

**Playgoing in Early Modern London
After Shakespeare
(1616-1642)**

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To the love of my life, Samanta

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	5
I.1 Research Objectives and Procedure	5
I.2 Current State of Research	19
I.3 Of Second Publications and Barriers of Time	53
II. Socio-Historical & Cultural Context: 1616-1642	57
II.1 A City of Contrasts – Jacobean and Caroline London	57
II.1.1 Growth and Development	60
II.1.2 London as a Centre of Entertainment	66
II.1.3 The London Theatres, The Court and the City Authorities	69
II.1.4 The London Theatres, Puritanism and Antitheatrical Prejudice	75
II.1.5 The London Theatres and the Plague	89
II.2 London's Suburbs	99
II.2.1 The Suburb of Southwark	103
II.3 Competing Industries	108
II.3.1 Animal baiting	112
II.3.2 Inns and Taverns	123
II.3.3 Prostitution	128
II.4 Theatrum Mundi – The Theatricality of Life	137
II.4.1 Punishments and Executions	139
II.4.2 Ceremonies, Pageants and Sermons	149
II.5 The Companies and Their Playhouses	154
II.5.1 Public Playhouses	155
II.5.2 Private Playhouses	169
II.6 Early Modern Londoners	189
II.6.1 The Order of Society	190
II.6.2 The Erosion of the Social Order	194
II.6.3 The Order of Society and the Theatres	196
II.6.4 Early Modern Families	200
II.6.5 The Order of Society and Clothing	203
II.7 Playgoing	205
II.7.1 The Evidence	207
II.7.2 Of Audiences and Spectators	220
II.7.3 Contemporary Reactions to Plays	226
II.7.4 Physical Circumstances of Performance	234
II.7.5 Audience Composition	251
II.7.6 Audience Behaviour and the Physicality of Response	272
III. Framing Devices in the Plays of Ford, Brome and Shirley	283
III.1 Metatheatricality	283
III.1.1 Framing Devices: The Prologue	290
III.1.2 Framing Devices: The Epilogue	293
III.2 John Ford	296
III.2.1 About John Ford and his Literary Works	296
III.2.2 Metatheatrical Framing Devices in the Plays of John Ford	304

III.3 Richard Brome -----	321
III.3.1 About Richard Brome and his Literary Works.....	321
III.3.2 Metatheatrical Framing Devices in the Plays of Richard Brome	330
III.4 James Shirley -----	365
III.4.1 About James Shirley and his Literary Works.....	365
III.4.2 Metatheatrical Framing Devices in the Plays of James Shirley.....	371
IV. Conclusion -----	399
V. Bibliography of Works Cited and Consulted -----	407

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURE

In his play *The Example* of the year 1634, James Shirley has his Prologist ask for the audience's indulgence and benevolence by declaring:

Hear partially ere you condemn the play.
'Tis not the author's confidence, to dare
Your judgments, but your calm ears to prepare,
That, if for mercy, you can find no room,
He prays that mildly, you pronounce his doom.¹

Following the conventional address of Early Modern framing devices, I likewise humbly invite the "faire and free Attention"² of my readers, whom I, like Shirley did with his audience, similarly regard as "great commissioners of wit"³.

As Ralph Berry has stated with regard to the study of Early Modern theatre audiences,

[t]he audience is an eternal puzzle, even when we are part of it. What the audience is, no man knows. It has assembled for a single occasion and will never meet again. Even so, the playwright knows or guesses something of it. He must have a strategy for bringing this curious multitude into a union of sorts. He must, like an actor [...] play to all parts of the house, so as to induce in them their share of the common experience.⁴

Notwithstanding these limitations outlined by Berry, the aim of this thesis is to bring London's theatre audiences of the years 1616 to 1642 to light and illustrate for whom playwrights like John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley composed their plays. Ever since Alfred Harbage's works on Early Modern theatre audiences were published in the 1940s, many scholars and critics have advanced the view that the dramatic works composed in Early Modern England can only be understood if

¹ James Shirley. Prologue. *The Example. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Eds William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, 6 vols. Vol. 3. London: 1833, p. 283.

All passages from Shirley's plays quoted in this thesis are taken from Gifford's and Dyce's edition of his collected works, which at present is the only comprehensive collection of Shirley's dramatic oeuvre.

² Richard Brome. Prologue. *The Weeding of Covent Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Ed. John Pearson, 3 vols. Vol. 2. London: 1873, p. 177.

All passages from Brome's plays quoted in this thesis are taken from Pearson's edition of his collected works, which at present is the only comprehensive collection of Brome's dramatic oeuvre.

³ Shirley. Prologue. *The Imposture. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, p. 181.

⁴ Ralph Berry. *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1985, p. x.

one possesses an enhanced understanding of the people for whom these plays were originally written. This gave rise to various studies examining the historical framework within which the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights were produced and staged. Likewise highlighting the importance of the original audiences in particular, Ann Jennalie Cook has emphasised that familiarity with Early Modern English audiences “extends the possibilities for understanding the remarkable drama of that place and time”.⁵ Following this assumption, the central aim of this thesis is firstly to reconstruct the socio-cultural field within which dramatic plays were originally produced between the year of Shakespeare's death in 1616 and the fatal closure of all playhouses in 1642, thus explicitly not primarily focusing on Shakespearean drama like most studies dealing with Early Modern drama. Using contemporaneous data and thus reconstructing the historical context by taking a contemporary perspective, I will analyse who the people were for whom Shakespeare's and Marlowe's successors wrote their plays to be performed on London's public and private stages. In addition to this, it will be highlighted what playgoing in general was like in Early Modern London during a period which has largely been neglected by modern scholarship. I will illustrate who exactly went to the theatres in these years and how these playgoers and their expectations towards the stage were shaped by a wide range of constantly shifting cultural, political and social circumstances.

In addition to this, another main objective of this thesis is secondly to examine how the Caroline playwrights John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley acknowledged their audiences and commented upon internal and external factors conditioning the development of professional acting and playwriting by means of metatheatrical and highly self-reflexive framing devices, i.e. prologues and epilogues. In order to reach this second goal, the examination of the socio-historical context conducted in the chapter's first part is indispensable as the plays analysed in the second part “suffer vastly if taken from the context of their time”⁶.

⁵ Ann Jennalie Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 273.

⁶ Theodore Miles. "Place-Realism in a Group of Caroline Plays". *The Review of English Studies*. 72 (1942): 428-440, p. 428.

To be able to reach these two greater goals, I have divided my thesis into two parts. The first part is an account of the people for whom Ford, Brome and Shirley wrote their plays. It will provide the reader with the necessary background information on theatregoing in Early Modern England during the years 1616 and 1642. This data is essential for the thesis' second part in which it will be analysed how these authors self-reflexively commented upon the state of their craft by means of prologues and epilogues. The thesis' first half will therefore shed light on Jacobean and Caroline drama and its audiences by taking historical, cultural and social circumstances into account, in acknowledgment and regard of Jean E. Howard's assertion that the study of literature should not be separated "from the study of [...] the culture which produced it".⁷ Many studies dealing with Early Modern audiences regard the people living during the time in question as disembodied figures who only become important once they appear as members of an audience watching a theatrical performance. In this thesis however, they will be given a voice and will be seen as being part of a much larger social and cultural environment. I will show how various external factors affected Early Modern playgoers, how they felt about these issues and how they in return influenced what was shown on stage. In this light, the following chapters are rather "histories *about* London but not necessarily *of* London"⁸, insomuch as the thesis is first and foremost concerned with the daily life, the practices and experiences of those inhabitants who also appear as playgoers in one of the theatres, rather than providing a comprehensive history of the city as such.

To begin with, the thesis' first chapters will explore to what extent the development of English drama between 1616 and 1642 was connected to the expansion of the city of London itself. London was a city of contrasts and underwent a significant and far-reaching transformation during the seventeenth century. One result of its uniqueness was the continued existence and further development of an industry solely devoted to entertainment and pleasure, which drew huge audiences. The

⁷ Jean Elizabeth Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 8.

⁸ Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner, eds. Introduction. *Londinopolis. Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 8.

ambivalent attitude of both the Court and the city authorities towards playing will also be commented upon and I will show that especially the theatres were under constant attack by antitheatrical streams, first and foremost from the Puritans. Even though these assaults were numerous and persistent, the theatres knew how to defend themselves. As Chapter II.1.5 will show in greater detail, there was one enemy against whom even the most clever theatre entrepreneurs or playwrights were powerless: the dreaded bubonic plague, which led to lengthy closures and bereaved London's remaining theatre companies of the basis of their own existence – namely their audiences whose role and fortune within the theatre-industry are at the very heart of this thesis.

After these issues have been covered in Chapter II.1 and its subchapters, I will elaborate on the importance of London's suburbs, above all Southwark, for Early Modern London's entertainment industry in general. Due to their paradoxical and ambivalent standing as areas outside the city's jurisdiction, London's quickly growing suburbs, often viewed as places of disorder and anarchy by contemporaries stressing suburban problems, helped public theatre companies and their competitors to escape the harsh restraints existing within the city walls. Suburbs such as Southwark developed as important places of consumption within which many pastimes and forms of recreation and pleasure limited in the city proper could flourish and develop. This made the suburbs a world of taverns, gambling houses, brothels, baiting arenas and fairs all influencing playgoers flocking to the three remaining public playhouses in their expectations towards the stage.

In the thesis' third chapter, more detailed attention will be drawn to the industries competing with theatregoing in Early Modern London. London and its suburbs had a rich cultural life and offered a wide range of public and private pastimes during the years 1616 to 1642. The great variety of non-dramatic forms of recreation, first and foremost animal baiting, drinking as well as prostitution, forced both public and private theatres to constantly adapt to the changing realities around them to fulfil their customers' desires and tastes. Not least because of their close proximity to each other in such areas as Southwark, these three forms of recreation in particular, similarly under constant attack, directly competed with the Early Modern theatre industry. Often attracting people from the same target-group, they heavily

influenced the tastes and experiences of Jacobean and Caroline theatre audiences. Dramatic and non-dramatic forms of entertainment were closely intertwined and this interdependence on the one hand and the Early Modern Londoners' high demand for amusement, spectacle, blood, violence and sex on the other hand heavily influenced dramatic productions during the period in question. Theatre companies had to make sure to hold their ground in this highly competitive market with blurred boundaries and an incalculable customer base. I will furthermore detail how the baiting of animals, having been popular all over the island long before the institutionalisation of Early Modern drama and the erection of permanent playhouses, posed a particular threat to the Jacobean and Caroline theatre-industry. These shows – using similar venues and being highly dramatic and carefully planned performances in their own right – catered for a thirst for blood, violence and spectacle that was very pronounced among Early Modern Londoners and could not always be met by the playhouses. In addition to this, light will also be shed on the drinking habits during the years in question and I will illustrate to what extent playgoing and the consumption of alcohol were connected to each other. The same holds true for prostitution, which was found all over London and was similarly closely linked to playgoing in such places as Southwark, where playhouses and brothels literally rubbed shoulders and where prostitutes were presented with a steady availability of potential customers before, during or after dramatic performances.

Chapter II.4 will then show that not only London's rich cultural life was characterised by a wide range of dramatic elements, but life within the city itself as well. The sites of pleasure analysed in Chapter II.3 lay in close proximity to the sites of punishment, pain and death. The overall theatricality of life found its ways into many different forms of cultural productions and in these often highly ritualised events nothing was left to chance. Once again giving voice to those who lived in London during the years between 1616 to 1642, it will therefore be illustrated that London and its suburbs were highly ceremonial and ritualistic spaces where royal and civic power was literally staged in front of huge audiences by means of events such as punishments, executions or pageants. The authorities knew well how to benefit from the people's thirst for spectacle. There were various exhibitions of

power organised around persons of authority who knew well how to dramatize themselves and use their public position to present themselves in the role they wanted to be seen in. To manifest, exhibit and exercise their power, the city was turned into a playhouse in its own right in which the public audience was required to play a certain role – true to the *theatrum mundi* trope that all the world is a stage. In this regard special emphasis will be put on the many well-rehearsed public forms of bodily humiliation and torture. These highly theatrical spectacles of exemplary justice and violence – literally turning Early Modern London into a theatre of punishment – were crucial elements of social control and served an important function for the judicial system as they helped to maintain the strict hierarchical structure of society. In addition to this, I will show that Early Modern Londoners in fact enjoyed and demanded these various forms of free entertainment. These anticipations had a direct influence on Jacobean and Caroline playgoers as they brought their experiences directly into the playhouses and thus partly shaped the dramatic works of that time.

In the thesis' fifth chapter and its subchapters I will then elaborate on the situation of the remaining public and private playhouses. These venues had to overcome several obstacles in the years leading up to their final closure in September 1642, such as frequent changes of companies, problems of patronage, the plague or the overall harsh competition within Early Modern London's entertainment sector. In contrast to the Elizabethan era, the period in question saw a general decrease in both companies and playhouses so that only six venues remained. Private theatres such as the Blackfriars, adding to the highly competitive world of entertainment and pleasure, gained significantly more importance. They catered for the changing needs and expectations of certain members of the audience who were willing and able to pay the higher admission prices and were in consequence offered even better opportunities to follow social pretensions and to dramatize themselves in the highly theatrical world described in Chapter 4. In addition to this, it will be illustrated that the individual venues each had unique features by which they were categorized and selected by contemporary playgoers. The Fortune and the Red Bull for example were characterized by somewhat less sophisticated, more old-fashioned and often controversial plays which were still highly popular, whereas the

Globe, by design also a public playhouse, inhabited a hybrid position as it shared several characteristics with the more fashionable and supposedly more respectable private playhouses (the three being the Blackfriars, the Cockpit or Phoenix and the Salisbury Court). Eventually attention will also be drawn to the fact that these six remaining theatres, in spite of their individuality, did not differ from each other as much as one might initially suspect. The period in question saw a constant interchange of plays, playwrights – Ford, Brome as well as Shirley all wrote for different stages – and audiences.

Chapter 6 and its subchapters will then shed light on the structure of Early Modern society and the people living in London at that time. The chapter will provide the reader with crucial background information needed to understand what playgoing was like in the years between Shakespeare's death and the closure of the playhouses. Early Modern society was determined by multiple social hierarchies and people were divided into distinct social roles and functions – first and foremost according to their rank or wealth. This class-consciousness, which helped to sustain order and had existed for centuries, came increasingly under attack as the changing social and economic realities made it easier for the newly developing middle classes and such groups as merchants, entrepreneurs or shopkeepers to climb the social ladder. The older, more hierarchical forms of social organizations were slowly dissolved as the rise of capitalism led to a certain redistribution of wealth and land and the fact that fewer people stuck to their expected roles. The problems resulting from urbanisation and London's hypertrophic growth also gave rise to yet another group hitherto unknown, namely the masses of poor and unskilled people not being able to gain a foothold in the nation's capital. In addition to this, it will be elaborated that even though the different social groups mingled only seldom in everyday life, they nevertheless came into contact in venues such as the churches or the theatres. The playhouses, for that reason often accused of undermining the social order on the one hand, inhabited an ambivalent position in this respect. On the other hand their elaborate seating arrangements reflected and reproduced social hierarchies. They enabled the more wealthy playgoers sitting in the galleries or boxes to exhibit themselves to the masses of inferior people located in the yard or auditorium.

The thesis' seventh chapter and its various subchapters will then shed light on the interaction between and the interdependence of Early Modern playgoers and the stage. Chapter 7 will thus – in contrast to the six preceding chapters – not primarily focus on external factors of life and culture outside the playhouses, but take an internal view on matters. This detailed historical perspective is necessary in order to illustrate how complex an undertaking playgoing was during the timespan in question and how audiences influenced dramatic productions on the one hand and the development of the London stage on the other hand. To begin with, I will highlight that a chief problem in the analysis of Early Modern playgoing is the scarceness and unreliability of contemporary data left behind by the playgoers themselves – not to mention the vast amount of negative and antitheatrical evidence often not based on first-hand experience. The long neglecting of texts not regarded as literary in the strict sense by literary scholars – like travel accounts, diary entries or personal correspondences by playgoers such as Sir Humphrey Mildmay, John Chamberlain or Abraham Wright – has led to the fact that many questions regarding the physical circumstances of theatrical performances have still been unanswered. A detailed or comprehensive historical perspective on late-Jacobean and Caroline playgoing must remain an illusionary ideal as the restricted availability of data does in fact only allow us to cautiously reconstruct certain aspects. The majority of playgoers did not bother to leave any written traces of their visits to the playhouses in general or their reactions to the plays they had watched in particular. Thus the few extant texts are all the more precious and must be analysed with the greatest care.

Subchapters II.7.2 and II.7.3 will deal with the etymological difference between the terms 'spectator' and 'audience' on the one hand and the contemporary reactions to performances on the other hand. The term spectator cannot be applied to Early Modern playgoers for various reasons. Due to certain crucial developments Jacobean and Caroline performances, which were characterised by an active, participating and communicating crowd, stand in stark contrast to modern performances, which have been transformed into individual and private acts lacking the collective emotional power characterising Early Modern stagings. In addition to this, more detailed attention will also be drawn to the explicit commentaries and

observations of those who were actually present at either Jacobean or Caroline performances and felt the need to note down their impressions. These texts will help the reader to get a more comprehensive picture of what playgoing was like in these years on the one hand and also show how difficult it was for Early Modern theatre companies to satisfy the wide range of differing and often conflicting tastes, desires and expectations of their clients on the other hand. Since only a very limited amount of records by eyewitnesses are extant, these few judgments are indispensable to get an insight into what Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's audiences thought about the plays they had watched – in contrast to the many antitheatrical texts which are only seldom based on first-hand experience.

The following subchapter will then be concerned with the physical circumstances of Jacobean and Caroline theatrical performances at both public and private playhouses. For this, aspects such as the prices of admission and other expenses involved in watching a play, the seating arrangements, attendance figures and the repertory system will be analysed in greater detail. Playgoing in Early Modern London was a complicated and complex business influenced and determined by a wide variety of often unpredictable factors. To survive in the highly competitive world of entertainment, theatre companies relied on a great number of playwrights and a huge repertory to satisfy their customers' demands and expectations – often shaped by diverse or even conflicting social and economic backgrounds. In addition to this, it will become clear that both public and private venues were not just places of entertainment, but places of consumption, which meant that playgoers quite often spent large sums of additional money on refreshments or food – not to mention the cost of transportation to reach the playhouses in the city's suburbs. Prices of admission varied greatly between the less expensive public and the more exclusive private playhouses, the latter offering their affluent clients a wide range of possibilities to exhibit themselves and to show off their superior social standing to the other members of the audience in a world which was highly theatrical in its own right. This was likewise the case for the public venues which equally enabled the playgoers to be seated according to their position within society – while at the same time being one of the few commercialized pleasures within a simple workman's means. The chapter will provide the reader with detailed information on all the

different seats available at the two types of playhouses and illustrate that the cheapest seat in the private theatres cost the same as the most expensive seat in a public venue.

Chapter II.7.5 will subsequently be concerned with a topic which has fuelled intense scholarly debate for many years and that still occupies many theatre historians and literary scholars alike: namely the question of audience composition. Though one must differentiate between public and private theatres, this thesis will show that Early Modern playhouses in general appealed to a wide range of customers with diverse social and economic backgrounds. Once again using various pieces of contemporary data, it will be proven that the previously popular and over-simplified labelling of especially Caroline drama as having been only for more wealthy and sophisticated members of society is in fact insupportable – especially in view of the continued popularity of the more unrefined Fortune and Red Bull. The chapter will therefore refute those propositions simply regarding the drama of that time as being 'Cavalier' and on the contrary detail that playgoing in late-Jacobean and Caroline London was in general still a pastime enjoyed by all layers of society; regardless of the playgoer's social standing, economic situation, gender or age. The complex and in fact well-balanced theatre-scene of Early Modern London with a total of six very distinct and well-defined playhouses and the significant gap in admission prices assured that playgoing in general continued to be a form of recreation enjoyed by very heterogeneous audiences, all drawn to the theatres by an overall common purpose. In this regard I will detail that whereas the three remaining public amphitheatres featured a broader social mix, the private venues were – though not exclusively – characterised by a more pronounced demographic homogeneity due to their higher admission prices. At the same time it will also be illustrated that there was no correlation between prosperity or social rank on the one hand and taste or sophistication on the other hand, as the more prosperous members of the audience were also sometimes prone to shady behaviour.

The audiences' behaviour will then be the main concern of the first part's last subchapter, in which it will be elaborated that late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences – in spite of various somewhat sensational incidents – were by far not as violent or disrespectful as numerous pieces of contemporary antitheatricalist writing would

want its readers to believe. Once again it would be wrong to take the exaggerated writings of the stage's enemies at face value. Of course playgoers of the years 1616 to 1642 had different expectations towards the stage than for example modern audiences as they were directly affected and influenced by the other forms of often highly brutal or infamous pastimes which the entertainment zone of London and its suburbs had to offer. Early Modern theatres were not only places of consumption – eating, smoking and drinking were an essential part of the Early Modern playgoing-experience –, but more importantly also of social interaction. Audiences were an active entity directly reacting to what they were seeing during dramatic performances (on- and offstage) and were used to expressing their thoughts and sentiments verbally, or at times even physically. Playwrights and actors alike encouraged the expression of approval by employing various metatheatrical devices to address and talk to their customers and integrate them into the world of the play.

The social, historical, cultural and political data supplied in the thesis' first half and its seven greater subchapters will then be needed as the basis for the thesis' second part; namely the study of how audiences were included into performances by means of metatheatrical framing devices, i.e. prologues and epilogues. In contrast to the thesis' first part and much recent scholarship on playgoers in the late-Jacobean and Caroline Periods, the second part will not primarily be concerned with how audiences responded to what they were hearing and seeing on stage, but with how their presence was acknowledged and referred to in the plays of three distinguished dramatists of the time in question: John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley. The prologues and epilogues of these three playwrights served a number of important functions and were cleverly constructed means of manipulation to ensure – among a variety of other things – the playgoers' benevolence and goodwill. Or, as Brian Schneider has put it in his book *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*,

[i]f spoken well, the prologue can immediately engage the spectator in the imaginative theatrical world that the ensuing play inhabits, while the epilogue can both sustain the illusion and then, possibly, return the audience to everyday reality. The idea of *Theatrum mundi*, which was so ingrained in the period, supports the notion that going to see an early modern play was to be presented with a continuous performance in which real life and

dramatic imagination tended to merge. [...] In addition, such prologues and epilogues are attuned to the particular concerns and interests of the audience at any given moment and are prepared to discuss and address such concerns. They deliver their cultural commentary more freely and boldly than many other forms of expression. Prologues and epilogues provide a sensitive gauge of cultural moods.⁹

How Ford, Brome as well as Shirley in particular used these means to bridge the fictional world of the play and the real world of the audience as well as to comment upon current theatrical matters will be a major concern of the thesis' second part. And while the present study does certainly not make any pretensions to be comprehensive, the metatheatrical and self-reflexive framing devices discussed in Part II are purposefully drawn from a wide range of plays written during different phases of the playwrights' careers. They provide a well-balanced overview on metatheatricality and audience address by means of prologues and epilogues in plays written and performed between 1616 and 1642. Together with the results of the analysis of the social, cultural und historical circumstances in the thesis' first part, the results of the second part will provide the reader with a detailed and diverse insight into what playgoing as well as playwriting were like during the late-Jacobean and Caroline Period.

In order to achieve this goal, the second part is likewise divided into several subchapters. To begin with, Chapter III.1 will provide a comprehensive definition of metatheatricality and introduce the reader to the fact that Jacobean and Caroline playwrights like Ford, Brome and Shirley did not see the audience's part in a theatrical production as a mere passive one. On the contrary: the framing devices used by them are ample proof of both the willingness and need to directly converse with their paying customers. All three playwrights exhibited a great concern for the reactions of their original playgoers as well as greater theatrical matters (especially in the last years before the theatres' closure). As this lively interaction between stage and auditorium and the ensuing reflection of the theatre's own artifice were most pronounced in the times' prologues and epilogues, I will then offer short introductions into these two forms of audience address. By illustrating that these framing devices advanced a very notable range of ambitions and functions in late-

⁹ Brian W. Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama. 'Whining' Prologues and 'Armed' Epilogues*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 6.

Jacobean and Caroline plays and that they were in consequence an important means to bridge the represented world of the play and the representing world of its production, the reader will be provided a first general insight into the complicated interplay between the real and fictional worlds. These three introductory chapters – to metatheatricality in general on the one hand and to prologues and epilogues in particular on the other hand – will then enable us to analyse several plays from the canon of Ford, Brome and Shirley in terms of their use of self-reflexive framing devices to comment upon the state of the theatre or manipulate their audiences in the face of London's highly competitive entertainment sector.

Though their framing devices testify the preoccupation with very similar concerns, Ford, Brome and Shirley differed greatly in their approach to the stage. To begin with, Ford is an author very difficult to categorize. He did not follow current dramatic trends and therefore occupies an isolated position within the Caroline Period – certainly not least because of his constant experiments with dramatic forms resulting from his regretfully looking back to the Elizabethan past. The plays to be analysed in greater detail are *The Lover's Melancholy*, *The Broken Heart*, *Perkin Warbeck*, *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* as well as *The Lady's Trial*. The framing devices employed in these five plays express Ford's need to critically reflect upon as well as address larger theatrical matters, such as the development of Early Modern drama in general or the changing expectations and tastes of playgoers in particular. His prologues and epilogues document Ford's trying to come to terms with the changing theatrical realities around him. Though he also used conventional elements to ensure his audiences' favour, he often used metatheatrical framing devices to reflect upon his own role as dramatist as well as the function of his customers within altering circumstances. He used these means to defend his choice of genre or form in a time when satires became more and more popular. The prologues and epilogues from Ford's canon analysed in this thesis will thus illustrate that literary debates were not only conducted outside the playhouses, but self-reflexively found their ways into the dramatic productions of that time.

Brome, whose plays offer striking glimpses into the lives of London's middle classes, is particularly interesting for modern scholarship for two reasons, about both of which more will be said in Chapter II.3.1; namely his intimate and at times

problematic relationship with Ben Jonson on the one hand and his unique and extant contract with the Salisbury Court theatre on the other hand. The plays from Brome's canon to be analysed are *The City Wit*, *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *The Sparagus Garden*, *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, *The Antipodes*, *The Court Beggar* and *A Jovial Crew*. By means of these seven plays I will show that Brome likewise used metatheatrical techniques to self-consciously refer to current theatrical issues – especially if one keeps in mind that he wrote more than just one prologue or epilogue for certain plays because he needed to adjust his work to the changing external realities. Brome – always attentive to the playgoers' desires and needs – used these passages to talk openly about the relationship between stage and audience, to comment upon the function of prologues or even to pay tribute to the memory of his former mentor Ben Jonson. He moreover employed prologues and epilogues as a means to counteract the bad press and prejudices his craft saw itself faced with and to position his product within the highly competitive market that existed in London and its suburbs. In order to ensure for his customers' coming back, Brome, whose phrasings could take a rougher form, thus also had to make use of conventional elements, such as the flattering of his playgoers' wit before a play or the feigned and highly manipulative granting of the ultimate power of judgment at the end of a play. In these cleverly constructed metatheatrical games of mutual interdependence and subjection employed by Brome, words like 'justice', 'judgment' and 'expectation' were stock expressions used to acknowledge the customers' authority on the one hand, while at the same time also reminding them of the responsibility coming along with this influence on the other hand.

Shirley did not only have a complicated and ambivalent relationship to the Court (which induced him to turn his back on London and work for the Werburgh Street Theatre in Dublin for almost two years), but also to his audiences whose legitimacy to judge him he often challenged. The prologues and epilogues analysed will be from the plays *Changes, or Love in Maze*, *The Example*, *The Coronation*, *The Doubtful Heir*, *The Imposture*, *The Brothers*, *The Cardinal* as well as his late play *The Sisters*. Shirley's prologues and epilogues document his on-going struggle to adapt to the changing realities Early Modern playwrights saw themselves faced with and the disappointment if his plays were not shown at the venue of his choice. In

addition to this, he – though well aware of the audiences' decisive role in dramatic productions – at times walked a thin line between insulting a certain part of the audience by praising another. The devices examined in the respective chapters will also detail that Shirley recognized the steadily increasing importance of the female members of the audience for the theatres' future development. He paid tribute to them by employing female speakers for his prologues and epilogues in *The Coronation* and *The Imposture*. Moreover, Shirley, just like Ford and Brome for example, viewed the changing role of the Caroline dramatist with great concern. Lamenting the degeneration of Early Modern drama, he used his framing texts to condemn those he blamed for the development, such as certain playgoers whose destructive and disreputable behaviour he disapproved of on the one hand, and the emergence of less skilled but nevertheless popular dramatists on the other hand. Established authors like Shirley were working under a lot of pressure as they were constantly struggling to sustain their customers' goodwill by renegotiating authority to them. Shirley, beweeeping earlier times and thus unable to hide his frustration over various theatrical issues after his return from Ireland, employed his framing devices to demonstrate that the increasingly unstable conditions outside the playhouse walls were more and more leaving their marks on the theatrical productions of that time and that the drama as he and his audiences knew it was ultimately coming to an end.

I.2 CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

To begin this chapter on the current state of research, it should be mentioned that several renowned scholars have already done an uneven amount of research on the three greater topics laying at the heart of this thesis; namely playgoing in Jacobean and Caroline London, the use of metatheatrical elements in Early Modern drama as well as the Caroline Period including the lives and works of John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley. However, in spite of these publications, several research gaps remain. It is this thesis' aim to close these gaps and hence provide the reader with more detailed information on several aspects that have been neglected in recent years due to a limited interest in the Early Modern English drama composed after Shakespeare's death in 1616.

In general this thesis' first part is very much indebted to the pioneering and far-reaching groundwork conducted by Andrew Gurr since the 1980s up until today. Of particular interest have been two books which lay at the heart of Gurr's achievements as a theatre-historian and literary scholar, namely his *The Shakespearean Stage*¹⁰ and *Playgoing in Early Modern London*¹¹. Ever since their first publication, these two influential monographs must be considered the standards-works for anyone interested in learning more about Early Modern English drama. *The Shakespearean Stage*, frequently revised and updated, is the only monograph describing a wide range of aspects relevant to understand the original staging of Early Modern plays. It provides its readers with detailed information on issues such as the acting companies, the theatres as well as the audiences. *Playgoing in Early Modern London* draws particular attention to the people for whom Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists composed their plays. Analysing the physical circumstances of Early Modern performances as well as the playgoers' evolving tastes and expectations, Gurr enables scholars of different academic fields to receive a substantial insight into what playgoing was like during Shakespeare's time. This thesis is built upon Gurr's findings and conclusions in particular and pursues the goal to take research a step further and pay more attention to the developments happening between the years 1616 and 1642. Though Gurr mentions this timespan in his works and provides the reader with a fair amount of information, he nevertheless puts his main emphasis on the Elizabethan and Jacobean age and allows only limited room for the alterations taking place in especially the 1630s – a point of criticism that can be applied to the majority of studies dealing with Early Modern drama. Only few of them allow sufficient room for the distinctiveness of the Caroline Period and on the contrary often content themselves with generalisations and jump to conclusions all too easily. Gurr's works, though to a lesser extent, are no exception to this rule.

¹⁰ Andrew Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

¹¹ Andrew Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. 4th Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

The city of London as such and its history have attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention ever since John Stow's *A Survey of London* was first published in 1598. There are indeed numerous by now antiquated, though nonetheless entertaining and charming, histories of England's capital, offering interesting pieces of information on various aspects touching the city's eventful past. After village and county studies were more prominent among political and social historians for several decades up to the 1980s, more recent years have seen a noticeable increase in scholarship on London as a topic of historical and cultural study again. In consequence, several substantial works on the capital – documenting both the continuing pride and interest in the city and its history – have been printed. They deal with varied issues such as the city's social history, the development of the suburbs, architecture, the capital's living conditions, or the playhouses, to name just a few. As Mark Jenner and Paul Griffiths have noted to this effect in the introduction to their book *Londinopolis* of 2000, the "renewed interest in early modern London is hardly surprising. [...] Aspects of early modern London, such as the Plague, the Fire, and the Globe, remain prominent in popular notions of the past and in versions of 'national heritage'."¹² Francis Sheppard's *London. A History*¹³, nicely illustrating the city's genesis to what it is today, Peter Ackroyd's voluminous monograph *London – The Biography*¹⁴ of 2000 as well as Stephen Porter's book *Shakespeare's London*¹⁵ of the year 2009 are just three examples documenting the again increasing interest in the capital's history. Especially the latter one – though not extending up to the years 1642 – has been indispensable for the present study for its catchy descriptions of life in the Early Modern metropolis. Some chapters from Roy Porter's monograph *London: A Social History* of 1994 have been likewise imperative for this thesis due their helpful descriptions of the city's development over the years.¹⁶ Several articles from the collection of essays entitled *Imagining*

¹² Griffiths and Jenner. Introduction. *Londinopolis*, p. 2.

¹³ Francis Sheppard. *London. A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

¹⁴ Peter Ackroyd. *London – The Biography*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2000.

¹⁵ Stephen Porter. *Shakespeare's London. Everyday Life in London 1580-1616*. Chalford: Amberley, 2009.

¹⁶ Though already a few years older, Roy Porter's book offers interested readers a comprehensive and well-structured list of studies investigating London's past in its 'further reading' section and should not be disregarded: Roy Porter. *London. A Social History*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994.

Early Modern London edited by J. F. Merritt have also been of great help, as they enable their readers to better trace and understand the crucial cultural and political transformations that London underwent during the Early Modern Period on the one hand and to get an insight into the representation of London in literature and culture on the other hand.¹⁷ One further study, though not specifically dealing with London, deserves to be mentioned in this regard for its comprehensive depiction of European urban societies during the time in question, namely Christopher Friedrichs *The Early Modern City: 1540-1750*.¹⁸ Subchapters of my thesis dealing with issues such as the plague or Puritanism have hugely benefited not only from the more comprehensive town histories, but also from more specialised studies, which, though certainly not outdated in the strict sense, are partly still patiently awaiting to be superseded by more current investigations. Among the studies used in this thesis were for example William Holden's *Anti-Puritan Satire*¹⁹, Christopher Hill's *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*²⁰ as well as Margot Heinemann's influential *Puritanism and Theatre*²¹. My investigations on the order of Early Modern English society conducted in the first part's sixth chapter heavily relied on Susan Amussen's book *An Ordered Society*.²² Though a few years have already passed since it was first published in 1988, it must still be seen as one of the most comprehensive studies dealing with the importance of central issues such as class and gender in Early Modern English society. Thanks to its plausible and detailed depictions of how the life of Early Modern Londoners was heavily shaped and influenced by both social hierarchies and social relationships, Amussen's study has been indispensable for my purposes. The same holds true for Louis Montrose's seminal book *The Purpose of Playing*, which, though mostly referring to the Elizabethan age, has been of great help for all parts of this thesis for its attempts to

¹⁷ J. F. Merritt, ed. *Imagining Early Modern London. Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

¹⁸ Christopher R. Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City, 1450-1750*. London: Longman, 1995.

¹⁹ William P. Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire, 1572-1642*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

²⁰ Christopher Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1964.

²¹ Margot Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre. Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

²² Susan Dwyer Amussen. *An Ordered Society. Gender and Class in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

recreate the ideological, material and cultural context within which Early Modern drama was created and within which playgoing took place.²³

The chapter on the suburb of Southwark depended to a large extent on the extensive works and investigations by Mary Boast²⁴, Leonard Reilly²⁵ and Geoff Marshall²⁶ who, feeling that Southwark's contribution to London as a whole had been neglected for many years, have given top priority to filling in this gap and provide scholars of various disciplines with a basis for their own studies, such as mine. However, as holds true for most chapters of this thesis investigating the cultural, social and historical context, the more general studies conducted by such eminent scholars as Gurr, Greenblatt²⁷ and Mullaney²⁸ have once again also been of great importance for this chapter in particular for their precise examinations of the importance of such suburbs as Southwark for the development of Early Modern English drama. In contrast to my thesis however, they pay only limited attention to the specific alterations taking place in the last two decades before the theatres' closure in 1642 and more generally focus on the state of affairs around the turn of the century when the playhouses were still trying to gain a permanent foothold in or around the metropolis. In doing so these and several other studies make only little allowance for the significant redistribution of professional acting happening in greater London in the years following Shakespeare's death resulting from the increase of private playhouses on the one hand and the simultaneous decrease of public venues outside the city walls on the other hand.

The chapter on those industries primarily competing with the theatres has drawn from the findings and analyses of a wide range of scholars from different disciplines.

²³ Louis Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing. Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

²⁴ Mary Boast. *The Story of the Borough*. London: London Borough of Southwark: 1997.

²⁵ Leonard Reilly. *The Story of the Borough*. London: London Borough of Southwark, 2009.

²⁶ Leonard Reilly and Geoff Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside. From the River Thames to St George's Circus*. London: London Borough of Southwark, 2001.

²⁷ Stephen Greenblatt. *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Stephen Greenblatt. *Will in the World. How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: Norton, 2004.

²⁸ Steven Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage. License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

The chapter on animal baiting is particularly indebted to the splendid article by Barbara Ravelhofer entitled "Beasts of Recreation", which has not received the attention it deserves by modern scholarship.²⁹ Until this day it remains one of the very few studies sufficiently emphasising the cultural and social relevance of bloodsports for Early Modern English society. Most other scholars only attach limited importance to these practices and at times undervalue the extensive effects of pastimes such as bear-baiting had on potential playgoers. Chapter II.3 therefore puts more emphasis on animal-baiting, drinking as well as prostitution as has previously been done by most literary scholars or theatre-historians in order to clearly detail the importance of such cultural practices on the development of Jacobean and Caroline drama in general and the expectations of Early Modern Londoners patronizing the public and private playhouses in particular.

For the analysis of the general theatricality of life in Early Modern London and its subsequent influence on the drama of that time, two works have been particularly helpful, namely Steven Mullaney's *The Place of the Stage*, which is very illuminative in examining the cultural situation of Early Modern drama in world that was highly theatrical in its own right, as well as Alan Brooke's and David Brandon's more recently published book *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, investigating in detail the functions and effects of executions in Early Modern London society.³⁰

The first part's fifth chapter, i.e. the account of the six remaining public and private playhouses, is very much indebted to the groundwork conducted by Gerald E. Bentley in the sixth volume of his voluminous study *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*³¹, modelled after Edmund Chamber's essential reference work *The Elizabethan Stage*³². Though already published more than half a century ago and in parts superseded by new data, Bentley's work must still be seen as the standard-work for the Caroline Period and thus constitutes the starting point for most studies dealing with this subject matter. The information and data gathered by him in his elaborate accounts on the Early Modern playhouses and their companies has

²⁹ Barbara Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears". *English Literary Renaissance*. 32 (2002): 287-323.

³⁰ Alan Brooke and David Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004.

³¹ Gerald Eades Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. 7 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941-68.

³² Edmund K. Chambers. *The Elizabethan Stage*. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.

seldom been challenged and only a limited, though significant, amount of additional material have been discovered ever since Bentley first published his study. In consequence most literary scholars and theatre historians wanting to find out more about playhouses such as the Globe, Phoenix, Blackfriars or Red Bull during the years 1616 to 1642 still heavily rely on the information first gathered and systematically organised by Bentley. The same holds true for several other aspects such as plays and playwrights. My own thesis is no exception to this rule and likewise builds upon Bentley's works. I have however aimed to also incorporate those pieces of information that escaped his attention or were not available at the time of his writing – first and foremost resulting from the excavations conducted in London after the foundations of the Rose and in parts of the Globe had been discovered in 1989. Resulting from these diggings, scholars, having relied on very few pieces of evidence such as drawings for many years, were able to gain elaborate insights into not only the general layout of Early Modern playhouses, but more importantly into the substantial and hitherto unknown differences between the individual public playhouses. These new findings have been summarized by R. A. Foakes in his essay "Playhouses and Players"³³, a contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, edited by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway.³⁴ Once again Gurr's *The Shakespearean Stage* has proven indispensable in the analysis of the playhouses in question. Gurr dedicates a substantial portion of his book to this very issue: among other aspects concentrating on matters of architecture and archaeological evidence, the action on-and off-stage and explicitly highlighting the specific features of the individual playhouses and the companies that operated them. In consequence Gurr's work must be seen as the best general survey of the more recent past in this particular field of study. Further crucial supplements to both Chamber's and Bentley's original findings have been provided by such scholars as Glynne Wickham in his *Early English Stages*³⁵, Gurr's *The*

³³ R. A. Foakes. "Playhouses and Players". *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*. Eds A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 1-52.

³⁴ A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

³⁵ Glynne Wickham. *Early English Stages*. 2 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

*Shakespearean Playing Companies*³⁶ (still the only general study of Early Modern companies of players), several articles reprocessing and transcribing archive material collected by Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry and William Ingram in their *English Professional Theatre 1530-1660*³⁷, as well as in several shorter studies on the individual playhouses, of which Foakes gives a well-researched list at the end of his essay.

Of all questions revolving around Early Modern English drama in general and playgoing in particular, few have received as much attention as the ones examining the physical circumstances of performance. None of them has led to as controversial and conflictive assumptions as the question of the social and mental composition of the original audiences. As S. P. Cerasano has summarised to this effect,

[o]ver the years historians have constructed many hypothetical audiences, especially for the public playhouses, which – being open throughout the year, costing less, and drawing many more spectators – attracted a more diverse audience than their private counterparts.³⁸

Four studies in particular stand out of the many works published on this matter in the last couple of decades and have influenced the debate most lastingly: Alfred Harbage's *Shakespeare's Audience* (1941)³⁹, Ann Jennalie Cook's highly controversial *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (1981), Martin Butler's *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642* (1984)⁴⁰ and Andrew Gurr's already mentioned *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987). Even though several points made by Harbage in his more generalizing *Shakespeare's Audience* have been refuted since the book was first published, it must still, with caution, be seen as the classic work in this particular field of study. Harbage, while also carefully stressing the social heterogeneity of the audiences in London's public theatres, assumes that the typical playgoer came from the lowest social class. His usage of more modern

³⁶ Andrew Gurr. *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³⁷ Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry and William Ingram, eds. *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

³⁸ S. P. Cerasano. "Must the Devil Appear?: Audiences, Actors, Stage Business". *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. 193-211, p. 193.

³⁹ Alfred Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1941.

⁴⁰ Martin Butler. *Theatre and Crisis. 1632-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

constructions of hierarchy fails to allow for the complexity of the Early Modern English class-system however and in consequence leads to many generalizations and oversimplifications. Some 40 years later, Cook's *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, which has caused much learned dispute regarding the new light it sheds on the composition of Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, sharply challenges Harbage's conclusions and argues that not only the more expensive private venues, but also the public theatres mainly catered for the privileged members of society as the other people did not possess the financial means or the time to follow such pastimes. Cook, ignoring the fact that the Fortune or the Red Bull attracted a less sophisticated clientele, sees the better educated, more affluent and socially elevated members of Early Modern London society as the principal audience. By desiring to come up with a uniform interpretation, she disregards or overrides those pieces of contemporary evidence contradicting her assumptions, such as the numerous contemporary complaints, which establish that people of a wide variety of social backgrounds frequented the playhouses. This approach has earned her much criticism. Quite interestingly Cook also admits that the less privileged, or plebeian members of society participated in other forms of public pastimes such as animal-baiting, but nevertheless denies them the playhouses even though the public venues offered entertainment at similar prices. As Butler has detailed to this effect, the Early Modern system of admission prices "was not meaningless; the playwrights knew that in different parts of the audiences they were addressing different groups of spectators."⁴¹ Unfortunately both Harbage and Cook put their emphasis on Shakespearean audiences and, though their titles suggest otherwise, only pay limited attention to the developments happening during the Caroline Period. Instead of acknowledging the distinct differences of the individual sub-periods, both Harbage and Cook deal with them undifferentiatedly and miss the distinct characteristics of the era's final years. Written around the same time as Cook, Butler's important book *Theatre and Crisis* has developed as a benchmark for especially the Caroline Period. The author's analysis convincingly qualifies Cook's assumptions. Butler's differentiated reconsiderations of especially

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

the social composition of both public and private theatre audiences have been indispensable for my purposes and instead of bending too much to one side, offer us valuable assessments of the social heterogeneity of Early Modern theatre audiences. Examining the social function of the playhouses and exploring "the myth of the 'Cavalier audience'"⁴², Butler describes "in detail the social round to which the theatres belonged"⁴³ and refutes earlier overhasty claims that Caroline private theatres in particular were above all meeting-places for aristocratic members of society. Not disregarding the importance of members of the gentry as playgoers either, he details that "[b]oth in terms of social differentiation and political leanings, the theatres embraced a collection of spectators much broader and more varied than this view allows."⁴⁴ In doing so Butler, in sharp contrast to Cook, emphasises that there were in fact "two 'traditions'"⁴⁵ resulting from the different kinds of theatres and the audiences they attracted. Neither does he fail to emphasize the "considerable degree of interaction and cross-fertilization"⁴⁶ between private and public venues, of which more will be said in the relevant chapter. In the second appendix to his work, Butler uses some 15 pages to specifically rebut several claims expressed by Cook in her *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*. In particular he criticises that Cook makes little if no distinction "between the playgoers frequenting the cheap outdoor stages and those who spent more lavishly at the indoor theatres"⁴⁷, thus disregarding the by all means pronounced, and widely recognized, differences between venues such as the Red Bull and the Blackfriars. Butler does not deny that the so-called privileged members of Early Modern society, a term rather broadly defined by Cook, were an important group of customers for all playhouses, but, he finds fault in Cook's undifferentiated conclusion that they were actually the only ones who counted – after all an assumption easily refuted by contemporary evidence from within plays of various dramatists, numerous metatheatrical elements as well as external data. Using hard

⁴² Ibid., p. 100.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 293.

facts, Butler has convincingly detailed to this effect that "the size of the ratio between population and theatre capacity seems to point very strongly in the opposite direction from Cook's conclusions, towards inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness"⁴⁸, meaning that the number of privileged Londoners at the time would in fact not have been sufficient to keep the playhouses running – even if one assumes that people visited the theatres more frequently during the Early Modern Period than is usual today. In addition to this, the presence of a number of privileged playgoers "does not logically entail the absence of the privileged"⁴⁹, Butler states in response to Cook's overvaluation of these records.

Gurr's detailed study *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* is likewise more complex than both Harbage's and Cook's. Though not paying enough interest to the changing realities happening in the theatres' final years before their closure in 1642, it nevertheless takes into account and emphasises the variations between the individual theatres as well as the shifts that took place over several decades. Gurr, while generally accepting that playgoers came from the widest range of society, comes to the conclusion that citizens are most likely to have accounted for the largest group in Early Modern playhouses; two assumption he convincingly backs up by drawing on the increasing number of individual playgoers that have been identified over the past years. Jeremy Lopez in his book *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (2003)⁵⁰, though disregarding Butler's significant contributions to the debate, provides us with an accurate summary on the major works dealing with the issue of Early Modern audiences. In his comprehensive survey of the formal conventions of Early Modern drama – claiming that "one can better understand the audiences of the English Renaissance if one better understands the plays they watched"⁵¹ – Lopez states that

[t]he question of audience has become more and more fraught over the last one hundred years, and has resulted in the tradition of audience study we now see most clearly in Alfred Harbage, Ann Jennalie Cook, and Andrew Gurr. This tradition has generally presented audience study and debate about audiences as a hard science. The [...] major works on

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 298.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Jeremy Lopez. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 7.

audiences in the last sixty years [...] are full of numbers, statistics, charts, measurements, and original documents, all combining to create an impressive, quite exact picture of the playhouse's physical, social, and economic place in early modern England. There is much classification: of "popular" and "coterie" plays and audiences in Harbage; of "privileged" and "plebeian" plays and audiences in Cook; of "amphitheatres" and "halls", "citizen" and "artisan" audiences, and even different kinds of "mental composition" in Gurr. All of this classification, used to provide a context within which to consider the drama, gives on the surface the impression of more rigidly segregated audiences and more easily dichotomized audience tastes than the evidence actually yields up. Harbage can in some way be seen as responsible for this: his separation of popular and coterie plays combined with his valorization of the "Shakespearean" audience as "an audience of the many" inspired the desire to break down the idea of a sentimentalized "popular" audience and to set up new, more accurate categories than "popular" and "coterie". Anne [sic] Jennalie Cook supplied the categories of "privileged" and "plebeian". Gurr, taking exception to these, reestablished a broad category of "playgoers", and then attempted to break that category into the smallest pieces possible, searching for truth in a mosaic rather than a panoramic picture.⁵²

Agreeing with Lopez' diagnosis, this thesis aims to strike a balance between these very methods and has adopted an approach that allows the reader to both see the general "panoramic picture" on the one hand, but also to identify certain individuals groups of playgoers on the other. However, one should not only see the differences expressed in these studies, but also stress the amount of new knowledge resulting from the still on-going productive debate on the one hand and the opening of this particular field of study for new critical and unbiased thinking on the other hand. All recent publications agree that such labels as 'Cavalier' oversimplify the matter and make no allowance for the diversity of people actually present at Early Modern theatres. As Michael Neill has summarised to this effect,

[w]hatever their disagreements, the work of Ann Jennalie Cook, Martin Butler and Andrew Gurr has called in question traditional assumptions about the social gulf between the older 'public' playhouses and the newer 'private' theatres whose coterie audiences were supposed to have pushed the dramatists towards précieux decadence; and Margot Heinemann's and Martin Butler's patient reclamations of the missing history of 'opposition theatre', have made it no longer tenable to account for the development of early Stuart drama in terms of any simple alignment of Court and theatre interests.⁵³

However, in spite of these major publications the debate about the factors revolving around playgoing in the Early Modern metropolis is continuing and has more recently been further enriched by various interesting and often highly

⁵² Ibid., pp. 16f.

⁵³ Michael Neill, ed. Introduction. *John Ford. Critical Re-Visions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 5.

differentiated works. John R. Elliott's article "Four Caroline Playgoers"⁵⁴ for example, first published in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* in 1993 and summarising the information about the theatrical endeavours of four individual playgoers, has greatly supplemented our understanding of Caroline audiences in particular. Apart from Butler's *Theatre and Crisis* the only other publications specifically dealing with Caroline audiences are the following: Clifford Leech's early article "The Caroline Audience"⁵⁵, published in the *Modern Language Review* in 1941, which, in spite of a few interesting assertions, must be regarded as outdated and deficient – both as far as Leech's methods or his conclusions are concerned. Ira Clark's book of the year 1992 entitled *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley, & Brome* is far more substantial on the other hand and has provided valuable contributions to the debate.⁵⁶ Clark, writing some ten years after Cook, supports the assumptions expressed in *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London* and likewise assumes an audience consisting predominantly of the moneyed members of Early Modern society. He postulates that these people, "drawn from the small contingent of the population"⁵⁷, were the principal addressees of such Early Modern dramatists as Ford, Brome or Shirley. In contrast to Cook however, Clark does not use 'hard facts' but bases his assumptions on internal evidence from the plays written by Massinger, Brome, Ford and Shirley. He uses aspects such as the relationship between characters, the presentation of ceremonies, rituals or hierarchy and various other issues presented in the plays themselves in order to come to conclusions about Early Modern society in general and theatre audiences in particular. This "use of social reflexivity and reciprocity"⁵⁸, as Clark himself has called it, has led to interesting observations, but – with regard to the fact that one should refrain from using a play's fiction to draw definite conclusions – has to be taken with a pinch of salt due to the questionable reliability of the results coming from this approach. Though he admits that one should beware

⁵⁴ John R. Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers". *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*. Ed. Leeds Barroll. New York: AMS Press, 1993. 179-196.

⁵⁵ Clifford Leech. "The Caroline Audience". *Modern Language Review*. 36 (1941): 304-319.

⁵⁶ Ira Clark. *Professional Playwrights. Massinger, Ford, Shirley, & Brome*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

of oversimplification when referring to the privileged members of society, Clark nonetheless lets himself be carried to extremes himself when he postulates that Caroline theatre audiences were generally well-educated and shared a "common set of expectations and aesthetic values"⁵⁹. This was not the case as theatre companies and authors were constantly struggling to meet their customers' highly differing and constantly shifting expectations. Yet another publication of the more recent past dealing with Early Modern theatre audiences is the collaborative debate between Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin in their book *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*, which was first published in 2001.⁶⁰ This collection of texts written by the two authors is not only interesting for its format or the different methods used, but for the fact that their texts nicely connect the different approaches to audience study and their respective arguments. By placing the cultural practice of playgoing in a variety of contexts, Dawson and Yachnin do not aim to "develop a single thesis about what going to plays might have meant"⁶¹, but strive to see the bigger picture and "to locate the theatre within a number of different cultural domains in an effort to understand theatrical experience in historical terms."⁶² Due to this rejection of a totalizing view, their divergent examinations of the cultural conditions within which theatrical plays during the Early Modernity were produced offers modern readers an interesting perspective into this particular form of pastime. Their book has been motivated by a similar wish as mine to more firmly position Early Modern playgoing within the broad cultural context to which it originally belonged. Unfortunately, like most publications on this matter, neither Yachnin nor Dawson sufficiently considers the further developments in this particular field of study taking place after Shakespeare's death. In consequence both scholars stay abreast of these changes which are also worthy of our attention. The collection of essays entitled *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*, edited by Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill and first published in 2011, has likewise been of great help in the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁰ Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England. A Collaborative Debate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶² Ibid.

writing of this thesis and should therefore not go unmentioned.⁶³ The texts published in this collection, though many of them focus on Shakespearean drama, cover a wide range of subjects related to playgoing in the Early Modern metropolis. Myhill's article "Taking the Stage: Spectators as Spectacle in the Caroline Private Theatres"⁶⁴ in particular offers interesting insights into the interaction between Caroline playgoers and the stage. By acknowledging the decisive role of audiences for dramatic productions of that time and rejecting the once prominent notion that the original audiences can be seen as a demographic entity, both Myhill and her fellow researchers aim to highlight the dialectical nature of Early Modern performances and the mutual impact and interdependence resulting from this. The collection's contributors have aimed, but did not always succeed, to draw attention to "the variety of experiences and viewing practises that individuals brought to an early modern theater".⁶⁵

What all the above mentioned publications have in common is that they – in spite of their often very divergent approaches – are facing the same problem, namely the lack of evidence providing a safer fundament for their assertions and conclusions. Though the New Historicism has more or less dominated the study of Early Modern English drama for some 20 years starting in the 1980s, no significant publication examining the role of the original audiences has yet been published by scholars dedicated to that particular approach. Scholars like Greenblatt have on the contrary rather focused on such aspects as the power of spectacles and other issues so that a work investigating the role and function of Early Modern playgoers from a New Historicist perspective is yet to be awaited.

However, in addition to these and many more works written by scholars over the past 100 years, this thesis relied on many contemporary sources from the English Early Modern Period itself. Much consideration has been given to the voices of those who lived between the years 1616 and 1642 and witnessed certain

⁶³ Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill, eds. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

⁶⁴ Nova Myhill. "Taking the Stage: Spectators as Spectacle in the Caroline Private Theatres". *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*. Eds Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 37-54.

⁶⁵ Low and Myhill. Introduction. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama*, p. 2.

proceedings at first-hand. However, as every scholar dealing with Jacobean and Caroline drama knows, only few contemporary accounts and scraps of data have survived. As Harbage points out to this effect, the “records are fragmentary, opinions more abundant than facts, and the most willing witnesses not the most credible”.⁶⁶ With regard to the present study it is even more unfortunate that the audience itself left “few traces behind, few means of vindication.”⁶⁷ With regard the analysis of the socio-historical context in the thesis' first part, this study is first and foremost very much indebted to Xavier Baron's *London 1066–1914. Literary Sources and Documents*⁶⁸ as well as to the first and second appendix to Gurr's *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. Together with the data collected by scholars such as Bentley, Kirsch⁶⁹ and others, these two books in particular have been indispensable for the provision of a wide range of contemporary source-material partially enabling the reader to see the years between 1616 and 1642 with the eyes of those who lived during this time. The first appendix in Gurr's book provides a list of some 160 Early Modern playgoers that have been positively identified so far and offers background information about aspects such as their social status within Early Modern society. In the second appendix, which has been even more vital for this thesis, Gurr supplies an extensive, though not comprehensive, list of documents recording or commenting upon visits by contemporaries to one of the many London theatres between 1563 and 1699. However, both Baron and Gurr leave it at itemizing these sources without analysing them in greater detail or relating them to the knowledge we have from other sources about aspects such as Early Modern London and its suburbs, popular forms of public and private pastimes, the theatricality of life or playgoing. As Elliott has noted with regard to Gurr's second appendix to this effect, “its main usefulness may well turn out to be the encouragement it gives to other scholars to add to it as new documents turn up, an undertaking that is all the more desirable given the smallness of the extant sample.”⁷⁰ And though this thesis has

⁶⁶ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Xavier Baron, ed. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*. Mountfield: Helm Information, 1997.

⁶⁹ Arthur C. Kirsch. "A Caroline Commentary on the Drama". *Modern Philology*. 66:3 (1969): 256-261.

⁷⁰ Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers", p. 179.

not succeeded in meeting Elliott's wish by unearthing hitherto undiscovered contemporary sources, its aim has nevertheless been to carefully use these valuable eye-witness accounts and literary sources gathered by Baron, Gurr and others to get a more detailed insight into the rich cultural life in the nation's capital during the time in question.⁷¹

As this short overview has shown, many works have already been published on the social, historical and cultural context of Early Modern London. What has hitherto been missing however is a comprehensive investigation of the manifold aspects that had an explicit or implicit influence on the Jacobean and Caroline playgoing experience. Though there are many isolated studies – often neglecting the Caroline Period and instead focusing on the years constituted by Shakespeare's life – on issues such as the city's development, the impact of either the plague or Puritanism, the effect of such competing industries as animal-baiting or the theatricality of everyday life, we are still lacking a work reconciling all of these and more aspects in order to better understand how complex an undertaking playgoing was especially in the years between Shakespeare's death in 1616 and the closing of all playhouses in 1642. Though this thesis does not claim to be inclusive in this regard, it offers a more broadly based investigation of a large variety of factors shaping, developing and at times also impeding Jacobean and Caroline drama so that one can better comprehend what exactly the social and cultural practise of playgoing involved in this important era of English literature. In addition to this, by using a wide range of contemporary data from various resources, this thesis has

⁷¹ Wherever available, the original spelling of the sources used in the thesis' first part was kept. Where the original text was not at hand, modernized and edited versions have been used instead. I am greatly indebted to the work of scholars such as Andrew Gurr, Xavier Baron, Gerald Eades Bentley, R. E. Pritchard and many more who have shown the greatest effort in bringing together a wide range of contemporary sources (both fictional and non-fictional) composed during the period in question. Without their dedicated and reliable work, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. I therefore claim no credit for the discovery of the original sources used in this thesis and in the cases in which contemporary sources (such as poems, plays, letters, pamphlets, sermons etc.) were not directly quoted, I have provided biographical data (where possible) on the original sources as well as on the work from which I have borrowed the quote in order to acknowledge the effort of the scholar in question. Though there are also modern editions of some of these texts, I have nevertheless decided to give reference to the original sources in the footnotes to the second-hand quotes in questions in order to ensure the desired historical perspective of my thesis.

given top priority to see the various influences affecting the Jacobean and Caroline playgoing experience through the eyes of those that were actually present.

In contrast to various other aspects, the research of metatheatrical elements in Early Modern drama or the interaction between stage and audience has been rather neglected in the past decades and more comprehensive and broadly-based studies covering the period as a whole are yet to be awaited. What we do have however, are several isolated studies dealing with aspects like the soliloquy, the play-within-a-play or the chorus, such as Robert Nelson's *Play with in Play* (1958)⁷² or Anne Righter's still widely read *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (1962)⁷³. Hsiang-chun Chu's study *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*⁷⁴ of the year 2008 is far more comprehensive in this regard and offers several interesting insights into the use and function of self-reflexive elements in plays of the Early Modern Period. By focusing on various techniques that enabled Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists and actors to actively interact with their audiences, Chu illustrates how these techniques were used to blur the distinction between the play world and the real world. In doing so, Chu, together with further scholars such as Richard Hornby⁷⁵ for example, follows a tradition first started by Lionel Abel's ground-breaking book of the year 1963 entitled *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*⁷⁶, in which the term 'metatheatre' was not only first coined, but which also first regarded metatheatre as a distinct genre. The present thesis, focusing on metatheatrical framing devices in the plays of John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley, is on the other hand also very much indebted to Brian Schneider's influential book *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, first published as recently as 2011. Apart from a few minor studies published at the end of the 19th century, it remains the only extensive study in this particular field of research. Especially its first appendix, systematically listing the prologues and epilogues of Early Modern English drama up to the year 1660, has been a major

⁷² Robert J. Nelson. *Play Within A Play. The Dramatist's Conception of his Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958.

⁷³ Anne Righter. *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.

⁷⁴ Hsiang-chun Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama. Four Forms of Theatrical Self-Reflexivity*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008.

⁷⁵ Richard Hornby. *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*. London: Associated UP, 1986.

⁷⁶ Lionel Abel. *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1963.

help.⁷⁷ In contrast to other scholars who only refer to isolated framing texts or other metatheatrical devices in their examinations of certain aspects related to Early Modern drama, Schneider succeeds in investigating a wide range of prologues and epilogues. In general, as Schneider has aptly noted in his introduction, "prologues and epilogues in early modern English drama have not received a good press."⁷⁸ The lack of research resulting from this is all the more to be regretted as both prologues and epilogues do tell a lot about the dynamic and interactive relationship between the Early Modern London stages and their customers. The framing texts of certain individual dramatists, above all Shakespeare, "have been examined and commented upon in many books and articles"⁷⁹, but have only seldom been related to each other. To this effect Schneider furthermore goes on observing that "[i]t is also true that prologues and epilogues are frequently quoted for the insight they afford us into the theatrical practices of the day, for the social comment often embedded in the texts and for the political dimension some of them display."⁸⁰ This superabundance of studies of individual plays does not allow us to see the bigger picture however and thus more comprehensive studies, or works connecting the rich social, historical and cultural context within which the people to whom these self-reflexive texts were originally addressed lived, are still missing. Apart from the books mentioned above, several other publications, though not dealing with framing texts in particular but with metatheatricity or audience address in general, have also been indispensable in the completion of this thesis. Among these were Janet Hill's *Stages and Playgoers: From Guild Plays to Shakespeare*⁸¹, which does not give any attention to the years after Shakespeare's death, but which has nevertheless been helpful in its clear demonstration of the various strategies employed by Early Modern playwrights to openly address playgoers. Lopez' monograph *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* has not only been of use for the light it sheds on playgoing in

⁷⁷ For further information on the state of research in this particular field of study I recommend the introduction to Schneider's own work.

⁷⁸ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Janet Hill. *Stages and Playgoers. From Guild Plays to Shakespeare*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

general, but also for its investigations of several conventions helping playwrights and actors to maintain the goodwill of their often highly demanding customers. A third publication that needs to be mentioned in this regard is Bridget Escolme's *Talking to the Audience. Shakespeare, Performance, Self*⁸², first published in 2005 and specifically analysing the relationship between audiences and actors during performances. Like most studies published in the past decades, Escolme's book solely focuses on Shakespearean drama and does not give any room to the authors writing in his legacy after his death until the theatres' fatal closure in 1642. Two further books, which have likewise made crucial contributions to this particular field of study are Ralph Berry's *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience* (1985) as well as Robert Weimann's and Douglas Bruster's more recent *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre. Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (2004)⁸³. The latter publication sees prologues primarily as "'threshold' texts ushering the audience to the play."⁸⁴ Both publications once again put their main emphasis on the works of Shakespeare and thus disregard the further developments of Early Modern drama in general and the use of metatheatrical elements in particular taking place after his death in 1616.

This disregard of the Caroline Period has been one of the main motivations for the composition of this thesis. Whereas countless articles and books dealing specifically with Shakespeare and his works are published on a daily basis all over the world, the 26 years of Early Modern drama immediately following his death have been widely neglected or been treated very superficially by modern scholarship. However, in spite of this general lack of scholarship dealing with the years 1616 to 1642, less than a handful of outstanding publications have significantly enriched the understanding of the period in question and have in consequence been of major importance for the completion of my thesis. It is in their footsteps that I mean to follow as I aim to yet better connect the social, historical and cultural context with the authors' self-reflexive comments directed at

⁸² Bridget Escolme. *Talking to the Audience. Shakespeare, Performance, Self*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

⁸³ Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann. *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre. Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama*. London: Routledge, 2004.

⁸⁴ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 4.

their customers and discussing various aspects shaping, influencing and impeding their craft. Butler's *Theatre and Crisis* was the first attempt to rouse the period from its deep and long sleep to which it had fallen after the last volume of Bentley's *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* had been published in 1968. Butler's influential study "of the English theatre during the years before the Civil War, focusing particularly on its treatment of political subjects and themes, its engagement with the issues of state, society and religion which were to generate the crisis of 1642"⁸⁵, as the author himself has described his work, has played a decisive role in counteracting the critical devaluation of the Caroline Period in modern scholarship, which was based on a number of misunderstandings and overhasty conclusions. Or, as Clark – himself not always agreeing with Butler – has put it:

Butler finds two major problems with earlier scholars: first, they see Caroline society through the lens of the Revolution, anachronistically observing cavalier-Puritan civil strife before the conflict; and second, they see the era through whiggish, anti-royalist eyes.⁸⁶

It is first and foremost thanks to Butler's pioneering work that now more and more – though still only a few – scholars are turning towards this important period in English literary history and finally recognize the immense value of the final years of Early Modern English drama. With its many facets, Butler's book convincingly illustrates that the long avoiding and undervaluation of the Caroline Period has been without reason and that "the theatrical tradition that was cut short in September 1642 was neither exhausted nor in retreat"⁸⁷ – a circumstance underlined not only by the emergence of a great number of new playwrights threatening the old-established ones. At the core of Butler's work lies the coherent assumption that the closure of the last remaining six playhouses did not come by accident or resulted from the Puritan's dislike of drama, but was exclusively due to the advancing political crisis fundamentally affecting and transforming the kingdom – necessitating far-reaching recesses on various levels. The theatres' fatal downfall was not caused, as had previously been claimed, by internal factors resulting from a

⁸⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. ix.

⁸⁶ Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 6.

⁸⁷ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 280.

decrease in quality or popularity or the fact that authors increasingly did not shrink from confronting critical issues. As Butler has summarised to this effect,

[t]he traditional view presents the drama of 1632-42 as unwilling to acknowledge these new threatening forces and withdrawing into a world of escapism, fantasy and romance, designed to divert its courtly auditors from the reality of their impending doom. By helping to foster the frivolous 'Cavalier mentality' the stage is held to have contributed to the national crisis and assured its own demise, as well as to have cut itself off from all that was serious or meaningful in contemporary experience; already 'decadent', it was ripe for the cropping.⁸⁸

Another work qualifying these false and often repeated conclusions critically summarised by Butler above is Julie Sanders's short book *Caroline Drama. The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome*, which was first published in 1999.⁸⁹ Though she also disagrees with Butler on some aspects, she likewise asserts that the closure of the theatres in September 1642 must be seen as "a product of wartime necessity"⁹⁰ resulting from the hostilities between the royalists and Parliament rather than anything else. Following in Butler's wake and dismissing earlier publications which see the drama of that time as "a royalist retreat into aesthetic indulgence"⁹¹, Sanders suggests that the plays written during the Caroline Period "are more often than not direct engagements with social, political, and indeed theatrical realities in the moment in which they were produced."⁹² In doing so, Sanders has also contributed significantly to the re-evaluation of the plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome, but it is still, as she points out

too often a fact that theatre histories of the seventeenth century gloss over the Caroline period, either ignoring it completely or presenting it as a period of aberration, of a falling-off from the high aesthetic achievements of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, or as a poor precursor of Restoration drama.⁹³

The present thesis is likewise committed to change this and to value the worth of the dramatic work composed and staged during the late-Jacobean as well as the Caroline Period. In order to achieve this, James Bulman's compact article "Caroline

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

⁸⁹ Julie Sanders. *Caroline Drama. The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome*. Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

Drama"⁹⁴ in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* edited by Braunmuller and Hattaway has been a helpful starting point for my own investigations for its clear, if rather short, depiction of the period. Like Butler and Sanders, Bulman highlights that the situation was much more complex than most publications would allow and demands for a shift in critical thinking. The same holds true for Margot Heinemann's influential book *Puritanism and Theatre* of the year 1980, which has considerably sharpened the understanding of the effect of Puritanism and antitheatricity on Early Modern society on the one hand, and the time's drama on the other hand by closely analysing the work of Thomas Middleton. Heinemann has succeeded in further repelling the once prominent myth that the Puritans alone brought about the playhouses' closure in 1642 and has illustrated that the historical truth was in fact much more complicated. The collection of essays entitled *Localizing Drama. Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625-1642*, edited by Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer, should also not go unmentioned in this discussion of publications helping the Caroline Period to return from oblivion.⁹⁵ Kathleen McLuskie's article "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater"⁹⁶, which I have consulted for various aspects of this thesis, criticises that

[e]arlier generations of critics either deplored its decadent decline from the high point of Shakespearean drama or admired its representation of a dynamic prerevolutionary moment in which the theater was able to act as the voice and imaginative staging ground of the political turmoil leading to the English Civil War⁹⁷

and calls for yet another shift in the critical reception of this period of English drama. The publications outlined above do in fact form the basic core in this particular field of study and I hope that this thesis will add to this debate.

⁹⁴ James Bulman. "Caroline Drama". *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*. Eds A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 344-371.

⁹⁵ Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer, eds. *Localizing Caroline Drama. Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625-1642*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

⁹⁶ Kathleen McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater". *Localizing Caroline Drama. Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625-1642*. Eds Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 43-68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

None of the publications mentioned above specifically deals with the broad scope of the historical context in which the cultural practise of playgoing was embedded. Instead of addressing the wide range of factors influencing the late-Jacobean and Caroline playgoing experience and the audiences' expectations towards the stage – such as the complex conditions inside the city of London itself or its suburbs, alternative forms of entertainment or the theatricality of life – previous studies concentrate on isolated aspects, such as politics. They moreover lack a pronounced historical perspective insofar as only room little is given to the voices of those who actually lived during the period in question and experienced things at first hand. Not just the Caroline Period as such, but also the dramatists writing during these years have largely been neglected by modern scholarship. Though a few isolated studies have been published in recent years, writers like John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley – in spite of their importance for the continuation of the Early Modern English stage – have not yet received the critical attention they and their works deserve. This is due to the fact that all three of them, together with Philip Massinger and other prominent writers, have always been regarded as standing in the shadow of better-known dramatists like Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson. In addition to this poets writing in the concluding years of Early Modern English drama have often falsely and hastily been labelled as decadent. Referring to Ford, Brome, Shirley and Massinger in particular and proposing a different approach, Clark has summarised the undifferentiated scholarship of earlier times by stating the following:

The conspicuous craft of these playwrights has too often been belittled as a facility for slick imitation: if discovery is deemed profound, then repetition, variation, and development must be shallow. Along with poor marks because of their polished craft, the four have also been disparaged for catering to an audience labeled dissolute. These playwrights are supposed to have purveyed sensational fantasies, escapes from an era that was falling into revolution. Moreover, the fantasies purportedly paint flattering portraits that hide the failings of presumably debased, sycophantic courtiers. Thus both the craft and the sociopolitics of Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome have been condemned as decadent. In the submerged metaphor of the medlar, borrowed from the Elizabethan this exalts, the Caroline professional playwrights got rotten before they got ripe.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 1.

The neglecting of John Ford and his works seems unwarranted considering the quality of the eight plays that can securely be ascribed to him. As Chapter III.2.1 will show, critics have always found it difficult to categorize Ford's literary achievements because his plays in particular, though all written after 1625, are resonant of older models of drama and thus not typically Caroline in tone. "The heyday of appreciation of Ford"⁹⁹, as Lisa Hopkins has called it, came in the Romantic Period when a number of writers, such as Mary Shelly and Lord Byron's mistress Lady Caroline Lamb, "responded most passionately"¹⁰⁰ to some of his plays. In general however, interest and critical attention in Ford and his works have always centred around one play in particular, namely *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. It is predominantly due to this play and its depiction of incestuous behaviour that Ford has long been a very controversial writer, often ignored by serious scholarship not realizing the true potential of his dramatic output and hastily condemning him for his ostensible moral decadence. Some early critics even considered Ford's supposed immorality, decadence and sensationalism as one of the reasons for the downfall of Early Modern English drama; a position most prominently expressed by Thomas Brian Tomlinson in his *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy* (1964)¹⁰¹ and by David Frost in his *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama, 1600-1642* (1968)¹⁰². However, in the course of the 20th century more and more – though still only rather few – critics began to appreciate Ford's works and his special treatment of both dramatic form and psychological issues. But generally, as again Hopkins has aptly summarised, "Ford was still considered mainly as an apologist for incest"¹⁰³. In consequence the preoccupation with morality was still only partly broken so that the attacks on ethical grounds continued. After

⁹⁹ Lisa Hopkins. "The Critical Backstory". *'Tis Pity She's a Whore. A Critical Guide*. Ed. Lisa Hopkins. London: Continuum, 2010. 14-33, p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Brian Tomlinson. *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

¹⁰² David Frost. *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama, 1600-1942*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

¹⁰³ Hopkins. "The Critical Backstory", p. 22.

For a detailed and up-to-date overview on early criticism on John Ford, please consult Hopkins' essay "The Critical Backstory" in the guide to Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* edited by her, which offers a comprehensive discussion on this matter.

various shorter essays had been published in the first quarter of the 20th century, Joan Sargeaunt was the first critic to pay more elaborate attention to Ford and his works and her book *John Ford*¹⁰⁴, though first published as early as 1935, must still be seen as a major work in this particular field of study. Sargeaunt's findings and her conclusions as well as the biographical information on Ford's life collected by her have given rise a number of other publications over the years. S. Blaine Ewing's monograph *Burtonian Melancholy in the Plays of John Ford*¹⁰⁵, investigating Ford's indebtedness to Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*¹⁰⁶ of the year 1621, as well as several shorter studies by G. F. Sensabaugh¹⁰⁷ – endorsing Ewing's ideas on the one hand, but also going much further in his analysis of the unsolvable dilemmas around which Fordian drama is centred on the other hand – then initiated a new wave of interest in Ford's drama in the 1940s, most of which focused on Ford's psychological explorations. Influenced by this trend, the 1950s and 1960s then saw the publications of Robert Davril's *Le drame de John Ford*¹⁰⁸ in 1954, an extensive analysis of such aspects as sources, themes and language, H. J. Oliver's book *The Problem of John Ford*¹⁰⁹ in 1955, R. J. Kaufmann's influential article "Ford's Tragic Perspective"¹¹⁰ as well as Mark Stavig's *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order*¹¹¹, the first comprehensive, though questionable, "attempt to provide an integrated account of Ford's non-dramatic and dramatic writing"¹¹². In his book, which was first published in 1968, Stavig, in contrast to most critics before and after him, sees Ford as a conservative supporter of the traditional moral order rather than, as for example Sensabaugh has done, as someone challenging the social

¹⁰⁴ M. Joan Sargeaunt. *John Ford*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966.

¹⁰⁵ S. Blaine Ewing. *Burtonian Melancholy in the Plays of John Ford*. New York: Octagon Books, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Burton. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. London: 1621.

¹⁰⁷ George F. Sensabaugh. "John Ford and Platonic Love in the Court". *Studies in Philology*. 36 (1939): 206-226.

George F. Sensabaugh. "John Ford Revisited". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 4:2 (1964): 195-216.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Davril. *Le Drame de John Ford*. Paris: Didier, 1954.

¹⁰⁹ H. J. Oliver. *The Problem of John Ford*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955.

¹¹⁰ Ralph. J. Kaufmann. "Ford's Tragic Perspective". *Texas Studies in Literature and Culture*. 1:4 (1960): 522-537.

¹¹¹ Mark Stavig. *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.

¹¹² Neill. Introduction. *John Ford. Critical Revisions*, p. 8.

realities of his time; an approach which has earned him much criticism not least because Stavig considers Ford's dramatic writing as being highly satiric. Choosing a more balanced approach, Donald Anderson's book *John Ford*, first published in the early 1970s, explicitly points to the differences between *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and Ford's other plays and suggests that one should not tar all of Ford's eight plays with the same brush and to get rid of hitherto prominent clichés about the period in general and Ford in particular.¹¹³ Dorothy Farr's *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre*, first published in 1979, has been indispensable for the purposes of my thesis due to the author's relation of Ford to larger theatrical issues, such as questions of staging.¹¹⁴ In 1988, a collection of essays entitled *John Ford. Critical Re-Visions* was edited and published by Michael Neill. The texts in this volume, written by distinguished scholars such as Andrew Gurr and Kathleen McLuskie, have likewise considerably enlightened the understanding of Ford's work. Like all publications listed above, they contributed significantly to Fordian scholarship. In his introduction to the volume, Neill provokingly states that Ford "has attracted an amount of critical attention that may seem out of proportion to his small and somewhat uneven output."¹¹⁵ However, the some 20 books in total published on Ford during the last century can hardly be called much – even if one takes the scattered essays and articles into account. However, in one aspect Neill is right: in contrast to other Caroline playwrights such as Brome or Shirley, the amount of attention Ford has received must be seen as rather a lot. But then again it is next to nothing if contrasted to the almost uncountable publications dealing with other Early Modern playwrights such as Marlowe, Shakespeare or Jonson. In addition to the works mentioned above, which must be seen as the core of Fordian scholarship, the present thesis is very much indebted to the research on Ford and his works conducted by Bentley in the already mentioned book *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Sander's *The Caroline Stage* as well as Lisa Hopkins' critical guide to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

¹¹³ Donald K. Anderson. *John Ford*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972.

¹¹⁴ Dorothy M. Farr. *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1979.

¹¹⁵ Neill. Introduction. *John Ford. Critical Revisions*, p. 2.

Though there has once again been a notable decrease in critical attention in Fordian drama in the past two decades, it is thanks to these publications outlined above in particular that Ford, in spite of the low number of plays written by him, must be seen as the best known Caroline dramatist nowadays. Some of his plays, first and foremost *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *The Broken Heart*, are also increasingly encountered in modern theatres. Ascertaining the increasing non-academic interest in Ford and his works, both plays have been staged at Sam Wannamaker's rebuilt Globe on London's Bankside in as recent as 2014 and 2015 respectively. As Neill has noted to this effect however, "while *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* has been amongst the most frequently performed on non-Shakespearean plays, its popularity has not served to awaken significant theatrical interest in the rest of his work".¹¹⁶ Though Neill made this assertion some almost 30 years ago, not much has changed since then and recent scholarship has concentrated on Shakespearean drama and largely ignored Ford and his fellow Caroline dramatists. The lack of a modern collected edition of Ford's works, either dramatic or non-dramatic, also underlines the hitherto neglecting of him. It is to be hoped that this deficiency will soon be remedied so that a wider public can enjoy Ford's canon, which, though rather small, is by all means worthy of both our benevolent and critical attention. Until this day, the three volumes edited by W. Gifford and A. J. Dyce in as early as 1869, entitled *The Works of John Ford*, remain the only complete edition of Ford's oeuvre.¹¹⁷ This is all the more to be lamented, because, as Farr has summarised

[t]he plays of John Ford require many readings before they yield up the fullness of their quality. No one else in the period was quite like Ford. He has been compared with dramatists of the French classical school – with Corneille and Racine – but ultimately there is no satisfactory parallel. We are simply left where we began, with the uniqueness of Ford and the fascination of the problems which that uniqueness presents.¹¹⁸

Richard Brome, the second author relevant for the purposes of the present study, has received considerably less attention by modern scholarship than Ford. This is all the more to be regretted, because, as Matthew Steggle has detailed in the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 2f.

¹¹⁷ John Ford. *The Works of John Ford*. Eds William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, 3 vols. London: 1869.

¹¹⁸ Farr. *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre*, p. 15.

introduction to his recent book *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*¹¹⁹,

[t]he plays of Richard Brome are among the most interesting and appealing texts to emerge from the later phase of the Shakespearean theatre. Taken together, they also comprise a large and surprisingly various body of work. His sixteen surviving dramas range in their settings from Anglo-Saxon Britain to a specific contemporary Lambeth pleasure-garden, from London's most fashionable shopping arcade to the wilds of Lancashire, from a surreal imaginary Antipodes to a troubled English countryside.¹²⁰

As Steggle further points out, the first critical notice of Brome that is extant dates back to as far as 1675 and was written by Edward Phillips. Phillips' characterisation has set "the agenda for most of the rest of the critical tradition"¹²¹, which usually regards Brome as standing in the shadow of the supposedly superior Ben Jonson. The note reads the following:

Richard Brome, a servant to *Ben. Johnson*; a servant suitable to such a Master, and who what with his faithful service and the sympathy of his Genius, was thought worthy his particular commendation in Verse; whatever Instructions he might have from his Master *Johnson*, he certainly by his own natural parts improved to a great height, and at last became not many parasanges inferior to him in fame by divers noted Comedies.¹²²

Steggle's well-researched and differentiated book, first published in 2004, is the last substantial contribution to Bromian scholarship. It has provided interesting insights into aspects such as the different stages of Brome's writing career, the dramatist's relationship to his former master, questions of genre and his reception in the course of the past four centuries. In addition to this, Ralph J. Kaufmann's *Richard Brome: Caroline Dramatist*¹²³ of the year 1961 – criticising the previous sparse and inferior critical work on Brome – must still be seen as the chief study in terms of the dramatist's biography, though Catherine Shaw's booklet *Richard Brome*¹²⁴, first published in 1980, has challenged a few minor details outlined by Kaufmann. Together these two studies enable readers to gain a profound and balanced

¹¹⁹ Matthew Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²² Quoted in: *Ibid.*

¹²³ Ralph J. Kaufmann. *Richard Brome. Caroline Playwright*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

¹²⁴ Catherine M. Shaw. *Richard Brome*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980.

overview on most facts that have hitherto been unearthed about Brome. However, Ann Haaker's rediscovery of the papers documenting the lawsuit between Brome and the Salisbury Court theatre company has likewise considerably enriched the understanding of not only Brome's position within the Early Modern London theatrical world, but also of the relationship between playwrights and companies in general. Haaker's considerations of these documents in her article "The Plague, the Theater, and the Poet"¹²⁵ of the year 1968 have helped Bromian scholarship to gain a certain momentum after the attempts of such scholars as Kaufmann and Bentley – whose chapter on Brome in his *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* is also worth mentioning here – to relocate the papers had been to no avail. The full text of the lawsuit published by Haaker has since then allowed critics to re-evaluate

one's understanding of how Brome's relationship with his employers actually worked; fills in biographical information about his activities before and after working for Salisbury Court; and makes possible a much more precise reconstruction of the chronology of his plays.¹²⁶

Modern Bromian scholarship has long suffered severely from the unwarranted devaluation of the Caroline Period in general. However, starting with Butler's *Theatre and Crisis* this began to change and the works of scholars such as Clark, Sanders and Hopkins have considerably accounted for the fact that one now sees the real potential of Brome's work.¹²⁷ No general study of Brome's non-dramatic works has yet been published however and those interested in these texts have to make do with the studies of Kaufmann and Andrews, who at least provide broad lists of the songs, poems and masques written by Brome.¹²⁸

As with Ford, a modern printed edition of Brome's complete works is missing. Until this day, the three volumes published by John Pearson in as early as 1873 constitute the only comprehensive printed edition of Brome's dramatic output and have been used for the purposes of my thesis. There are however a select few more recent single editions of individual plays, especially of the better-known plays like *The*

¹²⁵ Ann Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet". *Renaissance Drama*. 1 (1968): 283-306.

¹²⁶ Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*, p. 7.

¹²⁷ For a more detailed overview on Bromian scholarship please consult the introduction to Steggle's *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* as well as the pages 191 to 196 of the same work, which additionally document Brome's reception from 1963 to 2003.

¹²⁸ Clarence E. Andrews. *Richard Brome: A Study of His Life and Works*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913.

Antipodes or *A Jovial Crew*. In addition to this, it is thanks to the Humanities Research Institute of the University of Sheffield that a digital online edition of the collected works of Richard Brome is now easily available to scholars all over the world. This unique edition, under the general editorship of Richard Cave of the Royal Holloway University of London, offers its readers fully edited texts of not only Brome's plays – both sole-authored plays as well as collaborations – but also of his hitherto almost unknown non-dramatic writings. In addition to this, Cave and his colleagues – among them experts such as Matthew Steggle and Julie Sanders – were careful to provide extensive bibliographical and dramaturgical commentaries on the one hand, and additional information on the historical context on the other hand, both of which help modern readers to not only better understand Brome's writing, but also the times he lived and worked in.

To conclude this short overview on the limited research hitherto done on Richard Brome, one can summarise with Butler that

Richard Brome now goes almost totally unread; yet there is some reason to consider him as a political playwright of major significance. Brome's artistic importance for the Caroline theatre [...] is indistinguishable from his centrality within the period, that as the author of plays which articulate the points of view of courtly or aristocratic dissidence, of nascent gentlemanly 'localism' and of popular and puritan radicalism, he seems to be in touch with an amazingly diverse range of feeling, with the most lively and challenging currents of opinion in the decade.¹²⁹

Though these lines were written some 30 years ago, one must assert that only little has changed with regard to the neglect of Brome's plays since these words were penned. It is in consequence all the more to be hoped that such projects as the online edition of Brome's collected works by the Humanities Research Institute of the University of Sheffield will impede the further neglecting of the varied and meaningful oeuvre of Richard Brome, whose plays can considerably enrich the understanding of one of the most troubled times in the history of English drama.

James Shirley is now generally recognized as having been the most prolific writer of the entire Caroline Period. It is thus all the more to be regretted that only very few scholars have done research on Shirley and his works. The reasons for this neglect are hard to make out: on the one hand, Shirley's plays are not as

¹²⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 281.

experimental (neither in form, content or probably most importantly language¹³⁰) as for example Ford's oeuvre and on the other hand he does not express ideas as radical and critical as those by Brome for instance. In view of the fact that Shirley was more closely associated with the Court for a number of years and even had hopes to succeed Ben Jonson as poet laureate this is hardly surprising. In spite of all this however, modern scholarship would be well-advised to recognize the true potential of Shirley's extensive dramatic oeuvre and to assign him the position in literary history he deserves. Only few critics have done so in the past and only a dozen works were published within the last 150 years, of which only some have succeeded in making noteworthy contributions to the study of Shirley and his plays. In contrast to Brome, who already received critical attention during the 17th century, works on Shirley or his plays were generally not published before Alexander Dyce and William Gifford edited the hitherto only complete edition of *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley* in 1833. The lack of a more recent edition also testifies that Shirley, like most Caroline playwrights, has been treated rather stepmotherly by modern scholarship and has not received due attention. At the beginning of the 20th century, in 1911 and 1915 respectively, J. Schipper and Arthur Huntington Nason published the first two more substantial studies on Shirley and his works. Nason's *James Shirley, Dramatist*¹³¹, in spite of the author's detailed depiction of Shirley's life, does however only parenthetically refer to the Caroline theatre or the time in question. Schipper's *James Shirley: sein Leben und seine Werke*¹³² likewise mostly focuses on the dramatist's life, but in addition offers summaries of Shirley's plays. In general most studies written during the course of the 20th century are characterised by regarding Shirley as the role model of decadent writing – an undifferentiated label that even nowadays is still sometimes attached to the whole period as such. A few shorter studies differ in this regard however, such as two articles by Allan Stevenson entitled "Shirley's Years in

¹³⁰ For an illuminating discussion of Shirley's distrust of language please consult the following article: Julie McGrath. "James Shirley's Uses of Language". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 6:2 (1966): 323-339.

¹³¹ Arthur Huntington Nason. *James Shirley, Dramatist*. New York: Nason, 1915.

¹³² J. Schipper. *James Shirley, sein Leben und seine Werke*. Wien: Braumüller, 1911.

Ireland"¹³³ and "Shirley's Publishers: The Partnership of Crooke and Cooke"¹³⁴ respectively. In these articles, which were both published in the 1940s when Stevenson wrote a total of four articles on Shirley, the author on the one hand provides important background information on Shirley's time at the Werburgh Street Theatre in Dublin and, using both external and internal evidence, tries to reconstruct the chronology of the time he spent in Ireland. On the other hand, the second article illuminates the dramatist's collaboration with his two London publishers who published a great number of his plays during his absence from England – a noteworthy undertaking considering the fact that a range of arrangements needed to be made in spite of the distance between the poet and his publishers. A third article that needs mentioning here is Marvin Morillo's "Shirley's "Preferment" and the Court of Charles I" of the year 1961, which offers valuable insights into Shirley's complicated relationship to the Court and his fall from royal favour which confirmed him in his resolution to go to Dublin.¹³⁵ In contrast to several other critics before and after him, Morillo does not turn a blind eye on the fact that Shirley, though someone seeking royal patronage, also wrote a steadily increasing number of plays manifesting a critical interest in the life of Charles' I and Queen Henrietta's Court and that "Shirley became less and less tolerant of the moral laxity, the triviality, and the sometimes humiliating injustice of court life."¹³⁶ In addition to these three articles, Sandra Burner's study of the year 1989 entitled *James Shirley: A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth Century England* has been the work most helpful for the present study due to its comprehensive depiction of a wide range of aspects touching on Shirley's life, his plays and his position within his craft and society up to his death in 1666.¹³⁷ Moreover, Burner's detailed book provides an interesting insight into two conventions heavily influencing and determining the work of Early Modern

¹³³ Allan H. Stevenson. "Shirley's Years in Ireland". *The Review of English Studies*. 20:77 (1944): 19-28.

¹³⁴ Allan H. Stevenson. "Shirley's Publishers: The Partnership of Crooke and Cooke". *The Library*. 25 (1944): 140-161.

¹³⁵ Marvin Morillo. "Shirley's "Preferment" and the Court of Charles I". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 1:2 (1961): 101-117.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹³⁷ Sandra Burner. *James Shirley. A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1988.

dramatists, namely patronage and coterie. Apart from her book, no thorough critical and comprehensive study of Shirley or his plays has yet been written and critics so far have contented themselves with only examining isolated aspects. Though Richard Gerber's *James Shirley. Dramatiker der Dekadenz* of the year 1952 aims to provide a more general survey of Shirley's oeuvre, he does not, as the title already suggests, succeed in freeing Shirley from the stigma of having been a decadent writer.¹³⁸ Notwithstanding the lack of more comprehensive studies, a few discussions of individual plays have appeared since the beginning of the 20th century, however most of which are now antiquated and require revision. As with both Ford and Brome, the information gathered by Bentley in his *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* has also been indispensable for the chapters on Shirley and his works.¹³⁹ The same holds true for both Sanders and Clark, whose contributions to scholarship on Shirley must likewise not go unmentioned and whose books have been of great help to better understand Shirley's role in literary history.

In the light of the above, the aim of the present thesis is to close an academic void and to make a contribution to the study of the late-Jacobean and Caroline Period in order to end the devaluation of both the time in general as well as the drama composed and staged between 1616 and 1642 in particular. Instead of lumping together this important era of English literary and cultural history with its predecessor the Elizabethan Period, this study intends to specifically emphasize the significance of the years in question for the ultimate development of the cultural practise of playgoing in Early Modern London. In contrast to most studies on Early Modern audiences, this thesis makes allowance for the far-reaching changes in English society especially in the years leading up to the Civil War and details to what extent these alterations led to the fact that one should refrain from equating the audiences of these years with those from around the turn of the century. In doing so, I do not claim to be establishing a new tradition of audience study, but rather to be sketching an approach to late-Jacobean and Caroline drama that allows for the extensive and varied interdependencies influencing the playgoing experience during the time in question. By combining theater history and a broader historicist

¹³⁸ Richard Gerber. *James Shirley. Dramatiker der Dekadenz*. Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1952.

¹³⁹ In his book, Bentley also printed eight hitherto unpublished poems by Shirley.

approach, this study intends to reveal the manifold interactions between culture and theater and by these means to add to the still largely underrepresented study of the original audiences of playwrights such as John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley. In the process, the information and data presented in the more isolated studies discussed above has been combined to enable the reader to get a fuller picture of what exactly playgoing was like between the years 1616 and 1642. By these means this thesis ties in with the current efforts of English literature studies to attend to the dramatic achievements of Shakespeare's contemporaries¹⁴⁰, even though it must be recognized that this branch is still highly dominated by an abundance of works on Shakespeare. In addition to this, the liaison of the analyses of the socio-historical context and the metatheatrical framing devices employed by Ford, Brome and Shirley that lies at the heart of this thesis is meant to contribute to a better understanding of the reciprocal relationship between Early Modern dramatists and their audiences.

I.3 OF SECOND PUBLICATIONS AND BARRIERS OF TIME

In contrast to Seneca's closet dramas, dramatic works of the Early Modern Period in general and of Ford, Brome and Shirley in particular were not written to be read, but to be performed on stage in front of live audiences. Thus it is no surprise that Gurr emphasizes that "[d]rama, especially Shakespearean drama, is a performance art"¹⁴¹. To some modern readers it might be astonishing that the three dramatists in question and most of their contemporary playwrights did not primarily bother with later generations of readers. Reading and watching a dramatic performance were in fact different modes of cultural production and Early Modern authors were concerned with pleasing theatre audiences and not readers since "the life of these things consists in action"¹⁴², as John Marston observed. In *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Francis Beaumont refers to the printing and publishing of play-texts as

¹⁴⁰ The collected works of Middleton were published as recently as 2010: John Middleton. *The Collected Works*. Eds Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

¹⁴¹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 3.

¹⁴² John Marston. To my Equal Reader. *The Fawn*. Ed. Gerald A. Smith. London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1964, p. 5.

a “second publication”¹⁴³ – the first and thus the more important one being the actual performance on stage. From what is known, Ford, Brome as well as Shirley seem to have largely agreed with both Marston and Beaumont – though matters were slowly beginning to change. Even though no personal notes of them on these matters have survived, it is fairly safe to say that all three of them wrote first and foremost for theatre audiences and not the book trade as they privileged “the oral-aural and the practical-physical over the world of the book.”¹⁴⁴ Only few dramatists arranged for their plays to be published themselves and a first and notable exception to this rule was Ben Jonson. When he published his collected works in 1616 he became the subject of much ridicule. Even though James I’s reign saw a “gradual acceptance of commercial drama in the literary culture”¹⁴⁵, Jonson’s move was unusual because by doing this, he claimed authority over his texts and furthermore because he classified plays originally written for theatre audiences within the category of literature. Regarding this, Scott McMillin points out that the authorized and overseen publication of Jonson’s collected works “was a noteworthy piece of self-aggrandizement in itself, but the startling thing was that the bulk of Jonson’s “works” were plays – plays being set forth as though they ranked with his poetry and commanded the highest attention.”¹⁴⁶ Jonson was mocked for taking himself so seriously and passages such as “Pray tell me Ben, where doth the mystery lurk / What others call a play, you call a work?”¹⁴⁷ are a case in point. Yet Jonson’s publication did not only classify popular plays as serious literature, it also helped make possible one of the most important single publications in English literary history – namely the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays. When John Heminges and Henry Condell published most of Shakespeare’s plays in the First Folio in 1623, they were careful not to repeat the mistake Jonson had made seven years earlier. Rather than referring to Shakespeare’s plays as works, his former

¹⁴³ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 268.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Weimann. *Actor’s Voice and Author’s Pen. Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ Scott McMillin. “Professional Playwriting”. *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 225-238, p. 236.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in: *Ibid.*

fellow members of the King's Men referred to the plays three times as "trifles"¹⁴⁸ in their dedication. The First Folio thus paved the way for other dramatists of that time to give consideration to the publication of individual plays. As more and more people were able to read and willing to spend money on the printed versions of plays, a few authors were not disinclined to arrange for the publication of certain plays to earn a little extra money. During his time in Ireland, Shirley arranged for at least 13 of his plays to be published in the form of quarto editions by his London publishers Andrew Crooke and William Cooke. Authorized editions like these were still an exception however as only few authors or companies saw to it. That both modern readers and theatre audiences are actually able to enjoy the works of Early Modern playwrights is thanks to the fact that a large proportion of their plays were at some stage published without the permission of either the author or the company during their lifetimes – quite often in editions of questionable quality – or after their death by people who were close to them.

All we have nowadays of Early Modern plays is of course their second publication and as Gurr emphasizes in *The Shakespearean Stage*,

[p]rint has a fixity that performance never presumes to. We suffer from reading Shakespeare and his contemporaries in editions that give an illusion of permanence to their words and their stage directions that the originals never had. [...] Plays were subject to constant change, not just in memory but in such transient features of the performance event as the mood of the audience and the condition of the day [...]¹⁴⁹.

This quote draws attention to the crucial fact that the edited texts of Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's plays can by no means reproduce performances that took place some 400 years ago. Thus one must be careful when using internal evidence from the plays themselves to make conclusions about historical performances. Cook likewise stresses that modern readers of Renaissance drama "must recognize that we can only partially apprehend past reality. It is impossible to recreate perfectly or to report fully across the barrier of time"¹⁵⁰. The difficulty of this "text/performance

¹⁴⁸ William Shakespeare. *The Norton Facsimile. The First Folio of Shakespeare*. Ed. Charlton Hinman. New York: Norton, 1968, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 209.

¹⁵⁰ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. x.

In the following essay this particular problem is addressed in greater detail: Robert Weimann. "Performing at the Frontiers of Representation: Epilogue and Post-Scriptural Future in Shakespeare's

dichotomy"¹⁵¹, as W. B. Worthen has called it, lies in the fact that one often tends to forget that the "written text is radically incomplete"¹⁵² as it is "determined by its very need for stage contextualisation"¹⁵³. Therefore I agree with Weimann when he states that "[a]nalogies between then and now carry perils"¹⁵⁴. Gurr supports this diagnosis by considering the role of the audience during the original staging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

We cannot be so sure how they would receive Hamlet's soliloquies, spoken ostensibly in solitude when in fact he was visibly surrounded by thousands of people, some of whose heads and ears were literally at his feet. A performance text is a transmission tuned to a highly specific wavelength, and a specific set of atmospheric conditions. The receivers are a part of the mechanism of transmission, and need to be incorporated in the business of trying to recompose the performance text for what it can add to our knowledge of Shakespearean dramaturgy.¹⁵⁵

This circumstance has also been summarised by Kathleen McLuskie. Her observations to this effect round off this chapter on barriers of time and the problems resulting from them:

Our encounters with old plays always take place at a remove in time from the event or events that constituted their originary moment, and the locus of criticism always lies in the historical gap between an effect in the theater and the resulting affect in a later reader or audience – between a play and its afterlife. That gap presents particularly perilous terrain when the play's subject matter [or the play's metatheatrical elements; my addition] is deemed to belong more to the world of the play's originating moment than to the experience and consciousness of its later audience.¹⁵⁶

Plays". *The Arts of Performance in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama. Essays for G. K. Hunter*. Eds Murray Biggs et. al. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991. 96-112.

¹⁵¹ W. B. Worthen. "Deeper Meanings and Theatrical Technique: The Rhetoric of Performance Criticism". *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 40 (1989): 441-455, p. 442.

¹⁵² Weimann. "Performing at the Frontiers of Representation", p. 98.

¹⁵³ Keir Elam. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London: Methuen, 1980, p. 209.

¹⁵⁴ Weimann. *Actor's Voice and Author's Pen*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 43.

II. SOCIO-HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT: 1616-1642

II.1 A CITY OF CONTRASTS – JACOBEAN AND CAROLINE LONDON

The study of Jacobean and Caroline audiences is closely connected to the city of London and its development during the Early Modern Period. As Park Honan has recently detailed to this effect, "[a]rt responds to the wit of its receivers, and London audiences helped a new, paradoxical, immensely powerful drama into being"¹⁵⁷. Though the Early Modern theatre changed to a certain extent in the year leading up to 1642, the likewise importance of both London and the playgoers for the subsequent development of English professional drama during the reigns of both James I and Charles I cannot be denied. Henceforth it is not surprising, as Christopher Friedrichs has put it, that "[h]istorians – like many other people – have often tried to imagine what it might have been like to visit a European city in the early modern era."¹⁵⁸ The contemporary sources quoted in the chapters to come will be of help to achieve this goal in spite of the temporal distance of some 400 years. In contrast to recent studies of England's capital, this thesis is mainly concerned with how contemporaries from different backgrounds experienced their city and connected to issues such as growth, puritanism and the plague.

London was a city of contrasts throughout the Early Modern Period and was likewise depicted as such by contemporaries over the years. For almost every positive depiction of London's capital one can easily find a negative voice too. It was impossible for contemporaries to summarize their city briefly and this tradition of praise and blame shows, as Xavier Baron has emphasized, that "a vigorous interest in London persisted throughout the seventeenth century, both reflective and independent of the turmoil of Civil War, religious divisions, Interregnum and Restoration."¹⁵⁹ This mounting interest in London "spawned a great deal of literature and especially drama in the seventeenth century"¹⁶⁰, in which London was not only much more often the setting, but also the subject.

¹⁵⁷ Park Honan. *Shakespeare. A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 100.

¹⁵⁸ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 318.

¹⁶⁰ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 43.

The best-known contemporary single work about London is John Stow's town history *A Survey of London*, which was first published in 1598. As J. F. Merritt has stated, "Stow's survey was in part a description of a city that had already disappeared"¹⁶¹, thus highlighting the city's rapid change. More than 100 years after the first publication of Stow's work, another town history with the same title emerged, written by the historian John Strype.¹⁶² Even though this edition of 1720 was an enlarged and updated version of Stow's original work, in the "period between the two works, London had been dramatically transformed."¹⁶³

The split contemporary depiction of London acts as a recurrent theme in Early Modern writing. Thus it is not surprising that in 1573 already, Isabella Whitney, one of the very first women to publish poetry in England, presents two voices: "the one, scornful of the world that London symbolizes, the other, in love with the London she leaves."¹⁶⁴ On the one hand she depicts London in an unfavourable light by stating:

And now hath time me put in mind,
of thy great cruelty:
That never once a help wold finde,
to ease me in distress
[...]
No, no, thou never didst me good,
nor ever wilt I know.¹⁶⁵

Several aspects of London life to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters are already hinted at in this short passage, such as the city's mercilessness and severity. On the other hand and in spite of her hard feelings towards London, Whitney makes clear that

Yet I am in no angry moode,
but wyll, or ere I goe
In perfect love and charytie,
my Testament here write:

¹⁶¹ Merritt. Introduction. *Imagining Early Modern London*, p. 1.

¹⁶² John Strype. *A Survey of London*. London: 1720.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 155.

¹⁶⁵ Isabella Whitney. *A Sweet Nosegay or Pleasant Poyse. Contayning a Hundred and Ten Philosophicall Flowers*. London: 1573, E2. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 156.

And leave to thee such Treasurye,
as I in it recite.¹⁶⁶

As one moves further along the Early Modern Period one finds more examples of the kind mentioned above and accordingly in 1606, Thomas Dekker, who was born and lived in London throughout his life, likewise described England's capital as a city of contrasts by stating that

[t]hou art the goodliest of thy neighbors, but the proudest; the welthiest, but the most wanton. Thou hast all the things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest; for thou art attir'de like a Bride, drawing all that looke upon thee, to be in love with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes.¹⁶⁷

As this quote illustrates, Early Modern Londoners were well aware of the antithetic conception of their city. In 1612 Thomas Adams alluded to this complexity with the comment "[l]ooking one way you see a beautiful virgin; another way, some deformed monster."¹⁶⁸ Early Modern Londoners particularly liked to check their city against other major centres on the continent in order to show that it compared favourably with all of them. Of particular interest in these comparisons were Paris and Constantinople and Londoners like Thomas Gainsford were proud that London was a city

with broad spaciousness, handsome monuments, illustrious gates, comely buildings, and admirable markets-than any you can name in Paris or ever say in other city, yea Constantinople itself.¹⁶⁹

Towards the end of the period one finds one more contemporary comment that stands out amongst the many positive depictions. In his *The Art of Living in London*, the countryman Henry Peacham articulates his fear of London's capital by constructing an elaborate metaphor:

Now the city being like a vast sea, full of gusts, fearful-dangerous shelves and rocks, ready at every storm to sink and cast away the weak and unexperienced bark with her fresh-water soldiers, as wanting her compass and her skillful pilot, myself, like another Columbus or Drake, acquainted with her rough entertainment and storms, have drawn you this chart or

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Dekker. *The Seven Deadly Sins of London, Drawn in Seven Several Coaches, through the Several Gates of the City; Bringing the Plague with them.* 1606. Ed. Edward Arber. London: 1879, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in: S. Porter. *Shakespeare's London*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 321.

map for your guide as well out of mine own as my many friends' experience. [...] For the city is like quicksand; the longer you stand upon it the deeper you sink.¹⁷⁰

Peacham knew both the life in the countryside and in London and was familiar with the "problems and tensions that are part of the life of any great city"¹⁷¹ and could contrast them with the rural life he knew so intimately. Early Modern London was a world in itself and as the contemporary sources quoted above have shown, those who knew the city well were "aware of its diversity, its many facets [...] They were conscious, too, of the changes which the city was experiencing, which were not always welcome"¹⁷². To what extent these changes were connected to the city's unparalleled growth and how contemporaries in return experienced this will be discussed in the next chapter.

II.1.1 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

London was dramatically transformed during the Early Modern Period. This transformation was to a considerable extent due to the city's hypertrophic growth, which converted London's capital "from a medieval commune into a metropolis of half a million people"¹⁷³ within only two centuries. This was chronicled in many works of contemporary literature and many titles

were attached to London and many images found in an attempt to express the metropolitan experience: it was Trynovant, the New Jerusalem, the epitome or breviary of all Britain; it was a virgin, a mother, a fickle mistress, a monster; it was a beehive or Babylon, a jewel, a sea, a wood, a sprawling palace, and again and again a stage, a theatre.¹⁷⁴

As Andrew Gurr has argued in *The Shakespearean Stage*, urban immigrants soon realized that the "honey was in London, and the bees proved tenacious in clinging to it."¹⁷⁵ Many people – dreaming of escaping their origins and humble backgrounds – left the countryside behind to make their livings in a city which had developed as

¹⁷⁰ From: Henry Peacham. *The Art of Living in London*. London: 1642. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 438.

¹⁷¹ S. Porter. *Shakespeare's London*, p. 9.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Lawrence Manley. *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. vii.

¹⁷⁴ Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, eds. Introduction. *Plotting Early Modern London. News Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 29.

the island's "centre of trade and the seat of all major institutions of state, law and commerce"¹⁷⁶. A look at the sheer numbers makes clear that Gurr is not exaggerating. In around 1600, London was by far the largest city in England and as it continued to grow, it even became the biggest city in the world within only a few years. Regarding this exceptional standing, Ann Jennalie Cook has suggested that "Renaissance London was not England writ large – it was not a gigantic multiplication of life in hamlet, manor, countryside, and shire. London was quite different, and her difference stemmed partly from her sheer size."¹⁷⁷ With regard to the theatres it should also not be forgotten that the establishment of a professional theatre in the last quarter of the sixteenth century "was a cultural and commercial manifestation of London's unique size, wealth, sophistication, and diversity."¹⁷⁸ However, due to the lack of reliable and official contemporary data, it is hard to determine exactly how big London really was in the first half of the seventeenth century. In his *Londinopolis* of 1657, James Howell, a Royalist who served as a diplomat and administrator under Charles I, refers to a contemporary census commissioned by Charles I in 1636:

For numbers of humane souls, breathing in City and Suburbs, *London* may compare with any in *Europe*, in point of populousness: the last Cense that was made in Paris, came under a million; but in the year 1636, King *Charles* sending to the Lord Mayor, to make a scrutiny, what number of *Roman Catholiques* and *strangers*, there were in the City, he took occasion thereby, to make a Cense of all the people; and there were of Men, Women, and Children, above seven hundred thousand that lived within the Barres of his jurisdiction alone; and this being one and twenty years passed, 'tis thought, by all probable computation, that *London* hath more by the third part now, then she had then.¹⁷⁹

From today's point of view it is close to impossible to determine whether the figure of 700.000 mentioned by Howell is correct, since the first census of the complete city was only conducted in 1695. Howell's figures for both Paris and London seem rather high and exaggerated. More recent estimates based on the burials and christenings documented in parish registers mention a populace for London of

¹⁷⁶ Mehl et. al. Introduction. *Plotting Early Modern London*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁷ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 52.

¹⁷⁸ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 29.

¹⁷⁹ From: James Howell. *Londinopolis [...]*. London: 1657. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 352.

approximately 300.000 in 1625.¹⁸⁰ Whatever the exact figures, London was growing fast and the "growth of the City was not an unmixed blessing."¹⁸¹ The conflictive effects of this unparalleled growth were realized by London's inhabitants and in 1632, Donald Lupton expressed this in his *London and the Countrey Carbonadoed*:

She is grown so fast; I am almost afraid to meddle with her; she's certainly a great world; there are so many little worlds in her. She is the great beehive of Christendom, I am sure of England. She swarms four times in a year, with people of all ages, natures, sexes, callings; decay of trade, the pestilence, and a long vacation are three scarecrows to her. She seems to be glutton, for she desires always to be full. She may pray for the establishing of churches, for at the first view they are her chiefest grace. She seems contrary to all other things, for the older she is, the newer and more beautiful.¹⁸²

Though Lupton's depiction is predominantly optimistic, he cannot hide his anxiety resulting from the city's rapid growth and the sheer number of people living there, which makes him compare London to a frantic beehive. By comparing the inhabitants to bees, Lupton underlines how immensely populous London was in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Yet in spite of all this, he urges his readers to take a deeper look and see the beauty behind the seeming confusion resulting from the city's 'gluttony' and uniqueness.

Several of Lupton's contemporaries had more difficulties in noticing the beauty of London and watched the city's development with deep concern. This was partly due to the fact that London's hypertrophic growth and the constant inflow of migrants created problems not to be found anywhere else: "Since London was the largest of English towns, it threw up on a large scale the social difficulties that elsewhere were only just visible. And since it was the only really large town, it created problems peculiar to itself"¹⁸³, such as crime, filth, pollution and problems of distribution and regulation – thus giving birth to modern urban problems. Towards the end of the period in 1642, Sir John Denham uses the same kind of figurative language as

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 362.

See also: Griffiths and Jenner. Introduction. *Londinopolis*, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ Ian Archer. "The Nostalgia of John Stow". *The Theatrical City. Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649*. Eds David L. Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 17-43, p. 19.

¹⁸² Donald Lupton. *London and the Countrey Carbonadoed*. London: 1632, B-B2^v.

¹⁸³ Frederick Jack Fisher. *London and the English Economy, 1500-1700*. Eds P. J. Corfield and N. B. Harte. London: The Hambledon Press, 1990, p. 175.

Lupton when he takes a birds-eye view in his poem 'Coopers Hill' and writes from a vantage point high above St. Paul's Cathedral that London's inhabitants have become dehumanized ants:

By taking wing from thy auspicious height
Through untrac't waies, and airie paths I flie,
More boundlesse in my fancie, then my eie.
Exalted to this height, I first looke downe
On Pauls, as men from thence upon the town.
[...]
So rais'd above the tumult and the crowd
I see the City in a thicker cloud
Of businesse, than of smoake; where men like Ants
Toyle to prevent imaginarie wants;
Yet all in vaine, increasing with their store,
Their vast desires, but make their wants the more.
As food to unsound bodies, though it please
The Appetite, feeds only the disease;
Where with like haste, though severall waies they runne:
Some to undoe, and some to be undone.¹⁸⁴

The picture Denham paints in this poem is of an unmerciful and cruel city in which people fall prey to their own growing aspirations and – being blinded by imaginary wants and the desire for wealth and luxury – seek "heaven in hell"¹⁸⁵. The city only leaves them with two options: to either harm others to be harmed themselves. It is a very bleak picture, echoing the pervasive view that the city's growth was rather a sign of disease than of health. The poem is only one of the many surviving examples expressing the same uneasiness towards the growing city giving "false and artificial promises of the mercantile world"¹⁸⁶ to the hopeful masses of newcomers.

Not only some citizens but also the king and the city authorities regarded the growth with worry. One of Charles' I court-historians, Peter Heylin, saw London as a state within the state, "a parasite, or as poisoning the kingdom"¹⁸⁷, and in consequence developed the following simile, which describes the high-running anxieties of the time:

¹⁸⁴ John Denham. 'Coopers Hill'. London: 1642. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 381.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 380.

¹⁸⁷ R. Porter. *London*, p. 66.

Great Towns in the body of a State are like the *Spleen* or *Melt* in the body natural; the monstrous growth of which impoverisheth all the rest of the Members, by drawing to it all the *animal* and *vital* spirits, which should give nourishment unto them; And in the end cracked or surcharged by its own fullness, not only sends unwholsom fumes and *vapours* unto the *head* and heavy *pangs* unto the *heart*, but draws a *consumption* on its self.¹⁸⁸

Heylin's simile is another example of the eloquence with which Early Modern Londoners tried to express their concerns seeing that "the capital was ballooning out of all proportion to its sister cities."¹⁸⁹ By its critics London was perceived as a dangerous and uncontrollable monster and as Margaret Pelling has detailed, concern "about London's expansion is usually attributed to fears about disease, 'pestering' and political unrest"¹⁹⁰. With regard to these anxieties about "overcrowding, congestion, public health and disorder"¹⁹¹ it is not surprising that the authorities tried at different times to prevent the growth by passing proclamations to avoid further expansion. These laws were highly ineffective however and as Ian Munro has pointed out, the "idea that restricting houses could cure urban overcrowding is manifestly ridiculous; the more restricted the physical space of the city is, the more overcrowded and congested the city will become."¹⁹² In 1580, Queen Elizabeth I had already issued the first of a long series of proclamations to limit London's future growth, which in the decades to come was followed by similar ones by James I, Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II. The order was however seen threatened by the

great multitudes of people brought to inhabit in small rooms, whereof a great part are seene very poore [...] heaped up together, and in a sort smothered with many families of children and servantes in one house or small tenement [...] for remedie whereof Her Majesty forbade all new building within 3 miles of the gates of London, and also prohibited the subdivision of existing houses and the letting of rooms to lodgers.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Pelling. "Skirting the City? Disease, Social Change and Divided Households in the Seventeenth Century". *Londinopolis. Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*. Eds Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. 154-175, p. 158.

¹⁹¹ S. Porter. *Shakespeare's London*, p. 10.

¹⁹² Ian Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London. The City and its Double*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 29.

¹⁹³ Quoted in: Sheppard. *London. A History*, pp. 174f.

What exactly was meant by this becomes clearer when looking at a short passage from 1637 describing a property outside Aldgate: "Thomas Sarter a pewterer at Algate built 6 double houses upon a garden platt last summer and in four of these houses 11 inmates dwell."¹⁹⁴ Instead of building upwards, high densities were often achieved "by crowding more people into fewer rooms, and by converting gardens and garden buildings such as sheds and stables to living accommodation."¹⁹⁵

However, it should not be forgotten that in spite of the various negative attitudes, Early Modern London needed migration in order to counter the relative low numbers of births within the city itself – not to mention the high mortality, especially in years of crisis. This follows that the rapid population increase "was not self-sustaining"¹⁹⁶ and Porter has estimated that London "required an inflow of around 5,000 migrants per year [...] to sustain expansion."¹⁹⁷ Sheppard even puts this figure at around 7,000 to maintain the city's unique rate of growth of population¹⁹⁸, which was strongest between 1560 and 1640 and transformed "the fundamental nature of London"¹⁹⁹ within a period of only 80 years and thus made it a city which "was unique in a way which it is not today"²⁰⁰.

The growing city provided the public and private playhouses of both late-Jacobean and Caroline London with an "audience of sufficient means, leisure, and civic tranquillity"²⁰¹ to watch the plays written and performed for them until all theatres were closed in the wake of the Civil War in September 1642.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in: Vanessa Harding. "City, Capital, and Metropolis: The Changing Shape of Seventeenth-Century London". *Imagining Early Modern London. Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*. Ed. J. F. Merritt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 117-143, pp. 124f.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ J. A. Sharpe. *Early Modern England. A Social History, 1550-1760*. London: Edward Arnold, 1987, p. 85.

¹⁹⁷ R. Porter. *London*, p. 42.

¹⁹⁸ Cf.: Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 128.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

²⁰⁰ Janette Dillon. *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610. Drama and Social Space in London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 23.

²⁰¹ Gail Kern Paster. *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985, p. 6.

II.1.2 LONDON AS A CENTRE OF ENTERTAINMENT

As Butler has detailed in his seminal book *Theatre and Crisis*, "London's rapid growth in the seventy years 1570 to 1640 [...] had as one dimension the creation of an industry purely devoted to leisure and entertainment"²⁰², thus leading to a further secularisation of both society and culture. Apart from watching plays at either the private or the public playhouses, Early Modern Londoners enjoyed animal-baiting, executions, fairs, trials and city pageants, to name just a few examples.²⁰³ Referring to the contemporary Sir Humphrey Mildmay, Butler details that he

witnessed executions, wrestling matches, state installations, trials, the arrivals of ambassadors and the queen mother, and the city pageants. He visited a glass furnace, Tradescant's gardens, Covent Garden, the musters and the Exchanges. He went maying in Hyde Park, boating on the Thames, heard sermons at St James's and saw the royal family 'in Hyde Park all the day in all state'. And so the list goes on.²⁰⁴

Apart from growing to be a major European trading centre with a flourishing economy, London's cultural significance should thus not be disregarded either. London had become "a community of arts and letters such as had not existed since the Athens of the fifth century".²⁰⁵ The capital clearly was "the peak of the mountain of entertainment"²⁰⁶ and the city's purpose- and custom-built playhouses meant regular audiences and thus regular incomes for the companies, their sharers, players and playwrights. This is in the first place basically due to certain material, cultural and political factors that promoted the emergence of a professional drama. In *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, Alfred Harbage summarizes this development by observing that "London, the industrial capital of the nation, became the hub of theatrical activity when theatrical activity became an industry."²⁰⁷ The fact that Early Modern England saw the emergence of some of the greatest playwrights in the history of literature should consequently not be seen as

²⁰² Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 102.

²⁰³ Some of these forms will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapters.

²⁰⁴ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 102.

²⁰⁵ Angus Fletcher. *Colors of the Mind: Conjectures on Thinking in Literature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 116.

²⁰⁶ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ Alfred Harbage. *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952, p. 25.

a “sheer genetic accident”²⁰⁸. It is the logical consequence of certain “institutional and cultural circumstances that help the accident make sense.”²⁰⁹ One of these circumstances mentioned by Stephen Greenblatt is the development of institutionalized playhouses, which were erected in London's suburbs in great numbers around the turn of the century. Cook estimates that no less than 17 playhouses were built or rebuilt in London in the time between the opening of the first custom-built playhouse, the Theatre in Shoreditch in 1576, and the closing down and dismantling of all theatres in September 1642.²¹⁰ With reference to these regular venues, Stephen Orgel writes that “[a]ll at once, theater was an institution, a property, a corporation. It was real in the way that ‘real estate’ is real: it was a location, a building, a possession – an established and visible part of society.”²¹¹ The consequent commercial motive resulting from this firm establishment of professional playing directed many actors and playwrights to the metropolis. Nonetheless, life for the acting companies and other forms of entertainment, such as baiting, was not as easy and unproblematic as it might initially sound and difficulties indeed continued throughout to 1642. Gurr draws attention to the fact that in Early Modern times, “life for the playing companies was a constant battle to keep a foot-hold in London in the teeth of the City Fathers and the Puritan preachers.”²¹²

Before the “theatre was building a centre in London”²¹³ and the various companies of players were able to gain a permanent foothold in the metropolis, they had toured around Britain to entertain audiences in villages and towns all over the island. That Early Modern companies of players were able to quit this insecure existence on tour and establish themselves in London is due to the active support of Queen Elizabeth I herself and her Privy Council. The Queen liked to be entertained

²⁰⁸ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 199.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Cf.: Ann Jennalie Cook. “Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention”. *A New History of Early English Drama*. Eds John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 305-320, p. 308.

²¹¹ Stephen Orgel. *The Illusion of Power. Political Theater in the English Renaissance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 2.

²¹² Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 9.

²¹³ Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean. *The Queen's Men and their Plays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 7.

by plays during the Christmas season and her council saw to it that the best companies could perform for her. In 1572 and 1598 respectively, two statutes were passed by Queen Elizabeth which laid the foundation for the establishment of a professional drama in England's capital. It is especially the 'Acte for the Punishment of Vagabondes and for the Relief of the Poore & Impotent' of 1572 which promoted this development as it "required each company to be authorised by one noble or two judicial dignitaries of the realm"²¹⁴. Authorising nobles to become patrons of playing companies, Gurr argues, "was an early step in the progress of the professional players from strolling entertainers [...] to permanently established repertory companies, with enormous financial investments backing them"²¹⁵. The nobles did not only lend their names to the troupes, but protected them against their enemies and to a certain extent helped them in financially insecure times. Although these acts predate the period in question by a few years, their significance for the consequent development of Jacobean and Caroline forms of entertainment in general cannot be disregarded as they laid the foundation for all that was to come until the fatal year 1642 in which most forms of entertainment and leisure experienced a fatal caesura.

If, as I have presumed above, Early Modern drama and other forms of entertainment could only flourish as broadly as they did due to certain institutional, material and commercial factors, it follows that London's status as a centre of entertainment could only be maintained because of an on-going and persistent demand for entertainment by potential audiences, thus promoting further evolution. No other English town "could provide such a range of amusement as London"²¹⁶ and London had something to offer for everyone. As one contemporary argued, it was the place where "rich wives, spruce mistresses, pleasant houses, good dyet, rare wines, neat servants, pleasures and profits the best of all sort"²¹⁷ were waiting for an audience. The centralisation of culture within London and the subsequent presence of various places of entertainment also meant

²¹⁴ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 27.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 132.

²¹⁷ Quoted in: Ibid.

that the city's economy was heavily dependent upon the leisure and service industries. There were endless openings for domestic servants and for innumerable others, from sedan-chair operators to brothel keepers, whose living depended upon the disposable income²¹⁸

of potential customers seeking distraction by the manifold offerings of London's entertainment industries.

II.1.3 THE LONDON THEATRES, THE COURT AND THE CITY AUTHORITIES

The relationship between the Jacobean and Caroline Court and London's entertainment industry must be described as ambivalent. On the one hand numerous plays as well as an increasing number of masques were performed at Court not only during the Christmas season. In consequence the few surviving companies of players of the Caroline Period enjoyed some support of the crown in the years up to 1642. On the other hand, London's development as a centre of entertainment was regarded with concern by both the crown and the city authorities. This was especially true for the public and private theatres, which, together with the baiting-pits, drew the largest crowds. As R. E. Pritchard has emphasised to this effect, there "was much – largely unfounded – fear of crime and disorder"²¹⁹ and the authorities saw a potential for unrest and spreading diseases in the increasing numbers of playgoers and other citizens seeking distraction in England's capital.

The authorities needed to find ways to control what was being shown on stage and to reduce the potential for unrest and disorder to an absolute minimum. Playwrights and companies had to be careful when alluding to topics touching on current political or public affairs and, if at all, could only do so implicitly. Yet, as the following contemporary example of the year 1634 shows, some playgoers were sometimes much less interested in the politically allusive depth of a play than one might assume, but merely watched it for the aesthetic pleasure provided by its performance. *The Late Lancashire Witches*, written collaboratively by Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome, was performed at the Globe in 1634 and "not only deals with the historically resonant theme of witchcraft but is itself based on prior

²¹⁸ Sharpe. *Early Modern England. A Social History*, p. 88.

²¹⁹ R. E. Pritchard, ed. *Shakespeare's England. Life in Elizabethan & Jacobean Times*. 4th Edition. Stroud: The History Press, 2010, p. 216.

historical events"²²⁰. It is well-known among critics for its serious contemporary political significance, resulting from the use of a particular case of witchcraft. Heather Hirschfield has highlighted that

[w]riting a play about a contemporaneous event, the playwrights had to address not only a witchcraft scare but a host of other political and cultural issues, particularly the reach of the Caroline government into the provinces and the changing sociocultural status of the Stuart theatre.²²¹

On the other hand however, Herbert Berry's discovery of contemporary correspondence written by Nathaniel Tomkyns, who saw the play and "wrote a letter to his kinsmen with a full description and commentary on what he had witnessed"²²², makes clear that even plays highly charged with political energies were not always understood as such. Tomkyns "locates the play's performance entirely in the realm of aesthetic pleasure and indicates that any particular political implications were lost on him"²²³:

And though there be not in it (to my good vnderstanding) any poetically Genius, or art, or language or iudgement to state or tenet of witches (which I expected) or application to virtue but full of ribaldrie and of things improbable and impossible; yet in respect of the newnesse of the subiect (the witches being still visible and in prison here) and in regard it consisteth from the beginning to the end of odd passages and fopperies to provoke laughter, and is mixed with diuers songs and dances, it passeth for a merrie and excellent new play.²²⁴

However, the reading of only one playgoer cannot "foreclose discussion of the play's significance in the political debates of the time"²²⁵. As political tensions were in general running high during Charles' I reign and not all playgoers missed larger political meanings implied in plays performed during the Caroline Period, the authorities and the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, assiduously extended their "regulatory range to include old plays that might be read with new political meanings"²²⁶ to curtail the theatres' dreaded subversive power, a subversion

²²⁰ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 44.

²²¹ Heather Anne Hirschfield. "Collaborating across Generations". *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. 30:2 (2000): 339-374, p. 341.

²²² McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 45.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Quoted in: Herbert Berry. "The Globe Bewitched and "El Hombre Fiel"". *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*. 1 (1984): 211-230, pp. 212f.

²²⁵ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 57.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

coming "from within and through that ultimate form of iconographic communal and cultural display – theatre itself"²²⁷:

All ould plays ought to bee brought to the Master of the Revells, and have his allowance to them for which he should have his fee, since they may be full of offensive things against church and state; y^e rather that in former time the poets tooke greater liberty than is allowed them by mee.²²⁸

Herbert's fear of political or religious affairs unfit to be reproduced on stage in front of large audiences shows the power with which the drama was accredited in the late-Jacobean and Caroline Period. Due to commercial necessities, Early Modern companies of players and their playwrights had to be careful to stay clear of censorship at most times and generally ensured "that meaning be firmly contained within a narrative that had no immediate purchase on particular, local politics or personal sensitivities"²²⁹, thus guaranteeing a regular income and the continuing flourishing of the company. Hence, "it was often in devices [...] that work not through direct statement or allegory but through analogy and oblique reflection [...] that dramatists reflected the political concerns"²³⁰ of their time. Nevertheless, a great number of plays was either censored or banned altogether, as the following correspondence of the year 1617 from the Privy Council to the Master of the Revels shows:

Wee are informed that there are certayne Players or Comedians wee knowe not of what Company, that goe about to play some enterlude concerning the late Marquesse d'Ancre, wch for many respectes wee thincke not fitt to be suffered.²³¹

This correspondence is a fine example of how well the system of control worked and how well various offices of state interacted in order to protect state, church or crown. In the commendatory verses to Massinger's *The Roman Actor*, first performed by the King's Men at the Blackfriars Theatre in 1629, the actor Joseph Taylor states the following:

²²⁷ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 29.

²²⁸ Quoted in: N. W. Bawcutt, ed. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623-73*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 182.

²²⁹ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 64.

²³⁰ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 6.

²³¹ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 276.

some sower censurer, who's apt to say
No one in these times can produce a play
Worthy his reading since of late, 'tis true
The old accepted are more than the new.²³²

Though fictional, contemporary audiences could easily understand the metatheatrical undertone of these lines and it is not surprising that, apart from the play's opening performance, no more stagings of *The Roman Actor* are known during the Caroline Period. The closer one gets to the incisive year of 1642, the more comprehensive the governmental control of the non-courtly playhouses seemed to get, as the following order from 1639 shows:

Order of the King in Council. Complaint was this day made that the stage-players of the Red Bull have for many days together acted a scandalous and libellous play in which they have audaciously reproached and in a libel represented and personated not only some of the aldermen of the city of London and some other persons of quality, but also scandalised and libelled the whole profession of doctors belonging to the Court of Probate, and reflected upon the present Government.²³³

Nothing is known of the consequences the playing company had to face, but ever since Elizabethan times the impersonation of living people on stage, especially of people of rank like magistrates or aldermen, resulted either in heavy fines or more serious penalties.

Two of the leading experts on Caroline drama, Sanders and Butler, firmly disagree with the once prominent view that playgoers in the first half of the seventeenth century showed an increased interest in mere aesthetic pleasures and indulgence rather than politics, henceforth resulting in the drama of this time simply being labelled as 'Cavalier'. Of course certain playgoers did not always get the political allusions or references hidden in a play, but according to Sanders in particular, plays produced and performed during these years should not be dismissed as purely aesthetic or as simply offering "escapism from political realities"²³⁴ in the years leading up to the Civil War. To this effect Butler makes clear that the traditional view adopted by Harbage and others presents the drama of the period "as unwilling to acknowledge the [...] threatening forces and withdrawing in a world of escapism,

²³² Quoted in: Philip Massinger. *The Roman Actor*. Ed. Martin White. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, p. 76.

²³³ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 296.

²³⁴ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 4.

fantasy and romance, designed to divert its courtly auditors from the reality of their impending doom."²³⁵ Though the companies had to be careful not to challenge the authorities by explicitly criticising either crown or church, the plays produced in the years leading to the Civil War were in general much more politically charged than the plays in Elizabethan or early Jacobean times. In these, the general political framework was much more stable and less characterised by the tensions resulting from Charles' I controversial and contested rule. During the years 1629 to 1640, a period now known as the Personal Rule, Charles I ruled without summoning a parliament (contemporaries spoke rather of parliaments than of a single parliament) and "this was beginning to provoke considerable constitutional debate about the accountability of the King to his elected parliament"²³⁶.

Yet, as Sanders makes clear, especially Caroline plays were "more often than not direct engagements with social, political, and indeed theatrical realities in the moment in which they were produced."²³⁷ One should in consequence see the drama produced and staged during that time as "in some sense providing an alternative arena for debate whilst the chambers of the Houses of the Commons and the Lords remained so decidedly shut."²³⁸ However, this is not to say that plays ever straightforwardly criticised either the king or his personal rule. In the light of the harsh and expanded censorship by the Master of the Revels, the drama of that time delivered its disapproval of current social or political affairs in an ambiguous and equivocal way, which, as the example of Tomkyns has shown, was not detected by everyone and thus catered also for those who were only seeking to indulge in aesthetic pleasures.

It was nevertheless the restrictions resulting from paternalism which were often dealt with in plays, such as in Brome's *The Sparagus Garden*, first staged in 1635, in which Sam Touchwood reflects upon going against patriarchal authority:

To disobey a father is a crime
In any son unpardonable. Is this rule
So general that it can bear no exception?

²³⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 1.

²³⁶ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 22.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Or is a father's power so illimitable
As to command his son's affections?²³⁹

While explicitly deliberating over his father's everlasting quarrel with Striker, which does not allow Sam to act out his affections for Striker's daughter Annabell, Sam also implicitly debates "the pros and cons of challenging the royal prerogative"²⁴⁰, thus leaving the domestic locale and entering larger territory.

Especially plays of the 1630s are "replete with absolute kings tyrannizing over their realms, subjects trapped between their loyalty to the crown and their need to speak out, contrasts between government built on trust and enslavement built on fear"²⁴¹. As a result of this, contemporary audiences "were being pulled simultaneously in many opposing directions, between attachment to the *status quo*, alienation from it, anxiety for the effects of change and perhaps eventually conviction of its necessity."²⁴² Caroline drama of the years leading up to the Civil War in particular encouraged its audiences to think more critically, "entertain alternatives, and explore the contradictions in their world"²⁴³.

To conclude this chapter on the relationship between those in power and the public and private playhouses, it must once more be emphasized that in contrast to former beliefs, late-Jacobean and Caroline drama was indeed "more complex and varied than is suggested by the simple designation 'Cavalier'"²⁴⁴. The theatres did not only cater for their supposedly more elegant audiences' aesthetic pleasures, but also "engaged in debating serious and pressing issues"²⁴⁵ and current affairs of state in times more and more characterised by an intensified royal paternalism, thus detaching themselves further from the Court. Of course one must not forget that these assumptions apply only to the remaining public and private theatres. Court drama, as heavily promoted by Queen Henrietta for example, is only of minor interest here and developed into a completely different direction. As Butler has argued to this effect, the

²³⁹ Brome. *The Sparagus Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3. I.ii.19-23.

²⁴⁰ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 53.

²⁴¹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 23.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

dramatists who wrote for Whitehall had a much narrower freedom of manoeuvre. They were limited in the material they could use, the diversity of opinion they could express, the range of conflicting or unresolved attitudes which they could incorporate into their plays.²⁴⁶

II.1.4 THE LONDON THEATRES, PURITANISM AND ANTITHEATRICAL PREJUDICE

Whereas modern audiences and critics see the drama of the Jacobean and Caroline Period as a supreme artistic accomplishment, many contemporaries saw it "as a scandal and an outrage – a hotly contested and controversial phenomenon"²⁴⁷ that needed to be disestablished. The attacks

on professional popular drama were variously motivated and sometimes revealed more about the accuser than the accused, yet they should not be discounted to readily, for they have a great deal to communicate about the cultural and historical terrain that [the] theatre occupied in its own day.²⁴⁸

Both attacks on and defences of the stage were numerous in the years 1616 to 1642. I agree with Howard when she writes in her seminal book *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* that one "of the most fascinating aspects of the Renaissance debates about the theatre is how variously this institution was interpreted by contemporaries".²⁴⁹ One of the groups vigorously promoting the disestablishment of the London theatres were the Puritans.

II.1.4.1 ON HOW TO DEFINE PURITANISM

Before one can analyse the relationship between the London theatres and Puritans in greater detail, one first needs to understand what being a Puritan meant in the years between 1616 and 1642. "The name", as the pamphleteer Giles Widdowes wrote in 1631, "is ambiguous, and so it is fallacious"²⁵⁰. Regarding this Larzer Ziff in his "The Literary Consequences of Puritanism" argues that one can nevertheless maintain that Puritanism is the movement "which arose in England in the second half of the sixteenth century and which, accepting the basic assumptions

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, ed. *Shakespeare. The Essential Guide to the Life and Works of the Bard*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007, p. 28.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁴⁹ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 4.

²⁵⁰ Giles Widdowes. *The Schismatical Puritan*. London: 1631. Quoted in: Perry Miller. *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-50*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933, p. 21.

of the Christian Doctrine of John Calvin [...], strove to establish the institutional consequences of that doctrine."²⁵¹ If one interprets Puritanism more broadly, one can agree with Butler that Early Modern Puritans desired a purification of England's protestant church from within through an increased identification with the values and ideals of the early reformers, that is to say "a desire to preserve and consolidate what had already been achieved"²⁵². Although the term was widely used in the seventeenth century, especially as a very general term of abuse – "I find many that are called Puritans [...] yet few or none that will own the name"²⁵³, Owen Feltham wrote in 1628 –, even contemporaries had major difficulties in defining a Puritan. In consequence the term has always been ambiguous and abusive, as the following quote from 1641 shows:

Thus far it appears what a vast circumference this word "Puritan" has, and how by its large acception it is used to cast dust in the face of all goodness, theological, civil or moral: so that scarce any moderate man can avoid its imputation.²⁵⁴

As this passage from Henry Parker's *A Discourse concerning Puritans* emphasizes, "contemporaries did use the word, and one has to decide what, if anything, they meant by it."²⁵⁵ One has to determine whether it was "always a vague mist through which hostile or ludicrous figures were seen threatening and posturing"²⁵⁶. Puritanism, in contrast to the prevalent understanding and use of the term, cannot only be seen as a religious movement, but also as a political one. Instead of limiting Puritanism to one aspect of Early Modern life only, one should take careful heed to consider the movement in "its great breadth and variety – a variety which was the cause both of its strength and of its later disunity."²⁵⁷ In his first Parliament in 1604, the newly crowned king James I described Puritans as

²⁵¹ Larzer Ziff. "The Literary Consequences of Puritanism". *ELH*. 30:3 (1963): 293-305, p. 294.

²⁵² Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 86.

²⁵³ Owen Feltham. *Resolves, Devine, Morall and Politicall*. London: 1628. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 14.

²⁵⁴ Henry Parker. *A Discourse Concerning Puritans*. 2nd Edition. London: 1641. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 13.

²⁵⁵ Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, pp. 13f.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁵⁷ Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, p. 22.

a sect rather than a religion – ever discontented with the present government and impatient to suffer any superiority, which maketh their sect unable to be suffered in any well-governed commonwealth.²⁵⁸

In 1641, towards the end of the period and close to the movement's height, Parker said that men are called Puritans

if they ascribe anything to the laws and liberties of this realm, or hold the prerogative royal to be limitable by any law whatsoever [...] If they hold not against Parliament and with ship-money, they are ever injurious to Kings [...] If all reformers are Puritan, then Parliament is Puritan.²⁵⁹

Though a development is noticeable in these two quotes, they also primarily underline what has been highlighted above, namely the contemporary association of Early Modern Puritanism as being opposed not merely to matters of the Church, but also to current affairs of both state and crown, thus expressing much broader wishes for reform.

People who held Puritans in high esteem or even Puritans themselves both implicitly and explicitly provided definitions of Puritanism as well, such as George Wither in his *Juvenilia*, which was first published in 1622:

If by that name you understand
Those whom the vulgar atheists of this land
Do daily term so.²⁶⁰

Parker adds something to this picture when he summarises that those who speak unfavourably of Puritans are

papists, hierarchists, ambidexters and neuters in religion [...] court-flatterers, time-serving projectors and the rancorous caterpillars of the realm [...] and the scum of the vulgar [...] In the mouth of a rude soldier, he which wisheth the Scotch war at an end without blood [...].²⁶¹

In contrast to this critical description of those condemning Puritanism, Puritans committed to political issues characterized themselves foremost as having their own mind and being honest and faithful, even if this might result in dangers:

²⁵⁸ Quoted in: Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Parker. *A Discourse Concerning Puritans*. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 23.

²⁶⁰ G. Wither. *Juvenilia*. London: 1622. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 15.

²⁶¹ Parker. *A Discourse Concerning Puritans*. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 15.

A Puritan is he that speaks his mind
In Parliament: not looking once behind
To others' danger; nor just sideways leaning
To promised honour his direct true meaning,
But for the laws and truth doth fairly stand [...]
His character abridged if you would have,
He's one that would a subject be, no slave.²⁶²

Resulting from the contemporary controversy on how to determine a Puritan and as the term "came to be used to describe almost any opponent of the Court"²⁶³, cries for official definitions became increasingly louder and Emmanuel Downing wrote to Ussher in October 1620 that the priests

have now stirred up some crafty papists, who very boldly rail both at ministers and people, saying they seek to sow this damnable heresy of Puritanism among them: which word, though not understood, but only known to be most odious to his Majesty, makes many afraid of joining themselves to the Gospel [...] So to prevent a greater mischief that may follow, it were good to petition his Majesty to define a Puritan, whereby the mouths of those scoffing enemies would be stopped.²⁶⁴

This shows the uncertainty which arose from the lack of official classifications and the resulting doubt on how to properly discipline those considered being Puritans. The following short quote, asking for clarification, underlines this: "so that those who deserve the name may be punished, and others not calumniated"²⁶⁵. Hence, one can summarise with Hill that for "contemporaries the word thus had wide and ill-defined meanings, which were at least as much political as religious."²⁶⁶ It was "a view of life which was deeply rooted in the English society of its day"²⁶⁷ and having a closer look at the antitheatrical tenor of Early Modern Puritanism in the next chapter which will be of help to get an even better understanding.

II.1.4.2 PURITANISM AND ANTITHEATRICALITY

As Heinemann has argued in her seminal study *Puritanism and Theatre*, the "identification of Puritans [...] with total hostility to art, culture and beauty has

²⁶² Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 21.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁶⁴ R. Parr. *The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God, James Usher*. London: 1686. Quoted in: Hill. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, p. 19.

²⁶⁵ Quoted in: Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 510.

become almost axiomatic."²⁶⁸ Contemporaries, such as Thomas Randolph in his 1629 satiric poem 'To the City of London: A Mock Praise', frequently ridiculed Puritans for their ardent and futile attempts to completely suppress such pastimes as visiting prostitutes or drinking:

Each citizen unto a prison is borne
That every night will not hang out his horn;
Yet spare all your candles good providence might,
And hang out their wives that are surely as light,
In the delicate city of London.

[...]

Sobriety then shall arise some think,
That no man so late in the night shall have drink;
Yet then, good fellows, retain your crimes;
Rise early, good fellows, and be drunk betimes,
In the temperate city of London.

Authority now smites us no more
To drink in a tavern, or speak with a whore;
The late proclamation was so good sense,
That banished away all gentlemen hence,
From the chargeable city of London.²⁶⁹

The disapproval of "the Puritan city of London"²⁷⁰ inherent in Randolph's poem and the "total hostility to art" mentioned by Heinemann is backed by countless contemporary Puritan writings which strongly condemn both playing and playgoing as well as other forms of public pastimes. To Puritans playgoers were as much to blame as the players themselves, "for the audience, by attending and enjoying and applauding, approves, in effect, what it sees, and so shares in the sins it beholds."²⁷¹ When analysing the above-mentioned sources in greater detail, one quickly realizes that the objections and arguments were simply repeated many times over and that hardly anything new was ever added to the debate in the many pamphlets, letters and various other texts written ever since the institutionalising of professional

²⁶⁸ Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, p. 18.

²⁶⁹ Thomas Randolph. 'The City of London: A Mock Praise'. *Poetical and Dramatic Works of Thomas Randolph*. Ed. W. Carew Hazlitt, 2 vols. London: 1875. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 376.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Jonas Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 80.

theatrical activity in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The denunciations expressed in these writings are generally marked "by immoderate terms and by a uniform desire to see the theaters closed and plays, private ad public, forbidden."²⁷²

In this regard Barish notes that none

of the pamphlets that dropped from English presses during these years makes an impressive dialectical contribution. Rarely do they pursue an argument closely; more often they disintegrate into free-associative rambles. They repeat themselves, and each other, without shame or scruple. It is perhaps enough to say of most of them that they rehearse all the objections against the stage first formulated by the Fathers, along with a plentiful sprinkling of picturesque anecdote and invective against the loose manners of the London playhouse.²⁷³

The first principal objection repeated many times over was that plays, not observing the Sabbath, drew away people from church services. In his *Compleat Armour against Evill Society*, R. Junius asks: "For, art thou inclined to pray? they will tempt thee to a play: wouldest thou goe to a Sermon? by their perswasion the Taverne or Theater stands in the way"²⁷⁴. Although similar objections could have been made about other forms of contemporary entertainment, such as gambling, drinking or animal-baiting, professional acting was always the main point of attack. Though Gurr is right in stating that Puritans also aimed their criticism at these other forms of recreation, it is not accurate that no difference was made between these forms.²⁷⁵ As Barish has shown to this effect, "it is evident that for most antitheatrical polemicists, playgoing tends to rank abnormally high in the hierarchy of sins."²⁷⁶ Apart from various religious reasons, Puritans saw first and foremost the popular stage as "representative of the nation's moral decline"²⁷⁷ and a vast number of contemporary criticism is only directed at the stage, whereas the amount of texts concerned with baiting for instance is relatively small. Nevertheless they were sometimes named in the same breath, as the following example from a sermon by Thomas Adams, preaching at Paul's Cross, shows: "from Wine to Ryot,

²⁷² Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, p. 98.

²⁷³ Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 88.

²⁷⁴ R. Junius. *Compleat Armour Against Evill Society*. London: 1638. Quoted in: Thornton S. Graves. "Notes on Puritanism and the Stage". *Studies in Philology*. 18 (1921): 141-169, p. 142.

²⁷⁵ Cf.: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 45.

²⁷⁶ Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 80.

²⁷⁷ Jim Daems. *Seventeenth-Century Literature and Culture*. London: Continuum, 2006, p. 14.

from that to the Playes and from them to Harlots"²⁷⁸. Junius likewise disapproves of the fact that many people spend their days in idleness and go "from the taphouse to the play house, where they make a march for the brothel house, and from thence to bed againe: so that they either doe nothing, or that which is worse then nothing"²⁷⁹. As Gurr himself summarises in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, "Puritan objections to playgoing largely stemmed from the evident dishonesty of players who pretended to be what they were not"²⁸⁰, a central objection not applicable to the other forms of entertainment named above. Puritans strongly "believed that you should present yourself as yourself in the world, not as someone else"²⁸¹ and feared that audiences might be corrupted and altered by the often unmoral things and doubled identities shown on stage. Already in 1608, William Perkins postulated that

every one must be content with their owne natural favour, and complexion, that God hath given them. [...] For the outward forme and favour that man hath, is the worke of God himselfe. [...] Here comes to be justly reprov'd, the straunge practise and behaviour of some in these daies, who beeing not contended with that forme and fashion, which God hath sorted unto them, doe devise artificiall forms and favours, to set upon their bodies and faces, by painting and colouring; thereby making themselves seeme that which indeede they are not.²⁸²

In spite of being the "product of the Holy Ghost speaking through"²⁸³ them, actors were seen by Puritans as directly spreading the word of the Devil. Francis Lenton in his *The Young Gallants Whirligig* of 1629 declares that plays can mislead even more people than the Devil himself:

Which draw more youth unto the damned cell
Of furious Lust, then all the Devill could doe

²⁷⁸ Thomas Adams. *The Gallants Burden*. London: 1616. Quoted in: Graves. "Notes on Puritanism and the Stage", p. 142.

²⁷⁹ Junius. *Compleat Armour Against Evill Society*. Quoted in: Graves. "Notes on Puritanism and the Stage", p. 142.

²⁸⁰ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 126.

²⁸¹ McMillin. "Professional Playwriting", p. 226.

²⁸² William Perkins. *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience*. Cambridge: 1608. Quoted in: Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 93.

²⁸³ Ziff. "The Literary Consequences of Puritanism", p. 301.

Since he obtained his first overthrow.²⁸⁴

The following contemporary quote, taken from Robert Anton's *Vices Anatomie Scourged and Corrected* of the year 1617 helps to round off the picture of Puritan objections to the Early Modern Stage:

Why doe our lustfull Theaters entice,
 And personate in liuely action vice;
 Draw to the Cities shame, with guilded Clothes,
 Such Swarmes of wiues to b reake their nuptial othes:
 Or why are women rather growne so mad,
 That their immodest feete like planets gad
 With such irregular motion to base Playes,
 Where all the deadly sinnes keepe hollidaies.
 There shall they see the vices of the times,
 Orestes incest, Cleopatres crimes,
 Lucullus surfets, and Poppeas pride.
 Virginears rape, and wanton Lais hide
 Her sirens charmes in such eare-charming sense;
 As it would turne a modest audience,
 To brazen-fac'et profession of a whore.
 Their histories perswade, but action more,
 Vices well coucht in pleasing Sceanes present,
 More will to act, there action can inuent.
 And this the reason, unless heauen preuent,
 Why women most at Playes turne impudent
 [...]
 But I could wish their Modestie confin'd,
 To a more ciuell and graue libertie,
 Of will and free election: carefullie
 Hating this hellish confluence of the stage
 That breeds more grosse infections to the age
 Of separations, and religious bonds,
 Than e'er religion, with her hallowed hands
 Can reunite.²⁸⁵

Apart from showing that Puritans themselves were capable of composing rhymes, this passage makes clear that they were for all intents and purposes quite informed on what exactly was shown in the "lustfull Theaters" and how "this hellish confluence of the stage" might affect playgoers in general and women in particular and thus breed "more grosse infections to the age".

²⁸⁴ Francis Lenton. *The Young Gallants Whirligig*. London: 1629. Quoted in: Graves. "Notes on Puritanism and the Stage", p. 147.

²⁸⁵ Robert Anton. "Vices Anatomie Scourged and Corrected". London: 1617. Quoted in: Graves. "Notes on Puritanism and the Stage", p. 146.

The main body of Puritan antitheatrical writing disapproved of the theatre and pleaded for its closure because it "stood for pleasures, for idleness, for the rejection of hard work and thrift as the roads to salvation. [...] It seemed to embody everything wrong with the social order"²⁸⁶. Many Puritans could not understand why the theatres remained open and declared: "Oh, what times are we cast into that such wickedness should go unpunished!"²⁸⁷

Before having a closer look at how the stage reacted to these Puritan objections, it is essential to first examine William Prynne's *Histrio-mastix. The Players Scourge*, a "compendious exposition of the moral evils of plays and players"²⁸⁸, published by Michael Sparke in 1633. The book represents the culmination of the literature of denunciation and of Puritan attack on the Early Modern stage.

Prynne was an Early Modern pamphleteer and lawyer and produced several hundred pamphlets during his life. His most famous work remains *Histrio-mastix* (1633), a more than one thousand page long argument for the closing of the theatres. Apart from describing the dangers involved in both acting and playgoing, in his book Prynne also particularly attacks actresses. Since Queen Henrietta was known to participate in court masques at that time, this denunciation earned him severe punishments: he was "found guilty of sedition, sentenced to have his ears cut off, fined £5000, and sentenced to life imprisonment."²⁸⁹ This did not stop Prynne from writing pamphlets and after further punishments he still declared in his *A New Discovery of the Prelates Tyranny* of the year 1641, "The more I am beat down, the more I am lifted up."²⁹⁰ Prynne, like his fellow Puritans, strongly believed that playgoers would lose themselves fully in a play and that they in consequence

²⁸⁶ Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 114.

²⁸⁷ William Crashaw. *Sermon at Paul's Cross*. 14th Feb. 1607. London: 1608. Quoted in: Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, p. 76.

²⁸⁸ Daems. *Seventeenth-Century Literature and Culture*, p. 14.

²⁸⁹ William Lamont. "Prynne, William". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Eds H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. Vol. 45. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 489-494, p. 489.

²⁹⁰ William Prynne. *A New Discovery of the Prelates Tyranny in their Late Prosecutions of Mr. William Pryn*. London: 1641. Quoted in: Lamont. "Prynne, William". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Vol. 45, p. 490.

would no longer be able to distinguish between the fiction presented on stage and the real world outside the playhouse walls.

Prynne did not see this as a mere possibility, but as a proven fact. Thus the title page of the 1633 edition of his work states that "it is largely evidenced, by divers Arguments, by the concurring Authorities and Resolutions of sundry texts of scripture [...] That popular Stage-Plays [...] are sin-ful, heathenish, lewd, ungodly Spectacles, and most pernicious Cor-ruptions; condemned in all ages" and that within *Histrio-mastix* "[a]ll pretences to the contrary are here fully answered"²⁹¹. The title page makes clear that for Prynne there can be no doubt about the dangers of both playing and playgoing.

Prynne devoted the prologue of his *Histrio-mastix* to further torrents of hatred towards the theatres and characterises plays as "the common idol and prevailing evil of our dissolute and degenerate age"²⁹², thus blaming the stage for the much larger problems England saw itself faced with in the year of the book's publication. For him there can also be no doubt that dramatic plays "had their rise from hell, yea, their birth, and pedigree from the very Devil himself, to whose honour and service they were at first devoted."²⁹³ Since "many who visit the Church scarce once a week, frequent the Playhouse once a day"²⁹⁴ Prynne seemed to have seen it as his duty as a faithful and obedient Christian

to endure the cross and despise the hate and shame, which the publishing of this *HISTRIO-MASTIX* might procure me, and to assuage [...] these inveterate, and festered ulcers [...] by applying some speedy corrosives and emplaisters to them, and ripping up their noxious and infectious nature, on the public theater in these ensuing Acts and Scenes.²⁹⁵

However, like many other Puritan antitheatricalists, Prynne does not succeed, in spite of the considerable length of his monumental work, in providing his readership with any new information or facts on the "infectious nature" of the theaters. His polemical and undistinguished rants, though reported very passionately, echo the predominant arguments and objections of his time "in a style

²⁹¹ William Prynne. Title page. *Histrio-mastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedy*. London: 1633.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, Prologue.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

of paralyzing repetitiousness"²⁹⁶, without adding any new contributions to the debate – let alone "speedy corrosives and emplaisters" to fasten the theaters' downfall. Or as Holden has put it: "the volume is rather a copy of all that has come before."²⁹⁷ Holden argues that Prynne's *Histrion-mastix* is "singularly unfair in its presentation of evidence and opinion: the faults of the drama are numbered over, but little is said of its virtues."²⁹⁸ This is not surprising however and is true of most antitheatrical tracts. Prynne does not provide evidence of any sort, but rather, as was customary at this time, only opinions and unverified accusations. Hardly anyone opposed to the theater, let alone a Puritan antitheatricalist, ever mentioned aspects such as the drama's ability to teach or educate. Prynne has gone down in literary history as the theatre's arch-enemy who, for his own part, strongly believed that "he was doing society a service"²⁹⁹ by urging his contemporaries, as he has stated in the prologue to his *Histrion-mastix*, "to forsake the Devil and all his works, the poms and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of flesh, of which these Stage-Plays are the chief."³⁰⁰ As Butler has convincingly detailed, the audience for Prynne's monumental book must have been rather small. He gained more fame in 1637 "when he suffered with Burton and Bastwick for his attacks on the bishops, not in 1634 for his opposition to the stage."³⁰¹

The theatre in return found ways to react to the often extreme anti-Puritanism. As Keenan has detailed, contemporary "playwrights generally caricature opponents of the theatre as puritan killjoys"³⁰². Holden further highlights the fact that for "many years the English drama concerned itself intermittently with religious controversy, and the Puritan, one particular figure in this religious picture, came to be a stock in trade of the playwright"³⁰³, almost as rewarding and fruitful as the Vice-figure of mediaeval morality plays. This abundance of aspects to ridicule resulted from mocking such things as a Puritan's "clothing, his speech, his manners,

²⁹⁶ Barish. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 83.

²⁹⁷ Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, p. 99.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 85.

³⁰⁰ Prynne. Prologue. *Histrion-mastix*.

³⁰¹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 94.

³⁰² Siobhan Keenan. *Renaissance Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008, p. 80.

³⁰³ Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, p. 99.

and his morals"³⁰⁴ – all in all rich sources for mockery in such plays as Thomas Randolph's *The Muse's Looking Glass* (1630) or Abraham Cowley's *The Guardian* (1642). A short scene from George Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive* will suffice to illustrate how Early Modern dramatists depicted the narrow-minded manner of Puritans on stage. It is a second-hand account describing a Puritan who regards tobacco "as though it burned with the smoke of hell"³⁰⁵:

Upstart a weaver, blown up b'inspiration,
 That had borne office in the congregation,
 A little fellow, and yet great in spirit;
 I shall never forget him, for he was
 A most hot-liver'd enemy to tobacco,
 His face was like the ten of diamonds
 Pointed each where with pushes, and his nose
 Was like the ace of clubs
 [...] the colour of his beard
 I scarce remember; but purblind he was
 With the Geneva print, and wore one ear
 Shorter than t'other for a difference [...]
 Said 'twas a pagan plant, a profane weed,
 And a most sinful smoke, that had no warrant
 Out of the Word; invented, sure by Sathan
 In these our latter days to cast a mist
 Before men's eyes that they might not behold
 The grossness of old superstition,
 Which is, as 'twere, deriv'd into the Church
 From the foul sink of Romish popery,
 And that it was a judgment on our land
 [...] the smoke of vanity
 [...] a rag of popery [...]
 And speaking of your Grace behind your back,
 He charg'd and conjur'd you to see the use
 Of vain tobacco banish'd from the land [...]³⁰⁶

Chapman's play is a good account of how the Puritan stock-figure and his behaviour were generally depicted on the Early Modern stage: "he is of humble occupation, of small size, but great in noise. He is sour-visaged, squint-eyed, contrary, and stubborn, able to see Rome everywhere; he is eager to impose his moral judgment

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

³⁰⁶ George Chapman. *Monsieur D'Olive*. London: 1604. Quoted in: Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, pp. 119f.

on the whole community"³⁰⁷, his self-righteousness thus earning him ridicule and hostility.

However, the ridicule of Puritans so common in Early Modern drama "may perhaps exaggerate how unpopular they were with the audience [...]. Religious hypocrisy and pompousness has always been a rich source of humour, from Chaucer's Monk or Friar to Wilde's Canon Chasuble"³⁰⁸. Both Jacobean and Caroline dramatists at times suffered severely from Puritan attacks and denunciations, but they in return also profited from them by incorporating Puritan stock-figures into their plays in order to ridicule them on stage:

In most plays from 1600 to 1642 the treatment of the Puritan is in the nature of a cartoon: things are generally black or white; there are repetitious details which serve to identify the subject, and the details are of less importance than the bold strokes which accentuate the weaknesses.³⁰⁹

The reactions to Puritan antitheatricity by the stage were often as superficial and undifferentiated as the original attacks, thus primarily providing amusement rather than elucidation. In consequence they fuelled existing animosities, but also drew strength from "the opposed tensions and tendencies within society" and "the conflicting prejudices and aspirations still coexisting "³¹⁰ in the audience.

To conclude this chapter on Early Modern Puritanism, one needs to maintain once more that to "see all Puritans automatically hostile in principle to the theatre and the arts generally is, however, to misunderstand the depth and complexity of the intellectual and social movements that led to the upheavals of the 1640s."³¹¹ Antitheatricity was only one aspect characterising Early Modern Puritanism, which was more varied and multifaceted than many scholars dare to admit.

Furthermore, hostility to playing and playgoing was not exclusively Puritan. There were various other groups and individuals who voiced concerns and objections regarding the public and private theaters which, as Bishop Lancelot Andrewes

³⁰⁷ Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, p. 120.

³⁰⁸ Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, p. 73.

³⁰⁹ Holden. *Anti-Puritan Satire*, p. 143.

³¹⁰ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 5.

³¹¹ Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, pp. 20f.

declared in 1630, "stir up wicked and lustful thoughts"³¹². Accepting the view promoted by many scholars that "the theatres were swept aside in 1642 by a tidal wave of puritan protest which had gradually been gathering head throughout the 1630s"³¹³ is to completely misread the evidence and miss the complexity of the years leading up to the Civil War. Playhouses were "stigmatized as a breeding ground for social unrest and riotous behaviour"³¹⁴. Sanders has detailed in this regard that the

Puritans were, after all, scarcely in control in 1642 when Charles was still officially monarch of the realm. Moreover, the theatres were only closed for one season in the first instance, and more for reasons of public safety in wartime than because of any anti-theatrical political or theological ideology [...] and as a result the closure of the theatres in 1642 should be read as a product of wartime necessities [...].³¹⁵

The fact that Sir William Davenant succeeded in persuading Cromwell to allow operas with likewise politically-charged themes strongly suggests, as Heinemann has pointed out, "that it was particularly the popular plebeian theatre that was feared"³¹⁶, for it attracted the mass of London's citizens in politically unstable and times, thus empathising once more that the banning of plays primarily resulted from political, rather than theological reasons.³¹⁷ Thus, due to nature of these turbulent times and the increasing political instability, the 1642 order to close the theatres stated that "publike Sports doe not well agree with publike Calamaties, nor publike Stage-playes with the Season of Humiliation"³¹⁸, thus underlining the fact that the ban of playing should not be seen as an act of Puritan reform, but rather as a means to ensure public safety and to avoid disruptive effects "at a moment of unprecedented crisis"³¹⁹.

³¹² Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³¹³ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 95.

³¹⁴ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 43.

³¹⁵ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 2.

³¹⁶ Heinemann. *Puritanism and Theatre*, p. 235.

³¹⁷ Cf.: Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 99 & pp. 137f.

³¹⁸ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 138.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

II.1.5 THE LONDON THEATRES AND THE PLAGUE

Whereas most historians chiefly focus on the visitations of the plague in 1348 and 1665, which indeed claimed the greatest number of victims, one should not disregard the wide-ranging effects of the many virulent outbreaks in the years between. The epidemics in 1603 or 1625 both coincided with the accession of a new king and thus heralded the death of a sovereign. In both the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, the plague in London was, as Ian Munro has shown, "not a calamitous singularity but a constant presence, ebbing and flowing throughout the year and the years but never disappearing."³²⁰ That this figurative depiction is correct can be seen from the many contemporary accounts, like in that of John Davis of the year 1609, in which the plague's constant presence ever since the outbreak in 1603 is illustrated:

Time neuer knew since he beganne his houres,
(For aught we reade) a Plague so long remaine
In any Citie, as this Plague of ours:
For now six yeares in London it hath laine.
Where no one goes out, but as his coming in,
If he but feeles the tendrest touch of smart,
He feares he is Plague-smitten for his sinne;
So, ere hee's plagu'd, he takes It to the heart:
For, Feare doth (Loadstone-like) it oft attract,
That else would not come neere.³²¹

This passage demonstrates the desperation and fear felt by contemporary Londoners and also the desire to find an explanation for the physical and mental torments caused by the plague's persistence. Davis' quote makes clear that the "fear of plague [...] is itself like a plague, roaming through the city – and, through a conjoining of the mental and the physical, is as potentially deadly as the disease itself"³²², a sensation felt by many other contemporaries as well. This aspect has been taken up by Antonin Artaud in his *The Theater and its Double* in which he

³²⁰ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 176.

³²¹ John Davies. *Humours Heau'n on Earth: With [...] The Triumph of Peace of Death: Or, The Picture of the Plague, According to the Life; as it was in Anno Domini*. London: 1603. Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 176.

³²² Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 176.

likewise states that the spreading of the plague was not only caused by physical factors:

Whatever may be the errors of historian or physicians concerning the plague, I believe we can agree upon the idea of a malady that would be a kind of psychic entity and would not be carried by a virus. If one wished to analyze closely all the facts of plague contagion that history or even memories provide us with, it would be difficult to isolate one actually verified instance of contagion by contact.³²³

This does not mean that Artaud doubts the well-proven fact that the plague was caused by a virus, more precisely the bacillus 'Yersinia pestis', but that for him the effects of the plague are the disease: "the social and psychological chaos that plague inaugurates is as much a direct product of the disease as is the somatic chaos of buboes, fevers, lesions, and death."³²⁴

Resulting from their fears and uncertainties, Early Modern Londoners found various tropes to describe what happened to them and their city during times of plague. On the one hand, the "image of an invader conquering the city"³²⁵ was a very dominant picture, as was the idea that the plague was God's punishment for the citizens' unfaithfulness and increasing estrangement from him. In stark contrast to this stands another image which gained mounting support during the period, namely that of "the city feeding upon its citizens, consuming itself"³²⁶, thus characterising the epidemics as being of a cannibalistic nature. It is again Davies who in his account provides the contemporary backing for this symbolism:

The London Lanes (themselves thereby to saue)
Did vomit out their vndigested dead,
Who by cart loads, are carried to the Graue,
For, all those Lanes with folke were ouerfed.³²⁷

Davis depicts the plague as a means to regulate overpopulation and to save the city, as ironic as this might sound in this context.³²⁸ It illustrates the desperation of

³²³ Antonin Artaud. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958, p. 18.

³²⁴ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 181.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ Davies. *The Triumph of Peace of Death*. Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 191.

contemporaries to find explanations for the dreadful things happening around them and affecting their lives in extensive terms. Dekker and Middleton underline existing uncertainties concerning both the origin and the contagious nature of the disease when they ask in their collaborative work *News from Gravesend*

Can we believe that one mans breath
Infected, and being blowne from him,
His poyson should to others swim:
For then who breath'd upon the first?³²⁹

It was not only London's inhabitants who were at a loss, but also the authorities. The only sensible solution was to isolate those showing symptoms of infection, such as the swellings in the neck, armpit or groin caused by the bite of infected fleas unable to find other hosts, such as rats, thus enabling the bacillus to enter the human bloodstream and almost certainly causing speedy death. "When plague was diagnosed in a house, all residents were locked inside for forty days, by when, it was assumed, the infected had either died or recovered"³³⁰, as the following passage from a contemporary plague order demonstrates:

That to euery infected houses there be appointed two Watchman, one for the day and the other for the night: and that these Watchmen haue a speciall care that no person goe in or out of such infected houses, whereof they haue the charge, vpon paine of seuer punishment.³³¹

In reality these orders were hard to execute and many infected citizens were still roaming the streets, thus spreading the disease. Contemporaries like John Taylor disapprovingly commented on the authorities' inability to provide its fearful and confused citizens with precise instructions, thus causing them to perform absurd measures in the hope of escaping infection:

One with a peece of tasseld well tarr'd Rope

³²⁸ The English economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) further developed this theory in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in London in 1798. In his essay Malthus argues that overpopulation will sooner or later be countered by famine or disease (known as the 'Malthusian catastrophe'), as the rapidly growing population will eventually rise above the food availability.

³²⁹ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. *News from Gravesend*. London: 1604. Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 183.

³³⁰ R. Porter. *London*, p. 82.

³³¹ Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 196.

Doth with that nose-gay keepe himselfe in hope;
 Another doth a wispe of worme-wood pull
 And with great Judgement crams his nostrils full;
 A third takes off his socks from 's sweating feete,
 And makes them his perfume along the streete:
 A fourth hath got a pownc'd Pommander box,
 With woorme-wood juice, or sweating of a Fox,
 Rue steep'd in vineger, they hold it good
 To cheere the sences, and preserve the blood.³³²

The overcrowding mentioned by Davis above was especially problematic in the suburbs. Overpopulation was, in combination with generally insanitary conditions, a major reason why outbreaks of the plague usually started in the suburbs where population was most dense, and from where it then quickly spread to the city proper. During the outbreak of 1625, in the year of Charles' I accession to the throne and after an unusually hot and dry summer, almost one fifth of London's population perished, thus considerably diminishing the city's size and prompting the contemporary John Taylor to write that

All trades are dead, or almost out of breath
 But such as live by sickness and by death.³³³

However, "such was the pull of London that even these catastrophic depredations were quickly made good by fresh migrants"³³⁴, thus lessening the effects of the plague and sustaining the city's unparalleled growth and vitality. Hoping to escape death, those who could retreated to the countryside and left the city behind in the months of crisis, but thus often spreading it to other regions of the islands as a consequence. So great were fear and desperation that at times the whole city seemed to be on the run, as Thomas Dekker, apart from his plays also well known for his plague-pamphlets, illustrated:

Feare and Trembling (the two Catch-polles of Death) arrest every one: no parlye will be graunted, no composition stood upon, but the Allarum is strucked up, the Toxin ringes out for life, and no voyce heard but Tue, Tue, Kill, Kill; the little Belles onely (like small shot) doe yet goe off, and make no great worke for wormes, a hundred or two lost in every skirmish, or so:

³³² Quoted in: F. P. Wilson. *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 150.

³³³ Quoted in: John Richardson. *London and its People. A Social History from Medieval Times to the Present Day*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1995, p. 92.

³³⁴ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 128.

but alas, that's nothing: yet by those desperat sallies, what by opan setting upon them by day, and secret Ambuscadoes by night, the Skirts of London were pittifully pared off, by little and little: which they within the gates perceiving, it was no boot to bid them take their heels, for away they troop thick and threefold, some riding, some on foote: some without bootes, some in their slippers, by water, by land, in shoales swam they West-ward, many to Gravesend: none went unlesse they be driven, for whosoever landed there never came back again: Hacknies, Water-men & Wagons, were not so terribly employed many a yeare: so that within a short time, there was not a good horse in Smithfield, nor a Coach to be set eye on.³³⁵

The bleak picture Dekker provides is that of a city at war with a merciless and unforgiving invader suddenly attacking, severely disfiguring its numerous victims, not hearing their cries for mercy and parley and forcing those not already dead to leave their homes behind in a hurry. As was custom in times of plague, Parliament was adjourned in October 1625 for a few months due to "a general sickness and disease which proves mortal to many and infectious to more"³³⁶. Further contemporary accounts illustrate the havoc caused by the infection. Though some of them may seem to be exaggerated at first sight, they provide an unaltered and unvarnished picture of London's bleak reality in 1625:

Here, one man stagger'd by, with visage pale:
There, lean'd another, grunting on a stall.
A third, halfe dead, lay gasping for his grave;
A fourth did out at window call, and rave;
Yonn came the Bearers, sweating from the Pit,
To fetch more bodies to replenish it.³³⁷

In 1625 John Taylor, a Thames waterman and known as the 'water-poet', published a lengthy poem entitled 'The Fearefull Summer: Or, Londons Calamitie' in which he describes in a very figurative manner the horrors caused by the plague and how the epidemic changed the face of the city:

Faire London that did late abound in blisse,
And wast our Kingdomes great Metropolis,
'Tis thou that art dejected, low in state,
Disconsolate, and almost desolate,
The hand of Heav'n (that onely did protect thee)
Thou hast provok'd most justly to correct thee,
And for thy pride of heart and deeds unjust,
Hee layes thy pompe and glory in the dust.

³³⁵ Quoted in: R. Porter. *London*, pp. 80f.

³³⁶ Quoted in: Wilson. *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*, p. 129.

³³⁷ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[...]

Let him but say, that he from London came,
So full of Feare and Terrour is that name,

[...]

Strange was the change in lesse than three months space,
In joy, in woe, in grace, and in disgrace:
A healthfull April, a diseased Iune,
And dangerous Iuly, brings all out of tune.

[...]

What doe the eyes see there but grieved sights
Of sicke, oppressed, and distressed wights?
Houses shut up, some dying, some dead,
Some (all amazed) flying, and some fled.
Streets thinly man'd with wretches every day,
Which have no power to flee, or meanes to stay
In some whole street (perhaps) a Shop or twaine
Stands open, for small takings, and less gaine.

[...]

Thus passeth all the weeke, till Thursdayes Bill
Shews us what thousands Death that week did kill.

[...]

Whil'st fatall Dogges made a most dismall howling.
Some franticke raving, some with anguish crying,
Some singing, praying, groaning, and some dying,
The healthfull grieving, and the sickly groaning.

[...]

Here Parents for their Childrens losse lament;
There, Children grieve for Parents life that's spent:
Husbands deplore their loving Wives decease:
Wives for their Husbands weep remedilesse:
The Brother for his Brother, friend for friend,
Doe each for other mutuall sorrowes spend.
Here, Sister mournes for Sister, Kin for Kin

[...]

Thus universall sorrowfull complaining,
Is all the Musicke now in London raining

[...]

The ways of God are intricate, no doubt
Unsearchable, and passé man's finding out,
He at his pleasure worketh wond'rous things,
And in his hand doth hold the hearts of Kings

[...]

But that the Plague should then the Kingdom cleare,
The good to comfort, and the bad to feare:
That as a good King, God did us assure,
So hee should have a Nation purg'd and pure.

[...]

A sinfull Nation cleanse and purifie:
So God, for him these things to passe doth bring,
And mends the subjects for so good a King.

Upon whose Throne may peace and plenty rest,
And he and his Eternally be blest.³³⁸

Taylor sees the plague as a godly measure to "cleanse and purifie" the "sinfull Nation" for its "pride of heart and deeds unjust" so that the new monarch has "a Nation purg'd and pure". This cleansing of the city brought about by the previously provoked "hand of Heav'n" in a span of only "three months" did not only change the city itself, but also how it was perceived by people from outside London. Taylor describes a city completely controlled by the plague in which nothing "but grived sights" can be seen in "Streets thinly man'd". London is now a city filled with "universall sorrowfull complaining" and sounds of pain, horror and fear, of people crying and groaning and dogs howling desperately. Taylor makes clear that God, who "in his hands doth hold the hearts of Kings", hardly spares a family and that there is no Londoner not grieving for either a relative or friend, thus joining in the "Musicke now in London raining".

Plague epidemics also heavily affected London's entertainment industry. The closure of theatres during times of plague was a "reasonable public health measure"³³⁹, a means to prevent further spread of the disease. However, the theatres themselves were also seen as an infection pestering the city by "contaminating the morals of London's"³⁴⁰ population. Yet, not only the theatres were affected by these closures, but rather all places of public entertainment: the "advent of the plague means the death of the festive life of the city: pageants and ceremonies are canceled, theaters closed, fairs suppressed, and the gathering of crowds forbidden."³⁴¹ Passages from contemporary orders issued by the city authorities likewise emphasise the range of limitations:

³³⁸ John Taylor. "The Fearefull Summer: Or, Londons Calamitie". *All the Workes of John Taylor the Water-Poet*. London: 1630. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, pp. 503ff.

³³⁹ Jean Wilson. *The Archaeology of Shakespeare. The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre*. Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995, p. 37.

³⁴⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Shakespeare. The Essential Guide to the Life and Works of the Bard*, p. 33.

³⁴¹ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 176.

That all Plaies, Bearebaitings, Games, Singing of Ballads, Buckler-Play, or such like causes of Assemblies of people, be vtterly prohibited, and the parties offending, seuerely punished, by any Alderman or Justice of the Peace.³⁴²

This point had been made clear by the authorities as early as 1569, when the first of a long series of plague orders was issued in which the future course of action was described in great detail:

Forasmuch as thorough the greate resort, accesse and assembles of great multitudes of people unto diverse and severall Innes and other places of this Citie, and the liberties & suburbes of the same, to thentent to here and see certayne stage playes, enterludes, and other disguisinges, on the Saboth dayes and other solempne feastes commanded by the church to be kept holy, and there being close pestered together in small romes, specially in thy tyme of sommer, all not being and voyd of infeccions and diseases, whereby great infeccion with the plague, or some other infeccious diseases, may rise and growe, to the great hynderaunce of the common wealth of this citty, and perill and daunger of the quenes majesties people, the inhabitantes thereof, and all others repayryng thether, about there necessary affares.³⁴³

An exception to this rule – bringing total chaos to the entertainment world – were the churches, which, in spite of also attracting great masses of people, were allowed to remain open even during the worst outbreaks of the plague. The remaining playing companies suffered severely during these times, as they had no regular income when the theatres were ordered shut. In consequence there appeared several petitions of theatrical companies to be allowed to reopen their playhouses and resume acting because, as Sir Thomas Roe lamented in a letter to the Queen of Bohemia, "Your Majesty will give me leave to tell you another general calamity, we have had no plays this six months"³⁴⁴. And in 1639 Heton, reacting to closures brought about by the lesser outbreak of 1636, likewise claimed he

disbursed good somes of money for the maintaining and supporting the said Actors in the sicknes tyme, and other ways to keepe the said Company together, without which a great part of them had not bene able to subsist, but the Company had bene utterly ruined and dispersed.³⁴⁵

In the light of the wide-ranging effects the plague had on drama, it "is a great stroke of good fortune that in those formative years of the Elizabethan drama [...] the

³⁴² Quoted in: Ibid.

³⁴³ Quoted in: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 97.

³⁴⁴ Quoted in: Wilson. *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*, p. 174.

³⁴⁵ Quoted in: Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet", p. 288.

theatres [...] suffered little or no interruption from the plague".³⁴⁶ The playhouses were usually closed once the number of plague victims exceeded 30 in a week, resulting in frequent and lengthy closures, which were in return repeatedly echoed and commented upon in contemporary sources. However, as was often the case, the theatres had to remain shut even after the worst was over because people feared they "would renew and spread the sickness which had so happily abated."³⁴⁷ In the light of the havoc caused by the plague to both Jacobean and Caroline drama, it is surprising that the plague features seldom in the literature of this time. For reasons still unknown very few plays take up this topic. Whereas some scholars attribute this to censorship, I agree with Munro that it should rather be accredited to the fact that "representing plague-marked bodies in the crowded, contagious space of the theater would cause"³⁴⁸ horror and panic among the audience acquainted with the terror resulting from the all too familiar plague.

The plague remained a problem for Early Modern Londoners until the last major outbreak in 1665 when again a large proportion of the city's inhabitants perished and the reopened and heavily changed Restoration theatres were once again shut. In his diary the contemporary Londoner Samuel Pepys writes in shock that

I went away and walked to Greenwich, in my way seeing a coffin with a dead body therein, dead of the plague, lying in an open close belonging to Coome farme, which was carried out last night, and the parish have not appointed any body to bury it; but only set a watch there day and night, that nobody should go thither or come thence, which is a most cruel thing: this disease making us more cruel to one another than if we are doggs.³⁴⁹

And his fellow Londoner Thomas Vincent likewise observed that

in many Houses half the Family is swept away; in some the whole from the eldest to the youngest; few escape with the death of but one or two; never did so many Husbands and Wives dye together; never did so many Parents carry their Children with them to the Grave, and go together into the same House under Earth, who had lived together in the same House upon it. Now the nights are too short to bury the Dead; the long summer Dayes are spent

³⁴⁶ Wilson. *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*, p. 124.

³⁴⁷ Quoted in: Wilson. *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*, p. 172.

³⁴⁸ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 194.

³⁴⁹ Samuel Pepys. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, (1660-1669)*. Ed. H. B. Wheatley, 7 vols. Vols. 4-6. London: 1893-1899. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 515.

from Morning unto the Twilight, in conveying the vast number of dead bodies unto the bed of their graves.³⁵⁰

The bleak picture painted by these accounts is reminiscent of the horrors caused by the 1625 outbreak.

The city's suburbs, likewise suffering from the plague, will now be the concern of the thesis' next chapter.

³⁵⁰ Thomas Vincent. *Gods Terrible Voice in the City*. 5th Edition. London: 1667. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 528.

II.2 LONDON'S SUBURBS

London's diversity and the problems resulting from it also stemmed from the fact that London consisted of at least three distinct parts during the period, namely:

London itself, on the north side of the Thames, Westminster and Southwark. London was the commercial city, while Westminster was the focus of the political nation, containing the principal royal palace, the court and the meeting place of parliament, with all the functions of the government, the courts of law, and the nobility's mansions. On the south side of the Thames, across London Bridge, Southwark was larger than some provincial cities. Together they held an unrivalled position in the country's economic, social, legal and cultural life.³⁵¹

During the seventeenth century London thus was much less the monolith it is today and many contemporaries regarded the ever-growing suburbs with concern: "'Tis true, that the Suburbs of London are larger then the body of the City, which make some compare her to a Jesuites Hat, whose brims are far larger than the block."³⁵²

As Mullaney has shown in *The Place of the Stage*, Early Modern drama must be seen as "a territorial art"³⁵³. The following analysis will show that London's suburbs, most notably Southwark, played a major role in this respect as they offered the entertainment industry a chance to develop and flourish by escaping the harsh restraints of the city proper. Contemporary antitheatricalists regarded the Jacobean and Caroline stage and its audiences "as a troublesome and potentially subversive social phenomenon that threatened religious and civic hierarchies and yet [...] could neither be outlawed nor put down"³⁵⁴. Popular Early Modern drama in the form of public playhouses

was born of the contradiction between a Court that in limited but significant ways licensed and maintained it and a city that sought its prohibition; it emerged as a cultural institution only by materially embodying that contradiction, dislocating itself from the confines of the existing social order and taking up a place on the margins of society.³⁵⁵

The margins of society mentioned by Mullaney were various areas outside the city walls where mayoral authority did not run. In her book *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, Pearl clarifies to this effect that in the seventeenth century,

³⁵¹ S. Porter. *Shakespeare's London*, p. 11.

³⁵² Howell. *Londinopolis*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 352.

³⁵³ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 7.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

"the term 'suburbs' in respect of London was used to denote all the areas adjoining the territory under City jurisdiction, including often those liberties outside the walls."³⁵⁶ The contradiction highlighted by Mullaney gained even more impetus from the fact that during the first half of the seventeenth century the population of the areas outside London's direct control "began to exceed that within the City's jurisdiction [...] and continued to do so by an increasingly wide margin."³⁵⁷ As a matter of fact in 1630, the Court of Aldermen had still no wish "to annex the turbulent and ever growing suburbs"³⁵⁸ and thereby to regulate the increasing social problems. What they wanted was supervisory power and economic advantages, rather than obligations. This "blind eye" turned to the suburbs by London's city fathers, as Roy Porter has called it,

created the most bizarre paradox: the fact that a majority of the inhabitants lay (by aldermanic preference) beyond municipal government, in effect ungoverned. London was on the road to becoming a small, highly regulated, corporate City lapped by a turbulent metropolitan sea.³⁵⁹

This paradox helped various sectors of the Jacobean and Caroline entertainment industry to flourish at the city's threshold and to draw huge audiences. It also found its way in many pieces of contemporary literature. Dramatists frequently used their removed vantage point from outside the city proper to critically reflect with a slightly increased freedom on the proceedings and the eminent cultural and social contradictions on the other side of the wall.³⁶⁰

With regards to the increasing growth of suburbs such as Southwark, Thomas Nashe asked "[w]hat are [...] suburbs but licensed stews?"³⁶¹. Wendy Wall, echoing contemporary sentiments, calls the suburbs "the seediest areas of London"³⁶².

³⁵⁶ Valerie Pearl. *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution. City Government and National Politics, 1625-43*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 10.

³⁵⁷ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 188.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁵⁹ R. Porter. *London*, p. 54.

³⁶⁰ Cf.: Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 30.

³⁶¹ Quoted in: Ian W. Archer. "Shakespeare's London". *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. 43-56, p. 48.

³⁶² Wendy Wall. "Dramatic Print and Authorship". *Early Modern English Drama. A Critical Companion*. Eds Garrett A. Sullivan, Patrick Cheney and Andrew Hadfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 1-11, p. 2.

Many contemporary authorities regarded them as “a moral refuse dump”³⁶³ – a stigma they never really managed to shake off. In 1632, Dekker stated “[h]ow happy [...] were cities if they had no suburbs with whence they serve but as caves where monsters are bred to devour the cities.”³⁶⁴ The suburbs, and especially Southwark, were well known as the places to go when seeking distraction and many a traveller coming to the capital went

[...] to the banck-side where Beares do dwell
And vnto Shor-ditch where the whores keep hell.³⁶⁵

However, the prejudices expressed by Dekker and other contemporaries tend to falsify the picture to a certain extent, as they only depict the negative aspects associated with London's suburban growth, in consequence neglecting the positive aspects resulting from it. The concentration on negative attributes and the rhetoric resulting from it was self-serving and “a means of diverting attention from the failings of the city authorities”³⁶⁶ by excessively highlighting suburban problems. Among these problems were those resulting from the fact that many of the activities and popular pastimes that the city authorities tried to suppress found their ways to London's outskirts and continued to flourish there. When Richard Burbage chose the suburb of Shoreditch as the site for his Theatre in 1576, he did so because all acting within the city limits had previously been forbidden in 1574.³⁶⁷ Within the last quarter of the sixteenth century however, it became clear that the “centre of gravity for players was [...] shifting to the Surrey side of the river, which was well equipped for amusement-seekers.”³⁶⁸ Thus not only the great theatre impresario Philip Henslowe built his Rose on the Bankside, but the Lord

³⁶³ Frank Kermode. *The Age of Shakespeare*. New York: The Modern Library, 2004, p. 111.

³⁶⁴ Quoted in: Ian Archer. "Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs". *Two Capitals. London and Dublin, 1500-1840*. Eds Peter Clark and Raymond Gillespie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 133-148, p. 134.

³⁶⁵ Samuel Rowlands. "A Straunge Sighted Traueller". *The Complete Works of Samuel Rowlands, 1598-1628*. 3 vols. Glasgow: 1880. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 362.

³⁶⁶ Archer. "Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs", p. 135.

³⁶⁷ However, this ban of playing inside the city walls did not apply to the children of the royal chapels, who were still allowed to continue playing privately within London's boundaries.

³⁶⁸ Samuel Schoenbaum. *William Shakespeare. A Compact Documentary Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 135.

Chamberlain's Men also decided to re-erect their former playhouse there. The location south of the river Thames was a very attractive one and in consequence suburban growth was particularly extensive on the south bank as well as towards the north-west, whereas in the east it was much less substantial.

Accordingly, London "was ringed with playhouses posted strategically just outside its jurisdiction"³⁶⁹ by the turn of the seventeenth century because Early Modern drama was not a cultural institution accepted by everyone.³⁷⁰ The city authorities "constantly feared the outbreak of subversive or disruptive activity"³⁷¹ when big crowds of people gathered and in consequence, as the *Refutation of the Apology for Actors* of the year 1612 states, "the honorable Citie of London hath spued them out from within her Wallles"³⁷². By moving to the immunity of the suburbs, theatre companies found a way to escape the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and his council. During the period in question, the three remaining public playhouses were still located in Southwark and the northern suburbs respectively. Of the three private playhouses, the Blackfriars was located directly in a liberty in the City of London itself, whereas the Phoenix and Salisbury Court were to be found in the more fashionable West End in Westminster. Similar to Rosalind's withdrawal from Court in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the move of the public venues to the suburbs was thus a flight to "liberty and not to banishment".³⁷³

Even though London's suburbs belonged to the city, they were areas "over which the city had authority but, paradoxically, no control"³⁷⁴. Considering this ambivalent status of the suburbs resulting from the contradiction emphasized by both Mullaney and Porter, not only public playhouses, but also other entertainment industries and prohibited businesses flourished there. This resulted in the fact that the city's authorities came to regard the suburbs as "a world of taverns, brothels,

³⁶⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Shakespeare. The Essential Guide to the Life and Works of the Bard*, p. 28.

³⁷⁰ Liberties were not only found in the suburbs however. One example for this is the Blackfriars Theatre which, even though the monasteries had been dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536 already, was still a liberty exempt from City jurisdiction when Richard Burbage purchased it in 1596.

³⁷¹ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 41.

³⁷² Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 118.

³⁷³ William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*. Ed. Juliet Dusinberre. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006, l.iii.135.

³⁷⁴ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 21.

bear-baitings, and cock-fights – a vivid, dynamic world of thieves, rogues, fencers, beggars, cony-catchers, balladeers, and pamphleteers³⁷⁵ – in short an underworld angling for the Londoners' pennies. However, it was an underworld both loathed and needed at the same time, "just beyond the perimeter of its actual control."³⁷⁶ The suburbs were in consequence much more than just areas of dangerous and unlawful behaviour, but a place for unparalleled pleasure and freedom and the stigma they carried was also at times a promise.

II.2.1 THE SUBURB OF SOUTHWARK

In their *The Story of Bankside*, Leonard Reilly and Geoff Marshall describe Southwark as "an ancient riverside area directly across the Rives Thames from the City of London"³⁷⁷. Ever since the mentioning of Southwark's Tabard Inn in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*³⁷⁸, the suburb had been notorious for its inns, brothels and other forms of public pastimes, thus predominantly developing the reputation of a place of entertainment, leisure as well as lawlessness, which it retained throughout the seventeenth century. This offering of a wide range of public pastimes is what renders Southwark more interesting for the purposes of this thesis than other suburbs, which only had a much smaller influence on the people living in or near London between 1616 and 1642. Southwark's contemporary special standing was not only due to the fact that it was located safely outside the city's jurisdiction, but also because "the roads from Sussex, Surrey and Kent converged"³⁷⁹ near the suburb so that many travellers, even from the continent, passed through Southwark and often stopped for refreshments or spent a night in one of the many inns and hostelries.

Further contemporary documents, such as the increasingly popular panoramas or long views, provide a rough idea of Southwark's basic townscape and its relation to

³⁷⁵ Clare McManus. "The Roaring Girl and the London Underworld". *Early Modern English Drama. A Critical Companion*. Eds Garrett A. Sullivan, Patrick Cheney and Andrew Hadfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 213-224, p. 219.

³⁷⁶ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 41.

³⁷⁷ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 1.

³⁷⁸ Cf.: Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 23.

³⁷⁹ R. Porter. *London*, p. 56.

the city proper. An engraving by Claes Visscher, first published in 1616, depicts London from its southern bank and shows certain features of the suburb of Southwark in the foreground. However, the panorama's accuracy remains questionable, as Visscher never was in London himself. He depended on drawings and accounts composed by other people like his contemporary John Norden. It is especially the shape of the Globe Theatre in the bottom left corner which seems to be incorrect as the depicted octagonal form stands in contrast to the conclusions drawn from more recent archaeological excavations. Nevertheless Visscher's engraving offers a basic idea of both London's and Southwark's townscapes and the relative positions of such locations as the Globe, the Beergarden, St. Saviour's Church (now Southwark Cathedral), St. Paul's Cathedral or London Bridge, covered by the many houses and shops also mentioned by the contemporary Londoner Fynes Moryson.

A second panorama completed by Wenceslaus Hollar in 1647 likewise is an important contemporary depiction. It is based on drawings made by Hollar when he was in London a few years prior to the publication date. The viewpoint taken in this depiction is from the top of St. Saviour's Church and shows various locations of interest for the aims of this thesis. Due to it being based on first hand information, it seems to be – in contrast to Visscher's engraving – more precise as far as the exact positions and the shapes of buildings such as the playhouses are concerned. Yet one needs to be careful to take the reliability of certain aspects for granted. Though the shape of both the Globe and the Beergarden seems to be more accurate, they are falsely labelled and the names have been interchanged. The building closer to the river Thames is the Beergarden and the one further away is the Globe theatre.

In spite of these inaccuracies the two pictures allow modern viewers to see London and its suburbs with an increased contemporary view and enable scholars to better understand the surroundings in which contemporary Londoners lived and how their lives were affected and influenced by the topographical framework.

However, at the same time it is interesting to find out how Southwark could be reached from London by the great number of people seeking distraction offered by Southwark's entertainment industry, such as the masses of playgoers flocking to watch performances when the Globe's bright flag announced that a play would

soon be staged. The river could be crossed either by walking over London Bridge or by hiring a wherry. There were many wharves along the river and amusement-seekers and playgoers willing and able to pay the three-penny boat fare attracted the watermen by either shouting ‘Westward ho!’ or ‘Eastward ho!’ – “depending on whether they were travelling up or downstream.”³⁸⁰ The contemporary Sir Thomas Overbury painted the following sarcastic picture of watermen in his *Characters*:

A waterman is one that hath learned to speak well of himself [...] He is evermore telling strange news, most commonly lies [...] His daily labour teaches him the art of dissembling, for like a fellow that rides to the pillory he goes not that way he looks [...] When he is upon the water he is fare-company: when he comes ashore he mutinies and contrary to all other trades is most surly to gentlemen when they tender payment. The playhouses only keep him sober, and as it doth many other gallants, make him an afternoon's man. London Bridge is the most terrible eye-sore to him that can be.³⁸¹

Crossing the Thames by walking over the bridge so disliked by the watermen was free of charge, but due to “herds and flocks and itinerant street sellers and sightseers”³⁸² as well as the vast buildings on the bridge itself it took much longer and was more inconvenient. Hence the watermen of London and Westminster were at most times very busy ferrying customers to and fro the playhouses. Yet, contemporaries like Fynes Moryson, writing in 1617, often found words of praise and wonder for the bridge, as the following passage exemplifies:

The bridge at London is worthily to be numbered among the miracles of the world, if men respect the building and foundation laid artificially and stately over an ebbing and flowing water upon 21 piles of stone, with 20 arches, under which barks may pass, the lowest foundation being (as they say) packs of wool, most durable against the force of water, and not to be repaired but upon great fall of the waters any by artificial turning or stopping the course of them; or if men respect the houses built upon the bridge, as great and high as those of the firm land, so as a man connate know that he passeth a bridge, but would judge himself to be in the street, save that the houses on both sides are combined in the top, making the passage somewhat dark, and that in some few open places the river of Thames may be seen on both sides.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Daniel Hahn and Rosemary Linnell. *Shakespeare's Globe Exhibition*. London: Shakespeare's Globe Publications, 2001, p. 19.

³⁸¹ Quoted in: Liza Picard. *Elizabeth's London. Everyday Life in Elizabethan London*. London: Phoenix, 2003, p. 17.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁸³ Fynes Moryson. *An Itinerary*. London: 1617. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, pp. 165f.

Due to these two modes of transport, numerous people were also able to reach the capital conveniently, much to the distress of the city fathers who complained frequently that "we find so many evil disposed and licentious persons as not only fill their own liberties with all kind of disorder but send their infection into this city."³⁸⁴ However, instead of attempting to fully incorporate Southwark to limit existing tensions, London's city fathers only tried to "neutralise the authority of competing jurisdictions"³⁸⁵. A proper integration did not happen for many years.

Since Southwark was quickly becoming the largest of all suburbs and expanded along the Thames on both sides of the bridge, its increasing size, industrialisation and distinctive commercial and economic potential were also seen as threatening the city's economy in certain sectors. The suburbs were not liable to the same taxes and charges and tradesmen could operate outside the rules of the city companies. In consequence the city's aldermen criticised in the 1630s that

the freedom of London which is heretofore of very great esteem is grown to be little worth by reason of the extraordinary enlargement of the suburbs where great numbers of traders and handicraftsmen do enjoy without charge equal benefit with the freemen and citizens of London.³⁸⁶

Southwark in the first half of the seventeenth century quickly became aware of its potential to help supply "the gigantic metropolitan centre of consumption situated at the other end of London Bridge."³⁸⁷ Its industry did not only provide its bigger sister with manufactured and nutritive goods, but also catered for the inhabitants' manifold wishes for entertainment, recreation, or drinking. Numerous inns, baths, brothels, gardens, theatres, baiting arenas, gambling houses, bowling alleys and many more sites intended to feed the Londoners' increasing appetite for pastimes could be found in the suburb and helped it to procure a face quite distinct from that of the city proper.

Before moving on to the next chapter, there is one more aspect worth mentioning with regard to Southwark, namely Southwark Fair. Along with St. Bartholomew's

³⁸⁴ Quoted in: Archer. "Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs", p. 134.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

³⁸⁶ Quoted in: Ibid., p. 134.

³⁸⁷ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 171.

Fair, held at Smithfield, Southwark Fair was one of the great fairs of London and as Mary Boast has detailed in her book *The Story of the Borough*,

[e]very September for 300 years Borough High Street was a scene of great excitement, the annual Southwark Fair [...] The right to hold a Fair was granted to the City in 1462. Originally it lasted three days, but later fourteen. There were all sorts of entertainment at the Fair.³⁸⁸

Great diarists like Samuel Pepys, John Taylor or John Evelyn frequently visited Southwark Fair in the 1660s and reported that they "saw in Southwark at St. Margaret's Fair, monkeys and asses dance and do other feats on the tight rope"³⁸⁹. Contemporary visitors from both Southwark and London took great pleasure in watching the many clowns, performers, acrobats, magicians, players (including the leading theatre companies), tightrope-walkers, gamblers, dwarves and various kinds of animals, like bears, dogs and horses. Though Southwark Fair and the corresponding market was a substantial commercial undertaking, its main goal was to offer recreation and pleasure. The authorities regarded the Fair with great concern and saw it as yet another "symbol of disorder and anarchy, threatening to overwhelm the values of a humanised and civilised London"³⁹⁰. So depending on the point of view, the Fair – just like the pastimes analysed in the next chapter – was either a great attraction or a great inconvenience³⁹¹ and turned the suburb "into a noisy, dirty, drunken, joyous, threatening mass of people, animals, stalls and refuse."³⁹²

What other pastimes than Southwark Fair also influenced Early Modern playgoers in their expectations towards the stage will now be analysed in the following chapters.

³⁸⁸ Boast. *The Story of the Borough*, p. 8.

³⁸⁹ Quoted in: *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Ackroyd. *London. The Biography*, p. 151.

³⁹¹ Cf.: Reilly. *The Story of the Borough*, p. 52.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

II.3 COMPETING INDUSTRIES

In Samuel Rowlands' *The Letting of Humours Blood in the Head-Vaine* of the year 1600, the following short poem can be found:

Speak, gentlemen, what shall we do today?
 Drink some brave health upon the Dutch carouse?
 Or shall we go to the Globe and see a play?
 Or visit Shoreditch, for a bawdy house?
 Let's call for cards and or dice, and have a game,
 To sit thus idle is both sin and shame.

This speaks Sir Revel, furnished out with fashion,
 From dish-crowded hat unto th'shoes' square tow,
 That haunts a whorehouse but for recreation,
 Plays but a dice to coney-catch, or so,
 Drinks drunk in kindness, for good fellowship,
 Or to the play goes but some purse to nip.³⁹³

As this short text exemplifies, Early Modern London offered its inhabitants a wide range of public und private pastimes. Thomas Heywood likewise asked “what variety of entertainment can there be in any city of Christendom, more than in London?”³⁹⁴ As long as London has existed, Londoners have enjoyed a rich cultural life with a wide range of entertainments and in the years between 1616 and 1642, the ever-growing metropolis and its suburbs continued to offer a great variety of non-dramatic amusements for its citizens with whom both public and private playhouses had to compete, some of which were either free of charge or comparatively cheap. Thus the theatres had to hold their ground in a crowded and highly competitive market. In addition to this, the tastes of Early Modern playgoers were heavily influenced by what this “all-purpose entertainment zone”³⁹⁵, as Greenblatt has called it, had to offer. The Early Modern “taste for plays was of a piece with a love for other public entertainments such as fencing, bear-baiting, and cock-fighting.”³⁹⁶ Audiences were “thirsting for [...] spectacle”³⁹⁷ and keeping in

³⁹³ Samuel Rowlands. *The Letting of Humours Blood in the Head-Vaine*. London: 1600. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 201.

³⁹⁴ Quoted in: Schoenbaum. *William Shakespeare. A Compact Documentary Life*, p. 129.

³⁹⁵ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 163.

³⁹⁶ Kermode. *The Age of Shakespeare*, p. 110.

³⁹⁷ Penry Williams. *Life in Tudor England*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1964, p. 60.

mind that the playhouses literally “rubbed shoulders”³⁹⁸ with the arenas designed for animal-baiting, brothels and alehouses in suburbs like Southwark, it is understandable that they were often named in the same breath by both enemies and supporters who “saw no difference between bear-baiting, fencing matches, plays and prostitution.”³⁹⁹ Even though Early Modern moralists and Puritans in general were unwilling to make any concessions towards the theatre, one of them, Joseph Wyburne, noted that “if we marke how young men spend the latter end of the day in gaming, drinking, whoring, it were better to tolerate Playes.”⁴⁰⁰

The growing entertainment industry provided the inhabitants of Early Modern London with a wide range of possibilities to spend their free time and to amuse themselves. Whereas private recreations included playing games like chess or draughts, smoking, dancing, eating and drinking, the most popular public pastimes seem to have been bowling, which some contemporaries described as “the place where there are three things thrown away besides bowls: to wit, time, money and curses”⁴⁰¹, gambling, football – rather “a friendly kind of fight than a play a recreation, a bloody and murdering practice than a fellowly sport or pastime”⁴⁰² –, wrestling, fencing, animal baiting and playgoing. Some of these non-dramatic public leisure activities, like executions and other forms of punishment, walking in one of the many pleasure gardens and parks, sermons or certain other spectacles, were free of charge, whereas most other forms had to be paid for and were thus not available for everyone anytime.⁴⁰³ Sermons drew huge crowds of people and were – in spite of the Church's animosity towards the playhouses – rather theatrical in their own ways, as Millar Maclure indicates:

If we look at the scene as a whole, it reminds us of the Elizabethan theatre: groundlings and notables, pit and galleries, and, in the midst, the pulpit as stage. Indeed it was a theatre; to borrow a title from the young Spenser, 'a Theatre, wherein be represented as wel the miseries and calamities that follow the voluptuous wordlings as also the greate joys and

³⁹⁸ McManus. “*The Roaring Girl and the London Underworld*”, p. 215.

³⁹⁹ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 45.

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in: Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 73.

⁴⁰¹ John Earle. *Microcosmographie or, A Piece of the World Discovered*. London: 1628. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 209.

⁴⁰² Philip Stubbes. *The Anatomy of Abuses*. London: 1583. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 210.

⁴⁰³ Cf.: Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 199.

pleasures which the faithful do enjoy.' Sermons, proclamations, processions, and penances were all theatrical, and many a preacher of the Puritan persuasion acknowledged and fulminated against the competition from the Bankside.⁴⁰⁴

The institutionalisation of a diverse entertainment industry in London and its suburbs meant regular audiences and thus regular incomes for many people and companies profiting from the ever-high demand for spectacle and amusement. London's inhabitants retired to Southwark in particular in order to "pursue pastimes and pleasures that had no proper place in the community"⁴⁰⁵, as Mullaney points out in *The Place of the Stage*. He goes on observing that suburbs like Southwark were indeed quite heterogeneous as

alongside gaming houses, taverns, bear-baiting arenas, marketplaces, and brothels, stood monasteries, lazar-houses, and scaffolds of execution. Whatever could not be contained within the strict bounds of the community found its place here, making the Liberties the preserve of the anomalous, the unclean, the polluted, and the sacred.⁴⁰⁶

Contemporary evidence often mentions two groups in particular who were particularly drawn towards spending their time and money for the pastimes mentioned above: firstly apprentices and secondly the students of the Inns of Court. With regard to the latter group, Francis Lenton wrote in 1631 that "[h]is Recreations and loose expence of time, are his only studies (as Plaies, Dancing, Fencing, Taverns, Tobacco) and Dalliance"⁴⁰⁷.

However, throughout the period in question the private and public theatres occupied a special position within this versatile entertainment industry. Plays performed by professional players could almost only be watched in the capital, whereas the other non-dramatic forms also featured very prominently in other parts of the island. Regarding this Sheppard writes that "in this field the predominance of the capital was absolute, there being no comparable provincial counterpart to the London stage."⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ Millar Maclure. *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1958, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁵ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 22.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Francis Lenton. *Characterismi: or, Lentons Leasures Expressed in Essayes and Characters, Neuer Before Written on*. London: 1631. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 286.

⁴⁰⁸ Sheppard. *London. A History*, pp. 199f.

Montrose has detailed that Early Modern drama in general was trying to separate itself from its roots, which lay in "medieval civic religious drama"⁴⁰⁹ which was in turn characterized by the incorporation of elements such as singing, fencing or cockfighting. However, the evidence suggests that the theatres knew their competitors well and were eager to incorporate certain aspects of the other branches of England's traditional amusement industry in order to satisfy their customers' thirst for entertainment and to cope with the diverse expectations resulting from the manifold influences. I agree with Greenblatt who puts emphasis on the fact that the theaters' popularity also resulted from the fact that they

conjoined and played with almost everything the "entertainment zone" had to offer: dancing, music, games of skill, blood sports, punishment, sex. Indeed, the boundaries between theatrical imitation and reality, between one form of amusement and another, were often blurred.⁴¹⁰

In order to survive in these times of heated competition, Jacobean and Caroline theatres, in contradiction to Montrose's argument, had to revert to those forms of amusement deeply rooted in English society. In doing so, they answered their audiences' expectations, which were highly affected by what London and its suburbs had to offer.

Dramatists were well aware of the fact that their paying audiences were influenced by a vast entertainment industry which resulted in versatile demands and often picked this out as a central themes in their prologues or epilogues, as the following passage from Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* from 1612 shows:

How is't possible to suffice
So many ears, so many eyes?
Some in wit, some in shows
Take delight, and some in clothes;
Some for mirth they chiefly come,
Some for passion-for both some,
Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
Some to detract and ignorance their warrant.
How is't possible to please
Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?
Yet I doubt not, if attention
Seize you above, and apprehension

⁴⁰⁹ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 19.

⁴¹⁰ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 181.

You below, to take things quickly,
We shall both make you sad, and tickle ye.⁴¹¹

The "wild seas" emphasised by the author were a result of the fact that a considerable amount of Jacobean and Caroline playgoers also indulged in other public or private pastimes. They were consequently heavily influenced in their expectations towards the stage, which proved a difficult task at times and made poets wonder "How is't possible to suffice / So many Ears, so many Eyes".

To conclude, it is eventually worth remembering the fate the theatres suffered in 1642. James Howell, writing in 1657, greatly moaned the loss of the Early Modern Stage in his *Londinopolis*:

The time was, that Stage-playes, and fencing, were much used in London: [...] But those kind of Stage-playes, were turned after to Tragedies, Comedies, Histories, and Enterludes; for representing whereof, there were more theatres in London, then any where else; And it was a true observation, that those comical, and tragical Histories, did much improve, and enrich the English language, they taught young men witty Complements, and how to carry their Bodies in a handsome posture: Add hereunto, that they instructed them in the stories of divers things, which being so lively represented to the eye, made firmer impressions in the memory.⁴¹²

In spite of the fact that people like Howell put emphasis on the fact that Early Modern plays did not only entertain, but also instructed and educated their audiences, the theatres suffered most severely from the changes in politics and society during the Caroline Period. Whereas all the six remaining theatres were closed in 1642, most other public and private pastimes managed to survive.

II.3.1 ANIMAL BAITING

In *The Story of the Bankside*, Leonard Reilly and Geoff Marshall draw attention to the fact that the "bull and bear rings both pre- and post-dated the theatres"⁴¹³ for some 40 years in each direction and in the introduction to *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, Sanders emphasises that the baiting of animals had always been popular in both the capital and the countryside. She however differentiates between "rural baitings of blind bears [and] the more extravagant

⁴¹¹ Thomas Middleton. Prologue. *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*. Ed. Lowell E. Johnson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976, p. 4.

⁴¹² Howell. *Londinopolis*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 349.

⁴¹³ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 24.

and circus-like displays of the London bear-baiting arenas."⁴¹⁴ Certain parallels can be drawn between the development of Early Modern drama and animal baiting. Both forms of entertainment were inextricably linked and underwent considerable changes in character in the process of becoming more professional and institutionalised in the last half of the 16th century. London offered both branches unprecedented opportunities to flourish and to detach themselves from their more amateur predecessors, whose remains were still entertaining audiences outside the capital. The baiting rings found a natural home in Southwark not only because of the huge masses of paying amusement seekers, but also because of the ample nourishment for their animals supplied by the many butchers in Southwark, who had no use for innards and other slaughterhouse waste.⁴¹⁵ Regarding the superior standing of Southwark as a centre of entertainment, Ravelhofer emphasizes that "the Bear Garden area formed the center of an entrepreneurial nexus of theatre, prostitution, and baiting, set in the amusement district of London"⁴¹⁶.

In contrast to the playhouses, the baiting arenas were faster in gaining a permanent foothold in London's southern suburbs. They had already been institutionalised for some 40 years before the first purpose-built theatres were erected. The design of all Early Modern arenas used for bloodsports was very similar to the public playhouses and the theatres were to some extent modelled after these already well-established showgrounds.⁴¹⁷ The first Globe of 1599 was a new kind of theatre, in that it was exclusively used to perform dramatic plays and thus did not profit from any other activities popular in Southwark. The Hope, built in 1614 and in operation till the end of the period, was different. Since its owner, Philip Henslowe, intended to use it for bear-baiting as well, it had to be equipped with a removable stage. It was to replace the old Beargarden, which was located on the same spot. The building contract between Henslowe and the carpenter Gilbert Katherens describes the erection of a dual-purpose "Plaiehouse fitt & convenient in all things,

⁴¹⁴ Julie Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 3.

⁴¹⁵ Cf.: Schoenbaum. *William Shakespeare. A Compact Documentary Life*, p. 136.

⁴¹⁶ Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 288.

⁴¹⁷ Even though many baiting arenas could be found in Early Modern London, the major site for bloodsports was the renowned Paris Garden.

bothe for players to playe in, and for the game of Beares and Bulls to be bayted in the same"⁴¹⁸. Furthermore, Katherens was to

take downe or pull downe all that same place or house wherein Beares and Bulls have been heretofore usuallie bayted, and also one other house or staple wherin Bulls and horsstes did usuallie stande, sett, lyinge, and beinge upon or neere the Banksyde in the saide parish of St Saviour in Sowthworke, commonlie called or knowne by the name of the Beare garden⁴¹⁹

Henslowe, who also held a patent as "Master of the Royal Game of Bears, Bulls and Mastiff Dogs"⁴²⁰ and owned a brothel, later used the Hope solely for bloodsports and refrained from using it in the originally anticipated multipurpose way. Gurr assumes that this might have resulted out of a quarrel over priorities "which led to the players more or less giving it up altogether by about 1620."⁴²¹

In baiting arenas like the Hope or Paris Garden "bulls, bears and occasionally horses were "baited" – tethered to a post in the centre of the ring, while specially bred dogs were let loose at them. Spectators placed bets on the outcome."⁴²² This shows how much the different branches of the Early Modern entertainment industry mutually influenced and depended on each other. Greenblatt speaks of blurred boundaries between "one form of amusement and other"⁴²³ and draws attention to the close intertwining of such pastimes as the highly theatrical animal baiting and the performing of actual plays. However, they did not only share houses and certain theatrical elements, but "were attacked in similar terms by moralists and preachers, threatening divine vengeance upon all who took pleasure in filthy, godless shows."⁴²⁴ As far as the public playhouses are concerned, they reached for the same target group, as Early Modern Londoners did not make a big distinction between playgoing and watching animal-baiting.

The following passage from an undated handbill is a precious piece of contemporary evidence as it shows how highly competitive the Early Modern entertainment industry was. Companies did not only rely on word-of-mouth

⁴¹⁸ Quoted in: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 188f.

⁴¹⁹ Quoted in: Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Peter W. Thomson. *Shakespeare's Theatre*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 27.

⁴²¹ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 149.

⁴²² Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, pp. 24f.

⁴²³ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 181.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

recommendation, but they tried to directly influence and encourage potential customers. Some of these handbills were printed and others hand-written. They offer an insight in how professional and organized the Early Modern entertainment industry was and that they – well aware of the many rivals fishing for the customers' pennies – left nothing to chance:

Tomorrowe beinge Thursdaie shalbe seen at the Beargardin on the banckside a great Match plaid by the gamstirs of Essex who hath chalenged all comers what soever to plaie v dogges at the single beare for v pounds and also to wearie a bull dead at the stake and for your better content shall have pleasant sport with the horse and ape and whiping of the blind beare.⁴²⁵

The handbill promises potential customers the typical elements usually found in shows performed at the baitings rings, such as fights between dogs, bears and bulls, apes and horses attacked by dogs and the whipping of a blind bear by humans. The professionalism expressed by the use of handbills is emphasised by Ravelhofer who details that fights

were carefully timed and choreographed. Such supervised arrangements insured that opponents could be separated before serious harm ensued. Baiting was a scenic spectacle, a showpiece of controlled violence under the auspices of a master producer.⁴²⁶

Since animal baiting had a long tradition in England contemporary evidence and accounts dealing with this pastime span a long period of time. The following account is by Paul Hentzner, a traveller from the continent who kept a detailed travel diary of what he saw in the capital in the year 1598. His account is a significant source of information as it is one of the more detailed descriptions. It is highly valuable for the external perspective it provides in contrast to the many reports written by London's citizens themselves. As a foreigner Hentzner was careful to add certain pieces of extra information not included in most other reports. Many Londoners who witnessed baitings on a regular basis did not feel the necessity to be too detailed as their texts were meant to be read by people who were likewise already familiar with the basic course of action of these bloodsports. So in contrast to many of his contemporaries, Hentzner's account provides valuable information on the very basic pattern of animal-baiting instead of sensationally

⁴²⁵ Quoted in: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 19.

⁴²⁶ Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 288.

focusing on incidents or occurrences deviating from the familiar procedure. He states that

[t]here is still another place, built in the form of a theatre, which serves for the baiting of bulls and bears; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs, but not without great risqué to the dogs, from the horns of the one, and the teeth of the other; and it sometimes happens they are killed upon the spot; fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded, or tired. To this entertainment, there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it; and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them. At these spectacles, and every where else, the English are constantly smoking tobacco.⁴²⁷

While other contemporary reports give the impression of baiting being a rather unorganized enterprise, Hentzner's description evidences the opposite. A constant supply of not only bulls and bears, but also of dogs and humans willing to whip a bear were guaranteed.

John Stow also provides an early report of the practice of animal-baiting in his *Survey* and states the following:

Now to returne to the West banke, there be two Beare gardens, the olde and the new place, wherein be kept Beares, Buls and other beastes to be bayted. As also Matiues in seuerall kenels, nourished to baite them. These Beares and other Beasts are there bayted in plottes of ground, scaffolded about for the Beholders to stand safe.⁴²⁸

Baiting did not only compete with the playhouses with which it "shared buildings, owners, promoters and audiences"⁴²⁹, but also with the churches. However, since both bear- and bull-baiting were quite expensive sports, they could not be performed as frequently as other forms of public amusement and there were fewer rings than theatres.⁴³⁰ In addition to this, the animals needed rest, even though the "kennels at the Bear Garden maintained as many as 150 dogs, along with ten to

⁴²⁷ Quoted in: Schoenbaum. *William Shakespeare. A Compact Documentary Life*, p. 130.

⁴²⁸ John Stow. *A Survey of London. Contayning the Originall, Antiquity, Increase, Moderne Estate, and Description of that Citie, Written in the Yeare 1598. By Iohn Stow Citizen of London*. London: 1603. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 209.

⁴²⁹ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 21.

⁴³⁰ Harbage stresses the fact that animal baiting was seen as a form of sport by Early Modern spectators and not – as one might think – as something exceptionally cruel and brutal. Cf.: Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 153.

twelve bears."⁴³¹ Attempts to ban animal-baitings not only on Sundays but altogether were not unheard of during the Jacobean and Caroline Period, but this was "less out of concern for the welfare of the animals than because it attracted ill-behaved crowds who gambled, drank, swore and might get out of hand"⁴³². The Early Modern "public had a peculiar liking for the sight of animals on stage"⁴³³ and Sanders puts emphasis on the fact that "these creatures were an established part of popular amphitheatrical theatre in London"⁴³⁴. Greenblatt likewise argues that they saw bears as something extraordinary appalling and despicable and hence liked seeing the bigger beasts chased to deaths by the smaller dogs⁴³⁵ – which is interesting with regard to the metaphorical allusions about society the fight contains. Reilly and Marshall confirm this view by observing that although "barbaric to our tastes, the baiting of animals was hugely popular and was described by contemporaries in approving tones."⁴³⁶ John Taylor, well-known for his pamphlet *Bull, Beare and Horse*, adds yet another feature to this when one of the female characters in his *A Juniper Lecture*, first published in 1638, states that "to drive away grieffe, I would sometimes see a Play, and heare a Beare-baiting"⁴³⁷, thus highlighting the positive effects this cruel practice had on contemporary audiences. This account thus emphasises that the baiting of animals was generally associated with providing pleasure rather than anything else.

This taste for violence exercised on animals was part of a bigger liking for violence in Early Modern society in general. The witnessing of violence exercised on both animals and fellow humans had a long tradition in English history. Ackroyd points out that "Londoners have characteristically used their holidays or holy days

⁴³¹ Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 288.

⁴³² Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 66.

⁴³³ W. J. Lawrence. *Those Nut-Cracking Elizabethans. Studies of the Early Theatre and Drama*. London: The Argonaut Press, 1935, p. 10.

⁴³⁴ Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, p. 6.

⁴³⁵ Cf.: Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 177.

⁴³⁶ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 25.

⁴³⁷ John Taylor. *A Juniper Lecture. With the Description of all Sorts of Women, Good and Bad. From the Modest, to the Maddest, from the Most Civill, to the Scold Rampant, their Praise and Dispraise Compendiously Related. Also the Authors Advice how to Tame a Shrew, or Vex her*. London: 1638, p. 213. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 294.

for 'violent delights'.⁴³⁸ The popularity of bear-baiting in particular is underlined by several references found in dramatic plays. Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* contains the following passage describing Richard of York's courage in battle and must have sounded very familiar to contemporary audiences:

As doth a lion in a herd of neat,
Or as a bear, encompass'd round with dogs,
Who having pinch'd a few and made them cry,
The rest stand all aloof and bark at him.⁴³⁹

Not only people of lower social status were attracted by this kind of amusement. Greenblatt notes that both King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I had a passion for bear- and bull-baiting.⁴⁴⁰ During the late-Jacobean and throughout the Caroline Period cockfighting took place on a regular basis in the royal cockpit and "baitings were also held in the Banqueting House itself"⁴⁴¹. The superior standing of bear-baiting can be established by the fact that a great number of "bears acquired names and personalities:"⁴⁴² Ned of Canterbury, George of Cambridge, Don John, Robin Hood, Blind Robin, Judith of Cambridge, Kate of Kent and Mall Cut-purse.⁴⁴³ By the 1620s, as Sanders has detailed, bears "were part of the performance lexicon of elite courtly entertainments and masques"⁴⁴⁴. Ben Jonson for example included bears in his *Masque of Augurs* first performed in 1621.

Polar bears, caught during expeditions to Greenland, feature dominantly in contemporary accounts of the years 1616 to 1642 and held a special position. Two white cubs, caught during an expedition to Cherry Island in 1609, were presented to King James I who gave them to Philip Henslowe. The crew's account reads as follows:

⁴³⁸ Ackroyd. *London. The Biography*, p. 178.

⁴³⁹ William Shakespeare. *King Henry VI. Part 3*. Eds John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001, II.i.14.

⁴⁴⁰ At the Palace of Whitehall bear-baiting shows were not uncommon during the reign of Elizabeth I and were often used as a treat for foreign ambassadors. Cf.: Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 246.

⁴⁴¹ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 204.

⁴⁴² Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 177.

⁴⁴³ John Taylor's *Bull, Beare, and Horse* provides a full list of names. Cf.: John Taylor. *Works of John Taylor the Water Poet Not Included in the Folio Volume of 1630*. 3rd Collection. London: 1876. Rep. New York: The Spenser Society, 1967, pp. 61f.

⁴⁴⁴ Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, p. 6.

we found a shee-Beare and two young ones: Master Thomas Welden shot and killed her: after shee was slayne, wee got the young ones, and brought them home into England, where they are alive in Paris Garden.⁴⁴⁵

These two bears remained in London for almost 50 years and achieved some fame due to their white colour. In 1623 Bankside offered a large crowd the spectacular sight of how people "turned a white beare into the Thames where the dogs baited him swimming, which was the best sport of all"⁴⁴⁶, as John Chamberlain recounts in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton. This was part of a show performed by James I in July 1623 for the Spanish ambassador, who took great interest in the baiting of animals. Chamberlain likewise details that the "Spanish ambassador is much delighted in beare-baiting. He was the last weeke at Paris-garden where they shewed him all the pleasure they could both with bull, beare, and horse, besides Jackanapes"⁴⁴⁷. Ravelhofer has analysed this particular incident in greater detail and has come to the conclusion that

King James wished to entertain the Spanish Ambassador with a sophisticated event. The ordinary set of "beasts of recreation", as they were called, would have done for the masses but not for the special envoy. On this occasion James considered the baiting of one of his rare white creatures an appropriate way of honoring his visitor: a royal animal performing for the representative of a foreign sovereign.⁴⁴⁸

Ravelhofer's choice of words is very accurate as the spectacle executed by the bear was simply and solely a performance designed to entertain an audience, thus featuring a highly theatrical element. What this event also shows is how closely entertainment and politics went together. With regard to the marriage negotiations concerning James' son Charles and the Spanish Infanta, James was eager to present the Spanish Ambassador his most majestic and powerful animals. This highlights that during this time "animals were political currency, coinage exchanged between rulers."⁴⁴⁹ The swimming white bears in the possession of the English Crown were also a strong symbol of England's superior position as a sea power.

⁴⁴⁵ Samuel Purchas. *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes Cantayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*. 20 vols. Vol. 8. Glasgow: 1906, p. 281.

⁴⁴⁶ John Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Ed. Norman E. McClure, 2 vols. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: American Philological Society, 1939, p. 507.

⁴⁴⁷ Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 291.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

Taylor's pamphlet *Bull, Beare and Horse* mentions the two polar bears and identifies their names as Will Tookey and Mad Besse. Bears in the Thames were a recurrent sight and some of the bear houses located in Southwark had access to the Thames to satisfy the paying visitors' demands to see one of the bears swimming in the water.⁴⁵⁰ In his pamphlet Taylor ironically describes the practice of bear-baiting by comparing the bears to soldiers who likewise had to study and later perform certain elements of art and knowledge, such as postures and fight-moves apart from solely being baited:

At Beare-Garden (a sweet Rotuntious Colledge)
Hee's taught the Rudiments of Art and knowledge.
There doth he learne to dance, and (gravely grumbling)
To fight & to be Active (bravely tumbling)
To practise wards, and postures, to and fro,
To guard himself, and to offend his foe.⁴⁵¹

Taylor's famous pamphlet was published in London in 1638 and was dedicated to "his well-affected and much respected, his often approved, and truly beloved, Mr. Thomas Godfrey, Keeper of the Game for Beares, Bulls, and Dogges"⁴⁵². Taylor starts his pamphlet by asking Godfrey in the dedication to be sympathetic to his text and to defend him against his enemies:

Kind friend, I am sure you
can defend me from being
bitten with your Beares,
though not from being
back-bitten by Envie; you can stave
me and save me, from the Goring of
your Bulls, but there are too many
heards of other Horned Beasts to But
at my Inventions, and tosse my harm-
lesse meaning, as their empty ludge-
ments, and Witlesse fancies are en-
clin'd; howsoever I am resolv'd to
love you, and not to Respect them.⁴⁵³

Taylor's rhetoric is typical of the writing of the time and was a means to guard himself from malicious attacks by readers who disagreed with what had been

⁴⁵⁰ Cf.: Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, pp. 7f.

⁴⁵¹ Taylor. *Bull, Beare, and Horse*, p. 55.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

written. He was indeed making himself the target of attack by depicting the cruelly treated bears in a positive light and by sympathising with them.

After providing his readers with some information on where bears could be found, Taylor characterises them – in contrast to popular belief – as rather gentle and frugal animals:

A Beare's a temperate Beast, most free from riot,
A prudent Schoolmaster, of sparing dyet,
Hee'll live foure moneths from every kind of meat,
By sucking of his left foot, like a Teat.⁴⁵⁴

Though it is hard to tell exactly from today's point of view how much Taylor actually objected animal-baiting, the positive depiction of the bears is a recurrent theme in his text. Even when describing the actual baiting in greater detail for those readers yet unfamiliar with the practice, Taylor cannot hide his sympathetic feelings for the cruelly treated animals. In contrast to many other contemporary accounts, Taylor manages to not take the view of the audience, but that of the animal:

Upon his hind feet, Tipto stiffe to stand,
And cuffe a Dog off with his foot-like hand;
And afterwards (for recreations sake)
Practise to run the Ring about the stake.
Whilst showts, and Mastives mouthes do fill the sky
That sure Acteon ne're had such a cry.
Thus Beares do please the hearing and the sight,
And sure their sent will any man invite:
For whosoer'e spends most, shall finde his favour,
That by the Beares and Dogs, hee's made a favour.
As as a Common-wealth, (oft by ill-willers)
Is vex'd by prowling Knaves, and Caterpillars,
So is a Beare (which is a quit Beast)
By Curses and Mungrels, oftentimes opprest.
And tyde to what he doth hee's bound to see,
The best and worst of all their cruelty.
And for mens monies, what shift ere they make for't,
What ere is laid or paid, the Beare's a t stake for't.⁴⁵⁵

Taylor manages to critically question the moral standards of those ill-willingly favouring baiting and to personify the often misunderstood bears by equipping them with human attributes such as quietness and gentleness, thus shedding a new

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

perspective on baiting as a practise of oppressing animals to maximise profits. Taylor does not only feel sorry for the bears, but mentions the other mistreated animals and, by using carefully chosen adjectives, tries to highlight their affection, courage and caring behaviour:

There's three couragious Bulls, as ever plaid,
Twenty good Beares, as e'er to stake was taid.
And seventy Mastives of such Breed and Races,
That from fierce Lions will not turne their faces;
A male and female Ape (kind Jacke and Jugg),
Who with sweet complement do kisse and hugge,
And lastly there is Jacke an Apes his Horse,
A Beast of fiery fortitude and force.
As for the Game I boldly dare relate,
'Tis not for Boyes, or fooles effeminate,
For whoso'ere comes thither, most and least,
May see and learne some courage from a Beast⁴⁵⁶

Taylor condemns those enjoying the baiting of animals and implicitly insults them as being cowards by denying them the courage found in the animals.

The audiences depicted by Taylor were also encouraged to directly participate in the action: "People did not always remain the barriers; women and children, too, approached the raging animals"⁴⁵⁷. However, as records of accidents suggest, this Early Modern sensationalism and thirst for blood and spectacle sometimes backfired. In 1583, a bear broke loose from its stake and killed several people present in the arena, including women and children.⁴⁵⁸ Another incident took place in 1642. Sir Sanders Duncombe had held a royal patent for the "sole practicing and making profitt of the combatynge and fightynge of wild and domestic beasts within the realm of England for fowertene years"⁴⁵⁹ since 1639 and in consequence kept bears on his private property in Islington, a northern suburb of London. In 1642 the following account of a killing was published in a pamphlet:

Strange and horrible nevvs, which happened betwixt St. Johns street and Islington on Thursday morning, being the eight and twentieth day of this instant moneth of October: being a terrible murther committed by one of Sir Sander Duncomes beares on the body of his

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 58f.

⁴⁵⁷ Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 289.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf.: Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Quoted in: J. Leslie Hotson. "Bear Gardens and the Bear-Baiting During the Commonwealth". *PMLA*. 40:2 (1925): 276-288, p. 283.

gardner that usually came to feed them, where thousands of people were eye-witnesses: also, with what strange meanes and manner they used to make him loose his savage hold by muskets, pikes, and mastive dogs which could not be till he had torne his bowells, the man lying on his belly thorow his back.⁴⁶⁰

This account is particularly striking "for the implicit parallels it draws between this grisly spectacle and the mainstream theatrical entertainment of the kind that would have been seen on a daily basis at the nearby Red Bull theatre."⁴⁶¹ Though the pamphlet exaggerates the exact number of witnesses by putting them at "thousands" it is possible that a large amount of people came to Sir Duncombe's property every day to have a look at his exotic animals. The same holds true for the bears kept in Southwark, which could also be visited by paying customers wishing to see the animals. "Apart from watching a fight, people visited the Bear Garden area to see the bulls, dogs, monkeys and horses."⁴⁶² Non-dramatic texts like the pamphlet quoted above offer "access to the ways in which theatre and performance were woven deep into the contemporary psyche and, not least, the experience of specific spaces and places like the Bankside."⁴⁶³ Identifying these interdependencies and the linkages between different forms of cultural production and its influences on contemporaries is a major goal of this thesis. Only if one understands the cultural importance and effects of entertainments like animal-baiting, one can apprehend the relationship between the Caroline stage and its audiences.

II.3.2 INNS AND TAVERNS

Taverns and alehouses were also part of the Early Modern entertainment industry and probably the most popular leisure pursuit. Sheppard emphasises that drinking, "whether at home or in the tavern or alehouse, was probably the means of relaxation most widely favoured by Londoners, followed by gambling in every form and nearly every place."⁴⁶⁴ Inns and taverns, often brewing their own beer to be immediately consumed due its limited shelf life, were found all over London, but

⁴⁶⁰ Quoted in: Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, p. 7.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁶² Ravelhofer. "'Beasts of Recreation': Henslowe's White Bears", p. 291.

⁴⁶³ Sanders. *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama*, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 199.

once again suburbs such as Southwark were known as the places to go. This was, just as with the theatres and baiting-pits, mainly due to the fact that innkeepers and landlords preferred to conduct their businesses outside the constricting city limits. However, in contrast to animal-baiting, prostitution and playgoing, only little is known about this branch and the social behaviour related to it apart from a few basic parameters. Drinking was conducted in private or in small groups in inns or taverns and was thus much less public and in consequence did not attract as much as attention. In addition to this, contemporaries did not feel the necessity to make detailed notes about what happened inside the walls of the ale-houses. Dekker's *The Guls Horne-Book*, a highly satirical mock-guidebook for pretentious young men, provides a contemporary insight in how certain members of society behaved in taverns. Dekker

has a sharp eye for the spectacular and telling detail, and a keen ear for seemingly authentic dialogue and spoken speech, so that we get depictions of London and its detail both in the streets and public places, and inside places of domestic and commercial daily life, that are both gritty and vivid. Most of all he sees London as corrupt and corrupting.⁴⁶⁵

In this light it is not surprising that Dekker makes fun of gallants and their behaviour in taverns, which attracted irritation from other guests. *The Guls Horne-Booke*, parodying the then popular travel-advice book, is however not as bitter and aggressive as his other works and draws most of its momentum by evoking laughter and ridicule by means of exaggerations. Gallants are for instance advised to do the following when going out for a drink:

For your drinke, let not your Physician confine you to any one particular liquor: for as it is requisite that a Gentleman should not alwaies be plodding in one Art, but rather bee a generall Scholler (that is, to haue a licke at all forts of learning, and away) so tis not fitting a man should trouble his head with sucking at one Grape, but that he may be able (now there is a generall peace) to drink any stranger drunke in his own element of drinke, or more probably in his owne mist language.

[...] keepe a boy in fee, who vnderhand shall proclaime you in euery roome, what a gallant fellow you are, how much you spend yearely in Tauernes, what a great gamester, what costume you bring to the house, in what witty discourse you maintaine a table, what

⁴⁶⁵ Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 363.

Gentlewomen or Cittizens wiues you can with a wet finger haue at any time to sup with you, and such like.⁴⁶⁶

Though exaggerated, Dekker's contemporary readership would have understood what he was hinting at and recognized the pretentious, ridiculous and sometimes transgressing behaviour exemplified by gallants and other people. *The Guls Horne-Booke* is full of passages like this which allow scholars to get a short yet blurred glimpse on what seems to have been acceptable behaviour in places of consumption and what not. What is more, it shows that different clienteles frequented the same establishments. Gallants and students of the Inns of Court spent quite some time watching plays and drinking, as John Earle criticised in his *Microcosmographie* in 1628 when he states that gallants frequently spend their days at "Playes, Taverne, and a Baudy house"⁴⁶⁷. William Prynne tried to dismiss this accusation by calling it "ignominious Censure"⁴⁶⁸ a year later in his *Histrion-mastix*. However, the accusation brought forward by Earle in 1628 was still valid in 1641, when it was stated in the anonymous *The Stage-Players Complaint* that dramatic performances were an acceptable way for gallants to spend their time because they would otherwise "spent their money in drunkennesse, and lasciviousnesse"⁴⁶⁹.

Like today, drinking was a socially accepted practise and the many inns and taverns existing during the period are ample proof of its popularity. The different forms of pastimes often went together and playhouse audiences regularly went for a drink before or after watching dramatic performances or baiting. Prostitution and drinking were also closely connected and after having had a drink, many a Londoner went to a brothel or to one of the many prostitutes offering their service in the capital's streets, as Henry Vaughan picks up in his 'A Rhapsodie' when contemplating the possibilities after a night of drinking:

Should we goe now a wandring, we should meet

⁴⁶⁶ Thomas Dekker. *The Guls Horne-Booke*. London: 1609. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, pp. 370f.

⁴⁶⁷ Earle. *Microcosmographie*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 282.

⁴⁶⁸ Prynne. *Histrion-mastix*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 283.

⁴⁶⁹ Anon. *The Stage-Players Complaint*. London: 1641. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 299.

With Catchpoles, whores & Carts in ev'ry street⁴⁷⁰

Thomas Randolph's satirical description 'To The City of London: A Mock Praise' also names taverns and prostitution in the same breath and underlines their interdependence and likeness in reputation:

The Bankside is honest and Bloomsbury chaste,
The ladies turned careful and look to the waste;
Nor can we now beershops in Turnbull Street see,
No bawdy house now but St. Anth'lin's shall be,
In the Puritan city of London.⁴⁷¹

In Southwark specifically Borough High Street and Kent Street were lined with inns and taverns in which guests and travellers could not only get a drink or a meal, but also a bed for the night and stabling for their horses on their way to or out of the capital. Thus it is "no surprise that inn keeping developed as a major enterprise in Southwark"⁴⁷², as Reilly has recently detailed. The great number of inns in Southwark and the fact that they were literally rubbing shoulders with each other led Thomas Dekker to describe Borough High Street as "a continuous ale house with not a shop to be seen"⁴⁷³. Four inns operating during the period are still well-known nowadays:

The George because it has survived, the White Hart, from its description in Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, and appearance in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, the Queen's Head as the property of John Harvard and the Tabard as the place of departure for Chaucer's Pilgrims.⁴⁷⁴

Other inns and taverns included the Spurre, the Christopher, the Bull, the Anchor, the Gun, the Castle, the Elephant, the Bear and other, many of which had already been mentioned in Stow's *Survey* at the turn of the century and managed to survive for many years to come.⁴⁷⁵ In the light of the high density of establishments providing alcoholic beverages, it is not surprising that Southwark alone had five prisons in the first half of the seventeenth century.

⁴⁷⁰ Henry Vaughan. 'A Rhapsodie'. *Poems with the Tenth Satyre of Juvenal Englished*. London: 1646. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 384.

⁴⁷¹ Randolph. 'To the City of London: A Mock Praise'. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 376.

⁴⁷² Reilly. *The Story of the Borough*, p. 20.

⁴⁷³ Quoted in: Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ See R. Porter's *London* for an extensive list.

As with all forms of public and private pastimes, drinking was under heavy attack by its critics during the period and the authorities greatly feared the disruptive behaviour that might result from excessive drinking. In *The Art of Living in London*, Henry Peacham, favouring the country life and condemning London for its extravagances and seductive power, heavily criticises drinking:

And above all things beware of beastly drunkenness, which Horace truly saith, doth *affigere humo divinae particulam*. And well he may *affigere humo*, or nail to the ground', for some are found sometimes so drunk, who, being fallen upon the ground or, which is worse, in the kennel, are not able to stir or move again. Drinking begets challenges and quarrels and occasioneth the death of many, as is known by daily experience. Hence are Newgate, the Counters, and other prisons filled with young heirs and swaggering gallants, to the sorrow of their friends and joy of their jailers. Again, men, when they are in drink, are apt to say or do anything, as become sureties for decayed companions or lending them ready money out of their purses, which then they have slept upon it, they curse and are ready to hang themselves – besides the terror of conscience and extreme melancholy which sticks by them a long time after. Drunken men are apt to lose their hats, cloaks, or rapiers, not to know what they have spent, how much money they have, and full oft have their pockets picked by whores and knaves.⁴⁷⁶

Peacham greatly disapproves of the various consequences resulting from drinking and tries to warn his contemporary readership in indulging in this pastime and to do things they might later deeply regret. Such things as lending money, ending up in prison, losing one's possessions or being lead to participate in "challenges and quarrels" might make them want "to hang themselves" the next morning and lead to "terror of conscience and extreme melancholy". After providing his readers with a long list of unpleasant things that might happen to people who drink too much, Peacham hence advices them that there is "less danger in outdoor recreations then, as shooting, bowls, riding, tennis, etc."⁴⁷⁷ Though Peacham might be exaggerating when he states that people die almost daily from incidents connected to excessive drinking, he nevertheless shows that occurrences like those mentioned by him were not unheard of and that drinking produced manifold criminal energies. In consequence the authorities' fears of the numerous inns and taverns were not unwarranted.

⁴⁷⁶ Peacham. *The Art of Living in London*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 439.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

II.3.3 PROSTITUTION

Throughout the late-Jacobean and the Caroline Period prostitution⁴⁷⁸ was not only found in the suburbs and "it is also striking just how many establishments operated within the supposedly much better governed areas under the City's jurisdiction"⁴⁷⁹. However, Southwark was nevertheless "generally recognised as the place to go"⁴⁸⁰. In London and its suburbs, even in Westminster itself, "there were both brothels, where women were employed by pimps to provide sexual services, and inns, which rented rooms to women who entertained men."⁴⁸¹ These brothels and inns, which also figure very prominently in dramatic plays of that time, lay often in close proximity to the sites of theatrical performances, bloodsports and drinking and "by tradition, whoring and acting went together"⁴⁸². Prostitutes were regularly found at the playhouses themselves where they offered their services to those watching a performance or tried to solicit custom for their nearby brothels. Referring to this, the conclusion of the anonymously published *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint* of the year 1643 declared that

we shall for the future promise, never to admit into our sixpenny-rooms those unwholesome inticing harlots, that sit there meerey to be taken up by Prentizes or Laywers Clarks; nor any female of what degree soever, except they come lawfully with their husbands, or neere allies⁴⁸³.

⁴⁷⁸ Please note that the following explanations will primarily reflect the male perspective of those people visiting prostitutes in Early Modern London. For a wide range of male members of society, prostitution was put on a level with the other forms of public and private pastimes analysed in this thesis. It is for this reason that I focus on the men's involvement as buyers of commercial sex rather than on the perspective of those suffering from sexual exploitation, as it is the aim of my thesis to illustrate from a contemporary playgoer-perspective how expectations towards the stage were shaped by a wide range of things happening outside the playhouses. I have tried to use the term 'entertainment' with caution in this regard, as I am well aware that it only reflects one perspective and does not describe the sentiments of those having suffered from sexual exploitation.

⁴⁷⁹ Ian Archer. *The Pursuit of Stability. Social Relations in Elizabethan London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 211. For a map detailing the location of brothels and bawdy houses in London at the end of the 16th century see page 212 of Archer's book.

⁴⁸⁰ Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 192.

⁴⁸¹ Susan Dwyer Amussen. "The Family and the Household". *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 85-99, p. 97.

⁴⁸² R. Porter. *London*, p. 56.

⁴⁸³ Anon. *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint*. London: 1643. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 299.

In his play *Amanda, or the Reformed Whore*, published in 1635 and valuable for its vibrant descriptions of everyday life in the capital, the poet Thomas Cranley literarily reviews the presence of prostitutes in playhouses. Though fictional, it provides an interesting insight in how some prostitutes managed to find new customers at the playhouses on a regular basis:

The places thou dost usually frequent,
Is to some Play-house in an afternoone.
And for no other meaning, and intent,
But to get company to sup with soone,
More changeable, and wavering then the moone.
And with they wanton looks, attracting to thee,
The amorous spectators for to wooe thee.
Thether thou com'st, in severall forms, and shapes,
To make thee still a stranger to the place:
And traine new lovers, like young Birds to scrapes
[...]
Now in the richest colours maybe had,
The next day, all in mourning blacke, and sad.
In a Stuffe Wastcote, and a Peticote
Like to a chamber-mayd, thou com'st to day:
The next day after thou dost change thy note,
Then like a country wench, thou com'st in gray,
And sittest like a stranger at the Play.
The morrow after that, thou comest then
In the neate habit of a Citizen.
The next time, rushing in thy Silken weeds,
Embroyder'd, lac't, perfum'd, in glittering shew,
Rich like a Lady, and attented so,
As brave as any Countesse dost thou goe.⁴⁸⁴

Itinerant prostitutes were attracted by larger groups of people because it was easier for them to find clients. The playhouses were no exception to this rule, though it is hard to come up with hard evidence underlining this.⁴⁸⁵ The southern bank had been the capital's red-light district ever since medieval times and continued to be so partly because the brothel keepers could escape the jurisdiction of the city fathers. Traditionally "licensed prostitution had been the monopoly of the Bishops of Winchester, whose 'stewes' on the south bank of the Thames [...] had existed from

⁴⁸⁴ Thomas Cranley. *Amanda, or The Reformed Whore*. London: 1635. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 292.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf.: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 67.

the time of the Conqueror's son, William Rufus."⁴⁸⁶ The impact prostitution had on the Bankside can be deduced from the names of certain streets, such as Cock Lane and the ironic Maiden Lane or Love Lane.⁴⁸⁷ Due to its close proximity to the capital and the chance to discreetly access the brothels located at the riverfront by boat, the southern suburb was a good location for "the brothel keepers, the prostitutes and their clients"⁴⁸⁸.

Customers usually had to pay half-a-crown, which was a relatively high price in comparison to the other pastimes of that time, and the brothels of Early Modern London were commonly known as stews, "a reference both to a contemporary word for the stove that warmed each one, and to the nearby commercial fishponds."⁴⁸⁹ As Picard argues, in times of little opportunities for women to earn their own living, prostitution was often a profitable occupation, though at times of course a highly dangerous one it should be added. "Despite the risk of sexually transmitted disease, it gave a woman a means of earning her living which was at least an alternative to the other career opportunity open to most women, domestic service."⁴⁹⁰ Picard's view expressed in these lines is very euphemistic however and she neglects the fact that during the years 1616 to 1642 prostitution was, as in the years before and after, "above all an expression of the social and economic vulnerability of women"⁴⁹¹ and of the power men held over them. It remains highly questionable whether women actually chose this way of living by themselves or whether they were forced to do so by brothel keepers, male relatives or pure economic needs. To this effect Sheppard emphasizes that women "without means of subsistence – newly arrived migrants or the wives of absent sailors, for instance – often resorted through necessity rather than choice to prostitution, demand for which came from all social ranks"⁴⁹². Even though prostitution was somehow legalized in the suburbs, this did not mean that it was a respectable occupation. Just

⁴⁸⁶ E. J. Burford and Joy Wotton. *Private Vices – Public Virtues. Bawdry in London from Elizabethan Times to the Regency*. London: Robert Hale, 1995, p. 15.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf.: Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 19.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁸⁹ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 19.

⁴⁹⁰ Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 192.

⁴⁹¹ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 229.

⁴⁹² Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 196.

like actors for example, prostitutes stood at the margin of Early Modern society and "were expected to be sharply demarcated from the rest of the population"⁴⁹³. The Early Modern discussion about prostitution was a very unilateral one and hardly anyone took much interest in the prostitutes themselves. Often they were not really seen as human beings but rather as a marketable good. As the following passage from Michael Dalton's *The Country Justice*, a guide for magistrates on how to deal with rape, shows, prostitutes who were raped faced several obstacles when prosecuting their abusers because women had very little rights and had to fight against significantly erroneous assumptions:

To ravish a woman where she doth neither consent before nor after is a felony. But a woman that is ravished ought presently to levy hue and cry, or to complain thereof presently to some credible persons [...] If the woman at the time of the supposed rape do conceive with child by the ravisher, this is no rape, for a woman cannot conceive with child except she do consent [...] it is a good plea, in an appeal of rape, to say that before the ravishment supposed, she was his concubine [...] and yet to ravish a harlot against her will is felony [...]⁴⁹⁴

In reality it was thus incredibly hard for women in general and prostitutes in particular to compete with the arbitrariness exemplified in the passage above and to really convince the local authorities that they had been raped.

Archer differentiates between three different kinds of Early Modern prostitutes: at the top were those who enjoyed somewhat more freedom and "rented themselves out as private mistresses forming long-time liaisons, although often residing within a brothel". Secondly there were those who worked in brothels and were tied "much more closely to a particular keeper"⁴⁹⁵. Lastly, there was the large group of itinerant prostitutes who conducted their business in rooms they rented or in small alleys of the main streets. About this third group very little is known, but it is without doubt that they lived most dangerously as they were often exploited and abused and did not enjoy any protection whatsoever.⁴⁹⁶ Of this last type one contemporary wrote that they

⁴⁹³ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 229.

⁴⁹⁴ Michael Dalton. *The Countrey Justice*. London: 1618. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 292.

⁴⁹⁵ Archer. *The Pursuit of Stability*, p. 213.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf.: Ibid.

will resort to noblemen's places, and gentlemen's houses, standing at the gate either lurking on the back-side about bakehouses, either in hedgerows, or some other thicket, expecting their prey which is for the uncomely company of some courteous guest, of whom they be refreshed with meat and some money, where exchange is made, ware for ware.⁴⁹⁷

Even though the brothels were located safely outside the city's jurisdiction, London's city authorities "disapproved of the stews not only for moral reasons but also because of wider law and order problems such as drunkenness, violence, theft, harassment of innocent parties and the threat to property of large groups of lively young men in a densely built-up urban area"⁴⁹⁸. Prostitutes were often accused of leading people such as apprentices, Inns of Court students or workers into immoral habits, and prostitution was in consequence seen "as the beginning of the fall into greater sins"⁴⁹⁹. "Thomas Savage who was hanged at Tyburn in 1668 for murdering a fellow servant included the frequenting of bawdy houses as one of the reasons for his fall into sin:"⁵⁰⁰

The first sin [...] was Sabbath breaking, thereby I got acquaintance with bad company, and so went to the alehouse and to the bawdy house: there I was perswaded to rob my master and also murder this poor innocent creature, for which I come to this shameful end.⁵⁰¹

Already in 1593 Thomas Nashe in his *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* had warned the City's authorities of the danger of the growing prostitution-industry and urged them to:

Awake your wits, grave authorised law-distributors, and show yourselves as insinuate-subtle in smoking this city-sodoming trade out of his starting-hole as the professors of it are in under propping it.⁵⁰²

Nashe's contemporary Robert Greene, known for his religious pamphlets and moralistic reports of London's underworld, also provides an insight into why certain people condemned prostitution. Greene's report is highly valuable because it offers

⁴⁹⁷ Thomas Harman. *A Caveat for Commen Cursetors*. London: 1576. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, pp. 224f.

⁴⁹⁸ Reilly and Marshall. *The Story of the Bankside*, p. 21.

⁴⁹⁹ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 37.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Quoted in: J. A. Sharpe. "Last Dying Speeches: Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England". *Past and Present*. 107 (1985): 144-167, p. 151.

⁵⁰² Thomas Nashe. *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*. London: 1593. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 183.

an unusually detailed description on how the system as well as the rhetoric of condemnation worked:

The Cros-biting law is a publique profession of shameless cosenage, mixt with incestuous whoredomes, as il as was practised in *Gomorha* and *Sodom*, though not after the same vnnatural manner: for the method of their mischieuous art (with blushing chekes & trembling hart let it be spoken) is, that these villainous vipers, vnworthy the name of men, base roagues (yet why doe I tearme them so well?) being outcasts from God, vipers of the world, and an excremental reuersion of sin, doth consent, nay constrayne their wiues to yield the vse of their bodies to other men, that taking them together, he may cros-bite the party of all the crownes he can presently make: and that the world may see their monstrous practises, I will briefly set downe the manner.⁵⁰³

After this more general condemnation, which served to introduce his work, Greene sets out to provide his readership with a detailed description of this branch of Early Modern London's entertainment industry. The following lines make clear that Greene knew well what he was writing about and that his attack might be based on first-hand experience. It is not the prostitutes themselves, but the male customers he condemns first:

They haue sundry praies that they cal simplers, which are men fondly and wantonly geuen, whom for a penaltie of their lust, they fleece of al that euer they haue: some marchants, prentices, seruingmen, gentlemen, yeomen, farmers, and all degrees, and this is their forme: there are resident in London & the suburbes, certain men attired like Gentlemen, braue fellowes, but basely minded, who liuing in want, as their last refuge, fal vnto this cros-biting law, and to maintain themselues, either marry with some stale whore, or els forsooth keep one as their frend [...]⁵⁰⁴

After criticising these "basely minded" fellows of "all degrees", who seek the service of prostitutes, Greene continues by addressing the women themselves:

In summer euenings, and in the winter nightes, these trafickes, these common truls I meane, walke abroad either in the fields or streetes that are commonly hanted, as stales to drawe men into hell [...] Some unruly mates that place their content in lust, letting slippe the libertie of their eies on their painted faces, feede vpon their vnchast beauties, till their hearts be set on fire: then come they to these minions, and court them with many sweet words: alas their loues needs no long sutes, for they are forthwith entertained, and either they go to the Tauerne to seale vp the match with a bottle of Ipocras, or straight she carries him to some bad place, and there picks his pocket, or else the Crosbiters comes swearing in, & so out-face the dismaied companion, that rather then hee would be brought in question, he would

⁵⁰³ Robert Greene. "The Art of Cros-Biting". *The Life and Complete Works of Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*. Ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 15 vols. Vol. 10. London: 1881-1886. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, pp. 243f.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

disburse all that he hath present. But this is but an easie cosnage. [...] The whore, that hath teares at commaund, fals a weeping, and cries him mercy.⁵⁰⁵

Greene again depicts the customers as weak and wretched, but shows how prostitutes tactically exploit them and mislead them by means of their "painted faces", "vnchast beauties" and "sweet words". He portrays the prostitutes as very clever and says that they often succeed in picking their clients' pockets. When caught, they have "teares at commaund" and thus try to escape punishment. Greene's condemnation is therefore not as one-sided as most condemnations of that time which are mostly directed at the prostitutes only and do not mention the customers at all. Greene clearly denounces all individuals connected to that trade, but, as is often the case with condemnations like these, one must be careful not to accept everything at face value. Prostitution was one of the most flourishing and widely-spread branches of Early Modern London's entertainment industry, which attracted people from all parts of society. Nevertheless Greene felt the urge to save his contemporaries from the "penaltie of their lust". Thus he concludes his text with yet another all-embracing warning not to surrender to carnal desires:

Ah, gentlemen, marchants, yeomen and farmers, let this to you all, and to euery degree else, be a caueat to warn you from lust, that your inordinate desire be not a meane to impouerish your purses, discredit your good names, condemne your soules, but also that your wealth got with the sweat of your browes, or left by your parents as a patrimonie, shall be a prairie to those coosning cros-biters.⁵⁰⁶

It goes without saying that Green's text, though addressed to a wide range of people, went unheard and that prostitution continued to flourish till the end of the period and well beyond.

The artificial beauty of prostitutes mentioned and criticised by Greene was also taken up by Thomas Randolph in his poem 'An Ode to Master Anthony Stafford, to hasten him into the Country', published in 1638. Randolph, highly critical of urban life and the false promises it offered, condemns the artificially painted prostitutes in London as both false and deceiving. He manages to highlight this even more by contrasting them with the more natural and unpretentious women from the countryside:

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 244f.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 245.

[...]
There from the tree
We'll cherries pluck, and pick the strawberry.
And every day
Go see the wholesome country girls make hay,
Whose brown hath lovelier grace
Than any painted face
That I do know
Hyde Park can show.
Where I had rather gain a kiss than meet
(Though some of them in greater state
Might court my love with plate)
The beauties of the Cheap and wives of Lombard Street.⁵⁰⁷

Others, however, spoke more favourably of prostitution and saw it "as a necessary evil, a practice which would confine and channel sexual impulses which might otherwise spread more quickly"⁵⁰⁸. Even though attempts to limit the bawdy behaviour found in Southwark and the city or efforts to ban it altogether were numerous they all failed in the end or had only short-lived consequences because the authorities realized that "prostitution, though sinful, was, like sin, ineradicable"⁵⁰⁹. "King Charles' ordinances were just as ineffectual as all previous ordinances of the previous 500 years – when he was executed in 1649 [...] London was one vast brothel"⁵¹⁰, as this highly atmospheric passage from Henry Vaughan's 'A Rhapsodie' from 1646 exemplifies:

Should we goe now wandring, we should meet
With Catchpoles, whores, Carts in ev'ry street,
Now when each narrow lane, each nooke & Cave,
Signe-posts, & shop-doors, pimp for ev'ry knave,
When riotous sinfull plush, and tell-tale spurs
Walk Fleet street, & the Strand, when the soft stirs
Of bawdy, ruffles Silks, turne night to day;
And the lowd whip, and Coach scolds all the way;
When lust of all sorts, and each itchie blood,
From the Tower-wharfe to Cymbelyne, and Lud,
Hunts for a Mate, and the tyr'd footman reeles

⁵⁰⁷ Thomas Randolph. 'An Ode to Master Anthony Stafford, to Hasten Him into the Country'. *Poetical and Dramatic Works of Thomas Randolph*. Ed. W. Carew Hazlitt, 2 vols. Vol. 2. London: 1875. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 377.

⁵⁰⁸ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 229.

⁵⁰⁹ R. Porter. *London*, p. 56.

⁵¹⁰ Burford and Wotton. *Private Vices – Public Virtues*, p. 27.

'Twixt chaire-men, torches, & the hackney wheels [...]'⁵¹¹

In 1642, Henry Peacham in *The Art of Living in London*, a guide on how to dispose oneself in the capital, felt the necessity to one-sidedly repeat Greene's warning of earlier years to always be careful of the mischievous doings of prostitutes:

Let a moneyed man or gentleman especially beware in the city, *ab istis caladis solis filiabus*, as, these over-hot and crafty daughters of the sun, your silken and gold-laced harlots everywhere especially in the suburbs, to be found. These have been and are daily the ruin of thousands. And if they happen to allure and entice him, which is only to cheat him and pick his pocket to boot, with the bargain she makes, but let him resolutely say, as Diogenes did to Lais of Corinth, *Non tanti enam poenitentiam*, I will not buy repentance at such a rate.⁵¹²

To conclude the analysis of the industries competing with the theatres, I would like to provide a poem by the contemporary John Davis, which aptly summarizes the possibilities Early Modern Londoners had to spend their time, provided they could afford it:

Fuscus is free, and hath the world at will,
 Yet in the course of life that he doth leade,
 He's like a horse which, turning rounde a mill,
 Doth alwaies in the selfe same circle treade:
 First he doth rise at 10. And at eleven
 He goes to Gyls, where he doth eate till one,
 Then sees a Play til sixe, and sups at seaven,
 And after supper, straight to bed is gone,
 And there till tenne next day he doth remaine,
 And then he dines, then sees a commedy,
 And then he suppes, and goes to bed againe.
 Thus rounde he runs without variety:
 Save that sometimes he comes not to the play
 But falls into a whore-house by the way.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Vaughan. 'A Rhapsodie'. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 384.

⁵¹² Peacham. *The Art of Living in London*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 440.

⁵¹³ John Davies. 'In Fuscum'. *The Poems of Sir John Davies*. Eds Robert Krueger and Ruby Nemser. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 146f.

II.4 THEATRUM MUNDI – THE THEATRICALITY OF LIFE

Late-Jacobean and Caroline playgoers grew up in and were influenced by a society which was highly theatrical in its own right and in a city which was a highly ceremonial and ritualistic space. By means of public executions and royal progresses, royal and civic power was literally staged in front of huge audiences. Mullaney points out that “power was inseparable from such public manifestations.”⁵¹⁴ In this light one must also not forget that “[r]itual and spectacle are not spontaneous; they are staged events, orchestrated manifestations of power, studied representations of authority and community.”⁵¹⁵ The

[c]ity was itself a theatre in its own right, a scene of conflicting voices, styles and purposes; the streets sometimes became pure pageant, with the Corporation, guilds and parishioners combining in ceremony and song to celebrate civic events and calendar customs – festivities that were still going strong under the Georges, and even into the Victorian age. Shrove Tuesday had its rowdy side, but it was also a day when Londoners engaged in harmless merriment. In his *Jack a Lent* (1620), John Taylor described the day as a feast of 'boiling and broiling ... roasting and toasting ... stewing and brewing.’⁵¹⁶

Later periods had other methods to influence the population than was the case during the period in question, which still heavily relied on more public and theatrical manifestations of power:

Many highly theatrical practises – including royal processions, executions, exorcisms, charivaris, chivalric jousts – served as occasions to display, acquire, and exercise power within a fluid social field. While the ensuing bourgeois era would rely more and more heavily upon an expanding print culture to create self-regulating subjects, the Renaissance employed spectacles – including spectacles of exemplary violence, spectacles of monarchical display, and the spectacles of the public stage – as crucial elements of social control and ideological dissemination⁵¹⁷.

The lack of other means to effectively exercise power and to uphold the strict hierarchical structure of society led the royal and civic authorities to resort to the various forms of public display and spectacle outlined by Howard to reach, instruct and affect their subjects and to secure their positions of power. Just like the theatres, the authorities knew well how to benefit from the intensive thirst for spectacle of London's inhabitants and tried to cater for this need. However, it was

⁵¹⁴ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 23.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ R. Porter. *London*, pp. 62f.

⁵¹⁷ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 4.

not only the authorities, but also the theatres themselves which directly contributed to the theatricality of life by implicitly suggesting during performances that everyone had to play a certain role in life. In consequence, people living between the years 1616 and 1642 tended to stick to the role society had assigned to them and treated life emblematically. They tried to express their allocated position in society by means of their garments and behaviour. In his satirical *The Guls Horne-Booke*, Dekker takes up this very aspect and criticises that people tend to behave "not much vnlike the plaiers at the Theaters"⁵¹⁸. Dramatists, playing with the dialectics between reality and illusion, often exploited the Early Modern fascination for the *theatrum mundi* trope and used it "to pinpoint connections between the play world and the real world where men and women assume social roles in life as players adopt dramatic roles on stage."⁵¹⁹

Contemporaries were well aware of the fact that they were only playing a role on the big stage called 'London'. Various writings of the years 1616 to 1642 are ample proof that not only dramatists but also poets in general tried to find ways to express their sentiments about the theatricality of life. Francis Quarles' poem 'On the Life and Death of a Man' is a good example of how contemporary writers tried to come to terms with the situation:

The world's a Theatre. The earth, a Stage
Placed in the midst: where both Prince and Page,
Both rich and poor, fool, wise man, base and high,
All act their Parts in Life's short Tragedy.
Our Life's a Tragedy. Those secret Rooms,
Wherein we tire us, are our mothers' wombs.
The Music ush'ring in the Play is mirth
To see a man-child brought upon the earth.
That fainting gasp of breath which first we vent,
Is a Dumb Show; presents the Argument.
Our new-born cries, that new-born griefs bewray,
Are the sad Prologue of th'ensuing Play.
False hopes, true fears, vain joys, and fierce distracts,
Are like the Music that divides the Acts.
Time holds the Glass, and when the Hour's outrun,

⁵¹⁸ Dekker. *The Guls Horne-Booke*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 365.

⁵¹⁹ Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, p. 19.

Death strikes the Epilogue, and the play is done.⁵²⁰

Quarles' poem, highly reminiscent of Jacques' speech in Shakespeare's *As You Like it*, compares life to a theatrical play, a tragedy to be more precise, and thus underlines that "the metaphorical identification of life with theatre was commonplace in the Renaissance."⁵²¹ Quarles provides his audience with a bleak and depressing account of how life for all sorts of people is preordained with little or no hope to leave the predestined course. He summarizes life as consisting of nothing but "False hopes, true fears, vain joys, and fierce distracts" embraced by a "sad Prologue" and an "Epilogue", thus depicting life as a very dismal thing from the beginning to the end.

The various theatrical and ritualistic elements of daily life were most effective within the city walls and people felt a stronger effect there, whereas the less hierarchical liberties once again proved to be "a more ambivalent staging ground: [...] a place where the contradictions of the community, its incontinent hopes and fears, were prominently and dramatically set on stage."⁵²²

II.4.1 PUNISHMENTS AND EXECUTIONS

In close proximity to the sites of pleasures outlined in the preceding chapters lay the sites of punishment, pain and death. Early Modern Londoners often drew parallels between their lives and dramatic plays. Human identity was "increasingly perceived in terms of role-playing"⁵²³ – not least because many rituals of power and authority were highly theatrical affairs. "A good example for this", states Siobhan Keenan, "is afforded by the judicial system and the practice of executing felons on public scaffolds, a show of power that drew large audiences."⁵²⁴ In *The Early Modern City*, Christopher Friedrichs draws particular attention to the fact that in Early Modern times

⁵²⁰ Francis Quarles. 'On the Life and Death of a Man'. London: 1630?. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 285.

⁵²¹ Keenan. *Renaissance Literature*, p. 59.

⁵²² Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 22.

⁵²³ Keenan. *Renaissance Literature*, p. 59.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

[d]isorder was the eternal enemy of urban life. Violence, of course, was the most visible and dangerous form of disorder, and municipal authorities were constantly concerned to prevent arguments from turning into fights, fights into brawls, brawls into riots or riots, as occasionally happened, into revolts [...] And any behaviour that seemed to violate the divinely ordered pattern of human existence also threatened to upset the harmony of urban life.⁵²⁵

This obsession with order was likewise an essential part of private and public life. As several contemporary accounts of public executions testify, “the legal system of Early Modern England was a “theater of punishment”, operating not only to render justice but to demonstrate the absolute power of the state”.⁵²⁶ To this effect Susan Amussen has detailed in her *An Ordered Society* that “[l]aw enforcement in early modern England depended on the respect of the governed for those in authority.”⁵²⁷ The term 'respect' used by Amussen here seems a little weak and either 'fear' or 'dread' are much better terms to use for the sentiment the authorities needed their inferiors to feel. When foreigners from the countryside entered London, the piked heads of executed criminals displayed on London Bridge and the city's gates warned them that “spectacles of bodily humiliation to educate and discipline the watchers”⁵²⁸ were in use. The bodies thus displayed “remained and continued to serve as ambiguous signs of power, marking at once the manifest efficiency of the reigning social structure and the all-too-immediate limits of social and political control.”⁵²⁹ Walking through London's streets in the years leading up to the Civil War might have offered the sight of

men or women being whipped through the city, their backs raw and bloody, or a criminal being 'carted', or you might see a petty criminal in the stocks or the pillory, withstanding a rain of mud and missiles. And you might decide to take another route altogether if you found that your intended way passes under a gateway with part of a rotting human body on it.⁵³⁰

People living in Early Modern London were particularly interested in punishments and bloodsports. In consequence public executions in general imparted the feeling of being well-rehearsed and ritualised plays in a “theatre of judgement and of

⁵²⁵ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 245.

⁵²⁶ Alvin Kernan. *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright. Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 58.

⁵²⁷ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 161.

⁵²⁸ McManus. “*The Roaring Girl and the London Underworld*”, p. 217.

⁵²⁹ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 22.

⁵³⁰ Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 38.

pain."⁵³¹ Regarding this, Kernan writes that executions "were public spectacles in which the victims confessed their crimes, asked forgiveness, forgave their executioners, committed their souls to the next word, and in general made as good a show of it as they could."⁵³² The public audience was in consequence "an essential part of the execution ritual"⁵³³ and just as important as the executioner or the criminals themselves. In this respect Friedrichs details that

one reason for this was deterrence. But public executions were not simply a technique by which the authorities attempted to intimidate the lower orders by demonstrating the consequences of crime. In fact onlookers were required to be present as participants in a great moral drama through which the wrongdoer made visible amends to the community for the harm that he or she had done. [...] Members of the public were also supposed to help the criminal face the rigours of execution. This did not always work: sometimes the crowd was too hostile to the criminal to show any sympathy. But generally the prisoner was given moral support.⁵³⁴

The people present at these "rituals of justice"⁵³⁵ were far more important than one might initially think. They were not just passive onlookers enjoying the spectacle, but a crucial and active part of the carefully planned and executed ritual, which depended on the audience to play a certain role in order to reach the desired goal. Even though evidence on how contemporary crowds reacted is little, the audiences' reaction to these public spectacles of bodily humiliation and torture often depended on the character of the person to be punished. A similar vivacity and active participation was also expected and required from those frequenting London's playhouses in the years between 1616 and 1642. Since audiences were deeply influenced by the ritualistic and theatrical life outside the playhouses, they brought their experiences directly into the theatre – including the expectations resulting from it. Although "the responses of the crowds may seem capricious, even inexplicable to us today, they probably made perfect sense in the context of the times."⁵³⁶

⁵³¹ Ackroyd. *London. The Biography*, p. 153.

⁵³² Kernan. *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, p. 58.

⁵³³ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 255.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 50.

Almost daily deemed offenders were punished and public torture and humiliation were part of the world as Jacobean and Caroline audiences experienced and thus imagined it. The often appalling fates displayed in certain plays of that time was not as unfamiliar a sight for most Londoners as it would be for people living nowadays. In his work *Shakespeare's Audience*, Harbage however states that it would be "more accurate to say that the audience expected and accepted brutality than that they demanded and enjoyed it"⁵³⁷. Yet the evidence points into another direction. Though one always needs to be careful not to generalize, there is enough evidence to show that the majority of Early Modern Londoners in fact enjoyed and in consequence requested the ritualistic display of brutality and violence – be it on stage, in the baiting-arenas or in the form of public punishment and torture. How else could the great masses flocking to the baiting pits or the executions at such places as Tyburn, a name "synonymous with the idea of public execution"⁵³⁸, or Tower Hill be explained? Or the vast number of plays featuring violence, torture and death? In the third act of Dekker's and Webster's *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, the imprisoned Jane gestures at the crowd outside her cell in the Tower of London, in the direction of the audience and states

Out of this firme grate, you may perceiue
The Tower-Hill thronged with store of people,
As if they gap'd for some strange Noueltie⁵³⁹

Guildford likewise takes up this point and declares:

See you how the people stand in heapes,
Each man sad, looking on his aposed obiect,
As if a generall passion possest them?
Their eyes doe seeme, as dropping as the Moone,
As if prepared for a Tragedie.
For neuer swarmes of people there doe tread,
But to rob life, and to inrich the dead
And shewe they wept.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 153.

⁵³⁸ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. v.

⁵³⁹ Thomas Dekker and John Webster. *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat*. London: 1607. Quoted in: Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 129.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

Just as in the fictional context of this play, literally thousands were drawn almost daily to such brutal displays in the real world or, as in Dekker's play, to such "political spectacles staged for the multitude"⁵⁴¹ – by their own choice. With regard to *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, Munro emphasises that in the scene outlined above, the "spectacle of punishment and the spectacle of the theater cross [...]; stage and scaffold become interchangeable, as the tragedy of Jane's impending execution is figured as the play that it is"⁵⁴², thus fictionally highlighting the overall theatricality of life in general once again. The Early Modern taste for violence and corrective punishments had an interesting double effect on contemporary audiences: "It confirmed the order of things – this is what we do – and at the same time it called that order into question – what we do is grotesque."⁵⁴³ In the light of the above and the dynamic complexity of Early Modern executions, Harbage's point of view therefore needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. Of course there were also people who raised their voice against such shows, criticising for example the paradox that executions did not only make familiar the consequences, but also the crime itself. The general public enjoyed it however and directly participated in it at times by throwing things at the malefactor or by vociferously commenting on the action, thus moving the spectacle towards a certain direction, for example if the prisoner engaged in lengthy prayers. Audiences

could be extremely angry when a last-minute reprieve deprived them of their anticipated pleasure. [...] The sight of a felon dying on the gallows was not an edifying one but it provided a popular form of public entertainment, the appeal of which transcended social class. There is little evidence that the crowds who gathered at Tyburn saw what was enacted there as a deterrent to the carrying out of serious crime.⁵⁴⁴

Moreover, contemporaries knew that these spectacles were part of their life and "the trick was to know when to look and when to look away, when to punish and when to dance."⁵⁴⁵ Contemporaries understood well that certain measures to penalize criminals were necessary in order to contain the lawless energy of "the great numbers of idle, lewd, and wicked persons flocking and resorting hither from

⁵⁴¹ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 129.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵⁴³ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 178.

⁵⁴⁴ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. vii.

⁵⁴⁵ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 180.

all parts of this realm which do live here and maintain themselves chiefly by robbing and stealing."⁵⁴⁶

Prisoners were usually carted or drawn from their prisons, such as the Clink in Southwark or Newgate, to the places of execution, offering onlookers the possibility to insult and physically abuse them and developing a sense of carnival.⁵⁴⁷ In doing so, their journey "provided free and popular entertainment for London's masses and it became highly ritualised"⁵⁴⁸, thus adding further theatricality to the overall spectacle, which "etched itself deeply into the popular culture of London"⁵⁴⁹. Among the crimes punishable by death were murder, manslaughter, treason, rape, witchcraft, sodomy, highway robbery and felony, to name just a few out of a long list of more than 50 capital offences.⁵⁵⁰ For certain crimes, such high treason, simple hanging was not considered to be a sufficient punishment. Hence the criminals were "cut down while still alive, and disembowelled, the heart burned, the head cut off and the body divided into four pieces for distribution around the City."⁵⁵¹ They were thus punished for the afterlife as it was commonly thought that one needed a complete body to be granted access to heaven. According to contemporary authorities, prisoners to be thus executed were to be

[I]aid upon a hurdle and so drawne to the place of execution [...] then to have their secrets cut off and with their entrails thrown into the fire before their faces, their heads to be severed from their bodies, which severally should be divided into four quarters.⁵⁵²

This form of torture was only used for male criminals however. Women, whose naked bodies must not be displayed publicly, were burned at the stake instead.

It has been estimated that no less than 300 criminals were executed in Early Modern London each year⁵⁵³ and due to the lack of the

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted in: Archer. *The Pursuit of Stability*, p. 204.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf.: Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. vii.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ Cf.: Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 281.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁵⁵² Quoted in: Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 48.

⁵⁵³ Some criminals managed to escape punishment and execution by reading the so-called 'neck verse'. The ability to read had been regarded as a competent proof of clerkship since the Reformation. Ben Jonson for example succeeded in escaping punishment by these means.

bureaucracy necessary for the policing and surveillance of its populace, early modern England was forced to rely upon a system of exemplary justice, of public and often spectacular punishment, that sought to install the proper degree of awe and fear in the minds of the people⁵⁵⁴.

In the absence of an effective police force as known nowadays, the "bloodiness of the executions – the beheadings, the burnings alive at the stake, and the hanging, drawing, and quarterings – made shatteringly memorable the power of the state"⁵⁵⁵. The Early Modern police system was not only ineffective because of the small numbers of constables, but also because of their insufficient training and their personal attitude and the picture of their profession communicated to the outside world, as the following account taken from John Earle's *Micro-cosmographie* from the year 1628 testifies:

Is a viceroy in the street, and no man stands more upon't that he is the king's officer. His jurisdiction extends to the next stocks, where he has commission for the heels only, and sets the rest of the body at liberty. He is a scarecrow to that alehouse where he drinks not his morning draught, and apprehends a drunkard for not standing in the king's name. Beggars fear him more than the Justice, and as much as the whip-stock, whom he delivers over to his subordinate magistrates, the bridewell-man and the beadle. He is a great stickler in the tumults of double-jugs, and ventures his head by his place, which is broke many times to keep the peace. He is never so much in his majesty as in his night-watch, where he sits in his chair of state, a shop-stall, and, environed with a guard of halberds, examines all passengers. He is a very careful man in his office, but if he stay up after midnight you shall take him napping.⁵⁵⁶

Since only a small numbers of criminals were found and consequently brought to justice, the penal system relied to make daunting and intimidating examples of those who were actually apprehended by means of excessive and disproportional violence and public humiliation. The many prisons in London and its suburbs were not seen as places of correction and only "little use was made of custodial sentences for punitive and deterrent, let alone for reforming purposes."⁵⁵⁷ Thomas Dekker, who was in prison for debt between the years 1612 and 1619, wrote the following lines about the effects the imprisonment had on people:

So that I may call a prison an enchanted castle, by reason of the rare transformations therein wrought, for it makes a wise man lose his wits, a fool to know himself. It turns a rich man into

⁵⁵⁴ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 94.

⁵⁵⁵ Kernan. *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, p. 58.

⁵⁵⁶ Earle. *Microcosmographie*. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 233.

⁵⁵⁷ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 65.

a beggar, and leaves a poor man desperate. He whom neither snows or alps can vanquish but hath a heart as constant as Hannibal's, him can the misery of a prison deject. [...]

Art thou poor and in prison? Then thou art buried before thou art dead. [...] If there be any Hell on earth, here thou especially shalt be sure to find it. If there be degrees of torments in Hell, here shalt thou taste them. The body is annoyed with sickness, stench, hunger, cold, thirst, penury, thy mind with discontents, thy soul with inutterable sorrows; thin eye meets no object but of horror, wretchedness, beggary and tyranny [...].⁵⁵⁸

Dekker highlights the far-reaching negative effects the time spent in London's prisons had on the inmates and underlines that instead of returning the prisoners to their right ways and transforming them into better and corrected human beings, prisons were like an "enchanted castle", making people lose their wits. Considering the fact that the number of prisons in London and its suburbs was high, it is even more surprising that they were only used to lock up criminals instead of correcting them.

In London and within a mile, I ween,
There are jails and prisons full eighteen,
And sixty whipping-posts, and stocks and cages,
Where sin with shame and sorrow hath due wages⁵⁵⁹

wrote John Taylor of the great number of prisons in his *The Praise and Vertue of a Jayle and Jaylers* in 1623. By mentioning the many whipping posts, he highlights the importance of exemplary punishment and public humiliation for the Early Modern judicial system. Yet, while

'law and order' is often referred to as an ideal, a concept transcending time and place, in reality it is a social construct. Laws are made, interpreted, applied and altered by people who are largely from the dominant social classes. The forms that law and order take change over time and in different societies, but their primary purpose is to ensure that those individuals and institutions that possess the bulk of power maintain their favoured position.⁵⁶⁰

The strong theatrical element in late-Jacobean and Caroline society and the combination of physical pain and public humiliation were necessary means to uphold the desired order in the ever-growing and vastly expanding metropolis. In consequence executions as well as "the rituals surrounding it were intended by the

⁵⁵⁸ Thomas Dekker. *English Villainies Discovered by Lantern and Candlelight*. London: 1608. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, pp. 236f.

⁵⁵⁹ John Taylor. *The Praise and Vertue of a Jayle and Jaylers*. London: 1623. Quoted in: Pritchard. *Shakespeare's England*, p. 216.

⁵⁶⁰ Brooke and Brandon. *Tyburn. London's Fatal Tree*, p. 61.

authorities to emphasise the omnipotence of the law"⁵⁶¹. Yet, reality frequently deviated from this aim and "what often happened was a burlesque, both on the way to and at the place of execution and the development in popular culture of a widespread belittling of and irreverence for the authorities."⁵⁶² Contemporary slang terms used for the spectacles, like 'the hanging match', 'collar day' or to 'dance the Paddington fair' are ample proof that most members of the audience simply saw punishment and executions as a further form of public entertainment.⁵⁶³

As Jean Wilson has detailed, the "apogee of the spectacle of justice was, ten years after the closure of the theatres, the execution of King Charles I, put on by Cromwell outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall in which the King had acted so many roles"⁵⁶⁴ and seen so many roles acted by others. Thus the ritualistic and symbolic execution of members of society had – after the execution of Mary Stuart in 1587 – once again found its way into the royal family. In contrast to Mary Stuart, whose execution was purposely conducted inside and thus a rather private theatrical event for a restricted audience, Charles' beheading took place outside on a raised wooden stage in front of many onlookers. Charles was "forced from the private theatre which the Banqueting House represented, onto the public stage."⁵⁶⁵ The theatrical symbolism inherent in this particular execution was recognised by contemporaries and the poem 'An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland' by Andrew Marvell "describes the execution in terms of a play, with Cromwell as the author and the King as the leading tragedian:"⁵⁶⁶

That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn:
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.
He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable Scene:
But with his keener Eye
The Axe's edge did try:
Nor call's the Gods with vulgar spight

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Cf.: Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Wilson. *The Archaeology of Shakespeare*, p. 27.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

To vindicate his helpless Right,
But bow'd his comely Head
Down, as upon a Bed.⁵⁶⁷

In contrast to the playhouses, Charles was not merely an actor playing a king but a real king forced to play a certain role in an ever so theatrical world. The decision to literally stage the execution of the king also harboured a great deal of danger for the reason that "the multitudes of people that came to be spectators"⁵⁶⁸ were, as in all drama, invited to interpret the final act of this tragedy "as either exemplary justice or exemplary tragedy"⁵⁶⁹ – a thin line considering the still turbulent times in which some members of the audience saw Charles' end as that of a tragic hero whose fate needed to be pitied. Young Philip Henry, only seventeen at the time of Charles' execution, wrote in his diary:

The Blow I saw given, and can truly say with a sad heart; at the instant whereof, I remember well, there was such a Groan by the Thousands then present, as I never heard before and desire I may never hear again.⁵⁷⁰

Mercurius Pragmaticus, a devoted royalist, heavily condemned the execution of King Charles and warned his readers about the effects such a deed might have on the nation as a whole:

The Kingdom is translated to the Saints – Oh Horror! Blood! Death! Had you none else to wreak your cursed malice on but the sacred Person of the King? [...] Beware the building, for the Foundation is taken away, the winds begin to blow, and the waves to beat, the Restless Ark is toss'd: none but uncleane Beasts are entered into her, the Dove will not return, neither will the Olive Branch appear. The Axe is laid to the Root, even of the Royal Cedar, then what can the inferior Tree expect but to be crush'd and bruis'd in His fall, and afterwards hewn down and cast into the fire [...].⁵⁷¹

Pragmaticus' highly figurative language predicts a very dark future and complains that without the foundation in form of the king the house of the nation will come crumbling down and give "uncleane Beasts" the chance to further disturb the peace. He foresees chaos, as the falling "Royal Cedar" will crush many others on its way to the ground and cause havoc and disorder.

⁵⁶⁷ Quoted in: Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Philip Henry. *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry, 1631-1696*. Ed. M. H. Lee. London: 1882, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁹ Wilson. *The Archaeology of Shakespeare*, p. 27.

⁵⁷⁰ Henry. *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 12.

⁵⁷¹ Quoted in: Joad Raymond, ed. *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England, 1641-1660*. Whitney: Windrush Press, 1993, p. 249.

II.4.2 CEREMONIES, PAGEANTS AND SERMONS

However, it was not only violence that was performed in Renaissance London. In stark contrast to the ritualistic spectacles of the judicial system stood other forms of public theatrical events, such as ceremonies, pageants, marriages, funerals or sermons. While executions were centred around the person to be executed, the more festive forms of "ritual and spectacle were organized around central figures of authority and power, emblems of cultural coherence and community"⁵⁷². In 1559, referring to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I, the contemporary Richard Mulcaster wrote that if a man should say well

he could not better tearme the citie of London that time, than a stage wherin was shewed the wonderfull spectacle, of a noble hearted princesse toward her most loving people, and the people's exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a sovereign, and hearing so princelike a voice.⁵⁷³

The theatrical figure expressed by Mulcaster, in which the city is merely a stage upon which monarchs can perform their shows, did not lose any of its validity until many decades later. It held especially true for Charles I, who loved stateliness and spectacle even more than any of his predecessors and increasingly used the city as a theatre of royal display. Charles I "made major investments in courtly depictions and self-representations, in pictures to be read in terms of power"⁵⁷⁴. However, the ceremony and festivities to mark Charles' I own coronation did not go as planned. Due to an outbreak of the plague in 1625 and severe financial difficulties, the celebration had to be postponed and was later considerably downsized, thus bereaving Charles of his first big opportunity to present and dramatize himself.⁵⁷⁵

Elizabeth's successor, King James I, observed in his *Basilikon Doron*, "A King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly do behold."⁵⁷⁶ By a twist of fate, the public execution of James' son Charles in 1649 turned out to be ample proof of this being set on stage. Several years prior to James' *Basilikon Doron*, Elizabeth I had likewise already pointed out to an audience

⁵⁷² Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 31.

⁵⁷³ Quoted in: Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 26.

⁵⁷⁴ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 16.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf.: Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Quoted in: John H. Astington. *English Court Theatre. 1558–1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 3.

of Lords and Commons that “we princes are [...] set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed; the eyes of manie behold our actions”.⁵⁷⁷ However, as negative as both Elizabeth I and James I make this sound, monarchs until much later also knew well how to make use of this. By means of royal progresses performed in magnificent splendour as well as marriages and funerals, monarchs made generous use of this theatrical metaphor and successfully dramatized themselves – and were often criticised for this in plays like Massinger's *The Roman Actor*. Regarding this Mullaney puts emphasis on the fact that

civic pageantry served as a spectacular advertisement of social structure; ceremony and annual repetitive customs provided vehicles with which a community could chart, in its actual topography, the limits and coherence of its authority. The outlines of things, of the community itself, were marked by means or ritual process. The city was a dramatic and symbolic work in its own right, a social production of space [...] composed and rehearsed over the years by artisanal classes and sovereign powers [...].

By giving them the chance to devote themselves “to the arts of political persuasion and performance, and by turning those arts constantly toward “the arduous and constant wooing of the body politic”⁵⁷⁸, London provided certain groups of people with a stage for self-dramatization and with an opportunity to take on the very role in which they desired to be seen. Hence Greenblatt is right when he, in his seminal essay “Invisible Bullets”, suggests that royal power in Early Modern England depended on this “privileged visibility”⁵⁷⁹, meaning that

as in a theater, the audience must be powerfully engaged by this visible presence and at the same time held at a respectful distance from it. [...] Royal power is manifested to its subjects as in a theater, and the subjects are at once absorbed by the instructive, delightful, or terrible spectacles and forbidden intervention or deep intimacy.⁵⁸⁰

Though Greenblatt predominantly focuses on Elizabethan drama, his observations and conclusions can also be applied to Jacobean and Caroline drama, which, after all, developed out of Elizabethan drama and shared a wide range of constitutive

⁵⁷⁷ Raphael Holinshed et. al., eds. “A Report of Hir Majesties Most Gracious Answer, Delivered by Hir Selfe Verballie [...] in Hir Chamber of Presence at Richmond, the Twelwe Daie of November 1586”. *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. 6 vols. Vol. 4. London: 1808. Rep. New York: AMS Press, 1965, p. 934.

⁵⁷⁸ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 24.

⁵⁷⁹ Greenblatt. *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 64.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

characteristics. With reference to the ritualistic and theatrical spectacles of power performed by English Early Modern monarchs, Greenblatt suggests to see the "poetics of Elizabethan power" and the "poetics of the theater"⁵⁸¹ as synonyms. Out of this equation result far-reaching and paradoxical consequences for Early Modern drama:

It is precisely because of the English form of absolutist theatricality that Shakespeare's drama, written for a theater subject to state censorship, can be so relentlessly subversive: the form itself, as a primary expression of Renaissance power, helps to contain the radical doubts it continually provokes.⁵⁸²

According to Greenblatt it was thus the dramatic form itself which granted Early Modern drama, itself merely a part in the greater theatre of life, the possibility to express subversive doubts and comments on current affairs of state without attracting too much opposition from those who used the very form "as a primary expression of [...] power"⁵⁸³ themselves.

The Church, as another institution interested in upholding and increasing power, also knew well how to dramatize itself. Sermons preached at Paul's Cross could attract thousands of listeners and preachers and audiences were known to directly interact with each other. In his *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, Millar Maclure describes a painting entitled 'A Sermon at Paul's Cross in 1616' as follows:

If we look at the scene as a whole, it reminds us of the Elizabethan theatre: groundlings and notables, pit and galleries, and, in the midst, the pulpit as stage. Indeed it was a theatre; to borrow a title from the young Spenser, 'a Theatre, wherein be represented as wel the miseries and calamities that follow the voluptuous wordlings as also the greate joyes and pleasures which the faithful do enjoy.' Sermons, proclamations, processions, and penances were all theatrical, and many a preacher of the Puritan Persuasion acknowledged and fulminated against the competition from the Bankside.⁵⁸⁴

By drawing direct parallels between the playhouses and the preaching of a sermon, Maclure underlines the theatricality of this form of public spectacle and makes clear that the theatricality of Early Modern life found its way in many different forms of cultural production.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Maclure. *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642*, p. 4.

Another one of these forms were the processions and shows conducted by London's mayors on a regular basis to celebrate the power of the city's elite. The

procession attempted to present an idealised view of the social order, with the various levels of the mayor's company's hierarchy marching in due order distinctively dressed, the poor clothed in garments provided by subscription among the wealthier bachelors and bearing shields of the coats of arms of past mayors.⁵⁸⁵

Thus one is once more faced with a highly theatrical and ritualised event in which nothing was left to chance. In the backdrop of the real city, which served as a stage for these and further ceremonies, the highly idealised and consequently artificial view that the authorities aimed to get across to the many onlookers was however not as easy to maintain:

Because of the public medium in which civic pageantry necessarily operated, the ideal city was continually threatened by the real city that surrounded it. London served to frame the pageants, to authenticate their rehearsal of power, but it also undermined the ideal they put forward by contextualising and contemporizing it, bringing to the surface the artificiality of the ritual and the political motivations that guided its expressions. The context of contemporary London, as manifested through the bodies of the urban crowd, creates a gap between the city staged and the city *as* stage.⁵⁸⁶

The great danger inherent in all public ceremonies of this sort, be it the processions of the monarch or a mayor or be it an ecclesiastical spectacle, is therefore that "[s]ymbols are performed, and contexts symbolized"⁵⁸⁷.

Theatricality and self-dramatization also found their way into less public parts of society. The desire to present a certain picture of oneself to an audience was not limited to monarchs, mayors and churchmen, but took place on a much smaller scale, as well. Society in general was pervaded by the effects of self-dramatization and the city strongly depended on the order resulting from the fact that each individual had a certain role assigned to him or her on the big stage called London. With regard to the playhouses, suffice it to say at this point that theatricality and acting were not only found on the very stage itself, but also expressed by certain behavioural traits of members of the audience in the galleries and pit. The wish of especially more prosperous members of society to be seen in

⁵⁸⁵ Archer. "The Nostalgia of John Stow", p. 25.

⁵⁸⁶ Munro. *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London*, p. 58.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

the playhouses' galleries during performances added to the overall theatricality of life in Early Modern London. Playhouses were not only places to watch theatrical enactments performed on stage, but a means to successfully self-dramatize and stage oneself to an audience of up to 3.000 people at times. This tendency was another reason why the Puritans objected so heavily to the practice of playgoing. Hence the following words written by William Harison in 1623, taking up the issue of clothes as a means of self-representation, must not be surprising:

[...] no true Puritanes will endure to bee present at playes [...] few of either sex come thither, but in theyr holy-dayes appareil, and so set forth, so trimmed, so adorned, so decked, so perfumed, as if they made the place the market of wantonnesse, and by consequence to unfit for a Priest to frequent.⁵⁸⁸

In the light of the above it is equally not surprising that Ben Jonson, ever critical of how disrespectfully certain members behaved during the performances of his plays, penned the following lines for his play *The Devil is an Ass*, first performed in 1616:

To day, I goe to the Black-fryers Play-house,
Sit i' the view, salute all my acquaintance,
Rise vp between the Acts, let fall my cloake,
Publish a handsome man, and a rich suite
(As that's a speciall end, why we goe thither,
All that pretend, to stand for't o' the Stage)
The Ladies aske who's that? (For they doe come
To see vs, Loue, as wee doe to see them).⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁸ Quoted in: Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, pp. 71 & 113.

⁵⁸⁹ Ben Jonson. *The Devil is an Ass. The Works of Ben Jonson*. Eds C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. Vol. 6. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938. I.vi.31-38.

II.5 THE COMPANIES AND THEIR PLAYHOUSES

At the beginning of the period there was still a large number of companies operating in both public and private playhouses. Over the years, however, this began to change and both the amount of companies and playhouses began to decrease. Playhouses did not only vanish, but also new ones, especially private theatres, were erected to cater for the audiences' varying needs and expectations. Any scholar of Early Modern drama has to recognize that "there were many different stages as playhouses became more sophisticated, and that perhaps the only constant feature of the theatres up to 1642 was that all parts were normally played by men and boys"⁵⁹⁰ – a generalisation that needs closer scrutiny. In total it has been estimated that no less than 20 different playhouses were in operation from the erection of the first playhouse in 1576 till the closure of the remaining six venues in 1642, offering a vast and diverse range of dramatic productions over a period of some 70 years. It is, to quote Harbage, "one of the most striking facts in cultural history [that] within a few decades of bringing the stage to its peak as a national institution, the nation resolved to extirpate it."⁵⁹¹ However, the closure of the playhouses in September 1642 cannot be – as has long been postulated by both scholars and laymen – ascribed to Puritan or antitheatrical resistance alone. The historical truth is more complex than has often been assumed:

[t]he Puritans were, after all, scarcely in control in 1642 when Charles was still officially monarch of the realm. Moreover, the theatres were only closed for one season in the first instance, and more for reasons of public safety in wartime than because of any anti-theatrical political or theological ideology [...] and as a result the closure of the theatres in 1642 should be read as a product of wartime necessity rather than any concerted campaign by Parliament.⁵⁹²

After the companies had succeeded in gaining a permanent foothold in London in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, they needed a larger repertory system than back in the times when they were still touring around the island. To keep audiences coming in the increasingly competitive world of entertainment and

⁵⁹⁰ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 1.

⁵⁹¹ Harbage. *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, p. 27.

⁵⁹² Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 2.

pleasures, theatre companies relied on a large number of alternating plays to satisfy their customers' high demands.

II.5.1 PUBLIC PLAYHOUSES

In 1616 there were still six public playhouses operating in London's suburbs. One of them, Henslowe's Hope, was not used to stage plays however, but rather exclusively as a site for baiting and bloodsports until 1642. Of the remaining five public amphitheatres, two did not survive until the end of the period and were closed in the 1620ies. One of them was one of London's oldest playhouses, the Curtain, which had opened as early as 1577. The Curtain, located in the northern suburb of Shoreditch not far from Burbage's original Theatre, was closed in 1625 for unknown reasons and was only infrequently used by the Prince Charles Men or for the showing of prize fights in its final years. The building was not demolished however and was still standing a few decades later. The Swan, in close proximity to both the Hope and Globe in Southwark and used by the Lady Elizabeth's Players, was in operation until 1628 but was only rarely used to show dramatic plays in its final years, when other forms of entertainment such as fencing prevailed. The remaining public playhouses constantly had "to negotiate most carefully their customers' tastes and expectations"⁵⁹³ to keep their foothold in the harshly contested world of entertainment in which "the emphasis had by this time shifted to the indoor, more expensive hall-playhouses within the city of London proper"⁵⁹⁴. In general every poet writing for the late-Jacobean and Caroline stage had to "govern his Penne according to the Capacitie of the Stage he writes to, both in the Actor and the Auditor."⁵⁹⁵ And as the following subchapters will illustrate, these stages could indeed be rather different.

II.5.1.1 THE FORTUNE

The Fortune, located in the northern suburb of Clerkenwell, opened in 1600 and burned down in 1621. It was quickly replaced by a second Fortune – possibly

⁵⁹³ Mehl et. al. Introduction. *Plotting Early Modern London*, p. 21.

⁵⁹⁴ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁵ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 279.

made out of expensive brick and tiles – which succeeded in staging dramatic performances until all theatres were closed in September 1642. The Fortune developed a reputation for staging plays that predominantly drew less sophisticated audiences and those who preferred the 'old-fashioned' plays performed during the Elizabethan Period. A prologue written by John Tatham in 1640 accuses the Fortune audiences of being even less sophisticated and louder than the animals in the several baiting-arenas around London by stating the following:

[...] shee has t'ane
A course to banish Modesty, and retaine
More din, and incivility than hath been
Knowne in the Bearward Court, the Beargarden.⁵⁹⁶

Both the first and the second Fortune were smaller than the competing Globe in Southwark. In contrast to some recent assumptions, it is likely that even after its reconstruction the Fortune was still unroofed and thus continued to have an open yard like the other two public amphitheatres. Roofed auditoriums were reserved to the more elite private playhouses. The Fortune was operated by the Palgrave's Men until 1625, but London was faced with the worst outbreak of the plague since the Black Death in the year Charles I ascended to the throne. This severe outbreak "broke every London company except the King's Men"⁵⁹⁷ and in consequence the Palgrave's Men did not reappear when the theatres were finally allowed to reopen in either late November or early December. The Fortune was taken over "by a new and only vaguely known troupe called the King and Queen of Bohemia's company"⁵⁹⁸, which were equally irreverent and attracted the same clientele as their predecessors as reports of riots and upheavals testify. The King and Queen of Bohemia's company did not last long either and they were replaced by yet another company in late 1631. The King's Revels company, themselves only staying at the

⁵⁹⁶ John Tatham. "A Prologue Spoken Upon Removing of the Late Fortune Players to the Bull". *The Fancies Theater*. London: 1640, H2^v-H3. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 298.

⁵⁹⁷ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 160. The numerous contemporary sources (such as orders, personal correspondence, broadsides, testaments, diary entries and the like) providing information on London's playhouses collected by Bentley in the 6th volume of his monumental work have been of greatest importance for the completion of the following chapters. Where available the original sources, most of which are not easily accessible, are given alongside the reference to Bentley's work.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Fortune for a short time, also failed to increase the status of their playhouse however. In 1632, Alexander Gill mocked Ben Jonson, whose play *Magnetic Lady* had failed at the Blackfriars earlier that year and wrote that, due to the low reputation of its audiences, the Fortune would have been a better place to stage Jonson's play:

Is this your Loadstone Ben that must Attract
Applause and Laughter att each Sceane and Acte?
Is this the Childe or your Bedridden witt,
An none but the Black-friers to foster ytt?
Iff to the Fortune you had sent your Ladye
Mongest Prentizes, and Apell-wyfes, ytt may bee
Your Rosie Foole might haue some sporte begot
With his strang habitt, and Indeffinett Nott.⁵⁹⁹

The fact that Fortune audiences preferred plays written in an older style does however not mean that the plays performed at this venue were less topical or politically dangerous. Especially in the closing years of London's theatres and thus right before the outbreak of the Civil War, "passions were running high in London, and the temptation for the players to exploit them was very great; various records show that they succumbed more often than before."⁶⁰⁰ Bentley provides a list of plays staged at the Fortune and other playhouses in their final years that attracted the critical attention of the authorities and got the companies and authors into trouble:

Davenant's *Britannia Triumphans* [...] was unusually explicit in its anti-Puritan and anti-democratic implications; Massinger's lost *The King and the Subject* was censored by both King Charles and the Master of the Revels [...] for its veiled attack on Royal financial measures; the Red Bull players and the author were ordered to appear before the Attorney-General in late September 1639 for scandalous attacks on aldermen, proctors, and the government in a lost anonymous plays, *The Whore New Vamped* [...]; on 26 February 1641 the Puritan inhabitants of the district of Blackfriars petitioned Parliament to suppress the Blackfriars theatre [...].⁶⁰¹

Bentley concludes his extensive list by stating that in "such an environment it is not surprising that the company at the Fortune also presented dangerous political material to its audience."⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 166f.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

In 1640 one final change of company took place at the Fortune and the Red Bull-King's Company, who had joined the Fortune in 1634, left to return to the Red Bull again and were replaced by the Prince Charles' company. John Tatham recorded this switch of company in great detail in a bitter prologue to an unknown play. It was performed at the Red Bull after the company's removal from the Fortune:

Who would rely on Fortune, when shee's knowne
An enemie to Merit, and hath shewne
Such an example here? Wee that have pay'd
Her tribute to our losse, each night defray'd
The charge of her attendance, now growne poore,
(Through her expences) thrusts us out of doore.
For some peculiar profit; shee has t'ane
A course to banish Modesty, and retaine
More dinn, and incivility than hath been
Knowne in the Bearwards Court, the Beargarden.
Those that now sojourne with her, bring a noyse
Of Rables, Apple-wives and Chimney-boyes,
Whose shrill confused Ecchoes loud doe cry,
Enlarge your Commons, Wee hate Privacie.
Those that have plots to undermine, and strive
To blow their Neighbours up, so they may thrive,
What censure they deserve, wee leave to you,
To whom the judgement on't belongs as due.
Here Gentlemen, our Anchor's fixt; And wee
(Disdaining Fortunes mutability)
Expect your kinde acceptance; then wee'l sing
(Protected by your smiles our ever-spring;)
As pleasant as if wee had still possest
Our lawful Portion out of Fortunes brest:
Onely wee would request you to forbear
Your wonted costume, banding Tyle, or Peare,
Against our curtaines, to allure us forth.
I pray take notice these are of more Worth,
Pure Naples silk, not Worsted, we have ne're
An Actour here has mouth enough to teare
Language by the' eares; this forlorne Hope shall be
By us refin'd from such grosse injury.
And then let your judicious Loves advance
Us to our Merits, them to their ignorance.⁶⁰³

The bitterness and misery inherent in these lines is a clear indication that the Red Bull-King's company did not leave their playhouse willingly and that they were very

⁶⁰³ Tatham. Prologue. *The Fancies Theater*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 298f.

unhappy about the fact that they had been “thrust out of doore” and reassigned to the Red Bull again. The prologue is also interesting for the fact that it – in contrast to many other prologues of that time – does not attack the rival audience but the rival company instead, who “bring a noyse / Of Rables, Apple-wives and Chimney-boyes” to the Fortune. Since the Prince Charles' company had a well-known clown amongst their players, namely Andrew Cane, it is likely that their style of acting differed quite severely from the one of the Red Bull-King's company. Competition was very fierce and as Tatham's bitter text illustrates, the choice of playhouse was a very crucial one. Since the King's Men were firmly rooted at the Globe, the remaining companies were constantly trying to gain a secure foothold in one of the two other remaining public amphitheatres and, as the above-quoted text illustrates, the Fortune was the preferred choice. Unfortunately, Tatham does not provide any definite reason of why his company preferred the Fortune to the Red Bull, but it might be accurate to say that this was due to the fact that he was trying to avoid insulting the Red Bull audience with whom he and his colleagues would have to work henceforth after all. In consequence he decided to focus on criticising the Prince Charles' company and their style of acting instead and on lamenting the injustice that had taken place.

In spite of this fierce competition, the Prince Charles' managed to defend their position at the Fortune until all theatres were officially ordered closed. Yet, as Bentley and other scholars have detailed, “the Fortune did not cease to function as a playing-place after the publication of the Parliamentary order.”⁶⁰⁴ Together with the Red Bull and the Salisbury Court, the Fortune was one of the playhouses in which illegal theatrical performances took place on an irregular basis. It is not known which plays were performed and by which companies exactly, but there are some surviving notes which document these illegal showings. One note of October 1643, using noteworthy figurative language, is of particular interest in this respect and exemplifies that not only plays were staged, but also that the authorities tried their best to suppress this:

⁶⁰⁴ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 173.

The Players at the Fortune in Golding Lane, who had oftentimes been complained of, and prohibited the acting of wanton and licentious Playes, yet persevering in their forbidden Art, this day there was set a strong guard of Pikes and muskets on both gates of the Playhouse, and in the middle of their play they unexpectedly did presse into the Stage upon them, who (amazed at these new Actors) it turned their Comedy into a Tragedy, and being plundered of all the richest of their cloathes, they left them nothing but their necessities now to act, and to learne a better life.⁶⁰⁵

Though the attempts to prevent these forbidden stagings were harsh, their effectiveness must be questioned as there are various reports that plays and interludes and other exhibitions like fencing continued to take place at the Fortune for some years. This prompted Parliament to issue yet another official order meant to prevent the staging of plays in early 1648. This order turned out to be much more strict and extensive than previous ones. According to it, the executive authorities were

to pull downe and demolish, or cause or procure to be pulled downe and demolish all Stage-Galleries, Seates, and Boxes, erected or used [...] for the acting, or playing, or seeing acted or plaid, such Stage-Playes, Interludes, and Playes aforesaid [...] and all such Common Players, and Actors of such Playes and Interludes [...] to cause to be apprehended, and openly and publikely whipt in some Market Towne. [...]

And it is hereby further Ordered and Ordained, That every person or persons which shall be present, and a Spectator at any such Stageplay, or Interlude, hereby prohibited, shall for every time he shall be so present, forfeit and pay the summe of five shillings to the use of the Poore of the Parish. [...]⁶⁰⁶

This directive did not only order the playhouses to be damaged and the players to be severely punished, it also demanded to penalise playgoers participating in these unlawful productions, thus tackling the problem from various angles. In spite of these harsh consequences to be faced, there are indications that plays continued to be staged infrequently for some more time until the Fortune was finally severely damaged by soldiers in 1649, as one contemporary summarised:

The Fortune Playhouse betweene White Crosse streete and Golding lane was burnd downe to the ground In the yeare 1618. And built againe with brick worke on the outside in the yeare 1622. And now pulled downe on the inside by these Soldiers this 1649.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁶⁰⁶ Quoted in: W. C. Hazlitt. *The English Drama and Stage, 1534-1664. Illustrated by Documents, Treatises and Poems*. London: 1869, pp. 67ff.

⁶⁰⁷ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 177.

II.5.1.2 THE RED BULL

The Red Bull opened in 1604 and was located in the same area as the Fortune, though a bit further north in Clerkenwell. It was not demolished until 1661, but also officially stopped to show performances in 1642. Before its transformation into a playhouse, the Red Bull had been an inn and Foakes has argued that "what took place here was not a conversion, in the manner of the Boar's Head, but rather a virtual reconstruction."⁶⁰⁸ Thomas Woodford's account, describing the property and the playhouse October 1625, also indicates that the Red Bull had been an inn before it was converted:

[...] one Messuage or Tenement now commonly called or knowne by the name or signe of the Red Bull at the vpper end of St John street with the Gardens Courts Cellars Wayes & liberties therevnto belonging or appertyning sometymes in the tenure of one John Waintworth or his assignes [...] in the parish of St James at Clerkenwell aforesaid did lately erect & set vp in & vpon part of the premises diuers & sundry buildings & galleries to serue & to be used for a Playhouse or a place to play & present Comedies Tragedies & other matters of that qualitie [...].⁶⁰⁹

Apart from Henslowe's Hope, which was only initially used as a playhouse before it was solely used for bloodsports, the Red Bull was the last Early Modern public playhouse to be built in London and gained a reputation quite unlike its competitors. According to contemporary accounts, audiences at the Red Bull had the reputation of being particularly vulgar and uneducated and "preferred fights, noise, and clowning to serious drama"⁶¹⁰. They were "offered a repertory largely drawn from the popular tradition of chivalry, romance, farce, history, and fantasy."⁶¹¹ Like at the other playhouses, members of the audience also enjoyed sitting directly on the stage during performances and in March 1622, the apprentice John Gill was injured by the sword of the actor Richard Baxter during a performance while occupying a seat on the raised platform.

Christopher Beeston, the owner of both the Red Bull and the Cockpit,

was London's cleverest innovator in theatre affairs between 1609 and his death in 1638. He began as a player apprenticed to Augustine Phillips in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, appearing

⁶⁰⁸ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 216.

⁶¹⁰ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 9.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

in *Every Man in his Humour* in 1597. He transferred to the Henslowe enterprises by 1602 and became financial controller of Queen Anne's Men, taking over management of its business affairs in 1612 when its leading player Thomas Greene died.⁶¹²

The Queen's Men, whose principal playwright was Thomas Dekker, also showed plays by Webster, Marlowe and many more, but only remained at the Red Bull until 1617, when they were replaced by Prince Charles' Company, which had previously operated the Hope on the Bankside. The Queen's Men now played at Beeston's more prestigious private hall the Cockpit in Drury Lane, where they were not greeted by a very warm welcome at first. At the Red Bull, the Prince Charles' Company was quickly replaced by yet another group, since Beeston had decided to move them to the rebuilt Phoenix after the Queen had died in March 1619, leaving her troupe without a patron. Bentley has suggested that the former Queen Anne's Men regrouped under the name of the Company of the Revels and returned once more to the Red Bull, a suggestion which one unfortunately is unable to back up with contemporary evidence.⁶¹³ Whoever it was that played at the Red Bull during this time, they were quickly replaced by the Prince Charles' Company in either late 1622 or early 1623, who had previously moved to the Curtain for some time after they themselves had been replaced at the Phoenix. The Prince Charles' Company did only survive for another two years, because when King James died in March 1625, they lost their patron who, as the new king, took over his father's company the King's Men, operating at both the Globe and the Blackfriars. After this crucial turning point, nothing specific is known about who played at the Red Bull in the decade following Charles' accession to the throne and the plays shown at the Red Bull during these years

must have attracted only the slightest literary attention for the publishers mostly ignored them. Nearly 500 editions and issues of plays and masques were published in the reign of Charles I (1625-49) and about 150 of those editions name a theatre on the title-page [...]. But the name of the lowly Red Bull is added to their title-page statements by the printers only six times in the reign of Charles I [...] Obviously the publishers of Caroline London thought that most Red Bull plays were not worth printing, or if they did print one they thought that a title-page association with the Red Bull would sell no copies.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 202.

⁶¹³ Cf.: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 220.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

The next troupe one can link to the Red Bull for sure is a company patronised by the King's son, the later King Charles II, and, like the troupe belonging to his father when he was not yet king, it was called the Prince Charles' Company. In 1639 they were charged with the illegal presentation of living people on stage in the now lost play *The Whore New Vamped*, of whose production the Privy Council wrote that

[c]omplaint was this day made that the stage-players of the Red Bull [have for] many days together acted a scandalous and libellous [play in which] they have audaciously reproached and in a libel [represented] and personated not only some of the alderman of the [city of London] and some other persons of quality, but also scandalized and libelled the whole profession of proctors belonging to the Court of [Probate], and reflected upon the present Government.⁶¹⁵

This incident underlines other contemporary sources which present the Red Bull in general and the new Prince Charles' Company in particular as less sophisticated and more troublesome than their competitors. After yet another change of company, the Red Bull was finally closed in September 1642 along with the other five remaining playhouses. Some illegal acting continued to take place and in contrast to some other playhouses, the actors were lucky enough to escape punishment at least once as the following account from early January 1649 suggests:

The Souldiers seized on the Players on their Stages at Drury-lane and Salisbury Court. They went also to the Fortune in Golden-lane, but they found none there, but John Pudding dancing on the Ropes, whom they took along with them. In the meane time the Players at the Red Bull, who had notice of it, made haste away, and were all gone before they came, and tooke away all their acting cloathes with them [...]⁶¹⁶

The last note about the Red Bull, a handbill advertising a prize fight, can be dated to the year 1664 and after the Great Fire of London in 1666 "nothing more is heard of the theatre"⁶¹⁷.

The Red Bull is also of particular interest for modern scholarship as an unusual amount of contemporary writing dealing with it has survived. This is mainly due to the fact that the Red Bull was highly controversial in its own time and evoked a large quantity of writings attacking or ridiculing it. In this respect Bentley has summarised that

⁶¹⁵ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 228.

⁶¹⁶ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

[t]hough Londoners of the seventeenth century were scarcely inclined to treat any theatre with undue respect, the Red Bull was the subject of more sneers than any other playhouse of the time. Of course the Puritans tended to sneer at, or to castigate, all theatres, but they generally made no distinctions, and they were not often specific at all. More tolerant writers often sneered at the Fortune or the Curtain, sometimes at the Globe, and now and then at the Phoenix. The Fortune appears commonly to have been associated with the Red Bull, in part, no doubt, because during most of the period they were the only theatres in the district north of the City. But there are more admiring and non-committal references to the Fortune than to the Red Bull, and fewer condescending ones. As the Curtain falls into disuse, the Red Bull reigns supreme in ignominy. Such a reputation might have been expected in the twenties or thirties when the private theatres attracted all the prestige, but even in the earlier days before the Phoenix and the Salisbury Court had been built, violence and vulgarity seem to be the usual associations with the Red Bull.⁶¹⁸

Often these attacks were also addressed at the Red Bull audience and as Gurr has detailed, the "jibes against the Red Bull fall into three categories."⁶¹⁹ Some contemporaries criticised "its debased standards of literary sophistication" whereas others made the company look like a fool by highlighting their "noisy overacting". A third group was concerned with the company's all too frequent choice of plays dealing with war. A ballad found in Samuel Pepys' collection *Dice, Wine, and Women, or the Unfortunate Gallant gull'd at London*, though fictional, furthermore addresses the issue of theft as one of the problems associated with the Red Bull:

8. Then thinking for to see a play,
I met a Pander by the way:
Who thinking I had money store,
Brought me to Turnboll to a whore:
Ere from that house I rid could be
It cost ten pound my setting free.

9. Most of my money being spent,
To S. Iohns street to the Bull I went,
Where I the roaring Rimer saw,
And to my face was made a daw:
And pressing forth among the folke,
I lost my purse, my hat and cloke.⁶²⁰

Others were even harsher in their judgement about the Red Bull and Thomas Carew, highly critical of not only the actors, but also the performances in general, wrote that

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 215.

⁶²⁰ From Samuel Pepys' undated ballad "Dice, Wine, and Women, or the Unfortunate Gallant gull'd at London". Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 240.

[...] they'll still slight
All that exceeds Red Bull and Cockepit flight.
These are the men in crowded heapes that throng
To that adulterate stage, where not a tong
Of th' untun'd Kennell, can a line repeat
Of serious sense: but like lips, meet like meat.⁶²¹

The companies operating at the Red Bull were well aware of their dubious and unfavourable reputation and at least one of the many companies performing at the Red Bull over the years tried to change this for the better. In the prologue of the 1619 comedy *Two Merry Milkmaids, or, The Best Words Wear the Garland*, the Company of the Revels directly addresses the playgoers in attendance and states:

This Day we entreat All that are hither come,
To expect no noyse of Guns, Trumpets, nor Drum,
Nor Sword and Targuet; but to heare Sence and Words,
Fitting the Matter that the Scene affords.
So that the Stage being reform'd, and free
From the lowd Clamors it was wont to bee,
Turmoyl'd with Battailes; you I hope will cease
Your dayly Tumults, and with vs wish Peace⁶²²

In addressing the audience like this, the company explicitly characterises the style of acting hitherto in use as loud and violent and more appealing to the lower classes not interested in sensual words and poetry. In addition to this, these lines tell a lot about the playgoers frequenting the Red Bull, who themselves were rather vulgar, troublesome and noisy. There is no indication that the Company of the Revels succeeded in 'reforming' or 'freeing' their venue of existing stigmas and the style of acting continued to be as described above. In 1638, Ralph Bride-Oake still characterised Red Bull-plays as less reputable and less sophisticated by writing that

[t]he sneaking Tribe, that drinke and write by fits,
As they can steale or borrow coine or wits,
That Pandars fee for Plots, and then belie
The paper with - An excellent Comedie,
Acted (more was the pittie,) by th' Red Bull
With great applause, of some vaine City Gull;
That damne Philosophy, and prove the curse

⁶²¹ From Thomas Carew's commendatory verses for William Davenant's *The Just Italian*. London: 1630. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 242.

⁶²² John Cumber. Prologue. *The Two Merry Milkmaids, or, The Best Words Wear the Garland*. London: 1620. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, pp. 242f.

Of emptinesse, both in the Braine and Purse.⁶²³

But even if some good play somehow fell into the hands of one of the companies operating at the Red Bull, this did not necessarily lead to a good production in return, as the companies seem to have ruined plays because of their lack of skill: "they spoyle many a good Play for want of Action."⁶²⁴ Even though the Red Bull was ridiculed by some contemporaries, they quite successfully "continued to give expressions to those traditions from which Whitehall and Blackfriars had large turned away but for which, plainly, a sizeable audience still existed"⁶²⁵, as Butler emphasises – after all a fact not to be disregarded.

II.5.1.3 THE SECOND GLOBE

The most successful and best-known public playhouse was the Globe in Southwark. The erection of the first Globe was an attempt of the Lord Chamberlain's Men to lessen the disastrous effects that resulted from the Theatre's closure and the prohibition to play at the newly purchased and redesigned Blackfriars theatre. After the first Globe had burned down during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* in 1613, the seven housekeepers built a new playhouse in the exact same spot and decided to keep the name which had proven so successful. Regarding this, Gurr has pointed out that the

Globe's name was a logical extension of its predecessor, the Theatre. In its three-dimensional form an atlas or 'theatre' of the world was indeed a globe, and just as the stage was said to mirror the world, so the theatre of the world could become a globe.⁶²⁶

John Taylor commented on the ambitious plan to rebuild the Globe by stating that

As Gold is better that's in fire tride,
So is the bankside Globe that late was burn'd:
For where before it had a thatched hide,
Now to s stately Theator is turn'd.
Which is an Emblem, that great things are won,
By those that dare through greatest dangers run.⁶²⁷

⁶²³From Ralph Bride-Oake's commendatory verses for the collection of Thomas Randolph's poems. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 244.

⁶²⁴ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 244.

⁶²⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 183.

⁶²⁶ Andrew Gurr. "Shakespeare's Playhouses". *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 362-376, p. 369.

Taylor was not the only contemporary highlighting the greatness of the ambitiously rebuilt "stately Theator". John Chamberlain provides another piece of contemporary evidence by writing that he had heard "much speach of this new play-house, which is saide to be the fayrest that ever was in England"⁶²⁸.

Whereas the two other public playhouses in the northern suburbs catered primarily for the masses and staged more simplistic plays, the Globe attracted, but by far not exclusively, a more respectable clientele. What it is not known however, is how many of those playgoers who frequented the company's other playhouse during the colder months, namely the private Blackfriars theatre, also watched performances at the Globe during the summer season, which lasted from May to October when the weather was most stable. Some of the wealthier Londoners left the city to retreat to their summerhouses in the countryside, but the larger proportion stayed in London and also desired to be entertained by plays during these months. Of the public amphitheatres the Globe would have been the first choice, due to its good reputation and higher social standing. Referring to this, Gurr one-sidedly states that contemporary evidence "on the Globe's playgoers indicates little change from the Blackfriars clientele, either in Gallants or ladies."⁶²⁹ He bases this assumption on a quote by Nicholas Goodmann, who wrote in 1632 that "halfe the yeere a World of Beauties and brave Spirits resorted unto"⁶³⁰ the Globe. Yet, people of the lower classes were likewise found in large numbers in the Globe's yard and in general the Globe, though by design a public amphitheatre, "stood midway between the extremes of low amphitheatre reputation and hall playhouses snobbery"⁶³¹. It occupied a hybrid position among the six remaining playhouses in London and the suburbs south and north of the city. Nevertheless there were some authors who felt strongly about the Globe's subordination to the Blackfriars and alluded to this in their plays. William Davenant, primarily writing for the Blackfriars stage, expressed

⁶²⁷ John Taylor. *Taylor's Water-Work or The Sculler Travels from Tiber to Thames*. 2nd Edition. London: 1614. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 182. The poem does not appear in the first edition of the same work.

⁶²⁸ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 1, p. 544.

⁶²⁹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 220.

⁶³⁰ Quoted in: *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

his sentiments about a performance at the Globe in the prologue to his *News for Plymouth*:

A Noble Company! for we can spy,
Beside rich gawdy Sirs, some that rely
More on their Judgments, then their Cloathes, and may
With wit, as well as Pride, rescue or Play:
And 'tis but just, though each Spectator knows
This House, and season, does more promise shewes,
Dancing, and Buckler Fights, then Art, or Witt;
Yet so much taxt of both, as will befit
Our humble Theame, you shall receive, and such
As may please those, who not expect too much.⁶³²

Davenant considered Globe audiences to be inferior to Blackfriars audiences and felt the urge to express his feelings about this in view of the fact that this very play was to be performed at the Globe instead of the Blackfriars. He did however try to adapt it to fit the Globe audiences and in consequence the play is less extravagant than his usual plays – an indication that there were indeed varying demands and expectations to be kept in mind when composing a play for a particular stage. Modern scholarship is particularly interested in finding out which plays were written for which of the two venues belonging to the King's Men and Bentley has stated that

the Globe, however inferior in esteem and profit to the company's winter theatre, saw not only the performance of plays which had originally been put on at Blackfriars, but of a number which were written to be performed in the summer on the Bankside. Not many of them can be certainly identified now [...].⁶³³

Bentley's assessment seems very reasonable and is underlined by records in the books of the Master of the Revels on the one hand and by a number of extant prologues and epilogues on the other hand. Being offered only reproductions of plays having already been shown at the Blackfriars did not satisfy the expectations of playgoers frequenting the Globe and it is likely that there were at least some new productions written directly for the King's Men public venue.

⁶³² William Davenant. Prologue. *News for Plymouth. The Works of Sir William Davenant*. London: 1673. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 14.

⁶³³ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 195.

When new plays were staged for the first time or when popular plays were renewed, audiences were greatest and contemporary accounts put the number of about 3.000 playgoers for these instances. The Spanish Ambassador, after having watched a performance of Middleton's highly popular *A Game at Chess* in August 1624, reported to his king "that there were more than 3000 persons there at the day that the audience was smallest"⁶³⁴.

After the theatres had been officially closed by parliamentary order in September 1642, there are no records that playing continued at the Globe. Whether this really means that no performances took place or just that the players were never caught is impossible to say. What is known for sure however, is that the second Globe, the once "stately Theator" praised by Taylor and his contemporaries, was pulled down in April 1644:

The Globe play house on the Banks side in Southwarke [...]. And now pulled downe to the ground, by Sr Mathew Brand, On Munday the 15 of April 1644, to make tennements in the roome of it.⁶³⁵

II.5.2 PRIVATE PLAYHOUSES

Competing with the three public playhouses were three private ones. The increasing importance of the more expensive private playhouses within the city boundaries marks a significant contrast to Elizabethan and early-Jacobean drama when the main emphasis was still on the public playhouses located in the suburbs. The

geographical and cultural shift to the potentially more élite domains of the hall playhouses has led to the historical cliché that in the Caroline era theatre became more exclusive and, by implication, more closely allied to the court and its royalist politics.⁶³⁶

This assumption is, as Sanders writes, nothing more than a "historical cliché" kept alive for centuries without having been seriously questioned. It is true that playgoing became more fashionable to a certain extent and that the playhouses increasingly succeeded in attracting the upper levels of society, but as Butler observes in his seminal *Theatre and Crisis*, the increasing dominance of the hall-

⁶³⁴ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁶³⁵ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 200 (Folger Shakespeare MS. Phillipps 11613).

⁶³⁶ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 4.

playhouses did not change the theatres' overall character or capacity as a site "of opposition and critique"⁶³⁷ in increasingly unstable times. As had always been the case since its institutionalisation in the 1570s, Jacobean and Caroline drama of the years 1616 to 1642 found its ways to avoid censorship and to directly and critically engage with current social and political realities.⁶³⁸ Thus the growing importance of private playhouses did not lead to the emergence of a totally new form of either dramatic production or dramatic performance. Their increasing dominance was due to the fact that the playing companies – witnessing the success of the Blackfriars playhouse – realized that certain parts of society were willing to spend more money to watch plays in the more fashionable and elite hall-playhouses, thus making them a very profitable venture for the remaining companies. Private playhouses offered a seat to all members of the audience and prizes varied according to where exactly one desired to sit. This seems to have appealed to the gentry in particular.

In *The Shakespearean Stage*, Gurr puts emphasis on the fact that the

life of the three hall playhouses that existed from 1629, the Blackfriars, the Cockpit and the Salisbury Court, was every bit as healthy as the three public playhouses still flourishing, the Globe, Fortune and Red Bull.⁶³⁹

He furthermore goes on observing that "[i]t is an accurate sign of the times that, after 1608, the first year an adult company was able to get possession of an indoor playhouse, the only new one built or projected were halls."⁶⁴⁰

The reviser of Stow's *Annales* also took up the issue of playhouse-building in London and wrote the following commentary to this effect, which summarizes the development:

In the yeere one thousand six hundred twenty nine, there was builded a new faire Play-house, neere the white Fryers. And this is the seaventeenth Stage, or common Play-house, which hath beene new made within the space of threescore yeeres within London and the Suburbs, viz.

Five Innes, or common Osteryes turned to Play-houses, one Cockpit, S. Paules singing Schoole, one in the Black-fryers, and one in the White-fryers, which was built last of all, in the yeare one thousand six hundred twenty nine, all the rest not named, were erected only for common Playhouses, besides the new built Beare garden, which was built as well for playes,

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Cf.: Ibid., p. 5.

⁶³⁹ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 149.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

and Fencers prizes, as Bull Bayting; besides, one in former time at Newington Butts; Before the space of threescore years above-sayd, I neither knew, heard, nor read, of any such Theaters, set Stages, or Play-houses, as have beene purposely built within mans memory.⁶⁴¹

In the light of the overall theatricality of Early Modern, the private playhouses in particular offered certain members of society a means to dramatize themselves and to skilfully present themselves to those in attendance. The habit to directly sit on chairs on the very stage itself was not a means to be able to better watch the show, but intended to be better seen by the other members of the audience. The ever-critical Ben Jonson criticized the behaviour of gallants in his *The Devil is an Ass*, first performed at the Blackfriars in 1616:

To day, I goe to the Black-fryers Play-house,
Sit i' the view, salute all my acquaintance,
Rise vp between the Acts, let fall my cloake,
Publish a handsome man, and a rich suite
(As that's a speciall end, why we goe thither,
All that pretend, to stand for't o' the Stage)
The Ladies aske who's that? (For they doe come
To see vs, Loue, as wee doe to see them).⁶⁴²

Even though there were plays strategically written for a certain stage, it "would be wrong to conclude that there was a clear-cut distinction between the audiences and the repertoires at the indoor playhouses and those at the public theatres"⁶⁴³. Especially in the light of the fact that the King's Men used both the Blackfriars and the Globe, one needs to realize that there was a certain amount of interchange of plays and audiences. Of course demands and expectations varied from times to times and audiences at the private playhouses could afford to be seated. Nevertheless audiences also included "the Faces or grounds of your people, that sit in the oblique caves and wedges of your house, your sinfull sixe-penny Mechanicks"⁶⁴⁴, as Jonson writes in *The Magnetic Lady*, first performed at the Blackfriars in 1632. Jonson makes clear that audiences at private playhouses were not always as privileged or sophisticated as many scholars have tried to make their readers believe over the past decades.

⁶⁴¹ Quoted in: Chambers. *The Elizabethan Stage*. Vol. 2, p. 373.

⁶⁴² Jonson. *The Devil is an Ass*. *The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6, I.vi.31-38.

⁶⁴³ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 35.

⁶⁴⁴ Jonson. *The Magnetic Lady*. *The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6. Ind., 32-34.

II.5.2.1 THE BLACKFRIARS

The Blackfriars theatre had belonged to the Lord Chamberlain's Men (the later King's Men) ever since 1596, when James Burbage bought a set of tenements in the fashionable Blackfriars area, close to the City of Westminster, in order to turn it into a hall playhouse in the wake of the company's increasing problems with their expiring lease on the Theatre in Shoreditch. Burbage paid 600 pounds for

[a]ll those Seaven greate vpper Romes as they nowe devided being all vpon one flower and sometyme beinge one greate and entire rome wth the roufe over the same coued with Leade [...] And also all that greate paire of wyndinge staires wth the staire case therevnto belonging wch leadeth vpp vnto the same seaven greate vpper Romes oute of the greate yarde.⁶⁴⁵

The Blackfriars "stood inside the London walls but was free of the City of London's jurisdiction because of its ancient status as a monastic precinct."⁶⁴⁶ Burbage and his fellow members of the company were not allowed to use it until 1608 however due to a petition of numerous inhabitants sent to the Privy Council pleading not to open a playhouse in this area. Since the Privy Council took the peoples' worries seriously, Burbage, who died shortly after, was prevented from using this new venue and had to rent it to a children's company who staged plays only once a week and to whom the local residents did not object. From 1608 onwards, the company, now called the King's Men and under the protection of James I, had two playhouses to play in and used both venues on their own instead of renting one to another company. As Gurr has summarised,

plays staged in summer at the Globe began to cater for the citizenry who could not afford lengthy escapes from town, while the innovatory plays in the repertory were kept for the Blackfriars and for the long season of Christmas celebrations at court.⁶⁴⁷

Burbage was the first theatre entrepreneur trying to establish adult companies in a hall-playhouse and his plan to attract a wealthier and more exclusive clientele finally worked out and turned out to be very profitable. Other companies followed in the King's Men's footsteps in the years to come.

Not least because of their increasing status at Court under Charles, himself "a reader and beholder of plays"⁶⁴⁸, and Henrietta Maria, the King's Men succeeded in

⁶⁴⁵ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 5.

⁶⁴⁶ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 27.

⁶⁴⁷ Gurr. "Shakespeare's Playhouses", pp. 371f.

maintaining their superior position among London's theatre companies during the years 1616 to 1642. Using the Globe in Southwark in summer and the Blackfriars during the winter season, Shakespeare's former company had thus two highly profitable venues at their use and managed to attract a wide range of playgoers. Among the increasing number of performances at Court, the four recorded visits of Queen Henrietta Maria to the Blackfriars theatre are the clearest indication of the companies' and playhouse's superior standing. As Gurr has detailed in *The Shakespeare Company*, which closely follows the development of the King's Men, the Queen's visits to the "Blackfriars in the 1630s haloed the playhouse as the first public playing-place that royalty ever graced."⁶⁴⁹ About one of her visits, Sir Henry Herbert recorded that "[t]he 13 May, 1634, the Queene was at Blackfryers, to see Messengers play."⁶⁵⁰ Her four private visits were a remarkable exhibition of how high the Blackfriars had raised the company's social credit"⁶⁵¹ – something unimaginable during Elizabeth's or James' time; in spite of their pronounced interest in dramatic entertainment. In his seminal study *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Bentley underlines this by stating that in

the Jacobean and Caroline period from 1616 to 1642 the Blackfriars was the premier theatre of England. Though the King's company – the sole tenants throughout the period – played also at the Globe, the Blackfriars is the house constantly associated with them in these years. It is also the theatre chiefly associated with court circles and the *élite* London audience, as many letters and allusions testify.⁶⁵²

As Gurr has likewise shown to this effect in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, in

the last twelve years before the closure the social prestige of particular playhouses settled into a distinct hierarchy. The Blackfriars pre-eminence was never shaken after 1630, though for different reasons the Cockpit and the Globe served as respectable alternatives in summer. The third hall playhouse, the Salisbury Court in Whitefriars, which opened in 1629, was smaller than the two older halls, and remained self-consciously inferior to them in status if not in what its stage offered.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁸ Gurr. *The Shakespeare Company*, p. 19.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁶⁵⁰ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 34.

⁶⁵¹ Gurr. *The Shakespeare Company*, p. 190.

⁶⁵² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 4.

⁶⁵³ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 209.

Various contemporary sources testify the assumptions mentioned by both Bentley and Gurr. In 1624, John Chamberlain wrote in one of his many letters to Sir Dudley Carleton that

[t]he Duke of Brunswicke went hence on Newyeresday after he had tarried just a weeke and performed many visits to almost all our great Lords and Ladies as the Lord of Caunterburie, the Lord Keper, and the rest, not omitting Mistris Brus nor the stage at Blacke Friers.⁶⁵⁴

Audiences at the Blackfriars theatre developed a particular taste for innovation as well as "sophistication and wit rather than vigorous action and clowning"⁶⁵⁵. It is likely that some old plays were adapted for that purpose. It is also interesting that a playgoer's choice of attending a certain playhouse did not only depend on the plays staged at this particular venue, but, keeping the overall theatricality of Early Modern life in mind, also on the social standing represented by them. The Blackfriars, featuring the highest reputation, drew large amounts of people who regarded the King's Men's hall as the best means to pursuit their social pretensions. Hence the following lines by Francis Lenton, composed in 1629, emphasise the fact that certain parts of society chose playhouses rather for their reputation than their plays, even though this might have overstrained their intellect:

The Cockpit heretofore would serve his wit,
But now upon the Fryers stage hee'll sit.
His silken garments, and his sattin robe,
That hath so often visited the Globe,
And all his spangled rare perfum'd attires
Which once so glistred in the Torchy Fryers [...]⁶⁵⁶

In February 1632 an interesting incident occurred at the Blackfriars, which testifies that being seen by the other members of the audience was more important for some than anything else. A contemporary document detailing the incident, written by John Pory and addressed to Viscount Scudamore, has survived. Though highly subjective and only depicting one point of view, it sheds light on a few things, such as how certain members of the Blackfriars audience tended to behave while watching a performance:

⁶⁵⁴ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 2, p. 594.

⁶⁵⁵ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 37.

⁶⁵⁶ Lenton. *The Young Gallants Whirligig*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 283.

The occasion was this. This Captaine attending and accompanying my Lady of Essex in a boxe in the playhouse at the blackfryers, the said lord coming upon the stage, stood before them and hindred their sight. Captain Essex told his lordship they had payd for their places as well as hee, and therefore intreated him not to deprive them of the benefitt of it. Wherevpon the lord stood vp yet higher and hindred more their sight. Then Capt. Essex with his hand putt him a little by. The lord then drewe his sword and ran full butt at him, though hee missed him, and might have slaine the Countesse as well as him.⁶⁵⁷

In this regard, one must not forget however that the people frequenting the Blackfriars were not a homogeneous group either and that they behaved differently as well. This holds also true for the other playhouses – no matter if public or private. In general demands and expectations varied greatly and a division between the different social classes was apparent even for contemporaries. Richard Lovelace mentions in the epilogue to *The Scholars* that the people in the pit want different things from those in the upper gallery by stating the following:

His Schollars school'd, sayd if he had been wise,
He should have wove in one two comedies.
The first for th' gallery, in which the throne
To their amazement should descend alone,
The rosin-lightning flash and monster spire
Squibs, and words hatter than his fire.
Th'other for the gentlemen of the pit
Like to themselves all spirit, fancy, wit.⁶⁵⁸

Lovelace's epilogue suggests that certain members of the Blackfriars audience

prefer exactly the same visual spectacles and hot words for which the amphitheatre playhouses were noted. This implies that the seasonal transfer of gentry from the Blackfriars to the Globe and back might have been accompanied by more of the Globe clients than the prejudice of the Blackfriars writers normally allowed them to admit. If so, it calls into question the one truly explicit piece of evidence from a King's Men playwright which suggests that the Globe playgoers were treated to a repertoire of the King's Men's plays distinct from those the Blackfriars playgoers enjoyed.⁶⁵⁹

The "one truly explicit piece of evidence" Gurr refers to here is the prologue to James Shirley's *The Doubtful Heir*, a play originally meant to be shown at the Blackfriars in 1640, but then performed at the Globe instead. Gurr summarizes the quarrels involving the change in venue by stating that Shirley, after having been in

⁶⁵⁷ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 6.

⁶⁵⁸ From Richard Lovelace's epilogue to *The Scholars*. Although the play itself is lost, the epilogue is extant in a collection of Lovelace's poems printed in 1649. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 220.

⁶⁵⁹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 220f.

Ireland for some years because of the plague and his quarrels with the Court, "had secured London's outstanding playhouse for his work, only to find himself overtaken by the seasonal switch to the Globe."⁶⁶⁰ Out of his disappointment he composed "a seemingly sarcastic prologue telling the Globe playgoers what not to expect in a play that had been designed for a hall playhouse"⁶⁶¹:

All that the Prologue comes for is to say,
 Our author did not calculate this play
 For this meridian; the Bankside he knows,
 Is far more skilful at the ebbs and flows
 Of water, than of wit; he did not mean
 For the elevation of your poles, this scene.
 No shews, no dance, and, what you most delight in,
 Grave understanders, here's no target-fighting
 Upon the stage, all work for cutlers barr'd;
 No bawdry, nor no ballads; this goes hard;
 But language clean; and, what affects you not,
 Without impossibilities the plot:
 No clown, no squibs, no devil in't. Oh, now,
 You squirrels that want nuts, what will you do?
 Pray do not crack the benches, and we may
 Hereafter fit your palates with a play:
 But you that can contract yourselves, and sit
 As you were now in the Black-friars pit,
 And will not deaf us with lewd noise, nor tongues,
 Because we have no heart to break our lungs,
 Will pardon our vast stage, and not disgrace
 This play, meant for your persons, not the place.⁶⁶²

Shirley's text, be it a sign of distress or reverse flattery, evidences that different styles of acting were in operation at the various playhouses – even among those belonging to the same company – though Shirley might have exaggerated these differences. This was due to the fact that both stages and auditoriums varied greatly in size and as a result different plays were needed for particular venues and playwrights generally wrote plays with a certain stage in mind. This differentiation does not seem to include the audiences however, since Shirley states that the play was indeed "meant for your persons, not the place". This suggests either that audiences did not vary as greatly as many scholars believe or that there was a

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 221.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Shirley. Prologue. *The Doubtful Heir. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 4, p. 279.

considerable transfer of Blackfriars-playgoers to the Globe during the summer season. But as always with contemporary sources – fictional as well as real ones – one needs to take the material with a pinch of salt as it is impossible to know how exactly the author wanted certain passages to be understood – especially if one is presented with a text that has been read differently by scholars over the past years. Keeping this in mind, one could also read the prologue's final lines as a sort of apologetic conclusion meant to appease the audience in order to lessen their irritation resulting from the previous lines that may have been understood as insulting and condescending.

Though – or because – the Blackfriars was the playhouse with the highest reputation among London's theatres, it often came under attack by its Puritan neighbours living next to it in the same district. People in general were often worried when larger groups of people assembled and were irritated by the coaches bringing certain members of the audience to and fro the playhouse. In January 1619, the Corporation of the City of London, taking its citizens' petition seriously, therefore officially ordered the Blackfriars to be closed:

whereupon, and after reading the said order and lettre of the Lordes shewed forth in this Court by the foresaid inhabitauntes, and consideracion thereof taken, this Court doth thinke fitt and soe order that the said playhowse be suppressed, and that the players shall from henceforth forbear and desist from playing in that howse, in respect of the manifold abuses and disorders complained of as aforesaid.⁶⁶³

Though very definite in tone, "the Corporation evidently exceeded its authority"⁶⁶⁴ and only two months later the King's Men's right to continue using their prestigious playhouse was "confirmed by royal patent"⁶⁶⁵. Nevertheless attacks on the Blackfriars continued over the years until its final closure in 1642 and many a petition was presented to the authorities, all unsuccessful however. One complaint of the year 1631 provides a list of what exactly certain members of society disliked about theatres in general and the Blackfriars in particular. It was addressed to Archbishop Laud, member of the Privy Council and reads the following:

⁶⁶³ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Reasons and Inconveniencies induceing the inhabitants of Blackfriars London to become humble suitors to your Lordship for removing the Playhouse in the said Blackfriars.

1. The Shopkeepers [...] suffer [...] by the great recourse to the Playes (especially of coaches) [...]
2. The recourse of Coaches is many tymes so great, that the inhabitants cannot in an afternoone take in any provision [...]
3. The passage through Ludgate to the water is many tymes stopped up, people in their ordinary going much endangered, quarrels, and bloodshed many tymes occasioned; and many disorderly people towards night gathered thither, under pretence of attending and waiting for those at the playes.
4. Yf there should happen any misfortune of fier, there is not likely any present order could possibly be taken, for the disorder and number of the coaches [...]
5. Christenings and Burialls [...] are many tymes disturbed [...]
6. Persons of honour and quality, that dwell in the Parish, are restrained by the number of Coaches from going out, or coming home, in seasonable tyme [...] And some persons of honour have left, and others have refused houses [...] ⁶⁶⁶

The aspects mentioned in this document are ample proof of the theatre's popularity. The writers of this complaint "shrewdly confine themselves to the problems of traffic, fire prevention, church functioning, and neighbourhood deterioration, all of which the Archbishop and the Council must take seriously."⁶⁶⁷ The petition does not mention any of the usual antitheatrical elements mentioned in Chapter II.1.4 of this thesis, such as the plays' immorality and decadence. It was a clever move, but it remained without measurable consequences for the company. This is also proven by another contemporary source from January 1634, which shows that these measures usually did not have any long-lasting effects, as especially the last line emphasises:

Here hath been an Order of the Lords of the Council hung up in a Table near Paul's and the Black-Fryars, to command all that Resort to the Play-House there to send away their Coaches, and to disperse Abroad in Paul's Church-Yard, Carter-Lane, the Conduit in Fleet-Street, and other Places, and not to return to fetch their Company, but they must trot afoot to find their Coaches, 'twas kept very strictly for two or three Weeks, but now I think it is disorder'd again.⁶⁶⁸

However, in the end the Blackfriars suffered the same fate as all Early Modern playhouses and after its final demolishing in August 1665 it was to be replaced by tenement houses.

⁶⁶⁶ Quoted in: John Payne Collier. *The History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare: And Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London: 1879, pp. 455ff.

⁶⁶⁷ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 25.

⁶⁶⁸ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 290.

II.5.2.2 THE COCKPIT OR PHOENIX

The Cockpit, adapted from an old game house, was built in 1616 by Christopher Beeston, who was also the financial manager and co-sharer of the Red Bull. After the Cockpit had been attacked and burned down by apprentices in 1617, Beeston, well-known for his commercial skills, chose the name Phoenix for the replacement building. It was strategically located in an area of increasing wealth and population near the Inns of Court in Drury Lane, in what is nowadays London's theatre district, and was thus easy to reach from Westminster. Foakes has argued to this effect that the Phoenix "at once became the 'favourite resort of the gentry' after Blackfriars."⁶⁶⁹ The playhouse's original name resulted from the fact that it had originally been a pit used for cock-fighting before Beeston decided to imitate the Blackfriars theatre, though on a smaller basis with fewer galleries and consequently less seating capacity.⁶⁷⁰ In doing so, he took a great risk, because even though the King's Men succeeded in establishing a hall playhouse for adult actors, there was no guarantee that a second private theatre would turn out as profitable. Nevertheless Beeston was determined to put his plan into effect and the first step was to purchase property suitable for his needs. In 1616 he decided to lease

[a]ll that edifices or building called the Cockpittes and the Cockhouses and shedds therevnto adioyning late before that tyme in the tenure or occupacon of John Atkins gent or his assignes Togeather alsoe with one tenement or house and a little Garden therevnto belonging next adioyning to the said Cockpittes then in the occupacon of Jonas Westwood or his assignes and one part or parcell of ground behinde the said Cockpittes Cockhouse three Tenements and garden devided as in the said Indenture is expressed To haue and to hold [...] from the feast daie of St Michaell the Archangell next coming after the date of the said recited Indenture vnto the ende and terme of one and thirty yeares from thence next ensuing and fully to be compleat and ended yealding and paying therefor yearly duringe the said terme [...] the yearly rent or some of fforty and five poundes of lawfull mony of England att fflower of the most vsuall feasts in the yeare by equal porcons.⁶⁷¹

Gurr has mentioned that in implementing his ambitious plan, Beeston, now owning both the Red Bull and the Cockpit,

felt there would be more profit from imitating the Blackfriars than he could get at the Red Bull. He kept his financial interest in the Red Bull, but transferred its company to the Cockpit,

⁶⁶⁹ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", pp. 31f.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf.: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 208.

⁶⁷¹ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 48 (originally discovered by Leslie Hotson).

where it would play all the year round, unlike the King's at Blackfriars. He evidently expected to profit from the fact that his would be the only hall play-house operating through the summer months.⁶⁷²

However, Beeston's plan did not work out as anticipated. Though he managed to run both playhouses simultaneously, the enterprise did not turn out to be as profitable as held true for the King's Men. This may have been due to the fact that when the Queen's Men initially left the Red Bull, they took their "repertory designed for the 'fishwives' and artisans of the city"⁶⁷³, who could not pay for the higher admission prices however, with them. Those who could were not as attracted by these traditional plays as by the more innovatory plays staged at the Blackfriars. In this light the demolition of the Cockpit by angry apprentices is hardly surprising. John Chamberlain's account of the riot describes that even though the players tried to defend their playhouse, "they entered the house and defaced yt, cutting the players apparell all to pieces, and all other theyre furniture, and burnt theyre play books and did what other mischeife they could"⁶⁷⁴, thus severely damaging the company financially. A letter by Edward Sherburne written on the 8th March 1616 verifies Chamberlain's account:

[t]he Prentizes on Shrove Tewsday last, to the number of 3. or 4000 comitted extreame insolencies; part of this number, taking their course for Wapping, did there pull downe to the grownd 4 houses, spoiled all the goods therein, defaced many others, & a Justice of the Peace coming to appease them, while he was reading a Proclamacion, had his head broken with a brick batt. Th' other part, making for Drury Lane, where lately a newe playhouse is erected, 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 in peeces; & not content herewith, gott on the top of the house, & untiled it, & had not the Justices of Peace & Shrerife levied an aide, & hindred their purpose, they would have laid that house likewise even with the grownd. In this skyrmishe one prentice was slaine, being shott throughe the head with a pistoll, & many other of their fellowes were sore hurt, & such of them as are taken his Majestie hath commanded shall be executed for example sake.⁶⁷⁵

Thus for once the theatres' critics, who constantly feared the outbreak of riots, were right in doing so. However the riot did not start at a playhouse, but on the

⁶⁷² Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 203.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 2, pp. 59f.

⁶⁷⁵ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 54. Original transcription by James Halliwell-Phillips in one of his so-called scrapbooks.

contrary was directed at a particular one. Riots did frequently occur on Shrove Tuesday and often it was brothels that came under attack during these uprisings. After a lengthy closure resulting from the devastating outbreak of the plague in 1625, the re-erected Phoenix became the home of yet another company, namely Queen Henrietta's Men who were again made out of leading players formerly performing at the Red Bull. As Bentley has emphasised,

[i]n this change of companies at the Phoenix – as in all subsequent ones there – it is noteworthy that Beeston stayed with his theatre and not with his company. For no other managerial figure in the Jacobean and Caroline period do we have such clear evidence that the man went with the theatre and that he dominated the company and controlled its fortunes.⁶⁷⁶

In this constellation, which once again weakened the Red Bull, Beeston finally succeeded in attracting the desired clientele to the Phoenix on a regular basis and "in 1630 a group of Blackfriars poets complained that they were losing customers to the rival hall."⁶⁷⁷ One of them was Thomas Carew, who attacked both of Beeston's playhouses in one breath by writing the following:

I have beheld, when pearched on the smooth brow
Of a fayre modest troope, thou didst allow
Applause to slighter works; but then the weake
Spectator gave the knowing leave to speake.
Now noyse prevayles, and he is taxed for drowth
Of wit, that with the crie, spends not his mouth.
Yet aske him, reason why he did not like;
Him, why he did; their ignorance will strike
Thy soule with scorne, and Pity: marke the places
Provoke their smiles, frownes, or distorted faces,
When, they admire, nod, shake the head: they'le be
A scne of myrth, a double Comedie.
But thy strong fancies (raptures of the brayne,
Drest in Poetique flames) they entertayne
As a bold, impious reach; for they'l still slight
All that exceeds Red Bull, and Cockpit flight.⁶⁷⁸

In the sixth volume of *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Bentley confirms the Phoenix' position among the remaining London playhouses and states that after "Blackfriars it was the favourite resort of the gentry, and for these two playhouses

⁶⁷⁶ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 58.

⁶⁷⁷ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 207.

⁶⁷⁸ Carew. *The Just Italien*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 208.

most of the plays of the twenties and thirties which are still familiar to us were written."⁶⁷⁹ One of the dramatists regularly supplying the Phoenix with new plays was James Shirley. Though no such document has survived it is likely that Shirley and Beeston had made a contract arranging for two plays to be written each year. Richard Brome for example is known to have made similar arrangements with the Salisbury Court theatre. Other poets such as John Ford, Thomas Heywood and even Ben Jonson were also known to supply Beeston's hall playhouse with fresh plays. In spite of the fact that over the years the Phoenix was home to many different companies, Beeston's theatre succeeded in keeping its elevated position even after Beeston's death in 1638. No "other London theatre of the time is known to have been so dominated by one individual as the Phoenix"⁶⁸⁰ was by Beeston, who after all "planned, built, owned, and managed"⁶⁸¹ the playhouse for many years and it is surprising that it continued to flourish in the four remaining years until its final closure in 1642. The man who took over the company, William Davenant, was himself well known among the Caroline theatre industry and, according to the Lord Chamberlain, was

to take into his Gou'nmt & care, the sayd Company of Players, to gouerne, order & dispose of them for Action and prsentmentes, and all their Affyres in the sayd House, as in his decretion shall seeme best to conduce to his Mates service in that Quality. And I doe heerby inioyne & comaund them all [...] that they obey the sayd Mr Dauenant & follow his Orders & direcons as they will answere the contrary.

There is some evidence that the Phoenix was now and again used for dramatic performances during the Interregnum, but not as much as the Fortune or the Red Bull. It was however used as a school for a certain period of time, as a document from the records of the parish records dated to the year 1646 suggests: "1646. Pd and given to the teacher at the Cockpitt of the Children, 6d."⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁹ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 47.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸² From the parish records of St. Giles in the Fields. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 76.

II.5.2.3 SALISBURY COURT

The Salisbury Court playhouse, converted from a barn and the last playhouse to be built in London before the outbreak of the Civil War, opened in either 1629 or 1630 and was owned by the former Fortune player Richard Gunnell and William Blgrave. It was located near the old Whitefriars theatre, which had opened in 1608 but could not gain a foothold in London. Even though little is known about its dimensions, internal evidence from plays indicates that it must have been small. In the epilogue to his *Tottenham Court*, first performed in 1633, Thomas Nabbes refers to Salisbury Court as a "little house"⁶⁸³. Foakes moreover points out that it did not have had the same prestige as the Blackfriars and the Phoenix.⁶⁸⁴ As usual, only a limited amount of contemporary data shedding light on the opening of the playhouse has survived. Yet, one document of the year 1667 "recapitulated the early history of the Salisbury Court enterprise"⁶⁸⁵:

Whereas, the said Edward Fisher and Thomas Silver exhibited their petition into this Court, thereby setting forth that the Right Honble Edward, late Earl of Dorset, and his Trustees, by Indenture dated the sixth day of July, in the fifth year of the reign of the late King Charles the First, in consideration that Richard Gunnell and William Blgrave should at their costs and charges erect a playhouse and other buildings at the lower end of Salisbury Court, in the parish of ST. Bridget, in the ward of Farrington Without, did demise to the said Gunnell and Blgrave a piece of ground at the same lower end of Salisbury Court, containing one hundred and forty foot in length, and forty-two in breadth, To hold to the said Gunnell and Blgrave, their executors and assigns, from thenceforth for forty-one years and a half, paying therefore to the said Trustees, or the survivors of them, twenty and five pounds for the first half year, and one hundred pounds per annum for the remainder of the term, by quarterly payments; That the said late Earl and his Trustees, by indenture dated the fifteenth day of the said July, in the said fifth year of the same late King, in consideration of nine hundred and fifty pounds paid to the said late Earl of John Herne, of Lincoln's Inn, Esquire, did demise to him the said piece of ground and building thereupon to be erected, and the rent reserved upon the said lease made to Gunnell and Blgrave, To hold to the said John Herne, or his assigns, from the eighth day of the said July, for sixty and one years, at the yearly rent of a peppercorn [...] ⁶⁸⁶

By providing various definite numbers, this document makes clear how much money Gunnell and Blgrave were willing to invest in their ambitious project to

⁶⁸³ Thomas Nabbes. Epilogue. *Tottenham Court*. London: 1638. Quoted in: Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 32.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf.: Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", pp. 32f.

⁶⁸⁵ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 87.

⁶⁸⁶ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, pp. 87f (B. M. Additional MS. 5064, fol. 225).

establish London's third private playhouse. Leasing the land was not enough however and there is strong evidence that they invested at least another 1200 pounds to convert the barn on the leased ground into a hall playhouse – a very substantial sum, especially if compared to the 600 pounds paid by Burbage for the Blackfriars in 1596. One of the documents underlining this expenditure was written in the late 1650s by Gunnell's and Balgrave's heirs and addressed to the son of the late Earl of Dorsett, who had inherited the land from his father and now owned it. Among other things they grieved the following: "That our peticonrs expending neare the sum of 1200 in building & finishing the said play house and have paid neare three hundred pounds since their house was taken from them".⁶⁸⁷ In view of the fact that all theatres were closed only some twelve years after the Salisbury Court had been opened, it is more than probable that these high investments did not pay out. Thus Gunnell's and Balgrave's heirs lamented their losses to the Earl of Dorsett and told him why they were unable to continue their payments.

There are no surviving documents about the opening of the Salisbury Court, but regarding the fact that Gunnell's and Blgrave's lease started in the middle of 1629, it is likely that first performances took place some time in 1630. The transformation of the barn into a hall playhouse would have taken a certain amount of time. In view of the fact that all theatres were closed from 17th April until 12th November 1630 because of the plague, it is likely that the King's Revels Company began playing there as late as November 1630.⁶⁸⁸ The new playhouse did not turn out quite as profitable as anticipated and thus the King's Revels Company was replaced by the Prince Charles' Company in late 1631 already. As James Shirley's *Changes, or Love in a Maze* makes clear, the new troupe seems to have been equally unsuccessful:

Wee have no name, a torrent overflows
Our little lland, miserable wee,
Doe every day play our owne Tragedy.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁷ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁸⁸ Cf.: *Ibid.*, pp. 94f.

⁶⁸⁹ Shirley. Prologue. *Changes, or Love in a Maze. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 2, p. 273.

In consequence the Prince Charles' Company was again replaced by the King's Revels Company after a few years. But before that happened, another incident took place in March 1634, the same year as one of the owners, Richard Gunnell, died. The following was recorded in the burial register of the nearby church of St. Bride's: "George Wilson kild at the play house in salesburie court."⁶⁹⁰ The circumstances surrounding this incident have not been recorded, but it shows that contemporary worries about the theatres were not without reason. Bentley observes that "it may have been simply a street accident which the parish clerk was recording, but his most unusual particularity suggests more."⁶⁹¹

Both the Phoenix and Salisbury Court showed a wide range of plays reflecting the growing contemporary "dissatisfaction with the rule of Charles I, and show that audiences were interested in a 'drama that was sceptical, critical and levelling'."⁶⁹² In July 1635 Richard Brome left the services of the Red Bull theatre and signed a contract at the Salisbury Court for the duration of three years. In the light of the above-mentioned potential contract between Shirley and the Phoenix, it is probable that contracts like these were common in the Caroline drama industry. Brome's contract is of special interest for modern scholarship, because it is the only contract that has survived and the only one scholarship has definite proof of. As Bentley has detailed in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*,

Brome agreed to write exclusively for the Salisbury Court and to provide the players with three plays a year for three years. He also agreed to publish none of his plays without the consent of the company. [...] For his services the dramatist received a salary of fifteen shillings a week plus the first day's profits from each new play, which on one occasion was estimated at £5 or more.⁶⁹³

During the time of the service Brome wrote a total of eight plays for the company, among them successful plays such as *The Sparagus Garden*, *The Antipodes* or *The Queen and the Concubine*. Even though Brome was offered a new contract after the old one had expired, he subsequently left the Salisbury Court and joined the

⁶⁹⁰ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 99.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 37.

⁶⁹³ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 102.

Phoenix instead, to whom he had – in violation of his contract – already given plays when still employed at the Salisbury Court.⁶⁹⁴

There is one more contemporary document worthy of attention, namely the *Praeludium*, a kind of prologue to Brome's revival of Thomas Goffe's play *The Careless Shepherdess*, presumably written for a 1638 performance at the Salisbury Court. The play as such was probably "old in 1638, but the *Praeludium* is topical, colloquial, and evidently specially written for this theatre"⁶⁹⁵, thus making it very valuable for the purposes of my thesis. Though fictional, the *Praeludium*, a conversation between four characters, provides modern scholarship with various pieces of information on how exactly the theatre was functioning. By choosing four characters from four different parts of society – Spruce is a courtier, Spark belongs to the Inns of Court, Thrift is a London citizen and Landlord is a gentleman from the countryside – one is presented with various perspectives on theatrical habits and conditions of the time. Thrift is unhappy with what the private Salisbury Court has to offer and thus decides to leave the hall playhouse and go to the Fortune or Red Bull instead where his tastes for less sophisticated acting are better attended upon:

And I will hasten to the money Box,
And take my shilling out again, for now
I have considered that it is too much;
I'll go to th' Bull, or Fortune, and there see
A Play for two pence, with a Jig to boot.⁶⁹⁶

In his conversation with the Salisbury Court's doorkeeper Bolt, Thrift is particularly unhappy about the admission price, which at one shilling was considerably higher than what would have to be paid at the public playhouses. In consequence Thrift unsuccessfully tries to bargain with Bolt, who assures him that "When you have seen this play, you'll think it worth / Your Money."⁶⁹⁷ Thrift however is not convinced and still considers a shilling to be too much for a single performance and

⁶⁹⁴ Cf.: Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁹⁶ Richard Brome. *Praeludium*. Thomas Goffe. *The Careless Shepherdess*. London: 1656, p. 8

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

offers him to "take this groat in earnest, / If I do like it you shall have the rest"⁶⁹⁸ to which Bolt replies that the theatre

is no market or exchange, pray keep
Your aery groat that's thinner then a shadow
To mend your Worships shoes, it is more crackt
Then an old Beaver or a Chambermaid.⁶⁹⁹

In the end Thrift has no choice but to pay the full admission price, but is shocked to find out that the play has already begun. Eventually Thrift also meets the other members of the audience and realizes that people from different parts of society are present at the play. In the ensuing discussion about literary styles and theatrical habits, the other three characters arrogantly depict Thrift as uneducated and less sophisticated. Spark asks him

[...] do y' think you know
The Laws of Comedy and Tragedy?
Prethee, what kind of Beast is Helicon?
You may have skill in Horse and Sheep, and yet
Know neither l'egasus, nor Pastorals.
Alas you're ignorant of any stile
But what stands in a hedge; you never heard
Of more then the four humours of the body;
Nor did you ever understand a Plot,
Unlesse that grand one of the Powder-Treason.⁷⁰⁰

Spruce likewise insults the citizen and his differing tastes by stating that

Though you can give words soft and smooth, as is
Your Sattin Ribbon, yet your speech is harsh
To the round language of the Theater⁷⁰¹

Some time later they all seem to agree with Spark when he underlines that

Your judgements are ridiculous and vain
As your Forefathers, whose dull intellect
Did nothing understand but fools and fighting⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. 5.

Though this discussion has a very personal and insulting character, it must primarily be seen as a contemporary discussion of different styles of acting as performed in the remaining public and private playhouses. Thrift, representing the lower or middle classes, clearly prefers fights, jigs, noise and clowning as offered by the Red Bull and Fortune, whereas the higher classes of society consider these things old-fashioned and unsophisticated and consequently not fitting to the stage of the late 1630ies.

Though a fictional conversation, Brome's *Praeludium* serves as a good summary of the aspects outlined in the previous chapters, in which the key differences between the remaining six stages have been made clear. Eventually it must be emphasised once again that neither the playgoers nor the theatres can be seen as homogeneous. Different members of society had different expectations towards the stage and the theatres had to find ways to cater for these demands, resulting in the fact that some playhouses primarily tried to attract the lower classes whereas others chiefly drew the higher classes.

To conclude these chapters on the London playhouses operating between 1616 and the closure of all theatres in 1642, it is worthwhile to quote the historian James Wright, who in 1699 summarised the diversity of Early Modern London's playhouses as well as their varying audiences by stating that

[b]efore the Wars, there were in being all these Play-houses at the same time. The Black-friers, and Globe on the Bankside, a Winter and Summer House, belonging to the same Company called the King's Servants; the Cockpit or Phoenix, in Drury-lane, called the Queen's Servants; the private House in Salisbury-court, called the Prince's Servants; the Fortune near White-cross-street, and the Red Bull at the upper end of St. John's street: the two last were mostly frequented by Citizens, and the meaner sort of People. All these Companies got money, and Liv'd in Reputation, especially those of the Blackfriars, who were Men of grave and sober Behaviour.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰³ James Wright. *Historia Histrionica*. London: 1699, B3. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 301.

II.6 EARLY MODERN LONDONERS

Neither the history of the city of London, nor its entertainment history in general or the playhouses in particular can "be detached from human affairs at large"⁷⁰⁴. In order to understand Early Modern playgoers, one therefore needs to first understand Early Modern Londoners. London was, to quote Henry Peacham's *The Art of Living in London* of the year 1642, a place where

all sorts reside, noble and simple, rich and poor, young and old, from all places and countries, either for pleasure [...] or for profit, as lawyers to the terms, countrymen and women to Smithfield and the markets; or for necessity, as poor young men and maids to seek services and places; servingmen, masters; and some others, all manner of employment.⁷⁰⁵

Since a Jacobean or Caroline playgoer should not be seen "merely as a disembodied figure important only when he appears in a theater but rather as part of a total milieu existing in both England as a whole and, more significantly, in the unique society of London"⁷⁰⁶, the following paragraphs will explore the basic structure of Early Modern London society and give some background information on the people for whom playwrights such as Ford, Brome or Shirley wrote their dramatic masterpieces.

Within Jacobean and Caroline society, "relationships of authority and dependency, of desire and fear were characteristic of both the public and the domestic domains"⁷⁰⁷ and even though modern notions of class did not yet exist, class-consciousness, a crucial ingredient in class formation⁷⁰⁸, was determining life. In general the strict social hierarchies were regarded as helping to sustain order within society and Jacobean and Caroline society was "much more sharply divided into distinct social roles and functions than modern societies."⁷⁰⁹ Throughout the period, concern with

⁷⁰⁴ R. Porter. *London*, p. 4.

⁷⁰⁵ Peacham. *The Art of Living in London*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 438.

⁷⁰⁶ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 10.

⁷⁰⁷ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 176.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf.: Derek Hirst. *Authority and Conflict. England 1603-1658*. London: Edward Arnold, 1986, p. 12.

⁷⁰⁹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 58.

rank and status remained powerful [and the] vital dividing line was that which separated the gentlemen from the common people. Above that division was an explicit hierarchy of ranks; below it a complex mass of inferiors.⁷¹⁰

Though various people tried to break out of the boundaries shaping this "intensely, pervasively, visibly hierarchical"⁷¹¹ society by trying to climb the social ladder, it quite paradoxically at the same time provided the vast group of subordinates with some sort of security in a sense that they knew where they belonged in an ever-changing world. To this effect Richard Morton has detailed in his essay "Deception and Social Dislocation" that

[i]n a period of rapid social change, inevitably a sense of dislocation will be felt by many individuals. The uncertainty of their position will be reflected in confused behavior, affectation, or an exaggerated awareness of status.⁷¹²

In general "the fundamental characteristic of urban social structure in early modern times was inequality: some individuals exercised more power, commanded more respect or controlled more resources than others."⁷¹³ This differentiation is of course far too superficial and the following paragraphs will describe the actual structure of Early Modern London in more detail.

II.6.1 THE ORDER OF SOCIETY

At the centre of the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of Renaissance England was the concept of the Great Chain of Beings – seeing God on top of the hierarchy followed by angels, men and beasts – and the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, which identified the monarch as God's deputy on earth. Thus any "top-down account of early modern society would start with the monarch"⁷¹⁴ followed by the upper classes and the masses of lesser people. In his *Londinopolis* of 1657, James Howell refers to certain members of the upper classes and describes how London has bred and promoted people of high quality:

⁷¹⁰ D. C. Coleman. *The Economy of England, 1540-1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 7.

⁷¹¹ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 76.

⁷¹² Richard Morton. "Deception and Social Dislocation: An Aspect of James Shirley's Drama". *Renaissance Drama*. 9 (1966): 227-245, pp. 244f.

⁷¹³ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 139.

⁷¹⁴ Lisa Hopkins and Matthew Steggle. *Renaissance Literature and Culture*. London: Continuum, 2006, p. 42.

[...] whereof there have been great numbers of most gallant and generous, most wealthy and worthy, most eminent and munificent brave men, who had souls as large as their substance, I mean such that received, either their first being, or well being from Her [i.e. London].⁷¹⁵

As this contemporary quote hints at, within London affiliation to the upper classes was not only a matter of rank anymore, but increasingly "also of wealth and occupation."⁷¹⁶ Cook supports this top-down arrangement by observing that someone living in Renaissance England – unlike people living today – "was far more likely to define himself vertically rather than horizontally – according to those in authority above him and those in obedience below rather than according to his equals."⁷¹⁷ People were expected to stick to their assigned roles. The *Exhortacion Concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates*, a text produced by the state and to be read out in churches, stated that "Where there is no right ordre, there reigneth all abuse, carnall libertie, enormitie, syn and babilonically confusion."⁷¹⁸ In general the established view was that "those of higher status were to govern and care for their inferiors, and in return receive obedience and respect from the governed".⁷¹⁹

As Friedrichs emphasizes in *The Early Modern City*, "no society is really made up of a single hierarchy: there is always a complex pattern of intermingled chutes and ladders, and any person can occupy a multiplicity of 'social positions'."⁷²⁰ If one brings to mind that Early Modern Londoners – just like people living today – did not only belong to just one specific group, this conclusion becomes even more relevant. Regarding this "mosaic of complex hierarchies"⁷²¹, as Cook has called it, Friedrichs stresses the fact that people living in Early Modern cities like London "belonged [...] to a multiplicity of social identities: age, gender, family, neighbourhood, occupation, civic status and religion"⁷²² of which some were fixed whereas others could be

⁷¹⁵ Howell. *Londinopolis*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 353.

⁷¹⁶ Coleman. *The Economy of England*, p. 5.

⁷¹⁷ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 15.

⁷¹⁸ Quoted in: Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 21.

⁷¹⁹ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 134.

⁷²⁰ Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 140.

⁷²¹ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 12.

⁷²² Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 14.

changed. The "tensions between individual, group and communal needs and aspirations lay at the heart of all social interactions in the early modern city."⁷²³

In spite of the fact that each individual living in London at that time simultaneously belonged to more than just one group, certain superordinate groupings by which Early Modern society was categorised and shaped can be identified. According to the Early Modern worldview, people "ought to be categorised in tidy, recognizable boxes"⁷²⁴. Contemporaries such as William Harrison and Sir Thomas Smith insufficiently distinguished four principal categories of people, still based upon status and birth as well as the ancient division of "those who pray, those who fight and those who work".⁷²⁵ These were firstly nobles and gentlemen, citizens and burgesses, yeomen and finally artisans and labourers.⁷²⁶ As these orders had long ceased to reflect the changing social and political realities, one should add to these groups the newly developing "elite of wealthier business and professional men"⁷²⁷ as well as the great mass of unskilled wage-earners and poor people, who had "neither voice nor authority"⁷²⁸ and posed a particular problem in the ever-growing capital. They stood in stark contrast to the "most gallant and generous, most wealthy and worthy, most eminent and munificent brave men" described by Howell above and although poverty was nothing new, the poor as a distinct group certainly were. Capitalism led to the fact that the rich grew even richer whereas the poor grew poorer. Therefore there was a "big group of those whose distinguished mark was essentially that of inferiority, both in status and occupation"⁷²⁹. Concerning this matter Peter Laslett has stated that

[t]he term gentleman marked the exact point at which the traditional social system divided up the population into two extremely unequal sections. About a twenty-fifth [...] belonged to the gentry and to those above them in the social hierarchy. This tiny minority owned most of the wealth, wielded the power and made all the decisions. [...] If you were not a gentleman, if you were not ordinarily called "*Master*" by the commoner folk, or "*Your Worship*"; if you, like

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Picard. *Elizabeth's London*, p. 259.

⁷²⁵ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 151.

⁷²⁶ For a more detailed analysis of these four social groups as well as of the works of Harrison and Smith see: Williams. *Life in Tudor England*, pp. 46ff.

⁷²⁷ Fisher. *London and the English Economy*, p. 175.

⁷²⁸ Williams. *Life in Tudor England*, p. 66.

⁷²⁹ Coleman. *The Economy of England*, p. 5.

nearly all the rest, had a Christian and a surname and nothing more; then you counted for little in the world outside your household. [...] The labourers and husbandmen, the tailors, millers, drovers, watermen, masons, could become constables, parish clerks, churchwardens, ale-conners, even overseers of the poor [... but] they brought no personal weight to the modest offices which they could hold. As individuals they had no instituted, recognised power over other individuals, always excepting [...] those subsumed within their families. [...] To exercise power, then, to be free of the society of England, to count at all as an active agent in the record we call historical, you had to be a gentleman.⁷³⁰

The different groups living in the capital mingled only seldom in everyday-life as people of a certain class usually stayed among their peers. Though social mobility slowly began to threaten existing hierarchies to some extent, a certain class "would have been shocked to find itself lumped in with any of the others"⁷³¹. Peacham's account of 1642 supports this assumption when he writes that "we are esteemed to be such as we keep company withal, as well in estate as condition"⁷³², underlining that especially those of a better reputation tried to stay among their equals. The only two institutions in which this intermingling of different groups of society happened on a regular basis were the churches and the theatres. Yet, even here people of different backgrounds were kept apart by means of elaborate seating arrangements, even though it was regarded as the churches' task "to bind together the community"⁷³³ as a whole. The passages from the Praeludium to Brome's revival of Goffe's play *The Careless Shepherdess* have already illustrated what could happen if people of different backgrounds met. The text tells a lot about sentiments and prejudices existing at the time in question. Spark, as an Inns of Court man, is surprised to find Spruce and Thrift, who belong to different classes, together in one place and cannot but state his amazement:

What's there, a Courtier and a Citizen?
Such a conjunction is enough to make
A grand Eclipse. Sure th'one did never see
Th'other before, 'cause they are now so great.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁰ Peter Laslett. *The World We Have Lost*. London: Methuen, 1965, pp. 26f.

⁷³¹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 58.

⁷³² Peacham. *The Art of Living in London*. Quoted in: Baron. *London: 1066-1914. Literary Sources and Documents*, p. 438.

⁷³³ Hirst. *Authority and Conflict*, p. 60.

⁷³⁴ Brome. Praeludium. Goffe. *The Careless Shepherdess*, p. 3.

In spite of the fictional character of the passage quoted above, this is one contemporary example from towards the end of the period which shows that interacting between members of different social groups was not yet a commonplace. Prejudices ran high and those belonging to the lower classes often had to be prepared to be ridiculed or scorned as the following passage underlines:

Ha, ha, ha, ha! To see how their wits jump,
'Tis hard to tell which is the verier Fool,
The Country Gentleman, or Citizen:
Your judgements are ridiculous and vain
As your Forefathers, whose dull intellect
Did nothing understand but fools and fighting;
'Twill hardly enter into my belief
That ye are of this Age, sure ye are Ghosts.⁷³⁵

The playhouses strictly divided their customers by income. This was not only done to increase the companies' revenue, but also to limit the potential for aggressive or even violent behaviour when the different groups got in too close contact or got into discussions about different styles of acting as illustrated in the passage above.

II.6.2 THE EROSION OF THE SOCIAL ORDER

London's hypertrophic growth, rural exodus and the vast increase in poverty posed almost insuperable problems to London's authorities. In the wake of these cataclysmic developments, "the rapid social changes led to an increased concern for the maintenance of [social] order"⁷³⁶ – particularly in the first half of the seventeenth century. Several events of this time testify that the social order, most prominently in London, was very slowly beginning to erode and transform "as more yeomen, merchants, and lawyers crossed the vital frontier and set about strengthening from within what they had envied from without"⁷³⁷, thus proving that status was predominantly a matter of wealth and income. The threatening of both "morality and [...] stability of rank"⁷³⁸ and the eroding of the hitherto predicated "ideology of unchanging order and absolute obedience"⁷³⁹, as certain contemporary

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷³⁶ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 33.

⁷³⁷ Coleman. *The Economy of England*, p. 7.

⁷³⁸ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 118.

⁷³⁹ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 39.

groups perceived it, was mostly due to the rise of capitalism and the ensuing redistribution and polarization of both land and wealth. In consequence, the

belief in a fixed order and the realities of social change were ever in conflict. However firmly men might believe that the classes were clearly marked off from one another and that the orders of society were built into a divinely ordained pyramid, human conduct contradicted their assumption. [...] New classes, or rather new professions, were thrusting into public notice and demanded recognition.⁷⁴⁰

In this light Jenner Griffiths is right in observing that "the size of London and the diversity of its markets and material culture helped create new social [...] identities and dissolve older, more hierarchical, forms of social organization."⁷⁴¹ Even though the old proverb that 'Gentility is nothing but ancient riches' came to be more and more challenged by the increasing acquisition of new wealth, one must not forget however that this erosion of the social order was not yet quite as advanced during the Caroline Period as some eloquent contemporary critics, mainly those desiring "to preserve the social *status quo*"⁷⁴², would want their readers and listeners to believe. It would take many more years until more substantial changes and transformations would take place.

Furthermore, those most often blamed in contemporary accounts for undermining social hierarchies, namely the masses of poor people, were not the ones to blame as "it was seldom the poor who spurred the social changes for which they were scapegoated."⁷⁴³ The chance to significantly climb the social ladder was restricted to the newly developing middle classes, consisting mainly of wealthy shopkeepers, entrepreneurs or merchants profiting from the rise of capitalism. In consequence an increasingly fast expansion of the upper levels of society cannot be denied. Those in power viewed this development and the social transitions taking place with suspicion and vehemently tried to suppress these attacks on the settled notions of rank and status in order to sustain their own positions of power. Due to the new opportunities the city offered, the numbers of the more "wealthy, titled, ambitious,

⁷⁴⁰ Williams. *Life in Tudor England*, p. 75.

⁷⁴¹ Griffiths and Jenner. Introduction. *Londinopolis*, p. 3.

⁷⁴² Coleman. *The Economy of England*, p. 11.

⁷⁴³ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 45.

educated, sophisticated, and relatively idle people"⁷⁴⁴ increased much faster in London than anywhere else in England. This power and supremacy, which the old elites as well as the royal family so vehemently tried to maintain, depended to a certain extent on what Greenblatt has so aptly termed "privileged visibility", which was both "theatrically constituted and theatrically maintained."⁷⁴⁵ Now even this privileged visibility was increasingly challenged as the effects of entrepreneurship and the ensuing changing social realities enabled certain wealthy and distinguished members of society to enjoy it as well and to profit from them.

Class, authority or social hierarchies are extremely artificial, socially constructed and historically conditioned. Amussen summarises the determining factors or basis parameters resulting from this artificiality as well as the changes the social order underwent on different levels in Early Modern England:

Authority is socially constructed. The authority of particular individuals or groups rests on the conception of society developed in a particular period. It is also a product of social relations – hierarchies, distances and power – rooted in both the material and ideological worlds. Authority carries with it social and political consequences. Any change in one of the components of authority will have consequences for the others; the equation must be balanced.

In early modern England, several aspects of this equation were changing or being challenged: the economy was transformed by demographic growth and inflation; the political order was explicitly challenged by the gentry who tried to regain control of royal policy and prevent the establishment of what they sometimes perceived as absolutism; the family was changing as women in wealthy families gradually withdrew from work, and as poorer families became increasingly dependent on wages [...].⁷⁴⁶

II.6.3 THE ORDER OF SOCIETY AND THE THEATRES

The London theatres had been subject of attacks and prejudices ever since the erection of the first permanent playhouse in Shoreditch in 1576. Concerning the hierarchical structure of society, the theatre's enemies felt that the drama of the time had "constituted itself as an alternative site of authority within contemporary society, an authority radically different in its sources, appeal, and potential effects from that which sanctioned the dominant institutions of church and state"⁷⁴⁷.

⁷⁴⁴ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 95.

⁷⁴⁵ Mullaney. *The Place of the Stage*, p. 24.

⁷⁴⁶ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 187.

⁷⁴⁷ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 50.

Stressing this diagnosis, the *Refutation of the Apology for Actors*, published in 1615 and using the already familiar one-sided images and strategies to denunciate the theatres, feared the increasing influence of the playhouses and stated that

God onely gave authority of publique instruction and correction but to two sorts of men: to his Ecclesiasticall Ministers, and temporal Magistrates: hee never instituted a third authority of Players. [...] Players were ordained by, & dedicated to the Divell, which is enemy to God and al goodness.⁷⁴⁸

However, Early Modern theaters were moreover "riddled with contradictions"⁷⁴⁹. Contemporary accounts differ widely in their opinion about the dramatic achievements of the time in question. With regard to the hierarchical structure of Early Modern society, the playhouses likewise embodied a much more ambivalent position than one might initially assume. In a world which was highly theatrical in itself, the theaters "too provided something of a ritual function in society"⁷⁵⁰ since the best positions in both public and private playhouses "were not necessarily those with the best view of the actors but rather those where a spectator could be seen most prominently by the rest of the audience".⁷⁵¹ On the one hand the seating arrangement in amphitheatre auditoria in consequence reflected and "reproduced quite precisely the [...] social hierarchy, from the lowest in the yard below to the lords' rooms on the stage balcony above the actors"⁷⁵² by divided people by rank, or to be more precise, by income. The theaters, though not differentiating between the older gentry and the newly-rich, thus mirrored the social order and provided the upper classes of society with "opportunities for a public parade of status, wealth and other qualities"⁷⁵³ by nurturing the theatricality determining everyday-life. In doing so, the seating arrangement in the playhouses was, just like the placement of people in churches, "the visible representation of the local

⁷⁴⁸ Thomas Heywood, I. G. and Richard H. Perkinson. *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*. London: 1615, p. 57. Quoted in: Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 50.

⁷⁴⁹ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 45.

⁷⁵⁰ Darryll Grantley. *London in Early Modern Drama. Representing the Built Environment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 17.

⁷⁵¹ Cook. "Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention", p. 309.

⁷⁵² Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 21.

⁷⁵³ Grantley. *London in Early Modern Drama*, p. 17.

hierarchy."⁷⁵⁴ Regarding the seating arrangements in churches in particular, Amussen elaborates that

[t]he assignment of church seats ensured that the whole community was aware of the social order; there was no question of who belonged where. Church seating emphasized the importance of hierarchy in the social order, and made it clear that each had their own place as well as their own duties. It created an illusion of stability in the face of social and economic change.⁷⁵⁵

The points made by Amussen here can also be applied to other pastimes, such as the theatres where the social distinctions were also just too visible to everyone attending a play.

In spite of all this however, the playhouses were on the other hand also charged with undermining existing social orders at the same time as "anything which encouraged people to neglect their roles or change their social positions was considered unhealthy for the commonwealth."⁷⁵⁶ First of all this was due to the fact that certain plays were considered dangerous content-wise as they "crossed the barriers between the tolerable and the intolerable, linking the world of the court directly to that of the vagabond and the beggar."⁷⁵⁷ Furthermore, actors did not stick to their expected social role but on the contrary pretended to be someone else, thus explicitly personifying the social changes that authorities tried to suppress:

In the alternative world within the playhouse walls prevailed an anarchy which was threatening to external society. Men dressed up as women, rebellion triumphed, horrible crimes were committed.⁷⁵⁸

This problem was made even more complicated by the low social standings of the actors. Greenblatt argues that "becoming an actor or even a playwright was probably the worst imaginable route towards social advancement, something like becoming a whore in order to become a great lady."⁷⁵⁹ In his *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, Harbage emphasizes that "London as yet had no social milieu in

⁷⁵⁴ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 138.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁷⁵⁶ Norman Jones. "Shakespeare's England". *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 24-42, p. 36.

⁷⁵⁷ McManus. "*The Roaring Girl and the London Underworld*", p. 215.

⁷⁵⁸ Wilson. *The Archaeology of Shakespeare*, p. 38.

⁷⁵⁹ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 74.

which the mere fact of being a poet, critic, or publisher conferred prestige."⁷⁶⁰ Nevertheless – and this was a thorn in the flesh of the "conservative oligarchy of great merchants who ruled London"⁷⁶¹ – several actors and playwrights succeeded in accumulating very substantial sums of money and managed to climb the social ladder to a considerable extent once they were permanently set in the nation's capital.⁷⁶² The hitherto

lowly and frequently disreputable practice of playing had suddenly become a means to relative affluence and upward social mobility – at least for this professionals who were sharers in licensed and liveried companies and had profits sufficient to acquire real estate and to engage in moneylending and other forms of financial speculation.⁷⁶³

There are also instances showing that not all dramatists were trying to undermine or at least to question existing social orders. James Shirley, often writing plays and masques for the Court and therefore much more closely connected to the Court than his fellow dramatists such as Ford or Brome, "does not question the system but insists that it is fixed"⁷⁶⁴ in his play *The Duke's Mistress* by stating that:

Never was subject to a prince more bound
For free and bounteous graces, than Ardelia
To your highness; and with many lives to waste
In service for them, I were still in debt to you.⁷⁶⁵

This speech by Ardelia emphasises that in a hierarchical and patriarchal society everyone must know their place and trust the sovereign without questioning his authority. In doing so it is one of the few instances in which the theatre does explicitly confirm existing orders. Whether Ardelia's words also reflect Shirley's sentiments about his king Charles I and his increasingly disputed sovereignty remains an open question.

In consequence, Early Modern theatres in general – though obviously embodying a highly ambivalent position when it comes to social hierarchies – must be

⁷⁶⁰ Harbage. *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, p. 53.

⁷⁶¹ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 56.

⁷⁶² Shakespeare's relative wealth and the grant of a coat of arms in 1596 epitomize this paradoxical position of theatre professionals within Early Modern English society.

⁷⁶³ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 51.

⁷⁶⁴ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 44.

⁷⁶⁵ Shirley. *The Duke's Mistress. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 4. III, i, 201-204.

acknowledged for "bringing a diverse range of members of society together in the same building and with a common purpose, probably the only institution to do so other than the Church"⁷⁶⁶. Read like this, the theaters, "while conversely insisting upon the division of rank"⁷⁶⁷, helped to bring London's inhabitants closer together – even it only was for some two hours a day. In doing so, Early Modern playhouses were neither "essentially subversive nor recuperative"⁷⁶⁸ and embodied a very complex position, especially because admission prices, or to be more precise the ability and "willingness to pay for choice or less choice places [...] stratified the audience in ways at least potentially at odds with older modes of stratification"⁷⁶⁹.

II.6.4 EARLY MODERN FAMILIES

In Early Modern times the family was central to social order and the household was seen as "the primary unit of organization for the entire society"⁷⁷⁰ and a microcosm of the state, thus politicizing domestic relations "between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants"⁷⁷¹. Contemporary theorists often called households or families a little commonwealth, "organized and governed hierarchically like the state"⁷⁷² at large. Concerning this matter William Gouge in his *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises* wrote in 1634 that a

family is [...] a little Commonwealth [...] a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned [...] So we may say of inferiors that cannot be subject in a family; they will hardly be brought to yield such subjection as they ought in Church or Commonwealth.⁷⁷³

Four years earlier, Gouge's contemporary Richard Brathwait had already stated that "[a]s every man's house is his Castle, so is his family a private Commonwealth, wherein if due government be not observed, nothing but confusion is to be

⁷⁶⁶ Grantley. *London in Early Modern Drama*, p. 17.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 12.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁷⁰ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 13.

⁷⁷¹ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 176.

⁷⁷² Michael Bristol. "Everyday Custom and Popular Culture". *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. 121-134, p. 123.

⁷⁷³ William Gouge. *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*. 3rd Edition. London: 1634, p. 17. Quoted in: Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 37 (modernized spelling by Amussen).

expected."⁷⁷⁴ These domestic commonwealths, usually ruled by a father-sovereign, were seen by contemporaries as "a natural part of the divinely ordained scheme of things"⁷⁷⁵ and must be seen as the space within which most activities took place for most of the household-members.⁷⁷⁶ Amussen elaborates that

[t]he family was not only the fundamental economic unit of society; it also provided the basis for political and social order. It is well-known that in this period the family served as a metaphor for the state; in conventional political thought the king was a father to his people, the father king in his household. [...] The analogy implies that the family and the state were inextricably intertwined in the minds of English women and men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that we cannot understand politics [...] without understanding the politics of the family. Or, to put in another way, the ordering of households provided a model for ordering villages, counties, church and state. At the very least, the analogy means that it is inappropriate to dismiss what happened in the family as 'private'; the dichotomy so familiar to us today between private and public is necessarily false when applied to the experience of early modern England.⁷⁷⁷

In Early Modern society, apart from the aspects mentioned above, two categories provided the basis for the subordination of some people to others: age and gender. With regard to the first one, suffice it to say that younger generations are dominated by their elders until they in return are old enough to dominate the next generation. The effects resulting from this were only temporary and offered chances to escape – provided that one lived to see adulthood.⁷⁷⁸

The second category – gender – was immutable and did not offer these chances and even though women enjoyed slightly more freedom and independence in England and its capital than in other European countries, Howard is right in observing that "the Renaissance needed the idea of two genders, one subordinate to the other, as a key part of its hierarchical view of the social order"⁷⁷⁹. The role of women, as Samuel Rowlands details in his play *the Bride*, was as follows:

⁷⁷⁴ Richard Brathwait. *The English Gentleman: Containing Sundry Excellent Rules, or Exquisite Observations*. London: 1630, p. 155. Quoted in: Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 37 (modernized spelling by Amussen).

⁷⁷⁵ Michael Neill. *Putting History to the Question. Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 77.

⁷⁷⁶ A Modern Early family, apart from husband and wife and their children, could also include servants and apprentices and could thus be much bigger than one might initially think.

⁷⁷⁷ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, pp. 1f.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf.: Friedrichs. *The Early Modern City*, p. 14.

⁷⁷⁹ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 98.

Fourth dutie is, to love her owne house best,
And be no gadding gossipe up and downe,
To heare and carry tales amongst the rest.
That are the newes reporters of the towne:
A modest womans home is her delight,
Of businesse there, to have the oversight.
At publicke plays she never will be knowne,
And to be taverne guest she ever hates,
Shee scornes to be a streete-wife (Idle one,)
Or field wife ranging with her walking mates.
She knows how wise men censure of such dames.⁷⁸⁰

The role outlined in Rowland's fictional play is an idealistic one and was hardly ever met in real life. Women did indeed attend plays and not all women were as modest and passive as the passage would like them to be. Rowland's depiction of an ideal woman must thus be taken with a pinch of salt while at the same time nevertheless offering a glimpse of how male society defined the position of women. Due to the highly instructional tone of the passage and the fact that Rowland is quite specific in the issues he addresses, one can infer that for example gossiping and taking advantage of what the entertainment industry had to offer where things at least some women did enjoy – obviously to the distaste of certain (male) members of society. Edmund Tilney, giving husbands unconditional authority over their wives, summarised the differences between male and female members of society by stating that

[t]he man being as he is, most apt for the sovereignty being in government, not only skill and experience to be required, but also capacity to comprehend, wisdom to understand, strength to execute, solicitude to prosecute, patience to suffer, means to sustain, and above all, a great courage to accomplish, all which are commonly in a man, but in a woman very rare.⁷⁸¹

Resulting from this worldview, women were always seen in relation to men, be it a father, brother or husband and "according to English law they ceased to exist as legal individuals when they married."⁷⁸² Independent women in return were regarded with suspicion and since "woman was burdened with the curse of Eve, she was inferior to man physically, morally, intellectually and spiritually, it was thought,

⁷⁸⁰ Samuel Rowlands. *The Bride*. London: 1617, E1^r-1^v. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 278.

⁷⁸¹ Quoted in: Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 43 (modernized spelling by Amussen).

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

and he had to be her guide and her guardian"⁷⁸³, as Hopkins and Steggle summarise the contemporary perception of this issue. In consequence for the lesser members of a household "social identity was altogether vicarious. The family was represented to the larger community by its head [...] and those whom he commanded were 'subsumed' in his social life."⁷⁸⁴ Women stepping out of their assigned social roles threatened this structure and were often attacked in plays. An exception to this rule was Queen Elizabeth I, who, two generations earlier, had successfully ruled England for almost half a century. Elizabeth had been lucky in that a cult had developed around her in which she had embodied several personae, such as the Virgin Queen or mythological figures like the moon goddess. The public image thus created had helped her to secure her position in an otherwise male-dominated and strictly patriarchal world.

However, sometimes women did not have a choice but to run a household on their own. The high "mortality in London meant that many households, no fewer than 16 per cent in Southwark in the 1620s, were headed by women."⁷⁸⁵ In these and other instances, women thus had "authority over men – a contradiction which made gender a problem in the class system, just as class became a problem in the gender system."⁷⁸⁶

II.6.5 THE ORDER OF SOCIETY AND CLOTHING

A last aspect to be considered when talking about social structures of Early Modern society is clothing, which for centuries had been "precise indicators of status and degree."⁷⁸⁷ The ideology of a clearly structured order and absolute obedience depended very much on the ability to tell someone's social position by their dress and in "seventeenth-century London you were, at first, what you

⁷⁸³ Hopkins and Steggle. *Renaissance Literature and Culture*, p. 51.

⁷⁸⁴ Gordon J. Schochet. *Patriarchalism in Political Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1975, p. 26.

⁷⁸⁵ Archer. "Shakespeare's London", p. 50.

⁷⁸⁶ Amussen. *An Ordered Society*, p. 3.

⁷⁸⁷ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 97.

appeared to be."⁷⁸⁸ In this regard Marjorie Garber has more elaborately detailed that

[t]he ideal scenario – from the point of view of the regulators – was one in which a person's social station, social role, gender and other indicators of identity in the world could be read, without ambiguity or uncertainty. The threat to this legibility was 'confusion': 'when as men of inferior degree and calling, cannot be by their attire discerned from the men of higher estate'.⁷⁸⁹

In the theatres, actors disturbed this notion by wearing more expensive clothes than befitted their position within society, thus veiling their true identity during performances. In order to prevent this from happening outside the theatres as well, people of lower social ranks were by law not allowed to wear certain rich materials and colours. This distinction was also kept up on stage insofar as humble characters wore plain clothes and characters of a higher position were dressed in more elaborate apparel.⁷⁹⁰ Nevertheless times were slowly changing and already Phillip Stubbes had regarded the fact that clothes no longer were an indicator of rank with suspicion when he observed that people should "wear attire every one in his degree" [as] it is very hard to know who is noble, who is worshipful, who is a gentlemen and who is not"⁷⁹¹. The fact that "visible marks of status", such as clothes, badges or even coats-of-arms, could be "bought, sold, borrowed, or stolen"⁷⁹² added to the increasing confusion among contemporaries:

Many of the most powerful social institutions of church and state were invested in maintaining an official ideology of stasis and fixed identity, if not for themselves, then for those whose mobility or theatrical self-fashioning they found troubling.⁷⁹³

⁷⁸⁸ Jeremy Boulton. *Neighbourhood and Society. A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 149.

⁷⁸⁹ Marjorie Garber. *Vested Interests. Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 26.

⁷⁹⁰ The most valuable items of Early Modern theatre companies were costumes, as great and noble characters had to be dressed accordingly on stage. Heavy fines applied to actors who illegally wore these expensive costumes outside the playhouse.

⁷⁹¹ Quoted in: Picard: *Elizabeth's London*, p. 151.

⁷⁹² Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 32.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

II.7 PLAYGOING

As Gurr has argued in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, a "properly detailed historical perspective is a necessary component in any analysis of the original audiences"⁷⁹⁴. After the preceding six chapters – focusing on the interaction between drama and culture – have provided the reader with the necessary background information on what a playgoer's life looked like outside the theaters and how audiences' expectations towards the stage were shaped by a variety of external factors, one can now turn to have a closer look at what exactly playgoing involved during the period. The drama of these years "has especially suffered through insufficient attention to its audience"⁷⁹⁵ even though certain developments that took place deserve close analysis. The people attending plays during the late-Jacobean and Caroline Period were shaped and deeply influenced by Elizabethan traditions; yet they distinctively differed in certain aspects. Apart from concentrating on Shakespearean audiences of the years roughly between 1590 and 1616, the focus of modern scholarship has recently also been on the Restoration theatre public, thus ignoring the approximately 25 years in between in which a wide range of playgoers helped to further sustain and develop Early Modern drama. The progress taking place was also apparent to certain contemporaries like William Davenant, who in the prologue to his *The Unfortunate Lovers*, first performed in 1638, contrasts Caroline playgoers "with their easily satisfied predecessors, and gives a detailed account of the progress of the theatre from Elizabethan *naïveté* to Caroline sophistication"⁷⁹⁶:

[...] you are grown excessive proud,
For ten times more of wit, than was allow'd
Your silly ancestors in twenty year,
Y' expect should in two hours be given you here:
For they he swears, to th' Theatre would come
Ere they had din'd to take up the best room;
There sit on Benches, not adorn'd with Mats,
And graciously did vail their high-crown'd Hats
To every half dress'd Player, as he still

⁷⁹⁴ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁵ Clifford Leech. *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1950, p. 160.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Through th' hangings peep'd to see how th' house did fill.
Good easy judging souls, with what delight
They would expect a jig, or Target fight,
A furious tale of Troy, which they ne'er thought
Was weakly written, so 'twere strongly fought;
Laught at a clinch, the shadow of a jest,
And cry a passing good one I protest.
Such dull and humble-witted people, were
Even your fore-Fathers, whom we govern'd here;
And such had you been too he swears, had not
The Poets taught you how t' unweave a plot,
And tract the winding Scenes, taught you to admit
What was true sense, not what did sound like wit.
Thus they have arm'd you 'gainst themselves to fight,
Made strong and mischievous from what they write.⁷⁹⁷

In this prologue, Davenant, showing a high degree of self-confidence, is referring to private theatre audiences. Some of these playgoers had developed a different taste from those people frequently attending one of the three remaining public playhouses. Certain aspects criticised by Davenant here were, contrary to his depiction, still highly popular in public playhouses such as the Red Bull or the Fortune, which indeed succeeded in drawing large crowds of people enjoying and expecting less sophisticated or witty forms of drama.

In spite of the fact that Davenant's generalising view is unacceptable, it is nonetheless interesting that someone writing in the 1630s already "looks back to a barbaric past, and sees his own age as one of refinement."⁷⁹⁸ Hence it must be asserted that one cannot tar all playgoers of this period with the same brush and that, in contrast to Elizabethan times, the existence of dissimilar playhouses led to the emergence of very different types of playgoers – or vice versa. To this effect and emphasising that "audience taste could not be taken for granted" and that the commercial power exercised by Early Modern playgoers was not something to be taken lightly by contemporary theater companies, McLuskie has detailed that the

discussions of taste turned on and often conflated two distinct ideas. One was the link between taste and social status and the other the tension between tradition and innovation. Both were linked to unacknowledged commercial traditions. The increasingly intense commercial competition among playing companies and theaters made it important to

⁷⁹⁷ William Davenant. Prologue. *The Unfortunate Lovers. The Works of Sir William Davenant*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. New York: Blom, 1968, p. 120.

⁷⁹⁸ Leech. *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama*, p. 170.

differentiate the desired audiences for different theaters while the mixed repertory of revivals and new plays that sustained the expanding theatrical market needed careful aesthetic justification.⁷⁹⁹

Playgoing in the timespan between Shakespeare's death in 1616 and the closing down of the theaters in 1642 was "not simply a neutral pastime"⁸⁰⁰, but a much more complex undertaking than one might initially assume. As Richard Butsch has detailed in a recently published article, Early Modern "authorities conceived theatre and audiences as sources of disorder [while] the crowds conceived themselves as exercising legitimate rights and playwrights and performers cooperated through their scripts and performances"⁸⁰¹ with the people surrounding the stage. As this quote makes clear, the relationship between the Early Modern stage and its audiences was a very dynamic and vibrant one. The playgoers and their expectations towards the stage played an important role for the continuance and development of Early Modern drama until Parliament closed the theatres "for the preservation of the true religion, laws, liberties, and peace of the kingdom"⁸⁰².

II.7.1 THE EVIDENCE

Stephen Orgel has recently emphasised that "to understand theatre as a cultural, social, and thereby historical phenomenon we must focus on its audience" and he goes on observing that modern scholarship needs

to ask, as 'essential questions: what did the audience *see*, and how did they *feel* about what they saw?' These are, needless to say, not simple questions, and even to suggest answers requires not only the fullest attention to archival and archaeological evidence, but a willingness to entertain a broad variety of speculative and tentative hypotheses.⁸⁰³

The lack of contemporary evidence is "the most fundamental problem of working with the early modern audience" and "[t]he overwhelming majority of playgoers left no record of their attendance, let alone their reactions"⁸⁰⁴. In consequence, as

⁷⁹⁹ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 48.

⁸⁰⁰ Richard Butsch. "Crowds, Publics and Consumers: Representing English Theatre Audiences from the Globe to the OP Riots". *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*. 7:1 (2010): 31-48, p. 32.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁰² Quoted in: Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 22.

⁸⁰³ Stephen Orgel. "Introduction: A View from the Stage". *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*. Eds Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁴ Low and Myhill. Introduction. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama*, p. 9.

with most aspects of Jacobean and Caroline drama, information on the physical circumstances of playgoing is fragmentary and prone to misinterpretation. The question of audience composition has been fuelling intense scholarly debate for years, but also questions relating to actual figures of attendance, prices and seating have not yet been satisfactorily answered. It is exactly because of this scarceness of the material that the texts left behind – be it letters, diaries or account books – must be analysed with greatest care in order to restore the contacts between the playgoers and the stage and to provide an insight into the playgoing-experience of those who lived in London some 400 years ago. Even though the extant data is scarce, the Caroline audience "is the first audience to leave traces of widespread critical discussion of plays"⁸⁰⁵ – though still to very moderate extent.

In *The Shakespearean Stage*, Gurr makes out four estates of Renaissance theatre, one of which is the audience (the other three estates being the playhouses, staging and acting) and emphasizes that one should refrain from making generalisations on any of these estates.⁸⁰⁶ In order to avoid these generalisations as well as possible, the historical perspective adopted in my thesis will enable readers to get a fragmentary, but nevertheless authentic insight in the practise of playgoing in Early Modern London after Shakespeare. However, "[u]ntil someone perfects a time machine [...] no one can be certain what kind of people patronized the astounding dramatic activity of the English Renaissance"⁸⁰⁷ and the same holds also true for all other aspects relating to playgoing in England's capital in the years 1616 to 1642. "[E]ven if the miracle occurred, if we could mingle with Shakespeare's audience reincarnate, its secret would prove no more penetrable than the secret of audiences now"⁸⁰⁸, as Harbage had already pointed out some years prior to Cook. He has also underlined that "opinions [are] more abundant than facts, and the most willing witnesses not the most credible."⁸⁰⁹ In this regard Walter Greg has stated that

⁸⁰⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 107.

⁸⁰⁶ Cf.: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 260.

⁸⁰⁷ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 3.

⁸⁰⁸ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 3.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[e]very item of historical evidence performs a two-fold function: positively it enlarges the basis we have to build on, and enables us to extend the structure of valid inference; negatively it is often of even greater service in limiting the field of admissible conjecture.⁸¹⁰

In general one of the biggest problems is not only that merely a limited amount of contemporary first-hand evidence suitable to enable modern scholars to reconstruct Early Modern audiences has survived, but that only a small portion of these miscellaneous texts have been systematically analysed or published – not to mention those texts yet to be discovered in private, municipal or other archives. Another factor adding to these difficulties is that the writings suitable for the purposes of this thesis comprise kinds of text which could not be any more different and have often been neglected by literary scholars for not being 'literature' in a strict sense – such as diary-entries, travel accounts, personal or official letter, religious or political pamphlets, reports by foreign ambassadors, official orders, petitions or account books. Each of these text-types features quite distinct characteristics, which make the task of modern scholars even more complicated, while at the same time enabling them to receive a more reliable and balanced picture of the past. They offer a wide range of different perspectives and contain invaluable pieces of information of different sorts. Yet, "the writers of those few accounts did not feel obliged to make much more than a few jottings about the plays they saw. There were neither theatre reviews nor journals to publish them in"⁸¹¹, as Gurr reminds his readers in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* and he goes on observing that "[t]he major accounts need to be examined rather as normative and anecdotal stories than as expert analyses made from the top end of the playgoing range."⁸¹² Many of the surviving accounts focus rather on the plot or characters than on the physical circumstances of performance, audience composition or behaviour. An exception to this rule is the well-known and highly valuable diary of the theatre entrepreneur Philip Henslowe, whose diary "is one of the most frequently cited repositories of external evidence about early modern

⁸¹⁰ George Watson, ed. "Preface, the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy". *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London: Dent, 1962, p. 240.

⁸¹¹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 130.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

performance."⁸¹³ Though Henslowe's text focuses on many important aspects dealing with the physical circumstances of performance and moreover offer an insight into the functioning of Early Modern theatre companies, it is only of limited value for the purposes of this thesis, as the period covered lies outside the range of the present study and thus is of no help in documenting the theaters' further development up to 1642.

Another problem related to the occupation with Early Modern manuscripts is that only a limited number of the surviving documents has been published or edited yet, confronting modern scholars with the difficulty of first accessing and then deciphering the texts in question. Access to certain texts yet awaiting publication is limited and others are hard to read or sometimes even almost illegible for trained readers. This is, among other things, due to the fact that Early Modern writers employed different writing styles, such as 'hand' or 'secretary'. In addition to this, abbreviations, not always consistent, were common and further complicate the work of modern researchers. Common abbreviations were wth and w^t for with, w^{ch} for which or y^f for your. Orthography was not yet fixed so that "inconsistent spelling is so common in literary and historical manuscripts that any spelling of any word is possible."⁸¹⁴ Writers often used quite distinct spellings for the very same word in a single text and this was not necessarily a sign of ignorance or lack of education.⁸¹⁵

A lot of contemporary evidence relating to either the theaters in general or playgoing in particular "is negative evidence, in the form of antitheatrical tracts and responses to them. This is unfortunate because most of the antitheatricalists [...] did not really patronize the theatres."⁸¹⁶ Their attacks were based on hearsay and common prejudices and do not provide first-hand evidence. The existence of a vast body of antitheatrical writings depicting how "plays and playgoing in general were

⁸¹³ Andrea Stevens. "Drama as Text and Performance". *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. Ed. Michael Hattaway, 2 vols. Vol. 2. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 502-512, p. 508.

⁸¹⁴ Grace Ioppolo. "Early Modern Handwriting". *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. Ed. Michael Hattaway, 2 vols. Vol. 1. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 177-189, p. 184.

⁸¹⁵ For further information on Early Modern handwriting please consult Ioppolo's essay "Early Modern Handwriting".

⁸¹⁶ Lopez. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, pp. 19f.

perceived"⁸¹⁷ is attended by the almost complete absence of texts offering information on how Jacobean and Caroline audiences themselves thought or felt about the dramatic performances of their time. Only few playgoers bothered to write down anything dealing with how they spend their leisure time and even if they did, they contented themselves with only short notices on things such as the money spent to watch a performance. All the surviving texts were moreover written by people belonging to the upper classes. Modern scholars have almost no first-hand data on the experiences of the lower classes, because "[u]nlike the gentlemen, these classes did not leave diaries or account books and so tend to figure less prominently in accounts of the theatre audiences"⁸¹⁸.

Of those Early Modern playgoers who bothered to document their attendance and whose records have survived, the following paragraphs will exemplarily present a few of the most important ones. This short list does not claim to be complete or comprehensive, but should be seen as a means to provide my readers with a first insight into the state of evidence.

The first one of the people keeping record of their theatrical endeavours to be presented here was Sir Humphrey Mildmay, a country gentleman of Danbury, in Essex, whose diary and account book Bentley has called "[o]ne of the most promising sources of information about Elizabethan theatrical history"⁸¹⁹. It is thanks to Bentley and his wide-ranging dedication to the Caroline Period that modern scholarship has become aware of the importance of Mildmay's manuscript, now kept in the British library (Harl. MS 454). Mildmay's texts "give us a valuable record of the London theater in the reign of Charles I. So far as I know, it is the most complete of any individual's theater attendance which exists for the Elizabethan period."⁸²⁰ Even though a few more manuscripts have been discovered since Bentley wrote these lines, his observation still holds true. The manuscript is divided into two distinct parts, a diary occupying the front portion and consisting of some 200 pages, often hard to read, "covering the period from July 3, 1633, to July 9,

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸¹⁸ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 131.

⁸¹⁹ Gerald Eades Bentley. "The Diary of a Caroline Theatergoer". *Modern Philology*. 35:1 (1937): 61-72, p. 61.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

1652"⁸²¹. The latter section of the manuscript, containing Mildmay's account book, consists of 150 pages and covers "the period from January 21, 1631/32, to July 22, 1652"⁸²². Though Mildmay's diary is not as explicit about his attendances at the playhouses as one would wish, it is of immense value, as the following subchapters will show:

The diary, which gives a short account from one to five lines of nearly every day Sir Humphrey spent in London and of many of those he spent in the country, is generally little more than a bare relation of activities. It gives ample evidence, however, that the author was a regular patron of the theaters, since he recorded about six visits a year in the ten years between the opening of the account book in January 1631/32, and the closing of the theaters at the beginning of the Civil War.⁸²³

For people living in Early Modern England keeping a diary meant something quite different from it means to many people living nowadays. It was not yet a means to note down personal feelings or inmost thoughts, but rather to document everyday events or activities, organised by date. The "truly 'private' diary, with its entrusting of intimate thoughts and experience [...] does not really occur until the nineteenth century".⁸²⁴ Mildmay likewise only recorded events, but in contrast to others writing around this time, he did not primarily focus on political or military public proceedings, but on his own life. His records testify that playgoing "was an intensive activity for him. He saw five plays in the three months November 1632 to January 1633, five in November to December 1635, and in February 1639 he saw plays on the 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th".⁸²⁵ As with many other texts, "our perceptions are probably skewed by the low survival rate of manuscripts outside an aristocratic context, where the stately home would have proved a safe repository for the family papers"⁸²⁶. Though Clarke is right in observing that the physical circumstances of the aristocracy offered them with much better opportunities to preserve personal correspondence, one must also not forget that, considering the rather low rate of literacy among the lesser people, it is not very likely that those playgoers of a more

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ Ibid., p. 62.

⁸²⁴ Elizabeth Clarke. "Diaries and Journals". *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. Ed. Michael Hattaway, 2 vols. Vol. 2. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 447-452, p. 447.

⁸²⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 104.

⁸²⁶ Clarke. "Diaries and Journals", p. 451.

humble background kept journals in the first place. Even if they could, it remains debatable whether they actually saw the need to record daily events. In addition to this, almost all surviving texts were written by men, resulting in the fact that a female perspective is missing and one can hence only conjecture how the female members of the audience might have thought or felt about what they saw.

Keeping account books was not unusual either as many people wanted to keep records of their daily expenses. There are not always matching entries in Mildmay's diary and his account book so that sometimes one does not know how much exactly he spent for a certain performance. Overall he seems to have visited a total of 75 performances in the timespan indicated by Bentley above. In a review Giles Dawson once stated that much of the value of Mildmay's manuscript lies in the fact that Mildmay "was not rich, nor learned, nor ambitious, nor virtuous, nor wicked, beyond the average of his class and time."⁸²⁷ He did not try, like many others before or after him, "to elevate him[self] above obscurity"⁸²⁸, thus providing basic and unadulterated information on playgoing in the 1630s. Having said that, one would wish he had noted down a few more specific bits and pieces of information here and there about contemporary theatrical practices, audience behaviour and the interaction between stage and audience. Mildmay's

diary entries are brief and contain very little comment upon the performances, beyond an occasional observation such as "a base play," or "a pretty comedy." All too frequently the name of the play is omitted. The diarist's "expenses" at a play (never itemized) were usually about one shilling and sixpence, but ranged from sixpence to as much as seven shillings and sixpence when his wife was with him. The theatres visited include the Cockpit, the Globe, the Red Bull, and especially the Blackfriars.⁸²⁹

Since Mildmay did not only take his wife with him on several occasions, but also friends with whom he had had dinner prior to going to the playhouse, it is obvious that playgoing, apart from being entertainment, also had a social function not to be underestimated. For "Mildmay, and probably many like him, the audiences were

⁸²⁷ Giles Dawson. "Review of Philip Lee Ralph's *Sir Humphrey Mildmay: Royalist Gentleman*". *Modern Language Notes*. 63:3 (1948): 429-341, p. 429.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁹ Philip Lee Ralph. "References to the Drama in the Mildmay Diary". *Modern Language Notes*. 55:8 (1940): 589-591, p. 589.

crisscrossed by a network of friendship and kinship the extraordinary complexity of which must have made the environment at once public and intimate [...]."⁸³⁰

Another contemporary playgoer bothering to write down his experiences at the playhouse and a wide range of other things was Edward Heath, a law student, who in 1629 watched no less than "thirty-six plays in a single year"⁸³¹ and kept a notebook to record his expenses. John Elliott, who in his essay "Four Caroline Playgoers" sheds light on four contemporary playgoers, states that Heath was a very passionate guest at London's theatres "during his student days at the Inner Temple from 1628 to 1631."⁸³² In addition to this, Elliott regrets that even though many theater historians, among them Cook and Gurr, have mentioned Heath's notebook in their own studies, "it has never been published, and for some reason no one who has cited it has ever succeeded in adding up correctly the number of theater visits it records, the right number being fifty-three."⁸³³ Considering that Heath was only in London for some four years, this number, suggesting that he either "saw practically every play in the repertory of the London companies at that time, or that he went back to see his favourites more than once"⁸³⁴, is extraordinary and underlies how popular playgoing was for at least some students of the Inner Temple. Contemporary antitheatrical tracts often criticize that London's students spent too much time at the playhouses. Heath's notebook, though only representing the habits of one individual playgoer, underlines the assumption that playgoing was a popular form of entertainment among London's students. The same held true for bear-baiting, as Heath also recorded money spent for this particular branch of the capital's entertainment industry. This aspect also proves the hypothesis that Early Modern Londoners often enjoyed more than just one of the many branches of the capital's entertainment industry.

Justinian Pagitt, a law-student at the Middle Temple, kept a diary covering the years from 1633 to 1634 in which he, among a variety of other things, recorded his theatrical endeavours. Though not as passionate a playgoer as Heath, the

⁸³⁰ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 113.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁸³² Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers", p. 180.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

manuscript, partly in English and mostly in Latin, now kept in the British Library shows that Pagitt was a regular guest in London's playhouses during his time in the capital:

The format of the diary is quite intricate, each page being ruled into seven horizontal columns for the days of the week and three vertical ones for morning, afternoon, and evening. Within the resulting boxes the appropriate hours of the day are written, so that each of the day's events, however cryptically described, is precisely timed.⁸³⁵

Just like Heath's notebook, Pagitt's diary underscores the assumption that playgoing was a more than respected pastime for young people – Pagitt and Heath were both born in 1612 – studying at the Inns of Court. Elliott, mentioning two more manuscripts by John Greene III, a law student at Lincoln's Inn, and Bulstrode Whitelocke, a barrister at the Middle Temple, likewise emphasises this observation by stating that

[w]hen we turn to the contents of these documents we get some idea of how dependent the Caroline playhouses must have been on the custom of the lawyers at the Inns of Court, and in turn how central their visits to the theatre were in the routine of the students. [...] Being seen in fashionable places was an obvious asset to young men on the make".⁸³⁶

Though performances at Court and masques are only of minor interest for the purposes of my thesis, it should not go unmentioned that Pagitt's notes, in addition to the aspects outlined above, are interesting for the fact that he participated in a performance of Shirley's masque *The Triumph of Peace*. The exact nature of Pagitt's participation in the masque is not specified, but it was staged at Court in front of King Charles and Queen Henrietta, who, at least according to Pagitt, were "much pleased and taken with the sight"⁸³⁷ and requested further performances. Moreover, they invited those involved to "a rich banquet whereto the K. and Q. came and took a [seat] at the upper end of the table and then graciously smiling

⁸³⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., pp. 181f.

⁸³⁷ From the unpublished "Memorandum Book" of Justinian Pagitt at the Middle Temple. Located in the British Library, London (Harley MS 1026). Fol 50^r.

The manuscript covers the period from 1633 to 1634 and also contains notes and drafts. Most pages of the diary (until fol. 77) are ruled into seven horizontal columns for the days of the week and three vertical columns for morning, afternoon and evening. The diary is partly in English (especially the lengthy passages from fol. 77 onwards) and mostly in Latin.

upon us left us to the sole enjoying of that well furnished table"⁸³⁸, as an enthusiastic Pagitt wrote down not without a hint of pride and admiration.

John Chamberlain, writing from 1597 to 1626, composed "detailed letters of London affairs to his friend Sir Dudley Carleton. He included whatever he thought would interest Carleton."⁸³⁹ An occasional playgoer, Chamberlain hardly ever wrote much about it in the letters to his friend and instead focused on more public affairs. One big exception to this rule is a letter of the year 1624 in which he elaborately reports on the effects Middleton's highly controversial play *The Game at Chess* had on the London theatre scene:

I doubt not but you have heard of our famous play of, which hath ben followed with extraordinarie concourse, and frequented by all sorts of people old and younge, rich and poore, masters and servants, papists and puritans, wise men et. ct., churchmen and statesmen as Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Albert Morton, Sir Benjamin Ruddier, Sir Thomas Lake, and a world besides; the Lady Smith wold have gon yf she could have persuaded me to go with her. I am not so sowre nor severe but that I wold willingly have attended her, but I could not sit so long, for we must have ben there before one a clocke at farthest to find any roome. They counterfeited his person to the life, with all his graces and faces, and had gotten (they say) a cast sute of his apparell for the purpose, and his Lytter, wherin the world sayes lackt nothing but a couple of asses to carrie yt, and Sir G. Peter or Sir T. Mathew to beare him companie. But the worst is in playing him, they played sombody els, for which they are forbidden to play that or any other play till the Kings pleasure be further knowne; and they may be glad yf they can so scape scot-free: the wonder lasted but nine dayes, for so long they played yt.⁸⁴⁰

Chamberlain does not only provide a certain amount of information on how the play was conceived by contemporaries, but he also allows modern readers to get an insight into the physical circumstances of performance and the composition of audiences.

As Jonathan Gibson has pointed out, "[l]etters were ubiquitous in the early modern period"⁸⁴¹ and, in contrast to diaries, a rather vast body of letters written between the years 1616 and 1642 has survived until today. Only a very limited number of these correspondences deals with either the theaters in general or playgoing in

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ Sara Jayne Steen. *Ambrosia in an Earthen Vessel. Three Centuries of Audience and Reader Response to the Works of Thomas Middleton*. New York: AMS Press, 1993, p. 46.

⁸⁴⁰ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 2, pp. 577f.

⁸⁴¹ Jonathan Gibson. "Letters". *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. Ed. Michael Hattaway, 2 vols. Vol. 2. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 453-460, p. 453.

particular so that once again one must try to draw conclusions from a small body of evidence, making such letters as the one quoted by Chamberlain above even more valuable. Many other letters, often following a clear-cut structure, deal with family matters, politics, business or religion. As with other texts such as diaries, it remains to be hoped that future findings of yet undiscovered letters will help modern scholarship to get a clearer picture of Early Modern culture.

In addition to the playgoers alluded to above, one should also mention a manuscript highlighted by Linda Levy Peck, who, unlike for example Bentley, Cook or Gurr, draws particular attention to the fact that certain female members of the aristocratic Cecil family, such as Lady Ann Cecil, daughter of the second Earl of Salisbury, also attended plays at the Globe or Blackfriars during the Caroline Period. Though these so-called Hatfield House accounts, documenting the expenses of the Cecils and covering several decades, have been analysed by various scholars for their information on household expenses, no one paid much attention on the money spent on attending plays. As Peck emphasises, modern scholars analysing the audience composition of Early Modern playhouses often argue "from literary evidence that women were a significant part of the audience at Renaissance plays and call [...] for a more thorough search for evidence of women's attendance."⁸⁴² Such evidence is rare and most extant records reflect male perspectives. The Hatfield House accounts prove that women were also frequent playgoers and enjoyed being entertained by theatrical performances.

"Access to these account books is limited"⁸⁴³ and in addition to this the records are often incomplete – the same holds true for the microfilm-copies made by the Folger Shakespeare Library in the 1950s. In spite of this, the accounts and calendars "include records of payments for boats, footmen, torches, and plays, records that most theater historians have not used but which may prove useful."⁸⁴⁴ As with Mildmay's diary, there are moreover not always matching entries in the account books and the calendars, thus making it sometimes hard to draw definite

⁸⁴² Linda Levy Peck. "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House". *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 51 (2000): 474-477, p. 474.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 475.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

conclusion. Nevertheless the manuscripts show that not only the male members of the family were regular guests at certain playhouses such as the Globe and that the family also spent considerable sums for their transportation, like coaches or boats, from Salisbury House to the Bankside.⁸⁴⁵

A further Caroline playgoer, whose manuscript is now kept in the British library (Add MS 22608), is Abraham Wright. His manuscript contains excerpts from a total of 34 plays, "and for each play, in addition, there is a critical comment"⁸⁴⁶, thus making this manuscript highly valuable for theatre historians aiming to find out more about how contemporary audiences felt about certain productions. To this effect Kirsch has summarised that

[t]he characteristics which Wright assumes to be essential to good drama are precisely those which flourished on the Caroline stage: elegant and figurative lines; varied, intricate, surprising, though perspicuous plots; and strong but decorous characterizations. [...] What Wright most admires is what his age most admired: the tradition of tragicomedy established by Beaumont and Fletcher and maintained by their most popular Caroline disciple, James Shirley.⁸⁴⁷

Wright's taste and point of view were however predominantly shaped by what the private playhouses had to offer during the 1630s, thus not offering a glimpse of how audiences at the public theatres perceived what they were seeing. Nevertheless Wright's accounts are unique and highly valuable for the reason that they, unlike the other texts introduced so far, do not solely focus on the physical circumstances of performances, but rather on the author's individual perception of specific plays. Although Wright cannot be seen as an expert on drama, his subjective remarks about the aspect he himself liked or disliked are of great importance for they are of help in getting a better picture of what exactly Caroline playgoers might have expected from dramatic performances in general.

A last contemporary playgoer worth mentioning was Sir Edward Dering of Kent, who watched four or more plays a months during the 1620s and – just like Mildmay – often took friends to see the plays with him, thus underlining how sociable playgoing had become for members of the upper classes and that at least

⁸⁴⁵ Cf.: Peck. "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House", pp. 474ff.

⁸⁴⁶ Kirsch. "A Caroline Commentary on the Drama", p. 256.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

the private playhouses were considering to be adequate places for well-to-do members of Early Modern society.⁸⁴⁸ What is furthermore interesting about Dering's passion for dramatic performances is that he was a well-known Member of Parliament during the years 1640 to 1642, proving that playgoing had developed to be respectable enough for MPs to bring "distinctly parliamentary touches to the London theatres"⁸⁴⁹.

Another issue that should not go unmentioned when talking about evidence about Early Modern playgoers is the Records of Early Modern Drama project (short REED), a long-term venture meant to systemically study textual evidence relating to Early Modern dramatic performances. Over the past 35 years, the REED team has published an impressive amount of printed books and also enables researches to assess their online database:

An internationally coordinated project headquartered at the University of Toronto, REED gathers, publishes, and interprets a range of data about medieval and early modern performances across England. The project is not limited to the performance of professional plays in London; in their own words, REED 'examines the historical MSS that provide external evidence of drama, secular music, and other communal entertainment and ceremony from the Middle Ages until 1642.'⁸⁵⁰

Though ground-breaking discoveries for the period of time relevant for this thesis are yet to be awaited, the REED team has done modern scholarship an immense favour by systemically ordering already identified as well as new pieces of evidence and making them more easily accessible for people around the globe.

To sum up this chapter on the state of evidence, it is worthwhile to quote the theater historian Stephen Orgel, who wrote that

[t]he ideal of theatre history is to see with the eyes of the past, but it is an elusive, and in some ways illusory, ideal. Theatre history is no different from any other kind of history, and the past it reveals changes as both what we conceive to be evidence and what we want from the past changes.⁸⁵¹

As the preceding lines have shown, the study of late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences and a reliable reconstruction of the past are hindered by the restricted

⁸⁴⁸ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 104.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁸⁵⁰ Stevens. "Drama as Text and Performance", p. 509.

⁸⁵¹ Orgel. "Introduction: A View from the Stage", p. 1.

availability of suitable data. Although the examples provided in this chapter might suggest that the state of evidence is actually not that bad, one should not forget that these few manuscripts make indeed up a rather large proportion of all surviving texts extant from the period. In view of the fact that many of these documents are moreover incomplete or, as is often the case, rather indefinite when it comes to provide detailed information on the plays visited, one must try even harder to make the most of them. In fact, most of the accounts introduced above only seldom explicate the name of the play and the playhouse visited, leaving modern readers to speculate on what exactly the money mentioned had been spent.

In addition to this, the extant texts are dominated by a male upper-class perspective and some of them deserve a yet closer reading than has hitherto taken place. Nevertheless and in spite of the problems outlined above, the existing pieces of information, comprising a wide-range of different texts all adding to the greater picture, as well as the approach followed in this thesis afford

a rich opportunity to observe the interaction of culture and theater; though gaps in our knowledge render some of our speculative, our research builds on a solid body of knowledge drawn from [...] cultural anthropology as well as from historical documents.⁸⁵²

II.7.2 OF AUDIENCES AND SPECTATORS

The “strongest way of registering the essential difference between play-going in Shakespeare’s time and now is to register the etymological difference of an audience from a spectator.”⁸⁵³ First of all it is important to consider that the term audience “implies a crowd, whereas a spectator is an individual.”⁸⁵⁴ Yet, as many scholars and critics of Early Modern drama have shown, ever since the Middle Ages dramatic performances were essentially a public spectacle, involving a “merging of consciousnesses”⁸⁵⁵. However, “[t]he emotional power shared by crowd is more powerful but far less easily recorded than an individual’s response to a play.”⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵² Low and Myhill. Introduction. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama*, p. 10.

⁸⁵³ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 1.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁵⁵ Berry. *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience*, p. x.

⁸⁵⁶ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 102.

Scholars are again lacking contemporary records providing solid information on the responses resulting from this collective emotional power of Jacobean and Caroline audiences. What one does have however are the reactions of certain individual playgoers, who felt the urge to note down their impressions and thoughts, such as Mildmay or Wright. In addition to this, one should generally refrain from generalising and viewing a particular audience as a homogeneous group. Though watching a theatrical performance in Jacobean and Caroline London was something to be actively shared with the great masses of other people surrounding oneself, responses could be very diverse and the individual playgoers often had conflicting or at least differing sentiments about what they were watching. So while identifying Early Modern dramatic performances as group experiences, one must at the same time be careful not to forget that these groups consisted of distinct people with individual thoughts and attitudes, which were directly influenced and shaped by the dynamics forming the basis of playgoing as a joint practice.

Early Modern drama thus stands in stark contrast to modern performances, which are much more distant and cannot be seen as a communal event or as catering for a group awareness anymore. Modern theatres with their darkened auditoriums and rather rigid forms of etiquette have transformed playgoing into an individual act and “we have almost totally lost the feeling of experiencing a play as a member of a crowd.”⁸⁵⁷ In contrast to this, Jacobean and Caroline theatregoers “took their theatrical pleasure in huge public buildings”⁸⁵⁸ and perceived dramatic performances as something that needed to be shared with a huge crowd:

An audience then was very conscious of itself and its part in the theatre event, whereas today, except in Brechtian productions, directors usually try to make an audience forget itself and succumb to the performance. A modern audience sitting in virtual darkness looking at a well-lit stage is lured into concentrating on whatever takes place there, simply because there is not much to see in the auditorium. The actors, under controlled lighting, can play in a small, realistic style, since they need not strain for the audience's attention. Imagine, by contrast, a house almost as well illuminated as the stage, where spectators could see one another throughout the performance. The seating arrangement placed many of them along each side of the auditorium, opera-house style, with a splendid view of other playgoers.

⁸⁵⁷ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 210.

⁸⁵⁸ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 13.

An audience in such a theatre will be less likely to remain quiet, and performers may be drawn toward a larger-than-life style.⁸⁵⁹

One aspect mentioned by Langhans here deserves further emphasis, namely the fact that Early Modern audiences themselves played an active part during a performance. They embodied a crucial role in each theatrical production and determined a play's rise or fall. Playwrights could not write without keeping their audience in mind and were moreover well aware of the playgoers' importance for the success of a performance. Thus they found various metatheatrical ways to break down the fourth wall between the fictive world of the play and the real world of the people surrounding the stage to incorporate the audience into the play and to immediately communicate with them. Butler underlines this assumption by stating that "the many prologues and epilogues of the decade repeatedly defer to the spectator's judgment; they imply an audience of active taste, critical, discriminating and alert."⁸⁶⁰

Playgoers during this time very much expected to be treated that way. As the textual evidence makes clear, Early Modern playgoers wanted their presence to be acknowledged and ignoring the multitude of men, women and children clearly visible on three sides of the stage – talking, laughing, eating, drinking and shouting – would in consequence not at all have been a feasible option. To this effect Gurr has emphasised that "[w]e have lost the arts and all the effects of such three-dimensional staging. An Elizabethan 'audience' was a crowd, listening in three dimensions. Modern 'spectators' are individuals, viewing and thinking in two."⁸⁶¹

John Brown in his book *Studying Shakespeare in Performance* likewise highlights the extensive transformation playgoing has undergone since the Early Modern Period by asserting that

[a]lso gone is the assumption that the audience belongs to the same world as the actors, separated according to their roles of watchers or performers but sharing the same light under the same sky. That is not possible when a stage faces the audience and is not surrounded by it, and when productions are augmented by sound and lightning effects that have been

⁸⁵⁹ Edward A. Langhans. "The Theatre". *The Cambridge Companion to Restoration Theatre*. Ed. Deborah Payne Fisk. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 1-18, p. 12.

⁸⁶⁰ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 108.

⁸⁶¹ Andrew Gurr. "A New Theatre Historicism". *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*. Eds Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 71-88, p. 80.

developed for large-scale and fantastic musicals. Some of the audience in an Elizabethan theatre would have sat in galleries immediately adjacent to the acting area and favoured members were accommodated on the stage itself. Reports tell of audience members talking to the actors during a performance or leaving their places to take part in the action.⁸⁶²

In contrast to this, modern theatre producers prefer darkened auditoriums for their audiences

because it enhances the effect of stage lightning and strengthens the visual impact of performances. It is also liked by audiences because it enhances their privacy and encourages quiet behaviour: going to a theatre has become a serious business that requires an unrestricted view of the stage and the peace of mind to respond as each individual wishes.⁸⁶³

Early Modern audiences in contrast did specifically not want to have this feeling of privacy described by Brown and were constantly aware of sharing a group life with the other members of the audience. People watching plays in Jacobean or Caroline London expected immediate contact between themselves and the actors performing on stage and desired the experience of not being quiet individual members, but of belonging to an active, participating and communicating crowd. Francis Bacon in his *The Advancement of Learning* of the year 1625 provides a contemporary perception of this matter. He adds by way of explanation that one of the theatres' tasks, namely to instruct and educate the audience, was among others things achieved by the fact that Early Modern performances were something to be actively shared with a multitude of other people:

The action of the theatre, though modern states esteem it but ludicrous, unless it be satirical and biting, was carefully watched by the ancients, that it might improve mankind in virtue; and indeed many wise men and great philosophers have thought it to the mind as the bow to the fiddle; and certain it is, though a great secret in nature, that the minds of men in company are more open to affections and impressions than when alone.⁸⁶⁴

Modern western productions, even in those theatres aiming to specifically reproduce the experience of playgoing in Early Modern London are bound to fail in their attempt to recreate authentic performances of past times because "it is

⁸⁶² John Russell Brown. *Studying Shakespeare in Performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 200f.

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁸⁶⁴ Francis Bacon. *The Proficiencie and Advancement of Learning, Divine and Humane*. 2 vols. London: 1605. Rev. 1625. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 282.

impossible to change minds and habitual responses"⁸⁶⁵. Present-day playgoers are too much shaped by the changes having occurred since Early Modern times and their behaviour is generally too deeply influenced by modern practises and expectations, so that authentic reproductions of past performances are doomed to fail for the reason that one very crucial part, namely the role of the audience and its intimacy with the actors, has lost its determining function.

Furthermore, modern theatre performances are much more designed as visual spectacles than their Renaissance equivalents. Playwrights like Ford, Brome or Shirley wanted their audience to listen to their verse and to use their ears rather than their eyes. The Latin word for audience, *audientia*, specifically relates to the sense of hearing, whereas *spectator* is linked to seeing and watching. The modern use of *spectator* for people watching a soccer game proves that this differentiation is still valid nowadays, since in this case the term *spectator* is used for an event in which "the eye takes in more information than the ear."⁸⁶⁶

In order to be able to better understand this Early Modern focus on hearing, one must keep in mind that Jacobean and Caroline playgoers were part of a largely oral and aural culture. Since literacy was still low, people were much more trained in and accustomed to "sermons and other formalized public speech"⁸⁶⁷ and thus "were an audience who *listened*."⁸⁶⁸ Kermode illustrates this very fact by observing that

[i]t is true that the audience, many of them oral rather than literate, were trained, as we are not, to listen to long, structured discourses, and must have been rather good at it, with better memories and more patience than we can boast. If you could follow a sermon by John Donne, which might mean standing in St. Paul's Churchyard and concentrating for at least a couple of hours, you might not consider even *Coriolanus* impossibly strenuous.⁸⁶⁹

Early Modern playgoers were much more able to follow the spoken word and did hence not rely on elaborate visual spectacles accompanying a play.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, Jacobean and Caroline playgoers were much better at imagining things not actually shown on stage, such as huge battle

⁸⁶⁵ Brown. *Studying Shakespeare in Performance*, p. 202.

⁸⁶⁶ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 102.

⁸⁶⁷ Kermode. *The Age of Shakespeare*, p. 67.

⁸⁶⁸ Frank Kermode. *Shakespeare's Language*. London: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 4.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

scenes, which were in fact only presented by a handful of actors. Concerning this, Alan C. Dessen argues that “repeatedly, Shakespeare asks his audience to accept a part for the whole, to supply imaginatively what cannot be introduced physically onto the open stage.”⁸⁷⁰ However, by focusing on what is being said rather on what is being performed, Early Modern playgoers were both able and “willing to make this imaginative leap”⁸⁷¹. Yet the fact that “language was exalted as the most important element of early modern drama, not spectacle”⁸⁷² does not mean that the drama of the time in question did not offer any visual spectacle at all or that the visual dimension of the plays was not of importance. Elaborate and extensive costumes, as well as various stage properties ensured that the stage was not totally bare of items helping to create a certain illusion. Nevertheless, “[g]iven how quickly plays were produced and performed, with the same play seldom staged on consecutive days [...] companies would not be inclined to invest in spectacular visual effects designed for one play alone.”⁸⁷³ However, people seeking amusement in Early Modern London did anticipate a certain degree of spectacle so that the playwrights’ wish to the audience to rather use their ears than their eyes must be seen as somewhat idealistic, although it is true that playwrights and players “usually evoked settings through textual allusions.”⁸⁷⁴ This holds especially true of Jonson, who repeatedly insulted audiences who came to see rather than hear. In the prologue to his 1626 play *The Staple of News*, Jonson lets the actor speaking the prologue declare that

For your owne sakes, not his, he bad me say
Would you were come here to heare, not see a Play.
Though we his Actors must prouide for those,
Who are our guests, here, in the way of showes,
The maker hath not so; he'ld have you wise,
Much rather by your eares, then by your eyes.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷⁰ Alan C. Dessen. *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 12.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁷² Stevens. "Drama as Text and Performance", p. 507.

⁸⁷³ Garrett A. Sullivan, Patrick Cheney and Andrew Hadfield, eds. Introduction. *Early Modern English Drama. A Critical Companion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. xii.

⁸⁷⁴ Keenan. *Renaissance Literature*, p. 72.

⁸⁷⁵ Jonson. Prologue. *The Staple of News. The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6, p. 282.

II.7.3 CONTEMPORARY REACTIONS TO PLAYS

Jacobean and Caroline drama saw itself faced with a wide range of antitheatrical prejudices, passed on to modern readers in diverse forms of cultural production. In 1625, an anonymous enemy of the London theater scene, both criticising players as well as playgoers and making use of the prevailing rhetoric employed in these instances, wrote in his *A Shorte Treatise of Stage-Playes* that

the hearers and beholders, who being baptised into the name of Christ are brought into danger of Gods wrath, and their owne condemnation, in as much as they are partakers of the sinnes of the Players and the Playes in approving them.⁸⁷⁶

Moreover there is a rather huge body of texts depicting how Jacobean and Caroline playwrights saw their audiences and reacted towards them. In 1616, William Fennor, bitterly complaining about the unfavourable reception of his *Sejanus*, wrote down the following lines in which he, just like Jonson had done numerous times before and after him, heavily criticises London's playgoers for their tastes:

[...] sweet Poesye
Is oft convict, condem'd, and judg'd to die
Without just triall, by a multitude
Whose judgements are illiterate, and rude.
Witnesse Sceianus, whose approved worth,
Sounds from the calme South, to the freezing North.
And on the perfum'd wings of Zepherus,
In triumph mounts as farre as Aeolus,
With more then humane art it was bedewed,
Yet to the multitude it nothing shewed;
They screwed their scurvy jawes and look't awry,
Like hissing snakes adjudging it to die:
When wits of gentry did applaud the same,
With Silver shouts of high lowd sounding fame:
Whil'st understanding grounded men contemn'd it,
And wanting wit (like fooles to judge) condemn'd it.
Clapping, or hissing, is the onely meane
That tries and searches out a well writ Sceane.
So is it thought by Ignoramus crew,
But that good wits acknowledge's untrue;
The stinkards oft will hisse without a cause,
And for a baudy jeast will give applause.
Let one but aske the reason why they roare
They'll answere, cause the rest did so before.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁶ Anon. *A Shorte Treatise of Stage Playes*. London: 1625. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 282.

In addition to these texts speaking, on the one hand, unfavourably of the capital's playhouses and the performances offered at these venues and, on the other hand, the authors', often likewise critical, view on their paying customers, there is also a small body of texts documenting the experiences, thoughts and feelings of individual playgoers. Their voices – often neglected by modern scholarship – will be made heard again in the following paragraphs to further enhance my readers' picture of Early Modern playgoing.

These texts, often in the form of diary entries or personal correspondence, offer modern scholars an invaluable glimpse at how contemporaries perceived one of the branches of the Early Modern entertainment industry. They also help modern readers to understand what exactly playgoers expected when attending a performance at one of the six remaining playhouses. The aim of this chapter is therefore to depict the view of those contemporaries who actually attended the capital's theatres during the years 1616 to 1642. It thus stands in stark contrast to Chapter II.1.4, which provided contemporary evidence of people who often had never been to a playhouse themselves and based their opinions on hearsay and popular prejudices having circulated ever since the erection of the first permanent playhouse in 1576, such as "the transgressive nature of the plays and performance, encouraging immortality, disorder and even subversion."⁸⁷⁸ Acting companies saw themselves faced by the difficult task to satisfy a wide range of differing and often conflicting tastes, desires and expectations. The state of evidence does not enable modern scholars to generate a very detailed picture of how contemporary playgoers felt about the performances they attended. It is for this reason that one cannot disregard the few pieces of evidence one does have and must subject them to an even closer analysis. This chapter will predominately focus on those playgoers who have already been exemplarily introduced in previous chapters and highlight what exactly they had to say about the plays they watched in one of London's playhouses.

⁸⁷⁷ William Fennor. *Fennors Descriptions, or A True Relation of Certain and Diuers Speeches Spoken Before the King and Queenes Most Excellent Maiestie, the Prince his Highnesse, and the Lady Elizabeth's Grace*. London: 1616, B2^r-3^r. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 275.

⁸⁷⁸ Butsch. "Crowds, Publics and Consumers", p. 36.

As often with evidence based on personal evaluations, it is not always easy to grasp in retrospect why a certain play was more approved or what exactly it was that led people like Mildmay to term a play "a fooleishe one"⁸⁷⁹. This is also due to the fact that many pieces of contemporary evidence are not as elaborate and detailed as one might wish. Thus quite often judgments like "[...] after dynner to a fooleishe play att the fryers"⁸⁸⁰ or "[...] from thence to a playe a fine one"⁸⁸¹ are all there is, without offering any explanation why this particular play was approved or disapproved respectively. In Mildmay's case it is moreover peculiar that he, having attended many performances during his time in London, quite often seems to have considered playgoing a waste of time when he wrote sentences like "[...] to a play & loitred all the day"⁸⁸² or "[...] to dynner & then to the Newe play att Bl:fryers wth my Company where I loste the whole day"⁸⁸³. In general Mildmay's diary testifies that his passion for theatrical performances diminished to a certain extent in the final years before Parliament put an end to professional acting. Not only have his visits to the theatres become less frequent, but he had less joy in watching the performances he attended. In the light of the above it is therefore so much the worse that his accounts do not provide any reasons explaining this overall shift in tone. Mildmay did not feel the need to provide explanations for his judgments and merely decided to keep a rather impersonal account of his daily life and his expenses. One can thus only speculate whether his steadily increasing dissatisfaction resulted from a change Caroline drama underwent in its final years or whether his altered attitude was due to a change in how he personally felt about attending performances in general. In view of the fact that he only very rarely coupled his comments with the name of a play, it is even harder to find an answer to that particular question. Yet, even though one does not learn much about the audience of which Mildmay was part, these few lines prove that Early Modern acting companies did not always succeed in their above stated aim to satisfy and

⁸⁷⁹ From the unpublished diary of Sir Humphrey Mildmay (July 3, 1633-July 9, 1652). Located in the British Library, London (Harleian MS 454). Entry from the 20th March 1633/34, D, 6.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid., entry from the 1635 (exact date not specified by Mildmay), D, 12^v.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., entry from the 29th November 1634, D, 8^v.

⁸⁸² Ibid., entry from the 8th May 1640, D, 31^v.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., entry from the 15th May 1640, D, 31^v.

meet the expectations of their paying customers. The comment also attests that even people who seem to have had a pronounced passion for playgoing could be quite harsh in their judgments and critical of what was put before them. In the absence of any explanations or further comments one can only speculate on whether certain verdicts were based on expert or at least well-informed knowledge of theatrical practices or whether people like Mildmay, though a frequent guest at various venues, just made subjective and amateurish evaluations.

On the 21st of January 1634, Mildmay first visited "a play att Bla:fryers" before then watching how a "warde was hanged att grayes Inn lane, eande, & one attt longe lane eande for a foule rape"⁸⁸⁴. Mildmay does not write anything about the play he watched and rather provides more information on the execution. Nonetheless these two entries prove how closely playgoing and other forms of entertainment went together. Mildmay does not seem to have made a great distinction between these two forms of public pastimes and mentions them almost in one breath, in doing so verifying how London's manifold attractions shaped and influenced what people expected to be shown on stage.

In contrast to Mildmay, Abraham Wright elaborately commentated on why exactly he favoured one play over another or what he considered to be good or bad about a particular play. Wright's comments are of very high value for theatre historians for the reasons that he frequently bothered to provide detailed explanations on what exactly it was that led him to render a certain verdict. Wright always made sure to write down the title and the author of the plays he watched – though not the venue – , thus making it a lot easier for modern scholars to come to definite conclusions. When assessing a play, Wright would often follow the same procedure: after mentioning the play's and playwright's name, he would then state whether he liked or disliked it before often providing descriptions supporting his judgment. About John Webster's *The Devil's Law Case*, for instance, Wright wrote

[b]ut an indifferent play, the plot is intricate enough, but if rightly scanned be found faulty, by reason many passages doe either hang together, or if they doe it is so sillily as noe man can perceive them likely to bee euer done; as in the first act from the scene beetwixt Ercole, Romelio, Jolenta toward the beginning of the 2d act. The passage in the 3d act where Romelio

⁸⁸⁴ From the diary of Sir Humphrey Mildmay, entry from the 21st January 1634, D, 5^v.

comes to kill Contarino beeing allready wounded and not likely to liue is good, as by this speech of the surgion there is plaine. [...] About the beeginning of the 4th act there's a good scene to expresse a lawyer and his pleading by under the name of Contiluppo.⁸⁸⁵

This first example shows how structured and detailed Wright's comments about the plays he watched are. In the case of Webster's play, Wright addresses various aspects allowing him to evaluate the play, such as the plot or individual characters. His comment is well-structured and he picks out specific aspects of certain acts to underline his introductory thesis. What is moreover interesting is that Wright, even though he does not seem to have liked Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* all that much, nevertheless does not provide an unilateral comment just focusing on the failed aspects of the play. Wright, on the contrary, also finds room to mention certain aspects he enjoyed and found put well into practise. This balanced depiction allows readers to gain an even closer insight on what certain contemporary playgoers based their judgments of plays and what they expected from the playing companies.

A further example from Wright's notes is concerned with Shirley's tragicomedy *The Young Admiral*. In general Wright developed a particular liking for Shirley's plays, which does not mean however that one does not find comments in his manuscript criticising certain plays by Shirley, such as when he writes of *The Changes* that it was "[b]ut an ordinary play. The lines nothing neere soe good as those in his others plaies: the plot but plaine, and the same humour in many parts [...].⁸⁸⁶ It is of great interest that Wright relates certain plays to other works of the same author, thus proving that not all pieces of one playwright were equally well received by Jacobean and Caroline audiences. In contrast to *The Changes*, Wright talks almost enthusiastically about *The Young Admiral* and provides a very detailed commentary:

A very good play, both for lines and plot, the last beeing excellent: in which hee seems to follow Barclaies Argenis or the like history, where a man is now ioyed at the passages as all goeing according to his minde, and anon hees taken of: there beeing much variety in the plot. Act: 3 the scene beetweene Vittori and Cassandra is good: and act the 4 the scene beetwixt Alphonso and Allberto. Vittoris is a good part for the braue spirited and vertuous souldier. Fabio for a talkactiue impertinent courtier, who when hee brings newes which would most willingly bee heard, vses a great deale of friuolous circumstances ere hee comes to the

⁸⁸⁵ From Abraham Wright's unpublished book *Excerpta Quaedam per A. W. Adolescentem*, British Library, London (Add MS 22608). Quoted in: Kirsch. "A Caroline Commentary on the Drama", p. 257.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid.

matter. Pazzorello a foolish fellow which was persuaded hee was shot free, and soe was ventrous. But the plot is full of variety, and to be imitated as soone as any; and in which hees excellent, which when hee has brought you to the upshot as it were of a passage, hee then takes you with a contrary which you would nere expect: As when Vittori coming with Conquest from the Sicilian, who would not expect but hee should bee riceaud with ioy; when hee is banished and after when hee was cast by a storme amongst his enimies which were before Naples his natiue country which hee should bee forcd to redeame his Cassandra by vndertaking to fight against his owne country, an when hee had fully determind it how strangely hee was fetched of: which was done by the prince beeing taken by the Sicilian, and the daughter of Sicily flying from her fathers campe, and deliuering herselfe up into the hands of the K of Naples whose sonne her beeloued was prisoner in her fathers campe.⁸⁸⁷

As before, Wright takes out individual scenes and characters to undermine his superior thesis of *The Young Admiral* being a "very good play". What he seems to have particularly liked about Shirley's play this time is that the play features a many-sided plot with various unexpected twists and turns. However, what these two passages make also clear is that Wright did not only come to a playhouse to be entertained by a well-engineered and suspenseful plot. The language used by the playwright seems to have been equally important for him and whereas he rejects the lines in Shirley's *The Changes* as being substandard, he enjoyed them in the later play *The Young Admiral*.

Regarding *The Young Admiral*, scholars are in the lucky position that not only Wright's commentary has survived, but also a passage in the records of Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels during Charles' I reign. Herbert, often very critical and harsh in his judgment of the playtexts brought before him, likewise considered Shirley's play a very good one – even so for different reasons, it could be argued. As Master of the Revels, Herbert's primary concern was to make sure that no plays subversive in either content or language or plays endangering the peace of the realm were put into performance. Unlike Wright and his fellow playgoers, he was in consequence less interested in the potential certain plays had to entertain and enthuse their audiences, but instead judged dramatic works according to their subversive potential. In addition to this, Herbert based his critical comments on the reception of the written playtexts rather than on the actual performances, in doing so not providing his professional perception of acted plays. In spite of all these

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

limitations, Herbert's comments on *The Young Admiral* should not be disregarded.

After having read Shirley's manuscript in 1633, Herbert recorded in his diary that

[t]he comedy *The Yonge Admirall*, being free from oaths, prophaness, or obsceanes, hath given mee much delight and satisfaction in the readinge, and may serve for a patterne to other poetts, not only for the bettring of maners and language, but for the improvement of the quality, which hath received some brushings of late.

When Mr. Sherley hath read this approbation, I know it will encourage him to pursue this beneficial and cleanly way of poetry, and when other poetts heare and see his good success, I am confident they will imitate the original for their own credit, and make such copies in this harmless way, as shall speak them masters in their art, at the first sight, to all judicious spectators.⁸⁸⁸

Considering Shirley's close affiliation to the Court, it is not surprising that Herbert could find nothing subversive or potentially dangerous in *The Young Admiral* and, emphasising drama's ability to instruct and educate people, on the contrary explicitly highlighted the play's potential to serve as a role model for other playwrights less in line with the authorities' expectations. Shirley, whose plays and masques were frequently performed at Court, was very careful not to endanger this lucrative and beneficial connection by including questionable material into his plays. However, there was a thin line between not upsetting the Court on the one hand and pleasing the prevailing tastes and desires of his audiences watching his plays in one of London's theatres on the other hand. Judging from the exemplary comments by both Wright and Herbert, Shirley succeeded in catering for both target groups. Herbert's comment is also interesting insofar as he offers his professional opinion on how favourably *The Young Admiral* is likely to be perceived by the "judicious" members of the audience. Herbert's texts are not only, though primarily, concerned with the play's correspondence to existing policies, but also with its potential to entertain and please paying customers – especially in view of the fact that the quality of plays "hath received some brushings of late". Herbert thus presents himself not only as a highly dedicated man feeling responsible for the containment of precarious dramatic material, but as a man promoting and supporting the successful continuance of Caroline drama.

⁸⁸⁸ From the diary of Henry Herbert. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 289.

A further play Wright watched and commented upon is worth mentioning for another reason than the three plays above. About Henry Shirley's tragedy *The Martyred Soldier* Wright wrote the following:

An indifferent good play. The plot easy and plaine; the lines indifferent but very good for the presentments and songs by angel; by which the people were much taken: the humours but common as in ordinary plaies.⁸⁸⁹

Wright seems to have found it difficult to decide whether he really liked or disliked this particular play. In comparison to his lengthy comment about *The Young Admiral* quoted above, this rather short commentary suggests that he was not much moved by the performance. Nevertheless this short passage is of special interest for the reason that it is the only instance in which Wright bothered to write down how his fellow playgoers reacted to this play. According to him, the members of the audience developed a particular liking for the songs by the character Angel – even though he himself he considered the lines, plot and humour rather indifferent and plain.

Wright's comments lead to the conclusion that he, like most people frequenting the three remaining private playhouses, was particularly interested in "elegant and figurative lines; varied, intricate, surprising, though perspicuous plots; and strong but decorous characterizations."⁸⁹⁰ He developed a particular liking for the plays of James Shirley, who, writing in the tradition of Beaumont and Fletcher, catered for exactly these expectations. Although Kirsch denies Wright a "particular penetration or distinction of mind", he nevertheless has to admit that "his comments [...] provide exceptionally clear revelations of Caroline dramatic taste as well as instructive criticisms of plays which were written to cater to that taste."⁸⁹¹

The aim of the preceding paragraphs was to provide my readers with a first insight into how certain Jacobean and Caroline playgoers wrote down their reactions to plays. Playgoers, if they bothered to write anything down about their attendance at playhouses at all, only seldom felt the need to go into details about what they witnessed or how they felt about. Most of the contemporary playgoers of

⁸⁸⁹ From Wright's *Excerpta Quaedam per A. W. Adolescentem*. Quoted in: Kirsch. "A Caroline Commentary on the Drama", p. 259.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

whom manuscripts have survived just wanted to record their expenses or document their daily routine. A big exception to this rule is Abraham Wright, who, as a dedicated playgoer, took elaborate and well-structured notes to record his sentiments about the some 30 plays he watched in the capital's playhouses.

II.7.4 PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF PERFORMANCE

To begin this chapter on the physical circumstances of performances at the six remaining Jacobean and Caroline playhouses, it is important to emphasize that looking

at the audiences of 1500-1650 is like looking through a kaleidoscope. With every shift in perspective, they assume a different configuration. Does one emphasize private or public, roofed hall or open amphitheatre, elite or popular [...]?⁸⁹²

In addition to the aspects mentioned by Cook, Stevens has summarised the current state of research by observing that

[i]t is widely known that the action companies of the early modern period were all-male, that roles were doubled, that background scenery was not used, and that the physical features of the outdoor amphitheatres and the indoor playhouses influenced the shape and execution of plays [...]. But beyond these basic insights not a lot of primary evidence survives to help us visualise the plays as they were originally performed.⁸⁹³

In the light of the two citations above, the aim of this chapter and its subchapters is to shed some light on certain crucial aspects influencing and shaping performances at late-Jacobean and Caroline public and private playhouses, such as the cost of admission, the seating arrangement, the average number of playgoers, the companies' repertory system as well as various other issues needed to get a fuller picture of what playgoing was like during the years from 1616 to 1642. Two other aspects, which have fuelled intense scholarly debate indeed, – namely audience composition and audience behaviour – will be analysed in greater detail in separate chapters at the end of this thesis' first part.

Playgoing in late-Jacobean and Caroline London must have been an exciting undertaking not least because of the vast variety of – sometimes unpredictable –

⁸⁹² Cook. "Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention", p. 320.

⁸⁹³ Stevens. "Drama as Text and Performance", p. 507.

factors determining the physical circumstances of performances, which John Brown has summarised when he states that playgoing in Early Modern times

was a lengthy, complicated, and unpredictable business, having to be fitted in after a long day's work or other diversions, or before an evening meal. To get to the Globe, you probably had to walk through the tangle of narrow city streets and then cross the single bridge over the Thames or pay a waterman to ferry you across – the latter option not always an easy trip with a quick-flowing tide. Or you might travel on horseback, finding a boy to take care of your mount during the show; if very wealthy, you could use a coach and its attendants. Performance started at two o'clock in the afternoon but, for a popular attraction or on holiday, you would be well advised to arrive much earlier to secure a good seat or to be sure of admission to standing room in the yard. [...]

In winter, at the height of the theatrical season, a play would end at half-past four or five, in twilight or, perhaps, darkness, and then you would have to make your way home through unlit streets. [...] In London, going to see a play could take five or six hours of your time and a good deal of effort and ingenuity as well. [...] Refreshments were necessary in such conditions and so drinks and snacks were on sale during performances.⁸⁹⁴

Gurr provides a similar outline of the physical aspects directly influencing the playgoing experience and together with Brown's summary is a good departing point for the following analysis in which the aspects outlined by both Brown and Gurr will be more closely analysed:

Once at the playhouse, whether summoned by flag, trumpet and drum to the suburbs, ferried across the river or carried by coach into the city, the two or three hours' traffic of the stage would be jammed in with a variety of other distractions: the weather, food and drink, smells, noise, cutpurses, and occasionally riots.⁸⁹⁵

II.7.4.1 THE REPERTORY SYSTEM

Playwrights like Brome, Ford and Shirley had to please a vast number of playgoers with diverse social backgrounds and differing tastes and expectations; or, as the printer of *The Two Merry Milkmaids* put in 1620, every poet "must govern his Penne according to the Capacitie of the Stage he writes too, both in the Actor and the Auditor."⁸⁹⁶ In order to do so and to satisfy the constant demand for novelty, companies had a huge repertoire of plays. Only very successful plays were performed more than approximately twelve times and no play was shown more than once a week. This gives a running time of some three months for the majority

⁸⁹⁴ Brown. *Studying Shakespeare in Performance*, pp. 197.

⁸⁹⁵ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 42.

⁸⁹⁶ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 279.

of plays. Unsuccessful ones on the other hand were likely to drop from a company's repertoire after only two or three performances or whenever audiences were sated. New plays always attracted bigger audiences and were thus never shown on holidays, "when a good audience was already insured."⁸⁹⁷ This assumption is underlined by Mildmay's notes, because he five times felt the need to emphasise that a play was new. According to Bentley this was "further testimony to the well-known appeal of novelty in the theatre of the time."⁸⁹⁸ Early Modern companies of players operating in the capital and its suburbs engaged a large number of playwrights to supply them with new plays to meet the expectations of their paying customers. A company's "wages came from the people they entertained"⁸⁹⁹ and in consequence companies staged "what brought most money and best audiences"⁹⁰⁰ and no matter what the playgoers' background, all of them had to be pleased. Yet, as the many prologues and epilogues composed in the period testify, audience taste could not be taken for granted and the

discussions for taste turned on and often conflated two distinct ideas. One was the link between taste and social status and the other the tension between tradition and innovation. Both were linked to unacknowledged commercial considerations. The increasingly intense commercial competition among playing companies and theaters made it important to differentiate the desired audience for different theaters while the mixed repertory of revivals and new plays that sustained the expanding theatrical market needed careful aesthetic justification.⁹⁰¹

II.7.4.2 ATTENDANCE FIGURES

There has been much learned debate about attendance figures at dramatic performances during the Early Modernity. In general, the potential capacity of a certain playhouse – be it public or private – cannot be equated with the actual attendance. Various contemporary sources as well as the recent archaeological excavations in Southwark provide relatively reliable data on the size of certain Early Modern public playhouses. With room for about 2.400 playgoers, the Fortune was

⁸⁹⁷ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 45.

⁸⁹⁸ Bentley. "The Diary of a Caroline Theatergoer", p. 72.

⁸⁹⁹ Hill. *Stages and Playgoers*, p. 84.

⁹⁰⁰ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 39.

⁹⁰¹ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 48.

somewhat smaller than the Globe, which could hold an audience of up to 3.000. This is also the figure that Johannes de Witt gave in his Latin letter to his friend Arend van Buchell in 1596 with regard to the Swan. According to him, the Swan “can accommodate 3,000 seated spectators”⁹⁰². It is unlikely however that the Swan – just like the three public playhouses still in operation during the Caroline Period – could really seat this number of people. It is more probable that about a third of the members of the audience had to stand in the yard. Based on the figures outlined above, Gurr estimates that the yard could hold some 800 playgoers, whereas the different levels of galleries offered room for about 2.000 visitors.⁹⁰³ The often-quoted passage from Dekker’s and Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl* in which Sir Alexander says that “[w]ithin one square a thousand heads are laid”⁹⁰⁴ must be seen as exaggeration. It is more likely that the pit – just like the galleries – were at best only half-full most of the time, which provided the groundlings with enough room to sit down at times, as well. An average of more than 1.000 persons attending a play at the public venues was unlikely, unless it was a holiday or the first showing of a particular play. Even this number might be too high considering that for “nearly 40 years London had at least six playhouses and four regular companies performing daily except on Sundays”⁹⁰⁵. In one of the few surviving contemporary approximations, John Taylor estimates that all playhouses in London daily “draw unto them three or four thousand people”⁹⁰⁶. And although London was a rapidly expanding city with a huge populace, it is unlikely that theatre-going was something that many thousands – and thus a very high percentage of the total population – were prepared to pay for each week. Gurr puts the percentage of Londoners attending dramatic performances on a regular basis at 15 to 20 per cent, but also

⁹⁰² Quoted in: Alois Maria Nagler. *Shakespeare’s Stage*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 113.

⁹⁰³ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 25.

⁹⁰⁴ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. *The Roaring Girl*. Ed. Paul A. Mulholland. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987, l.ii.19.

⁹⁰⁵ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 76.

⁹⁰⁶ John Taylor. "The True Cause of the Water-Mens Suit Concerning Players". *The Old Book Collector’s Miscellany*. Ed. Charles Hindley, 3 vols. Vol. 2. London: 1871-73, pp. 6f.

admits that this “means that most of them must have gone to a play at least twenty times a year.”⁹⁰⁷

Attendance figures at the three private venues were again considerably lower as the Blackfriars, the Phoenix and especially Salisbury Court were significantly smaller than their public counterparts and could not hold more than approximately 500 to 700 people. In consequence it is safe to say that the average number of playgoers at the private halls was well below 500 at the Blackfriars and the Phoenix and again less at Salisbury Court – unless it was a holiday or the first staging of a new play.

The foregoing discussion has shown that “no acceptable scientific estimate of the average size of the Elizabethan audience can be made.”⁹⁰⁸ Scholars hold different views on this issue and even though several coherent estimates have been presented over the past years, one just cannot be entirely sure about how many people actually attended the theatres in Jacobean and Caroline times. Regarding this and to sum up this matter, Peter Thomson has put emphasis on the fact that

[w]e need to distinguish between what is average and what is characteristic. There is a high probability that an audience of 600 or less was a more regular occurrence than an audience in excess of 1,000. But the love of novelty, together with the unembarrassed quest for entertainment, boosted the numbers attending any performance that had a special promise.⁹⁰⁹

What one *can* be sure of, however, is that no matter how many people attended a particular performance, the “sharing of the playgoing experience as a crowd was the ruling feature of the whole event.”⁹¹⁰ With regard to the public playhouses Paul Menzer, recalling the *theatrum mundi* trope, has furthermore detailed that the architecture of Early Modern theatres led to the fact that “[t]he crowd is seated opposite itself. Every spectator has a thousand in front of him [...]. There is no break in the crowd that sits like this, exhibiting itself to itself.”⁹¹¹ Not least because plays were staged during bright daylight at the three public theatres, both the people standing in the pit and the people sitting in the different levels of galleries “were

⁹⁰⁷ Cf.: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 268.

⁹⁰⁸ Harbage. *Shakespeare’s Audience*, p. 20.

⁹⁰⁹ Thomson. *Shakespeare’s Theatre*, p. 30.

⁹¹⁰ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 260.

⁹¹¹ Paul Menzer. “Crowd Control”. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*. Eds. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 19-36, p. 28.

visibly reminded that they were part of a crowd"⁹¹². They were able to clearly see all the other playgoers – and to be seen at the same time. This exhibition of oneself to the other members of the audience was taken even a step further in the private theatres, which provided those willing to pay for it with yet another peculiar opportunity to present themselves.

II.7.4.3 EXPENSES INVOLVED IN PLAYGOING OTHER THAN ADMISSION

Apart from the price of admission, there were several other expenses involved when watching a play's performance. Playhouses, like inns or taverns, were also places of consumption and the performances itself were by far not the only thing that were on sale at the theaters. Drinks, mostly beer, ale or wine, were just as available for purchase as for examples oranges, apples, nuts or tobacco. Not to mention the prostitutes who also offered their services to those attending a play and the boys selling newspapers. Of the aforementioned refreshments and services, the noisy custom of cracking and eating nuts as well as the hissing sound made by bottles being opened were particularly disliked by actors and playwrights alike. Playgoers like Heath bought refreshments at the public playhouses frequently, but there is little to no evidence on how members of the audience, especially women, managed to relieve themselves in the absence of toilet rooms. Gurr mentions buckets and vessels, which might have been provided to pass urine during performances, but once again solid contemporary data to undermine this assumption is lacking.⁹¹³

A second aspect to be considered in this regard is transportation to and fro the playhouses. "To cross the river by boat, the normal manner of reaching the Bankside playhouses, probably cost threepence each way"⁹¹⁴, thus considerably increasing the cost for the afternoon. There was also the possibility to walk over the heavily crowded and busy London Bridge, which would have taken rather long, resulting in the fact that those member of the audience taking time off work "would

⁹¹² Butsch. "Crowds, Publics and Consumers", p. 35.

⁹¹³ Cf.: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 44f.

⁹¹⁴ Hattaway. *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, p. 48.

have had to take that much more time from his employment."⁹¹⁵ This also holds true for the playhouses located in the capital's north, for which to reach playgoers likewise had to allow for a certain amount of extra time on top of the actual performance time of roughly two hours. The increasing traffic in the capital in general and near the playhouses in particular was a great nuisance for some inhabitants. In consequence there were also critical voices commenting on the increasing numbers of coaches near the theatres, as the following passage from 1634 exemplifies:

Here hath been an Order of the Lords of the Council hung up in a Table near Paul's and the Black-Fryars, to command all that Resort to the Play-House there to send away their Coaches, and to disperse Abroad in Paul's Church-Yard, Carter-Lane, the Conduit in Fleet-Street, and other Places, and not to return to fetch their Company, but they must trot afoot to find their Coaches, 'twas kept very strictly for two or three Weeks, but now I think it is disorder'd again.⁹¹⁶

Unfortunately this passage does not provide any information on possible fees for not respecting the order, which would have had to be added to the costs involved in watching a performance, as well. Nevertheless this short text is ample proof that the use of coaches was becoming more and more common among certain playgoers.

The Cecil family took detailed notes on the money spent to reach the playhouses. They thus provide crucial information needed to get a fuller picture of the additional expenses needed when attending a theatrical performance in Jacobean and Caroline London. For the visit of an unspecified performance in 1639, they spent seven shillings in total "for a play and boat hire for the young ladies, the nurse, and others"⁹¹⁷. The notes do not specify the exact sums spent for the different services and thus one can only speculate how much money was spent for the actual performance on the one hand and the wherry on the other hand. Mildmay's records are much more precise in this respect and help modern scholars to better understand the financial circumstances involved in watching a play. In

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 290.

⁹¹⁷ Peck. "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House", p. 477.

early February 1634, he gave one shilling "[t]o Coachman that day"⁹¹⁸ and only three days later he gave the sum of sixpence to a wherryman "for a boate, to Whitehall"⁹¹⁹.

Of Heath's fifty-three recorded visits to the theatres ten "are accompanied by payments for "going by water""⁹²⁰, suggesting that Heath was a regular patron at the Globe across the river. Since he also recorded at least one visit to the Bearegarden ("ffor going over the water to the bearegarden – 1s. 6d."⁹²¹) and keeping in mind that the Blackfriars was only open during the winter season, this assumption is likely. In addition to this, Heath spent considerable amounts of money on refreshments consumed at the playhouses and took precise notes on what he bought. He spent money freely "ffor buttered ale", "ffor beare and sugar", "ffor a pinte of sack", "ffor reasons" or "ffor cheryes" – not to mention the money regularly spent "ffor my supper" or " ffor my dinner"⁹²² after performances. These additional expenses paid for refreshments at the premises could further add as much as seven pence to the initial price of admission.

Coming back to the Cecil paper, it is important to notice that the records of the family, while not specifying the exact sums spent for transportation, are nevertheless important with regard to another aspect, namely the necessity for torches to light one's way back home after a performance. There was not yet artificial gas lightning in England's capital and since especially the young unmarried women of the family, such as Lady Anne or Lady Elizabeth (born in 1612 and 1618 respectively) enjoyed watching plays, Lord Cecil felt the need to equip them and their footmen with candles for their own safety when watching performances at either the Globe, Blackfriars or Cockpit. For early January 1638, there is a note for money spent on a "torch to light my young mistress home from Blackfriars"⁹²³ or for

⁹¹⁸ From the diary of Sir Humphrey Mildmay, entry from the 3rd February 1633/34, A, 178.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, entry from the 6th February 1633/34, A, 178.

⁹²⁰ Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers", p. 183.

⁹²¹ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁹²² All quoted in: *Ibid.*, pp. 187ff.

⁹²³ Quoted in: Peck. "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House", p. 476.

a "torch for my Lady being at the Cockpit at Whitehall at a play"⁹²⁴ later that same year.

II.7.4.4 PRICES OF ADMISSION & THE SEATING ARRANGEMENT

Reclaiming their Blackfriars playhouse in 1608 "was an unparalleled stroke of good fortune for the King's Men"⁹²⁵. In consequence they were no longer dependent on the weather and thus "could revive their old practice of separate winter and summer venues, this time not with an inn for the bad-weather season but an already well-patronised indoor theatre"⁹²⁶. At the public theatres the groundlings in particular were often exposed to rain, cold and sun, but the private playhouses offered more luxurious seating. William Armstrong, who has done extensive research on the physical circumstances of performance at Early Modern private theatres, summarises the seating arrangements at these venues as follows:

At the second Blackfriars, the Cockpit, and Salisbury Court [...] there appear to have been seats for spectators in five places: on the stage, in the pit, in the boxes, in the middle gallery, and in the top gallery. The top gallery was partitioned into sections called 'rooms' in which seats were available at sixpence each [...].⁹²⁷

Unlike at the Globe, Fortune or Red Bull there was a seat for every single member of the audience. The companies could charge six pence for a seat in the galleries and hence attracted a more select and sophisticated audience consisting of mainly aristocrats, gallants and wealthy merchants. For those able to afford even more, there were the so-called boxes or lords' rooms where prices could be as high as half-a-crown – i.e. two shillings and sixpence. Thus the company "charged for the cheapest seat in the furthestmost gallery the same price as could gain the best place at an amphitheatre."⁹²⁸ The private theatres featured another interesting peculiarity. Even though they had rather small stage platforms, there was "the practice of allowing members of the audience, who paid extra for the privilege, to

⁹²⁴ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 477.

⁹²⁵ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 55.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁷ William A. Armstrong. "The Audience of the Elizabethan Private Theatres". *The Review of English Studies*. 10:39 (1956): 234-249, p. 240.

⁹²⁸ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 89.

have a stool and sit on stage."⁹²⁹ At a minimum cost of two shillings, one could consequently be seen by all the other playgoers and become the centre of attention:

Up to fifteen gallants could pay for a stool to sit and watch the play on the stage itself, sitting in front of the boxes that flanked the stage. Each would enter from the players' dressing room [...] with his stool in hand before the play started. This gave them the best possible view of the play and easily the most conspicuous place in the audience's eye.⁹³⁰

In view of the theatricality of Early Modern life, it is not surprising that certain members of the audience desired to present themselves to the rest of the audience and display their fine clothes or to smoke tobacco for everyone to see. As the following quote exemplifies, this practise could however also lead to serious problems and quarrels if the people on the stage hindered the view of the other playgoers:

This Captaine attending and accompanying my Lady of Essex in a boxe in the playhouse at the blackfryers, the said lord coming upon the stage, stood before them and hindred their sight. Captain Essex told his lordship they had payd for their places as well as hee, and therefore intreated him not to deprive them of the benefitt of it. Whereupon the lord stood up yet higher and hindred more their sight. Then Capt. Essex with his hand putt him alittle by. The lord then drewe his sword and ran full butt at him, though he missed him, and might have slaine the Countesse as well as him.⁹³¹

This passage does not only show that the practise of sitting on the stage platform could be a rather great nuisance for the other paying customers, but also that the box in which Captain and Lady Essex were sitting was right beside the stage and on a level with it. Jonson objected to the inconveniences caused by this custom in many of his plays and in *The Staple of the News*, performed at the Blackfriars in February 1626, he "exploits the custom most fully [...] when his four gossips, as if members of the audience, sit on the stage throughout the play."⁹³² At the very beginning of the play they highlight how ridiculous some playgoers behave and interrupt the prologue speaker by saying:

⁹²⁹ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 28.

⁹³⁰ Andrew Gurr. "The Shakespearean Stage". *The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton & Company, 1997. 3281-3301, p. 3286.

⁹³¹ Quoted in: Herbert Berry. "The Stage and Boxes at Blackfriars". *Studies in Philology*. 63 (1966): 163-186, p. 165.

⁹³² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 6, p. 8.

MIRTH. [...] Do you heare Gentleman?
 what are you? Gentleman-vsher to the Play? pray you helpe
 vs to some stooles here.
 PROLOGVE. Where? o' the Stage, Ladies?
 MIRTH. Yes, o' the Stage; wee are persons of quality,
 I assure you, and women of fashion; and come to see, and to
 be seene.⁹³³

In his cynical pamphlet *The Guls Horne-Booke* of the year 1609 Dekker likewise depicts the practise in an unfavourable light and ridicules the practise of sitting on stage:

By sitting on the stage, you haue a signd patent to engrosse the whole commodity of Censure; may lawfully presume to be a Girder: and stand at the helme to steere the passage of *Scaenes* yet no man shall once offer to hinder you from obtaining the title of an insolent, ouerweening Coxcombe.

By sitting on the stage, you may (without traueiling for it) at the very next doore, aske whose play it is; and, by that *Quest of inquiry*, the law warrants you to auoid much mistaking; if you know not the author, you may raile against him: and peraduenture so behaue your selfe, that you may enforce the Author to know you.

By sitting on the stage, if you be a Knight, you may happily get you a Mistresse: if a mere *Fleet street* Gentleman, a wife: but assure yourselfe by continuall residence, you are the first and principall man in election to begin the number of *We three*.

By spreading your body on the stage, and by being a Justice in examining of plaies, you shall put your selfe into such true *Scaenical* authority, that some Poet shall not dare to present his Muse rudely vpon your eyes, without hauing first vnmaskt her, rifled her, and discovered all her bare and most mysticall parts before you at a Tauerne, when you most knightly shal for his paines, pay for both their suppers.

[...]

And to conclude whether you be a foole or a Justice of peace, a Cuckold or a Capten, a Lord Maiors sonne or a dawcocke, a knaue or an vnder-Sheriffe, of what stamp soeuer you be, currant or counterfeit, the stage, like time, will bring you to most perfect light, and lay you open: neither are you to be hunted from thence though the Scar-crows in the yard, hoot at you, hisse at you, spit at you, yea throw durt euen in your teeth: tis most Gentlemanlike patience to endure all this, and to laugh at the silly Animals: but if the *Rabble* with a full throat, crie away with the foole, you were worse then a mad-man to tarry by it: for the Gentleman and the foole should neuer sit on the Stage together.⁹³⁴

Though exaggerated to a certain extent, these sections throw some light upon the behaviour and manners of certain members of Early Modern audiences. It helps to better understand why people desired to sit on the stage at all and what their expectations and hopes were. Dekker's depiction of gallants sitting on the stage is not very favourable and in spite of the financial benefits he seems to have

⁹³³ Jonson. *The Staple of News. The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6. Ind., 4-10.

⁹³⁴ Dekker. *The Guls Horne-Booke*. Quoted in: Nagler. *Shakespeare's Stage*, pp. 129f.

considered this practise a great nuisance – especially in view of the fact that those sitting on the stage would often boastfully and insolently impede the progress of a performance by drawing the attention onto themselves and thus away from the play.

Admission prices at the private playhouses were considerably higher than at the public playhouses. This led to the fact that they also attracted quite a different clientele. Referring to contemporary data, Armstrong has estimated that seats in one of the rooms in the top gallery, which were farthest from the stage, were the cheapest seats and cost sixpence. Though these seats also offered the audience with a good view of the stage, it was not a good spot if one desired to be seen as well. If one wished to occupy a seat in the middle gallery, which seems to have been Mildmay's preferred choice, one would have been somewhat closer to the action – both on and off stage – and with a price of one shilling (or twelve pennies) would have had to pay twice as much as in the top gallery. A seat in one of the private boxes below these galleries was at half a crown (i.e. two shillings and sixpence) again considerably more expensive, but provided members of the audience with better chances to exhibit themselves. They were the most expensive seats and "were the special resort of men and women of fashion."⁹³⁵ In his play *The City Madam* of the year 1632, Massinger comments on the fashion of displaying oneself and has the character Anne Frugal imitate the behaviour of a court lady:

[...] The private box took up at a new play
For me, and my retinue; a fresh habit,
Of a fashion never seen before to draw
The gallants' eyes that sit on the stage upon me [...]⁹³⁶

Compared to these costly boxes, a seat on one of the benches in the pit was at one shilling and sixpence slightly cheaper, but would also have offered considerable less comfort and privacy. Mildmay, when not sitting in the middle gallery, favoured to sit in the auditorium and his records show that he paid eighteen pence for this on different occasions at the Blackfriars. A stool on the stage had a total cost of two

⁹³⁵ Armstrong. "The Audience of the Elizabethan Private Theatres", p. 240.

⁹³⁶ Philip Massinger. *The City Madam*. Ed. Cyrus Hoy. London: Arnold, 1964. II.ii.119-122.

shillings and was in consequence the second most expensive option one had in the private playhouses of late-Jacobean and Caroline London.⁹³⁷

While Mildmay's diary and account book on the one hand do not provide a lot of information on how exactly he received the plays he watched, they on the other hand offer detailed contemporary evidence on the financial aspects involved in watching a play. Mildmay, who occasionally also visited the Cockpit in Drury Lane and the Globe south of the river but whose principal venue was the Blackfriars, took notes on the money spent. His expenses "at a play (never itemized) were usually about one shilling and sixpence, but ranged from sixpence to as much as seven shillings and sixpence when his wife was with him."⁹³⁸ This happened for example in December 1632 when he noted "Expenses att a playe with my wyfe [...] 00-07-06"⁹³⁹ or on the 15th of May 1640 when he spent as much as eleven shillings: "To the playe house with my wife & Company [...] 00-11-00"⁹⁴⁰. The money spent for watching plays recorded in Mildmay's notes ranges from a mere sixpence (e.g. "To a Playe of Warre [...] 00-00-06"⁹⁴¹) to as much as the already quoted eleven shillings for an as usual unspecified "Newe play att Bl:fryers with my Company where I loste the whole day"⁹⁴². Between these two extremes Mildmay most often spent sums ranging from some two shillings to six or seven shillings when patronising one of the private theatres – always depending on whether he went alone, with members of his family or friends or whether he also had supper or dinner after the performance. When he went to the Globe, he spent sums between one shilling and sixpence and two shillings. On the 23rd of May 1633, he spent one shilling and sixpence for a performance of John Fletcher's *Rollo, Duke of Normandy or the Bloody Brother*: "To a play Called Rolloe, & the globe [...] 00-01-06"⁹⁴³ whereas a week earlier he spent two shillings for another play at the same venue: "To a play that day beinge Thursday att the globe [...] 00-02-00"⁹⁴⁴. In doing so he had spent twice as much at

⁹³⁷ Cf.: Armstrong. "The Audience of the Elizabethan Private Theatres", p. 240.

⁹³⁸ Ralph. "References to the Drama in the Mildmay Diary", p. 589.

⁹³⁹ From the diary of Sir Humphrey Mildmay, entry from the 19th-22nd December 1632, A, 181.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid., entry from the 15th May 1640, A, 162^v.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid., entry from the 16th November 1643, A, 146.

⁹⁴² Ibid., entry from the 15th May 1640, A, 162^v.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., entry from the 23rd May 1633, A, 180.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid., entry from the 16th May 1640, A, 162^v.

the public Globe than he did a few weeks later at the private Cockpit in Drury Lane, when he recorded "To a pretty & Merry Comedy att the Cocke [...] 00-01-00"⁹⁴⁵. This firstly proves that even though the Blackfriars was his first choice, he also went to other venues and secondly that it was not unusual to spend more money at a public theatre than at a private one.

Heath, the young student from the Inner Temple, did not specify to which playhouses he went in particular. Even though he took precise notes on the money spent, it is most of the time still impossible to be sure whether he went to a public or a private venue:

Theoretically we might expect to be able to distinguish Heath's visits to the amphitheatres from his visits to the hall theatres by the prices he paid for admission, but in fact he had expensive tastes and seems to have wanted the better seats wherever he went. On nine occasions he paid only one shilling, which was the minimum admission charge for the hall theaters, but on thirty-three occasions he paid 1s 6d (the same as Whitelocke), and eleven times he paid 2s., which would have given him a private box at the Globe or a pit sit seat at the Blackfriars. He also spent freely on snacks, such as raisins and cherries, and on drinks, such as sack, buttered ale, and beer with sugar.⁹⁴⁶

Even though Elliott is wrong about the minimum admission price for the private theatres, which he incorrectly assumes to be one shilling (the right price being sixpence for a seat in the top gallery), his summary of Heath's expenses nonetheless is a helpful means to exemplify how hard it is to come to any definite conclusions when dealing with incomplete contemporary data.

Bulstrode Whitelocke, a young barrister at the Middle Temple, on the other hand almost always spent one shilling and sixpence when visiting a theatrical performance. Since his surviving manuscript also specifies the venues he went to – namely either the Blackfriars or the Cockpit – it is likely that he preferred to have a seat on one of the benches in the pit. In November 1628, he spent "Att the blackfryars playhouse – 1s. 6d"⁹⁴⁷ and a few months later he paid the same amount of money at the competing Cockpit in Drury Lane: "Att the cockpit playhouse – 1s.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid., entry from the 6th June 1640, A, 179^v.

⁹⁴⁶ Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers", p. 183.

⁹⁴⁷ Quoted in: Ibid, p. 186.

6d."⁹⁴⁸. Only on one occasion, and thus in stark contrast to Heath, he also recorded additional expenses and spent sixpence on refreshments: "Item for beere – 6d."⁹⁴⁹. The companies of players operating private theatres were dependant on the higher admission prices in general and on the additional receipts resulting from people sitting on stage in particular, as the roofed playhouses were considerably smaller than the public venues and were more costly to run – "if only because of the need to provide the candles and torches"⁹⁵⁰. However, in spite of the limitations resulting from the reduced number of seats or the higher costs of running, the private playhouses proved to be a huge success for the companies and enriched all their sharers considerably.

Seating arrangements at the three remaining public playhouses were in contrast less complicated, but likewise offered clients the chance to show off their social standing by paying more money for seats in the galleries surrounding the pit. This division between the different classes was still a well-known fact among people living many years after the theaters had been closed in 1642. In the 1659 English edition of Comenius' schoolbook *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, which circulated throughout many European countries, the author stated in retrospect that "[t]he chief of the Spectators sit in the Gallery [...] the common sort stand on the ground [...] and clap the hands if anything please them."⁹⁵¹

The expense of one penny could buy Early Modern playgoers a space in the pit, which surrounded the stage on three sides and where one, depending on how crowded the venue was, had to stand and, as Cook has put it, "where the playgoer was exposed to sun, wind, rain, sleet, or snow for two or three hours."⁹⁵² John Tatham, sending a letter to a friend in 1640, wrote the following lines in this regard:

When last we did encounter with the Globe,
The Heav'ns was pleas'd to grace us with his rone
Of settled motions; but Aquarius, hee,

⁹⁴⁸ Quoted in: Ibid.

⁹⁴⁹ Quoted in: Ibid.

⁹⁵⁰ John Orrell. "The Theatres". *New History of Early English Drama*. Eds John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 93-112, p. 98.

⁹⁵¹ Jan A. Komensky. *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*. English Edition. London: 1659, p. 264. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 300.

⁹⁵² Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 181.

Like an ambitious Churle, disdaines that wee
Should have another meeting [...] ⁹⁵³

Even though Tatham was put off by the rainy weather, there is no contemporary evidence stating that a performance at one of the public amphitheatres was ever cancelled because of the weather. Audience numbers might have decreased to a certain extent, but all the data there is regarding closures gives other reasons such as the plague.

Compared to the above mentioned minimum price of sixpence at one of the private playhouses, the one penny to be paid for a place in the pit at the public venues was considerably less, but the seating also offered substantially less comfort and would have attracted a different clientele altogether. The prices at public playhouses remained relatively stable over the years and “the single penny which gained an apprentice admission [...] in the 1570s was still the price [...] in 1642.” ⁹⁵⁴ One English penny does not seem to be much from today’s point of view, but back in Early Modern times it was also the price of a loaf of bread and many Londoners could not afford such an expenditure all that easily. Nevertheless, “theatregoing was one of the few commercialized pleasures within the workman’s means” ⁹⁵⁵ and only bear-baiting was as cheap. Audiences had a shaping influence and it was important for theatre companies to be aware of the playgoers’ tastes, as an “artisan could have afforded the penny admission, but he would have paid it only if his interest was genuine.” ⁹⁵⁶ The Swiss traveller Thomas Platter, writing in 1599, confirms the price of admission and notes the following:

The playhouses are so constructed that they play on a raised platform, so that everyone has a good view. There are different galleries and places, however, where the seating is better and more comfortable and therefore more expensive. For whoever cares to stand below only pays one English penny, but if he wishes to sit he enters by another door, and pays another penny, while if he desires to sit in the most comfortable seats which are cushioned, where he not

⁹⁵³ John Tatham. "Upon the Hinderance of Meeting by Raine, Sent to his Friend Mr. W. B. *The Fancies Theater*, C1^v. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 298.

⁹⁵⁴ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 12. For Cook’s view please see Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London*, p. 212.

⁹⁵⁵ Harbage. *Shakespeare’s Audience*, p. 60.

⁹⁵⁶ Thomson. *Shakespeare’s Theatre*, pp. 24f.

only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he pays yet another English penny at another door.⁹⁵⁷

If one could afford to double this initial expense, as Platter's description makes clear, one could buy a sheltered seat in one of the lowermost galleries. Depending on the playhouse, there were two or even three levels of galleries in total and the higher one desired to sit, the more one had to pay. Seats on the second or third landing also offered cushions for those able to afford this luxury and provided the more wealthy members of the audience with the opportunity to better exhibit themselves to their fellow playgoers standing in the yard or sitting across them in the opposing galleries. All seats in the galleries offered playgoers shelter from the rain and were to be reached by stairs near the entrance.

Yet there were also separate rooms, which contained the most expensive seats and are the fourth category of seats to be found at Early Modern public theatres. These rooms were a bit like the ones found at the private theatres and were almost above the stage and offered those able to afford it with a superior view of both the action on and off stage and also to be clearly seen by everyone else:

The wealthiest patrons most likely had separate access to their places, since the 'lords' rooms' on the balcony immediately over the stage were reached directly through the tiring house. The sixpence which a lord's room cost would have been paid at the tiring-house door at the back of the playhouse, and the privileged who went to their superior places could chat to the players in the tiring house on the way [...].⁹⁵⁸

As this quote makes clear, the most expensive seats in one of the public amphitheatres cost as much as the cheapest one at one of the private venues. Generally seating was on a "first-come, first-served basis"⁹⁵⁹ and bringing the theatricality of life back to mind, it is not surprising that the best positions were not necessarily those with the best view of the actors, but rather those where playgoers could be seen most prominently by the rest of the audience. Thus paying for a seat in the galleries was not only an investment in comfort, but also in prestige. Jonson took up the issue of admission prices in the Induction to his *Bartholomew Fair* by presenting 'Articles of Agreement' to the audience. These articles, directed at the

⁹⁵⁷ Quoted in: Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 24.

⁹⁵⁸ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 22.

⁹⁵⁹ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 150.

playgoers of the Hope, “granted members of the audience the right to judge the play according to their investments:”⁹⁶⁰

It shall bee lawfull for any man to iudge his six pen’orth, his twelue pen’orth, so to his eighteene pence, 2 shillings, halfe a crowne to the value of his place: Prouided alwaias his place get not aboute his wit [...] marry, if he drop but sixe pence at the doore, and will censure a crownes worth, it is thought there is no conscience, or iustice in that.⁹⁶¹

II.7.5 AUDIENCE COMPOSITION

It is even more complicated to make reliable judgements about the composition of Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's audiences at London's theatres; the subject has fuelled intense and continuing scholarly debate. Even though the theatres, especially the private venues, increasingly began to cater for more sophisticated audiences than had been the case during Elizabethan times, it is wrong to assume, as many scholars of Caroline drama have done, that the drama of the time was simple 'Cavalier', i.e. addressing only the more wealthy and intellectual members of society. Neill summarizes the still common assumptions by stating that especially Caroline audiences "have been identified as an upper-class coterie with a predilection for extravagant romantic plotting, the melting ardours of sentimental platonism, and précieux debates on the niceties of love and honour."⁹⁶² Playgoing in fact was still a pastime and form of recreation enjoyed by a wide range of society, especially in view of the fact that fifty per cent of the six remaining playhouses were public venues and offered entertainment at relatively low and affordable prices. It is wrong to interpret the increasing importance of performances at either the private playhouses or at Court as a sign that playgoing had outgrown its Elizabethan traditions or that the older public amphitheatres were fading into obscurity. The three remaining public playhouses continued to be sites of potential social conflict until they were closed in 1642 and as with consumption in the ever-growing capital in general, the upper classes only amounted to "a small

⁹⁶⁰ Heidi Brayman Hackel. "The "Great Variety" of Readers". *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. 139-157, p. 145.

⁹⁶¹ Jonson. *Bartholomew Fair*. *The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6. Ind., 87-96.

⁹⁶² Michael Neill. "'Wits Most Accomplished Senate": The Audience of Caroline Private Theatres". *Studies in English Literature*. 18 (1978): 341-360, p. 341.

proportion of the total metropolitan demand for goods and services"⁹⁶³. Butler has emphasised that the theatres "inherited and continued to develop the rich, varied and essentially independent-minded tradition of the Elizabethan-Jacobean professional theatre"⁹⁶⁴. This was in spite of the increasingly felt influence of the Court or the growing political tensions in the realm.

It is however at the same time also wrong to adopt the other extreme and postulate that only people of a more humble background went to see plays – an impression one could get by the manifold contemporary evidence depicting Early Modern audiences as lewd, unsophisticated and even violent persons:

Because a lot of our descriptions of playhouse audiences derive from puritan pamphlets, City petitions, criminal court records, satirical poems, and the invectives of disappointed playwrights, it is easy to get the impression that playhouse yards were filled with an illiterate rabble containing a large proportion of cutpurses, pickpockets, and whores, and that their galleries were crammed with inattentive 'plush and velvet men' paying court to their mistresses or appearing at the play only to be seen themselves.⁹⁶⁵

As often, the truth lies in the middle. A wide range of the population of Early Modern London found pleasure in watching plays and this common purpose led to the fact that especially the public theatres were places where people of socially very diverse backgrounds met. Even though changes took place especially in the last decade before the theatres were closed, they were not as pronounced and sweeping as many scholars have suggested over the past decades. The increase of more prosperous playgoers did not mean that the poorer ones vanished. The theaters were and continued to be "a crucial meeting point for diverse social groups and for diverse discursive and performance traditions, both elite and popular in nature"⁹⁶⁶. To quote Gurr, who advances a similar view,

[b]y the time the playhouses were ordered to be closed the social range stretched from the boxes at Blackfriars, which might contain the Countess of Essex, the Duke of Lennox or the Lord Chamberlain [...], to the nameless chimney boys and apple-wives in the yard of the Fortune or Red Bull.⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶³ Sheppard. *London. A History*, p. 132.

⁹⁶⁴ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 4.

⁹⁶⁵ Hattaway. *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, pp. 44f.

⁹⁶⁶ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 13.

⁹⁶⁷ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 93.

II.7.5.1 AUDIENCE COMPOSITION AT PUBLIC PLAYHOUSES

If one believes contemporary antitheatricalists sources or anxious city fathers, only the lowest members of society gathered at the public playhouses – such as thieves, fishwives, whoremongers or prostitutes. Though this view must be seen as exaggerated, Harbage nevertheless assumes that the typical Early Modern audiences at public playhouses “were composed largely of [...] people of low income”⁹⁶⁸. He makes only “little allowance for the long working hours and breadline existence of those citizens, labourers and unprivileged men whom he represented as constituting the major part”⁹⁶⁹ of Early Modern audiences.

Forty years later, Cook claims that the exact opposite is more likely to be true, namely that predominately privileged people from a higher social rank came to attend these performances and that “it would be a mistake to assume that low prices meant a low clientele”⁹⁷⁰ – even though there is some contemporary evidence showing that even beggars now and again patronised the playhouses, as for example John Taylor, who knew the Early Modern entertainment industry well, noted down:

Yet have I seene a beggar with his Many
Come in at a Play-House, all in for one penny.⁹⁷¹

Cook does not make any real distinction between the cheaper public and the considerably more expensive private venues and thus not only assumes that a quite similar clientele frequented all playhouses, but also implies that the privileged “were virtually, if not absolutely, the only spectators who counted”⁹⁷² – two implications not backed up by the surviving historical data. Both Cook and Harbage underline their assumptions with various pieces of both contemporary and more recent evidence. In doing so, however, Cook in particular oversimplifies the matter and rigidly disregards much of the data that would be obstructive to her overall

⁹⁶⁸ Harbage. *Shakespeare’s Audience*, p. 64.

⁹⁶⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 293.

⁹⁷⁰ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London*, p. 182.

⁹⁷¹ John Taylor. *The Praise, Antiquity, and Commodity of Beggery, Beggars and Begging*. London: 1621, C3^v. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 280.

⁹⁷² Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 294.

aim, only paying attention to those sources supporting her view.⁹⁷³ She does not altogether deny that commoners also came to the plays, but she grants them only a very limited role in the public playhouses. Harbage on the other hand is less rigid and at one point even mentions that he believes “that Shakespeare’s audience was a large and receptive assemblage of men and women of all ages and of all classes.”⁹⁷⁴ He nevertheless fails to provide the reader with a well-balanced account of Jacobean and Caroline audiences backing up his conclusions and does not consider the whole social spectrum in due detail.

It is basically thanks to two scholars in particular that both Harbage's and Cook's view came to be severely challenged over the past years and that the crucial question of audience composition is no longer regarded as being as simple as had been done for a long time. The two works which began to change this view were Butler's *Theatre and Crisis* on the one hand and Gurr's *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* on the other hand. Both discard the hitherto common assumptions that Early Modern theatre audience were simply either plebeian or privileged in nature and in contrast opt for a more balanced and less generalising view of the matter.

Gurr was one of the first Shakespeare-scholars to publish books avoiding generalisations about audiences and instead took a broader perspective on the composition of audiences at Early Modern public theatres. He succeeded in making out more than 150 individual playgoers who went to the London theatres, mainly the private ones however, between 1567 and 1642 in the first appendix to his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. In the second appendix he lists documents recording these people's visits. Though Gurr does not analyse the majority of these pieces of evidence in greater detail, the main usefulness of his list may “well turn out to be the encouragement in gives to other scholars to add to it as new documents turn up, an undertaking that is all the more desirable given the smallness of the extant sample.”⁹⁷⁵ Taking “variations among particular theatres and shift over several decades”⁹⁷⁶ into account, Gurr advances the view that

⁹⁷³ For an extensive list of privileged playgoers whose presence at Early Modern public theatres has been confirmed, please consult the first Appendix of Gurr's *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*.

⁹⁷⁴ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 158.

⁹⁷⁵ Elliott. "Four Caroline Playgoers", p. 179.

⁹⁷⁶ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 47.

“playgoers came from the widest range of society”⁹⁷⁷, thus both confirming as well as contradicting certain parts of both Harbage’s and Cook’s assumptions. Even though there are many questions still to be answered, I agree with Gurr when he writes that “the social mix of audiences can never be ignored.”⁹⁷⁸ This statement can be backed by a quote from Sir John Davies, who observed that

For as we see at all the plays house dores,
When ended is the play, the daunce, and song:
A thousand townsemen, gentlemen, and whores,
Porters and serving-men together throng.⁹⁷⁹

A passage from Dekker’s and Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl*, first staged at the public Fortune in 1611, confirms the social diversity found in the playhouse when the character Sir Alexander turns towards the people surrounding the stage, introduces other characters to the audience in a highly metadramatic scene and states

Nay, when you look into my galleries –
How bravely they are trimmed up – you all shall swear
You're highly pleased to see what's set down there:
Stories of men and women, mixed together
Fair ones with foul, like sunshine in wet weather –
Within one square a thousand heads are laid
So close that all the heads the room seems made;
As many faces there, filled with blithe looks,
Show like the promising titles of new books
Writ merrily, the readers being their own eyes,
Which seem to move and to give plaudities.⁹⁸⁰

In this scene Sir Alexander pretends that the galleries filled with playgoers surrounding the stage are actually part of the furnishings of his own home in London. The audience is "transformed first into a portrait gallery and then into a magnificent library with each playgoer represented as a book"⁹⁸¹, containing their own individual stories and thus highlighting the diversity of the people mingling at the Fortune; after all a public venue featuring not as high a reputation as its

⁹⁷⁷ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 318.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁹⁷⁹ Davies. 'In Cosmum'. *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, p. 136.

⁹⁸⁰ Dekker and Middleton. *The Roaring Girl*, l.ii.14-24.

⁹⁸¹ Dawson and Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*, p. 80.

competitor the Globe. Alexander Gill, writing in 1632, described the typical audience at the Fortune as consisting of "prentizes and apell-wyfes"⁹⁸².

Even though contemporary sources like the ones cited above are always to be taken with a pinch of salt, they can help to gain a better understanding of the actual composition of Early Modern audiences. The playwrights writing during the time in question did not divide their audience into social layers, but "classified them according to their tastes"⁹⁸³ and thus welcomed all who enjoyed their dramatic works – and were able to pay for them. Contrary to Cook's view, "audiences could be socially diverse, including men, women and children of all ages, and a mix of social groups, ranging from apprentices and servants to merchants, lawyers, nobles and visiting ambassadors."⁹⁸⁴

Two factions "are mentioned again and again in contemporary allusions to the theatres – the students of the Inns of Court and the apprentices of London."⁹⁸⁵ There were about a thousand residents of the Inns of Court, "the majority of them being sons of the landed gentry"⁹⁸⁶ and thus being able to spend their time freely:

[i]n contrast to Oxford and Cambridge, residents at London's four main law schools (Middle Temple, Inner Temple, Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn) received something like a liberal education, having the stimulus and the freedom to read widely, attend plays, and write.⁹⁸⁷

Law students were a common sight at both public and private playhouses and presented an important clientele for the companies of players – in spite of their occasional quarrels with apprentices. This is also underlined by various contemporary writings, as for example by William Prynne. Referring to the Inns of Court students, he, echoing established clichés, deprecatingly writes "[t]hat Innes of Court men were undone but for Players, that they are their chiefest guests and imployment, & the sole busines that makes them afternoons men; [...] & take

⁹⁸² From Alexander Gill's verses against Jonson's final comedy *The Magnetic Lady* which was performed at the Blackfriars in 1632. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 287.

⁹⁸³ Nagler. *Shakespeare's Stage*, p. 110.

⁹⁸⁴ Keenan. *Renaissance Literature*, p. 64.

⁹⁸⁵ Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, p. 80.

⁹⁸⁶ Thomson. *Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 25.

⁹⁸⁷ Charles Whitney. *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 123.

smoke at a Play-House, which they commonly make their Studie [...]".⁹⁸⁸ In contrast to the common notion that Jacobean and Caroline apprentices were merely boys, many of them were in their twenties already. Their group outnumbered the students ten to one and even though Cook argues that playgoing would have been "severely limited by most masters"⁹⁸⁹ on a workday afternoon and that they could not afford it, apprentices found ways to flock to the public theatres – the private ones certainly being much too expensive – in great numbers. This is testified by numerous contemporary sources complaining about the behaviour of both the Inns of Court students and the apprentices.

In addition to this, the theatres were a hotbed for criminals and prostitutes, who were always to be found wherever there were crowds. Attracted by the more prosperous visitors sitting in the galleries, pickpockets – often also called coony-catchers or cutpurses – were busy both during and after performances, as the already above mentioned character Sir Alexander from Dekker's and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* exemplifies:

And here and there, whilst with obsequious ears
Thronged heaps do listen, a cutpurse thrusts and leers
With hawk's eyes for his prey.⁹⁹⁰

Prostitutes, whose presence was often mentioned by the theatres' enemies, were likewise regular patrons of the public playhouses and offered their services to those able to afford it:

Whosoever shal visit the chapel of Satan, I meane the Theater, shal finde there no want of yong ruffians, nor lacke of harlots, utterlie past al shame: who presse to the fore-front of the scaffolds, to the end to showe their impudencie, and to be as an object to al mens eies.⁹⁹¹

Cook regards the presence of both pickpockets and prostitutes as proof for her claim that mainly the privileged attended the public playhouses. Yet, while it is accurate to say that both groups profited less from the poorer playgoers, it does by no means follow that there were only a few commoners present.

⁹⁸⁸ From the epistle dedicatory to Prynne's *Histrio-astix*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 283.

⁹⁸⁹ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 220.

⁹⁹⁰ Dekker and Middleton. *The Roaring Girl*, I.ii.25-27.

⁹⁹¹ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 66.

In addition to the various groups mentioned above, the importance of the groundlings, e.g. the people standing in the pit, is not to be disregarded. Though it is certainly wrong to tar them all with the same brush, one could argue that the groundlings were not only financially separated from the more prosperous members of the audience, but to a certain extent also intellectually. From the very beginnings of professional acting in England's capital in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the groundlings had slightly different tastes or expectations and preferred action, such as fights and clowning, to elaborate verses and more serious drama. In spite of their lower social standing, the playgoers paying the minimum fee of one penny "remained an important part of the audience, and the arena theatres continued to cater for them"⁹⁹² throughout the Caroline Period. It seems likely that the groundlings were predominantly apprentices, wage-earners, craftsmen, soldiers and the like, who only earned very limited amounts of money and would in consequence not have been able to afford higher admission prices. These members of late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences found more delight in the somewhat rougher entertainment offered at especially the Red Bull and Fortune in which the continuance of Elizabethan traditions was much more pronounced than at the other venues. In view of the fact that there were actually not that many playhouses left in London during the years 1616 to 1642, it is wrong to assume, as for example Clifford Leech has done, that playgoers favouring the less sophisticated dramatic performances were "almost as uncharacteristic of the age's theatre as the survival of mystery plays till the end of the sixteenth century is un-Elizabethan."⁹⁹³ Generalising and simplified statements like these are often found in the secondary literature about Caroline drama and tend to overlook the fact that at least two (if not three) of the six remaining playhouses successfully catered to exactly these expectations and in consequence constituted a significant proportion of the overall theatrical activity. This was testified by Thomas Carew, who in 1630 bitterly observed that the rather ill-reputed Red Bull drew large audiences whereas the other playhouses at times only managed to attract only a handful of spectators:

⁹⁹² Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 9.

⁹⁹³ Leech. *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama*, p. 162.

[...] they'l still slight
All that exceeds Red Bull, and Cockpit flight.
These are the men in crowded heapes that throng
To that adulterate stage, where not a tong
Of th'untune'd Kennell, can a line repeat
Of serious sence, but like lips, meet like meat;
Whilst the true brood of Actors, that alone
Keepe naturall unstrayn'd Action in her throne
Behold their Benches bare, though they rehearse
The teaser Beaumonts or great Johnsons verse.⁹⁹⁴

Even though Carew's words might be somewhat exaggerated, they contain a sufficient amount of truth and therefore are ample proof that the Elizabethan dramatic traditions were far from dead in the years before the Civil War and that on the contrary large numbers of Early Modern Londoner expected to be treated by these forms of entertainment.

II.7.5.2 AUDIENCE COMPOSITION AT PRIVATE PLAYHOUSES

Even though the private theatres of Early Modern London feature a long history from around the turn of the century until they were finally closed in 1642, evidence on their audiences is fragmentary and has received less attention than the public venues. Working closely with the pieces of contemporary data available, there are several claims that can be made about the people patronising the private halls. Not least because of the considerable higher prices of admission, the three remaining private halls catered for a different clientele than their less expensive public counterparts and featured a sort of demographic homogeneity not found at the amphitheatres. Conveniently located in the more fashionable western districts of the capital and not on the periphery like their public competitors, audiences at the private halls were more select and wealthier. Yet, as nowadays, being able to afford more money for one's pastimes did not always mean more sophistication or better taste. Playgoing during Jacobean and Caroline times was also an important means to socialize and to exhibit oneself. Thus one must be careful to automatically regard all members of private theatre audiences as experts or as having more refined tastes than the average patron of public theatres. Regarding this Hattaway

⁹⁹⁴ From Carew's commendatory verses for Davenant's *The Just Italian*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 285f.

has emphasised that "it is naive to postulate a correlation between literacy, taste, or sophistication and social rank: an aristocrat could be depraved or discriminating in judgment, a water-carrier as fond of high rhetoric as inexplicable dumb showy and noise."⁹⁹⁵ An exception to this rule was Abraham Wright, whose elaborate and critical notes on the performances he watched present a man of high intelligence and with a thorough understanding of theatrical practises. The growing importance and popularity of the private halls was mainly due to "the rise of a social and political circle of new capitalist wealth"⁹⁹⁶ in the ever-expanding capital. In addition more and more members of the gentry patronised these venues as a means to establish and strengthen social ties. The evolving capitalist class, which concentrated itself in London,

was a product of the long transition from feudalism to capitalism that also transformed the state. [...] They created a nascent public sphere, at theaters, coffee houses, salons and other public places [...] that promoted a new relationship to the state as citizens and not simply subjects.⁹⁹⁷

The private playhouses in particular were the beneficiaries of this development as evidently more and more people were willed to spend increasing sums for entertainment and consumption and in consequence "flocked to London in pursuit of pleasure and fashion"⁹⁹⁸. Among the people following this trend were also numerous gallants who predominantly came to the theatres to be seen and to exhibit themselves and their elaborate apparel and who, according to the anonymous *The Stage-Players Complaint* of the year 1641, "otherwise perhaps would spend their money in drunkenesse, and lasciviousnesse, [and] doe find a great delight and delectation to see a play"⁹⁹⁹. Playgoers belonging to this group would often pay for stools on the stage platform itself and show more interest in the female members of the audience than in the dramatic performance. No known manuscripts of this group have survived, but it would be questionable anyway

⁹⁹⁵ Hattaway. *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, p. 47.

⁹⁹⁶ Butsch. "Crowds, Publics and Consumers", p. 38.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁸ Leo Salinger. "Jacobean Playwrights and "Judicious" Spectators". *Renaissance Drama*. 22 (1991): 209-234, p. 220.

⁹⁹⁹ Tatham. Prologue. *The Fancies Theater*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 298f.

whether these people, showing such an unusual level of self-confidence in public, would bother to record objective or reliable data. Thus all there is are the descriptions by people from outside this particular circle, such as the playwright Aston Cockayne, who, in 1639 in the prologue to his *The Obstinate Lady*, stated that

[...] many Gallants do come hither, we think
To sleep and to digest there too much drink:
We may please them; for we will not molest
With Drums and Trumpets any of their rest.¹⁰⁰⁰

Cockayne here draws attention to yet another side of late-Jacobean and Caroline gallants, namely that their indifference to plays at times even led to the fact that they fell asleep during performances. Although there are many more examples of contemporary playwrights about the often disrespectful and snooty behaviour of gallants, it is likely that the constant influx of money resulting from their attendance as well as the opportunity to ridicule them in their plays helped to ease the dramatists' bad feelings about them.

As Mildmay's records testify, the Blackfriars was the resort of well-to-do members of London society, who appreciated the existence of an environment in which to meet and exchange on a regular basis, and is moreover often associated with Court circles. In January 1635, Chamberlain wrote another letter to his friend Sir Dudley Carleton in which he gives an example of a person of rank visiting a performance at the King's Men's private hall as well as his social affiliations:

The Duke of Brunwicke went hence on Newyeresday after he had taried just a weeke and performed many visits to almost all our great Lords and Ladies as the Lord of Canterburie, the Lord Keper, and the rest, not omitting Mistris Brus nor the stage at Blacke Friars.¹⁰⁰¹

This part of Chamberlain's letter shows that it was customary for people from the top of the social hierarchy to patronise the London stages and furthermore that visits to the playhouses were a given means for visiting gentry from the countryside. Especially in the last ten years before the theatres' closure, the three remaining private halls increasingly, though by far not exclusively, moved "into an exclusive association with the court, performing before a plush-and-velvet clientele for whom

¹⁰⁰⁰ Aston Cockayne. Prologue. *The Obstinate Lady*. London: 1657. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 296.

¹⁰⁰¹ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 2, p. 594.

playgoing was only an extension of the normal courtly round."¹⁰⁰² At the same time the drama's potential to critically comment on and challenge the social and political developments shaking and burdening the country in the years leading to the Civil War was not lost.

Chamberlain's letter above as well as Mildmay's account are a reminder that predominantly records of the gentry have survived until this day. Scholars are lacking data proving that also other well-to-do members of London society, such as wealthy merchants, judges or lawyers, who had both the time and the financial means to attend performances, regularly patronised the Blackfriars, the Cockpit and Salisbury Court. It is known that these members of society were there and made up a rather huge proportion of the overall audience because they are mentioned in various sources – not to forget Brome's extended Praeludium to the 1638 revival of Goffe's *The Careless Shepherdess*.¹⁰⁰³ However, what is missing are records or notes of these particular groups of people telling about their attendances in their own voices. This scantiness of references to individual middle-class patrons is on the one hand due to the fact that people not belonging to aristocratic circles wrote less letters and on the other hand because no one felt the need to preserve these letters – in contrast to the rather well-documented history and family affairs of certain aristocratic families. To this effect Butler has highlighted that

the presence of the privileged does not logically entail the absence of the unprivileged; rather, what these records are illustrating is demonstrably only a part of the total audience. Interpreted more objectively, those testimonies which establish the existence of privileged playgoers disclose the existence of the unprivileged playgoers too [...].¹⁰⁰⁴

Regarding this and following Butler's line of thought, Gurr has likewise put emphasis on the fact that people other than the gentry or aristocracy – though maybe not featuring very dominantly in contemporary accounts – must have made up a huge proportion of theater audiences:

¹⁰⁰² Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁰³ As McLuskie has emphasised to this effect, "[t]he differences between these characters involve not only their respective levels of wealth and status, or the particular venues they frequent, but also their appreciation of new artistic trends." (McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 50.)

¹⁰⁰⁴ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, pp. 298f.

Evidence for the presence of citizens' wives at plays confirms the inference that citizens themselves were likewise regular playgoers, since no respectable wife could easily attend a play without a male escort. I am inclined to believe that despite the infrequent reference to their presence citizens were the staple [...] throughout the period. They attracted far less attention than the gallants, the Inns of Court students, or even the foreign visitors, who took in the playhouses much as they took in the river and a view of royalty, and noted their impressions accordingly. Given the number of citizens in London, their relative affluence, and their proximity to all the playhouse venues, it may not be wildly wrong to think of them and their lesser neighbours the prosperous artisan class as a kind of silent majority in the playhouses.¹⁰⁰⁵

What Gurr suggests here is that only because there aren't any surviving documents proving that such classes as citizens or artisans frequented the playhouses, there are nevertheless strong indications that they enjoyed watching plays in large numbers. Another aspect in favour of Gurr's conclusion is that it is well-known that these two classes in particular increasingly tried to imitate the tastes and fashions of the upper classes. Since playgoing had developed to be a regular feat of upper class life, citizens and artisans tried to be seen at the playhouses on a regular basis. A huge proportion of the capital's population belonged to these two groups so the playhouses were dependent on them to ensure their venues were not only moderately filled most of the time. As it is, they just kept quiet about how they spent their pastimes.

Gurr introduces another group whose presence at the playhouses is well documented: young men studying at the Inns of Court, who would have lived and worked in close proximity to the private halls and whose parents' money would have allowed them to enjoy these pastimes. John Greene, a student at the Lincoln's Inn during the mid-1630s, noted that it was not unusual for large groups of students to attend performances at the nearby private playhouses together. In October 1635, he and his friends "were at a play, some at cockpit, some at Blackfriars."¹⁰⁰⁶ In contrast to their public counterparts, the private halls featured in consequence a more limited audience diversity and as Armstrong has summarised to this effect,

[t]hough there a few direct descriptions of the audiences of Elizabethan private theatres, there is sufficient evidence to warrant the belief that they were mainly drawn from those parts of London adjacent to the theatres and that they consisted mainly of courtiers, gentlemen of the Inns of Court, wits, and women of fashion, together with such hangers-on

¹⁰⁰⁵ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Quoted in: Armstrong. "The Audience of the Elizabethan Private Theatres", p. 237.

as gamblers, soldiers, prostitutes, and would-be gallants. Citizens and artisans were in a minority, partly because of the relatively high prices of seats, partly because the plays were not entirely to their taste.¹⁰⁰⁷

It would be wrong to exaggerate the gap between the two types of playhouses, as many scholars, above all Harbage, have suggested. There were evident and rather far-reaching differences in both layout and other physical circumstances of performance, but one has to keep in mind that the surviving contemporary data indicates that various members of the upper classes, such as Mildmay or the Cecils, were regular guests at the public amphitheatres and spent considerably amounts of money there. Yet, one should also keep in mind that these visits were almost entirely restricted to the Globe on the Bankside, which was the most fashionable among the three remaining public playhouses. As the summer-home of the highly popular King's Men it drew larger crowds of the well-to-do members of society. Gurr offers a simplified portrayal of the Globe's special standing and states that "[a]s always with the Globe, its offerings and its playgoers stood midway between the extremes of low amphitheatre reputation and hall playhouse snobbery"¹⁰⁰⁸. However, visits of the gentry or the merchantry to the Fortune were not unheard of and people like Father Orazio Busino (see below) also considered this venue a suitable site to spend their free time and mingle with people outside their usual social circles to enjoy a common purpose.

Both types of theatres had the potential to "unify a large collection of people of disparate backgrounds into a more homogeneous group"¹⁰⁰⁹ and the private halls did not only tend to an aristocratic or even courtly coterie. This does not mean that people of different backgrounds mingled freely. Early Modern playgoers preferred to stay – helped by the elaborate seating arrangements – within their own social group. Within these groups however, the private playhouses in particular "were environments which stimulated acquaintance and in which friendship and kinship could thrive [...]; they provided conditions ideally suited to enable such a society to constitute and establish itself"¹⁰¹⁰. This assumption is underlined by the fact that for

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 249.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 113.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

people like Mildmay or the MP Sir Edward Dering of Kent, playgoing was an important means to sustain existing social bonds with a wide range of people with whom one watched performances and ate dinner together.

There are numerous metatheatrical passages in which playwrights expressed the difficulties coming along with such a demographic heterogeneity – each member of the audience having his or her own taste and expectations. A fine example for this is the prologue to Middleton's comedy *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*. The play was first performed at a public venue in 1612 and revived in 1638. It exemplifies the problems resulting from the fact that the people sitting in the galleries could differ quite a lot from the people standing in the yard:

How is't possible to suffice
So many ears, so many eyes?
Some in wit, some in shows
Take delight, and some in clothes;
Some for mirth they chiefly come,
Some for passion-for both some,
Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
Some to detract and ignorance their warrant.
How is't possible to please
Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?
Yet I doubt not, if attention
Seize you above, and apprehension
You below, to take things quickly,
We shall both make you sad, and tickle ye.¹⁰¹¹

What Middleton's prologue and other metatheatrical elements composed during the Jacobean and Caroline Period suggest is that no matter how exactly the audiences picked out as a central theme in these passages were composed, they

consistently present not one audience but multiple ones. In some cases, one type of audience member is clearly encouraged over the others [...] but there is never any pretense that other types of audience do not exist or can consistently be retained.¹⁰¹²

The existence of socially diverse audiences in Jacobean and Caroline playhouses cannot be denied. Doing so would contradict the people who lived during this time and wrote plays for exactly this diversity of Early Modern Londoners. It would take some another twenty years for the London theatres to develop the very narrow and

¹⁰¹¹ Middleton. Prologue. *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, p. 4.

¹⁰¹² Myhill. "Taking the Stage: Spectators as Spectacle in the Caroline Private Theatres", p. 52.

distinctly exclusive clientele characterising them after their reopening following the Restoration in 1660, when ties to earlier Elizabethan traditions had almost completely been shaken off and public theatres and their audiences had in fact disappeared altogether.¹⁰¹³ The diarist Samuel Pepys

declared after the Restoration that the theatre was 'a thousand times better and more glorious than ever before.' He was referring to the newly licensed theatres of Dorset Gardens and Drury Lane, but the new theatres were nothing like the old; as Pepys went on to remark, 'now all things civil, no rudeness anywhere.' The drama had been refined, in other words, in order that it would appeal to the king, the court and those Londoners who shared the same values.¹⁰¹⁴

II.7.5.3 FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE

In contrast to other European countries, women – ranging from apple-wives and prostitutes to aristocratic ladies or even the Queen herself – were a common sight at the public and private playhouses respectively and their presence is attested by a rather wide range of contemporary sources by both Londoners and visitors from abroad. As Howard has put it,

[f]rom Andrew Gurr's important study, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, we know that women were in the public theater in significant numbers and that the women who attended the theater were neither simply courtesans nor aristocratic ladies; many seem to have been citizens' wives [...].¹⁰¹⁵

Puritans viewed their presence with suspicion and in consequence condemned women, even though they were usually accompanied by a male escort, for watching plays on the one hand, but there are on the other hand also sources which provide a more objective view on this matter. In 1579, Stephen Gosson criticized female playgoers in his antitheatrical tract *The School of Abuse* and advised them that "[t]he best counsel that I can give you, is to keepe home, and shun all occasion of ill speech."¹⁰¹⁶ Throughout the passages dealing with the presence of women at the playhouses, Gosson

¹⁰¹³ Cf.: Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 110.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ackroyd. *London. The Biography*, p. 172.

¹⁰¹⁵ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 76.

¹⁰¹⁶ Stephen Gosson. *The School of Abuse*. London: 1579. Quoted in: Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, pp. 76f.

voices his worries in a typically paternalistic form: i.e. as a concern for woman's safety and good reputation. [...] In Gosson's account the female playgoer is symbolically whored by the gaze of many men, each woman a potential Cressida in the camp of the Greeks, vulnerable, alone, and open to whatever imputations men might cast upon her. She becomes what we might call the object of promiscuous gazing. [...] For the "good" of women he warns them to stay at home, to shut themselves away from all dangers, and to find pleasure in reading or in the gossip of other women.¹⁰¹⁷

In addition to this, Howard provides a further analysis of Gosson's tract and his anxieties about female playgoers blurring existing boundaries by stating that the

threat the theater seems to hold for Gosson in regard to ordinary gentlewomen is that in that public space such women have become unanchored from the structures of surveillance and control "normal" to the culture and useful in securing the boundary between "good women" and "whores". Not literally passed, like Cressida, from hand to hand, lip to lip, the female spectator oases instead from eye to eye, her value as the exclusive possession of one man cheapened, put at risk, by the gazing of many eyes. [...] How does one classify a woman who is not literally a whore and yet who is not, as good women were supposed to be, at home?¹⁰¹⁸

Some twenty years later, in 1616, Robert Anton, proving that women still went to the playhouses in numbers large enough to be commented upon, expressed reservations quite similar to Gosson and asked

[...] why are women rather growne so mad,
That their immodest feete like plantes gad
With such irregular motion to base Playes,
Where all the deadly sinnes keepe hollidaies
There shall they see the vices of the times,
Orestes incest, Cleopatres crimes.¹⁰¹⁹

Even though texts like this were common throughout the entire Early Modern Period, they – in spite of their highly figurative and dramatic language – had only little effect on the actual composition of playgoers. The other extant data shows that the numbers of female playgoers steadily increased until 1642 – not least because of Queen Henrietta's recorded visits to the Blackfriars in the 1620ies and her pronounced and widely known passion for drama in general.

A text from 1617 underlines this. Orazio Busino, chaplain of the Venetian Embassy, watched a performance at the Fortune playhouse and was pleasantly surprised "to

¹⁰¹⁷ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, pp. 76f.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁰¹⁹ Robert Anton. *The Philosopher's Satyrs*. London: 1617, p. 46. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 276.

see men and women sitting so unceremoniously side by side"¹⁰²⁰ – something unimaginable in his native country at that time. He noted, clearly impressed, that

[t]hese theatres are frequented by a number of respectable and handsome ladies, who come freely and seat themselves among the men without the slightest hesitation. On the evening in question his Excellency and the Secretary were pleased to play me a trick by placing me amongst a bevy of young women. Scarcely was I seated are a very elegant dame, but in a mask, came and placed herself besides me [...] she determined to honour me by showing me some fine diamonds on her fingers, repeatedly taking off no fewer than three gloves, which were worn one over the other [...] This lady's bodice was of yellow satin richly embroidered, her petticoat of gold tissue with stripes, her robe of red velvet with a raised pile, lined with yellow muslin with broad stripes of pure gold. She wore an apron of point lace of various patterns: her head-tire was highly perfumed, and the collar of white satin beneath the delicately-wrought ruff struck me as extremely pretty.¹⁰²¹

Father Busino's short account, though in some parts exaggerated, does not only provide proof for the presence of women at Early Modern playhouses in general, but also that members of the upper classes frequented the public amphitheatres and did not only visit the more fashionable private venues – even though they nevertheless seem to have put a lot of thought into expressing their social standing by their elaborate attire. Combined with the available data on the lower members of society at the public playhouses, this helps to better see that various social classes mixed at the public venues and mutually experienced the performances and the recreation resulting from it as a crowd.

In addition to this, playgoing was very popular among the women of the Cecil family, who would often travel from Salisbury House to the Globe or the Blackfriars theatre. Especially the young daughters of William Cecil, the second Earl of Salisbury, were regular patrons at the theaters. In April 1627, Lady Ann was only fifteen when she attended a performance at the Globe in Southwark. Concerning this performance the family records state: "going by water with my Lady Ann in two boats to the Globe, 1s – 6d going and returning 1s – 6d."¹⁰²² Though she or her sister Lady Elizabeth, who had a particular fondness of masques, never went on their own but were accompanied by other family members or footmen, it is striking

¹⁰²⁰ Nagler. *Shakespeare's Stage*, p. 107.

¹⁰²¹ Orazio Busino. *Calender of State Papers, Venetian 1617-19*. London: 1909, pp. 67f. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 276.

¹⁰²² Quoted in: Peck. "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House", p. 474.

that girls this young were seen at the playhouses and felt safe there among the masses of people of diverse backgrounds.¹⁰²³

The fact that women were regular guests at London's playhouses is also testified by certain metatheatrical passages found in various plays written and performed between 1616 and 1642 in which the female members of the audience are addressed and flattered. Shirley addresses and sweet-talks them in his *The Coronation* of the year 1635 by even using a female prologue:

[...] is there not
A blush upon my cheekes that I forgot
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 [...]
You are the bright intelligences move,
And make a harmony this sphere of Love.¹⁰²⁴

In the prologue to his *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* of the year 1624, John Fletcher likewise puts emphasis on the importance of the female members of his audience and directly speaks to them and states

Nor blame the Poet if he slip aside,
Sometimes lasciviously if not too wide.
But hold your Fannes close, and then smile at ease,
A cruell Sceane did never Lady please.¹⁰²⁵

These two pieces of internal evidence from plays prove that women made up a certain proportion of late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences. Another letter, written in 1635, likewise testifies that women were a common sight at playhouses – in this case the public Globe. In a letter to Robert Phelips, Nathaniel Tomkyns states the following:

Here hath bin lately a newe comedie at the globe called *The Witches of Lancasheir*, acted by reason of ye great concourse of people 3 dayes together: the 3rd day I went with a friend to

¹⁰²³ For further information on the Cecil family and their records, please see Linda Peck's highly illuminating essay "The Caroline Audience: Evidence from Hatfield House".

¹⁰²⁴ Shirley. Prologue. *The Coronation. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 3, p. 459.

¹⁰²⁵ John Fletcher. Prologue. *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife. The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*. Ed. Fredson Bowers, 10 vols. Vol. 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 502.

see it, and found a greater apparence of fine folke gentmen and gentweomen then I thought had bin in town in the vacation.¹⁰²⁶

This letter, like the Cecil papers, does not only provide proof for the assumption that female members of the upper classes also went to the Globe on the Bankside and not only to the even more fashionable private halls during their summer vacation. In addition to this, it testifies that playgoing was a very sociable event (Tomkyns went there with a friend) and lastly that certain plays, like Heywood's and Brome's collaboration *The Late Witches of Lancashire*, were unusually successful and managed to attract huge audiences even on consecutive days.

Taking the above mentioned aspects into account, I come to the conclusion that Jacobean and Caroline audiences could be socially very diverse and that they were by far not as homogeneous as critics tried to make their readers believe in the past decades. Though especially the private venues more and more distanced themselves from their Elizabethan roots, they still consolidated a wide spectrum of amusement-seekers under one roof and remained sites of social conflict like their public competitors throughout the period:

It appears that although the 'two traditions' are broadly and unmistakably distinct a considerable degree of interaction and cross-fertilization still took place between them, and the critical terminology that divides 'private' from 'public' implies misleadingly that the Blackfriars, Phoenix and Salisbury Court catered for a more withdrawn and restricted clientele than in fact they did.¹⁰²⁷

One must look closer at the extant data. Simplifications and generalisations, though easier and quite convincing on the surface, are misleading and lead to a falsified and incomplete picture of historical realities. The absence of accounts or letters of the lower classes must not be seen as proof that they did not watch plays anymore or that the Elizabethan traditions had altogether disappeared – especially in view of the fact that their very presence was acknowledged by both the theaters' enemies and the playwrights themselves. Nor should the role of aristocratic or court-related members of the audience be overestimated. Though it is true that various people belonging to courtly circles were frequent guests at especially the private halls, it

¹⁰²⁶ From a letter by Nathaniel Tomkyns to Robert Phelips. Quoted in: Berry. "The Globe Bewitched and "El Hombre Fiel"", p. 215.

¹⁰²⁷ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 132.

must not be forgotten that they – being not that numerous anyway – only amounted to a rather small proportion of the overall audience and that the ever-growing merchant class, successful citizens as well as other well-to-do members of Jacobean and Caroline society presented the majority. The stigma of being 'Cavalier' only really applied to the Court stage, which,

was indeed elitist, exclusive, intimate, amateur, occasional, restricted, private in the tightest sense, but the professional theatres, both indoor and outdoor, were genuinely public – in the case of the popular theatres, fully and comprehensively so.¹⁰²⁸

The heterogeneity of audiences is moreover testified by the significant gaps in admission prices, which enabled people of socially very diverse backgrounds to come to the playhouses for a common purpose. Even though Cook denies this, the clear distinction between the different seats at both playhouse types "was a significant, functional one"¹⁰²⁹ and was also attested by the playwrights themselves, by frequently addressing the different groups present at the playhouses by means of a wide range of metatheatrical elements.

Using two last contemporary pieces of evidence, the hypothesis that Jacobean and Caroline playhouses were frequented by socially diverse audiences can be further backed up. In a letter, Chamberlain explicitly exemplifies that in 1624, Middleton's *A Game at Chess* was

frequented by all sorts of people old and younge, rich and poore, masters and servants, papists and puritans, wise men et. ct., churchmen and statesmen as Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Albert Morton, Sir Benjamin Ruddier, Sir Thomas Lake, and a world besides [...].¹⁰³⁰

Following the same line of thought, the epilogue to Richard Lovelace's *The Scholars*, first performed in the early 1640s, underlines the social diversity found at the playhouses on the one hand and draws particular attention to the division resulting from the seating arrangement on the other hand. In doing so he puts emphasis on the fact that even in the theatres' final years the people attending a play were still a highly heterogeneous group with significantly varying individual tastes and expectations towards the stage:

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., p. 305.

¹⁰³⁰ Chamberlain. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*. Vol. 2, pp. 577f.

His Schollars school'd, sayd if he had been wise
He should have wove in one two comedies.
The first for th' gallery, in which the throne
To their amazement should descend alone,
The rosin-lightning flash and monster spire
Squibs, and words hotter than his fire.
Th'other for the gentlemen o'th'pit
Like to themselves all spirit, fancy wit.¹⁰³¹

II.7.6 AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR AND THE PHYSICALITY OF RESPONSE

The theatres' enemies often criticized Early Modern playgoers for their unruly behaviour. The same holds true for several contemporary playwrights such as Jonson, who condemned audiences if they showed a dislike of a certain play. Most of the testimony for audience behaviour “expresses a social attitude or comes from disappointed poets, disgruntled preachers, wary politicians, or spokesmen for threatened commercial interests”¹⁰³². In May 1626, the Privy Council sent the following note to Justices of the Peace in order to ensure peace and control the supposedly violent and riotous playgoers:

Whereas wee are informed that on thursday next, divers loose and Idle persons, some Saylor, and others, have appointed to meete at the Playhouse called the Globe, to see a Play (as it is pretended) but their ende is thereby to disguise some Routous and Riotous action [...].¹⁰³³

Most of these accusations were unwarranted and wrong, since Early Modern playgoers were usually of a gay and peaceful bearing. Passages like the one quoted above underline that contemporary authorities viewed the playhouses with great suspicion and were afraid of the things that might have happened when people met in large and hard to control numbers. Texts like these express a fear of things that might happen instead of referring to actual occurrences and hence do not depict actual audience behaviour. Yet, though many accusations brought against the playhouses and their customers were unwarranted, the anonymously published *The Actors Remonstrance or Complaint* of the year 1643, in which actors and companies state their grievance resulting from the banishment of their profession and the closing

¹⁰³¹ From the epilogue to Lovelace's lost play *The Scholars*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 299.

¹⁰³² Harbage. *Shakespeare's Audience*, pp. 17f.

¹⁰³³ Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 282.

of their playhouses in the previous year, takes up several of these issues and promises to change them:

We shall for the future promise, never to admit into our six-penny-rooms those unwholesome inticing Harlots, that sit there meere to be taken up by Prentizes or Lawyers Clerks; nor any female of what degree soever, except they come lawfully with their husbands, or neere allies: the abuses in Tobacco shall be reformed, none vended, not so much as in three-penny galleries, unlesse of the pure *Spanish* leafe. For ribaldry, or any such paltry stuffe, as may scandall the pious, and provoke the wicked to loosenesse, we will utterly expell it with the bawdy and ungracious Poets, the authors to the *Antipodes*.¹⁰³⁴

The Actors Remonstrance or Complaint shows how frustrated and disappointed the companies of players were and that they would do anything – be it trying to change the behaviour of their audiences or that of those belonging to their own profession – to persuade the authorities to re-open the playhouses and save them from unemployment and poverty.

The evidence available on actual audience behaviour for both the public and private venues is limited and often highly subjective in nature. With regard to the private halls, two groups in particular have attracted more contemporary attention than any other – namely the gallants on the one hand and the people sitting on stage on the other hand. At the public amphitheatres the groundlings attracted more attention than the people sitting in the galleries.

The theatres "were competing with a wide range of rowdy entertainments, such as bear-baiting, inns and taverns"¹⁰³⁵. As these forms of entertainment were often frequented by the same people, the way they behaved was somewhat similar. Especially the public venues and their layout "effectively constructed the situation as an enclosed version of the rowdy crowd attending to a street performance."¹⁰³⁶ However, it would be wrong to generalise and conclude from this that late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences were always characterised by rowdy participation or reactions. Modern scholars, due to the lack of suitable evidence, still do not know how people behaved at the bear-pits and inside inns or ale-houses for example. Superficial generalisations are in consequence not helpful.

¹⁰³⁴ From the conclusion to the anonymously published *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 299.

¹⁰³⁵ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 34.

¹⁰³⁶ Butsch. "Crowds, Publics and Consumers", p. 35.

One cannot tar all members of the audience and their behaviour with the same brush and should refrain from seeing late-Jacobean and Caroline playgoers as "an entity, experiencing much the same emotions and interests in much the same intellectual excitements".¹⁰³⁷ Individual playgoers reacted differently to what was shown on stage and as with dramatic performances in general, the audience

was stirred as one man by some passionate or dramatic situation. At other moments, however, its response was much more patchy and limited; a soliloquy absorbed some, mildly interested but perplexed others, and frankly bored another section of the audience, just as a bout of horse-play or of bawdy put part of the house in a roar, but may have left others grieving [...]. It may be that one part of a play appealed to one section of the audience and another to another section. It is also true that one and the same part of a play appealed to all sections at different levels.¹⁰³⁸

Having said that however, one must also keep in mind that due to the scarceness of evidence, one can most of the time only describe behavioural patterns that seem to have been exhibited by the majority of playgoers and in consequence found their ways in contemporary pieces of data. Evidence to assess how exactly certain scenes or passages may have affected individual members of the audience is lacking and most of the time it is not even known how a particular play was received at all. Only the more general reactions that have shaped the theatrical landscape between the years 1616 and 1642 can be analysed and though this might not sound very fertile at first, the following paragraphs will offer a rather comprehensive insight into the atmosphere of Early Modern performances.

In Early Modern playhouses "the action in the audience competed with the entertainment on the stage"¹⁰³⁹. This is due to the fact that Early Modern audiences must always be seen as an active entity responding to what they were seeing on stage and "[i]n a period when characters frequently spoke lines to the audience, it should not be surprising if the audience talked back."¹⁰⁴⁰ An experienced dramatist

leaves as little as possible to chance: he adjusts his plotting, and much else besides, to ensure that the audience will respond as he wants. His manipulation of response is therefore one of

¹⁰³⁷ H. S. Bennett. *Shakespeare's Audience: Annual Shakespeare Lecture of the British Academy*. London: Milford, 1944, p. 3.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰³⁹ Cook. "Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention", p. 311.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Langhans. "The Theatre", p. 15.

the dramatist's basic skills, no less important than plotting, characterisation, use of imagery or ideas and the like [...].¹⁰⁴¹

Late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences were hard to please and they would directly express their disappointment if the dramatists and the actors did not succeed in using the idealistic strategies mentioned above. If a play failed to delight for some reason the playgoers, having paid to be entertained, would not hesitate to hiss and yell comments or suggestions. As Cook points out, "hisses and insults made good sport"¹⁰⁴². This happened in 1629, when a French troupe "was hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage"¹⁰⁴³, as Thomas Brande recorded in a letter in November of the same year. Crowds "affirm their collective spirit by vocal expression of their shared feelings. The audience, as an active participant in the collective experience of playgoing, had no reason to keep its reactions private."¹⁰⁴⁴ However, it was not only hissing and whistling that could show the audiences' dislike of a play. Impatient, restless or angry playgoers often threw things such as apples, pears and oranges at the actors. These "missiles might be used not only to hasten the beginning of a play but to stop it altogether, and even to make the players offer a different play"¹⁰⁴⁵. The proximity to the stage of such groups as the groundlings at the public venues or the people sitting on stage at the private venues "would have given them a disproportionate power to dictate the terms of performance"¹⁰⁴⁶. The issue of throwing things at the actors during performances was taken up by Edmund Gayton in retrospect in 1654, when he, highly exaggerating, stated that during Early Modern performances "the benches, the tiles, the laths, the stones, oranges, apples, nuts, flew about most liberally"¹⁰⁴⁷. In general actions such as laughter, booing, shouting at the actors, talking, calling out to other members of the audience or greeting acquaintances during

¹⁰⁴¹ E. A. J. Honigmann. *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies Revisited. The Dramatist's Manipulation of Response*. 2nd Edition. New York: Palgrave, 2002, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴² Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁴³ From a letter by Thomas Brande from the 8th November 1629. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 283.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Thomson. *Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Edmund Gayton. *Pleasant Notes Upon Don Quixot*. London: 1654, p. 272. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 300.

performances were not at all unusual at both public and private playhouses. Actors, in particular at the open-air theatres, needed strong and clear voices to make themselves heard over these distractions. This general noise-level resulting from the more openly responsive atmosphere was considerably increased by people eating, drinking and smoking, by people walking freely around to purchase more refreshments or to welcome friends and by the noise of the city itself. Many prologues of this time urged the playgoers to be quiet and attentive, such as the prologue to *The Two Merry Milkmaids* of the year 1619, which specifically addresses the groundlings in the pit:

We hope, for your owne good, you in the Yard
Will lend your Eares, attentively to heare
Things that shall flow so smoothly to your ear [...] ¹⁰⁴⁸

Even though audiences were not restrained to show their sentiments, it would be wrong to conclude that Early Modern playgoers were of a generally violent nature. If audiences had been as unruly and immoral as the theatres' enemies claimed, the playhouses would have been permanently shut long before 1642. There are in fact only a handful of instances in which playgoers were to blame for serious troubles. The denunciation of the theatres was not based on actual audience behaviour, but was rather due to the fact that some people "subscribed to the fact that drama has the capacity to imitate action and, by example, to impel its audience to action" ¹⁰⁴⁹. In general one should always be cautious about taking the antitheatricalist view for a normative one in this period. Yet, it would also be wrong to assume that all playgoers were friendly or honest people. In a text published in 1631, Richard Brathwait, referring to the public theatres, details that certain dishonest members of the audience would obtain entrance by fraud and behave rudely:

To a play they will hazard to go, though with never a rag of money: where after the second Act, when the Doore is weakly guarded, they will make forcible entrie, a knock with a Cudgell is the worst; whereat though they grumble, they rest pacified upon their admittance. Forthwith by violent assault and assent, they aspire to the two-pennie roome; where being furnished with Tinder, Match, and a portion of decayed Barmoodas, they smoake it most

¹⁰⁴⁸ Cumber. Prologue. *The Two Merry Milkmaids*. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 279.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 71.

terribly, applaude a prophane jest unmeasurably, and in the end grow distastefully rude to all the Companie.¹⁰⁵⁰

Renaissance audiences were not hesitant in showing approval with applause either. In contrast to today, applause in the Early Modern theatres was not confined to the end of a piece and playgoers “would applaud at any notable event during the play”¹⁰⁵¹ – much too the dislike of the poets at times, as the following examples testify. In 1616 William Fennor, deeply hurt about how unfavourably his *Sejanus* had been conceived by contemporary playgoers, parodied audience reactions by summarizing that

The stinkards oft will hisse without a cause
And for a baudy jeast will give applause
Let one but aske the reason why they roare
They'll answere, cause the rest did so before.¹⁰⁵²

Fennor's passage is not the only one in which certain members of audiences are attacked or ridiculed by playwrights for clapping at the wrong moments during a play. Fletcher criticised those less sophisticated playgoers who would clap or laugh at jigs instead of appreciating the beauty of his verses, in doing so underlining that audiences were not as homogeneous as some critics would want their readers to believe:

A Jigg shall be clapt at, and every rime
Prais'd and applauded by a clamorous chime.
Let Ignorance and laughter dwell together,
They are beneath the Muses pittie. Hether
Come nobler Judgements, and those the straine
Of our invention is not bent in vaine.¹⁰⁵³

Playhouses were not only places of entertainment, but also places of consumption and social interaction. Refreshments were “a ready feature of playgoing”¹⁰⁵⁴ and Thomas Platter observed that “in the pauses of the comedy food and drink are carried round amongst the people, and one can thus refresh himself at his own

¹⁰⁵⁰ Richard Brathwait [Clitus-Alexandrinus]. *Whimzies: Or a New Cast of Characters*. London: 1631, pp. 134f. Quoted in: Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁵¹ Hahn and Linnell. *Shakespeare's Globe Expedition*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵² Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁵³ Fletcher. Prologue. *The Fair Maid of the Inn. The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*. Vol. 10, p. 559.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 162.

cost.”¹⁰⁵⁵ Ale and beer were the most common drinks at the playhouses and some theatres, such as the Globe or the Fortune, were equipped with taprooms in which playgoers could buy ale and beer before, after as well as during performances.¹⁰⁵⁶ “[B]ottled ale sold well”¹⁰⁵⁷, but unfortunately for the audiences the playhouses were not equipped with toilets so that other means to relieve oneself had to be found. There is little surviving evidence to illuminate one's understanding of this. Gurr suggests that men sitting in the galleries could easily have used the back wall to pass their urine and women “might have had special pots under their skirts to receive their outflows, subsequently decanted into available buckets.”¹⁰⁵⁸ Sir Henry Wotton, who was present when the first Globe burned down during a production of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* on the 29th June 1613, highlights the advantages of bottled drinks sold on the premises by writing that “one man had his breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broiled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit put it out with bottle ale.”¹⁰⁵⁹

However, not only drinks were sold at Early Modern playhouses. Food – mostly apples, nuts and sometimes more expensive oranges – were also available for those who could afford this additional expenditure. The habit of noisily cracking nuts during performances triggered various complains by playwrights, actors and concentrative playgoers and in fact “nut-cracking was the only regular complaint apart from the prologue's customary plea for silence.”¹⁰⁶⁰ W. J. Lawrence cites several of these contemporary complaints in his book *Those Nut-Cracking Elizabethans*. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady*, one of the characters complains about playgoers who crack “[m]ore nuts than would suffice a dozen Squirrels”¹⁰⁶¹. Another play mentions visitors of private theatres “who sixpence pay

¹⁰⁵⁵ Quoted in: John Lewis-Stempel, ed. *England: The Autobiography. 2000 Years of English History by Those Who Saw it Happen*. London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 142.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Cf.: Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Honan. *Shakespeare. A Life*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 173.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Lewis-Stempel. *England: The Autobiography*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 278.

¹⁰⁶¹ Fletcher and Beaumont. *The Scornful Lady. The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*. Vol. 2. IV.ii.67.

and sixpence crack”¹⁰⁶². Playgoers living in the Restoration, preferring more expensive oranges to apples and nuts, made fun of the fact that few Early Modern playgoers could sit out dramatic performances without eating nuts. This is testified by John Corye’s *The Generous Enemies*, in which it is said that

Your aged fathers came to plays for wit,
And sat knee-deep in nutshells in the pit.¹⁰⁶³

A thick layer of shells of various types of nuts was found on the site of the Rose when it was excavated in 1989. In spite of the noise and distraction caused by nut-cracking, the companies in general tolerated their customers’ habit because of the additional money that could be earned from selling nuts and other refreshments.

Another issue that contemporaries frequently remarked upon was the habit of some more wealthy playgoers to smoke tobacco during performances. A small pipeful of tobacco cost about three pennies in a playhouse and the habit of smoking was not confined to the open air venues. Many gallants sitting on the stage in the private theatres smoked in order to show off their wealth to the rest of the playgoers. Many people complained about the smell of tobacco and the fact that it “makes your breath stink like the piss of a fox”¹⁰⁶⁴. In consequence, smokers “became the object of scorn and ridicule”¹⁰⁶⁵ and references to ‘stinkards’, as in Thomas Dekker’s *The Gull’s Hornbook* were not uncommon. Even King James I, well-known for his critical pieces of writing, wrote a text condemning the steadily increasing habit of smoking. In his *Counter-blast to Tobacco* of the year 1604 he writes:

And for the vanities committed in this filthy custom, is it not great vanity and uncleanness, that at the table, a place of respect, of cleanliness, of modesty, men should not be ashamed to sit tossing of tobacco pipes, and puffing of the smoke of tobacco one to another, making the filthy smoke and stink thereof to exhale athwart the dishes, and infect the air, when very often men that abhor it are their repast? Surely smoke becomes a kitchen far better than a dining chamber, and yet it makes a kitchen also oftentimes in the inward parts of men, soiling

¹⁰⁶² Quoted in: Lawrence. *Those Nut-Cracking Elizabethans*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶³ John Corye. *The Generous Enemies or the Ridiculous Lovers*. London: 1672. Quoted in: Lawrence. *Those Nut-Cracking Elizabethans*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Thomas Dekker. *The Honest Whore. Parts One and Two*. Ed. Nick de Somogyi. London: Nick Hern Books, 1998, p. 35.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Cook. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London*, p. 199.

and infecting them with a unctuous and oily kind of soot, as hath been found in some great tobacco takers, that after their death were opened.¹⁰⁶⁶

Though he does not specifically refer to the playhouses, one could safely argue that the aspects criticized by James were also greatly disliked by the non-smoking members of the audience who had to bear the smell and uncleanness – not to mention the actors, who were equally exposed to the fumes.

Taking the above mentioned aspects into consideration, the differences between public and private theatres were not as great as one might have expected. Most of the aspects outlined above – such as eating, drinking, smoking and talking – were common features of performances at both types of playhouse. Yet, the difference in audience composition also resulted in a different tone in which people expressed their sentiments – the public venues being somewhat harsher in that respect. Nevertheless likes and dislikes were actively expressed at both the private halls and the public amphitheatres and the numerous prologues and epilogues written and performed at the six remaining playhouses between 1616 and 1642, encouraging certain kinds of behaviour and disapproving of others, are ample proof that the difficulties faced by dramatists and actors were the same at all venues. This is notwithstanding the fact that certain members of the audience present at the Red Bull might have expressed their disappointment or even anger somewhat more harshly than the often more sophisticated and better-to-do playgoers at the Blackfriars. In general however, "the Caroline theatres were respectable places for entertainment, and had some prestige"¹⁰⁶⁷. It would be wrong to take the many exaggerated contemporary passages from the theatres' enemies or disappointed playwrights depicting audiences in an unfavourably light at face value. People watching performances at the capital's playhouses in the last decades before the Civil War should, in spite of their dynamic participation, be seen as attentive and critical people, actively shaping the development of Early Modern drama and in doing so just as actively contributing to its accomplishments.

Early Modern London society was highly theatrical in its own right and this desire for self-display was a determining factor of playgoing:

¹⁰⁶⁶ Quoted in: Kermode. *The Age of Shakespeare*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 105.

In the theatre, then, there prevailed a kind of dialectic between distraction and attention. On the one hand, multiple evidence, not only about noise, self-display, cutpurses, and bawdy assignations, but also about the selling of food and drink, cracking of nuts and even throwing of pippins, together with the evenness of lightning which blurred the distinction between auditorium and stage that present-day playgoers are used to, suggests a strong temptation to direct one's eyes and ears away from the stage. On the other hand, extensive evidence about rapt attention and powerful emotional responses indicates that collective participation in a theatre, we may conclude, had to work hard in order to wrest attention from one kind of display onto another, to define its own visual power.¹⁰⁶⁸

Dawson highlights the fact that the desire to exhibit oneself to the rest of the audience moreover offered playgoers the chance "to trade downwards"¹⁰⁶⁹, i.e. to become players themselves. This was a role they knew very well from outside the playhouses as well. Seen in this light, the competition between the actions onstage and offstage becomes even clearer.

Resulting from all this, the companies of players and their actors were forced to find ways to assure their playgoers' highest possible attention and succeeded in developing a close relationship with all members of their audience. The absence of visual barriers allowed the actors to directly communicate and identify with the playgoers. Playwrights like Ford, Brome and Shirley were much aware of this and exploited it in numerous prologues, epilogues, soliloquies and other metatheatrical means in which actors stepped out of their roles and directly addressed the audience. In doing so, they were "reminding their audiences of the fictive nature of what they were watching, and of the uncertain boundary between illusion and reality."¹⁰⁷⁰ The analysis and interpretation of some of these forms of metatheatricality will shortly be the aim of this thesis' second part.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Dawson and Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*, pp. 91f.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Foakes. "Playhouses and Players", p. 23.

III. FRAMING DEVICES IN THE PLAYS OF FORD, BROME AND SHIRLEY

III.1 METATHEATRICALITY

In *The Common Monument*, Muriel Bradbrook argues that the Early Modern stage established “a firm degree of distance between the spectator and the play”¹⁰⁷¹. Steven Mullaney underlines this claim in his book *The Place of the Stage*. However, while it is true that audiences had played a more active role in the drama’s mediaeval ancestors before the institutionalisation of permanent playhouses in the nation's capital, the second part of my thesis will challenge Bradbrook’s and Mullaney’s view and show that the plays of John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley had not yet grown out of the tradition of directly involving playgoers in dramatic performances or openly acknowledging them:

To some extent it is undoubtedly true that Renaissance drama was strongly self-regarding. The secular [...] theater was a relatively new institution in Renaissance culture, and the plays produced for that theater reflect a heightened self-consciousness about what it means to create fictions, to manipulate audiences, and to negotiate between the lived world and discursive representation of it.¹⁰⁷²

Not every address to the audience can be – or needs to be – cited and even though the plays analysed in this thesis will mirror the audience for which they were originally written, one must not forget that any “approach to the audience through the plays must be highly subjective; conclusions are as apt to reflect the nature of the reader as of what he reads.”¹⁰⁷³

Richard Hornby defines metatheatre, a term which has gained a certain currency with the publication of Lionel Abel's book *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* of the year 1963, as “drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself”¹⁰⁷⁴. Patrick Pavis likewise describes it as “theatre which is centred around theatre and therefore ‘speaks’ about itself, ‘represents’ itself”¹⁰⁷⁵. The lively interaction between audience and stage resulting from metatheatrical conventions “tends to produce a conscious

¹⁰⁷¹ Muriel Bradbrook. *The Common Monument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 51.

¹⁰⁷² Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷³ Harbage. *Shakespeare’s Audience*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Hornby. *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Patrice Pavis. *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 210.

awareness in audience members of their position as spectators [... and ...] plays a crucial role in the construction of playgoing as a self-conscious activity, and hence contributes substantially to the formation of the culture of playgoing as we understand it"¹⁰⁷⁶. By means of adding a mediating metatheatrical dimension to their plays, Ford, Brome and Shirley shape a dialectic relationship between the stage and their audiences and by "representing particular cultural forms and human actions within fictional frames, [Early Modern] theatre invited its audience to reflect upon those forms and actions"¹⁰⁷⁷, as Louis Montrose sums up in his seminal *The Purpose of Playing*. He goes on to observe that "the theatre holds the mirror up to nature precisely by reflecting upon its own artifice"¹⁰⁷⁸ and in doing so metatheatricality produces a memorial effect on playgoers. The metatheatrical devices employed in Jacobean and Caroline drama, first and foremost the numerous prologues and epilogues of these years, do not only pick up greater theatrical matters as a central theme, but more importantly do so by directly including the playgoers in the performance. At this point one should therefore add to Pavis' and Hornby's definition provided above that metatheatre does not only speak *about* itself but, intensifying the effects, also explicitly *to* the members of the audience. Brian Schneider likewise emphasizes the latter aspect and highlights the audience's role with regard to Early Modern metatheatricality by stating that

Early modern drama consistently displays its own theatricality, attempting among many other topics to come to terms with the importance of the playwright, the functions of the audience and the contribution of the actor. [...] The spectator is drawn into the theatrical experience by direct address in prologues, epilogues and inductions, by references in the texts themselves and soliloquies spoken directly to the audience; or kept at a distance, when the plays retreats into its own dramatic reality.¹⁰⁷⁹

Ford, Brome, Shirley and their contemporary playwrights produced performance art, "a form of communication more thoroughly intercommunicative than any other form of publication"¹⁰⁸⁰, and composed their drama not to be read, but to be performed on stage "for a tight grouping of people, a more immediate and readily

¹⁰⁷⁶ Dawson and Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 3.

recognisable social entity than the individuals who might buy a printed text."¹⁰⁸¹ In doing so they realized the "dynamic interaction between plays and playgoers that is the essence of theatre"¹⁰⁸². In contrast to Bradbrook's and Mullaney's assumption, this indeed very "complex interactive process"¹⁰⁸³ was by no means a one-way street. Playgoers took an active, if unrehearsed part, in theatrical performances. Though all there is are second publications in the form of printed texts, the following chapters will examine how this "complex interactive communication between stage and audience"¹⁰⁸⁴ was encouraged and catered for by playwrights and actors by means of metatheatrical framing devices blurring and partly dissolving the boundaries between the illusion performed on stage and the reality surrounding it. Due to the fact that there were only six playhouses left and that playgoers usually had one or two venues they preferred over the others, the intimacy and familiarity between audiences and playwrights was very high. When "actors and audiences were so familiar to each other metatheatrical games became wonderfully exploitable."¹⁰⁸⁵ Ford, Brome and Shirley had a particular interest in audience reactions and numerous passages in their plays testify that they did not see the playgoers' role as a mere passive one. The numerous prologues and epilogues embracing their plays and the subsequent willingness to directly converse with their paying customers are ample proof of the intimacy shared. They moreover demonstrate that all three of them were highly aware of their playgoers' importance and that they showed great concern for audience reactions as well as greater theatrical matters. Gurr has highlighted certain factors influencing and determining this very relationship by observing that

[t]he process from writer's initial concept through its renegotiation by the players into the products that interacts with the audience's expectations and preconceptions is, to put it mildly, a complex one. Many factors of varying degrees of marginality intervene on the intellectual capacity and momentary alertness of a single playgoer. Not many of these factors can be identified, let alone isolated as casual features of the experience of a play.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸² Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 124.

Though indeed a very complex matter, playwrights did their best to shape this dynamic and often unpredictable relationship as best as possible and by the use of metatheatrical framing elements their plays explicitly draw attention to themselves and the dramatic illusion. In consequence they highlight and articulate their own self-reflexivity – in doing so simultaneously challenging and subverting "the autonomy of the play world".¹⁰⁸⁷ The resulting "metaphorical identification of the world and the stage"¹⁰⁸⁸ shapes a dialectic between the playwrights' profession and society.¹⁰⁸⁹

A basic element of the "metatheatrical practice is the tradition of direct address"¹⁰⁹⁰, which renders "the relationship between characters and audience [...] as important as the relations among the characters on the stage"¹⁰⁹¹. Talking openly to playgoers was a very prominent feature in mediaeval drama and could already be found in both morality and mystery plays and had become a potent and complex aspect of Early Modern drama, as well.¹⁰⁹² Over the years, different scholars have coined different terms for the addressing of audiences from the stage. However, terms such as Janet Hill's 'open address' or Ralph Berry's 'direct address' all refer to the same strategy, namely the willingness to make direct contact with the audience by means of such devices as epilogues, soliloquies, asides or choric speeches.¹⁰⁹³ These and other devices "show the awareness that there are people beyond the sphere of action for whom, after all, the play is performed."¹⁰⁹⁴ Even though this strategy is generally referred to as being a dialogue between the actors and the playgoers, one must keep in mind that – apart from the irregular and unrehearsed comments made by the members of the audience – the "audience's side of the

¹⁰⁸⁷ Berry. *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Montrose. *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Cf.: *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁰ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁹¹ Hill. *Stages and Playgoers*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹² For more information on the self-reflexivity of both morality and mystery plays please consult: Righter. *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*. Righter's highly valuable study dedicates several highly illuminating chapters to this issue.

¹⁰⁹³ Cf.: Berry. *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience*.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Hans-Jürgen Diller. *The Middle English Mystery Play. A Study in Dramatic Speech and Form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 111.

dialogue remains implicit.”¹⁰⁹⁵ Just like metatheatricity in general, the open address of theatregoers serves a number of functions. In mediaeval drama the function was first and foremost to “explain and instruct”¹⁰⁹⁶ and to guide the audience to an understanding of the play. This statement can also partly be applied to the drama of Ford, Brome, Shirley and their contemporaries, in which audiences are infrequently encouraged to judge their own reactions rather than the characters’ behaviour. Yet, audience address is much more than just a means to instruct. Being addressed by a dramatic character referring to their presence causes playgoers to “lose themselves wholly in the play”¹⁰⁹⁷. The barrier between the fiction performed on stage and the real world inside the playhouse becomes blurred, as the members of the audience experience themselves – as well as the dramatic characters – as being “simultaneously present in the theatre and in the play’s fiction.”¹⁰⁹⁸ However, sometimes the exact opposite was true, i.e. that the metatheatrical devices helped playwrights and actors to remind their customers that what they were watching was just fiction and not reality.

Closely connected to this issue is Robert Weimann’s differentiation between ‘locus’ and ‘platea’, a concept about the organization of playing space. In his *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre*, Weimann uses the term locus “to denote stage space used for action contained within the play’s fictional world”¹⁰⁹⁹. It is a place localised within the story itself and for that reason it is cut off from the audience. Platea, on the other hand, describes “an entirely non-representational and unlocalised setting”¹¹⁰⁰ from which the playgoers’ presence can be acknowledged by means of openly talking to them. Given the fact that in the Early Modern theatres the members of the audience literally surrounded the stage or even sat on it, it is not surprising that the metatheatricity of Jacobean and Caroline drama developed to be a very open one and that many plays succeeded in absorbing the crowd and their world into the play. Righter has rightly emphasised

¹⁰⁹⁵ Hill. *Stages and Playgoers*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Diller. *The Middle English Mystery Play*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hill. *Stages and Playgoers*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Escolme. *Talking to the Audience*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁰⁰ Robert Weimann. *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p. 79.

that "[t]he construction of the playhouse [...] allowed the spectators to impinge upon the world of the drama from almost all sides, and to share a common daylight, a common weather, with the stage."¹¹⁰¹

The functions of metatheatrical elements in general and framing devices in particular are manifold and suffice it to point out the most important ones at this stage. To begin with, Dawson has highlighted that

[j]ust as there is a correlation between what happens meta-theatrically within a play and what goes on within the playhouse, so what happens inside the theatre – controlling visibility while acknowledging its devious ability to escape management – can be seen as correlative to the position of the theatre in the culture as a whole.¹¹⁰²

As far as framing elements, i.e. prologues and epilogues, in particular are concerned, Schneider emphasizes that "[m]any of these texts are made up of similar ingredients – the direct address to the audience, the pleas for silence and applause, the *faux* modesty, the attack on critics, exposition and explanation, among others."¹¹⁰³ Quite often prologues and epilogues were a popular means of playwrights to comment upon the state of the theatre in general or their audiences in particular. Playgoers very much expected to be confronted with these devices and they saw metatheatrical framing elements as a necessary ingredient in any dramatic performance. Early Modern playgoers were "torn between the desire for spectacle and the repeated requests of playwrights for the spectator to pay attention to the words of the play."¹¹⁰⁴ In this light the importance of devices mediating between the two worlds and negotiating with the audience literally surrounding the stage cannot be overemphasized. Chu sums up the functions of metatheatrical devices as follows:

(i) to control the audience's degree of involvement in the stage illusion, (ii) to provide a more active interplay between different planes of illusion, (iii) to add resonances to spectator's responses to dramatic illusions, (iv) to remind the audience that life too is a play, (v) to underscore the metadramatic proposition that plays are in part about dramatic art or the responses of spectators.¹¹⁰⁵

¹¹⁰¹ Righter. *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 59.

¹¹⁰² Dawson and Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*, p. 102.

¹¹⁰³ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹¹⁰⁵ Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, p. 221.

To what extent these functions can also be applied to the plays of Ford, Brome and Shirley will be analysed in due course and the close readings will be of help to better understand how exactly Jacobean and Caroline playwrights employed such devices as prologues and epilogues to interact with and hold up the mirror to their audiences and in doing so reminding the playgoers of the fictive character of what they were about so witness.

Audiences were both expecting and expected to play a more active role than present-day audiences and playwrights found various ways to make this happen. However, the following considerations are not meant to be comprehensive – neither as far as the choice of plays nor as far the selection of metadramatic techniques are concerned. Neither are the readings and interpretations offered in the following chapters are claiming to be the only possible ones. They should be seen as "windows on the complex and sometimes obscured architecture, aesthetic, social, and political, of this neglected moment of cultural history."¹¹⁰⁶ Ford, Brome and especially Shirley included a wide range of self-reflexive elements in a great number of their dramatic works. The aim of my thesis' second part is to provide the reader with a first overview of two techniques allowing dramatists to draw the playgoers' "attention to the play's artificiality and its status as an artifact"¹¹⁰⁷, rather than offering an analysis claiming to be all-inclusive. I hope, however, that my thesis will encourage and inspire those interested in the drama of the years 1616 to 1642 to further engage with this highly interesting and still only insufficiently studied era of English drama.

The present thesis has concentrated on those instances explicitly and overtly metadramatic. The more implicit ones have been neglected as the latter ones do not challenge the limits of theatrical illusion as much and do not require the audiences' collaboration as directly. Thus such mediating devices as soliloquies and asides will not be discussed, as they do not disturb the illusion of the play as openly as other techniques.¹¹⁰⁸ Similar qualifications must be made for the clown or the fool. Ford, Brome and Shirley only used minor clown or fool parts in their plays and

¹¹⁰⁶ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 15.

¹¹⁰⁷ Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, p. 212.

¹¹⁰⁸ Not to mention the fact that especially Ford hardly used any soliloquies in his extant plays at all.

if they did, they were by far not as refined as was true in earlier decades. Secondly the metatheatrical potential of these two types relied heavily upon the actors' talent for improvisation and since only the written text is available, it is impossible to determine how exactly the interaction between the actor personifying the clown or fool and the audience looked like. The inset play or the play-within-the-play, a highly "self-analytic and self-reflexive"¹¹⁰⁹ device, which is not all that easy to define as it can take many forms indeed (dumb shows, interludes, pageants, masques), did not feature very prominently during the years in question either and only five inset plays from the canon of Ford, Brome and Shirley are extant. The device underwent considerable changes over the years. In the Caroline Period, the inset play was more and more used for psychological purposes and was no longer predominantly a didactic means to move audiences towards a more moral and virtuous behaviour by exposing "the guilt feelings of the onstage spectators"¹¹¹⁰.

Following the definitions of metadrama provided above, my thesis focuses on passages that firstly openly talk *about* the current state of the theatre and their audiences by directly addressing theatrical matters and which secondly do exactly this by explicitly talking *to* the audience. The chosen passages literally speak of themselves and turn "the dramaturgy inside out"¹¹¹¹. They will underline how important the self-consciousness and self-reflexivity expressed in them is for scholars engaging in social and cultural history and will be of help to delve even deeper into certain issues already introduced in the first part.

III.1.1 FRAMING DEVICES: THE PROLOGUE

The three playwrights in question composed prologues for a large proportion of their dramatic output. To begin with, one first needs to define what is commonly understood as a prologue. Scragg writes that Early Modern prologues

may outline the events that are about to be enacted [...], define the author's aims and intentions [...], or apologize for the deficiencies of the coming performance [...]. The effect of such introductory speeches is to heighten the spectator's awareness of the theatrical

¹¹⁰⁹ Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, p. 20.

¹¹¹⁰ Charlotte Spivack. "Alienation and Illusion: The Play-Within-the-Play on the Caroline Stage". *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*. 4 (1989): 195-212, p. 195.

¹¹¹¹ Nelson. *Play Within A Play*, p. ix.

representation as artifice. For a short time at least after the Prologue has made his exit, the audience remains alive to the fact that the characters who succeed him on the stage are actors in a play, and a number of dramatists promote this awareness by direct allusion in the Prologue's speech to the machinery of the theatre, or the inability of the actors to do justice to the writer's conceptions. Conversely, the character who speaks the prologue is detached by his superior knowledge, or critical stance, from the persons of the play proper. He does not belong to the same order of reality as they do, though he forms part of the dramatic structure which is about to unfold.¹¹¹²

Early Modern prologues advance a very notable range of ambitions. From their important position outlined above, prologues, bridging the world of the play and the world of the playgoers, were able

to function as interactive, liminal, boundary-breaking entities that negotiated charged thresholds between and among, variously, playwrights, actors, characters, audience members, playworlds, and the world outside the playhouse. The conventional nature of early modern prologues facilitated rather than diminished their ability to comment meaningfully on the complex relations of playing and the twin worlds implied by the resonant phrase *theatrum mundi*. [...] In the absence of extensive records of contemporary responses to specific plays, prologues offer cultural historicism some of the most significant characterizations of the early modern theatre.¹¹¹³

All one has nowadays are the printed texts, making it hard to come up with definite conclusions about how exactly these negotiations mentioned by Bruster and Weimann worked between the actors and the audience.

Since textual allusions embedded in the characters' speeches did not always suffice to provide the audience with the necessary background information needed to understand the play or its setting, prologues could moreover both foreshadow future events and condense the past. In doing so, they often covered long periods of time or long distances "by means of a relatively brief speech"¹¹¹⁴. In addition to this, prologues – just like choruses and epilogues for example – were also "components in the apparatus of anti-realistic staging"¹¹¹⁵. Metatheatricality manifested itself in many ways and the absence of elaborate stage scenery and the fact that the actors stood in the midst of the playgoers ensured the "obviousness of

¹¹¹² Leah Scragg. *Discovering Shakespeare's Meaning. An Introduction to the Study of Shakespeare's Dramatic Structures*. London: Longman, 1994, p. 86.

¹¹¹³ Bruster and Weimann. *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 2.

¹¹¹⁴ Lopez. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, p. 80.

¹¹¹⁵ Gurr. *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 10.

the location's identity as a theatre"¹¹¹⁶. Thus many "plays began with prologues and inductions openly acknowledging that the play which follows is a fiction"¹¹¹⁷. In this sense, prologues both presented the scene to the members of the audience and at the same time represented the fictional world of the play. Characteristically "the Prologue belongs to, and thereby bridges, both worlds, the represented world of the play and the (re)presenting world of its production and performance."¹¹¹⁸ In consequence, explanatory prologues of dramatic works are mediators between the real world, of which the playgoers surrounding the stage are part, and the illusory world of the play and its characters. In this mediating capacity prologues "engage the audience actively in the theatrical process of setting a scene or creating a character."¹¹¹⁹ However, Early Modern prologues served a number of further functions other than openly acknowledging the illusion as illusion. They were also used to "prove the diversity of audience composition and response".¹¹²⁰ This can be seen in the already quoted prologue to Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*:

How is't possible to suffice
 So many ears, so many eyes?
 Some in wit, some in shows
 Take delight, and some in clothes;
 Some for mirth they chiefly come,
 Some for passion-for both some,
 Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
 Some to detract and ignorance their warrant.
 How is't possible to please
 Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?¹¹²¹

As the apologetic character of this passage makes clear, prologues in Early Modern drama were a means to "offer apologies for what playgoers are about to receive"¹¹²².

¹¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

¹¹¹⁸ Weimann. *Actor's Voice and Author's Pen*, p. 54.

¹¹¹⁹ Lopez. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, p. 78.

¹¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹²¹ Middleton. Prologue. *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, p. 4.

¹¹²² Hill. *Stages and Playgoers*, p. 96.

Furthermore, prologues were often concerned with much more practical requests, such as praying for silence or “asking the crowd to be a patient audience”¹¹²³. Some prologues in Early Modern drama were only included in the printed and thus second publication and could be much more critical of playgoers – depending on how negative the audiences’ response was during the first publication of a particular play. In general, Early Modern prologues as well as epilogues,

deal with open questions regarding the stage and they invite the audience to share in such questions – how to imagine the scene, how to judge what is shown, what verbal and visible devices the playwright can muster to interest the spectator and what the role of the audience is in the theatrical experience [...]. Such prologues and epilogues can be apologetic, comic, serious, addressed to a special audience or the monarch; they sometimes deal with critical disputes of the day; they are political, placatory or defiant; they either stand apart from the drama they frame or they are inextricably linked to that drama.¹¹²⁴

III.1.2 FRAMING DEVICES: THE EPILOGUE

Epilogues, together with prologues, provide a frame for the actual play and a vast number of Jacobean and Caroline epilogues have survived. They testify that this device was a major dramatic effort in the first half of the seventeenth century to let the play refer beyond itself and a single character address the audience directly, often begging indulgence and applause or praising the audience and their sophistication. In many plays the character speaking the epilogue explicitly announces the end of the play, leaves the locus and addresses the crowd from the non-representational platea. In consequence, epilogues as well as prologues “are extraordinarily self-conscious productions that comment upon both the art and the artifice of the drama, but also reach out extra-dramatically to engage with some of the issues of the day”¹¹²⁵. The Jacobean and Caroline theatre “harbored a pervasive need to digest the (ab)use of the distance between the world-in-the-play and the playing-in-the-world of early modern amphitheatrical scaffolds”¹¹²⁶. Epilogues ensured that the playgoers did not leave the playhouse empty-minded. Just like other metatheatrical means such as prologues or inset-plays, epilogues implicate a

¹¹²³ Ibid.

¹¹²⁴ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 28.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹²⁶ Weimann. *Actor’s Voice and Author’s Pen*, p. 216.

kind of “contractual relationship between playhouse and spectators”¹¹²⁷. In most of the epilogues by Ford, Brome, Shirley and their contemporary dramatists, the threshold between the represented and the representing world is crossed in order to plead for the playgoers’ applause, thus highlighting the transition “from fictional representation to theatrical reality”¹¹²⁸. The concluding lines of the epilogue often sent the play out into the world of the audience, and in doing so “offered the audience a space for response, even participation in, the presumably happy outcome of what, at least partially, remained a festive occasion.”¹¹²⁹ However, the conventional appeal for applause had a more practical reason, as well. London’s theatres faced harsh competition within the Early Modern entertainment industry and the companies therefore had to make sure to please their audiences and provide for their coming back. Jacobean and Caroline audiences were a highly heterogeneous and dichotomised group. Whereas some members of the audience preferred action, others came to playhouses predominantly to listen to the plays’ language. In “a culture used to pageants, processions, cockfighting, bearbaiting and other spectacles, the difficulty in making the audience sustain the two-hour verbal traffic of the stage needed constantly to be addressed”¹¹³⁰ by metatheatrical devices helping the dramatists to preserve their customers’ benevolence. The need to cater for the return of these highly dissimilar paying customers and the fact that epilogues also renegotiated authority to the playgoers by inviting them to “recollect, discuss, and reappropriate the performed play after its theatrical transaction is over”¹¹³¹, ensured the play’s post-scriptural future and prevented the play from being mere “shadows” that vanish into thin air after the performance.”¹¹³² The crowd is consequently

urged to endorse, even to remember and thereby keep alive, not only the work of “author’s pen” but that of “actor’s voice”. For the audience to be acknowledged as the supreme court

¹¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

¹¹²⁸ Weimann. “Performing at the Frontiers of Representation”, p. 101.

¹¹²⁹ Weimann. *Actor’s Voice and Author’s Pen*, p. 220.

¹¹³⁰ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 90.

¹¹³¹ Weimann. *Actor’s Voice and Author’s Pen*, p. 219.

¹¹³² Cf.: Ibid., p. 218.

of appeal is an act of authorization that goes beyond that of representation of dramatic fiction.¹¹³³

Due to the surrendering of the dramatic fiction effectuated by epilogues, “the arts of performance must confront and cope with the gulf”¹¹³⁴ between the two worlds and the use of epilogues was a deliberate means to “delay the collapse of the represented figuration”¹¹³⁵.

There are several plays in the canon of Ford, Brome and Shirley which have more than just one prologue or epilogue. Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden* features heavily revised framing texts which underline that playwrights used these devices as a means to comment upon current dramatic and extra-dramatic considerations and that they often did so with a particular audience in mind. Another example proving this is the prologue to Shirley's *The Doubtful Heir*, which is employed “to negotiate a careful path, explaining why the play should actually have been presented at the Blackfriars but at the same time not insulting the audience at the Globe, before whom the play is actually being performed”¹¹³⁶. Epilogues and prologues were carefully drafted tools which – depending on the venue, occasion or audience – were used to influence as well as manipulate the playgoers. As bridges between the real and fictional worlds they both helped to first construct the play's fiction and then to gradually dissolve it again. Chu elaborates on this seemingly paradoxical situation by stating that “it appears that the more an audience is reminded of the fiction, the more it falls for the invention. The more a dramatist emphasizes the illusion, the more an audience believes it.”¹¹³⁷ In addition to this, in Early Modern drama metatheatrical devices exploring the dynamics between the onstage and offstage worlds served to remind the playgoers “that elements of illusion are present in ordinary life, and that between the world and the stage there exists a complicated interplay of resemblance that is part of the perfection and nobility of the drama itself as a form.”¹¹³⁸

¹¹³³ Ibid.

¹¹³⁴ Weimann. “Performing at the Frontiers of Representation”, p. 101.

¹¹³⁵ Weimann. *Actor's Voice and Author's Pen*, p. 220.

¹¹³⁶ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 12.

¹¹³⁷ Chu. *Metatheater in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, p. 4.

¹¹³⁸ Righter. *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 86.

III.2 JOHN FORD

III.2.1 ABOUT JOHN FORD AND HIS LITERARY WORKS

H. J. Oliver has stated in his book *The Problem of John Ford* that to read

the plays of John Ford in isolation is to examine a conclusion without the beginning. His works come at the very end of a long tradition of which he apparently had excellent knowledge; and it would seem – although of this there is, of course, no proof – that he expected similar knowledge in at least the better part of his audience, the part to which he so often, in his prologues, appealed.¹¹³⁹

Ford, who was baptized at Ilsington in Devonshire in April 1586 as the second son of Thomas Ford and Elizabeth Popham, came of an established and respected landowning family and was entitled to call himself a gentleman (his great-grandfather had acquired a coat-of-arms in 1524). The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is likely that he was born in the same month he was christened as was usual around that time when infant mortality was still high. Data of his personal life is scarce and it is not known when he died, but a John Ford entered Exeter College, Oxford in September 1600 from where he left after having studied for five terms without taking a degree. Since this name was common in Devonshire around that time it is sometimes hard to come to definite conclusions. On the 16th November 1602 the future playwright was admitted at the Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court, where he stayed for several years and received a general education as well as professional training, just like various male family members before and after him. He came to London when Shakespeare was at the height of his fame and would have had the chance to see performances of several of his greatest plays. Details in his works indicate that he was a keen playgoer during his early time in the capital. In the Hilary Term of 1605/1605, he was expelled from the Middle Temple because he failed to pay his buttery bill, which was not uncommon for students of the Inns of Court. Three years later in June 1608, he was reinstated after having paid his bill as well as an additional fine of forty shillings. The Master of the Bench ordered in this regard that

yf the sayd Master Forde doe before the ende of this Tearme paye all manner of duties as well pencions & Commons as other duties before this tyme due, and doe also bring and deliver fortye shillings to the Master of the Bench at the Bench Table for his fine imposed

¹¹³⁹ Oliver. *The Problem of John Ford*, p. 1.

vppon him by the said Master of the Bench at this parliament and shall also then and there submytt himself acknowledging his fault with penitency. That then the said Master Forde shalbe restored to the Fellowshippe and Societye and shall have and retayne his antiquity according to his first admittance the said former expulsion notwithstanding [...].¹¹⁴⁰

In 1617 his name appears one more time in the records of the Middle Temple when he was one of forty students to wear hats instead of the obligatory lawyer's caps.¹¹⁴¹ He spent a long period of time at the Middle Temple, but there are no records indicating that he ever worked as a lawyer – leaving scholars with the question whether his relatively low amount of writing earned him enough money or whether he had yet another source of income, possibly some sort of legal work. That old students stayed at the Middle Temple was not uncommon and as long as residents paid their bills they were welcome even after their studies. After his father's death in 1610, Ford was left the relatively low single payment of ten pounds, whereas his younger brothers got an annual ten pounds, which was even to be doubled after their mother's death. Regarding John, Thomas Ford wrote the following in his last will:

I doe give and bequeath vnto Iohn Ford my sonne tenn poundes of lawfull money of England to be paid vnto him by my Executors within one whole yeare next after my decease.¹¹⁴²

Why Thomas only left this little to his second son is unknown and it has been speculated that he might have disapproved of his literary ambitions, but in the absence of solid evidence this claim is impossible to sustain. Only when his older brother Henry died in September 1616, John Ford got a bigger proportion of the family fortune and received an annual paying of twenty pounds for the rest of his life:

Item I geve and bequeath vnto Iohn Forde gent. my Brother Twentie poundes a yeare for terme of his life, To be payed imediatly after my death att the Fower vsuall quarters, That is to saye the Feaste of St. Michaell the Archangell, The birth of our Lord, the Anunciacion of St. Marie the Virgin, and the Nativitie of St. Iohn the Baptiste issueing out my personadge of Iplepen vpon Condicion he surrender the estate he hath in two Tenements called Glandfeilds groundes Bilver parke and willow meade lyeing in Iplepen and Torbryan to the vse of my Children.¹¹⁴³

¹¹⁴⁰ Quoted in: Sargeant. *John Ford*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴¹ For the full text of the order please consult: *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁴² Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁴³ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Whether Ford ever got married or had any children is simply not known.¹¹⁴⁴

Scholars have divided Ford's works into three distinct groups and phases. Between 1606 and 1620 he wrote several non-dramatic works, which, as Oliver has put it, are "of no great literary importance"¹¹⁴⁵. The three essays or pamphlets and two longer and several shorter poems composed during these years show the author's preoccupation with certain issues and ethical questions which dominated his later dramatic works, such as frustrated or difficult romantic love, morality, reputation, honour and human ambition.

From approximately 1621 to 1625 Ford tried his hands on dramatic texts for the first time and composed several works in collaboration with other, mostly already well-established, playwrights like Thomas Dekker and William Rowley, with whom he wrote *The Witch of Edmonton*. Especially Dekker offered him "the best possible apprenticeship in how to craft a saleable product"¹¹⁴⁶ and together they composed at least seven plays in total, not all of which have survived till this day.

The third phase of Ford's writing spans the years reaching from roughly 1625 until at least 1638 in which he by himself wrote the eight surviving plays for which he is mostly known nowadays. Some of these plays are hard to categorize in terms of genre as Ford constantly experimented with dramatic forms, but at least four of these eight extant plays are tragedies whereas three more are commonly referred to as tragicomedies. The only exception to this rule is *Perkin Warbeck*, a tragic history play, which he himself in the prologue describes as "out of fashion"¹¹⁴⁷.

Ford, though the dating of most of his plays is difficult, was already in his forties when he composed his first unaided play *The Lovers Melancholy*. Trying to find a new form of drama different from those of his contemporaries, he looked back regretfully to the plays of a decade or two before. This is one of the reasons why he is so difficult to categorize and appears to occupy an isolated position within the Caroline Period:

¹¹⁴⁴ For more information on Ford's biography please consult the works of Anderson, Bentley, Sargeant, Staving and Vickers, who all offer reliable investigations in spite of the scarceness of the material.

¹¹⁴⁵ Oliver. *The Problem of John Ford*, p. 7.

¹¹⁴⁶ Rowland Wymer. *Webster and Ford*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 96.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ford. Prologue. *Perkin Warbeck*. *The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 2, p. 115.

In the first place, he is a difficult writer to pin down chronologically. Born in 1586, he is in some sense an Elizabethan – he was almost 17 when the queen died, and had already moved to London – but an unusually late start means that all of his surviving independent dramatic writing seems to be firmly Caroline, after a period of collaborative authorship during the reign of James. Nevertheless, though the eight surviving plays which have more or less securely ascribed to him seem probably all to have been written after 1625, it could reasonably be said that they are not Caroline in feel, since they all to a greater or lesser extent hark back to a considerably older model or models of drama.¹¹⁴⁸

Farr likewise states that "Ford stands between two worlds in the theatre of his time" and draws attention to the fact that his uniqueness "lies primarily in his response as an artist to that situation."¹¹⁴⁹ No one writing around that time was quite like him and most of his rival playwrights contended themselves with following current dramatic trends and in consequence have attracted much less attraction and fascination. Ford's "major achievement was in reconciling both traditional and contemporary dramatic themes with an analysis of human character"¹¹⁵⁰.

His first plays were written for the King's Men at the Blackfriars Theatre, but after *The Broken Heart* "his plays are linked to Christopher Beeston's company, the Queen's Men, at the Cockpit Theatre"¹¹⁵¹, *Tis Pity She's a Whore* of 1630 being the first play for Beeston's playhouse in Drury Lane. Though no such document has survived, it is possible that Ford signed a contract similar to the one Brome received from Beeston. Ford used a wide range of dramatic and non-dramatic sources for his writing and many of his plays resemble Shakespeare's canon as far as certain aspects or character-constellations are concerned. Among the non-dramatic works he used was above all Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which offered him material for both *The Lover's Melancholy* and *The Broken Heart*.¹¹⁵² His plays are often concerned with the conflicting prerogatives of the law on the one hand, and of human nature and of the human heart on the other hand. They appealed to contemporary feelings and concerns – not least because of the simplicity and

¹¹⁴⁸ Hopkins. "The Critical Backstory", p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁹ Farr. *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre*, p. 1.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹⁵¹ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 6.

¹¹⁵² For more information on this matter please see: Ewing. *Burtonian Melancholy in the Plays of John Ford*. Ewing's study nicely analyses to what extent Ford incorporated information from Burton's work in his own writing.

directness with which Ford's characters express their deepest and innermost thoughts and anxieties while fighting their individual struggle against a cruel and unsympathetic society.

Ford and his plays also attracted a fair amount of commendatory verses by contemporaries such as George Donne (John Donne's son), William Singleton, Edward Greenfield and James Shirley. Ford also wrote 19 extant commendatory verses himself (among others for Shirley's *The Wedding* and Brome's *The Northern Lass*) and among the aristocratic dedicatees of his plays were Penelope Devereux (the eldest daughter of the first Earl of Essex), the Earl and Countess of Pembroke, the Earl and Countess of Montgomery, the Earl of Peterborough and the Duke of Lennox. Together with the title pages and some entries in Henry Herbert's office book and the Stationers' Register these are the only allusions to him as a dramatist. In the absence of any first-hand accounts on any of Ford's plays during his own lifetime, these pieces of data, though highly subjective and usually following certain conventions, can be of help to understand how Ford was seen by his colleagues and provide a contemporary perspective.

In 1633 James Shirley felt the need to write a few lines on Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* and stated the following:

Unto this altar, rich with thy own spice,
I bring one grain to thy LOVE'S SACRIFICE;
And boast to see thy flames ascending, while
Perfumes enrich our air from thy sweet pile.
Look here, thou, that hast malice to the stage,
And impudence enough for the whole age;
Voluminously ignorant. + be vext
To read this tragedy, and thy own be next.¹¹⁵³

Due to the highly conventional character of this passage and due to the lack of any background information, it is impossible to tell whether Shirley really liked Ford's play or whether the verses were written because Shirley was commissioned to do so. Neither does he, as was customary for commendatory verses written around that time, refer to any aspects of the play in particular so that the passage quoted above might interchangeably also be applied to other plays.

¹¹⁵³ Ford. *The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 1, p. clxxxvi.

A short dedicatory poem written by Ford's friend Thomas Ellice is different insofar as it does not only refer to Ford's talent as a dramatist in general, but to the representation of a certain character:

With admiration I beheld this Whore,
Adorn'd with beauty, such as might restore
(If ever being, as thy muse hath famed)
Her Giovanni, in his love unblamed:
The ready Graces lent their willing aid;
Pallas herself now play'd the chambermaid,
And help'd to put her dressings on. Secure
Rest thou that thy name herein shall endure
To th' end of age: and Annabella be
Gloriously fair, even in her infamy.¹¹⁵⁴

Ellice's poem testifies that Annabella, in spite of her incestuous and condemnable behaviour, was met with sympathy and understanding by contemporary playgoers and that Ford, regardless of her serious offences, succeeded in depicting her as a likeable and pitiable character with whose unjust treatment audiences could identify.

In 1629, Thomas May wrote a few lines for Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* in which he states the following:

'Tis said from Shakespeare's muse your play you drew.
What need? when Shakespeare still survives in you...¹¹⁵⁵

May, though probably the first one, was by far not the only one to draw this connection between Ford and Shakespeare. In the years to come, many other people felt the need to comment on the resemblances between the two playwrights. Jonson was particularly annoyed by Ford's initial success and, if the story is true, "accused Ford of plundering Shakespeare's papers with the help of Hemminge and Condell"¹¹⁵⁶ when his own play *The New Inn* was met with only limited appreciation by the audience. A passage from an epigram commonly ascribed to the diplomat and royalist Endymion Porter (1587 – 1649) takes up this

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. clxxxvf.

¹¹⁵⁵ Quoted in: Robert Davril. "Shakespeare and Ford". *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*. 94 (1958): 121-131, p. 121.

¹¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

very quarrel and "takes sides with Ford against Jonson and "his fool" Tom Randolph"¹¹⁵⁷ by concluding that

But after times full consent
This truth will all acknowledge,
Shakespeare and Ford from heaven were sent,
But Ben and Tom from college.¹¹⁵⁸

Ford's last play, *The Lady's Trial*, was published in 1639 but there is no indication that he oversaw this publication himself. He might have died in 1638 already after completing this last play, but an epigram published in 1640 might prove that he was still alive when these lines directly addressed to him and complimenting him were written:

If e're the Muses did admire that well,
Of Hellicon as elder times do tell,
I dare presume to say upon my word;
Thy much more pleasure take in thee rare Ford.¹¹⁵⁹

A few years later however and well after his death, Samuel Pepys wrote down the following for the 9th September 1661 after seeing a performance at Salisbury Court:

To the Privy Seal in the morning, but my Lord did not come, so I went with Captain Morrice at his desire into the King's Privy Kitchen to Mr. Sayres, the Master Cook, and there we had a good slice of beef or two to our breakfast, and from thence he took us into the wine cellar where, by my troth, we were very merry, and I drank too much wine, and all along had great and particular kindness from Mr. Sayres, but I drank so much wine that I was not fit for business, and therefore at noon I went and walked in Westminster Hall a while, and thence to Salisbury Court play house, where was acted the first time *'Tis Pity Shee's a Whore*, a simple play and ill acted, only it was my fortune to sit by a most pretty and most ingenious lady, which pleased me much.¹¹⁶⁰

Pepys not only disliked the way the play was performed, but also the play as such. This shows that even though Ford's writing found many advocates, there were also people who thought the exact opposite – at least during the Restoration. Pepys likewise disliked Ford's *The Lady's Trial*, which he saw at the Duke of York's playhouse in March 1669 and about which he wrote that it was "but a sorry play,

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 122.

¹¹⁵⁸ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁹ Quoted in: R. G. Howarth. "John Ford". *Notes & Queries*. 202 (1957): 241.

¹¹⁶⁰ From the diary of Samuel Pepys. Quoted in: Wallace A. Bacon. "The Literary Reputation of John Ford". *Huntington Library Quarterly*. 11:2 (1948): 181-199, p. 181.

and the worse by how much my head is out of humour by being a little sleepy and my legs weary since last night."¹¹⁶¹ Pepys does not provide any information on what exactly he did not like about these two plays and hence one is only left to speculate whether his verdict might stem from altered expectations towards the stage following in the wake of the fundamental changes the theatres had undergone after the Restoration or from reasons more directly related to Ford's style of writing.

Some of Ford's plays continued to be staged after the Restoration, as well. "The heyday of appreciation of Ford", as Hopkins has called it, "however, undoubtedly came in the Romantic period."¹¹⁶² New editions of almost all plays were published. Female writers such as Mary Shelley or Lady Caroline Lamb showed particular interest in Ford's writings and were deeply influenced by him in their own works as well as particularly fascinated by Ford's extremely strong-willed heroines.

More than a century after Pepys had watched the performance of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Charles Lamb in his *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* praised Ford in the highest terms by stating that

Ford was of the first order of Poets. He sought for sublimity not by parcels in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds. There is a grandeur of the souls above mountains, seas, and the elements. Even in the poor perverted reasons of Giovanni and Annabella [...] we discern traces of that fiery particle, which in the irregular starting from out of the road of beaten action, discovers something of a right line even in obliquity, and shows hints of an improvable greatness in the lowest descents and degradations of our nature.¹¹⁶³

Even though modern scholarship is torn between the verdict of Pepys who could see nothing special in Ford and Lamb's enthusiastic praise, more and more people have come to appreciate Ford's talent in recent years and do not condemn him for his supposed moral decadence anymore – for many years the charges brought against him were that "Ford treats evil too sympathetically, that Ford's subjects themselves are often morally unacceptable, and that Ford advocated outright abandonment of orthodox morality"¹¹⁶⁴. Today Ford, though still occupying a

¹¹⁶¹ From the diary of Samuel Pepys. Quoted in: Sargeant. *John Ford*, p. 170.

¹¹⁶² Hopkins. "The Critical Backstory", p. 16.

¹¹⁶³ Charles Lamb. *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*. New Edition. London: 1854, p. 228.

¹¹⁶⁴ Tucker Orbinson. *The Tragic Vision of John Ford*. Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1974, p. 3.

debateable position, is the one Caroline dramatist whose plays are encountered in modern theatres most frequently.

III.2.2 METATHEATRICAL FRAMING DEVICES IN THE PLAYS OF JOHN FORD

III.2.2.1 *THE LOVER'S MELANCHOLY*

John Ford's first unaided play *The Lover's Melancholy*, staged by the King's Men in 1628, shows that Ford was highly fascinated by topics such as unsatisfied desires and melancholy from the very start of his dramatic career and also illustrates his indebtedness to Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The play as such has only attracted little scholarly attention over the years – not least because of its structural shortfalls which show that the author, though already somewhat older, was still inexperienced when it came to writing dramatic plays on his own and was trying to find a new form of drama.

The prologue to *The Lover's Melancholy* is particularly interesting for its extra-theatrical dimension reflecting upon the greater rules and laws defining drama – an issue Ford, looking back regretfully to the plays of the decades before, was very concerned with:

To tell ye, gentlemen, in what true sense
 The writer, actors, or the audience
 Should mould their judgments for a play, might draw
 Truth into rules; but we have no such law.
 Our writer, for himself, would have ye know
 That in his following scenes he doth not owe
 To others' fancies, nor hath lain in wait
 For any stol'n convention, from whose height
 He might commend his own, more than the right
 A scholar claims, may warrant for delight.
 It is art's scorn, that some of late have made
 The noble use of poetry a trade.
 For your parts, gentlemen, to quit his pains,
 Yet you will please, that as you meet with strains
 Of lighter mixture, but to cast your eye
 Rather upon the *main* than on the *bye*,
 His hopes stand firm, and we shall find it true,
 The LOVER'S MELANCHOLY cur'd by you.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶⁵ Ford. Prologue. *The Lover's Melancholy. The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 1, p. 7.

Early Modern drama frequently "displays its own theatricality, attempting among many other topics to come to terms with the importance of the playwright, the functions of the audience and the contribution of the actor"¹¹⁶⁶ – that is the very three columns or pillars on which dramatic performances are built. Ford, ever-critical and sceptical of how English drama had developed ever since his youth, also felt the need to address and critically reflect upon these crucial larger theatrical matters in the metadramatic elements embedded into his plays. Considering that he was already in his forties when he penned *The Lover's Melancholy* and had been participating in London's theatre-industry for some years and been witnessing the theatres' alterations even longer, it is not surprising that his first single-authored play is characterised by a pronounced amount of self-confidence in this area. This critical participation in contemporary literary debates also features prominently in some of his later plays. Especially the first lines of the prologue to *The Lover's Melancholy* contain "anxious assertions of originality"¹¹⁶⁷. Ford stresses that "we have no such law" by which dramatic plays should be composed and that he "in his following scenes [...] doth not owe / To others' fancies". Even though *The Lover's Melancholy* is somewhat original as far as the play's structure or the representation of morality are concerned, this assertion must be taken with a pinch of salt as the play owes quite a lot to earlier productions especially with regard to characters and motifs. Most of Ford's plays have never quite managed to shake of the stigma of being reworkings of earlier plays. Ford's vehement claim in the prologue to his later tragicomedy *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*, in which he states that in this "free invention" "is shown / Nothing but what our author knows his own / Without a learned theft"¹¹⁶⁸ does not, though sounding convincing, manage to change this impression. Wymer states to this effect that "Ford's self-conscious reworkings of previous plays are part of a continuing struggle to achieve authentic emotional expression despite the suffocating pressure of the 'already written'."¹¹⁶⁹ Yet, it was customary in Early Modern drama to recycle and adapt already existing ideas and

¹¹⁶⁶ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 10.

¹¹⁶⁷ Wymer. *Webster and Ford*, p. 90.

¹¹⁶⁸ Ford. Prologue. *The Fancies Chaste and Noble. The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 2, p. 225.

¹¹⁶⁹ Wymer. *Webster and Ford*, p. 91.

Ford was not the only one to do so – Shakespeare being the most prominent playwright to likewise borrow ideas. Ford's fame rests largely on the eminent quality of his re-workings and his skilled incorporation of a pronounced moral layer calling certain aspects of human interaction and love and life in general into question. In doing so, Ford managed to ensure the playgoers' identification with his characters and guaranteed that they did not leave the theatre empty-minded.

Ford was likewise not the only Early Modern playwright trying to come to terms with changing theatrical realities and

[m]any prologues and epilogues concern themselves with major elements of the discussions about the nature of drama, which continued throughout the period. The playwrights took advantage of the extra-theatrical dimension that these framing texts afforded and used them, often in highly original ways, to enunciate their diverse ideas on referentiality, theatricality, audience participation and expectation and authorial competence. The comfortable notion that many prologues and epilogues are only peripheral texts concerned mainly with soliciting audience approval and applause, anticipating criticism or giving plot summaries does not, in a significant number of cases, bear close scrutiny.¹¹⁷⁰

Schneider's observation also holds true for Ford's metatheatrical elements. Due to his ardent ambition to find new ways to express himself as well as his individual understanding of drama, his first play not only reflects upon his own role as writer, but also on the function of the actors and his audience. He cannot help following certain conventions either and directly asks for his audiences' assistance:

For your parts, gentlemen, to quit his pains,
Yet you will please, that as you meet with strains
Of lighter mixture, but to cast your eye
Rather upon the *main* than on the *bye*,
His hopes stand firm, and we shall find it true,
The LOVER'S MELANCHOLY cur'd by you.

Ford, by directly addressing the audience, assigns them an active role. This was an essence of Early Modern productions and a needed means to ensure a play's success and long-lasting popularity – not to mention the fact that audiences might turn angry if their presence was not coaxingly acknowledged now and again. Knowing the London theatres and their audiences well, Ford was well aware of the fact that the people paying to see his *The Lover's Melancholy* expected to be flattered and the prospect that the lover's melancholy might be cured by them

¹¹⁷⁰ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 10.

presumably found their approval. This ensured their attentiveness as they embarked on their transitory journey from the real world into the fictional world of the play of which they were now part.

III.2.2.2 *THE BROKEN HEART*

The next play blurring the boundaries between theatrical illusion and reality is Ford's tragedy *The Broken Heart*. Besides *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, it is by many scholars considered to be his best play – above all because of its treatment of love, jealousy and enforced marriage as well as its depiction of melancholy and death. Or, as Sanders has put it, "the rituals and ceremonies by which societies [...] sustain and restrain themselves."¹¹⁷¹ It is not known for sure when exactly the play was written, but it was performed by the King's Men at the private Blackfriars, and possibly the Globe as well, in 1633. As Bentley has detailed, "Ford's name does not appear on the title-page of this play, but his anagram, *Fide Honor*, is there, and the dedication to Lord Crane is signed *'Iohn Ford'*."¹¹⁷² Though no direct literary source has been detected yet, an indebtedness to Sidney's *Arcadia* and Shakespeare cannot be denied.

The play's prologue, though in general rather conventional, has attracted a fair amount of scholarly interest for its claim that the play's fiction "was known a TRUTH" some time ago. It features several devices broaching central issues such as the development of Early Modern drama or the changing expectations and tastes of London's playgoers in the theatres' last decade before their fatal closure in 1642:

OUR scene is Sparta. He whose best of art
Hath drawn this piece calls it THE BROKEN HEART.
The title lends no expectation here
Of apish laughter, or of some lame jeer
At place or persons; no pretended clause
Of jests fit for a brothel courts applause
From vulgar admiration: such low songs,
Tun'd to unchaste ears, suit not modest tongues.
The virgin-sisters then deserv'd fresh bays
When innocence and sweetness crown'd their lays;
Then vices gasp'd for breath, whose whole commerce

¹¹⁷¹ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 24.

¹¹⁷² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 440.

Was whipp'd to exile by unblushing verse.
This law we keep in our presentment now,
Not to take freedom more than we allow;
What may be here thought FICTION, when time's youth
Wanted some riper years, was known a TRUTH:
In which, if words have cloth'd the subject right,
You may partake a pity with delight.¹¹⁷³

These 18 lines, written in verse, are directly addressed to the playgoers and feature many elements typical of Early Modern prologues, such as the two-line exposition providing background information on the play's title and setting, meant to help contemporary audiences to place the play they were about to watch in the correct surroundings. The use of the personal pronoun 'our' helps the actor delivering the prologue to directly interact and bond with the playgoers surrounding the stage from the very beginning. It enables the audience to immediately commence the desired transition from the real world into the fictional world of which they will be part for the next some two hours until the actor speaking the epilogue will release them again.

In addition to this, it was also conventional during the Caroline Period to provide playgoers with some understanding of what not to expect from the ensuing play. In this case, as the play's negatively connoted title already hints at, they were not to anticipate a cheerful or amusing plot: "The title lends no expectation here / Of apish laughter, or of some lame jeer". Telling audiences what or what not to expect served several functions; namely to put them in the appropriate mood needed to fully appreciate the play on the one hand, and to minimize the potential for disappointment or even unrest if the company's paying customers had expected something quite different on the other hand. Playgoers could display unpleasant behavioural traits if they disliked what was being performed in front of them.

However, there is even more to these lines of the prologue than one might initially suspect. Ford's vindictive prologue was additionally needed to introduce his play "[b]ecause it was a tragedy when comedy was the mode"¹¹⁷⁴. The prologue is in consequence a means by the author to explicitly address larger theatrical matters in

¹¹⁷³ Ford. Prologue. *The Broken Heart. The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 1, p. 215.

¹¹⁷⁴ Andrew Gurr. "Singing Through the Chatter: Ford and Contemporary Theatrical Fashion". *John Ford. Critical Re-Visions*. Ed. Michael Neill. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1988. 81-96, p. 93.

general and the playgoers' shifting expectations in particular. In doing so it serves to defend Ford's choice of genre when many playgoers came predominantly to the theatres to "jeer / At place or persons" and not to witness the portrayal of serious topics. Ford, deeply rooted in earlier dramatic traditions, thus, with a note of nostalgia, looks back to a time when "innocence and sweetness crown'd" a poet's bays, whereas now many playgoers expected and desired much more unrefined and simple entertainment. This is interesting considering the fact that he was writing for London's reputedly most sophisticated playhouse and not the Red Bull or Fortune, which were the venues usually associated with vulgar performances and less classy audiences admiring "such low songs" and having "unchaste ears".

The prologue's claim to be based on historical facts has triggered suggestions of various kinds over the years and so far it is impossible to tell whether Ford used a real incident for his fictional play or whether the prologue just claims this in order to provoke more interest and publicity among the original audiences. Large audiences could not be taken for granted. Due to the fact that a certain closeness of the play to Sidney's *Arcadia* cannot be dismissed, it has been suggested that *The Broken Heart* might indeed reflect Sidney's relationship with Penelope Rich. As Bentley has argued in this regard "the indebtedness of the play to the details of Sir Philip's life is [...] dubious."¹¹⁷⁵ Other possible parallels have been found between certain characters and Margaret Ratcliffe, "one of Elizabeth's maids of honor, [who was] grief-stricken at the death of her brother, [and] starved herself to death"¹¹⁷⁶ or between the play's main plot and a supposedly true story already fictionalised in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* first published in English in 1561.¹¹⁷⁷ In the absence of any other data however, it is impossible to tell whether Ford's statement in the prologue is true or not. Whether really based on historic incidents

¹¹⁷⁵ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 440.

¹¹⁷⁶ Donald K. Anderson. "John Ford". *The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists. A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama*. Eds Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978. 120-151, p. 132.

¹¹⁷⁷ Cf.: Ibid.

or not, the claim to be so underlines the author's metatheatrical reference to "the didactic function of drama which, he implies, is now somewhat out of fashion"¹¹⁷⁸:

The virgin-sisters then deserv'd fresh bays
When innocence and sweetness crown'd their lays;
Then vices gasp'd for breath, whose whole commerce
Was whipp'd to exile by unblushing verse.

Neill goes on to observe that

[t]he only exceptional thing about this prologue is its rather heavy emphasis on the moral value of poetry. From about 1610 the requirement of didactic earnestness tends to figure less and less prominently in all the occasional material.¹¹⁷⁹

Considering that Ford's writing in general features a distinct Elizabethan touch and that he continued to write tragic plays when satires and comedies were most popular this is not surprising.

The epilogue to *The Broken Heart* takes up some of the aspects already introduced in the play's prologue:

WHERE noble judgments and clear eyes are fix'd
To grace endeavour, there sits truth, not mix'd
With ignorance; those censures may command
Belief which talk not till they understand.
Let some say, "This was flat", some, "Here the scene
Fell from its height"; another, "That the mean
Was ill observ'd in such a growing passion
As it transcended either state or fashion:"
Some few may cry, "'Twas pretty well", or so,
"But-" and there shrug in silence: yet we know
Our writer's aim was in the whole address
Well to deserve of all, but please the best;
Which granted, by th' allowance of this strain
The BROKEN HEART may be piec'd-up again.¹¹⁸⁰

The epilogue affirms that the play is addressed to "noble judgments and clear eyes" and is meant to "please the best", namely those members of the audience capable of grasping the depth and seriousness of the play's topic and those who would "talk not till they understand". In doing so, Ford "cunningly differentiates between the

¹¹⁷⁸ Neill. "'Wits Most Accomplished Senate": The Audience of Caroline Private Theatres", p. 354.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ford. Epilogue. *The Broken Heart. The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 1, p. 320.

shallow commentators and the genuine understanders"¹¹⁸¹ and underlines that certain members of private theatre audiences had grown in sophistication over the years. Ford's differentiation shows that Early Modern audiences were not as homogeneous a group as some scholars have tried to make their readers believe over the years. The epilogue to *The Broken Heart* draws attention to the fact that only because playgoers sit in the auditorium together, it does not follow that they share the same level of sophistication or rejoice in the same things.

Ford adds yet another metatheatrical level to the epilogue and sheds some light on the relationship between playgoers and playwrights by enumerating various reactions usually voiced after a play's performance. This proactive and offensive handling of possible complaints allows Ford to take the wind out of his critics' sails and at the same time shows that he is well aware of the fact that his play would not please everyone. According to these imagined comments, some members of the audience, merely voicing stock-term criticism because they have not really understood the play, might say "This was flat" or declare that "Here the scene / Fell from its height". But only "Some few" may detect the play's deeper meaning and announce "'Twas pretty well" and then "shrug in silence" for they cannot find anything to criticise. For exactly these people the play was originally designed and they might help that "The BROKEN HEART may be piec'd-up again", as Ford has so figuratively put it in the epilogue's highly self-reflexive last line.

However, Ford's epilogue to *The Broken Heart* and the distinction between more and less cultured playgoers contained in it must be seen as a conventional means to flatter the paying customers present at the playhouse. Playwrights and their companies at times had difficulties to ensure large audiences. One could argue that a large proportion of the audience considered themselves as belonging to the small but distinguished group so well-spoken of in the epilogue – after all self-confidence ran high among especially private theatre audiences and, clouded by self-assurance and used to being sweet-talked to, not everyone would have applied the epilogue's criticism to themselves.

¹¹⁸¹ Leech. *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama*, p. 168.

III.2.2.3 PERKIN WARBECK

Ford's notoriously hard-to-date tragic history play *Perkin Warbeck* has attracted a fair amount of scholarly criticism over the years not only for its political content, but for its author's endeavours to renew a literary genre which had been out of fashion ever since the later years of Elizabeth's I reign some 30 years prior to its presumed first performance at Beeston's Phoenix in Drury Lane. Though the play, for which Ford drew heavily on Francis Bacon's *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh* and other works, feels somehow out of place among the many witty comedies and satires produced in the 1620s and 1630s, *Perkin Warbeck* was received very positively by its original audiences. T. S. Eliot later praised it as "one of the very best historical plays outside of Shakespeare in the whole of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama"¹¹⁸². Ford once again managed to adapt an already well-established form to his own conception and to leave a slight Burtonian mark on the play's protagonist.

Ford, being well-familiar with London's dramatic scene, was aware that his history-play *Perkin Warbeck* did not follow current literary trends and as usual decided to thwart potential denunciation or ridicule by self-reflexively addressing this very issue in the play's prologue:

STUDIES have of this nature been of late
 So out of fashion, so unfollow'd, that
 It is become more justice to revive
 The antic follies of the times than strive
 To countenance wise industry: no want
 Of art doth render wit or lame or scant
 Or slothful in the purchase of fresh bays;
 But want of truth in them who give the praise
 To their self-love, presuming to out-do
 The writer, or – for need – the actors too.
 But such this author's silence best befits,
 Who bids them be in love with their own wits.
 From him to clearer judgments we can say
 He shows a history couch'd in a play;
 A history of noble mention, known,
 Famous, and true; most noble, 'cause our own;
 Not forg'd from Italy, from France, from Spain,
 But chronicled at home; as rich in strain
 Of brave attempts as ever fertile rage

¹¹⁸² Quoted in: Anderson. "John Ford", p. 133.

In action could beget to grace the stage.
We cannot limit scenes, for the whole land
Itself appear'd too narrow to withstand,
Competitors for kingdoms; nor is here
Unnecessary mirth forc'd to endear
A multitude: on these two rests the fate
Of worthy expectation, – truth and state.¹¹⁸³

The prologue, criticising the "want of truth" characterising other productions, self-consciously justifies the unusual choice of form by emphasising that the play is not meant to please those "in love with their own wits", but to reach those capable of "clearer judgments". In deciding to write a history play, Ford did not only pay tribute to the memory of a known kinsmen, but to a literary form which had succeeded in drawing large audiences in the first two decades of professional and institutionalised acting in England's capital – one only needs to think of Shakespeare's or Marlowe's great and immensely popular histories in the 1590s when Ford himself was still a boy. Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* sticks closely to its historical sources and relates the story of the imposturous and delusional Warbeck, who – pretending to be the younger of the two princes presumably killed in the Tower by the villainous later king Richard III – challenges the rule of the Tudor king Henry VII. In the play "[t]he distinction between royalty and the performance of royalty is once again dangerously blurred"¹¹⁸⁴. Following Hopkins' argument in her *John Ford's Political Theatre*, Sanders draws attention to the fact that Ford's choice to present his audiences with a play "So out of fashion, so unfollow'd" could be seen as a means to implicitly confront Charles I with the honourable behaviour of his Tudor ancestors – contrasted to the more questionable conduct of his Stuart relatives. Due to the fact that Ford had to be careful not to draw attention to these matters all too obviously, it is hard to determine whether the author really wanted to steer his audiences' attention towards that direction or whether he just felt, as he states in the prologue, that it has "become more justice to revive / The antic follies of the times" and to present

A history of noble mention, known,
Famous, and true; most noble, 'cause our own;

¹¹⁸³ Ford. Prologue. *Perkin Warbeck*. *The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 2, p. 115.

¹¹⁸⁴ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 22.

Not forg'd from Italy, from France, from Spain,
But chronicled at home; as rich in strain
Of brave attempts as ever fertile rage
In action could beget to grace the stage.

Sanders has elaborately detailed to this effect that

[w]hether this is a play engaged with the question of succession or not, the problematic link it forms between the court's representation of itself to the people and the deceptive and counterfeit nature of theatre should not be underestimated as offering its own mode of counsel to Charles I. By 1634 Charles had already ruled for some five years without summoning a parliament, and this was beginning to provoke considerable constitutional debate about the accountability of the King to his elected parliament, a debate that would ultimately contribute to the civil wars of the following decade. He would rule without a parliament for a further six years, a period that came to be known as the 'Personal Rule' (1629-40); and the theatre produced in that time can be seen as in some sense providing an alternative arena for debate whilst the chambers of the Houses of the Commons and the Lords remained so decidedly shut.¹¹⁸⁵

It is thus likely that Ford wanted to direct his audiences' attention to these problems and that the two fundamental issues stated at the prologue's very end, i.e. "truth and state", are meant to refer to much more serious matters than one might initially assume, namely the contrast between "responsible Tudor sovereignty and irresponsible Stuart autocracy."¹¹⁸⁶ Read this way *Perkin Warbeck* is more than just a poet's self-conscious attempt to revive an old form with a new content.

The dramatist also once more decided to pick up larger theatrical matters as a central theme in the play's prologue. In adding a metatheatrical dimension to the play he tried to justify himself against potential critics and to prepare his demanding customers, who were well aware of the power they held over the play, for what they were about to witness. This was after all different from what they were used to at least as far as the play's genre was concerned. Though the audiences' part remains implicit as usual, the prologue to *Perkin Warbeck* illustrates that current literary debates were by no means only conducted outside the playhouses, but also directly found their way into the period's dramatic performances themselves.

However, not only the playgoers held power over a play in Early Modern times and determined its rise or fall, but the play likewise had authority over those present in the auditorium. Especially prologues served an important function by gradually and

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁶ Anderson. "John Ford", p. 134.

gently taking the audience to another place and time – in the case of *Perkin Warbeck* to "The antic follies of the times" and "A history of noble mention".

III.2.2.4 THE FANCIES CHASTE AND NOBLE

The Fancies Chaste and Noble, whose prologue echoes the induction to *The Lover's Melancholy*, was first staged at Beeston's Phoenix by Queen Henrietta's Men in 1635. The play has only received a very small amount of scholarly attention over the years and is commonly regarded as one of Ford's weakest creations. Yet, it features an interesting peculiarity in the epilogue, which, despite its relative shortness, is brought forward by no less than four characters – namely Morosa, Clarella, Castamela and Flavia. These four female characters share the epilogue's eight verse lines among them and deliver two lines each. This is exceptional for Early Modern epilogues, which were usually spoken by one just actor, who – counteracting a sense of abruptness after the play's ending – remained on stage to slowly discharge the audience into real world again. The epilogue reads the following:

Mor. Awhile suspected, gentlemen, I look
For no new law, being quitted by the book.
Clar. Our harmless pleasures free in every sort
Actions of scandal; may they free report!
Cast. Distrust is base, presumption urgeth wrongs;
But noble thoughts must prompt as noble tongues.
Flav. Fancy and judgment are a play's full matter:
If we have err'd in one, right you the latter.¹¹⁸⁷

This passage, notwithstanding spoken by actors still in their costumes, shows that the fiction constituted in the play is no longer available and enables both poet and actors to let the play refer beyond itself. Though women constituted a substantial proportion of late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences, this epilogue, while spoken by four female characters leaving the locus and addressing the crowd from the non-representational platea, is only addressed to the male members of the audience. This was not unusual however and of the many surviving prologues and epilogues of

¹¹⁸⁷ Ford. Epilogue. *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*. *The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 2, p. 322.

the time in question only very few were explicitly directed at the female playgoers, the most prominent examples being Shirley's *The Coronation* and *The Imposture*. Though it is spoken by female characters and not a single male character, the epilogue is somewhat conventional insofar as its crossing of the threshold between the represented and the representing world is concerned with very practical matters. It tries to subliminally manipulate the playgoers by having Castamela appeal to their "noble thoughts" which "must prompt as noble tongues". In elevating their social status and level of sophistication by flattering them like this, Ford asks for the audience's active participation and indulgence and tries to ensure that the playgoers do not speak badly about his play after leaving the playhouse and thus tries to avouch for the survival of *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*. This aim is intensified by Flavia, who releases the audience by stating that "Fancy and judgment are a play's full matter: / If we have err'd in one, right you the latter." This highly metatheatrical passage depicts fancy and judgment as two crucial aspects of dramatic representation and emphasises that even though the poet and his actors may have failed, it is the playgoers' task not to jump to conclusions all too easily, but rather to render a judgment that befits "noble thoughts". This passage thus directly acknowledges the power Early Modern audiences held over the plays they watched and illustrates that playwrights were well aware that they had to renegotiate authority to the playgoers in order to survive the harsh competition within London's Early Modern entertainment industry. It is another example of how Caroline epilogues were a crucial means to accommodate the passing fiction of a play "to the actual circumstances of its production and reception"¹¹⁸⁸.

III.2.2.5 THE LADY'S TRIAL

Ford's last play *The Lady's Trial*, first performed by Beeston's Boys at the private Phoenix in Drury Lane in May 1638 and published the following year, features a prologue, which has received somewhat more scholarly attention than his other framing texts. The prologue, divided in seven stanzas with three lines each and written in verse, was however not written by Ford himself, but presumably by

¹¹⁸⁸ Weimann. "Performing at the Frontiers of Representation", p. 98.

the actor Theophilus Bird, son-in-law of the manager of the Phoenix theatre. It does appear in most, but not all, surviving copies and features the signature "Master Bird". It remains unclear to this day whether it was performed in all productions, but in the absence of any other prologues and in view of the fact that Bird was closely associated with the Phoenix for more than a decade this is not unlikely. The phrasing and the direct address of the audience strongly indicate that the prologue was designed to be performed on stage and not, in contrast to several other framing devices explicitly addressing a reader, later penned to be included only in the written publication of the play. Bird's

name appears attached to the prologue, epilogue, or dedication of three plays, all of them in whole or in part by Ford – *The Witch of Edmonton*, *The Sun's Darling*, and *The Lady's Trial*. Signatures to prologues and epilogues are most unusual and one can only guess that Bird was the author rather than the speaker of those to which his name is attached, and that some special friendship with Ford made the dramatist want to acknowledge the actor's composition when the play was published. The verse form of the prologue for *The Lady's Trial* is an unusual one for Jacobean and Caroline prologues, and it is duplicated in the epilogue.¹¹⁸⁹

The prologue reads the following:

LANGUAGE and matter, with a fit of mirth
That sharply savours more of air than earth,
Like midwives, bring a play to timely birth.

But where's now such a one in which these three
Are handsomely contriv'd? or, if they be,
Are understood by all who hear to see?

Wit, wit's the word in fashion, that alone
Cries up the poet, which, though neatly shown,
Is rather censur'd, oftentimes, than known.

He who will venture on a jest, that can
Rail on another's pain, or idly scan
Affairs of state, O, he's the only man!

A goodly approbation, which must bring
Fame with contempt by such a deadly sting!
The Muses chatter, who were wont to sing.

Your favours in what we present to-day;
Our fearless author boldly bids me say
He tenders you no satire, but a play;

¹¹⁸⁹ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, pp. 446f.

In which, if so he have not hit all right,
For wit, words, mirth, and matter as he might,
He wishes yet he had, for your delight.¹¹⁹⁰

Bird's prologue points out several central elements of drama, such as the changing role of the author or the position and function of audiences in general. Bird, finding "both wit and its perversions a sad falling-off"¹¹⁹¹, explicitly criticises the theatre's development as well as other dramatists who, unlike Ford, follow certain trends ("wit's the word in fashion"), which do not do justice to drama's rich heritage and are artistically insufficient. Bird's prologue is highly reminiscent of Ford's own prologues, such as the one to *The Broken Heart* and mirrors his own attitude. It is nevertheless interesting however that, as Gurr has put it, "[t]he most cogent formulation of a critical position in a Ford seems, oddly, not to have been written by Ford himself."¹¹⁹²

In the first stanza the prologue self-reflexively identifies language, matter and mirth as three central ingredients or elements for a good play and states that they "[l]ike midwives, bring a play to timely birth". This stanza is predominantly concerned with the role of the author, in whose hands it lies to skilfully combine these three aspects in order to compose a good play. The second stanza is more concerned with the role of the audience and states that even though language, matter and mirth may be "handsomely contriv'd" by the poet, it is at the same time also necessary that the play "is understood by all who hear to see". In doing so, the prologue explicitly reminds the members of the audience of their part in the ensuing production and appeals to their sophistication and their ability to follow even demanding plays; after all the "fearless author [...] tenders you no satire, but a play", as Bird states in the prologue's sixth stanza, emphasising once more that the play the audience is about to watch is not for those "who will venture on a jest" or those who "Rail on another's pain". By saying this he both criticises poets writing such unassuming plays and audiences wanting to see them. The repeated insistence "on an artistic value for plays that was distinct from the physical pleasures of

¹¹⁹⁰ Ford. Prologue. *The Lady's Trial. The Works of John Ford*. Vol. 3, p. 7.

¹¹⁹¹ Leech. *Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama*, p. 175.

¹¹⁹² Gurr. "Singing Through the Chatter: Ford and Contemporary Theatrical Fashion", p. 94.

clowning and fighting"¹¹⁹³ found in many of the metatheatrical texts framing Ford's plays is hardly surprising if one keeps in mind that his approach to drama was at times quite different from the one by his contemporaries. Satires were highly popular at the time when *The Lady's Trail* was first performed, but this kind of play did not correspond to Ford's (and possibly Bird's) understanding of drama:

The Prologue to *The Lady's Trial* comments sarcastically on the kinds of playwrights who are now considered fashionable and from whom Ford wished to distance himself. These include the sort 'who idly scan affairs of state'. This is a late reminder [...] of the fact that Ford's approach to life, including recent historical events, had never been primarily political. He was more interested in tracing the disturbances and conflicts of the human heart than in commenting on contemporary politics.¹¹⁹⁴

In this light Bird's prologue must be seen as a means to thwart potential misinterpretations of *The Lady's Trail*, because

[t]he danger for playing companies was that the "wit" that was admired as a mark of sophisticated aesthetic collusion between audience and playwright could equally encourage a particularity of interpretation that might bring the play into disrepute. [...] Bird's gloss on "wit" extends its applications from verbal and narrative dexterity to cruel personal attack and, most dangerous, idle animadversions on "affairs of state". The aesthetic qualities of artistic innovation could, in the hothouse atmosphere of particular theater events, be turned to the equally collusive and possible equally pleasurable slurs on individuals.¹¹⁹⁵

This was something Ford, whose plays' focus always lies on the difficulties involved in human relationship rather than politics or greater affairs of state, was trying to prevent by all means. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to instruct his audiences by the use of framing texts which self-reflexively address these very issues.

The flattering and caressing of the often proud and vain customers present in the playhouse was a common and necessary measure to ensure their favour – after all audiences could be very demanding and taxing. Hence appealing to their vanity by highlighting that the following play is not for everyone would have pleased Ford's original audiences. Recalling once again how intimate the relationship between poets, actors and audiences was in the smaller private halls like Beeston's Phoenix in particular, these procedures become even more potent and serviceable.

¹¹⁹³ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 51.

¹¹⁹⁴ Wymer. *Webster and Ford*, p. 103.

¹¹⁹⁵ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", pp. 51f.

Bird's observation that "The Muses chatter, who were wont to sing" in the prologue's fifth stanza lies at the heart of his speech and laments the development Early Modern drama has undergone in recent years. Having identified language as a major ingredient of drama in the prologue's first line, Bird here regretfully observes that drama is now characterised by a new language, inferior to the singing of earlier times. Bird's lines "describe an antithesis between wit and chatter on the one side, and the poet who sings on the other, lamenting the fact that the wrong side is in favour at the time."¹¹⁹⁶ Though this is not directly stated, it is likely that Bird's criticism was particularly directed at the reputedly less sophisticated Fortune and Red Bull, which were known to offer a somewhat different form of dramatic entertainment and featured a language considerably less poetic in tone than Ford was known for.

To address these larger theatrical elements in prologues or epilogues was not unusual for Ford's plays. As Zucker has detailed in this regard, "[i]n their efforts to secure market share, playwrights surrounded their plays with commentary in which they attempted to construct a differentiated audience that would appreciate different styles of drama in different venues"¹¹⁹⁷. This was an aspect particularly important for Ford who was experimenting with dramatic forms in most of his plays. One is thus once more faced with a prologue which does not, in contrast to many other examples from especially the Elizabethan Period, concern itself with providing the audience with background information on the play's plot or setting, but rather with a prologue addressing larger issues concerning London's professional theater scene.

The prologue's last and seventh stanza is again conventional and features some aspects typically found in Early Modern prologues. Directly addressing the audience, it humbly underlines that the author has tried his best to combine the already mentioned "wit, words, mirth, and matter" in a way that may please and delight the playgoers and at the same time offers an implicit apology in case he has not achieved this goal and did "not hit all right".

¹¹⁹⁶ Gurr. "Singing Through the Chatter: Ford and Contemporary Theatrical Fashion", p. 94.

¹¹⁹⁷ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 51.

III.3 RICHARD BROME

III.3.1 ABOUT RICHARD BROME AND HIS LITERARY WORKS

In contrast to Ford, there is even less to say about Richard Brome. Much of the information available is drawn from commendatory and prefatory verses, title pages, legal documents and prologues and epilogues. Unlike Ford, Brome and his plays have also attracted considerably less scholarly as well as unprofessional attention and criticism over the centuries – in spite of the high quality of his extant 16 plays, which Matthew Steggle has described as being "among the most interesting and appealing texts to emerge from the later phase of the Shakespearean theatre."¹¹⁹⁸ T. S. Eliot once stated that "Brome deserves to be more read than he is"¹¹⁹⁹ – however with only limited effects so far. R. J. Kaufmann's biographical study *Richard Brome: Caroline Dramatist* of the year 1961, which has only rarely been challenged, must still be viewed as the standard work in this field – in spite of the fact that "a surprising amount of primary archival evidence has come to light since Kaufmann was writing."¹²⁰⁰ Most of the attention of recent years focused primarily on his intimate and at times problematic relationship with Ben Jonson, from whom Brome received something like a dramatic apprenticeship, and his unique contract with the Salisbury Court theatre and an ensuing lawsuit. Since Brome "had a penchant and an ear for dialects it does not seem unlikely that he came to London from the outlands."¹²⁰¹ Just like his place of birth, though, his date of birth is equally unknown, but is usually set about the year 1590. For the next quarter of a century only very little about him is known and "[t]here is no definite fact in Brome's career to make a birth-date of 1575 or 1595 impossible"¹²⁰². In the prologue to his *The Court Beggar*, presumably written around 1640, he speaks of himself as "the Poet full of age and care"¹²⁰³. Whatever the exact date of his birth, Brome was thoroughly professional and knew the theatre well and might have been an actor before he took to playwriting. To this effect it has been argued that he

¹¹⁹⁸ Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*, p. 1.

¹¹⁹⁹ Quoted in: Kaufmann. *Richard Brome. Caroline Playwright*, p. i.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹²⁰¹ Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 155.

¹²⁰² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 50.

¹²⁰³ Brome. Prologue. *The Court Beggar. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. 184.

might have been an actor in the Queen of Bohemia's company for a short period of time from 1628 onwards.¹²⁰⁴ Whatever the exact circumstances under which he came into first contact with the London theatre scene, he seems to have worked his way up over the years and the next reference one can clearly link to him is in the induction to Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* of the year 1614, in which Jonson refers to his "man, Master Broome, behind the Arras"¹²⁰⁵. Brome's relationship with Jonson was a very interesting one and in the verses he penned for his *The Northern Lass* in 1632, Jonson, at times for all intents and purposes quite jealous of his apprentice's success, wrote the following lines about his companion, which help to better understand the exact nature of their connection:

I Had you for a Servant, once, Dick Brome;
And you perform'd a Servants faithful parts:
Now, you are got into a nearer roome,
Of Fellowship, professing my old Arts.
And you doe doe them well, with good applause,
Which you have justly gained from the Stage,
By observation of those Comick Lawes
Which I, your Master, first did teach the Age.
You learn'd it well; and for it, serv'd your time
A Prentise-ship: which few doe now a dayes.
Now each Court-Hobby-horse will wince in rime;
Both learned, and unlearned, all write Playes.¹²⁰⁶

Based on these lines, in which Jonson cannot help but to attack certain rival dramatists, and some other contemporary sources, it is nowadays commonly agreed that Brome was first a servant in Jonson's household and that Jonson then decided to make him his apprentice.

Brome collaborated in quite a few plays in the years to come. Unfortunately most of these plays are not extant and it is likely that some of his undated single-authored plays stem from the period immediately following his apprenticeship. From roughly 1629 onwards, plays written by Brome alone were both staged and published, the first ones probably being *The City Wit* and *The Northern Lass*. Following the success

¹²⁰⁴ The name Richard Brome appears in a royal warrant mentioning him as being an actor for the Queen of Bohemia's players. Whether the warrant really refers to the playwright has however not sufficiently been answered yet.

¹²⁰⁵ Jonson. *Bartholomew Fair. The Works of Ben Jonson*. Vol. 6. Ind., 8.

¹²⁰⁶ Quoted in: Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 171.

of his dramatic output, he was soon "recognized as one of the country's leading playwrights, with rival theatrical companies competing for his services"¹²⁰⁷. This was also due to the generic variety of his dramatic achievements. In contrast to Ford, Brome wrote very successful comedies and in his first years was closely associated with the King's Men before joining the Salisbury Court theatre in 1635.

Brome's theatre contract which regulated his terms of employment with the King's Revels Company at the private hall Salisbury Court is the only known document of that sort from the entire Early Modern Period. It sheds crucial light on the working conditions of dramatists not only during the Caroline Period. The contract as such, dated to the 20th July 1635 and possibly negotiated by the playhouse's manager Richard Heton, is not extant, but two documents dated to 1640 dealing with this very contact are: first a lawsuit brought against Brome by the Salisbury Court filed on 12th February 1640 and second Brome's answer to that lawsuit dated to the 6th March 1640. These lengthy documents "tell the complete story, from Brome's first encounter with Salisbury Court up to his final break with the theater five years later in order to join William Beeston at the Cockpit Theater."¹²⁰⁸ According to these documents, which were first discovered by Charles W. Wallace in 1910 while he was trying to find biographical material on Shakespeare,

the said Brome should for the terme of three yeares then next ensueinge with his best Arte and Industrie write euerye yeare three playes and deliver them to the Companye of players there Acteing for the tyme beinge And that the said Richard Brome should not nor would write any playe or any parte of a playe to anye other players or playe howse, but applie all his studdye and Endeauors therein for the Benefitte of the said Companie of the said playehouse [...].¹²⁰⁹

For his services he was to receive a weekly salary of 15 shillings. For many years the contract was only known from the remarks Wallace had made when first discovering it and unfortunately for later scholars, Wallace, who died in 1923, did not bother to either publish the whole document or to mention the document's exact location. So it took almost another 60 years until Ann Haaker finally rediscovered the documents among the many unsorted papers at the London Public

¹²⁰⁷ Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*, p. 1.

¹²⁰⁸ Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet", p. 283.

¹²⁰⁹ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Record Office and made the full texts accessible for modern scholarship in her article "The Plague, the Theater, and the Poet", published in 1968. The information first published by Wallace in a short account in *The Century Magazine* in 1910 regarding Brome's contract reads the following:

Yet another set of documents assists here in understanding certain relations of the poet to the theater. Richard Brome, former servant to Ben Jonson and his literary disciple, in 1635 made a contract with Salisbury Court theater to write three plays a year for three years at a salary of 15s. a week, plus the first day's profits from each new play as a benefit. In 1638, it was agreed that the contract should be continued seven years longer at a salary of 20s. a week from Brome's exclusive services. But the rival theater, the Cockpit, lured him away with a better offer, and the new contract was not signed. The most interesting new items here are, the limit of three plays a year and the special provision that Brome should not be allowed to publish any of his own plays without the consent of the company.¹²¹⁰

Brome did not manage to provide the company with the agreed number of nine plays over the three years. As the lawsuit between him and the company testifies, he, besides various songs, prologues, epilogues and revisions of scenes, only wrote six plays for them and in addition to this he also gave, or planned to give, one play to Beeston's rival Phoenix, thus breaching his contract twice:

That the said Brome haveinge gotten soe much Money of your suiects as aforesaid did fayle to deliuer vnto your subiects the number of playes which in tyme hee was by his Artickles to haue deliuered them [...] That the said Richard Brome did in the three yeares before menconed sell and deliuer one of the playes which hee made for your Subiects in the said tyme vnto Christopher Beeston gent and William Beeston [...].¹²¹¹

The highly popular play *The Antipodes* was written with the Phoenix in mind, but was then, in compliance with Brome's contract, first staged at the Salisbury Court theatre. A note appended to *The Antipodes* provides further clarification on this issue. This note was written by Brome for the quarto edition of this play in 1640 and reads the following:

Courteous Reader, You shal find in this Booke more then was presented upon the Stage, and left out of the Presentation, for Superfluous length (as some of the Players pretended) I thoght it good al should be inserted according to the allowed Original; and as it was, at first, intended for the Cock-pit Stage, in the right of my most deserving Friend Mr. William Beeston,

¹²¹⁰ C. W. Wallace. "Shakspere and the Blackfriars". *The Century Magazine*. 80 (1910): 742-752, p. 751. Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 52.

¹²¹¹ Quoted in: Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet", p. 298.

unto whom it properly appertained; and so I leave it to thy perusal, as it was generally applauded, and well acted at Salisbury Court. Farewell, Ri. Brome.¹²¹²

Regarding this matter, Andrews has outlined that probably the following happened:

Brome, late in 1637, before the expiration of his contract with the Salisbury Court Theatre, wrote the *Antipodes* for the newly formed King and Queen's Young Company, or Beeston's Boys. The Salisbury Court Company forced Brome to give the play to them, because he had delivered but six of the nine plays promised, and had guaranteed his exclusive services.¹²¹³

In spite of all this, the King's Revels Company recognized Brome's worth and he was offered a new seven-year contract, which shows how profitable his plays were for the Salisbury Court; notes sent by Wallace to Clarence E. Andrews mention a sum of 1000 pounds earned by the company for *The Sparagus Garden* alone.¹²¹⁴

In his lengthy and detailed answer to the lawsuit brought against him, fully reprinted by Haaker in her essay, Brome's lawyer Andrew Browne provides Brome's side of the story and mentions the hardships suffered by the dramatist and his family because the Salisbury Court company failed to pay him the agreed salary during times of plague when the Privy Council ordered all theatres to be closed to avoid further spread.¹²¹⁵ In his answer Brome, not entirely denying the accusations brought against him, complains that he "expected the due and true performance and payment of the said fifteene shillings weekly"¹²¹⁶. His letter shows that he and the company differed in how they interpreted the contract with regard to the times in which the theatres were closed. The company's failure to pay him his weekly salary in these critical months in late 1636 and early 1637 prompted Brome not to extent his corporation with them even though he prior had verbally agreed to do so. He joined William Beeston instead, who had just taken over the management at the Phoenix playhouse after his father's death, and wrote a few more plays, among

¹²¹² Quoted in: Andrews. *Richard Brome: A Study of His Life and Works*, p. 15.

¹²¹³ Ibid.

¹²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹²¹⁵ Unfortunately no marriage-records that could clearly be linked to the dramatist have been discovered yet as the name was a common one in London during the time in question. Thus we do not know what exactly his family situation looked like in these years. But as has been shown, Brome might indeed have been married three times. Cf.: Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 19.

¹²¹⁶ Quoted in: Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet", p. 303.

them *The Court Beggar*, for the latter's company.¹²¹⁷ Brome did not deny that he was somewhat behind with the Salisbury Court Theatre, but only with regard to

twoe Playes In lieu of which hee hath made divers scenes in ould revived playes for them and many prologues and epilogues to such playes of theirs, songs, and one Introduccion at their first playing after the ceasing of the plague all which hee verily beleeveth amounted to asmuch tyme and studdy as twoe ordynarie playes might take vpp in writing which hapened by the accidents and through their owne defaults as aforesaid [...].¹²¹⁸

In addition to this, Brome also admitted that he, in urgent need for money, was planning to sell a new play to Beeston's Phoenix, but only because the Salisbury Court company did not comply with their part of the treaty: "this defendant confeseth it to bee true that the stopage of his weekly meanes and vnkind carriages aforesaid forced this defendant to Contract and bargaine for the said new play with the said William Beeston"¹²¹⁹.

It is not known how the court settled this lawsuit, but at the end of his answer Brome, in consideration of his unjust treatment, requested the court "to bee hence dismissed with good Costs for his vuiust vexacon and charge in that behalf most iniuriously sustayned"¹²²⁰. Brome never worked for the Salisbury Court Theatre again during the few remaining months before all theatres were closed in September 1642.

Though Brome has been neglected by scholarship to a large extent for many years, he was immensely popular during his own lifetime. This is not only attested by Jonson's favourable words or the fact that at least two playhouses courted for his services and offered him rather substantial amounts of money, but also by the fact that he received a fair amount of commendatory verses by his contemporaries. Referring to his popularity in his own age, Haaker has observed that

[t]he age that Brome depicts in his comedies, it is well to remember, spanned the turbulent era of changing values and judgments from the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, through the reigns of James I and Charles I, through the unprecedented beheading of a king, into the first year of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. The shifts in moral, social, spiritual,

¹²¹⁷ For more information on Brome's life please consult the highly illuminating studies of Bentley and Steggle and above all Andrews and Kaufmann who all offer reliable investigations in spite of the scarceness of the material.

¹²¹⁸ Quoted in: Haaker. "The Plague, the Theater and the Poet", p. 293.

¹²¹⁹ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹²²⁰ Quoted in: Ibid., p. 294.

and aesthetic standards are reflected in the Brome canon. Brome's contemporaries also praised him for his craftsmanship in the structure of his plays, for his showmanship, and also for his originality of plot and character [...].¹²²¹

Caroline audiences moreover particularly liked the "realistic glimpses into middle-class and often vulgar lower-class London life"¹²²² that Brome's plays offered. Most of his comedies are set in London, which helped audiences, besides the rather colloquial prose language he used, to better identify with what they were seeing:

plays are closely geared to the happenings of the time and at times, in their rich interlarding of topical references, seem almost to be performing the function of modern newspaper editorials. They are usually firmly located in their London setting.¹²²³

Among Brome's contemporaries to provide him with dedicatory verses or prefatory poems was his close friend Alexander Brome, whose lines for *A Jovial Crew* do not only show why the dramatist was so popular among contemporary audiences, but also that Brome's relationship with his ever-envious former master Jonson was at times somewhat strained:

[...] I love thee for thy Name;
I love thee for thy Merit, and thy Fame:
I love thee for thy neat and harmlesse wit,
Thy Mirth that does so cleane and closely hit.
Thy luck to please so well: who could go faster?
At first to be the Envy of thy Master.¹²²⁴

Though Alexander Brome does not go into detail about Brome's and Jonson's conflict, it seems clear enough that Jonson, as had happened before with other playwrights, did envy his former apprentice for his success while his own relationship to his audiences remained a tense one.

John Ford, or at least a person bearing this name, also complimented Brome by writing a few verses for *The Northern Lass* and calls himself "The Authors very

¹²²¹ Ann Haaker. "Richard Brome". *The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists. A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama*. Eds Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978. 172-191, p. 186.

¹²²² Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 17.

¹²²³ Kaufmann. *Richard Brome. Caroline Playwright*, p. 13.

¹²²⁴ Brome. Commendatory Verses. *A Jovial Crew. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 349.

Friend"¹²²⁵. Ford praises his colleague's play for its plot and language in this highly conventional poem and prophesies that his name will live on to future generations. He also hints at a tension between the Court and the theatre:

Poets and Painters curiously compar'd,
 Give life to Fancy and atchieve Reward
 By immortality of Name: so thrives
 Art's Glory, that All, what it breaths on lives.
 Witness this Northern Piece. The Court affords
 No newer fashion, or for wit, or words.
 The Body of the Plot is drawn so fair,
 That the fould language quickens with fresh air.
 This well limb'd Poem, by no rate, or thought
 Too dearly priz'd, being or sold, or bought.¹²²⁶

A further contemporary dramatist to provide commendatory verses for one of Brome's plays was James Shirley, who addresses his colleague as a "worthy Friend"¹²²⁷ and highlights the knowledge of human nature found in Brome's *A Jovial Crew*. For this not university learning and knowledge found in books, but understanding of "men, and their actions" is necessary. Shirley's poem is equally conventional and allows only for limited conclusions about the exact nature of the relationship between the two playwrights. Just like Ford before him and Alexander Brome after him, Shirley predicts that Brome's name and his characters will outlast time and will live on in memory so that he does not have to dread fire:

This Comedie (ingenious Friend) will raise
 It self a Monument, without a Praise
 Beg'd by the *Stationer*; who, with strength of Purse
 And Pens, takes care to make his *Book* sell worse.
 And I dare calculate thy Play, although
 Not elevated unto *Fifty two*,
 It may grow old as Time, or Wit; and he,
 That dares despise, may after envie thee.
Learning, the File of poesie may be
 Fetch'd from the *Arts* and *Universitie*:
 But he that writes a *Play*, and good, must know,
 Beyond his Books, Men, and their Actions too.
 Copies of Verse, that make the *New Men* sweat,

¹²²⁵ Brome. Commendatory Verses. *The Northern Lass. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. xi.

¹²²⁶ Ibid.

¹²²⁷ Brome. Commendatory Verses. *A Jovial Crew. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 347.

Reach not a *Poem*, nor the *Muse's* heat;
Small *Bavine-Wits*, and *Wood*, may burn a while,
And make more noise, then *Forrests* on a *Pile*,
Whose *Fivers* shrunk, ma' invite a piteous stream,
Not to lament, but to extinguish them.
Thy *Fancie's* *Mettal*; and thy strain's much higher
Proof 'gainst their *Wit*, and what that dreads, the *Fire*.¹²²⁸

Even Samuel Pepys, who so disliked Ford's plays, liked some of the performances of Brome's plays he saw acted on the Restoration stage in the 1660s. About *A Jovial Crew* for example, which he saw three times in 1661, he enthusiastically wrote that it was "the most innocent play that I ever saw"¹²²⁹. *The Northern Lass* however, which was likewise highly popular during the Restoration Period, did not find Pepys' approval and he termed it "but a mean sorry play"¹²³⁰.

Very little is known about Brome after the theatres' closure in 1642, which cut short his fruitful collaboration with Beeston. In 1647 he wrote a long poem for the folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's works in which he states that he knew Fletcher well during the time when Jonson was his master. The last extant record of him himself dates from the year 1652, in which he wrote a dedication for an updated edition of his highly popular play *The Jovial Crew* in which he says about himself "I am old, and cannot cringe"¹²³¹. Furthermore, he writes that "I am poor and proud"¹²³², in doing so highlighting that his proficient writing did not provide him with the financial security needed in old age. Brome died shortly after these lines were written in either late 1652 or early 1653. In 1653, Alexander Brome, his close friend, addresses the readers of *Five New Playes* and states: "the Author bid me tell you, that, now he is dead, he is of Falstaffs minde, and cares not for Honour."¹²³³ The dedication also draws attention to Brome's financial difficulties by stating that

He was his own Executor, and made
Ev'n with the world; and that small All he had –
He without Law or Scribe put out of doubt;

¹²²⁸ Ibid.

¹²²⁹ Quoted in: Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*, p. 192.

¹²³⁰ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹²³¹ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 49.

¹²³² Quoted in: Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 20.

¹²³³ Brome. *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. iv.

Poor he came into the world, and poor went out.
His soul and body higher powers claim,
There's nothing left to play with, but his name;
Which you may freely toss; he all endures.
But as you use his name, so'll others yours.¹²³⁴

It is somewhat ironic that even Brome's name did only partially succeed in outlasting the centuries and that together with many of his rival late-Jacobean and Caroline dramatists he almost sank into oblivion in spite of his great talent to fascinate and captivate his original audiences – quite in contrast to what both Ford and Shirley had predicted in their commendatory verses.

III.3.2 METATHEATRICAL FRAMING DEVICES IN THE PLAYS OF RICHARD BROME

III.3.2.1 *THE CITY WIT*

Brome's early satiric comedy *The City Wit* is very hard to date, but it seems likely that the play was first performed at Salisbury Court by the King's Revels Company in 1629. To this effect Bentley has detailed, that

[t]he unusually large number of characters who are boys or women – eight – and the importance of their roles suggest that the comedy was written for a boy company, since adult companies presumably would not have had enough competent boys for the parts. All these inferences may be reconciled by the hypothesis that *The City Wit* was one of Brome's earlier compositions for the King's Revels company at Salisbury Court, a theatre which they first occupied in 1629.¹²³⁵

However, as parts of the surviving prologue to the play strongly suggest, *The City Wit* was revived during the author's lifetime and most scholars now agree that this revival was performed by Queen Henrietta's Men at Salisbury Court sometime around 1637.

The play's prologue is well-known among scholars studying plays of the 1630s for its unusual mix of Latin and English on the one hand, and its references to both Brome's former master Jonson and the play's performance history on the other hand. In general the prologue, which has come down in the 1653 edition of the play, is somewhat chaotic as far as its structure is concerned. This confusion "perhaps derived from the state of the playhouse manuscript from which it was set

¹²³⁴ Quoted in: Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 20.

¹²³⁵ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 60.

up"¹²³⁶. As it is, the prologue, which is unusually long for Early Modern standards and features a rather wide range of metatheatrical elements, seems to be a merging of actually two independently produced texts – the second of which explicitly comments on the fact that the play is a revival. It is however impossible to determine for sure whether the prologue as printed in the 1653 edition really is a combination of possibly two texts or whether it was actually meant to be that way for the play's revival by Queen Henrietta's Men. Schneider, even suggesting that one might be faced with a total of three prologues "cramped into one text"¹²³⁷, details to this effect that, "[w]hat was actually spoken before an audience is difficult to decide, and the 1653 edition gives no clue, calling the whole text 'The Prologue'." In the paragraphs to come the two parts will be dealt with separately. Whatever the exact circumstances of the prologue's original composition and performance, both parts shed some light on theatrical practices of the day. The first, presumably older and less fertile, part of Brome's prologue reads the following:

Gentlemen, You see I come unarm'd among you, fine Virga aut Ferula, without Rod or Ferular, which are the Pedants weapons. Id eft, that is to say, I come not hither to be an Instructor to any of you, that were Aquilam volare docere, aut Delphinum nature, to teach the Ape, well learned as my selfe. Nor came I to instruct the Comedians. That were for me to be Afinus inter fimias, the fool o'the Company: I dare not undertake them. I am no Paedagogus nor Hypodidafcalus here. I approach not hither ad erudiendum, nec ad Corrigendum. Nay I have given my Schollars leave to play, to get a Vacuum for my selfe to day, to Act a partice here in a Pla; an Actor being wanting that could beare it with port and state enough. A Pedant is not easily imitated. Therefore in person, I for your delight have left my Schoole to tread the Stage. Pray Jove the terror of my brow spoile not your mirth, for you cannot forget the fury of a Tutor, when you have layne under the blazing Comet of his wrath, with quaeo Praeceptor te precor da ----- &c. But, let feare passe, nothing but mirth's intended.
But I had forgot my selfe, A Prologue should be in Rhyme, &c. therefore I will begin agen.

Kind Gentlemen, and men of gentle kinde,
There is in that a figure, as you'll finde,
Because weel take your eares as 'twere in ropes,
Ile nothing speak but figures, strayns & tropes.¹²³⁸

Even though this prologue appears to be incomplete or missing some lines towards the end, the beginning of the second text does not fit to it either and is quite different in both content and tone. Thus in the absence of any other information –

¹²³⁶ Ibid., pp. 60f.

¹²³⁷ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 131.

¹²³⁸ Brome. Prologue. *The City Wit. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, pp. 271f.

both external and internal – the lines quoted above are presumably the prologue, or parts of it, written by Brome for the first performance of *The City Wit* in 1629.

The prologue's highly uncommon linguistic pattern is striking and suggests an intellectual and educated audience, which would be in accordance with the type of playgoers the Salisbury Court theatre predominately tried to attract. Latin was still widely taught at schools and universities and many of the people present might have received a substantial Latin education. However, there is also the chance that only a limited number of the original playgoers understood the Latin words and phrases weaved into the text and that they relied on the English paraphrases to clarify the author's intentions.

The prologue's first part as cited above is moreover particularly interesting for its self-reflexive discussion of the function of prologues. It does not, as is the case in many of Ford's framing texts, address larger theatrical matters but rather the purpose of a single element of dramatic productions. The prologist, coming "unarm'd among you", addresses the audience and declares that "I come not hither to be an Instructor to any of you", in doing so picking out the relationship with the audience as a central theme. As is common for Early Modern prologues, the text highlights the playgoers' sophistication and humbly presents the actors as being inferior to them and at the same time implicitly asks them to lay down their "weapons" as well. The prologist underlines his hybrid position and the fact that he neither really belongs to the actors, nor to the playgoers by elaborating that "Nor came I to instruct the Comedians." This is striking insofar as the person delivering the prologue, as he makes clear in the lines to come, was himself one of the "Comedians" mentioned by him and, having left his "Schoole to tread the Stage", will later reappear as a character in the play. This typically vague position of the prologist – constantly shifting back and forth between the representing and the represented world – is a clever means to secure the audience's attention and participation and to help them make the desired transition into the fictional world of the play; having just been flattered supposedly in a good and attentive mood, because after all "nothing but mirth's intended". The speaker's complicated position is in addition to this a cleverly constructed reminder of the fact that everyone in

Early Modern times was playing a sometimes hard to define role on the large stage that was life itself.

After his lengthy and highly apologetic introduction the actor delivering the prologue all of a sudden stops short and declares in a wonderfully metatheatrical moment: "But I had forgot myself, A Prologue should be in Rhyme, &c. therefore I will begin agen." By thus self-consciously addressing the unusual structure of the prologue, the text counteracts possible animosities and underlines that the author was well aware of what he was doing and well-familiar with current literary standards. The ensuing four lines written in rhyming couplets then correspond to the prologist's aforementioned typical stylistic pattern, but seem incomplete and one can only speculate whether more lines were spoken in the play's original performance. Notwithstanding its abrupt ending, Brome's prologue helps to better understand the dynamic relationship between author or playing companies and their audiences. It shows that Early Modern prologues could take very different forms, while at the same time often serving very similar functions, such as pacifying and flattering the playgoers or humbly apologising for possible imperfections in the ensuing production.

The second prologue to Brome's *The City Wit*, which I assume to have been written for the play's revival some eight years after the original performance, resembles the first prologue insofar as parts of its peculiar linguistic pattern are concerned. Yet, having been written under different circumstances and pursuing slightly altered goals, it differs considerably with regard to content:

Quot quot adeptis Salvete falvetote.
The Schoolemaster that never yet besought yee,
Is now become a suitor, that you'll fit,
And exercise your Judgement with your wit,
On this our Comedy, which in bold Phrase,
The Author sayes has past with good applause
In former times. For it was written, when
It bore just Judgement, and the seal of Ben.
Some in this round may have both seen't, and heard,
Ere I, that beare its title, wore a Beard.
My sute is therefore that you will not looke,
To find more in the Title then the Booke.
My part the Pedant, though it seem a Columne
Is but a Page, compar'd to the whole volumne.

What bulk have I to bear a Scene to passe,
But by your favours multiplying Glasse.
In nova fert Animus, then Ile do my best
To gaine your Plaudite among the rest.
So with the salutation I first brought yee,
Qout quot adeftis, falvete falvetote.¹²³⁹

As with the first prologue, the speaker in these lines is well aware of his hybrid position between being involved in the theatrical production of the play on the one hand and being closely connected to the playgoers to whom he is addressing himself on the other hand. Compared to the first prologue, the use of Latin is much less substantial in these lines, but must nevertheless be seen as a striking feature as it once more suggests a rather educated clientele. This time Brome moreover decided to use rhymed couplets; yet these are sometimes rather clumsily constructed.

However, this prologue for the revival of *The City Wit* is not primarily remarkable with regard to its structure, but for the fact that it self-consciously refers to the play's performance history and "the seal of Ben" it bears. Brome was closely connected to Jonson at the beginning of his career in particular and keeping in mind that *The City Wit* was one of Brome's first works it is likely that Jonson exerted a rather extensive influence on the play's genesis. Following Bentley's line of thought in his short section on *The City Wit* in his *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, it could be argued that "[t]he line about the approval of Ben indicates that the play was written before Jonson died, in August 1637, and it would seem to imply that Jonson was dead at the time of the revival"¹²⁴⁰, thus making late 1637 a likely date for the revival's staging. This prologue to *The City Wit* is the only known literary example in which Brome explicitly acknowledges his debt to Jonson and in doing so he pays tribute to the memory of his former master. If the play was indeed revived shortly after Jonson's death as Bentley has suggested, the mentioning of his name might also have had strategic and commercial motives: Jonson, though certainly controversial, had after all been one of the most prominent playwrights for several decades and playgoers may have felt a sting of positive nostalgia when hearing his

¹²³⁹ Ibid., pp. 272f.

¹²⁴⁰ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 60.

name. Brome's affiliation with Jonson in general "gave his career an unexpected boost"¹²⁴¹ and Brome, knowing the London theatre scene well, would have tried to use this connection to his advantage whenever possible by humbly highlighting his indebtedness to his former master. This is what he does in *The City Wit* when he has the prologist state that the play had previously born Jonson's "just Judgment", which was something not be taken for granted considering the highly critical and envious nature of the author of such works as *Volpone* or *The Alchemist*.

In addition to this, the passage is of interest for the way it self-reflexively comments on the fact that the ensuing production is actually a revival and not a new play. Revivals were common and re-stagings of Early Modern plays in general continued to be popular well beyond the Restoration Period. Yet, not many metatheatrical elements directly remarking on this tradition have survived and what is particularly interesting with regard to *The City Wit* is that "[t]he player reading the prologue says that the performance is a revival on the authority, not of the players, as was usual, but of the author. Such a distinction implies that the original performance was not given by this company."¹²⁴² Though only little is known about what happened behind the scenes of late-Jacobean and Caroline theatre companies, this assumption seems plausible if one takes Brome's close affiliation with the Salisbury Court as well as the play's earlier success into account.

The speaker of the prologue moreover emphasises that he himself was still young when the play was first staged by stating that "Some in this round may have both seen't, and heard, / Ere I, that beare its title, wore a Beard." In doing so, the speaker does not only comment upon his own position, but explicitly acknowledges those members of the audience who were present at one of the play's original performances some eight years earlier.

Apart from that, the prologue features a number of characteristics typical of the genre and flatters those present in the playhouse by appealing to their "Judgement" and their "wit", something already familiar from the plays by Ford discussed in the previous chapters. Many playgoers frequenting the private halls like Salisbury Court during this time showed a pronounced amount of self-assurance and references to

¹²⁴¹ Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 25.

¹²⁴² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 60.

the audiences' wit had become a stock-ingredient of Caroline prologues. The theatres saw themselves faced with a wide range of competition from the other branches of Early Modern London's entertainment industry. Hence highlighting the play's successful performance history and the fact that the play "has past with good applause" in recent times was a clever move to get audiences in a positive and expectant mood.

In this prologue Brome moreover makes sure to have his speaker directly state his wish – namely that the members of the audience should not expect too much for then they can only be disappointed: "My sute us therefore that you will not looke, / To find more in the Title then the Booke." This is a concern found in many metatheatrical elements of the time and underlines that playwrights and playing companies were generally concerned that their plays might not meet their audiences' expectations and tastes. In the prologue to *The City Wit* this strategy is further developed when the prologist, humbly referring to his own part in the ensuing production, declares that it "Is but a Page, compar'd to the whole volume." In doing so he asks his addressees not to condemn the whole play if only a certain part should not meet their expectations – telling modern scholars a lot about how quick audiences could be in their judgments of a play. To prevent this, the speaker solicits them to approach the ensuing production with an open and impartial mind and to grace the company with "your favours". In clarifying that he will appear again as a character in the play, the speaker furthermore sets the desired transition of the audience into the play-world into motion and facilitates the beginning of the play proper.

III.3.2.2 THE WEDDING OF COVENT GARDEN

The next example is Brome's satiric comedy *The Weeding Of Covent Garden, or The Middlesex Justice of the Peace*, first published along with four other plays in 1659 in an octave volume. The exact dates of composition and the play's first performance are unclear, but it seems likely that *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* was first performed in around 1632, when the development of the Covent Garden area in London was subject to intense public controversy. The play was possibly first staged by the King's Men at either the Globe or the Blackfriars and has been

considered one of Brome's best plays in the years to come, predominantly for its striking place realism, its depiction of urban development and the exploitation of the capital's remaining open spaces as well as its satirizing of Puritans. *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* is highly concerned with contemporary matters and picks out the nation's soaring urbanization and its emerging capitalism in the field of real estate as a central theme. Bentley confirms the notion that the King's Men are the most probable candidates for the staging of *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*:

The company which produced Brome's company must have been a rival of Queen Henrietta's Men, who produced Nabbes's competing *Covent Garden*. The London companies competing with that troupe in 1632 were the King's men, the King's Revels, and Prince Charles's (II) company. [...] The King's men were by far the strongest of these competitors. Furthermore Brome is known to have been writing for that troupe for at least three years, and he worked for them again in 1634 when he collaborated with Heywood on *The Late Lancashire Witches* [...]. His work for the King's Revels is not known to have begun until 1635.¹²⁴³

The striking place-realism found in *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*, which is also explicitly self-consciously referred to in the play's framing devices, was characteristic of a small group of plays written in the early 1630s, all of which "feature explicit descriptions of and comments upon particular places on London"¹²⁴⁴. Besides Brome's *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* and *Sparagus Garden*, Shirley's *Hyde Park*, Marmion's *Holland's Leaguer* as well as Nabbes' *Covent Garden* and *Tottenham Court* also belonged to this small group of plays, which were set in a highly realistic London setting and employed well-known city locations:

London functions in all these plays as a microcosm of theatre itself. As a meeting-place and a catalyst for activity and no mere passive reflector of society, the capital city is depicted as being akin to the very theatre-houses in which it is being staged to the view.¹²⁴⁵

This steadily increasing tendency to fictionalize current events and developments which were closely affecting the playgoers' lives shows that Brome and his colleagues were ready to "exploit the popular interest"¹²⁴⁶ in such matters to their own advantage on the one hand and that audiences expected such plays on the other hand. Most notably Jonson had already done this in earlier times to a certain

¹²⁴³ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 91.

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹²⁴⁵ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, pp. 44f.

¹²⁴⁶ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 90.

extent, but "Shirley and Brome are [...] shifting the focus of their London comedies somewhat, in a manner that prefigures the town emphasis of Restoration comedy."¹²⁴⁷ In addition to this, plays like *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* and *Hyde Park* are more explicit in their references to real localities in London than their Jacobean predecessors. They made it easier for the original audiences to identify with what was being staged before them on the one hand and at the same time they enabled playwrights to more accurately depict and satirise developments taking place outside the playhouse on the other hand.

Just like *The City Wit*, *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* has an interesting performance history and has come down with both two prologues and epilogues, which were published alongside each other in the 1659 edition of the play and underline the theatre's ability to adapt to changing social and political realities. It is not known whether all four framing texts were staged or whether the updated versions were just composed for the written publication of the play. In view of the fact that *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* was only published in 1659 however and that the second prologue mentions that the play had been written "Some ten years since", it seems likely that Brome updated his play – or at least the metatheatrical framing texts – for a revival of the play in the early 1640s. No evidence documenting this is extant, but it is again Bentley who underlines this assumption:

[t]he play was revived in 1641 or 1642 [...], presumably by the original company [...]. This revival had to occur, of course, before the closing of the theatres in September 1642, and probably even 1641 would have been close enough to the play's tenth anniversary to allow the statement of age.¹²⁴⁸

The play's original prologue, which at 30 lines is rather long, reads the following:

HE that could never boast, nor seek the way,
To prepare friends to magnifie his Play,
Nor raile at's Auditory for uniust.
If they not lik't it, nor was so mistrust-
Ful ever in himself, that he besought
Preapprobation though they lik't it not.
Nor ever had the luck to have his name
Clap't up above this merit. Nor the shame
To be cried down below it. He this night

¹²⁴⁷ Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 44.

¹²⁴⁸ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, pp. 91f.

Your faire and free Attention does invite.
Only he prays no prejudice be brought
By any that before-hand wish it nought.
And that ye all be pleas'd to heare and see,
With Candor suiting his Integritie.
That for the Writer. Something we must say,
Now in defence of us, and of the Play.
We shall present no Scandal or abuse,
To vertue or to honour. Nor traduce
Person of worth. Nor point at the disgrace
Of any one residing in the Place,
On which our Scene is laid, nor any Action shew,
Of thing has there been done, for ought we know.
Though it be probable that such have been.
But if some vicious persons be brought in,
As no new Buildings, nor the strongest hold
Can keep out Rats and Vermine bad and bold,
Let not the fight of such be ill endur'd;
All sores are seen and search't before th' are cur'd.
As Ruffian, Bawd, and the licentious crew,
Too apt to pester Scituations new.¹²⁴⁹

This verse prologue does not only give attention to the relationship between the writer and his audiences, but more generally to the play's content as such. The first 15 lines are concerned with how Brome would like those present in the playhouse to approach his ensuing production. The playwright, as the prologist declares, "Your faire and free Attention does invite" and more importantly "he prays that no prejudice be brought". Only limited evidence detailing how late-Jacobean and Caroline playgoers felt about individual dramatic productions during the time in question is extant, but they at times were hard to please and the playing companies were constantly struggling to counteract bad press and prejudices. Thus Brome in this prologue to *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* explicitly asks his customers to be fair and to lay aside possible prejudgments and to approach the play open-mindedly. If they do this, the prologist assures them, they will "all be pleas'd". However, in the second half of the prologue it is also made clear that there are more qualifications to be met. The playgoers are informed that in the ensuing production

We shall present no Scandal or abuse,

¹²⁴⁹ Brome. Prologue. *The Weeding of Covent Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 2, pp. iiif.

To vertue or to honour. Nor traduce
Person of worth. Nor point at the disgrace
Of any one residing in the Place,
On which our Scene is laid, nor any Action shew,
Of thing has there been done, for ought we know.

By doing this, Brome is pursuing two goals: First he makes clear that those members of the audience who have primarily come to the playhouse to watch people being publically ridiculed or to listen to rude language will be disappointed. Gossip ran high in the last decade before the Civil Wars and many playgoers enjoyed it when the authorities or people of influence were mocked and presented in a bad light during performances. By referring to this in the prologue, Brome does not only prove that some playgoers anticipated to be shown such things, but he also thwarts these expectations from the very beginning. It shows that playwrights and playing companies did not meet all demands of their paying customers and that there were more or less closely defined boundaries within which they attended to their audiences' expectations. This leads to the second goal Brome is trying to pursue in these lines: even though Early Modern London's entertainment sector was strongly contested, the theatres had to be careful not to go too far when trying to satisfy their customers' demands. Ever since the erection and institutionalisation of the first permanent playhouses in the nation's capital in the 1570s, it was by law forbidden to represent living people on stage and heavy fines and punishments awaited those who broke this rule. All productions were carefully controlled and if necessary censored by the Master of the Revels and neither playwrights nor playing companies could afford to risk costly closures or other penalties. Thus there is only a small number of plays set in contemporary London, as playwrights were trying to minimize the potential for trouble and not to transgress borders too obviously. A large amount of the plays written in the entire Early Modern Period found ways to comment on contemporary issues and to mock people that were still alive, but this was always done implicitly and was not detected by everyone. Setting plays directly in contemporary London, as Brome has done in *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*, always involved increased dangers to anger those in power. Thus Brome carefully explains in the prologue that any resemblances to living people residing in the Covent Garden area have not been intended and would be purely coincidental. This

self-reflexive element was not only meant to thwart errant expectations on the original audiences' side, but to pacify certain people of influence. If the prologue was included in the manuscript handed in to the Master of the Revels as well, it would also have been a clever metatheatrical means to counteract possible irritation or even censorship.

The second, considerably shorter, prologue to *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*, refers "to the sorry state of Covent Garden 'ten years since' and lauds the playwright that 'so happily his Pen / Foretold its faire improvement'. Thus the second framing text replaces the first and updates the play."¹²⁵⁰ The complete prologue reads the following:

'Tis not amisse ere we begin our Play,
T'intreat you, that you take the same surveigh
Into your fancie, as our Poet took,
Of Covent-Garden, when he wrote his book.
Some ten years since, when it was grown with weeds,
Not set, as now it is, with Noble Seeds.
Which make the Garden glorious. And much
Our Poet craves and hopes you will not grutch
It him, that since so happily his Pen
Foretold its faire emprovement, and that men
Of worth and honour should renown the place.
The Play may still retain its former grace.¹²⁵¹

Though one cannot be sure whether these lines were ever spoken in front of a theatre-audience, they illustrate that Early Modern playwrights were quick to adapt their creations to the changing realities outside the world of the play and above all that especially metatheatrical and self-reflexive devices were subject to constant change and had to keep up with the time in particular. To this effect Schneider has pointed out that "[w]hat is being argued here is how ephemeral the prologue and epilogue sometimes are, and how soon what seems to be new and up to the minute quickly becomes outdated."¹²⁵² Whereas the Covent Garden area was still "grown with weeds" when the play was first staged in the 1630s, it had undergone significant changes at the time of the play's revival and had developed into a

¹²⁵⁰ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 146.

¹²⁵¹ Brome. Prologue. *The Weeding of Covent Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 2, p. iv.

¹²⁵² Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 146.

fashionable and "glorious" part of London. Due to this significant change of external realities, Brome had no choice but to adapt the play's prologue and both apologetically and proudly at the same time asks the audience not to "grutch / It him" that he foresaw this very development ten years earlier. Since times have changed, the prologist directly appeals to the playgoers' imagination and asks them to "take the same surveigh / Into your fancie" as Brome himself took ten years earlier in order to help the play achieve "its former grace".

The two extant epilogues to *The Weeding Of Covent Garden* likewise self-consciously address the changes London had undergone in the timespan between the two performances and the effect this has on the play as such. The first epilogue, written for the play's original performance in presumably 1632, is almost completely identical with the epilogue to Brome's *The Lovesick Court*, which was one of the very few plays by him to be staged at the Red Bull theatre in the 1630s. Since the epilogue is highly conventional and fulfils many requirements of the genre, it is not surprising that either the company or Brome himself decided to use it again at another venue:

Tis not the Poets Art, nor all that we
 By life of Action can present on't, ye
 Can or ought make us presume a Play
 Is good, 'tis you approve't. Which that you may
 It cannot mosbecome us, since our gaines
 Come by your favour, more then all our paines.
 Thus to submit us unto your commands,
 And humbly ask the favour at your hands.¹²⁵³

In contrast to the play's two prologues, this epilogue does not feature any allusions to contemporary events and is only concerned with the playgoers' reception of the preceding performance. As Steggle has detailed regarding the effectiveness of this epilogue, "[i]n the course of an elegant single sentence, it is typically businesslike and uncompromising in putting the audience's experience, not the actors', or even the poet's, at the heart of a definition of good drama."¹²⁵⁴ In contrast to the original prologue, Brome here closely follows existing conventions and commits himself

¹²⁵³ Brome. Epilogue. *The Weeding of Covent Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 2, p. 95.

¹²⁵⁴ Steggle. *Richard Brome. Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage*, p. 195.

fully to pleasing his audiences. By putting his playgoers' judgement and satisfaction above everything else, he flatters them as was customary around that time and tries his best to ensure for their coming back and to make their transition from the fictive London of the play into the real London awaiting them outside the playhouse a pleasant and enjoyable one. This short but nonetheless highly effective manipulation finds its apogee in the epilogist's likewise conventional and humble request for applause, which gives the audience a feeling of control and authority by pretending to offer them a choice to show "favour at your hands" or not.

The epilogue's updated version for the revival of *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*, once more underlining the theatres' ability to adapt to new circumstances, is considerably shorter:

Tis done. And now that Poets can divine,
Observe with what Nobility doth shine
Faire Covent-Garden. And as that improves,
May we finde like Improvement in your Loves.¹²⁵⁵

By initiating the audience's journey from the representing world back into the represented world by a simple yet effective "Tis done", the playgoers are restored to the here and "now". In spite of its shortness, this updated epilogue, in contrast to the original version, once more picks out the advancement of the Covent Garden area as a central theme and therefore abandons most of its predecessor's strategies of audience manipulation and flattery. The short passage is self-consciously concerned with the role of the poet in the foregoing production and with Brome's ability to foresee the development that Covent Garden has undergone in the past ten years. On the other hand it establishes a connection between the possible advancement of "Faire Covent Garden", now shining with nobility, and the playgoers themselves, who, as it is hoped, will display a similar improvement in their "loves" – arguably a phrase that could both be applied to human relations in general and more self-reflexively to the playgoers' relationship to the King's Men in particular, who increasingly depend on their customers' goodwill in the last months leading up to September 1642.

¹²⁵⁵ Brome. Epilogue. *The Weeding of Covent Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 2, p. 95.

III.3.2.3 THE SPARAGUS GARDEN

Brome's comedy *The Sparagus Garden* belongs to the same group of topographical plays being set in London and making use of particular places within the city as Brome's earlier *The Weeding Of Covent Garden*. *The Sparagus Garden* was first performed by the King's Revels Company at the private Salisbury Court in 1635 and proved to be a huge success. At a claimed 1000 pounds, it earned the company an unusually great sum of money. As Bentley has detailed in his passage on the play, "*The Sparagus Garden* is basically a comedy of intrigue, like others of Brome's plays, but it was probably the farcical satire which, along with the garden scenes, made the play popular."¹²⁵⁶ The play is however less topographically intense, which results from the fact that it does not, in contrast to *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, deal with a pressing and controversially contested current issue, but makes do with offering a few minor snapshots of London life in the 1630s. There are "several references to the new sedan chairs and one brief discussion of *The Knight of the burning Pestle* [...], which was probably appearing at the Phoenix about this time"¹²⁵⁷, proving that Brome was anxious to incorporate recent developments from both inside and outside the playhouse into his dramatic achievements. The asparagus garden alluded to in the play's title was located in Lambeth Marsh near Waterloo and would have been familiar to most of the playgoers present at the Salisbury Court theatre in 1635 as a place of recreation for the more fashionable members of Caroline society.

Both the prologue and the epilogue to *The Sparagus Garden* are interesting for their highly apologetic and modest tone, which stand in rather stark contrast to the self-confidence and determination exhibited by Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden*:

HE, that his wonted modesty retaynes,
 And never set a price upon his Braines
 Above your Judgments: nor did ever strive
 By Arrogance or Ambition to atchieve,
 More prayse unto himself, or more applause
 Unto his Scenes, then such, as know the Lawes
 Of Comedy do give; He only those

¹²⁵⁶ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 88.

¹²⁵⁷ Ibid.

Now prayes may scan his Verse, and weigh his Prose:
Yet thus far he thinks meet to let you know
Before you see't, the *Subject* is so low,
That to expect high Language, or much Cost,
Were a sure way, now, to make all be lost.
Pray looke for none: He'le promise such hereafter,
To take your graver judgments, now your laughter
Is all he aymes to moove. I had more to say.
The Title, too, may prejudice the Play.
It sayes the *Sparagus Garden*; if you looke
To feast on that, the Title spoiles the Booke.
We have yet a tast of it, which he doth lay
I'th midst o'th journey, like a Bait by th' way:
Now see with Candor: As our Poet's free,
Pray let be so your *Ingenuity*.¹²⁵⁸

At the heart of the prologue lies the author's apology "for the slight use made of the locality to which his title refers"¹²⁵⁹ and the garden in fact only plays a subordinate role. As Richard Perkinson has summarised it in his book *Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth Century*, "[t]opographical names of plays in some cases [...] may be advertisements; in others, an attempt to call attention to the technical use made of a locality, like a park as a place of intrigue."¹²⁶⁰ It is likely that Brome similarly employed the name of a well-known London locality to attract potential customers, but then saw himself faced with the problem that his playgoers might be disappointed or even turn angry once they realized that their expectations would not be met. In consequence he decided to directly address them from the non-representational platea and to confess that actually "The Title [...] may prejudice the Play". He had already employed a similar strategy in the prologue to *The City Wit* in which he asks the audience not to expect too much from the play's title, lest they not be disappointed. By pointing out this discrepancy to the audience, Brome "reveals his own consciousness of the structural weakness"¹²⁶¹ of *The Sparagus Garden* on the one hand, and the whole group of plays using place-realism on the other hand. "Why should Brome", Miles asks,

¹²⁵⁸ Brome. Prologue. *The Sparagus Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 115.

¹²⁵⁹ Richard H. Perkinson. "Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth-Century". *English Literary History*. 4:3 (1936): 270-290, p. 273.

¹²⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹²⁶¹ Miles. "Place-Realism in a Group of Caroline Plays", p. 435.

have been so concerned about the public's reaction to the slight bearing of the place in the title upon the play? Certainly his solicitude would not have been voiced unless he or the company thought it necessary. Very probably Brome's warning throws light upon the reception accorded the earlier plays of the group. They might well have aroused objections that the title misrepresented the play. Brome accordingly would find it desirable to forestall similar criticism of the *Sparagus Garden*.¹²⁶²

Following Miles' line of thought, it could be argued that the companies, already feeling a steady decline in attendance figures, had increasing difficulties in standing their ground against the wide range of competitors. Hence they had to find new ways to attract paying customers and using the name of a fashionable city locale would have been a clever move to appeal to patriotic and loyal Londoners. Miles' hypothesis that either Brome or the King's Revels in the wake of recent developments found it necessary to include the respective passage into the framing text can be underlined by the fact that this part of the prologue seems somewhat out of place when seen in relation to the prologue's beginning. As it differs quite considerable both in tone and content, it may have been rather hastily added to an already finished prologue as an afterthought. Read this way, the rather clumsily transition from the prologue's first part, in which the prologist makes a pause and declares "I had more to say", to the second one might be explained and shows that not only dramatic plays in general, but also their metatheatrical devices at times needed to be adjusted to changing external realities rather hastily and were of a very ephemeral nature.

The prologue's first half is concerned with different matters altogether and instead of appeasing audiences not to expect too much from the title, elaborately states the wish of a most humble and modest author to please and amuse those having paid to see his comedy. For Brome it is essential in these lines to illustrate that the playgoers' judgement is most important to him and that he would never try to put himself above them. In addition to this he would never, in contrast to some of his colleagues,

[...] ever strive
By Arrogance or Ambition to atchieve,
More prayse unto himself, or more applause
Unto his Scenes, then such, as know the Lawes

¹²⁶² Ibid.

Of Comedy do give [...]

Since he has not tried to achieve more than what commonly defines a comedy, he politely asks his audience not to expect more than that from the ensuing production either. Following this plea, he then humbly presents his play in a very bad light and states that he would like to inform the playgoers before the production starts that both subject and language of the following play are low. He puts emphasis on the fact that all he cares about is actually his audience's joy: "now your laughter / Is all he aymes to moove." Presenting both himself and his play in such a bad light was a clever means to counteract potential criticism and to guide the playgoers' expectations into the desired direction. It would have pleased Brome's original audiences, as references to the playgoers' superior taste and judgment always made good sport to put them in an attentive and well-disposed mood.

The epilogue, repeating and intensifying the prologue's central concern, runs as follows:

AT first we made no boast, and still we feare,
We have not answer's expectation here,
Yet give us leave to hope, as hope to live,
That you will grace, as well as Justice give.
We do not dare your Judgements now: for we
Know lookers on more then the Gamsters see;
And what ere Poets write, we Act, or say,
Tis only in your hands to Crowne a Play.¹²⁶³

This highly apologetic and overmodest epilogue voices the playwright's and company's worry that the audience may have expected something different from the play – in spite of the fact that the prologist had already humbly told them not to expect too much. It presents the epilogist and his fellow actors as the playgoers' modest servants and asks them to exercise careful justice and to grace them with their well-respected judgment and to "give us leave to hope, as hope to live". Though these pleas were customary and a popular means to flatter audiences during this time and should therefore not be overestimated, they tell a few interesting things about the relationship between Caroline audiences and those involved in the production of theatrical plays as well as about the fact that an

¹²⁶³ Brome. Epilogue. *The Sparagus Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 115.

audience's approval could never be taken for granted and therefore constantly had to be renegotiated. Brome aims to achieve this in the epilogue to *The Sparagus Garden* by granting his playgoers the ultimate power of judgment:

[...] what ere Poets write, we Act, or say,
Tis only in your hands to Crowne a Play.

The final authority and influence literally lies in the hands of the paying customers, who are superiorly positioned above both poet and actors. By presenting the balance of power in a playhouse like this, Brome values his audiences' satisfaction above everything else like he had already done in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. However, through careful and cleverly constructed means of manipulation, he tries not to leave anything to chance and aims to influence the playgoers in such a way that they will feel inclined to render a positive judgement since they are, after all, depicted as highly considerate and fair-minded human beings on whose verdict others depend.

These two self-reflexive examples from *The Sparagus Garden* have illustrated how dynamic the interaction between Caroline audiences and the stage was and how wonderfully exploitable certain metatheatrical devices were when playgoers, playwrights and actors were so familiar with each other as was the case in Early Modern playhouses. In these metatheatrical games of mutual interdependence and subjection, keywords such as "expectation", "justice" or "judgement" were stock expressions and helped playwrights like Brome to acknowledge their customers' authority and influence while at the same time cautiously manipulating them for his own purposes.

III.3.2.4 A MAD COUPLE WELL MATCHED

The next examples, which are taken from Brome's *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, illustrate that Brome was also capable of addressing his audiences more roughly and that he did not always flatter them in the traditional ways. *A Mad Couple Well Matched* was, in contrast to the other plays discussed so far, first performed by Beeston's Boys at the Phoenix. It is hard to date the play with certainty, as one cannot be sure whether it was written while Brome was still bound

by contract to the Salisbury Court or whether it was written after his contract had already ended.

The prologue self-consciously discusses "the dramatist's concern [...] with the definition of a framing text"¹²⁶⁴, as Schneider has put it:

HEre you're all met, and looke for a set speech,
Put into Rhyme, to court you, and beseech
Your Worships, but to heare and like the Play,
But I, I vow, have no such part to say.
I'm sent a woing to you, but how to do't,
I han't the skill; tis true I've a new Suite,
And Ribbons fashionable, yclipt Fancies,
But for the Compliments, the Trips, and Dances,
Our Poet can't abide um, and he sweares,
They're all but cheats; and sugred words but jeeres.
Hee's hearkening there: and if I go about
To make a Speech, he vows, he'le put me out.
Nor dare I write t'you: therefore in this condition,
Ile turne my courtship into admonition.
When a good thing is profer'd, don't be nice,
Our Poet vows, you shan't be profer'd twice.¹²⁶⁵

These lines show that Brome, in the form of the prologist, could also address the original audiences quite differently and that Early Modern framing texts did not always flatter and court the audiences. The passage is highly metatheatrical insofar as it explicitly comments on the audience's demand for a particular form of prologue ("HE're you are all met, and looke for a set speech / Put into Rhyme, to court you") which shows that the audience "apparently looks forward not to experimentation so much as familiarity in a prologue."¹²⁶⁶ Both the prologue and the epilogue of *A Mad Couple Well Matched* are exactly this however, namely an experiment in audience address. Though the prologist is well aware that under normal circumstances it would be his job to woo and court the people around him, he declares that he "han't the skill", as the poet has fitted him weith "a new Suite" which does not allow him to do that. The playgoers are not offered the kind of speech they are used to and expect, but are bluntly told that the compliments they

¹²⁶⁴ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 25.

¹²⁶⁵ Brome. Prologue. *A Mad Couple Well Matched. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. 1.

¹²⁶⁶ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 24.

like so much are "all but cheats". In addition to this, as the prologist speaking on behalf of the poet informs his listeners, he will turn his usual "courtship into admonition" and declares that they will not be offered "a good thing" twice.

However, Brome's original audience at the Phoenix were most likely amused by this new kind of address and understood that they were in fact not supposed to take the prologist's speech at face value. Most of them would have sensed the irony and "[i]n a deft inversion of the idea of courting the audience, the Prologist nevertheless delivers a speech in rhyming couplets, in 16 lines, which appears to be the sort of address that fulfils the spectators' desire."¹²⁶⁷

The epilogue to *A Mad Couple Well Matched* takes Brome's experiment to the next level and "acknowledges the desire for a 'set' speech, at the same time questioning and undermining that same desire by apparently refusing to 'court' the audience."¹²⁶⁸ The audience, after the prologue now already somewhat familiar with this new kind of direct address, are even more bluntly spoken to in the epilogue as Brome here further implements his plan outlined in the prologue:

Well! had you Mirth enough? much good may't doe you,
If not, 'tis more then I did promise to you.
'Tis your own fault, for it is you, not wee
Make a Play good or bad; and if this be
Not answerable to your expectation
Yee are the free-borne People of this Nation,
And have the power to censure Worth and Wit,
But wee must suffer for what you commit.
Yet wee're resolv'd to beare your gentle Hands,
And if you will tie us in any Bands,
Let us be bound to serve you, and that's thus,
To tell you truth, as long as you serve us.¹²⁶⁹

Again the passage is conventional as far as its form is concerned, but it follows a new approach with regard to content and style. Members of the audience who frequented the three remaining public playhouses – often favouring rougher plays over the usually more witty and refined renderings at the private halls – were already more familiar to hearing such speeches in a playhouse and were thus less

¹²⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 24f.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹²⁶⁹ Brome. Epilogue. *A Mad Couple Well Matched. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. 99.

shocked to be spoken to like this. Though the speech is somewhat ironic in character, it directly addresses several serious issues which at times gave Early Modern theatre companies a hard time and might have irritated the paying customers surrounding the stage – such as the authority audiences held over poets and actors alike which is critically depicted here. Contemporary data illustrating how exactly the framing devices of Brome's *A Mad Couple Well Matched* were received by their original addressees is lacking. It seems likely that – all amusement aside – some members of the audience left the Phoenix rather grudgingly and felt that Brome had overstepped his bounds in addressing the brittle relationship between playgoers and the stage like when he states that "wee must suffer for what you commit" or "Let us be bound to serve you, and that's thus, / To tell you truth, as long as you serve us." Keeping the rather low social standing of Early Modern actors in mind, it is a brave move to dismiss an audience after an performance by telling them that they are servants to the company of players who, after all, receive their salary directly from them and to declare that "it is you, not wee / Make a Play good or bad".

Leaving aside that the epilogist delivering Brome's thoughts might be taking it a bit too far, one nonetheless needs to recognize that the view expressed here mirrors reality. It was not always easy for Early Modern playing companies to please their audiences' shifting and often highly varying tastes, which were influenced by a vast number of external factors. Though metatheatrical devices often reminded playgoers of the crucial role they themselves played in dramatic productions, it is known that playgoers were always rather quick in judging a play, but were considerably slower in speaking words of praise. In addition to this, they did not exercise the same amount of critical self-reflexion than the poets and actors and did only seldom realize that it might indeed have been their "own fault" and not the actors', as Brome has put, that a particular play did not meet their sometimes unrealistic or disproportionate expectations. Brome's texts framing *A Mad Couple Well Matched* are good examples illustrating that even though Early Modern dramatists were well aware of their dependency on their audiences, they did not always address them apologetically or defensively and – at least once – found the courage to address certain issues making their working-life difficult more explicitly.

In doing so, Brome reminds his audience that with "power to censure Worth and Wit" also comes a certain amount responsibility and in consequence asks them to exercise this power thoughtfully.

III.3.2.5 THE ANTIPODES

The Antipodes has widely been regarded as Brome's most metatheatrical play, not least because of its striking inset-play, which takes both the character and the members of the audience on a journey to yet another fictional world. The play was first performed by the Queen's Men at the Salisbury Court theatre in 1638 and was written while Brome was still bound by contract to that house:

The Antipodes in particular bears witness not only to the terms of the contract but to factors which caused it to be broken. It will be recalled that Brome agreed to write plays exclusively for the Salisbury Court theatre, and that he was accused of violating his agreement by writing one or two plays for that theatre before the expiration of the contract. [...] *The Antipodes* is a play which Brome had indented for the King and Queen's Young Company under the governorship of William Beeston at the Cockpit but which the Salisbury Court managers had forced him to give them according to the stipulations of his contract.¹²⁷⁰

These developments prompted Brome to add a signed and highly self-reflexive note to the play when it was first published in 1640. This note addresses the reader and states the following:

Courteous Reader, You shal find in this Booke more then was presented upon the Stage, and left out of the Presentation, for Superfluous length (as some of the Players pretended) I thoght it good al should be inserted according to the allowed Original; and as 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; and so I leave it to thy perusal, as it was generally applauded, and well acted at Salisbury Court. Farewell, Ri. Brome.¹²⁷¹

The note proves Brome's close affiliation with Beeston and his Phoenix playhouse. It moreover underlines that the remaining playhouses had differing expectations towards their poets and did not hesitate to alter or shorten plays given to them – much to the distress of the author in this case. Brome's mentioning of the more restrictive nature of the management of the Salisbury Court theatre is a nice piece

¹²⁷⁰ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, pp. 56f.

¹²⁷¹ Brome. A Note to the Readers. *The Antipodes*. *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 339.

of contemporary data from someone inside the theatre and helps modern theatre-historians to recognize the differences between the individual venues.

While this note addressing Brome's readership was only later added to the written publication of the play, there are also elements in *The Antipodes* which metatheatrically address the audience watching the play's actual performance, all of which have attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention over the years. The lengthy verse prologue, divided into three stanzas, employs conventional methods to court for the playgoers' benevolence. In spite of its great length, it does – especially in contrast to the much more fertile inset play and epilogue – add only little to the analysis and thus suffice it to say that in the prologue Brome primarily condemns the new approach to drama adopted by some of his rival playwrights. In particular he criticises that the overly exuberant orchestration and high language of these plays cannot conceal their structural weaknesses and thus rank behind the accomplishments of

The Poets late sublimed from our Age,
Who best could understand, and best devise
Workes, that must ever live upon the Stage [...] ¹²⁷²

The play's epilogue, which connects the conventional appeals found in Early Modern epilogues with the play's passing fiction, reads the following:

Doc. WHether my cure be perfect yet or no,
It lies not in my doctor-ship to know.
Your approbation may more raise the man,
Then all the Colledge of physitians can;
And more health from your faire hands may be wonne,
Then by the stroakings of the seventh sonne.
Per. And from our Travailes in th' Antipodes,
We are not yet arriv'd from off the Seas:
But on the waves of desprate feares we roame
Untill your gentler hands doe waft us home. ¹²⁷³

Instead of the usual single epilogist found in most Early Modern plays, the epilogue to *The Antipodes* features two speakers, namely Doctor Hughball and Peregrine. The audience is thus addressed by two characters who themselves have just only begun to leave the play's fictional world and who, by stretching out into the

¹²⁷² Brome. Prologue. *The Antipodes. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 230.

¹²⁷³ Brome. Epilogue. *The Antipodes. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 339.

audience, help those present in the playhouse to make the passage back into the real world. Neither the doctor nor Peregrine have however really left the play's fiction yet and address their customers rather as dramatic characters than as actors. In most epilogues analysed in this thesis, this is not the case as the epilogist is more easily discernable as an actor just having left behind his original role in the play. This interesting move enables Brome and the company of players to better connect their wish for applause and goodwill with the play's slowly but surely vanishing fiction.

Doctor Hughball, presented as a capable physician in the play, tells the audience that not even his medical skills will suffice to guarantee the cure's permanent effects and that it rather requires the talented audience's help to ensure long-lasting health. After all, as he coaxingly declares, the playgoers' "faire hands" may achieve more "Then all the Colledge of physitians can". The ambiguity inherent in these lines on the one hand refers to the actual necessity in medical operations to use skilled hands to cure illnesses and on the other hand more metaphorically asks for the audience's applause, which is needed to ensure the preceding play's health and prosperity. The doctor, as was not unusual for Brome's plays, acknowledges the audience's superiority over all those involved in the production of the play and, by appealing to their vanity, reminds them of their responsibility for the play's survival:

While Hughball's comment is a blatant request for applause – the approval that translates into the economic approval of repeat business – it also insets on the theater audience's involvement in the action of the play. The audience's applause, not Hughball's art, determines the success of his "cure."¹²⁷⁴

After the doctor has finished his request, Peregrine, well-known to the audience for his constant relocations between the different worlds presented in the play, reminds the playgoers in a highly metaphorical speech that the company's journey is still not over and that they "are not yet arriv'd from off the Seas" and will keep drifting about on the oceans until the playgoers' "gentler hands doe waft us home." By explicitly referring to the inset play's setting and by maintaining the play's figurative language from the field of travel, Peregrine intensifies the audience's feeling of having just been on at least one, if not two, journeys themselves and that

¹²⁷⁴ Low and Myhill. Introduction. *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama*, p. 6.

it requires their active help to ensure the well-being and safe return of all their fellow travellers.

Brome's epilogue to *The Antipodes* is another outstanding moment of intense and pure metatheatricality which clearly shows that

[t]heater professionals active between the early 1580s and 1642 knew the extent to which their audiences controlled them economically and, as a result, aesthetically. Their epilogues at the end of plays (particularly in the seventeenth century) tend to stress the power of the audience and the actors' vulnerability to their judgment [...].¹²⁷⁵

III.3.2.6 THE COURT BEGGAR

Brome's late satire *The Court Beggar* was, though the erroneous and impossible title page states something different¹²⁷⁶, first performed by Beeston's Boys at the Phoenix theatre in around 1639 / 1640 and has been recognized for using the theatre "to register a sharp political protest through detailed personal satire of specific public figures"¹²⁷⁷. The play gives attention to several pressing contemporary issues bothering Early Modern London in the final years leading up to the Civil Wars, such as royal favouritism and monopolism. *The Court Beggar* is "political satire in which the whole ethic of unmerited and irresponsible preferment is attacked"¹²⁷⁸ – issues deeply concerning a lot of Brome's contemporaries. Butler points out that *The Court Beggar* "brought the wrath of the king crashing down onto the company and virtually wrecked the career of its manager, William Beeston" and goes on to emphasise that

the court's furious reaction shows that it recognized how dangerous the play was; *The Court Beggar* is a full-blooded and uncompromising demonstration of the bankruptcy of the personal rule and an attack on all that the court, by 1640, had come to represent.¹²⁷⁹

The play's prologue does not only help to securely date the play in either 1639 or 1640, but assures the audience that in the play

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁷⁶ For a detailed discussion of the impossibilities stated on the play's original title page please consult: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 62. Bentley, using both internal and external evidence, not only elaborately details that the play must indeed have been first performed in around 1640 but also that The King's Men are most unlikely to have staged it.

¹²⁷⁷ Quoted in: Haaker. "Richard Brome", p. 182.

¹²⁷⁸ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹²⁷⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 220.

WE've cause to fear yours, or the Poets frowne
 For of late day's (he know's not (how) y'are grown,
 Deeply in love with a new strayne of wit
 Which he condemns, at least disliketh it,
 And solemnly protests you are to blame
 If at his hands you doe expect the same;
 Hee'l tread his usuall way, no gaudy Sceane
 Shall give instructions, what his plot doth meane;
 No handsome Love-toy shall your time beguile
 Forcing your pittie to a sigh or smile [...] ¹²⁸⁰

By addressing his audience like this, Brome, like several other playwrights writing at the same time, condemns the theatre's recent development and in very plain language tells the playgoers not to expect something similar from the ensuing production. Professional playwrights like Brome and Shirley leagued "in their comic attacks against pretentiousness, hypocrisy, and affectation" ¹²⁸¹ and in doing so not only critically addressed theatrical matters, but also the social and political changes affecting everyday life in the nation's capital during these precarious years.

The Court Beggar's epilogue consists of two very distinct parts, the first of which is a conversation between five characters, namely Lady Strangelove, Sir Ferdinand, Mr. Cit-Wit, the chambermaid Philomel and a Boy. Two of the speakers are thus female and three are male. The 20 verse-lines read the following:

Strang. LAdyes, your suffrages I chiefly crave
 For th'humble Poet. Tis in you to save
 Him, from the rigorous censure of the rest,
 May you give grace as y'are with Beauty blest.
 True: Hee's no dandling on a Courtly lap,
 Yet may obtaine a smile, if not a clap.

Ferd. I'm at the Cavaliers. Heroick spirits,
 That know both to reward, and atchieve merits,
 Do, like the Sun-beames, virtuously dispense
 Upon the lowest growths their influence,
 As well as on the lofty: our Poet so
 By you Phebean favours hopes to grow.

Cit-w. And now you generous spirits of the City
 That are no lesse in money then braine wity,
 My selfe, my Bride, and pretty Bride-boy too,
 Our Poet for a Boun preferres to you.

¹²⁸⁰ Brome. Prologue. *The Court Beggar. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. 184.

¹²⁸¹ Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 32.

Phil. And though you tast of no such Bride-ale Cup,
 He hopes y' allow the Match to be clapt up.

Boy. And, if this Play be naught (yes so he said)
 That I should gi' yee my Mother for a Mayd.¹²⁸²

This cleverly constructed and highly manipulative epilogue shows that both Early Modern poets and companies of players were well aware of their playgoers' importance for their own survival. Addressing several distinct groups individually must be seen as a very clever move to appeal to the audience's vanity. This effect is yet intensified if one keeps in mind that the characters speaking these lines likewise represent different layers of society in both the play and its epilogue and thus give the various groups present at the playhouse the feeling of being talked to by one of their own kind. The female playgoers are praised for their "Beauty", the Cavaliers and courtiers for their "Heroick spirits" and the citizens for their generosity and wit. Each of these groups is in turn presented as being the only one able to fully appreciate the poet's efforts and are given the feeling that only their opinion matters. This part of the epilogue to *The Court Beggar* exemplifies that Caroline audiences were not a homogeneous group, but that they came from very different parts of society and that they were equally important for a company's financial health. And Brome's epilogue in particular "also reflects the increasing importance of upper-class women as arbiters of taste in the Caroline audiences, largely as a result of the influence of Queen Henrietta Maria and her circle".¹²⁸³ Lady Strangelove's as well as Philomel's appeals are based on the already familiar strategy of flattery and express the "view (or hope) that women spectators are more easily pleased than the men and will help to win the men's approval of the play"¹²⁸⁴ – a formula found in several framing texts of the theaters' last years. Schneider confirms this diagnosis and likewise states that the two passages spoken by female characters give "a central role to women in the audience as pivotal in the

¹²⁸² Brome. Epilogue. *The Court Beggar. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, p. 270.

¹²⁸³ Richard Levin. "Women in the Renaissance Theatre Audience". *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 40 (1989): 165-174, p. 169.

¹²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

success of the playwright's work"¹²⁸⁵ when for example Lady Strangelove declares that "Tis in you to save / Him, from the rigorous censure of the rest".

The epilogue's lengthy second part, written in prose and spoken by Swaymint, self-reflexively addresses a wide range of contemporary and theatrical issues and sheds further light on the dynamic relationship between Early Modern poets and their audiences. In contrast to the epilogue's first part however, it is debatable whether the second half was ever staged – not least because of its great length and the fact that it would have postponed the play's final end considerably. The phrasing however indicates that it was in fact designed to be performed in front of a live audience and not only later added to the written publication of the play. Whatever the real circumstances, the epilogue provides further interesting insights into the Early Modern theatrical landscape.

The epilogue's very beginning – already anticipating the trouble the play will cause – is still conventional in its manipulative attempt to make sure that the play's following performances will also be attended by London's theatre-lovers and not fall into oblivion:

And why you now? or you? or you? I'le speak enough for you all, you now would tell the Audients they should not feare to throng hither the next: for you wil secure their Purses cut-free, and their pockts pick free. Tis much for you to do tho'.¹²⁸⁶

A bit further on, the epilogue then self-reflexively refers to the first part and repeats the different social classes mentioned there:

And you: Poetick part induces you, t'appologize now for the Poet too, as they ha' done already, you to the Ladies, you to the Cavaliers and Gentry; you to the City friends, and all for the Poet, Poet, Poet, when alls but begging tho'.

As Schneider has additionally pointed out, the second part is also important with regard to the importance of female playgoers:

To underline the centrality of female approval (while simultaneously undermining the reasons for it), there is a long speech after the epilogue proper, delivered by the character Swaymint,

¹²⁸⁵ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 111.

¹²⁸⁶ The following quotations from the epilogue's second part have all been taken from: Brome. Epilogue. *The Court Beggar. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 1, pp. 270ff.

in which he warns the men in the audience: 'take heed you displease not the Ladies tho', who are their partiall judges being brib'd by flattering verses to commend their Playes'.¹²⁸⁷

The second half of the epilogue to *The Court Beggar* is remarkable for the admiration the epilogist expresses for both William and Christopher Beeston, to whom Brome was closely connected and owned a huge proportion of his success. In consequence, he pays tribute not only to their friendship but to his friends' knowledge:

But this small Poet vents none but his own, and his by whose care and directions this Stage is govern'd, who has for many yeares both in his fathers dayes, and since directed Poets to write and Players to speak till he traird up these youths here to what they are now. I some of 'em from before they were able to say a grace of two lines long to have more parts in their pates then would fill so many Dryfats.

The stage governor praised in these lines is William Beeston, Christopher Beeston's son, who had taken over the company in April 1639 after his father had already died in October 1638.¹²⁸⁸ Brome wrote this part of the epilogue

with a consciousness of his theatre as an institution with a separate and continuous professional history, a sense which could only be reinforced by the various occasional prologues and inductions employed to mark special events, such as an exchange of theatres between companies, or a re-opening after a plague closure, and the inter-company rivalries which he, Davenant, Massinger, Shirley and Nabbes all at one time or another fought out from the stage or in print.¹²⁸⁹

Through the epilogist, Brome – under Beeston's guidance further developing the craft first learnt with Jonson's help – expresses his "distaste for those writers, particularly "University Scholars", who rely upon others' wits to bolster up their plays with intruded songs and interludes."¹²⁹⁰ Hence he declares about these group of playwrights that they "onely shew their own wits in owning other mens; and that but as they are like neither."

At the end of this passage, which sheds light on Brome's fruitful and intimate relationship with both Beestons, the epilogist draws the playgoers' attention to yet another recent incident involving William Beeston:

¹²⁸⁷ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 111.

¹²⁸⁸ Cf.: Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 28.

¹²⁸⁹ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 101.

¹²⁹⁰ Shaw. *Richard Brome*, p. 28.

And to be serious with you, if after all this, by the venomous practise of some, who study nothing more then his destruction, he should faile us, both Poets and Players would be at losse in Reputation.

Though rather vague, two plausible suggestions have been brought forward regarding the exact nature of this allusion. Bentley has suggested that "[t]he allusion to the venomous practice of some who might make Beeston 'faile us' sounds as if it might refer to Beeston's imprisonment of 4 May 1640 and the company's short suppression."¹²⁹¹ Shaw on the other hand has proposed that this passage might refer to the fact that

[f]or a short time Beeston, at the order of Sir Henry Herbert, was replaced as the head of the King and Queen's Young Players by William Davenant, a court dramatist so heartily disliked by the professional playwrights that there can be no doubt that, through Swaynwit, Brome is attacking Davenant's attempt to use court influence to forward his ambitions to govern his own professional theater.¹²⁹²

Read that way, the epilogue, echoing the prologue's central message, uses the heat of the current political situation outside the playhouse and "turns openly to the audience and warns them directly against patronizing courtly plays."¹²⁹³ Whatever the exact incident, both suggestions seem plausible. The passage evidences that metatheatrical devices from especially the end of the Early Modern Period took up and critically commented upon issues that were of current interest – be it either larger social and political or smaller theatrical matters. Brome, like many other poets in the theatres' final years, echoed common sentiments and exploited "the spectacular resources of the popular style in the service of a distinct, and highly radical, political moral."¹²⁹⁴

That this holds true especially for the epilogue to *The Court Beggar* can further be seen from the next passage, which intertextually alludes to two of Brome's earlier plays, namely *The Antipodes* and *The Sparagus Garden*:

¹²⁹¹ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 65.

¹²⁹² Shaw. *Richard Brome*, pp. 28f.

¹²⁹³ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 227.

¹²⁹⁴ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 227.

The Antipodes is a play which Brome had intended for the King and Queen's Young Company under the governorship of William Beeston at the Cockpit but which the Salisbury Court managers had forced him to give them according to the stipulations of his contract.¹²⁹⁵

The disappointment resulting from this lawsuit had a lasting effect on Brome and it is interesting that he felt the need to implicitly hint at this issue in the epilogue to *The Court Beggar* and that he would do so much more explicitly again in the appended note to his readers in the 1640 edition of *The Antipodes*.

At the very end of the epilogue's lengthy second prose part, Brome once more bethinks himself and remembers the traditional function of epilogues and declares in a rhyming couplet:

Meane while, if you like this, or not, why so?
You may be pleas'd to clap at parting tho'.

Though certainly less conventional as far as the direct and unflattering phrasing is concerned, the epilogist – already sensing the trouble that the play would cause in due course – releases the playgoers' back into the real world of 1639/1640 London by asking for their applause and their goodwill.

III.3.2.7 A JOVIAL CREW

In 1641, Brome's last dramatic work before the theaters' closure, the cheerful comedy *A Jovial Crew*, was staged. Just like *The Court Beggar* before, *A Jovial Crew* was first performed at the Phoenix in Drury Lane and as Bentley has detailed to this effect,

[t]he explicit statement on the title-page of the first edition that the comedy was performed at the Cockpit in 1642 indicates that Brome wrote it for his friend William Beeston and the King and Queen's Young Company, who performed at that theatre in 1641.¹²⁹⁶

It was also Bentley who drew attention to the fact that *A Jovial Crew* might have been the last play to be performed at Beeston's playhouse before the parliamentary order of September 1642 banned all acting in the capital and triggered the ruin of professional and institutionalised acting in Early Modern London:

¹²⁹⁵ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 57.

¹²⁹⁶ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 3, p. 71.

Brome's statement, in the dedication to Thomas Stanley in the 1652 edition, that the play '*had the luck to tumble last of all in the Epidemicall ruine of the Scene*' probably means that it was performed on the last day the company acted before they were by Parliament's order, 2 September 1642.¹²⁹⁷

Concrete evidence to back up this claim is not extant, but it makes a nice story and exemplifies how destructive that order was – though it is questionable whether the play was really still being staged in September 1642.

Most scholars have regarded *A Jovial Crew* as a utopian setting, dealing with a group of beggars "who form a community within the community – small, cohesive, autarchical, and mutually interdependent under a patriarch [...] who rules by reasonable persuasion, not by invested power"¹²⁹⁸. The play shows Brome's dissatisfaction with the social, political and economic changes England had undergone in recent years and documents his frustration in the face of "the inevitability of a new order which he could neither condone nor ignore"¹²⁹⁹. Sensing his audiences' need for some comic relief and distraction, Brome – as usual very attentive to the playgoers' desires – designed a play offering his original audience a chance to get away from the increasingly difficult and unstable times outside the playhouse walls. However,

[e]scapism is indeed Brome's theme, but the play is about escapism rather than itself escapist. Brome was himself no fugitive from reality; his prologue specifically demanded that the audience should relate the play's action to the political uncertainties through which they were living and which were the major concern of all [...].¹³⁰⁰

This explicit and self-conscious demand constituting the play's prologue reads the following:

The Title of our Play, A Joviall Crew,
 May seem to promise Mirth: Which were a new
 And forc'd thing, in these sad and tragick daies,
 For you to finde, or we expresse in Playes.
 We wish you, the, would change that expectation,
 Since Joviall Mirth is now grown out of fashion.
 Or much not to expect: For, now it chanches,
 (Our Comick Writer finding that Romances
 Of Lovers, through much travell and distresse,

¹²⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁹⁸ Quoted in: Haaker. "Richard Brome", p. 181.

¹²⁹⁹ Quoted in: Ibid.

¹³⁰⁰ Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 271.

Till it be thought, no Power can redresse
Th' afflicted Wanderers, though stout Chevalry
Lend all his aid for their delivery;
Till, lastly, some impossibility
Concludes all strife, and makes a Comedie)
Finding (he saies) such Stories bear the sway,
Near as he could, he has compos'd a Play,
Of Fortune-tellers, Damsels, and their Squires,
Expos'd to strange Adventures, through the Briers
Of Love and Fate. But why need I forestall
What shall so soon be obvious to you all:
But wish the dulnesse may make no Man sleep,
Nor sadnesse of it any Woman weep.¹³⁰¹

The prologue is another example to show how close poets, actors and playgoers had become during the Early Modern Period and that playwrights like Brome saw audiences as legitimate people to confide in. In spite of strict censorship, the capital's remaining six professional theatres had increasingly become alternative sites of political discussion and exchange in their final years and offered much more than just pleasure and entertainment. Plays like *A Jovial Crew*, which critically reflect upon current affairs of state, served an important social function insofar as they tried to compensate for King Charles' growing neglect of duties or his abuse of royal sovereignty. Keeping the problems resulting from Charles' Personal Rule in mind, *A Jovial Crew* is "a product of a troubled cultural moment" and the various metatheatrical and self-reflexive elements in the play emphasize that "the tensions produced by that decade or so of non-parliamentary rule [...] were producing grim prophecies of their own."¹³⁰² These greater political, social and cultural developments were in consequence causing changes in the drama of that time. As Brome's prologue to *A Jovial Crew* – highlighting how the dramatic output of these final years was affected by external factors – stresses, "comedy is no longer the favoured generic form"¹³⁰³ in these "sad and tragick daies". As Sanders continues to point out to this effect,

that phrase [...] must have had a very particular resonance in 1641, with the threat of war looming on the horizon, a war that would be waged not against some external force, but that

¹³⁰¹ Brome. Prologue. *A Jovial Crew. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 351.

¹³⁰² Sanders. *Caroline Drama*, p. 64.

¹³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

would pit brother against brother and household against household in a grim rewriting of the battles waged over love and land in Brome's and Shirley's vagabond plays.¹³⁰⁴

Though Brome admits that "Joviall Mirth is now grown out of fashion" and somewhat inappropriate with regard to the nation's recent developments, he offers his audience a means to escape from their worries and troubles for a short while. Yet, the play's prologue

is a good bit more complex than most play prologues, for even while capitulating by personal necessity to public taste he, at the same time, writes an admirably concise criticism of the kind of romantic, far-fetched, badly organized plays he had been actively resisting throughout his career.¹³⁰⁵

Even if the play might be but a "forc'd thing" in these increasingly difficult times, as Brome himself declares, the mirth offered by *A Jovial Crew* must have been a welcomed diversion for many of those present at the Phoenix on these days in 1641 and 1642 when life was determined by uncertainty and anxiety.

¹³⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁰⁵ Kaufmann. *Richard Brome. Caroline Playwright*, p. 171.

III.4 JAMES SHIRLEY

III.4.1 ABOUT JAMES SHIRLEY AND HIS LITERARY WORKS

More is known about Shirley's personal and professional life than is the case with Ford and Brome. Born and baptized in the parish of St. Mary Woolchurch in London in 1596, the later dramatist first attended the Merchant Taylors' School in the capital where he stayed from October 1608 until 1612. The following years are a bit more obscure and have prompted speculations of different sorts, but it is now commonly agreed that Shirley first went to St. Johns at Oxford University where he left in 1615 without finishing his degree. Yet, no documents of his time at Oxford are extant. Everything known about this period of his life is derived from notes taken by Shirley's first biographer Anthony à Wood, which – in spite of a few mistakes – seem to be correct.¹³⁰⁶ In the Easter term of 1615 Shirley matriculated at St. Catherine's College at Cambridge University before receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from there in 1617. After that he became a teacher and later headmaster at a grammar school in St. Albans in Herfordshire, where he stayed for a few years.¹³⁰⁷ At this time he had already converted to Catholicism and married his first wife Elizabeth, with whom he fathered several children.

In 1625, the year in which Charles I ascended to the throne, Shirley was back in the capital where he penned his first play *Love Tricks; or, The School of Compliment*, which was performed by Queen Henrietta's company at Christopher Beeston's Phoenix in Drury Lane. In the next twelve years Shirley wrote numerous plays of different genres – among them tragedies, comedies, histories and romances. Most of these plays were written for the Phoenix and only one play, *The Changes*, was written for Heton's Salisbury Court theatre in early 1632 during a phase in which Shirley's finest plays were written. Shirley "may have had a contract with Christopher Beeston similar to that of Richard Brome with the Salisbury Court theatre"¹³⁰⁸ – but no such document has been discovered yet.

¹³⁰⁶ Anthony à Wood. *Athenae Oxonienses. An Exact History of Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford*. Ed. Philip Bliss, 2 Vols. Oxford: 1848.

¹³⁰⁷ For more detailed information on Shirley's time in St. Alban and his time as a teacher please consult: Albert C. Baugh. "Further Facts About James Shirley". *The Review of English Studies*. 7:25 (1931): 62-66. Baugh unearthed various documents establishing the facts.

¹³⁰⁸ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1068.

After these very productive years at the Phoenix, Shirley left London for Dublin after the capital's theatres had been closed due to an outbreak of the plague for almost seventeen months from May 1636 onwards – the same epidemic that caused the Salisbury Court theatre to stop their weekly payments of 15 shillings to their playwright Richard Brome. The exact time of his departure is not known, but Allan Stevenson has suggested in his article "Shirley's Years in Ireland" in this regard that "[p]robably Shirley did not accept employment in Ireland until the plague had lingered into the autumn and begun to break up theatre companies."¹³⁰⁹ Shirley did not only write plays while in Dublin, such as the tragicomedy *The Royal Master* or the rather unusual *St. Patrick's for Ireland*, but worked as a director at the newly established Werburgh Street Theatre, which was operated by John Ogilby. During his time in Ireland, Shirley saw to the publication of at least of 13 quarto editions of his own plays, which was put into execution by his London publishers Andrew Crooke and William Cooke. This "was a remarkable amount of publication for a dramatist living in 'another Kingdome'; and it must have required unusual arrangements among Shirley, the stationers, and perhaps Christopher Beeston, manager of the Cockpit."¹³¹⁰ The exact contract between Shirley and his publishers is not extant, but among the plays published during this time were *Hyde Park*, *The Lady of Pleasure*, *The Duke's Mistress* and *The Coronation* – many of which were furnished by a dedication by Shirley himself. Shirley stayed in Ireland for some three and a half years, before he – disappointed and missing London – joined the successful King's Men in London after their chief dramatist Philip Massinger had died in March 1640, offering Shirley the chance to see his plays performed in front of considerably larger and less select audiences again. As several prologues and epilogues testify, this was something that had been a great disappointment for him during his time in Dublin. Of his return to London a short account in his own words in the form of a dedication for Richard Owen's play *The Opportunity* is extant:

This Poeme, at my returne with you, from another Kingdome (wherein I enjoyd, as your employments would permit, the happinesse of your knowledge, and conversation) emergent

¹³⁰⁹ Stevenson. "Shirley's Years in Ireland", p. 22.

¹³¹⁰ Stevenson. "Shirley's Publishers: The Partnership of Crooke and Cooke", p. 140.

from the Presse, and prepar'd to seeke entertainment abroad, I tooke boldnesse thus farre to direct to your name and acceptance [...].¹³¹¹

Among the five plays by Shirley staged by London's chief company after his return were *The Imposture* and *The Cardinal*. Shirley stayed with Shakespeare's former group until the theaters were ordered closed by the Privy Council in September 1642 in the wake of further political unrest. His last and sixth play he wrote for the King's Men was *The Court Secret*, which could not be staged anymore.

In the years prior to this calamitous ban of playing, Shirley had been a very prolific writer and wrote more than 30 plays that can be ascribed to him with certainty. In contrast to Ford, Shirley wrote a new play roughly every six months – usually one in spring and one in autumn both while working at the Phoenix and the Blackfriars.¹³¹²

Clark has termed Shirley's relationship to the Court "a quest for courtly approval and support unmatched by any other Caroline professional playwright"¹³¹³. However, his bond with the Court was more ambivalent as Clark's statement suggests. Though he was by no means a masque-writer, his masque *The Triumph of Peace* was immensely popular at Court in the 1634 season. Due to his close links to courtly and aristocratic circles during these years – he was even made one of the valets in the household of the likewise Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria in early 1633 – Shirley had hopes to become poet laureate after Jonson's death in 1637. However, after a period of increasing alienation, he was disappointed when William Davenant was offered this post in December 1638 instead and could henceforth grace himself with 'majesty's servant' on title pages. It has been argued that Shirley's dedication to *The Maid's Revenge*, printed in 1639, in part refers to this incident: "I never affected the ways of flattery: some say I have lost my preferment by not practising that Court sin."¹³¹⁴ In his essay "Shirley's 'Preferment' and the Court of Charles I" Marvin Morillo has detailed that the dramatist's decline in fortunes began as early as 1634 and resulted from "a) his own frequent indulgences in satire of court life, b) the fad at court of a mode of drama which Shirley declined

¹³¹¹ Stevenson. "Shirley's Years in Ireland", p. 23.

¹³¹² Cf.: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, pp. 1068ff.

¹³¹³ Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 122.

¹³¹⁴ Quoted in: Morillo. "Shirley's "Preferment" and the Court of Charles I", p. 101.

to write, and c) the rapid rise to royal favor of William Davenant."¹³¹⁵ In the light of this declining courtly favour, Shirley's decision to leave London for Dublin in 1636 is not surprising. Had he still been one of the royal family's favourites, he would not have left for such an extended period of time. Shirley – never given to flattery, but nonetheless a committed royalist – incorporated a high amount of passages satirising and caricaturing those operating in courtly circles in his plays, as he does in *The Faithful Servant*:

Methinks I talk like a peremptory statesman already; I shall quickly learn to forget myself when I am great in office; I will oppress the subject, flatter the prince, take bribes on both sides, do right to neither, serve heaven as far as my profit will give me leave, and tremble only at the summons of a parliament.¹³¹⁶

According to Morillo, "Shirley became less and less tolerant of the moral laxity, the triviality, and the sometimes humiliating injustice of court life"¹³¹⁷. In contrast to other authors, "Shirley turned more and more toward traditional romantic themes"¹³¹⁸ as his career progresses, whereas many plays of his colleagues depict platonic love to please Charles and his queen.

After the theatres' closure in 1642 Shirley, while still infrequently publishing pieces of poetry, masques and hitherto unpublished plays, first joined the King's cause in the Civil War for two years until 1644 and then worked as a schoolmaster. He "lived to see many of his plays successfully revived on the Restoration stage"¹³¹⁹ – in spite of the fact that most of them were Elizabethan in tone. However, he never wrote for the stage again and he and his second wife died of old age after their energy-sapping flight from the Great Fire of London in October 1666. Shirley was buried at St. Giles in London.¹³²⁰

Although Shirley's relationship with his original audiences was ambivalent, contemporaries praised him and his works for their elaborated dramaturgy.¹³²¹

¹³¹⁵ Ibid.

¹³¹⁶ Quoted in: Ibid., p. 104.

¹³¹⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

¹³¹⁸ Ibid. p. 111.

¹³¹⁹ Ruth Zimmer. *James Shirley. A Reference Guide*. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980, p. 5.

¹³²⁰ For more detailed information on Shirley's life please consult above all the works of Baugh, Bentley, Burner, Morillo, Sanders and Stevenson, who all offer reliable investigations.

¹³²¹ A prominent exception to this was Dryden, who mocked Shirley and his works in his abusive *Mac Flecknoe* of 1682.

Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels, as well as Abraham Wright particularly liked his tragicomedy *The Young Admiral*:

The admiration expressed by [...] Wright is probably typical of the sentiments of audiences in the private playhouses that supported Shirley's many plays, rivalled in number only by those of Shakespeare and by the combined efforts of Beaumont and Fletcher and their collaborators.¹³²²

Other plays by Shirley also found the playgoers' approval and in February 1634, King Charles I said about *The Gamester* that it was "the best play he had seen for seven years."¹³²³

As with the verses addressed to Ford and Brome, there is always "the danger of mistaking what is merely conventional for what is expressive of earnest conviction"¹³²⁴. The same holds true for Ford's commendatory verses contributed to Shirley's *The Wedding*, which promise the playwright eternal fame and praise the structure of this particular play:

The bonds are equal, and the marriage fit,
Where judgement is the bride, the husband wit.
Wit hath begot, and judgment hath brought forth,
A noble issue of delight and worth,
Grown in this Comedy to such a strength
Of sweet perfection, as that not the length
Of days, nor rage of malice, can have force
To sue a nullity, or work divorce
Between this well-trimm'd Wedding and loud Fame,
Which shall in every age renew they name.¹³²⁵

It is not known how well or if at all Ford and Shirley knew each other personally. It is possible that Ford was commissioned and paid to write these lines, but it is just as likely that the two dramatists moved in the same circles and that Ford decided to provide his acquaintance with this short poem. In the absence of any personal correspondence or notes, the two poems addressed to each other are all there is with regard to their relationship.

¹³²² Albert Wertheim. "James Shirley". *The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists. A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama*. Eds Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978. 152-171, p. 161.

¹³²³ Quoted in: Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 114.

¹³²⁴ Morillo. "Shirley's "Preferment" and the Court of Charles I", p. 102.

¹³²⁵ Shirley. Commendatory Verses. *The Wedding. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 1, p. lxxi.

Shirley's *The Grateful Servant* also received commendatory verses by several contemporaries. One of them is John Fox, who addresses Shirley as his "learned friend" and writes the following:

Present thy work unto the wiser few,
That can discern and judge; 'tis good, 'tis new.
Thy style is modest, scenes high, and thy verse
So smooth, so sweet, Apollo might rehearse
To his own lute: be therefore boldly wise,
And scorn malicious censures; like flies
They tickle but not wound; thy well got fame
Cannot be soil'd, nor canst thou merit blame
Because thou dost not swell with mighty rhymes,
Audacious metaphors; like verse, like times.
Let others bark; keep thou poetic laws,
Deserve their envy, and command applause.¹³²⁶

Fox' poem proves that Shirley and his plays were at times somewhat controversial and did not find everyone's approval. Fox urges his friend not to listen to the people criticising his work but to concentrate on "the wiser few / That can discern and judge". Instead of unwisely explaining himself to his opponents – which "like flies / They tickle but not wound" – Shirley should "scorn malicious censures" and have faith in his own abilities, which, as Fox reassures him, "Deserve their envy, and command applause".

Fox' poem echoes the tone of another one written by Shirley's "known friend" John Hall, who reminds the author of *The Grateful Servant* that times have changed and that he should not pay attention to his critics:

Who would write well for the abused stage,
When only swelling words do please the age,
And malice is thought wit? To make't appear
Thy judge, they mis-interpret what they hear.¹³²⁷

Contrary to the impression given by these last two examples, Shirley, though not uncontested, was a very popular and proficient playwright during his lifetime and attracted a high amount of commendatory verses. He succeeded in attracting large audiences until all playing was forced to stop in September 1642 – making it all the more regrettable that he and his canon have almost sunken into oblivion nowadays.

¹³²⁶ Ibid., p. lxxiii.

¹³²⁷ Ibid.

III.4.2 METATHEATRICAL FRAMING DEVICES IN THE PLAYS OF JAMES SHIRLEY

III.4.2.1 *CHANGES, OR LOVE IN A MAZE*

Shirley's first play to be discussed here, the comedy *Changes, or Love in a Maze*, was first performed at the private Salisbury Court some three years after it had opened in 1632 and was also popular when the theatres reopened after the Restoration:

If the play was performed shortly after Sir Henry had licensed it – i.e. some time in January 1631/2 – then it was not performed by the King's Revels company at Salisbury Court, as the title-page of the 1632 quarto says, for that company left the Salisbury Court before December 1631.¹³²⁸

Not least because of the many roles for boy actors, Prince Charles's company, having taken over the playhouse from the King's Revels company in late 1631, is the likelier candidate for the play's original staging even though it may well be that Shirley composed *Changes, or Love in a Maze* "for the King's Revels company at Salisbury Court theatre [...] when that company still performed there."¹³²⁹ Erroneous title-pages were not unusual during the Early Modern Period in general and one is always well advised to question their reliability, since not all of them were based on the final version of the manuscript. While there has been some dispute about which company first performed *Changes, or Love in a Maze*, one can be sure that this staging took place at the small but exclusive Salisbury Court. The prologue underlines this:

That Muse whose song within another sphere
Hath pleased some, and of the best, whose ear
Is able to distinguish strains that are
Clear, and Phoebean, from the popular,
And sinful dregs of the adulterate brain,
By me salutes your candour once again;
And begs this noble favour, that this place,
And weak performances, may not disgrace
His fresh Thalia; 'las, our poet knows
We have no name; a torrent overflows
Our little island; miserably we
Do every day play our own Tragedy:
Bu 'tis more noble to create that kill,
He says, and if but, with his flame, your will

¹³²⁸ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1093.

¹³²⁹ *Ibid.*

Would join, we may obtain some warmth, and prove
 Next them that now do surfeit with your love.
 Encourage our beginning, nothing grew
 Famous at first, and, gentlemen, if you
 Smile on this barren mountain, soon it will
 Become both fruitful and Muse's hill.¹³³⁰

The prologue is similar to the prologue to *The Doubtful Heir* insofar as it documents Shirley's struggle to compose individual plays for a specific playhouse of his choice. The "sphere" the prologist refers to here is Beeston's Phoenix and both framing texts of *Changes, or Love in a Maze* "indicate that Shirley had left the Phoenix for the Salisbury Court and hoped to continue to write for the new theatre. Why he deserted Beeston at the Cockpit or why he returned after writing one play for the Salisbury is unknown."¹³³¹ There is a strong likelihood that Shirley – well-known for his high-flying ambitions to climb the social ladder – considered the private theatres of Caroline London and their more sophisticated audiences to be more suitable for his works. He at times could not hide his disappointment when these aspirations were halted and he had to write for the public and at times somewhat less refined public venues again. That Shirley attached great importance to these matters is depicted in the prologue to *Changes, or Love in a Maze*. In it he addresses the audience and declares that his work

[...] within another sphere
 Hath pleased some, and of the best, whose ear
 Is able to distinguish strains that are
 Clear, and Phoebean, from the popular.

This suggests "not only different audiences, but different theatres as the loci of the seeing and hearing types of spectators."¹³³² Since his position at the Salisbury Court, where *Changes, or Love in a Maze* was first performed, was unstable however, he was walking a fine line and should have exercised more caution not to insult the customers he would depend upon again sooner than he expected. This walking on the borderline between flattering one type of audience by insulting another was even more pronounced in the prologue to *The Doubtful Heir*.

¹³³⁰ Shirley. Prologue. *Changes, Or Love in a Maze. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 2, p. 273.

¹³³¹ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1068.

¹³³² Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 89.

Apart from differentiating between different kinds of playgoers and their degree of sophistication, Shirley's highly figurative prologue is concerned with both the role of actors and playwrights, who "every day play our own Tragedy", and their difficulties resulting from other "weak performances" which have blemished their reputation and may in consequence "disgrace" new productions, as well. The passage appears more stilted than Ford's or Brome's framing devices, but the prologue's central aim is similar, as it explicitly asks for the audience's active support in the ensuing production. It is highly apologetic and humble and asks the members of the audience to "Encourage our beginning, nothing grew / Famous at first" and to "Smile on this barren mountain" to turn it into "the Muse's hill" again. This ascription of power and authority to the paying customers was a common feature of Early Modern metatheatrical devices and served an important function in ensuring the playgoers' goodwill and support. The prologue to *Changes, or Love in a Maze* is a good example to show that Shirley was well aware of the audiences' decisive role in theatrical productions; even though he at times overdid it when he tried to win over one part of his customers by offending others. This general acknowledgment of the playgoers' importance is conventionally repeated in the play's epilogue:

Our poet knows you will be just, but we
Appeal to mercy; he desires that ye
Would not distaste his muse, because of late
Transplanted, which would grow here, if no fate
Have an unlucky bode.¹³³³

The prologue to *Changes, or Love in a Maze* is only addressed to the "gentlemen" present at the Salisbury Court playhouse, though women constituted a major part of the audience. This is something Shirley only allowed for in some of his later plays, such as *The Coronation* or *The Imposture*, both of which feature remarkable female prologists and epilogists and pay tribute to the importance of the female members of the audience.

¹³³³ Shirley. Epilogue. *Changes, Or Love in a Maze. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 2, p. 364.

III.4.2.2 THE EXAMPLE

The prologue to *The Example* explicitly criticises a certain group of playgoers, whose ruthless behaviour was a great nuisance for both Early Modern playwrights and actors alike. As is usual for Shirley, it is rather long and paints an elaborate and comprehensive picture of gallants:

'Twill be a Great Assize; how things will hit
For us appearing at this bar of wit,
is most uncertain; we have name'd our play
THE EXAMPLE, and for aught we know, it may
Be made one; for at no time did the laws,
However understood, more fright the cause
Of unbefriended Poesy: since the praise
Of wit and judgment is not, now a days,
Owing to them that write; but he that can
Talk loud, and high, is held the witty man,
And censures finely, rules the box, and strikes
With his court nod consent to what he likes.
But this must'be; nor is't our parts to grudge
Any that by their place should be a judge:
Nay, he that in the parish never was
Thought fit to be o' the jury, has a place
Here, on the bench, for sixpence; and dares sit,
And boast himself commissioner of wit:
Which though he want, he can condemn with oaths,
As much as they that wear the purple clothes,
Robes, I should say, on whom, i' the Roman state,
Some ill-look'd stage-keepers, like lictors wait,
With pipes for fasces, while another bears
Three-footed stools instead of ivory chairs.
This is a destiny to which we bow,
For all are innocent but the poets now,
Who suffer for their guilt of truth and arts,
And we for only speaking of their parts.
But be it so; be judges all, and be,
With our consent, but thus far, take me w' ye:
If any meet here, as some men i' the age
Who understand no sense, but from one stage,
And over partial, will entail, like land,
Upon heirs male, all action, and command
Of voice and gesture, upon whom they love;
These, though call'd judges, may delinquents prove.
But few such we hope here; to the rest we say,
Hear partially ere you condemn the play.
'Tis not the author's confidence, to dare
Your judgments, but your calm ears to prepare,
That, if for mercy, you can find no room,

He prays that mildly, you pronounce his doom.¹³³⁴

In a highly metatheatrical moment, the prologue to *The Example* self-reflexively addresses a crucial current theatrical topic, which upset the majority of poets and actors in the late-Jacobean and Caroline Period. Though it also takes up other theatrical issues, it is first and foremost interesting for its destructive and extensive depiction of gallants and their disputable and inconsiderate behaviour in the playhouses. In an almost Jonsonian manner, Shirley's prologist provides his listeners with a long list of negative aspects exhibited by him that considers "himself commissioner of wit" and makes the company of players "suffer for their guilt of truth and arts". In doing so, Shirley explicitly criticises the fact that certain playgoers believe themselves to be "fit to be o' the jury" only because they have the means to spend sixpence to watch the play even though they – in contrast to certain other members of the audience and the poet himself – have only very limited knowledge of theatrical practises. Like Jonson had done before him, Shirley complains about the habit of certain more wealthy customers to assume the right to loudly and unreasonably sabotage and interfere with theatrical performances only because they have sufficient financial means to pay for the most expensive seats in the playhouse. Since the group of gallants and courtiers exhibiting these attitudes was steadily increasing in the 1630s and compromising his and his colleagues' work, Shirley felt the urgent need to try to put an end to these recent developments. In his lengthy denunciation of gallants and courtiers, Shirley addresses a large number of aspects voiced repeatedly in the writings of the time and emphasises that the role of the poet has changed and suffered considerably

[...] since the praise
Of wit and judgment is not, now a days,
Owing to them that write; but he that can
Talk loud, and high, is held the witty man,
And censures finely, rules the box, and strikes
With his court nod consent to what he likes.

As Sandra Burner has summarised to this effect,

Shirley refers to the courtiers who sit on the stage, commenting loudly on the play, be he also seems to be referring to those who prefer only the type of performance that pleased the

¹³³⁴ Shirley. Prologue. *The Example*. *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 3, pp. 282f.

Court taste and, perhaps, only one particular theatre. Courtiers were becoming interested in developing the accomplishments admired in an elite society – dance horsemanship, poetry, and drama. Encouraged by the queen, they began to write and produce their own plays. The encroachment on the craft, along with a genuine liking for the audience, moved playwrights to seek an exclusive relationship with discerning patrons. That the relationship was precarious is illustrated by the number of prologues and commendatory verses that complain about the audience or defend them.¹³³⁵

Apart from explicitly offending the gallants and courtiers by displaying their faults to themselves and the rest of the audience, Shirley implicitly flatters the other playgoers and tries to win them over to his side. By the mutual enemy-image thus developed, the non-gallant members of the audience identify more with the actors and their performance and are more likely to be sympathetic to them. There are no records of how the gallants present at the performances of *The Example* reacted to this criticism. It is possible that they did not relate the accusations to themselves at all or that they, pretentious and vain as they were, thought that Shirley's prologist was only making jokes. Offending playgoers like this was a dangerous move and violent or defiant behaviour was not unheard of among Caroline playgoers at times. Metatheatrical elements like the prologue to Shirley's *The Example* thus strongly highlight the ambivalent relationship of late Early Modern poets to their increasingly diverging customers and that they were – at times at least – not hesitant to voice their unhappiness and disappointment when they felt that their efforts were not appreciated or even unfairly judged by people not qualified to do so. Though the prologist almost seems to resign in the face of recent developments when he states "But be it so; be judges all", he remembers that there are many playgoers present at the Phoenix who are well-disposed to them. He directly addresses them in the last lines of his speech and humbly states the following conventional wish:

[...] to the rest we say,
Hear partially ere you condemn the play.
'Tis not the author's confidence, to dare
Your judgments, but your calm ears to prepare,
That, if for mercy, you can find no room,
He prays that mildly, you pronounce his doom.

¹³³⁵ Burner. *James Shirley. A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England*, pp. 58f.

III.4.2.3 *THE CORONATION*

Shirley's tragicomedy *The Coronation*, at first falsely attributed to John Fletcher, was first performed by Queen Henrietta's Men at the Phoenix in 1635 and was one of the last plays written by Shirley before his departure to Ireland in 1636. It features a lengthy verse prologue spoken by a female character. The prologue was first published in the 1640 quarto-edition of the play and reads the following:

Since 'tis become the title of our play,
A woman once in a Coronation may,
With pardon, speak the prologue, give as free
A welcome to the theatre, as he
That with a little beard, a long black cloak,
With a starch'd face, and supple leg hath spoke
Before the plays the twelvemonth; let me then
Present a welcome to these gentlemen:
If you be kind, and noble, you will not
Think the worse of me for my petticoat.
But to the play: The poet bad me tell
His fear's first in the title, lest it swell
Some thoughts with expectation of a strain,
That but once could be seen in a king's reign;
This CORONATION, he hopes, you may
See often, while the genius of his play
Doth prophesy the conduits may run wine,
When the day's triumph's ended, and divine
Brisk nectar swell his temples to a rage,
With something of more price to invest the stage.
There rests but to prepare you, that, although
It be a Coronation, there doth flow
No under-mirth, such as doth lard the scene
For coarse delight; the language here is clean;
And, confident, our Poet bad me say,
He'll bate you but the folly of a play:
For which, although dull souls his pen despise,
Who think it yet too early to be wise,
The nobler will thank his muse, at least
Excuse him, 'cause his thought aim'd at the best.
But we conclude not; it doth rest in you,
To censure poet, play, and prologue too.
But what have I omitted? Is there not
A blush upon my cheeks that I forgot
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 clear, and active souls, nay, though the men

Were lost, in your eyes, they'll be found again;
 You are the bright intelligences move,
 And make a harmony in this sphere of love.
 Be you propitious then, our poet says,
 One wreath from you is worth their grove of bays.¹³³⁶

As Schneider has observed in his book *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama* with regard to the role of female playgoers,

[t]here is very little attention paid to the woman spectator, or to anything feminine, in the majority of James Shirley's prologues and epilogues; indeed, a number are pointedly addressed to 'Gentlemen'. The two notable exceptions are *The Coronation* (1635) and *The Imposture* (1640). In the earlier play, both framing speeches are delivered by female figures [...].¹³³⁷

The cleverly constructed and very intimate prologue to *The Coronation* can be divided into three distinct parts. The first part, consisting of the first ten lines, is concerned with the unusualness of a female prologue. Hoping they will not "think the worse of me for my petticoat", humbly and apologetically addresses the male members of the audience. As the female speaker self-reflexively declares, she is well aware of the fact that female prologists are rare on the Caroline stage and therefore appeals to the gentlemen's benevolence even if a tradition might be broken by her very appearance:

As this prologue suggests, and far before the 'twelvemonth' to which its speaker refers, the early modern prologue's outward show appears to have routinely included a 'long, black, velvet cloak', hat, and beard, as well as papers, book, scroll, or other property conveying an authority behind the information communicated to the playgoer. The various items here draw on diverse realms of authority. The prologue's black velvet robe, for instance, suggests academic, ecclesiastical, or judicial authority. The bay garland he may have worn on his head symbolizes poetic authority and tradition. The items that the prologue may have held – whether book, scroll, papers, or staff – could have signified not only literary authority but the *skeptron* of political power extending over theatrical affairs as well. After all, the speaker almost certainly was one of the players, one who would typically be in association with whatever histrionic politics the troupe tended to pursue."¹³³⁸

In the light of the fact that Early Modern prologues had followed a certain and fixed pattern for several decades, the unusualness of a distinctly female speaker should

¹³³⁶ Shirley. Prologue. *The Coronation. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 3, pp. 458f.

¹³³⁷ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 113.

¹³³⁸ Bruster and Weimann. *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 25.

not be underestimated and is likely to have surprised and amused – or at worst even irritated or upset – Shirley's original audiences.

The prologue's second part, introduced by the interjection "But to the play" and comprising lines eleven to 32, primarily deals with issues conventionally addressed in Early Modern prologues, such as the acknowledgment of the crucial role played by the audience ("it does rest in you, / To censure poet, play, and prologue too") or the frequently voiced anxiety that the play's title might raise excessive expectations: "His fear's first in the title, lest it swell / Some thoughts with expectation of a strain". In addition to this, the prologist reminds the audience that they should not look for "coarse delight " in the ensuing production as "the language here is clean". *The Coronation*, after all, is "aim'd at the best" and unchaste language would not suit the play – even though the mounting popularity of bawdry or personal satire in the 1630s was by far not restricted to the public amphitheatres anymore. This can be concluded from the increase of such plays on the one hand and the denunciation of them in the metatheatrical elements in the works of such playwrights as Ford, Brome or Shirley on the other hand.

The prologue's final part is explicitly directed at the female members of the audience, who "Were first within my thoughts" as the prologist declares. In what almost sounds like an afterthought later added, the speaker turns to the women in the audience by stating

But what have I omitted? Is there not
A blush upon my cheeks that I forgot
The ladies? and a female Prologue too!

In doing so she

acknowledges the female spectators while denoting herself as a Prologist, this time without apology. Not only that, but she goes on to favour the women spectators as the 'high Commissioners of wit, whom the playwright wishes to please above all.'¹³³⁹

Shirley thus grants his female customers the ultimate power over his play and underlines their importance by dismissing them into the world of the play by stating that "One wreath from you is worth their grove of bays."

¹³³⁹ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 113.

The increasing influence of female playgoers is again taken up as a central theme in the epilogue to *The Coronation*, in which the speaker Sophia – emphasising the women's importance for future productions – states

We hope, by their soft influence, the men
 Will grace what they first shined on; make't appear
 Both how we please, and bless our covetous ear
 With your applause, more welcome than the bells
 Upon a triumph, bonfires, or what else
 Can speak a CORONATION.¹³⁴⁰

Although female playgoers were nothing new during the Caroline Period, it is interesting that poets took so long to recognize their potential not only as actual customers, but as a medium to ensure the men's approval of a play.

Though the prologist of *The Coronation* addresses a wide range of crucial current theatrical issues in her lengthy speech, it is likely that Shirley's original audiences at the Phoenix in 1635 saw it primarily as a funny and entertaining alternation and "[t]he repeated allusions to her femininity are made more amusing and sexually ambivalent by the actual biological sex of the actor."¹³⁴¹

III.4.2.4 THE DOUBTFUL HEIR

As Schneider emphasises, "[w]hen there were widely divergent expectations from a play at one theatre as opposed to another, then the prologue and epilogue would reflect those expectations."¹³⁴² This occurs most prominently in Shirley's *The Doubtful Heir*, which was first performed by Ogilby's Men at the St. Werburgh Street playhouse in Dublin in 1638 under the title *Rosania, or Love's Victory*, but later also shown at the Globe in Southwark after Shirley's return from Ireland:

The King's men had it licensed as a new play, since it had not been licensed in London before. Shirley assumed that his tragi-comedy would be acted at the Blackfriars, a private theatre probably not unlike the Dublin theatre for which the play had been written, but it was licensed too late in the season and acted at the Globe instead [...].¹³⁴³

¹³⁴⁰ Shirley. Epilogue. *The Coronation. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 3, p. 540.

¹³⁴¹ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 113.

¹³⁴² Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁴³ Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1106.

Due to the fact that *The Doubtful Heir* was staged at two completely different venues with highly diverse audiences, there are two prologues extant. The one written for the Globe expresses Shirley's deep disappointment about the fact that the play was not staged at the more respectable Blackfriars¹³⁴⁴:

All that the Prologue comes for is to say,
Our author did not calculate this play
For this meridian; the Bankside he knows,
Is far more skilful at the ebbs and flows
Of water, than of wit:: he did not mean
For the elevation of your poles, this scene.
No shews, no dance, and, what you most delight in,
Grave understanders, here's no target-fighting
Upon the stage, all work for cutlers barr'd;
No bawdry, nor no ballads; this goes hard;
But language clean; and, what affects you not,
Without impossibilities the plot:
No clown, no squibs, no devil in't. Oh, now,
You squirrels that want nuts, what will you do?
Pray do not crack the benches, and we may
Hereafter fit your palates with a play:
But you that can contract yourselves, and sit
As you were now in the Black-friars pit,
And will not deaf us with lewd noise, nor tongues,
Because we have no heart to break our lungs,
Will pardon our vast stage, and not disgrace
This play, meant for your persons, not the place.

Schneider claims that this prologue negotiates "a careful path, explaining why the play should actually have been presented at the Blackfriars but at the same time not insulting the audience at the Globe, before whom the play is actually being performed"¹³⁴⁵. This is debateable however and I would argue that with this prologue, Shirley was once again entering dangerous territory as some of the members of the original audience at the Globe might have thought he had gone too far with lines like "the Bankside, he knows / Is far more skilful at the ebbs and flows / Of water, than of wit". Shirley's frustration notwithstanding, it was not a clever move to address and insult his customers like this – especially in view of the fact that Globe audiences were far from having a bad reputation. Shirley, after his

¹³⁴⁴ Further aspects relating to this prologue have already been analysed in Chapter II.5.2.1 of this thesis.

¹³⁴⁵ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 12.

almost four-year absence from the London theatre scene, did not know it as well as his fellow dramatists and was not aware that many playgoers followed the King's Men in their seasonal change from the Blackfriars to the Globe and vice versa. Hence his reservations are unwarranted and his assumption that the audience at the Globe expects something quite different from what he has to offer is likewise unjustified. Shirley, "schooling the amphitheatre playgoers in what *not* to expect from a play originally intended for an indoor hall staging"¹³⁴⁶, wrongly assumes that the people at the Globe watching his *The Doubtful Heir* anticipate less sophisticated entertainment consisting mostly of "immediate theatrical pleasures"¹³⁴⁷, such as dancing, bawdry, singing, unchaste language and clownery. However, he has nothing to offer of that sort and therefore – trusting "that the audience will accept the play's limitations"¹³⁴⁸ – has the prologist highlight the aesthetic qualities of his work and ask the audience to "contract yourselves, and sit / As you were now in the Black-friars pit" and not to "disgrace / This play, meant for your persons, not the place." Since one cannot separate the persons from the place, it remains questionable whether Shirley achieved his goal with this frank, bitter and highly unflattering prologue. Shirley overdoes it and instead of offering his paying and loyal customers a real apology for his work's potential flaws, he offends them before the play proper has even started although it is not their fault that the external circumstances of his production have changed. In a moment of intense metatheatricality, Shirley, referring to the playgoers' supposed demand for action, even compares the audience to "squirrels that want nuts", which is a very apt, though again unflattering, depiction.

The play's epilogue – of which one cannot be sure whether it was also specifically written for the London stage – "takes a more collusive tone, offering its audience some terms for their appreciation of the play"¹³⁴⁹. The epilogue, spoken by the Captain, reads the following:

¹³⁴⁶ Robert Hornback. *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009, p. 193.

¹³⁴⁷ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 49.

¹³⁴⁸ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 88.

¹³⁴⁹ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 49.

Gentlemen,
I am no Epilogue; I come to pray
You'd tell me your opinion of the play.
Is the plot current? may we trust the wit,
Without a say-master to authorise it?
Are the lines sterling? do they hold conceit?
And every piece, with your allowance, weight,
That, when you come abroad, you'll not report
You are sorry to have given white money for't?
So, so! I know your meaning; now, pray tell,
How did the action please ye? was it well?
How did king Stephen do, an 'tother prince?
Enough, enough, I apprehend; and since
I am at questions with you, tell me, faith,
How do you like the Captain? Ha! he saith,
I'll tell you, you're my friends: none here, he knows,
(I mean you o' the gentry, to whom he owes
No money,) will enter a false action;
And let the rest look to't; if there be one
Among his city creditors, that dares,
He hath vow'd to press, and send to the wars.¹³⁵⁰

McLuskie argues that

[t]he difference between the defensiveness of the prologue and the collusive tone of the epilogue suggests that the experience of the play itself could turn the taste of the Globe audience from bawdry and ballads to sophisticated discussions of plot, wit, and conceit. The rhetoric of taste exemplified by the prologue drew on literary distinctions between the different kinds of writing that had been established earlier in the century.¹³⁵¹

The distinction between the different venues, though they cannot be dismissed, should not be overvalued – particularly as far as the Globe and the Blackfriars were concerned, which were run by the very same company and often staged the same plays.

The epilogue to *The Doubtful Heir* is an extreme example of the intimacy between Early Modern playing companies and their playgoers and "[t]he Epilogist appears to have a number of direct exchanges with the spectators, actually waiting for audience response to his comments"¹³⁵². As usual, the playgoers' part of the conversation remains implicit however and one can only speculate what their reactions might have been to questions like "Is the plot current?" or "How did the

¹³⁵⁰ Shirley. Epilogue. *The Doubtful Heir. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 4, pp. 361f.

¹³⁵¹ McLuskie. "Politics and Aesthetic Pleasure in 1630s Theater", p. 49.

¹³⁵² Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, pp. 15f.

action please ye?" Since the text grants them a lot of room to answer the Captain's metatheatrical questions and also taking the general activeness and vividness of Caroline playgoers into account, there can be no doubt that a large proportion of the audience would have reacted to the Captain's queries in one way or another. In contrast to the prologue, the epilogue to *The Doubtful Heir* is much more concerned with the audience's well-being and not with the playwright's disappointment over the change of venue. Even though the members of the audience are bestowed with the opportunity to pronounce the final judgment, the cleverly constructed and highly manipulative speech tries its best to ensure a positive outcome. On the one hand this is achieved by the many leading questions asked by the epilogist, which do not give the audience the chance to express their sentiments. On the other hand the fact that the speech is delivered by the Captain also makes sure that the audience's verdict does not turn out too bad. By wittily turning the attention towards himself at the end of his speech – and thus away from more serious topics such as the play's afterlife or the audience's assessment of its language and content – the Captain amuses the people listening to his speech:

Enough, enough, I apprehend; and since
I am at questions with you, tell me, faith,
How do you like the Captain?

By thus changing the tone of the passage, the speaker manipulates the playgoers by making them his "friends", as he states himself. Based on what is known about the intimate and dynamic interaction between Early Modern actors and their audiences, it is likely that many of the people watching the original performances of *The Doubtful Heir* at the Globe would have laughed at these lines – provided that they were wittily and convincingly performed by the actor representing the Captain. If this assumption is true, the playgoers would then have been in a joyful and relaxed mood and would not have been hesitant to see the actors off with a good round of applause and laughter. The epilogue to *The Doubtful Heir* is another fine example of how important certain metatheatrical devices were for the successful continuation of the Early Modern stage and also that playwrights like Shirley – even if they had been absent from the London stage for some years or could not hide their frustration over certain current theatrical issues – knew well how to employ

metatheatrical and self-reflexive elements as a means to dismiss their customers with a favourable mood after a play's fiction had ended.

III.4.2.5 *THE IMPOSTURE*

Shirley's romantic comedy *The Imposture* was first acted by the King's Men at their prestigious Blackfriars in the summer season of 1640 and was one of the first of Shirley's plays to have been performed after his return from Dublin. According to his own estimation of the play in the dedication to Sir Robert Bolles, *The Imposture* was one of his best works:

Sir, this Poem, I may with modesty affirm, had a fair reception, when [it] was personated on the stage, and may march in the first rank of my own compositions.¹³⁵³

The play's lengthy verse prologue, which draws explicit attention to Shirley's almost four-year absence from the London theatre scene, reads the following:

Our poet, not full confident, he says,
When theatres' free vote had crown'd his plays,
Came never with more trembling to the stage;
Since that poetic schism possess'd the age –
"A prologue must have more wit than the play" –
He knows not what to write; fears what to say.
He has been stranger long to the English scene,
Knows not the mode, nor how, with artful pen,
To charm your airy souls; beside, he sees
The Muses have forsook their groves; the trees
That fear'd no thunder, and were safely worn
By Phoebus' own priests, are now rudely torn
By every scurrile wit, that can but say,
He made a prologue to a new – no play.
But let them pass. – You, gentlemen, that sit
Our judges, great commissioners of wit,
Be pleas'd I may one humble motion make:
'Tis that you would resolve, for the author's sake,
I' the progress of his play, not to be such
Who'll understand too little, or too much;
But choose your way to judge. – To the ladies, one
Address from the author, and the Prologue's done: -
In all his poems you have been his care,
Nor shall you need to wrinkle now that fair
Smooth alabaster of your brow; no fright
Shall strike chaste ears, or dye the harmless white

¹³⁵³ Quoted in: Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1125.

Of any cheek with blushes: by this pen,
No innocence shall bleed in any scene.
If then, your thoughts secur'd, you smile, the wise
Will learn to like by looking on you eyes.¹³⁵⁴

The prologue is delivered by a female speaker and expresses Shirley's deep fear that his long absence from the London stage might have deprived him of his ability to meet the expectations of English playgoers, as he is not familiar with the current habits anymore. Highlighting his anxiety, he has the prologist declare that he "Came never with more trembling to the stage". Due to the fact that "He has been a stranger long to the English scene" he "Knows not the mode, nor how, wit artful pen, / To charm your airy souls". Shirley's comeback to the London theatre scene was also complicated by the fact that the drama had developed further during his absence and that in consequence, at least from his point of view, "The Muses have forsook their groves" and that now "every scurrile wit" thinks he can compose plays. Echoing his objections previously already expressed in plays such as *The Example* or *The Duke's Mistress*, he sarcastically comments on the now fashionable "poetic schism" that "A prologue must have more wit than the play". These recent developments were not only criticised by Shirley, but by the majority of professional playwrights. They saw their position threatened by the increasing number of new playwrights composing less sophisticated and demanding plays, which, to the great dislike of the established dramatists, were often met very favourably by the audiences and thus posed a real threat to their craft. As one of the most prolific writers of the time, these changes were even more apparent to Shirley when he came back to London in 1640 after his prolonged absence. He, "not full confident" and not knowing what to write, felt the need to self-reflexively voice his fears and concerns in the prologue to *The Imposture* to appease his demanding customers at the Blackfriars. As is often the case in the metatheatrical devices framing his plays, Shirley, ever the calculating courtier, directly addresses his audience as "great commissioners of wit" and grants them the privilege to judge his composition – even though he, in "one humble motion" apologetically asks them "not to be such / Who'll understand too little, or too much". Shirley's prologue to

¹³⁵⁴ Shirley. Prologue. *The Imposture. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, p. 181.

The Imposture is a fine example proving that prologues had changed considerably during the course of the Early Modern Period. Whereas during Shakespeare's lifetime prologues were primarily used to introduce the plot, late-Jacobean and Caroline inductions "now much more commonly discuss the public's reactions to plays or voice the dramatist's hopes of success"¹³⁵⁵.

The prologue to *The Imposture* is interesting for one further aspect, namely the direct address of the female members of the audience in the speech's last quarter. In it the women are assured that "In all poems you have been his care" and that the ensuing production will contain no salacious or unchaste material inappropriate for ladies:

[...] no fright
Shall strike chaste ears, or dye the harmless white
Of any cheek with blushes: by this pen,
No innocence shall bleed in any scene.

This direct address shows that female playgoers were more and more recognized as an important client base that needed to be flattered and cared for in metatheatrical passages – especially in the theatres' final years when dark clouds were already looming on the horizon.

The play's short verse epilogue, delivered by the actor representing Juliana, likewise highlights the significance of female playgoers:

Now the play's done, I will confess to you,
And will not doubt but you'll absolve me too;
There is a mystery; let it not go far,
For this confession is auricular:
I am sent among the nuns, to fast and pray,
And suffer piteous penance; ha, ha, ha!
They could no better way please my desires:
I am no nun – but one of the Black Friars.¹³⁵⁶

Like most Early Modern epilogues, the passage quoted above slowly dismisses the playgoers back into the real world outside the playhouse walls and helps them to perform their voyage from the representing into the represented world by asking to be absolved. Even though the epilogue to *The Imposture* is rather short for Caroline

¹³⁵⁵ Salinger. "Jacobean Playwrights and "Judicious" Spectators", p. 215.

¹³⁵⁶ Shirley. Epilogue. *The Imposture. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, p. 269.

standards, it features another metatheatrical layer addressing contemporary theatrical practises, such as the fact the all female parts were played by male actors:

In the epilogue there is a metaphorical disrobing of the character Juliana. As a female, her fate at the end of the play is to be 'sent among the Nuns to fast and pray'; as the male playing the part of Juliana states, 'They could no better way please my desires'. And in a final punning line, he/she exclaims: 'I am no Nun – but one of the Black-Friers.' This move from feminine to masculine seems to disenfranchise the female and cut across the apparent influence granted to women in the prologue. It is the woman spectator who is given power; in the epilogue it is women and boy actors who are being mocked. Thus real women, not the supposed women on the stage, are being granted a degree of influence.¹³⁵⁷

III.4.2.6 THE BROTHERS

The comedy *The Brothers* was another of Shirley plays performed by the King's Men after his return from Ireland and was first staged at their prestigious Blackfriars in 1641. The play was first published in 1653 and its prologue and epilogue were moreover printed in Shirley's *Poems* of the year 1646. The play has produced a fair amount of uncertainty as Sir Henry Herbert had already licensed a play bearing the very same title in 1626. As Albert Wertheim and others have stated in this regard, "[i]t seems likely that *The Brothers* of 1626 is lost and that *The Brothers* of 1641 is identical with a play called *The Politique Father*, licensed in 1641 but never printed under that title."¹³⁵⁸ Though not the rule, the changing of the title of a play for its publication was not unheard of and may have been motivated by various considerations.

The prologue to *The Brothers* on the one hand self-reflexively and critically addresses the function of prologues. On the other hand it documents that the unstable conditions outside the playhouse walls were already leaving their mark on the dramatic productions of these years:

Troth, gentlemen, I know not what to say,
No I am here; but you shall have a play:
I hope there are none but my friends; if you
Be pleas'd to hear me first, I'll tell you true,
I do not like the Prologue, 'tis not smart,
Not airy; then the Play's not worth a –

¹³⁵⁷ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 114.

¹³⁵⁸ Wertheim. "James Shirley", p. 162.

What witty Prologues have we heard! how keen
Upon the time, how tickling o' the spleen!
But that's wit's gone, and we, in these sad days,
In coarse dull phlegm, must preface to our plays.
I'll shew you what our author meant should be
His Prologue, – "Gentlemen," – he shall pardon me,
I dare not speak a line, not that you need
To fear a satire in't, or wit, indeed.
He would have you believe no language good
And artful, but what's clearly understood;
And then he robs you of much mirth, that lies
I' the wonder, why you laugh at comedies.
He says the times are dangerous; who knows
What treason may be wrapt in giant prose,
Or swelling verse, at least to sense? Nay, then,
Have at you, master Poet: – Gentlemen,
Though he pretend fair, I dissemble not,
You're all betray'd here to a Spanish plot;
Bit do not you seem fearful; as you were
Shooting the bridge, let no man shift or stir,
I'll fetch you off, and two hours hence you may
(If not before) laugh at the plot and the play.¹³⁵⁹

In contrast to most of the prologues discussed in this thesis so far, this passage, echoing certain concerns already expressed in the prologue to *The Imposture*, is different as the speaker almost desperately and self-consciously declares such things as "I know not what to say" or "I do not like the Prologue". This misery is due to the fact that the wit of earlier times is gone and that it is hard for poets to revive the "witty Prologues" of the past "in these sad days" that are at hand. As both Shirley and his prologist are well aware, they "must preface to our plays" and meet their customers' demand for metatheatrical framing devices even though their depressed mood does not allow for that. In spite of the dislike of some poets of both prologues and epilogues, this indicates that

there is nevertheless acknowledgment among playwrights that by the time of the closure of the theatres in 1642, the framing text was so familiar as to be expected. Once prologues and epilogues achieved such a position, playwrights could more comfortably and confidently express their attitude towards them.¹³⁶⁰

In beweeeping the more glorious plays and prologues of earlier times, Shirley echoes similar concerns as Ford and Brome now and again did in their metatheatrical

¹³⁵⁹ Shirley. Prologue. *The Brothers. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 1, p. 191.

¹³⁶⁰ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 137.

devices embracing their plays – with an important difference however: whereas both Ford and especially Brome were looking as far back as to the Elizabethan and Jacobean era and were overcome by a tinge of nostalgia, Shirley refers to a much more recent past, namely the heyday of Caroline drama before his departure to Ireland when he was one of the most prolific and successful writers in London and enjoyed the favour of the Court.

However, even though times have changed there is no getting around devices such as prologues as the prologist declares. That is why he starts off by showing the audience "what our author meant should ne / His Prologue", but after the single word "Gentlemen" he begs his listeners' pardon, stops and informs them that "I dare not speak a line" of what the poet has written for him. Instead he tells the audience in his alleged own words what the poet wanted him to say. In doing so he mentions a number of aspects conventionally addressed in Early Modern prologues, such as mirth, wit or language. The latter aspect – the desire for clarity of style – is of particular interest as his declaration that "He would have you believe no language good, / And artful, but what's clearly understood" indicates that Shirley was striving to use plain language and not to imitate those lesser dramatists who considered themselves fashionable and used overblown and nebulous language. By directly addressing these aspects usually found in Caroline prologues, "[t]he speaker presumes the audience is used to hearing prologues, can discern their quality and can appreciate what prologue should be. There also seems to be an acceptance by Shirley of the framing text as necessary, even if no longer witty."¹³⁶¹ This further underlines the earlier hypothesis that audiences expected to be supplied with such framing devices and that authors generally had no choice but to comply with their paying customers' wish – leaving modern readers with wonderful passages of intense metatheatricality, which provide crucial information on a wide range of Early Modern theatrical issues and practices as well as on how playwrights such as Shirley responded to the developments complicating their already challenging craft. Referring to the external circumstances and developments influencing the work of both dramatists and actors, the prologist also points out that

¹³⁶¹ Ibid.

[...] the times are dangerous; who knows
What treason may be wrapt in giant prose,
Or swelling verse, at least to sense? [...]

In doing so he self-consciously refers to the general potential of Early Modern drama to get around censorship and to subversively circumvent the authorities.

At the very end of the prologue to *The Brothers*, the speaker once again metatheatrically refers to his own function and informs the playgoers that he will "fetch you off" and help them to safely make the passage into the fictional world of the ensuing play and assures them that after two hours the audience may "laugh at the plot and play." By generously offering them his help and making them his comrades – or "friends" as he calls them in the prologue's third line – the prologist manipulates the playgoers for his own purposes and ensures that they will start watching the play with an open and benevolent mind.

III.4.2.7 THE CARDINAL

The Cardinal, first performed at the Blackfriars in the autumn of 1641 and depicting a church dignitary abusing his power and manipulating a weak king, is another one of Shirley's plays written for the King's Men, but his first tragedy for them. The play was very popular among its original audiences and led to a fair amount of commendatory verses praising it: "Shirley himself though it his best play"¹³⁶², saying so both in the play's dedication and its prologue. The play's metatheatrical devices document that the playgoers' support and benevolence could not be taken for granted and that playwrights were constantly struggling to sustain their customers' goodwill. The highly apologetic prologue to *The Cardinal* is rather conventional in its attempt to renegotiate authority to the audience and its plead for forgiveness if the play should not meet the playgoers' expectations:

The CARDINAL! 'Cause we express no scene,
We do believe most of you, gentlemen,
Are at this hour in France, and busy there,
Though you vouchsafe to lend your bodies here;
But keep your fancy active, till you know,
By the progress of our play, 'tis nothing so.
A poet's art is to lead on your thought

¹³⁶² Bentley. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol. 5, p. 1086.

Through subtle paths and workings of a plot;
 And where your expectation does not thrive,
 If things fall better, yet you may forgive.
 I will say nothing positive; you may
 Think what you please; we call it but a Play:
 Whether the comic Muse, or ladies' love,
 Romance, or direful tragedy it prove,
 The bill determines not; and would you be
 Persuaded, I would have't a Comedy,
 For all the purple in the name, and state
 Of him that owns it; but 'tis left to fate:
 Yet I will tell you, ere you see it play'd,
 What the author, and blush'd too, when he said,
 Comparing with his own, (for't had been pride,
 He thought, to build his wit a pyramid
 Upon another's wounded fame,) this play
 Might rival with his best, and dar'd to say –
 Troth, I am out: he said no more. You, then,
 When 'tis done, may say your pleasures, gentlemen.¹³⁶³

Shirley, well-known for his appreciation of certain Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, often lamented the degeneration of Early Modern English drama by means of metatheatrical devices. As Clark has emphasised, "[h]is prologue to *The Cardinal* deplores the general abandonment of Shakespeare's, Fletcher's, and Jonson's art"¹³⁶⁴ – in contrast to the many lesser playwrights considering themselves fashionable and witty during the 1630s and early 1640s.

By having the prologist tell the audience

We do believe most of you, gentlemen,
 Are at this hour in France, and busy there,
 Though you vouchsafe to lend your bodies here;
 But keep your fancy active, till you know,
 By the progress of our play, 'tis nothing so.
 [...]
 Think what you please; we call it but a Play

Shirley on the one hand implicitly comments on the current political situation and invites "his audience to reflect that the matter of the play, or at least some of its characters, might be applicable to Englishmen of the time"¹³⁶⁵. On the other hand

¹³⁶³ Shirley. Prologue. *The Cardinal. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, p. 275.

¹³⁶⁴ Clark. *Professional Playwrights*, p. 131.

¹³⁶⁵ Burner. *James Shirley. A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England*, p. 141.

he self-reflexively addresses the fact that the ensuing production requires the playgoers to play an active part and to use their imagination to round off the play. Though

A poet's art is to lead on your thought
Through subtle paths and workings of a plot

the role of the playgoers should not be disregarded as the employment of an active and vivid imagination could determine a play's rise or fall. Shirley, following contemporary dramatic conventions, begs his customers' pardon should he not meet their expectations:

And where your expectation does not thrive,
If things fall better, yet you may forgive.

He himself seems to have found that unlikely however since he, never reluctant to praise the value of his own works, considered *The Cardinal* to be his best play so far:

Yet I will tell you, ere you see it play'd,
What the author, and blush'd too, when he said,
Comparing with his own, (for't had been pride,
He thought, to build his wit a pyramid
Upon another's wounded fame,) this play
Might rival with his best [...].

This explicit and open reference to a play's quality and value is highly unusual for the period during which playwrights usually hid their true sentiments and assessments behind highly conventional and humble stock phrases. Yet, times were changing and with dark clouds already looming on the horizon, the professional playwrights tried to develop a new sense of self-confidence and to find novel means to save their craft from both internal and external threats.

The epilogue to *The Cardinal* is likewise an interesting example of Caroline metatheatricity as it is one of the few surviving first-day epilogues:

[Within] Master Pollard! where's master Pollard, for the epilogue?
[He is thrust upon the stage, and falls.
Epi. [rising] I am coming to you, gentlemen; the poet
Has help'd me thus far on my way, but I'll
Be even with him: the play is a tragedy,
The first that ever he compos'd for us,
Wherein he thinks he has done prettily,

Enter Servant.

And I am sensible. – I prithee look,
 Is nothing out of joint? has he broke nothing?
 Serv. No, sir, I hope.
 Epi. Yes, he has broke his epilogue all to pieces.
 Canst thou put it together again?
 Serv. Not I, sir.
 Epi. Nor I; prithee be gone. [exit Serv.] –
 Hum! – Master poet,
 I have a teeming mind to be reveng'd. –
 You may assist, and not be seen in't now,
 If you please, gentlemen, for I do know
 He listens to the issue of his cause;
 But blister not your hands in his applause;
 Your private smile, your nod, or hem! to tell
 My fellows that you like the business well;
 And when, without a clap, you go away,
 I'll drink a small-beer health to his second day;
 And break his heart, or make him swear and rage,
 He'll write no more for the unhappy stage.
 But that's too much; so we should lose; faith, shew it.
 And If you like his play, 'tis as well he knew it.¹³⁶⁶

This epilogue is particularly interesting for its unusual and broken-up structure on the one hand and shows nicely to what extent metatheatrical framing devices were part of both the represented and the representing world on the other hand. The epilogist, represented by the actor Thomas Pollard, once more tells the audience that the author "thinks he has done prettily" even though *The Cardinal* is the first tragedy "that ever he compos'd for us". The epilogist "is pushed onstage, ostensibly by the playwright himself, with such force that he falls and then begins his framing speech by threatening to get 'even' with 'the Poet'".¹³⁶⁷ Pollard is then interrupted by a servant coming onstage, with whom he self-consciously discusses the epilogue's curious structure: "he has broke his epilogue all to pieces". His physical hurt resulting from his fall is linked to the text's broken-up structure, which "is another example of text, actor and character overlapping, with a resultant complex richness of meaning and allusion"¹³⁶⁸. Since the servant is unable to help Pollard reassemble the epilogue, he is dismissed and the speaker once again addresses the

¹³⁶⁶ Shirley. Epilogue. *The Cardinal. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, p. 352.

¹³⁶⁷ Schneider. *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama*, p. 150.

¹³⁶⁸ Ibid.

audience on the behalf of the "Master poet" who will "write no more for the unhappy stage" should the play not have pleased the playgoers.

The reference to the play's "second day" indicates that the extant epilogue to *The Cardinal* is the one that was originally performed when the play was staged for the very first time. Attendance figures were usually highest at a play's premiere, but even then an audience's approval could not be taken for granted. On the contrary: for both poets and actors alike the first staging of a new play was always an immensely tense and unpredictable moment. As with *The Cardinal*, metatheatrical devices were used as a manipulative means to negotiate the production's reception and to induce potential critics to reconsider their judgment. In this case this is done by highlighting the consequences of negative responses, which would break the playwright's heart and cause him to abandon his craft. The epilogist asks for the playgoers' assistance in showing the nervous playwright, who "listens to the issue of his cause", that the play has found their approval, because after all, "if you like his play, 'tis as well he knew it."

III.4.2.8 *THE SISTERS*

Shirley's light comedy *The Sisters* was first performed by the King's Men at the Blackfriars in April 1642. The play's metatheatrical devices, first and foremost its lengthy and highly politicised verse prologue, express a deep concern resulting from the growing social and political tensions outside the playhouses. They self-consciously refer to the playwrights' desperate struggle to counterbalance the dismal external circumstances affecting their craft in the last months before the theatres' fatal closure.

The prologue to *The Sisters* starts the following:

Does this look like a Term? I cannot tell;
Our poet thinks the whole town is not well,
Has took some physic lately, and, for fear
Of catching cold, dares not salute this air.¹³⁶⁹

¹³⁶⁹ The following passages from the prologue to Shirley's *The Sisters* have all been taken from: Shirley. Prologue. *The Sisters. The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*. Vol. 5, pp. 356f.

Shirley compares London to a sickening body and the first four lines already show that the theatres – even the more prestigious ones like the popular Blackfriars – were experiencing major problems in 1642 as they were struggling to attract the usual amount of playgoers. According to Shirley's pessimistic prologist, this severe decline in attendance figures and the fact that playgoers "for fear / Of catching cold" do not dare to come to the playhouses anymore is primarily due to the king's absence from the capital:

But there's another reason, I hear say,
London is gone to York: 'tis a great way.

No longer able to ignore the growing resistance to his autarchic rule in the capital, Charles I had decided to move his court from London to York in March 1642 in an (unsuccessful) attempt to gather the support of the northern provinces. Already sensing the theatres' dismal future, Shirley likewise asks his audience "must we / Ne now translated north?" In general the relocation of the nation's power-centre to the countryside may, as Shirley proposes, predominantly have affected the three remaining private playhouses as they usually attracted the largest number of people associated with the Court, who were now following the king to the north:

Evidently he believed that the court's removal and the consequent attrition of the genteel London society from which the Blackfriars drew its spectators was responsible for declining audience numbers. It is unclear whether the other, less fashionable playhouses were experiencing similar problems, but they are unlikely to have been immune from current disruptions.¹³⁷⁰

Shirley uses his prologue to address the people present at the Blackfriars and desperately declares:

And if you leave us too, we cannot thrive:
I'll promise neither play nor poet live
Till ye come back. Think what you do; you see
What audiences we have [...]

The playful and light-hearted flattering of earlier prologues is gone and has been substituted by desperate attempts to appeal to the playgoers' conscience as only

¹³⁷⁰ Martin Butler. "The Condition of the Theatres in 1642". *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*. Eds Jane Milling and Peter Thomson, 3 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 439-457, p. 445.

they can ensure the company's survival during these hard times. By picking out the company's dependence on the playgoers as a central theme, Shirley and his prologist try to awaken the audience to the responsibility they have – with only limited effects as the continuing low attendance figures of the months to come testify. The prologue and the play as such indicate "that Shirley was working under external pressure, knowing the future of the theatre to be uncertain, particularly in London, as the power of the Puritans rose."¹³⁷¹

Shirley's pessimism is further increased by the fact that the hitherto highly popular plays of Shakespeare, "whose mirth did once beguile / Dull hours", Fletcher, "the Muse's darling", and Jonson "t' whose name wise art did bow" no longer manage to attract large audiences either after they had been the company's backbone for decades. Shirley, deploring "This fate, for we do know it by our door", cannot help but to repeat his urgent appeal and asks his audience not to "conspire" and instead "meet more frequent" at the playhouses again. He himself seems to have little hope however, as he declares in the prologue's final lines that

Though while you careless kill the rest, and laugh,
Yet he may live to write your epitaph.

These lines emphasize the bad conditions with which the theatres saw themselves confronted in 1642. The prologue illustrates how severely the rapidly changing external circumstances influenced the dramatic productions of that time on the one hand and how poets like Shirley tried to come to terms with these developments using metatheatricality on the other hand. In contrast to several other prologues by either Ford, Brome or Shirley discussed in this thesis, the prologue to *The Sisters* does not prepare the audience for the ensuing production at all, but solely focuses on the external political and social changes and their far-reaching consequences for Shirley's craft.

Shirley regarded the theatres' steady decline in their last months before their fatal closure as inevitable as he and his company managed to attract less and less playgoers: "England clearly did plunge into a tremendous crisis in 1642, one that had roots striking deep into the economic, social and religious changes that were

¹³⁷¹ Burner. *James Shirley. A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England*, p. 143.

profoundly transforming their society"¹³⁷². After decades of professional and institutionalised acting in London and its suburbs, all theatrical activity was officially brought to an end for 18 years when the Privy Council, fearing the disturbance of public order after Charles' I withdrawal from London and the first bloodshed of the Civil War, ordered all playhouses to be shut in September 1642. Though poets and actors had known well how to flatter and manipulate their paying customers ever since the erection of the first playhouse in Shoreditch in 1576, their conventional and steadily perfected praising of the playgoers' wit and sophistication was to no avail anymore and fell silent. After some 65 years of highlighting and articulating their own self-reflexivity to ensure for their audiences' coming back, the theatres, after having been concerned with internal issues for so long in order to shape a dialectic relationship with the audience, had to surrender to overpowering external forces which they could neither influence nor control. This is all the more regrettable because, as Butler has observed, "[i]t is beyond doubt that the theatrical tradition that was cut short in September 1642 was neither exhausted nor in retreat"¹³⁷³, even though the drama's undeserved neglect by modern scholarship might suggest otherwise.¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁷² Butler. *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 10.

¹³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹³⁷⁴ Contrary to Butler's suggestion, playwrights as well as audiences may also have realised that the Early Modern stage had not only come to an end due to external reasons but to aesthetic ones, as well. Read this way, several metatheatrical framing texts may hint at the fact that in its present form the art as such had reached its limits and had become out-moded to be superseded by radically changed forms of drama during the Restoration Period.

IV. CONCLUSION

The main aims of my thesis were to analyse the cultural practice of playgoing in late-Jacobean and Caroline London on the one hand and the inclusion of the audience in plays by John Ford, Richard Brome and James Shirley by means of metatheatrical framing devices on the other hand. To begin with, I have drawn attention to the fact that an elementary distinction needs to be made “between two kinds of text and thus two possible objects of semiotic analysis”¹³⁷⁵. Dramatic works of the Early Modern Period were primarily written to be performed in front of audiences and “the reputation of a play had to be made in the theatre, and the printed version counted as a poor second-best.”¹³⁷⁶ For this reason I have emphasised that the dramatic texts available to modern scholarship need to be taken with a pinch of salt when used to analyse performances that took place some four hundred years ago.

The thesis' first part was concerned with the socio-historical and cultural context of the years between Shakespeare's death in 1616 and the closing of the theatres and other places of public assembly in 1642. The chapters and subchapters belonging to this part gave a detailed overview on late-Jacobean and Caroline times in order to provide the reader with background information essential for the thesis' second part. Following the procedural method of scholars such as Andrew Gurr, several social and historic factors that had a shaping influence on Early Modern playgoers and interpenetrated the stage in Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's day have been analysed. This historical perspective has shown that the nation's capital contributed in a number of ways to the success of English Early Modern drama and must be seen as a crucial component in any analysis original audiences. The continued existence of institutionalised and professional drama that followed the erection of several purpose- and custom-built playhouses around turn auf the century helped to underline London's cultural significance. This continuation of professional acting was due to certain material, cultural and political factors and in return also promoted the materialisation of a huge group of people willing to pay

¹³⁷⁵ Elam. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p. 190.

¹³⁷⁶ E. A. J. Honigmann. *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1982, p. 50.

for attendance at the six remaining theatres. London, as a city of contrasts, was not only the nation's centre of entertainment, but a melting pot for groups opposing the theatres, such as the Puritans. However, the Puritans were by far not the only group that complicated the life of those involved in the theatre industry. At times the Court, the ever-anxious city authorities and the plague likewise had their share in impeding the work of playwrights, actors and their colleagues. By illustrating the relevance of the suburb of Southwark for the Early Modern stage, it has furthermore become evident that the study of late-Jacobean and Caroline audiences cannot be separated from the culture that produced it. Though the significantly increasing number of private amphitheatres led to the fact that playgoing was not confined to the suburbs anymore as one moves away from the Elizabethan and Jacobean towards the Caroline Period, the importance of Southwark for the entertainment industry in general and the theatres in particular cannot be ignored. The region south of the river continued to be of significant cultural importance and had a substantial influence on the mind-set of Early Modern playgoers and their expectations towards the stage.

The purpose of Chapter II.3 was to mention some forms of entertainment other than playgoing that also had a profound influence on the tastes and expectations of Early Modern audiences. I have shown that bloodsports such as bear-baiting as well as businesses such as prostitution enjoyed great popularity among Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's original playgoers. The theatres

conjoined and played with almost everything the "entertainment zone" had to offer: dancing, music, games of skill, blood sports, punishment, sex. Indeed, the boundaries between theatrical imitation and reality, between one form of amusement and another, were often blurred.¹³⁷⁷

In this light it is not surprising that the theatres proved to be such a big success, as the plays performed at the public and private playhouses combined the best elements of the most popular pastimes available in England between 1616 and 1642.

The following chapter, i.e. II.4, put emphasis on the fact that there was a strong theatrical element in society generally and that playgoers were heavily influenced

¹³⁷⁷ Greenblatt. *Will in the World*, p. 181.

by this. Both James I and his son Charles I literally performed and staged their power in daily life and the *theatrum mundi* metaphor found its way into several plays. People living in Early Modern England often witnessed cruel punishments and spectacles of bodily humiliation were part of the world as the original audience experienced and expected it: Early Modern power “depends on its privileged visibility. As in a theater, the audience must be powerfully engaged by this visible presence and at the same time held at a respectful distance from it.”¹³⁷⁸

Following this, Chapter II.5 provided background information on the six playhouses at which the plays of Ford, Brome, Shirley and their fellow playwrights were originally staged. Having individual characteristics, the venues in general catered for different tastes and expectations and in doing so attended to different groups of playgoers. However, as has become clear, the differences between the individual playhouses should not be overemphasised since there was a constant interchange of both plays and audiences. Many playgoers, though often favouring one specific venue, frequented at least one or two other houses as well. The biggest differences existed between the more fashionable private venues and the public ones, even though the Globe of the latter group occupied a hybrid position. The six remaining playhouses and the huge array of plays written for them over the years generated an immense variety of cultural productions. They enriched the lives of people who at times could not have been any more different but met together in one place to enjoy the richness of late-Jacobean and Caroline drama.

Chapter II.6 was mainly concerned with the “official ideology of stasis and fixed identity”¹³⁷⁹ which was promoted by various cleric, civic and royal institutions. This hierarchical system shaping Early Modern society affected all areas of life and in the eyes of the playhouses’ enemies was threatened by the theatre. Approaching Early Modern playgoers by first looking at the population of the nation’s capital in general has been a valuable means to make it plain that audiences are always part of a larger social environment influencing them. Due to a complex interplay of political, economic and cultural transformations, the social order was slowly beginning to erode as a new middle class was evolving. The theatres, as always

¹³⁷⁸ Greenblatt. *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 64.

¹³⁷⁹ Howard. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, p. 10.

inhabiting a somewhat ambivalent position, maintained this division of classes by offering their customers the chance to choose their seats according to their income or their social status. On the other hand however, the theatres were one of the very few places where these different groups met at all and where mere actors played the roles of kings and queens so that they were often charged with undermining the social order as well.

The first part's last chapter and its subchapters have eventually touched upon several physical circumstances of Early Modern theatrical performances and I have illustrated that most of the aspects discussed in these chapters have been fuelling intense scholarly debate for years and have not been satisfactorily answered yet. Data enabling modern scholarship to get an insight into what exactly playgoing was like during these years is scarce and must be handled with the greatest care:

The responsibility of the scholar to give a comprehensive account of the history of [Early Modern] theater involves considerable difficulties, and the account itself is bound to be sufficiently a matter of interpretation and intelligent conjecture that it will come to require re-interpretation and adjustment.¹³⁸⁰

Modern knowledge on the physical circumstances of late-Jacobean and Caroline performances is based on the extant writings of only a small number of contemporaries who bothered to take notes of varying quality and quantity about their visits to the theatres. Taken together these texts help modern scholarship to have an admittedly incomplete glimpse at the cultural practise of playgoing during the years 1616 and 1642 and are of help to better appreciate the cultural significance of these very years of Early Modern English drama. To this effect it should however not be forgotten that writing about theatregoing in late-Jacobean and Caroline London always involves a fair bit of speculation, as there are numerous aspects one cannot be sure about. In addition to this, I have drawn attention to aspects such as the repertory system of Early Modern theatre companies in order to show that Ford, Brome, Shirley and their contemporary playwrights tried very hard to please their customers and produced a vast amount of plays. Furthermore, it has also become evident that there is strong disagreement among scholars on issues such as attendance figures or audience composition. Even though not all social

¹³⁸⁰ John Astington. *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater*. New York: AMS, 1992, p. 3.

groups could be considered in due detail, the discussion about the composition of late-Jacobean and Caroline audience has shown that one should refrain from hastily being insistent on the dominance of a particular social group. Putting appropriate emphasis on a wide range of the available sources, it is apt to ascertain that the composition of the original audiences covered a "social range from gallants to grooms and from citizens' wives to whores".¹³⁸¹ Admission prices ranged from a mere penny to a multiple of this sum and an increasing number of people in Early Modern London were willing to shoulder this expense. The last subchapter of the thesis' first part shed some light on how Early Modern playgoers behaved during performances. The original audiences differed to a great extent from modern ones in that they were active participants who enthusiastically responded to what they were seeing and hearing performed on stage. To this effect I have drawn attention to the fact that certain antitheatrical groups tried to show audiences in a bad light and that the accusations brought forward were without cause, as Early Modern playgoers were generally of a peaceful bearing.

Even though there are still many things one cannot be sure of when it comes to the cultural practise of playgoing in Early Modern England, there are several things one can acknowledge beyond doubt, namely that Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline audiences alike

enjoyed the theatre for its variety – the variety of events portrayed on stage, the variety of characters played day to day or even scene to scene by single actors, the variety of emotions it provoked, and the variety it provided in the routine of daily life. These audiences enjoyed the self-reflexivity of the theatre [...] and the feeling of being "in on" all the jokes this self-reflexivity provided. They enjoyed maintaining an ironic distance from the action or words on stage, and also losing that distance, and then being made aware of moments when they had lost it. They enjoyed going to the theatre for reasons other than seeing a play – to see and be seen by others, to loiter about, to meet members of the opposite sex, to show off new clothes. They enjoyed complex, multi-levelled plays which they could nevertheless easily classify as "tragedies" or "comedies". They enjoyed thinking of themselves and being thought of as a collective entity, whose collective response quite powerfully determined the value of a play. And above all they enjoyed – and playwrights enjoyed them – *responding*, visibly, audibly, and physically: the transparent self-reflexivity of the language and the dramaturgy, like the relative bareness of the stage and brightness of the theatre, would have made this both inevitable and essential.¹³⁸²

¹³⁸¹ Gurr. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 183.

¹³⁸² Lopez. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, pp. 33f.

With this social, historical and cultural background information in mind, I was then able to turn towards my thesis' second main aim, namely the study of how both the presence of the audience as well as the state of the theatre were referred to in plays by Ford, Brome and Shirley by means of metatheatrical framing devices. All three playwrights knew well how to address their audiences and used different techniques in their framing texts to ensure for their customers' benevolence and their coming back. In addition to this, Ford, Brome and Shirley were aware of the changes affecting their craft and used their prologues and epilogues to critically reflect upon the alterations happening both inside and outside the playhouse walls – especially in the years leading up to the Civil War. The three playwrights' extensive use of prologues to create a bond between the represented and representing worlds testified the prologue's role as a mediator crossing the barrier between the world of the play's fiction and the reality of the playhouse. Epilogues in Early Modern drama on the other hand were often highly apologetic in tone and their metatheatrical character caused the play to refer beyond itself. Frequently begging indulgence and applause, epilogues renegotiated authority to the original playgoers of Ford's, Brome's and Shirley's plays and tried to ensure the play's post-scriptural future. The extant epilogues give evidence to the fact that all three playwrights as well as their contemporary dramatists saw a need to bridge the gap between actors and playgoers at the end of a performance in order to counter the sense of abruptness audiences may have felt after the fictional world of the play had collapsed. In general Ford, Brome and Shirley knew well how to use prologues and epilogues for their own ends. The wide range of plays analysed in the thesis' second part has shown the diversity of theatrical topics addressed in these framing devices, such as questions of staging, the roles of audience, actors and playwrights, repertory, competition and changing theatrical realities. The practice of commenting upon current topics and of bonding with the audience served to ensure the playwrights' and actors' popularity among their customers and was a crucial and cleverly constructed means to satisfy the playgoers' thirst for attention, flattery and entertainment. As Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann have noted with regard to the profitableness of analysing Early Modern framing devices, the "self-consciousness [...] makes dramatic prologues

[and epilogues] extremely valuable for the pursuit of not only literary history and the history of performance, but cultural history as well."¹³⁸³ My thesis followed a similar approach insofar as the framing devices examined in the second part were used to furnish evidence from the plays for the contentions made in the analysis of the social-historical and cultural context in the first part.

The dramatic works written and staged between 1616 and 1642 as well as the culture that produced them exhibit a quality hitherto too seldom appreciated by modern scholarship. The Caroline Period in particular has suffered severely from the lack of attention as well as the hasty condemnations and claims of earlier generations. I hope that in the future more people from both inside and outside the academic circle will come to value the importance of these final years of Early Modern English drama. When the theaters finally reopened with only two venues in 1660, playwrights, actors and actresses as well as audiences saw themselves faced with fundamentally changed circumstances and could themselves not have been any more different from their predecessors of some 20 years earlier. The closing of the theatres in September 1642 by means of a parliamentary order which regarded the playhouses as dangerous places where subversive ideas could both be shared and executed cut short one of the most valuable eras of English literature which had started some 70 years earlier when professional and institutionalised acting found its home in the nation's capital. The cut was irrevocable and Restoration drama can for many reasons not be regarded as a continuation of Elizabethan, Jacobean or Caroline traditions, but must be seen as something radically and profoundly different of which the complete disappearance of the public stage is ample proof. The promising and flourishing careers of playwrights such as Ford, Brome, Shirley and many others were fatally disrupted by this social and political crisis which shook England to the very foundations. Though the playwrights increasingly dramatized the tensions and changes characterising their society, the downfall of Early Modern drama was not brought about by internal forces but exclusively by external factors far beyond the theatres' control and influence.

¹³⁸³ Bruster and Weimann. *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 153.

On rereading my thesis, I am deeply aware of the many aspects that could not be mentioned. I hope however that what I have written has encouraged my readers to also occupy themselves with a highly interesting era of English literature that has not yet received the attention it deserves and answer some of those questions that still remain unanswered. To conclude my thesis and following the custom of audience address in Early Modern drama, I would like to quote the first four lines of Richard Brome's epilogue to *The Sparagus Garden* again to humbly ask for my readers' indulgent goodwill and benevolence:

AT first we made no boast, and still we feare,
We have not answer's expectation here,
Yet give us leave to hope, as hope to live,
That you will grace, as well as Justice give.¹³⁸⁴

¹³⁸⁴ Brome. Epilogue. *The Sparagus Garden. The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*. Vol. 3, p. 115.

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