” provided his ambassador could secure “the remainder of the porcion money” and “an abolition … of all acts published in France against any, particularly the three brothers, the Kirks, employed in that occasion,” Report on Canadian Archives, 1884 (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1885) lx-xlxi. On 25 February 1631/32, Sir John Pory informed John Scudamore that “a Canada marchant tolde me twoe days ago, that they are sending for their people which lye in garison in the forte of Kebec situate upon that river of Canada, which Captain Kirke some 3 or 4 yeare ago took from the Frenche, and together with his Coadventurs hath enjoyed ever since, with that rich trade in Bevers skins, which was worth to the Frenche above 150 thousand Crownes a year gained, and worth already above 25 thousand pound gaine to our marchants,” in John Pory 1572-1636: The Life and Letters of a Man of Many Parts, ed. William Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977) 220-221. The “Traité entre les Deux Rois pour le Retablissement du Comerce fait a S. Germain en Laye le 29 Mars 1632” is reprinted in Foedera, Conventiones, Literae et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica (London: J. Tonson, 1732) 364-365.

60 David Kirke caused a minor fiasco by defying a Privy Council order to give the Lord Mayor the keys to the family’s Bishopsgate Street and Canning Street warehouses. The Canada Merchants played a shell game with over 6000 furs, moving them from ship to warehouse then breaking into a government storehouse to retrieve them after their sequestration. In the end, the Kirkes managed to process some of the furs, some “perished with wett,” and the rest were returned to de Caën, see NA CO 1/5 f. 37, 50, 87, 92, 97; APC Colonial 139-147.
however: the family’s coat of arms was augmented to include a lion rampant “Collered
with a chaine Argent” to reflect the brothers’ “surprizeinge and takeinge of the Countrie
of Canida” and their having “vanquished and overrane and brought … Monsieur de
Rockmond prizoner into England” (Appendix I). Royal theatrical entertainment also
acknowledged the Canada expedition. During the King’s coronation visit to Scotland in
1633, the figure of Jove in a masque by William Drummond prophesized Caroline
dominion over all “new found worlds,” including “Canada the unknowne sourse.” This
was likely implicit praise for David Kirke, whom the King knighted days later in the
home of a Scottish gentleman. The Kirke adventure may also have inspired an
antimasque by Aurelian Townsend that accompanied a performance of the French play
*Florimène* before Henrietta Maria in about 1635. It features a “Man of Canada,” a crude
caricature of a Montaignais or Huron Indian who “rough and rude / with bare, nimble
feet,” joins a company of Egyptians, Italian pantaloons, and Spanish soldiers in a song of
thanksgiving for the civilizing power of the Queen’s neoplatonic love.

Contrary to royal fantasy, Lewis Kirke’s subsequent Canadian ventures were
fraught with difficulty. In 1633, risking the peace with France, the crown awarded the
family new fur-trading rights in the St. Lawrence region. Lewis Kirke outfitted the *Mary
Fortune* that year and travelled as far as the Gulf of St. Lawrence when a French vessel
captured his ship and impounded its estimated £12,000 of cargo. He petitioned the

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61 SP 16/204 f. 7-9. The Kirke family’s blazon forms the basis of Newfoundland’s present-day coat of arms, reproduced in Peter Neary and Patrick O’Flaherty, *Part of the Main: An Illustrated History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John’s: Breakwater, 1983) 31.

French court repeatedly but received no redress. A storm stranded him at Plymouth when he tried to exercise the patent again a year later, and he finally aborted the project.\(^{63}\)

While these events interrupted Lewis Kirke’s mercantile activity, his brothers persisted and their long story must be briefly summarized. On 13 November 1637, the King issued a land grant for the whole of Newfoundland to four men: James Hamilton, Marquis of Hamilton, Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, and Sir David Kirke.\(^{64}\) Sir David functioned as the partnership’s overseas manager and took control of an existing settlement at Avalon. Its earlier governor, George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, had abandoned the site in 1629 to establish the colony of Maryland in the warmer Chesapeake Bay.\(^{65}\) Kirke planted in the southeastern harbour of Ferryland, facing the Grand Banks and established a profitable system of impositions on foreign fishermen while working closely with younger brothers James and John Kirke, managers of the family’s London trading house, to ship dried cod, wine, and oil between docks in Canada, New England, and Europe.

Lewis Kirke, meanwhile, devoted himself to the King’s “great business” of asserting English sovereignty over the waters around Britain. In the 1620s and 30s, a rise in French and Dunkirk privateering and slave raiding by North African corsairs (the Sallee “Turks,” or “Moors”) posed a threat to which a retooled Caroline navy addressed


\(^{64}\) NA CO 195/1 f. 11-27, “A Grant of Newfoundland to the Marquesse Hamilton, Earl of Pembroke, Earl of Holland, S’ David Kirke and their heires,” transcribed in Keith Matthews, ed., *Collection and Commentary on the Constitutional Laws of Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Maritime History Group, 1975) 82-116. A monopoly on fish off the English shore was intended, in part, to compensate for the Kirkes’s losses five years earlier.

\(^{65}\) Calvert’s Catholicism perhaps led the Church to take an interest in the religious character of Kirke’s Avalon settlement. In a letter to Archbishop Laud, dated 2 October 1639, Sir David expresses the prejudice he demonstrated at Québec: “the air of Newfoundland agrees perfectly well with all God's creatures except Jesuits and Schismaticks” (NA CO 1/10/40).
Kirke captained the *Leopard* in the first ship-money fleet of 1634/35, charged with licensing Dutch fishing busses, conveying English travellers and goods, and exacting salutes from foreign vessels. His signed letters among the State Papers (see fig. 10) point to his continued service in the fleets of 1636 and 1637 as captain of the *Repulse*, the aging ship that had famously carried the Earl of Essex to Cadiz in 1596. According to Kirke, a “spotted fever” crippled the *Repulse*’s crew in 1636 and the ship was “so leaky” and its main yard “so rotten” that it was decommissioned. Perhaps growing disillusioned, he refused to serve under Captain William Rainsborow in an expedition against Sallee in early 1637 and instead petitioned the Privy Council to engage in privateering against the French. After testifying before a commission investigating the poor victualling and clothing of English sailors, he extricated himself from service late in

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67 “Captain Lewis Kerke [of] the Leopard” appears in a description of the 1634 fleet, dated 30 March 1635 (SP 16/285 f. 13). His crew was 160 men (SP 16/296 f. 155) and according to Sir William Monson, his daily wage was 6s 8d, *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, vol. 3 (London: Navy Records Society, 1902) 224. Thomas Kirke also sailed in the merchant auxiliary to this fleet, captaining the *Freeman*, the *Swallow*, and the *Sampson* (SP 16/285 f. 13). Its admiral, Robert, Earl of Lindsey, describes a tense encounter between the *Leopard* and Dunkirkers in August of 1635 (SP 16/296 f. 83). Later that month, Secretary Windebanke made note of Lewis Kirke’s assignment to monitor “those ffrench and Hollanders … torturinge his Maiesty’s subjectes on these Costs” (SP 16/296 f. 142). On 10 August 1635, Kirke escorted Lord Scudamore to Calais in “much thunder lightning and rain,” and on 22 August 1635, he guarded a convoy of English merchants transporting “much silver” to Dunkirk (“A Relation of the passages that daily happened … from the time that the shipps mett all together in the Downes 28 May vntill the 8th of October” SP 16/299 f. 55, 62-63). On 27 August, he patrolled the French coast with instructions to protect English vessels (SP 16/299 f. 63). On 28 October, he wrote that he was searching “all Crooks about the Isle of wight & hampton water” in an effort to apprehend “a crew of piratical fellows” (SP 16/300 f. 115). On 27 June 1636, the Admiralty noted his capture of a French sloop suspected of “pillaging and robbing his Maiesty’s Subjects” (SP 16/327 f. 152).

68 Kirke’s naval letters: 7 Oct. 1635 (SP 16/299 f. 46), 22 Oct. 1635 (SP16/300 f. 50), 28 Oct. 1635 (SP 16/300 f. 115), 30 Oct. 1635 (SP 16/300 f. 131), 3 Dec. 1635 (SP 16/303 f. 97), 4 Dec. 1635 (SP 16/303 f. 125), 2 Apr. 1636 (SP 16/319 f. 43) 29 May 1636 (SP 16/322 f. 110). The “spotted fever full of spots” aboard the *Repulse* is described in SP 16/330 and SP 16/331. On the ship’s disrepair, see SP 16/332 f. 74.
1637 and crossed the Atlantic to assist his elder brother with the imposition of fishing
taxes at Newfoundland.\footnote{69 SP 16/363 f. 193-195; John Holland and Robert Slyngesbie, \textit{Two Discourses of the Navy 1638 and 1659} (London: Navy Records Society, 1896) 369-370; \textit{A List of his Maiesties Ships, with others of the Merchants that are now set forth ... 1637} (London, 1637). An inhabitant of Newfoundland witnessed “Capt Lues Kirke” taxing a French ship near Ferryland during David Kirke’s “first yeare” as governor (1637-38), L.D. Scisco, “Testimony Taken in Newfoundland in 1652,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 9 (1928) 249. Another witness says that Kirke captured a vessel called the \textit{Hamilton} that year and was seen taxing a Dutch ship near the Bay of Bulls, see Peter E. Pope, “Baltimore vs. Kirke, 1651: Newfoundland Evidence in an Interregnum Lawsuit,” \textit{Avalon Chronicles} 3 (1998) 63-98.}

Christopher Beeston’s will suggests that Kirke returned to London by October 1638. The two men frequently shared social contacts and social space, but their most significant connection was perhaps the Earl of Pembroke. I have argued in the previous chapter that Beeston had become Pembroke’s client by 1634 and his friend Kirke may have been among the same clientele. On 20 June 1635, “the ship of Captain Cherch” carried Pembroke’s two sons to Dieppe on the first leg of a journey to Rome. Pembroke had jointly held the patent to the Northwest Passage Company, to which Gervase Kirke belonged in 1612, and furthermore was a patentee in the Newfoundland enterprise managed by Lewis’s brother after 1637.\footnote{70 CSP Venetian 23: 403-404; CSP Colonial 2: 238-241.} A community of naval officers, colonial investors, and gentleman-investors apparently lived and socialized in the vicinity of Beeston’s playhouse. In 1634 and 1635, Beeston rented his Covent Garden house at 6 Henrietta Street to William Monson, Viscount Castlemaine, a son of Sir William Monson, the Vice Admiral of the Caroline navy and Lewis Kirke’s superior officer.\footnote{71 “Appendix III: Leases of the Piazza … 1631-37,” \textit{The Parish of St. Paul Covent Garden} 298-299, fig. 45. A French vintner Robert Brasieur ran a tavern called “the Paris frenchman” seven doors down on 14 Henrietta Street, one of several establishments that resisted orders to “pull downe theire bushes” in 1633 and 1634. (SP 16/254 f. 22; SP 16/260 f. 171-173). Given the Kirke family’s trade in wine, one could imagine a meeting there between a French-born merchant-sailor and a local landlord.} In 1635, two men began to sell copies of a privately printed volume called \textit{A Relation of}
Maryland out of their west London residences. According to its title page, one of the vendors, William Peasley, Esquire, occupied a house “on the back-side of Drury-Lane, neere the Cock-pit Playhouse.” The sale of colonial tracts in the shadow of Beeston’s theatre might appear insignificant if not for Peasley’s identity: throughout the 1620s, he was the personal secretary of Sir George Calvert, Lord Baltimore. During the English occupation of Québec, Peasley was in Newfoundland, having travelled with Baltimore, and he there married his employer’s daughter. The Kirke family had replaced Peasley’s family when it moved into the governor’s mansion at Ferryland in 1637. In 1635, Peasley and Baltimore’s descendents were intent on sponsoring Maryland but had not forgotten their claim on Newfoundland, which they pursued in court during the civil wars. There is nothing known about the Calvert-Kirke relationship in the intervening years but A Relation of Maryland does firmly place both colonial families in the orbit of the Beeston business in the mid-1630s.

Thomas Heywood’s connections with the Caroline navy may also explain Kirke’s affiliation with the Beestons. In 1634, the King visited the Woolwich dockyards to inspect his reconstituting fleet. While aboard Kirke’s ship, the Leopard, Charles, inspired, ordered his master shipwright Phineas Pett to build a great English flagship. Pett’s Sovereign of the Seas launched three years later, the largest, most heavily armed, and most expensive vessel of its day. To enhance its magnificence, the navy’s carvers Matthias and John Christmas sculpted decorative allegories in wood along the ship’s

72 Anonymous, Relation of Maryland, together with a Map of the Countrey, the Conditions of Plantation, His Majesties Charter to Lord Baltemore, translated into English, These Bookes are to bee had, at Master William Peasley Esq: his house, on the back-side of Drury Lane, neere the Cock-pit Playhouse; or in his absence, at Master John Morgans House in High Holbourn, over against the Dolphin (London, 1635).

exterior. Heywood received a commission to design these allegories, having previously collaborated with the Christmases on city pageants. To commemorate the ship’s completion in 1637, Heywood also wrote *A True Description of his Majesties Royall and most Stately Ship*. Its second edition refers to the playwright’s social familiarity with both the “prime Worke-men” who fashioned the *Sovereign’s* “inimitable Fabricke” and the “prime Officers” aboard it. First among them was “Captaine WILLIAM COOKE,” an Elder Brother in Trinity House and former master aboard the *Repulse* under Captain Lewis Kirke.

These patterns of association offer a glimpse of a much larger community of mariners, colonial planters, and merchants living and operating near the Cockpit during the 1630s. Christopher Beeston’s friendship with Kirke is consonant with other suggestions that naval officers and sailors frequented the theatres of Caroline London and may partly explain the many travel and adventure plays the manager purchased for his theatre’s repertory. To actual seafarers in the Cockpit audience, dramatizations of piracy, slave trading, shipwreck, and lost sea merchants in plays such as Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1624), Heywood’s *The Captives* (1624), *Fair Maid of the West 1 and 2* (revived 1631), and Shirley’s *Hyde Park* (1634) were probably regarded as something more than the fantastic projections of tragicomedy or the nostalgic reiterations of Elizabethan conventions. For men such as Kirke, they evoked authentic experience.

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If Kirke was reinforcing Elizabeth Beeston’s credit in the summer of 1640, we might plausibly conclude that he also facilitated the £200 loan she made to Lord Rich that autumn. Rich, a Member of Parliament and heir to the powerful second Earl of Warwick, may have made Kirke’s acquaintance through the shared colonial enterprises of their families, and both men would soon support the King militarily in Yorkshire. At the time of the loan, the Scots had repelled Charles’s army in the north, the Long Parliament was assembling, and the crown, desperate for money, was soliciting loans from all possible sources in London. Conceivably, Kirke put the politically like-minded Rich in touch with Elizabeth Beeston, either to secure ready money for his residency during the new Parliamentary session, or to assist his financing of the King during the Bishop’s Wars.

Kirke’s association with Elizabeth Beeston and the Cockpit was probably disrupted early in 1641 when he and a group of men were charged with entering the home of a fellow English captain and murdering him with their rapiers. Although the King’s Bench initially convicted Kirke of homicide, evidence later demonstrated that Henry Parker, Lord Morley, delivered the killing blow. Parliament debated the appeals of both

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77 Robert, Lord Rich attended Strafford in his final hours (A briefe and perfect relation, of the answeres and replies of Thomas Earle of Strafford (London, 1647), 104. He declared for the king in June 1642, levying 30 horse, for which Parliament impeached him, A catalogue of the names of the Dukes Marquessess, Earles and Lords that have absented themselves from the Parliament, and are now with his Maiesty at Yorke (London, 1642); A catalogue of the names of the Lords that subscribed to levie horse to assist His Majestie in defence of his royall person (London, 1642); Edward Peacock, ed., The Army Lists of the Roundheads and Cavaliers (London: John Camden Hotten, 1863) 6, 30. His father, the Earl of Warwick, was a major colonial investor who headed the Providence Island Company. Rich’s uncle, Henry Rich, the Earl of Holland, was a patentee of the Kirke family’s Newfoundland monopoly (Cokayne, Complete Peerage 12: 407-413); W. Frank Craven, “The Earl of Warwick, a Speculator in Piracy” The Hispanic American Historical Review 10 (1930) 457-479; John Louis Beatty, Warwick and Holland (Denver: Allen Swallow, 1965) 16-17, 30, 86-88.

men until mid-1642. Kirke was at liberty on 1 September 1641 when the Commons authorized him to post bail for Richard Kilvert, a solicitor in the employ of the King, who had recently provoked a scandal by collaborating with the Marquess of Hamilton and Alderman William Abell to pressure London’s vintners to accept a new duty on imported wine. Although the imposition aimed to generate revenue for the King, monopolizing wine merchants like the Kirkes and their associate Roger Kilvert, Richard’s brother, stood to profit from a stipulation requiring vintners to buy a fixed amount of wine at a fixed price. By the summer of 1642, as he awaited judgment on his appealed conviction, Kirke may have rekindled his connection with the Beestons and their playhouse. That June, Sir Henry Herbert recorded visits by one “Mr. Kirke” who delivered two plays to the Revels Office for licensing. Herbert does not mention the playhouse or company Kirke represented, stating only that one play concerned the revolt in Ireland and that he burned the other for ribaldry. Scholars tentatively identify “Mr. Kirke” with John Kirke, a playwright connected to Prince Charles’s Men (but of no

79 Glimpses of this case are to appear in Journal of the House of Lords, 4:148, 272, 282, 295, 548, 565, 5: 64-65, 67-68, 71, and in lists of witnesses, affidavits, and petitions of the victim’s kin in the Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1, f. 49-51, 62, 69, 115, 120, 122 and HL/PO/JO/10/14/8/3582. In the summer of 1640, Kirke, Lord Morley and “one Jenkins” allegedly assaulted Captain Peter Clarke “in the night tyme … the mortall wound given by the Lord Morley” who then “fledde, and forsooke his owne Lodgeing,” where “his gloue and his ruffe were found … bloudy.” According to Garrard, Morley was prone to the “high Distemper of Wine” and to violence (Strafforde’s Letters 1: 225, 335). Initially, Kirke was convicted in King’s Bench, but was seemingly retried and either acquitted or pardoned (HL PO/JO/10/1 f. 51).


81 Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 211.
known relation to the Kirkes in question). It is just possible, however, that “Mr. Kirke” refers to Lewis Kirke. William Beeston’s insubordination had recently strained his family’s relationship with its backers in the Revels Office, perhaps prompting Elizabeth Beeston to enlist her husband’s “noble friend” as an intermediary. That Kirke and Herbert apparently knew each other personally lends some support to the speculation. Far more certain is Kirke’s good relationship with Elizabeth Beeston for they were married within the next four years, at which time Kirke assumed legal possession of the Beeston playhouse.

The Kirkes, Royalism, and the Cockpit, 1642-1656

In August 1642, Lewis Kirke rode north to join the King’s army as it gathered at Nottingham. Detailed evidence of his military service during the first civil war (1642-1646) and of his continued support for the crown in the years that followed is of value to theatre historians, I argue, for the light it casts on illicit performances at the Cockpit between 1646 and 1649. While Parliament regarded all of London’s playhouses with suspicion and sought generally to suppress the exhibition of plays during this period, the Cockpit may have become an unusually intense politicized space because of Kirke’s political affiliation.

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82 Bentley, JCS 2: 492-493, 4: 710-715.

83 “L.Kirke” is one of three signatures subscribed to “Mr KILLEGREWE’S Promise to Pay the Costs of Suite against the Players,” a document in a lawsuit between Sir Henry Herbert and Thomas Killigrew, dated 14 July 1662 (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 265). It is perhaps significant, too, that Sir Henry’s brother, Thomas, a deputy of the Revels for a time in 1637, served with Kirke in the royal navy.

84 On 15 August 1642 (a week before Charles’s standard went up), the House of Lords observed that “one Kirke, dwelling at The Golden Anchor, in Kingestreat hath conveyed privately away divers Pistols and Saddles” (Journal of the House of Lords 5: 289). This was perhaps Holborn Street, also known as the King’s Street, where Kirke resided.
Kirke was a leading soldier in the King’s military during the first four years of the conflict with Parliament, commanding troops of cavalry and foot under Prince Rupert during early campaigns at Edgehill in October 1642, Cirencester in February 1642/43, and Newbury in September 1643.\textsuperscript{85} A ghost story written in the wake of the traumatic fighting at Edgehill describes “Colonel Lewis Kirke” and other “Gentlemen of credit” investigating reports of hauntings in the battlefield, “wherein they heard and saw the fore-mentioned prodigies, and … [recognized] divers of the apparitions, or incorporated substances, by their faces, as that of Sir Edmund Varney, and others that were there slaine.”\textsuperscript{86} When the Royalists settled at Oxford in 1643, the King knighted Kirke and appointed him the city’s temporary governor.\textsuperscript{87} The next year, Kirke sternly oversaw a garrison at Bridgnorth, Shropshire, where he dined several times with the King and the royal entourage in his governor’s residence.\textsuperscript{88}

In June 1645, a month after the decisive Royalist defeat at Naseby, the course of history nearly turned when Cromwell stopped briefly at Bridgnorth to inspect its defences and Kirke ordered snipers to fire upon him. According to a Parliamentary pamphlet, “a brace of musquet buletts, shot from the enemies works, hit a Cornet of his regiment with

\begin{footnotes}

\textsuperscript{86} Anon, \textit{A Great Wonder in Heaven Shewing the Late Apparitions and Prodigious Noyses of War and Battells, Seen on Edge-Hill near Keinton in Northamptonshire} (London: 23 January 1642/43) 7.

\textsuperscript{87} “Si\textsuperscript{7} Lewis Kirke Governor: of the Cittie of Oxford” ordered “Powder, Shott, Match, Armes and all other manner of Ammunition” on 24 April, 1643, Ian Roy, ed., \textit{The Royalist Ordnance Papers 1642-1646}, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1963-1975) 219, 476. For this purpose, the King knighted him the day before “at Oxford” (Shaw, \textit{The Knights of England} 2: 215).

\textsuperscript{88} The British Library preserves several of his workman-like letters to the King and Prince Rupert from 1644 and 1645. See BL MS Add. 18981, vol. 2 f. 103, 139, 153, 225 and vol. 3 f. 36.
\end{footnotes}
whom the Lieutenant General was then talking, but blessed be God the person aimed at escaped without any hurt.” By 1646, Shropshire had slipped from Royalist control, and in March, Kirke made a dramatic final attempt to hold his position, raining down shot and boulders from the high ground on advancing soldiers. When the Parliamentary force seized the parish church and converted it to an ammunition store, Kirke ordered it bombarded with granadoes and the resulting fire burned the town to the ground. After three weeks of deprivation, Kirke finally surrendered. Returning to London in December 1646, he immediately faced legal charges for allegedly seizing property by force during wartime.

Elizabeth Beeston’s activities during the first stage of the war have never been determined. Circumstantial evidence suggests she was among the Royalist supporters who left London late in 1642. On 2 September, Parliament suppressed commercial theatre on grounds that “publike Sports doe not well agree with publike Calamities, nor publike Stage-playes with the Seasons of Humiliation.” Anticipating a Royalist siege, the city transformed itself into Milton’s famed “shop of war,” hurriedly melting precious metals into weapons, assembling thousands of horses, and erecting elaborate defensive works at its gates. In this environment, the widow Beeston may have decided to join

89 G. Bellet, *Antiquities of Bridgnorth with some Historical Notices of the Town and Castle* (London: Longmans, 1856) 149.


91 See the petitions of Sir Lewis Kirke [1 August 1648] and Edmund Bishopp [26 Sept 1648], Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1 f. 266, 273.

92 *A Declaration of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament ... also an Ordinance of both Houses for the Suppressing of Stage-playes* (London: 1642) A4r.

other theatrical professionals travelling to the royal court in Oxford late in 1642 or early in 1643.

A copy of an obligation preserved in the State Papers may confirm her temporary residency in nearby Witney the next year (Appendix J). On 25 December 1643, the Committee of Examinations ordered its Sergeant at Arms to discharge “Elizabeth Hutchinson” from custody, provided she “goe to her lodging at Witney and not return [to London] without a justifiable Passe.” Further details were regrettably lost when the Committee’s records burned in the Westminster fire of 1834, but two circumstances potentially favour an identification of “Hutchinson” with Elizabeth Beeston alias Hutchinson. First, the obligation bears the signature of Richard Kilvert, the solicitor whose brother was an associate of the Kirkes in the wine business and the man for whom Lewis Kirke posted bail during the wine monopolization scandal of September 1641. Secondly, the mandate of the Committee of Examinations was political investigation and inquisition. Throughout the early 1640s, it enforced Parliamentary loyalty by investigating complaints, searching houses, ordering arrests, calling witnesses, and adjudicating cases of suspected subversion of the Long Parliament’s agenda.

“Elizabeth Hutchinson” of Witney therefore interested the Committee for a political reason. If she was Elizabeth Beeston alias Hutchinson, there are at least two reasons the Committee might have arrested her. First, since she had likely travelled between London and the court at Oxford, she may have been suspected, as were other “certain adventurous...

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94 NA SP 16/498 f. 79. I interpret the word “lodging” to mean “temporary residence” rather than “home.”

women” at the time, of transmitting Royalist intelligence.\textsuperscript{96} A second possibility is that the Committee judged her playhouse in Drury Lane to be politically prejudicial and therefore took steps to separate her from the property.\textsuperscript{97}

Elizabeth Beeston’s alignment with the Royalist cause seems certain in light of her former husband’s service to the King and Queen and her subsequent marriage to Sir Lewis Kirke between 1644 and 1646. The probability of her Royalist allegiance provokes the question of whether the Kirkes were motivated to re-open the Cockpit in 1646 by political ideology in addition to economics. Did she simply renew her prewar commercial habits, or did she and her new husband recognize an opportunity to deploy an instrument of mass communication in the service of their struggling cause? They left no direct evidence of their intentions, but in light of their obvious engagement and other indications that the government regarded the Kirkes with suspicion, it is difficult to envision Lewis and Elizabeth Kirke’s tenure in Drury Lane as politically neutral.

Economic necessity certainly played a part in their re-opening of the theatre. Rent owed to Katherine Best was in arrears and her heirs vigorously competed to collect payment.\textsuperscript{98} To remain solvent in the intervening years, Elizabeth probably had liquidated

\textsuperscript{96} I have learned nothing further about Elizabeth Hutchinson of Witney. The obligation bears her “mark” but not her signature, perhaps a sign that she could not write (but not necessarily a sign that she was innumerate). Witney was under royalist control until late 1644. On female messengers and intelligencers, see Roy, “This Proud Unthankefull City” 157, and Ann Hughes, “Women’s Role in the English Revolutions,” \textit{Political and Historical Encyclopaedia of Women} (New York and London, Routledge, 2003) 51.

\textsuperscript{97} A churchwarden’s account for the parish of St. Giles in the Fields records the entry: “1646. P\textsuperscript{d} and given to the teacher at the Cockpitt of the Children, 6d,” John Parton, \textit{Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St. Giles in the Fields} (London, 1822), 235. Bentley conjectures that, in its owner’s absence, the theatre was appropriated and used as a school.

\textsuperscript{98} Best died in 1642 after promising the property to two men, her son-in-law Robert Rolleston and a protonotary Thomas Hussey. Hotson explains how this triggered a series of lawsuits in Chancery with both claimants seeking rent from the Kirkes (\textit{CRS} 94-98).
her accumulated stock of apparel and properties. Parliament had sequestered Lewis Kirke’s London estate during the wars and now ordered him to pay a tenth of its value to recover it. The couple’s first move upon returning to London, therefore, was to regain the interest in the playhouse mortgaged to William Wilbraham in 1640. According to Wilbraham, Elizabeth Beeston, “ye now Lady Kirke,” approached him in 1646 to request that he “make assignment of his interest in ye said Playhouse vnto James Kirke,” to which he agreed. James Kirke was Lewis’s younger brother, a successful wine merchant and a parishioner of St. Andrew Undershaft. His own testimony in Chancery, hitherto unnoted, indicates he had no interest in the theatre business but rather sought to restore full control of the Cockpit to his brother and sister-in-law. In purchasing Wilbraham’s share, “his name was therein vsed onely in trust for the behoofe of the said Sr Leawys Kirke … and dame Elizabeth his wife” (Appendix K).

According to the common law of “couverture,” Lewis Kirke now legally owned the

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99 Of wardrobe keepers in 1643, The Actor’s Remonstrance, reports: “they are out of service: our stock of cloaths, such as are not in tribulation for the generall use, being a sacrifice to moths” (7). Nothing indicates that Elizabeth Beeston afterwards instituted a policy of controlling the tiring house. When a new company formed to play at the Cockpit in 1648, it relied on the outside investment of Robert Conway, a London skinner, to buy apparel and properties. See Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, “New Light on English Acting Companies in 1646, 1648, and 1660,” The Review of English Studies 42 (1991) 491, 498.

100 He appeared before the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents in Goldsmith Hall on 27 March 1648 and arranged to recover his property at a rate of £151 (a tenth), Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding ... 1643-1660, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1889-1892) 1596-1597.

101 NA C2 ChasI H28/26.

102 “Certificate of Henry Vesey, curate of the church of St. Andrew Undershaft, that John Kirke, James Kirke, and Mary West, are diligent resorters to the church, and frequently receive the sacrament,” Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1 f. 49. James Kirke’s will indicates that he lived until 25 November 1656 (PROB 11/259 f. 88).

103 NA C10 36/116. Hotson’s study does not record this document.
Cockpit’s lease. Elizabeth’s practical experience, however, must have informed their decision to oversee business together as they reestablished connections with numerous players returning to London that year.

Various scholars have shown how exaggerated are claims that public playing completely ceased between 1642 and 1660. Demand for theatrical entertainment remained high and despite Parliamentary ordinances aimed at prohibiting it, it was suppressed less urgently than political and religious objectors might have wished. Royalist news pamphlets report printed playbills once more being thrown into passing coaches in 1647 and 1648, and taunt the godly with assertions that “where a dozen Coaches Tumble after Obadiah Sedgwick; Threescore are observed to wheele to the Cockpit.” The diarist John Evelyn attended a tragicomedy hosted by the Kirkes on 5 February 1647/48, a rare pleasure, he wrote, “after there had been none of these diversions for many Yeares during the Warr.” By one report, the Cockpit was again generating “a very great constant yearly profit” and taking “a very extraordinary profit” in particular around Michaelmas 1647, when the Kirkes earned “by acting of plays there about xxx or xl a night.”

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108 NA C2/108/34, cited by Hotson, *CRS* 94-95. By this time, the Kirkes had revived Elizabeth’s scheme to open the adjoining George tavern (now demised to one Knightly Lucas). This perhaps now involved Kirke’s contacts in the wine merchant community (NA C2/Chas1/H28/26).
As the Kirkes worked to regain financial footing, they were undoubtedly aware of how ideologically contentious their enterprise was. In the popular imagination, the stage was a distinctly Royalist institution and many players had taken up arms for the King in 1642. The companies for which the Kirkes opened their doors after 1646 were composed of former King’s Men, and Lewis Kirke’s own history was one of intense public loyalty to the Stuarts.\textsuperscript{109} Technically, exhibiting plays remained illegal, meaning that the Kirkes kept the Cockpit open at considerable risk to their reputations and property. Armed soldiers periodically raided playhouses in operation, jailing players and their collaborators and fining playgoers.\textsuperscript{110} The strictest Parliamentary ordinance of February 1647/48 targeted playhouse proprietors directly. Where previous orders emphasized the punishment of actors in a manner recalling the Elizabethan statute, the 1648 order authorized officials “to pull downe and demolish or cause or procure to be pulled downe and demolished all Stage-Galleries, Seates, and Boxes” in operation. As a further deterrent, it threatened to turn playhouse revenue over to local churchwardens for distribution to the poor and playing assets were to be removed forcibly from playhouses and sold should owners refuse to pay.\textsuperscript{111}

Although these injunctions undoubtedly reflect religious prejudice, the tense atmosphere surrounding the stage in the months before the King’s execution had more to


\textsuperscript{110} According to one gloating Parliamentary writer, an audience would scatter during a raid “like a company of drowned Mice.” See \textit{Mercurius Melancholicus} (4 September 1647) 2; \textit{Perfect Occurences} (1-8 October 1647) 278; Hotson, \textit{CRS} 24-38.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament for the Utter Suppression and Abolishing of all Stage-Playes and Interludes} (London: 1648) 3-5.
do with acute political anxiety. According to Martin Butler, “Parliament’s hostility to plays was of an uneven intensity, and it was most active in times of increased political instability.”

The order of July 1647, which extended the ban on playing for six months until January 1647/48, coincided with an internal struggle between Presbyterians and Independents in government, violent demonstrations at Westminster by mobs of unpaid soldiers and Royalist supporters, and threats by the Army to occupy the city. Debate about the more severe ordinance of February 1647/48 accompanied Parliament’s push to forego a negotiated settlement with the King and its anticipation of large-scale riots by Royalists, apprentices, and petitioners demanding a return to stable government. To Royalist polemicists, the closure of theatres was plainly a response to a fear of “dangerous Assemblies.”

The stage held the power to shape public perception and to activate audiences politically. According to Mercurius Melancholicus “there you may see Treason courting Tyranny, and Faction prostituted to Rebellion; there you may see (as in a mirrour) all State-judglings, clenly conveyances, and underhand dealings pourtray’d to the life.” Precisely because perception was at stake, wrote Mercurius Elencticus, “the Members are perplexed with the Play-houses” and “no Stages

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112 Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). The Commons expressed intense religious objections to playing and a desire for its permanent cessation, while members of the Lords regarded the ordinances as temporary political measures. There were some exceptions, notably Christopher Beeston’s former patron, the Earl of Pembroke, whose experience as Lord Chamberlain perhaps made him more sensitive to the ideological potential of staged drama (*Journal of the House of Lords* 9: 334).


115 Mercurius Melancholicus (4 September, 1647) 2.

116 Mercurius Melancholicus (22-29 January 1647/48) 130.
must be tollerated but that at Westminster: [where] None act Cataline but themselves." The Venetian ambassador observed, “as the government dreads gathering of the people, all conventicles and meetings are forbidden, and plays and parties in particular, from fear that under the guise of recreation they may be plotting something against the present rulers.” Concern about rabble-rousing and sedition seems to have been warranted. A current of loyalty to the Stuarts ran strong in London and the radical attempt to reform cultural activities such as dancing, sports, and theatre provoked intense resentment. The Earl of Clarendon wrote that commiseration in public places might indeed have stirred clandestine Cavalier plots. If the Kirkes desired to see the King’s return to power and chose to participate in the general resistance to Parliament in 1647 and 1648, they may well have used their theatre to promote their ideological position.

With political tension intensifying in 1648, the King’s former actors, according to James Wright, “ventured to Act some Plays with as much caution and privacy as cou’d be at the Cockpit.” At their disposal were popular Beaumont and Fletcher collaborations

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118 CSP Venetian 30: 165.


120 “It was the greatest consolation to miserable men, who had in themselves or their friends been undone by their loyalty, to meet together and lament their condition; and this brought on invectives against the person of Cromwell; and wine, and the continuance of the discourse, disposed them to take notice of the universal hatred that the whole nation had of him, and to fancy how easy it would be to destroy him. And commonly there was in all those meetings some corrupted person of the party, who fomented most the discourse, and for a vile recompense betrayed his companions, and informed of all, and more than had been said; whereupon a new plot was discovered against the commonwealth,” cited by C.H. Firth, “The Royalists under the Protectorate,” The English Historical Review 52 (1937) 648.

121 Wright, Historia Histrionica 8.
published the previous year by Humphrey Moseley in a folio characterized as “a literary manifesto for Cavalier writers.”

Wright recounts that:

in the Winter before the King’s Murder, 1648, … they continu’d undisturbed for three or four Days; but at last as they were presenting the Tragedy of the Blody 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, surprised ‘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.

Wright’s account is corroborated by contemporary reports of an orchestrated crackdown on 1 January, 1648/49. According to The Kingdom’s Weekly Intelligencer:

The Souldiers seized on the Players and their Stages at Drury-lane, and at Salisbury Court. They went also to the Fortune in Golden-lane, but found none there, but Iohn Pudding dancing on the Ropes, whom they tooke 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 on 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 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.

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123 Wright, Historia Histrionica 8-9.

124 The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer (2-9 January 1648/49) 1210-1211. A similar report appears in Perfect Occurrences (29 December–5 January 1648/49): “The Souldiers this day surprized the Players in Salisbury Court and Drury lane, and brought them Prisoners to Whitehall, in their attire, Fools in theirs, and the King in theirs, but took the crown off his head; yet sometimes put it on againe. The Ladies were in a great fear, but had no hurt: Some of the exempted Members of Parliament were there” (784). Intriguing to note is the presence of parliamentarians recently expelled (in Pride’s Purge) for their willingness to negotiate with the king.
The raids coincided with the Commons’s passing of an ordinance proposing to try the King for treason. If the incursion indeed interrupted a production of the popular *Rollo, or the Bloody Brother*, there is some irony in the Cockpit’s reported “resistance.” From the perspective of downtrodden Royalists, there must have been great poignancy in the play’s portrayal of the struggle for liberty and honour in the shadow of violent faction and dictatorship. Indeed, the political virtues communicated by the veteran John Lowin in his set speeches as the staunchly loyal Aubrey – stoicism, the capacity to temporize, and the recognition that tyranny is too poisonous to sustain itself – are widely echoed elsewhere in Royalist propaganda.⁴ The political virtues communicated by the veteran John Lowin in his set speeches as the staunchly loyal Aubrey – stoicism, the capacity to temporize, and the recognition that tyranny is too poisonous to sustain itself – are widely echoed elsewhere in Royalist propaganda.¹²⁵ There was no philosophical patience exercised in the heat of the January 1648/49 raid however.

Was the Cockpit’s “resistance” to the army’s incursion and its harsh treatment by the soldiers a consequence of Lewis Kirke’s presence at the theatre? Major General Philip Skippon, Kirke’s adversary at the battle of Newbury and now in military control of London, had campaigned for months to root out the city’s known malignants.¹²⁶ The revolutionary government was also keeping a watchful eye on the Kirke settlement at Newfoundland. On 23 February 1648/49, the Council of State denied passage to four hundred sailors “in the ships going thither to fish for Sir David Kirke,” the concern being that “some dangerous designs may be carried out under that pretense,” namely the

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¹²⁵ See especially Aubrey’s speech on “mischief now resistlesse,” *The Tragoedy of Rollo Duke of Normandy* (Oxford, 1640), 32. The only other play identified as acted at the Cockpit at this time is Jonson’s *Sejanus*, similarly concerned with faction and the difficulty of living under political tyranny, Hyder E. Rollins, “The Commonwealth Drama: Miscellaneous Notes,” *Studies in Philology* 20 (1923) 52-69.

¹²⁶ Ian Gentles, “The Struggle for London in the Second Civil War,” *Historical Journal* 26 (1983) 277-305. On 26 July 1648, the Commons urged that enforcement of the anti-theatrical ordinance “be referred to the Committee of the Militia of Westminster, with such Forces as they shall think fit, to take care, that the Stages, Boxes, Scaffolds, Seats, and Forms, in the several Playhouses within the County of Middlesex, be forthwith taken down; and the Materials thereof made unuseful for that Service for the future: And that Major General Skippon be desired to advise with the said Committee about the same; and to assist them with Horse, if Need be” (*Journal of the House of Commons* 5: 648).
organization of a naval force to assist Prince Rupert’s reconstituting Royalist fleet.\footnote{CSPD Interregnum 1: 16; J. Holland Rose et al., eds., The Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929-1959) 130-132. On 7 November 1648, two months before his execution, the king wrote to Sir David Kirke, requesting that he accommodate Lady Frances Hopkins and her family who had become political refugees after Sir William Hopkins hosted the King on the Isle of Wight (BL MS Egerton, 2395 f. 36). Hopkins (formerly Frances Andrews) was Kirke’s sister-in-law.}

Puritan merchants branded Sir David “a known malignant and inveterate enemye to the present state and government” and the government recalled him in 1651 to review his plantation’s financial and political activities.\footnote{“Petition of the Merchant Adventurers of Plymouth, England to the Council of State, ca. 1650,” cited in Pope, Fish Into Wine 141-142.} After signing a bond promising to remain in London, he died in prison in 1654.\footnote{NA PROB 11/240 f. 177, nuncupative will of Sir David Kirke, 28 January 1654. When he arrived in London, the descendents of George Calvert, Lord Baltimore prosecuted their land claim in court, arguing that Kirke had illegally appropriated the Ferryland settlement in 1637. This proved convenient for the Council, which ignored Sir David’s petitions from prison (Journal of the House of Commons 7: 97), effectively allowing him to die there. His wife Sara and their sons (George, Philip and Jarvis) governed Ferryland until 1697 when they were displaced by the French. Sir Lewis Kirke’s will (appendix L) suggests that he quietly took over portions of his brother’s estate in trust to protect it from the government.} The government authorized Lewis Kirke to attend to his brother’s business overseas on the condition that he sign two £1000 bonds and vow to do “nothing prejudiciall to the Commonwealth.” His brother James eventually travelled in his place. In 1653, the family’s overseas business came under the surveillance of a “Commissioner for managing and ordering the affairs and interest of the Commonwealth in Newfoundland.”\footnote{“List of Recognizances to the Council of State” (25 May 1650), CSPD Interregnum 2: 516; CSP Colonial 1: 403 415-416. Some political pressure may have been relieved by younger brother John Kirke’s business connections among prominent Independents, including William Barkely, an Alderman who had been involved in the Canadian ventures of the 1620s and 30s (Pope, Fish into Wine 83-86).} The Council continued to watch Lewis Kirke closely. As late as May 1655, amid new worry about Royalist conspiracy, the notorious spy Henry Manning sent Cromwell’s Secretary of State, John Thurloe, a dispatch, urging
him to “remember” active Royalist operatives in London, among them “Sr Luis Kirke,” one of the city’s “weekly Intelligencers.”

Perhaps the only thing murkier than Interregnum espionage is Interregnum theatre. Caution with respect to the current evidence permits us to conclude only that the Kirkes possessed the political motivation and a means, in the form of their playhouse, to help sustain Royalist morale, agitate for anti-Parliamentary resistance, and perhaps to gather strategic intelligence on behalf of those still fighting for the Stuarts. More confidently, we may liken their effort to keep the Cockpit running between 1646 and 1649 to other forms of anti-Parliamentary resistance such as the celebration of Christmas, the organization of amateur theatricals and dancing in private residences, drinking and singing ballads in taverns, and the quiet reading of dramatic literature. After 30 January 1648/49, hosting performances at the Cockpit became increasingly a challenge. In March 1649, the soldiers marched into Drury Lane again and deliberately defaced the interior of the playhouse. Perhaps not surprisingly, Lewis Kirke afterward returned his attention to his family’s colonial investments in Canada. The Kirkes permitted William Beeston to invest in the theatre’s refitting in 1651 but when Elizabeth Beeston ultimately refused to relinquish control of the property to him, he channelled his effort into a new venture at the Salisbury Court. Select audiences attended William Davenant’s “moral representations” of music, dance, and recitation at the Cockpit sometime before 1 April.

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1656 but after this, the Kirkes’ ownership of the lease – and their willingness to persist in the erratic London theatre business – expired. The couple jointly purchased a residence called the Corner House in Holborn in 1653 and lived on income from property they held in Covent Garden. Lewis Kirke and his brothers continued to petition for the restitution of their Canadian trading rights but Charles II ultimately granted them to other interested parties, including the Restoration dramatist Thomas Crowne. In 1660, the King nevertheless rewarded Lewis Kirke’s loyalty by appointing him Paymaster of the Gentlemen Pensioners, and Kirke was appointed to a grand jury that tried twenty-nine regicides in Hick’s Hall. Kirke’s will, dated 21 August 1663, left Elizabeth £100 and their “best Arras hangings.” The reversion of his estate went to his surviving brother, John, and other gifts travelled across the Atlantic to nephews living in Newfoundland (Appendix L).

This chapter has analyzed the contributions of Elizabeth Beeston and Sir Lewis Kirke to the management of the Cockpit playhouse between 1634, the approximate date that Elizabeth joined the Beeston family, and 1656, when the Kirkes’ lease on the building expired. New documentary evidence clarifies the ways in which they utilized, expanded upon, and fought to retain their inherited portion of Christopher Beeston’s theatrical business during the English civil war. As an active manager of the Cockpit’s finances and tiring house, Elizabeth Beeston deserves greater recognition as the first recorded woman to own and operate a purpose-built playhouse in seventeenth-century

133 Hotson, CRS 141-159.


135 NA SP 29/19 f. 80; SP 29/28, f. 26; A Collection of the Most Remarkable and Interesting Trials (London: R. Snagg, 1775) 133.

136 NA PROB 11/312 f. 131-133, will of Sir Lewis Kirke (21 August, 1663).
London. No other woman would occupy an analogous position until Lady Mary Davenant inherited her husband’s interest in the Duke’s Company in 1668 and fulfilled his plan to build the Dorset Garden theatre in 1671.137

Hotson’s early description of Lewis Kirke identified him as “a gentleman pensioner and Royalist officer.” I have demonstrated that he was also a French immigrant, a wine merchant, the English governor of Québec, a ship-money captain, and co-proprietor during the civil wars of the theatre business established by his friend Christopher Beeston. Attention to the wider scope of Kirke’s career has generated several potential explanations for his initial affiliation with the Beestons and unveiled a significant dimension of the Beeston family’s elite social and political network. Furthermore, Kirke’s longstanding allegiance to the Stuarts presents a more detailed political context in which to consider the re-opening of the Cockpit in the late 1640s. Partly to rehabilitate their ailing financial situation and, arguably, to drum up political support for the Stuarts, Lewis and Elizabeth Kirke sustained the Beestons’ troubled enterprise until at least the beginning of 1649, at which point economic and political pressures overwhelmed their theatre business. Among those who would struggle on would be William Beeston, the other main beneficiary of Christopher Beeston’s theatrical legacy in 1638. His negotiation of the commercial and political pitfalls of the late Caroline period and his effort to carry the Beeston torch forward into the later seventeenth century are analyzed in Chapter Four.

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CHAPTER FOUR
William Beeston and the Decline of the Family Enterprise

When his father died in October 1638, William Beeston inherited an enviable position in the London theatre business. The previous chapter has shown how Christopher Beeston, to preserve his thriving theatrical enterprise, strategically divided his assets and their attendant responsibilities between his wife and his son. Elizabeth Beeston took possession of the Cockpit’s lease and a third of the shares in the resident King and Queen’s Young Company, while William, for “his Care and industrie in the said Company,” received a £20 annuity, his father’s collection of manuscript playbooks, and the office of theatrical Governor into which he was sworn six months later.  

Stepmother and stepson would oversee business together in Drury Lane for the next five years. Christopher Beeston clearly sought to provide materially for his widow by granting her the playhouse, but he may also have had greater faith in her ability than in his son’s to manage it. His carefully worded will implores William for “the love of a Child to his father” to “doe all good (concerning this or anie other busines) to my said wife and her two daughters,” perhaps pointing to a measure of uncertainty about the younger Beeston’s fitness for leadership within the projected new balance of managerial power.  

Three days after first signing the will, the ailing manager added a codicil that replaced William’s annual legacy with a half share in the acting company. The two gifts were of approximately the same value, but the latter carried added responsibility. Did

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1 Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills* 192. William also inherited the freehold of King’s Head Yard in Shoreditch and a “parcel of grounde now inclosed with a Brick wall” in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, entitling him to style himself a gentleman.

2 Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills* 193.
uncertainty linger about William’s commitment or competence? Did the father thereby aim to bind his son more tightly to the new management partnership?

Questions such as these, although unanswerable, have contributed to the scholarly consensus that William Beeston was “rather less adroit than his father” as a manager of theatrical affairs. As evidence of his inaptitude, scholars typically cite the unusual decision in May 1640 to stage Richard Brome’s *The Court Beggar* in defiance of royal order, an error that led to Beeston’s immediate imprisonment and sanctions against the Cockpit. As I will argue, however, this incident was exceptional rather than representative. A prevalent but arbitrary emphasis on events prior to 1642 has warped our critical assessment of William Beeston’s stage career, which in fact extended across a half century, from 1632 until his death in 1682. A wider perspective presents a more varied and complex state of affairs. Before the civil wars, Beeston’s position was one of relative professional stability. The unlicensed play fiasco briefly deprived him of his court-appointed theatrical Governorship, but he soon re-stabilized himself, aided by the great practical and economic value of his theatrical assets. As political repression and economic hardship intensified during the 1640s and 50s, he engaged in a protracted struggle to preserve his family’s theatrical investments and practices. When the theatre business reached its lowest ebb in the 1650s, Beeston’s professional stature paradoxically reached a new height, and those who hoped for the resumption of legal playing universally anticipated that he would re-establish his family’s former commercial supremacy. The complicated political developments of late 1660 ultimately prevented this, but, surprisingly, Beeston retained an influential standing in the profession until

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4 See note 5.
1664, and another two decades would pass before the Beeston name finally lost all
currency in the London theatre community. It is within this wider and more complex set
of economic and political circumstances that we must therefore analyze William
Beeston’s career, while addressing the critical question of why the viable system of
prewar management he inherited ceased to sustain the Beestons after the Restoration.

This chapter examines the long-term factors that combined to force the family
enterprise into decline during the later seventeenth century. In the first section, I analyze
Beeston’s early career and the way it instilled in him the technical expertise and
professional conditioning necessary to function as a London theatre manager. The
chapter then reinterprets Beeston’s notorious staging of Brome’s *The Court Beggar* in
1640 in order to illustrate a countervailing difficulty that the manager faced throughout
his career, namely the rapidly changing conditions of theatrical patronage. The
remainder of the chapter then analyzes Beeston’s determined effort to preserve his
theatrical inheritance before and after the Restoration. New documentary evidence here
helps to provide a clear picture of how his professional standing disintegrated in the
absence of patronage and how an inherent fragility in the structure of seventeenth-century
business families ultimately prevented his sons George and Sackville, and his grandson
Beneniah, from extending the Beeston theatrical dynasty beyond the seventeenth century.

**“Bred vp in the art of Stage playing”: William Beeston’s Early Career, 1616 to 1638**

Throughout William Beeston’s long theatrical career, one detects a tension
between his considerable practical skill within the playhouse and his awkwardness at
vying for theatrical patronage beyond it. This section of the chapter examines his esteem
for the artistry of his father’s generation and his concomitant desire to impart the skills
and traditions he inherited to subsequent generations of players. The section that follows then explores his counterproductive tendency to lose his footing on the shifting sands of theatrical patronage. We may plausibly trace Beeston’s pedagogical interest to early experience in his father’s household. No birth record has emerged, but he was probably born in London between 1608 and 1611, the only surviving son of Christopher and Jane Beeston. In about 1607, the Beeston family relocated from Holywell Street in the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, to Turnbull (or Turnmill) Street in St. James’s parish, Clerkenwell. William’s first exposure to theatre was therefore in the busy Red Bull amphitheatre where his father managed Queen Anne’s Men. At the age of about ten in 1616, he would have observed his father’s efforts to build the Cockpit playhouse and he would have grown to maturity immersed in Drury Lane’s theatrical community. In his own words, he was “bred vp in the art of Stage playing” and “skild in that science” by his father, a statement that suggests he trained exclusively for a stage career. The frequent instability of the profession made this a potentially risky path for an early seventeenth-century youth and perhaps accounts for his later espousal of the player’s art as an acquired technical knowledge, a craft refined through practice and measurable against existing standards.

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6 NA C2/Chasl/H44/66. He retained either the use or rent of a tenement adjoining the Cockpit after 1638.

7 NA C10/80/15. Leslie Hotson discovered this suit and discusses it in *CRS* 107. As with his father, there is no evidence that William Beeston worked in any other craft or trade.

8 The *OED* defines this usage of “science” as “knowledge acquired by study” (n. 2a) and more specifically as a “craft, trade, or occupation requiring trained skillcraft” (2d); “craft,” in turn, connotes “Human skill, art as opposed to nature” (*OED*, n. 2c). Undoubtedly, lasting stage careers were always founded upon some measure of inborn ability, yet with uncommon frequency, records associate Beeston with the practice of cultivating or refining raw talent and with the teaching of a histrionic technique, the substance of which (voice projection? singing and dancing? hand or bodily rhetoric?) unfortunately is now lost.
His earliest certain involvement with the stage dates to 1632 and curiously associates him not with Drury Lane but with the Salisbury Court playhouse in the precinct of Whitefriars. On 12 November, Beeston joined William Blagrave in petitioning the Lord Chamberlain to “restore vnto them a boy named Stephen Hamerton inveigled from them by one Christopher Babham & by him imploied at the Blackfryars playhouse.”

Blagrave was a deputy of Sir Henry Herbert’s in the Revels Office who had joined with Richard Gunnell, a player and former housekeeper at the Fortune, to erect the new, indoor playhouse in Salisbury Court in 1629. It stood on property belonging to Edward Sackville, fourth Earl of Dorset, and operated as the third indoor playhouse in west London (after the Blackfriars and the Cockpit) throughout the 1630s. The new theatre at first hosted a Revels company whose function, according to Blagrave, was “to train and bring up certain boys in the quality of playing not only with intent to be a supply of able actors to his Majesty’s servants of the Black Friars, … but the solace of his Royal Majesty when his Majesty should please to see them and also for the recreation of his Majesty’s loving subjects.”

To this end, Gunnell took on the costly and exhausting work of maintaining fourteen boys and young men at his home, among them Hamerton, reputedly “a most noted and beautiful Woman Actor” who afterwards played “with equal

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9 MSC 2.3: 408.


11 A matter revealed by two Court of Request suits of June and October 1632 involving Gunnell, Blagrave and another financial investor, Christopher Babham. The quotation derives from C.W. Wallace’s transcription, cited and modernized by G.E. Bentley, “The Salisbury Court Theater and its Boy Players,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 40 (1976-77) 129-149.
Grace and Applause, a Young Lover’s Part.” In 1631, a dispute arose between Blaggrave and a third investor, Christopher Babham, over the rights to Hamerton’s labour. That summer, apparently in fulfillment of the Revels company mandate, Babham integrated Hamerton into the King’s Men. The move prompted Blaggrave to try to reassert legal control over the boy in the Court of Requests and when that strategy failed, both he and Beeston petitioned the Lord Chamberlain. The extent of Beeston’s involvement in the dispute is not entirely clear. Generally, it is thought he was a partner at the Salisbury Court from its inception and, therefore, his father’s competitor in 1632. If so, it is unusual that the lawsuit over Hamerton that summer fails to mention him and that no other evidence directly connects him to the Salisbury Court at this time.

On the current evidence, a plausible alternative view is that his involvement was more limited than normally assumed and a logical consequence of the patronage structure influencing the organization of commercial theatre in Caroline London. Bentley has shown that the fledgling Salisbury Court operation faced an early financial struggle, partly because it had to maintain so many boys and partly because of strong commercial competition from the nearby Blackfriars and Cockpit playhouses. In January 1632/33, a newly patented company in the service of Prince Charles replaced the Revels boys, and James Shirley was engaged to furnish it with his comedy Changes. Shirley was Christopher Beeston’s steady collaborator, having written more or less exclusively for the

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12 Wright, Historia Histrionica 4.


14 Shirley, Changes: or, Love in a Maze (London, 1632) A4r. Herbert’s licence is dated 10 January 1631/32 (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 174). The quarto describes it as acted “by the Company of His Majesties Revels,” though the date of its licence in fact suggests a performance by their substitute, Prince Charles’s Men.
Cockpit since 1624. Herbert’s records of licences clearly show the anomalous nature of his single Salisbury Court commission; he had written *Love’s Cruelty* for the Cockpit two months earlier, and three months later, in April 1632, he would again furnish that theatre with a successful comedy, *Hyde Park*. A prologue printed in the *Changes* quarto provides a potential clue to what was happening. It describes Shirley’s muse as having recently journeyed from “another Spheare” (that is, the Cockpit playhouse) to the troubled “little I[s]land” of the Salisbury Court to perform an act of charitable intervention:

... ’las our Poet knowes  
Wee have no name, a torrent overflowes  
Our little I[s]land, miserable wee,  
Doe every day play our owne Tragedy:  
But ’tis more noble to create than kill,  
Hee saies, and if but with his flame, your will  
Would joyne, wee may obtaine some warmth, and prove  
Next them that now doe surfeit with your love.  
Encourage our beginning, nothing grew  
Famous at first, and Gentlemen, if you  
Smile on this barren Mountaine, soone it will,  
Become both fruitfull and the *Muses* hill.

If Shirley wrote *The Changes* to help shore up business at the Salisbury Court, William Beeston may well have been offering his own service, normally reserved for the Cockpit, in a similar capacity. If so, this commercially counterintuitive impulse – that it was “more noble to create than kill” – requires explanation. We find it, I think, when we consider who stood to suffer financially should Gunnell and Blagrave’s venture have collapsed. Several powerful figures were almost certainly monitoring the situation

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16 Shirley, *Changes* A4r.
closely, including the Earl of Dorset, who owned the ground on which the playhouse stood, and Sir Henry Herbert, Blagrave’s superior officer and owner of a share in the playhouse.\textsuperscript{17} I have argued in Chapter Two that Christopher Beeston was then working to solidify his status as a client of the Herbert family and that he did so, in part, by carefully subordinating himself to Sir Henry Herbert. It is conceivable, then, that he was led to divert resources from the Cockpit to the Salisbury Court at Herbert’s request, and that Herbert was in turn prompted either by his stake in the playhouse or by Dorset, the Queen’s Lord Chamberlain and Herbert’s superior officer. If this is correct, we may reasonably extrapolate from the Hamerton petition that William Beeston was not an official manager of the Salisbury Court venture but rather an agent working on his father’s behalf to support Gunnell and Blagrave, thereby upholding the family’s obligations to its patrons in the Revels Office.\textsuperscript{18} This perhaps involved training Gunnell’s cohort of boys, or perhaps simply lending his family’s name to strengthen Blagrave’s petition for Hamerton.

The question remains: why petition for Hamerton’s return when his service had always been intended for the King’s Men? Here, I think, Blagrave and Beeston’s private commercial concerns came back into play. In addition to his Salisbury Court interests, Blagrave held a share in Queen Henrietta Maria’s company at the Cockpit.\textsuperscript{19} He and

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Heton later noted that Dorset secured the patent for the Prince’s Men and installed them at the theatre late in 1631, just as Shirley was writing The Changes (Bawcutt, “Documents of the Salisbury Court” 181-184, 186). Herbert claimed an income of nearly £100 \textit{per annum} from “his 9\textsuperscript{th} Share in Sal. Court House” (Bawcutt, \textit{Control and Censorship} 174, 208).

\textsuperscript{18} This scenario expands upon Gurr’s observation: “Why Shirley gave this one play to [the Salisbury Court] instead of his usual customer, Beeston, we do not know; but it suggests he had a special commission to help launch the new enterprise” (Shakespearian Playing Companies 427). I propose that Shirley’s “special commission” intended instead to rescue it.
Beeston surely would have recognized Hamerton’s talent in 1630-31 and may therefore have sought to circumvent the Revels mandate and retain him for Drury Lane. Their respective political connections to the Herberths in the Revels office, responsible for adjudicating the matter, perhaps led them to anticipate favour. If so, they overextended their hope; the Master of the Revels found their petition untenable and Hamerton continued to act at the Blackfriars.

Envisioning a limited role for William Beeston at the Salisbury Court playhouse in 1632 is consistent with substantial evidence that he closely collaborated with his father throughout the 1630s. Thomas Heywood’s 1635 publication *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* records the first certain sign of the pairing. Of the nine engravings commissioned for the folio by Heywood’s friends and associates, the fifth and sixth were paid for by “*Guihelmi Beeston Generos*” and “*CHRISTOPH BEESTON Generos*” (see figs. 11 and 12). On 12 May 1637, the Privy Council recognized father and son as “Keepers of ye Playhouse called ye Cockpit” and summoned them both to answer a charge of publicly exercising young players during plague time. Nothing confirms that William acted parts in Cockpit plays at this time, though it seems likely. Undoubtedly,

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19 According to Blagrave’s widow, Sir Henry Herbert sold him the share for £100 before the company fractured and left the Cockpit in 1636/37 (Bentley, *JCS* 6: 64).

20 Bentley first proposed this idea, though with little faith (“The Salisbury Court Theater and its Boy Players” 143-144). In light of Blagrave’s stake in the Queen’s Men and the Beeston-Herbert patronage connection, facts he never considered, he was arguably correct.


22 NA SP 16/356 f. 11. After summoning Christopher and William Beeston, Theophilus Bird, Ezekiel Fenn and Michael Mohun, the warrant orders those actors who “either live in [the Cockpit] or haue relacion to it” to cease all acting there until further order. Bird, Fenn, and Mohun seem to have resided on site.
he coached the younger players of Queen Henrietta Maria’s company and later those of the King and Queen’s Young Company.

Surviving evidence gives the strong impression that he took great pride in his specialized function in the Beeston companies, and that he was a talented educator. When he was appointed “Gouernor & Instructor of the Kings & Queens young Company of Actors” on 5 April 1639, his office received the notable addition of “Instructor” (see fig. 2). In 1652, the bookseller Francis Kirkman observed that: “the chief, and most ingenious of [London’s players], acknowledg[e] their Fames & Profits essentially sprung from [Beeston’s] instructions, judgment and fancy.” In 1654, Richard Flecknoe thought fit to dedicate a play to Beeston “by Reason of his long Practice and Experience … [and] also for having brought up most of the Actors extant.”

In 1699, Wright’s Historia

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23 NA LC 5/134 f. 326. When William Davenant briefly took over on 27 June 1640, “Instructor” was removed and he was recognized simply as “Gouernor of the Cockpitt Players” (see figure 4).

24 Brome, The Court Beggar S8r-v. A “Dry-fat,” or dry vat, was a large packing basket for dried articles; the metaphor is obvious and a pun on “dry” potentially points to the unaffected professionalism of Beeston’s trained boys.

25 Francis Kirkman, The Loves and Adventures of Clerio & Lozia (London, 1652), A2v. I discuss this dedication in more detail below.
*Histrionica* presented Beeston as a crucial link in a genealogical chain of seventeenth-century acting traditions:

*Burt* was a Boy first under *Shank* at the *Black-friers*, then under *Beeston* at the *Cockpit*; and *Mohun*, and *Shatterel* were in the same Condition with him, at the last Place. There *Burt* used to Play the principal Women’s Parts, in particular *Clariana* in *Love’s Cruelty*; and at the same time *Mohun* acted *Bellemente*, which Part he retain’d after the Restauration.\(^{27}\)

Details of the “Condition” under which he trained boys are obscure, but Beeston probably instituted a systematic regime similar to that at the Salisbury Court. Christopher Beeston’s original warrant in 1637 was to govern “a Company of Boyes of the Revells newly erected for the king and Queenes service,” taking upon himself the “Chardges and paines in breeding and keeping them.”\(^{28}\) This language echoes that used to describe the earlier Salisbury Court company (“the Company of His Majesty’s Revels”) and likely implies a shared mandate “to train and bring up certain boys in the quality of playing … with intent to be a supply of able actors.” If so, William Beeston’s operation in 1639 could have been akin to later Restoration stage nurseries that aimed to prepare young performers for service in the patented adult companies.\(^{29}\)

Beeston likely took on the discriminating work of recruiting adolescents with the voices, physical appeal, and intellectual quickness necessary for the stage. Gunnell’s experience testifies to the costliness of feeding, lodging, and clothing a cohort of boys

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\(^{26}\) Richard Flecknoe, *Love’s Dominion, A Dramatique Piece* (London, 1654) F8v. The “Postscript” alluding to Beeston appears in the British Library’s edition which I have consulted (BL 643 b.27) but not in the Huntington Library copy archived in *Early English Books Online*.

\(^{27}\) Wright, *Historia Histrionica* 3.

\(^{28}\) NLW Wynnstay MS 181, f. 15v.

and other company members may have shared the general expense. On 10 August 1639, the Lord Chamberlain’s office prepared twelve tickets of privilege for the “Cockpit Players,” all of whom were aged nineteen or older. Brome informs us that Beeston instructed his boys how “to speak,” that is, how to project, modulate, and harmonize their voices, to breathe, and to find rhythms appropriate to the poetic language of their plays. He probably also exercised them in the choral singing enjoyed by Caroline audiences and frequently called for by Cockpit plays. Such training apparently informs an otherwise obscure allusion in Ford’s *The Lady’s Trial* when the slick courtier Piero ironically comments on the court outsider, Fulgoso, and his singing boys who serenade the lisping maid Amoretta:

PIE[RO] Yes, and ile tell you what his office is, His Prince delights himself exceedingly In birds of divers kindes, this gentleman Is keeper and instricter of his black-birds, He tooke his skill first from his father’s carter.

AMO[RETTA] [lisping] Tith wonderfull to thee by what thrange meanes Thome men are raisd to plathes.  

This appears to be a good-natured jest at the “plathes” Beeston and his father had attained as keepers of the royal “birds,” the Revels boys. A similar joke perhaps informs Letoy’s comic exasperation at his household actors in Brome’s *The Antipodes*:

Let[oy] … minde your part Let me not see you act now, In your Scholasticke way, you brought to towne wi’ yee

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31 Ford, *The Ladies Triall* H2r.
With see saw sacke a downe, like a Sawyer;
Nor in a Comicke Scene, play Hercules furens,
Tearing your throat to split the Audients eares.

[To another actor] And you Sir, you had got a tricke of late,
Of holding out your bum in a set speech;
Your fingers fibulating on your breast,
As if your Buttons, or your Band-strings were
Helpes to your memory. Let me see you in’t
No more I charge you. [To another] No, nor you sir, in
That over-action of the legges I told you of,
Your singles, and your doubles, Looke you — thus —
Like one o’th’ dancing Masters o’the Beare-garden;
And when you have spoke, at end of every speech,
Not minding the reply, you turne you round
As Tumblers doe; when betwixt every feat
They gather wind, by firking up their breeches.
Ile none of these absurdities in my house.
But words and action married so together,
That shall strike harmony in the eares and eyes
Of the severest, if judicious Criticks.  

Insofar as the boys were drawn from lower or middling social ranks, they required
lessons in elocution and deportment to mimic convincingly the refinements of the many
aristocratic characters populating Cockpit plays. Extant plays suggest also intensive
training in dance, musical instrumentation, and fighting with several weapons.

Beeston’s other key managerial responsibility before 1642 was oversight of his
company’s repertory. With the aid of his father’s patron, Pembroke, he personally
reserved the right to perform many of the scripts left to him by his father, and he
therefore likely selected the Cockpit’s daily offerings (see fig. 4). Why such protection
was necessary is not known; possibly, the outgoing Queen’s Men removed plays (or parts

32 Richard Brome, The Antipodes (London, 1640) D3rqv. The Salisbury Court first staged this play in 1638
but Brome’s postscript to the “Courteous Reader” says “it was, at first, intended for the Cock-pit Stage, in
the right of my most deserving Friend Mr William Beeston, unto whom it properly appertained” (L4v).

33 NA LC 5/134 f. 337. The protected list contains forty-five older and newer titles, arranged by author and
(it would seem) by order of perceived importance.
of plays) to the Salisbury Court in 1637, prompting Beeston’s complaint that they were “properly & of right … his propriety.” Whatever the cause, the result was an admonition by the King, communicated through the Lord Chamberlain: “his Majesty hath signified his royall pleasure … therby requiring mee to declare soe much to all other Companyes of Actors heerby concernable: that they are not any wayes to intermedle with or Act any of th’aboue mentioned Playes.”

As early as 1636, Beeston was also parleying for new scripts. Personal connections to members the Inns of Court, some established by his father’s collaboration with Heywood, Shirley, and Ford, facilitated the acquisition of new plays from a fashionable circle that included Henry Glapthorne, Thomas Nabbes, Richard Chamberlain, and Richard Brome. An early trace of Beeston’s working relationship with Brome in particular survives in a legal suit brought by the managers of the Salisbury Court theatre against the playwright in 1640. In the summer of 1635, Brome contracted to write three scripts a year for Richard Heton, for a span of three years, at a salary of 15s per diem. The long plague disruption of 1636 forced Heton to rescind Brome’s wages, however, at which point their contract was allegedly “tampered withal” and “throughe the [per]swasions and inticement of … William Beeston” Brome was led to write a script for Drury Lane. The playwright admitted that in August 1636, suffering “distres and want” in the “hard sadd and dangerous tyme of the sicknes,” he repaired to Beeston, who “lent

34 NA LC 5/134 f. 337.
35 NA LC 5/134 f. 337.
36 For William Beeston’s connections to the Middle Temple, see MSC 15: 171-194.
37 NA REQ 2/622 and 723, transcribed and analyzed by Haaker in “The Plague, the Theater, and the Poet” 283-306. No documents revealing the case’s outcome are apparently extant.
Six poundes at his need vpon Agreement to Compose and write a play for the Cockpitt Company.” The Salisbury Court management eventually settled the debt with Beeston to retain Brome, but the playwright obviously thought it more advantageous to write for Beeston. After fulfilling his contract with Heton, Brome says he “contracted and made other agreements with the said William Beeston with whome hee hopeth to enjoy the fruits of his labours more peaceably.” These legal documents are important to Brome scholars for what they reveal about the contractual conditions underlying his stage writing. They are equally valuable as evidence that Beeston actively acquired Cockpit playbooks before his father’s death, a practice that paved the way for his controversial staging of Brome’s *The Court Beggar* in 1640.

**The Court Beggar, William Davenant, and Patronage Problems, 1639-1642**

Brome was twenty years older than Beeston but their shared views on theatre aligned them in May 1640 when Beeston openly defied the political establishment to which he owed his managerial privileges and staged *The Court Beggar* at the Cockpit. Interpretations of the incident vary, some seeing it as a defining moment of Beeston’s “incredible foolishness,” others as evidence of a personal stake in “oppositional” politics. The professional context in which he operated tends to undermine both interpretations, however, and his clear attitude toward theatrical artisanship points to another basis for interpreting his misstep. Quite possibly, Beeston erroneously assumed

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38 Haaker, “The Plague, the Theater, and the Poet” 299, 303-304. £6 was the average rate for a new play and Beeston’s “loan” to Brome looks rather more like an advance to secure his service.

that professional merit would sustain him as theatrical Governor to the same extent as patronage.

The incident coincided with a dispute between the popular, workman-like Brome and an emerging courtly set of poets such as Sir John Suckling and William Davenant who had recently made incursions into the profession with sumptuous, masque-like entertainments at the playhouse in Blackfriars. As a protégé of Ben Jonson, Brome was particularly offended by Suckling’s irreverence toward the older playwright and his resentment toward “Court-Hobby-horses” boiled over in the plays he wrote for the Cockpit after 1639. He lashed out repeatedly at the “powder’d and ribbanded Wits” who paid players with rich attires to act their poorly-constructed “Romances” and substituted the “old way of Playes” with “Scene magnificent and language high / and Cloathes worth all the rest, except the Action.” As Beeston was to the “science” of acting, so was Brome to the craft of play making.

On 3 May 1640, word reached the Lord Chamberlain that “William Bieston and the Company of Players \of the Cockpitt/ in Drury Lane [had] lately Acted a new play w\th out any License … in contempt of the Authority of the sayd M’ of the Reuells & the

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41 John Hall’s commendation printed in the 1652 quarto of *A Joviall Crew* says Brome was “by great Johnson … made free o’the’ Trade” (A3r). Jonson’s verse for the 1632 quarto of Brome’s *The Northern Lasse* is entitled “To my old Faithfull Seruant … M. Rich. Brome” and praises his disciple for adhering to his “Comick Lawes”: “You learn’d it Well: and for it, seru’d your time / A prentise-ship: which few doe now a dayes / Now each Court-Hobby-horse will wince in rime; / Both learned and vnlearned, all write Playes. / It was not so of old: Men took vp trades / That knew the Crafts they had bin bred in, right.” (A3r).

42 See the prefatory matter in *A Joviall Crew* (A2r-v, A6r) and *The Antipodes* (A3v).
power graunted vnto him vnder the great seale of England.” The King was in London seeking money for the Scottish war and, when informed of the infraction, he personally ordered the Cockpit’s management to “forebeare to Act any Playes whatsoever” until the Revels Office restored its privileges. Remarkably, Beeston defied this order and staged the play again. Immediately, authorities imprisoned him in the Marshalsea. The Master of the Revels closed the Cockpit for several days and confiscated the offending playbook, noting its “relation to the passages of the K.s journey into the Northe … complaynd of by his M. tie to mee, with commande to punishe the offenders.” In 1960, the critic R.W. Kaufmann established a widely accepted view that the play in question was Brome’s *The Court Beggar*, a multi-pronged satire skewering, among other targets, Suckling’s alleged cowardice at Berwick during the First Bishop’s war. Kaufmann depicts Beeston as a man with “a knack for embroiling himself in difficulties with the authorities,” but it is worth noting that the staging of politically contentious material was not in itself a managerial error. Topical theatre was in high demand during the political crisis leading up to 1642 and plays on contemporary issues were potentially lucrative. John Freehafer

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43 *MSC* 2.3: 393-394.


46 “Suckling and Davenant Satirized by Brome,” 333.

47 In May 1639, ecclesiastical authorities fined the Fortune for exhibiting “The Cardinalls Conspiracie.” The playhouse then showed *The Valiant Scot* which reportedly “vext the Bishops worse then the other.” In September 1639, Andrew Cane’s Red Bull players acted *The Whore New Vamped* “for many days together,” a play described as a “scandalous and libelous” attack on a local Alderman (Hotson, *CRS* 3-5). Butler treats the taste for political drama at length in *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1643*, passim.
suggests that the controversy drummed up by the political content of Brome’s play may have drawn crowds, leading Beeston to calculate his risk and stage it after its prohibition. Margot Heinemann and Martin Butler have since elaborated upon this argument by proposing that political conviction compelled Beeston to stage Brome’s “full-blooded and uncompromising demonstration of the bankruptcy of the personal rule.”

Several facts complicate arguments positing straightforward commercial or political motivation, however. London theatre managers never seem to have so recklessly exposed themselves to censure by their institutional masters. Curious, too, is Charles’s personal intervention in 1640, given his almost certain preoccupation with more dangerous adversaries in the Short Parliament that spring. The Court Beggar alludes to the King’s northern campaign only incidentally with a satiric representation of a controversial courtier (Suckling) during a brief comic episode. Furthermore, Brome’s prose epilogue to the play ignores national politics and instead alludes to Beeston’s entanglement in a private struggle against unnamed detractors. Extraordinary circumstances, it would seem, led the manager to proceed, though cognizant of the risk.

His problem, arguably, was the poet William Davenant. In March 1639, Davenant had obtained a patent to build a sophisticated new auditorium in Fleet Street for the exhibition of “Plays, musical Entertainments, Scenes or other like Presentments.”

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49 Heinemann, Puritanism and Theatre 232-234; Butler, Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642, 220.

50 The character of Sir Ferdinando caricatures Suckling’s ineffectual war service. Blindfolded and deluded during his first speech in Act Three, he cries: “Am I then taken prisoner in the North? / Wounded, disarm’d, bound? I shall be ransom’d / To which of your rebelliously usurp’d / Castles ha’ you brought me? You sir Presbiter, / That better can pugnare than orare, / And do abjure all allegiance –” (P5v).
The patent, moreover, granted Davenant the managerial authority “to gather together, entertain, govern, privilege and keep … Players and Persons to exercise Action.” He had the backing of influential courtiers such as Endymion Porter and Henry Jermyn, and he had recently become the preferred fashioner of court masques for the royal family. Beeston must have viewed Davenant’s ambitious Fleet Street project with great apprehension, for it threatened both his unique professional function at court and his family’s lucrative corner of west London’s theatrical market.

Kaufmann has persuasively argued that The Court Beggar registers this anxiety about Davenant in its grotesque caricature of Court-Wit. Springing from the shady world of monopolists and projectors, Court-Wit wants above all “to procure a patent … to have the only priviledge to give instructions to all the actors in the City (especially the younger sort) the better to enable them to speake their parts emphatically and to the life.” Brome’s evocation of Davenant’s patent to “gather together, entertain, govern, privilege and keep” players in Fleet Street is apparently not intended to call the prerogatives themselves into question (they are essentially those awarded to Beeston) but rather to disqualify Court-Wit (Davenant) from accessing such powers on the grounds of

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51 Davenant’s patent (of 26 March 1639) and the indenture eventually renouncing his privileges (2 October 1639) are printed in Bentley, JCS 6: 304-309.

52 For Davenant’s connection to Porter, see Dorothea Townshend, Life and Letters of Mr. Endymion Porter (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897) 134-135.

53 Davenant’s theatre project also worried Richard Heton, who noted the conversion of one of his actors into an “agent for one that hath got a grant from the King for the building of a new playhouse w[which] was intended to be in fleetsstreet.” He may have petitioned to be “sole governor” of the Salisbury Court’s actors, at least in part, as a preventative measure against Davenant’s influence (Bawcutt, “Documents of the Salisbury Court” 186). Elizabeth Beeston moved to integrate the Cockpit and the George Tavern (as discussed in the last chapter) a month after Davenant’s patent was granted, perhaps also in anticipation of increased competition.

54 Kaufmann, “Suckling and Davenant Satirized by Brome” 341-344.

55 Brome, The Court Beggar P4v.
his incompetence. An onstage interlocutor responds critically to Court-Wit: “You were best take heede in time then that you well preserve your own voyce, for feare you doe a spoyle among ’em in teaching to utter in unsavory tunes.” The statement draws attention to Court-Wit’s syphilis-damaged nose, evoking Davenant’s own deformation, reportedly the result of “a terrible Clap of black handsome wench that lay in Axe-yard.” The play represents Court-Wit’s voice as ludicrously nasal and defective, especially during final preparations for Lady Strangelove’s household entertainment in Act 5. City-Wit bluntly tells him: “You write admirably, I confesse, but you have an ill tone to instruct in … you give your words no grace.” Despite Court-Wit’s energetic effort to master the theatrical craft, “sometimes scratching his head, as pumping his muse” and scribbling in his tables, Brome, in Jonsonian fashion, allows the character’s self-contradictions and pretensions ultimately to undermine him.

Brome’s distorted mirror arguably intends to function on Beeston’s behalf by castigating, if unfairly, a sexually reckless and unqualified courtly interloper on the verge of assuming a major position in the London theatre. By implication, the play self-reflexively invites its audience to recognize Beeston’s authentic experience and authority as a theatrical Governor. The Court Beggar’s epilogue articulates the same message more explicitly. Swainwit, the play’s true wit, directly addresses the “Ladies,”

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56 Brome, The Court Beggar P4v.
57 Aubrey, Brief Lives 1:205-206. Brome again emphasizes Court-Wit’s venereal scarring in Act 4, when the Doctor befouls himself and Swainwit observes Court-Wit’s lack of olfactory sense: “I list not be no nearer him: no more wou’d my cozen had he my nose” (R2v). In Act 5, Court-Wit is also described as “pepper’d so full o’ the watsha callums, that his spittle would poysen a Dog or a Rat” (R5v).
58 Brome, Court Beggar S3v.
59 Brome, Court Beggar S3r.
“Cavaliers,” “Gentry,” and “City friend[s]” in the audience on Brome’s behalf, declaring that:

this small Poet vents none but his own and his [i.e. Beeston’s] by whose care and directions this Stage is govern’d … and to be serious with you, if after all this, by the venemous practises of some, who study nothing more than his destruction, he should fail us, both Poets and Players would be at a loss in Reputation.

Cryptic references to “after all this” and “venemous practises” suggest that a dispute was already under way and Freehafer speculates that Brome wrote the epilogue especially for the unlicensed performances that led to Beeston’s incarceration in May 1640.

Circumstantial evidence supports this possibility. An obscure source of political resistance at court had forced Davenant to renounce his Fleet Street patent on 2 October 1639, but he remained intent on running a theatrical operation. He may have had designs on Beeston’s existing office and, if so, Beeston and Brome likely resorted to personal satire in The Court Beggar to discredit him publicly. It is a reasonable conjecture that Davenant’s court allies – probably Porter, who had the King’s ear and who had assisted his client in theatrical matters before – retaliated by bringing the play’s otherwise unrelated and muted political content to the King’s attention, thus cleverly exploiting national politics for the purpose of settling a private conflict – “venemous practises” indeed. It is doubtful whether Charles ever actually inspected the play given

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60 Brome, Court Beggar S8v.

61 Freehafer, “Brome, Suckling, and Davenant’s Theater Project of 1639” 367-383.

62 Freehafer argues for possible interference by the Earl of Dorset and Sir Henry Herbert, both of whom, as I have mentioned, held an interest in the nearby Salisbury Court theatre (“Brome, Suckling, and Davenant’s Theater Project of 1639” passim).

63 Porter intervened on Davenant’s behalf in 1632 by circumventing the Master of the Revels and seeking the king’s authorization to stage an uncensored version of Davenant’s The Wits at Blackfriars (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 186)
his much greater problems of money, war, and Strafford’s looming impeachment. He probably simply adhered to the wishes of Davenant’s court advocates and summarily ordered the play suppressed through Herbert. Beeston’s defiance of the King’s command and continued staging of *The Court Beggar* looks bold to the point of recklessness, but it is perhaps explicable if he sensed no other option available but to articulate his grievance in the court of public opinion. Swainwit’s allusive epilogue takes for granted an audience aware of the dispute and may have aimed to solicit support from courtly spectators present. Davenant, however, proved the stronger competitor in the patronage game.

On 4 May, Beeston was arrested and jailed along with George Stutville, a leading company player, and Michael Mohun, then likely Beeston’s servant and acting apprentice. There is no indication that Brome came under any suspicion, which increases the probability that the primary intention was to implicate Beeston. If this narrative is accurate, Beeston was neither naïve nor ignorant, but he was gambling. Gurr’s assessment of his lack of managerial adroitness is arguably accurate, but for reasons never fully articulated. My conclusion is that he was motivated to stage *The Court Beggar* so insistently by a desperate and erroneous assumption that the theatre business functioned like a professional meritocracy rather than according to network of closely-

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64 I diverge here from Butler’s influential account in *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642*, which sees Brome’s play as “a wholesale attack on the Scottish war” (136). This arguably overstates the implication of one allusion to the northern campaigns that appears briefly in a single scene of the play. Butler’s account of the play’s satire on the greed of courtiers, monopolists and projectors is otherwise persuasive. I am arguing that Beeston insisted on staging Brome’s play primarily because he was threatened by one of these projectors, Davenant, who encroached on his livelihood. Politically, Beeston’s traditionalism strikes me as rather conservative and I do not perceive the radical activist whom Butler says “brought the wrath of the king crashing down on the company” by attacking the Caroline establishment (220).

65 By contrast, the staging of other politically offensive plays such as *The Isle of Dogs* in 1597 and *A Game at Chess* in 1624 led authorities to seek the arrest of playwrights.
knit and mutually supportive commercial and political interests. Christopher Beeston clearly recognized that a patronage system structured London commercial theatre and made mastering it a managerial priority. Davenant did the same, and on 27 June 1640, the court awarded him gubernatorial power over the Cockpit’s royal company. Brome, unsurprisingly, returned immediately to the Salisbury Court. It took a political error on Davenant’s part less than a year later to turn Beeston’s fortunes around once more. Davenant’s involvement in the Army Plot in May 1641 and his resulting house arrest allowed for Beeston’s eventual reinstatement as theatrical governor. He appears to have managed the King and Queen’s company cautiously and quietly for the remainder of his tenure at the Cockpit. Apart from his re-hiring of Brome, whose *A Jovial Crew* had “the luck to tumble last of all in the *Epidemicall* ruine of the *Scene,*” nothing more is known of his activity before the civil wars swept away his court-backed authority in August 1642.

“Hopeful Inheritor”: Civil War and Interregnum Management, 1642-1660

Despite the dissolution of his court office, Beeston remained perhaps the most active of London’s beleaguered theatre practitioners during the civil wars and Interregnum. As the Victorian scholar Peter Cunningham first demonstrated, this had much to do with Beeston’s acquisition of the Salisbury Court playhouse, a move which

66 Alfred Harbage describes this as “the most substantial favour the poet had yet received” and “perhaps a compensation for the surrender of his right to build a new theatre,” *Sir William Davenant: Poet Venturer 1606-1668* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935) 72. The wording of Davenant’s warrant (see fig. 4) suggests that no warm reception awaited him at the Cockpit.

67 Mary Edmonds, *Rare Sir William Davenant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) 87-90. No evidence accounts for the length of Beeston’s prison term or precisely how he regained his office. An establishment list for the king’s household in 1641 records him as “Gouernor of y* Cockpitt Players,” indicating his return by the end of that year (*MSC* 2.3: 326)

led Allardyce Nicoll to conclude early in the last century that Beeston must have been “a careful man,” who had “saved up for himself a respectable competency.”69 Scholars have since examined Beeston’s efforts to renovate that building’s fabric and to maintain it during the 1650s and 60s.70 This section of the chapter synthesizes the established facts in order to clarify the way Beeston recovered professionally during the 1640s and 50s despite the period’s generally harsh economic and political climate.

Parliament’s major injunction against playhouses in September 1642 and the “Seasons of Humiliation” that followed created a sharp economic downturn for the London theatre business. According to The Actor’s Remonstrance, many theatrical practitioners were compelled to “live upon [their] shifts, or the expence of [their] former gettings, to the great impoverishment and utter undoing of [their] selves, wives, children, and dependants.”71 Beeston apparently faced no immediate threat of insolvency, however. On 15 July 1642, he married Alice Bowen, the widow of a wealthy mercer, and the rents from his inherited freehold property probably supported their quiet life in St. Giles in the Fields over the next four years. Apart from their loss of a three-year old child, there is no knowledge about the family between 1643 and 1647.72

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71 An Ordinance of both Hovses of Parliament for the Suppressing of Publike Stage-playes throughout the Kingdome during these Calamitous Times (London, 1642); Anon., The Actors Remonstrance 4.

72 Bentley transcribes the parish register wedding entry as “LC William Hutchinson alias Beeston and Alice Bowen” (“Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields” 152). “Jane Daughter of William and Alice Hutchinson als Beeston” (likely named for William’s mother) was christened on 1 April 1644 and buried 25 June 1647 (Bentley, “Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields” 153).
Beeston evidently did not support the King militarily as his acting apprentices Michael Mohun, Robert Shatterel, and Nicholas Burt did before 1647, nor is there evidence of his availing himself to Prince Charles’s court in exile. Declaring allegiance during the wars was a deeply personal matter and a memory of his imprisonment by the King’s government in 1640 may have prompted Beeston to remain politically neutral. Such a stance would be consistent with his apparent refusal to affiliate with overtly Royalist actors as they regrouped in London in 1646 and 1647. There are no apparent connections between Beeston and the Kirkes in the mid 1640s or between Beeston and Humphrey Moseley’s conspicuously royalist publishing project, the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio.\textsuperscript{73}

Nevertheless, he clearly intended to re-establish a functioning playing operation, and he apparently learned a lesson about the value of patronage from his bitter experience of 1640. Late in 1648, as London players contemptuously defied the ordinances of Parliament, he moved to acquire the Salisbury Court theatre. He did so successfully, it is now clear, because of his social familiarity with the aging Edward Sackville, fourth Earl of Dorset. I have already suggested that Beeston may have trained the Revels boys at the Salisbury Court in 1632 to help prop up the fledgling enterprise on Dorset’s property, and according to a previously unstudied letter from Beeston to Dorset’s grandson in 1679 (Appendix M), Beeston enjoyed the retired Earl’s patronage in London in the late 1640s and early 1650s.\textsuperscript{74} In 1648, the Salisbury Court’s leaseholder, John Herne, planned to convert the theatre into a brewing house. Probably in response to petitions by Beeston,

\textsuperscript{73} Beeston’s apparent alienation from this group may owe something to a dispute between his brother-in-law Theophilus Bird and other former members of the King’s Men over the disposition of prewar assets (Hotson, CR\textsuperscript{5} 32-33).

\textsuperscript{74} Centre for Kentish Studies U269/C111.
Dorset chose instead to sell the manager the lease for £700. According to surviving Chancery records, Beeston made a downpayment of £100 and occupied the building late that year. Within six months, however, before he had paid the amount owing, Parliament moved to execute the King and harshly cracked down on suspected opposition in the theatres. Early in 1649, Beeston says, “divers soldiers by force & Armes entred ye said Playhouse, Cut downe ye Seates, broke downe ye Stage & vtterly defaced ye whole buildings [sic].”

Beeston briefly changed course and resolved to acquire his father’s old theatre from the Kirkes. Being “desirous to purchase” the Cockpit, he entered into negotiations with Robert Rolleston, a claimant competing for the ground on which it stood, and agreed to terms in October 1649. Beeston would pay Rolleston £150 immediately and another £201 by 24 March 1649/50. In the winter of 1650, he returned to Drury Lane where he says he “layd out neere Two hundred pounds about the repairing & fitting the same … and also tooke prentises and Covenant Servants to instruct them in the qvality of Acting to fitt them for the said intended premisses to his greatt charge and damage.” The Kirkes’ reaction to his move is unrecorded. Clearly, though, Beeston miscalculated in his dealing with Rolleston, who had a shaky claim to ownership of the property and no legal basis for leasing the theatre at that time. Beeston afterward accused Rolleston of deliberately preventing him from discharging their bond in order to claim the value of its

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75 NA C10/53/7. Hotson discovered this suit and discusses it in CRS 100-06.

76 The following details are recounted in Beeston’s Chancery complaint against Rolleston’s widow in 1672 (NA C10/128/27). Further details emerge from Beeston’s complaint against Rolleston in June 1651 (NA C2/160/113). Hotson discovered these records and discusses them in CRS 95-96.

77 NA C 10/128/27.
security. He alleges that on the day a significant payment was due, he repaired to the
uphosterer’s London house and, finding him away, he:

Tarryed till the said Robert Rolleston came in which was not till after Sunsett and
when he came in he tendered him the said One hundred poundes and assured to
have paid itt; but [Rolleston] made Answere that hee had been all that day about
his businesse [and] … he was well neer tyred out with business, and therefore hee
desired to bee excused then from receiving the said money and that he would
receive it the next day or any other tyme and that he would not take advantage for
the non-payment.78

Unable to pin his elusive creditor down, Beeston sued him in 1651 to reclaim his initial
£150 investment and prevent what he describes as a plot to defraud him. Rolleston
counter-sued on grounds that Beeston had “slipt his day of payment.”79 Their business
ground to a halt and Beeston abandoned his claim on the Cockpit.

Fortunately, while he was between terms in prison for debt, Beeston encountered
another opportunity to acquire the playhouse in Salisbury Court. John Herne had retained
the building’s lease when Beeston’s 1648 arrangement with Dorset fell apart, and
Herne’s son now renewed plans to convert it into a brewing house.80 The elderly Earl of
Dorset continued to be displeased with this potential “Annoyance” and once more
promised Beeston the property, sweetening the offer with a promise to pay an outstanding
debt of £700 once owed to the mercer Thomas Bowen, Alice Beeston’s late husband.81

78 NA C 10/128/27.

79 Elizabeth Kirke’s answer to Beeston’s complaint survives (NA C10/35/29). She denies knowledge of a
plan to defraud her stepson and claims to be “a meere stranger” in the business. She does state that she
“hopeth that shee this defendant or her Assignes being the immediate Tenant in possession of the premises
may lawfully purchase the said Rolstons interest therein if he hath any for the bettering or securing her
Title therein,” suggesting her unwillingness to relinquish the property.

80 NA C10/53/7.

81 NA C10/53/7.
The matter looked promising, but then Beeston’s old patron fell ill and died in the summer of 1652. His heir, Richard Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and fifth Earl of Dorset, at first proceeded with the business. On 24 March 1652/53, the new Earl assigned the playhouse in trust to Theophilus Bird for £480. Beeston purportedly “sold and pawned his most necessary goods” and “tooke vp money vppon ill Condicions” to meet the Earl’s terms – which included creating a landscaped garden next to the theatre – and he spent an additional £300 to undo alterations begun by “one Lightmaker,” who “tooke down ye roofe of ye said house and was disposing it to a brewhouse.” Unfortunately, at this point Beeston’s credit reached its limit and the Earl chose to withhold the lease and leave London for a five-year excursion to France.

Beeston’s failure to take legal possession of the property’s lease on this occasion has led scholars to conclude that the playhouse lay dormant between 1652 and 1658. Yet considerable evidence contradicts this, and in fact suggests these were years of recovery and relative success for Beeston. Chancery documents discovered by Hotson, for instance, reveal that after the fifth Earl’s departure, Beeston continued to petition the estate’s overseers, Lady Frances Cranfield, Countess of Dorset, and Sir Kenelm Digby. He maintained a cordial relationship with the Countess in particular and she evidently permitted Beeston to use the playhouse while her husband was abroad. In 1654, Beeston named his second surviving son Sackfield (or Sackville), obviously to honour the

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82 The dedication printed with the 1637 quarto of Joseph Rutter’s translation of The Cid states that in addition to being a client of the fourth Earl of Dorset, Rutter served as Lord Buckhurst’s tutor (A2r-A3r). His play was “acted before their Majesties at court, and on the Cock-pit stage in Drury-lane by the servants to both their Majesties,” which may suggest Beeston was acquainted with Buckhurst as early as the 1630s.

83 NA C 10/53/7.

84 See for instance, Biographical Dictionary of Actors ... 1660-1800 1: 417.
Sackvilles’ continued patronage.\textsuperscript{85} Granted use of the playhouse, Beeston says he “entred there into and held and enjoyed the same and there was vsed in the said howse for some tyme the said Art of Stage playing vntill the Stage playing was forbidden by the powers that then were.”\textsuperscript{86} This must refer to a period between Beeston’s negotiations with the Sackvilles in 1652 and 1655-56 when Cromwell’s government again pushed hard to constrain the stage amid renewed fear of Royalist conspiracy.

Furthermore, there are clues to which plays Beeston staged during these years. Eleven prewar plays were printed for the first time in quarto or octavo between 1652 and 1656: Richard Brome’s \textit{A Jovial Crew} (1652), \textit{A Mad Couple Well Matched} (1653), and \textit{The Court Beggar} (1653), Middleton and Rowley’s \textit{The Changeling} (1653) and \textit{The Spanish Gypsy} (1653), Alexander Brome’s \textit{The Cunning Lovers} (1654), Webster’s \textit{Appius and Virginia} (1654), Daborne’s \textit{The Poor Man’s Comfort} (1655), Heywood’s \textit{Fortune by Land and Sea} (1655) Davenport’s \textit{King John and Matilda} (1655), and Ford’s \textit{The Sun’s Darling} (1656).\textsuperscript{87} The Lord Chamberlain had protected seven of the titles in

\textsuperscript{85} NA C6/297/123. Hotson discovered this Chancery case and refers to it in passing in \textit{CRS} 104. Sackfield Beeston was “about two and thirty yeares of age” in 1686, placing his date of birth in about 1654, when William Beeston was negotiating solely with the Countess.

\textsuperscript{86} NA C10/80/15. Hotson discovered this Chancery case and discusses it in \textit{CRS} 106-114. Between 1652 and 1666, Beeston identified himself as a resident of St. Bride’s parish, which suggests he moved his family into a tenement on or near the playhouse property. In 1656, the Churchwardens fined him £2, perhaps as a formal means of paying a poor-rate as theatrical managers had traditionally arranged to do, Walter Godrey, \textit{The Churchwardens of St. Bridget, Fleet Street} (London: London Survey Committee, 1944) 28.

\textsuperscript{87} The printed texts identify the respective publishers as: Humphrey Moseley (\textit{The Changeling}); Richard Marriot (\textit{The Spanish Gypsy, Appius and Virginia}); Thomas Dring (\textit{The Court Beggar}); William Sherares (\textit{The Cunning Lovers}), Thomas Sweeting and Robert Pollard (\textit{Poor Man’s Comfort, Fortune by Land and Sea}), N.E. & E.D. (\textit{A Jovial Crew}), and Andrew Penneycuicke (\textit{King John, Sun’s Darling}). Another play, W. Rider’s \textit{The Twins}, was printed by Pollard in 1655 and its title-page describes it as “Acted at the Private House at Salisbury-Court, with general Applause.” I believe this was also Beeston’s play as it was entered into the Stationers’ Register for John Sweeting (Pollard’s partner) on 20 June 1655, the same day as \textit{The Poor Man’s Comfort} and \textit{Fortune by Land and Sea}. See, \textit{A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers of London, 1640-1708}, vol. 1 (London: Privately Printed, 1913-14) 486.
1639, and Beeston likely kept possession of each during the Interregnum. Generally, a greater interest in the private reading of plays explains the increase in printed drama during the 1650s, a demand exploited by publishers like Humphrey Moseley and Richard Marriott who actively pursued rights to large catalogues of earlier seventeenth-century plays. Possibly, though, Beeston and his partner Bird chose to release some of their manuscripts strategically to the press as a way of publicizing ongoing performances at their playhouse. This theory would usefully account for the curious fact that the title pages of both *The Changeling* and *The Spanish Gypsy* refer to performances “at the Privat house in DRURY LANE, and Salisbury Court” although there is no evidence that the Salisbury Court exhibited either play before the wars. Shortly after *The Changeling* quarto appeared, “drolls” adapted from the play were also printed, perhaps another indication of its popular revival at Beeston’s theatre. There is evidence, moreover, that Beeston sought to reserve Thomas Killigrew’s *Claricilla* for performance at the Salisbury

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88 In order of appearance: *A Mad Couple Well Matched, The Changeling, The Spanish Gypsy, The Sun’s Darling, The Cunning Lovers, King John and Matilda, and Appius and Virginia* (see fig. 11).


90 Bird’s name appears next to that of the publisher and former Cockpit actor Andrew Penneycuicke beneath the dedication to *The Sun’s Darling* quarto of 1656. Bird’s will of 20 March 1663 bequeaths to his sons Theophilus and George “all my right and tyle in all the playes and playbookes that are mine” (Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills* 211).

91 There is no evidence that the two plays were transferred to the Salisbury Court by members of Queen Henrietta Maria’s Men between 1638 and 1642 as David Stevens conjectures in “The Staging of Plays at the Salisbury Court Theatre, 1630-1642,” *Theatre Journal* 31 (1979) 511-525.

92 The play was entered into the Stationers’ Register for Moseley on 12 April 1652 (*Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers* 1: 403). Excerpts are printed in *The Marrow of Complements* (London: 1653/4) 124-127. A figure identified as “Changling” also adorns the frontispiece of Francis Kirkman’s *The Wits, or, Sport upon Sport in Select Pieces of Drollery* (London: 1662). The title-page of Moseley’s edition (Q1653) records performances “at the Privat house in DRURY LANE, and Salisbury Court.” An identical heading in Marriot’s edition of *The Spanish Gyysy* (Q1653) suggests the plays were set for type together. On the bibliographical links between the texts, see George R. Price, “The Quartos of *The Spanish Gyysy* and their Relation to *The Changeling*,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 52 (1958) 111-125.
Court at this time. In March 1653, *Mercurius Democritus* reported that the “poor Comedians …[while] adventuring not long since to Act a Play called Claracila at one Mr. Gibions his Tennis Court, an ill Beest, or rather Bird (because the rest denied him a share of their profits) beshit his own nest, causing the poor Actors to be routed by the Souldiery though he himself hath since the prohibition of Playes had divers Tragedies and Comedies acted in his own house, a deed so base, that it were pitty but all Persons of Honor would still take Notice of him.”

The composite metaphors of “Beest” and “Bird” appear to evoke a partnership between William Beeston and Theophilus Bird, whose theatre, the Salisbury Court, the reporter implies, had recently showed “divers Tragedies and Comedies.” We may surmise that commercial rivalry between playhouses persisted, and when the company at Gibbons’s Tennis Court laid claim to a play belonging to Beeston or Bird without providing compensation (“the rest denied him a share of their profits”), the brothers retaliated by bringing the performance to the government’s attention, thereby befouling their “own nest,” the acting profession itself.

As the economic and political stress on playing intensified during the early 1650s, it may have become necessary to placate and bribe the Council of State’s soldiers to keep the Salisbury Court operational.

Continued activity at the playhouse between 1652 and 1656 explains why London contemporaries frequently recognized Beeston during this period as a figure steeped in

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93 *Mercurius Democritus* (9-16 March 1653) 383.


95 William J. Pinks notes a precedent for such bribery occurring at the Red Bull during Christmas and Bartholomew tide in *The History of Clerkenwell* (London: J.T. Pickburn, 1865) 194.
theatrical history, a “caretaker of cultural memory.” In 1652, the bookseller Francis Kirkman dedicated a romance to Beeston, and recounts moments of social interaction with the impresario, possibly backstage at the Salisbury Court: “Divers time (in my hearing) to the admiration of the whol[e] Company, you have most judiciously discoursed of Poësie: which is the cause I presume to chuse you for my Patron and Protector.” Kirkman also observes, for the first time, the emergence of a third generation of theatrical Beestons:

for you have I translated the Adventures and Loves of Clerio and Lozia; and I doubt not though they fail to receive incouragement from you, your son, Mr George Beeston (whom knowing men conclude, a hopeful inheritor of his Father’s rare ingenuity) may receive them with a gracious allowance.

Forty years after being “bred up” in the family “science,” William was now preparing his own son, aged about ten, for a stage career. Richard Flecknoe’s postscript to Love’s Dominion, printed in 1654, corroborates the family’s prominent public profile, referring

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97 Kirkman, “To His much honored Friend Wil. Beeston, Esq.,” The Loves and Adventures of Clerio & Lozia, A2r. R.C. Bald argues that Beeston exerted an influence on Kirkman’s publishing habits, particularly the younger man’s desire to preserve old plays, “Francis Kirkman, Bookseller and Author,” Modern Philology 41 (1943): 17-32. Kirkman’s reference to socializing with the “whol[e] Company” of his “Patron and Protector,” together with certain passages in his semi-autobiographical book, The Unlucky Citizen (1673), make it reasonably likely that he had occasion to act in Beeston’s theatre: “I studied my Pleasure and Recreation; the cheifest of which, and the greatest pleasure that I took being in seeing Stage Plays; I ply’d it close abroad and read as fast at home, so that I saw all that in that age I could, and when I could satisfie my Eye and my Ear with seeing and hearing Plays Acted; I pleased myself otherwise by reading, for I then began to Collect, and have since perfected my Collection of all the English Stage Plays that were ever yet Printed … And I have had so great an Itch at Stage-playing, that I have been upon the Stage, not only in private to entertain Friends, but also on a publique Theatre, there I have Acted, but not much nor often, and that Itch is so well laid and over, that I can content my self seeing two or three Plays in a Year” (259).

98 Kirkman, The Loves and Adventvres of Clerio & Lozia A3r-v.
to William Beeston as the “fittest Man” to produce the play. If Beeston was indeed the talkative and nostalgic figure Kirkman describes, he may well have provided the anecdotes about prewar players and playing conditions later included in Flecknoe’s treatise, “A Short Discourse of the English Stage.”

When the fifth Earl of Dorset returned to London in 1657, he immediately sought more favourable rental conditions on his prime real estate. This forced Beeston to close the playhouse, and the “ill Condicions” upon which he had borrowed money led to his imprisononment for debt. In 1658, Beeston conducted a torturous legal fight from jail to stay his eviction by Dorset. Surprisingly, by some social channel or financial settlement now obscure, he managed to secure another lease on the playhouse from the Sackvilles. The Countess may have once more intervened on his behalf or, more likely, the stirrings of a theatrical renaissance in 1659 convinced Dorset of the theatre’s potential profitability. Excitement about Charles Stuart’s return was running high, and the London players were bravely exhibiting themselves again. By the spring of 1660, three theatrical operations had resumed daily business in defiance of existing ordinances, seemingly tolerated by Major-General Monk’s transitional authority. The bookseller and former wardrobe keeper John Rhodes managed the first company at the Cockpit, which included future stars Thomas Betterton and Edward Kynaston. Michael Mohun

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100 First printed with his play *Love’s Kingdom* (London, 1664). Flecknoe’s account of Richard Burbage “wholly transforming into his Part, and putting off himself with his Cloathes, as he never (not so much as in the Tyring-house) assum’d himself again until the play was done” (G6v-7r) echoes stories that Beeston later related to John Aubrey.

101 NA C10/53/7; Hotson, *CRS* 105-106.

102 In August 1660, war veteran John Rogers petitioned the king to be compensated “for Guarding yo’ playhouses from all Molestations and Injuries … vpon the Lord Generall Monks recomendation” in late 1659 or early 1660 (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 224-226).
headed a second troupe of mostly veteran actors at the Red Bull. Beeston led the third company, to which belonged his brother and partner Bird, the comedian John Lacy, Thomas Loveday, Richard Baxter, as well as Beeston’s son George and nephew Theophilus Bird the younger. This group produced at least one very popular play at the Salisbury Court in early 1660, Tatham’s political satire *The Rump.*

Three weeks before the King landed at Dover, Beeston hired two carpenters, Edward Fisher and Thomas Silver, to rebuild sections of the theatre that since 1657 had been “neglected and vnused and became ruinous and wanted repair.” To finance the work, he mortgaged his lease to Fisher and Edwards on 5 April 1660, and they began to “amend the said Theater and all the seats and boxes and v[i]ewing roomes thereto belonging” and to prepare “a large Roome or Chamber for a danceing schoole forty foote square” A month later, the King’s bedchamber was reestablished, and the Earl of Manchester and Sir Henry Herbert were appointed Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Revels. With the institutional structures that traditionally regulated playing back in place, Beeston reflexively submitted to Herbert’s authority. In June 1660, he received a warrant “to Continue the house called Salsbury Court Play house … to Sett Lett or vse it for a Play house, wherein comedies tragedies or TrageComedies Pastoralls and Interludes may

103 A list of twenty plays acted by this troupe at this time survives, five of which (*The Traitor, Love’s Cruelty, Wit without Money, The Wedding, and Claricilla*) had belonged to the prewar Beeston repertory but which he either sold, or failed to retain (Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 222)


105 NA C 10/80/15. Hotson discovered this Chancery case and discusses it in *CRS* 108-113.

106 NA C 10/80/15. Provision of a dancing school hints at a rather grand design and coheres with Beeston’s career-long interest in theatrical instruction.
be acted.”  The essential components of the Beeston management model were therefore again in place by the summer of 1660: Beeston controlled his enterprise’s primary assets, the theatre and repertory; he led a resident acting company, reinforced by his technical expertise and bonds of kinship; and he had the backing of an influential courtier in Herbert. The Beeston family seemed poised to fulfill the expectations expressed in the panegyrics of Kirkman and Flecknoe.

**The Collapse of the Beeston Enterprise, 1660-1682**

There were critical complications, however. The first and most serious was a shift in conditions of theatrical patronage even more overwhelming than the one Beeston experienced in 1640. Although he claimed he faced “many troubles” and even was “made a prisoner vnder the late Vsurper for his Loyalty to his Majesty,” no evidence confirms that national politics ever absorbed him more than the everyday struggles of family and business. Meanwhile, the ambitious Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant were on the verge of consolidating royal patronage and monopolizing the London stage. Killigrew, a groom of the bedchamber and renowned wit, clearly understood how to manage royal favour, having travelled with the exiled Stuarts since 1647. Davenant also continued to thrive by benefactors; in March 1660, with characteristic foresight, he set aside his planned conversion of a tennis court in order to join the Stuart court in France as it prepared to return to England, putting the practical matter of preferment ahead of his theatre’s fabric. The result was a new dispensation

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107 Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship* 221.


of theatrical “Gouernment and Authority,” enshrined in a patent of 21 August 1660 granting the courtiers “full power & authority to Erect two Companies of Players Consistinge respectiuely of such persons, As they shall chuse and appoint, and to purchase builde or Erect or hire at their Charge, As they shall think fitt, [and] Two houses or Theaters” for the “Representation of Tragydies Comedyes, Playes, Operas & all other Entertainments of that nature.” The patentees swiftly moved to suppress existing commercial competition. By late summer, London’s independent managers recognized the threat and unanimously endorsed the Master of the Revels’s old system of licensing to legitimate their enterprises. To the “uniust surprise” of Herbert, however, the monopolists’ patent proved equally “distructiue to powers graunted [to him] vnder the great seale” and he petitioned for its revocation. For two years, he waged a legal campaign to reassert his former authority, without success. By the end of 1660, Killigrew and Davenant controlled a majority of the London stage’s human and material resources. The King and Duke’s new companies rapidly conscripted Beeston’s actors, along with those from the Cockpit and Red Bull companies. With two components of his

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110 BL Add. MS 19 256, f. 47 (Sir Henry Herbert’s copy of the warrant), transcribed in Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 226-228. The document’s use of the term “Gouernment” may consciously invoke the office once occupied by the Beestons at the Cockpit.

111 A draft order in Davenant’s hand dated 20 August observes that “divers persons, and Companies have assembled, and doe dayly assemble themselves together at the Play-Houses called the Red-Bull, in St. Johns Street, the Cockpit in Drury Lane, and a certaine Play-house in Salisbury Court … without the least Colour of Authority,” and requires that city constables “suppresse, and disperse … all and every such Assemblies, Companies, and meetings” (NA SP 29/10 f. 169).

112 Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 225-226.

113 Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 222-224.


business structure suddenly gone, Beeston found himself at the mercy of further innovations to come.

Davenant’s patent authorized his new Duke’s Company to occupy the Salisbury Court stage from November 1660 to June 1661, during the renovation of Lisle’s Tennis Court in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. One imagines these were uneasy months for Beeston. He perhaps retained some influence on theatrical production, for he still appears to have owned a portion of the coveted “Principal old stock” of Jacobean and Caroline plays. Samuel Pepys travelled “to Whitefriars to the Playhouse” twelve times during this period and saw acted Middleton and Rowley’s The Changeling, Massinger’s The Bondman, and “The Queene’s Maske,” (Heywood’s Love’s Mistress), all Beeston-protected plays in 1639. In other aspects of the house’s management, however, notably the supervision of income, circumstances compelled Beeston to relinquish control to Davenant and Davenant’s assistant, Betterton.

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116 An indenture between Davenant and his actors, dated 5 November 1660, records their intention to “Act Tragedies Comedies & playes in the Playhouse called Salisbury Court Playhouse” (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 223).


119 The precise arrangement between Davenant and Beeston is not known, but the latter was obviously marginalized. The profit-sharing plan between Davenant and his actors dictated that the “houserent, hirelings and all other accustomed and necessary expences” were to be first defrayed and (presumably) managed jointly by Davenant and Beeston, after which the actors’ shares were paid out. Davenant was authorized to “appoint halfe the number of the Doorekeepers necessary for y’ receipt of the said Ticketts for doores and Boxes,” which means Beeston no longer fully controlled his house’s finances (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 237).
Compounding the problem was George Jolly, another company manager authorized to use the Salisbury Court playhouse. Jolly had served in the King’s prewar company and had led an English troupe that entertained German courts throughout the Interregnum, which perhaps explains Charles’s esteem for him.120 Notwithstanding the August patent, the King licensed Jolly to form a third company on 24 December 1660 and to “purchase, build or hire” a London playhouse in which to act.121 Jolly accordingly “hired” Beeston’s stage for several months in 1661, likely just after Davenant’s departure for Lincoln’s Inn Fields in June. By the autumn, Jolly had relocated to the Cockpit in Drury Lane.122 Tenantless, Beeston petitioned the Lord Chamberlain on 28 October 1661, demanding that Jolly honour an unspecified agreement between them.123 On 13 November, Manchester ordered Jolly “not to act … at the Cockpit or any other place untill the difference and matter betwenee Mr Beeston your selfe and your Company be heard and determined,” and on 26 November, after receiving the King’s order that “George Jollyes Company of Players should act at Wm Beestons Theater in Salisbury Court,” Jolly agreed to pay Beeston a rate of 30s a day for “vse of such Roomes to dress themselues and reherse in as formerly were allowed Sr Wm Davenants players.”124 Jolly’s company did not stay long. The King soon granted him a warrant to tour, and Killigrew


121 Hotson, CRS 177-178.

122 In his suit against Fisher and Edwards in 1666, Beeston complained that “a Company of good able players whoe had fixed themselves” in his theatre had “deserted the said place and went and acted at another house” because ill-framed scantlings obstructed the view of the stage. Without the company, Beeston could “make noe rent or benefit of the said house” and was forced to make further structural repairs (NA C10/80/15).


124 NA LC 5/137 f. 36. Nicoll’s transcription of the order misrepresents the archival reference (History of Restoration Drama 309 n1).
and Davenant’s designs on his patent in 1663 ultimately prevented his return to the
London market.¹²⁵ With the veneer of legitimacy Jolly’s licence had afforded the
Salisbury Court now gone, Beeston could only cling to the dwindling authority of the
Master of the Revels. He stood witness on Herbert’s behalf during the Master’s
protracted legal battle against what he called the monopolists’ “p<re>tended
Authority.”¹²⁶ Yet even before the legal wrangling and political infighting ended,
Beeston must have known he had thrown his lot in with the wrong courtier. In the spring
of 1662, Herbert complained that Killigrew and Davenant’s players “doe refuse to pay
the said ffees and profits formerly payd and due to the said office and [have] totally
withdrawne the payment of them;” and in the summer, when the monopoly finally passed
the Privy Seal, a cadre of Davenant’s actors led by Betterton beat and detained a Revels
messenger, a clear degradation of the old administrative authority.¹²⁷ Before summer’s
end in 1662, Herbert successfully forced a financial settlement that allowed him to retain
limited regulatory authority, but he made no effort to protect Beeston. By 29 August
1663, all of Beeston’s former pretenses to legitimacy dissipated and he was arrested “for
acting stage playes without leave.” He stubbornly persisted for another year, prompting a
second warrant on 7 September 1664 ordering that he “or any other acting stage playes
by his authority” be arrested.¹²⁸

By the end of 1664, Beeston had been neutralized as a competitor in the London
market by monopolists operating at the pleasure of the King. Now in his fifties, and

¹²⁵ Hotson, CRS 179-188.

¹²⁶ Bawcutt transcribes the two surviving breviats outlining Herbert’s court evidence (Control and
Censorship 247-249, 253-256).

¹²⁷ Hotson, CRS 212; Milhous and Hume, Register of Theatrical Documents 1:33.

¹²⁸ NA LC 5/185 f. 70 and LC 5/186 f.13.
without the patronage necessary to remain an impresario, he was absorbed into Killigrew’s King’s Company at the new Theatre Royal in Bridges Street. Many of the company’s sharers had once been his acting apprentices – Mohun, Burt, Shatterel, Lacy – and he may have provided them with playbooks from his old repertory.\textsuperscript{129} New evidence shows that William’s son George joined the company at approximately the same time, and the family name appears frequently in cast lists over the next decade.\textsuperscript{130} George Beeston, it is now clear, was a servant to the Duke of Ormond in Ireland, and Ormond personally secured him a place in Killigrew’s company by letter in November 1664.\textsuperscript{131} Small roles and missed opportunities mark his early years as an actor. On 15 September 1668, Pepys saw him in “so mean a thing, as when they came to say it would be acted again tomorrow, both he that said it, Beeston, and the pit fell a-laughing – there being this day not a quarter of the pit full.” On 2 February 1668/69, Pepys again saw him stand in for an injured Kynaston: “his part is done by Beeston, who is fain to read it out of a book all the while and thereby spoils the part and almost the whole play, it being one of the best parts in it.” It was nevertheless “pleasant,” Pepys says, “to see Beeston come in with

\textsuperscript{129} A quarto copy of Ford’s \textit{Love’s Sacrifice} in the Folger Shakespeare Library (STC 11164 copy 2) is inscribed with a cast list apparently representing this company. It records an actor called “Beeson” in the minor role of Maurucio’s servant, Giacopo. The play was formerly protected for Beeston in 1639.

\textsuperscript{130} William van Lennep, ed. \textit{The London Stage 1660-1800}, vol. 1 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-1968) 70, 119, 120, 145, 148-149, 155, 162, 171-172, 202, 214, 227. It is not always clear whether “Mr Beeston” refers to father or son and Van Lennep oddly assigns certain roles to a non-existent “William Beeston Jr.” “George Beestian Comaedian” was recognized on 21 August 1669, along with Beeston’s nephew, the younger “Theophilus Bird Comaedian.” “William Beeston” is listed as a “Comaedian in Ordinary” on 10 March 1680 (Milhous and Hume, \textit{Register of Theatrical Documents} 1: 11, 201-202).

\textsuperscript{131} Bodleian Library MS Carte 145 f. 68. The letter by Ormond to Killigrew, dated 14 November 1664, reads: “I desire you to do me the fauour … that this bearer George Beeston be admitted into his Majesty’s Theater to act there upon good Condition untill I shall haue ocasion for his service wherein you will oblige your affectionate servant Ormond.” Perhaps George Beeston requested to join his father in the King’s Company, or perhaps his joining paved the way for his father’s membership thereafter.
the others, supposing it to be dark and yet … forced to read his part by the light of the candles.”

In time, the young player grew more distinguished. He acted the part of Roderigo alongside Mohun’s Iago and Burt’s Moor in *Othello*. In Dryden’s *Tyrannic Love* (1669), he played Nigrinus, an Indian conjurer whose spectacular entrance involves wielding ceremonial swords, fumigation with “Sparrows brains, and Pigeons blood” and the summoning of spirits of the air. In 1670, he acted the substantial and complex part of “warlike Ozmyn,” a noble Moor in Dryden’s hit *The Conquest of Granada*, and in Duffet’s comedy *The Amorous Old Woman*, he performed the part of Amante, a leading wit, opposite the experienced Elizabeth Boutell. It is pleasing to imagine William Beeston following his son’s development with pride, yet ongoing financial stress and personal tragedy likely overshadowed whatever minor success George Beeston enjoyed.

There are several signs of William’s Beeston’s rapidly diminishing status between 1666 and his death in 1682. The Salisbury Court playhouse did not escape the Great Fire in 1666, and Beeston had to relinquish his rebuilding rights to the carpenters Silver and Fisher, having mortgaged them the property’s lease. Problems with creditors mounted. As the King’s Company struggled to survive the aftermath of another fire

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134 On 2 July 1667, the Court of Judicature formed to settle disagreements over “houses burned or demolished by reason of the late fire” described the Salisbury Court theatre as “totally burned down and consumed” (Cunningham, “The Whitefriars Theatre” 102-108).

135 On July 1671, Robert Smyth was granted leave to sue “William Beestian” for a debt of £2 10s. On 20 August 1673 Jeramiah Stillgore petitioned for the right sue “Beestian” for a debt of £4 9s (Milhous and Hume, *Register of Theatrical Documents* 1: 128, 153).
that destroyed its Bridges Street theatre in 1672, Beeston resorted to London’s seasonal fairs for income. In January 1674/75, he sued a local vintner, Richard Francis, over a periwig purportedly lost by one Mary Farrington, “sometimes an Actor in Bartholomew ffayre in Smithfield in the publique shewes … in a Booth of your Orators.”

Farrington’s failure to return the wig, Beeston says, led Francis unjustly to call for his arrest. Perhaps closer to the pathetic truth of the matter, Francis testified that Beeston was, in fact, in his debt, not only for the periwig but for money and wine as well.

Scholars have yet to acknowledge Beeston’s involvement in the world of the late summer fairground, with its ballad singers, puppeteers, sword-handling children, and exotic animals. Elizabethan and Jacobean plays often formed the basis for colourful and popular drolls staged at Bartholomew Fair. If ownership of a booth stage drew Beeston away from the refinements of the London playhouses, it may also have allowed him to exploit whatever old plays were still in his possession.

By the later 1670s, the complex politics of the disorganized and unpopular King’s Company effectively superannuated Beeston. He admitted as much in a humble letter

\[136\] NA C10/126/6. Hotson calendars this case but does not mention the booth-stage in CRS.

\[137\] NA C10/126/6.


written on 23 November 1679 to Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset and the future Lord Chamberlain. Theatre historians have yet to study this intriguing document, which reveals the significant fact that Beeston tried his hand at writing a play in his old age, apparently in an effort to remain professionally relevant:

I am too old, and too unfortunate to hope or implore a new Patron. And had I my choice of all the Kings Court I should absolutely desire your Lordshipp being Grandchild in my esteeme to the most honourable Earle of Dorsett whom I ever found my absolute Patron vpon all applications Therefore for his sake and for my knowledge of your Lordshipps Candour and ingenuity above these twenty yeares I would peticion your honours assistance, my play that your Honourable vouchsafed to read I have since in my opinion throughly corrected and the Actors commend itt; butt they doe deferre the playing of itt because itt is still hindred by Persons of Honour writing to prefer other mens Labours. 

The company’s main playwright, Dryden, had abandoned it the year before and productivity stalled when key players refused to work under the management of the Killigrews. The organization was on the verge of financial collapse and integration with the more successful Duke’s Company, led by Thomas Betterton. Beeston’s playscript, “corrected” to suit Dorset’s taste, was perhaps an attempt to reintroduce to the London stage an older form of spoken drama, emphasizing depth of character, situation, and speech rather than expensive mechanical spectacle and operatic music. Dorset reputedly shared Beeston’s aesthetic appreciation for Jonsonian drama and typically was a generous patron, but he does not appear to have assisted the old petitioner in this instance.

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140 CKS U269/C111. Brice Harris partially transcribes this letter in Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset: Patron and Poet of the Restoration (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1940) 185-186. He attributes it, however, to an “unknown playwright” named “William Reeston.” One the basis of Beeston’s previous association with the Sackvilles, and the total absence of other evidence for “Reeston,” I think it virtually certain that Beeston wrote the letter. Harris speculates that Dorset “must have found [it] difficult to resist” the letter’s “certain family claims” (186), but the loss of the play in question and Beeston’s retirement shortly thereafter suggest otherwise.

141 Dorset was an early supporter of Dryden and the dedicatee of his Essay of Dramatick Poesie in 1667.
Competition for the backing of “Persons of Honour” was as energetic for playwrights as for managers and Beeston’s labour apparently failed to rejuvenate his company’s fortunes. Now about the age of seventy and a minor player in a floundering enterprise, Beeston must have been cognizant of the damage done by his chronic failure to attract the support of powerful men.

By 1681, he had retired from the stage. The actor John Lacy directed John Aubrey to visit him in Shoreditch during the antiquarian’s hunt for biographical material on poets, players, and their contemporaries. “Old Mr Beeston,” Aubrey noted, was “not a company keeper,” “would not be debauched,” and “if invited to court, [he] was in pain.” When Aubrey wrote to his friend Anthony Wood on 1 September 1681, he could not recall Beeston’s name, nor the name of the family’s old playhouse: “I have mett with old Mr … who knew all the old English poets, whose lives I am taking from him: his father was master of the … playhouse.” The epithet “old” may have carried the respect of the antiquary, but it was also dispassionately literal. A year later, Aubrey informed Wood that “Old Mr. Beeston, whom Mr Dreyden calles ‘the chronicle of the stage,’ died at his house in Bishopsgate street without, about Bartholomew-tyde, 1682,” adding “Mr Shipey in Somerset-house hath his papers.”

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142 Bodleian MS Aubr. 8, f. 45, transcribed by Clarke in, Aubrey, Brief Lives 1: 97. Chambers believed “court” to be a mistranscription of “writ” (i.e. “if invited to writ, was in pain”) in MSC 1.4-5: 341-347. In either case, Beeston is represented as a private man who has retired from the “debauched” trends of the Restoration court and theatre.

143 Bodleian MS Wood F 39, f. 357, in Aubrey, Brief Lives 1: 96-97. Beeston’s anecdotes are trivial but fascinating: Edmund Spenser was “a little man, wore short haire, little band and little cuffs”; Ben Jonson had “one eye lower then t’other and bigger”; Shakespeare was “in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the countrey”; Sir John Suckling “invented the game of cribbidge,” marked his gaming cards, and took credit for Sir Francis Corwallis’s portion of Aglaura (Brief Lives 2: 14, 223, 224, 245, 227).

144 Bodleian MS Aubr. 7 f. 6 in Aubrey, Brief Lives 1: 97. “Shipey” is Thomas Sheppey, the actor and a family friend.
Social and economic historians have analyzed the threats that “biological hazards” posed to the long-term stability of seventeenth-century businesses. Death, lack of interest, and incompetence all had the potential to prevent the children of businesspeople from preserving their parents’ financial gains and traditional practices.\(^{145}\) 1675 marks the last known acting performance by George Beeston, once the “hopeful inheritor” of his father’s business. His absence from William Beeston’s will suggests he died before 1682. The same document promises legacies of money to William’s younger son, Sackfield and to “Benaniah Beeston the reputed sonne of George Beeston,” but the family’s degraded professional standing likely discouraged them from pursuing stage careers.\(^{146}\) At minimum, three conditions were necessary for the successful transmission of a functioning business to a new generation: (a) early instruction and socialization, principally within the business family but also within a wider network or community; (b) access to material resources or capital; and (c) access to opportunity. Christopher Beeston’s good standing in the Jacobean and Caroline theatrical world assured William Beeston of all three, but the destabilizing effects of war, damaged and liquidated resources, and shrinking opportunities for patronage made it impossible for William’s sons or grandson to benefit in the same way. Although kinship remained the primary basis for organizing business in the later seventeenth century, patterns of association were becoming increasingly “ego-centred.” The bilateral (rather than patrilineal) movement of individuals into traditions and professions alternative to those of their parents tended to


\(^{146}\) Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills* 219-221, 237-238. The resale value of the family’s many “old” household goods amounted to just over £12, and the £7 annual provision for Sackfield is considerably less than the £20 annuity given to William in 1638, another index of the family’s reduced financial condition.
render household businesses structurally impermanent.\textsuperscript{147} Sackfield Beeston’s aspirations clearly diverged from those of his father and grandfather, and he expressed no apparent pride in their earlier theatrical achievements. He was estranged from the family by the time his mother, Alice, composed her will in 1686. She discontinued his annuity before her death, dividing what remained of the family’s estate between her grandson Benaniah and the actor Thomas Sheppey. Sackfield bitterly contested his disinheri-
tance in the court of Chancery that year, and bleakly complained of his inability to provide financially for four children (Appendix N).\textsuperscript{148} The otherwise obscure Benaniah Beeston, meanwhile, having seemingly mismanaged his inherited tenement in King’s Head Yard, relocated to St. Giles Cripplegate where, in 1713, he petitioned the Middlesex Sessions of the Peace concerning his payment of the poor rate.\textsuperscript{149} By the early eighteenth century, economic hardship had apparently become endemic among descendants of the theatrical Beestons. “Mobility was downward as well as upward,” as Richard Grassby observes, and like other seventeenth-century business families, the theatrical Beestons inhabited “a two generational world.”\textsuperscript{150} When William Beeston died in 1682, the half a century bridging the lives of his theatrical father and his non-theatrical children suddenly became a chasm.


\textsuperscript{148} Alice Beeston’s will (NA PROB 11/384, f. 174-176) is dated 24 May 1686 and she died in October. Sackfield Beeston married Ann Taylor on 10 February 1672 in the parish of St. Marylebone London according to the online \textit{International Geneological Index} (http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp). Hotson catalogues the Chancery case against Shippey (NA C6/297/123) in \textit{CRS} but does not discuss it.

\textsuperscript{149} LMO MJ/SP/1713.

\textsuperscript{150} Grassby, \textit{Business Community} 328, 387.
This chapter has argued that William Beeston’s theatrical career did not fail because he lacked technical expertise or the commercial acumen of his father. His stage career was, in fact, the longest and most durable of any in the Beeston family and, on the eve of the Restoration, he headed a promising enterprise at the Salisbury Court modelled closely on the family’s earlier successful venture in Drury Lane. William Beeston’s deeper problem was his inability to keep a handle on the unstable, legitimating support of the Stuart court. His father’s connections to benefactors such as the Earl of Pembroke and Queen Henrietta Maria before 1638 and William Davenant’s promotion by Endymion Porter and later Charles II clearly demonstrate that patronage was not simply useful to theatre managers at this time, but essential. I have suggested that the younger Beeston’s strained relationship with the court first becomes evident in 1640 amid the controversy surrounding his staging of Brome’s *The Court Beggar*, a miscalculated effort to discredit Beeston’s better-connected rival, Davenant. When the majority of courtiers evacuated London during the civil wars, there temporarily opened up a space in which Beeston could advance his theatrical interests at the Salisbury Court, assisted by local patrons, the fourth Earl of Dorset and the Countess of Dorset. In the early 1650s, to an extent not fully acknowledged by theatre historians, Beeston used his remaining assets to re-establish a prominent place for his family in a theatrical industry that was quietly reconstituting itself despite repressive conditions. But his upturn in fortune was shortlived. Political shifts in 1660 and natural accidents thereafter fatally undermined both his professional stature and his capacity to bestow his business to his descendants. Killigrew and Davenant’s court-sanctioned monopoly suppressed all viable commercial
competition; fire reduced the Salisbury Court to ash; George Beeston apparently died; and Sackfield and Benaniah Beeston recoiled from the theatre business.

Within months of William Beeston’s death, mismanagement and internal dissent put so great a strain on the King’s Company that, in desperation, it amalgamated with the better organized Duke’s Company to form a single patented organization under the practical management of Thomas Betterton. Like the Beestons who quietly foreshadowed him, Betterton was technically proficient, commercially astute, and well supported by the Stuart court. Within the Restoration patent system, commercially viable companies required precisely this configuration of elements to function, and those led by court speculators or non-specialist investors typically struggled.  

At the turn of the century, James Wright’s *Historia Histrionica* (1699) would invoke the Beeston name a final time as a metonymn for the sort of “honest and old” experience by then regarded as essential to the theatrical manager. Truman, an aging and nostalgic Cavalier, dimly remembers “Beeston” – an apparent conflation of Christopher and William – as a prewar figure significant for having once trained the Restoration’s best actors. A decade later, the name seems to have “grown out of knowledge” entirely. Another eighty years would pass before Edmond Malone would initiate its rediscovery in original documents while pioneering the modern historiographical study of the early English stage.

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152 Wright, *Historia Histrionica* 1-3.

153 I borrow this phrase from John Stow (*Survey of London* 1:151). “Mr. Beeston,” an obscure music instructor and violinist, possibly carried on the family’s tradition of entertaining and coaching into the eighteenth century. Benefit concerts on his behalf (at which he performed solos) occurred at Wax Chandler’s Hall in Gresham Street on 17 October 1711 and Orlibeer’s School on 28 November 1712 (van Lennep, *The London Stage* 1660-1800 2: 289).
CONCLUSION

While conducting research for this study, I have frequently been struck by the rather morbid awareness that for every new particle of information I might locate about my subject, countless others must remain irrecoverably lost. Does the evidence exist to demonstrate that Christopher Beeston confiscated costumes from Queen Anne’s Men and used the proceeds to launch his managerial career? Was Elizabeth Beeston (Lady Kirke), in fact, a Royalist intelligencer in 1643? What happened to William Beeston’s seemingly unproduced play manuscript, read by the Earl of Dorset in 1679? A question that has perhaps most absorbed my imagination concerns the fate William Beeston’s household goods after the old manager’s death. In the spring of 1683, his neighbours Richard Garnon and William Kidgell dutifully surveyed his belongings and compiled an inventory of his “singuler goodes Chattelles and credites.” Beeston’s house contained mostly “old” things: old glass bottles, old lumber in the garret, old linens, an old chest. Intriguingly, in the first chamber, or best bedroom, there hung “4 old pictures.”¹ The inventory tells us nothing further about these pictures, but they seem to have been closet pieces, displayed in a room that traditionally doubled as a space to entertain visitors. Were they devotional icons? Dutch landscapes of the popular sort? Or might they have been family portraits of Christopher, William, and George Beeston, three generations of expressive faces and gesturing hands in the style of other surviving paintings of seventeenth-century players?² In this instance, our total lack of surviving information

¹ For Beeston’s inventory (GL MS 9052/23), see Honigmann and Brock, Playhouse Wills 237-238.

about their physical appearance inevitably influences both the emphasis we might desire to place on this sliver of textual information and the significance we might wish it to yield.

This sort of frustrating indeterminacy is familiar to all theatre historians, who will therefore appreciate why the narrative structuring this thesis remains necessarily incomplete. In Sir Thomas Browne’s words, “oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy.”

Nothing guarantees that those fragments of the past that reach us will answer the questions we may wish to put to them. Moreover, as theorists of history have long recognized, “the ‘object’ that the historian studies is not only incomplete, it is markedly variable as records are lost or rediscovered.”

If a forgotten set of Christopher Beeston’s daily memoranda suddenly emerges from an attic trunk, many of our assumptions about the man and his practice surely will be called into question. The very scarcity and contingency of historical evidence make the new archival sources brought to light by this thesis valuable, but simultaneously they ensure that the narrative it constructs is provisional and subject to future modification.

The new facts discussed in this study are primarily biographical in nature and afford fresh glimpses of the social and professional networks to which individual members of the Beeston family belonged. Chapter One has established Christopher Beeston’s connection to the wealthy, land-owning Sands (Sandys) clan of Lancashire following his marriage to Jane Sands in 1602. This union forged useful bonds of kinship between the young player and the veteran actor-manager Robert Browne, and the social

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and financial respectability it imparted rapidly advanced Beeston to a position of leadership within Queen Anne’s company. Chapter Two has documented Beeston’s financial investments in non-theatrical London properties, including the Caroline gambling house known as Shaver’s Hall and two upscale townhouses in Covent Garden. The pattern of affiliation underlying this activity now allows us to place Beeston among the clientele of the aristocratic Herbert family, particularly that of Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke and Lord Chamberlain. Beeston’s talent for networking beyond the playhouse, we may now see, assisted his climb to prominence as a theatre manager during the 1630s and informed his court appointment as theatrical Governor in 1637. Furthermore, it strongly supports S.P. Cerasano’s recent claim that patronage was a fundamental dimension of managerial success in the early seventeenth century.5

Chapters Three and Four have shed further light on the Beeston family’s social and political connections after 1642. An audit of Chancery records first analyzed by Leslie Hotson in The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage has revealed previously unexamined testimony in a mid-century legal dispute over the Cockpit, evidence that points to the deeper involvement of Sir Lewis Kirke and his family in the management of that theatre after Christopher Beeston’s death. The same documents argue for a greater recognition of Elizabeth Beeston’s achievement as the first woman to manage a purpose-built commercial playhouse in London. Of the new evidence surveyed in Chapter Four, the 1679 letter of appeal written by William Beeston to the Earl of Dorset perhaps best illustrates the family’s crippling inability to hold onto patronage, the root cause of its late seventeenth-century decline. Although Dryden could generously acknowledge Beeston as a “chronicle of the stage,” the old manager’s exhausted capacity to court noble

5 Cerasano, “Philip Henslowe and the Elizabethan Court,” 57.
sponsors ultimately reduced him to operating a fairground booth and taking undistinguished parts in the struggling King’s company.

In addition to expanding our general knowledge of individual Beeston family members, the facts outlined above have made it possible to structure a detailed new narrative of their collective involvement in the developing world of seventeenth-century theatrical management. Although the Beestons would virtually slip from London’s memory after 1682, the management model they refined played an important role in theatrical business throughout the century and after. As I have demonstrated, this model put formerly separate forms of authority at the disposal of a single managerial figure responsible for controlling a venture’s major assets, personally securing court patronage, and bringing technical expertise to bear in daily practice. A brief concluding survey of the successes and failures of key managers of the later seventeenth century will illustrate the lasting efficiency of this configuration.

The strength of the Beeston model depended on its careful balance of practical expertise and a stable, advantageous personal patronage. More than once, failure to maintain this balance would precipitate commercial problems for a London operation. William Beeston’s long experience and accumulated material resources made him a strong commercial contender in the London market on the eve of the Restoration but aspiring managers with better connections to the returning Stuart court rapidly neutralized and displaced him. Beeston, like Rhodes and Jolly, was clearly a casualty of the theatrical monopoly granted to court favourites William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew. The management system that Davenant proceeded to institute for the Duke’s Company was, for the most part, highly successful and, not surprisingly, it closely
resembled the one earlier employed by Christopher and William Beeston. There were obvious differences in scale since stage machinery and costuming greatly increased the costs of Restoration productions. With the advent of young female performers, the company’s internal dynamic and method of maintaining apprentices changed slightly as well. Yet Davenant otherwise seems to have deliberately replicated the Beeston’s style of management. He prioritized ownership of the playing venue by investing in the Lincoln’s Inn Fields theatre in 1661 and planning the magnificent Dorset Garden theatre before his death, a project completed by his family in 1671. Like Beeston, Davenant sought to retain between a third and a half of the total shares in the playing company he governed. He also regularly reinvested a portion of his shares in the theatre’s fabric, its tiring house, its repertory, and in the training of new players, thereby exerting considerable artistic control over production and its alignment with the tastes of his courtly patrons and upscale commercial clientele. When Davenant died in 1668, his protégé Thomas Betterton took over his practical managerial responsibilities along with Henry Harris (and later William Smith), while Davenant’s wife and sons continued to provide the Duke’s Company with its legitimating patent. From his residence in one of the “Front Houses adjoining to the Theatre,” Betterton worked to discipline and instruct apprentices, stood as chief consultant for theatrical production, adapted old scripts, commissioned new ones, and, as the leading player, he served as the public face of the

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6 Articles of agreement with the Duke’s players signed in November 1660 assign Davenant four of fourteen “p<ro?porcons or shares,” two of which were to be paid “towards the house rent buildinge scaffoldinge and makeinge of fframes for Scenes,” another used “for provision of Habitts Properties and scenes for a supplement of the said theatre” (Bawcutt, Control and Censorship 236-240). After moving to the Lincoln’s Inn Fields playhouse, Davenant managed an additional seven shares out of fifteen for the purpose of training and maintaining the company’s young female players (Highfill Jr., Burnim, and Langhans, Biographical Dictionary 4: 182).
Duke’s successful company. The essential components of the Beeston system thus remained firmly in place: the Duke’s venture functioned because of the work of a central manager, a figure endowed with practical skill and good commercial sense, propped up by the patronage of the court.

By contrast, problems of mismanagement repeatedly hindered the King’s Company, the second of the patented ventures after 1660. If William Beeston’s late career is a case study in the danger of losing patronage, Thomas Killigrew’s unsteady handling of the King’s Company illustrates the related problem of a deficient capacity to handle everyday theatre business. Killigrew’s essential value was the good will that Charles II showed him, his reward for political loyalty throughout the Interregnum. Pepys likened him to “the King’s fool or jester,” a man able “with privilege [to] revile or jeere any body … without offence.” Although the King’s client, he was nevertheless negligent in practical decision making, preferring to delegate daily company affairs to various senior players such as Mohun, Burt, and Hart. The age and prewar habits of these veterans led them to resist theatrical innovation and the King’s Company was slower to adapt to the Restoration taste for elaborate painted scenes, female performers, and opera. Even with the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson in its repertory, Killigrew’s company struggled to compete commercially with Davenant’s players. Killigrew’s handling of the enterprise’s finances, moreover, was incompetent. Despite perpetual petitions to the King for profitable offices and estates, debt consumed him. He eventually pawned his shares in the King’s playhouse along with his shares in the company and even his patent. Trust among the actors broke down and they threatened to walk out.

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Killigrew’s son, Charles, a manager in waiting, was suspected of secretly selling off clothes from the tiring house, and the Killigrews, in turn, accused players of taking money directly from the box office. By the late 1670s, matters had become so chaotic that the King ordered the Lord Chamberlain to arbitrate. In 1682, by royal command, the Duke’s Company finally absorbed what remained of Killigrew’s financially depleted and dysfunctional enterprise.\textsuperscript{9}

This is not the place to rehearse the entire complicated history of the unification of the patents in May 1682 and Betterton’s breakaway enterprise at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, but a glance at affairs before the turn of the eighteenth century offers a final indication of the lasting influence of the Beeston management system.\textsuperscript{10} Betterton and the patent holders oversaw the united company in a relatively settled fashion for the next five years. Central to this stability was the steady managerial hand of Betterton, who now operated in consultation with the patent-holding sons of William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew. The familiar structure of practical experience joined with firm court patronage functioned efficiently until 1687, when one of Davenant’s sons sought to buy out his brother’s interest with borrowed money. When he defaulted on his obligations and fled the country, the door opened for his creditors to move in and seize shares and the Davenant patent from the shocked company. Christopher Rich, a lawyer, and Thomas Skipwith, a speculator, were pragmatic men of business, outsiders with no previous theatrical experience and little respect for playhouse tradition. According to the players, suddenly thrust under new management by strangers, the operation rapidly deviated from “the

\textsuperscript{9} For Killigrew’s managerial problems, see Highfill Jr., Burnim, and Langhans, \textit{Biographical Dictionary} 9: 7-17, and Milhous, \textit{Thomas Betterton} 31-37.

\textsuperscript{10} For the best account of the Union of 1682 and related events, see Milhous, \textit{Thomas Betterton} 37-79.
whole Course & method” that Davenant and Betterton had set out. Rich and Skipworth slashed the company’s production budget, denied pensions to retiring players, cut senior players’ salaries, promoted younger men and women, whom they found more pliable, and cancelled traditional payments to the parish. Central company members formally complained to the Lord Chamberlain in 1694 of having their “just Rights & privelidges taken … by the New Managers of the playhouse,” and of being handled “not as … the King & Queenes servants but the Claimers slaves.” General dissension and a power struggle ensued, and Betterton departed the next year to run an independent collective of established actors in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Rich proceeded to manage his patented organization until 1709, and although he had a strong hand and sought to replenish the company with young talent (such as Colley Cibber), contemporaries continued to view him as an unqualified interloper. Unlike Betterton, whom critics appreciated for having “all along been bred on the Stage,” Rich was deemed a “Monarch of the Stage, tho’ he knows not how to govern one Province in his Dominion.” As in Killigrew’s case, Rich’s operation lacked a crucial dimension of managerial success. He appears to have fundamentally misunderstood, or simply ignored, the settled practices and mindset of the players. They interpreted this as callousness and an absence of aesthetic sense and they grew resentful. Colley Cibber, the eighteenth-century actor, playwright, and eventually

11 NA LC 7/3 f.2-4, transcribed in Milhous, Thomas Betterton 225-229.

12 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 51-74. While both Rich and Skipworth technically held the patent once belonging to the Davenants, only Rich appears to have involved himself in practical matters of theatrical management.

13 Anonymous, A Comparison Between the Two Stages (London, 1702). The critic, Chagrin, an obviously biased observer, also calls Rich “an old snarling Lawyer Master and Sovereign; a waspish, ignorant pettifogger in Law and Poetry” and “one who understands Poetry no more than Algebra; he wou’d sooner have the Grace of God than do everybody Justice” (14-16).
also a talented manager, climbed the ranks in Rich’s employ and later looked back on Rich’s incapacity to work with actors as a concrete lesson for his own executive career:

My having been a Witness to this unnecessary Rupture was of great use to me, when many Years after, I came to be a Manager myself. I laid it down as a settled Maxim, that no Company could flourish while the chief Actors, and the Undertakers were at variance. I therefore made it a Point, while it was possible, upon tolerable Terms, to keep the valuable Actors in humour with their Station.  

Throughout this study, I have attempted to bridge a notable gap that separates the scholarly study of theatrical management practiced before 1642 and after 1660. As the language of the players’ petition against Rich cited above clearly shows, the late seventeenth-century profession came to recognize the theatrical “Manager” as an executive figure in possession of a patent that signified royal patronage as well as a significant stake in the building used by the patented company and in the company itself. Christopher Beeston, as I have argued, gave definitive shape to this conception of the manager by folding together existing forms of theatrical authority and vesting them in a single professional position. The Caroline court institutionalized his practice by designating him the first theatrical “Governor” in 1637. The Beeston management model eventually migrated to the Restoration stage. Davenant did not spontaneously invent this system, as theatre historians sometimes assert, but rather was instrumental in adapting it to accommodate Restoration innovations such as expensive stage machinery and the introduction of female performers.  

Adopting a long view on the development of seventeenth-century theatrical management allows us to recognize that the successful

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15 Bentley suggests Davenant first implemented the system while Governor at the Cockpit in 1640 (*JCS* 6: 74-75), though it is more logical to think that he was exposed to the Beestons’ existing system at that time and then emulated it after 1660.
enterprises of Davenant and Betterton and the troubled operations of Killigrew and Rich had as much to do with the structure of their enterprises as with the vicissitudes of commerce and politics. Like their influential predecessors the Beestons, Davenant and Betterton would lay the groundwork for a pragmatic tradition that viewed management as an inseparable component of theatrical art, a tradition that would eventually come to include such great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actor-managers as David Garrick (1717-1779), John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), Charles Kean (1811-1868), and Sir Henry Irving (1838-1904).
FIGURES

Fig. 1. Lord Chamberlain’s warrant to Christopher Beeston, 21 February 1636/37 (NA LC 5/134 f. 151).

Fig. 2. Lord Chamberlain’s warrant to William Beeston, 5 April 1639 (NA LC 5/134 f. 326).
Fig. 3. Lord Chamberlain’s warrant to William Davenant, 27 June 1640 (NA LC 5/134 f. 405).
Fig. 4. “Cockpitt Playes appropriated,” 10 August 1639 (NA LC 5/134 f. 337).
Fig. 5. Covent Garden piazza, c. 1647 (Wenceslaus Hollar Collection, plate 909, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto). Christopher Beeston built and owned two of the townhouses with shaded frontage facing St. Paul’s Church, to the far left.
Fig. 6. Philip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke. (Wenceslaus Hollar Collection, plate P1481, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto).
Fig. 7. England’s Honour Revived (London, 1628) sheet 1. National Library and Archives of Canada.
The second Part: To the same Tune.

For the Ladye's Shipps of England,
Comminge from farther springs and
Those the gill of their number by their might,
Howe shall them bensee and quoyle alle
That with haue faile in their of victuell and quoyes.
For why it is declared,
That this French shippe could,
Found in all enoughe to winne three yeares
And further instrution,
Of the hope and new plantation,
No longer time made account as well appeares.

But now all surprised
As it is seen
Thus more land-men had bin in our Fleet.
The loss had bin ouer;
And for the King of England woon,
It makes that we long for more soode.

In this therefore Ballad as I have sai
By our English men wone,
V Quit was a pitious object to behold,
But twice better it goe to
Then they have left them for our ease.
For we let more than bury well we could.

Thus our valiant Captain Kirk,
Did the Deceawe foundy ibr,
And part with honour victual's native land
Oh had we any like him,
Then England would in credit wone.
And France and Spain could not allink us stand.

Our precious King and Queen God save,
V With all the Princi Conquell grace,
And end related to Reddem in discreet.
Oh whom soe early meane doth haue,
Let Heaveny power at last prevel.
Among my sae are these the true Faith profess.

For this the shippe of England,
Comminge from farther springs and
Those the gill of their number by their might,
Howe shall them bensee and quoyle alle
That with haue faile in their of victuell and quoyes.
For why it is declared,
That this French shippe could,
Found in all enoughe to winne three yeares
And further instrution,
Of the hope and new plantation,
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V Quit was a pitious object to behold,
But twice better it goe to
Then they have left them for our ease.
For we let more than bury well we could.

Thus our valiant Captain Kirk,
Did the Deceawe foundy ibr,
And part with honour victual's native land
Oh had we any like him,
Then England would in credit wone.
And France and Spain could not allink us stand.

Our precious King and Queen God save,
V With all the Princi Conquell grace,
And end related to Reddem in discreet.
Oh whom soe early meane doth haue,
Let Heaveny power at last prevel.
Among my sae are these the true Faith profess.
Fig. 8. Imaginative depiction of the Kirkes below Quebec in 1629, from Louis Hennepin, *Nouvelle decouverte d'un tres grand pays situé dans l'Amérique entre le Nouveau Mexique, et la mer glaciale* (A Utrecht: Chez Guillaume Broedelet, Marchand Libraire, 1697). Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto
Fig. 9. Kirke’s signature, from articles of capitulation of Quebec, 1629 (LAC MG18-N1)

Fig. 10. Kirke’s signature, 1634-1637 (NA SP 16/299 f. 46, SP16/300 f. 50, 115, 131 SP 16/303 f. 97, 125, SP 16/319 f. 43, SP 16/322 f. 110).
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Folger Shakespeare Library
MS Y.c.123

12 / 12 / ’32

Portland House,
Bognor Regis
Sussex, England

To Professor Quincy Adams /

Dear Sir /

I have just finished making nine copies of the Beeston pedigree for my nine nephews &
nieces as part of their Xmas present & as said pedigree dates back to the 13th century the
task – altho’ pleasant – was scarcely a light one.

To each copy I have appended a list of books to be consulted when these young people
are old enough to study the subject for themselves, & in the list appears this paragraph:
“For an appreciation of the work of Christopher & William Beeston read Professor
Quincy Adam’s “Life of William Shakespeare”. And if said book gives them as much
pleasure as it did me, they will surely thank me for the introduction. Having arrived thus
far, I considered that I might just as well thank you
myself – not only for a most
interesting, lucid & scholarly biography, but for its incidental references to the pioneer
work of Christopher & William Beeston in the beginnings of the theatre in England.

A fact not generally known is that both these men laboured under extraordinary
difficulties throughout their lives, for they were staunch “Papists & recusants” in times
when to be suspected of a leaning in this direction was to court fines, imprisonment, &
often death. Hence Christopher’s alias of Hutchinson, altho’ this did not
save him. He & his first wife – Jane – were three times prosecuted & heavily fined for
“not going to church”. This in 1615, 1616 & 1618.

Hence too the intolerable usage of William, throughout his life, by those who knew his
secret & sought to profit by his handicap.

Professor Leslie Hotson has been singularly unjust to William Beeston in his book “The
Commonwealth & Restoration Stage”, & it is quite obvious that his views are based upon
ignorance of the actual facts. Obvious to me – that is. The said book (unlike your own)
is not readily obtainable from the circulating libraries in England, & when I asked the
reason, I was told that “it’s a text book, & not suitable for general reading”.
But my own idea of a “text-Book” is that it should be absolutely accurate, & I am much concerned that one which mistakenly labels a member of my family as an “ill Beest” and a “traitor” should be circulated among students in the United States. The accusation was originally aimed at Theophilus Bird, & in any case was too trifling to deserve Professor Hotson’s limelight.

I must write to him, altho’ I “feel in my bones” that he is not a sympathetic & understanding person like yourself, & that he will probably say “What is done is done, & cannot be undone”.

I should like to know your opinion on this subject, if it will not bother you too much.

Believe me, dear sir, with
Renewed thanks & best wishes,

        Sincerely yours,
        H.M. Beeston.

(Miss)
This Indenture tripartite made the one and twentyeth day of November in the yeares of the raigne of our soueraigne Lorde Iames by the grace of God of Englanede Scotland sffraunce and Ireland kinge defender of the the fflayth & that is to saye of England sffraunce and Ireland the thirde & of Scotland the nyne & thirtyeth Betweene Alice Burnell of the parishe of Saint Leonarde in Shorediche in the County of Middlesex widowe of the firste party Edwine Sands of ffurnesfells in the County of Lancaster gentleman of the seconde partie & Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston of the saide parishe gentleman of the thirde partie Witnesseth that whereas the saide Alice Burnell & Edwine Sandes the daye of the date of the presents are and stande seised of a good & perfecte state of Inheritance eyther in the Coparciny or as Tenants in Common or in some other sorte vndevidedly, that is to saye the saide Alice Burnell of one whole thirde Parte or Purpartyes of and in All that mesuage or Tenemente sometymes two Tenements nowe called & knowen by the name and Signe of the King’s Head in the parishe of Saint Leonard in Shordiche in the saide County of Middlesex. And of and in all that Gardins and the Yards Stables & Backsydes with all and singular their & euerie of theire appertenuances vnto the said mesuage or Tenemente belonginge or apperteyninge sometymes in the tenure of Iane Man widowe deceased sometymes the wife of Robert Man of the sayde parishe of Saint Leonardes deceased. Nowe aswell for a Particion to be made of the said mesuage and of all and singular the premisses (savinge and exceptinge so muche thereof as is hereafter expressed and appoynted to be used in Common) as also for the avoydinge of all Strifes and Controuersies that may hereafter happen eyther betweene the saide Alice & Edwine concerninge their saide seuerall Partes or Purpartyes of the same shold remayne & contynue vnto them vndevyded or between the saide Edwine & the saide Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston (which saide Christofer by Agreement betweene the saide Alice & him is to become tenant of some parte of her saide Parte or Purparty from and ymmedietly after the insealing & deliuery of these presents) by reason that <hee> the saide Christofer Hitchinson nowe holdinge acertaine Close of meadowe or pasture lyenge on the backsyde of the saide mesuage or Tenemente towards there place there called the Curtayne intendeth to have ingress egress & passinge thervnto by thorow the saide further yarde of the saide mesuage or Tenemente. It is Therefore covenanted granted and agreed by and between the said partes to theise presents in maner and forme folowinge. That is to saye firste that the saide Alice Burnell shal have for her thirde Parte Purparty or Porcison of the saide mesuage and premisses (excepte before excepted) These Roomes folowinge parcell of the premisses that is to saye the kitchin on the weste syde of the larder abuttinge vpon the stone Parlour the saide Longe Parlour and over the same a Chamber, and over that, a Garrett, The new buyldinge conteyninge three Roomes adioyninge to the weste ende of the saide Longe Parlour. One Stable adjoyninge on the weste syde of the saide Stable with a Little Longe plotte behynde the said Stable abuttinge on the Sowthe side of the Gardine of Edmonde Moore and the other parte of the saide Gardine & yarde [ink faded] ratably devided according to
the oddes and difference of there seuerall Purpartyes and to be abutted to the South side thereof with the Casements and Commodities only belonging to the same Roomes Lasts [ink faded] and that the sayde Edwinn Sands shall have for his saide two Partes Purpartyes or thirde parts of the saide mesuage premisses (exceopt before excepted) All the reste of the said [ink faded] premisses so dividable or partible as is aforesaide and the saide Alice Burnell & Edwine Sands and eyther of them for her & herself her and his heyres executours and administratours doe for the better [ink faded] and establishment of the said Partition so made as is aforesaied Covenanted & graunte edyer of them with the other by these presents to saide to & agree vnto the saide Partition & to permite & suffer the same to remayne and abyde in full force & strength for ever to and for the only vse & behalfe of the saide Alice and Edwine their heyres & assignes for ever And that edyer of them and their heyres and assigns shall hold themselves contented with the saide Partition and division and with there saide Partes Purpartyes and Portions to them severally appoynted and allotted as aforesaied And it is further agreed by and betweene the said Alice & Edwine by these presents that all & euery the writinge & evidences concerninge the premisses or any parte thereof shall be delyvered into such safe Custody as by Edwarde Hake Esquyre shall be advised in writinge [ink faded] behalf vnder his hande as whereby edyer of the saide Partyes vnto the saide Partition may have the same writinge & Evidences and seuerall Copyes thereof where with to defende the Tytle of the premisses [ink faded] and as often as there shalbe Cause thervnto provided always and it is agreed by an betweene the saide Alice Burnell & Edwine Sands by theise presents That the auntient passage or entry from the Strete the next Courte yarde with the well & the yarde beyonde the well called the stable yarde and the Shedde of Boords in the saide Stable yarde shall remayne in Common and in such sorte as if theise presents had never bine made and it is condiscended concluded Covenanted and agreed by and between all the said three parties to these presents Indentures alternatly and respectively euery of them to other That so long as the said Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston shall have any Tytle or Intereste in or to the aforesaide Close of meadowe or pasture at the backside of the saide mesuage as is aforesaide no only hee the saide Christofer Hitchinson & his Assignes occupyers of the saide Close shall have way & passage ingresse & egressse into and from the same thorowe the said further yarde of the saide mesuage for the bringing in & owt of horses kine & sheepe as the saide Christofer & his assigns occupyers of the saide Little Close shall from tyme to tyme be occasioned to putte into the saide Close But also the saide Alice Burnell & Edwine Sands and eyther of their heyres or Assignes of their saide seuerall Purpartyes shaall have Lueue Liberty & power from time to tyme to bringe into the saide Close all such horses as they or eyther of them their either of their heyres or Assignes of their said said seuerall Purpartyes shalbe occasioned to have or keepe within theire saide seuerall Purpartyes of the saide mesuage Only for the washinge and wateringe the saide horses in the pale or watering place of the saide Close & not otherwise nor to any other ende or purpose And finally it is agreeed by and betweene the said Alice Burnell and Edwine Sands by theise presents eache & eyther of them theire & eyther of their heyres & Assignes shall have ingresse egressse way and passage into and from theire seuerall parts and Purpartyes of the saide mesuage or Tenemente & premisses to them so appoynted & allotted as aforesaide eyther by & thorowghe their owne grownde or by and
through the said ancient passage or Entry holden in Common as aforesaid. In Witness whereof to one or the first part [“of these”? ink faded]

Indentures remaining with the said Alice Burnell the said Edwine Sands & Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston have putte their hands and Seales To one other or the second parte of these Indentures [“remaining”? ink faded] with the said Edwine Sands the said Alice Burnell & Christofer Hitchinson have put theire hands and Seales and to one other or thirde parte of the said Indentures remaining with the said Christofer Hitchinson alias Beeston the said Alice Burnell & Edwin Sands have putte their hands and Seales Gyven the daye and yeere abovewrytten ·/

The mark of Alice Burnell Christofer Hitchinson
Appendix C

Lancashire Record Office
DDSA 30/2/3

This Indenture made the xijth day of februarie in the xvth yeare of the Reigne of our most gratious and soveraigne Lord James By the grace of god of England ffrance and Ireland kinge defender of the ffaith And of Scotland the lth Anno Domini 1617 Betwene Edwin Sands of Estwaite within the Countie of Lancaster gentleman, on the one partie and Christofer Philipson of Callgarth within the Countie of Westmorland esquire, And Thomas Knype of Greenehame within the Countie of Lancaster gentleman vpon the other partie. Witnesseth That wheras the said said Edwin Sands, is at this present lawfully seized of a good prior perfect and indefeasible estate in fee simple or ffee tayle of Tow [sic] whole third parts purperties and portions (as they are now devided, from the part purperties and portion of Alice Burnell widdow, of in an to the new messuage or tenement (sometimes tow tenements) Comonly Called and known by the name or signe of the kings heade, in the parish of Saint Leonards in Shoreditch within the Countie of Midlesex, And of in and to All the Gardins Orchards stables Backsides passages and waies therevnto belonging or appertaineing Together with their and everie of their appurtenances of the inheritance of the said Edwin Sandes And now demised and Letten by the said Edwin Sandes vnto one Christofer Hitchinson alias Beestone, which Lease beareth date the eight day of december in the yeare of our Lord god 1605 in the Third yeare of his Majesty’s Reagne of England and of Scotland the Thirtie nth ffor one and Thirtie yeares to begin at the date thereof, As by the said Lease more at Large it doth and may appeare now the said Edwin Sandes for the speciall trust and Confidence, that he the said Edwin hath and doth Repoose in the said Christofer Philipson his loueing Cossen, And the afforesaid Thomas Knype natureall brother vnto Elizabeth Knype And their heires or assignes And inconsideration of a marriage hereafter to be had and sollemnized Betwene him the said Edwin Sandes and the afforesaid Elizabeth Knype And for the unfained loue which he beareth vnto the said Elizabeth Knype who by the grace of God shallbe wife vnto him the said Edwin Sandes, As also for and inconsideration of the some of Tow hundreth and and fower schoore pounds of good and Lawfull Current money of England well and truely payd And receiued by the said Edwin Sands in mariage with the said Elizabeth Knype at or before the ensealeing and deliverie of these presents, The Receite whereof he doth acknowledge and of the same and everie parte thereof doth Confesse himself well and truely Content Satisfied or paid And also for and in Lewe and Sattisfaction of a Joynture to be hereafter dewe vnto her the said Elizabeth Knype off in and out of all the Lands tenements hereditements and possessions of him the said Edwin Sandes hath Couenanted promissed granted and Agreed and by these presents doth Couenant promisse grant and agree, for him his heires and assignes and all and end everie other personn or persons now haueing or hereafter Claymeing to haue any estate or estates By from or vnder him the said Edwin Sands or his heires or assignes or any of them to and with the said Christofer Philipson and Thomas Knype and their heires and assignes And to and with all and everie of them by these presents, That he the said Edwin
Sandes his heires and assignes and everie of person or persons now haueing or hereafter Claymeing to haue any estate or estates By from or vnder them or any of them shall from henceforth stand and be Lawfully seized of the said tow whole third partes purperties and portions (as they are now deuided from the parte purpertie and portion of Alice Burnell widdow of in and to the said messuage or tenement sometimes tow tenements Comonly Called and knowen by the name or signe of the Kings heade in the parish of Saint Leonards in Shoreditch in the Countie of Midlesex aforesaid Together with their and everie of their appurtenances before in these presents mentioned of the inheritance of the said Edwin Sandes as aforesaid To and for such vse and vses estate and estates as hereafter in these presents are and shalbe declared expressed and mentioned Lymited and appointed That is to say for and to the onely proper vse and behoofe of her the foresaid Elizabeth Knype and her assigned for during and untill the end and determination of the life natureall of her the said Elizabeth Knype fullye to be Complete finished and ended. Prouided alwaies And it is the true intent and meaneing of both the parties to these Indentures, That after the expiration of of the forfeiture or Surrender of the forementioned lease of the premisses made vnto Christofer Hitchinson alias Beestone as aforesaid, It shall and may be lawfull To and for the said Edwin Sands his heires or assignes demisse sett or let for liues or yeares the aboue Couenant and granted premisses or any part thereof to his or their most benefit Comoditie and aduantage, Soe that the said Edwin Sands his heires or assignes vpon such lease grant or demisse of the premisses soe to be made or letten do Reserve the yearely Rent of Thirtie pounds Current money of England to him the said Edwin Sandes his heires or assignes To and for the onely proper vse and behoofe of her the said Elizabeth Knype and her assignes vpon such Couenantes and condicons as hereafter in these presents shallbe sett downe and expressed And he the said Edwin Sands his heires and assignes of the said yearely Rent of xxx so to be Reserued as aforesaid Shall stand and be seized thereof To and for the vse and behoofe of of her the said Elizabeth Knype dureing her natureall life onely and to and for no other vse intent or purpose and furthermore the said Edwin Sands doth Couenant promisse and grant for him his heires and assignes, To and with The said Christofer Philipson and Thomas Knype their heires and assignes, and to and with all and everie of them by these presents, That there shall be answered and yearely paid forth of his moyetie of the Rectorie of Hawkesedd The whole and Iust som of Tenne pounds yearely and everie yeare vnto her the said Elizabeth Knype or her assignes dureing her natureall life onely yf she suruiue him the said Edwin Sands: and the said payment to be made And paid at or within the Church of Hawkeside, Allwaies vpon the first day of August Commonly Called Lamas day dureing the space and tearme of yeares that his estate and Interest in the moyetie of the said Rectorie shall Continue and be unexpired Prouided futher and vpon condition and the said Edwin Sands for him his heires and assignes doth Couenant promisse and grant to and with the said Christofer Philipson and Thomas Knype their heires and assignes, That yf the tearme of yeares which he the said Edwin Sands hath in the moyetie of his Rectorie or parsonage of Hawkeside be ended and expired dureing the natureall life of her the said Elizabeth Knype, That then and from thenceforth it shall and may be lawfull to and for the said Christofer Philipson and Thomas Knype or either of their heires or assignes To take and receiue the aforesaid some of xxx yearely and [page cut off] yeare forth of the aboue Resited Lands messuages or tenements or out of the Issues Rents and profits thereof liinge and being in
Shorditch in the Countie of Midlesex vnto the onely proper use and behoofe of her the said Elizabeth Knype for and dureing her natureall life onely as afforesaid Prouided nevertheless the true intent and meaneing as well of the said parties as also of these presents is That noe more Rent butt onely the some of Tw[cut off] pounds shalbe yearely paid out of the aboue mentioned Lands messuage or Tenement lying and being in Shorditch in the Countie of Midlesex dureing the continuance of the said Edwin Sands his Lease for yeares in his moyetie of the Rectorie or parsonage of Hawkeside: And after the expiration of the said lease, That then the said some and yearely Rent of Thirtie pounds shalbe paid out of the aboue granted and Couenanted Lands and premisses as in the firstpr[cut off] set downe and expressed and lastely it is Couenanted Concluded and agreed vpon by and amongst all the foresaid parties, That the said Elizabeth Knype shall accept vpon and take the foresaid some of Thirtie pounds by[cut off] dureing her life onely in lewe and full Satisfaction of her Ioynture, and that she shall hereby at all times hereafter be debarred for makeing of any Challenge Clayme or demand after the death of him the said Edwin Sandes [cut off] either dower in any lands any title vnto leases (otherwise then <as> is afforesaid) or widow right vnto any Customerie estates of tenantrights which the said Edwin Sands shall dye seized vpon or haue any title vnto dureing th[cut off] Together In witnesse whereoff the afforesaid parties to these Indentures enterchangeablely haue put their hands and seales the day and yeare first aboue written

Sealed and delivered
in the presents of vs

Edwin Sandys

Francis [cut off]
Appendix D

Lancashire Record Office
DDSA 30/2/1

In Dei noie Amen The xxith day of October Anno dei 1591 Anthony Sandys of Estwhaite in the county of lancaster do make this my laste will and testamente in manner and forme followinge ffirse I comende my soule to almyghtye god trustinge the pretious bloude sheddinge of Jesus Christe his only sonne my redeemer that I shall live for ever with him in his blessed kingdome and my body I comitte to the earthe Item I Geve to my sonne Edwyne Sandys my tenemente of Estwhayte with thappurtenances theirto belonginge with all that my parte of the rectorie of the chappell of Hauxheade · Item I Geve to my daughters Cycely and Jane one hundreth markes a peece to be taken oute of the comodities arisinge & comminge out of my tenemente of Estwhaite and parsonage of Hauxheade and out of the reste of the goods which I now haue or hearafter may haue duringe the mynorytie of my Sayde sonne Edwyne · And allso I Geve vnto my daughter Cycely twenty poundes which my L: G: of Yorke bestowed vpon hir & me · Item yt ys my mynde and will that such some or somes of money shalbe bestowed vpon the poore at my buriall or at other tymes and in such order as shalbe thoughte meete and conveniente at the discrec<ion of the Supervisors of of this my last will & testamente · And whearas Anne my wife did Eloupe and goe frome me with hir adulterer and adulterers and hath nowe for many yeares together lyved from me in adultery with divers and sundry adulterers and by them hath had dyvers and sundry children and remaynyth still vnreconcyled vnto me, so as she hath herby lost such title & possibilitye of Dowerye as otherwise she mighte haue had of my said tenemente of Esthayte, I doe theirfore by this my last will & testamente declare and yt ys my mynde that Anne and all hir children (except the said Edwyne, Cycely and Jane which three I take to be myne owne) be utterly excluded to haue perceive or take any of my landes or goodes or benefitte parte or porcion theirof notwithstanding be<inge> in charityr with all the worlde I beseech god to humble hir harteto make hir knowe hir synnes and converte <hir> by repentance that she may obtayne forgeunes theirof by the deserte of [?] as Mary
Magdalen and such other greate synners heartofore haue done · Item I make myne Executors my Brother Myles Sandys and my sonne Edwyne Sandys · Item I make Supervisors of this my laste will and testamente Maister Adam Sandys, Maister Peter Magson John Sawrey of Plimpton, Barnarde Benson, George Jacksonne and Wylliam Benson, and I geue vnto every one of them tenn shillings Wyntnesses hearof Allan Nicholsonn, Myles Sawrey, Henry Rigge and Myles Rigge .

[Probatum]
Appendix E

National Archives UK
C2/ChasI/P6/6

Iur 16 ° ffebr 1641

The several Answers of Elizabeth Beeston Widdowe one of the Defendants to the Bill of Complaint of William Phillipps

The sayd Defendant saueing vnto her selfe now and at all tymes hereafter all advantages of excepcion to the incertaneyt insufficiency and manyfould imperfection of the sayd Bill of Complaynt for full and perfecte Answere vnto soe much of the sayd bill as any way concerneth this Defendant to [ink faded] that she doth not know how or by what means the Complainant became bounde in the bond in the Bill mencioned with others vnto Sir Iohn Danvers knight in the bill named neyther doth this defendant know what promises Symon Osbaldeston in the bill named did make to the Complainant to pay the [ink faded] in the Bill mencioned at such tyme as in the Bill is expressed nor whether he made any such protestations to the plaintif bounde with other suretyes for to saue him harmeles against the sayd ingagement as in the Bill is pretended for this Defendant sayth that she is a meere stranger to all the passages and pretended proceedings in the Bill mencioned between the sayd Simon Osbaldestone and the sayd Complainant And this Defendant sayth and beleeveth that Chistofer Beeston in the Bill named this Defendant’s deceased husbande at or about the tyme in the Bill mencioned was drawne and persuaded to enter into the bond in the Bill mencioned vnto the sayd Sir Iohn Danvers as surety with the sayd Symon Osbaldeston <vpon the promise of the said Symon Osbaldeston> and the said defendants Iohn Barrowe and Thomas Osbaldeston to give him the sayd Christofer Beeston counter securty by bond to saue him harmeles against the said principal bond otherwise this defendant’s beleeveth that her sayd <deceased> husband would never haue entred into the sayd principall bond and this Defendant doth rather beleue the same to be true for that it appeareth by a bond which now remayneth in the custody of William Small the younger gent this Defendant’s Attorney bearing the date the one and twentieth day of Iune 1639 that they the sayd Simon Osbaldeston Thomas Osbaldeston Iohn Berrow and the Complainant himselfe did vndertake to saue this Defendant’s husband harmeles from the sayd principall bond for that they the sayd partyes in and by the sayd bond doe bynd themselues vnto the sayd Christofer Beeston this Defendant’s <deceased> husband in the somme of twelve hundred pounds to saue him this Defendant’s sayd deceased husbands his heires executors and administrators harmeles of and from the sayd principall bond in the Bill mencioned to the sayd Sir Iohn Danvers as in and by the sayd counterbond remayning in the hands of this Defendant’s <sayd Attorney> and wherunto for the more certaynty thereof in that behalfe this Defendant reserveth her selfe. And this Defendant beleeveth that the sayd principall bond beareth date with the sayd Counter bond but this Defendant sayth that she doth not know who had the fowre hundred pounds which was borrowed of the sayd Sir Iohn Danvers but this Defendant is very
confident that the sayd Christofer Beeston this Defendant’s deceased husband had not the
same nor any parte therof. And this Defendant sayth that the sayd principall bond is
forfitted and that it appeareth that the money mentioned in the condition of the sayd bond
being foure hundred thyecteene pound six shillings and eight pence was by the condition
of the sayd bond to have been payd the three and twentieth day of November in the sayd
year 1639 but the same was not nor any parte therof was <not> payd at the sayd day
appointed for the payment thereof nor at any tyme since to the knowledge of this
Defendant. And this Defendant sayth that she conceiveth that the sayd Christofer
Beeston this Defendant’s deceased husband in his life tyme was seised and possessed of
[ink faded] and personal estate of good value and being seoe seised and possessed of the
same and a greate parte of his said personal estate consistinge of debts and his sayd
estate much incumbred he the sayd Christofer Beeston this Defendant’s deceased
husband aboute the fowreth day of Oct <1638> made his last wille and testamente in
writinge and therin therby did give and devise vnto severall persons divers great legacyes
of a greate value whereby the estate of this Defendant’s sayd deceased husband became
further incumbered <& charged> then it was before his death and of the sayd will he the
sayd Christofer Beeston this Defendant’s deceased husband made and ordayne this
Defendant his executrix and aboute the <same> month of October in the year of our Lord
God 1638 he dyed After whoes death this Defendant did make probate of the sayd will
and tooke vpon her the executicon therof and since the death of this Defendant’s sayd
husband Christofer Beeston hath been inforced for and towards the satisfaccon of the
sayd legacy as devised in and by the sayd will and for the satisfaccion of the debts of the
sayd Christofer to convey away the greatest parte of the sayde estate both reall and
personal all of him this Defendant’s sayd deceased husband was seised and possessed of
whereby the estate of this Defendant’s said deceased husband hath been very much
weakened and impayred and albeit and in case this Defendant had a sufficient estate in
her hands as executrix to her sayd husband wherwithall to satisfy the debt vnto the sayd
Defendant [ink faded] she conceiveth she hath not yet this Defendant sayth she
conceiveth she ought to be saued harmeles and ought ti be defended from the payment of
the sayd debt or any parte thereof by the Complainant and the rest of the sayd suretys
named in the sayd Counterbond for and in regard [ink faded] whether the Complainant be
insoluent or not insoluent and whether he hath made such payment and had such losses as
in the Bill is expressed is more than this Defendant knoweth neyther is it any way
materiall to this Defendant as she conceiveveth saueing only to his anillity to saue harm to
this Defendant [ink faded] and for the Complainant’s owne good and plentifulfull
subsistance this Defendant doth hartely wish that the sayd Complainant were a person of
sufficient plentifulfull and good estate and the rather for that this Defendant sayth and
denyeth that she or her sayd husband in his life tyme to her knowledge had [ink faded]
other counter securty eyther from the sayd Simon Osbaldeston or any other to saue her
harmes against the sayd bond of Eight hundred pounds vnto the sayd Sir John Danvers
aforesayd and this Defendant conceiveveth for the reasons aforesayd that if the sayd
principall money and damage [ink faded] recovered by the sayd Sir John Danvers of nay
other of the aforesayd suretys this Defendant’s ought to be spared in the payment therof
Howbeit this Defendant sayth that the <said> principall money and interest being not
payd as it seems) the sayd Sir John Danvers caused the sayd bond of Eight hundred
pounds [ink faded] suite against this Defendant as executrix to her sayd husband in the
Common Pleas of Westminster wherupon such proceeding hath beene had against this Defendant that the sayd Sir John Danvers obteyned Judgment against this Defendant vpon the sayd bond whereby this Defendant was inforced to Error vpon the sayd Judgment returnable in his Majesty's Bench at Westminster but noe error being therupon found Judgment was affirmed in Trynity term last and the sayd Sir John Danvers or his agents haue soe far prosecuted this Defendant vpon the sayd Judgment that an execution of s[ink faded] therupon directed to the Sheriffe of Middlesex against the goods of the Defendant is by the sayd execution to which she reserveth her selfe appeareth and by reason therof this Defendant hath beene enforced to defend such goods as she had and to obscure her selfe and hath been put to great cost and charges [ink faded] believeth that there hath bene more violent execution had against this Defendant vpon the sayd Judgment then against any other obligees named in the sayd bond and and by reason and means thereof to prevent the penalty of the whole execution from falling vpon this Defendant she this Defendant hath [ink faded] two hundred pounds for and towards the satisfacion of the sayd debt the which hetherto will not be accepted but this Defendant is still in great danger and fear to have the sayd whole execution laid vpon this Defendant wherfore and for the reasons aforesaid true it is this Defendant did put the sayd counter bond [ink faded] against the sayd Complainant and this Defendant hath therupon declared against him the sayd Complainant vnto which the sayd Complainant hath vntruly pleaded Condition performed as this Defendant by her sayd Attorney is informed and this Defendant hath allso taken out proces at several tymes and to severall Countyes against [ink faded] the sayd Simon Osbaldeston <Thomas Osbaldeston> and the sayd Berrow and this Defendant hath been at greater charge to obtayne leave to arrest them the sayd partyes vpon the sayd Counterbond but as yet this Defendant cannot perceive them or any of them to be arrested neyther haue they or doe they or the Complainant or any of them [ink faded] the knowledge of this Defendant saved harmeless or indeavour to saue harmeles this Defendant from the sayd bond and the penalty therof but this Defendant is still exposed to the penalty of the same and this Defendant denyeth that she knoweth or beleeveth that the sayd Christofer Beeston this Defendant's deceased husband [ink faded] circumvention or by any indirecte meanes whatsoever did procure any bond of sixteene hundred pounds for his sayd indempnyty against the sayd bond of eight hundred poudns neyther had the sayd Christofer Beeston or this Defendant any such bond to the knowledge of this Defendant or any other bond [ink faded] saueing him harmeles against the aforesaid bond of eight hundred pounds saueing only the sayd bond of twelue hundred pounds before mencioned the which was had and obteyned in manner aforesayd and in noe other manner to the knowledge of this Defendant And this Defendant sayth that she doth [ink faded] expecte or endeavuour any other benefitt by the sayd bond then only to be saued harmeles against the said bond of eight hundred poudns And this Defendant doth deny all manner of And shee well knows [ink faded] shall and may be lawfull to and for her to presente the sayd Complainant or any other of the sayd obligees vpon the sayd bon for the recovery of such damages as she hath or hereafter shall sustayne by reason of the sayd principall bond and this Defendant doth nether intend nor [ink faded] other advantage by the sayd bond then only therby to save <her selfe> harmeles against the sayd bond of eight hundred pounds And this Defendant sayth that she conceiveth and for Cause sayth for the reasons aforesayd that if she shall be compelled to pay the sayd principall debt and damages in any parte [ink
faded] it shall and may be lawfull for her to recouer the same against any of the sayd obligees in the sayd Counterbond as she shall think fitt or by her Councell she shalbe advised. And this Defendant conceiveth and for the reasons aforesayd sayth that she is aduised that she in that Judgment aforesayd [ink faded] to satisfie her proportionable share of the sayd debt and damages prorata in Case the sayd whole debt and damages shall be recovered against the sayd Complainant or any other of the obligees named in the said Counter bond this Defendant hauing the sayd Counter bond to saue her hameles [ink faded] And this Defendant denyeth that she or any other on her behalfe to her knowledge hath payd or made any other proffer promise or agreement concernynge the payment of the Originall debt then before in this Defendant’s Answere is mencioned neyther hath this Defendant or any other to her vse of knowledge [ink faded] other security to saue her harmeles from the sayd bond then before is expressed. And this Defendant sayth that by reason of the original bond vnto the sayd Sir John Danvers and the suit commenced against this Defendant vpon the same and the seuerall damages therby susteyned this Defendant hath [ink faded] dampnifyed in her owne Credit imployment and estate at lease one hundred Pownds besides this Defendant’s charges in defence of the sayd bond this Defendant hath expended haue bene forced to expend in defence of [ink faded] suite at least ffourty pownds x And this Defendant sayth that vpon payment of the sayd damages and expences and the expences in the honourable Courte and all other damages and expences which this Defendant shall hereafter be put vnto and shall [?] by reason of the sayd bond this Defendant [ink faded] to deliver vp the sayd Counterbond or doe any other Act for the dischargeing of the said bond and all other proceedings had vpon the same. Without that any other matter or things in the sayd Bill of complaynte contayned materiall or effectuall for this Defendant to make answer vnto and [ink faded] not answered vnto confessed and avoyded denied or traversed is true. All which matters and things this Defendant is redy to averr and proue as this honorable Courte shall awarde and humbly prayeth to be hence dismissed with her costs and charges herein <very> uniustly susteyned.
Appendix F

National Archives UK
PROB 14/13220

An Inventory of the goods Chattells & debts
of Dame Elizabeth Kirke <alias Hutchinson> late of the parish
of Saint Gyles in the Fields in the County of
Midd widd deceased Taken and made
by Mrs Mary Haynes the sister and
Administratrix the 22th [sic] day of June 1671
As followeth (vizt)

There is due to her the said Dame
Elizabeth Kirke alias Hutchinson ~
by one Bond or Obligation entred into } C\textsuperscript{3i}
by Robert Lord Rich of Two Hundred
Pounds for the payment of One hund=
dred Pounds dated the 29th day of
September : 1640 ~

The deceaseds Apparrell were dispo=
sed amongst ther servants& never came
to the hands of the Administratrix

\textit{Suma patet C\textsuperscript{3i} .}

Maria Haynes \textit{Iurata de veritate}
22\textdegree. Junij. 1671. \textit{Corem me}

Richard Lloyd : ser
Appendix G

National Archives UK
PC 2/50, f. 131r

A Warrant to commit Elizabeth Beeston alias Hutchinson Widdow, safe prisoner to the ffleete, date the 17th: of Aprill [1639] Signed by the

Lord Arch Bishop of Canterbury / Lord Privy Seale / Lord Newburgh
Lord Keeper / Earl of Bridgwatter / Master Comptroller
Lord Treasurer / Lord Cottington / Master Secretary Windebank

PC 2/50, f. 132r

A Warrant to Iasper Heiley Messenger to bring before their Lordships George Lilgraue & Iohn with the one eye, dated the 19th [April 1639]: Signed by the

Lord Arch Bishop of Canterbury / Lord Treasurer / Lord Cottington
Lord Keeper / Lord Privy Seale / Lord Newburgh
Master Secretary Windebank /

PC 2/50, f. 135v

A warrant to discharge Elizabeth Beeston from the ffleete, shee having given bond that shee shall not hereafter giue consent vnto George Lilgraue directly or indirectly for the converting of the house lately by her demised vnto the said Lilgraue nere the Cock-pitt Playhouse in Drury Lan <into a Taverne> dated the [19 April 1639] … Signed by the Lord Privy Seale, Master Comptroller and Master Secretary Windebank

PC 2/50, f. 136v

This day [19 April 1639] George Lilgrave and Iohn with one eye being sent for by Warrant from their Lordships entred their appareances & are to remaine in custodie

SP 16/424, f. 240

It is humbly desired by the Inhabitants of Drury lane (of which number are Mr Secretary Windebanke y£ Lord Montague, ye Earl of Cleveland and divers other persons of qualitie) that, forasmuch as since George Lillgraues committment to a Messenger, wine hath neuerthelesse beene drawen and sold in that House adioyning to Mª Beestones Playhouse, which he attempteth to make a Tauern in contempt of the seuerall Orders of
Whereas an humble Petition was presented to the Board in name of the Inhabitants of Drury Lane in the Countie of Middlesex Compleyning that not withstanding severall expresse orders of this Board heretofore made for restraining the erecting of any more Taverns in the said Lane, and for preventing the manifold inconveniences occasioned thereby, one George Lilgrave hath lately taken a house belonging to one Mistris Beeston in Drury Lane neere vnto the Cockpipt Playhouse and is now about to sett vp another Taverne there and to haue a back door from the said playhouse to the said Taverne which if it should bee suffered would (as the Petitioners alleadge) bee the occasion of much disorder and great annoyance and disturbance to divers noble personages and others of the qualitie inhabiting nere the same; Their Lordshipps vpon consideration had thereof well remembring their former Care taken for preuenting of ye increase of Taverns in the said Lane doe now likewise in pursuance thereof think fitt & order, that Sir Henry Spiller Knight and Lawrence Whitacres Esq. two of the next Justices of Peace adjoyning shalbe hereby authorized and required to cause the said Taverne to be forthwith suppressed, and in case any persons shall after notice hereof contemnutously presume either to drawe any Wyne in the said house or to attempt to hang vp a Signe, Bush, or any other signall of a Taverne there That they Commit every such person to the Gaole there to remaine vntill further order from this Board; Lastly it was ordered that the said George Lilgrae being already prisoner in the Custody of a Messenger shall soe continue vntill hee haue given good bond before the Clark of the Counsell attendant not to convert ye said house to a Taverne neither directly nor indirectly / ~
Appendix H

NA C10/36/118

Iurat septo Die ffebruary 1650 /

The several Answears of William Wilbraham gentleman one of the defendants to the Bill of Complainte of Thomas Hussey Esquire Complainant

The said defendant saveinge to himselfe now and att all tymes hereafter all advantages of Excepcon to ye incertayntyes and other imperfeccions of the said Complainant’s Bill for Answears vnto soe much thereof as materially concerneth this defendant to answeare vnto, he saith yat in ye yeare one thousand six hundred forty & one <or thereabouts> Mrs Elizabeth Hutchinson, now ye Lady Kirke an other of ye defendants did desire to borrow of this defendant ye somme of one hundred & fifty pounds offering to make an assignment of ye playhouse in ye bill mencioned for this defendants security for ye same The which this defendant <then> refused, but vpon ye said Lady Kirkes offer to secure ye said one hundred & fifty pounds to be borrowed of this defendant by other collaterall security by bond, this defendant did lend ye now Lady Kirke then Elizabeth Hutchinson ye somme of one hundred & fifty punds takeing an Assignment of her interest in ye said playhouse, And ye bond of Leawys Kirke, now Sir Leawys Kirke Knight and <of> ye said Elizabeth Hutchinson now ye Lady Kirke for security & true payment of ye said one hundred & fifty pounds lent vnto them And in ye yeare one thousand six hundred forty & six this defendant was desired by ye said then Elizabeth Hutchinson <Kirke> now ye Lady Kirke, & one <other> of ye defendants in this bill to make <an> assignment of his interest in ye said Playhouse vnto James Kirke named a defendant also in ye Complainant’s said Bill & to take other new security for ye said one hundred & fifty pounds lent as aforesaid, which this defendant did & accordingly in ye yeare one thousand six hundred forty & six, he this defendant did assigne over his interest in ye said playhouse, vnto ye said James Kirke without any consideracion herein att ye instances of ye said now Dame Elizabeth Kirke, And did take new security for his said debt by bond, And he this defendant further saith, yat since ye yeare one thousand six hundred forty six aforesaid, he this defendant never had any interest in ye said Playhouse, or ever received any rents, or profitts out of it <at> any tymse since, & as to all other ye matters in ye Complainant’s Bill charged, he this defendant is a stranger therevnto not knoweing of <any> agreement made with <with> Sir Leawys Kirke & ye Lady Kirke or either of them which by ye bill ye said Complainant as sett forth to have beeene, one thousand six hundred forty and seaven neither doth this defendant clayme to have any interest in ye said Playhouse, nor can more materially answere to any ye matters in ye said Complainant’s said bill but is a stranger therevnto without, yt, yat any other matter or thinges materiall for which this defendant to answere & not herein sufficiently answered vnto, condensed & avoyded, traversed or denyed is true, All which this defendant is ready to averr, justifie & prove, as this honourable Court shall award And hunbly prayeth to be dismissed hence as with his reasonable costs and charges in this behalfe wrongfully sustayned / William Geery
To the Right Honourable and our very good Lords, the Lords of his Majesty's most honourable privie Councill

To all singular aswell Nobles and Gentiles as others to whome those presents shall come to be scene read or heard I Richard Saint George Knight Clarenceux Kinge of Armes of ye East West and South parts of England to the River of Trent sendeth due Commendacions in our Lord God everlastinge fforasmuch as auncientlie from the beginninge the valiant and virtuous artes of worthie persons have been commended to ye world by sundry Monuments and Remembrances of their good deserts Amonge which chiefest and most vsual have beene the beareinge of signes in shields called Armes being evident demonstrations and tokens of prowesse and valour diverslie distributed according to the qualities and deserts of the persons meritinge the same which Order as it was most prudentlie devised in the beginninge to stir and kindle the hearts of men to the imitation of virtue and noblenesse : Even so hath the same been and yet is continuallie observe to the intent that such as have done comendable service to their Prince or Countrie either in war or peace may receive due honour in their lives, and also derive and continewe the same successivelie to their posteritie for evermore. Amongest which number Captaine David Kirke the eldest sonne and heir of Jarvas Kirke of London Merchant and late of Deepe in ffrance sonne of Thurstan Kirke of Greenhill in ye parish of Norton in the County of Derby third sonne of Arnold Kirke of Whitehough alias Whitehall; which said familie and surname have borne for their Coat Armour these Armes depicted in the margent (that is to say) per tesse or and Gules a Lozenge counter changed. But the said Clarenceux being requested by the said Captaine David Kirke to give him some addicion of honour of his said Armes and Creast correspondent to the same Wherevppon I being crediblie informed of the honorable and worthie enterprises and imployments of the Captaine David Kirke and his brothers both by sea and land and that of late being Admirall and Chiefe Comaunder in a small ffleete mett and encountered with the ffrance Navie vnder the Commaund of Monsieur de Rockmond Admirall thereof whence hee and his Brothers vanquished and overanne and brought the said Monsieur de Rockmond prizoner into England And ye next yeare followinge the said Captaine David Kirke goeinge with his Maiesties Commission vnder the Great Seale with a ffleete of nyne sayle for the surprizeinge and takeinge of the Countrie of Canida in the Continent and maineland of America which was there planted with the ffrance, in which Expedicion
hee and his Brothers soe worthilie and with so great valour demeaned themselves that they surprized the ffrench that had there planted and fortified themselves, wonne their ffort and tooke Monsieur Champlain their Governor and Chiefe Comaander prizoner and brought him Captive into England. In consideration whereof I the sayd Kynge of Armes by power and authoritie vnder the great Seale of England vnto my Office attributed and annexed due by theis presents not onlyen ratify and confirm the said former Coate but also give and graunt to the said Captaine David Kirke, Lewis Kirke now Captaine and Governor of the sayde ffort for his Majesty in Canida Thomas Kirke Captaine and Viceadmirall of the said ffleete John and James Kirke his Brothers the Coat-Armour of Mounsieur Rockmond Admirall of the sayd ffrench ffleete that is to say Azure a Lyon rampant Or supportinge this instrument Argent as it is heere portraied to beare in a Canton as an augmentacion or addiccion of his honour, but the Lyon to be Couchant and Collered with a chaine Argent as enthralld and prostatinge himselfe to the merry of the vanquisher And for his Creast on a helmet and wreath of his Colours an Arme Armed proper pursled or holdeinge a Curtelas Argent hiltes or Mantled Gules doubled argent, as more plainly appeareth depicted in the margent. All which said Armes and Creast with the appurtenances I Clarenceux Kinge of Armes doe by these presents allowe ratifie and confirme vnto the said Captaine David Kirke and his Brothers and to ye yssue of their Bodies lawfullie begotten for ever with their due differences And hee and they the same to use beare and shew forth in Shield Coat Armour or otherwise accordinge to ye auncient Lawe of Armes at his or their Libertie and pleasure for evermore without contradiccion or controllment of any any person or persons whatsoever. In witnesse whereof I the sayd Kinge of Armes have herevnto set my hand and seale of Office. Dated at London this first of December in the seaventh yeare of our Soveraigne Lord Kinge Charles and in the yeare of our Lord God 1631.

Richard Saint George Clarenceux Kinge of Armes

Concordat cum originali George Owen Yorke
facto Collatione pernos Watson Reg [ ]

Memorandum that the original Patent was delivered to Mr Anthony Maria Smith
Appendix J

National Archives UK
SP 16/498, f. 79

[Latin preamble]  Elizabeth Hutchinson of Witney, Oxon.
Richard Kilvert of St. Martins in the Fields
John Hunt  John Felton scissor teneri

The condicion of this Obligacion is such That whereas the Committee for Examinacions of the noble howse of Commons in Parliament assembled hath comitted the aboue bounden Elizabeth Hutchinson to the custodie of the aboue named John Hunt Esquire Sergeant at Armes attending the said howse & doth nowe remayne in his custodie. And vpon her humble suite the said Committee hath ordered that shee bee forthwith discharged putting in good baile that shee shall goe to her lodging at Witney and not returne without justifiable Passe (as by order of the said Committee of the three & twentieth of this instant December appeareth . If therefore the said Elizabeth Hutchinson shall well & truly performe fulfill and keepe the said order & every particular thereof and shall goe to her lodging at Witney and not returne thence without a justifiable passe according to the true intent & meaning of the said Order That then this presente Obligacion to bee voide & of none effect, Or also it to stand remayne & bee in full force, and vertue.

Sealed & deliuered in the presence of
The marke of + of Eliz.
  William Bermeth
  John Younge
  Richard Kilvert
  John Felton

December 25 1643
The answer of James Kirke one of the defendants to the bill of Complainant of Thomas Hussey Complainant

The said defendant saving to himselfe now att all tymes hereafter all advantage of exception to icertaynties & other the imperfections of the said bill for answere vnto soe much thereof as doth materially Concerne this defendant to answere vnto hee saith That aboute the latter end of the yeare one thousand six hundred fortie six as this defendant remembreth William Wilbrowe<ham> one other of the defendants did Co<n>vey the intrest [sic] of the said house in the bill Called the Cockpitt to this defendant  But this defendant saith [sic] that his name was therein vsed onely in trust for the behoofe of the said Sir Leawys Kirke allsoe in the bill named and dame Elizabeth his wife and to and for their vse  Butt this defendant saith that hee never tooke any profitts of the premisses or received any rents thereof or knoweth of any profitts that were made thereof at any tyme since the same was so assigned in trust and this defendants name vsed to that purpose neither doth this defendant Clame any thinge or estate in the premisses in the bille mencioned but on trust as aforesaid nor doth knowe who att any tyme since haue received the profitts thereof or what profitts haue been made thereof neither doth this defendant know of any promisse made to the Complaynant as in the bill is sett forth  And this defendant doth deny all manner of Combinacion with any of the defendants in the bill named to defraud the Complaynant of his rent due for the premisses as by the said bill is ~ pretended nor is this defendant otherwise Concerned in any the matters of the said bill nor Concerninge the intrest of the said lease then in trust as aforesaid neither doth defendant knowe of any estates made of the said premisses to any person or persons nor hath this as itt was first made ouer to him without that that any other matter or thinge in the said Complaynants bill allledged materially all for him this defendant to answer vnto and herein sufficiently answered vnto confessed and avoyded traversed or denied is true all which this defendant is readie to aver Justifie and prove to the honvrable Courte in this behalfe wrongfullie sustayned .
Appendix L

National Archives UK
PROB 11/312, f. 131-132

In the Name of God Amen the One and Twentieth day of August One Thousand Six Hundred Sixty and Three I Lewis Kirke of the Savoy parish in the County of Middlesex Knight being sicke of body but of good and perfect memory God be praysed doe make and ordayne this my last Will and Testament (Revoking all former Will and wills Testament and Testaments by me made) in manner and forme following (That is to say) ffirst I commend my soule into the hands of God my maker hopeing assuredly through the onely merits of Iesus Christ my Saviour To be made partaken of life everlasting And I commend my body to the Earth whereof it was made Item I giue and bequeath to my deare wife Dame Elizabeth Kirke One Hundred pounds in Gold whereof shee hath threescore pounds in present possession As also halfe of my best Arras Hangings during her naturall life vpon Condition That shee release the Revercion of those houses in Holborne in the parish of St Gyles in the ffeilds vnto my Loving brother Iohn Kirke or his assignes whrein shee is Ioynt purchaser with me as may appeare by a deed hereafter expressed Item I giue vnto M.rs Mary Haynes fifty pounds Item I giue to my servant Iohn Cleavor fifty pounds his wages if any be due to him being comprehended therein As also vpon Condition That my wife shall release her interest in the houses aforesaid within Twenty dayes next after my decease vnto my said brother Iohn Kirke or his assignes Item I giue to my sister M.rs Elizabeth Harris Fifty pounds Item I giue to Lewis Kirke fifty pounds Item I giue to my ffoure Nephewes George Kirke David Kirke Philip Kirke and Jarvase Kirke All the Estate that their late ffather Sir David Kirke and their mother did giue vnto me And ffive pounds a piece besides Item Whereas I have by deed Indented being date[d] the Thirteenth of August One Thousand Six Hundred fifty Three Purchased of Thomas Hanson of London Cordwayner and Martha his wife as by the said Indenture it may more fully appeare One messuage with the appurtenances lying and being in High Holborne in St Giles in the ffeilds commonly called or knowne by the name of the Corner house Together with all gardens and grounds thervnto adjoyning westward Ans also Two other houses with their appurtenances next adjoyning vnto the Southside of the Corner house And the Revercion and revercions which the said Thomas Handson and Martha his wife have granted bargained abd sikd vnto the sad Sir Lewis Kirke and Dame Elizabeth Kirke his wife All the said Messuages and Tenements with their appurtenances to their heires and assignes And whereas Dame Elizabeth my wife is Ioynt purchaser with me Soe that the foresaid Houses and Tenements with their appurtenances do come to her by survivorshippe Therefore in consideracion and vpon her ffaithfull promise made vnto me that shee will convey vnto my said brother Iohn Kirke and his heires or assignes the Revercion of the said houses and lands therevnto belonging I doe giue and bequeath to my said wife during her naturall life All the Rents and benefitts of all my Leases in the Savoy and in the Covent Garden scituate and being in the said County of Middlesex and with all the proffits thereof And after her decease Then my Will is That the said Leases shalbe to the onely vse and benefitt of my said brother Iohn Kirke and my Nephew Iohn Kirke his sonne and their assignes And in case my wife Dame Elizabeth Kirke shall refuse within twenty dayes next after my decease as
aforesaid to convey all the lands and tenements wherein she is joyned purchasor with mee vnto my said Brother or has assignes as counsell learned in the Law shall advise Then my Will is and I doe hereby declare That I renounce vpon er denyall to convey the Reversion of the said Messuages and lands scituate in High Holborne aforesaid to my said brother Iohn Kirke and his assignes and as she hath formerly promised That then shee shall not take nor haue any benefitt by this my last will and Testament of any of the aforesaid Lease Exprest or any other Bequest whatsoever conteyned therein Saue onely the One Hundred pounds in Gold which I formerly exprest And vpon her refusall as aforesaid then my will is and I doe hereby giue All my right title and interest in my said Lease before exprest vnto my said brother Iohn Kirke and Iohn Kirke his sonne and their assignes All the rest of my lands goods and Chattells whatsoever undisposed of I leaue to my Executors And I doe make my loving brother Iohn Kirke and Iohn Kirke his son Executors of this my last Will and Testament In Witness whereof I have herevnto sett my hand and seale And publish this to be my last Will and Testament the day and yeare ffirst aboue written Memorandum that I giue vnto my wife ffurniture for Two Roomes during her life whereof the Hangings Exprest in the Will is a part Item I ffreely giue to my Brother Iohn Kirke my Pensioners place with all the proffits thereof Item I giue to my servant Iacey Rose Twenty pounds And that my brother shall keep him as a servant soe long as hee shall live / L Kirke. /

Signed Sealed published and delivered Hamilton Edward Alston Anthony Jackson Edward Brooks Shoywell. /Probated
Appendix M

Centre for Kentish Studies
U269/C111

My Lord

I am too old, and too vnfortunate to hope or implore a new Patron And had I my choice of all the Kings Court I should absolutely desire your Lordshipp being Grandchild in my esteeme to the most honourable Earle of Dorsett whom I ever found my absolute Patron vpon all applications Therefore for his sake and for my knowledge of your Lordshipps Candour and ingenuity above these twenty yeares I would peticion your honours assistance, my play that your Honourable vouchsafed to read I have since in my opinion throughly corrected and the Actors commend itt; butt they doe deferre the playing of itt because itt is still hindred by Persons of Honour writing to prefer other mens Labours. Therefore I desire your Lordshipps Countenance and I would implore that great favour to be owned your Lordshipps Servant by signing this same Paper And then to pardon the ambition of

November 23rd 1679

On Monday next I shall obey your
Lordship’s Comand & further leasure

Your constant Honour &
most faithfull & humble servant
William Beeston
Appendix N

National Archives
C 6/297/123

Viresimo Septimo Die Novembr 1686

To the right Honourable George Lord Jefferyes Baron Wemm lord high Chauncellor of England

Humbly complayning sheweth unto your Lordship your Orator Thomas Sheppey of London gentleman that whereas Alice Beeston late of the parish of Saint Leonard Shoreditch in the County of Middlesex widdow in her life time and att the time of her death was seized in her demesne as of ffe simple to her and her heires for ever of and in fourteene severall messuages or tenements scituate in Kings head Court in the said parish of Saint Leonard Shoreditch in the said County of Middlesex And being soe seized shee the said Alice being of sound memory and minde vpon the four and twenti[e]th day of May in the yeare of our Lord One thousand six hundredd eighty six made and ordeyned her last will in weighting in manner and forme and in these words following . In the name of God amen I Alice Beeston of ye parrish of Saint Leonard Shoreditch in the County of Middlesex widdow being minded and willing to settle and dispise that small part of worldy estate which God hath blessed mee withall doe make this my last will and testament in writeing in manner and forme following . ffirst J doe recommend my soule into the hands of Allmighty God my Creator and to his sonne Jeasus Christ my only saviour and Redemer by the meritts of whose death and passion I doe assuredly trust to be bee saved and have remission for all my sinnes and my body I comitt to the earth to bee decently buryed in the Parish of Saint Leonard Shoreditch neare my husband And as to my wordly estate I dispose ye same as followeth Imprimis J give and bequeath vnto my Cosin Katherine Lister the sume of Twenty punds of lawfull money of England to bee paid her within one yeare after my decease Jtem J give and bequeath vnto Anne Chubb the sume of ffifteene pounds of Lawfull money of England and five pounds more J devise and desire may be paid which was given vnto her by my late husbands will to be paid her in life manner And J I doe alsoe give and bequeath vnto the said Anne the vse of two roomes part of a mesuage in Kings head Court aforesaid vnder the house noe or late in the possession of Phillip Newell which said roomes were lately in the possession of Edward Hutchins to have and to hold for and during her life Jtem J doe give and bequeath vnto my Cozen Susan Warner the sume of Tenn pounds of Lawfull money of England and five pounds more J devise and desire may be paid which was given vnto her by my late husbands will to be paid her in life manner And J I doe alsoe give and bequeath vnto my leading friend and Executor Thomas Sheppey and his heires for ever one mesuage or tenement scituate in Kings head Court aforesaid noe or late in the possession of Thomas Pander, Anne King, Ellienor Gale and Richard Dobson And alsoe one other mesuage or tenement scituate in the said Kings head Court and and now or late in the possession of Alexander Ludkin Jane White widdow and Mr Buffeth Jtem J give and bequeath vnto Benaiah Beston the reputed sonne of my sonne George Beeston and the heires of his body one mesuage or tenement
and a little rope walke nowe or late in the possession of John Nye Susan Murrillan Samuell Deloase and Thomas Chubbas or some of them and alsoe the revertion of the two roomes late in the possession of Edward Hutchins of which said two toomes J have given the vse to my servant Anne Chubb dureing her life and J give the said Beniaiah and the heires of his body for ever one garden or piece of ground in Kings head yard now in the possession of [blank space] Vdall but Jf the said Beniaiah shall have noe heires of his body then J give and bequeath the remainder of the said messuage and two roomes to the said Thomas Sheppey and his heires and Assignes for ever, out of the profitts of which said three mesuages and garden and two roomes when they fall to my Legatees J have appoynted my debts lagacyes and ffunereall expences to bee paid as an addicion to my personall estate. Jtem J give and bequeath vnto the said Thomas Sheppey and his heires for ever one mesuage or tenement scituate in Kings head Court aforesaid now or late in the possession of Anthony Jefferson and Richard Clarke and alsoe one other mesuage or tenement scituate in the said Kings head Court and now or late in the severall tenures or possession of George Garson Robert Batt William Gillet and Mrs Higgs or some of them, Jtem J give and bequeath vnto the aforesaid Benaiah Beeston and the heires of his body fore ever one mesuage or tenement scituate in Kings head Court aforesaid now or late in the possession of William Taylor Thomas Baker and Paul Godson or some of them and also one other mesuage or tenement scituate in the said Kings head Court and now or late in the possession of John Carwill Ralph Leech and John Bunch or some of them but if the said Beniaiah happen to dye without issue of his Body then J doe advise the remainder of the estate of and in the said two messuages or tenements to the said Thomas Sheppey his heires and assignes fore ever. But my will and desire is that out of the said foure severall mesuages or Tenements last mentioned and bequeathed to the said Thomas Sheppey and Benaiah Beeston the cleare profitts of the same being about the yearly value of twenty two pounds three shillings shall be paid by my Executor Thomas Sheppey vnto my Sonne Sackvile Beeston for and during his life the said Thomas Sheppey deducting the Taxes charges of repaires and other ncident charges of the same out of the said rent and profitts and alsoe he the said Sackvill first paying and discharging one Annuity or yearly rent of seaven pounds dureing the life of the said Sackvile which was settled vpon him by his father William Beeston and charged vpon the estate of the said William Beeston which said estate was devised to me by the said William but the said anuity of seaven punds per Annum is since sould and made away by the by the said Sackvile and my will is that the said Sackvile shall free all my other estate from the payment Therof otherwise not to enjoy his legacy by me hereby given him and that the said Sackvile bee content and satisfied with this my will and not disturb my executor legatees or other friends concerned therein but release and remitt all his right claime and pretence to all and ever other part of my estate herein and hereby bequeathed. But if hee the said Sackvile shall refuse to execute such release within Six Moneths next after my death being theirvnto required and shall not submitt to this my will then J doe hereby make void my legacy hereby given him. Jtem J devise and desire that all my iust debts which J shall owe at the tyme of my death and my Legacyes hereby given shall bee paid and discharged and alsoe my funereall expences shall be paid and discharged out of my personall estate and out of the rents issues and profitts of the three severall mesuages or tenements in the possession of Thomas Pouder Anne King Ellinor Gold Richard Dobson AlexanderLudkin Jane White Mrs Buffett, John Nye Susan Murrillian Samuell Deloafe and Thomas Chubb and
the garden in the possession of Thomas Ponder two roomes in the possession of Edward Hutchins when they happen to my legatees, And whereas I have Lately by deeds of lease and released duly executed conveyed to the said Thomas Sheppay and Benaiah Beeston divers other messuages or tenements situate in Kings head Court aforesaid and in the streets there adjoyning I doe hereby devise ratifie and confirme ye same by this my will according to the use therein lymitted and expressed, And I doe hereby revoke and annul all former and other will and wills by mee formerly made, And of this my last will and testament I doe make and ordaine my said Loveing friend Thomas Sheppay of London gent my sole executor And all the rest and resident of my estate reall and personall whatsoever not disposed of by this last will & testament I after my debt legacyes and funeral expences be paid and discharged, I give and bequeathed vnto the said Thomas Sheppay and Benaiah Beeston equally to bee divided betweene them for ever, In witnes whereof I have herevnto lett my hand and seale the fore and twentith day of May in the yeare of one Lord one thousand six hundred eighty six Alice Beeston, signed Allcock Thomas ponder Charles Blo<o>nt Ann Arnold As by the said will relation being therevnto had more large it doth and may appeare, And your Orator further sheweth that soone after the making of this said will to witt the fifteenth day of october shee the said Alice dyed Whereas vpon your said Orator and the said Benaiah Beeston entred in the said severall mesuages and tenement soe to them respectively devised and the same tenements doe now quietly enjoye according to the true intent and and meaning of the said will. But now soe it is May it please your Lordship that Sackvile Beeston in the will above named being not content with the Legacy and bequest soe bequeathed vnto him by the said will of the said Alice Beeston animated by confederacy with persons vnknowne to your Orator whome when they shall be discovered your Orator prays they may bee partyes to this bill with apt words to charge them and hopeing to make a greate advantage to him selfe threatens your Orator and gives out in Speeches that hee will endeavor to avoid the said will some Tyme pretending the said will was not made when the said Alice Beeston was Compos indentis but by surprise other whiles that the same was not well executed, And that since there was a disposicion of lands in the said will there ought to have bine three credible witnisses at the least to the same according to the Statute in that case made and provided which he he the said Sackville Beeston pretends that the said Alice was not seized of the said Severall mesuages and soe not capable to dispose the same by her said will And further the said Sackville at other times threatens that when the witnesses present at the executing of the said will are dead they being now auncient, that then hee the said Sackville Beeston will sett vp a title at law as heire or otherwise disturb your Orator in the possession of the premises bequeathed to him as aforesaid in Tender consideracion whereof, And for that your Orator is advised he hath noe other or more proper way or meanes to quiett the possession and settle his estate in the the bequeathed to him as aforesaid feares and disturbances soe threatened by the said Sackville Beeston and his confederates but to preserve the testimonies of the witnesses which are yett alive whose were presant at the sealing and publishing of the said will and whoe can testify that the said Alice Beeston made her said last will and testament in forme as aforesaid but that shee was of perfect and sound minde and memory and good vnderstanding when shee made and published the same your Orator therefore humbly prays in respect that some of the witnesses being remote and others of them infirme that Commendation may be awarded out of this Honourable Court directed to some discreete
person for the takeing the examinacions and deposicions of such witnesses or otherwise that the said witnesses may be examined according to the course and and rules of this Court which said witnesses canne prove that the said Alice Beeston was of sound minde and memory at ye tyme of the sealeing and publishing of the said will to the end that testimony of such witnesses as may be preserved in perpetuam rei memoriam and bee of record in this Honourable Court or be made vse of in after tymes for the benefit and advantage of your said Orator and such person and persons as shall hereafter Clayme vnder your said Orator as their shall bee occasion att any tryall at lawe or otherwise, And that hee the said Sackvile Beeston may tend and perfect answer make to all and singular the premises May it please your Lordship to graunt vnto your Orator his Majestys most gracious writt of subpena vnder seale of this Honourable Court directed to the said Sackvile Beeston thereby commanding him at a certaine day and vnder a certaine paine therein to bee lymitted personally to bee and appeare before your Lordship in the high Court of Chauncery to answer all and singular the premisses vpon his Corporall oath And further to stand to and abide such further order and direction herein as to your Lordship shall seeme meete, And your Orator shall preay xc ~

George Bradbury

18° Die decembris 1686

The Answer of Sackfield Beeston sonne & heire of Alice Beeston late of the parish Saint Leonard Shoreditch in the County of Middlesex widdow defendant to the Bill of Complaint of Thomas Sheppyfe of London Complainant

All advantages of Exceptio to the uncertainyties insufficiencys & other ye imperfeccions of ye said Bill of Complaint now & att times after saved & reserved to this defendant for Answer vnto soe much thereof (as this defendant is advised any way materially concerneth him this defendant to make Answer vnto hee saith That hee beleeveth it to bee true that Alice Beeston in the Bill named this Defendants Mother was in her lifetime & at the time of her death seized in her Demeasne as of ffee Simple to her & her heires for ever of & in the messuages or Tenements seitate in Kingshead Court in the said parish of Saint Leonard Shoreditch aforesaid in the Bill mencioned but this defendant doth not <know or> beleive that shee the said Alice being soe seized did at the time in the Bill set forth or att any other time make such last will & Testament as in the said Bill of Complaint is Expressed for that the said Testatrix dyeing seized of such Considerable reall Estate as in the said Bill of Compaint is settforth being of the value of one hundred pounds per Annum & possessed of a good personall Estate. And that Defendant Sackfield Beeston being att the time of the death of his said Mother about two & thirteye yeares of age And being not onely the sonne & heire but the onely Child which his said Mother had att the time of her death hee this defendant then and still having fflower Children who being her Grand children might Justly have Expected that they should have received some Considerable advantage by her said Will Yett neverthelesse shee this Defendants said Mother by the said pretended will hath given & devised the ffee & Inheritance of the said Messuages Lands & Tenements in the said pretended will mencioned totally from this Defendant & his said Children And hath by the said Will onely bequeathed an Annuity of about two and twenty pounds a yeare to this Defendant
For his life only & that small proportion of the said Estate not free neither but Cloyd not only with the payment of seaven pounds a year to bee yearly issuing out of the same for this Defendant’s life & to free all the said Testatrix’s other Estate from the same or otherwise hee this Defendant not to Enjoye the said Annuity But hath subiected the same to beare of all taxes repaires & incident Charges And by her said will hath not given (as this Defendant is advised) any remedy att Law either by a distress or otherwise for the recovery thereof neither hath the said Testatrix this Defendant’s said Mother by the said pretended will in the said Bill of Complaint sett forth devised to this Defendant’s said flower Children or to any one of them att all nor as much as mentioned them either or any of them in the said pretended will But shee the said testatrix hath thereby given & devised the ffee & inheritance of the greatest parte of her siad reall Estate to the Complainant & his heires who was nott att all of Kinn or of any the least affinity vnto her & after shee hath by her said will devised divers greate Legacyes out of her reall & personall Estate to such persone & in such manner as this Defendant could not in any sort have imagined could or should have been participants of the least part thereof’ Shee hath thereby not only made the Complainant her sole Executor but hath given & bequeathed vnto him & Benaiah Beeston in the said pretended Will named all the rest & residue of her reall & personall state whatsoever equally to bee divided between them All which being soe very greatly prejudicall to this Defendant & tending to the vttre ruine of him his wife & said four Children & being soe full of vnnaturall Cruelty in the said Testatrix (if it should be admitted in the least that shee was of sound mind memory & vnderstanding at the time of the making & publishing of the saud pretended will) this defendant therefore cannot in any sort compell himselfe to beleife that shee yee said testatrix was at the time of making & presenteing of the said pretended will of sound mind & memory or in Case shee was then of a disposing & memory (as this Defendant beleiveth shee was not) Yett that shee being of a greate age that is say of about threescore & seaventeene yeares at the time of her death & by reason thereof & of her said sicknesse vnder a very greate declension both of Body & mind was by the strength of the infirmacions & pressing impertauityts or rather dilusions of those which not onely resolved <to> Graspe her saide Estate & to raise themselves and theirs by the fall & distrucion of this Defendant & all his / overwrought wean & prevailed vpon (Contrary to her owne inclinacions desires & intencions) soe very Exteme vnnaturally cruelly & contrary to all the dictates of Justice Conscience reputation & comon morality thus horredly & inhumanely to vse this defendant & to leave him & his to Contend with the vttremost Extremeties that necessityes and wants can reduce him & them vnto And this defendant further saith that hee beleiveth that true it is that about the time in the Bill sett forth / shee the said Testatrix dyed But this defendant doth deny all & all manner of Combinacion or Confederacy whatsoever any way charged vpon in or by the said Bill of Complaint without that any other matter or thing materiall or Effectuall in the Law for him this defendant to make Answer vnto & not herein before Answered vnto confessed & avoyded traversed or denied is true to the knowledge of this Defendant all which matters & things this Defendant is ready to averr Justifiey maintaine & prove as this honourable Court shall award & humbly prays to bee heare dismissed with his reasonable Cost & Charges in this behalfe most wrongfully susteyned & –

Wm Cole
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