CHAPTER 1

Starting Points

The origins of Leicester's Men are obscured by the loss of the vast majority of the household accounts of their patron. That we know anything at all about their formation is due to the fortunate situation that two of the four surviving Dudley household accounts cover the early periods of Elizabeth's reign, from 20 December 1558 to 20 December 1559 and 22 December 1559 to 30 April 1561.[1] The earliest record of the company's existence is a payment for 20s 'gyvin unto your lordship's players' in the first of these accounts, and while the record is undated, its proximity to other items related to Dudley's expenses 'at Easter' means that it can be confidently dated to within a few days of 26 March 1559.[2] A further payment of 60s to 'Laurens one of your lordship's pleyers' between 4 and 15 May in the same year provides at least a partial name but the accounts offer no other information about who these players were or how long the players had been in Dudley's service up to that time.[3] This chapter offers what I think are the best answers to these questions based on available evidence of the lives of the players whose names appear on two documents from 1572 and 1574 as well as from examining Dudley's own background.

There is an undated letter in the Longleat Archives Dudley Papers (Volume III, folio 125) addressed to the 'right honorable Earle of Leicester, their good lord and master' by six players, whose names are entered at the bottom seemingly in order of rank: 'Iames Burbage. Iohn Perkinne. Iohn Laneham. William Iohnson. Roberte Wilson. Thomas Clarke'.[4] Because

[1] Volumes XIV and XV of the Dudley Papers in the Marquess of Bath's collection at Longleat House – see Adams, *Household*, 1.

[2] Adams, *Household*, 56.

[3] Ibid., 63. The date range can be determined by an item on the same page referring to Dudley's visit to William Pickering, which took place after 4 May (63), and by a later item referring to the visit by the family of Amy Robsart, Dudley's wife, to her sister Elizabeth Scott in Camberwell, for which Dudley paid to transport her bedding and other items in mid-May (64).

[4] My thanks to Emma Challinor, Records Manager, Historic Collections Department at Longleat House, for confirming that the names are written in the same professional scribal hand that drafted the letter, befitting a formal request by the players to the earl.

this letter refers to a proclamation issued on 3 January 1572, the request is reliably dated to shortly thereafter and will be referred to here as the letter of 1572. The other document is a royal patent issued to the company on 10 May 1574, and it lists the same names in the same order but Clarke is absent. Being the last name on the first list, it appears that Clarke was the lowest ranked member, and must have departed before the patent was granted in 1574, so has been given barely a passing thought by theatre historians. His entry in *The Elizabethan Stage* reads only 'Leicester's, 1572', and even the generally more expansive Edwin Nungezer gives him a single sentence in *A Dictionary of Actors*, mentioning the same fact.[5] David Kathman's online biographical index of actors also includes only these two sources on Clarke, meaning that to date scholars have ascertained nothing more about Clarke than that his name is on the letter of 1572.[6] Had he departed before this letter, we would likely never have known of his membership in the company. Since we do know his name, there is a place from which to start searching for more information to connect Clarke with the company in the years before 1572. The search for such connections is important not just because it can furnish us with additional biographical information about a player of the pre-Shakespearean stage. As I will show, from a theatre history perspective, the door swings both ways: establishing such ties shores up the identification of records of the members of the company but also enriches our understanding of the company's origins in deep ties that kept them together for so many years, with Clarke's life story revealing several important clues to how these ties were maintained.

One notion that needs to be put to rest from the outset is the claim made in no less a reference work than *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that the company was 'formed in 1559 from members of the Earl of Leicester's household', a claim repeated by dozens of other sites on the internet.[7] The notion may not seem that absurd given the precedent for a company

[5] Chambers, *Elizabethan*, 2.310; Nungezer, *Dictionary*, 92.

[6] There are a small number of studies of John Florio's *First Fruits* (1578) that assign the poem written by 'T.C.' to Clarke, a claim that I think is plausible and will discuss shortly, but they are not included by Kathman, as they do not make any biographical claims about Clarke. In a 1966 dissertation, Janet Gayle Elsea argued that Clarke signed the letter only in his capacity as an investor and owner of the Blue Boar Tavern in Leicester, and that he was not a player at all. Elsea assumes that Clarke added his name personally, but the players' 'signatures' were entered instead by a single scribal hand several months before they visited Leicester in that year – see Elsea, *Earl*, 28–29.

[7] 'Earl of Leicester's Men', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, article published 20 July 1998. A search at the time of writing revealed no fewer than thirty-five sites using this phrase verbatim, with six other sites also repeating the phrase but giving the year instead as 1572.

being formed from within the King's own household, using servants whose primary function was artisanal.[8] As early as 1494, an annual wage of four marks per player was recorded in the household accounts of Henry VII, in addition to livery and performance rewards, to a troupe of Royal Interluders whose five members were also paid elsewhere in the same accounts for domestic duties.[9] Yet the idea that Dudley emulated this practice can be easily refuted by observing that in the letter of 1572, the players asked that in addition to 'our lyveries as we have had', their patron might *also* agree to support them as 'your household Servaunts', a request that would be superfluous if they were already in his household.[10] Furthermore, the surviving household accounts include livery payments to members of the household from 1559 to 1560, but they reveal no obvious candidate for anybody named 'Laurens', so it is certain that the earliest named member of the company was not considered a member of the household at that time.[11] The questions I address in this chapter are thus: why did Dudley not simply follow the royal example by assembling a company from within his own household? Who were the players to whom he granted his patronage? And where did they come from? The answers will, I suggest, provide much more than merely the backdrop to the history of the first major Elizabethan playing company; they will force us to rewrite that history.

Robert Dudley's Pathway to Patronage

Robert Dudley's preparation for becoming a patron to a company of players can be traced to long before Elizabeth's coronation. Dudley was born on 24 June 1532 or 1533 – the date is certain because Dudley himself refers to this as his birthday in a letter to William Cecil,[12] but the year remains subject to debate. A miniature portrait by Nicholas Hilliard puts the sitter at the age of forty-four in 1576, but Dudley's older brother John was twenty-three when he died in October 1554 and Ambrose was born between John and Robert, so it is more likely that Ambrose was born

[8] See, in particular, Kipling, 'Henry', 153–59;
[9] Ibid., 152–53; Streitberger, *Court*, 49–50.
[10] For extracts from both documents, see Chambers, *Elizabethan*, 4.268; but for the letter in full, see 2.86.
[11] While there are several men named Lawrence (Cox, Granger, and so on) in the accounts from 1585 to 1586 and in the attendees at Dudley's funeral, there is nobody with this name in the bills for livery in 1559 and 1560. See Adams, *Household*, 419–25.
[12] Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 24 June 1587, in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth* 21.3, 128–29.

in 1532 and Robert in 1533.[13] Their father, John Dudley, became patron to a playing company around the time of the oldest son's birth. Styling himself at the time as Baron Lisle following the death of his mother, Elizabeth Grey, Baroness Lisle, Dudley senior acquired the company from Viscount Lisle, Arthur Plantagenet, for whom a playing company had become surplus to courtly ambitions.[14] Under Dudley's patronage, Lisle's Players appeared in Bristol, Dover, Lydd, and Rye between 1531 and 1537.[15] Dudley senior was a powerful opportunist who never looked a gift-horse in the mouth and used the acquisition of a playing company as an opportunity to match the fourteen nobles and members of royalty who were also promoting themselves through patronage of a playing troupe at the time.[16] The company undoubtedly performed for the Dudley family on occasion, so young Robert would have formed memories of theatrical spectacle among the earliest recollections of what was by all accounts a happy childhood.[17]

In 1537, these same players were likely acquired by Thomas Cromwell to serve as the Prince's Players for young Edward, but this was not Dudley's last experience of them. In the early 1540s, he also spent much of his young life at the court of Henry VIII being trained in the ways of the courtier and no doubt enjoyed the entertainments of the king's own players as well as those of the prince, during which time his father also acquired another company as Lord Admiral.[18] Throughout his formative years, then, while being exposed to a Protestant humanist education, and undergoing his training at court, the young Dudley also had many opportunities to form an appreciation of elite playing companies as well as to learn at close quarters the benefits of being a patron from his father and from Cromwell's management of the royal players. Yet there were some other lessons Dudley learned by having a father close to the seat of ultimate power in England, which contributed to his attitudes towards court and country, thereby shaping his approach to patronage by 1559.

[13] The Hilliard miniature is catalogued at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG 4197). For the other details here, see Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, Earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online, 2008; Wilson, *Sweet*, 2.

[14] I develop this argument in more detail in Johnson, 'Reassessing', 160–63.

[15] Gibson, REED *Kent*, 2.433, 685, 3.1412; Hays and McGee, REED *Dorset*, 240, 619; Louis, REED *Sussex*, 102, 312; Pilkinton, REED *Bristol*, 40, 43, 46, 310.

[16] This figure is derived from the troupes identified in the REED Patrons and Performances database as players of nobility or royalty and active during the period from 1520 to 1532.

[17] For a detailed description of the Dudley family during Robert's childhood, see Wilson, *Sweet*, 2–25.

[18] For Dudley's training at court, see Loades, *Dudley*, 225; Wilson, *Sweet*, 28–29.

After participating in his father's action to quell the Kett rebellion in Norfolk in 1549, Dudley married Amy Robsart, daughter of prominent local grazier Sir John Robsart and Lady Elizabeth Robsart, on 4 June 1550.[19] I have no wish to question the popular view that theirs was a love match and will merely point out that on face value the Robsarts had far more to gain from the marriage than the Dudleys.[20] Shortly before this, Dudley senior had been made Lord President of the Council and removed the Lord Protector from office, thus becoming de facto regent. The wedding took place at Richmond Palace with Edward in attendance and Robert was knighted before the occasion, yet the immediate upshot of the marriage was that the young couple were then removed from court, with papers drawn up to ensure the pair would enjoy an annual income and rental on the priory of Coxford near the Robsart estate in Norfolk.[21] Their ceremony took place the day after the marriage of elder brother John Dudley to Anne Seymour, daughter of the former Lord Protector, which was a far more lavish affair to mark an arrangement of greater political importance, with a masque, military displays, and a great banquet.[22] The Dudley-Robsart nuptials appear under the same circumstances to have been planned for convenience rather than for spectacle.

Dudley's first major public appointment was as steward of the manor of Rising on 7 December 1551, an office he held jointly with Amy's father, and he became the Member of Parliament for Norfolk in January 1552, following a local by-election to replace the deceased sitting member Sir Edmund Knyvet, indicating that he had indeed been residing in the county for a significant proportion of the first eighteen months after his marriage with Amy.[23] Most commentators agree that Dudley's father consented to the arrangement in order to strengthen his influence in East Anglia following the demise of Henry Howard and the acquisition of the Howard lands in Norfolk by Princess Mary – he could not compete with Mary's power in the region, but he could nevertheless install his own family in the area as a way to generate local Protestant support in the wake of the Kett rebellion and as a tactic in a long game for control of the court.[24] Dudley's involvement in the 1552 and 1553 Parliaments gave him time away from Norfolk to reestablish himself at court, gaining a position in the retinue to accompany

[19] On Dudley's role in suppressing the Kett rebellion, see Paul, *House*, 177–81.
[20] See Paul, *House*, 187–89.
[21] Adams, *Leicester*, 158–59; Loades, *Dudley*, 225.
[22] Paul, *House*, 187–88.
[23] Adams, 'Dudley, Robert', *ODNB*; Bindoff, *House*, 2.66.
[24] Adams, *Leicester*, 135, 159–60; Loades, *Dudley*, 128–29, 225; Paul, *House*, 188–89.

the dowager Queen of Scotland to Hampton Court in October 1551, and a short succession of appointments followed as Master of the Buckhounds on 29 September 1552 and Chief Carver on 25 February 1553.[25] He also participated in the royal tournament of 1552, and was by this time very much a star on the rise at court, yet his wife Amy remained absent throughout.[26] In July 1553, however, came Edward's death and the Dudley family's rapid decline for playing a part in the attempt to install Jane Grey on the throne. His father and younger brother Guildford were both executed, another brother John was condemned but released and died shortly after, and young Dudley himself was attainted and imprisoned in the Tower. Dudley was released during the winter of 1554–5, struggled during the next few years to regain trust, and was then finally restored in blood on 7 March 1558.

As Joanne Paul explains, Ambrose and Robert Dudley worked hard to gain the favour of King Philip in order to regain Mary's trust, first by featuring prominently at the Lady Day jousting tournament of 1555 and then by fighting on the side of the Spanish forces along with older brother Henry in Philip's siege of Saint Quentin in August 1557.[27] Henry paid the price of this exercise with his life, apparently struck down by a cannonball in full view of Robert.[28] For the last surviving Dudley brothers, the sacrifice had been necessary to place the family in the position to be restored in blood, yet there was also the attendant risk that by ingratiating themselves to the Spanish court, they would alienate potential allies at home: 'Being seen as hispanophiles could make a family unpopular, but on this count the Dudleys had little to lose and quite a lot to gain'.[29] Dudley also seems to have been aware of the need to counteract this unpopularity and he campaigned to return to Parliament as member for Norfolk shortly after the family was restored. As with his attempts to win over Philip, Dudley appears to have been willing to do something he found to be relatively unpalatable in order to achieve his longer-term goals. It was at this time, while preparing to represent Norfolk, that Dudley wrote to John Flowerdew on 22 July 1558: 'I must, if to dwell in that country, take some house other than mine own, for it were wanteth all such chief commodities as a house requireth, which is pasture, wood, water, &c.', adding a rather cryptic complaint about the residence containing 'most of

[25] Wilson, *Sweet*, 45–46.
[26] Adams, 'Dudley, Robert', *ODNB*.
[27] Paul, *House*, 243–51.
[28] Ibid., 250.
[29] Ibid., 244–45.

that the other wants, and besides it standeth somewhat nigh that little I have there'.[30] With this 'must, if', Dudley reveals his reluctance to return to Norfolk.

When the Dudleys were restored by an Act of Parliament on 7 March 1558, Mary's hopes of preventing the Elizabethan succession were already in tatters with the realization that her pregnancy, expected to reach full term at around the same time, was false.[31] From May onwards, as Mary's health declined, Dudley could realistically have begun dreaming of the type of courtier he would be under Elizabeth, and within days of Mary formally declaring Elizabeth as successor in early November, Dudley's status as one of the few men with whom the heir was 'on very good terms' was being mentioned as public knowledge in dispatches by Count Feria to Spain.[32] In anticipation of being able to take up a position of prominence at the court, Dudley had every reason to prepare for life as a courtier before any appointment was official.[33] As Simon Adams explains, the restored Dudley brothers, Robert and Ambrose, spent much of their early years in the court of Elizabeth seeking to regain their father's lands and titles lost by attainder.[34] Yet when Dudley wrote to Flowerdew in July 1558, Mary was not yet in the grave, so he needed to pave the way for his anticipated return to court using the limited influence he was able to wield while biding time for her demise. Not knowing how long he would have to wait to take his place at Elizabeth's court, then, Dudley appears to have fallen back on the strategy his father used in 1550 to garner support among the people whose lands he had helped save from the destruction of the enclosures by Kett's rebels. He would install himself once more as a prominent figure in Norfolk, with a view to gaining a seat as one of their members in the House of Commons.

Dudley's anticipated move to Norfolk could not, however, on this occasion have been intended to move him closer to his wife. As Adams has observed, all available evidence puts Amy at the house of William Hyde in Throcking, Hertfordshire, from mid-1557 to mid-1559, but Dudley's movements during this same period are more difficult to pin down, especially when not in London.[35] Adams does provide a reason to want to find Dudley also stationed in Throcking for some of this period, as Elizabeth

[30] Adlard, *Amye*, 16–17.
[31] Paul, *House*, 252; Porter, *Mary*, 398.
[32] Feria to Philip II, 14 November 1558, cited in Adams, *Leicester*, 134.
[33] See Paul, *House*, 252–53.
[34] Adams, *Leicester*, 151–59.
[35] Adams, *Household*, 380–82.

was residing at Hatfield in 1557 and 1558 – he acknowledges the locations 'can by no stretch be considered adjacent' but he feels them to be close enough that Dudley's use of Hyde's house at the same time 'strengthens the case for an association with Elizabeth during her residence at Hatfield'.[36] Throcking is a little over 22 miles to the northeast of Hatfield and I agree this was not the kind of distance that would dissuade a motivated Dudley from visiting the powerful woman with whom he was 'on very good terms'. Unfortunately, as Adams concedes, Dudley's exact movements during this period cannot be tracked with any certainty. In fact, it is not until the commencement of the account kept for Dudley by William Chancy in December 1558 that his movements become clearer. For theatre historians, the years prior to Dudley taking possession of the property at Kew have barely warranted any interest, since it has long been assumed that he became patron to a company of players after this time. For those more interested in Dudley's relations with his wife Amy and with Elizabeth, his whereabouts have long been the subject of both intense interest and, given the lack of concrete evidence, usually also much speculation. Adams is explicit about his desire to put Dudley at Throcking for this very reason but others are less self-reflexive, so a number of biographies of Dudley, Elizabeth, or Robsart present different versions of events in these years, often without any direct evidence other than Dudley's letter to Flowerdew and one by Amy to the same agent regarding the management of their assets.[37]

We cannot be sure, then, that Dudley was absent from his wife for any length of time during the years before he returned to court in late 1558, except for when he was involved in the Saint Quentin expedition in August 1557. The timing is also crucial in dating Amy's letter to Flowerdew, with Adams pointing out that the conventionally accepted date of 1559 cannot align with any other evidence of Dudley's movements as verified in the Chancy account, but her mention of Dudley's 'soden departyng' certainly matches the timing of his departure for the urgent preparations to sail for France.[38] Amy's letter also means that Dudley can indeed be placed at Hyde's house early in Amy's period in residence there from mid-1557. How much additional time he spent there following the completion of the campaign is impossible to gauge for certain. Once the

[36] Ibid., 381.

[37] Without space here to summarise, I merely direct the reader to several leading accounts – Adlard, *Amye*, 16–24; Haynes, *White*, 28; Jenkins, *Elizabeth*, 40–41; Kendall, *Robert*, 24–25; Wilson, *Sweet*, 76–77, 94–95.

[38] Adams, *Household*, 380.

Chancy account begins, however, it becomes very clear that Dudley and Amy rarely saw each other after Elizabeth acceded to the throne and not at all after June 1559, with Amy moving first to Compton Verney and then to Cumnor, where she died in mysterious circumstances in September 1560. This protracted absence from each other need not be seen as evidence of an estrangement, but it can be observed that Amy's exclusion from court mirrors the treatment she received when her husband had become a regular at court during their first three years of marriage.[39]

Whether by design or by chance, Dudley thus appears to have been following the same path in 1557 to 1558 that he had been obliged to follow seven years earlier, setting in place a potential move to Norfolk and making arrangements that would result in the exclusion of his wife from life at court. We do not know if Dudley did in fact move to Norfolk again but it is relevant that when Elizabeth's first parliament was summoned on 5 December 1558, he was again elected to represent the county. When he wrote to Flowerdew in July, parliament was not in session, but Mary's fifth parliament met from 20 January to 7 March, during which Dudley was restored in blood, and he could be forgiven for thinking that he was within his rights to seek to serve once more in the House of Commons at the next available opportunity. As it happened, the same parliament reconvened on 5 November with Norfolk represented as it had been in the first session by Sir Henry Bedingfield and Sir William Woodhouse, but it dissolved upon the news of Mary's death twelve days later.[40] Less than three weeks after the dissolution of Mary's final parliament, Elizabeth summoned her first one, with Norfolk now represented by Dudley and fellow Protestant Sir Edmund Wyndham. The latter was Deputy Lieutenant and represented the county in parliament as long ago as 1539, so was an obvious candidate to provide stable representation in the first parliament following Mary's reign, but there were certainly other candidates whose local credentials could have been considered by the Duke of Norfolk and the local electors to surpass Dudley's. Sir Christopher Heydon, for example, had represented Norfolk in 1545 and would become joint Lord Lieutenant with Wyndham in 1560 – he would later represent the county in 1571.[41] Sir Nicholas L'Estrange, who had represented Norfolk as the Duke's nomination in 1547, was a justice of the peace for the county in 1558 to 1559 but instead served in the parliaments of both years for the borough of Castle

[39] Ibid., 382–84.
[40] Bindoff, *House*, 1.148.
[41] Ibid., 2.352–53.

Rising, in a position created specifically for him.[42] Other prominent locals were also bypassed, it seems, by the election of Dudley, so if he did not complete the move to Norfolk in mid-1558, he evidently leveraged old ties in the county, paying dividends before the end of the year.

Where would patronage of a playing company have fitted into these plans? Dudley's initial placement in Norfolk coincided with his father's push for absolute power as Protector during Edward's reign. One of Dudley senior's strategies in this campaign was to stave off attempts by the Duke of Somerset to publicly discredit him and block the implementation of his policies by looking to gain public approval, which in part involved following the example of Cromwell's use of the Prince's Players during Edward's youth. As William Ingram points out, the company undoubtedly entertained Edward in his early years, but given the frequency with which it appears in the provincial record from 1538 to 1547, the company was evidently used 'more as a standard-bearer for public notice than as a troupe for the pleasure of the young heir' at a time 'when agitation for religious and political reform was at its height'.[43] In 1551, with public sentiment oriented more towards stability than reform, Dudley senior would need standard-bearers of his own to quell public disapproval. He acquired the title of Duke of Northumberland on 11 October, then had Somerset arrested, and his playing company began touring the same circuits Somerset's players had followed since 1547, taking in performance locations across the country.[44] Skip forward to Dudley's plans to rebuild his father's fortunes in 1558, and memories of his father's use of the players as provincial standard-bearers make sense as a model for Dudley to follow, even before he enjoyed a position of any importance under Elizabeth.

Mirroring the pathway to service that he had followed after marrying Amy during the last half of Edward's reign, Dudley now had every reason to emulate his father, including the patronage of a playing company. If he did follow his father's patronage model, Dudley would have seen no reason to assemble a company from scratch, since Dudley senior's patronage appears to have been unwaveringly contingent on the acquisition of an existing company.[45] Yet there are no obvious candidates for any active

[42] Ibid., 2.522–23.
[43] Ingram, *Business*, 76–77.
[44] See 'Seymour, Edward (1500–1551/2)' and 'Dudley, John (1504–1553)', *REED Patrons and Performances*; Johnson, 'Reassessing', 168; and on Dudley senior's part in Seymour's downfall, see Paul, *House*, 190–98.
[45] Johnson, 'Reassessing', 168.

company that Dudley could have acquired at this time. Mary's reign was marked by a series of prohibitions against playing, beginning with a proclamation on 18 August 1553 which included a ban on the playing of interludes of any kind without her special license.[46] From September 1555, the Royal Interluders had such a license to perform plays in the provinces, a privilege that appears to have been exclusively theirs for almost a year, before the Duke of Norfolk's and Earl of Oxford's players appear in provincial records from late 1556 onwards but with limited touring circuits. Five companies also appeared in provincial records for one performance during Mary's reign (the players of the Earls of Bedford and Sussex, Lords Berkeley and Mountjoy, and Viscount Hereford).[47] With so few companies active during Mary's reign, and with only sporadic appearances, it is difficult to identify any that are likely to have ceased activity at the same time that Dudley's players first appear in the records, and which might therefore have been transferred to him.

The only company that comes close is in fact the Duke of Norfolk's Players, whose last recorded appearance was in Norwich in late 1558 or early 1559. They were paid 13s 4d for a command performance in front of the mayor John Aldrich, with the next item in the Norwich Chamberlain's Accounts being the first provincial performance record of 'Lorde Robarte Dudleye his players', paid 20s for a command performance before mayor Richard Fletcher, who replaced Aldrich after the election of 1 May.[48] Norfolk's Players could have performed in Norwich at around the same time that Dudley was lobbying to regain influence in the region. Yet Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was a vocal critic of Dudley and would hardly have gifted his playing company to a rival.[49] As both companies appeared in Norwich at this time, I think it safe to say that they were not comprised of the same group of players, and their presence rather speaks to their patrons' rivalry, with Dudley dispatching his own company to the same location on the first leg of their first provincial tour under his patronage in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the local population. For this he needed a troupe that could offer something different from what Norfolk's company had provided, and perhaps this meant finding an existing company that were not currently in the service of any noble.

[46] Hughes and Larkin, *Proclamations*, no. 390.
[47] 'Berkeley, Henry (1534–1613)', 'Blount, James (1533–1581)', 'Devereux, Walter (1489–1558)', 'Radcliffe, Henry (1507–1556/7)', and 'Russell, Francis (1526–1585)', *REED Patrons and Performances*.
[48] Galloway, REED *Norwich*, 45.
[49] Williams, *Howard*, 49–50.

The Players of St. Stephen Coleman Street

The Marian restrictions meant that there might have been no viable candidate for a company of players that Dudley could refashion as his own standard-bearers when he was looking to reassert his influence in Norfolk ahead of the next parliamentary elections. There is however some evidence that a group of players were already performing in London out of a home base in the central northern parish of St. Stephen Coleman Street before this time. David Kathman has argued that properly commercial playing began when professional players ceased relying on commissions for civic occasions and they started performing with the intention to make a profit.[50] As Kathman notes, indications of this shift can be seen in livery company records of players paying to hire company halls to perform plays that audiences paid to attend, with the first such payment being 12d to the Armourers in 1537–8 'for a play kepte in our hall'.[51] In subsequent years, similar records appeared in accounts of the Weavers (first in 1544) and the Founders (first in 1545).[52] The practice appears to have been confined to the decade up to 1547, after which increasing pressure from city authorities was successful in stamping it out. While livery company records from this era are far from complete, it is worth noting that the three-volume REED edition, *Civic London to 1558*, compiled by Anne Lancashire, contains records from dozens of livery companies but no other instances of hall payments of this kind, indicating furthermore that the practice appears to have been confined to these three halls. I will add that these halls, in particular, form a zone of proximity centred on Coleman Street. Armourers' Hall was located on the northern end of Coleman Street, near London wall (item 40 on the map of the ward, Figure 1.1), Weavers' Hall was situated on the eastern side of Basingshall Street in the block to the west (item 57), and Founders' Hall stood on the eastern side of St. Margaret Lothbury near the southern end (item 11), nearest to the parish church of St. Stephen (item 15). Any player living on Coleman Street, looking for the closest livery company halls suited to hosting plays, to secure the shortest possible walking distance from their home to a playing venue, would choose these venues. Masons' Hall (item 59) was inside the same zone and no evidence indicates players also sought to hire this venue, but if the map of the ward from 1720 is any guide, the original Masons' Hall was not as large as those that the players did hire.[53]

[50] Kathman, 'Rise'.
[51] Ibid., 18.
[52] Ibid., 19.
[53] The original hall was built in 1463 but became obsolete following the adoption of the far more grandiose Freemasons' Hall on Great Queen Street in 1775. Historic England, Grade II List entry 1113218.

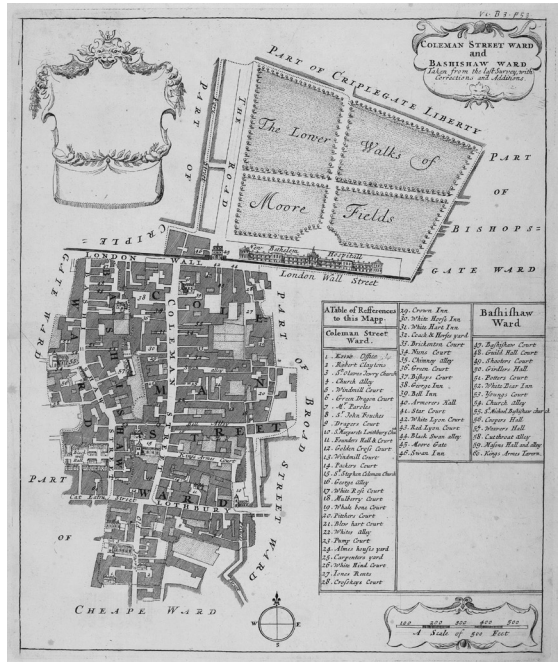

Figure 1.1 Map of Coleman Street Ward and Bassishaw Ward, from John Strype's edition of John Stow's *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark*, Vol. 1, Book 2 (1720), opposite p. 52. Artist: Richard Blome.

Kathman also records that in 1543, George Tadlowe of the White Horse and Thomas Hancock of the Bishop's Head were compelled to sign bonds agreeing to no longer host plays in their taverns or dwelling houses, and I suggest they also support claims of a home base for the players in St. Stephen Coleman Street. The Armourers' Hall was hired by the players just once, and the six-year gap until a second hall was hired may be explained if the same group of players sought to hire these two taverns instead, until the city intervened in 1543. The next two halls were hired in each of four years after these orders. Importantly, these two taverns were located either side of Lombard Street, St. Mary Woolnoth, only around 200 metres from Founders' Hall – these were not by any means the closest taverns to Coleman Street, but were possibly the closest taverns of sufficient size and layout to house plays, based on Kathman's descriptions of them: the White Horse is marked as 'Sir Robert Viner's House' on the 1676 Ogilby and Morgan map of London, depicted as an 'inn-like

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structure with a large central yard, about 56 feet long from north to south, and 32 feet wide from east to west, accessible via a 50-foot covered passageway from Lombard Street' and with a second yard measuring 36 by 30 feet; and based on a 1659 ground plot, the Bishop's Head had a slightly larger plan (36 by 67 feet) but too many rooms on the ground floor to have had available yard space, so Kathman notes that plays were likely performed on one of the larger internal rooms of the upper level.[54]

Further evidence that a group of players was active in this area within London comes from one of the earliest Marian restrictions. A mayoral order was delivered on behalf of the monarch to the alderman of Coleman Street Ward at Guildhall on 16 August 1553, banning preaching or sermons until Mary provided further doctrinal guidelines but also instructing him, 'doo not p*er*mytt or suffer any co*m*en playes or enterlud*es* to be made or played at eny tyme herafter w*ith*in any man*er* of place or plac*es* of yo*ur* said warde'.[55] Other orders of the like kind were no doubt issued to other aldermen, so this should not be seen as evidence that playing was limited to this ward, but the order does reveal that the City was concerned with the extent of 'common' playing happening therein. There is ample evidence that players did remain active in and around London throughout Mary's reign, with a string of reports of breaches, renewed prohibitions, and second-hand accounts well known to theatre historians from these years – in *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*, edited by Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram, the 'Documents of Control' include twenty-one separate documents of this kind relating to seven separate incidents and one other general order for the years 1555 to 1558 alone.[56]

The third and, I would suggest, most compelling source of evidence for there being a playing company resident in the same parish before 1559 are the players themselves. While it is true that we only have the name of 'Laurens' from Dudley's household accounts in 1559 to tell us anything about the membership of the company in its initial iteration, the presence

[54] Ibid., 26–28. Readers will notice that the map of the ward in 1720 (Figure 1.1) includes a White Horse Inn (item 30) and other suggestive place names such as Red Lyon Court (item 43) but should be reminded that such names are remarkably common. The White Horse used for playing until 1543 is not the same one as displayed on this map, and indeed is not named as such on the 1676 map to which Kathman refers. The yard identified in 1720 as belonging to the George Inn (item 38) does appear to have been a viable space for playing (larger than 50 feet by 50 feet) but the same space is not linked to an inn on the Ogilby and Morgan map, and appears there to be split between the alley extending from Coleman Street, and only a smaller courtyard of around 25 feet in width on the top portion. This may not have been a viable playing space in the sixteenth century. For Ogilby's key to the 1676 Ogilby and Morgan map, see Mitton, *Maps*, 18–24.

[55] Lancashire, REED *Civic*, 2.764.

[56] Wickham, Berry, and Ingram, *English*, 41–47.

of James Burbage in St. Stephen Coleman Street before 1559 has been known to scholars for some time. Ingram's comprehensive list of parish records related to Burbage's marriage and the births and deaths of his children, in a footnote in *The Business of Playing* (1992), shows that Burbage (whose name was also spelled Brigges, Bridges, and other similar variants by the clerks of the parish) had married Helen Brayne at St. Stephen Coleman Street on 23 April 1559 and had five children baptised in the same church from 24 December 1559 to 13 June 1574. Parishes began to keep records of baptisms, marriages, and burials following an order by Henry VIII in 1538, so we are reliant on Burbage's own testimony regarding the year of his birth. During a protracted legal battle concerning the Theatre, Burbage deposed on 16 February 1591 that he was sixty years of age at the time, so he was likely born around 1531 or 1532.[57] This date then helps us to identify how long he had been in London prior to his appearance in these parish records, because he was identified as a joiner by trade in the entries for his marriage and the christening of their daughter in 1559, so the period of his apprenticeship can be calculated fairly reliably.

If the deposition by Robert Myles during the 1592 Chancery proceedings against Burbage by Myles and John Brayne's widow Margaret is accurate – and Burbage never disputed these details – the man who would be remembered by history as a visionary of the Elizabethan theatre industry was previously a 'poor man and but of small credit being by occupacion a Joyner and reaping but a small lyving by the same', whose failures in pursuit of an honest trade had compelled him to give over 'and became a commen Player in playes'.[58] This testimony would seem to confirm that Burbage had served an apprenticeship in joinery. As Ingram points out, the dates of this apprenticeship are lost with most of the company's earliest records prior to the Charter of Incorporation in 1571, but he argues that Burbage would have taken up his freedom by 1555 or 1556.[59] How long would Burbage have spent 'reaping but a small lyving' as a joiner before the lure of playing took hold? He was not blessed with the gift of patience, as numerous witnesses would later attest, so I doubt he would have lasted long as an independent craftsman.

Joinery was at this time among the most competitive crafts in which to be seeking to make a living, as the company did not yet have the power to offer its members the level of protections afforded by incorporation

[57] Wallace, 'First', 61.
[58] Loengard, *Elizabethan*, 299.
[59] Ingram, *Business*, 96, 99, 101. See also the summary inventory of surviving records in Phillips, *Annals*, 4–6.

which the Carpenters' Company enjoyed, for example, and they competed with carpenters, turners, and upholsterers for market share in furniture production. To make matters worse, the lack of regulation made joinery particularly vulnerable to foreign craftsmen entering the city and practicing the trade without membership of the company – in the 1563 audit, in fact, ninety-nine unlicensed joiners were identified in London alone, a much higher number than for any other trade.[60] Donald Woodward also provides a salient reminder that joinery was one example of a craft that relied on self-employment rather than secure income: 'Their modern equivalents are not wage-earning factory workers but, rather, jobbing joiners, plumbers, and electricians'.[61] Joiners needed to maintain their own individual supply of tools and materials, and Woodward cites examples of joiners whose individual inventories were valued up to £20 in any given year, but only being able to count on payments for labour and materials per job meant that it was not unusual for such craftsmen to supplement their income with alternative employment.[62]

While the trade was competitive and the Joiners' Company were not yet incorporated, they did operate as a guild that had for nearly two centuries been concentrated in the parish of St. James Garlickhithe, and it was relatively unusual for members to live elsewhere. Jessica Lutkin's study of joiners' wills from 1200 to 1550 shows that throughout this history, joiners invariably lived in this parish or, upon obtaining their freedom, relocated to one of the nearby Thames-side wards while maintaining ties with the fraternity of St. James.[63] Conversely, as Gary Gibbs has shown, St. Stephen Coleman Street became by 1550 an attractive residential location for people from across the spectrum of livery companies. From 1550 to 1562, the parish clerks kept records of the occupations of bridegrooms, so we know that from some 144 marriages in that period, bridegrooms were identified as having sixty-nine different occupations.[64] Burbage was, incidentally, the only joiner married in the parish during this period, but other joiners were also residing in the parish, with John Street the most likely master for Burbage's apprenticeship.[65] Ingram explains that Street was a poor man and even experienced notoriety after being imprisoned in 1554 for an act of protest which may have been little more than an accident

[60] Forman, *Continental*, 97.
[61] Woodward, 'Wage', 42.
[62] Woodward, 'Wage', 37, 42–43.
[63] Lutkin, 'London', 130–31, 139–46, 150–51.
[64] Gibbs, *Parishes*, 93.
[65] Ingram, *Business*, 95–96; Kathman, 'Life and Times', 15–16.

while crossing the road in front of a Corpus Christi march.[66] Burbage's prospects as a joiner would not have looked too promising, so it makes sense that he aligned himself with players in the same parish soon after completing his apprenticeship.

The parish's diversity may be explained in part by its peculiar shape, which made it possible for a significant wealthier class to be established in the residences along Coleman Street, whereas the string of alleyways running off the central thoroughfare became popular short-term cheap residential options for renters.[67] While the turnover rate was thus unusually high, a long-term group of parishioners emerged as a result of renters needing deferrals from which they were unable to pay their way out, creating a spiral of debt and dependence on the landlords located on the main thoroughfare. The parish was thus marked by an increasing economic and social division, with the alleyways populated by poorer long-term residents reliant on parish masters who operated the rental and tithe system, in Gibbs's words, 'as a local banking institution'.[68] Undeterred by the prospects of apparent economic hardship, the promise of cheap and possibly even deferred rent naturally attracted people from across the city, regardless of their livery company loyalties. Yet rather than lock in an image of the poor players being stuck in a cycle of debt that prevented them moving elsewhere, I suspect they occupied the middle rung of this social divide. If players living long-term in this parish were involved in the cycle of debt generated by the 'local banking institution', then it would have been as lenders of money to the poorer residents and not as debtors to the central inhabitants.

The streetscape of this parish therefore played a part in shaping a peculiar community identity that might best be characterised as collective codependency. It is not that building a local economy around money lending was new – many of the market towns on the periphery of London experienced increases in the number, length, and amount of cash loans made by private arrangement throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from which activity emerged the professional moneylenders that Tudor lawmakers effectively legalised in the Act of 1571 but which Thomas Wilson railed against in his *Discourse Upon Usury* (1572).[69] The rise of professional money lending tends to be associated with individual enterprise, and in the market towns in particular the practice of money

[66] Ingram, *Business*, 92–95.
[67] Gibbs, *Parishes*, 94–103.
[68] Ibid., 102.
[69] See McIntosh, 'Money', 558–60.

lending was motivated primarily by trade, since market transactions often required credit rather than cash to ensure goods and livestock would be moved. When a line of credit was withdrawn or called in for payment, a debtor could shift the debt by obtaining a loan from a fellow townsperson, local clergy, or a wealthy city dweller. What sets the lending economy of St. Stephen Coleman Street apart from these historical trends in market towns is that the parish 'banking' arrangement was not created by trade in and out of townships but by the localised economics of rent scales. Instead of the buy-now-pay-later rationale of trade credit, a loan to assist a person in meeting rental or tithing responsibilities involved forming a financial arrangement that grounded both debtor and creditor in a shared parochial responsibility.

I would thus argue that the players and many other inhabitants of the alleyways of St. Stephen Coleman Street occupied a place in the economic hierarchy identified by historians as the place of the 'middling sort', but not defined in the terms that Jonathan Barry proposed in 1994: 'independent trading households'.[70] Instead of embracing independence, the players were part of a codependent community. Instead of trade, their place among the middling sort would have hinged in this parish on their relatively secure position in the middle of the local rental and loans economy. This peculiar socio-economic character of the parish proved ideal, I suspect, for a collective entrepreneurial spirit to thrive. John Coldewey documents the rise of the figure of the 'property player', an entrepreneur paid by a town to oversee production of the local play or pageant, with the peak being from 1515 to 1565.[71] As Coldewey observes, the property player usually worked alone, directing the local talent from each community that hired him, but St. Stephen Coleman Street appears to have been home to one property player who attached himself to a specific group of players. By 1530, the mercer Henry Walton was established as a man who hired costumes to players and built stages for civic performances on commission, but also in 1530 in particular, paid 14s 10d to hire the church and yard at St. Botolph without Aldersgate for his 'fellows' to perform a series of plays.[72] This was, as Kathman argues, an example of a proto-commercial

[70] Barry, 'Introduction', 2. For current work (at the time of writing) on the 'middling culture' in early modern London and its role in the rise of the playing industry, look for outcomes of the 'Middling Culture: The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture, 1560–1660' research project, headed by Catherine Richardson with researchers at King's College London, the University of Birmingham, and the University of Kent.

[71] Kathman, 'Rise', 16–17.

[72] Coldewey, 'Enterprising', 5.

operation, the sort of venture that made the players in later years realise the possibility of pursuing commercial playing.

Walton's earliest documented activity came when hired by John Rastell to build a stage on his Finsbury property in 1527 and to organise the performance of Rastell's own *Love and Riches* at court in Greenwich in the same year.[73] We cannot know if Rastell chose Walton for the task due to any earlier undocumented activity, but I can confirm that Rastell did not need to look very far to locate the man he hired for the task: Rastell's property was situated on the route directly north from Moorgate just beyond the northern boundary of Coleman Street ward, and Walton's own will dated 13 December 1539 identifies him as a resident of St. Stephen Coleman Street.[74] The parish registers subsequently record the burial of Harry Walton in the same parish on 8 January 1540. Another local man who definitely had business with Walton was George Birche, a member of Princess Mary's playing group from 1525 to 1527 and afterwards a royal interluder for two decades. Kathman notes that while the first certain reference to Birche in the royal accounts under Henry VIII is not until 1538, he was certainly already a royal interluder by the time he deposed in a 1531 dispute between Rastell and Walton that he had worn costumes loaned by Walton and had seen them used in other performances at court dating back to 1527.[75] Birche identified himself as a currier of St. Stephen Coleman Street, so his connection to Walton may well have been a parochial one and could explain why Birche was the royal interluder who deposed in defence of Walton's case in the suit brought against him by Rastell. Incidentally, Birche's brother John was also a local of St. Stephen Coleman Street and a joiner by trade, and had by 1547 also become a member of the King's company.[76]

Another side to this proto-commercial activity might be glimpsed in an obscure parish play from St. Mary Magdalen in Milk Street, two blocks southwest of Coleman Street. Mary Erler has described a series of records

[73] These circumstances are only known courtesy of the suit of Rastell v. Walton, which concerned the loan of a large supply of costumes and materials by Rastell to Walton, the latter of whom then let the items out himself or used them in performances in which he was involved. George Birche, a royal interluder, was one of the deponents. For full transcriptions, see Pollard, *Fifteenth*, 307–21. For corrected transcriptions, but with omissions, including details of the stage in Finsbury, see Wickham, Berry, and Ingram, *English*, 229–32.

[74] London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section, Clerkenwell, London, England; Reference Number: DL/C/418; will no. 028.

[75] Kathman, 'Life and Times', 14–15.

[76] Ibid., 15–16; Siobhan Keenan has also identified further records related to the Birches, including the burial record of 'John Bretche' (a variant used elsewhere for Birche) on 3 November 1558 in St. Stephen Coleman Street – see Keenan, 'Tudor', 205–206.

in the churchwardens' accounts of 1530 to 1537 that show the parishioners incrementally adding spectacular elements onto the Palm Sunday procession, starting with added symbolic presentations but culminating in 1536 in the staging of a dramatisation of the cure and conversion of Longinus, the Roman soldier who wounded Christ at the crucifixion.[77] As Erler notes, the 1536 accounts include a payment to the player who performed the part of Longinus, which in the absence of payments for other parts would indicate a professional player was hired for this occasion. In 1536 and 1537, the parish also hired garments for the performance, and while Erler does not make more of these costuming elements, I suspect the presence of the Roman figure at least indicates that the garments were hired from a theatrical provider, with Walton springing very much to mind given the years in question and the proximity to his home parish. The professional player was evidently not a parishioner of St. Mary Magdalen, and would therefore have likely been associated with the provider of the costumes, so we might pencil him in as a player from St. Stephen Coleman Street operating as a performer for hire through his local property player.

Walton appears to have been a relative rarity among property players, with Coldewey identifying numerous other examples of this type of activity only outside of London, in East Anglia and Kent. After Walton's demise, other players in St. Stephen Coleman Street may have taken over some of his entrepreneurial initiatives. Competition also appeared on their doorstep, with a group of minstrels taking up residence in the parish in the 1530s. Ingram's study of the parish evidence for men identified as minstrels or musicians in London reveals that a full one-third (37 out of 111) resided in St. Giles Cripplegate,[78] but I note that this large cluster only appeared in that parish from around the 1580s onwards. There is a smaller but not insignificant cluster of eight minstrels in St. Stephen Coleman Street from 1530 to 1560: Daniel Burbage, Richard Jones, Robert Langdale, Thomas Long (along with an apprentice John Bennett), Robert Rafton, Gilbert Smith, and Thomas Willis.[79] In addition to this list, the famous minstrels Thomas Bowbank and William Turk probably also resided in the parish, as I glean from the christenings of a William Turke and Francis Bowbancke recorded in the register a day apart, on 27 and 28 April 1539.[80] A Timothy Turk also followed on 10 October 1540, appearing a

[77] Erler, 'Spectacle', 450.
[78] See Ingram, 'Minstrels', 30–31, 36–54.
[79] For Ingram's lists of records related to these eight players, see 'Minstrels', 37–39, 42–44, 47, 49, 53.
[80] *Parish Register of St. Stephen Coleman Street 1538–1598*, LMA: MS 4448.

few entries above Margaret Jones, the daughter of Richard Jones, christened on 4 November.[81] The name of Daniel Burbage stands out here for obvious reasons. It has been suggested by Mary Edmond that Daniel was related to the player and 'perhaps it was he who persuaded James to forsake joinery for the entertainment business'.[82] Yet I would agree with Ingram's conclusion that the connection requires a 'fanciful narrative' based on no evidence other than the surname.[83] For Ingram, the documented evidence of Burbage's family shows no indication of any familial tie to the minstrel, and if Daniel persuaded James to forsake joinery, it would have surely been in order to become a minstrel rather than a player. I am more inclined to view Burbage's change of professional direction instead in the context of the emergence of the local property player and the new commercial strategies adopted by players located in the same parish. Following Ingram's lead, the next step in this investigation will be to determine whether other members of Leicester's Men can be linked to these players of St. Stephen Coleman Street.

Family Ties among the Alleyways

In a relatively obscure article that was mostly subsumed into *The Business of Playing*, Ingram began amassing further evidence of what he called 'a remarkable collocation of people living in Coleman Street parish in the early years of Elizabeth's reign', focusing on the Burbages, John Street, and Burbage's business partner, John Brayne.[84] The last of these men lived not in St. Stephen Coleman Street but in neighbouring Bucklersbury, in Cheap Ward, following his apprenticeship to a grocer in that ward. Brayne and his sister Helen were, however, raised in St. Stephen Coleman Street, where their parents Thomas and Alice lived.[85] Most of 'The Early Career of James Burbage' was simply reproduced in Ingram's book but the final two pages, which included the observation about this 'collocation' and the speculations it might elicit, were not reproduced in the book and have

[81] Ingram cites the entry for Jones but not for Turk – see 'Minstrels', 38. Other entries I have identified for the minstrels in the parish register for St. Stephen Coleman Street, in addition to the items documented by Ingram, are the christening of Margaret Wyllis on 19 September 1541, the marriage of Thomas Longe to Agnes Burfotte on 22 July 1548, and the burial of 'Triphena Jons' (the daughter of Richard Jones) on 23 November 1548.

[82] Edmond, 'Yeomen', 32.

[83] Ingram, *Business*, 96. See also Ingram's earlier discussions of the same body of evidence in 'Minstrels', 35; and in 'Early', 18–36.

[84] Ingram, 'Early', 35.

[85] Ibid., 26.

thus been forgotten by theatre history. Here I take up the challenge of extending Ingram's work, demonstrating that such a collocation of key figures – namely, the early membership of Dudley's playing company – can certainly be found in the registers of St. Stephen Coleman Street and its immediate neighbourhood. From the letter of 1572, the membership of the company at that time can be confirmed in order of seniority as James Burbage, John Perkin, John Laneham, William Johnson, Robert Wilson, and Thomas Clarke. Ingram confirmed that the Burbage in the parish register of St. Stephen Coleman Street was the player because his occupation was listed as a joiner and Burbage had continued to identify with this trade, as Ingram says, 'when it mattered', including the lease of the Shoreditch property on which the Theatre was built in 1576.[86] By cross-referencing the information about Burbage in legal documents concerning the Theatre to personal documents like his brother Robert's will, it is possible to establish with certainty that the records in the St. Stephen Coleman Street register do refer to the player and his family. My goal here is to replicate this approach with the other names listed on the letter of 1572, starting with those for whom a clear anchoring point can be established in parish records that refer to them as a player.

The burial of 'Robt Wylson yoman (a player)' on 20 November 1600 in St. Giles Cripplegate is widely acknowledged as indisputably referring to the player in Leicester's Men and later the Queen's Men, so it is as good a place as any to start.[87] This record has also been a source of some confusion. John Payne Collier conceded that this notice referred to the player but also insisted that this man was the father of Robert Wilson, the dramatist who appears in the accounts of Philip Henslowe from 1598 to 1600.[88] Collier had identified the baptism of another Robert Wilson in the register of St. Botolph's Bishopsgate, and assumed this was the same man who married Mary Eaton in that parish in 1606, and that this man was buried in St. Bartholomew the Less in 1610, with these dates making it possible for Wilson junior to be the dramatist in Henslowe's accounts. Collier's 'two Wilsons' theory held sway for several decades and was even echoed by Sidney Lee in the entry on Wilson for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1885–1900, as well as other major reference works of the early twentieth century. Yet Collier missed the record of the burial of the infant Robert Wilson, son of Robert Wilson, at the age of just six weeks in the

[86] Ingram, *Business*, 28, 100.
[87] *Parish Register of Saint Giles Cripplegate, 1561–1606*, LMA: MS 06419/001.
[88] See Collier, *Memoirs*, xviii.

St. Botolph's register on 4 November 1579.[89] To be fair, the list of burials in this register is in sequential order on the recto pages and 1578 was a bad year for increased mortality, with burial records extending over many pages, so this burial notice from 1579 eventually appears opposite weddings from 1587 and baptisms from 1581 and could be easily missed.

Incidentally, Wilson the player did previously reside in the parish of St. Botolph's, as has been confirmed by Mark Eccles via two other documents: 'Robertus Willson de parochea St Buttolphes extra Bushoppgate player' provided bail along with Henry Collier to release Sir Owen Hopton from the Tower on 2 September 1585, and Wilson's name was already on the subsidy roll for the parish in 1582.[90] It is thus very likely that the player was indeed the father of the short-lived Robert, and he was also father to Richard (baptised 7 September 1582) and Sara (3 June 1586) in the same parish. It thus seems fair to me to suppose, as many now do, that Wilson the player was also the dramatist paid by Henslowe, whose payments stop after the burial of Wilson, '(a player)', in St. Giles Cripplegate in 1600.[91] Wilson evidently moved to this parish sometime after June 1586, but the timing is unclear. Knowing that he was 'a player' buried in the latter parish in 1600 helps establish that the strongest candidate for the identity of his wife is the 'Ales Wilson widdo' whose burial is recorded in the same parish on 28 March 1602. I find no other marriage involving an Alice to any Wilson in this parish that would rule this identification out. Similarly, no prior marriage of Wilson appears in the St. Botolph's Bishopsgate register to help identify another wife with whom his three children baptised in that parish were conceived. There is, however, the marriage of a Robert Wilson to 'Alles Jhones' in St. Stephen Coleman Street on 3 October 1574, which makes me confident in claiming this as the marriage of our player and pointing to the possibility that he was living at the time in the same parish as Burbage.

It is of course possible that Wilson's marriage did not take place in his home parish, as there were many reasons for Elizabethans to marry away from home. As David Cressy has observed, for one thing, 'a huge number of men and women in their twenties lived away from home as servants or apprentices, and not surprisingly many of them fell in love'.[92] For some families, an ecclesiastical licence to marry away from home might also

[89] *Parish Register of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate, 1558–1628*, LMA: MS 0451/001.
[90] Eccles, 'Lives', 131–32.
[91] See Mithal, 'Two Wilsons', 106–107.
[92] Cressy, *Birth*, 254.

have been preferred to a 'highly publicized wedding with banns because it spared them the expense of hospitality to a ravenous assembly of guests'.[93] Then there were also undoubtedly those who sought to marry under licence away from home, 'in haste, when time was of the essence', and without the scrutiny of family and neighbours.[94] Yet in all of these cases, the parish church in which the ceremony was conducted would often also seek to protect its parishioners by ensuring the couple or their offspring did not become burdens, making it clear in the register that the bride and groom were not locals. Consider for example the record of Richard Burbage's marriage, recently discovered by Siobhan Keenan in the register of St. Mary's Rotherhithe, Southwark, well away from Burbage's residence in Shoreditch.[95] Both the leading performer of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and his new wife were registered as foreign to the parish church in which they were married: 'Richard Burbag of Shordich gentlem[an] to Winifred Turner of White Chappell maden'. Record-keeping practices did differ markedly from one parish to another, but as a rule of thumb it is worth accepting that without explicit reference to another parish, a record in the register indicates likely residence. This principle applies throughout this book except where additional external evidence suggests that one of the married parties was a non-local, but in the case of Wilson's marriage, I see no reason to doubt that he was living in St. Stephen's Coleman Street by 1574.

Wilson's move to Bishopsgate by 1582 is noteworthy because it also put him on the route from the city to the Theatre, after Burbage made the move to Shoreditch in 1576 to live closer to his major theatrical investment. Burbage appears in parish registers for St. Leonard with the baptism of his daughter Alice on 17 March in that year.[96] Wilson's move to St. Giles Cripplegate took place after he was already a member of the Queen's Men and was no longer affiliated with the same company as Burbage. Another member of both companies can also be located in St. Giles Cripplegate around the same time as Wilson. On 10 February 1587, the register records the christening of 'Comedia, the daught^{r} of Willm Johnson, one of her Ma^{tie} players, Base borne of Alyce Booker', and her death is subsequently recorded via a burial notice for 'Comedia, daught^{r} of Willm Johnson player' on 3 March 1593 in the same parish. Alice was a native of the parish

[93] Ibid., 309.
[94] Ibid., 309.
[95] Keenan, 'Shakespearean', 461–62.
[96] *Parish Register for St. Leonard, Shoreditch, 1558–1653*, LMA: MS 07493.

who was christened there as daughter to 'Rob[t] Bowker', on 8 August 1564 but she died when her daughter Comedia was not yet seven weeks old and was buried on 30 March 1587. Of some interest here is that Alice's burial record identifies her as servant to 'widdow Colman', the wife of 'Christopher Ffoster alias Colman', the grocer and householder who was earlier buried in St. Giles Cripplegate on 23 February 1586. Coleman had previously earned notoriety for his part in running a reformist congregation in St. Martin in the Fields near Westminster, after which he was imprisoned and wrote a petition to the Secretary of State, William Cecil, declaring that the proper place of all rulers should be *in* the house of God and not *above* it.[97] I mention this fact simply to note the irony of a member of the Queen's Men producing a child out of wedlock with a servant in the house of a man who once petitioned to have the Queen removed as the head of the Church of England.

Attempting to locate where Johnson was living while he was a member of Dudley's company has proven to be equally intriguing. As with Wilson, the name of a widow might provide an important clue: the burial of 'Annes Johnson widdo' was recorded in St. Giles Cripplegate on 10 November 1592. Now it should be remembered that Johnson is a rather common surname, as your present author can attest, so caution is needed in ascribing this burial notice to the wife of the player with the same surname. Scrutiny of this parish register yields no obvious marriage of an 'Annes' (or Agnes, or a similar name) to any other man with the same surname, nor does it reveal any marriage by another William Johnson other than to Joan Barton on 3 May 1573, but both this William and Joan were dead by 1577. Like Wilson, then, Johnson must have married before moving to this parish, if he was even married when he had a liaison with Alice Booker. There is also, like Wilson, a marriage of one couple with the right names in St. Stephen Coleman Street in the early 1570s: William Johnson married Agnes Goodall in that parish on 20 April 1572.[98] This couple had a son christened William on 26 September 1575, but the boy was buried less than a year later, on 30 August 1576. The player's earlier life can, I think, be traced through a series of other parish records which, as it happens, indicate he had a predilection for women whose names begin with the first letter of the alphabet. In a string of seemingly related records, a marriage involving William Johnson is preceded shortly before by the

[97] See Cooper, *Athenae*, 1.283; Peel, *Congregational*, 9–10.

[98] This item is in fact missing from MS 04448 but can be located at the correct date in the duplicate register, MS 04449.

record of a burial of a wife or the baptism or burial of a child of a man with the same name in the same parish, then the marriage that fits with that relationship is preceded by another set of similar records. I concede that coincidence may be at work here, and that this could be a string of records involving different men with the same relatively common name. Yet I hope the reader will see from the evidence I present here that the timing and location of these records point to the possibility that one man connects them all.

Before his marriage to Agnes Goodall, Johnson married 'Alys Lucke' on 31 March 1567 in the same parish, and their daughter Martha was christened 21 November 1568 but also died young and was buried 6 August 1570. There is no record of an Alys Johnson buried in this parish, but an Alice Johnson was buried in St. Botolph Aldgate on 5 February 1570.[99] A move to Aldgate might have made sense for Johnson as it would put him and his wife in the vicinity of the road to his company's first playhouse, the Red Lion. If this burial was of the player's wife, it also adds a more tragic element to Johnson's career with the company. After the family moved from St. Stephen Coleman Street to St. Botolph Aldgate by 1570, Alice's death could have prompted the return of the young Martha to the care of one of the families still residing in the parish in which she had been born, especially if Johnson was on tour at the time – the company was indeed as far away as Gloucestershire by early February. They were on the road again later in the year, so if Johnson went on tour after the death of his wife, leaving his daughter in the care of former neighbours or family in St. Stephen Coleman Street, as I suspect he did, he was also absent when she died in early August, as the players were in Devon at that time.

Before this, Johnson married 'Annes Walton' in St. Stephen Coleman Street on 10 April 1564, but exactly nine months to the day later, on 10 January 1565, 'Annis Johnson the wyfe of W^{m} Johnson' was buried. The timing suggests possibly terminal complications in the advanced stages of a pregnancy or even in childbirth, and the surname invites thoughts of a family connection to the property player Henry Walton, but this is unconfirmed. Looking further back, no other William Johnson presents in the register as an alternative candidate for the father of 'Rachel the childe of William Johnson' buried in St. Stephen Coleman Street on 11 September 1563, but this is as far back as he appears, with no record of Rachel's baptism or any earlier marriage in this parish. We need to look instead out to St. Mary Whitechapel, where 'Rachell Johnson' was baptised on 7 June

[99] *Parish Register of St. Botolph, Aldgate, 1558–1625*, LMA: MS09222/001.

1562, and her mother Alice was among the dozens of people recorded in this parish as having died 'of the Plague' – Alice was buried on 1 August 1563.[100] The only marriage I can find of an Alice to a William Johnson prior to this is one for which banns were issued on 25 July 1559 in St. Clement Danes, Westminster, and the marriage was finally recorded on 10 September of the same year.[101] Alice's surname is not listed in the register, so there is no way to know anything more about her background.

These records all seem to me to line up in such a way as to indicate that Johnson was married four times, with each of the second to fourth marriages taking place around two years after the death of his previous wife. They also support the idea that he moved several times, first from Westminster to Whitechapel after 1559, to St. Stephen Coleman Street by 1564, and then to Aldgate by 1570, before returning to Coleman Street following the death of his wife and daughter while he was on tour. Finally, his move to St. Giles Cripplegate by 1587 aligns well with the timing of Wilson's move to the same parish. Tragically, the losses that precipitated his return to Coleman Street could have repeated a cruel pattern for Johnson – if he was a member of the company as early as 1563, he was on a tour of the north at the time that his first wife died in August. Rachel also died a month later, at which time the company were as far north as York, and I am inclined to think he did not break from the tour even if the news of his wife's death reached him on the road. I suspect instead that Rachel was taken into the care of a family of one of the other members of the company, hence her burial at St. Stephen Coleman Street and his move to that parish after the company's return from tour.

While Johnson may have been absent for the loss of his daughter and wife in 1563 and 1570, I can confirm that all these records of his weddings or the timing of the conception of his children are free from any clashes with touring records. Any such clash of dates would disqualify these records from being our player. The nearest miss is the company's appearance in Dover on 22 April 1564, just twelve days after his marriage to Annes Walton, but this gap is more than sufficient to account for the travel time from London to Dover, even including several stops along the way, such as for the appearance in Canterbury that I include in the itinerary prior to

[100] *Parish Register of St. Mary, Whitechapel, 1558–1643*, LMA: P93/MRY1/001.

[101] The date is given as '10' but listed after an item for 27 August in what is otherwise a chronologically exact sequence of entries, so it is most likely referring to 10 September even though 'September' is not listed in the sequence of months covered on this page. See *Parish Register of St. Clement Danes, Westminster, 1558–1638*, City of Westminster Archives Centre; London, England, Reference: STC/PR/1/1.

Dover. Most likely, Johnson ensured the marriage was timed to enable him to depart with the players shortly afterwards. This might sound as though I am describing a relatively uncaring husband, but then on the evidence provided here, this may be precisely the best way to characterize Johnson's lack of paternal and spousal obligation. This sense of his character may explain one curious aspect of the will of Richard Tarleton, the great clown of the Queen's Men, dated 3 September 1588, which named Johnson and Robert Adams as the guardians of his son Phillip, at the time just six years old, until he came of age.[102] Along with their guardianship, the two men would control the bulk of the estate, which had been invested in the boy for fifteen years. Yet before his death, Tarleton petitioned Secretary of State Francis Walsingham to protect Phillip from Adams, 'a sly fellow … being more fuller of law than vertew', prompting a legal battle that Tarleton's mother and sister pursued for over a decade – they claimed that the attorney, Adams, unduly influenced the content of the will and heavily underestimated the value of the estate in order to pocket the difference for himself.[103] Despite being well positioned to support the Tarleton family, Johnson appears to have played no further part in the pursuit of justice or in providing for the guardianship of Tarleton's son.

Lest we presume that Johnson lacked all sense of familial obligation, it may however be worth noting that his sister, Margaret Guye, found herself in dire straits in 1589 and was reportedly taken in by John Lowth of Aldreth in Cambridgeshire after she arrived at his door 'in foul weather with a little girl and a child in her arms'.[104] Finding herself with two young children but no father to provide for them, Margaret was said to have gained employment as a seamstress and teacher, but surely turned to her two brothers, Robert of Soham and William, whom she identified as 'one Johnson one of the Quenes players'.[105] The player evidently took her in as she appears thereafter in the same parish register if, that is, the marriage of 'Richard Holden and Margarett Guy' recorded on 28 October 1593 in St. Giles Cripplegate involved the same woman. It would seem that his sister and her two children had settled with Johnson, his wife, and his base-born daughter at least until the deaths of Johnson, Agnes, and Comedia all within a year of each other.[106] Happy families, indeed.

[102] PRO PROB10/124. See also Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 57–58.
[103] Eccles, 'Actors IV', 173.
[104] Eccles, 'Actors II', 461.
[105] Ibid., 460–61.
[106] Johnson was evidently still alive – or at least believed to have been alive – when named in the will of Simon Jewell, on 19 August 1592, so if the widow Agnes was indeed the wife of the player,

Ingram based his claim about there being a collocation of names in the register of St. Stephen Coleman Street on the Burbages, Brayne, and Street, but he also noted two entries related to a John Perkin which he conceded were only 'loose threads' requiring additional evidence to achieve more certainty.[107] With this part of his article not being reproduced in his book, these threads were never pursued any further. Here I have established that the burial of Johnson's daughter Rachel and Wilson's marriage to Alice Jones allow us to extend this collocation of names to include more members of the company, making it possible to revisit the Perkin material with a firmer footing. Until Ingram's claims about Perkin, scholars had universally steered clear of making additional biographical claims beyond Chambers asking if he may have been the 'Parkins' who assisted George Ferrers as the Lord of Misrule at the court of Edward VI in 1552–3.[108] This prospect, while by no means definitive, still provides a potential age range. The revels accounts list this 'Parkins' as third in the order of succession behind the 'ayer apparaunt' John Smith, as the second of three boys fitted for 'longe ffooles Coates', and ahead of '2 base sones' fitted for 'lesser ffooles coates'.[109] He was evidently on the older side of the age range for boy actors, which Kathman has demonstrated was normally from fourteen to twenty-one, with a median age of seventeen.[110] If we assume this 'Parkins' was more than fourteen, we can be quite certain that his birth would fail to appear in parish records commencing in 1538, but I can confirm that the register does offer plenty of available evidence of Perkin's presence in the parish and also of the large family to which he belonged.

John Perkin first appears in these parish records as the grieving husband of Elizabeth, 'wife of John Parkyns', buried on 5 October 1570, and then there is a burial record of 'John Parkyns' on 8 August 1578, and a marriage of a 'John Parkyne & Bridgette Symkens' on 2 December 1581.[111] There is

Johnson's death might be presumed to have happened between 19 August and 10 November 1592, though the burial record remains still unconfirmed despite three burials of men with this name being found in London parishes in this interval, and at least three elsewhere in the country. For Jewell's will, see Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 58–59.

[107] Ingram, 'Early', 35.

[108] Chambers, *Elizabethan*, 2.332.

[109] Feuillerat, *Edward*, 119–20. For additional correspondence related to the appointment of Ferrers as Lord of Misrule, see also Kempe, *Loseley*, 19–54.

[110] Kathman, 'How Old', 244–45.

[111] Ingram notes the burial of Perkin's first wife and the record of his second marriage but did not see this burial notice – the relevant notice is in a section of MS04448 that has badly faded ink and so is easily overlooked, but I can confirm the record by cross-referencing to the duplicate register, MS04449, in which the entry is clear.

no record of the marriage to Elizabeth in the register, so they evidently married elsewhere, but the record remains elusive. Ample evidence can be found in the register of a large family with the same surname, suggesting a stronger familial tie to the parish. Beginning soon after the commencement of the register, there are nine christenings of Perkin children, spread out in such a way as to make it feasible that all were from the same parents: 'Nycholase' (25 November 1538), 'Rychard' (29 September 1540), 'Dorothye' (13 September 1542), 'Thomas' (13 September 1544), 'Margaret' (25 February 1546), 'Brygyt' (20 August 1547), 'Mary' (11 January 1549), 'Rychard Parkyne son of Phelippe Parkyne freemason' (28 July 1555), and finally 'Joan Parkyns the childe of Phillip Parkyns mason' (7 June 1562). Ingram suggests some of these could have been John's children, but his potential age would make this prospect most likely only for the last two names in the sequence and for both children born after 1549 Phillip is identified as the father.[112] I rather think that all of them are the freemason's children, as would be John and any others born before the register commenced.

As a freemason, Phillip's choice to reside long-term in St. Stephen Coleman Street was not unusual, with Masons' Hall located on the eastern edge of the parish of St. Michael Bassishaw, behind a row of houses lining Coleman Street and the church of St. Stephen (as indicated on the map of the ward, refer Figure 1.1). Few of the Perkin children made it through to adulthood, with burials recorded at young ages for all of Nicholas (17 November 1543), Richard (2 December 1543), Thomas (23 June 1545), Margaret (10 July 1547), Mary (30 August 1550), and a second Richard at age eight on 17 October 1563. There are two burials of family members whose births must precede the register: 'Anne' (23 September 1540) and 'Wenefryd' (13 March 1544).[113] I am unsure of the identity of Perkin's mother, but I note the burial of 'Mildred Parkyne' on 22 July 1578, and Phillip was buried less than two years later, on 24 May 1580. The Perkin family were thus established locals in the parish, and evidence from the lives of two sisters further reinforces a sense of loyalty to both family and parish. Dorothy married Thomas Empson in this parish on 1 June 1561, and the evidence indicates that they did not leave even though Empson was buried in St. Lawrence Jewry on 4 September 1581. Dorothy was

[112] Ingram, 'Early', 35.

[113] There is also a Mary Perkin with no baptism entered in this register but who married John Ames there on 15 July 1562 – since the marriage entry records that she was 'dwelling at Maidstone in Kent', she could have been an older member of this family who returned home to marry or may simply have been from another Perkin line.

married thereafter to 'John Croutch of Olave Sylvrestreet' in St. Lawrence Jewry (only a block west of the church of St. Stephen, just off the shaded area of the map of the ward) on 4 August 1583 and their first child was baptised on 6 May 1584 in the same church but then buried shortly after on 8 September as 'John son of J^no^ Crouch in Myles Alley'. Crouch's residence was in Mills Alley, one of the many alleyways that jut off Coleman Street to the east – by 1720, it was Bell Alley (see Figure 1.1).

From this fact, I glean that Dorothy and Empson, and perhaps the whole Perkin clan, likely lived in the same alley, but Empson must have preferred the ministrations and lectures at nearby St. Lawrence Jewry, where reform was being embraced more quickly than in St. Stephen's.[114] Crouch was a member of the same congregation, but obviously also a resident of the same alleyway, indicating a sort of divided loyalty between one's place of worship and the place that one called home. Even in making the move to a more reformist congregation, Dorothy still maintained her residential link to the parish her family had called home since at least the 1530s. Brigit also went no further than St. Stephen Walbrook, at the eastern end of Bucklersbury Street, to marry James Watson on 24 February 1570.[115] This connection may have come via John Brayne, who lived for many years in that street while he was apprenticed to grocer John Bull and who certainly by this time had an established relationship with the players as the brother of Burbage's wife.

Readers will notice that the burial of John Perkin in 1578 is dated just over a fortnight after Mildred was buried, and I can add that just two days before Mildred's burial, a 'George Parkens' was also buried in St. Stephen Coleman Street. Plague ravaged London in 1578, and is therefore the likely cause of death in such short succession for three members of the Perkin family, although I have not been able to locate other records that would cement this link. It is possible, as Ingram observes, that Perkin subsequently moved with his wife Bridgette to St. James Clerkenwell, where actor Richard Perkins is thought to have been born and certainly spent his whole adult life, and where the burial of a John Parkins is also recorded on 2 May 1597.[116] One problem with this suggestion is that the baptism record for Richard, 'sonne of John Parkins', is dated 24 October 1585, which

[114] For a description of the reforms at St. Lawrence Jewry, driven by the masters of Balliol College, Oxford, who held the advowson in the 1560s and 1570s, see Branch, *Faith*, 126–27.

[115] *Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials for the United Parishes of St. Stephen Walbrook with St. Benet Sherehog, 1557–1716*, LMA: MS 08319/001.

[116] Ingram, 'Early', 35. For detailed biographical accounts of Richard Perkins, see Mateer, 'Edward', 63–70; Nungezer, *Dictionary*, 274–78.

would make this Richard just seventeen years of age when authorising payments for Worcester's Men on 4 September 1602 and borrowing 10s for the company from Phillip Henslowe in 1603.[117] David Mateer has also identified Richard as the boy player involved in a contract dispute with Edward Alleyn dated from 19 April 1597, but he explains that the terms of the dispute indicate the plaintiff was at the time 'in his late adolescence'.[118]

It is instead possible that the Perkin buried in 1578 was the actor, and the marriage in 1581 could involve another John Perkin altogether.[119] Given that there is no evidence of any activity by Perkin after 1578, and he was not among the members of Leicester's Men enlisted into the Queen's Men in 1583, I am inclined to think that this is indeed the case. The salient point here is in any case that Perkin was very much a local of St. Stephen Coleman Street, strengthening the case for the collocation of names towards which Ingram had gestured. While we have the Perkin family in sight, it is also worth mentioning a burial record from a nearby parish. The church of St. Bartholomew-the-Little was situated on Threadneedle Street across the road from where the Royal Exchange was opened in 1571, hence the church being later named St. Bartholomew-by-the-Exchange, but also therefore just one block away from the White Horse and a short stroll from Founders' Hall, key sites of playing activity in the 1540s, as we have seen. It was in this parish church that on 6 May 1562 the burial of one 'Lawrence Parkyn' was recorded.[120] Since this register only begins in 1558, there is no surviving record of any earlier event that might provide more information about his family connections. Yet the surname and the proximity to pivotal sites in the backstory of the players make this man the strongest candidate I have yet found for the identity of 'Laurens', coupled to a very real possibility that he was one of the oldest members of the extensive brood to which John Perkin belonged.

If this is correct, we arrive at the striking notion that the first famous Elizabethan player brothers were not John and Laurence Dutton of the companies of Dudley's brother Ambrose, Earl of Warwick (*circa* 1575 to

[117] Nungezer, *Dictionary*, 274; *Parish Register of St. James Clerkenwell, Islington, 1561–1625*, LMA: P76/JS1/004.

[118] Mateer, 'Edward', 68. I note in addition to this that there are at least six baptisms of boys with the name of Richard Parkin or Parkins in London and surrounding precincts between 1578 and 1583, so there are certainly alternative candidates whose ages align better with the known facts of this actor's life, with none appearing to have been directly related to the actor John Perkin.

[119] There is a baptism recorded of a John Parkyn, son of Richard Parkyn, 'citizen and clothworker', in St. Mary Woolnoth on 21 April 1556, which would make him the right age to marry in the nearby parish of St. Stephen Coleman Street in 1581 – *Parish Register of St. Mary Woolnoth, 1538–1641*, LMA: MS07635/001.

[120] *Parish Register of St. Bartholomew by the Exchange, 1558–1712*, LMA: MS04374/001.

1580), the Earl of Oxford (1580 to 1583), and the Queen. Before that pairing, there would thus have been John and Lawrence Perkin, first of a group of professional players located mainly in St. Stephen Coleman Street and subsequently of Lord Robert Dudley's Players. Johnson's earliest appearance in the parish register of St. Stephen Coleman Street may therefore also be related to the death of the company's leading member in 1562. Burbage undoubtedly moved to the top of the internal hierarchy of members with the demise of the older Perkin, with the younger Perkin a close second, as reflected in the order in which the names appear on both the 1572 and 1574 documents. The gap in the company's personnel needed filling, however, and this along with the circumstances I have described would be more than enough to account for Johnson's move to the parish before 1564.

From the names on the letter of 1572, only Laneham continues to be most elusive. He certainly became a member of the Queen's Men along with Johnson and Wilson, but there is no evidence he also moved to St. Giles Cripplegate, where we find both of them after 1583. A record for the christening of 'John, the sonne of John Langham Labor[r]' does appear in that register on 5 March 1585, but this is evidently the same 'John Langhim labourer' whose son Thomas was previously christened in the same parish on 23 September 1582. Laneham is last mentioned as a Queen's player as a payee at court on 1 January 1591,[121] so there is a *terminus post quem* for his death and it is thus feasible that one 'John Langam' buried in St. Leonard, Shoreditch, on 20 February 1594 might be the player. For earlier records relating to Laneham, I am intrigued by the burial of 'Jane Langham an childe' on 5 January 1559 in St. Stephen Coleman Street, as it may suggest he arrived in the parish with a young child not long before this. The closest I can get to a more solid connection between the player and this child is a marriage between John Lanham and 'Jone Frende' in Eynsford, Kent, on 13 December 1543 and a baptism of 'Jone Lanham' in the same parish on 22 September 1553.[122] The link is far from certain, but the child who died in 1559 could have been new to the parish and just five years of age, following a move by John and Joan from Kent. The town of Eynsford is eleven miles from Bromley, the town from which Burbage originally hailed, and the route to London passes directly between the two townships. Yet this connection is complicated by one other Lanham daughter appearing in the Eynsford register after this move would have taken place, with Anne baptised on 1 May 1562. If John Lanham of Eynsford is indeed

[121] Chambers, *Elizabethan*, 4.163; Nungezer, *Dictionary*, 234.
[122] *England Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975*, FHL Micro 992518 Ref ID 2:1.

our Laneham of acting fame, though, it is possible that the couple initially moved to London to be closer to the playing company but the death shortly afterward of their young daughter prompted the family to return to Kent, and Laneham thereafter worked and lived in London while his wife and children stayed in their regional home, rather like a certain other famous player later did from a home base in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Making Connections with Wives and Daughters

Five of the six players listed on the letter of 1572 appear to have lived in the same parish much earlier, with Perkin belonging to a family that inhabited the alleyways since the 1530s, and the early leader of the company may have been his older brother. Burbage was residing in the parish by 1559, and Laneham appears to have first attempted to relocate his family there around this time. These players form the likely core of the membership of the company, and it may be no coincidence that thirteen years later, sans 'Laurens', theirs were the first three names on the letter of 1572 and also on the royal patent of 1574. Among the six names on the letter of 1572, Thomas Clarke's was last, and his absence from the 1574 patent indicates that he must have left the company in the meantime. I have also left Clarke until last but this is not at all to signify his lack of importance. Instead, I will show that the search for Clarke in the records has revealed evidence of the key role of women in forging and maintaining these ties that held the company together for decades. But for the fact that Clarke twice married women with close ties to other players, it would be easy to miss him due to the sheer number of records including this very common name in the registers of dozens of parishes throughout this period. The value in the presence of these women goes far beyond merely confirming that the records in question refer to the player; their presence serves also to bear witness to their active participation in the behind-the-scenes work that a company required to remain viable. The trail of evidence on which I base this claim begins with the will of Thomas Pope, one of the members of the second generation of Leicester's Men and then also Shakespeare's company. When Pope drew up his will on 22 July 1603, he awarded property, money, and part shares in the Curtain and Globe playhouses to 'mary Clarke alias wood' and a gold ring with five opals to 'dority Clarke sister to mary Clarke alias woode'.[123] These two sisters, whose future welfare was clearly very dear to Pope's heart, provide a tangible link to Clarke the player.

[123] PRO PROB10/224; Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 68–70.

As theatre historians have long known, Mary Clarke subsequently married another of the players named in Pope's will, with the list of Globe sharers by 1605 amended to include John and Mary Edmonds.[124] Edmonds was a fellow player, likely apprenticed to Pope in the 1590s, then later a member of Queen Anne's Men, and is listed in the registers of Southwark St. Saviour as a 'player' as early as 1605. He was left apparel but not shares in Pope's will, so he acquired a share via marriage to Clarke. The reason Clarke was given these playhouse shares is not so evident unless she was related to the player. It is also not clear why Clarke was 'alias wood' in Pope's will, but in the parish in which Pope lived there is a record that may provide an answer. On 1 November 1596, the St. Saviour register records the burial of 'John Wood a prison[er]', and a man with the same (albeit extremely common) name married a Mary Clarke in Frating, Essex, on 22 January of the same year.[125] The connection to Clarke the player may be reconciled via the baptismal record of Mary, daughter of Thomas Clarke, in St. Mary Stratford Bow, Tower Hamlets, on 19 October 1567, although I have grounds more relative than just the confluence of the right names here to think this record relates to the player and the daughter named in Pope's will, as I will explain further.[126]

While the small village of Frating may seem a remote location in which to find Clarke being married, especially if she was daughter to a London-based member of a nobleman's playing company, the village is actually one of a cluster of small rural settlements close by to the east of Colchester, a town Dudley's company regularly visited during their East Anglian tours.[127] It is conceivable that Wood was more than just an occasional audience member and knew the players well enough to form an intimate acquaintance with their families. With this in mind, I draw the reader's attention to another marriage involving John Wood only a few years earlier and in another of the villages east of Colchester. In the register for the church of St. Edmund King and Martyr in Tendring on 17 May 1593, the name of John Wood appears in a marriage to 'Brydgett

[124] Adams, 'Housekeepers', 3–4; Chambers, *Elizabethan*, 2.418; Nungezer, *Dictionary*, 128.

[125] *Essex Registers of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials*, ERO D/P 349/1/1.

[126] *Parish Register of St. Mary, Stratford Bow, 1538–1637*, LMA: MS P88/MRY1/001. There appear to have been at least two Thomas Clarkes, possibly more, living in this parish from the 1550s onwards, including one record of a Thomas Clark baptised as the son of Thomas Clark (28 June 1562) and, even earlier than that, the listing of a 'Thomas Clarke junior' as a father (18 February 1559). For reasons outlined later, I am confident that Clarke the player was among their number for a short period in the late 1560s.

[127] While Colchester is absent from the itinerary I have prepared for this volume, I will explain in Chapter 2 that there is abundant evidence the town would have been a regular location visited by the company during their East Anglian tours.

Edmonds'.[128] Not only is the surname of this bride matched to another player close to Pope, the timing is potentially also no coincidence, since a Thomas Edmonds was buried in Southwark St. Saviour on 14 April 1592. Thomas was, to the best of my knowledge, no player, but it is possible he was the father of the player named in Pope's will. The baptism of John, son of Thomas Edmonds, in St. Andrew Holborn on 22 July 1584 would be the right age for the Edmonds apprenticed to Pope prior to 1603.[129] Yet John was not involved with playing when Wood and Bridget married in 1593, so was there a link to the players at all? The answer lies in evidence that Edmonds and a twin brother after whom he named his son were Pope's close lifelong friends. Pope's baptism is registered in Southwark St. Saviour on 16 March 1561, but immediately below and just one week later the baptisms of twins John and Thomas 'Edmonson' are also recorded.[130] The two marriages of John Wood thus provide glimpses of what seems yet another fanciful narrative: Wood took the widow of a player's friend (Thomas Edmonds) for his wife, then after her death marries the daughter of another player (Thomas Clarke), only for his death and the death of the first player (Thomas Pope) to provide the catalysts for the marriage of his own widow (Mary Clarke *alias* Wood) to the son of the player's friend (John Edmonds), who had in the meantime become a player himself through apprenticeship to the first player.

The scenario is complex, but does make sense of these records, and really only needs a burial record for Bridget prior to Wood's second marriage to make it even more plausible – alas, that record eludes me.[131] Jodie Smith has identified another viable candidate for Mary Clarke *alias* Wood in research for the important *King's Women, 1594–1642* project, and kindly agreed to share this information with me prior to going to press. There was a marriage of a Mary Clarke to Thomas Wood in St. Mary le Strand, by license, on 19 September 1599, and then the burial of Thomas Wood, 'a man', in Southwark St. Saviour on 12 September 1603. The timing of this man's demise fits well with the marriage of Clarke and Edmonds shortly thereafter, but I would still question whether Pope would bequeath playhouse shares to Mary if her husband had no connection to theatre and was

[128] ERO D/P 353/1/1.
[129] *Parish Register of St. Andrew Holborn, 1558–1623*, LMA: MS06667/001.
[130] *Parish Register of Southwark St. Saviour, Denmark Park, 1538–1572*, LMA: PS92/SAV/0356.
[131] There is one burial that I have found for a Bridget Wood in the interval indicated here, on 10 September 1594, in Westham, East Sussex, but it is most likely the burial of a child baptised with the same name in this parish just nine days earlier – *Sussex Parish Registers*, Brighton, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office, Ref PAR505/1/1/1.

alive when Pope drew up his will, effectively leaving these shares to Wood by marriage.[132] Thankfully, I have one piece of evidence to link Pope to Clarke in a way that does not rely on knowing who Wood is. Just as the 'Edmonson' twins were baptised only a week after Pope and in the same parish, there is recorded the baptism of Annes Maddock in the same register alongside the twins – in fact, Pope, Maddock, and the twins are the four successive entries at the bottom of this page of the register:

> Item the same day chrystened thomas pope
> Item the xxiij day chrystened annes maddock.
> Item xxiiij day chrystened Jhon edmonson
> Item the same day chrystened thomas edmonson.

The link to Clarke is secured when at St. Giles Cripplegate, on 13 October 1574, a marriage was recorded between 'Thomas Clarke and Annes Maddock'. This would mean Maddock was only thirteen years and seven months old when Clarke took her to be his wife, which is on the young side for a girl to marry in this era but not unthinkable.

There are families of Maddocks to be found in the 1560s and 1570s in both St. Giles Cripplegate and St. Stephen Coleman Street, which may help explain how a young girl from Southwark became paired with a player living in St. Giles Cripplegate and a fellow of other players living in St. Stephen Coleman Street. There are also several Clarke families sprinkled throughout the registers of Southwark St. Saviour that could have been the link to the player in London. If this is the right Clarke, living in St. Giles Cripplegate in the 1570s, we need to be careful to disentangle the lives of potentially three men of the same name who appear in the register at this time: one listed as a 'labourer', who I am discounting, one 'howseholder' (buried on 2 June 1579), and one 'servant to John Taylor, merchant'

[132] Smith has also kindly shared findings of two Maria Clarkes and a Dorothy Clarke baptised in St. Martin-in-the-Fields from 1576 to 1582, but neither Maria has the father named in the register, and Dorothy's father is identified as Matthew Clarke. Given that my argument rests on the connection to Thomas Clarke, I omit these women from my discussion, but the reader should be aware of other viable candidates. I have also not located any record that definitively identifies a Dorothy as daughter of Thomas Clarke apart from a baptism in Holy Trinity church in Coventry on 1 October 1570 (*Parish Register of Coventry, Holy Trinity, 1561–1653*, Warwick County Record Office, FHL no. 1067410). This Clarke could not have been the player, but he could have been the Coventry wait named as Thomas Clarke in 1563 (Ingram, REED *Coventry*, 225). There are, incidentally, christenings for 'Mary Clarck' (19 May 1569) and 'Doryte Clarck' (30 May 1572) in Saint Martin Pomeroy, a church very close to the southern end of Coleman Street, but I am reluctant to link these to our player, since Clarke would have been on tour with the company in East Anglia and Lincolnshire in September to October 1571, when the latter child was conceived – see *Parish Register of Saint Martin Pomeroy, 1538–1812*; LMA P69/MTN4/A/001/MS04392.

(buried on 3 November 1582). While it may be more reasonable to think that Clarke established himself financially upon retiring from Leicester's Men, and so would have been the reputable householder buried in 1579, there is some fascination to be gained from the notion that he took to making money in the service of Taylor, who may be the same 'John Taylor, merchant of London', who was renowned as a bygone P. T. Barnum – he is on record as having shown such strange sights in Shrewsbury in 1583 as 'a dead child with two heads, a live sheep with six feet &c., … and if the party which kept him would ask him and say, "Be those people welcome?" he would lift up his fore-feet and cry, heigh, heigh: also a live eagle, a purpentine of the sea, dead, a wild live lynx', and more.[133] Could Clarke's own experience as a player for a noble patron have helped him provide a spectacular edge for Taylor's roadshow?

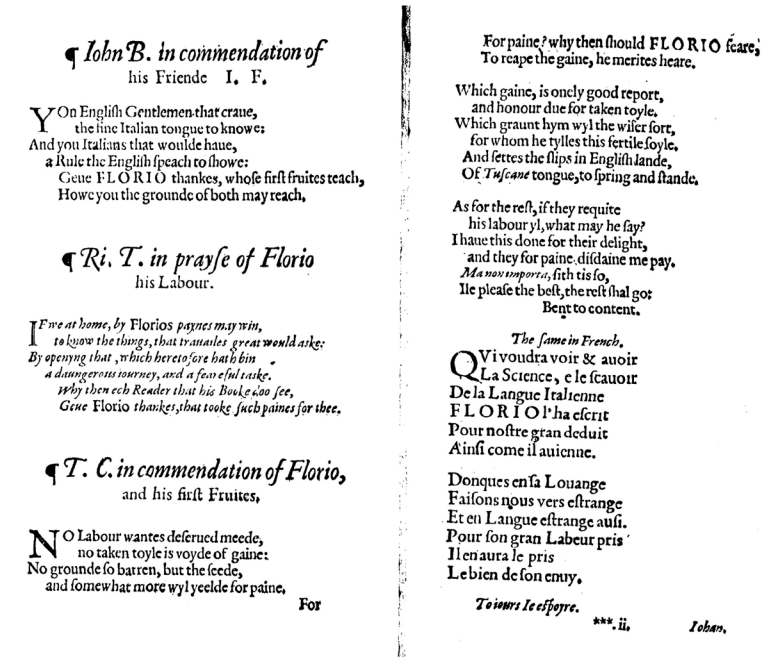
In any case, Clarke was evidently still alive when he wrote one of the commendatory poems for John Florio's first major work, *Florio His First Fruites Which Yeelde Familiar Speech, Merie Prouerbes, Wittie Sentences, and Golden Sayings* (1578) (Figure 1.2), but his involvement here need not signify that he was still an active member of the playing company.[134] Admittedly, Clarke is identified only as 'T.C.' but other members of the company also provided poems in praise of the author, with 'R. Wilson' being Wilson the player and playwright, 'Iohn B.' likely to be Bentley, and 'I.P. al Ecc^{mo} Conti di Lecestri' quite possibly referring to Perkin, 'a most excellent servant of the Earl of Leicester', so Clarke is usually identified as the author of this poem.[135] Claims that the poems by Bentley, Clarke, and Wilson are 'grouped together' with one by Richard Tarleton (initials given as 'Ri. T.'), as evidence that all four were members of Leicester's Men at the time are incorrect, however, since a poem by the stationer Richard Collins is included between those by Wilson and Bentley.[136] Tarleton was, in the reckoning of most scholars, associated with Sussex's Men at the time, and it is more likely that the list of contributors came from a range of networks in which Florio was active at court and in the families of others for whom his linguistic services were

[133] Owen and Blakeway, *Shrewsbury*, 562. While it is possible that there were two merchants of London with the same name, membership records of the Merchant Taylor's company of London are incomplete for these years, so this cannot be confirmed – see LMA CLC/L/MD/Co16/MS34037/005 Membership Index 1530–2008 of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors, and Sleigh-Johnson, *Merchant*, 439–45.

[134] Florio, *First*, sig. *ii4v–*iiir.

[135] Ibid., sig. *ii2v–*ii4v. While the involvement of these players has been a source of hyperbolic claims by some people, for a measured discussion of Florio's dedication of the book to Leicester and his connections to the players, see Harding and Stamatakis, 'Shakespeare', 31–38.

[136] Florio, *First*, sig. *ii4r–*ii4v.



¶ *John B. in commendation of*
his Friende I. F.

YOn Englifh Gentlemen that craue,
the fine Italian tongue to knowe:
And you Italians that wouldе haue,
a Rule the Englifh fpeach to fhowe:
Geue FLORIO thankes, whofe firft fruites teach,
Howe you the grounde of both may reach.

¶ *Ri. T. in prayfe of Florio*
his Labour.

IF we at home, by Florios *paynes may win,*
to know the things, that trauailes great would aske:
By openyng that, which hereto fore hath bin
a dangerous tourney, and a feareful taske.
Why then ech Reader that his Booke doo fee,
Geue Florio *thankes, that tooke fuch paines for thee.*

¶ *T. C. in commendation of Florio,*
and his firft Fruites.

NO Labour wantes deferued meede,
no taken toyle is voyde of gaine:
No grounde fo barren, but the feede,
and fomewhat more wyl yeelde for paine,
For paine? why then fhould FLORIO feare,
To reape the gaine, he merites heare.

Which gaine, is onely good report,
and honour due for taken toyle,
Which graunt hym wyl the wifer fort,
for whom he tylles this fertile foyle,
And fettes the flips in Engliſh lande,
Of *Tuſcane* tongue, to fpring and ſtande.

As for the reſt, if they requite
his labour yl, what may he fay?
I haue this done for their delight,
and they for paine diſdaine me pay.
Ma non importa, fith tis ſo,
Ile pleaſe the beſt, the reſt ſhal go:
Bent to content.

The ſame in French.

QVi voudra voir & auoir
La Science, e le ſcauoir
De la Langue Italienne
FLORIO l'ha eſcrit
Pour noſtre gran deduit
Ainſi come il auienne.

Donques en ſa Louange
Faiſons nous vers eſtrange
Et en Langue eſtrange auſi.
Pour ſon gran Labeur pris
Il en aura le pris
Le bien de ſon enuy.

Toiours Ie eſpoyre.

Figure 1.2 From the dedications to John Florio, *Florio His First Fruites Which Yeelde Familiar Speech, Merie Prouerbes, Wittie Sentences, and Golden Sayings* (London: Thomas Dawson, for Thomas Woodcocke, 1578), sig. *ii4v–*iiir, RB60820, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

being widely used.[137] Clarke did not have to still be an active member of the company to maintain ties with the current cohort, as I will demonstrate.

After Clarke's death in either 1579 or 1582, his wife and children moved back to the parish in which Annes spent her childhood. By this time she was still not yet twenty-two years of age herself. At some point, Pope appears to have taken Clarke's two daughters into his care, but it is not clear how many or if any other children survived Clarke. Based on the timing of births and deaths of various Clarke children in the register of St. Giles Cripplegate, I suspect that Bridget Clarke, christened on 19 May 1577 (while Annes was sixteen years old) but buried on 9 September 1578, is the only child Clarke produced with Annes. This means that the two daughters named in Pope's will, Mary and Dorothy, were the issue of an

[137] McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's*, 5, 11–12.

earlier marriage, and Annes took on the care of these two girls even though she was only six years older than Mary. I also suspect Pope's family first took these girls in along with Annes while she was still alive, as she appears to have been buried in the parish in which the Popes lived on either 25 September 1590 or 6 November 1591.[138] Dorothy and Mary thus ended up in Pope's care and in his will ultimately because they were in the care of the young woman with whom he had been friends since childhood. Their mother, and Clarke's first wife, was very likely the Dorothy Clarke who was buried in St. Giles Cripplegate on 6 September 1574, six weeks before he married Annes – the marriage of Thomas Clarke to 'Doryte Briges' took place in All Hallows Honey Lane on 18 January 1561.[139]

The location and timing of this marriage stands out to me because it places Clarke and his first wife in the vicinity of St. Stephen Coleman Street close to 1559 – only three blocks separated the two churches, located in adjacent wards. Perhaps the strongest feature of this record from a theatre history perspective is the surname, as it links Clarke via marriage to a second identifiable player, although this one has remained unheralded before now. In the register for St. Mary Stratford Bow, there is on 17 December 1575 a baptism of 'Esay Bridge sone of John Bridg Player', providing us with a player bearing the same name as Dorothy, Clarke's first wife. This player is also named as the father of two other sons baptised in this parish, 'Henery Bridges' (24 September 1572) and 'William Bridge' (3 September 1573). It is difficult to locate Bridges any earlier, although there are two records in London worth mentioning, with a John Bridges marrying Elizabeth Cooper in St. Michael Cornhill on 16 September 1566, and 'Anne Bridge the childe of John Bridge' christened on 2 February 1569 at St. Stephen Coleman Street.[140] The appeal of these records should now be evident, as they place Bridges in London near the members of Leicester's Men in the late 1560s. Furthermore, in Southwark St. Saviour, the burials of both Elizabeth Bridges (on 22 December 1584) and 'John Brydges' (11 October 1577) can be found after the latest date that the Bridges name appears in the registers of St. Mary Stratford Bow. Without being able to confirm them as the same couple who married in St. Michael Cornhill, I offer these records as window dressing for the imagination.

[138] These are the two dates on which burials are registered for 'Annys Clarke', and since three girls with that name were baptised in this parish (9 January 1574, 20 September 1575, and 10 April 1584) but two are later married (25 August 1596 and 5 September 1602), only one of the two burials under this name could have been from among the three local baptisms.

[139] *Parish Register of All Hallows Honey Lane, 1538–1697*, LMA: MS05022.

[140] *Parish Register of St. Michael Cornhill, 1558–1654*, LMA: MS04062.

It is tempting to make more of Burbage's own name being entered on occasion in the documentary record as a variant of Bridges. His marriage notice in the St. Stephen Coleman Street register, for example, gives his name as 'James Brydgys' (23 April 1559), and in the record of christening for his son Richard, two different spellings are used: 'Rychard briggys the child of James brygges' (7 July 1568). Ingram argues that such inconsistencies can be explained by a hapless clerk who 'regularly got Burbage's name wrong', but the hands are so different in these entries and they are separated by such a long interval that I am certain more than one clerk recorded these variations.[141] Burbage was thus very likely inconsistent in the spelling of the family name, but I am disinclined to entertain thoughts of any direct family link between Bridges and Burbage since the first names of the family members of Bridges the player are not in any records relating to Burbage's extended family. Nevertheless, if John and Lawrence Perkin found fame as player brothers, and as John and Lawrence Dutton certainly did, Burbage could be expected to have capitalised on any mistaken belief that he was closely related to Bridges at this time. It is however likely that Clarke was related to Bridges through his first wife, Dorothy Bridges, who could well have been the player's sister. The presence of Bridges the player in St. Mary Stratford Bow in the early 1570s helps square the box around the claim that the 1567 baptism of a Mary Clarke in the same parish is for Clarke's daughter. Bridges may thus be tentatively added to the membership of Dudley's company based on his possible proximity to the other players in London by 1566 and then to Clarke after 1567, as well as finally settling close to Clarke's daughters. As I will show in Chapter 4, having at least one member of the company in St. Mary Stratford Bow into the 1570s also strengthens the case for counting John Garland, later of the Queen's Men, as a member of this company in the 1570s, given that he appears to have been residing near Bridges at that time.

Leaving Bridges to one side for now, I will nevertheless add that Clarke's second marriage helps to lock in the link to the second generation of players in the company, through the childhood connection of Annes Maddock to the player who left playhouse shares in his will to her stepdaughter Mary. I will add then that the reason so many connections of this kind exist between players via daughters, sisters, and wives is surely because these women actively worked together to maintain such connections. Scholars recovering evidence of women's involvement in the early English theatre have shown that the women named in legal battles for the control

[141] Ingram, *Business*, 99–100.

of playhouse assets were not merely representatives of their deceased husbands – they held a significant stake in the business of playing in their own right, and they were able to mobilise associates, friends, and family to protect it. In the case of Margaret Brayne, for example, her involvement in numerous legal battles after her husband's death in 1586 has typically been described in terms of the protection of a widow's inheritance, but Natasha Korda points out she was involved in the construction of the Theatre.[142] Also, she presented herself in 1586 as a gatherer at the Theatre to ensure the Burbages did not cheat her out of the Brayne share.[143]

Viewed in a similar light, the bequest to Mary Clarke should not be seen as just a case of loyalty to a fellow player's surviving family but is an indication that the recipient was a legitimate agent in the business from which Pope and his fellow players derived their income. In the following chapters, I consider ways in which the changes in the company's business and playing practices were closely linked to increasing theatrical capital, which means that a significant and increasing volume of assets would be left behind whenever they toured – the maintenance of these assets inevitably involved prominent roles for daughters, sisters, and wives.[144] As I will explain, these roles must have grown along with the capital, culminating in the responsibility of maintaining the company's largest assets, the playhouses. The women operating behind the scenes in this fashion naturally appear most often in the documentary record when their stake in an asset is threatened or where these assets are legally transferred, but these documentary traces surely represent a small fraction of the investment they made in the business of playing: they undoubtedly gave their finances, their labour, and their skill. As Korda notes, the great theatre entrepreneur Phillip Henslowe records the involvement of his wife Agnes in the family business of money lending and pawn broking, and his niece Mary was apprenticed to gain skills as a sempstress and lace maker, skills that would be useful in costume and property manufacture and repair.[145] My sense is that the growth of the capital that precipitated the great innovations I attribute to Leicester's Men from 1558 to 1588 was made possible with similar levels of commitment and skill from the

[142] Korda, *Labors Lost*, 25–26; see also Berry, 'First', 35.
[143] Berry, 'First', 36. For an excellent general study of early modern women's role in business and pathways to property ownership, see Erickson, *Women*.
[144] With this argument, I echo Gabriel Egan's summary of how the accumulation of theatrical capital resulted in increasing professionalism in the English theatre in the 1580s and beyond, but I extend the timeframe to account for the earlier history of Leicester's Men – Egan, 'Theatre', 22–25.
[145] Korda, *Labors Lost*, 26–29.

women in the lives of these players, even if the lack of detailed business records like Henslowe's means that their collective efforts are generally lost to history.

Postscriptum: Beginnings

Having established that Dudley had good reason to want to acquire a playing company well before Elizabeth took the throne, I hope that the evidence for a collocation of players in and around St. Stephen Coleman Street also provides reason enough to accept that the company he acquired was already active beforehand. The precise timing of the beginning of Dudley's patronage is lost along with the Dudley household accounts before December 1558 but the 'must, if' letter may well provide a hitherto unacknowledged clue. Dudley sent the letter to Flowerdew, 'From Hays', which refers to Hayes Place, a property owned by the Scotts of Halden but situated on the northern outskirts of the town of Hayes in Kent, at the site of the modern day Chatham, Hambro, and Pittsmead avenues, all of which are named after former residents.[146] Scholars who cite the letter give no thought to why Dudley was staying at Hayes Place in July 1558 as their interest is usually only in the content of the letter and the question of his relationship with Amy.[147] None mention, for example, that the Scott family hailed from Halden, the same town in which Dudley's father had spent a substantial proportion of the first three decades of his life and possibly where Dudley himself was born and spent several years of his early life, given that his father did not sell their estates there until Dudley was six or seven years of age.[148] His father also purchased Halden Manor in 1550, as part of his efforts to reestablish influence in the southeast during the peak of his powers, but this estate was lost again when Mary unleashed her wrath on the family.[149] Was Dudley in 1558 attempting to work with old family friends to reclaim some of his father's former interests in Kent, but taking advantage of the fact that one of the family's old Halden ties was also established in Hayes, just twelve miles south of London, instead of having to go to Halden, some sixty miles southeast of London, to do so?

[146] Adlard, *Amye*, 20. For a more precise description of the location and history of Hayes Place, see Hasted, *Survey*, 24–26.
[147] See, for example, Adams, *Household*, 380–81; Adlard, *Amye*, 20–21; Kett, *Ketts*, 57; Kendall, *Robert*, 24; Wilson, *Sweet*, 76–77.
[148] Loades, *Dudley*, 30–32, 288–90; Paul, *House*, 67–70, 114.
[149] Loades, *Dudley*, 296.

Whatever Dudley's reason for being in Hayes in July 1558, his presence there gives me an opportunity to point out that Hayes Place was also only a little over half a mile from the southern edge of Bromley, the town from which James Burbage hailed.[150] Although I have established that Burbage was already in London well before this time, he had reason to be home with family in Bromley for the harvest or Lammas feast time, if he was needing to reconcile his father to the wisdom of a change in career direction in London as well as to his prospects for marrying a young tailor's daughter in the city despite apparent lack of 'credit', as Myles later deposed. Indeed, the obstacles to the marriage appear on the surface to have been considerable, and there was little in the credit of an unestablished joiner and 'commen Player in playes' that might give the Braynes cause to permit it save for family friendship and, perhaps, necessity – an eight-month gap between the wedding and Mary's arrival hints at a marriage of convenience. Yet if Burbage was able to promote himself to the Braynes as a player employed in the service of 'Lord Robert', his social capital would have had more to recommend him to the Braynes than his small credit. Dudley's presence in the vicinity of Bromley in the middle of 1558 represents an opportunity when an encounter with Burbage was possible. In later years, Hayes would certainly come to hold substantial value for the Burbages, with his son Cuthbert retiring not to Bromley but to the second largest property in Hayes after Hayes Place, and both Cuthbert and his wife Elizabeth died at 'The Heyes' in 1636.[151] If this can be read as an act of sentiment on Cuthbert's part, it is conceivable that he was retiring to the village in which his father first established the long-term association with Dudley that would eventually reap enormous benefits and prestige for Cuthbert and Richard.

While Burbage was by no means yet a leading member of the company, as such, his entire career tells us that confidence was one of his defining character traits, particularly in dealing with those above his own station, so if the opportunity did present itself to meet with Dudley in Hayes in 1558, he undoubtedly jumped at it. As I have argued, Dudley was also primed to recognize the value of the players at this time and surely seized the opportunity as well. Such a meeting is of course a product of my imagination but the materials from which it is constructed are, from a historical perspective, concrete. Historians must tell such stories not because they are

[150] Mary Edmond, 'Burbage, James (c. 1531–1597)', *ODNB*.
[151] Edmond, 'Yeomen', 45–46.

true but because the concrete stuff of history consists of the material traces of the often otherwise invisible lives of real people. As Ingram reminded theatre historians in *The Business of Playing*, finding the tangible pieces of the puzzle of the past is only one part of the process; the remainder is 'fitting them together'.[152] I suggest that a meeting in Hayes in 1558 represents as good a place as any to mark a beginning, or at least one of the viable connections through which these pieces could be fitted together.

[152] Ingram, *Business*, 242.