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Marissa P. Lambert March 28, 2012

Curtain Call, or From the Master of Revels to the Lieutenant Général de Police: Theatre Censorship in London and Paris from 1660 to 1737

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An abstract of a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of History

2012

Abstract

Curtain Call, or From the Master of Revels to the Lieutenant Général de Police:

Theatre Censorship in London and Paris from 1660 to 1737

By Marissa P. Lambert

The period from 1660 to 1737 saw significant changes in the way the legitimate theatres of London and Paris were censored by the English and French governments. The theatres had been officially or unofficially censored from centuries before, but it is between the foundings of the royal theatres in London (1660) and Paris (1680) and the 1730s that the *way* in which the government attempted to censor changed.

I show that administrative changes in the official censorship and theatrical regulation account for the growing differences in the relative strength of theatrical censorship between London and Paris. While the official place of the English censor declined, causing a weakness in English censorship, the official place of the French censor remained constant, avoiding weakness in French censorship. In fact, when the French government became occupied with matters of succession in 1715, the French censor was able to increase his efficacy.

I have chosen 1660-1737 based on important dates in England that are roughly matched in France. The beginning date was the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne after the Cromwell Protectorate. One year later marked the beginning of Louis XIV's personal rule upon the death of Cardinal-Minister Mazarin. The end date corresponds to the imposition of the English Licensing Act of 1737, a last attempt to rein in unruly London theatres—a state of theatrical disarray that one can clearly contrast with Paris.

The structural positions of the Master of Revels in London and the *lieutenant général de police* (and in 1706, the police censor) in Paris were different from most other administrative jobs in the eighteenth century. The positions were not terribly important to the everyday functioning of government, but their products were very important politically and thus they were subject to official oversight by important administrators who could apply a great deal of power.

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Acknowledgements

Through the year and a half I have spent on this thesis, there are several people I would like to thank. Of course I owe my committee a large thank you, but I wanted in particular to thank Dr. Michael Evenden for acting as my surrogate advisor, while Dr. Miller was abroad this past year. I would be remiss not to thank again the History Department for giving me a Cuttino Scholarship to do much of my archival research this past summer.

I'd also like to thank Mr. Olivier de Bodman and Mrs. Anne de Bodman for kindly taking in a wandering American student in Paris and being the French family I never had two summers in a row. Hugs and kisses to Raphael, Axelle, and Violaine, too, for loaning me their parents. Last but not least are the family and friends who have encouraged me through a process that has not been very kind to me, that goes double for my parents, Helen and Charlie, who are now probably experts on this topic after all the drafts they read for me.

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As long as words a different sense will bear,

And each may be his own interpreter,

Our airy faith will no foundation find;

The word's a weathercock for every wind.

John Dryden
Poet and critic
Historiographer Royal
Poet Laureate of England

En vain contre le Cid un ministre se ligue,

Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue.

L'Académie en corps a beau le censurer,

Le public révolté s'obstine à l'admirer.

Nicolas Boileau
Satiriste et poète
Historiographe du roi
Membre de l'Académie française

PROLOGUE: INTRODUCTION

The period from 1660 to 1737 saw significant changes in the way the legitimate theatres of London and Paris were censored by their respective governments. The theatres had been officially or unofficially censored from centuries before, but it is between the foundings of the royal theatres in 1660 and 1680 until the 1730s that the *ways* in which the government attempted to censor changed. I will show that *administrative* changes in official censorship and theatrical regulation account for the growing differences in the relative strength of theatrical censorship between London and Paris during this time. On the one hand, the official place of the English

theatrical censor declined, causing a weakness in English censorship. On the other hand, the official place of the French censor remained constant, avoiding weakness in French theatrical censorship. In fact, when the French government became occupied with matters of succession in 1715, the French censor was able to increase his efficacy, whereas the opposite had occurred by the same time in England. The differences can be described as the devolution of political power in England leading to confusion over the legitimacy of the censor while the centralizing politics of France allowed the censor to cultivate his individual legitimacy in a way that translated to greater efficacy of censorship.

I have chosen to discuss the time period 1660-1737 based on two important dates in England that are roughly matched in France. The beginning date was the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne after the English Civil War and Cromwell Protectorate. Just one year later, 1661, also marks the beginning of Louis XIV's personal rule upon the death of Cardinal-Minister Mazarin. This period saw the respective foundings of the first royal theatres in London (1660) and Paris (1680). The end date corresponds to the imposition of the English Licensing Act of 1737, an Act of Parliament that completely revised the government's process and powers of censorship. It was a last attempt to rein in unruly theatres, which implied a state of theatrical disarray in London that one can clearly contrast with Paris.

Theatres in particular were socially and politically important because the audience for the stage encompassed all levels of society including the illiterate, unlike printed media which required at least rudimentary education. While much progress has been made in the study of literacy in the eighteenth century, and many would place it at levels far higher than early estimates, "the 'enlightened' public was not composed uniquely of reader-citizens."[1] Theatre was

[1] Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 227.

a sure index of "public taste" and intellectual changes. It reflected "almost intangible literary and intellectual movements, but it was intimately in touch with nearly all the great men of letters of the time." [2] Even if theatre failed to occupy the same place in the courts of the Stuarts or Louis XIV as it held in the governments like that of fifth-century Athens, one can still see that it became an important and permanent fixture for both the government and the populace. [3]

Since the relative importance of the theatre changed fairly little during this time period, I will be looking at the way the government tried to control it. The structural positions of the Master of Revels in London and the *lieutenant général de police* (and in 1706, the police censor) in Paris were different from most other administrative jobs in the eighteenth century. The positions were not terribly important to the everyday functioning of government, but their products were very important politically and thus they were subject to official oversight by very important administrators who could, if they chose, apply a great deal of power to either help or hinder the censor.

ACT I: SETTING THE STAGE: The Secondary Literature

How do we understand the word "censorship"? Most people conjure up images of repression, or sinister government misdeeds; the censor is often viewed as the "villain" in stories of creative work—the artist and his work are martyred on the pyre of government regulation. This simplistic viewpoint with its emotional overtones accounts for the fact that there are almost no stories from the censor's point of view. While *history* has provided numerous examples of angry suppressors of public expression, the *theatre* has usually lacked such a figure, especially in

[2] Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900: Volume II Early Eighteenth Century Drama* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 1925), 3.
[3] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince sacrifié: Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 9.

pre-industrial Europe. In fact, society on the whole in the eighteenth century seemed quite accepting of theatrical censorship.[4]

Censorship is inherently political, and thus often considered a government tool, but it is also administrative.[5] Individual personality aside, it is often the *position* of the censor within a government that dictates the severity or aims of dramatic censorship. Administrative changes can account for much of the difference in the relative positions of the censor between two countries, especially those that are similar. By using two countries such as France and England, one can block for many variables: geographical location, cultural sophistication, religious fervor, trade contact, progress towards statehood or nationhood, and instead focus in on the relevant administrative changes.

Initially there was little scholarly interest in the theatre of the long eighteenth century because its literary merit was considered so limited as to dissuade much academic interest in it.[6] Despite that, there were steady forays with particular peaks of work done in the 1930s and then more in the1960s-70s. Aside from Renaissance-era histories,[7] the groundwork for our current understanding of "the censor" started with E. K. Chambers' *Notes on the History of the Revels Office under the Tudors*[8] in 1906 and was followed by a spate of other studies in the following

[4] Calhoun Winston, "Dramatic Censorship," in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 287.
[5] Jules Bonnassies, *La Censure Dramatique* (Paris: Librairie André Sagnier, 1873), 5.
[6] Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama: 1660-1900 Volume II Early Eighteenth Century Drama* (Cambridge: The University Press, Third Edition, 1955), 1.
[7] There was produced an anonymous 1573 report of the Office of the Revels that explains the original purpose of the English Master of Revels, which begins: "The Office of the Revelles, as it shoulde seems by reporte, hath in tymes past bene in that order, That the prince beinge disposed to pastyme would at one tyme appoynte one persone, at sometime an other, suche as for creditte pleasaunte witte and habilitye in learnynge he thought meete to be the *master* of the Revelles for that tyme…" British Library, Lansdowne MS 83, f.158, reprinted in E.K. Chambers, *Notes on the History of the Revels Office Under the Tudors* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1906), 1-4.
[8] E.K. Chambers, *Notes on the History of the Revels Office Under the Tudors* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1906).

years.[9] An issue with these early works is that they did not question their own premises, that they saw no cause "to reexamine the actual processes of government, their relationship with the drama…or the censorship they enforced."[10] Their model of government censorship was repressive, stemming from corrupt officials and despotic regimes and as such, these initial forays were often "partisan and incomplete,"[11] produced to promote or reject larger ideas of censorship on the whole.

It took until the second half of the twentieth century to overcome these deficiencies. The spurt of history-writing that occurred in the sixties and seventies was inspired in large part by new or previously forgotten manuscript material,[12] while the formal elimination of the British theatrical censor in 1968 brought the topic back into the public eye. This body of work, which is incredibly well researched and which provides the main basis for the current scholarship on censorship, is nonetheless tempered by incomplete understandings because of the specific aims and approaches of the studies.[13] Earlier historians such as Harry Pericord were mostly concerned with compiling hard facts such as ticket sales, taxes, press coverage, etc.,[14] and giving a factual report of who said what and when, including little analysis of what the governmental restrictions

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[9] French monographs on dramatic censorship are few and far between, so the earliest works on the position of the censor were Anglophone and focused on the English Master of Revels while French mentions of the *lieutenant général de police* were focused on his larger non-censorial role. These early English works include Virginia Gildersleeve's *Governmental Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama* in 1908, Joseph Adams' compilation of *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert* (1917), as well as E.K. Chambers' 4 volume series on *The Elizabethan Stage* and G.E. Bentley's seven-volume *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*.

[10] Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 4.

[11] Ibid, 4.

[12] Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (Revised Edition) (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), x.

[13] Works from the first period include: Arthur White, "The Office of the Revels and Dramatic Censorship During the Restoration Period," *Western Reserve University Bulletin*, NS 34, no.13 (September 1931); P.J. Crean, "The Stage Licensing Act of 1737," *Modern Philology* 35 (1938); while works from the second period encompass: L.W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama 1737-1824* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1976); Calhoun Winton, "The London Stage Embattled: 1695-1710," *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, 19 (1974); John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[14] Harry Pericord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick* (New York: King's Crown Press of Columbia University, 1954), ix-x.

and interactions actually meant.[15] This "data-gathering" style of scholarship, the "meticulous mapping of plays, performers, and performances" is the hallmark of such great writers as Allardyce Nicoll and Robert Hume,[16] but it would be later generations that began the work of interpretation.

This leads us to the 1980s and 90s during which several opposing historiographical movements came to be, mostly in English-language scholarship. New methods and topics were hypothesized; ideology and discourses and not just structures became possible foci of study.[17] The audience and the public became popular topics or approaches, and the model became to approach the questions of censorship from the angle of the subversive potential of the texts censored and the governments' corresponding fear of them. The questions being asked in the 1990s centered on the viewpoint from which the history was written. Many challenged the traditional view of events like the Enlightenment in an attempt to rethink what historians thought they knew. The accessibility of documents and new interpretations have created a body of work that answers most factual questions about the process of censorship so that there is now a solid background, that theatrical analyses are "refreshingly steeped in cultural and political history."[18] More current scholarship has begun to systematize the thematic analysis in an otherwise

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[15] P.J. Crean, "The Stage Licensing Act of 1737," *Modern Philology* 35, no. 3 (Feb. 1938): 239-255; Alfred Jackson, "The Stage and the Authorities, 1700-1714 (As Revealed in the Newspapers)" *The Review of English Studies* 14, no. 53 (Jan. 1938): 53-62; Harry Pericord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick* (New York: King's Crown Press of Columbia University, 1954); Jules Bonnassies, *La Comédie-Française, Histoire administrative (1658-1757)*. Paris : Didier et C[ie], Libraires-Editeurs, 35 Quai des Augustins, 1874 ; Sylvie Chevalley, *La Comédie- Française: monographie établie par Sylvie Chevalley avec le concours des services de la Comédie-Française* (Paris: Comédie Française, 1961).

[16] Bridget Orr, "Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality [sic] and the English Stage, 1660-1720 (Book Review)," *Comparative Drama* 41 no. 3 (September 2007): 386.

[17] J. Douglas Canfield, *Heroes and States: On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 2.

[18] Peggy Thompson, "Spectacular Suffering: Women on the English Stage, 1660-1720," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 113.

scattered body of knowledge of this era of drama.[19] In the twenty-first century these divisions have mellowed somewhat by further work, by "convergent developments" in the multiple approaches.[20]

Even with these advances, the study of the theatre is lacking, especially considering that official theatrical censorship remains mostly unexplored, so it is a subject that should be taken more seriously.[21] A study like mine is thus relatively rare, as most existing monographs choose to focus on the question of censorship from the perspective of the literature (see below). The position of theatrical censor has not been adequately treated in a dedicated monograph, although theatrical censorship has been written about, especially in a religious or moral mode. The founding of official theatres in London and Paris necessitated the re-conceptualization of official censorship and of the traditional censor's position regarding the theatrical institution, which has not been discussed. Most works on late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century theatrical censorship are thematically related[22] but offer little for the questions I ask. Those that encapsulate the subject matter offer accounts *of* censorship or censors but provide little by way of understanding the administrative reasons *behind* censorship.[23]

The best model for this study that I have found (though over twenty years old) is Richard Dutton's *Mastering the Revels* which seeks to "contextualize the office of Master of the Revels

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[19] Paula De Pando Mena, "Review," *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 31 no. 1 (June 2009): 191.
[20] Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer, eds., *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage (*New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xiv.
[21] Robert Tittler, "Recent Writing on Early Modern British Urban History (c.1540-1720)," *History Compass* 2 (2004): 1-12 (www.history-compass.com).
[22] Popular topics include nationalism, feminism, popular culture, or popular expression on stage. The reader is invited to scan titles in the attached bibliography for examples.
[23] See John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil (*London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970); G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908); Fowler, Frank and Frank Palmer, *Censorship in England* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1913).

and his duties as censor."[24] He approaches the work by examining the many official decrees of the Master of Revels to track how the system of censorship emerged and worked. According to Dutton, and I agree, the systems of regulation can only be understood through the systems of government from which they descend.[25] His ultimate aim giving an account of institutional interference in *drama*[26] is close to my topic, which is to determine the institutional interference in *censorship* itself (i.e. what controlled the censor, not what the censor controlled): how the administration of the state affected the process and not just the product. The setting is also divergent, with Dutton's study falling neatly into the huge body of renaissance studies that have attracted scholars for decades.[27] Most scholars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have ignored the literary merit of the produced drama to explore the popular concerns and the political issues that were written between the lines.[28] By working chronologically, I hope to prove Dutton right by following the changing role and responsibilities of the Master of Revels in London and the *censeur de police* in Paris so that we can make some sense of the situation and changing purpose of the censor, and why he succeeded or failed.[29]

There has been less fascination with the French counterpart to the Master of Revels. Censorship in France remains « un sujet très rarement traité. »[30] One of the only substantial monographs on it for this time period is Georges Minois' *Censure et culture sous l'Ancien*

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[24] Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 6.
[25] Ibid, 47.
[26] Ibid, 9.
[27] J. Douglas Canfield, *Heroes and States: On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 3.
[28] See Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer, eds. *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660-1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[29] Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 16.
[30] Martine Poulain, "Censure et culture sous l'Ancien Régime," *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France* 40, no. 6 (1995): 120-121.

Régime, which covers the general history of censorship in France from the invention of the printing press through the Revolution.[31] Like most studies, Minois' focuses on printed material and is similar to Robert Darnton's *Forbidden Best Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (coincidentally published the same year),[32] in that it attempts to locate in the clandestine literature the seeds of popular political culture and the origins of the Revolution. The majority of French censorial work concerns the regulation of books and other printed material.[33] This type of scholarship has shown that when the office of the lieutenant-general of police for Paris took over control of book censorship it established a bureaucratic procedure for policing the ever-growing number of new editions.[34] As such, it does not address the question of theatrical material. While many plays were, in fact, printed, the theatre remained primarily a performance art. Perhaps this is why in the body of scholarship on Old Regime publishing and censorship "the world of theater scarcely appears" despite the fact that plays reached a greater portion of the population than their printed counterparts.[35] The study of print censorship often also follows the traditional pattern of literary analysis instead of administrative analysis.

The French state from the 1680s to the 1740s had received scant revisionist attention until more recently, remaining understood in only basic ways. The older historiographical tradition for this time emphasized political stagnation, characterizing the era as one of stasis, one in which

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[31] Georges Minois, *Censure et culture sous l'Ancien régime* (Paris: Fayard, 1995).
[32] Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).
[33] The most recent work includes Raymond Birn, *Royal Censorship of Books in Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) and Robert Darnton, *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France, 1769-1789* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995).
[34] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 241.
[35] Ibid, 242; A relatively recent exception to that rule is the English-language *Listening in Paris* by James Johnston which focuses on the audience of Parisian opéra.

"the administration continued on its well-worn paths."[36] Absolutism became the accepted mantra similar to the Whig narrative of England.[37] Early analysis found evidence of centralization beginning with Louis XIII,[38] and Ernest Lavisse, Pierre Gaxotte, and Pierre Goubert did note that late in Louis XIV's reign the various bureaus became "more clearly defined and specialized," initiating the era of an administrative monarchy.[39] Yet the significance of this administrative monarchy has remained largely unexplored.[40]

Recent studies of the 1990s have shown that the response to the heavy military and fiscal pressures of the second half of Louis XIV's reign forced changes in administration, leading to "political experiments and expedients that prompted individuals to engage new political practices, ideas, and languages…"[41] Daniel Roche has put forward the notion that "the state" is an entity distinct from the society it sought to control.[42] Recent research into the political culture of old regime France has uncovered fluidity between public and private that is in opposition to that distinction, in numerous institutional spaces the state and society blended so thoroughly as to frustrate any effort to mark distinct boundaries.[43] Public officials could conduct their business through private channels and vice versa,[44] which shows that private enterprise took part in government regulation, though it often left the government responsible for failures.[45] Instead of

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[36] David K. Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002):491; Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 14.
[37] Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 1.
[38] Ibid, 1; see Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien régime and the French Revolution*, trans. S. Gilbert (London: Anchor, 1955), 132.
[39] Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 214.
[40] David K. Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002): 491.
[41] Ibid, 494.
[42] Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 12.
[43] David K. Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002): 492-93.
[44] Ibid, 493.
[45] See generally François Bluche, *Louis XIV*, trans. Martin Greengrass. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 146-151.

setting up a new, differentiated administrative system, the "innovation" in French politics was more aimed at adapting the current structure to new challenges.[46] And because there was no pre-established administrative post for the theatrical censor, the essential invention of the job at the exact turn of the century, though it took a little while to work out, gave the French censor an advantage over his English counterpart. The French censor benefitted from the freedom of limited precedents to follow, contemporary goals to achieve, and access to more resources. What the recent scholarship has demonstrated "is that the government of Louis XIV continued to have much in common with that of its predecessors." It was distinguished by "an ability to make old methods of rule function more effectively and the restoration of order was the result."[47] To this extent we find the perpetuation of bureaucracy in France, and the model that emerges is of a government where the "deft distribution of patronage, or careful management of the nobility, seems more important than the centralising drive of an absolutist bureaucracy." But that only "raises awkward questions about exactly what type of state, or society, the *ancien régime* monarchy represented."[48] These are questions that are pertinent to the implementation of censorship, too.

On the opposite side, the English state has been deluged with works attempting to uncover the secrets of its politics and administration. For a long time the established narrative was the inexorable rise of a constitutional state dating back to the Magna Carta.[49] The traditional (Whig) conception of England was of a modern country ruled by a reactionary court,[50] but that

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[46] Examples of scholarship on French political innovation include David Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002): 490–537.
[47] Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 19.
[48] Ibid, 15.
[49] Ibid, 1.
[50] Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer, eds., *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage (*New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xii.

narrative has been changing, especially with changing conceptualizations of the state and modernity. In particular there has been intense scrutiny of party politics, which seems to have validated the idea of a divided, two-party constituency.[51] Current works have less fascination with ideology and "high politics" and some approaches even drop the political focus altogether.[52] After carefully eliminating previous (often teleological) conceptions of the British constitutional monarchy, there is, as of now, little consensus as to the proper view of the politics of England from the Renaissance on. Even so, censorship is "one area where drama and the processes of government unmistakably met,"[53] which allows it to overcome many of the divisions of current historiography.

And still, perhaps due to a bias towards the creative and revolutionary, most studies that have attempted to address the theatre have focused on the playwrights and not their censorial shadows. There have been many monographs using close readings of topical plays to attempt to uncover the *moeurs* of the society, what was important or troubling or popular, to find history in the dramatic text. I am thinking here of such studies as J. Douglas Canfield's, which analyzes the imagery of heroic tragedy to uncover political fears and ideals during the Restoration, or Linda Colley's, which looks at the nation-building powers inherent in group representation. Such stories often do not examine the internal processes of government, or at least not for very long.[54] Examples that are closer to a linkage of stage and state are rarer. A good example is John Brewer,

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[51] Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (Revised Edition) (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), xvii.
[52] Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer, eds., *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xi.
[53] Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 6.
[54] J. Douglas Canfield, *Heroes and States: On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 1; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) ; for other examples of tangential works see Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons: A Study of the Eighteenth-Century London Audience* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1971); Jean Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660-1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Susan Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

who in his "*Pleasures of the Imagination*,"[55] describes the shift of English high arts from the court to the city of London as it grew in size and economic power, and how it came to overshadow the royal court in the eighteenth century. The French literature is similar in focus, though there is seemingly less in total. French-language monographs such as *Le Prince sacrifié*[56] deal with the importance of theatre to the king while English-language sources have taken interest in the moral controversy raised by theatre, specifically Jonas Barish (*The Antitheatrical Prejudice*), and Henry Phillips (*The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth-Century France*).[57]

Instead of following in this historical-cultural vein, I am positing that there are significant *administrative* changes that serve to illustrate the shifting focus and power of governmental regulation of the stage, changes that have been mostly ignored. Often the plays really are more exciting than the censor, and it is easier to favor the flashy hare than the plodding tortoise, but as in Aesop's fable, the censorial tortoise frequently prevails.

ACT II: PRE-ROYAL THEATRE BACKSTORY

I will begin with a brief overview of theatrical regulation up to my proposed time period. While a good play limits lengthy exposition, it is necessary to look at the non-controversial history to make a proper comparison with the end product. Early modern European utilization of the theatrical apparatus for political purposes can be found in Tudor England, when courtly and other writers created short interludes to be played between acts of the main entertainment or

[55] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[56] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince sacrifié: Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985).
[57] Henry Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

event. They were intended to instill good morals in the audience, censor the bad, and not coincidentally use the people's love of entertainment to secure loyalty to the government.[58] These pieces were originally written by private parties, but were eventually adopted by the government. The insertions began as a way to bring issues to the government's attention, but were later censored into vehicles for state propaganda.[59] These interludes were the impetus for some of the first theatrical censorship in England, whose earliest known law regarding censorship of "appropriate" matter dates from 1543:

> by reason an Occasyon of the manyfold and sundrye Enterludes and commen Playes that nowe of late days have been by dyvers and sondrye persones more commonly and besylye set foorthe…[leading many and especially youth] to all proclyvytye and Redynes of dyvers and sondrye kyndes of vyce and synne…to the greate decaye and hurt of the common wealth…his highnes therefore straitlye Chargethe and commaundethe that no maner of person of persones…playe or set foorthe or cause to be played any maner of Enterlude or commen playe [unless in particular controlled situations set forth in the act].[60]

The power of theatre to sway those who see it has been debated, as mentioned in the above order, since Plato wrote his *Republic*.[61] This debate became doubly important when coupled with the absolutist monarchy's use of pageantry and spectacle both to promote its own power and to impress and entertain others in a performance-based rulership. Harnessing that power would be a key accomplishment and theatre therefore acquired the status of an official art over which the state possessed a right of supervision. In the intervening years of the Renaissance the dramatic tradition grew, producing some of the world's most famous playwrights from Shakespeare and Jonson in England to Corneille and Molière in France. Public theatres developed and then proliferated in the seventeenth century in both countries (though limited economic support would

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[58] Mary Polito, *Governmental Arts in Early Tudor England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 77.
[59] Ibid, 80.
[60] Norman Sanders et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English* vol.II (London: Methuen, 1980), 25-6.
[61] Plato wrote his *Republic* c.380 BCE, and in it he proposed banning all theatre from his ideal country.

necessitate the closing or merging of those in Paris into the Marais troupe, Molière's troupe, and the Comédie Italienne). Formal aristocratic patronage developed and blossomed into royal patronage of certain theatrical troupes.

Not only could the theatre influence citizens, but well-placed entertainment could also sway visitors and improve the country's international standing. A list of early eighteenth-century playbills from the Theatre Royal Drury Lane amply evidences this fact: almost every week they list under the name of the play a notation that it was requested for ambassadors or other persons of a certain quality.[62] Writing between 1756 and 1780 in France, Papillon de la Ferté explained to a courtier that Royal-sponsored spectacles had increased the Court's international prestige and brought in needed foreign gold and silver. The chief officer of French courtly entertainments referenced the earlier period of Louis XIV's reign: "I cited [le Grand] Colbert who thought … that the Court needed spectacles capable of exciting the curiosity of strangers & creating thereby the traffic and consumption advantageous to the State."[63] The politicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may be accused of many things, but refusing to be opportunistic is not one of them. Theatre was thus a natural concern that would require official oversight at the highest levels.

In the eighteenth century, the artistic capital of the European world was Paris. For all that the English derided the effeminacy and luxury of the French court, it was French styles they most imitated. This mimicry extended far into the theatrical world for some time. Eventually

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[62] National Archives (Kew), Add. MS. 32,249, Latreille Playbill Collection; examples include « 1703 : F Jan 1 For the Entertainment of Senor Dm &c and several other strangers lately come from Spain. The Island Princess," p.4; or "1703: T June 22 For the Entertainment of His Excellency the Envoy Extraordinary (from the King of Denmark) and several other foreign ministers and Ladies of Quality…" p.6

[63] Papillon de la Ferté, *Journal des Menus Plaisirs du Roi 1756-1780* (Paris: Éditions paleo, 2002), 8-9. « Je lui citai Colbert qui pensait au contraire qu'il fallait à la Cour des spectacles capables d'exciter la curiosité des étrangers, & d'occasionner par là une circulation & une consommation avantageuses à l'Etat. » (Above translation mine.) Jean Baptiste Colbert (the senior), 1619-1683, known as "le Grand," instituted a form of state sponsored capitalism and mercantilism to improve the French economy. His economic innovations, known as "colbertisme," largely withered after his death in 1683.

London and Paris progressed along separate but somewhat parallel artistic paths. However, the growing London economy with its increasing resources started to replace the royal court as the center of matters artistic. John Brewer noted the artistic transfer to a growing economy: "as London grew in importance as a centre for the arts, so it and the activities within in became matters of moral deliberation and aesthetic representation,"[64] which is to say, censorship began to matter more. This is why a parallel comparison of the English and French cases is so interesting: geographical proximity and historical similarities closely linked the two countries, and yet by the eighteenth century, their theatrical subjects and systems of theatrical governance became decidedly different.

In England the beginning of state censorship is bound up with the person of the Master of Revels. Founded under Henry VIII and initially in charge of planning festive occasions, the Master of Revels became a censorial force for the first time under Elizabeth I in 1581, when the powers of Edmund Tilney[65] were expanded to include censorship of the theatre. Responding to the proliferation of drama in England's "Golden Age," Tilney was tasked with protecting royal interests, which he did through approving manuscripts or "fair copies" of plays prior to performance.[66] His patent for the work allowed him to commit offending parties to prison without bail for as long as he thought fit,[67] and that allowed him to earn his living by charging fees to the writers or producers seeking his approval. (The fact that he worked in unpublished material[68] may herald the later problems to come with the advent of cheap printing since he would have less familiarity with it when it arrived.) This was mostly the status quo, as the Master

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[64] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 54.
[65] Edmund Tilney, 1536-1610, was Master of Revels from 1579 till his death.
[66] John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 25.
[67] Gerald Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 145.
[68] E.K. Chambers, *Notes on the History of the Revels Office Under the Tudors* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1906), 80.

of Revels established his own precedent and remained the traditional figure of regulation, until 1624. In that year, censorial power was formally transferred to the higher political authority of the Lord Chamberlain, [69] although the Master of Revels[70] continued to exist under his aegis. In reality, however, the job remained the same and the Master of Revels was allowed to continue as he had for half a century. This remained the case up to the English Civil War (1642–1651) when the Puritan Commonwealth (1649–53) and Protectorate (1653–59) banned stage plays and thus effectively removed the need for a Master of Revels.

In France there was no singular censorial post prior to the eighteenth century. France in the late seventeenth century has been identified with a huge creative output (for example Molière, Corneille, and Racine were all writing at this time) precisely because up to 1673 the troupes of *comédiens* retained the freedom to hire actors and perform plays as they saw fit.[71] Censorship in seventeenth-century France was still a long way from the organized institution it would become before the end of the *ancien régime*.[72] Even so, some measure of censorship or control was considered "natural" early on.[73] There was some activity under Francis I (r.1515-1547), but the theatre was free through the reigns of Henri III (r.1575-1589) and IV (r.1589-1610), minus selected episodes of "mauvaise humeur royale." It was not until 1699 that censorship was

[69] William Herbert, 1580-1630, Earl of Pembroke, was Lord Chamberlain from 1615 to 1626 and later Chancellor of Oxford University.
[70] Officially Sir John Ashley was the Master of Revels from 1622 to his death in 1640. He informally sold the office to Henry Herbert, a relative of William Herbert, in 1623.
[71] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince Sacrifié : Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1985), 27. « bénéficient d'une grande liberté dans le recrutement des comédiens et le choix des textes dramatiques s'exerce sans censure. » (Translation mine)
[72] Jules Bonnassies, *La Censure dramatique* (Paris: Librairie André Sagnier, 1873), 64. « était loin d'être une institution organisée comme il la voyait à la fin de l'ancien régime… » (Translation mine)
[73] Ibid, 7.

"formellement rétablie," and even then many people did not notice, for under Louis XIII and the early years of XIV the regulation had been very pacific.[74]

But while there was little formal censorship, government regulation still existed. In 1673 two Parisian troupes were consolidated into one in a political move that would be echoed only seven years later to create the Comédie Française. In this case, the troupe of the Marais and Molière's old troupe were joined together to make the Guénégaud troupe.[75] The purpose was an experiment of le Grand Colbert's to see if he could dictate government policy to the arts.[76] It included appointing a specific actress to watch over company receipts, and forcing the actors to sign a permanence contract. The contract meant they could not leave for 20 years without paying a penalty of 10,000 *livres*, a large sum of money that effectively bound them to the troupe.[77]

ACT III: ENTER THE CENSOR, STAGE RIGHT

Based on the tumultuous period prior to the Restoration, it is easy to see how English censorship could have led to unintended consequences. In a way, the new formal censorship caused the collapse of the old censorship system, which in turn led to a temporary increase in freedom for the new theatres. We will see that the original shared monopoly of English theatres provided difficulties for the Master of Revels, as the privileged nature of the patent theatres and the close personal ties of their managers to the king allowed them to successfully refuse much of the censorship. The style of the drama itself, while harmonious with the ruling party, led the

[74] Ibid, 10-11. The *lieutenant général de police* in 1699 time was Marc René de Voyer de Paulmy, 1652-1721, marquis d'Argenson.
[75] For more information on the Parisian troupes prior to 1680, see Jan Clarke, *The Guénégaud Theatre in Paris 1673-1680* 3 vols (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1998-2007).
[76] Jean-Baptiste Colbert the senior was Secrétaire d'État de la Maison du Roi, among other titles.
[77] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince sacrifié: Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 28. « régenter selon une politique générale appliqué aux arts »

censor to a relaxed complacency from which it would be difficult to rouse once political circumstances changed.

At the onset of the Carolinean Restoration (1660-61), the theatre was firmly an institute of the court.[78] Even so, Charles still re-appointed the past Master of Revels, Sir Henry Herbert (1595–1673), to watch over it.[79] Herbert thought he had regained a lucrative post and was no doubt disillusioned by the new state of affairs, as according to Calhoun Winton it "was clear almost from the outset…that matters were going to be different under the new Stuart king."[80] Despite reinstalling Herbert, the king chose a new path for the theatre instead of allowing it to prosper in the open as in the golden days of the Elizabethan era. He granted two royal patents to courtiers he knew from before the interregnum, William Davenant[81] and Thomas Killigrew.[82] Both men had remained loyal to the royalist cause during Cromwell's Protectorate, and Killigrew in particular had remained Charles' confidant during his exile. These patents were unprecedented meddling with the Master of Revels' and Lord Chamberlain's traditional duties of stage supervision.[83]

The patents were royal grants that gave the men a shared monopoly in the production of plays in London and prevented the kind of competition that might otherwise have come from "theatres of a less royalist complexion."[84] In short, Charles was hedging his theatrical bets, assuring that the powerful and often volatile tool of the stage remained loyal to both his political

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[78] John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 8.
[79] Henry Herbert, 1595-1673, had been the unofficial censor starting in 1623 and official censor from 1640, upon the death of his predecessor. Henry Herbert would serve as Master of Revels and official censor until his own death in 1673.
[80] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1980), 289.
[81] Charles I had appointed Davenant (1606-1668) Poet Laureate of England and Emissary to France.
[82] Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683) was Groom of the Bedchamber for Charles II and Chamberlain to Queen Catherine.
[83] John Loftis, *The Politics and Theatre in Augustan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 8-9.
[84] Ibid, 10.

and artistic tastes, though he circumvented the Master of Revels in his hurry. London theatre was thus established with royal approval, but not run by the king or government directly. It was a third-party commercial venture carried out by two courtiers, which shows that although the English state had sufficient bureaucracy to integrate and run a theatre,[85] it did not want to associate itself quite so closely with an institution labeled dirty and promiscuous. In one way the patents did make the job of royal censor easier by limiting the total amount of theatre to two companies:

> Our Pleasure, Is that there shall be noe more Plans of Representations nor Companies of Acto[rs] of the Playes or Operas by Recitative musick or Representations by danseing and scenes or any other Entertainments on the Stage In our Citties of London and Westminster…then the two to be now Erected by virtue of this Authority…[86]

Because of these patents, the years 1660-1663 in England were a "curious episode" of censorial history when the royal warrants of Killigrew and Davenant effectively bypassed the powers of the Master of Revels.[87] From this order we can see that instead of bringing theatre back in general, Charles kept the ban on public performance with the exception of Davenant's and Killigrew's future companies, ensuring his ability to control the theatre. Perhaps the small size of the companies and the personal connection between Charles II and Davenant and Killigrew rendered the censor's protection unnecessary. In fact, to one historian "nothing short of Homeric laughter" could adequately express the humor of imagining Killigrew and Davenant trying to "'expunge' scurrility from other men's plays"[88] as required by the wording of the patent. The mirth over the lack of real censorship undermined the power of the censor, and while it did

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[85] John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 64. Specifically Brewer states that while the British state was not quite a modern bureaucracy, "neither was it a quasi-feudal special interest, wedded to corporate privilege and individual gain." Instead, it was "efficient."
[86] British Library, Add.MS 19256, f. 47
[87] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 57.
[88] Ibid, 60.

not matter as long as the theatre remained courtly, the day was fast approaching when that assumption would not hold true.

Charles undermined the Master of Revels through intense personal interest and meddling that no later English monarch would repeat. On one hand the office was weakened under his reign, but on the other it was bolstered by his personal influence, which, when withdrawn would hurt the office. An example is Herbert's 1662 licensing of the play *The Cheats* by John Wilson, which was authorized by Herbert and personally banned by the King, who then tasked two other poets with re-censoring it. The "authority of the Master of the Revels had been undermined—in this case by the direct intervention of the king in appointing Waller and Denham, in effect to censor the censor."[89] Charles also intervened in 1682 to allow the performance of John Crowne's *City Politique* which had previously been banned by the censor.[90] From these and other examples one can see that Charles preferred to substitute his own judgment for that the Master of Revels: "the king himself often acted as the censoring force."[91] A less ambitious or crafty man than Herbert might not have been able to keep up the authority of the Master of Revels under such conditions of interference.[92]

Charles' action is important for two reasons. The first is that by ensuring his own tastes, the king was limiting the necessity for censorship in the first place. The popular styles of performance then were "Restoration Comedy" and "Restoration or Heroic Tragedy," which were bawdy, aristocratic, and sumptuous. Perhaps the decision lacked foresight, but at the time it might not have seemed so dangerous to let these theatres run free, since the general style

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[89] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1980), 296.
[90] Ibid, 297.
[91] Ibid, 298.
[92] Herbert was described by contemporaries as the most distinguished of Masters, a man of breeding, scholarship, and Parliament. He had a personal connection with dramatic literature as his brother George was a successful poet. It is possible that this personal connection to the arts gave him an insight that led to his success as a censor. G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 42.

affirmed the hegemony of the ruling class. Additionally, the royal theatres were expected (and did in the beginning) to respond to large royal occasions (the custom appeared in France, too). We can see that both patent theatres were connected enough to the court to close down in mourning for the deaths of major aristocrats as well as royalty.[93] In the early years, actors in the two royal companies were also granted official livery to wear as servants of the king,[94] and status as part of the royal household was enough to get them out of trouble.[95] This made up for the fact that the royal theatres of England (unlike those of France) received no routine subsidy. Players would be compensated for trips to the royal court, but the theatre would become increasingly commercial as unofficial aristocratic patronage dried up and there was no royal paycheck to keep the theatre bound to it.[96] Commenting later, the Earl of Chesterfield complained that this too-close association had led to a lack of censorship and aristocratic stagnation in the theatre: "in King Charles the second's days…the playhouse retailed nothing but the politics, the vices and the follies of the court; not to expose them no, but to recommend them…"[97] No matter how it was noted, though, there was little organized opposition to the Restoration stage, throughout Charles' reign and into James II's. Unfortunately for these genres and perhaps for English theatre in general, this situation would be relatively short-lived: there was not an English monarch before or after Charles II (r.1660-1685) who offered comparable support of the stage.[98]

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[93] British Library, Add. MS 10,116, p.198 notes that the theatres closed in 1660 for the Duke of Gloucester's death.
[94] For examples of orders of royal livery for actors, see National Archives (Kew) LC 5/137, p.31 (29 July 1661), LC 5/60, p.245 (4 February 1662), LC 5/139 , p. 371 (29 October 1663), LC 5/138, p.65 (25 February 1666), and LC 5/62, f.1 (22 July 1667), after this date, though, warrants for livery for the actors become very rare.
[95] Servants of the king could not be detained because it would deprive the king of their function. Arresting authorities had to clear the arrest beforehand with the appropriate authority, in actors' cases, the Lord Chamberlain. For example, see National Archives (Kew) LC 5/184, f.36v which requests the release of actor Lacy be released from prison (1661).
[96] For examples of payment orders for players' trips to court, see LC 5/137, p.100 and p.110 (1662) or LC 5/153, p.141 and p.145. For an example of the unofficial payment actors received in the form of food and drink at court,
[97] M. Maty, ed, *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Phillip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield* vol. 1, part 2 (London: Printed for Edwards and Charles Dilly, 1777), 237-8.
[98] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 360.

Charles' use of the royal patents to grant a shared monopoly was not initially well-accepted. There had been over twenty official theatrical companies during the reign of Elizabeth I,[99] and some viewed Charles' move as counter to tradition.[100] "With a bureaucrat's instinct," Herbert recognized immediately that this "represented an encroachment on his authority"[101] and decided to use the unpopularity of the restriction to his own advantage by mounting an attack on the patents. Although he cited subversion of tradition, Herbert was, in fact, more concerned about a more pragmatic issue: his income. Up until 1633, the King's Men paid the Master of Revels a whole day's takings from the Globe and Blackfriars companies in exchange for their license.[102] Thus, by allowing the two companies to be run independently of close regulation, the traditional bribes and fees garnered through regulating and approving drama in London would necessarily be reduced if not disappear altogether. In a written complaint to the king, Herbert attempted to persuade the reader that allowing Killigrew and Davenant to run their theatres independently was bad policy, bad government, bad law, and bad precedent. It was "destructive to the powers granted under the Great Seal to your petitioner, and to the constant practice of the said Office … and cannot legally be done as your petitioner is advised. And it may be of very ill consequence ..."[103] The Attorney General,[104] in charge of grants under seal, also had misgivings

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[99] The twenty named companies were: the King's Revels Children, the King's Revels Men, Lady Elizabeth's Men, Leicester's Men, Lord Strange's Men (later Derby's Men), Oxford's Boys, Oxford's Men, Pembroke's Men, Prince Charles's Men, Queen Anne's Men, Queen Elizabeth's Men, Queen Henrietta's Men, The Admiral's Men, The Children of Paul's, The Children of the Chapel (Queen's Revels), The King's Men, The Lord Chamberlain's Men, Sussex's Men, Warwick's Men, and Worcester's Men. In addition to these, there were countless peripatetic, or "strolling" troupes as well as semi-professional and amateur companies.

[100] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 7.

[101] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed. *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 289-90.

[102] E. K. Chambers, *Notes on the History of the Revels Office Under the Tudors* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1906), 285-87.

[103] British Library, Add.MS 19,256, f.48. [Y]our petitioner [Herbert] … looks upon it as…destructive to the powers granted under the Great Seal to your petitioner, and to the constant practice of the said Office, and exercised in the said Office ever since players were first admitted by authority to act plays and cannot legally be done as your

about the proposed plan, cautiously telling the king before the official decision that it would be better to retain ultimate control over the situation: "the matter was more proper for a toleration than a grant under the Great Seal of England…"[105] The grant gave permanent authority to the companies, whereas a toleration would have merely allowed the companies to operate as long as they behaved. The Attorney General's discomfort clearly implied that those in charge of rationing power thought they had something to fear.

In fact, they did have something to fear. The power of the patents took away the best leverage of the Master of Revels, and without it there was little censorship Herbert could accomplish or would probably even attempt to accomplish. In the slippery world of royal intrigue, a courtier would be wasting his time on a job with little pay or influence. Without any special power, Herbert's only official recourse was to the common justice system, taking up legal cases against the patentees.[106] Thus the patent holders had enormous powers to choose the repertory and to self-censor. This was a blow Herbert was not willing to accept. He refused to abate even "a whit of his pretensions" and continually attempted "to restore some or all of the very considerable powers he had exercised as Master of the Revels before the interregnum,"[107] begging and bargaining his way back to power.[108] Herbert must have despaired at his current state of affairs despite his progress, for he temporarily rented his position out to one Edward Hayward the same year.[109] Unfortunately, Hayward seems to have had even more trouble than

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petitioner is advised. And it may be of very ill consequence, as your petitioner is advised, by a new grant to take away and cut off a branch of the ancient powers granted to the said Office under the Great Seal.

[104] Sir Geoffrey Palmer, 1598-1670, Baronet of Carlton, who was previously the Solicitor General.

[105] National Archives (Kew) SP 29/10, no. 108.

[106] For example, Herbert's 1661-62 legal battle with William Davenant over the latter's defiance of authority. See British Library Add. MS 19.256, f.101.

[107] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1980), 294.

[108] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 60.

[109] The official decree was published in April 1664, though the transfer must have been earlier in the year.

Herbert, complaining several times to other officials about his difficulties collecting fees[110] and asking for an augmentation of the powers of the Master of Revels.[111] Clearly Herbert was not done with the position, though, for he officially took it back by 1665, publishing a formal notice that any regulation by Hayward was "void and of no effect."[112] During the time he was renting out his post, Herbert was still not content to leave the position alone. He pestered the king and harassed the two companies until Killigrew willingly agreed to "submit" to the authority of the Master of the Revels in 1662 and paid him to go away: "the sum of fifty pounds, as a noble present from them…And the said Henry Herbert does…promise…not to molest the said Thomas Killigrew…"[113] The status of the censor had indeed fallen when "reduced" to entering into a formal settlement with his charge, a mere Groom of the Bedchamber.[114] The submission was a good trade for Killigrew, who ensured that Herbert would leave the King's Men alone in their choices. This resulted in the powers of censorship "virtually passing from the Master of the Revels to Thomas Killigrew."[115] At Drury Lane the power slipped until Killigrew himself was made Master of Revels in 1673,[116] although this technically subjected him directly to the Lord Chamberlain's authority.[117]

Killigrew took over the job from Herbert and would hold it for four years. The ill-suitedness of Tom Killigrew as censor can be demonstrated by the Venetians who, known for catholic tastes, asked the English for his removal from Venice in 1650 for the poor effect he had

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[110] British Library, Add. MS 19,256, f.87.
[111] British Library, Add. MS 19,256, f.86.
[112] Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, eds., *A Register of English Theatrical Documents 1660-1737* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 71.
[113] British Library Add.MS 19,256, f.66.
[114] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 63.
[115] John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 25-26.
[116] Thomas Killigrew was Master of Revels from 1673 to 1677.
[117] Henry Jermyn, 1605-1684, Earl of St. Albans, was Lord Chamberlain from 1671 to 1674.

on the city's morals.[118] This was doubly evidenced by the frequent and vociferous attacks on theatrical morals by critics best exemplified by Jeremy Collier.[119] The appointment as Master of Revels, like the patent, was a political gift from the king instead of a merit-based appointment. Samuel Pepys wrote in his famous diary that Killigrew, having the office of the King's fool and jester, had the power to mock and revile even the most prominent without penalty.[120] It was a power that would have limited his fear of offending other aristocratic playwrights, but which probably earned him little by way of official respect. As a mere political appointee, Killigrew had as much experience censoring as he had had running a theatrical company, which was none at all. If his abysmal performance as a theatre manager was any indication, it can be assumed that censorship was an equivalent failure and it has been noticed that Killigrew never "ever censored anything."[121] In 1677 he was succeeded by his son, Charles Killigrew,[122] a nepotistic decision that was not the best, though Charles had more experience with theatrical affairs than his father. In any case, Charles Killigrew managed to hold onto the job into the eighteenth century and through the reigns of five monarchs. This was quite an anomaly, for although a new Master of Revels was not selected with each new monarch, from the time of Elizabeth through Charles I, there was a rough one-to-one correlation that Charles Killigrew disrupted.[123] The longevity of his service might seem to imply a dedication to the role of censor that belies the frequent political

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[118] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 66.

[119] Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) is probably best known for his long tirade against the stage called *A Short View on the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, together with a Sense of Antiquity Upon this Argument* (London: printed for S. Keble at the Turk's-Head in Fleetstreet, R. Sare at Gray's-Inn-Gate, in Holborn, and H. Hindmarsh against the Exchange in Cornhil, 1698) which vilified the stage and those who patronized it as sinful.

[120] Samuel Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Thursday, 13 February, 1668.

[121] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 297.

[122] Charles Killigrew, 1655-1725, a Gentleman of the Privy Bedchamber to Charles II, was Master of Revels from 1677 to his death.

[123] Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) with Edmund Tilney (1579-1610), James I (r. 1603-1625) with George Buck (1610-1622), Charles I (r. 1625-1649) with Henry Herbert (de facto 1623-interregnum in 1649), subsequent correspondences include George II (r. 1727-1760) with Charles Henry Lee (1725-1744).

turnovers, but I will show that, in the English case, the political progression should have resulted in a new censor who was up to date with the political situation and the monarch, instead of a vestige from the Restoration.

The political upheaval in England can be most clearly seen by moving forward in time to the Glorious Revolution (1688-89). The controversial Act of Succession installed the Protestants William and Mary as joint sovereigns in place of her father, the Catholic King James II. This bloodless *coup d'état* brought a noticeable shift in the ways in which political groups formed themselves. It led to developing more distinct party politics than the earlier "Country" party that had campaigned to limit the powers of central government.[124] The resulting creation of a bi-party[125] system is important because it created two opposing forces that could each use drama against the other, thus increasing personal, non-monarchical patronage on the whole. After this, party and other divisions seemed to erupt everywhere in England, as evidenced by the divisions in the Church, the press, the electorate, and, of course, the theatre.[126] The drama was an excellent conduit for political messages for and against the government, meaning the generally pro-monarchical Restoration theatre was at its end. More political plays meant that the Master of Revels had much more to censor, but he also had more complicated decisions to make.

If the censor's position had been mainly personal in the past, it was now a tool for a much larger political body. The aftermath of the Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution ensured that sectarianism was rife. Thriving commerce and powerful new financial interests made the nation richer, but they appeared to undermine the landed social order, to perpetuate economic and

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[124] John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 142.
[125] The party names changed several times before they were solidified into the "Whigs" and "Tories" known to the eighteenth century.
[126] Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (Revised Edition) (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), xvi.

political change, to "fragment society and destroy its unity."[127] Of economic importance was the founding of the privately owned Bank of England in 1694. It loaned money to the government, which stabilized government finances, and in return, the Bank was authorized to issue paper currency, which by increasing the flow of money and credit, jumpstarted the economy. Increasing commercialization was reflected in the patronage of the royal theatres, with the traditional gifts of livery being replaced with actual payment for the shows produced at court.[128]

With the more efficient machinery of party politics and arrival of "real or assumed patriotic sentiment," it is easy to see that the censor would have been busy.[129] It is not to be assumed, however, that all censorship was overtly political or concerned with political parties. The censoring of plays typically reflected the personal attitudes and beliefs of those involved, the "personal desire of particular politicians," sometimes people completely unconnected with the "Whig and Tory machines."[130] This is not to say, however, that theatrical censorship did not favor the party of the censor. Friendship with the Master of Revels or his superior, the Lord Chamberlain, could ensure the safe passage of questionable political sentiment in many plays. There was probably more interest in controlling theatre for personal gain, less interest in formal regulation. Another difference is that censorship could now be pulled in different directions within the government itself, so there was a lack of uniform progression, which opened many loopholes and permitted new precedents. London stages were increasingly used as "organs of

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[127] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 98.
[128] For example, June 19, 1704 produced two warrants, one for £50 to Rich at Drury Lane and the other for £75 to Thomas Betterton at Lincoln's Inns Fields, British Library, Add. MS 61,420, ff.15-16.
[129] Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama Volume II Early Eighteenth Century Drama*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), 21.
[130] Ibid, 21.

propaganda, in touch with the small group that was dominant politically…"[131] The English theatre began serving too many masters.

A major government expense that was controlled after the Glorious Revolution was the personal spending of the monarch, who was forced to call Parliament at least once a year to approve his personal expenditures. The financial controls likely exacerbated the personal disinterest of Mary and Anne in the theatre, which they considered immoral. Mary showed her distaste for it in issuing two Proclamations Against Vice (1698 and 1699), as Anne would do later (in 1702). Royal patronage of the stage at times proved decisive in English theatrical history. It was "highly influential in the reign of Charles II," but only minimally so in the short reign of James II, while occasionally decisive under William and Mary. The authority of these rulers was of prime importance in protecting managers and playwrights from forces inimical to the stage.[132] As personal protection diminished over time, the position of censor required more effort to reach socially acceptable decisions instead of relying on the personal wishes of the monarch. As discussed below, the position became less secure and while calls for censorship grew, the censor was rendered less able to respond adequately.

A particularly apt example of this comes from 1696. Too many political plays were slipping through the cracks and the Lord Chamberlain[133] re-directed the King's ire onto the Master of Revels, Charles Killigrew. He was in the future "to be very Careful in Correcting all Obsenistys & other Scandalous matters…"[134] As a corrective measure, Killigrew was now to censor all plays before their performance, a licensing requirement: "All plays [were] to be sent to

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[131] John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 2.
[132] *The London Stage, 1600-1800; a Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment (Compiled from the Playbills, Newspapers, and Theatrical Diaries of the Period* vol. 2-4 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965-68), xxvii-xxix.
[133] Charles Sackville, 1638-1706, Earl of Dorset and Earl of Middlesex was Lord Chamberlain from 1689 to 1697. William III also made him Privy Counselor and Knight of the Garter.
[134] National Archives (Kew), LC 7/1, p.43 (24 January, 1696)

the Master of the Revels to be licensed and his fees paid under penalty of silence."[135] And though this was not a new rule, its systematic enforcement was. While the situation led to technical strengthening of the censor's position, from another vantage it can also be seen as the Lord Chamberlain overruling the Master of Revels for not satisfactorily completing his job. This could potentially create confusion as to whose approval was needed. The situation was aggravated in 1699 when William III further involved the Lord Chamberlain[136] by issuing a "Notice to the Master of the Revels not to license any Play containing expressions contrary to Good Manners and should the Comedians presume to act anything he has struck out, notice is to be given to the Lord Chamberlain."[137] It *was* technically the Lord Chamberlain's responsibility to censor, but the task had traditionally fallen to the Office of the Revels, as discussed above. Again the Lord Chamberlain was becoming more active in censorship, "taking greater control, especially of religious and political issues which continued to be his main concern."[138] The Master of Revels and the Lord Chamberlain were not a united front, which would necessarily leave cracks in the censorship barrier.

The powers of the royal censor derived, of course, from Royal Prerogative, the inherent right of the sovereign, (supposedly) subject to no restriction.[139] With the limiting of monarchical power and the strengthening of the Privy Council and Parliament through the 1689 Bill of Rights and the 1701 Act of Settlement, all positions appointed through royal prerogative also saw their foundations undermined. As discussed above, party politics exacerbated the situation by affecting the workings of Parliament, impacting the ministries and impeding the personal power

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[135] National Archives (Kew), LC 5/152, p. 162.
[136] The successor chamberlain, Charles Talbot, 1660-1718, Duke of Shrewsbury, Gentleman-Extraordinary of the Bedchamber for Charles II, who was one of the seven who had invited William III to England. He was Lord Chamberlain from 1699 to 1700.
[137] National Archives (Kew), LC 7/3, f. 159.
[138] John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 26.
[139] Ibid, 26.

of the monarch. The party warfare extended past the House of Commons and "forced its way into government, racking successive ministries and rending the fabric of royal administration."[140]

Thus we can see that in England the official position of the censor was unclear from its reinstatement at the Restoration. Patent theatre rights, the absorption of the Master of Revels' discretion into the purview of the Lord Chamberlain, and the dwindling royal prerogative, all contributed to a rocky beginning to official censorship in London in the later years of the seventeenth century. In all, the struggle to impose a previously-established censorship position on a new theatrical situation caused lasting problems of authority.

ACT IV: ENTREZ LE CENSEUR, CÔTÉ COUR

In the French case we will see that the official government regulation of theatre was an improvised art. The creation of a royal theatre necessitated a governing body, and one was cobbled together and revised based on the absolutist model of government which assigned all power to the king. Louis XIV was very involved in theatrical life in Paris before the eighteenth century; the personal relationship with the monarch ensured good behavior from the Comédie Française even before there was an official and permanent censor. Luckily for Louis, from 1661 the French government was, for the most part, "a remarkably stable ministerial and conciliar system"[141] that allowed the government to censor the royal theatre without an established censorial position up through the end of the seventeenth century.

The *lettre de cachet* sent by the government in 1680 to what would become the Comédie Française expressed the French king's determination "to meld" the Guénégaud and Bourgogne troupes "to give them the means to perfect themselves more and more." As an incentive, the king

[140] Ibid, 150.
[141] William Doyle, ed., *Old Regime France: 1648-1788* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 140.

granted the combined troupe a partial monopoly on Parisian theatre such that "only the said troupe can present comedies in Paris forbidding all other French comedians from establishing themselves in said town and neighborhoods."[142] The use of a *lettre de cachet* instead of following administrative processes reinforces the notion that regulation of the theatre was then outside the formal administrative system.[143] Also, note that by specifically referring to "French comedians" the king left untouched the extant Comédie Italienne, which had been operating in Paris since c.1600. Paris, like London, would have two royally sanctioned companies, in effect, another shared monopoly.

Interestingly, unlike England, which had a long-established governmental position in charge of theatrical dealings, France had none. Perhaps this was due to the longstanding religious intolerance in France towards theatre[144] that would not have accepted too close a link between the government and the theatre, an outcome distasteful to the powerful Church.[145] Instead of creating a position at the birth of the Comédie, le Grand Colbert selected the *Premiers gentilshommes de la chambre*,[146] or the First Gentlemen of the King's Bedchamber, to supervise Paris theatre (and perhaps to use their high rank and numbers to dilute the theatre's stigma). These four dukes received new and unprecedented control, though they did not actually use it

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[142] Archives Nationales de France, O[1] 844, f.1. « Sa Majesthé ayant estimé a propos de ramis par doux troupes de comediens… afin de rendre par representaõne des comedies plus parfaites par le moyen des acteurs et actrices…et pour fair donner moyen de se profectionner deplus et plus, sad.[e] Ma.[te] veux que lad.[e] seule troupe puisse representer les comedies dans Paris faisant deffenses atous autres comediens françois de s'establir dans lad.[e] ville et fauxbourgs» (Above translation mine.)

[143] A written order signed by the king (or in his name), countersigned by a Secrétaire d'État and sealed closed, to be opened only by the named recipient. For more information see Claude Quétel, *Les lettres de cachet : Une légende noire* (Paris: Perrin, 2011).

[144] M. Barras, *Stage Controversy in France from Corneille to Rousseau* (New York: Publications of the Institute of French Studies, Inc., 1933), 7, 10.

[145] In total, the religious situations in England and France were quite similar. Virulent anti-theatrical sentiment from the Puritan quadrant of England may have been worse than the ongoing dislike of the Catholic Church against the French theatre, so Charles II's establishment of a royally-approved theatre could be seen as an act of religious defiance instead of the pleasant diversion as which it is often characterized. The official Catholic position against the theatre in Paris was more sustained and institutionalized however.

[146] The four gentlemen in 1680 seem to have been the duc d'Aumont, the duc de Saint-Aignan, the marquis de Créqui, and the duc de Gesvres.

autonomously. The fluctuating regulatory power made the Comédie a unique institution, "resembling the royal literary academy in its prestige…and the Book Trade in its commercial nature," although it supposedly had no competition.[147] It became comparable to the English theatrical system, overseen by the Master of Revels because in France the First Gentlemen, whose jobs in the *Maison du Roi* were too prestigious to deal with trivial details (the provenance of the *intendant* of the *Menus-Plaisirs*),[148] immediately delegated their authority to an 'inspector of the Comédie' who ensured the correctness of plays.[149] Another parallel with the English system was the double layer of authority, with the *Maison du roi*/King's Household having supervisory authority over the *Menus-Plaisirs*/Office of the Revels.[150]

Despite close supervision by the inspector in Paris, the actual decisions of the newly-christened Comédie Française were surprisingly autonomous. The *secretaires* of the Comédie were in charge of choosing pieces, thus the *comédiens* themselves, under the watch of the First Gentlemen, composed their repertory from works proposed by individual authors, which enabled them to respond to the demands of all audiences.[151] It was actually the playwright's job to obtain censorial approval, which meant the censor was not constrained by the desires of the king's favorite players and was consequently free to censor without much fear of retribution. The job entrusted to the *Premiers gentilshommes* was made much easier by the fact that the Comédie Française was "very conscious" of its allegiance to the king and showed it as much as possible,

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[147] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 243.
[148] Often the first *premier gentilhomme de la chambre* was also the controller of the Menus-Plaisirs, but the department of *argenterie, menus plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du roi* was subordinate to the greater *Maison du roi*.
[149] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 243.
[150] While the major supervision of the *Maison du roi* was split into four "*premiers gentilshommes de la chambre*," there was always a "first" among those four. In the early years of the Comédie Française this was the marquis du Créqui.
[151] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 245.

through its choice of topic and by suspending performance during sad ones (especially the deaths of royalty, just as in England) and extending the principle to the other extreme by giving free performances during happy times (for the king).[152] Because of this personal connection with the king dating from Molière's time, the Comédie and its chosen authors had a lot of freedom to put on what they chose.[153] This was counterbalanced by the fact that the actors were, above all, servants of the king, and were always on call for court performances, even up to the eve of the Revolution.[154] The players were rewarded for their loyalty in a very tangible way: from 1682 they were to receive an annual royal pension of 12,000 *livres* as servants of the king.[155] We see here that the administration of the theatre continued to be based on an older style of patronage, where the Sun King's (or his proxies') "royal largesse" convinced his subjects that rebelliousness was far less fruitful than cooperation.[156]

Just as in England, the style of theatre at the founding of the Comédie Française lessened the necessity of a French censorial figure. Neoclassicism kept the idea of the king's influence at the forefront of theatrical performances: the reason why *bienséance* needed to be practiced continually was partly out of respect towards a king who could potentially show up to watch the performance. Thus, actors were prohibited on aesthetic grounds from drawing swords on stage,

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[152] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 317; for instance the *Mercure gallant* proclaimed the respect of the comédiens for the royal family caused them to shut down the theatre as soon as news of the Queen's death reached them (August 1683, pp. 57-58) and upon the successful completion of a surgery by the king, the Comédie gave free public performances in celebration (February 1687, pp.61-63).

[153] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince sacrifié: Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 9. They « jouissent d'une liberté qui leur permet de mettre en scène une multitude de gouvernements possibles. »

[154] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neoclassical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 7.

[155] Archives de la Comédie Française, *Registre* (1680-81), p.79v : "…the King…desiring to gratify and treat favorably the troupe of his French actors in consideration of the services they render at his entertainments, His Majesty has accorded them and makes them a gift of an annual pension of 12,000 livres." (translation in William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 290).

[156] Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 19.

blaspheming, or maligning the king. Additionally, neoclassicism tapped into the august roots of drama, which is to say that they "consecrated" to art the law, literature, and learning of Classical antiquity,[157] thus giving the comedians extra weight in making decisions. It would be more difficult for the censor to dispute the decisions of the Comédie due to the *de facto* legitimization that came from their process of deliberation and aesthetic style. After the death of Molière (1673), the last playwright who spurned the rules and got away with it due to Louis XIV's personal admiration, obedience to neoclassical convention became the only way to survive in the official theatre. The strict structural and aesthetic regulation enforced by the Académie française was also a huge help to the censor in the seventeenth century. Founded by Richelieu in 1635, the Académie published its aesthetic findings and judged artistic work based on conformance with the neoclassical standards it propagated.[158] Perhaps this is why the first instance of official censorship did not occur in Paris until the eighteenth century (discussed below).

Incidents of early French censorship tended towards the "personal and episodic" rather than the "bureaucratic and systematic." The seventeenth century did see the strengthening of the bureaucratic system[159] in France that was necessitated by the sheer volume of government business transacted, what Michel Antoine terms an "administrative monarchy."[160] At the same time, we should not overestimate the modernization of the government structure.[161] The censor, the Académie, and many playwrights knew each other (unlike the developing "hack" tradition in

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[157] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neoclassical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 28.

[158] Neoclassical theatre not only prescribed the genre and characters, it also had strict formal rules based on length, number of acts, verse composition, etcetera. It is here that the alexandrine became the norm; Gregory Brown, *Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth Century: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater of the Enlightenment*, The Journal of Modern History 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 238-39.

[159] The term "bureaucracy" was coined in eighteenth-century France, see Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 5-6.

[160] Michel Antoine, *Le Conseil du roi sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Geneva: Droz, 1970), 629-34.

[161] Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 6.

England) and part of the censor's power depended not on his legal authority but his personal status among other professionals.[162] This meant that, unlike the case in England, the security of the censor's position did not diminish with evolving administrative structures. If the censor had personal legitimacy not stemming from royal prerogative, he had more personal sway and because there was neither a Bill of Rights nor an Act of Settlement in France to rearrange monarchical power, the stability of the administration empowered the role of *censeur*. Personal relationships with writers meant the censor took his job more seriously—the objects of attack or defense were actual people to him, potentially creating a greater commitment to the job. The French court held onto a courtly and ritualized sentiment that valued the ideal of gentility, an ideal that was somewhat lost in England upon the expansion of Parliament and the increasing importance of the Commons who were not imbued with the aristocratic tradition of courtly personal relations. These ideals remained in the French administration, and the lieutenant-general of police instructed censors to keep them in mind, for "it is above all when a hallowed name from the court is invoked that you will report" on the suitability of the play. For works considered questionable, the lieutenant-general referred the text to the courtier whose family would be mentioned for his approval.[163] It is conceivable that this attempt at gentility in his dealings would have earned the censor more respect than he had in the less personal British case, as it ensured that he maintained friends in high places.

Apparently the *Premiers gentilshommes* were not enough to regulate the theatre on their own, for Louis handed overall control of the royal theatres over to Madame la Dauphine,[164] in a probable attempt to bring her out of her natural reticence and make the future queen of France a

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[162] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth Century: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater of the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 238.
[163] Ibid, 251.
[164] Marie Anne Victoire de Bavière (1660-1690), wife of Louis of France, le Grand Dauphin who predeceased his father Louis XIV in 1711.

central figure of the court. She was given the ultimate authority, charged "par le roi de la Surintendance de théâtres,"[165] but her 1685 "Règlements de la Dauphine" not only meddled in the affairs of the *comédiens*, they became the official standards, the "fondement de règlements officiels de la Comédie-Française."[166] They set up a complicated bureaucracy that more closely mimicked the umbrella of the Lord Chamberlain's office in London whereby the *Premiers gentilshommes de la Chambre du roi*, « chargés de la haute direction des théâtres, » were to pass any and all orders of the Princess through the director of the *Menus plaisirs*.[167] This made the First Gentlemen the official intermediaries between the *comédiens* and the government. By reassigning a royal influence on the regulation of theatre, Louis XIV was demonstrating his essentially non-reformist attitude. Despite the innovations that can be credited in general to the regime, Donna Bohanan sees the government of Louis as "actually conservative and disinclined to innovate,"[168] so while accepting bureaucratic censorship, Louis was still maintaining traditional royal influence over the theatre.

1685 was also the year that the French court relocated to the recently-renovated chateau de Versailles. In a smart move to limit the influence of bureaucrats, Louis used traditional means to reassert control over the nobility that had rebelled in the Fronde only thirty years prior. Reassertion began with the court nobility,[169] the emphasis on etiquette and ritual enforced submissive behavior. Versailles emphasized the monarchical/aristocratic relationship of patronage,[170] but it also removed the king and many nobles from regular theatrical patronage. What did this mean for a state with such strict control over its royal theatre? The answer is that,

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[165] *La Comédie-Française : 1680-1980 [exposition, Paris, 23 avril-27 juillet]* (Paris: Bibliothèque national de France, 1980), ix.
[166] Archives de la Comédie Française, IIIA 4CF DL1680-1728 (Décrets sur la Comédie).
[167] *La Comédie-Française : 1680-1980 [exposition, Paris, 23 avril-27 juillet]* (Paris: Bibliothèque national de France, 1980), 3.
[168] Donna Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 61.
[169] Ibid, 63.
[170] Ibid, 61.

as mentioned above, in France the first *overt* censorship of a publicly-performed play was not until 1701. Until then, censorship was a covert affair directly influenced by the king. Prior to his secret marriage to the deeply religious Madame de Maintenon (1685), upon which he traded the royal box for his private chapel, Louis XIV was an avid theatre-goer. This interest extended into stage regulation, though to protect his royal image the king could not be seen to involve himself in the types of plays that merited censorship. Despite the deep involvement of the monarch (unlike the Stuarts in England), Louis XIV still needed a visible censor to be the official hand of censorship. A good example comes from the 1690 play the *Carnaval de Venise*, by Dancourt.[171]

> [T]he king being informed that there is to be performed shortly a play which shows all the princes of Europe in league against France in a burlesque and ridiculous manner, His Majesty does not judge it appropriate to allow it to be performed. However, since it must not appear that His Majesty has been informed of this, nor that it is by his order that its performance be prevented, it is necessary that you should quietly and in your own name summon some of the actors and oblige them to give you the play to read; after which, on your own initiative and on other pretexts, you will tell them not to perform it.[172]

The covert trend could not effectively last much longer due in large part to the declining interest of the king. The post of *lieutenant général de police* was created in 1667 as part of a government effort to consolidate royal authority over Paris from a jigsaw puzzle's worth of administrative bodies.[173] It was a unique post in that Gabriel-Nicolas de la Reynie,[174] the first *lieutenant général*, "would escape, at least partially, the tutelage of the minister with

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[171] Born Florent Carton, 1661-1725. Trained as an attorney, he married the daughter of actor La Thorillière the senior, joined the Comédie française, and adopted the stage name of Dancourt.

[172] Georges-Bernard Depping, *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1850–55), 611.

[173] "Édit de création de l'office de Lieutenant de Police de Paris (15 mars 1667)," reproduced in Nicolas Delamare, *Traité de la Police*, Livre I, Titre IX (Paris, 1722), 147-148; Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 2 (June 2003): 243; Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 213.

[174] Gabriel Nicolas de la Reynie, 1625-1709, served as the first *lieutenant générale de police* from 1667 to 1697.

responsibility for Paris" (Secretary of State Guénégaud, [175] predecessor of le Grand Colbert) and work directly with the king.[176] One of La Reynie's first formal theatrical orders from the king, in 1696, was to monitor the Comédie "to prevent disorder" and monitor the actors for any "indecent postures or to say any words . . . contrary to propriety."[177] In the same year, the king, upon hearing of a problematic farce at the Comédie Française's neighbor, the Comédie Italienne, ordered the Secretary of State of the Maison du Roi, Pontchartrain,[178] to address the issue. In turn, he ordered La Reynie to ask a trusted underling to attend the theatre every day and report on what went on at the theatre, with the threat that the first misstep would result in the company's removal from Paris.[179] When *La Fausse prude* debuted in 1697, it was damning evidence and the king personally sent La Reynie's successor, d'Argenson[180] with an army "de commissaires, d'exempts et de sergents" to remove the Italians from their theatre within the month.[181] The seriousness with which the incident was treated ensured that in the future other groups would take the *lieutenant général* and his censorship seriously. He was aided in his efforts by the privileged access he enjoyed to the king and his working sessions (*liasses*), which allowed him to effectively monitor the comédie to Louis' specifications.[182] Both La Reynie and d'Argenson were "superb administrators," d'Argenson especially adding the prestige of his family line to the

[175] Henri du Plessis-Guénégaud, 1610-1676, was Secrétaire d'État de la Maison du Roi from 1643 to 1669. He held other high offices as well.
[176] Francois Bluche, *Louis XIV*, trans. Martin Greengrass (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 107.
[177] Georges-Bernard Depping, *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1850–55), 711. The original order for the creation of the post makes no mention of anything censorial or theatrical, so one can clearly see that the duties relating to the theatre were a later addition.
[178] Louis Phélypeaux (1643–1727), marquis de Phélypeaux (1667), comte de Maurepas (1687), comte de Pontchartrain (1699), from 1690, Secretary of State of the Maison du Roi. He was commonly called Pontchartrain to minimize confusion.
[179] Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 39.
[180] Marc René de Voyer de Paulmy, 1652-1721, marquis d'Argenson, succeeded La Reynie as *lieutenant générale* from 1697 to 1718.
[181] Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 40.
[182] François Bluche, *Louis XIV* trans. Martin Greengrass (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 153.

position.[183] But afterwards, it must be noted, the censor did not abuse the new authority by taking his job overly seriously. Instead he allowed some measure of impurity through into the eighteenth century even after Louis XIV's 1701 declaration against it.[184]

The post was powerful but its authorities were amorphous. It was created by le Grand Colbert, and his successors Seignelay[185] and Pontchartrain carried the royal support forward vigorously. Since it displaced existing Parisian authority, the *Parlement de Paris* claimed certain rights over the traditional functions: it gave « au nouveau magistrat un droit de surveillance sur les théâtres, d'autant plus vague qu'il reste partagé entre le monarque et le Parlement. » Eventually, the royal authority overrode the objections of the *Parlement*, but it was not until 1701 that « censure est réellement instituée et constituée… »[186] Lieutenant general d'Argenson was then ordered to review carefully the texts of plays *before* performance instead of responding to complaints after the fact.

We can see, then, that the official position of the French censor was successful due to the continuing close relationship between the stage and the king despite a somewhat muddled beginning. Absolutism, which glorified the king (and by extension his government), created a docility in the official theatre and a stylistic conformity that limited the need for censorship and contributed to a relatively smooth, though comparatively late, beginning to official censorship. In all, the freedom of creating a new position allowed the French to respond more easily to necessary changes. This created a precedent, as we will see, that extended into the eighteenth century.

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[183] Ibid, 154.
[184] Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 41.
[185] Jean-Baptiste Colbert (the junior), 1651-1690, marquis de Seignelay. Secrétaire d'État de la Maison du Roi from the death of his father in 1683 to his own death in 1690. He was commonly called Seignelay to avoid confusion with his father, le Grand Colbert.
[186] Jules Bonnassies, *La Censure dramatique* (Paris: Librairie André Sagnier, 1873), 11-12.

ACT V: RISING TENSION

Once the eighteenth century began, the censor as an administrative position became institutionalized in a way that put the position into a bureaucracy instead of leaving it apart as a personal tool of the monarch. As a recognized position of authority, the censor became susceptible to questioning by third parties. We will see this is a place of divergence between the French and the British. In the British case, it led to a gradual decline in the censor's prestige and power ("…the power of the Master of the Revels was declining to zero after 1700…"[187]). In France the censor's newly enhanced status allowed him to act more securely. This difference was aggravated by the broadening in focus of eighteenth-century drama to encompass both performance and print.

The Sun King was synonymous with absolutism, but looking back on eighteenth-century France "the relative weakness of the monarch…is striking."[188] "French absolute monarchy is still best conceptualized as a social compromise with the sword and robe nobility and other influential persons, but recent studies suggest corrections and additions."[189] Though "absolute" in theory, the French government was much more limited in practice,[190] and while it had thousands of offices its bureaucracy was far from modern,[191] which explained the lack of an official censorship program and the several precursor steps required to put in place an official police censor. Especially in his later years, Louis' government became increasingly administrative as debt and venality required that the government work benignly with many

[187] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1980), 291.
[188] William Doyle, ed., *Old Regime France: 1648-1788* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 168.
[189] William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present* 188 (2005): 221.
[190] Ibid, 145.
[191] Ibid, 146.

people because it could not afford to pay in cash.[192] This created a model of mutual benefit[193] for government officials interacting with the king. Despite (or perhaps because of) the overabundance of positions, it was still to the administration that people turned for reform and guidance.[194] Historians such as William Beik have reinforced this idea that "mutually beneficial cooperation" is the key to understanding how Louis XIV's government operated.[195] So even when the active patronage of Louis XIV declined after he married Mme. de Maintenon,[196] the office of the French censor was adequately set up to survive without direct support by the king. The censor was helped in significant measure by the aesthetics of the theatre, which were still supportive of the image of the monarchy.

The same could not be said of the English stage, which lacked the dramatic structures that kept French writers in line. Neoclassicism was never accepted in England where the "acting was good" but the plays did not follow the "rules of poetics," a situation that "would not be tolerated in France where regularity is required."[197] As the British theatre drifted further away from its aristocratic-centered past, it became "cut off from Court protection,"[198] and thus more easily censored by a bureaucrat who did not have to worry about aristocratic interference. Its failure to adhere to neoclassicism or to develop new, formal rules meant that playwrights had no structural-aesthetic defense of their work, either—they lacked the legitimization granted through the neoclassical style and thus the content was more likely to be questioned. The royal theatres barely clung to their ties to the king, instead of voluntarily closing down in times of mourning as

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[192] Ibid, 147.
[193] Ibid, 149.
[194] Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 221.
[195] Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 15.
[196] Though his increasing piety limited the amount of theatre Louis attended, it was noted as late as 1702 that Louis went to the public Comédie (see the *Mercure de France* (1702) and Dangeau's *Journal* vol. viii, p.335)
[197] Samuel Chappuzeau, *The Theatre françoise* (Lyon: Michel Mayer, 1674), 50.
[198] Alfred Jackson, "The Stage and the Authorities, 1700-1714 (As Revealed in the Newspapers)," *The Review of English Studies* 14, no. 53 (Jan. 1938): 53.

had been the case previously, in 1700 they were ordered to do so by the Lord Chamberlain.[199] Renewed demands for censorship based on morals became highly prevalent in England starting in the eighteenth century. There was a particular rash of them in 1700: "The Grand Jury of London … desired that the Playhouse Bills might not be henceforth posted up in the City…"[200]; and then "…a trial was brought on in the Court of Common Pleas against one of the Players for Prophanely using the Name of God upon the Stage…"[201]; next, a trial at the Common Pleas Bar found "Hodgson the Player [guilty] for using prophanely and jestingly the name of God upon the Stage"[202]; and finally "We the Grand Jury of Middlesex, do present … that the common Acting of Plays in the said Playhouse very much tend[s] to the debauching and ruining of the Youth resorting thereto, and to the breach of Peace,…We hope this Honourable Court will use the most effectual and speedy means for the suppressing thereof."[203]

In response to the many local court cases in England punishing actors and authors for profane language on stage (like the ones above), Queen Anne put a royal stop to some proceedings and "in so doing she re-asserted the Crown's traditional control" over the welfare of the acting companies. This was despite the fact that she herself would have preferred to see the stage similarly reformed.[204] Note the similarity with Louis XIV's use of *lettres de cachet* in the British monarch's interference with normal administrative processes. Like Louis, Anne was protective of royal prerogatives. Historian David Thomas' claim that Anne *re*-asserted the Crown's power presumes that some power previously had been wrested away from the

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[199] The theatres were ordered closed for 6 weeks for the death of the Duke of Gloucester (6 August 1700), see Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affaires, 1678-1714* vol. IV (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1857), 664; they were also closed in 1702 following the death of King William, see *Post Boy* (London) 10-12 March 1702.
[200] *Flying Post* (London) May 18/21 1700.
[201] *Flying Post* (London) May 28/31 1700.
[202] Ibid.
[203] *Post Man* (London) December 17/19 1700.
[204] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 190.

government. The royal censor had, in fact, been undermined by the proliferation of other governmental apparatuses in England, and there was no assurance that the royal interests were being looked after. This is evidenced both by Anne's stopping the local magistrates, and also in the fact that those magistrates found questionable and immoral material in the first place, since that material had already been ordered removed by Mary's proclamations against vice and Anne's own 1702 proclamation. The Master of Revels, Charles Killigrew, was supposedly spurred on by the immorality claims of clergyman and amateur pamphleteer Jeremy Collier[205] to take a closer look at the plays submitted for approval. As remembered by Restoration playwright and actor Colley Cibber[206]: the Master of Revels "licens'd all the Plays, for the Stage, assisted this Reformation, with a more zealous Severity, than ever."[207] But little evidence of actual censorship remains for the early years of the eighteenth century.

Conversely, censorship was strengthened in France when, in 1701, it was formally implemented. As mentioned above, censorship previously had been covert, "frequently involved a degree of deception on the part of the Lieutenant de Police, who would receive his orders but then be required to act as if on his own initiative."[208] The eighteenth century saw the formal and open beginning of real French censorship. The order from Secretary of State Pontchartrain to d'Argenson, successor to La Reynie as *lieutenant général* (1701) warned that

> It has come to the King that the actors are getting into very bad ways, that indecent expressions and postures are starting to take hold in their performances, and that, in a word, they are straying from the state of purity which the theatre had attained… if they do not correct themselves, His Majesty will, on receipt of the

[205] See note 119.
[206] Colley Cibber (1671-1757) was an actor-manager of the Drury Lane Company who rose to the poet laureateship in 1730, though his poetry is generally considered poor (the appointment was political).
[207] Colley Cibber and B.R.S. Fone, ed., *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 151-52.
[208] William Howarth, *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 300-01.

> least complaint, put into effect resolutions against them which will not be pleasant for them.[209]

The first play to fail this new standard was Nicolas Boindin's *Bal d'Auteuil* (1702) which was judged indecent and had its offending scenes "suppressed."[210] The interesting point of this example was that the scene was offensive not for the political overtones one might expect, but for showing two women cross-dressing, which distressed the Duchesse d'Orléans.[211] The fact was that Louis did not want censorship to overly interfere with the theatre because the theatre distracted his subjects from governmental problems and other "désastres."[212] The war of the Spanish Succession from 1701 to 1714 inflicted heavy burdens on France, as did a long period of crop failures that ran on and off from 1693 through 1710.[213] By limiting his censorship to concrete references to living people (or complaints by living people) and letting the playwrights generally have their fun with "les plaisanteries sur les mœurs,"[214] he was protecting the government from a people with few other ways of officially demonstrating their dissatisfaction. Louis' memory of the Fronde (1648-53) had most likely not faded, and it was an experience that shaped the rest of his reign.

The seventy-two years that the Sun King reigned provided a different type of political innovation in France, one that, unlike increasingly constitutional England, allowed the government to remain more uniform and focused. The senior civil official in France was the

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[209] Georges-Bernard Depping, *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV*, vol. II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1850–55), 738-39.
[210] *La Comédie-Française*: *1680-1980 [exposition, Paris, 23 avril-27 juillet]* (Paris: Bibliothèque national de France, 1980), IX ; Nicolas Boindin, *Œuvres* vol. 1 (Paris, 1753), xii.
[211] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-classical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 303.
[212] Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève : Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 46, 48.
[213] See generally François Bluche, trans., *Louis XIV*, trans. Mark Greengrass (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 513-540.
[214] François Bluche, *Louis XIV*, trans. Mark Greengrass (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 50.

Chancellor of France.[215] He was the premier judge of the country and kept the great seal of France. Even under absolutism, the Chancellor represented France as an entity apart from the monarchy. Thus the national fabric maintained a duality: the king might be the government, but he was not the nation. The king had the authority to adopt new laws, but they had to be submitted to the *Parlement de Paris* for registration. Under French jurisprudence, a new law could not go into effect until it was registered (published), on the common sense ground that secret laws could not be obeyed. This requirement enabled the lawyers of the *Parlement* to review the new law and make sure it was equitable. Otherwise, the *Parlement* would not register the law and it would not go into effect.[216] Beyond the power of the Chancellor and the *Parlement*, there remained the residual power of the nobility and commoners. The king was a Christian monarch, subject to the commandments of God. If Louis failed to respect divine laws, his subjects would be released from their duty of obedience to the king, and lawfully entitled to rebel.[217] The duties thus imposed on the king included respect for persons and property, and Louis felt a need to publicly justify the hardships of the War of the Spanish Succession. On June 12, 1709, he addressed an explanatory letter to his subjects which he had read out publically by regional government officials and the clergy.[218] As the demands upon the state continued to grow, the government needed more men of ability than the nobility could supply. The king moved to a mixed system, where merit would be rewarded, but in measured amounts so as to keep the support of the nobility. Towards the end of Louis XIV's reign, the various government *bureaux* became "more

[215] Ibid, 96.
[216] Ibid, 130.
[217] Ibid, 128.
[218] Ibid, 541.

clearly defined and specialized," formalizing the era of "administrative monarchy,"[219] into which the censor began to fit.

Neoclassicism as aesthetic dogma and the continuing emphasis on communal loyalty maintained aesthetic uniformity in France and ensured that France did not turn out like England. These influences, however they kept the censor in charge in France, did not necessarily eliminate all political dissent in the theatre. In the eighteenth century in particular, audiences in Paris often edited and added to the previously-censored plays to change their meaning.[220] Since there was nothing written in the text, there was nothing the censor could do to prevent the audience from acting out, although there was a possibility of subsequent arrest and punishment. This avoidance of authority gave audiences a way to express themselves more freely. In this way France matched England by providing a "drama [that] remained one of the vehicles through which people…worked out political ideas."[221] And while Jeffery Ravel has determined that the *parterre* considered itself an active participant in many shows even by the 1690s,[222] the nature of the self-censorship of the repertoire and outside censorship by the *censeur* ensured that the drama of the royal theatre did not become a tool for political pandering. Although public participation mattered little to the job of the *lieutenant général de police* except to install guards at the royal theatres to protect against riots,[223] the political nature of the audience does point to a healthy and

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[219] David K. Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002): 491.
[220] For discussion of the *parterre* and its antics in eighteenth-century Parisian theatre, see Jeffry Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture 1680-1791* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).
[221] Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer, eds., *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.
[222] Jeffrey Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 126.
[223] A French pamphlet published in 1726 entitled *Former rulings of the troupe of the King's Actors made in 1697 and approved and renewed by the actors and actresses composing the same troupe on 1 April 1726* mentions "so that the *contrôleurs* and the guards at the door may be instructed in their duty and the intentions of the company" which implies that there were official guards as early as 1697.

lively political atmosphere on the whole, which would have impacted the censor's ability to respond to changes in the government at a reasonable pace.

In both England and France, the eighteenth century's emphasis on printed work was a new development and showed the difficulty of enforcing censorship against a performative art. The Master of Revels only had power over performances, not printed works—he would receive a manuscript version or the actors would recite the play to him before performance. This of course led to easy avoidance of English censorship by having the actors speak different words in performance than those that had been approved. Because this continually happened, Anne proclaimed in 1704 that no play could be performed unless officially licensed, a process that required submitting a hard copy, usually a printed version in advance of the performance.[224] Anne followed her public pronouncement with a private one, chastising the Master of Revels Charles Killigrew on March 9, 1704 that *all* plays were "to be by him perused, corrected, and allowed under his hand pursuant to Her Majesty's Commands under pain of being proceeded against for Contempt of Her Majesty's said order."[225] Killigrew pled the impossibility of his position a month later (April 13, 1704), claiming: "Strolling Players pretending to have Licences from Noblemen, puppet-owners, showers of strange sights" and other mountebanks refused to take notice of the order.[226]

France developed an administrative solution to this problem. The classicizing tendencies of the Académie gave Paris a strong literary legacy[227] such that the first official "police censor" of the theatre, appointed in 1706, was taken from the ranks of literary censors: « un des censeurs

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[224] Alfred Jackson, "The Stage and the Authorities, 1700-1714 (As Revealed in the Newspapers)" *Review of English Studies* 14 (1939): 5, printed in the *London Gazette* January 17/20 1704.
[225] Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900: Volume II Early Eighteenth Century Drama* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 1925), 281-2.
[226] Alfred Jackson, "The Stage and the Authorities, 1700-1714 (As Revealed in the Newspapers)," *The Review of English Studies* 14, no. 53 (Jan. 1938): 60.
[227] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 267.

royaux chargés de l'examen des livres à la grande chancellerie, qu'on détache à la police. »[228] The 1706 "Règlement de la censure théâtrale" designated a police censor as the specialized theatrical censor for the patent theatres of Paris (the fairground entertainments were not worth censoring since their products were mere ephemera). Also in line with the tendencies of the Académie, the censors exercised a certain amount of judgment and latitude in carrying out their work. "The police censor did not necessarily review each new play proposed to the official theaters" and instead focused only on those that, based on the opinion of the First Gentlemen, "might violate the French Academy's stylistic 'rules' of 'decorum.'"[229] Interestingly, this shows that the First Gentlemen were reading the plays, or at least the potentially problematic ones. In fact, the establishment in 1706 of an official censor actually benefitted the comédiens who, up to that point, had rather been subjected to an "anarchie administrative" that placed them under the "menace continuelle" of many different caprices.[230] These new rules consolidated the number of people the *comédiens* had to please. While censorship was strong in Paris, it was not air tight and some censored plays were performed in other cities under the aegis of the local aristocracy: « l'institution ne sera pas uniforme dans toute la France, et telle pièce, interdite à Paris, se fera représenter dans une autre ville. »[231] It is with this 1706 decree that censorship in France officially became « un service administrative. »[232]

This order was followed up in 1709 with a similar one regarding the censorship of printed dramatic works. Although Louis XIV had earlier mandated several increasing forms of

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[228] Jules Bonnassies, *La Censure Dramatique* (Paris: Librairie André Sagnier, 1873), 14.
[229] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 244.
[230] Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la Censure Théâtrale en France* (Genève : Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 45.
[231] Jules Bonnassies, *La Censure Dramatique* (Paris: Librairie André Sagnier, 1873), 13-14; « Néanmoins, en l'absence de toute loi, de tout règlement, le bon plaisir du monarque et des grands seigneurs chargés par lui de diriger les théâtres décidera maintes fois contre l'avis du censeur ; puis le Parlement et le clergé s'arrogeront un droit de remontrance dont la police tiendra compte ; enfin, l'institution ne sera pas uniforme dans toute la France, et telle pièce, interdite à Paris, se fera représenter dans une autre ville. »
[232] Ibid, 13.

censorship, this was the first time that plays were to be submitted to the censor *before* their performance. In a letter to the Syndics of the Paris Booksellers and Printers, Pontchartrain wrote

> The abuse which has recently crept in of having plays printed differently from how they were performed has led me to resolve that henceforth I will not accord either a *privilège* or permission for printing to any of these plays unless they have been presented to me by their authors prior to being performed on stage.[233]

This reflected a new phenomenon, as in the past printing had been reserved for bestsellers. With the eighteenth century's upswing in literary consumption, plays began to be produced in printed form and Pontchartrain added printed-dramatic censorship duties to the police censor. This was a new instance of censorship as until 1709 printed plays had fallen in the crack between the censorship of plays and the censorship of books: "the police censor operated entirely outside the corps of censors supervised by the director of the Book Trade and outside the troupe governed by the First Gentlemen and the Minister of the Royal Household."[234] Thus the censor stood apart and cultivated his own legitimacy. It was France's seeming absolutism that limited the questioning of power and allowed this form of censorship to happen. The order continued on, informing the director of the Book Trade that "neither *privilège* nor *permission* for printing of any plays" should be issued "unless they have been presented to [the police censor] by their authors" and doubly censored through staging by the royal troupe.[235] Both the 1706 and 1709 orders in Paris reflect the increased standardization of French administration, which grew the state's effectiveness and scope in interfering in private enterprise and public life.[236]

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[233] Pontchartrain to the Syndics of the Paris Booksellers and Printers (Versailles, 27 Feb. 1709), printed in Georges-Bernard Depping, *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1850–55), 860.

[234] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 249.

[235] Ibid, 245.

[236] David K. Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002): 495; James Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142–46; Roger Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 1988), 176–77 and 285–90.

1709 was a busy year in London, as well. The previous construction of a new rival playhouse in the Haymarket (1705) indicated that changes were coming to the London theatre, the days of a shared patent monopoly were ending. It "ushered in a decade of instability for London's theatres. There were…frequent interventions by the Lord Chamberlain and even open mutiny by the actors."[237] There is an undated proposition (probably c.1705) from the Lord Chamberlain that suggests the patent theatres should set up a board of directors monitored by "honorary directors" much like the French system, but no such innovation occurred in London, and censorship continued in a hodge-podge fashion.[238]

An interesting example of the confusion of the censor's powers can be found in the case of the 1709 silencing of Drury Lane. The context is this: The manager of the company, Christopher Rich,[239] bullied his actors into accepting unfairly reduced compensation by tricking them into signing an *indulto* (remission) that signified an agreement for him to privately tax their benefit performances, an act that ran counter to traditional practice and caused the actors to seek relief from the government. Rich had previously attempted to hoard the right to produce both the established theatre and opera (a relatively recent importation from Italy[240]) counter to the wishes of Sir John Vanbrugh, who was gearing up a company in the newly-constructed Haymarket Theatre. The Lord Chamberlain[241] stepped in to give to Vanbrugh a monopoly on musical theatre, compensating Rich with a renewed monopoly in legitimate theatre. This was actually in violation

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[237] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England, 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 22.
[238] National Archives (Kew) LC 7/3 ff.5-6, for discussion of the date see Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, eds., *A Register of English Theatrical Documents 1660-1737* vol. 1 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 393.
[239] Rich (1657–1714) was originally an attorney who turned his hand to theatre management in the 1690s and was known for his ruthlessness.
[240] Early English operas include John Blows' *Venus and Adonis* (1683), Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), and Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Prophetess* (1690).
[241] Henry Grey, 1671-1740, Earl of Kent, later Duke of Kent, was Lord Chamberlain from 1704 to 1710.

of the original patent, "but for some reason no one complained."[242] While Rich and Vanbrugh must have been content, the actors, now forced to work under Rich alone, pleaded to the Lord Chamberlain for protection, in response to which he required Rich "to …pay to ye respective players who have had benefitt plays ye full receipts." To forestall Rich from trying to fleece his players again, the Lord Chamberlain then ordered Rich to appear in the Chamberlain's office for examination of his financial records.[243] When Rich refused to heed this decree, the Lord Chamberlain found him "in Contempt of the said Ord^{r}" and as punishment "therefore for the s^{d} Contempt hereby silence you from further acting & require you not to perform any Plays or other Theatricall entertainm^{ts} till further Ord^{r}." He also prohibited Rich from earning any income from his playhouse by renting it out to others by forbidding "all her Maj^{ts} Sworn Comedians…to act any Plays at y^{e} Theatre" and warned them that "they shall answer the contrary at their perill."[244] When Rich nevertheless attempted to open his season in the fall, he was immediately shut down. Several actors at this point had transferred to the Haymarket, and Drury Lane remained closed as the managers and actors petitioned the Lord Chamberlain, the Queen, and anyone of influence

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[242] Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, "The Silencing of Drury Lane in 1709," *Theatre Journal* 32, no. 4 (December, 1980): 430.

[243] National Archives (Kew), LC 5/154, p.417
"In consideration where of these are to require you to Ord.^{r} your Treasurer to pay to ye respective players who have had benefitt plays ye full receipts of Such plays deducting only from each the Sume of 40 for ye charges of ye house pursuant to their Articles & if ye Shall think fit hereafter to make any New agreemt with any Player y.ll are to take care y.^{t} Such agreem.^{ts} be for ye better observance thereof be fromm time to time enter'd in my Office …1709
To the Managers of her Maj. Company of Comedians for the Patentees
Kent"

[244] National Archives (Kew), LC 5/154, p.437.
"I am inform^{d} y^{t} in Contempt of the said Ord^{r} y^{u} still refuse to pay and detain from the s^{d} Comedians y^{e} profits of y^{e} s^{d} benefit plays I do therefore for the s^{d} Contempt hereby silence you from further acting & require you not to perform any Plays or other Theatricall entertainm^{ts} till further Ord^{r}; And all her Maj^{ts} Sworn Comedians are hereby forbid to act any Plays at y^{e} Theatre in Covent Gard^{n} or else where wthout my leave as they shall answer the contrary at their perill.

who would listen. Alas for them, nothing happened until William Collier,[245] an actor-manager and patentee sought and obtained a license to form a new company:

> My Lord Chamberlain has directed me to acquaint you in consideration of Your having surrendered all your Interest and Claim to the Pattents granted to Mr Killigrew and Sr. W.[m] Davenant and submission to her Maj.[ties] authority her Majesty is graciously pleas'd to permit You to Act Comedy and Tragedy in the Theatre in Drury Lane…
>
> And you are strictly required by his Lordship not to suffer Mr. Rich or any other Person claiming under y.[e] above said Pattents to be any ways concern'd in the Management of the Company of Comedians under Your direction.
>
> You are also hereby requir'd to observe all Such Regu[l]ations as have been made for y.[e] better Government of her Majestys Theatre...[246]

Note the Lord Chamberlain's continuing ire at Rich. What is important about this situation is that it demonstrates that all was not static in the world of theatrical governance. There was a potential conflict here between the royal rights previously granted under patent and the Lord Chamberlain's current regulatory power. The attention paid to the legal niceties, the "consideration" of surrendering any interest in the earlier patents made it clear that Collier was not receiving those extensive rights. The government was reasserting control over a medium that had escaped its grasp. Historians Judith Milhous and Robert Hume see the possibility of the silencing simply being a "case of high-minded government intervention on behalf of the downtrodden actors."[247] Yet the strange occurrences that revolved around Drury Lane in 1709 point to a more complex relationship between government and theatre management than merely a humanitarian effort. There is a cautious rethinking of censorial power in this situation based on the legality of the patents and the authority of the Lord Chamberlain. When both the Haymarket and Drury Lane companies were warned that all their plays were to be relicensed by the Master

[245] William Collier (1687-1758) was a shareholder in the Drury Lane Company in the eighteenth century whose attempt at becoming a manager was short-lived.
[246] National Archives (Kew) LC 7/3, f. 33.
[247] Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, "The Silencing of Drury Lane in 1709," *Theatre Journal* 32, no. 4 (December, 1980): 429.

of Revels, they pushed right back. The 'adventurers' questioned the legality of the Lord Chamberlain's action as

> not only extraordinary in their own nature and contradictory one to another, but were made without ever calling your petitioners before his Lordship, or ever hearing them in relation to the matters thereof; and, as we are advised, are contrary and in prejudice to the powers, privileges, authorities, rights and interests granted by your Royal Majesty's predecessors by the said respective Letters Patent and tend to the subversion of the same…"[248]

The political assertiveness of the theatre managers threatened the traditional hegemony of the Office of Revels by questioning the source of its power under the law. Although England had a long history of constitutionality, such a radical disbelief in a traditional authority was somewhat astounding for the time.

We have seen in this section how the print revolution strengthened the administrative position of the censor in France by allying it to the long-established *librarie*. Great Britain's continued censorial focus on ephemeral theatre (as opposed to its literary version) made effective censorship difficult and led to an inability to enforce a consistent standard. We have also noted how the continual political changes in England gradually weakened the position of the censor as his basis for existence became muddled by multiple "bosses," while the French censor moved in the opposite direction towards privilege based on the continuing French emphasis on strict monarchical control.

ACT VI: CLIMAX, 1715-1737

The years encompassing the deaths of Anne and Louis XIV (1714-15) through 1737 resulted in a further weakening of the censor's position in England, whereas France strengthened its position as the regency for Louis XV progressed. We will see that the political upset due to

[248] British Library, Add.MS 20,726, ff. 23

the regency in France allowed the police censor to fortify his position in the partial vacuum of the decline of the Académie and royalism and the increase in commercialism as the aristocrats returned to Paris from their exile at Versailles. On the other side of the Channel, London playhouses became more and more out of control until the first Prime Minister lost his patience and eliminated the traditional censor by replacing him with a new position.

Anne died without any heirs, and the English government had to search far afield to find an acceptable (Protestant) successor to the throne under the terms of the 1701 Act of Settlement. They settled on a line connected to Electress Sophia of Hanover, inviting the man who would become King George I to the throne.[249] The problem with this was that George spoke almost no English, was already 54, and had never ruled a large kingdom before.[250] Needless to say, the transition could not have been easy and the government was once again thrown into turmoil regarding the succession and its opposition by the Jacobites, the group that wanted to install the Catholic heir of James II back to the throne. The Jacobite uprisings featured largely in the dramatic literature,[251] and although they were defeated in 1715, the Jacobite threat continued through the 1740s.[252] The topic of the Hanoverian Succession was hotly debated on stage and was the cause of much censorial effort. Besides the topical application of censorship, though, a government weakened by such factionalism would herald disaster for the British censor's authority.

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[249] The progression of this line was from James I of England through his daughter Elizabeth of Bohemia and her daughter the Electress Sophia to Sophia's oldest son George. George became first in that line to the throne when his mother died the same year as Queen Anne.

[250] George was previously the Elector of the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

[251] Not only were there plays such as John Dennis' *A Plot and No Plot: or, Jacobite Credulity* (From The Select Works of Mr. John Dennis, in Two Volumes: Consisting of Plays, Poems, &c. London: Printed for J.D. and sold by D. Browne, W. Mears, S. Illidge, F. Clay, T. Bickerton, T. Corbet, W. Chetwood, and T. Payne, 1721), there was the famous example of Colley Cibber's *The Non-Juror*, more information on which can be found in Dudley H. Miles, "The Political Satire of The Non-Juror," *Modern Philology*, XIII (1915-I6), 2I8-304.

[252] Louise Marshall, *National Myth and Imperial Fantasy: Representations of Britishness on the Early Eighteenth-Century Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 25.

One of the best examples in England of the compromised position of both the Master of Revels[253] and the Lord Chamberlain[254] during this period was the licensing dispute revolving around Sir Richard Steele. Steele had been awarded a patent for the Drury Lane theatre in 1715,[255] and in return he promised to help control theatrical abuses. The inherent reference in this promise clearly demonstrated prior poor performance by the censor, [256] for a return to relying on the companies to self-police would be to regress back to 1660-1663, when the patentees had bypassed the Master of Revels. Proof that self-censorship by Drury Lane was not adequate was that an anonymous 1720 publication harangued Steele's choices of plays as calculated to make the most money as opposed to improving "Publick taste." The writer (identified by a later hand as rival playwright John Dennis) admonished Steele to "lay aside this foolish Pretence, for 'tis not your Design to improve any Thing, but your own Privy-Purse."[257] This shows that the stage remained a lucrative business, even more so when pandering to the "publick" instead of following censorial rules.

In any event, Steele fell into a prolonged disagreement with the Master of Revels and Lord Chamberlain claiming that the wording of his patent (which was identical to that of the 1660 patents) granted him full powers to put on plays without submitting them in advance to the Master of the Revels for perusal and licensing. Accordingly, Drury Lane was "independent"[258]

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[253] Still Charles Killigrew.
[254] Charles Paulet, 1661-1722, Duke of Bolton, was Lord Chamberlain from 1715 to 1717. He was also Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and a Lord Justice.
[255] John Loftis, "The London Theatre in Eighteenth-Century Politics," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 18 no. 4 (Aug. 1955): 375.
[256] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England, 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 189.
[257] The *Characters and Conduct of Sir John Edgar, Call'd by Himself Sole Monarch of the Stage in Drury Lane; and his Three Deputy-Governors. In Two Letters to Sir John Edgar.* The Second Edition (London: Printed for M. Smith, in Cornhill, 1720), 3.
[258] John Loftis, *Steele at Drury Lane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 48-50.

and he refused to submit plays for licensing or pay licensing fees to the Office of the Revels.[259] This was the unofficial end of the Master of Revels, for the Lord Chamberlain had to step in to bully Steele into submission by citing a longer tradition of censorship than that of the patents:

> And Whereas It is highly necessary for His Majesties Service that the Just & ancient Rules & Methods for the Regulation of the Theatre be Strictly Observed, Thro' the voluntary neglect whereof, Great offence has been of late publickly given, and undue Demands Impos'd upon His Majesties Good Subjects, by the Managers and Comedians at the Theatre in Drury Lane in Covent Garden.[260]

Steele ignored it still. He justified his actions by aligning the Lord Chamberlain with a "style thus royal" that did not suit an Englishman, namely a private order similar to the French *lettre de cachet*.[261] But instead of taking unilateral action against Steele, the Lord Chamberlain at the time, Newcastle,[262] wrote to his lawyers for an opinion on the legality of Steele's actions.[263] Although the Lord Chamberlain eventually ordered Steele and his theatre silenced for "neglect of a due subordination and submission to the authority,"[264] the idea that the same Lord Chamberlain, who was supposed to be the ultimate authority in matters theatrical and censorial, would feel uncertain enough to require a legal opinion is rather shocking in the context of the early eighteenth century. The Office of the Revels' power had been so compromised by the political changes that limited the monarchy and empowered the citizen that the Lord Chamberlain was not even sure of his own prerogatives. Furthermore, Steele was supposed to remain silenced until he accepted the Lord Chamberlain's authority, which he never did. Ultimately the sentence was

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[259] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 26.
[260] National Archives LC 7/3, f.44
[261] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 75; "When I complained of it in a private letter to the Chamberlain, he was please to send his secretary to me, with a message to forbid my writing, speaking, corresponding, or applying to him in any manner whatsoever. Since he has been pleased to send an English gentleman a banishment from his person and counsels in a style thus royal…"
[262] Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle (1693-1768) served as Lord Chamberlain 1717-1724.
[263] National Archives (Kew), LC 5/157, ff.81-82.
[264] National Archives (Kew), LC 5/157, f.144

suspended in 1721 when "changes in the government forced the Lord Chamberlain to relent."[265] The probable reason was the appointment of Steele's friend Walpole[266] to the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, a powerful position that would have been able to pressure Newcastle. When the theatre was eventually re-chartered it was only by promising to never call upon the legal power of the original patent and to obey all future orders of the Lord Chamberlain and King of England.[267] It was a hollow promise. It had become more than obvious that the Lord Chamberlain could not enforce his threats, and even if he could there was confusion over what the rules were and how to enforce them.[268] This situation was "symptomatic of the conflicts that were to come to a head" with the Licensing Act of 1737.[269]

At the end of this time period, one of the greatest challenges to formal censorship in England lay within the aesthetics of the dramatic genres themselves. *The London Merchant*, first performed in 1731, was the greatest paean to the bourgeoisie written in England at that time. The most popular type of play in the 1730s, bourgeois or sentimental comedy, validated the cultural legitimacy of the middle and merchant classes. Steele defended the idea of sentimental comedy in his preface to the play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) by making it sound benign and less prone to censorship: "The chief design of this was to be an innocent performance…and hope it may have some effect upon the goths and vandals that frequent theatres."[270] The bourgeois, sentimental genre had less issue for the Lord Chamberlain on grounds of morality than topicality. Since its perspective was by and for the non-governing class, the goals of the piece did not necessarily have the wellbeing of the ruling party in mind.

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[265] David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England 1660-1788* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 26.
[266] Sir Robert Walpole, 1676-1745, later Earl of Oxford.
[267] British Library, Egerton Charter 362, 19th Sep.br 1721.
[268] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 380.
[269] 10 Geo. II.
[270] Richard Steele, *The Conscious Lovers* (London: Tonson, 1735), preface.

In contrast, the plays that premiered in France in the 1730s at the Comédie Française—though less academic than in the past—were still grounded in neoclassical thought and recently popular models. Examples include the classically-influenced *Brutus* by Voltaire and a revival of the now-culturally-hegemonic *Tartuffe* by Molière.[271] France's parallel to sentimental comedy and bourgeois tragedy, *le drame*, transpired later, but the same process occurred with nearly identical aesthetic treatises and similar popular plays.[272] This would provide similar headaches half a century later, but as the Académie discouraged non-neoclassical productions even into the mid-eighteenth century, bourgeois-influenced plays were harder to come by in Paris than they were in England, where they were common by 1737.

We must remember that from "the days when he clapped poets into the Tower," the duty of the censor has always been "three-parts political."[273] The problem in England was that the years leading up to the Licensing Act revealed "a system of corruption admittedly unparalleled in the history of English politics."[274] The majority of the vote in the eighteenth century was considered floating, which ramped up the propaganda on stage and should have made the censor a powerful figure in determining public sentiment,[275] and yet he was not. Perhaps this is because theatrical patronage was still associated with the Tory party,[276] which is potentially one reason the Master of Revels found himself out on his own during the Whig ascendency of the twenties. The 1720s were a decade of collapsing government control in England, as the Lord

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[271] Archives de la Comédie Française, Assemblées et délibérations 1730-1733 (R 52 13) ; both shows opened in 1730.
[272] *La comédie larmoyante* began gaining ground in the 1720s but full-fledged bourgeois tragedy and comedy was a function of the 1750s and on.
[273] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 77.
[274] Ibid, 78.
[275] Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (Revised Edition) (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), xviii.
[276] Ibid, xxxviii.

Chamberlain[277] failed in his attempt to prosecute unlicensed theatres, and "a torrent of new music and drama was unleashed," demonstrating what an unregulated London theatre could offer. [278] Weakness of censorship led in England to the proliferation of unchartered theatres and continual and extreme lampooning of figures in the government, especially the controversial first Prime Minister Walpole (*de facto* from 1721). The ballad operas by Gay in particular, such as *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) are still famous for their attacks on the Walpole government that serve as textbook example of what I have been discussing.[279] A contemporaneous article in *The Craftsman* set out in mock-seriousness to "…prove beyond dispute that the *Beggar's Opera* is the most venomous allegorical libel against the G[overnment] that has appeared for many years past"[280] in a bid to spread the joke of the play to a wider audience. The entire consequent battle by the Lord Chamberlain to reassert control of the stage is a topic slightly outside the time period of this paper, but looking at the situation that led to the Stage Licensing Act of 1737 gives an accurate illustration of how far the post of censor had fallen by the 1720s and 30s. The idea behind the Act was that theatres had grown too wild and Parliament needed to add power to the Lord Chamberlain's role to counter the rampant abuse. The public had gotten quite free with its critiques and, after a string of obvious satires, Walpole himself leaned heavily on his fellow politicians to speed the stiff censorship bill through Parliament. The Act was not without controversy, for it was felt to infringe on freedoms of expression and Lord Chesterfield[281] worried that freedom of the press would be next. When the Act went through, Chesterfield complained that it consolidated the "arbitrary powers" of the Star Chamber, the Privy Council,

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[277] Charles FitzRoy, 1683-1757, Duke of Grafton, succeeded Newcastle as Lord Chamberlain from 1724 to his death. An illegitimate son of Charles II, he was also a Privy Counselor, Knight of the Garter and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.
[278] John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 372.
[279] For more information on *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and other of Gay's works, see John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination* or Robert Hume, ed. *The London Theatre World 1660-1800*.
[280] "The Beggar's Opera," *The Craftsman* (London) 17 February 1728.
[281] Philip Stanhope, 1694-1773, Earl of Chesterfield, was also Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Secretary of State.

the Lord Mayor, the Master of the Revels, and the King in "the hands of one irresponsible official."[282]

The office of the Master of Revels, which had exercised great power under the early Stuarts, had gradually become "a cipher, a true sinecure, as everyone apparently tacitly recognized." So when the Walpole ministry drafted the bill, it "simply ignored the Revels Office."[283] Looking at the powers the bill gave to the Lord Chamberlain serves to describe the powers that had been missing from the proper regulation of the theatre in the years leading up to 1737. The Act, for the first time, gave the Lord Chamberlain a statutory function to license theatrical performances, finally moving censorship authority from royal prerogative to government administration. It required that all new plays, and new additions to old plays, were to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain fourteen days before their premiers.[284] The granting of licenses was discretionary with the Lord Chamberlain, and the Act further provided there was no appeal from his decision. Another part of the Act created an "Examiner of Plays," a position that effectively replaced the Master of Revels.[285]

As it increased the Lord Chamberlain's power, the Act also abridged the king's in the area of patent-granting.[286] To Chesterfield, the assumption of such power by the Lord Chamberlain violated the tenets of both limited monarchy and absolutism at the same time. The Act meddled even further in the complicated power scheme of the early eighteenth century in

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[282] G.M.G., *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch: 1544-1907* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, LD., 1908), 88.
[283] Calhoun Winton, "Dramatic Censorship" in Robert Hume, ed., *The London Theatre World 1660-1800* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1980), 290, 304.
[284] John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 27.
[285] Ibid, 27; the position still technically survived until the 1740s.
[286] P.J. Crean, "The Stage Licensing Act of 1737," *Modern Philology* 53, no. 3 (Feb. 1938): 254; J. Raithby, ed., *Statutes at large*, vol. 5 (London: Eyre & Strahan, 1811), 266-68.

England. It was nothing less than "a formal redefinition of the government's power to license plays and theatres,"[287] which is exactly what the English censor needed to do his job effectively.

> Do not let us subject them to the arbitrary will and pleasure of any one man. A power lodged in the hands of one single man, to judge and determine, without any limitation, without any control or appeal, is a sort of power unknown to our laws, inconsistent with our constitution. It is a higher, a more absolute power than we trust even to the King himself; and, therefore, I must think, we ought not to vest any such power in his Majesty's Lord Chamberlain.[288]

In comparison, the office of official censor in France remained mostly constant after the death of Louis XIV in 1715. State theatre remained a symbol of political privilege and a manifestation of the hierarchy of the *ancien régime*.[289] As the aristocrats returned to Paris from their forced stay at Versailles, artistic life in Paris received a huge burst of energy. Thomas Crow sees this time as a time of dispute between the older rules of the Académie and the newer aesthetics of the *salon*.[290] A contributing factor for this came from the above-mentioned decline in prestige of the Académie. A new genre, the *comédie larmoyante* (tearful comedy), had become very popular by 1735: the shows of Nivelle de La Chaussée[291] form the evolutionary link between neoclassicism and bourgeois tragedy.[292] The style promoted moral triumph and classical virtue, and as such it remained affirmative of the same types of courtly gentility that had always marked the drama of legitimate French stages. The arrival of the new genre did not eliminate the traditional neoclassical, though. Even as late as 1737 the Comédie Française was

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[287] David Thomas, ed. *Restoration and Georgian Theatre 1660-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 8.
[288] John Jonston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 27.
[289] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neoclassical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 8.
[290] Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 21.
[291] Nivelle de La Chaussée was a French bourgeois playwright elected to the Académie française in 1736. For more information see *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Pierre-Claude Nivelle de La Chaussée," accessed April 07, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326258/Pierre-Claude-Nivelle-de-La-Chaussee.
[292] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "comédie larmoyante," (accessed April 07, 2012), http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/127445/comedie-larmoyante.

producing shows like *Achille à Scyros*[293]or *Lysimachus*.[294] Overall, however, the drama of the first half of the eighteenth century was still characterized as "an essentially regular, neoclassical repertory."[295] Even while aesthetic rules softened, the censor was able to ensure that writers did not plunge headlong into the freedoms of the new genres of painting (the *fêtes gallants* of Watteau) and theatre (the *comédie larmoyante* and the return of the *commedia dell'arte* style when the Italians returned to Paris in 1716 from their forced exile in 1697).[296]

This migration and subsequent shift was due to a partial political power vacuum after the death of Louis XIV left a Louis XV too young to rule in his own right. In contemplation of his own death, Louis XIV had legitimized the duc de Maine and the comte de Toulouse, his sons by the marquise de Montespan. He also gave them the title of princes of the blood (1714) and placed them in the line of succession behind Louis XV (1715), thus giving them order of precedence over all the aristocracy.[297] The elevations violated French jurisprudence,[298] but the *Parlement de Paris* registered the decrees anyway. Even though Louis XIV was well aware that his own mother, Anne of Austria, had avoided her regency restrictions, he nevertheless drew up a will that entrusted the safety of Louis XV to Maine and, unwilling to name a regent, provided a regency council, including Maine and the duc d'Orléans,[299] to exercise power. Orléans seized upon the violations of jurisprudence and the aristocracy's wounded sense of precedence to set

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[293] Michel Guyot de Merville, *Achille à Scyros : comédie héroïque en 3 actes en vers*, first performed 1737-10-10, nine shows (information from Comédie Française base en ligne « La Grange », http://www.comedie-francaise.fr/la-grange-notice.php?ref=00003415&id=554&p=1 (accessed 4/6/12)

[294] Gilles de Caux de Montlebert and Caux de Montlebert, fils, *Lysimachus : tragédie en 5 actes en vers*, first performed 1737-12-13, four shows (information from Comédie Française base en ligne « La Grange » http://www.comedie-francaise.fr/la-grange-notice.php?ref=00003423&id=554&p=1. (accessed 4/7/12)

[295] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neoclassical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 499.

[296] Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 70.

[297] François Bluche, *Louis XIV* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1990), 593.

[298] Pontchartrain's resignation as Chancellor of France, the chief judicial officer, in 1714 may have reflected more than his unhappiness with the Papal Bull *Unigenitus* (1713).

[299] Phillip II, 1674-1723, duc d'Orléans, de Chartres, de Valois, de Nemours, de Montpensier, was the great uncle of Louis XV.

aside Maine and the regency council. The *Parlement*, besides its power to refuse to register inequitable edicts, had the power of "remonstrance," of revoking registrations upon the death of the king who had issued the edict. Orléans found that in exchange for promising to replace the Secretaries of State with various councils, *Parlement* was quite willing to name him regent and to free themselves from their own loss of aristocratic precedence.[300]

The power struggle surrounding the death and succession naturally left little time for worrying about theatre by those with pretensions to power. Orléans was under great pressure to restore privileges to the nobility, and he duly replaced each of the administrative heads of government with councils. This "polysynody" (1715-1718) was a reaction against many of the administrative innovations and bureaucratic influences that had developed under Louis XIV, particularly the promotion of commoners on the basis of merit to positions the nobles felt they had a right to hold. However, some of these nobles lacked the education or training to succeed as "men of the pen." The "administrative monarchy" was significantly reduced in effectiveness, so the Regent slowly dismissed the councils and returned to the previous ministerial "despotism." The polysynody authorized formation of a modern bank, the *Banque générale,* in 1716 to stabilize government finances and expand the economy through issuance of paper money. The bank was such a success that the government nationalized it and dramatically increased the amount of money. However, so much paper money caused the public to lose confidence and the entire system failed in 1720. The return to gold and silver kept France from achieving the economic vitality that had transformed England.

[300] James Breck Perkins *France Under the Regency* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, 1892) 332-338.

At this time, Louis II Phélypeaux, marquis de La Vrillière,[301] took advantage of the comparative weakness of the polysynody to directly appoint the *lieutenant général*, without royal interference, and d'Argenson was replaced in 1718 with Louis Charles de Machault.[302] This streamlined the censorship structure, solidifying the position of the censor himself. 1719 marked increasing attempts of the *Premiers gentilshommes* to regulate the theatre on their own authority with new regulations for the patent theatres and the attempted suppression of the *théâtre de la foire*.[303]

An emerging weakness of the French censor can be attributed to the personal nature of the relationships between many writers and the official system, relationships that had so often aided censorship in the past. Although a general strength, some writers, such as Voltaire, were seen by their peers as upholding, rather than violating, established norms of civility when they circumvented the censor.[304] This made it more difficult for the censor to assert his authority in specific cases. Thus, the evolutionary changes in censorship cannot be viewed as the same desperate attempt as it could be characterized in England, but rather should be seen as a reform to transfer authority to those who were deserving of it. The new French police censor combined the ideas of structural and state censorship with ideals of personal rapport, honesty, and gentility in his treatment of works to be censored and their authors.[305] The idea of civility and personality of the job was synonymous with the person of the censor himself. For instance, Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, the actor who served as police censor 1728-1762, "held great status among the actors

[301] The Regent replaced Jérôme Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain with his son Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux de Maurepas in 1715. However, Jean Frédéric was not yet of age so the Regent appointed Louis II Phélypeaux de La Vrillière to act for him. This indirect appointment of La Vrillière shows further weakness in the Regent.
[302] Louis Charles de Machault, 1667-1750, seigneur d'Arnouville, was lieutenant général de police from 1718 to 1720.
[303] *La Comédie-Française : 1680-1980 [exposition, Paris, 23 avril-27 juillet]* (Paris: Bibliothèque national de France, 1980), ix.
[304] Gregory Brown, "Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theater in the Enlightenment," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (June 2003): 240.
[305] Ibid, 267.

and other authors, which was evident in his numerous privileges, including free entrance passes for life, a personal box at the theater, an annual pension of 2,000 *livres*, and a grand funeral procession."[306]

It was not that France had no disturbances in the 1720s whereas England was consumed by them. There were, in fact, decrees were made throughout the eighteenth century addressing the problem of unruliness in the theatre. France produced many edicts to remind attendees that "His Majesty gives permission for the imprisonment of offenders" to the *lieutenant général*. The banning of "interruption of the performance," "disorderly acts," "loitering in the wings," "committing acts of violence or indecency" seems to suggest that these things did happen from time to time.[307] The difference was that the king (or the Regent, as it was in 1720) reaffirmed the position of the censor. The monarchy, even after the death of Louis XIV provided a united front. From the true accession of Louis XV upon his majority in 1723 throughout the remainder of the *ancien régime*, the institution remained intact and in the control of a royal censor. With the appointment of Cardinal Fleury[308] as minister in 1726 and Louis XV's adoption of his great-grand-father's politics and administration, the monarchy had a visual representation of its authority and continuation of French "absolutist ambitions"[309] which prolonged itself through royal representation.

In contrast with the disarray in the theatre world in England by 1737, the 1730s in France were a period of peaceful administration (though not of peace generally).[310] It is difficult to find "proofs" of the censorial stability, of the lack of problems, in France at this time, in direct

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[306] Ibid, 249.
[307] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997), 412.
[308] André Hercule de Fleury, 1653-1743.
[309] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997), 8.
[310] Michael Antoin, *Louis XV* (Paris: Hachette, 2006), 265.

contrast to the myriad of examples of theatrical problems leading up to the Licensing Act in England. Of course, the situation did not stay so easy, as Louis XV's reign was later known for debauchery and political crises that led to the Revolution fifteen years after his death, but in the early years of his personal reign (and even during the polysynody), the legitimate theatre in Paris kept on course. The relative scarcity of major documents of control seem to suggest that the *lieutenant général de police* had no need to constantly rebuke the theatres as he had done a decade earlier. Instead, the comprehensive control over the theatre by both the lieutenant general and the *Premiers gentilshommes* continued on a day-to-day basis.[311]

ACT VII: DENOUEMENT

Despite clearly similar situations at the end of the seventeenth century, Britain and France developed different censorial practices by 1737. Britain became progressively more constitutional and politically variable with the development of party politics and the increasing limitations imposed on the crown by Parliament and eventually by a prime minister. France, on the other hand, remained "absolute," but not in the way that historians used to believe. Louis XIV's absolutism was "a backward-looking force that rebuilt an old system by adapting old practices to new uses,"[312] one that remained true to its courtly nature: a state based on unity and fidelity.[313] From this we can see how the changes in England led to confusion over the censor's legitimacy, which reduced efficacy, while the corresponding stability of France allowed the censor to cultivate individual legitimacy, which translated to greater efficacy. Comparing them,

[311] William Howarth, ed., *French Theatre in the Neo-Classical Era, 1550-1789* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997), 403.
[312] William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present* 188 (2005): 223.
[313] Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 211-212.

we can say that the key to understanding the changes in both countries' censorship activities and concerns is the relative "absolutism" of the administrations.

The censor depended on a secure administrative place as a way to legitimize himself and his actions. A royally-appointed censor needed the royal prestige of the monarch to operate effectively. Without the direct influence of the king or queen, the censor needed to channel bureaucratic power to make and enforce his decisions. As political changes undermined or prolonged this monarchical system, so the theatrical censor lost or gained legitimacy and efficacy. By the 1730s the monarchs had almost no direct communication with the theatres; instead governing bodies like the Lord Chamberlain or the *lieutenant général de la police* were in charge. They monitored, more or less effectively, the theatre to keep heresy at a minimum and public order at a maximum.

As for future studies, from this point, the increasingly comprehensive work done on administrative history should be extended in the direction of the theatre. Unofficial influences on censorship should be discussed also—societal fashion, status of women, impacts of the audience.[314] Combining administrative studies, like this, with cultural or social history could lead to a unique product. The complexity of the long eighteenth century is a puzzle that should be fully unraveled, including the mystery of the censor, forgotten or ignored for so long.

[314] William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present* 188 (2005): 223-224.

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