THE ROLES OF SERVANT CHARACTERS IN RESTORATION COMEDY, 1660 – 1685

by

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Under the Direction of Malinda Snow

ABSTRACT

Scholarship that focuses on the role of servants in London comedies following the restoration of Charles II is almost non-existent even though servants appear in most every play written and produced during that period. Stage servants often serve as principle, essential characters who are pivotal to the action of the drama, and sometimes they are the star of the show, played by celebrity actors. Servant characters also serve to exemplify the frequently changing social mores and political issues of the period with their thoughtful observations and endeavors as they illustrate the innumerable themes about which scholars have written.

INDEX WORDS: Carolean comedy; Restoration stage; Charles II; mirror to society; Hobbesian thought; libertine lifestyle; licentious behavior; lady’s companion; lady’s maid; footman; valet de chambre; agency; master; mistress; comedy of manners; social comedy; farce
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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2018
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Electronic Version Approved:

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July 2018
DEDICATION

My love and gratitude go to my mom for her gift of a round tuit; to Max for acting as sentry and insisting upon “sequestration” designed to “achieve maximum productivity”; to Grayson—along with the Paw Patrol, Blippi, Mila and Morphle, Peppa Pig, and the PJ Masks superheroes: Catboy, Owlette, and Gekko—for keeping me company while I worked; and to Berkley for closing the door.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I can’t thank everyone on my committee in the same manner, as you have each held a different place in this all-too-long process. Dr. Malinda Snow directed my M.A. thesis as well as this dissertation, and I really don’t know why she agreed a second time, knowing that my ability to procrastinate is quite well developed. Dr. Snow, your guidance and suggestions were—as always—invaluable and greatly appreciated. Dr. Lyneé Gaillet, who also read my secondary focus (Composition and Rhetoric) exams, has far more pressing things to do as Department Chair (in addition to all the other hats she wears) so I am very grateful that she put me on her to-do list. Thanks especially to Dr. Matthew Roudané, who willingly agreed to be on this dissertation committee despite the already long list of others on which he serves. I value not only your much-needed council and advice, but the time and effort each of you has expended in helping me achieve my goals. Thank you.
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1 INTRODUCTION

Although servants appear in nearly every new comedy staged in London following the restoration of Charles II, little scholarship has focused on their roles in these plays. This neglect occurs despite the prolific attention scholars have paid to other stage characters of the period. But while many servant roles are insignificant, employed simply to introduce other characters or provide background information, a substantial number are not only essential to the plot and pivotal to the action of the drama, they often exemplify the frequently changing social mores and political issues as well as highlight the characters and illustrate the innumerable themes about which so many scholars have written.

There is a plethora of critical material on other roles in Renaissance, Restoration, and eighteenth-century drama, and entire books devoted to the rake (see Robert Hume’s *The Rakish Stage* and Gillian Manning’s *Libertine Plays of the Restoration*), carefree young lovers (see John Harrington Smith’s *The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy*), the heroine (see Lisa Hopkins’s *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy*), the honorable woman (see Douglas M. Young’s *The Feminist Voices in Restoration Comedy: The Virtuous Women in the Play-Worlds of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve*), and even seventeenth-century senior citizens (see Elisabeth Mignon’s *Crabbed Age and Youth: The Old Men and Women in the Restoration Comedy of Manners*), yet indexes on topics concerning drama during the period go from “Sedley” to “Settle” with never a “servant” in between. From the earliest Restoration comedies, however, servants not only provide thoughtful observations, witty comments, hilarious moments, and absurd situations; they sometimes have their own storylines and are often central to the direction of upper-class characters. For example, the role of Teague in Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee, Or, The Faithful Irishman* (1662) was played by John Lacy, one of the most famous
comic actors of the time, whose characterization of the bumbling Irish servant was the beginning of the ever-popular stereotype. Likewise, the servant Dufoy, a saucy, impertinent Frenchman from Sir George Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge: or, Love in a Tub* (1664), has as many lines (including a soliloquy of the same length as Hamlet’s “To be or not to be …”) and a more interesting storyline than any of the other characters. In John Dryden’s *The Feign’d Innocence, Or, Sir Martin Mar-all* (1667), Warner, the title character’s servant, singlehandedly orchestrates the action of the play. Warner is the first character to appear on stage, complaining to the audience about the problems he is having with Sir Martin, who is “so opinion’d of his own Abilities, that he is ever designing somewhat, and yet he sows his Stratagems so shallow, that every Daw can pick ’em up” (1). Throughout the play, the clever and witty servant creates plans to help Sir Martin get what he wants (the girl), covers for his master each time the knight bumbles the plan (to get the girl), and takes the blame whenever Sir Martin gets caught doing something he shouldn’t (inadvertently insulting the girl). By the end of the play Warner, with the help of his cohort Rose (another servant), determines the course of events by directing and manipulating the other characters (all of whom are their social superiors) who are, in turn, willingly directed by the servants from whom they ask advice and guidance. *Sir Martin Mar-all* is only one of many comedies in which the servant is a principle, essential character. Servants frequently make suggestions and sometimes even dictate to their masters; they are friends and confidants; they assist and aggravate, shame and support; they take matters into their own hands with both good motives and bad. Even in comedies where servant roles are minimal, they advance the action, serve as foils for other characters, and provide essential explanations and background information. And sometimes they simply steal the show.
Why, then, has so little attention been paid to the great many servant roles that are vibrant, entertaining, and indispensable, while university stacks are filled with texts on the libertines, gallants, and heroes who compose only part of the cast? Linda Anderson posits that scholarship on servant roles has been neglected because modern readers “are often uncomfortable with the idea of personal service, which seems to imply ‘servitude’ and even to verge on slavery” (9). But if this were true, would there be so many texts on slave narratives, postcolonial literatures, and subaltern studies? Would we watch and enjoy films like Robert Altman’s Gosford Park (2001), I Am Love (Lo sono l’amore; 2009), or the re-made comedy Arthur (1981 and 2011)? Would the popular British television series Upstairs, Downstairs have aired sixty-eight episodes? And would a great number of us have waited so impatiently for the next season of Downton Abbey?

Elisabeth Mignon, in her 1947 study of old men and women as portrayed in Restoration comedies, stated even then—in 1947—that there was a critical “need for detailed examination of the constituents” in these works (Preface vii), yet with the exception of a superficial examination of the roles of servants in eighteenth-century drama in a dissertation published in 1961 by Michael Porter¹ and a musical written twenty years later as a parody of Restoration comedies,² there is nothing that devotes more than a few paragraphs or a brief chapter to the roles of servants in Restoration (or eighteenth-century British) drama; there has certainly never been a

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¹ Michael Porter’s 1961 dissertation, The Servant in Restoration Comedy, traces the dramatic evolution of servant roles in source plays by Plautus, Terence, Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher, and Molière to compare them with adaptations of those source plays by Restoration dramatists. The author looks at the Restoration audience’s concept of the servant in real life, the various kinds of servants (he has identified twenty-four different service capacities), and examines servants’ real-life “duties, their living conditions, their leisure activities, their relations with their masters, and their attitude toward service as a means to another end” (2). After a very broad—and therefore rather insubstantial—compilation of dramatic servant roles categorized by function (exposition, amplification, opposition, complication, or contrast) and by modes of development (external, internal, or involvement), Porter concludes his dissertation with a “chronological exploration of the evolving techniques and conceptions of servant characterization as they appear in ‘original’ Restoration comedies” (2), cataloging the onstage role of servants into three groups: those who are rebellious or exploitative; the obsequious, faithful, and industrious; or the lewd, lascivious, and lustful. Yet Porter’s topical (the areas listed above are discussed in a mere 180 pages) examination of the role of servants in Restoration comedies is virtually the only scholarship on such a rich and varied topic.

full-length study of the topic. Kristina Straub, in her 2009 book *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism, and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, devotes bits and pieces of several chapters to the drama of the period to illustrate her portrayals of the real-life relationships between masters and servants as depicted in the polemical and imaginative literature of the period. It appears that while contemporary writers have long recognized the importance of servant roles, today’s critics have just begun to do so. Denys Van Renen has recently published *The Other Exchange: Women, Servants, and the Urban Underclass in Early Modern English Literature* (2017) in which (despite the subtitle) he gives only a brief nod at servants, somehow conflating them with itinerant workers, the urban underclass, rural vagabonds, and “other marginalized groups” who steer “the ways in which England navigates the shifting cultural, economic, and political terrain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (2).

For example, in his consideration of Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* he writes that “when the court, skilled doctors, and gentry abandon the city en masse, the laboring class remains to give London definition and shape. Servants, the underemployed, and city dwellers commingle with neighbors, butchers, apothecaries, and artisans, traversing and connecting classes and urban topographies” (157). But later in the chapter, in a six-page section titled “Servants in the City,” Van Renen says that while “the gentry no longer maintain[ed] servants in London,” the “helpless master class … depended on servants for basic human needs,” sending them to shops and markets for food, beer, bread, and medicine (159, 160). Who belongs to the “master class” if “the court, skilled doctors, and gentry abandon[ed] the city en masse”? Even Iman Sheeha, who wrote a positive review for this book in *The Review of English Studies*, is confused about the author’s classifications:
While the distinction Van Renen makes between the “English underclass” and “women” is curious (can we envision an underclass without women?) and between the “underclass” and “servants” (were servants a class distinct from other groups in the period?), the central argument of the book, that “several major authors of the period represent the itinerant workers, women, and other marginalized groups as steering the ways in which England navigates the shifting cultural, economic, and political terrain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” [2] is solid.

Paddy Lyons more thoroughly considers servants in Catie Gill’s 2010 text, Theatre and Culture in Early Modern England, 1650-1737: From Leviathan to Licensing Act, in a chapter titled “What Do the Servants Know?” in which he looks at various ways stage servants understand and are treated by their employers. He divides the relatively short (nineteen-page) essay into pre- and post-1700 sections, which reduces even more an already brief study. Also published in 2010 is R.C. Richardson’s Household Servants in Early Modern England, in which the author devotes a fifteen-page chapter to representations of household servants in early modern drama (including Shakespeare), suggesting that servants in Restoration comedies, “like citizens, tend to be on the outside edge of this polite world—generally the setting is London—though they are complicit in the stage action and facilitators of it from time to time. They are confidants, shrewd observers and critics of marriages of convenience, fashion, manners and polite society’s empty rituals” (29). In 2009 Everett G. Neasman published Take My Coxcomb: Shakespeare’s Clown-Servants from Late Feudal to Proto-Capitalist Economies in Early Modern England, and several books published in 2005 focus in one way or another on servant roles in Shakespeare’s theatre: Service and Dependency in Shakespeare’s Plays by Judith Weil and Discourses of Service in
Shakespeare’s England by David Evett, in addition to Anderson’s A Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare’s Plays. In each text the abstract, introduction, or preface indicates the previous lack of scholarship on servant roles in Renaissance studies. Anderson’s preface begins:

The volume of Shakespeare studies is so great that it sometimes seems unimaginable that there remains an aspect of the canon that has not been exhaustively discussed. It is therefore surprising to discover how little attention has been paid to the servants in Shakespeare’s plays, although all of his plays feature servants as characters, and many of these characters play prominent roles.

(i)

There are dozens of monographs and several books on the role of servant characters in the fiction of Richardson, Swift, Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett, and even more on the topic of real-life servants in eighteenth-century Britain, but practically nothing on stage servants. Cynthia Lowenthal considers several different characters in her book, Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage—including sexual predators and rapists—but servants didn’t make the cut. Nor does Ram Chandra Sharma look at servant characters, even in his chapter titled “Outside the [Aristocratic] Charmed Circle,” in which he considers “the country bumpkin” (120-25), “the middle-aged and the old” (125-37), “the henpecked husband” and his termagant wife (137-42), the “libidinous and amorous old man” (142-46), the “amorous old woman” (146-58), and “the merchant class” (158-64) in a good-sized (354 pages) text. In “‘Keeping Place’: Servants, Theater, and Sociability in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain,” Gillian Russell utilizes James Townley’s 1759 farce High Life Below Stairs to discuss “the comparative invisibility of servants in the historiography of this period and in literary criticism” (22) and states that there “is no
book-length study of servants in the imaginative literature of the eighteenth century” (39). And since there is not, to date, a full-length study of servant roles in Restoration comedy, I would like to fill that void with the following pages. Servant roles are not just under-represented in long eighteenth-century theatre scholarship but are virtually un-represented even though servants—both real and fictional—were ubiquitous during this period. While Straub, as well as R.C. Richardson in his 2010 book, *Household Servants in Early Modern England*, contrasts real life with literary portrayals of relationships between masters and servants, and Porter’s dissertation provides a useful (albeit cursory) overview of servant roles and dramatic functions, this dissertation approaches the topic from a different perspective. Instead of comparing depictions of servants in comic drama to those in real-life late seventeenth-century England, or determining whether the roles serve to expose, amplify, oppose, complicate, or contrast the actions of characters who are considered “more important,” I look at the ways in which servant roles are significant, contributing to the momentum of the play and often essential to the plot, going far beyond the simple job of filling in background information or introducing other characters to become—quite often—the most entertaining and memorable part of the play. In many comedies it is the servant who instigates action, establishes what others are to do or say, or determines the fate of the protagonists. Servants in comedies of the Restoration not only move the story forward and facilitate action, they have agency; they are not simple plot devices, constructs, or foils used to highlight other characters, but characters in their own right who serve—like other characters—to highlight and debate the issues and mores of the Restoration period. But unlike other

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3 Since my focus is on a specific time period with its own social, political, economic, and religious issues, I chose to limit my study to comedies because, according to Addison and Steele, the “violent Passions, which are the Subjects of Tragedy, are the same in every Age, and appear with the same Face; but those Vices and Follies, which are the Subjects of Comedy, are seen to vary continually” (Bloom 166) and because comedy, claims Lisa Freeman, is “the genre most intimately associate with the representation of social relations … that make public life possible” (45).
characters in these dramas, servants expose many of the not-so-pretty elements in this glittering period of extravagant couture, elaborate mannerisms, genteel behavior, and witty repartee.

For the following study I used only full-length, five-act comedies that were “smash hits” when first produced and then regularly staged to become part of the repertory of London playhouses. Although reworked plays by Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Jonson (among other Renaissance dramatists) were extremely popular and a part of the repertory, I limited my study to include only those comedies both written and produced during the reign of Charles II to focus on how servant roles were created and performed during that socially and politically capricious epoch. The prologues and epilogues of the time emphasize the idea that playwrights wrote what the public wanted to see. For example, Aphra Behn begins her prologue to The Emperor of the Moon with the lines: “Long, and at vast Expense the industrious State / Has strove to please a dull ungrateful Age” and in her epilogue to The Rover states that playwrights have “tried all ways the insatiate clan to please” (l.8); John Dryden concludes his prologue to Marriage a la Mode by saying that the poet writes to “oblige the town, the city, and the court” and claims in his prologue to An Evening’s Love, Or, The Mock Astrologer that the playwright “is bound, as civil husbands do, / To strain himself, in complaisance to you” (ll. 7-8). If servant roles were important, dynamic, or essential, it is because the audience enjoyed seeing depictions of clever, vibrant servant characters as much as vivacious heroines and witty rakes.

Each of the following chapters examines the various types of servant roles in the comedies of the Restoration and attempts to determine how these roles work in relation to the other characters. Also included in each chapter is a brief synopsis of the current political and social climate, the comedies’ production details, extant contemporary criticism that reviews the

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Footnote: 4 With one exception: Aphra Behn’s The Emperor of the Moon is included as the last play of this study for several reasons, which are explained at the beginning of chapter five.
actors and plays, and on occasion, excerpts from personal correspondence, diaries, and journals (such as that of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn) that illustrate the popularity of the plays and actors playing particular characters. Just as we do today, Restoration theatre audiences attended plays that got positive reviews, and they often watched—and re-watched—plays in which their favorite actors and actresses appeared. Playwrights (always responsive to audience demand) typically had the cast in mind as they composed, writing parts to highlight the unique talents and individual personalities of the actors (see Mora 77). Throughout the long eighteenth century, it was the actors—more than the comedies themselves, and certainly more than the playwrights—who attracted audiences. Henry Harris (who played Warner in Sir Martin Mar-all) was a celebrity actor who performed both comic and tragic roles such as Medley in Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* and Ferdinand in John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*; John Lacy, celebrity comic actor, playwright, and favorite of Charles II, played the Irish servant Teague in Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee*; Anne Bracegirdle, an actress who remained extremely popular throughout her long (almost thirty-year) career, played a maid in John Vanbrugh’s *The Confederacy* years after she played main female roles such as Angelica in Congreve’s *Love for Love* and Desdemona in the frequently staged *Othello*. There was, according to William Van Lennep’s introduction to *The London Stage*, a “tendency to allow an exceptionally popular actress to have good roles, whether or not she was particularly well suited to the part” (cli). Just as it is unlikely that at the height of their careers, actors such as Angelina Jolie or Tom Cruise would accept a minor role in a major film, a celebrity actor of the 1660s, ‘70s, and ‘80s would not have agreed to play (nor would they have been asked to play, since high-profile roles for popular actors meant more third-night earnings for the playwright) an unimportant, low-focus

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5 Authors seem to have been the least important draw, as there is no evidence of a performance being advertised by author until 1699, and then only rarely during the early- and mid-1700s.
servant role. Many Restoration-era comedy servant characters were as sophisticated as—and often more savvy than—the masters they served (or exploited), and therefore these colorful, rich, and rewarding roles went to some of the most popular actors and actresses of the period. Clearly, considering the status of the actors who played these parts, servant roles cannot be categorically characterized as either minor to or serving only as support for other, more important (i.e., upper-class), characters in the plays.

Chapter two serves to “set the stage” with a consideration of London’s theatre world: a look at the initial Restoration playwrights, actors, and theatre managers; a determination of who, exactly, composed the audience for whom the dramatists wrote; and an attempt to determine whether what is depicted on stage leans toward the realistic or the fantastic. Some scholars claim that Restoration comedies are “the prose comedy of London life” (Burns 17) with intrigue plots that serve “to articulate the social conflicts and personal need that underly [sic] a casually understated language of self-preservation” (Burns 14). But over the twenty-five-year period in which Charles II reigned as king of England, a great many changes occurred not only in social aspects and “personal need[s]”; significant changes in religious, economic, and political spheres are represented through the heretofore ignored servant characters just as often and to the same (or greater) degree as the other characters in the comedies of this quarter-century.

Chapters three, four, and five focus on comedies written and produced during the famed “Restoration Comedy” period. In The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, John Hume gives considerable attention to how one might define this period in dramatic history, and he determines that “Carolean drama (1660–85) should very definitely be seen as a cohesive unit. The years 1688–1708, though less characterizable, constitute a sort of drawn-out turning point” (Development 9). But both terms—Restoration and Carolean—are
problematic when applied to the reign of Charles II. The restoration of the monarchy did not take almost three decades to reestablish itself after Cromwell’s death, and to call the period Carolean would mean the inclusion of the years in which Charles I was king. While these terms are used throughout this study, the years on which I focus are those of the reign of Charles II—a period that is easily separated by decade because of the significant events and changes that took place in the political and religious arenas, and in social issues and philosophical perspectives, all of which were either caused or exacerbated by a very colorful, sensational monarch.
2 SETTING THE STAGE

2.1 London’s Theatre World

The following study of the function servant roles play in Restoration comedies entails a consideration of the world in which these plays were produced. The process of determining how various servant roles are utilized in comic drama to reflect the mutable social, philosophical, economic, and political issues of the period requires an examination of the context in which these plays were written. We must also know the extent to which comedy portrayed such issues and concerns and with what degree of veracity; in other words, can the plots, issues, and characters depicted on stage be accepted as rather exaggerated-but-accurate portrayals of concerns faced by the diverse segments and ranks of society during this period? Throughout the seventeenth century (not including the Commonwealth era), comic drama, just like today’s and that of other historic periods, consciously mirrored the mores of the audience—an audience that varied considerably in socio-economic standing and perspective during the quarter century studied here. The first comedies written and produced following the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 primarily centered on anti-Puritan sentiments: John Tatham’s The Rump (1660; rewritten by Aphra Behn in 1681 as The Roundheads, Or, The Good Old Cause), Abraham Cowley’s The Cutter of Coleman Street (1661), and Sir Robert Howard’s The Committee (1662). These social comedies ridicule values, traditions, and behaviors that are at odds with the newly restored hegemony. Toward the end of the 1660s and throughout the 1670s (once the hypocritical, social-climbing Puritans had been deposed, socio-economic order restored, and an upside-down world righted), a focus on Hobbesian desire and libertine attitudes regarding sex and marriage emerged, influenced to a large extent by a dissolute, profligate court ethos; social satires such as Etherege’s She Wou’d if She Cou’d (1668), Thomas Betterton’s The Amorous Widow (1670),
John Dryden’s *Marriage a la Mode* (1671), William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), and George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676) are outstanding examples of this liberal perspective.

A loss of confidence in the monarchy during the many political upheavals that began in earnest toward the end of the 1670s—the Popish Plot and Test Acts, Charles’s dissolution of Parliament and the resulting Exclusion Crisis, the death of Charles II and the succession of James (a Catholic), the rebellion and execution of the Duke of Monmouth, and the formation of political parties—would affect both audience composition and demand in the following decade, resulting in a virtual cessation of new plays.6 The few original comedies that were (quite unsuccessfully) produced, such as Dryden’s *The Spanish Fryar* (1681) and John Crowne’s *The City Politiques* (1683), focused on and questioned political (and therefore religious) values. However, the smuttier plays of the previous decade had not lost their appeal; Edward Ravenscroft’s *The London Cuckolds* (1681) and John Crowne’s *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685) were also added to the repertory. With the coronation of William and Mary in 1689, and the establishment of a Society for the Reformation of Manners in 1691, a sea change in social mores—from the liberal promiscuity of Charles II’s reign to the modest respectability under William and Mary—resulted in a “collapse of the sex boom,” as Hume puts it (*Development* 382); the demand for more humane, sentimental comedy, often with strong didactic elements,7 signified the end of bawdy Restoration comedies.

Although we can read extant journals, letters, sermons, newspapers, and other contemporary writings that illustrate the ways in which many of the upper-class, mostly literate characters are accurately (albeit exaggeratedly) portrayed, servants pose a problem: most were

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6 The King’s and Duke’s companies were forced to unite due to both the lack of demand and an unprecedented number of new play failures.
7 Jeremy Collier’s *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) can be considered both the cause for and result of this change in values.
illiterate until very late in the period. We have, therefore, only their employers’ comments on and
directions to their household servants in addition to sermons and other didactic tracts addressed
to servants in general. From these words we must reconstruct servants’ lives and their places in
an ever-changing society to determine whether they, too, are accurately portrayed and eliminate
the possibility that playwrights created implausible servant characters to use as instruments in
their efforts to affect social change. We have to “set the stage,” so to speak, by establishing an
understanding of the issues and attitudes expressed on stage; only having determined the
environment and contexts in which these performances took place can we determine how
specific characters might have been interpreted by the audience and how their actions and
interactions with other characters reflect those issues and attitudes. We must also construct a
social model of the audience because the theatre was then, as it is now, a profit-seeking business
venture, making it essential to mount only those productions that would attract paying customers.
But who these customers were, and what they wanted to see and were willing to pay for, is a
topic of much disagreement.

Robert Hume claims that many of “the critical misunderstandings about Restoration
drama have stemmed from misconceptions about the audience and its demands, and that works
by Thomas Macaulay and Alexandre Beljame published in the mid- and late-nineteenth century
“contributed greatly to the incredible myth that playwrights had to pander to an audience
consisting almost entirely of vicious debauchees” (Development 24). Harold Love includes the
seminal works of Montague Summers and Allardyce Nicoll published in the following century as
contributors to the mistaken belief that “only a very small proportion of the people [of
London] favoured the theatre. … Had the courtiers been less debauched, had Charles been less

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8 Summers’s *The Restoration Theatre* was published in 1934 and Nicoll’s *A History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700* in 1940.
the slave to his passions, had the playwrights maintained a more sedate attitude towards life, the citizens might, too, have flocked to the playhouses as in Elizabethan times. Of direct reference to the middle classes in the theatre we have practically no record” (Nicoll 7). Love further refutes their description of the audience by claiming that support for both scholars’ arguments was derived from “ten prologues, four epilogues, three passages of dialogue, and a dedication” (23), supplemented with the diary of Samuel Pepys (1660–1669), Thomas Brown’s satirical sketch of the playhouse as an enchanted island,9 and a handful of articles from Richard Steele’s The Tatler (1709–1711).

Hugh Hunt reiterates the earlier scholars’ studies in 1964 with his colorful depiction of the Restoration social climate and the Hobbesian-inspired men and women who frequented the playhouses.10 It is worth quoting at length:

After twenty years of sexual repression, during which the natural instincts of men and women had been hypocritically cloaked under the saintly garb of puritanism, human instincts had broken out in a riot of sensuality, which has known no parallel in our social history. The society that patronized the playhouses was one in which extra-marital sex relations were normal behaviour. Women had become as free in their relations as men and had achieved, by means of sexual freedom, a degree of equality which was not to be repeated until the 1920s. … The society that frequented the playhouses and whose style of life was mirrored in the comedies was, as we have said, a court society many members of which had absorbed by personal contact something of the elegance and wit of the French

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9 See Thomas Brown’s Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London (1700), available through Early English Books Online (EEBO).
10 Janet Todd notes that not only had “Hobbesianism … dominated court culture,” it had even “corrupted half the gentry of the nation” (196).
salons where precious language, repartee and wit were essential qualifications for admission. (183-84)

Hunt explains that members of the merchant class, even those of the royalist party, “were nervous of frequenting this exotic and unfamiliar meeting place of fashionable society with its strange dress and manners and its disdainful attitude to the homely citizens”; he insists that those who patronized the playhouse (and whose lifestyle was mirrored on the comic stage) were the unconventional, self-indulgent, sexually liberated men and women of an elegant and witty court society in serious pursuit of pleasure (“with an occasional country cousin up for a visit to town”); it was a court-influenced beau monde that comprised “a minute fraction of society” (180).

But this information does not correspond with observations and statements made by playwrights, diarists, and dramatic theorists of the time. In his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668), John Dryden’s alter-ego Neander courts the approval of the “mix’d audience of the populace, and the Noblesse” (108). Thomas Shadwell complains in his preface to *The Humorists* (1671) about “the rabble of little people” who prefer farce to wit, and in his comedy *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), Sir Positive insists that mere clerks in the cheap seats shouldn’t be allowed to critique his work: “for him to sit in the Eighteen Pence Gallery, pray mark me, and rail at my Play aloud the first day, and did all that lay in his power to damn it” (act 3). Entries in Pepys’s diary show that the “middling sort” regularly attended the theatre. For example, Pepys’s entry for 27 December 1662 states that the theatre “was full of citizens, there hardly being a gentleman or woman in the house,” and a few days later (1 January 1663) he noted that once again the “house was very full of citizens.” On 2 November 1667 Pepys wrote that the theatre was “full of Parliamentmen, it being holyday [a holiday] with them,” and on the following January first he said there was “a mighty company of citizens, ‘prentices, and others” to see John Dryden’s *Feign’d Innonence,*
Or, Sir Martin Mar-all. In “Letter VII” of The Tricks of the Town Laid Open; Or, A Companion for Country Gentlemen. Being the Substance of Seventeen Letters from a Gentleman at London to His Friend in the Country, to Disswade Him from Coming to Town, the anonymous author explains theatre seating practices:

In our Playhouses at London, besides an Upper-Gallery for Footmen, Coachmen, Mendicants, etc., we have three other different and distinct Classes; the first is called the Boxes, where there is one peculiar to the King and Royal Family, and the rest for the Persons of Quality, and for the Ladies and Gentlemen of the highest Rank, unless some Fools that have more Wit than Money, or perhaps more Impudence than both, crowd in among them. The second is call’d the Pit, where sit the Judges, Wits, and Censurers, or rather the Censurers without either Wit or Judgment. These are the Bully-Judges, that damn and sink the Play at a venture; ‘tis no matter whether it be good or bad; … in common with these sit the Squires, Sharpers, Beaus, Bullies and Whores, and here and there an extravagant Male and Female Cit. The third is distinguished by the Title of Middle Gallery, where the Citizens Wives and Daughters, together with the Abigails, Servants, Journey-men and Apprentices commonly take their places. (27-28)

Clearly, Dryden’s “mix’d crowd” and Shadwell’s “rabble of little people” not only attended the theatre with their employers, but on their own as well, sometimes seated amongst the middling sort and sometimes in the pit, sitting elbow to elbow with someone of the upper-classes as they held seats for their employers who may or may not arrive before the final act. Also seated along

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11 John Hume suggests a reason for audience composition: “Plays were expensive enough after 1660 (the cheapest seats were twelve times as costly as those at Shakespeare’s Globe had been) that the majority presumably consisted of the ‘middling sort,’ plus a sprinkling of gentry and nobility. … Different members of the audience could have widely different values and see class and money in strikingly contradictory ways” (“London”).
the benches in the pit “were those who passed for the London intelligentsia, gentlemen of wit and fashion, members of the Inns of Court, amateur versifiers and critics apprenticed in the town’s chocolate- and coffee-houses” (McCallum 34). Perhaps earlier scholars assumed a court-influenced coterie audience because the comedies’ plots and themes ridiculed country squires, merchants, citizens, and any other of the “middling sort” and completely ignored the actions and often vivid personalities of the servants. But William Van Lennep puts the idea of a coterie audience to rest in his introduction to The London Stage: although an upper-class audience is a common assumption, the “range of social classes, professions, and cultural attainments was fairly great” and included “many wits, gentlemen, Persons of Quality, citizens, Templars, and others of varying social and financial status” (clxii). “The diaries and correspondence for that period show that a considerable number of literary men attended the theatre,” Van Lennep continues, because the theatre was “a center where intellectuals met and kept abreast of literary tendencies” (Vol. 1; clxiv, clxii). The Restoration audience was clearly quite diverse and certainly not limited to the court society; it was one in which different members of the audience would have widely different values and see class and money in strikingly contradictory ways” (Hume “London”).

The diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn are especially useful in determining the composition of the audience and popular story lines. Pepys was an avid play-goer who often attended the theatre with fellow civil-servant friends Captain Ferrers and John Creed or with his wife and her current lady’s maid. Mrs. Pepys even went to the theatre alone, meeting her husband there and saving him a seat; sometimes she went with other women friends, sometimes with another family (including children), and sometimes with only her maid. On 4 February 1667 Pepys wrote in his diary that the woman seated by herself beside him was “a whore, I believe, for
she is acquainted with every fine fellow, and called them by their name, Jacke, and Tom, and before the end of the play frisked to another place”; Pepys assumed she was a prostitute not because she was a woman alone at the theatre, but because she knew the names of so many men in the audience. Pepys’s wife was only one of many women whose maids accompanied them to see plays in which women in service had sexual relationships—or at least exchanged sexual innuendoes—with their mistress’ husbands or lovers. Was it the licentious behavior taking place both on the stage and amongst the audience that allowed Pepys and several of his wife’s maids to have sexual relations with impunity? Many Restoration comedies feature aristocratic and upper-class characters making sexual advances toward lady’s maids and waiting women; did such repartee between servants and their employers indicate that this type of behavior was acceptable or even expected? As we will see in the following study, there are a great many instances that portray servants and employers, or servants and their employers’ love interests, as sexually attracted to each other (or one to the other). There are an even greater number of female servants who eschew the sexual advances of—and even scold—higher-ranked male characters. Did seeing this behavior on stage make it the norm? It was not uncommon at this time (as well as most others throughout history) for the master and adult male children of the house to have sexual relations with a maidservant. As it is difficult for anyone—male or female, servant or master—to not feel equality (or possibly even superiority, depending upon who is doing the pursuing) with a person with whom one has such a relationship, this intriguing (and enduring) topic is one to explore in depth.

The court ethos of the king was most certainly a presence in the Restoration theatre both on and off stage. Pepys wrote in his diary that he “can hope for no good to the State from having a Prince so devoted to his pleasure” (11 January 1668). Several of the dramatists: William
Wycherley, George Etherege, and John Vanbrugh among others, were gentlemen at court where the culture was intimate, innovative, and risqué. In *Comedy of Manners* David Hurst contends: “The Court of Charles II was a more cynical and licentious one, and on stage the dramatists, all of them in the truest sense dilettantes, because not fully committed to professional men of the theatre, sought to reflect that freedom which was a deliberate counterpart to the Puritan repression of the interregnum” (7). While the court may have been “cynical and licentious,” not “all” of the dramatists were “dilettantes.” Many wrote for literary recognition or for their own enjoyment, and several playwrights, some of whom were also actors or theatre managers, wrote to earn a living. More importantly, playwrights, actors, and managers considered themselves servant to both king and audience, writing, acting, and producing what their “masters/employers” wanted to see.\(^{12}\) The sensuality, sexual freedom, and witty repartee in Restoration comedy may be directed toward the courtier crowd—those who occupied the more expensive seats—but there were as many successful comic playwrights who were not dilettantes and not part of the court: John Dryden (whose comedies are among the most bawdy), Thomas Shadwell, Edward Ravenscroft, John Crowne, and Thomas Otway to name just a few; there were a great many more whose works are not part of the canon and whose names are unfamiliar to us today.

In *The Designs of Carolean Comedy*, Eric Rothstein and Frances Kavenik state that recent scholarship “has scrapped the old canard that a coterie of blasé, sexy, men-about-town made up the theatre audiences, a knot of wits, fops, and their hangers-on” but was instead “a mixed group of literate Londoners\(^{13}\)… alert to the new, broadly sanctioned diversity of opinions

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\(^{12}\) Paul McCallum suggests that “no single group of consumers in the theater attracted greater attention or excited more anxiety among the writers of prologues and epilogues than those seated just below the proscenium—that is, in the Pit” (34).

\(^{13}\) This is a bit misleading; according to David Cressy’s figures in “Levels of Illiteracy in England 1530-1730,” this “group of literate Londoners” would have been quite small—a coterie in itself—limited to educated gentlemen of the leisure classes and some businessmen; fewer than 70 percent of male Londoners were literate at this time. The number of fully literate women of the upper ranks during the Stuart era was quite low; by the 1690s less than half
and attitudes in society as on stage, for they themselves would have represented a considerable range of such attitudes” (15). But the range of this varied group with its diverse opinions and various attitudes must be extended as—once again—servants have been left out of the mix. In addition to employees accompanying their mistresses or holding seats for their masters, apprentices, footmen, and other lower-ranked servants occupied the upper gallery where a seat cost only one shilling; by the end of the seventeenth century, they could sit in this gallery for free whether attending with their employers or not. The cultural, political, and moral diversity between servants in the upper gallery, persons of quality (including royalty) in the boxes, citizens with their wives and children along with journeymen and apprentices in the middle gallery, and a wide assortment of characters in the pit means that there was no such thing as a “Restoration audience” much less a court coterie attending the theatre.

The Restoration was “an era undergoing large-scale social, political, and cultural changes that created differences both ontological and epistemological for early modern individuals” (Lowenthal 6). Society was adjusting to a political and societal turnabout, as exiled royalists—who previously had known their place in society and were confident about their reasons for being and existing—assumed their pre-Commonwealth titles and sought to recover their lands and fortunes. While the prevailing sense of a return to social order overpowered (politically, at least) Puritan ethos, the rigidly austere moral stance of the Puritans did not simply vanish, of course, as we can see from the significant number of published sermons and broadsheet diatribes about the evils being presented on stage—evils supported and perpetrated by those affiliated with the court of Charles II. Theatres, too (both the physical structures and the social milieu), were going through a re-creation period following a twenty-plus-year hiatus courtesy of Oliver

could read and write. Nor does this statement include the mostly illiterate tradesmen, journeymen, apprentices, and servants in the audience. See also Cressy, *Literacy* 129.
Cromwell’s New Model Army and his Puritan Parliament. Not only had theatre buildings been destroyed, but almost everyone who had been acting and writing for the stage before Charles I’s execution had either long since died or had, out of necessity, found other careers. There was a new crop of playwrights who knew from personal experience that one’s “place” in society did not indicate the quality of an individual, and many of those self-actualized royalists who could not reclaim their properties or fortunes were forced to choose—despite their social status—between serving in the army or serving as a gentleman’s gentleman while their sisters were reduced to positions as “companion” or lady’s maid, serving those who had once been their equals. The rank of “servant” no longer indicated the real worth of the individual, nor was it considered déclassé to be one of these upper-servants—topics that are present in a good number of Restoration comedies.

Although many royalists remained angry about their time in exile or imprisonment (in addition to the sequestering of their lands and monies), the general attitude was that of making up for the time and pleasures lost under Cromwell’s regime. The “libertine” philosophy that prevailed in the first decade of the Restoration was influenced by Thomas Hobbes\(^\text{14}\) and his theory that all human beings—regardless of rank or social status—are programmed by nature to be self-interested and to pursue desires with the incentive of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. What did this Hobbesian-inspired, self-interested, socially and economically diverse audience want to see, and how did demographics—and therefore audience demand—change following the restoration of the monarchy? In other words, what was going on in London socially, politically, and economically in these three rather distinct decades, and how did this affect the portrayal of

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\(^{14}\) Roger D. Lund suggests we regard Hobbes “not merely as the last in a line of Renaissance Humanists, but as the first in a line of Restoration and Augustan wits who imitated Hobbes’s philosophic drollery” and that *Leviathan* was “one of the foremost causes of the itch for wit” (825, 831-32).
servants on stage? To set the stage for a study of servant roles, their functions, and their relevance in specific Restoration comedies, the remainder of this chapter will be used to consider the new crops of playwrights, actors and actresses, the extent of “reality” present in what was produced on stage, and lastly, a very brief look at the real lives of upper-level servants.
2.2 His Majesty’s Servants: Playwrights, Actors, and Theatre Managers

Acting companies during the Middle Ages and Renaissance depended entirely on patrons (usually wealthy aristocrats and royalty) who not only provided room and board but also clothing for the employees in their households; servants who were in the public eye, such as soldiers, footmen, serving boys, pages—and actors—wore a livery that bore the insignia of their employer and clearly marked them as members of specific households. Liveries were exempt from many of the sumptuary restrictions because they represented the master rather than the servant, causing (particularly among footmen in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) a blurring of class distinction. Renaissance actors and playwrights (including Shakespeare, who wrote for and acted in the King’s Men company sponsored by King James I) were given the rank of “groom of the Royal Chamber, and wore the King’s livery” (Knowles 638). Even when they were on stage, actors wore livery both “symbolically beneath their clothes, and literally through aristocratic donations and second-hand clothes.\textsuperscript{15} This system of metaphorical livery continues through the Restoration period and was emphasized further by the fact that the theatres were now directly owned and governed by the king: all official theatre performance was symbolically marked by a royal imprimatur” (Monks n. pag.).

Even before his coronation, Charles II granted official permission for the opening of two playhouses, bestowing one on Sir William Davenant (knighted by Charles I during the Civil War) and the other on Thomas Killigrew (who followed Prince Charles into exile and was appointed Charles’s representative in Venice). Like his father, Charles II enjoyed the theatre, and he provided not only financial support but licensed a co-monopoly on the theatre world: two new

\textsuperscript{15} According to Allardyce Nicoll, the king himself “provided vestments for the actors on special occasions, passing his state robes over to [Michael] Mohun or [Thomas] Betterton as the case may be. [And] sometime before 1665 the royal coronation suits were worn in the theatre” (9).
theatres would eventually be constructed, two new troupes of actors were assembled, and exclusionary entitlement to specific plays was conferred upon each of the two new companies. As both Davenant and Killigrew had written and produced plays before the Civil War, they brought with them a degree of experience despite the long closure of the theatres.

In a purported effort to “improve the moral tone” of playhouses, the new king also decreed that the boys who traditionally played female roles would be replaced by women—actresses—ostensibly to promote decency by eliminating any homosexual overtones or implications of young boys assuming female positions. The king declared that not only would “such reformation be esteemed onely harmless delight, but useful and instructive” as well (qtd. in McMillin 538). How having women on stage was “useful and instructive” remains unclear, but Colley Cibber wrote in his *Apology* that the new actresses were able “to calm and mollify the cares of Empire” (Chap. 4, n. pag.). While many in the audience, particularly those who had followed Charles into exile, were accustomed to seeing actresses on the French stage, others were appalled at what they considered an indecency. John Evelyn recorded in his diary that he loathed having “lewd” actresses on the stage (9 January 1662). He rarely attended the theatre because of the “foul and indecent” women (both on stage and in the audience) arousing gallants and young noblemen who fall “into their snares to the reproach of their noble families, and ruin of both body and soul” (18 October 1666) and listed the names of several noblemen (indirectly including the king) who had succumbed to the lure and wiles of actresses. Evelyn was painfully “afflicted to see how the stage was degenerated and polluted by the licentious times” (19 June 1668). But Pepys was delighted with the change and wrote in his diary that having a woman play a female role “makes the play appear much better than ever it did” (12 February 1661). He

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16 Although there were only two licensed playhouses, performances by unlicensed actors continued until 1663.
particularly enjoyed seeing the ladies’ legs when playing breeches roles (see 23 February 1662 and 4 October 1664). As Restoration and early eighteenth-century women were spared many of the constraints on public appearances that women of the Elizabethan and Victorian periods encountered, audience, actors, and playwrights alike embraced this opportunity for unprecedented views of the female body via cross-dressing actresses; between 1660 and 1685, 89 of the 127 new or adapted comedies written and produced featured women in breeches. As Brown and Harris explain: “To a contemporary audience the display of a woman’s calf and ankle was little less than a ‘bombshell’” (183). And in plays where actress’ legs were fully covered by voluminous skirts, deeply cut necklines exposed a significant amount of décolletage to which they could call attention with deep curtseys and the act of hiding billet-doux, adding to the decadent atmosphere of the theatre.

While the exploitation of women’s bodies may have (at that point of dramatic history) been considered extreme and was totally unrelated to reality, it was actually “a mirror of the practices of society. The ladies of Charles’s court frequently dressed up as men for mad-cap escapades. Fashionable ladies would adopt male disguise for visiting their lovers” (Brown and Harris 183) as did Margery in The Country Wife and Arbella in The Committee. The issue of scantily clad women on stage was still being addressed in 1711 when Richard Steele (in the persona of Mr. Spectator) wrote: “I, who know nothing of women but from seeing plays, can give great guesses at the whole structure of the fair sex, by being innocently placed in the pit, and insulted by the petticoats of the dancers” (The Spectator 28 April). Yet the sensuality evoked by having real women onstage with their normally covered body parts on display was not only titillating, it also provided a sense of realism for those in the audience who embraced the new principles of libertinism and sought to replace the gloomy standards of puritanism. While female
servant characters were less scantily dressed than the upper-class women they served, a woman playing that role instead of a boy added credibility to the character itself, eliminating any joke that might have added unnecessary and unintended connotations. Think of the two nurses in the film *Shakespeare in Love*—the stage nurse in the film’s production of *Romeo and Juliet* and the “real” nurse who attended Viola de Lesseps, the young woman who impersonated a boy actor with whom the fictional Shakespeare fell in love. The on-stage nurse—played by a man—spoke to Juliet in falsetto, giving a comical spin to the female (although certainly not feminine!) role he played. The *Shakespeare in Love* nurse was played by a woman, and although her lines were identical to those of the male stage nurse, her role wasn’t funny in the least. Contrast the servant roles—one comical, one not—with the serious roles of Romeo and Juliet that were played by the opposite sex—the on-stage Romeo was played by a woman (Viola de Lesseps) while the on-stage Juliet was played by a boy—yet the fact that they were both cross-dressed did not make their characters comical in the least; we know (since the play is a tragedy) that the title characters will be serious. But servant characters present an entirely different situation: in comedies and tragedies both, we rarely know whether servants should be taken seriously or not, whether they perform a comic function (like the grave digger in *Hamlet*) or promote the seriousness of the situation. Having actresses (instead of cross-dressing boys) play female roles gives characters credibility while also allowing individual playwrights and actresses to determine whether their roles are comical or not, thereby changing servant roles from stock characters to individuals.

The return of the king and court also brought the return of playwrights who provided new materials for this new age in theatre. But with only two licensed playhouses, and therefore a limited number of actors, playwrights created specific plots and characters not only at the king’s request, but with individual players in mind. This focus on actors and actresses worked to an
advantage because for the audience, they were the main draw; it was the actors’ names—not that of the playwright—listed on playbills. William Van Lennep explains in his Introduction to *The London Stage* that actors “were held in considerable personal esteem by theatregoers” (xcvi), and Allardyce Nicoll points out the it was “the actor and not the dramatist [who] ruled the theatre” (39). Audiences were enticed into paying to see their favorite players in their “usual” roles, since each actor and actress was generally best suited to particular “types” of characters (i.e., silly or girlish, matronly, loutish, suave) even though playwrights professed that “characters in comedy should be properly distinguished from each other” (Singh 205). Suitability to a role, however, did not mean that one actor played aristocratic characters while another played the servant; comic actors and actresses played both upper-class and servant characters because, as we shall see in the following chapters, these characters had comparable attitudes and characteristics. For example, John Lacy, who played Teague in Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee, Or, The Faithful Irishman* also played a sea captain in Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene* and a knight in *Volpone*. Henry Harris played the servant Warner in *Sir Martin Mar-all*, the gentleman Medley in George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode*, and knights in both *She Wou’d if She Cou’d* and *The Comical Revenge, Or, Love in a Tub*, also written by Etherege. Katherine Corey played the maid Lucy in William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* and Mopsophil in Aphra Behn’s *The Emperor of the Moon*. Thomas Jevon played the servant Harlequin in Behn’s *The Emperor of the Moon*, Sir Foplington in *The City Heiress* (also written by Behn), and Young Bellair in Etherege’s *The Man of Mode*. These characters, despite their disparate ranks in society, were acted in similar fashions.

Expectations of the audience and the actors’ lines also resulted in stock characters and familiar plots, as Restoration audiences enjoyed variations on comfortably predictable themes.
and had no objection to seeing the same sort of play over and over again with minor alterations in plot and characters. These preferences were of great advantage to a comic repertory company, especially at this period in theatre history when a popular new production might run a week, and when “[t]en consecutive performances constituted a smash hit” (Hume, Development 23; see also Fisk 77); most often a different play was offered every afternoon. Nicoll states that no play, “however brilliant, however splendidly produced, however popular by means of poetic beauty or of immoral suggestion, could count on a run of over a few days” (26). The stock characters who pleased the audience were essential to actors required to play many different parts in the span of a month, as rarely did a play attract a large enough audience to go beyond three nights. Short initial runs also made repertory companies dependent upon revivals, and the willingness of the audience to see plays they had seen before, sometimes several times before, was a distinct advantage. For example, in his diary entry for 22 May 1668, Pepys wrote: “Thence to the Duke of York’s house to a play, and saw Sir Martin Marr-all, where the house is full; and though I have seen it, I think, ten times, yet the pleasure I have is yet as great as ever.” Sir Martin Mar-all was a part of the repertory for more than sixty years, The Adventures of Five Hours was staged for over a century, and others, such as She Wou’d if She Cou’d, The Man of Mode, The London Cuckolds, The Gentleman Dancing Master, The Rover, Love for Love, and The Old Bachelor were still being revived in the twentieth century.17

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2.3 A Mirror of the Times, or Cloud Cuckoo-Land?

In this study I intend to prove that not only are servant characters essential to the plot and worthy of analysis in the same way other characters have been studied, but that they function to describe and comment upon the various activities and behaviors exhibited by different classes of London society and inform us of issues present at the time the play is staged. To do that I must first establish that the characters, events, and situations we see on stage is very similar to what was taking place in London during the Restoration period. It is quite clear that throughout each of the three decades considered in this project, playwrights felt (as indicated in the many prologues, prefaces, apologies, and critical debates of the period) that they had created “realistic” characters who echoed the ways in which the various members of society behaved in real life. For example, in his preface to *An Evening’s Love* (1668), Dryden wrote: “Comedy consists, though of low persons, yet of natural actions and characters; I mean such humours, adventures, and designs as are to be found and met with in the world. … Comedy presents us with the imperfections of human nature.” Almost a decade later, Etherege (in response to having critics damn his play) confirms Dryden’s theory in his prologue to *The Man of Mode* (1676): “Since each is fond of his own ugly Face, / Why shou’d you, when we hold it, break the Glass?” The plain dealer of Wycherley’s eponymous comedy uses the prologue to tell the audience that the playwright “Displays you, as you are,” and Nahum Tate said in his preface to *A Duke and No Duke* (1693) that “comedy properly so called, is an imitation of human life.” John Vanbrugh clearly states in his prologue to *The Provok’d Wife* (1697) that “‘tis the Intent and Business of the Stage, / To Copy out the Follies of the Age; / To hold every Man a Faithful Glass, / And shew him of what Species he’s an Ass.” In the twentieth century, Hugh Hunt reiterates the words of these Restoration playwrights:
What happened behind the scenes, on the stage, and in the auditorium was no
different from what happened in the Mall, in the parks, in the coffee-houses and in
the court itself. … Restoration comedy from Dryden to Farquhar was played in a
realistic style, not an artificial one. This does not mean that artifice was not an
important aspect of acting as it was of life: but both the comedies and their acting
were, within the given conventions of Restoration stage-craft, imitations of life;
they were not artificial inventions. What was represented on the stage, however
flagrant it may seem to us today, was no exaggeration of what happened in life.

James Jensen, author of The Sensational Restoration (1996), agrees that when these comedies
were written and performed, “they were regarded as reflections of life as life was assumed to be.
The audience saw themselves on stage in light of their own beliefs. That is, in the comical plays
the audience understood that what happened on stage was how they understood their own
society, in actions, speech, and motivations” (xii).

Peter Holland’s take is a bit different; he focuses on the “imitation” part of Tate’s
explanation and suggests that Restoration comedy was an exaggerated (but fairly accurate)
picture of London society: “it is abundantly clear that the form of behaviour in the comedies was
consonant with the form of behaviour of man in society, rendered theatrical and therefore more
extreme … [but] analogous to society. The acting style, except for the fools, was naturalistic; that
is, it conformed to the conventions of social decorum” (58). Jocelyn Powell feels that the
“Restoration audience appreciated truthful acting as we do today” but cautions that “the truth of
the imagination naturally carried the same stylistic traits as the poetic truth of the texts they
presented” (87). Robert Hume agrees with Holland’s opinion that situations, events, and
characters are exaggerated for effect. Activities depicted in comedies were those of typical London men and women of leisure: at their toilette, dressing (always with a servant’s assistance), having conversations, playing cards, eating, drinking, carousing, and arguing with one’s parent or spouse. And except for the occasional set of couplets at the end of the act or the random song, everyone, regardless of rank, spoke in colloquial prose. Comic plots typically involved the domestic life of husbands and wives, pairs of lovers, masters and servants, parents and children. The locations in which the stories took place were real places and real streets and real buildings. There are endless references to current events and concerns, to political issues, and to real live people living in London at the time.

Other scholars declare—despite what Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, Tate, and other contemporary playwrights have clearly stated—that familiar situations depicted in the comedies of the period do not indicate that this drama in any way approached a credible view of Restoration society, and that “psychologically realistic characters were neither drawn nor expected on the Restoration stage” (Lewcock 170). Lisa Freeman states that “it is clear that realism, in either a mimetic or a formal sense, was simply not an objective or even a consideration in eighteenth-century dramatic representations” (17). These scholars claim that play-acting consciousness eliminates any possibility of a realistic picture of human behavior because, beginning with the prologue, the audience is always aware of the relationship and

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18 See Development pages 48-56.
19 According to Richard H. Perkinson

The frequency with which Restoration dramatists utilize a popular locale as the background for comedy of manners and intrigue has emphasized a genre which deserves attention. It is a genre, not because it includes plays labeled with the name of particular parks, or fairs, or gardens, but because it is the comedy of the manners and intrigues and habitues of some definite, popular locality. The purpose of scenes laid at Epsom or in St. James’s Park palpably is to display the manners of the people who frequent those places or the intrigues for which the localities were thought characteristic. Topographical comedy in the Restoration not only offers a divergence from the confines of the drawing-room, but ostensibly it brings into literature the life of some actual, specific place. (270)
interplay between themselves and the actors on stage, and that whatever is said to the audience from the stage, before the play begins, is part of the play and just make-believe. But why would anyone utilize comedies to examine behavior from a psychological perspective in the first place? Tragedies, perhaps, would be a good choice for analyzing someone’s motivation behind some action or behavior, or if one is trying to figure out what a specific person/character is thinking, but certainly not comedy. Comedy is “all for fun.” It should be frivolous and silly, not something intended to tax the gray matter. And it is funny precisely because we recognize the actions and behaviors portrayed on stage.

John Styan takes the not-realistic theory a step further and says that these are comedies of non-illusion,

replete with stage convention and practice which deny any idea that the drama sought some kind of realism—conventions which included prologues and epilogues, soliloquies and asides, winks and double-takes, glances and throw-aways. All were at work linking the stage and the audience, so that the drama was less a realistic portrait of Restoration life than a stage image, at best an extension of its self-image. (5-6)

But if we think about how the theatre business worked at the time, it was essential for actors to connect with the audience for economic reasons if nothing else. Prologues helped to develop a rapport with the audience, the speaker alternating between a deferential mode as servant to the public, abusive raillery of the audience, and the friendly repartee that marked the conversation of the Restoration wit. Affable banter and wordplay would connect with the wits in the crowd creating a “we’re all in this together” atmosphere, while the upper-classes and intelligentsia could connect with the “public servant” persona. Epilogues begged for the audience’s approval
and pleaded with them to recommend a new play to their friends so that it was performed to at least a third night, which would pay the poor, unappreciated playwright for his hard work.

Soliloquies might connect the audience with the speaker, but since this is a way for one person (the character on stage) to communicate his or her thoughts to another person (the audience), I see it promoting a theatre of illusion rather than one of non-illusion. The last few conventions on Styan’s list: “asides, winks and double-takes, glances and throw-aways” are things that real people—in real life—do all the time. How often have we heard someone say something not-so-bright, and we turn to the person beside us to roll our eyes, or lift our eyebrows, or wink? We also wink to indicate that we mean the opposite of what we just said, or that we’re teasing, or to reassure a child that we “won’t tell” when she’s caught in the act of pinching a cookie she wasn’t supposed to have. Throw-aways are used in the process of telling a story; it’s the build-up; it’s how we describe the persons involved and make our way to the conclusion or punchline. And a literal throw-away line occurs every time we suggest getting together for lunch “sometime” with someone we don’t particularly care for. It’s hard for me to see how these quotidian methods of communication, when used on stage, indicate a play of non-illusion.

Styan also believes that the conduct of the Restoration audience during the performance—a general lack of decorum that went from chatter to boisterous interruptions, from people-watching to propositioning prostitutes, from fisticuffs to the occasional swordfight—does not, as it has been assumed, “represent a display of disrespect for the art of the theatre.” It is, according to Styan, “the ultimate sign of a theatre of non-illusion. If an audience enjoys such freedom, it is also enjoying an unusual sense of possession and belonging, holding the drama in a special affection, that of an audience which has completely accepted its own participatory role in the business of playmaking” (11). How do distractions in the auditorium and the audience’s close
involvement with the actors and physical stage indicate to them that what they are watching is incredible, unrealistic, and inaccurate? If we pretend that Styan is correct, and the audience knows that everything that happens on the boards is pure fantasy—what Hume calls “Cloud-cuckoo-land” (*Development* 89)—why would anyone object to what was presented on stage? If depictions of risqué situations and libertine values were so distanced from reality that the audience knew it was entirely make-believe, something they would never encounter in real life, why was there such opposition to the “licentiousness” of the stage?

Holland seems more on track when he says that the “reality of the actor, emphasized by his spatial connection with the audience, functions as evidence that the action of the play is at least analogous to reality. He mediates the play, through the part he plays, to the audience, guaranteeing its truth and relevance. Insofar as the actor ‘fits’ the part, the part is true, is real” (57). In addition to actual London settings, Restoration comedies were replete with references to topical events, contemporary themes of courtship and marriage, family disputes, money (or the lack thereof), politics and social matters—all real-life concerns and issues. In his recent study of eighteenth-century London, Jerry White declares: “When the audience stopped regarding one another and duly paid attention to the action on stage they saw—as often as not—themselves” (309). Perhaps key here is the phrase “as often as not”: some parts are realistic while others are obviously less so. Or we can think of it as being simultaneously part fact and part fiction. Of course the characters’ behavior and the situations presented on stage are exaggerated for effect; what fun would it be to sit through a rendering of anyone’s typically uneventful day? But it isn’t just the upper-class characters who are portrayed as entirely plausible. White points out that servants also “saw themselves portrayed on stage” and suggests they may have emulated those fictional-but-realistic characters (309). Robert G. Lawrence looks at the realism of servant
characters from another perspective, suggesting that “the speeches and actions of [actual] servants contribute much to the true-to-life vitality evident on Restoration comic stages” (xii). Whether stage characters (including servants) emulated real-life characters or real characters imitated those they saw on stage, “London life proved an inexhaustible subject for playwrights and playgoers alike” (J. White 309).

Another reason we should accept the Restoration theatre as one of illusion is because it is likely that different audience members then, like those of today, would identify, dis-identify, or counter-identify with the various situations and characters portrayed on stage. What is parody to one will be mimetic to another; what might be regarded as extravagant conduct or unsafe practices to one person could be a commonplace for someone else. We might also think of Restoration comedy as Jonathan Swift thinks of satire. In his preface to “The Battle of the Books,” Swift begins with an explanation: “Satyr is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generall[y] discover every body’s Face but their Own; which is the chief Reason for that kind of Reception it meets in the World, and that so very few are offended with it” (A Full and True Account of the Battel n. pag.). While the stage may not be an unwavering mirror of life, it certainly reflects aspects of the social and economic circumstances of the culture at large, and it is quite entertaining to watch people just like ourselves (or rather, just like our crazy next-door neighbors) behaving in outlandish ways and finding themselves in bizarre situations both realistic and improbable. While examinations of the constituents in Restoration comedies will not allow us to draw unimpeachable sociological conclusions, we can certainly construct a somewhat accurate picture of the issues and concerns of the period as well as a rather clear indication of what people enjoyed doing, what they found distasteful, and how the audience
responded to a wide variety of situations with which they could identify, whether or not they would ever find themselves in such predicaments.

2.4 The Lives of (Real) London Servants

A final topic to consider before jumping into the primary texts is the late-seventeenth-century social and physical contexts of real London servants. Conduct manuals and extent sermons directed to servants are few for the 1660-1685 timeframe, although such texts are plentiful beginning in the 1690s. Richard Mayo wrote in his conduct treatise titled *A Present for Servants* (1693) that “there is scarce any general Name of a Calling that contains under it such different kinds of persons, as this of a servant” (1). It is easy to see why he gives such a vague definition, because the word “service” had a wide variety of uses in pre-industrialized London, describing both the activity of serving as well as the position as one who serves. Anyone who performed duties or rendered services for another in domestic, social, government, or church positions was considered a servant. The appellation gives no indication of rank because people of all social levels—from the king, who was a servant of God, to the lowliest servants who shoveled manure and emptied chamber pots—were servants in one capacity or another; everyone had someone to whom or something to which he or she was subservient. As Carolyn Steedman points out, “it was not what you called your employee that counted, but rather, what he did” (27). Even friends and lovers called themselves servants simply because they were devoted to and willingly perform services for another person.

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20 Since most servants were illiterate in Restoration England, many of these manuals were written for literate upper-level servants to read to their lower-ranked cohorts. See Cressy regarding the incredibly low number of literate persons, even of the upper classes.
Domestic servants were considered members of the family of the house in which they served; in fact, this was sometimes the actual case, particularly among the lower gentry and middling sorts, as younger relatives of the husband or wife were often hired in a servant position, considering it a useful educational experience to prepare for the running of a household. Aunts were employed as governesses and cousins hired for particular positions (such as companions or watchdogs), and younger brothers were hired as stewards of the family land or as the live-in family minister. Pepys employed his sister Pall several times so that he could “get her a husband here [in London], which, though it be some trouble to us, yet it will be better than to have her stay there till nobody will have her and then be flung upon my hands” (16 May 1664). But Pall proved quite unsatisfactory as a lady’s companion, forcing Pepys and his father to speak “privately in the little room to my sister Pall about stealing of things as my wife’s scissars [sic] and my maid’s book” (24 January 1660) and demoting her from lady’s maid to a chambermaid. Eventually, due to her belligerent nature, Pepys and his father “at last called Pall up to us, and there in great anger [I] told her before my father that I would keep her no longer, and my father he said he would have nothing to do with her” (25 August 1661). But finances trumped, and although Pepys found it “a very great trouble to me that I should have a sister of so ill a nature” he was reluctant to “spend money upon a stranger when it might better be upon her, if she were good for anything” (4 January 1662). As a lady’s maid Pall fell short, as the requirements included attributes such as being “discreet, cheerful, submissive … [and] honest enough to look after jewels” (Turner 121). Incidents regarding Pall’s ill-nature and sticky fingers show up regularly in Pepys’s diary.

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21 Or sometimes because there’s nothing else to do with certain family members except give them a roof over their heads and a job to let them earn their keep.
While some were forced into service, others found it a comfortable and protected existence or used it as a path to social ascent. Several years in service not only allowed men and women to save enough money to open an inn or a public house, but as members of the household, they had the opportunity to observe their employers at close range and acquire the manners, speech patterns, and quality (albeit, often cast-off) clothing of the genteel classes; and with regular contact with their employers’ friends and associates, servants could practice their upper-class mannerisms on a class superior to their own. “Like the dressers of an actor,” explains Gillian Russell, “upper servants became intimate with what the performance of rank entailed” (23). Many servants eventually married into the lower middle classes (Earle 76) or were able to save enough money and gain sufficient experience to open their own roadhouse or tavern or even to set up a trade, working out of a home of their own.

Roy Porter, author of *English Society in the 18th Century*, claims that domestic servants were “easily the largest single occupational group” (85). “Contemporary estimates,” states Jerry White, author of *A Great and Monstrous Thing: London in the Eighteenth Century*, “ranged from one in nearly every five Londoners working in service to one in eight and as few as one in eleven” (227). All but the poorest of the poor had at least one servant, while noble houses of the period retained between thirty and one hundred. A large well-to-do family of the gentry would employ about twenty servants, eight or ten of whom would be in livery. For the nobility and gentry, the importance of maintaining a significant number of servants was intensified by the rapidly growing middle classes; since a lord or squire was forced not only to meet the competitive ostentation on his own level but also that of the social-climbing mercantile community, many families employed as many servants as they could afford to pay rather than as many as they actually needed to run the household. Servants were “symbols of status” explains J.
Jean Hecht, “one of the evidences of wealth that gained increased significance as wealth became a more potent criterion of social status. … [T]he servant not only put his master’s wealth into evidence directly but also indirectly, by supporting a style of living that was expensive and ostentatious” (2-3). The number of male servants a family retained was especially indicative of their wealth because—as male jobs typically had to do with luxury items such as horses, coaches, extensive gardens, and wine—there was a luxury tax placed on each male servant in the household.22

The use of servants as status symbols is particularly evident with footmen who, because their routine consistently exposed them to public view, were most useful in publicizing their master’s affluence: the number of footmen hanging onto the equipage “demonstrated their master’s ability to pay and maintain them in return for little or no productive work” (Hecht 53). The lustier and more robust the footman, and the more lavish his livery (which disassociated him even further from productive labor), “the more emphatically he proclaimed the ‘waste’ of time and energy of his unproductive routine” and his employer’s “ability to pay and maintain [him] in return for little or no productive work” (Hecht 55, 53). As an escort, however, the footman was extremely valuable. Having footmen meant that one didn’t have to rely on a linkboy to carry the flambeau when traveling at night, and having several lusty men surrounding a coach offered some protection from highwaymen. The footman rode on the back of the coach or walked in front of a sedan chair to clear the way, and when his master or mistress went out on foot, he followed behind to open doors and carry packages.

22 Female servants were not taxed because they were considered necessities of daily life—not only for dressing and undressing the ladies of the household, but required for the unavoidable tasks such as laundering, sewing, emptying chamber pots, dusting, hauling water, lighting fires, and doing the shopping for the household.
While the social standing of the upper servants employed by the nobility and gentry was superior to that of small tradesman, the status of those employed by the middle classes probably was not. Serving gentlemen and women “seem to have regarded themselves, and to have been regarded by others, as gentlemen and ladies. Such ‘upper’ servants were often better off, by almost any standard—living conditions, work required, wealth, opportunities for advancement, power—than most people who were self-employed” (Anderson 22). Restoration comedies are filled with servants who use the rank of their employer to coerce others, and even within the household there was an acute awareness of the disparity of rank among servants: higher positions meant better living quarters, food, and clothes, and even dictated the type of leisure activities in which they could participate. This awareness of rank within the household is often seen in the comedies of the period. The higher the servant’s status, the closer (both physically and emotionally) he or she would be to the employer, and the more often we see them replicated in plays of the period. Playwrights frequently depict masters—and even more often mistresses—in deep discussion with their servants who illustrate how well they know their employer due to the great amount of time they spend together—more time than between husband and wife, and sometimes even more time than newly established lovers.

The servant characters we see most often are the upper-staff who dealt directly with their employers on a daily (most often hourly) basis: the valet-de-chambre and lady’s maid or waiting woman, the occasional governess, and lady’s companions galore. Most were well-educated (sometimes better educated than their employers), and many belonged to the genteel class. Forced by economics to secure a paying position, their status was (technically) reduced below that of their employers simply because they came from a “failed” family who no longer had enough money to support all their members. In Sir Martin Mar-all, for example, we see the
antagonism that clearly existed between masters and servants who found themselves in this predicament. The lady’s companion—her name usually preceded by “Mistress” out of courtesy for her genteel origins, polite education, and abilities in music, conversation (in both English and French), and the arts—was essentially a friend and confidant, companion and secretary, available twenty-four hours a day to accompany her mistress in whatever activities tickled her lady’s fancy: visiting friends, shopping, going to the theatre, playing cards, taking a stroll through the public gardens or a ride around the Ring. She ate, drank, dressed, and amused herself in essentially the same way as her employer and was treated as being on (almost) the same social level as her mistress. A waiting woman or lady’s maid (ranked below the companion) was responsible for helping her mistress dress, taking care of her clothes, running her errands, fixing her hair (many had professional training in hairdressing), carrying messages, and assisting with both honest and illicit love affairs.

Like the lower-ranking waiting-woman, the chief responsibility of a gentleman’s gentleman or valet de chambre was his master’s personal appearance; his expertise in fashionable dress was essential to the figure his master cut in London’s social world. He was also responsible for his employer’s coiffure (both natural hair and wigs) and may have studied with a professional hairdresser. A valet often accompanied his master on his travels and his exploits about town—going to the theatre, visiting, traveling, gambling, drinking—usually in the position of a fashionably dressed but rather servile companion. The butler was responsible for guarding the wine and the silver; the housekeeper was typically an older woman who supervised the housemaids and was responsible for buying provisions and keeping household accounts. In fact, according to Kirsten Olsen, conditions in some households was so relaxed that servants held “private parties in the kitchen, even inviting fellow-servants from other households” (130). We
almost never see lower-level servants: kitchen, laundry, and parlor maids; gardeners and gamekeepers; stable masters and grooms. Because they did not have intimate contact with their employers—the people about whom Restoration drama was written and all scholarship has been focused—they were of little interest to the theatre clientele who paid for their seats and for whom the playwrights wrote. Nor would the lower-ranked servants in the audience—accustomed to being invisible—expect to see themselves portrayed on stage. We see the occasional nurse and quite a few footmen because, although considered a lower-level servant, they had regular and frequent contact with their employers.

Information about these real-life servants is found in the diaries, letters, journals, and memoirs of their masters and mistresses: the tasks they performed in the household, sometimes their names and origins, how long they stayed in one place, what their employers thought of them, and why they were valued or dismissed. Rarely are their individual personalities revealed, except when employers recorded instances of servants’ insolence when complaining about a grievance of some sort, as in the case of Pepys’s quarrelsome, bad-tempered, pilfering sister. Typically, only when there was mutual affection did the diarist record what appears to be the real character of the employee. These are the servants who play significant roles in the comedies of the Restoration and early eighteenth century—those who were valued as friends and companions in addition to the performance of their duties.
3 THE SENSATIONAL SIXTIES

3.1 Why Sensational?

Although several scholars have utilized the term “sensational” when referring to the Restoration period, none have considered the significant role stage servants play in highlighting the sensationalism of the period. Laura Knoppers, for example, looks at the “sensational side of the Restoration” caused by the king’s “mode of luxury as central to his political power” (n. pag.) and Abigail Williams considers the ways in which dramatists of the 1660s (particularly Aphra Behn) “exploited the sensational impact of the female body on stage” (n.pag.). H. James Jensen, author of *The Sensational Restoration*, provides three reasons for considering the period itself sensational: one scientific, one societal, and one literary. The first is that since “reality is perceived through the senses—it is sensational”; his second is that “the senses (and the passions and appetites associated with them) move human perceptions, attitudes, and behavior,” particularly during an era “that immersed itself in materialistic issues and beliefs”; and third, the sensational body of literature that emerged during this period—vastly different from (the unsensational) religious tracts and sermons—is “artistically effective” in the “theatrical marketplace” (ix). While one would expect some of the characters in theatrical productions—the rakes, libertine ladies, fops, and the like—to be sensational, I argue here that servant characters (particularly in the comedies) function in a variety of ways to highlight the sensationalism of the early Restoration period and its shifts in social attitudes and mores. Servants regularly serve to expose hypocrisy and function as foils for their employers’ sensationalistic passions and appetites, their materialistic tendencies and beliefs, and quite often exhibit those appetites and tendencies themselves, revealing a remarkably “clear-eyed mockery that strips characters of all social levels down to fundamental motivating passions which are independent of class. The
dramatists do not question the principle of rank” and they “never pretend that the possession of high or low rank makes people different in essence. There are fools and knaves among lords and ladies just as there are men and women of sense among servants” (Love 44). J. Douglas Canfield also considers “rank” portrayed on stage, saying that comedies of the Restoration “disrupted the very status hierarchy being reaffirmed, as enterprising soldiers and commoners and thieves and whores often stole the show and sometimes even estates themselves” (xiii). Servants—especially in the comedies—also have many opportunities to steal the show whenever they conduct themselves in fashions similar to their masters and mistresses; they are, therefore, sometimes just as sensational as the other (primarily upper-class) characters upon which most studies focus. Whether servants serve to draw attention to the sensationalism of their employers by appearing realistic—the reality they perceive, as Jensen claims, through the senses—or whether they are sensational characters themselves, they are worthy of scholarly attention they have yet to receive.

To further the complexity of the word “sensational” as used in various ways by the scholars mentioned above, I would add the extraordinary influence of the newly restored king, a dynamic, spectacular, scandalous—and thereby sensational—man who spent his formative years (age sixteen to thirty) living in exile in various courts in Europe and particularly in that of his first cousin, Louis XIV. While in the French court, both Charles II and the royalists who fled Cromwell’s regime were exposed to the opulent extravagances and lifestyle of the French monarch; upon his return to England, Charles adopted many of his cousin’s beliefs, including that of the divine right of kings to justify his God-given right to a profligate lifestyle financed by Parliament. The king’s constant stream of paramours—on whom he lavished expensive gifts of gowns, paintings, and jewelry as well as houses—was supported by the crown. Charles fathered
thirteen children by his mistresses (none by his wife)\(^23\) who were also supported by the state; his sons were granted titles and preferments. Charles’s lifestyle was as performative as it was profligate with the “bawdy stories” he loved to tell, his very public affairs with sometimes equally bawdy mistresses, and through his “highly personal and unpredictable” political/religious policies, which sparked dramatic tumults that were equally theatrical and therefore the topic of both comedies and tragedies (Sutherland 12, 17). In fact, Derek Hughes goes so far as to say that the “stage and the monarchy were inseparably suppressed and inseparably restored, and for much of the 1660s the twin restorations remained ostentatiously linked” (1). The sensationalist king’s lifestyle became the topic of numerous poems, ballads, and other ephemeral literature that emphasized the sensationalist aspects of his life. And as the king’s profligate lifestyle was represented on stage, an even larger audience was exposed to his mode of sensationalistic behavior.

Several of the king’s paramours were from amongst the cadre of ladies who became the first English actresses.\(^24\) Although women had been prohibited from acting on the London stage (private productions in homes and at court did not fall under this mandate), actresses had appeared on public stages in France long before Charles II was born.\(^25\) With the royal grants given to Davenant and Killigrew, the newly restored monarch decreed that English actresses would now replace the young male actors who traditionally played female roles, a change as necessary as it was inevitable since the “nurseries” that trained young boys to act had been closed during the Interregnum. The libertine perspectives and activities of the new monarch and his courtiers were played out on the stage, as drinking, whoring, gambling, witty repartee, and a

\(^{23}\) Charles II married Catherine of Braganza (Portugal) in 1662, whom he impregnated three times, each ending in miscarriage.

\(^{24}\) Including Moll Davis, Nell Gwyn, and Mary Knight (a singer).

\(^{25}\) Marie Vernier (1590-1627) is considered the first French stage actress.
command of fashionable oaths became desirable traits among young royalist aristocrats whose university studies were preempted by the Interregnum and subsequently needed different criteria to indicate their social standing. Nor were libertine standards restricted to men; women also partook in witty repartee, gambling, and drinking in this new, egalitarian society. Even the servants on stage were exempt from conventional behavior or rigid moral standards. A return to monarchy did not, however, diminish the number of conservative Puritans to whom Charles’s decadent indulgences were offensive, nor did it persuade those who were not part of the court culture or lacked the funds (or the desire) to adopt a libertine way of life. Many Londoners, for example, still felt that women should remain within the safety of their homes, first under the care of a father and then with the protection of a husband, their activities confined to taking care of home and family. Women who took to the stage defied that image, creating a situation made even more sensational with costumes that displayed—in a public forum—an inordinate amount of cleavage and shapely legs clad in tight-fitting breeches.

Not only had the aristocrats and courtiers who followed Charles II into exile become accustomed to seeing women on the stage, many had acquired dissolute tendencies and “the materialistic views of Hobbes that had so influenced the court culture” (Combe 298). The popularity of Hobbesian thought, tolerance for (or participation in) licentious behavior, and contempt for the religious fervor of the Puritans makes it easy to understand the rather widespread acceptance (if not the practice) of a libertine lifestyle, particularly among those who regularly attended the theatre. Jensen explains:

26 See conversation between Dr. Baliardo and the ambassador from the moon in the penultimate scene of Aphra Behn’s *The Emperor of the Moon*.
27 This is a topic of practically every play—comedy and tragedy—during the Restoration period.
28 Hobbes, too, was exiled in Paris and was the Prince of Wales’s (the future Charles II) tutor from 1646–1648.
In the comical plays the audience understood that what happened on stage was how they understood their own society, in actions, speech, and motivations. The worlds of those plays do not dutifully reward goodness because it is good. … The world’s rewards go to those who are aggressive, clever, cynical, self-aggrandizing, and rich, and who give the appearance of knowing. The rewards are monetary, sexual, and social. (xii)

Hobbes was convinced, and managed to convince others, that it is simple human nature to let our passions and appetites control our behavior. In the beginning paragraphs of *Leviathan* 1.6, Hobbes explains how desires (for what we think is good) and aversions (to what we consider evil) are “caused by the action of the things we see, hear, etc.”—those events we experience through our senses which are, in effect, “sensational” and the actions we take are caused by an appetite for sex, wealth, food, recognition, and other things we desire. And since sex sells (to use a phrase that originated in the nineteenth century) and political power was still connected to the ownership of land, comedies of the 1660s reflected everyday life with love (or lust) triangles and money-oriented themes that were not limited to upper-class characters; servant characters—also affected by Hobbesian philosophy—acted to acquire wealth, status, and love (or sometimes just sex) as well. Seeing stage characters’ sensational pursuits of love and money was particularly interesting to an audience concerned with materialistic issues and beliefs, especially following the Puritan government’s sequestration of their properties. Royalist fortunes had to be regained, so the economic venture that courtship and marriage had been for centuries continued to flourish. But the libertine pursuit of gratification promoted by the newly restored king, who “thought that the world was ‘governed wholly by interest’” and who possessed a “sceptical,

29 Hobbes uses the term “aversion” to indicate something we do not want to have or experience—when we choose to not go to, speak to, or move toward something (*Leviathan* 1.6).
realistic (and, as many would have said, Hobbesian) temper [that] was characteristic of the whole period” (Sutherland 14) made it unfashionable to love one’s spouse, thereby creating another layer of the sensationalism associated with illicit sexual pleasures and the relentless pursuit of personal gratification.

In the (what must be considered) realistic comedies of the period are plots that reflect contemporary issues caused by sensational materialism and appetites as perceived through the senses and motivated by our passions: a social order inverted by avarice and the desire for political power in the name of religion, which is then “righted” by equally materialistic cynics; the quest for possessions such as ornate snuff boxes, orange-scented gloves, and lacy ruffles; passionate, rollercoaster love affairs conducted for excitement or personal gain rather than for any feelings of affection; dramatic swordfights to defend one’s honor or compete for the same woman’s heart (and fortune); the imaginative creation and elaborate execution of ingenious schemes (most often executed either by or with directions from the servants) to thwart the mandates of parents and guardians or to attract members of the opposite sex; extravagant clothing and wigs for both sexes, and masks worn by women to conceal their identities while conducting mischievous activities or when en route to secret rendezvous or to watch a particularly immodest play. The practice of mistresses giving their lady’s maids cast-off clothing and gentlemen’s gentlemen looking as dapper as the boss made clandestine trysts almost effortless. In fact, a servant’s ability to dress, speak, and imitate both mannerisms and levels of cleanliness of the upper classes was highly desired by masters and mistresses who gave their employees “strong inducements” to portray themselves and ladies and gentlemen (Hecht 213); the more genteel the servant, the more elite the employer. Well-dressed servants were “evidence of wealth that gained increased significance as wealth became a more potent criterion of social
status,” exhibiting both directly and indirectly their employers’ prosperity “by supporting a style of living that was expensive and ostentatious” (Hecht 2-3). Servants also emulated their employers by attending “card parties and assemblies” as well as “visits to pleasure resorts, such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh” (Hecht 214), where nothing—not their clothes, mannerisms, elocution, or topics of conversation indicated that they were of the servant classes. Even conversations between servants themselves took on sensational characteristics as they were occasionally devoted not to communication but to witty repartee that mimicked that of their masters and mistresses.

![Image of servants in 1660's clothing](image)

*Figure 3.1 Servants wearing cast-off clothes, looking remarkably like those they serve.*

See John Styan’s *Restoration Drama in Performance* (104, 119).

Original engravings housed in the Versailles Public Library.

But the high-ranking, socially conscious, often pretentious, and sometimes affected characters in 1660’s comedies were far too busy moving from one sensational activity to the next
in their Hobbesian pursuit of passion and gratification of desire to be either sensible or honest, even with themselves. Servant characters are therefore often used to ground the comedies, making them believable by acting in an authentic and rational manner, delivering rather than creating the passionate messages sent between their masters and mistresses; they are often the voice of reason, sometimes calming their employers’ libertine passions, sometimes scolding them or cajoling them into better behavior, but quite often helping them in their pursuits of pleasure (it is, after all, human nature). While some servant characters mimic the sensational behavior of their employers, others are portrayed as down-to-earth, pragmatic individuals whose behavior is credible—in stark contrast to the scandalous behavior of their employers—making them realistic (reality as perceived through the senses) rather than sensational and making the aristocratic characters even more sensational because of the servants’ rational behavior. The plays of the Restoration “posit a vital socio-political role for the aristocracy and gentry” (but not the servant classes) “and satirize all those forms of conduct—sexual license, prodigality, misanthropy, parental tyranny or absenteeism, intellectual and artistic dilettantism, religious superstition—that prevent these classes from fulfilling their responsibilities to family, society and nation” (Dharwadker 152). Responsibility is the servants’ purview.

Using three comedies from the 1660s—Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee, Or, the Faithful Irishman* (1662), Sir Samuel Tuke’s *Adventures of Five Hours* (1663), and John Dryden’s *Sir Martin Mar-all, Or, The Feign’d Innocence* (1667)—I will illustrate how servant characters function not only to highlight the “sensationalism” of the period by acting as foils to expose the hypocrisy, passions, appetites, and materialism of their employers, but that they are complicated, interesting, rational characters who are not the simplistic stock characters most scholarship indicates, included merely to act the fool, provide comic relief, or present necessary
background information. They are rich, complex, round characters in their own right—often drawn more fully than their aristocratic counterparts—who deserve scholarly attention previously granted only to non-servant characters.

3.2 Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee, Or, The Faithful Irishman* (1663)

The first servant character to consider is Teague in *The Committee*—a blundering and bewildered, hard-drinking but loyal Irish footman introduced by Ben Jonson in *The Irish Masque at Court* (1616) and regularly featured in various literary formats well into the nineteenth century. Renowned comic actor John Lacy was the first to play the bumbling servant of *The Committee*, and some attribute the success of the comedy—which remained in the repertory for over a century—to Lacy’s rendition of Teague. When Pepys saw *The Committee* for the first time, he considered it an “indifferent play, only Lacey’s [sic] part, an Irish footman, is beyond imagination” (13 August 1663). When he saw it for a second time four years later, Pepys again praised the actor’s skill: “Lacy’s part is so well performed that it would set off anything” (13 August 1667). John Evelyn also commends the comic actor, saying that “ye mimic Lacy acted the Irish footman to admiration” (27 November 1662). In 1691 Gerard Langbaine wrote in his *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* that Lacy was an “Excellent Comedian” and “King Charles the Second fancied him so much, as to have his Picture drawn in Three several Figures, in the same Table, as Teague in the Committee, Scruple in the Cheats, and Gallyard in the Varieties (84). John Evelyn, however, wrote that Lacy is dressed as “a gallant, a Presbyterian minister, and a Scottish highlander in his plaid. It is in his Majesty’s dining room at Windsor” (3 October 1662). While it appears (to me; see image on the following page) that Evelyn is correct, and Lacy as Teague is not included in this painting, the important part is that Lacy was an
extremely popular actor who was greatly admired by the king. Genest wrote in his *Account* that this painting “is still in being in Windsor” and that “for many years he [Lacy] performed all parts that he undertook to a miracle, insomuch that I am apt to believe that as *this* age never had, so the *next* never will have, his *Equal*, at least not his *Superiour*” 300-01.

![Figure 3.2 John Lacy in three of Charles II’s favorite roles.](image)

Appreciation for Lacy’s skill at depicting the servant increases when we remember that Restoration audiences would have been quite familiar with real-life Irish footmen as they “were
all the rage in English aristocratic circles” of the early 1600s (McNally).30 In her study titled “Teg: The Stage Irishman,” Florence Scott states that Lacy’s portrayal was notably realistic to contemporary audiences … not just a peg on which to hang a few outlandish qualities, in order to secure a laugh from the audience. He is a real flesh and blood man, with heartaches and joys. In addition to his more three-dimensional character Teg plays an important part in the intrigue—so important that the role became a splendid vehicle for the talents of John Lacy and other noted comedians. … The Committee without its comic character would probably have had a brief stage history, for Teg and John Lacy, the creator of the stage part, made the play’s success. (314, 320, 318)

Typical of Restoration and early eighteenth-century drama is the tendency for subsequent actors to perform each part in the manner established by its creator—the actor who first played the character—so it is Lacy’s rendition of Teague that kept this play popular for almost 150 years. In 1808 Sir Walter Scott wrote: “The Committee, alone, kept possession of the stage till our time; and that solely supported by the humours of Teague, an honest blundering Irish footman, such as we usually see in a modern farce” (225). Since a great many different comedians would have played the role during its long stage life (see figure 3.3, below), there must have been something very special about this servant character who was an “important part in the intrigue—so important that the role became a splendid vehicle for the talents of John Lacy and other noted comedians” (F. Scott 320). While Teague has a minimal number of lines, he is essential to the plot’s forward action, and he interacts, either directly or indirectly, with each of the other

30 Because of their strength and speed, Irishmen “could easily outpace a horse over long distances” (McNally n. pag.) so they were valued not only for speedy delivery of letters and messages, but for their endurance in long distance travel.
characters to reveal their flaws and misconceptions, their good traits and bad, and calls attention to various issues of the day—both sensational and political. Since audiences of the mid- to late
1700s had no connection to the Restoration context and subject matter highlighted in *The Committee*, it is clearly the credibly rendered servant character himself who kept this comedy on stage for so many decades.

The theory that the Irish footman Teague is a plausibly realistic portrayal can be (somewhat) supported with a story regarding Howard’s conception of this “honest blundering Irish footman” with a penchant for the drink. In 1769 Charles Howard published the *Historical Anecdotes of Some of the Howard Family*. One of the entries is for Sir Robert Howard, uncle of *The Committee*’s Sir Robert Howard. The earlier Sir Robert had an illegitimate son named Robert Danvers who was imprisoned in England “by the parliament for some offence committed against them” while his father was living in Ireland (111). The minute Sir Robert heard of his son’s imprisonment, he dispatched his Irish servant to England with letters to friends in high places, asking their help in getting his son released. The father, of course,

waited with great impatience for the return of this messenger, and when he at length appeared with the agreeable news, that his son was at liberty, Sir Robert finding that [the servant] had been several days in Dublin, asked him the reason of his not coming to him before. The honest Hibernian answered, with great exultation, that he had been all the time spreading the news, and getting drunk for joy … that he forgot the impatience and anxiety of a tender parent. (112)

This family tale provides a plausible rendering of the loyal servant and suggests that we consider this character’s *character*, rather than placing all our attention on Lacy-as-Teague, however deserved it may be.

Since both the actors’ portrayals of Teague and the fictional (or perhaps factual) servant’s disposition itself are what made this play such a success, and because the incidents that take
place or are discussed in the play accurately reflect historical and contemporary concerns and events, the bumbling, mistake-making, exceptionally loyal, and sometimes brutish Teague clearly has a purpose beyond that of entertaining an audience. Cheryl Nixon, in her *Broadview Anthology* introduction to the play, gives a brief nod to the befuddled footman, discusses the comedy’s historical background at length, and concludes by saying that “*The Committee’s* brilliance comes not from its recognition of these factual situations, but from its use of them to heighten the plot’s conflicts, develop its characters, and raise larger moral questions concerning the state’s coercion of economic structure and religious principle” (473). Far more than any other character in this play, Teague’s words and actions accentuate the moral values and social, political, and financial issues found both “in the ‘topsy turvy’ world of the Interregnum” and in the early Restoration (Hughes 31). He is particularly functional in highlighting the sensational materialism found primarily in the Puritan characters and, to a lesser extent, among the royalists. A bumbling servant who heightens conflict, develops other characters’ personas, and raises moral questions becomes even more plausible when we consider that the Celtic meaning of the name “Teague” is “poet” which, according to the *OED*, is defined as one who is “distinguished by special imaginative or creative power, insight, sensibility, and faculty of expression.” What if we think of Teague not as a simple-minded Irish servant character but as one who is distinguished by such insight and sensibility that he functions naturally\(^{31}\) (albeit inadvertently) to raise moral questions about the religious dogma that some Puritans spout but don’t follow and to comment upon the oppressive economic strictures imposed upon the cavaliers? How do Teague’s (unconscious, involuntary) insights and sensibilities heighten conflict in the comedy? In what ways does this servant function to help develop the personae of other characters—particularly

\(^{31}\) Teague has, according to Hobbesian thought, a “natural” intelligence, “which is gotten by use only, and experience; without method, culture, or instruction” (see *Leviathan* 1.8).
that of Mrs. Day, the cavaliers, and Obadiah—and how does he affect our perceptions of those characters? Although the cavaliers and wealthy young heiresses have the majority of lines and stage time, their witty repartee isn’t nearly as entertaining as the servant’s actions, nor do they function at his level in highlighting current social, economic, political, and religious issues. Teague very effectively helps develop the personae of both the cavaliers and the Puritans, and none of the other characters can heighten conflict to the degree that Teague achieves through his blundering, sometimes animalistic, drunken Hibernian ways.

In the first act, Colonels Careless and Blunt run into each other on the street, both having traveled to meet with the Committee of Sequestrations in an attempt to buy back their estates, which had been seized by Parliamentary order as punishment for their being royalists:

COLONEL CARELESS. What business brought thee?

COLONEL BLUNT. May be the same with yours: I am come to compound with their honors.

COLONEL CARELESS. That’s my business, too. (54)

The cavaliers expend a total of three sentences on their plans to regain their properties before Blunt tells Careless about the two “very pretty” ladies who rode in the coach with him—a conversation that continues for almost thirty lines because Careless cannot understand why Blunt did not pursue one of the girls who caught his interest. Teague interrupts their discussion when he approaches the men and begs six pence, and when Careless discovers that Teague’s master—a “dear and noble friend” of the colonel’s—has recently died, he offers Teague a job as footman. The conversation between the colonels eventually returns to their meeting with the Committee of Sequestrations and the fact that not only must they pay to regain their estates, they must first swear allegiance to the covenant—an “ill-tasting dose to be swallowed” indeed (60). When
Careless says he will refuse to take this covenant, to which his friend replies: “You must have no land then” (57), the loyal and devoted footman decides to help and says to himself: “Well, what is that covenant? By my soul, I would take it for my new master. If I could, that I would” (63). In this very first act and scene, as he does throughout the comedy, Teague illustrates his fidelity in stark contrast to the treachery of the Puritan characters, especially that of Mrs. Day, “an arrogant, ambitious woman who wants to satisfy her selfishness by cunning intrigues” (Tellenbach 26) and Mr. Day, chairman of the Committee, whose infidelity (revealed in the final act) is certainly sensational according to both Jensen’s definition regarding passions and appetites and to the Hobbesian principle that people are by nature selfish and act only in their own interests.

In the next act Teague gets the opportunity to “take the covenant” for his master when he happens upon a bookseller hawking new pamphlets: “Mercurius Britannicus, or The Weekly Post, or The Solemn League and Covenant” (128). The footman, hearing that this man has exactly what his master needs, makes his first big blunder because the “covenant” the bookseller holds is simply an eight-page booklet printed by Parliament for mass distribution that described the formal alliance between Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans in their efforts to prevent any trace of catholicism from tainting their national religion:

TEAGUE: Well upon my soul now, I will take that covenant for my master.

BOOKSELLER: Your master must pay me for it then.

TEAGUE: I’faith now, they will make him pay for’t after I have taken it for him.

(63)

Teague knows that his master must take this covenant before he can pay the fine to regain his estate, so the devoted servant is outraged that Careless must also pay for taking the covenant, pointing out to great effect the ruthless financial practices of the Puritan parliament toward the
returned royalists. While taking the covenant by force and telling the bookseller that his master
will pay for it later makes perfect sense to the perpetually confused Teague, the merchant is, of
course, bewildered by the Irish servant and insists upon payment up front. Teague tells him: “I
will knock you down upon the ground if you will not let me take it” and then throws the poor
man to the ground, the first of many brutish acts that the audience would have considered
realistic for an Irishman. The astonished bookseller says: “What a devil ails this fellow? He did
not come to rob me, certainly, for he has not taken above two pennyworth of lamentable ware
away” (63). Teague’s rough treatment of the bookseller and the bookseller’s response, which is
confused rather than angry or vengeful, allows the servant character to highlight the merchant’s
goodness compared to the Puritan characters’ sensational materialism in the name of religion.
And while Teague’s method of taking the covenant is rather violent, he does it for the benefit of
his master, knowing that Careless considered taking the oath “an ill-tasting dose to be
swallowed” (56). In sharp contrast to the servant’s altruism, the members of the Committee—
and the Days in particular—focus on activities designed to increase their individual wealth and to
satiate their voracious appetites for social status.

Teague’s presence also provides an opportunity to greatly develop the personas of
Careless and Blunt. When the colonels first meet Teague, Careless is indeed “careless” in hiring
a servant when he hasn’t money enough to support himself, let alone another person, and Blunt is
certainly blunt when he says that the Irishman is a “poor simple fellow” (71). Teague’s theft of
the covenant is another occasion for us to see just how careless and blunt the colonels are.
Blunt’s comments are straightforward concerning Teague’s acumen with his “mistaken kindness.
I dare warrant him honest to the best of his understanding” to which Careless replies: “This
fellow, I prophesy, will bring me into many troubles by his mistakes. … Yet his simple honesty
prevails with me; I cannot part with him” (64). Only a person comfortable with making imprudent decisions would choose to retain a servant he cannot afford and who will most certainly cause difficulties and misunderstandings in future. Yet the kindness Careless shows to the bungling Irishman gives him a very endearing quality—something we would not have seen without Teague in the picture—that affects our perception of the colonel; with the ladies Careless is all witty cavalier, but with Teague he is a kind and generous master despite the servant’s continual blunders.

Teague is an especially effective foil to Mrs. Day, the scheming, shrewish wife of hen-pecked Mr. Day, who is chairman of the Committee of Sequestrations. Her dishonesty and self-deception contrast markedly to Teague’s honesty and self-awareness. For example, Mrs. Day comes up with a plan to get the Committee’s support in forcing Arbella, the wealthy orphan she met in the coach along with Colonel Blunt, to marry Abel, the Days’ blockhead son, and thereby gaining control of the sequestered fortune left to Arbella by her recently deceased, royalist father. Mrs. Day—who first brags about her talent in abusing parliament’s policies regarding royalist estates and fortunes, and then takes advantage of her husband’s position as chairman—tells her spouse: “In the first place (observe how I lay a design in politics) d’ye mark, counterfeit me a letter from the King, where he shall offer you great matters to serve him and his interest”—a letter in which he sends us his “kind love and service” so that the other members of the committee—believing that the Days are special favorites of the king—will be more inclined to go along with her plans to “get the composition of Arbella’s estate” (58). Mrs. Day’s materialistic scheme works, and the equally materialistic and dishonest committeemen, who are fully aware that the letter is a forgery but choose to “wink at one another” (68), tell Arbella that she must marry Abel if she wants access to her estate. When Arbella objects, Mr. Day tells her
that “the Committee has passed their order” and commands her to leave. The committee of land-grabbers justifies its punitive decisions with the Puritan religious dictum that those outside the church “walk according to nature and are full of inward darkness” (74); because royalists do not have the light of grace, they exist in a natural state of sin and should, therefore, be denied their fortunes to ensure the funds won’t be used in a sinful manner. We see this situation described when a musician, playing in a public house where Blunt and Careless are making plans to reclaim their land, sums up the Puritans’ financial-gain maneuvering in a song that goes:

The pulpits are crowded with tongues of their own,

And the preacher, spiritual Committee-men grown,

They rail and they pray,

Till they quite preach away

The wealth that was once the wise City’s. (94)

Teague shines in stark contrast to the fortune-focused Puritans; when Colonel Careless asks Teague if he successfully delivered some money that Careless wanted to leave with a friend for safekeeping, the honest servant replies: “Yes, but I will carry no more” because the devil might make me “run away with it” (104). Unlike the Days and members of the Committee, Teague has no desire to steal someone else’s money or property and serves to highlight, once again, the land-grabbing, materialistic governmental/religious practices of the time. Teague’s innate honesty is also evident when, after learning that Mrs. Day had been a kitchen maid in the Careless household before the Interregnum, he is concerned that when he sees her, he might “laugh upon her face, for all that I would not have a mind to do it” (75). When Careless—who wants to send Teague to the Days’ house to request a meeting with the committeeman’s wife—insists Teague
call her either “your ladyship” or “your honor,” the continually befuddled servant asks his master for clarification: what if he thinks of “any kettles or spits or anything that will put a mind into my head of a kitchen, I should laugh then, should I not? (75). And despite his best efforts to keep a straight face, Teague giggles every time he says “ladyship” or “honor.” At one point he even calls Mrs. Day a “foolish brabble-bribble” because of her incessant talking (79). The dishonesty of the “virtuous” Puritans is continually emphasized by the humble Irish servant’s innate truthfulness, creating an incongruity that serves to heighten conflict. Mrs. Day’s haughty manner and pride in her new place in society are particularly evident in her dealings with Teague while illustrating the inverted social order of the period in which The Committee is set.

The Irish footman’s loyalty to his employer is another characteristic that highlights the Days’ lack of fidelity, as we see particularly at the end of the comedy when we discover that the upright chairman has had illicit affairs, two of which resulted in the birth of illegitimate children. The servant’s loyalty once again exposes the absence of integrity in the Puritans when Careless goes to the committee to see about regaining his land and they ask him to “take the covenant” that swears his allegiance to the church. Teague waits patiently (like Mrs. Day, the committeemen “prate so”) before he can explain that his master already has taken the covenant: “I took it for him, and he has taken it from me, that he has.” When Careless refuses to swear his allegiance, the committee tells Careless to “void the room” (72). This angers the devoted servant, and he calls the man assigned to escort them from the room “a rascal” for which the committee fines him a shilling. Teague asks how much the fine would be if he cursed them, and then hands over his last sixpence to pay in advance for shouting “a plague take you all” as he runs out the door (73). Teague’s fidelity especially shines when Obadiah, clerk of the sequestration committee, arrives to tell Blunt and Careless that Mr. Day wants to see them. Since the cavaliers
would first like to know why they are being summoned, they ask Teague to get Obadiah drunk so that the clerk might reveal why the chair of the committee has requested their presence. Teague—always the loyal servant—readily agrees and tells the cavaliers, “I will make him and myself too drunk, for thy sweet sake” (93). When Teague succeeds—even getting the clerk to sing a royalist ditty in honor of the king—the cavaliers send the clerk back to the Days, who beat him for drinking wine. While the righteous Puritans require their clerk to be proficient at extortion,\(^{32}\) they consider his consumption of alcoholic beverages sinful. Teague once again serves to highlight the extent of the hypocrisy in this particular group of Puritans at this particular time of English history.

The Irish servant character is often employed in *The Committee* to make observations about a number of social issues particular to the period,\(^{33}\) one of which is the influx of penniless Irish into England following Cromwell’s New Model Army’s plunder of Ireland. Teague has nothing but the shirt on his back—a condition similar to that of the cavaliers who, should they not succeed in regaining their estates, tell the servant that they “may be reduced together to thy country fashion” (57). Teague not only illustrates how the cavaliers have been degraded in stature, but also portrays the various images of the Irish held by the English. While the servant could be loyal, honest, and fearless, as an Irishman he was also seen as wild and brutish. Locating Teague to have him arrested for theft and battery, the bookseller tells the Irishman: “You shall pay dearly for the blows you struck me, my wild Irish” and put in a place “where you

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32 Whenever returned royalists request a meeting with the Committee of Sequestrations, Obadiah first brings them to Mrs. Day so that she can “prepare matters” for her husband and the committee. With her inflated sense of self-importance, she tells the clerk: “In truth, in truth, I have too great a burthen upon me. Yet for the public good I am content to undergo it” (3.3) and then ameliorates her burden by demanding “gifts” from the penniless cavaliers—a piece of plate or some other token of their appreciation—before she allows them access to her husband and the committee. When someone comes without a “present,” Mrs. Day tells Obadiah: “Bid him be gone; I’ll not speak with him” (3.3).

33 In this way, Teague is much like other observant and insightful but clownish servants in Shakespeare’s drama, e.g., Feste in *Twelfth Night*, the Fool in *King Lear*, and Touchstone in *As You Like It* to name just a few.
shall have worse liquor than your bonny-clabber” (103). Teague is portrayed as the “typical” Irishman of the period: loyal to and honest with his master, but brutish to others, particularly those for whom he has no respect, such as Obadiah. When Blunt asks him to get the clerk drunk for a second time, Teague assures the cavalier that “if he will not be drunk, I will cut his throat then, that I will, for my sweet master” (110). Obadiah does indeed refuse to drink with Teague, so the Irishman puts a halter around the clerk’s neck and explains that Obadiah “would not let me make him drunk, no more, that he would not. So, I did take him in this string and I did tell him if he did make noises, I would put this knife into him, that I would” (116-17). Teague also pledges that, out of loyalty to his master, he “will get drink into his pate, or I will break it for him,” earning Blunt’s compliment that he was a “faithful and stout” servant (110). Teague’s treatment of the clerk not only serves to depict the “wild” streak in the Irishman, it also helps develop Obadiah’s persona by showing the clerk as weak and in the position of having to kowtow to the committeemen and Mrs. Day; he is now under a servant’s control. These scenes allow Teague to significantly heighten the conflict between the cavaliers and the committee as well as expose the Puritans as hypocrites.

*The Committee* would not have succeeded without the faithful Irishman of the subtitle, and not simply because of Lacy’s portrayal of the servant. More than any other character, Teague heightens conflict between characters, thus providing ample opportunities for them to develop their personas. The footman’s tendency to say exactly what’s on his mind and his unintentional insight—his sensibility—affects the audience’s perception of both the servant himself and those with whom he interacts. Teague is indeed sensational in his perceptions, as his reality is perceived *only* through his senses—those appetites and passions that incite in him the physical desire to first knock down the bookseller and then “take” the covenant, and to put a halter on the
Puritan clerk because he refuses to get drunk, threatening to stab him should he give voice to his protest. But the footman’s materialism is quite different from that of the other characters in this comedy; he has no aspirations to climb the social ladder like Mrs. Day or to amass a fortune like Mr. Day and the other committeemen; Teague is content to be clothed, fed, and given only enough money for wine and a little snuff. In fact, he refuses to carry anyone’s money because he fears the Devil may induce him to steal it, and since this lowly servant is far too honest for that, he raises important moral questions regarding the Puritans and their propensity to take control of other’s fortunes and estates in the name of political duty and religious dogma. Teague—despite his animalistic tendencies—is a very kind-hearted and loyal servant whose function it is to show us, in extremely comical ways, the social issues of the early Restoration.

3.3 Sir Samuel Tuke’s *The Adventures of Five Hours* (1663)

While each of the comedies considered in this project was extremely popular, Sir Samuel Tuke’s *The Adventures of Five Hours* was a smash hit that was kept in the repertoire for decades; records in *The London Stage* indicate that it was staged at Covent Garden in 1767, more than a century after its debut in 1663. In his *Roscius Anglicanus* John Downes wrote: “This Play being Cloath’d so Excellently Fine in proper Habits, and Acted so justly well … [that] it took Successively 13 Days together, no other Play Intervening” (n. pag.) in a time when “ten consecutive performances constituted a smash hit” (Hume, *Development* 23). John Evelyn’s *Diary* entry for 8 January 1663 echoes Downes, saying that the comedy “so universaly tooke as it was acted for some weekes every day, & twas believed would be worth the Comedians 4 or 5000 pounds” (n. pag.). Pepys noted that he and his wife went to see “the famous new play acted

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34 Performance numbers from *The London Stage* indicate that *The Adventures of Five Hours* was staged on January 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 22.
the first time today, which is called The Adventures of Five Hours,” and “though early, were forced to sit almost out of sight, at the end of one of the lower forms, so full was the house. And the play, in one word, is the best, for the variety and the most excellent continuance of the plot to the very end, that ever I saw, or think ever shall” (8 January 1663). Rothstein and Kavenik also praise Adventures for its “energy, multiplicity and variety, the affectivity and rapid reversals characteristic of [F]letcherian comedy” (56). Allardyce Nicoll notes that the comedy’s fast pace and its characters’ diversity drive this “intrigue play of love, revenge, and honour, alternating grave with gay, dignified Spanish manners with the ludicrous tomfooleries of serving men” (207); Frances Kavenik says only slightly more about the role of the servants: “The tone was lightened with farcical humor provided by servant characters, and decorum was maintained because such servants existed outside the moral boundaries the other characters subscribed to” (48), but she neglects to explain that it was precisely because the servants in this play were not bound by inane imperatives regarding one’s honor that events play out the way they should. The assemblage of diverse personalities consists of seven named servants (as well as four unnamed servants) and six nobles—three men and three women. The Spanish cavaliers adhere to utter moral propriety and follow a strict chivalric code of behavior; the ladies are chaste beyond any possibility of reproach. Even their servants are honorable and admirable, bravely attending their masters during a war with the Dutch. Only one character, a servant named Diego, exhibits behavior that is less than admirable. Diego is both materialistic (protecting himself rather than others) and sensational (in that his attitude and behavior are the result of what he senses—what he sees and how he understands it); he is cowardly, sulky, impudent, sarcastic, insulting, self-centered, and—in one word—hilarious. Yet of all the scholars who have examined this extremely popular comedy, only one writes more than a sentence or so for Diego: Robert Hume
devotes an entire page to the servant who “draws laughs, both for his cowardice and his quips” (*Development* 138). But still, one page simply isn’t enough for this fabulous character.

The play opens with Dons Henrique and Carlos discussing their sisters, for whom they have each been responsible since the death of both sets of parents. Henrique, described in the Dramatis Personae as a “severe brother to Porcia,” has immersed himself in the materialistic belief that his sister’s value comes only from her being pure and innocent until marriage, and this idea—throughout the play—controls his perceptions and behavior. This type of “sensationalism” causes Henrique to betroth his sister to Antonio—a man she has never met—and refuses to let her see Don Octavio, the man with whom she has already fallen in love and who is in love with her. In a conversation with Camilla (Carlos’s sister) Porcia laments her sad fate (4-9), and a lengthy tale full of passion and despair continues as Camilla relates her own despondent story about having fallen in love with a soldier named Antonio Pimentel, who saved her life (and her virginity) when she was held as a Spanish prisoner of war. After almost 300 dispiriting lines, the girls realize that Camilla’s hero is the same Antonio to whom Henrique has promised his sister—a split second that illustrates the sensationalism in Jensen’s third meaning of the term to describe that which is artistically effective in the marketplace. The intrigue that evolves from this discovery becomes the driving force of the entire plot. Antonio has agreed to the arranged marriage with Porcia only because he has given up hope of ever finding Camilla (with whom he fell in love during the moments of her rescue), because he was forced to return to battle without having learned her name. While this (rather typical for Restoration drama) crossed-love affair is certainly worthy of the scholarly attention it has garnered, the six noble characters are quite flat, almost never deviating from serious mode. Porcia and Camilla alternate between despair and fear of discovery after having switched identities in their attempt to marry the men they love;
Henrique is tediously angry, jealous, vengeful, and materialistic; and neither Carlos nor Antonio ever depart from their honorable personas as they focus solely on the love story, giving only a brief nod to some of the noteworthy political and economic conditions of the period that serve as topics of conversation for the servants.

At the time this play was written and produced, England’s bitterness about Dutch dominance in trade (a resentment that began in the latter 1500s) had already caused the First Dutch War (1652–1654). Such intense commercial rivalry, especially in England’s vast overseas empires, fueled hostilities and led to the 1663 Staple Act (one in a series of English laws that restricted trade with other countries) and caused the Second Anglo-Dutch War, which began in 1665 and ended with England’s defeat in 1667.35 Despite the fact that these wars with the Dutch continued through the late sixteenth century, it is the servants in this play—not the upper-class characters who were fighting in these wars—who discuss political and economic issues caused by England’s rivalry with the Dutch. In act 1, after Don Antonio’s servant Ernesto has delivered a message to Don Henrique, three of Henrique’s servants offer Ernesto some chocolate; as they drink they question Ernesto, who has recently returned with his master from fighting in one of Spain’s wars36 with the Dutch: “Tell me, what kind of a country is this Holland, / That’s so much talk’d of, and so much fought for?” Another servant asks what they drink, since he’s heard “there’s neither Fountains there, / Nor vines”; Ernesto tells him that “they drink there a certain muddy Liquor, / Made of that Grain with which you feed your / Mules,” causing them always to be drunk (10); “but they / Themselves believe it not, because they’re so, / So often” (11). When

35 Two additional wars over trade took place between 1672–1674 and 1680–1684, although trade embargoes remained in place until 1849.
36 The Eighty Years’ War (1568–1648) was largely a religious/cultural war that began when the Low Country Provinces (with England’s support) revolted against Spanish rule. Holland’s battles with England (1652–54, 1655–57, and 1672–74) were trade wars.
asked if the Dutch can fight, Ernesto explains that yes, they can, because their soldiers are paid for their service, unlike the English soldiers whose salaries were often withheld because Charles II’s habits and pursuits of pleasure were so expensive that Parliament regularly ran out of money. When asked how the Dutch government gets the funds to pay their navy, Ernesto replies:

they have a Thriving Mystery:
They Cheat their Neighbouring Princes of their Trade,
And then they Buy their Subjects for their Soldiers.\(^{37}\)

These Dull Fellows will sooner beat our Armies
Out of their Country; Why, Friend, ready Mony
Will do much more, in Camps, as well as Courts,
Than a Ready Wit. (11)

The servants then—even more so than Teague—are the characters who bring topical events to the stage; they also discuss ambition disguised as religious rebellion (getting in a dig at the Puritans) before Ernesto must leave to attend some of his master’s business. Each topic of the servants’ conversation easily could have been that of the noble characters. In fact, the topic of military troops not receiving the pay they earned does come up again in the next act when Don Antonio, having just arrived in Seville, runs into Don Octavio, who says to his friend: “I joy to see you here, but should have thought / It likelier to have heard of you at Court, / Pursuing there the Recompences due / To your transcendent Merit.” Antonio replies:

I have been taught, Octavio, to Deserve,
But not to Seek Reward; that does prophane

\(^{37}\) Ernesto refers to the English sailors who—out of economic necessity—fought with the Dutch navy, knowing that the pay vouchers given to English sailors by Parliament would not be honored.
The Dignity of Virtue; if Princes
For their own Interests will not advance
Deserving Subjects, they must raise Themselves
By a brave Contempt of Fortune. (17)

While the servants discuss the difference between the English and Dutch governments paying (or in England’s case, not paying) their soldiers, and the higher-ranked dons talk about having to do without the pay they deserve for service to their country, the tone and manner of conversation between the group of servants and the dons is undistinguishable. In this situation we see more Hobbesian thought, as explained in the first sentence of *Leviathan* 1.13:

> NATURE hath made men so equal in the faculties of the body and mind, as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he.

Unlike Shakespeare and Dryden, whose low characters typically speak in prose while the higher-ranking characters speak in iambic pentameter, Tuke’s characters—regardless of social status—speak in blank verse. Neither voice, topic of conversation, nor perspective distinguishes noblemen from servants. In fact, throughout this comedy—and most of the comedies of the period—conversation between master or mistress and servant is that of equals, even though playwrights clearly indicate that one is employer and the other employee. This egalitarianism, according to Paddy Lyons, is the first of four “Rules Concerning Servants in Restoration Drama, Up to 1700.” Discourse between master and servant is conducted “with a presumption of mutual equality and shared humanity” (13). In act 3, when Don Henrique’s erratic behavior baffles Don
Antonio, he asks Ernesto, “What can the meaning be of this indecent / Suffering me to remain without thus long / Upon my first Arrival?” to which the servant replies, “I swear, Sir, I’m amazed at this great change / … / All looks disorder’d now; nor can I guess / What may have caus’d so strange an alteration” (31-32). Antonio then asks his servant if he has, perhaps, taken him to the wrong house; Ernesto confidently assures his master: “If you are certain that we are awake, / Then I am certain that this is the same House” (32). And when Antonio finally discovers the woman he rescued—the one with whom he fell in love but didn’t learn her name—it is Ernesto who tells his master: “Approach her boldly, Sir, and trust your Sense” (33). Not only is Ernesto familiar with Hobbesian philosophy regarding the senses and sensibilities, he is as confident in himself as Antonio is confident in his servant, creating an environment in which employer and employee treat each other as “equal in the faculties of the body and mind.”

While the principled noblemen (with their serious debates on honor and justice along with elaborate exaltations of personal integrity) are admirable, and the intelligent servants are likeable and interesting, only Diego is drawn as a fully round character, and only he and his counterpart Flora (waiting-woman to Porcia) provide comical moments in this play. Their amusing badinage culminates at the final act of *The Adventures* when Henrique gives grudging consent to his sister’s marriage to Octavio. Flora looks at Diego and says: “Had such Disorders e’r such a Come-off? / Me thinks ‘twould make a Rare Plot for a Play,” to which Diego replies: “Faith, Flora, I should have the worst of that; / For by the Law of Comedy ‘twould be / My Lot to Marry you” (71). Although we expect—and audiences demanded—witty repartee in Restoration comedies, the only badinage in this play takes place between servants, whose words, actions, and attitudes illustrate the sensationalism of the decade in a number of ways: passions and appetites move human behavior, the fundamental motivation (passion) is independent of
class, and such a disruption of class hierarchy as portrayed on stage is quite outrageous in 1660s England. Flora also illustrates Hobbes’s egalitarian philosophy on men and women when she takes over the efforts to thwart Henrique’s “mischievous design” even though she may “perish in th’Attempt” (31). In act 4 the maidservant comes up with a design to get Octavio safely hidden from Henrique, and in the fifth act a panicked Octavio cries, “What must we do Flora? all my hope’s in you” (54), while lily-livered Diego is convinced they’ll be discovered and slain. The exciting, tension-filled scenes that abound in this play were—as evidenced by the number of productions—especially popular and correspond with one of Jensen’s reasons for calling the 1660s “sensational”: “the kind of works written in the period are artistically effective … in the theatrical marketplace” (ix).

Although Diego would become the byword for a cowardly servant, this character is the epitome of sensationally materialistic beliefs; he is self-centered, sarcastic and insulting, sulky and the voice of doom, full of false remorse and excuses for his behavior, and he’s always ready with a dry, witty retort. When Diego enters, we know the serious bit is over and the fun is about to begin. The actor who originally played this servant (thereby determining the “personality” that Diego would have throughout his long stage career) was Cave Underhill, known for his roles as a heavy, boorish (and sometimes rather stupid) stock character (see image, below). But like Teague (considered the prototype of the comical, bumbling stage Irishman), Underhill’s rendition of Diego became the prototype for the cowardly, selfish, sullen servant who blames his errors on others. Diego claims, however, that his unwillingness to place himself in danger is

38 Real servants would never have been granted permission to marry since it would impose upon their 24/7 availability to their employers.
39 In Dryden’s Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Neander and Lisideius debate the merits of French drama; Neander points out: “Most of their new plays are, like some of ours, derived from the Spanish novels. There is scarce one of them without a veil, and a trusty Diego, who drolls much after the rate of The Adventures” (55). Later scholars note that the “Spanish plot’ vogue introduced by Tuke’s The Adventures of Five Hours was relatively short-lived and quickly Anglicized, but the French influence … was much more pervasive and far-reaching” (Kavenik 49).
Neither cowardice nor selfishness, but only good sense—in the Hobbesian denotation that reality is perceived through the senses and that looking out for one’s self, at the expense of others, is only natural. In act 2, Octavio tells his servant that they are going to see Porcia (whose brother has forbidden the lovers’ relationship), and Diego observes: “Call you this making of Love? me-thinks, ‘tis / More like making of War.” Octavio asks, “Why would’st not thou venture as much for Flora?” (15). The servant explains:

DIEGO. … there lives not in the world

A more Valiant Man, than I, whilst Danger
Does keep its Distance; but when sawcily
It presses on, then (I confess) ‘tis true,
I have a certain Tenderness for Life,
That checks my Ardor, and enclines my Prudence
Timely to withdraw.

OCTAVIO. Your Style is wondrous civil to your self;
How you Soften that harsh word, call’d Cowardice. (16)

Diego has what Hobbes calls an “aversion” for not only things “which we know have hurt us; but also that we do not know whether they will hurt us, or not” (Leviathan 1.6). In true Hobbesian fashion, Diego believes it’s safer to check his ardor and favor prudence when it comes to love or war.

Throughout this tragi-comedy, Diego prefers to remain at a safe distance from the action. In the last act, when Octavio is about to be confronted by Antonio, Henrique, Carlos, and Geraldo with their swords drawn, Diego tells his employer that he will go with the women to hide rather than stand by his master’s side. And in act 3, when instead of meeting Porcia in her garden as arranged, they run into her brother, Octavio tells his servant: “Be not afraid Diego” and the cowardly servant whispers back: “Y’had as good command me not to Breath” (25). At the end of the scene, Octavio wants desperately to help his friend Antonio, who is engaged in a swordfight, but finds the gate to the garden (where the fight is taking place) locked:

OCTAVIO. What! the door shut! my Friend engag’d, and I
Excluded! cursed Fate! this Tree may help me
To climb o’re; if not, I’l flie t’him.

DIEGO. You may do so; your noble Love has Wings
And’s ever Fledge; ‘tis Molting time with mine;
Yet I’l up too; the hazards not in climbing,
Here I will sit, and out of dangers reach
Expect the Issue. (26)

When the fight is over, Diego says “I’ll down, and follow, inventing all the way / Some handsome Lie t’excuse my Cowardice” (27). Following Antonio, the spineless servant mistakes one of Henrique’s crew for Antonio’s and inadvertently leads the opposition straight to the house where Antonio has hidden Henrique’s sister Porcia. When Octavio discovers Diego’s error, he calls him a villain and a traitor who has “not one grain of common Sense” and has set out to destroy them. A “Curse on all Cowards!” shouts Octavio, echoing Shakespeare’s Falstaff;⁴⁰ “better far be serv’d / By Fools, and Knaves: they make less dang’rous Faults” (37). Diego refuses to accept any blame for leading the enemy to their door, telling Octavio that since he can’t see in the dark, he can’t be held accountable for such an error. And then comes what I think are the best lines in the play:

OCTAVIO. Peace, cowardly Slave; having thus plaid the Rogue,
Art thou Sententious grown? did I not Fear
To Stain my Sword with such Base Blood, I’d let
Thy Soul out with it at a thousand wounds.

DIEGO. Why then a thousand Thanks to my Base Blood
For saving my Good Flesh. (37-38)

Diego’s error eventually leads to Octavio’s capture, and when his master castigates him because they are now at the mercy of his enemies, Diego retorts: “Having broken into another’s Ground, /

⁴⁰ Another “voice of reality” in 1 Henry IV.
‘Tis just i’faith, you should be put i’th’ Pound” (59). And while he’s right—technically—that Octavio has stolen another man’s wife, as a servant he is a far cry from the loyal Teague. Even when Diego apologizes to Porcia for his error, his tone is mocking, adding yet another facet to his character. He tells her:

DIEGO. Madam, though I was never yet Unkind

To my own Person, I am so much troubled

At the Disquiet my Mistake has brought you,

That could I do it conveniently, I’faith,

I could even cudgel my self.

PORCIA. Away Buffon, is this a time for fooling? (39)

Here is where Underhill’s “part”—that of a churlish, crude, ill-mannered character—would have been played to perfection.

Diego’s sardonic comments can also be considered the voice of reality that allows us to maintain our sense of perspective regarding the other main characters; he’s not just a device for trivial comic relief. Late one evening Octavio orders Diego to fetch a sedan chair so that they might get Porcia out of the house before her brother arrives; the servant’s sarcastic (but perfectly realistic) response was: “These Chair-men are exceedingly well natur’d, / Th’are likely to obey a Servant’s Orders / After ten a clock” (38). And when he returns, sans chair, he tells his master:

DIEGO. The Chair is come, Sir, just as I expected.

OCTAVIO. Where is it?

DIEGO. Even where it was; they are deeply engag’d

At New Cut [a card game], and will not leave their Game,

They swear, for all the Dons in Sevil. (39)
Here the servant character illustrates the Hobbesian philosophy of power as the primary motivation for human behavior: who has it, who doesn’t, and whether one only appears to have power but is, in actuality, powerless. Diego knows that his position as a servant will not convince the chair-men (despite their powerless position in society) to leave their card game, but then neither will the prestige of the nobleman. The chair-men are in control because, as Hobbes explains, they have “the power of a faction … leagued” (*Leviathan* 1.10). While a lone chair-man might be intimidated by a powerful nobleman and submit to his will, a group of powerless chair-men is collectively stronger than the individual nobleman.

In *The Designs of Carolean Comedy*, authors Eric Rothstein and Frances Kavenik explain that Carolean playwrights typically “gear every scene for enacting the [Hobbesian] movements of desire and/or eliciting admiration or contempt. Thus, each scene deals with movement to or from a specific object of desire” (23). We certainly see the noble characters in *The Adventures of Five Hours* frantically chasing that which they desire (as dictated by their senses), but the crossed love story is the extent of their storyline. The servants exhibit well-formed personalities and broader interests, intelligently discussing current events and issues, making these “low characters” superior from both entertainment and social history perspectives as they enact a number of Hobbesian beliefs popular at the time and illustrate the sensationalism of the period. Rothstein and Kavenik also state that “the more broadly humorous or farcical actions [are] generally confined to low characters like Teague and Diego” (58), and I agree with them in part: these characters are broadly humorous and made the comedies smash hits in the late seventeenth century, kept them in the repertoire, and caused them to be revived in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even the twentieth centuries. Students of these comedies rarely remember the names of the high-ranking characters, but they most certainly remember Teague and Diego. The term with
which I disagree, however, is “low characters.” Since there is a single plot in *The Adventures of Five Hours*, and because Teague is involved in all three plots (none of which could be considered “low”) of *The Committee*, how can these colorful characters be deemed “low”? Both servants are essential to the comedies and have what many would consider the best parts; both were played by celebrity actors. Using the term “low characters” is part of the reason these fabulous roles have been ignored by scholars who are busy looking for other facets to explore with the higher-ranking characters. My aim with this study is to rectify the almost total lack of attention paid to servant roles.

3.4 **John Dryden’s *Sir Martin Mar-all, Or, Feign’d Innocence* (1667)**

The second half of the 1660s was a time of social transition and political instability. The year 1665 saw both the start of the Second Dutch War and a bubonic plague (thought to have come to England on Dutch trading ships) that killed about almost 100,000 people—a quarter of London’s population. On the 30th of April Pepys wrote: “Great fears of the sickness here in the City it being said that two or three houses are already shut up. God preserve us all!” London shops and theatres were closed for the duration, and entire families quarantined when one member became ill—creating the perfect environment for everyone to succumb. Pepys recorded in his diary on 16 September 1665: “Lord! How empty the streets are and how melancholy, so many poor sick people; … there is never a physician and but one apothecary left, all being dead.” At the height of the epidemic, “people were dying at a rate of over 8,000 a week” (Inwood 170). But this was just the beginning of London’s troubles.

In January of 1666, the war against England intensified as France and Denmark joined the Dutch, and a few months later the Great Fire of London gutted the medieval city and
“destroyed 13,200 houses, 89 churches, and goods valued at £3.5 million” (Coward 301). John Evelyn recorded on the third of September that the fire, “having continued all this night (if I may call that night which was light as day for ten miles round about)” was exacerbated by “a fierce eastern wind in a very dry season.” As the fire destroyed St. Paul’s cathedral, Evelyn wrote:

[The] conflagration was so universal, and the people so astonished, that, from the beginning, I know not by what despondency, or fate, they hardly stirred to quench it; so that there was nothing heard, or seen, but crying out and lamentation, running about like distracted creatures, without at all attempting to save even their goods; such a strange consternation there was upon them, as it burned both in breadth and length, the churches, public halls, Exchange, hospitals, monuments, and ornaments; leaping after a prodigious manner, from house to house, and street to street, at great distances one from the other. For the heat … had even ignited the air, and prepared the materials to conceive the fire, which devoured, after an incredible manner, houses, furniture, and every thing.

On September 4th Evelyn described how the fire was still raging: “the stones of [St.] Paul’s flew like grenados, the melting lead running down the streets in a stream, and the very pavements glowing with fiery redness, so as no horse, nor man, was able to tread on them, and the demolition had stopped all the passages, so that no help could be applied.” Those whose homes were destroyed, said Evelyn on the fifth, were now living “under tents, some under miserable huts and hovels, many without a rag, or any necessary utensils, bed or board, who from delicateness, riches, and easy accommodations in stately and well-furnished houses, were now reduced to extreme misery and poverty.” The reality of this nightmare—as perceived through all
five senses (surely observers could even “taste” the fire that was voraciously devouring their city)—illustrates the decade’s sensationalism at its worst.

Many Londoners believed that the plague and fire were sent by God to punish the wicked behavior of the court and other libertines, and they blamed the king for what was considered retribution for his profligate behavior and extravagant lifestyle. This blame increased the following June when Dutch ships broke through chains stretched across the Thames, “doing us not only disgrace, but incredible mischief in burning several of our best men-of-war lying at anchor and moored there, and all this through our unaccountable negligence in not setting out our fleet” (Evelyn; June 8, 1667), which were docked and unattended because Parliament had insufficient funds to put them in service. Historians note that Parliament blamed the king for wasting public money, and “Charles’s response was to launch a completely unprovoked attack upon the Dutch in the hope of winning plunder and prestige, claiming to his people that the Dutch were actually the aggressors. Instead the Dutch fought back, dragging him into a bloody and expensive war that ended in 1667 with the greatest naval humiliation in British history” (Hutton n. pag.). While soldiers who fought in the futile war went unpaid and people who lost everything in the fire continued to live in abject poverty, Charles’s blatantly extravagant lifestyle, his total lack of concern for his subjects, and the birth of his ninth illegitimate child by his current mistress caused people to say: “‘Give the King the Countess of Castlemaine and he cares not what the nation suffers.’ … Unless there be speedy redress, His Majesty will lose all his friends, for those that love him best cannot excuse these things. None of his courtiers will tell him how he has lost himself with the whole nation” (Green 478). In The History of England (1730), the author explains the nation’s burgeoning frustration and anger with a king who “gave

41 In the late 1670s the fire would be blamed on the Papists in their attempt to convert England to Catholicism.
himself up to all sensual Pleasures without Controul, and was irreconcilable to any who interrupted his Lusts. That he debauch’d the Nation more in its Manners, than ever any other King did before him” (Oldmixon 693). The “regressively uncritical and almost unmixed euphoria” at the restoration of Charles II had turned into “critical scrutiny and serious disillusionment” with a monarch more concerned with gratifying his pleasures than with meeting the needs of his subjects (McGuire 140). Londoners’ cynicism and resentment increased when the Dutch fleet anchored their ships at the mouth of the Thames, preventing goods from getting into the “exceedingly distressed” city (Evelyn; June 24, 1667). Pepys recorded on June 13th: “Never were people so dejected as they are in the City,” and on June 28th Evelyn wrote that seeing the “dreadful spectacle as ever Englishmen saw, and a dishonor never to be wiped off!”

On August 15th—just two months after Pepys’s and Evelyn’s diary accounts describing Londoners’ feelings of dejection and disgrace—John Dryden’s *Sir Martin Mar-all* premiered at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and ran for six successive nights. Pepys saw the comedy on August 16th, calling it “the most entire piece of mirth, a complete farce from one end to the other, that certainly ever was writ. I never laughed so in my life, I laughed till my head [ached] all the evening and night with the laughing; and at very good wit therein, not fooling.” Even after seeing the comedy a number of times, Pepys was “mightily pleased with it, and think it mighty witty, and the fullest of proper matter for mirth that ever was writ” (1 January 1668). On 22 May 1668 he once again “saw Sir Martin Marr-all, where the house is full; and though I have seen it, I think, ten times, yet the pleasure I have is yet as great as ever, and is undoubtedly the best comedy ever was wrote.” So popular was this play that Allardyce Nicoll speculated “whether Dryden was better known in his own day by any play more than this” (216), an idea that would
have distressed the poet since he felt comedy was the lowest form of drama and far beneath the skill-set of a Poet Laureate.

Although both a shareholder and principle playwright for the King’s Company, Dryden wrote the eponymous Sir Martin with a specific actor in mind: the famous James Nokes of the Duke’s Company, with Henry Harris as Warner, Sir Martin’s *valet de chambre*. Downes complimented the actors’ portrayals of the characters, pointing out: “All the Parts being very Just and Exactly perform’d, ‘specially Sir Martin and his Man” (28). While Nokes is considered one of the best comic actors of the period,\(^{42}\) Henry Harris was a celebrity who commanded a higher salary as an actor than even Thomas Betterton. He was so successful on stage, playing a wide variety of both comic and tragic roles, that he was awarded the post of yeoman of the revels, responsible for “keeping the vestments and trappings for court masques and disguisings. In the following year he was said to have had lodgings at court” (Oxford DNB). The stage-play between Nokes (as Sir Martin) and Harris (his servant) was so notable that Colley Cibber wrote about it in his *Apology*:

> [Sir Martin] is always committing Blunders to the Prejudice of his own Interest, when he had brought himself to a Dilemma in his Affairs by vainly proceeding upon his own Head, and was afterwards afraid to look his governing Servant and Counsellor in the Face, what a copious and distressful Harangue have I seen him make with his Looks (while the House has been in one continued Roar for several Minutes) before he could prevail with his Courage to speak a Word to him. (144)

\(^{42}\) His name became the byword for the fool, ninny, or dullard—Sir Martin to a tee!
Whether or not actor-playwrights like Cibber or theatregoers like Pepys realized it at the time, *Sir Martin Mar-all* is more than an entertaining romp to celebrate the opening of the theatres after having survived the plague and a great fire. This comedy “represent[s] and respond[s] to contemporary concerns over the nation’s and its subjects’ material well-being and cultural coherence” (Flores 171). The integration of varying levels of social class is clearly seen in *Sir Martin Mar-all*—particularly at the end—and in each of the characters we can see the Hobbesian philosophy that human nature is driven by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain—a theory that corresponds perfectly with the sensationalism of the decade and its focus on materialism, power, and desire—all embodied in a lascivious, spendthrift king and his profligate court.

Following the example of Charles II, Lord Dartmouth—the highest-ranking character—seduces young Mrs. Christian upon whom he lavishes expensive gifts; and like the stream of mistresses supported by the State, Dartmouth tells Christian: “The business of my life shall be but how to make your Fortune, and my care and study to advance and see you settled in the World” (11). However, once the young woman succumbs to his charms (and his gifts of money and jewelry), the novelty wears off and Lord Dartmouth wants to get rid of a pregnant mistress who has become more demanding—and more expensive—than his wife. Lady Dupe (Mrs. Christian’s aunt, who orchestrates the shakedown of Lord Dartmouth) illustrates to an extreme the materialism of the Sensational Sixties as she encourages her young niece not only to have an affair with the married lord, but to sleep with him often enough (receiving gifts for her services each time) that she gets pregnant and can demand the big pay-off: “thou shalt distil him into Gold my Girl” (10). Lord Dartmouth, like Charles II—or rather, like Charles II’s taxpayers—pay dearly for their sexual entertainment.
While Lord Dartmouth is portrayed as a dupe, Sir Martin is depicted as “a most conceited Fool” (2) and the Hobbesian epitome of someone who lacks wit: he has a “Defect, or fault of the mind, which is commonly called DULNESSE, stupidity, and sometimes by other names that signifie slowness” in sharp contrast to his valet de chambre, Warner, who has what Hobbes calls natural wit: “that which a man hath from his Birth; for that is nothing else by Sense” but that “which is gotten by Use onely, and Experience” (Leviathan 1.8). Disorder between the different social ranks and the power each wielded—between lords and their “ladies’ and between masters and servants—was a “significantly prominent theme” throughout the decade (Hughes 68) and is epitomized in this comedy, particularly between the ditzy Sir Martin and his intelligent, clever, and long-suffering manservant, Warner.

At the very beginning of this comedy we learn that Sir Martin is intent on marrying the wealthy heiress Millisent who is, unfortunately, already promised to Sir John. Sir Martin’s servant Warner is tasked with devising scheme after scheme to bring his master and Millisent together, but each time what could have been a successful strategy is ruined by Sir Martin’s oblivion to what is going on around him. While casually chatting with Sir John in the first act and scene, Sir Martin not only reveals his desire to marry Millisent (Sir John’s fiancée), he explains that his manservant has arranged for them to reside under the same roof during their stay in London. When Warner realizes what his daft master has done, he chastises him: “O unparallell’d ignorance! … Fortune had plac’d you in the same House with your Mistress, without the least suspicion of your Rival or of her Father: but, ‘tis well, you have satisfi’d your talkative humour: I hope you have some new project of your own to set all right agen: for my part I confess all my designs for you are wholly ruin’d” (8-9). Sir Martin immediately realizes the error he’s committed and promises to be more canny and observant in future, but time and
again, Warner’s master spoils the plot. When Warner warns Sir Martin that Millisent’s father—a country swashbuckler named Old Moody—despises the typical “London fop a la mode” routine, Sir Martin again mucks up the works in a conversation with the country gentleman: “I vow to Gad I am not Master of any of these perfections; for in fine, Sir, I am wholly ignorant of painting, Musick, and Poetry; Only some rude escapes—but, in fine, they are such, that, In fine, Sir—” (25), forcing Warner to once again bail his master out of another self-inflicted mess.

Warner finally tells Sir Martin that he can no longer work for him, but (as happens again and again), Sir Martin “mollifie[s] him with money” (26). The clever servant embodies Hobbesian philosophy, particularly when it comes to materialistic objectives.

Warner’s ingenious strategies for securing Millisent for his employer are examples not only of superb intellect and wit but of his desire for power in controlling each situation and rectifying each of Sir Martin’s blunders. In *Leviathan* 1.8 Hobbes explains that the “Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, [which] are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power.” In the last act, Millisent—who finally realizes that Sir Martin is a titled fool and that Warner is the true wit—devises a plan to trick the servant into marrying her and having Sir Martin marry her maid, Rose. Everyone gets what they want: Millisent her witty lover, Sir Martin a wife, Rose a title, and Warner a return to fortune because, it turns out, he is a serving-man only because “his Father’s sufferings in the late times hath ruin’d his Fortunes” (69). Through the “interrelated pursuits of class status, money, love, honor, and wit within the marriage market” (Flores 174), Londoners—

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43 Millisent is also a bit oblivious and thinks Sir Martin is charming and witty, but her maidservant Rose is significantly more observant: “he has a rare way of acting a Fool, and does it so naturally, it can be scarce distinguish’d. … How blind Love is” (2.2).
on stage, and therefore also in real life—began adapting to an evolving social order and the interconnection between different classes, united in their principles and interests. The subplot of \textit{Sir Martin}—the seduction and deception that take place between Lord Dartmouth, Lady Dupe, and Mrs. Christian—is infinitely coarse despite the titled characters, particularly when compared to the main plot that involves the servants. In the end, Millicent \textit{wants} to marry Warner, and Sir Martin accepts his marriage to Rose.

Mark Burnett, in his chapter on the male domestic servant in Renaissance drama, claims that stage servants “are respectively the victims of or the prime movers behind a perceived breakdown in the social order” (88). Burnett also suggests that writers found these characters quite useful for “the facility with which the male domestic servant could tap into and stand for a range of social constituencies” (89). In early Restoration plays we see people of all classes who want the same thing: money (Millicent and Warner); sexual satisfaction (Lord Dartmouth and Diego); a higher social position (Mrs. Day and Rose). But as Londoners’ faith in both monarch and parliament deteriorated, we see resentment and cynicism replacing the hope that greeted the restoration of Charles II; concern for one’s own desires became a major tenet not only among the upper classes, but of the lower and middling sorts as well. And as the decade progressed, more and more we see servant characters displaying the acumen that’s missing in their employers—something that occurs in many of the comedies of the 1670s when skeptical and observant servants become the voices of reality; they are servants who “know”; and with knowledge comes power.
4 THE CYNICAL SEVENTIES

4.1 Why Cynical?

In 1660 John Dryden had rejoiced at the return of the majestic “Happy Prince whom Heav’n hath taught the way,” for whom “Fate reserv’d for Great Augustus throne” to give “The World a Monarch, and that Monarch You” (Astraea Redux 15). Abraham Cowley rejoiced in the financial and trade advantages that accompanied the newly restored king: “Along with you Plenty and Riches go, / With a full Tide to every Port they flow” (5). Thomas Mayhew warmly welcomed Charles, writing: “Thy King, O England, that best Name, which wears / Thy Glory in it, stamps the Characters / Of Honour and Renown upon thy brow” (5). Thomas Edwards praised the king for his “Generous and Extensive Charity,” while Richard Flecknoe extolled additional qualities of the returning monarch:

For moral vertues then, ha’s every one
In their full splendors and perfection,
Justice, not Clouded with severity,
Nor Temperance, with sower austerity;
And ne’re in none more Courage was, nor more
Wisdom and Prudence, with less vanity, nor
With lesser Artifice; then ore’s passion he
Commands so absolutely, and sovereignly. (B3)

Yet when this majestic monarch established his court during the summer of 1660, it was “in the image of its king, amoral, carefree and high-spirited, lewd and enthusiastically licentious, with sex the dominant and sometime ruinous preoccupation” (Jordan and Walsh 76). Majesty and honor have shared the spotlight with hedonism and debauchery from the very beginning of
Charles II’s reign. The king’s “Characters / Of Honour,” his “moral vertues … Wisdom and Prudence,” and the “Plenty and Riches” generated upon his return to the throne deteriorated even more over the course of the decade, and Charles II was no longer living up to his image depicted in the many odes, panegyrics, poems, and songs composed to celebrate his return. Ten years later he proved less the semi-divine monarch with absolute and sovereign command over his passions than a debauched, worldly man, preoccupied with venereal delights and expensive habits financed by the taxpayers (Harris 94). The general public’s opinion of their king (as indicated in the literature about him) had converted from laudatory to cynical and mocking. For example, consider John Wilmot’s “A Satyr by the Lord Rochester, which King Charles took out of his Pocket,” which goes:

Was every Prince’s Soul so meanly poor,
To be a Slave to every little Whore?

Which Wolf-like in that Breast raw Flesh devours,
And must be fed all Seasons and all Hours. (192)

How poorly squanderest thou thy Seed away,
Who should get Kings for Nations to obey?
But thou poor Prince so uselessly hast sown it,
That the Creation is asham’d to own it. (193)

By the early 1670s, the number of the king’s illegitimate children by several different women, and the unpopularity of his current, devoutly Catholic, French mistress, Louise-Renée de Kérouaille (created Duchess of Portsmouth in 1676) had “seriously impaired royal dignity”
In Tricks of the Town Laid Open, the anonymous author claims that although the ultimate corruption of their glorious monarch was caused by “the D. ——es of P——th who bewitch’d him with her Amours, and had not only drain’d the substance of his Body, but likewise the substance of his Purse,” Charles regularly gave himself up to all sensual Pleasures without Controul: And was irreconcilable to any who interrupted his Lusts; that he debauch’d the Nation more in its Manners than ever any other King did before him; that he squandred [sic] away the ancient Revenues of the Crown which were esteemed sacred and left such a Debt upon it as was never before heard of. (n. pag.)

Charles II’s lifestyle and parliament’s inability to keep his spending under control caused Andrew Marvell to complain that the king “hath a vast Revenue constantly arising from the Hearth of the Hous[e]holder, the Sweat of the Labourers, the Rent of the Farmer, the Industry of the Merchant, and consequently out of the Estate of the Gentleman: a large competence to defray the ordinary expense of the Crown, and maintain its lustre” (4). John Kenyon takes Charles’s extravagance a bit further, claiming that his “financial improvidence … ruined the government’s credit” (223). Many Londoners, having lost all confidence in parliament and with Charles’s personal failings manifested to the point that “[s]kepticism about kings had become epidemic. …[P]laywrights began to express more clear-sighted reactions to rulers” as they started to emphasize the lack of self-control and leadership (McGuire 140). But outright criticism of the king in the playhouse would be considered treason (and would not have been approved by the appointed licenser, Sir Roger L’Estrange, a staunch Royalist) so a much safer alternative was presenting a disdainfully amused attitude toward figures of authority that only suggested derision. In the comedies of the 1670s we see this not only in the upper-class characters toward
parents and others in authority, but in the servants who encourage, exacerbate, and promulgate the younger generation’s contempt, thereby expressing their own discontent with the status quo.

The comedies of the 1670s are infinitely more satirical that those of the 1660s. Gone are the clear-cut connections to themes of righting a social order inverted by avarice, the denunciation of hypocrisy inherent to a desire for political power in the name of religion, or the laudatory celebration at the restoration of a legitimate (albeit sensational) monarch. As Jessica Munns explains, 1670s drama “replayed themes of regal impotence and monarchic irresponsibility as obsessively as the previous decade had revisited the topic of glorious restorations” (16). Not only has satire replaced the lofty sentiments and honorable goals of the previous decade, the comedies express a general skepticism felt toward both social institutions and the new ethos of the Stuart court through the absence of a moral framework previously found in commendable heroes or heroines and happy endings. Instead we see on the 1670’s stage a reflection of society where sardonic pleasure is attained through “less easily interpreted characterizations, characters with the potential to arouse in the audience not just simple admiration or easy sympathy but empathy and familiarity, contempt and awareness” (Rothstein and Kavenik 124). Scholarly studies of 1670’s comedies, therefore, often focus on aberrant characters such as Horner, Dorimant, Lovemore, and Pinchwife and on topics such as sexual debauchery, marital discord, and divorce among the upper-class characters.

What I find particularly interesting in these plays, however, is the alteration in the hegemony of the societies portrayed: servants promptly take control of consistent disorder and chaos, they are not portrayed as skeptics (although their expressions of cynicism and sarcasm are rampant), and they are set apart from most other characters as having the cognitive ability to see reason and truth, something noticeably lacking in their employers in this increasingly murky
social milieu. Servants appear more confident and they act as a voice of reality; overall, their roles indicate significant social transformations that were taking place outside the theatre and makes what happens on stage believable. Laura Brown notes that the “presence of these [1670s servant] characters, their outspoken observations, and their unique relationship to their ‘betters’ distinguish the social world of *The Man of Mode* from that of *The Comical Revenge*” because they are no longer “amenable to the simple formal authority” exhibited in earlier Restoration comedies (43). And rather than unequivocal conclusions where wrongs have been righted and marriage proposals are in place, these plays mock the happily-ever-after construction of the previous decade to depict uncertain futures and cynical perspectives. Although there is an appearance of confidence, it was a tenuous sureness reflecting the instability of social mores and norms; the “commingling of sexual conflict and social satire” in particular “highlights varieties of human behavior which demonstrate natural and social drives” that collide (Rothstein and Kavenik 125).

Paradoxically, most comedies of the 1670s are sex comedies—libertinism at its peak—and the “obvious and immediate causes” for the extraordinary success of the English theatre in this decade are, according to Gillian Manning, due to continued “examples of Charles II and his court circle who were notorious for their libertine lifestyles, and who were also powerful and enthusiastic patrons of the London stage” (xxxii). In the 1670s we see tradition in flux, shifting hierarchies, deterioration of conventional social order, and ardent skepticism of any ruling power all playing out on the comic stage. Douglas Canfield states that the drama of this period illustrates “the competing oligarchies of power [that] are portrayed as having none of the legitimacy of Stuart de jure ideology but as being based upon mere will to power”; the plays of the late 1670s and early 1680s “peel back the civilized veneer to reveal the naked power politics
of class warfare beneath” (1, 2). Rothstein and Kavenik add “the twin pulls of sex and money” to issues of social class that “exert increasing force on characters until, by the 1670s, power itself supersedes all other motives for most comic characters and is given ideological weight in the text with references to Hobbesian psychology” (63).

The various factors that created the decade’s social, political, and economic conditions account for a change of attitude in those affected by these mutable issues, issues that are credibly reflected in the words and actions taking place on the London stage. According to Edward Burns, the “hierarchical platonism of the Caroline court gave place to a materialist philosophy associated with Lucretius and the new science … patronage games of courtiers as intent on furthering their own careers as those of their proteges produced an ambiguous, often ironic, set of mirrorings between playhouse and court” (63). Hugh Hunt also attests to the realism of 1670s “sex comedies” that “almost without exception, is the theme of all Restoration comedy from Dryden to Farquhar, [and] was played in a realistic style, not an artificial one. … Nor was the wit, the repartee, the precision of language and the elegance of manners that expressed this display of sex an exaggeration of reality” (184). George Etherege confirms the reality of what appeared on stage; at the end of his prologue to The Man of Mode (1676) he states: “Since each is fond of his own ugly face, / Why should you, when we hold it, break the glass?” Comedies of the 1670s (just like those of the 1660s) were then and are now considered by many scholars as mirrors to real life and a looking glass for those in the audience that reflect and deal with their experiences, interests, and transforming perspectives. Some scholars, like Robert Hume, claim that what happens on stage takes place in “cloud cuckoo-land,” while others (myself included) consider it something in between: a wavy mirror that reflects somewhat accurately issues that may be a bit overstated by playwrights whose goal is to fill seats and by actors whose
performance is most likely exaggerated for effect because their aim is to entertain. If scholars agree to call this genre “social comedy” or “the comedy of manners,” then there must be enough realism in the comic events—and especially in those that are satirical, since satire typically ridicules foolish behavior (manners) or comments upon topical social issues—that adequately reflects a plausible society dealing with realistic situations. Social values and traditions in flux are illustrated by portrayals of unequal relationships between servant characters and those of the upper classes while the shift in social hierarchy depicts the materialism and self-interest of the period.

Although written in what is considered the decade of the sex comedy, plots of the 1670s “served up a fare whose unorthodoxy went well beyond sex. All of these comedies in one form or another severely weaken the claims of traditional social authority” (Rothstein and Kavenik 167)—including that between master and servant—that reflect the lack of confidence and disillusionment of the people in their government and monarchy. Most of the upper-class characters with whom we would have sympathized are no longer taken seriously; they have been reduced to stock characters who simply carry out the plot (Hume, Development 265), and it is the servants who create situations, orchestrate the action, and direct their employers, sometimes overtly and sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes with their master’s permission or at his request, but just as often without his knowledge. These “complex and subtle effects” are achieved, claims Paddy Lyons, by “taking it for granted that servants are perspicacious” (11)—they are astute, observant, and insightful—and they know their employers’ flaws, assets, and obsessions. Servants in the comedies of the 1670s easily thwart visions of traditional authority not only because of their “knowingness,” but because many theatre-goers of the period were scornful of authority as well. Yet in contrast with the “Truwits,” asserts Lyons, “servants are
more or less unshakable in their knowing awareness”; they “know how to intervene, how to warn or inform, and their sophistication in this domain is great” (20, 21). Servants of the 1670’s theatre possess both kinds of knowledge as described by Thomas Hobbes in Chapter 9 of *Leviathan*: “Knowledge Of Fact” (absolute knowledge comprising sense and memory; i.e., we see a fact and we remember it) and “Knowledge Of The Consequence Of One Affirmation To Another” (conditional knowledge achieved through reasoning, which is philosophical, moral, ethical, the result of our passions, and the consequences of things we say). Hobbes explains how knowledge of fact is essential for witnesses to an event, while knowledge of consequence is required of philosophers as they consider the corollaries between human thought and action. Possession of both such types of knowledge is what gives servants their power over social superiors, both on stage (see Lyons) and off (see Hecht 206-08; Turner 121). Servants, due to their proximity to their employers, are in the position to continually witness incidents and gather facts about those they serve—facts they can use as they employ their knowledge of consequences to influence both their masters and mistresses and to control situations and events as they see fit.

Stage servants now have both agency and control through the knowledge they possess—knowledge of how their world works and how they can control that world. Using four representative plays from this this decade (there are many more in this period considered the

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44 Lyons’s chapter on servants in *Theatre and Culture in Early Modern England, 1650-1737*, edited by Catie Gill, is rather typical of studies conducted by Restoration comedy scholars who consider servants with more than a brief nod. Like Michael Porter’s 1961 (very concise) dissertation titled *The Servant in Restoration Comedy* (discussed above; see footnote 1), Lyons has defined four “rules” concerning servants in the dramas staged between 1660-1700. In ten pages, he discusses his protocols regarding “master-servant discourse” (13), servants’ lack of participation in “erotic engagements” even though they understand the “laws of desire” (17, 20), and that servants know “how to intervene, how to warn or inform” their employers in matters of love; in fact, “their sophistication in this domain is great” (21). Another longer-than-typical consideration is Alfred Tellebach’s sixty-one-page dissertation (published in 1913) titled *Sir Robert Howard’s Comedy The Committee and Teague, an Irish Stage-Type* (also mentioned above), which examines the various portrayals of Teague but focuses on the Irish stage type rather than the servant role. For example, Teague is a servant in Howard’s *The Committee* and in George Farquhar’s *The Twin Rivals* (1702); in Thomas Shadwell’s two political plays, *Lancaster Witches* (1681) and *The Amorous Bigot* (1690), Teague is an Irish priest; in Farquhar’s *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707) he is a chaplain. Although each of these treatises focus on servants in some manner, none does so as an in-depth study.
pinnacle in Restoration comedy) I will illustrate how servants are not only ingenious and perceptive, but powerful in a changing society; their awareness, in and of itself, causes a transformation of their place in the social order, giving them agency far surpassing that of the previous decade, but also bringing into question the relationship between this amplified agency and their moral authority. Portrayals of unequal relationships between servant characters and those of the upper classes depict social values and traditions in flux, while the shift in social hierarchy illustrates the materialism and self-interest of the period as well as clearly illustrating the decade’s skepticism of established ruling powers and a deterioration of conventional social authority.

4.2 Thomas Betterton’s *The Amorous Widow, Or, The Wanton Wife* (1670)

According to John Harrington Smith, *The Amorous Widow* was one of the “most vital of the comedies originating in the 1660-1700 period” (“Thomas” 212). Considered a prototype of the 1670’s comedy of manners, this play is also one of the first real “sex” comedies inspired by a dissolute, theatre-loving king and court, and “in diverse ways it furnished material for Ravenscroft, Etherege, Crowne, Shadwell, and Mrs Behn” (Nicoll 173), all of whom created cynical characters who directed their scorn and mockery at figures of authority whose sexual desires exceeded their common sense. Rothstein and Kavenik say that this play “juxtaposes, not just degrees of seriousness and moral tones, but planes of verisimilitude” and as a result, it “treats sexuality differently from previous Carolean or [F]letcherian comedies”; an “equivocal ending and mixed tone [also] set it apart from its predecessors” (122). On stage, however, this “mirror to life” takes on an undeniably sardonic quality as the servants either assume or thwart

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45 See Hume, *Development* 337.
the positions of authority traditionally possessed by aristocratic characters. Unlike servants of the
1660s—those interesting, fully-drawn characters who served as responsible, supportive,
ingenious foils to the actions of their employers—servants of the 1670s are depicted as
perceptive, intelligent, and sensible in stark contrast to their foolish and unscrupulous “betters,”
possessing independent attitudes that often infuriate their employers—employers who depend
upon their servants’ intelligence and awareness to get them out of (or into) sticky situations. In
the first act and scene we meet three of the five servants who are solely responsible for plot
development and who control both the upper-class characters as well as the intrigue in this
comedy of manners. At the end of the play Lady Laycock—the highest-ranking woman and
amorous widow of the title—is denied (by a servant, no less) the marriage she so desires. As the
play opens we meet the widow who is in the market for a (much) younger, handsome husband;
she has inconveniently and inappropriately set her sights on either Cunningham (who is in love
with and loved by the widow’s niece, Philadelphia) or his friend, Lovemore, neither of whom has
any interest in the older widow. The younger generation is openly disdainful of their elders and
pessimistic, especially where marriage is concerned, while the older generation depicted as
foolish, as illustrated by Lady Laycock (and her desire for marriage of any sort—equal or not)
and Sir Peter Pride (who has lost his fortune but continually boasts of his noble family). Each of
the higher-ranking ladies and gentlemen is either duped or dependent upon the resourcefulness of
the servants, who are portrayed as perceptive and ingenious with their shrewd maneuvers to get
the young lovers married to each other and the old widow married to one of Cunningham’s
servants disguised as the Viscount Sans-Terre.
Because the servants are perspicacious and know their employers’ quirks and idiosyncrasies, they can easily manipulate the upper-class characters. “Knowing” their masters and mistresses gives the servants power to control events, which aligns—as it did in the previous decade—with Hobbesian philosophy: “The POWER of a Man,” says Hobbes in *Leviathan* 10, “is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good”; since it is human nature to desire what we consider “good” or gratifying, we therefore crave power, whether it comes from wealth and influence, or from intelligence and practical ability. In *The Amorous Widow* the servants—because they are sensible, knowledgeable, and very adept with their schemes—are the ones with the power to attain “Good.” Their knowledge is power. Those with money, like the widow, or influence, like Sir Peter Pride—the highest-ranking male character in this comedy who is a “great Boaster of his Honour, his Valour, what a noble Family he is deriv’d from, and of their mighty Courage” (Dramatis Personae)—are dupes to the servants’ intrigues. Even the young lovers act precisely in accordance with the servants’ instructions; indeed, they ask their employees for guidance throughout the play. The plot moves forward only through their directions, yet the fact that they have agency does not mean they lack moral rectitude. Jeffry wants what is best for his master but will not lower himself to be party to marital infidelity, and Prudence (who knows her mistress is making a fool of herself) attempts to steer her toward objectives that are realistic, attainable, and not humiliating. Both servants have control over those they serve, yet they suggest—and in Jeffry’s case, even insists upon—behavior that is proper, ethical, and principled.

We see the blending of ethics, knowledge, and power in the servants in the very first act and scene with Jeffry and Prudence, who serve Cunningham and Lady Laycock. Jeffry has

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46 The word “know” is used in various forms throughout the comedy a total of 104 times, indicating the importance of “knowing” to the plot.
brought a love letter from his master to Philadelphia (Lady Laycock’s niece) that gives “convincing Proof of his Love to you” (4). But before Philadelphia can compose a response to Cunningham’s letter, Prudence runs onstage to warn her that her aunt is “at your heels. Go up the Back-Stairs quickly” (4). The maid knows that her mistress is unreasonably and ridiculously jealous of her niece’s younger age and astounding beauty, and that she would attempt to prevent Cunningham and Philadelphia from seeing each other because she (illogically, and thereby foolishly) believes she has a chance of convincing the young gentleman to marry her. Prudence has, however, placed her allegiance with the younger, more rational, generation. When Philadelphia escapes up the back stairs leaving the two servants alone on stage, Jeffry complains to Prudence that Philadelphia has not yet expressed her love for his master despite having been courted for an entire year. The maid assures him of her abilities to manipulate the girl: “Alas! She’s but a Novice. Let me alone with her; I’ll order the Business so” (5). Prudence knows that Cunningham and Philadelphia love each other and would be a good match, but she also knows that Lady Laycock has irrationally set her sights on him. Both Prudence and Jeffry understand the issues, they know those involved, and they can identify solutions to the various situations and events that take place. This knowledge gives the servants power and control—something the upper-class characters in this play do not possess—along with the sardonic perspective toward traditional authority typical of the 1670s.

As Lady Laycock’s maid, Prudence is fully aware of her employer’s sexual appetites; she tells Jeffry: “This old lady of mine has languish’d for a young Husband ever since Sir Oliver Laycock dy’d: She cares not what Estate he has, or what Religion he’s of, so he be but young and lusty” (6). Prudence uses this knowledge to manipulate her mistress and easily sets her up to fall in with the servants’ plots. To distract Lady Laycock’s amorous advances, and to give
himself time to court Philadelphia without her aunt’s interference, Cunningham arranges for another of his servants—Merryman, a fellow who “is bold, and very apt, and has not been seen much in Town” (16)—to impersonate a lusty viscount. Jeffry assures his master that “No body of the Family has seen him [Merriman] yet, but the Butler; and he, I know, will be secret” (17).

Even Lady Laycock’s butler is in on the scheme and willingly deceives her to support the desires of the younger generation who have fully justified contempt for their foolish elders. Like Prudence and Jeffry, Merryman is ingenious and perceptive. At the end of act 1, Merryman, as clever as the other astute servants in this comedy, asks his master: “What sort of Lord is he [the Viscount] to be?”

CUNNINGHAM. Oh! An Amorous Resolute sort of a Person, that’s much given to love Musik. You shall have all things that’s fitting for a Man of such Quality.

MERRYMAN. Well, Sir, let me once set out with a good Equipage, and leave the rest to me.

LOVEMORE. Come with us, Friend, and We’ll instruct thee fully in thy Part.

MERRYMAN. Well, give me but my Cue of Entrance, and let me alone to act my Part. (17)

Merryman is confident in his capacity to impersonate an aristocrat without coaching from his employer, and his agency is not limited by structures of social class, ability, or custom. We don’t even question his moral authority in impersonating a titled gentleman and participating in a deception because the widow is not only irrational, but has been rude and inconsiderate to her niece, who is nothing but courteous to her aunt despite the older woman’s bad-mannered, sour-tempered behavior. In the next act the servant-as-nobleman arrives in a “huge fine Equipage,
[with] Fiddles, and other Instruments” to begin courting the widow (22). Like Prudence, Merryman is fully aware of Lady Laycock’s vanity and delusions regarding her beauty, so the “viscount” gazes at the middle-aged widow in seeming adoration and says, “what young Gentlewoman is that, whose matchless Beauty seems to still the Place with more, than common Brightness? Sure ‘tis some Goddess, dropt from Heaven for Men to worship! Fair Angel, pardon this rude Attempt: The Honour only of your fair Hand. (Kisses it.) For till I touch it, I cannot think you mortal” (23). Lady Laycock (once again earning the younger generation’s contempt) believes his nonsense, and the viscount/servant tells her, “Lady, I bless those Stars that have directed me to so happy a Choice. … If you like me as well as I do like you, e’en send for a Parson” (24); this silliness prompts the maid to whisper to Philadelphia: “Now we shall have rare Sport” (23). Merriman clearly understands his target’s amorous nature, as the “viscount” tells the widow: “Methinks I long to have thee in my Arms. Oh! How I would employ my Faculties, And surfeit with delight. What say you, Lady? Never stand to consider on’t, but send for a Parson to say Grace, that I may fall to. Odds so, I’m very hungry—Very sharp set; I long to be doing” (25). While comedies in the early part of the 1670s are significantly less lascivious than later in the decade, we still understand what the viscount “long[s] to be doing.” Hume illustrates the progression of sexual explicitness from the late 1660s: “Courtall in She Would [if She Cou’d] (1668) avoids illicit sex when it is thrust upon him; Shadwell’s Rains [in Epsom Wells] (1672) indulges but makes excuses for himself; Dorimant in The Man of Mode (1676) leaps to it without a qualm” (Development 296). Many scholars agree that this evolution was inspired by a dissolute, theatre-loving king and court, making explicitly lustful behavior expected, acceptable, and even replicated amongst the theatre-going crowd.
The collective agency seen here somewhat muddied the social order for London’s elite which, of course, affected those who worked for them. If the aristocracy could imitate the nobility, and the gentry mimicked the conduct of the aristocrats, then it only makes sense that the serving class characters could ape the upper-classes on stage. We see this impersonation played to the hilt in act 3, when the counterfeit viscount comes upon his master chatting with Lady Laycock:

VISCOUNT: Ha! What are you, Sir? that thus dares to encroach upon my Territories and invade my Right?

WIDOW: Nay, pray my Lord, be not displeas’d. This Gentleman, you must know, has a Law suit depending, and is come to entreat a Line of Commendation from me to my Lawyer.

VISCOUNT: Enough; I do believe all you can say. Ah! those Eyes of yours!

What Looks are there! they enflame my very Soul. (48)

But unlike the comedies of the 1660s, jealousy and marriage in *The Amorous Widow* is not confined to the fake viscount and Lady Laycock. Jeffry is concerned that Prudence will fall for the impersonator and tells the maid: “I know your Humour well enough; you love a bold audacious Fellow, that will say any thing, and such a one we have come to Town, one Merryman, our Falconer; I fear you’ll like him better than you do me” (6). But Prudence isn’t swayed by the falconer’s cheeky affectations, and the play concludes with two sets of servants planning marriage with their employers’ blessings.

In addition to servants who marry, the 1670’s theatre portrayed unequal marriages rarely seen in the previous decade. Rather than limit themselves to situations in which older, lusty men pursue women young enough to be their daughters, playwrights freely coupled men and women
of different socio-economic backgrounds. In *The Amorous Widow*, Betterton not only has Lady Laycock agree to marry Cunningham’s servant (impersonating a viscount), he has the daughter of the highest-ranking characters—Sir Peter and Lady Pride—married to Mr. Brittle, a glass shopkeeper who doesn’t hesitate to remind his in-laws that “had [I] not married your Daughter, and with my good Money redeem’d your Estate, your Gentility had been left in the Mud” (37). Once again, the derisive mocking of restrictions promoted in the previous decade and scorn for the older generation is exposed. Even the (more or less) honorable gentlemen created by the previous set of playwrights—Colonels Careless and Blunt, Dons Antonio and Octavio, Lord Dartmouth and Sir John—are often replaced with men (and women) who gradually become more lecherous, allowing the servant classes to assume the moral responsibility that appears to have deserted the upper-class characters. With the lusty widow occupied by the fake viscount, Lovemore is free to chase his own object of sexual desire, Mrs. Brittle; he asks his servant Jeffry if he can “carry this Letter to a young Gentlewoman, and bring an Answer, without being suspected? If thou dost, Jeffry, thou shalt be well rewarded for thy Pains” (26). But the honorable servant refuses, not because he can’t, but because he won’t; he explains to his employer: “I don’t care to meddle in a Cause, where there’s a Process of Cuckoldom going forward” (27). Jeffry—exercising his free will to be an exemplar of honorable conduct—asserts that just as he wouldn’t want to be a cuckold, he won’t participate in putting another man in that humiliating position.

There is, of course, a less principled servant to demonstrate the cynicism of the decade (and move the plot forward) who is willing to help Lovemore with his intrigues, and Clodpole (another servant who came to town with Merryman) becomes the messenger. This job is perfect for Clodpole, who noticed that Mrs. Brittle’s “handsome Maid that waits upon her gave me Two or Three such loving Looks, that I am half persuaded she likes me” (35), and in his self-
interested, Hobbesian-like, relentless pursuit of pleasure, he reasons: “if my Master gets acquainted with the Mistress, I intend to strike in with her Maid” (35). In act 3, Clodpole (not the sharpest tool in the shed) inadvertently tells Mr. Brittle that he is about to be made a cuckold: “His Wife’s a main pretty smirking Rogue, as a Man would wish to lay his Leg o’er” (33); when the shopkeeper justly accuses his wife of infidelity, Mrs. Brittle calls upon her maid (the one who gave Clodpole “Two or Three such loving Looks”) as a defense: “Speak, Damaris, did I ever give him any Cause for these Suspicions, and this Usage? Thou know’st all I say or do” (41). Damaris—quicker than the rather dim-witted Clodpole and possessing acting skills equal to that of the fake viscount—breaks down in tears, wailing to her mistress that she can’t “bear to see the Hardship you endure! Like a barbarous Man as he is—To abuse so good a Lady! so virtuous, so Innocent, and so Pious a Lady! I am sure it makes me weep to think on’t” (41). The maid—with her knowledge of the affair and knowing how to manipulate the foolish, older generation—has the power to convince Sir Peter that his daughter is innocent of any wrongdoing despite her husband’s substantiated accusations.

The word “know” is used (in one form or another) forty-six times in act 3 alone, illustrating how little the upper-class characters understand and how well the lower-ranked and servant classes know (to be familiar with the habits, preferences, behavior, etc.) those they serve. When Clodpole attempts to deliver a letter from Lovemore to Mrs. Brittle and runs into the lady’s husband, Mr. Brittle asks the servant his business; Clodpole replies, “Wou’d you know now?” (32) as in “wouldn’t you like to know?” Brittle insists, “But you must know—” (32), meaning “to recognize or acknowledge” as he attempts to explain that he is the owner of this household, not someone asked to keep a secret from the man about to be cuckolded. Misunderstanding Brittle’s use of “know,” Clodpole interrupts to tell the shopkeeper that he
does, indeed, know (the fact or state of knowing something) what’s in the letter, “but I am not such a Fool to tell you. You shan’t get a Word out of [me]” (32). Clodpole then entreats Brittle to be quiet: “Mum! not a Syllable! no body must know” (33), as in “to discover.” The misunderstanding continues between the two for more than seventy-five lines, and despite each repeatedly using the word “know” to mean “to understand” something, at the end of the conversation neither party is any wiser. As Clodpole leaves without having delivered the letter, Brittle’s high-ranking parents-in-law, Sir Peter and Lady Pride, arrive, and for the remainder of the act, “know” is used with a variety of meanings\(^47\) without Sir Peter and Lady Pride ever “knowing” that Brittle—despite being of a significantly lower class (“Do you know who we are? And the Respect due to Persons of our Quality, good Son-in-law?” [36])—knows what he’s talking about; he knows the truth about their daughter. The entire third act is one in which nothing the higher-ranking characters “know” is accurate; it ends with the amorous widow begging the viscount/servant to understand that she is speaking to Cunningham only because “[t]his Gentleman, you must know” is here on business (48), yet this is something the servant already knows because he is part of the scheme to divert her attention from Cunningham so that the young gentleman can spend uninterrupted time with the widow’s niece.

Never are the power and agency of the servant due to his or her knowledge so apparent as when, toward the end of act 3, Cunningham attempts to convince Philadelphia to marry him immediately, even though her aunt forbids the union: “Be not so cruel to say, you want the

\(^47\) “I know to my sorrow” (to have personal experience of something as affecting oneself); “let him know his Duty” (to learn); “I best know my self” (to have understanding of or insight into one’s own person, personality, etc.); “you should know what it is” (to have experience of); “Why, you shall know, good Mother-in-law” (to be apprised of something); “How came you to know this, Son-in-law?” (to apprehend or comprehend as fact or truth). Between Lovemore and Mrs. Brittle, “know” has a different meaning: “had you let me know of your passion” and “pray, let me know it” (to be sexually intimate with). As we reach the end of the act, Cunningham attempts to convince the amorous widow that the (fake) Viscount “who you know loves you” (to be familiar with the habits, preferences, behavior, etc., of a person) is the man for her, “but how came you to know it?” (to be aware of something). Definitions taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. 

Power: If we neglect this Opportunity, which kindly presents it self, the next perhaps may not be ours” (43). Prudence—who knows her mistress’s heart—says: “Madam, how can you deny him that, since I know you love him? … Give him your Hand, or, I’ll discover all” (44). Since Prudence—who has orchestrated most of the events concerning the lovers—knows all, she has the power to compel Philadelphia to comply. Because the servants know their employers and are such accomplished “actors” in this comedy, they not only have individual and collective agency but full command of the upper-class characters. For example, at the end of act 4, Jeffry devises an outlandish tale as to why the Viscount Sans Terre has come to take his employer’s life: the “viscount” claims that Cunningham “has deflower’d my Sister, got her with Child of a Bastard, and stain’d the Honour of our great Family! No, tho’ all the World should plead for him, I’ll not forgive it; he dies” (66). When the viscount refuses the widow’s plea to spare Cunningham’s life, Prudence steps in and whispers to Lady Laycock: “Tell him you’ll marry him, Madam, and try what that will do” (67). And the “viscount” agrees: “‘Tis a hard Request; but to shew how much I love you, upon that Condition I grant it” (67). The servants’ powers are at their peak in act 5, when Jeffry insists that his master marry Philadelphia immediately, lest the viscount is “discovr’d to be a Counterfeit” (69). At first their hopes are dashed when Lovemore arrives to tell Cunningham that Lady Laycock “will not consent you shall marry her Niece” (69), but Lovemore offers reassurance, telling his friends that he has “left Prudence reasoning the Case with her” (70).

PRUDENCE. After a thousand Arguments, which I us’d to persuade her, she has at last resolv’d—I can’t speak it.

PHILADELPHIA. Oh what? Prithee out with it.
PRUDENCE. Why, to marry the Viscount her self, and give you and your ten thousand Pounds to Mr. Cunningham.

CUNNINGHAM. Oh the bless’d News! (70)

Where Philadelphia, Lovemore, and Cunningham have failed, the maid has triumphed. Because she knows her mistress, she can manipulate her to the extent that Lady Laycock thinks she is making her own decisions, when it is really Lucy who determines events. With the combined machinations of Lucy and Merryman, Lady Laycock is putty in their hands.

_The Amorous Widow_ concludes without any of the characters consummating an illicit affair (that’s for later in the decade) and with the expected marriage between Philadelphia and Cunningham. But when the unequal marriage agreement between Lady Laycock and the viscount/falconer is called off at the eleventh hour—by the servant, no less, who decides he has “no great Stomach” for matrimony (87)—Lady Laycock is left once again without a husband.

Who will she set her sights on next? Will she renege on her agreement to let her niece marry Cunningham? Will she double her efforts to beguile Lovemore? Such ambiguous conclusions will intensify by mid-decade with a marked cynicism conveyed through derisive humor and moments of scornful contempt in an increasingly sardonic atmosphere. But until then we find throwbacks to 1660s drama with plays such as John Dryden’s _Marriage a la Mode_, where there is clear differentiation between right and wrong, and new twists on Hobbesian-inspired desire.

### 4.3 John Dryden’s _Marriage a la Mode_ (1671)

While remembered primarily for _Sir Martin Mar-All_, Dryden wrote in his dedication of the play to the Earl of Rochester that _Marriage a la Mode_ is “the best of my comedies.” Although scholars (if not the author) call it a tragicomedy, Allardyce Nicoll points out there is so
much of a comic element in this play that it “may more fittingly be considered among the comedies proper” (130), especially considering the happy ending of the tragic plot when true love triumphs and the rightful heir is restored to his throne. According to Derek Hughes, *Marriage a la Mode* is “one of the last plays to deal with the subject of restoration until the revival of the topic during the last years of Charles’s reign” (“Heroic Drama” 205). Questions of legitimate rule (the focus of many plays in the 1660s) are still present in the dramas written and produced in the new decade, but in the serious plot of *Marriage a la Mode*, personal desire trumps civic responsibility as the deposed ruler chooses true love over the return of his kingdom.

Hobbesian materialism and self-interest as the basis of all human action are present in *Marriage a la Mode* (as they were in *The Amorous Widow*), but in addition to the marital discord, extramarital sex, and forced marriages found in earlier dramas, Dryden plays with seeing Hobbes’s theory on desire as a rather practical morality with his married couples contemplating divorce and “follow[ing] the new mode” of open marriage and partner swapping (Prologue). According to Rothstein and Kavenik, the “portrayal of women in comedy, generally as well as in matters of divorce, plainly emerges from attitudes that were not only changing but also were perceived as in flux” (13). And despite the comedy’s conservative ending, Dryden deals with sardonic portrayals of unstable identity with his comic figures depicted as courtly and his heroic characters reduced in social status, or, as in the case of Melantha (described in the *Dramatis Personae* as an “affected lady”), an upper-class character who aspires to be part of the courtier crowd but is clearly less qualified than her intelligent, accomplished, and witty servant, Philotis. In both comic and tragic plots, the idea of social mobility is promoted. Polydamas has usurped the throne of Sicily while Leonidas, the rightful heir, has been raised as the son of a fisherman named Hermogenes, who is really a loyal friend of the deposed king posing as a
commoner to keep Leonidas (the true heir to the throne) safe from the wrath of Polydamas.
While many Restoration plays seem to accept and even promote high absolute mobility, *Marriage a la Mode* implies relative social mobility; the overall structure of the imagined Sicilian court society hasn’t changed, but the probability of upward mobility (Leonidas, Hermogenes, and the maid-servant Philotis), downward mobility (Polydamas, Argaleaon [the usurper’s favorite] and Palmyra [the usurper’s daughter]) as well as horizontal mobility (Melantha) is probable. This relative social mobility increases throughout the decade and peaks in the 1680s.

In the comic plot, Dryden’s maid character, Philotis (like his Warner in *Sir Martin Mar- all*) illustrates other problems in class hierarchy. During the 1670s especially, wit was among the most highly prized qualities in both men and women, “encompassing cleverness in conversation, physical actions and imagination” (Novak, “Libertinism” 58). But it is the maidservant Philotis—not her mistress Melantha (whose social ranking would allow her to become part of the courtier crowd)—who embodies the prized attributes a la mode. Not only is Philotis more intelligent, accomplished, and witty than her mistress, the maid exemplifies the extremely libertine themes found in 1670s sex comedies as well as the free-thinking philosophies that were part of court culture and associated with wits such as John Wilmot, Charles Sedley, William Wycherley, George Villiers, and George Etherege. For example, Philotis encourages her mistress’s desire to have an affair with Captain Rhodophil (a married man), telling her that he’s “a fine gentleman indeed” whose abilities in singing, dancing, and writing *billet-doux* are talents that deserve the attentions of someone who “understands and values the French air, as your

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48 R.E. Pritchard says that the court’s philosophy of libertinism was “derived from (mis)readings of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651), interpreted as regarding all authority—state, religious and church, family and sexual laws—as arbitrary, hypocritical and repressive of man’s natural impulses” (10).
ladyship does” (52). Melantha, who is a dunce compared to the clever maid, doesn’t catch the sarcasm in Philotis’s remarks regarding her mistress’s “desire to gain access to power [that] expresses itself by the need to learn French” and her “obsession about gaining access to the court” (Kroll 323). Witless Melantha reminds her maid that she is paid very well (with expensive articles of clothing) “for furnishing me with new [French] words for my daily conversation” (64) and reprimands her for providing only “fifteen words to serve me a whole day! Let me die, at this rate I cannot last till night” (64). Philotis reads from her list: “foible, chagrin, grimace, embarrassé, double entendre, équivoque, éclaircissement, suite, bêvue, façon, penchant, coup d’étourdi, and ridicule” (64), while Melantha practices her “postures” for the day, asking the maid’s opinion on how well she assumes her various “looks”:

PHILOTIS. Sovereignly well, madam.

MELANTHA. Sovereignly! Let me die, that’s not amiss. That word shall not be yours. I’ll invent it and bring it up myself. My new point gorget shall be yours upon’t. Not a word of the word, I charge you.

PHILOTIS. I am dumb, madam.

MELANTHA. (Looking in her mirror.) That glance, how suits it with my face?

PHILOTIS. ‘Tis so languissant.

MELANTHA. Languissant! That word shall be mine too, and my last Indian gown thine for it. (Looks again.) That sigh?

PHILOTIS. “Twill make many a man sigh, madam. ‘Tis a mere incendiaire.

MELANTHA. Take my gimp petticoat for that truth. If thou hast more of these phrases, let me die but I could give away all my wardrobe and go naked for ‘em.
PHILOTIS. Go naked? Then you would be a Venus, madam. (64-65)

The fact that the would-be courtier doesn’t catch the irony of the situation—that the maid’s wardrobe increases with each French word she utters—helps illustrate the sardonic quality of the period. And just as Prudence’s knowledge about those she serves allows her to manipulate the amorous widow in Betterton’s comedy, Philotis’s use of flattery to swindle her mistress out of her expensive apparel comes from the maid’s intelligence and wit. An alteration in the hegemony of the 1670s means that Melantha, despite her status as a lady, the mistress, and would-be courtier, has relinquished her power over the employee because of her preoccupation with becoming a part of the debauched court. Philotis’s success in controlling her mistress (and later Palamede) is, according to Hobbes, her “Power, because it maketh reputation of Wisdome, or good fortune; which makes men either feare him, or rely on him” (Leviathan 10). Clearly Philotis is the one with power, secured by a reputation for managing her mistress and her ability to gain good fortune from Melantha and later, from both Rhodophil and Palamede.

Philotis also possesses both of Hobbes’s classifications of knowledge—that derived from the assimilation of facts and that which is the consequence of one pronouncement to another—which allows her to con Palamede. Philotis informs the courtier that Melantha’s father sent his daughter a letter “with an absolute command to dispose herself to marry you tomorrow”—a letter that arrived at the perfect moment, the maid explains to Palamede, “for it found her in an ill humour with a rival of yours that shall be nameless, about the pronunciation of a French word” (83). Telling him that she discouraged her mistress from pursuing an affair with Rhodophil by “discommend[ing] him all over: clothes, person, humor, behavior, everything” (83), Philotis begins her scam with another upper-class character:
PHILOTIS. Then I took occasion to commend your good qualities: as the
sweetness of your humor, the comeliness of your person, your good mien,
your valor, but above all your liberality.

PALAMEDE. I vow to Gad I had like to have forgot that good quality in myself,
if thou hadst not remembered me on’t. Here are five pieces for thee.

PHILOTIS. Lord, you have the softest hand, sir! It would do a woman good to
touch it. Count Rhodophil’s is not half so soft, for I remember I felt it once
when he gave me ten pieces for my New Year’s gift. (83)

Unlike Melantha, however, Palamede is fully aware of the maid’s game and uses it to his
advantage:

PALAMEDE. Oh, I understand you, madam. You shall find my hand as soft
again as Count Rhodophil’s. There are twenty pieces for you. The former
was but a retaining fee; now I hope you’ll plead for me.

PHILOTIS. Your own merits speak enough. Be sure only to ply her with French
words, and I’ll warrant you’ll do your business. Here are a list of her
phrases for this day. Use ‘em to her upon all occasions and foil her at her
own weapon. For she’s like one of the old Amazons, she’ll never marry
except it be the man who has first conquered her.

PALAMEDE. I’ll be sure to follow your advice, but you’ll forget to further my
design.

PHILOTIS. What, do you think I’ll be ungrateful? But however, if you distrust
my memory, put some token on my finger to remember it by. That
diamond there would do admirably.
PALAMEDE. There ‘tis and I ask your pardon heartily for calling your memory into question. I assure you I’ll trust it another time without putting you to the trouble of another token. (83)

Although he is aware of her ploy, Palamede recognizes that Philotis knows her mistress’s quirks and foibles—knowledge that allows the maid to manipulate the higher-ranking characters. Palamede follows Philotis’s directions about using French phrases, but Melantha assumes he is mocking her, causing Philotis to quickly assure her mistress that Palamede “does but accommodate his phrase to your refined language” (85). Palamede also follows the maid’s instructions when he sings to Melantha in French. When Melantha tells Palamede that she accepts his proposal of marriage “upon condition that—when we are married, you …” Philotis swiftly interrupts to tell Palamede: “drown her voice. If she makes her French conditions, you are a slave forever” (85). Knowing her mistress as she does, the maid can aptly advise the suitor, earning his gratitude (and his riches) and therefore gaining power from the situation.

The witty, perspicacious maid is the only individually drawn character in the partner-swapping comic plot—a theme that makes the gay couples entirely interchangeable. Dryden puts both girls in breeches disguises, both meet their lovers (the other’s husband or fiancé) in the same grotto, and at end of the play, the partners switch smoothly and without fanfare. The swap-exchange-substitute-transfer activities of the upper-class couples makes them transposable, and both look at relationships as brief opportunities to satisfy desires, neatly following Hobbes’s theory that people only desire that which is unavailable to them: “by Desire, we always signifie the Absence of the object” (Leviathan 6). Interest in their partners is lost until those partners look elsewhere, then desire for that which they no longer possess is once again evoked.
Like *The Amorous Widow*, *Marriage a la Mode* ends with “at least two radically different ideologies coexisting uneasily or with an ambivalent solution which can be interpreted in two ways: as a conventional ‘happy ever after’ ending or as a prediction of a future filled with doubts and infidelities” (Rothstein and Kavenik 124). Since changing ideologies and alterations in hegemony during the 1670s weakened traditional social mores of the previous decade, the conclusion of this comedy is certainly not conventional, and it is the maid’s power gained through knowledge that best illustrates the decline of traditional social authority. Maximillian Novak explains this phenomena with his notion of “the basic doctrines of libertinism”:

[S]ociety was merely an artificial construct. Its laws were not to be taken seriously by those who understood that human beings had been tricked into accepting them. … Since the young experienced the pleasures of the senses more fully than the old, they should ignore, as much as possible, the precepts delivered by those who could no longer experience the pleasures of life fully. Such understanding set the believers free from the conventions of society. (55)

In a time when “old” parents arranged “suitable” marriages for their children, the only crossing of classes occurred when the middling-sort person had money and the upper-class person needed to restore a lost (or dwindling) fortune. When financial levels and social rank were about equal, there was less social mobility. Once freed from traditional conventions, however, divisions between social and economic groups of the younger set—and therefore between servants and those being served—were becoming increasingly malleable, allowing those of the upper-classes to place their confidence in the attributes and abilities of their servants, both on- and off-stage.
4.4 William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675)

There is little question among scholars that with *The Country Wife*, “William Wycherley produced a masterpiece—indeed, the greatest of all Restoration comedies” (Marshall 409). Bonamy Dobrée considers it not only Wycherley’s magnum opus but “the one play in the whole period equal to *The Way of the World* in completeness of expression” (93). Phyllis Allran declares *The Country Wife* (which was censured at the time for its licentiousness) “the epitome of the spirit of the reign of Charles II” (1)—a claim supported by Richard Steele in *The Tatler* No. 3: “The character of Horner, and the design of it, is a good representation of the age in which that comedy was written; at which time love and wenching were the business of life, and the gallant manner of pursuing women was the best recommendation at Court” (14 April 1709).

While scholars generally agree that the play is, indeed, a tour de force, there is considerable debate on what the comedy is “about,” causing Robert Hume to declare that the “spread of critical opinion on *The Country Wife* is almost ludicrous, even ignoring those who are morally outraged” (*Development* 97). For example, Peggy Thompson reads *The Country Wife* as “a radically defiant celebration of natural desire” (113) but posits that the “major force behind these diverse interpretations is Wycherley’s ambivalent approach to the myth of a sexual fall” (100). Some critics, Hume declares, consider it an ideal farce chock full of buffoonery, while others claim it’s a tribute to honesty and sexual liberation, a satire on jealousy, a satire on female hypocrisy, a study of masculinity, a critique of sexual morality, or a dramatic representation of William Wycherley’s supposedly cynical view of humanity (see *Development* 98-99). I absolutely see it as full of buffoonery, and I see the pessimism that is present in every play Wycherley wrote, but to say that it’s it is a celebration rather than a satire, or whether Wycherley

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50 Dobrée doesn’t consider *The Country Wife* a comedy “in the ordinary sense. The clever, cynical dialogue, the scathing irony, the remorseless stripping of all grace from man, are too overpowering” (94).
has taken a “radically defiant” approach versus an “ambivalent approach” to a specific theme is the same as looking at only one tree in a large forest. Wycherley has touched on all of these themes at about the same scale.

According to Dobrée, not just The Country Wife, but all of Wycherley’s plays are “tinged with a deep pessimism, a fierce hatred” (a cynicism clearly present in many of the 1670s comedies) that “reveal[s] all his strange revulsions against the society in which he now lived as fully as any” (78, 80). Wycherley “presents a degraded and often disgusting view of man and society” agrees Hume (Development 103), and Kellye Corcoran finds the comedy very sadistic, particularly with the way Pinchwife mistreats his wife (549). Edward Burns, however, contends that the playwright “builds The Country Wife out of the contradictions and tensions in pastoral ideas, with a deepening apprehension of the unattainability of real escape. The play is at once more farcical and more despairing than anything that went before” (56). John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris feel that “the balance in Wycherley’s turbulent writing is typically through paradoxical assertions of perverse authority” (27), but they neglect to specify the “authority” being thwarted. That of the king and court? A demand for civility and decorum? Of a patriarchal society? Of the town over the country? That of master to servant?

Despite the vast array of conflicting opinions regarding Wycherley’s “purpose” in The Country Wife, it is indisputable that by mid-century playwrights have taken the discussion of having affairs into full-blown sexual encounters of the sort trumpeted by a “rather debauched, worldly” king who was “preoccupied with venereal delights” (Harris 94). We see “the unvarnished, crude desire of the women behind their virtuous facades, the stupidity of their husbands, the falsity and imperceptiveness of would-be wits” (Brown and Harris 79). What most
of us remember best about *The Country Wife* is the china scene\(^{51}\) where Horner—who declares that sexual intercourse is physically impossible for him (a claim verified by his physician, Dr. Quack)\(^{52}\)—clearly has sex with each of the three hypocritical, libidinous women who incessantly profess concern for their “honor” while contriving ways in which to have intercourse with the scoundrel; Horner also seduces Margery—the innocent, unsophisticated country wife. While we feel primarily contempt for the disingenuous “ladies,” our perspective of Horner—and most likely the perspectives of the contemporary audience, as well—is less clear. Do we regard him with disapproval and contempt for sleeping with other men’s wives? Or do we like him and admire his ingenious plan to play the eunuch? Was it all right for him to bed the libidinous married ladies, but not the innocent country wife? Perhaps Horner—like Charles II—is both majestic and debauched at the same time.

Another set of characters for whom we (and most likely the original audience, as well) have mixed feelings is the honorable Alithea and the admirable (although certainly not honorable) Harcourt. We may not even remember that this comedy has the requisite romance because, as Hume points out, the romantic plot is “a thin and rather flavourless version of a common Carolean romantic love story” that is included only “for necessary fullness and variety” (*Development* 101). Brown and Harris agree, saying that “Wycherley is not really interested in his young lovers” (94); indeed, they and most of the other on-stage depictions of the upper-classes have become stock characters who simply move the plot along. And if we don’t recall the love story characters, we certainly won’t remember the only maid in the play—Lucy—who

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\(^{51}\) This particular scene is variously called the “famous ‘china scene’” (Novak 63), the “notorious ‘china’ scene” (Langhans 11), the “famous ‘china’ and drinking scene” (Rosenthal 107), and the “deservedly famous china scene” (Markley 334).

\(^{52}\) As noted by Peter Ackroyd in *London, A Biography*, a seventeenth-century quack doctor was “part showman, part sorcerer and part physician” (199).
doesn’t appear on stage until the middle of act 3. Yet this servant character is indispensable to
the love story; we can’t recall her existence, much less her importance: this maid saves her
mistress from a disastrous marriage, is an integral part of the famous plot of Horner’s making,
and acts as the deus ex machina that resolves all the problems at the end of the play.

We also clearly remember that Horner has asked his friend, Dr. Quack, to spread the
word around town that as the result of “an English-French disease” (the pox he caught from a
French woman) and the disastrous “cure” provided by an “English-French chirurgeon” (93), he is
now (as rumor has it) a eunuch, safe to be left alone and unsupervised amongst the honorable
ladies of London. As soon as Horner gets permission from a husband who is enthusiastically
looking for someone to squire his wife around town without making him a cuckold, Horner tells
the (sexually aroused) woman that his castration is pure fiction. This works for him three times
before he gets together with Margery Pinchwife, whose jealous husband had earlier removed her
to the country to keep her from being prey to someone like Horner. We particularly remember
the churlish, violent Mr. Pinchwife who locks his young spouse in their room and warns her not
to get “within three strides of the window when I am gone, for I have a spy in the street” (132).
When Margery questions her husband whether the letter he’s dictating to her should begin with
“Sir” or “Dear Sir” he snaps: “Write as I bid you, or I will write whore with this penknife in your
face … and question it not, or I will spoil thy writing with this. I will stab out those eyes that
cause me mischief” (130). On one occasion Pinchwife threatens to kill both his wife and his
brother-in-law with his sword (140), and later he draws his sword on Horner when he realizes
that the “eunuch” has bedded his wife (152).

The very memorable Horner was able to seduce Margery only through the machinations
of the indispensable (yet entirely forgettable) maid who devised a plan so that the country wife
could experience the delight of lovemaking with someone besides her brutish husband. But is this really something a mere servant can accomplish? Would a maidservant really have enough knowledge or expertise to advise and control an unsophisticated country girl who has never experienced London life or courtier lovers? Brown and Harris posit that Lucy is a “realistic waiting-woman” (77), a claim reinforced by J. Jean Hecht’s seminal study, *The Domestic Servant Class in 18th-Century England*, in which he explains that the servant class “was composed of recruits from social levels as diverse as the gentry and the rural proletariat” and was, for many intelligent, gently bred women, “a means whereby improved social status could be attained” (19). It was not considered déclassé to be one of the higher-ranking servants. Lucy may, in fact, have been better educated and is depicted as infinitely more intelligent than any of the upper-class characters. The maid is resourceful, clever, confident, and perfectly comfortable speaking her mind to those whose stations in life are decidedly above her own. Lucy is also perceptive, quick-witted, and sensible compared to the upper-crust characters who do not behave in her rational and perceptive manner: Sparkish is an egocentric buffoon whose “dear friend” Harcourt assiduously steals his fiancée (97); Sir Jasper is a fool who, believing Horner’s fabrications, repeatedly asks the conman to “entertain” his wife; Mr. Pinchwife is bad-tempered, suspicious, and cruel to his wife Margery, who—despite being vulnerable and rather appealing—is totally clueless; and Lucy’s mistress Alithea (the only upper-class character who comes close to being laudable) has a misguided sense of obligation and a skewed perspective of matrimony.

Knowing that Harcourt, who loves Alithea, is a much better match for her mistress, Lucy’s challenge is, “like a Lacanian psychologist,” to persuade her employer to “recognize how her desires are the obverse of those she has been pronouncing. Her adroitness demonstrates her

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53 Rothstein and Kavenik go a bit further to call her a “rustic booby” (248), but David Gelineau claims that Margery’s “innocence is more an [“Eve-like”] ignorance” (287).
knowing command of utterance” (Lyons 22). The servant knows how to talk to her mistress in a way that she will understand and accept what the maid has to say ... eventually. Alithea has agreed to marry Sparkish simply because he is never jealous when other men flirt with her, and her greatest fear is that if she marries a possessive, mistrustful man, she might be forced to live in the country—safe from the evils and temptations of the city—like her sister-in-law, Margery. Lucy, a servant “who observes everything” (Arnold) and the only character who can see situations as they really are (particularly that Sparkish doesn’t become jealous only because he continually misconstrues the advances made to his fiancée as expressions of admiration for himself), must somehow convince Alithea that she is too worthy to waste herself on a buffoon. She tells her mistress: “Lord, Madam, what should you do with a fool to your husband? You intend to be honest, don’t you? Then that husbandly virtue, credulity, is thrown away upon you” (126). The maid approaches her typically sensible employer in a direct and logical manner. On the morning of the wedding, Lucy—who has repeatedly told her mistress that marrying Sparkish is a grave mistake—disgustedly states: “Well madam, now have I dressed you and set you out with so many ornaments and spent upon you ounces of essence and pulvillio, and all this for no other purpose but as people adorn and perfume a corpse for a stinking second-hand grave, such or as bad I think Master Sparkish’s bed” (125). Again, the maid doesn’t try to change her mistress’s mind with flattery, which is often how servants—think Philotis and Merryman (the fake Viscount)—persuade their employers to do something they’d rather not do. Lucy knows that Alithea would “make no use of her fortune, her blessing” should she follow through with her promise to marry the fool (119), and she knows that to convince her mistress, she must use logic and proof instead of flattery.

54 Powdered perfume.
It is clear that perspicacious servants (as Lyons puts it) are also realists. Lucy eventually gets her mistress to admit that she doesn’t love Sparkish, but Alithea explains that she hopes she will after they’ve been married awhile. The intelligent maid admonishes her mistress, explaining with much rationality: “Can there be a greater cheat or wrong done to a man than to give him your person without your heart? … The woman that marries to love better will be as much mistaken as the wencher that marries to live better. No madam, marrying to increase love is like gaming to become rich; alas, you only lose what little stock you had before” (126). What appears obvious to us (and presumably to the contemporary audience as well) is wasted on the upper-class character: Alithea ignores the maid’s words of wisdom, and Sparkish arrives with the parson (Harcourt in disguise so that the marriage is not legal) to perform the ceremony. When the perceptive Lucy recognizes the imposter, she does a quick turnabout and encourages her mistress to follow through with her promise to marry Sparkish: “I pray, madam, do not refuse this reverend divine the honor and satisfaction of marrying you, for I dare say, he has set his heart upon’t” (128). The less-astute mistress takes her maid’s advice and goes through with the ceremony conducted by a pretend parson, giving the maid time to create a plan to affect a legitimate marriage between Harcourt and Alithea—one in which she enlists Margery’s help. In the final act and scene—full of mistaken identity and confusion over who wrote letters to whom and whether a wedding between Alithea and Sparkish had, indeed, taken place—Lucy clears it all up, saying that she can “solve the riddle, who am the author of it” (151). The servant exhibits agency, foresight, and control while the upper-class characters—who should be in control of their own lives—flounder, unable to affect their desires without help from the help.

The conclusion of this comedy illustrates why scholars cannot reach a consensus regarding what the play is “about.” In the last act Mr. Pinchwife learns that his wife has been lying to him,
that she had somehow escaped from the room in which he locked her. He is (justly) convinced that she has slept with Horner. Lucy jumps in to help, assuring the jealous husband that she is “the unfortunate cause of all this confusion. Your wife is innocent, I only culpable, for I put her upon telling you all these lies concerning my mistress in order to the breaking off the match between Mr. Sparkish and her to make way for Mr. Harcourt. … I assure you, sir, she came not to Mr. Horner out of love” (152). But unlike the other characters, the inexperienced Margery doesn’t cooperate with the maid, and tells her husband that she does love Horner and knows for certain that he’s not a eunuch. The violent Pinchwife draws his sword, and Lucy steps forward to help, telling Horner that she can “fetch you off and her too, if she will but hold her tongue” (152). But Margery won’t cooperate with the maid and once again tells her husband: “I do love Mr. Horner with all my soul, and nobody shall say me nay” (152). Why can’t Lucy control naïve, honest Margery the way she manipulates the other characters? Is Wycherley—the cynical pessimist that he’s alleged to be—actually paying tribute to honesty and sexual liberation? The ambiguous ending makes determining Wycherley’s “central thematic concern” impossible (Hume, *Development* 97). Margery eventually realizes that, as a country wife, she can’t “be rid of my musty husband and do what I list” the way city wives can (154), and she lets the maid intervene. Lucy tells Pinchwife: “Indeed, she’s innocent, sir. I am her witness, and her end of coming out [of the closet in which her husband had locked her] was but to see her sister’s wedding, and what she has said to your face of her love to Mr. Horner was but the usual innocent revenge on a husband’s jealousy” (152). Lucy’s understanding of human nature and of the temperaments and dispositions of those she serves allows the clever and sensible maid to manipulate the various situations to her satisfaction. Although Margery reluctantly allows Lucy to intercede on her behalf, Alithea’s stubborn refusal to end her relationship with Sparkish forces
the maid to act on her own, trusting that the choices she makes and the advice she gives is beneficial to her employer. She is not inhibited in any way by structure of any kind—not social class, gender, or custom. Her agency is uninhibited, and her astute recognition of the situation—her knowledge—allows her to take control, particularly over those who have an obvious lack of self-control such as Margery and Mr. Pinchwife as well as those less-easily interpreted characters like Alithea, Harcourt, and Horner. The play’s remarkably uncertain, unresolved ending echoes the instability of social mores and the epidemic cynicism of ruling powers and class hierarchy during the 1670s, something we will see to an even greater extent in the next comedy in this study: George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode, Or, Sir Fopling Flutter*.

4.5 **Sir George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode, Or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676)**

In his *Defense of Sir Fopling Flutter*, John Dennis describes the characters in Etherege’s last play as

> a true Resemblance of the Persons both in court and Town, who liv’d at the Time when that Comedy was writ: For Rapin\(^55\) tells us with a great deal of Judgment, *That Comedy is as it ought to be, when an Audience is apt to imagine, that instead of being in the Pit and Boxes, they are in some Assembly of the Neighbourhood, or in some Family Meeting, and that we see nothing done in it, but what is done in the World.* (italics in orig.; 17)

Brown and Harris agree, complimenting Etherege’s “ability to bring contemporary life and manners on the stage” (43), while Harriet Hawkins claims that “the play allows us to look at the social spectacles that it mirrors and magnifies” (McMillin 594). Edward Burns pushes the degree

\(^{55}\) René Rapin, the seventeenth-century French Jesuit who wrote critical essays on Homer, Virgil, and Aristotle.
of realism one step further, saying that the “‘modish’ comedy of the early 1670s (often to be identified by the ‘mode’ or ‘fashion’ in its title) takes its response to the social moment seriously; … the perpetual motion of a society of individuals can gel into a pattern, can become readable to the audience, [and in] the 1670s this essentially literary space was realized by the plays as St James’s Park, and its adjacent ‘Mall’” (37). In act 3, for example, Dorimant takes Sir Fopling to the Mall to “accidentally” run into Mrs. Loveit, hoping to foist his unwanted mistress on the fop. Dorimant tells Fopling to “Walk on; we must not be seen together” (187), and the “rituals of theatre and everyday life become hard to distinguish: the role of the actor is to use movement and scene to capture the social performance that was ‘High Mall’” (Roberts 152). But so much more than the social life and libertine attitudes of the 1670s come to life as we experience these plays. Harriet Hawkins claims:

If we wish it to, a comedy like The Man of Mode may instruct—but not about moral crime and punishment. It may instruct us about its historical social scene, and about the comparable social scene we all know, about the masks people wear, and about the way people play the game of love. And its creator does explicitly instruct us. He instructs us to sit back and relish both the spectacle on the stage and the spectacle round about. (597)

Both Wycherley’s The Country Wife and Etherege’s The Man of Mode are spectacles. They were written and produced at the height of libertine sex comedies, when Rochester and friends were “asserting their freedom in a world filled with what they considered foolish rules—rules that ought not to apply to those who saw through the enchaining conventions of society” (Novak 59).

This is when “the comedy of manners” claims Nicoll, “came to its majority” (225). Unlike The Country Wife, however, libertine behavior in The Man of Mode extends far beyond the upper-
class characters; the orange-woman and shoemaker in the first act and scene—despite being of the “serving classes”—voice libertine philosophies. Laura Brown says that “their outspoken observations, and their unique relationship to their ‘betters’ distinguish the social world of The Man of Mode. … The opening scene thus introduces libertinism almost as the corollary of the rejection of class hierarchy advocated by the most radical revolutionary sects” (43). In this scene the orange-woman tells Dorimant about a judge who, upon being introduced to a beautiful, young, genteel woman, looked upon her lustfully and then kissed her “so heartily” (160). The “gentlemen of the long robe” she says, “have not been wanting by their good examples to countenance the crying sin o’the nation” (160). This opening scene “thus introduces libertinism almost as the corollary of the rejection of class hierarchy advocated by the most radical revolutionary sects” (L. Brown 43). Skepticism and sexual libertinism had reached new heights and affected many facets and levels of society that included people from the court, clergy, country, and city. Those of the servant classes also adopted libertine philosophies and were particularly well-informed and knowledgeable when it came to the libidinous natures and sex lives of their masters and mistresses.

In his chapter titled “What the Servants Know,” Paddy Lyons utilizes Etherege’s The Man of Mode to illustrate how in Restoration comedy, “it is taken for granted that servants generally can and do know” (13). Lyons uses the candlelit bedroom scene where Dorimant and Bellinda—still in a state of undress—have just been intimate. The moment their sexual activities are complete, Bellinda begins to worry about her reputation:

DORIMANT. What makes you tremble so?

BELLINDA. I have a thousand fears about me. Have I not been seen, think you?

DORIMANT. By nobody but myself and trusty Handy. (199)
This scene is dramatically enhanced by the presence of Dorimant’s trusted valet de chambre, who knows when his attendance is needed and when it is not. Handy comes and goes during the couple’s private conversation, quietly removing the soiled linen; he “is literally ‘behind the scenes’ for Dorimant, the necessary convenience to ensure Dorimant’s easy passage through society” (Holland 39). And as one who is very familiar with his master’s “addiction to new and novel conquest, he is equipped to recognize Bellinda’s fears as all too well-founded” (Lyons 12). “At the same time,” continues Holland, “Handy functions as a symbol, a reminder of the sordidness of Dorimant’s sexual athleticism” (39). When several of his friends arrive unexpectedly, Dorimant simply tells the servant to “direct her.” Handy’s “knowingness” as Lyons calls it, allows him to calmly procure a carriage for the anxious Bellinda and slip her unseen down the back stairs, “[n]either laughing at their folly, nor participating in their panic” (Holland 11). Nor does the servant comment upon the baseness of their coupling. Handy’s complete lack of surprise at Dorimant’s behavior with his latest lover, and the servant’s ability to “direct her” without guidance from his master, indicate that he not only knows the routine that must be followed to preserve the most recent conquest’s character but that he understands and, in his own way, supports the libertine régime of the 1670s.

Handy is a servant who “knows” on many levels. While he never indicates that his employer’s “ladies” are dissolute or comments upon his master’s licentious behavior, Pert (like Lucy in *The Country Wife*) constantly reminds her mistress that Dorimant is a cheat who has not kept his promises of fidelity. She tells Mrs. Loveit, “I’ll lay my life there’s not an article but he has broken: talked to the vizards i’the pit, waited upon the ladies from the boxes to their coaches, gone behind the scenes and fawned upon those little insignificant creatures, the players” (170). And Pert is correct; she knows Dorimant’s type as well as she knows her mistress. The maid
vehemently complains when Mrs. Loveit receives a note from the negligent Dorimant to announce his intention to visit after an absence of “two days without sending, writing, or coming near you, contrary to his oath and covenant!” Without a moment’s hesitation, Pert involves herself in her employer’s private affairs, demanding of her mistress: “Pray, what excuse does he make in his letter?” Her mistress replies: “He has had business” (170).

PERT. A modish man is always very busy when he is in pursuit of a new mistress.

MRS. LOVEIT. Some fop has bribed you to rail at him. He had business; I will believe it and will forgive him.

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PERT. I wish Mr. Dorimant would not make it his business to defame you. (170) Pert knows; she is fully aware that Dorimant has indeed been in pursuit of a new conquest, and when the cad arrives, the maid chides him for “the business that has taken you up these two days. How have I seen you laugh at men of business, and now to become a man of business yourself!” (172). Pert identifies what has really detained the lover, and whether her mistress wants to hear her or not, she is the voice of reality. The servant reveals a precise understanding of rakish behavior when she assures her employer that “Mr. Dorimant’s affects will quickly make you know your rival, ten to one let you see her ruined, her reputation exposed to the Town—a happiness none will envy her but yourself, madam” (171). Clearly Pert is also an expert in understanding her mistress: when Mrs. Loveit denies her love for the roué, Pert—knowing otherwise—retorts “I wish you did not” (187). As a character with both agency and determination, the pert maid attempts to interest her mistress in a man of mode—Sir Fopling Flutter—telling her that he is “as handsome a man as Mr. Dorimant, and as great a gallant” to which Mrs. Loveit replies: “Intolerable! Is’t not enough I submit to his impertinences, but must I
be plagued with yours, too?” (203). Servants in the comedies of this decade both understand and voice libertine viewpoints; their agency extends beyond their capacities to act independently or as a manager of the plot—to move it along as they see fit. They also know how their self-indulgent, rather debauched masters and mistresses act and react. When Dorimant runs into Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda in the park and he “respectfully” bows, Pert reminds the women: “He’s always over-mannerly when he has done a mischief” (187). And, indeed, he has done some mischief; he seduced and dumped first Mrs. Loveit, then Bellinda, and is now pursuing Harriet Woodville, the woman in the vizard he met at the play—the one so beautiful that she was kissed by a judge.

Unlike the essential role Pert holds in this play, Sir Fopling Flutter doesn’t appear on stage until the middle of the third act, and this title character does nothing to further the plot; if his part were eliminated, all we would lose are some jokes made at his expense and a catchy title. Most scholarly focus is on Dorimant, “a Restoration Don Juan and almost too intense a personality to be the hero of a comedy” (Hawkins 593), who “keeps Bellinda on the hook and his friend Bellair’s Emilia in his eye, even as he traipses to the country after Harriet” (Rothstein and Kavenik 170). Allardyce Nicoll raves: “How fine is Dorimant! He is the gentleman par excellence—but how heartless!” (224); L.C. Knights, however—after discussing at length Dorimant’s “physical stamina”—claims that his intrigues are of no more human significance than those of a barn-yard cock” (131). David Roberts explains that The Man of Mode was such a success because it “played out the dreams of the royal dynasty that so loved it. Like Charles II himself, Dorimant seeks to shuffle off the past in order to achieve his ultimate settlement; striving to prove his ability to prevail over French competition [i.e., Sir Fopling with his French attire and affectations], as he asserts himself as the real man of mode, the ultimate Englishman”
That almost all scholarly attention has focused on Dorimant (who reminds me a bit of Horner) is unfortunate because other characters—especially one of the maids—are also worthy of study.

Harriet’s maid, Busy, is even more essential to the advancement of the plot and more “knowing” than Pert in The Man of Mode, Lucy in The Country Wife, and even Philotis in The Amorous Widow. Harriet, who lives in Hampshire and is betrothed to a man she “might be brought to endure” (175), has conned her mother into bringing her to town despite Lady Woodville’s apprehensions that “[l]ewdness is the business” of the city (191). Busy knows her mistress is infatuated with Dorimant (whom she met, while masked, at the theatre), but Harriet insists that the only thing she loves is “this dear Town, to that degree I can scarce endure the country in landscapes and in hangings” (176). Busy implores Harriet to stay away from Dorimant who, she warns, will be her undoing, but knowing her mistress as well as she does, all the maid can say is: “I wish you do not design your own ruin!” (175). In the final act, Harriet—still claiming she has no interest in Dorimant—causes Busy to quip: “She thinks of nothing else, I am sure,” and Harriet chastises her maid, saying: “Thy tongue is as impertinent as thy fingers” (210). But then the servant begins singing a song Dorimant had written, knowing that a verse or two will appease her mistress. Busy—continuing to make her own free choices and undaunted when it comes to voicing her opinions—changes her mind about Dorimant when the rake arrives, and she sees how lovingly he looks at her mistress; she tells Harriet: “Faith, madam, now I perceive the gentleman loves you, too, e’en let him know your mind and torment yourselves no longer. … Think, if you lose this, you may never have another opportunity.” Harriet follows the servant’s advice and tells her mother (who has forbidden her to see Dorimant) that she “never will marry any other man” (212).
This interdependence between masters and servants led Paddy Lyons (the only scholar to devote an entire chapter to servant characters since Michael Porter’s 1961 dissertation) to develop four “Rules Concerning Servants in Restoration Drama.” The first is that whenever “masters or mistresses converse with their servants, they do so with a presumption of mutual equality and shared humanity” (13). We see this in The Man of Mode whenever Busy or Pert talk with their mistresses, and we also see it on occasion in the taciturn Handy:

DORIMANT. Call a footman.

HANDY. None of ‘em are come yet.

DORIMANT. Dogs! Will the ever lie snoring abed till noon?

HANDY. ‘Tis all one, sir: if they’re up, you indulge ‘em so, they’re ever poaching after whores all the morning.

DORIMANT. Take notice henceforward who’s wanting in his duty; the next clap he gets, he shall rot for an example. (157)

Dorimant later asks his servant whether the coach has arrived, and Handy replies, “You did not bid me send for it” (166). Handy, in his quiet way, puts his employer in his place, and Dorimant, in his blasé fashion, lets the servant do so. True to her name, Pert is also quite impertinent with Dorimant. When he is surprised that both Bellinda and Mrs. Loveit reproach him for his cavalier attitude toward Pert’s mistress, the servant heatedly tells him: “All women will hate you for my lady’s sake!” (208). Even the orange woman is flippant with Dorimant when she comments on his remarks regarding the ladies he seduces: “I never knew you commend anything. Lord, would the ladies had heard you talk of ‘em as I have done.” She also gleefully tells him that Harriet’s mother “thinks you an arrant devil: should she see you, on my conscience she would look if you
had not a cloven foot” (158). How someone like the lower-class orange woman understands human nature while the upper-class Dorimant does not is pointed out repeatedly in this comedy.

That “egalitarianism prevails in master-servant discourse,” which we see with the orange-women and the servants, is not surprising in an era when Hobbesian thought was so pervasive, although Lyons contends that “once this egalitarianism of the theatre is relocated offstage, as a feature of casual conversation, it immediately sounds saucy and outrageous” (16). Rothstein and Kavenik also appear to limit egalitarianism to the stage when they say that the “rule of thumb in Carolean Comedy” is that a character can exercise control “only over those who assume or allege themselves to be at least her or his equal. Ideals of natural merit, of freedom, and of fair dueling stand behind the rule” (95). So how do we interpret maidservant characters such as Pert (who is chastised only once by Mrs. Loveit for her “impertinence” when voicing her frequently shared opinions) and Busy (who regularly chimes in with digs at Dorimant and directs a few at her mistress) even though they are reprimanded for insubordination? Playwrights not only tended to equalize stage servants and upper-class characters through discourse, but with asides and plot devices that show the servants as correct in their assumptions and observations. Although upper-class characters may chastise their employees on occasion, it is more of a way to save face than to put them in their place.

Since contemporary critics claimed that *The Man of Mode* was a realistic impression of 1670s society, perspicacious servants—who clearly possess both individual power and control—were most certainly included in that evaluation. In his seminal study titled *The Domestic Servant Class in 18th Century England*, J. Jean Hecht notes “the independent attitude of the servant class” (71) and explains that the “friction between master and servant stemmed from a fundamental conflict. The master sought to impose the extensive control and exact the perfect
allegiance to which in theory he was entitled; the servant, on the other hand, sought to preserve an independence that accorded ill with what was expected of him” (77). Hecht cites several causes for the escalating discord but claims that “most important was the increasingly dynamic character that English society assumed during this period. As the expansion of commerce and industry raised more and more men in [sic] the economic and social scale, the impulse to rise became widely diffused. Few domestics remained untouched by it”; conditions “encouraged servants to assert themselves, and they did so in an aggressive fashion. Even when allowance is made for the inevitable exaggeration, the barrage of criticism directed at them by employers leaves the impression that as a group[,] servants were highly insubordinate and very far from identifying their interests with those of their masters” (77, 78). It’s clear that those of the serving classes and those of the upper classes have the same Hobbesian notions of individualism. Hecht’s concept about servants’ attitudes runs parallel to the way in which Rothstein and Kavenik see Dorimant: a character who “whether openly or not, proclaims his freedom from dependence on the wills of others and from all relations except those into which he voluntarily enters with a view to his own interest; he sees himself as sole proprietor of his own person and capacities” (13). Bruce considers Dorimant “the Hobbesian wolf-man” who (80), relying only on his own abilities, “conforms to the type of Natural Man described in Hobbes’s Leviathan: presocial Man of ‘the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall’” (124). In most Restoration comedies, however, masters and mistresses rely on their servants’ abilities much more than they rely on their own.

Etherege’s masterful portrayals of beautiful heiresses and libertine men (with whom he typically associated), as well as the orange-woman, shoemaker, and servants, make The Man of
Mode a realistic depiction of London in the 1670s and illustrate the skeptical humor and derisive mocking typical of this period. Etherege “was the right man in the right place at the right time,” claims Burns, whose objective was “to capture the moment, to relocate comedy’s claim to the real in a fluid presentation of ‘nature’” (46). Particularly interesting in these plays, however, is the alteration in the hegemony of the societies portrayed: servants promptly take control of consistent disorder and chaos, they are not portrayed as skeptics (like Diego in The Adventures of Five Hours), and they are set apart from most other characters as having the cognitive ability to see reason and truth, something sadly lacking in their employers in this increasingly murky social milieu. Servants appear more confident; they act as a voice of reality and serve to maintain the realism of the era, making the comedies believable.

The Man of Mode, Etherege’s last play, marks a turning point in the comic drama of the Carolean period. While the sex comedies of the 1670s came to a rather abrupt end, the target of realistically capturing the moment continues into the next decade when the focus turns decidedly political. Frances Kavenik claims that the restoration of Charles II “began in celebration and ended in crisis,” with all of the social upsets and political issues “played out in the drama of the time” (26). Charles’s lack of self-control, irresponsibility toward his subjects, and his impotence in leading the nation has as decided an effect in the 1680s as it did in the 1670s, and the cynicism of the decade would continue well into the next.
5 THE UNEASY EIGHTIES

5.1 Why Uneasy?

During the 1660s, comedies reflected a joyful acknowledgment and celebration of authority as well as a certain knowledge of where to place one’s loyalty. In the boisterous sex comedies of the 1670s—when authority figure and rake were frequently one in the same—a skepticism accompanies the often licentious action taking place on stage. Charles’s degenerate behavior and apparent lack of interest in governing for the benefit of his subjects had gradually weakened their loyalty and caused the atmosphere of celebration to deteriorate into one of cynicism. In the early 1680s, that cynicism is joined by an uneasiness triggered by a lack of respect for authority, which plays out in the comedies of this decade. Upper-class characters appear to lose their momentum while, incongruously, servants exhibit significantly more agency now than at any other point in Restoration comedy. This change in dynamics, however, didn’t redirect the mode of comedy, but rather resulted in comedies not following a specific plot formula at all. One popular new play (and there were very, very few) praised moral behavior (*Sir Courtly Nice*) while another (*The London Cuckolds*) was considered one of the most licentious of the Restoration period. Acts of betrayal and moral chaos abound in one, while innocence and virtue are predominant in the other. There is no clear-cut right and wrong, good or bad, true or false; admirable and contemptible behavior coalesce into an uneasy decade both on stage and off.

Just as Samuel Pepys’s diary is enlightening regarding the theatre-going crowd of the 1660s, John Evelyn’s journal is indispensable for understanding the political events that thoroughly changed theatrical productions of the 1680s—events that began in the last two years of the
previous decade. For 15 November 1678, Evelyn wrote that he had never seen “the nation in more apprehension and consternation” than following Titus Oates’s astonishing “revelations” about a Popish Plot to assassinate the king so that his Catholic brother, James, could assume the throne. Two months later, Charles II dissolved parliament, “which had sat ever since the Restoration,” because of the members’ reactions to the events surrounding and persons incriminated in Oates’s fictitious plot (25 January 1679). In a country that had not seen such a wave of anti-Catholic hysteria since the early 1640s—a situation that ended with civil war and the execution of Charles I—the anti-Catholic hysteria following Oates’s allegations of a Popish Plot caused “frequent local outbreaks of panic that Catholics were about to murder and pillage the community … [even though] Catholics almost certainly made up no more than 5 percent of the population” (Coward 314, 315). Barry Coward describes the gravity of the situation:

Panic was greatest and lasted longest in London where fear of another fire was endemic. Everywhere the authorities searched the houses of known Catholics for arms, and called the militia out. In London chains were put across the major streets and trained bands kept on the alert day and night. The panic was reflected in parliament, where various committees heard more witnesses and added more allegations and names to the already long list of Catholic “crimes” and “conspirators.” (327)

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56 Robert Hume explains that because “there is no sharp break in continuity, one may easily underestimate the drastic changes in drama and the theatrical climate during the eighties [that] is apparent only when the plays of 1678 are set against those of 1688” (Development 376).

57 In the autumn of 1678 Titus Oates made his allegations of a Popish Plot: the Catholic Church had created a plan to have their secret militia assassinate Charles II, burn London to the ground (again), and then 20,000 Papists would rise to cut the throats of 100,000 Protestants. During his interminable meetings before the Privy Council, Oates revealed a vibrant imagination “that must have been the envy of many playwrights” (Roberts 12). Even then there was an association between Oates’s tale and the theatre: An anonymous verse broadside printed in 1679 proclaimed him the “Wise Director [who] shew’d his prudent art, / On such a Stage so well to act his part” (R. White n. pag.).
During the last two years of the 1670s and the first few of the 1680s, these fears dominated the lives of all Londoners. By 1683 the furor caused by the fabricated Popish Plot, wrote John Evelyn, “which had hitherto made such a noise, began now sensibly to dwindle, through the folly, knavery, impudence, and giddiness of Oates” (18 June 1683). Evelyn wrote further that Oates was “such a hypocrite, that had so deeply prevaricated … [that] such a man’s testimony should not be taken against the life of a dog” (6 December 1680).

Although governmental and religious issues overwhelmingly dominated the nation’s anxieties, Evelyn’s diary has several entries that express his (and therefore, presumably, many others’) discontent with the king for allowing the Duchess of Portsmouth to waste taxpayers’ money on her extravagant palace living quarters, which she had “twice or thrice pulled down and rebuilt to satisfy her prodigal and expensive pleasures.” He describes the lavish apartment—“beyond anything I had ever beheld”—and “went contented home to my poor, but quiet villa” wondering: “What contentment can there be in the riches and splendor of this world, purchased with vice and dishonor?” (4 October 1683). Evelyn’s opinion of the king is clearly evident in his entry for 25 January 1685, shortly before Charles II died: “I saw this evening such a scene of profuse gaming, and the King in the midst of his three concubines, as I have never before seen—luxurious dallying and profaneness.” He returns to this scene in his lengthy description of Charles’s death and the events that followed in his entry for 4 February 1685:

He would doubtless have been an excellent prince, had he been less addicted to women, who made him uneasy, and always in want to supply their immeasurable profusion, to the detriment of many. … I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming, and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening), which this day se’nnight I witness of, the King
sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland, and Mazarin, etc., a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, while about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2,000 in gold before them; upon which two gentlemen, who were with me, made reflections with astonishment. Six days after [when Charles died], was all in the dust.

With the death of Charles II came the coronation of his brother, James II, and the realization of fears about a Catholic ruling England. Evelyn noted: “the King begins his reign with great expectations, and hopes of much reformation as to the late vices and profaneness of both Court and country” (23 April 1685), but to his grief, the following month he “saw the new pulpit set up in the Popish Oratory at Whitehall for the Lent preaching, mass being publicly said, and the Romanists swarming at court with their greater confidence than had ever been seen in England since the Reformation” (5 March 1685).

During the 1680s the people of England were so focused on religion and politics that art and literature had no choice but to follow suit, and the combination of secular and ecclesiastical circumstances conspired to bring about a transformation in the theatre in response to the highly charged disputes that shook the country to its core. When the Licensing Act of 1664 was inadvertently allowed to lapse in 1679, religious tracts, anti-papist handbills, and political propaganda ran unchecked, pushing aside any desire for comedy and changing both what appeared on stage and the way the theatres operated. Sex comedies gave way to tragedies and political dramas that more suited public interest, causing a defining moment in Restoration drama and the start of a disquiet that would all but ruin the theatre.
With this shift to politically themed productions came vehement disruptions between members of the audience, and the two theatres were often closed by authorities for producing seditious content. In December of 1680 “both houses had plays banned because of their political complexion, and … by the second half of the season (February 1681 and later) the receipts at Drury Lane had fallen off so drastically that the players ceased acting” (Van Lennep 289). Hume declares that “extrinsic factors, especially the end of playhouse competition, help[ed] cause rapid shifts in play fashions, followed by stagnation” (Development 340). It was not, however, the end of competition between theatrical companies that caused an end to the dramatic heyday of the 1670s, but a combination of political and religious circumstances that brought about the sea change. Rothstein and Kavenik note that “during the anti-Catholic excitements, a good theatregoer was hard to find” (242), and in her prologue to Feign’d Curtezans, Or, A Night’s Intrigue (1679)—a comedy that folded after the first night—Aphra Behn blames “this cursed plotting Age” for emptying the theatres. She continues in this vein in her epilogue: “So hard the times are, and so thin the Town, / Though but one Playhouse, that must too lie down” (n. pag.). This preoccupation with religion and politics became the impetus for drama of a different sort; theatricality now took the form of pope-burning processions, a “pageantry [that] served a triple function: a satire on the Catholic faith; a narration of the Popish Plot, with an exposition of the sort of things one could expect if popery were ever to reign in England again; and a condemnation of all those who were hostile to the [W]higs as popishly affected” (Harris 103).

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58 When the Licensing Act of 1662 expired in 1679, and printed materials were (temporarily; the act was renewed in 1685) not censored, the plethora of lengthy and elaborate political tracts in the form of ballads, broadsides, sermons, poems, and verse satires were often reduced to inflammatory propaganda concerning the tyranny of Catholicism and the dissolute court of Charles II (see Harris 94-96).
Figure 5.1 The Solemn Mock Procession of the Pope. Engraving by Francis Barlow currently housed in the British Museum

“An Account of the Burning of the Pope at Temple-Bar in London” (1680) describes this obsession with the processions; the anonymous author states: “Never were the Balconies, Windows, and Houses more filled, nor the Streets more thronged with multitudes of People, all expressing their Abhorrence of Popery with continual Shouts and Acclamations, so that in the whole progress of their procession, by a modest computation it is judged there could not be less than Two Hundred Thousand Spectators” (n. pag.). And like the previous decade when poems were written about the debauched king, there were poems written for this situation as well. One begins: “What Pageant’s this that Marches thus in State? / Three Images! the Worlds Triumvirate; / Three Privy-Counsellors, Plotters of Evil, / A POPE, a Jesuit-Cardinal, and a Devil” (“Poem on the Burning”).
The turn of the decade brought additional processions and the accompanying literature: “A Dialogue upon the Burning of the Pope and Presbyter” (1681) concludes with a declaration to the pope and his followers that they “shall eternally lament your Idolatry and Witch-crafts, your Cheats and Delusions, your Profaness and Blasphemies, your Popgeries and Fooleries”; and an admonishment in “The Procession: Or, The Burning of the Pope In Effigie, in Smithfield-Rounds” (1681) warns “his Holiness to keep on the other side of the Herring-pool, lest if he fall into the hands of those that burnt him in Effigies, they serve him the same sauce, and turn it into a real Tragedy. For English-men that love their King, dare still cross Rome’s dire Plots, and maugre all her Ill” (n. pag.). Several years before pope-burning processions began in earnest, Andrew Marvell had written An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England (1677) which begins: “There has now for diverse Years a design been carried on, to change the Lawfull Government of England into an Absolute Tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant Religion into down-right Popery” (3). The people’s concern was justifiable. The fact that Louis XIV—a devout Catholic who was in the process of zealously persecuting Protestant Huguenots—was Charles’s first cousin, and since the Duchess of Portsmouth (also Catholic), was still Charles II’s main squeeze, many English men and women felt their Protestant king might have Catholic tendencies. According to Barry Coward, author of The Stuart Age: England 1603-1714, “the extent of the mistrust of Charles and the court felt by many at this stage should not be underestimated. … What, however, caused most distrust of the crown at this stage was Charles’s continued attachment to the French alliance” (323). The (Not-

59 An estimated 30,000 Huguenots fled to London and surrounding municipalities during the 1680s to escape persecution in France (see Inwood 273). When Louis XIV failed in convincing most of his Protestant subjects to convert to Catholicism, he destroyed their churches and schools, and instituted the “Dragonnades” policy whereby soldiers (particularly those who were ill-mannered and poorly-behaved) were quartered in Protestant households. These Dragoons had implicit permission to use any available means to force Huguenots either to convert to the state religion or to leave France.
So-‐ Secret Treaty of Dover (1670) between Charles II and Louis XIV—in which warships, soldiers, and a yearly pension were exchanged for Charles’s promise to convert to Roman Catholicism—would not have been forgotten by the king’s subjects. In The History of England During the Reigns of the Royal House of Stuart (1730), John Oldmixon describes how Charles II “prostituted” himself by being a Pensioner to France, and advanced the Power of that Monarch, to the endangering of the Liberties of Europe. That he imbroil’d his own Subjects in intestine Feuds; and did so vitiate all publick Offices, both sacred, civil and military, with Bribery and Corruption, as it will be hard to reform them. That he was ungrateful to the Nation for their Loyalty, and the incredible Sums which they pour’d upon him. That he lessen’d the Reputation and Strength of the Kingdom, overturn’d the Laws, and invaded the Properties of his Subjects. (693)

After several very expensive and ill-advised wars with France and Holland, “the Crown’s chronic financial troubles [not only] affected the quality of court life” and therefore that of the theatre-going crowds (Bucholz and Ward 152), but the king’s “general credibility was nil” with both Parliament and the English populace (Kenyon 228). It is completely understandable that the overwhelming issues of the 1680s would take attention away from the pleasant things in life, like going to the playhouse in the afternoon to escape the pressing fears of Papists slitting Protestant throats and burning London to the ground. With Londoners’ concerns focused on political-religious issues, comedies were rapidly replaced with political drama that could better deal with anxiety over the Popish Plot, Test Acts, and Exclusion Bills. According to Jessica Munns, the “images of royalty that emerge on stage as a result of this long period of crisis and debate are not merely of monarchs too fond of women, madly tyrannical or weak, but rather of monarchs who
are always themselves part of larger systems that they imperfectly understand or control” (122). The “torturous duplicity of Charles II” with his “evasions and empty suavities” generated the distrust of both Parliament and the general population (Kenyon 240, 242), and his Catholic connections—causing questions of succession—led to the development of party politics. These are the issues that caused changes in London’s theatre world, not, as Hume posits, the lack of competition between theatre companies.

As political and religious issues gained momentum in the late 1670s, playwrights experienced one failure after another even with comedies we now consider exemplary. Harold Langbaine posits that John Dryden’s The Kind Keeper, Or, Mr. Limberham (1677) was the poet’s best comedy, yet it was staged only twice: at Drury Lane in July 1677 and Dorset Gardens in March 1678. Thomas Otway’s wonderful Friendship in Fashion (1678) and Aphra Behn’s Sir Patient Fancy (1678) both folded after the first night. Behn was hit especially hard during the 1680s when only The Rover, Part II was staged more than once.60 Her other comedies: The False Count, Or, A New Way to Play an Old Game (1681); The Roundheads, Or, The Good Old Cause (1681); The City Heiress, Or, Sir Timothy Treatall (1682);61 and Like Father, Like Son, Or, The Mistaken Brothers (1682) all folded after the first night. Other playwrights did equally poorly: John Crowne’s The City Politics (1683), Thomas Durfey’s Sir Barnaby Whigg, Or, No Wit Like a Woman’s (1681) and A Commonwealth of Women (1685); John Lacy’s Sir Hercules Buffoon, Or, The Poetical Squire (1684); Thomas Otway’s The Atheist, Or, The Second Part of the Soldier’s Fortune (1683); Edward Ravenscroft’s Dame Dobson, Or, The Cunning Woman

60 In January and April 1681 at Dorset Garden.
61 Edward Burns contends this was Behn’s best play that, unfortunately, ran for only one night and is rarely included in today’s anthologies (137).
Thomas Shadwell’s *The Lancashire Witches* 62 (1681); and Nahum Tate’s farce, 63 *Cuckolds-Haven, Or, An Alderman No Conjurer* (1685) also closed after the first night, some never to be staged again. Tate’s other farce written during this decade, *A Duke and No Duke*, was very popular after 1693 and throughout the eighteenth century, but could not draw an audience in the 1680s; it was staged on single afternoons in August, November, and December of 1684.

Thomas Southerne’s *The Disappointment, Or, The Mother in Fashion* managed a second performance in January 1685, almost a year after its premier in April 1684; only Durfey’s *The Royalist* (1682) managed to last three nights in a row (January 23, 24, 25) and was staged again for one afternoon on May 31st of the same year. Since new plays weren’t succeeding in the final years of Carolean comedies—no matter how great we consider them today—many of the 1660s plays that were deemed “sure things,” such as *The Adventures of Five Hours* and *The Committee*, dominated the repertory.

The first year of the new decade brought the production of nine new tragedies but only two new comedies—both quite vehemently anti-Catholic. 64 Dryden’s tragi-comedy 65 *The Spanish Friar, Or, The Double Discovery* was staged irregularly for several years (November 1680, March 1681, November 1684, December 1686, February 1687, and May 1689) before taking off in the first half of the eighteenth century with more than 300 performances by mid-

62 At the end of act 2 the witches “cannibalize babies and ‘kiss the Devil’s Arse’” claim Rothstein and Kavenik, “behavior associated not only with witches but, more significantly, with Irish Papists” (251), demonstrating that even comedies with religious content failed.

63 James Sutherland claims it is significant that “a number of actor-authors, who must have been thoroughly familiar with the tastes of the contemporary audience, chose to write farces or farcical comedies. Thomas Betterton, Cave Underhill, Thomas Jevon, William Mountfort, Thomas Doggett, and George Powell all produced plays of this type” (132).

64 Managers played it safe with revivals of tried and true favorites. Dominating the repertory for “the last seven seasons of Carolean comedy, as in the first few seasons, [were] ‘old,’ pre-War plays, foreign [Spanish and French adaptations] comedy (like *The Adventures of Five Hours* and Behn’s *The False Count*), and political plays (like *The Committee* and Crowne’s *City Politiques*)” (Rothstein and Kavenik 241).

65 This term should be used loosely, as the supposedly comic “Spanish friar” plot is as wretched as the actual tragic plot—that of the “double discovery” concerning legitimate rule.
The Spanish Fryar deals with questions of legitimate rule and attacks the Catholic church in general and Jesuits in particular, who were “hated and distrusted by most English Catholics as much as by the Protestants” (Kenyon 228-29). During what Susan Owen calls the “Tory Reaction period of 1681-82,” Puritans and Whigs were satirized by playwrights desperate to lure audiences back to the theatre (161), but the “flood of political drama” with which the decade began “is succeeded by the virtual cessation of playwriting; … the first three years of the decade average twelve new plays a year,” dropping to only four a year until the end of the decade (Hume, Development 340). For these reasons there are only two plays between 1680 and 1685 that meet my “immediate smash hit, long in the repertory” criteria: The London Cuckolds, Edward Ravenscroft’s racy city comedy and John Crowne’s chaste Sir Courtly Nice, Or, It Cannot Be, both of which were staged regularly for more than a century. The latter was written at the request of Charles II, who suggested Crowne adapt the comedy from its Spanish source, Augustín Moreto’s No puede ser (Cannot Be). This play, according to Rothstein and Kavenik, “in fact qualifies as the last Carolean comedy, for the king died while it was in rehearsal” (243). I find it interesting that the only two successful comedies of the 1680s fall at opposite ends of both the decorum and political spectrums: The London Cuckolds is a raucous sex comedy considered by some scholars to be a Tory reactionary play that satirizes Puritans and Whigs, while Sir Courtly Nice is comedy far removed from the immoral London Cuckolds. The epilogue pronounces Sir Courtly Nice a comedy that “throws all that lewdness down, / For

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66 Behn’s The Feign’d Curtizans (1679) “sets the tone for a new wave of political comedies which employ methods and modes reminiscent of 1660s comedy to attack the Whigs” (Owen 160). Other Tory-propaganda plays include Thomas Otway’s The Souldier’s Fortune (1680), Thomas Durfey’s Sir Barnaby Whigg (1681) and The Royalist (1682), and Behn’s The False Count (1681), The Roundheads (1681), The Rover, Part 2 (1681), and The City Heiress (1682).

67 Aparna Dharwadker is an exception; she finds (and I agree) The London Cuckolds to be “oddly apolitical for its date,” having “a plot formula devised to contain a more unmanageable threat—the growing power of capital and its quest for autonomy in a society ideologically recommitted to the values of inherited rank and wealth” (151).
Virtuous Liberty is Pleas’d alone: / Promotes the Stage to’ th’ ends at first design’d / As well to profit, as delight the Mind,” and yet the Tory/Catholic versus Whig/Presbyterian controversy dominates the entire lower plot.68 I’ve also included Aphra Behn’s *The Emperor of the Moon* in this chapter—even though it doesn’t conform to the five-act play criteria and was produced in 1688—for several reasons that will be explained during the discussion of this fabulous farce.

### 5.2 Edward Ravenscroft’s *The London Cuckolds* (1681)

Although *The London Cuckolds* is often considered a political comedy, I see only very slight elements of the Tory reactionary drama that flourished in the early 1680s. Three unrepentantly adulterous wives (of a slightly higher social rank than their middle-class—but prosperous—husbands) take gentlemen lovers, while the three jilted husbands (presumably Whigs, since they work in London) have no idea they’re being cuckolded. The husbands were played by famous buffoons: Cave Underhill, James Nokes, and Anthony Leigh, so we are clearly meant to regard these men as comical fools. I find the political implications negligible (like Dharwadker) but also ambiguous; the general impression is one of instability. Tension is palpable throughout the comedy, keeping the audience on edge as unfaithful wives and gentlemen lovers must be ready to run (clothed or not) when husbands return home unexpectedly, and servant characters—whose agency is particularly evident in this comedy—must be on their toes and ready to intervene.

Scholars have overlooked both the tension present in *The London Cuckolds* and (needless to say) the servant characters to focus on either the farcical aspects of the play or its political

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68 Allardyce Nicoll claims that *Sir Courly Nice* is as political as Crowne’s *City Politiques* (1683), and that when Crowne returned to writing comedies (after ten years of authoring only heroic tragedies) “it was to present purely political plays” (258-59).
connotations. Judith Milhous claims that Ravenscroft “was laughing at the misguided attempts of City business men [Whigs] to display themselves like aristocrats and courtiers. Their aspirations lead them to make inappropriate marriages, and their wives’ response is to cuckold them with genuine members of the class they cannot successfully emulate” (259). Adolphus Ward explains that the political content is tenuous because the hostilities “between Cavaliers and Puritans, Tories and Whigs, and courtiers and merchants are simply undeveloped … [and] political or social themes are overshadowed by the vaudeville atmosphere” (88). Robert Hume doesn’t consider *The London Cuckolds* politically significant at all, calling it “amusing, pleasant, and frivolous … rollicking good fun with no ulterior point whatsoever” (*Development* 354, 355). His intriguing trailer-like overview, however, indicates the tension that accompanies the farcical disorder of the play:

> Three old cits have married young wives, and each is convinced that [to lessen the chance becoming a cuckold] he has chosen wisely. Wiseacre has opted for a foolish country girl; Doodle for a witty woman; Dashwell for a pious one. Add Mssrs. Ramble, Townly, and Loveday, two maids, one guardian aunt, darkness, a loaded chamberpot, etc.—and we have wild confusion, concluding with three triumphant cuckoldings. The whole play is sheer farce. (*Development* 354)

Rothstein and Kavenik also deem *The London Cuckolds* a “great tour de farce” (248) with the “senility of empty giggles” (3). Their only political reference is to “sexual politics” (249), and they claim that the “joke of the play is that one will become a London cuckold no matter whether one weds ‘a mere Infant in her intellects,’ ‘a woman with wit,’ or a ‘Church zealot’” (248). Edward Burns sees the comedy as an “unrespectable but inoffensive farce … a play derivative in everything but its hilarious energy and solid good nature” (186).
Other twentieth-century scholars and contemporary critics are disparaging in their reviews of the comedy: Allardyce Nicoll derides *The London Cuckolds* as “a notorious piece, with a perfectly immoral plot, descending, because of its workmanship, to utter vulgarity” (243); Richard Steele called it a “heap of vice and absurdity” with which, however, audiences “were extremely well diverted” (*Tatler* No. 8); and Colley Cibber considers it “the most rank Play that ever succeeded” (267). Although there is little consensus regarding the nature of this play, what is not debatable is the comedy’s long production history and its enduring popularity. In a review she wrote for a twentieth-century production of the play, Milhous calls it “a raucous sex-farce which held the stage into the 1750s" and was revived at the Royal Court, London, in 1979” (258). The Carnegie Mellon School of Drama also staged *The London Cuckolds* in 2009 without (unsurprisingly) any political references at all:

*Cuckolds* really is a raunchy show … this 17th-century story shows three wives getting nookie from three different suitors—and, in at least one case, the wrong suitor. When they’re not making up ridiculous stories to cover their trails, *Cuckolds*’ characters are leaping in and out of bed like acrobats on a trampoline; just when the coast looks clear, an oblivious husband blusters into the bedroom, and a hapless lover must collect his scattered clothes and sneak out. (Theatre)

Three hundred years after it first hit the stage, *The London Cuckolds* still has the vitality to elicit reviews that entice audiences to enjoy the farcical antics of impotent husbands, hapless would-be lovers, and cheating wives—all of whom are directed by the servants in the play.

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69 *The London Cuckolds* was staged annually until 1751 on Lord Mayor’s Day to celebrate the newly appointed Lord Mayor, a celebration that includes a carnivalesque street parade that, according to the Lord Mayor’s Show website, is a “procession unlike any other in the world; last year [2017] there were over 7000 participants, 20 bands, 150 horses, hundreds of other carriages, carts, coaches and other vehicles including vintage cars, steam buses, tanks, tractors, ambulances, fire engines, unicycles, steamrollers, giant robots, helicopters, ships, penny farthings, beds and bathtubs” ([https://lordmayorsshow.london/day/](https://lordmayorsshow.london/day/)). There are events, exhibitions, and family activities throughout the day, culminating in an extravagant firework display over the Thames.
The degree of agency exhibited by each of the three servants (two maids and a man-servant) is rather astounding. Engine and Jane, waiting-women to Arabella (wife of a rich London aldermen) and Eugenia (wife of a successful city attorney), are exceptionally involved in procuring for their mistresses someone besides their husbands with whom to have sexual relations. Once Arabella’s husband has left on a business trip in act 1, she and her maid come up with a plan that allows her “to feast in his absence upon lustier fare than a dull City husband, as insipid and ill relisht as a Guild hall-dish on a Lord Mayor’s day.” The servant encourages her mistress’s desire to have an illicit fling:

ENGINE. A little variety, Madam, wou’d be pleasant; always to feed upon Alderman’s flesh is enough to cloy your stomach.

ARABELLA. He’s so sparing on’t it can never surfeit me.

ENGINE. Faith, Madam, they that have spare dyet at home may the better be allow’d to look abroad. Troth, Madam, ne’r lose your longing.

ARABELLA. But how, Engine, what contrivance to let him know it? … thou shalt go to him, thou hast a pretty good way of speaking; I’ll give thee some general hints and leave it to thy management.

ENGINE. I’ll doe my part, I’ll warrant you, Madam. … If you like the Gentleman, I’ll secure you, the Gentleman shall like you.

ARABELLA. Have a care how you turn Insurer, Love is a doubtful voyage.

ENGINE. Yes, if the venture be in a leaky rotten bottome, or such a slug as your husband.—But in such a well built ship, so finely rig’d as that you speak of, you run no risk at all. (6)
Engine—as her name suggests\textsuperscript{70}—is instrumental in arranging for her mistress’s sexual exploits and for ensuring (as “Insurer” of the “well built ship”\textsuperscript{71}) that Ramble (the intended lover) will participate in a sexual liaison. The maid knows what to do and how to accomplish her mission. With a great deal of confidence in her abilities, Engine goes to Ramble’s home, where she uses her artfulness, talent, ingenuity, wit, and genius to entice Ramble into falling in with her design:

ENGINE. And yet when you have consider’d how accomplish’d a person you are, and how worthily you attract the eyes of Ladies, you think it then no wonder at all that a Lady of a great wit and beauty as any of the City affords, thinks you the most admirable person of your whole Sex. One that talks of you with so much delight and fervency, that I though it injustice, even to you, as well as injurious to her, if I should not acquaint you. … I know the secrets of her heart—and since I was sure it would not be displeasing to her, and you were a part so highly deserving, I took the Liberty without her knowledge to do you both this piece of service. (11)

The maid’s excessive flattery quickly persuades the gentleman, and soon she becomes his “little Angel Intelligencer”\textsuperscript{72} (10). Here we see Engine’s agency in action; she knows what she needs to do, and she gets the job done. Grateful for the maid’s service, Ramble rewards her with “gold to encourage thee” (10). In fact, Engine’s agency shines with her diligence in arranging trysts between her employer and a couple of willing gentlemen, an activity that becomes quite lucrative. In act 3, after having arranged several lovemaking sessions for her mistress, Engine

\textsuperscript{70} The \textit{OED} provides several pertinent (but obsolete) definitions: as a noun, “engine” has been used to indicate a net, trap, or tool, ingenuity, artfulness, a contrivance or means, a plot or snare, inborn talent, intelligence, wit, or genius. As a verb it meant to trick, deceive, ensnare, seduce, entice, contrive, plan, or design.

\textsuperscript{71} One who makes certain guarantees or protects against loss (\textit{OED}).

\textsuperscript{72} One employed to obtain confidential information; a spy, messenger, bringer of news, and a means or source of information (\textit{OED}).
counts her ill-gotten gains, reflects on her job description as lady’s maid, and justifies her position in arranging extra-marital affairs:

Let me see, what has my pains taking brought me in since morning 1—2—3—and 4—Guinies—When should I have got so much honestly in one day?—well this is a profitable profession, and in us that wait on Ladys the scandal is hid under the name of Confident or Woman: I would sooner choose to be some rich Lady’s woman than many a poor Lord’s Wife. This imployment was formerly stil’d Bawding and Pimping—but our Age is more civiliz’d—and our Language much refined—it is now a modish piece of service onely, and said, being complaisant, or doing a friend a kind office. Whore—(oh, filthy broad word!) is now prettily call’d Mistress;—Pimp, Friend;—Cuckold-maker, Gallant: thus the terms being civiliz’d the thing becomes more practicable. (27-28)

Throughout the Restoration and the eighteenth century, servants earned perquisites or supplemented their wages by performing “extra” services. Philotis in *Marriage a la Mode* is exceptionally talented: in exchange for expensive articles of clothing the maid supplies her mistress with French words she can use at court; she also encourages her mistress’s romantic interests by praising Count Rhodophil—who gave the maid ten gold coins for her recommendation—and extolling the good qualities possessed by Palamede, who offers the maid only five coins for her promotional services. When she informs Palamede that Rhodophil had given her ten, Palamede boosted the ante by another fifteen coins and allowed the maid to weasel him out of a diamond ring as well. But Engine’s “responsibilities” as a lady’s maid extend far beyond the “extras” that other servants in Restoration comedies are asked to do and greatly

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73 There were several (quite interesting!) ways in which servants supplemented their wages by charging for additional services. See Hecht 157-72, Turner 47-55, or Dawes 122-23.
contributed to *The London Cuckolds*’ reputation as notorious, vulgar, rank, and immoral. When Arabella’s husband comes home unexpectedly late one evening, just as she and Ramble are about to enjoy a sexual encounter, Arabella hides Ramble and tells Engine that once her husband falls asleep, the maid should take her place next to him in bed. When Engine asks: “But, Madam, should the Spirit move, and my Master wake and turn to me—” Arabella retorts: “Fool, he’ll find thee a Woman, will he not?” (29). Portrayals of unfaithfulness in the 1680s are significantly more callous than in comedies of the previous decades, and Engine, always open to getting the most for her wages, replies: “Nay, now I have your leave—and rather than spoil a good Intreague, I’ll venture” (29). As her mistress leaves to join her lover, Engine reflects: “Oh were I but a wife, what ways would I invent to deceive a husband, and what pleasure I should take in the Roguery!—Well, I long to be marry’d, to show my wit. In the mean time, I am making Experiments at another’s cost” (29). Engine is the only servant character in the plays discussed here who aspires to be married (although a couple of servants do get married in the end), but she wants it for the challenge of deceiving her husband.

Engine is also a major player in the most hilarious scene in this comedy (31)—the one Hume refers to having “darkness, a loaded chamberpot, etc.—and we have wild confusion.” Hume’s etcetera refers to the outrageous things that happen to Ramble the next time he tries to gain access to Arabella in the middle of the night. Engine has arranged to let him in, but discovers that her master took the door key with him when he retired for the evening. Engine instructs Ramble to enter through the basement window and she’ll come down and open the cellar door. Ramble gets himself halfway through the window, but there he gets stuck. While tightly wedged—unable to get in or out—a passing linkboy accidentally smacks Ramble in the head with his lighted torch. The trapped would-be lover’s smoldering wig is quickly
extinguished when a full chamber pot is tossed out a window and drenches his head. Engine is witness to these indignities and can barely control her merriment. Then two chimney-sweeps add to the poor man’s humiliation; having ascertained that the gentleman is firmly stuck in the window, they steal his new beaver hat, a slightly scorched periwig, and his sword, blackening his face with their hands in the process. Ramble shouts at them, which raises the attentions of the night watchmen who assume he’s a thief. The watchmen wake the household to alert them to the burglar attempting to enter their basement, but thanks to Engine’s quick thinking, everything is explained away. When Ramble is finally extricated from the window, Arabella finds his appearance and “explanation” so hilarious that she cannot stop laughing, compelling her soon-to-be-cuckolded husband to apologize for his wife’s inappropriate behavior. In addition to the feeling of unease at the constant tension in this raucous sex comedy, there is a sense of distortion—of something warped—when the abused husband feels it necessary to ask his wife’s lover for forgiveness. With the exception of The Country Wife, extramarital sex in most Restoration comedies is flirted with, talked about, but not consummated. And even in The Country Wife, the cheating wives focus their lust on Horner. The wives in The London Cuckolds don’t really care who they sleep with, as long as they’re engaging in sex; when Arabella realizes that she’s sent her maid to proposition the wrong man, she decides to just go ahead and sleep with him anyway (26) illustrating how—in a pre-latex era—the social instability that caused a devaluation in the sanctity of marriage may have emboldened married women to not only violate their vows, but to engage in casual sex regardless of what it may cost.

We feel tension again when both Engine and Jane (maid to Eugenia) pressure the paramours to be quick about their lovemaking. Jane tells Townly that time is short, so “therefore what you doe, doe quickly” (24), and Engine tells her mistress to “make good use of your time,
and don’t stay too long” (29). Instead of enjoying a leisurely love-making session, the goal is intercourse, and it really doesn’t matter with whom it takes place or how long it lasts. Interestingly, the lovers are encouraged to “doe quickly” not only to reduce the women’s risk of getting caught by their husbands in compromising situations, but because in this era they were thought to suffer from “womb frenzy, to be placated only by copulation. … Since the vagina was such a potent mantrap, far better not to linger there; erection, penetration, ejaculation, withdrawal—get them all over, safely and fast” (Picard 161). Agitation and uneasiness (along with erections, I imagine) abound in this tumultuous decade: political, social, religious, and now in the bedroom where getting caught is only one threat.

Jane is also active in procuring her mistress, Eugenia, a lover while her husband—“a Blockhead City Attorney; a Trudging, Drudging, Cormuging, Petitioning Citizen, that with a little Law and much Knavery has got a great Estate” is away on business (8). Eugenia’s case is a bit different from Arabella’s: her big-shot attorney husband is too self-interested and busy making money to have time for his wife, who craves his attention. If only I were important to him, she wonders, “how happy a creature should I be? But I was forced to marry him to please my parents” (13). Like Engine, the maid encourages her mistress to find pleasure wherever she can:

JANE. ‘Tis then your turn to please your self now with a Gallant, to supply the defects of a husband; when a man will press a woman to marry against her inclinations, he lays the foundation himself of being a Cuckold after: Troth Madam, think no more of your husband, but of your Gallant, the man you love, who is this night come to your embraces. I’ll warrant you you’ll not repent your self to morrow morning. (13)
Taking it upon herself, Jane pens a letter to Ramble to say that she will “Guide [him] to the Happiness” he’s been wishing for (8), taking the initiative in finding a sexual partner for her mistress in the same way that “[v]arious members of Charles’s inner circle were said at some point or other to be pimping for him” (Jordan and Walsh 125). When the king designed the Royal Bedchamber, he made sure to include a set of back stairs leading directly to a hidden dock on the river, “useful for his page and pimp, Thomas Chiffinch, to bring in women” (Pritchard 107). The “wits of the day,” claim Jordan and Walsh, “dubbed him [Chiffinch] the Pimpmaster General. He handled the women who were brought there, along with, later, the huge sums in bribes to the King that came from Louis XIV of France” (125). Stage servants, like Charles’s “page and pimp,” are very much involved in their employers’ love lives, providing logistic assistance and moral support.

Jane’s involvement—like that of Charles II’s friends and servant—comes into play in the next scene when an unexpected houseguest arrives and upsets the plans between the lovers. Eugenia says to her maid: “Jane, this is unlucky, what shall we doe? His being in the house will put a restraint on our freedome to night,” and Jane replies, “No, Madam, I’ll dispatch him to bed, do but you give order, and then let me alone” (14). While Jane acts independently and has individual power, she doesn’t have the same degree of agency possessed by Engine or some of the servants we considered earlier, such as Diego (The Adventures of Five Hours), Teague (The Committee), or Lucy (The Country Wife). Later, while Ramble and Eugenia are just about to enjoy a romantic dinner in her bedroom, her husband (like Arabella’s) returns home ahead of schedule. Once again Eugenia implores her maid: “Jane, what shall we doe” (16); Jane quickly thrusts the table of food and wine, along with the lover, into a closet, hands her mistress a prayer book, and intercepts the husband, saying “She is at her Prayers and would not be disturb’d” (16).
Ramble makes his escape undetected, and later that night—once her husband is fast asleep—Eugenia sends the servant to retrieve her lover. Unfortunately (for Ramble), Jane mistakes Mr. Townly for Ramble, who is out of luck on the love front for the third time, and once again we see how easily lovers are substituted; whoever comes to the bed gets to get in.

Townly’s manservant, Roger, exhibits his agency when his master sends him home, telling the servant that he plans to stay up all night “playing cards” with Arabella. Roger—who knows his master well—says to himself: “I suspect what game my Master plays at to night, there will be fine shuffling and cutting and dealing” (27). Before he can leave Arabella’s house, however, Roger sees her husband entering his front door; he shouts “Fire, fire, fire”; “Fire, fire, fire” so that everyone will evacuate the house and his master can make a safe escape (29). As Ramble leaves the (supposedly burning) building he runs into his servant and demands, “What do you doe here—did I not send you home to bed?”

**ROGER.** I guess’d, Sir, by your sending me home, that your stay there all night was to play at a better game than any upon the Cards—

**RAMBLE.** What, you imagin’d a Woman in the case—

**ROGER.** Troth I did, and ‘twas a lucky thought—I was no sooner out of doors, but I met an acquaintance, and as I stood there talking, I perceiv’d a man come ploding a long—go in without knocking, and shut the door—This, thought I, is the Husband.

**RAMBLE.** So—

**ROGER.** Now thought I, may my Master be in bed with this man’s wife—

**RAMBLE.** You had the impudence to think so—

**ROGER.** My Conscience was so wicked to tell me so at that time, Sir.
RAMBLE. Proceed.

ROGER. Now thought I, must my Master be cramb under the bed, or thrust into a Closset, or Woodhole, and remain in Purgatory all night to save a Lady’s honour—unless I work his deliverance. (30-31)

Roger—like Teague—has good intentions and his master’s best interest at heart, but he acts on the spur of the moment and somewhat bumbles his way through. Engine, Jane, and Roger are called upon and succeed at inventing stories and plots to do their employers’ bidding and keep them out of trouble. Roger knows how to get Ramble out of his (perceived) predicament because he knows his master, and spending the night playing cards with a beautiful woman translates into taking her to bed. Ramble jumps at the opportunity to sleep with the wives of the inferior citizens—wives who have no compunction about having extra-marital affairs—and the servants do everything in their power to bring the ungentlemanly gentlemen together with the dissolute ladies. This immoral-yet-harmless comedy highlights the uneasiness—political, social, and literary—of the decade by pitting city Whigs against Tory gentlemen (and humiliating both), ravaging any thoughts of the sanctity of marriage, and providing the forum for Londoners to laugh at both the disgraceful behavior of upper-class figures and the foolish, unsuspecting London citizens being cuckolded.

Although social ranking in this comedy is clear, with the gentlemen at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the ladies who married below their stations, and then servants who (probably should but don’t) rank below the citizen husbands, identity and status are less distinct than in previous decades. Even though Diego and the other servants in The Adventures of Five Hours spoke in the same manner of the upper-class characters, it’s always clear that they are servants—there’s an implicit deference. We also see this between Sir Martin and Warner; despite
the master acting the buffoon and the servant his superior, Warner clearly serves Sir Martin. The same holds true for Philotis in *Marriage a la Mode*, who speaks fluent French and must teach it to her mistress so that she can become part of the courtier crowd. It’s not always easy to recognize the gentlemen in *The London Cuckolds* because they don’t behave as such. Three times Ramble is mistaken for someone of a lower social class and must identify himself as a gentleman: in act 2 when he introduces himself to Peggy and her aunt (22) and twice in act 3—once when he gets stuck in Arabella’s basement window and asks the chimney sweeps for help (32) and again when the night watchmen awaken Arabella’s husband to say they’ve found a thief attempting to enter his house (32-33). Ramble insists he’s “a Gentleman, and one that scorns such base actions” (32-33), and yet he has attempted on several occasions to have illicit sex with this man’s wife.

5.3 John Crowne’s *Sir Courtly Nice, Or, It Cannot Be* (1683)

The focus chosen by scholars who write about *Sir Courtly Nice* is quite varied: some see it as a nice, clean, chaste, innocuous, pure comedy” with a “lighthearted love and honour plot.” Some look at the musical numbers, while others look at its “legal impossibilities,” or at Sir Courtly as a fop, or as written in the foreign-comedy (Spanish and/or French) mode. One scholar focuses on the “femmes savantes” in the play while another looks at it from a

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74 See Whiting 43; Hume, “Theory” 313; Rothstein and Kavenik 243, 251.
77 See Hume, *Development* 51.
78 See Susan Staves’s “A Few Kind Words for the Fop.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22.3 (1982): 413-28; Heilman 363; Atwood 108; Burns 106.
79 See Rothstein and Kavenik 246; Burns 15.
topographical perspective. Most mention in passing that Crowne wrote it “to King Charles’s specifications, and [that] the playwright was dejected when the king died shortly before its first performance in May 1865” (Wikander 344). Even James Sutherland—who notes that as “one of the Tory poets [Crowne] felt bound to enter the political conflict that followed upon the Popish Plot” (126)—ignores the partisan conflict evident in Sir Courtly Nice to focus on the effective contrast between characters achieved by the playwright (127). Rothstein and Kavenik discuss not only how pairs of characters effectively contrast with each other but point out that “the two political factions that had so recently been at each other’s throats are also equated. Testimony, a stock Tartuffean fanatic who hides lust under cant, and his counterpart, Hothead, an angry loyalist zealot, are the two enemies of liberty” (245). Others—Allardyce Nicoll (259), Matthew Wikander (344), and Edward Burns (104-05)—claim Sir Courtly Nice is “purely political.” I find this comedy a very balanced combination of political commentary and pure, clean, fun. Like the balance Crowne achieves between contrasting characters, the servants are relegated to the political component while those they serve are free to play. And since this study

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82 Dejected may be putting it too mildly. John Dennis recorded the gravity of the situation on 6 February 1685:

The Play was now just ready to appear to the World; and as every one that had seen it rehears’d was highly pleas’d with it; every one who had heard of it was big with the Expectation of it; and Mr. Crown[e] was delighted with the flattering Hope of being made happy for the rest of his Life, by the Performance of the King’s Promise; when, upon the very last Day of the Rehearsal, he met Cave Underhill coming from the Play-House as he himself was going towards it; Upon which the Poet reprimanding the Player for neglecting so considerable a Part as he had in the Comedy, and neglecting in on a Day of so much Consequence, as the very last Day of Rehearsal: Oh Lord, Sir, says Underhill, we are all undone. Wherefore, says Mr. Crown[e], is the Play-House on Fire? The whole Nation, replys the Player, will quickly be so, for the King is dead. At the hearing which dismal Words, the Author was little better; for he who but the Moment before was ravish’d with the Thought of the Pleasure, which he was about to give to his King, and of the Favours which he was afterwards to receive from him, this moment found, to his unspeakable Sorrow, that his Royal Patron was gone for ever, and with him all his Hopes. (qtd. in Van Lennep 335-36)
focuses on servants (who are, unlike those in *The London Cuckolds*, very undeveloped characters), I will gloss over the others who are fully round characters with lots of … character.

In his *History of England* Thomas Babington Macauley explains that the Exclusion Crisis and attendant events had created havoc to the point that ‘[e]very county, every town, every family, was in agitation. The civilities and hospitalities of neighbourhood were interrupted, the dearest ties of friendship and of blood were sundered [and the] theatres shook with the roar of the contending factions” (201). Why, then—with the political-religious arguments of the period that overwhelmed all other aspects of community and family life—didn’t Crowne develop the servant characters’ personas as thoroughly as those in the nice, clean, chaste, innocuous, and pure comedy parts? The lower plot is almost entirely related to the political-religious issues of the late 1670s and early 1680s, which is carried out within the dialogue between a contrasting pair of servants who have stage time equal to that of the other characters. The servants do nothing—absolutely nothing—to move the plot along, and they have little to do with the other characters, so their only function is to express the Whig and Tory perspectives of the hotly debated controversy. I cannot support my overall claim that scholars have wrongly ignored this fascinating pair of servants in favor of the wealthy gentry and aristocratic characters because Testimony (who espouses the views of a Catholic or a Dissenter who supports the monarchy and belongs to the Tory party) and Hothead (who represents the city Whigs who feared arbitrary government and supported Catholic exclusion because of their even greater fear of popery) are just as interesting and have as much, if not more, agency as the upper-class individuals. Yet they aren’t interesting, and they don’t exhibit one iota of agency. These uncomplicated, flat characters remain the same throughout the comedy—and except for one occasion when they draw their swords—they simply stand to face each other on stage and hurl insults at one another. Why
would Crowne create exciting, complex characters for all but two parts—parts for characters who embody the spirit of the 1680s?

The play begins with Leonora complaining to her friend Violante that her brother, Lord Belguard, has hired both a governess—her “governing Aunt”—and two guards to protect his sister’s virtue until she is safely married to Sir Courtly: “I am so watch’d, not only at home but abroad … for to assist my governing Aunt, there is a whole Army of Spies in the House; and over them two Spies General: And there my Brother thinks he shews a Master-piece of Policy” (3). The two “Spies General” are Testimony—a “Canting Hypocritical Fanatick,” and Hothead, a “cholerick Zealot against Fanaticks” (Dramatis Personae). Once Leonora has explained the presence of the two “Spies General,” Hothead storms onstage, indignantly bellowing “Where’s my Lord? Where’s my Lord, I say?

LEONORA. What’s the reason of all this anger?

HOTHEAD. He affront’s me, he invites me to live in his house, and then keeps a [Catholic] Fanatick to make a jest o’ me. He knows I sweat when I see one.

LEONORA. May be he has occasion for one.

HOTHEAD. What occasion? He is not in a Plot, is he? Fanatics are good for nothing else that I know of. (3)

At this point Testimony arrives—also shouting—and the first heated argument between the two servants sets the standard for their interaction throughout the comedy:

HOTHEAD. Sirrah! Sirrah! What’s your business in this House, Sirrah?”

TESTIMONY. What Authority have you to examine me, Friend?

HOTHEAD. Friend, you Dog! Call me Friend, I’le knock you down Sirrah.

TESTIMONY. Poor Soul—poor Soul—
HOTHEAD. You are an Impudent Rascal to call me poor Soul—Sirrah, I have a Loyalty and a good Conscience, and that’s a better Estate, than any of your Party have; and if you live in the house with me, I’le settle it on you with a Pox to you.

TESTIMONY. Yes, Mr. Hot-head I know you well enough, I know you would hang us all if you could.

HOTHEAD. I need not Sirrah, for Heaven be prais’d now you begin to hang your selves; I knew when Tyburn was bestow’d upon the Priests and Jesuits, the Fanaticks and Re-publicans wou’d not long be without it, for they are very fond of all Church Lands, come, Sirrah, if you live here, I’le make you turn over a new leaf, I’le make you go to Church, Sirrah.

TESTIMONY. That’s more than you do your self Mr. Hot-head, you go not often to Church.

HOTHEAD. What then? I’m for the Church, Sirrah. But you are against the Church, and against the Ministers, Sirrah. (4)

The stream of insults and accusations continue, establishing the deep animosity that existed between the political parties—a “growing gulf between the Whigs and the Tories [that] seemed to make the possibility of a second civil war a reality (Coward 329). Stringent religious beliefs and polarized views of the government and monarchy prevented either side from even slightly attempting to accommodate the other.

The next act opens with Hothead and Testimony arguing once again—this time about who has the authority to decide whether to allow a tailor into the house to measure Leonora for a gown.
TESTIMONY. He shall not speak with her, I don’t approve of it.

HOTHEAD. You approve Sirrah? what ha’ you to do?

TESTIMONY. I have Authority.

HOTHEAD. You Authority?

TESTIMONY. Yes, from my Lord.

HOTHEAD. You had it then out of his Kitchin, Sirrah; the Beef o’ the nation breeds all the Maggots in the Peoples heads. I am sometimes tempted to throw down their Porridge-pots, and spill the Divine Right of Presbitery. In short my Lord is a man of honour, and you have belyed him, Sirrah.

TESTIMONY. It is well known I make a Conscience.

HOTHEAD. Ay, you Rogues making o’ Consciences is a great trade among your Party, and you deserve to loose [sic] your Ears for it. (15)

The argument gets more and more heated, with each servant threatening to kill the other until Leonora’s governess intervenes, demanding to know what all the noise is about. Hothead tells her that Testimony, “a Fanatic Rogue [who mistakenly believes himself the] ordain’d ruling elder o’th’ Family by my Lord, as the Rogue says, so he undertakes to govern and Preach” to which the governess retorts: “And you undertake to Govern and correct?” (15). But then Leonora arrives, demanding “What’s the quarrel here?” and Hothead explains that there’s a tailor at the door, who “can’t get through this Fellows narrow Conscience, yet there is room for a whole Common-wealth” (16). Throughout the early 1680s authority between the two parties went back and forth. Initially, opposition to the crown and still-fresh trepidation of a Catholic invasion from France put the Whigs in control. When the tailor (whose name is Crack) is finally allowed in to
meet the ladies of the household, evidence of England’s focus on religious controversy again controls the conversation:

GOVERNESS. Ay, where did you learn your Skill?

CRACK. In *France*, Madam.

TESTIMONY. In *France*? then Friend I believe you are a Papist.

HOTHEAD. Sirrah, I believe you are a Presbyterian.

TESTIMONY. Friend, if you be a Papist I’le ha’ you before a Justice.

HOTHEAD. Sirrah, if you be a Presbyterian, I’le kick you down Stairs.

TESTIMONY. What are you Friend? [to the tailor]

HOTHEAD. Ay, what are you Sirrah? [to the tailor]

CRACK. What am I? why I’m a Taylor, I think the Men are mad. (16)

The only thing the two servant-guards can agree on is the intensity of their hatred for the religious principles for which the other stands.

In act 3 Hothead and Testimony are at it again. Hothead complains to Belguard that he has coupled him “with a *Fanatick Rogue*” to protect his sister. When Belguard asks Testimony why he is wearing a sword (surely that’s not necessary to protect Leonora), the servant says: “To preserve my Life. My life is threatened by that bloody Papist” (26), causing both the bloody Papist and the hypocritical Presbyterian fanatic to draw their swords upon each other. Belguard rebukes them, which only causes more fiery agitation between the two:

HOTHEAD. Will you protect a *Fanatick*? I see what you are. Well Sirrah [to Testimony], though I may not cut your Throat, i’le choak you Sirrah.

TESTIMONY. [to Belguard] De’e hear the bloody Papist? He’l throttle me.
HOTHEAD. Sirrah, i’le cram the Oaths of Allegiance, and Supremacy into you, and they’l stick in your Throat, though Treason won’t. (26)

Testimony emphatically refuses to “take the Oaths. … Ten thousand times, I will not take the Oaths” (26) that pledged allegiance to the king as head of the Church of England and the “only supreme Governour of this Realm, and of all other … Dominions and Countries” that belonged to the monarch, including “all Spiritual and Ecclesiastical things or causes” (“Oaths” n.pag.). The oaths were required for anyone who held a government position, was in the military, worked for the royal family, or was in any other position of trust. Catholics and Dissenters who refused (like Hothead) were in danger of having their property seized.

Crowne, probably knowing that his audience was in need a break from the brother-sister bickering and the servants’ unremitting political-religious disputes, finally introduces Sir Courtly Nice at his levee in act 3. Here we also meet his unnamed servant, whose queries to his master cause me to wonder if Crowne questioned social hierarchy in addition to commenting on the political-religious debate of the decade. The servant asks his master what it is that makes a gentleman a gentleman.

SIR COURTLY. … fine Hands, a Mouth well furnish’d—

SERVANT. With fine language—.

SIR COURTLY. Fine Teeth you sot; fine Language belongs to Pedants and poor Fellows that live by their Wits. Men of Quality are above Wit. ‘Tis true for our diversion sometimes we write, but we ne’r regard Wit. I write but I never writ any Wit.

SERVANT. How then Sir?

SIR COURTLY. I write like a Gentleman, soft and easie.
SERVANT. Does your Honour write any Plays?

SIR COURTLY. No, that’s Mechanick, I bestow some Garniture on Plays, as a Song or a Prologue.

SERVANT. Then your Honour is only a Haberdasher o’ small Wares? (20)

The witty servant draws attention to Sir Courtly’s ridiculous and skewed perspective of what signifies a gentleman, yet the fop is the character of focus for several scholars who study this play.

In the same act and scene there is a second unnamed servant belonging to Leonora who—without previous information, knowledge, or prompting by her employer—saves her mistress from her brother’s certain fury. When Belguard finds—in his sister’s bedroom, no less—a photograph of the man with whom his family has been having a Montague-and-Capulet-style feud for the past century or so, and (justly) accuses her of being in love with the enemy, Leonora untruthfully claims that the photograph is not hers. She explains that her “Woman found it in Westminster Abby, at Prayers, and [I,] knowing what work wou’d be made with it, commanded her to burn it, and she has dar’d to disobey” (25). The savvy—yet nameless—maid adroitly picks up on the falsehood and authenticates her mistress’s fabrication: “Indeed, Madam, I thought to have presented it to a Friend o’ mine; and laying it out o’ my hand unfortunately in your Honours Chamber, my Lord found it” (25). How is it that two unnamed servants are more

83 Not really a photograph, but an extremely accurate and detailed drawing that became attainable with the invention of the sliding box camera obscura, initially used by seventeenth-century Dutch painters as a drawing aid to help with their attention to details. For example, Jan Vermeer most likely used one for his “View of Delft” (1660) and “Girl with a Red Hat” (1665-66) because it would have been impossible to see the reflections he painted had he not been looking through a reflex lens, which consisted of a mirror angled at 45 degrees to reflect the image onto an oiled paper screen. In 1676 Johann Sturm published an article that described and illustrated the earliest reflex camera (see page five in Helmut Gernsheim’s A Concise History of Photography. New York: Dover, 1986), which led to Johann Zahn’s 1685-86 text that described—in illustrated detail—several types of hand-held cameras, one of which had the mirror reflex mechanism later used in photographic cameras. See also chapter four in The History of the Discovery of Cinematography. http://www.precinemahistory.net/.
perceptive than two of the upper-class characters in this comedy? Belguard’s heavy-handed dealings with his sister will eventually cause her to defy him, putting her safety (and virginity) at risk, and Sir Courtley behaves in the typically ridiculous manner common to most Restoration fops.

The language used to express Belguard’s overpowering, albeit protective behavior is another indicator (in addition to the servants’ bickering) that perhaps this comedy should be considered from a political perspective. The words *govern, government, or politick* are used a significant number of times by the upper-class characters. At the very beginning of act 1, after having witnessed the servants’ initial confrontation, Leonora explains their presence to Violante:

> Is not my Brother politick? These are to see no Provisions for wantonness be convey’d to me from abroad, and be sure they will not agree [due to their antagonistic political-religious perspectives] to deceive him. And that I may have none at home, My Brother will not venture a handsome Servant in the house; he swears he will not be Brother in Law to er’e a Butler or Footman in *England*; and he has cull’d for his Family, the most choice pieces of deformity he cou’d find in the Nation. (5)

Leonora asks her friend what she thinks of her situation, and Violante replies: “I perceive your Brother has put the whole force of his Wit into this Form of Government” (6). Belguard (Leonora’s brother), rationalizes his imperious and controlling mandate at the end of the same act and scene, clearly indicating the uneasy instability of the decade: “Things are so inverted, that Ladies who were honest all their Youth to be like their Mothers, turn lew’d in their old Age to be like their Daughters” (8). The “government” tenor continues with the opening of act 4 as Belguard and Violante debate the power relationship between men and women:
BELGUARD. … when I talk of Governing Women, I talk of a thing not
understood by our Nation. I admire how it came about, that we who are
of all Nations, the most wise and free in other respects, shou'd be the only
Slaves and Fools to Women.

VIOLANTE. Oh! you are the Wisest of all Nations, you know [sic] let Men do
what they can, Women will do what they please; and whereas other
Nations by their spyes and Governantes are at great toyle and charges to
be Cuckolds, you have it for nothing. (32)

Spies and governments, women’s free will and men’s fear of becoming cuckolds … just a few of
the many anxieties of an uneasy, disquieting decade.

When Sir Courtly finally arrives to woo Leonora, bringing ribbons, laces, and “other idle
Vanities” (35), Testimony refuses to open the door for the fop; Belguard reprimands the servant:
“Be gone you senceless Ass; and bring in the Gentleman” which prompts the servant to
sermonize:

TESTIMONY. I am no senceless person. I ha’ more sences than your self. I have
a senco o’ Vanity, and of the nothingness o’ the things o’ this World—and
a sence o’ Sin, and a sence o’ the insinuating nature o’ sin—I dare not
bring this wanton frothy young Man to your Sister—for she is frothy
also—and sin will get in at a little crany—and if sin once get in his head,
he’l get in his whole body. Now your honour has not that sence o’these
things. You ought to know that Young Honour is a senceless Person—

BELGUARD. How Sirrah?

TESTIMONY. In the spiritual sence.
BELGUARD. There’s no getting this preaching Fellow away. (35)

Hothead enters, and another dozen lines ensue in which the servants once again insult each other’s integrity. Belguard interrupts to ask “who’s at my Door?” (35).

TESTIMONY. Popery, I’m sure.

HOTHEAD. Roguery I’m sure.

TESTIMONY. Popery, I’m sure

HOTHEAD. Roguery I’m sure.

BELGUARD. Confound you both. [Belguard turns them both out.] (36)

Sir Courtly Nice “is clearly a sign of the times” (Hume, Development 371) and “places the whole Whig/Tory controversy within the family structure” (Burns 104). Crowne assigns his servant characters the political-religious storyline—a topic that obsessed Londoners and then, by neglecting to develop them into fully round characters, keeps all the focus on the current issues and events, indirectly commenting on the absurdity of it all. This comedy also brings to the stage—through the “ridiculous antics of the servants” (Sutherland 93)—what the audience would demand next: farce. This is, according to Robert Hume, “the most striking development” for the 1680s London stage (Development 366).

5.4 Aphra Behn’s The Emperor of the Moon (1687)

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Behn’s farce is considered briefly here even though it falls outside my criteria for selecting plays. Although it has only three acts, due to its length and elaborate (i.e., very expensive) staging, Emperor did not fit “afterpiece” status and was always produced as the main feature. It was staged almost two years after the death of Charles II, but Behn wrote in her dedication that “‘Twas calculated for His late Majesty of
Sacred Memory, that Great Patron of Noble Poetry, and the Stage, for whom the Muses must for ever mourn” (157); Janet Todd notes that the king had considerable “scepticism and interest in amateur science … [and] would relish mockery of the more bizarre beliefs of some ‘scientists,’ of alchemy and rosicrucianism” (343). While this farce was not a “smash hit” when first staged, its production history has “remained constant” for over three hundred years (Corman, “Restoration” 187); in fact, The Emperor of the Moon has been produced more regularly than any other Carolean comedy for the past three centuries.84

![Image](image-url)

Figure 5.2 Recent playbills from The Emperor of the Moon, Actor’s Theatre of Columbus and the Saint Sebastian Players at the St. Bonaventure Theatre, Chicago.

While there is nothing in this play that reflects the significant political-religious issues of the 1680s, the servants provide interesting observations about London society, illustrate cross-class communication, and provide an almost overwhelming abundance of hilarious moments and

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84 Just a few of the more recent productions at theatres in the United States include the Sylvia Center for the Arts in Bellingham, WA, June 15-24, 2017; Actor’s Theatre in Columbus, OH, July 20 – August 6, 2017; Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts, March 21-25, 2017; Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, MA, July 15 – August 20, 2016.
absurd situations. They are also essential to the plot, have their own storylines, and continually direct the upper-class characters.

Hume notes that in the mid-1680s, “the most conspicuous generic development is a small boom in magic-and-machinery farce” (Development 362), and reading Behn’s stage directions, it’s clear that there was plenty of costly “magic-and-machinery” utilized in this comedy, particularly in the last act, which is worth quoting at length:

*The Scene in the Front draws off, and shews the hill of Parnassus; a noble large Walk of Trees leading to it, with eight or ten Negroes upon Pedestals, ranged on each side of the Walks. Next Keplair [who speaks for the emperor, when His Majesty arrives] and Galileus descend on each side, opposite to each other, in Chariots, with Perspectives in their hands, as viewing the Machine of the Zodiac. Soft Musick plays still. … Next the Zodiac descends, a Symphony playing all the while; when it is landed, it delivers the twelve Signs; Then the Song, the Persons of the Zodiac being the Singers. After which, the Negroes dance and mingle in the Chorus. … [T]he Globe of the Moon appears, first like a new Moon, as it moves forward it increases till it comes to the Full. When it is descended, it opens and shews the Emperor and the Prince. They come forth with all their Train, the Flutes playing a Symphony before them, which prepares the Song. Which ended the Dancers mingle as before. … A Chariot appears, made like a Half Moon, in which is Cinthio for the Emperor, richly dressed, and Charmante for the Prince, rich, with a good many Heroes attending. Cinthio’s Train born by four Cupids.* (200, 202)
It is not surprising that much of the scholarship on *The Emperor of the Moon*—with its sumptuous flying chariots, gilded weapons, and glamorous costumes—considers the elaborate staging and the machines that lower the chariots and raise the moon. In his contribution to the hefty tome, *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, Edward Langhans discusses the “wonderland” of lavish scenes and ingenious machines that for many in the audience must have been “the whole point of going to the theatre” (8). The magic continues today; in 2017 the Actors’ Theatre of Columbus billed *The Emperor of the Moon* as “a zany blend of commedia dell’arte, music, and science fiction. Servants and lovers run wild in this play which was hugely successful in the English Restoration Period” (“Emperor”). While Behn’s farce “has more dazzle than substance, but is great fun and well deserved its long success” (Hume, *Development* 375).

![Figure 5.3 On left: Stephan Langer as Scaramouch and Trad N.G. as Harlequin; Actor’s Theatre of Columbus, OH; July 20–August 6, 2017. On right: Concetta Russo as Mopsophil and Ashton Muniz as Harlequin; Shakespeare & Company, Lenox, MA; July 15–August 20, 2016](image)

While the “spectacle” appears to be the reason this play transcends the ages, the servant characters—particularly Harlequin and Scaramouch—have entertained audiences around the world for several centuries.

Janet Todd deems *Emperor* “a play about theatre, transformation, and pageantry. … Disguises abound, Harlequin becomes ambassador from the moon and declares he can do
whatever he wishes, even tickle himself to a laughing death. Baliardo’s house becomes a theatre within the theatre; dancers emerge from tapestries, revealing the theatricality of all life” (365). I wholeheartedly agree with Todd; it’s the servants who are directors and stage managers at the Baliardo theatre. They determine what happens on stage and they tell the other actors how to play their parts. Academic attention is also given to Behn’s prologue to *The Emperor of the Moon*. David Roberts calls it “a potted history of Restoration Drama” (84). It begins with “Heroes and with Gods … [and] Some dying Love-sick Queen” (ll. 3, 5), but “Our Drums and Trumpets [of the earlier drama] frighted all the Women; / Our Fighting scar’d the Beaux and Billet-Doux Men.” *The Emperor of the Moon* has all the components of the original Restoration dramas: heroes and a love-sick empress (instead of a queen), musical instruments galore, an abundance of swordfights that end in silliness, and, of course, beaux and billet-doux (what would a Restoration comedy be without them?).

The farcical scenes in *The Emperor of the Moon*—those that kept it in on stage for such a long time—always center upon the servant characters, and since there is such a great number of scenes that clearly illustrate my claims, I’ll use only one from the first act and one from the last, along with a few bits and pieces of dialogue between the servants to illustrate how differently they interact with each other compared to how they behave in the presence of their masters and mistresses. In the opening scene Scaramouch, who is Dr. Baliardo’s manservant, comes from behind the curtain, “peeping on all sides before he enters” (75) in traditional commedia dell’arte tradition. His master’s daughter, Elaria, has sent the servant to check on Don Cinthio (her lover), who came to serenade her the previous evening, causing her father and his hired ruffians to get into a swordfight (the only one that doesn’t end in silliness) with the crooner. But Scaramouch takes this serious incident and turns it into a riddle: he reports to his mistress that Cinthio “has
got but one Wound” and “they say it may be dangerous” because he has been “run—quite through the Heart.” His only hope is for “a certain cordial Balsam, call’d a Fair Lady; which outwardly applied to his Bosom” would most likely revive him. Elaria berates the servant, telling him that time is precious, and he should not “fool it away thus,” especially since she is “confin’d a Prisoner to my Apartment, without the hope or almost possibility of seeing him any more” (162). The servant reassures her, saying “I think you are a little mistaken; for besides the Plot that I have laid to bring you together all this Night,—there are such Stratagems a brewing, not only to bring you together, but with your Father’s consent too” (162). When asked about the plot, the servant tentatively begins …

SCARAMOUCH. You must know, Madam, your Father (my Master, the Doctor) is a little whimsical, romantick, or Don-Quicksottish, or so.

ELARIA. Or rather mad.

SCARAMOUCH. That were uncivil to be supposed by me; but lunatic we may call him, without breaking the Decorum of good Manners; for he is always travelling to the Moon. (163)

The servant’s plan depends upon Baliardo’s credulity and belief that he sees life on the moon through his telescope, reflecting the interests and activities of the Royal Society that Charles II chartered in 1661. Please note that the conversation between the servant and his mistress is not slapstick in any way. It is only when servants speak to and relate to each other that everything gets crazy.

To get the plan rolling, Harlequin dons a disguise and convinces Baliardo that he is an ambassador from the moon, sent to let him know that the emperor and his brother, the Prince of Thunderland, would be joining them for dinner … so be sure to bring out the *good* wine. The
gullible doctor takes this opportunity to ask the “ambassador” questions about life on the moon: Do their women drink alcoholic beverages? “Yes,” says Harlequin the ambassador; “the greater the Quality, the more profuse the Quantity”; the doctor replies: “Why, that’s just as ‘tis here; but your Men of Quality, your Statesmen, Sir, I presume they are Sober, Learned and Wise” to which Harlequin replies: “Faith, no, Sir; but they are, for the most part, what’s as good, very Proud and promising, Sir, most liberal of their Word to every fauning Suitor,” and the doctor again replies: “Just as ‘tis here.” The conversation continues, commenting on several social issues in Restoration-era London in just one scene:

DOCTOR. But pray Sir, How do these Great Men live with their Wives?

HARLEQUIN. Most nobly, Sir, my Lord keeps his Coach, my Lady hers; my Lord his Bed, my Lady hers; and very rarely see one another, unless they chance to meet in a Visit, in the Park, the Mall, the Tour, or at the Basset-Table, where they civilly Salute and part, he to his Mistress, she to play.

DOCTOR. Good lack! just as ‘tis here.

HARLEQUIN. —Where, if she chance to lose her Money, rather than give out, she borrows of the next amorous Coxcomb, who, from the Minute, hopes, and is sure to be paid again one way or another, the next kind Opportunity.

DOCTOR. Just as ‘tis here.

HARLEQUIN. As for the young Fellows that have Money, they have no Mercy upon their own Persons, but wearing nature off as fast as they can, Swear, and Whore and Drink, and borrow as long as any Rooking Citizen will lend till, having dearly purchased the heroick Title of a Bully or a Sharper,
they live pity’d of their Friends, and despis’d by their Whores, and depart this Transitory World, diverse and sundry ways.

DOCTOR. Just, just as ‘tis here!

HARLEQUIN. As for the Citizen, Sir, the Courtier lies with his Wife; he in revenge, cheats him of his Estate, till rich enough to marry his Daughter to a Courtier, again gives him all—unless his Wife’s over-gallantry breaks him; and thus the World runs round.

DOCTOR. The very same ‘tis here. (197)

This servant—like those in previously considered plays—knows how those of the upper-class world works; servants know how their employers behave, even how they think. And—as when talking to Elaria—Scaramouch engages in a lengthy conversation with the doctor without even one sign of farcical behavior.

Yet when servants appear together without any of the upper-class characters on stage, we get sheer farce, especially in the scenes that concern Harlequin and Scaramouch’s competition to marry the maid, Mopsophil. For example, Don Cinthio has charged his (somewhat chubby) servant Harlequin to carry a letter to Doctor Baliardo’s house and somehow smuggle it in to give to Elaria, the doctor’s daughter, who is also Mopsophil’s mistress. Hoping to gain entrance to the house so that he can deliver the letter and flirt with the maid, Harlequin disguises himself in women’s clothes. When he arrives at Baliardo’s house, he is infuriated when he sees Scaramouch on a ladder, serenading Mopsophil at her bedroom window in his attempt to convince her to marry him instead of the other servant. Screeching in a woman’s voice at the top of his lungs, Harlequin tells Scaramouch to “Come down, come down, thou false perfidious Wretch … thou false Deceiver, that hast broke thy Vows, thy Lawful Vows of Wedlock—the witness of my
Love and Shame” and points to her/his (protruding) belly. In horror, Mopsophil cries: “How! With Child!—Out Villain, was I made a Property? … I am resolv’d to marry to morrow—either to the Apothecary or the Farmer, men I never saw, to be reveng’d on thee” (185). Mopsophil’s declaration simply sets up the two male servants for another zany attempt at winning the maid’s love, when one impersonates the apothecary and the other the farmer.

The significantly different behavior of the servants in their interaction with each other compared to their communications with the upper-class characters is interesting. In each of the other plays we’ve considered in this study, relationships have been built on alliances to achieve common goals. Nor (with the possible exception of Teague in The Committee) have there been any real communication problems between upper-class characters and their servants. The egalitarianism between master and servant extends to servant to servant communication as well. It may be obvious that one servant is ranked higher than another, but they speak to each other in the same manner. In The Emperor of the Moon, however, this is not the case. Non-servant characters are sometimes on stage while farcical action takes place, but they don’t actively participate. Only the servants run into furniture, grope and bite each other, peep around curtains or from under tables, dance until they fall on the floor, or try to tickle themselves to death. And even the scenes in which Doctor Baliardo looks at the moon through his telescope and claims he can see into the emperor’s closet are only silly, not farcical. While the “zanni” are significant characters in the commedia dell’arte tradition, I wonder why two of the three zanni in this play (the servants Harlequin and Scaramouch) are put in charge of directing the other characters. Behn discusses the idea of “service” in her prologue to The Emperor of the Moon, where she traces the history of audience demand in Restoration drama:

Long, and at vast Expense, the industrious Stage
Has strove to please a dull ungrateful Age:
With Heroes and with Gods we first began,
And thundered to you in heroic Strain:
Some dying love-sick Queen each Night you enjoyed,
And with Magnificence, at last were cloy’d:

In humbler Comedy we next appear,
No Fop or Cuckold, but slap-dash we had him here;
We showed you all, but you malicious grown,
Friends Vices to expose, and hide your own;
Cry, damn it—This is such, or such a one.
Yet nettled, Plague, what does the Scribler mean?
With his damn’d Characters, and Plot obscene.

Our next Recourse was dwindling down to Farce,
Then—Zounds, what Stuff’s here? ‘tis all o’er my—
Well, —This will be but a nine days wonder too;
There’s nothing lasting but the Puppet Show.

Maybe *The Emperor of the Moon* isn’t a play about a play, but a play about the theatre.

Playwrights, actors, and theatre managers—*servants* to the audience—must meet the demands of the audience-masters, even when what they ask for is absurd.
6 CONCLUSION

Due in part to audience demand, the focus of comedy changed (almost by decade) from themes of divine right and restoration in the 1660s, to free-wheeling sex in the 1670s, to the political and religious trauma of the early 1680s which ended with an escapist demand for farce. Although it is clear that audiences of each decade commanded a different type of drama, some scholars of Restoration comedy “assert that they are describing an identifiable genre with social-political objectives, detectable against the backdrop of a realistic portrait of contemporary London” (Hume, “Socio-Politics” 188). I would agree that Restoration comedies fall into the “comedy of manners” genre, but since the social-political objectives change so drastically over time, for that reason alone they cannot be considered the same genre. Plays “with social-political objectives” have been written and produced from Aristophanes to David Ives, but we could never lump them together in a single category. That would be the same as saying Venus in Fur, Three Nights in Prague, and The Bridges of Madison County are the same genre simply because they all have “social-political objectives.” The drama produced during the twenty-five-year timespan when Charles II was on the throne responded to the issues encountered in London society, issues that changed significantly throughout the Restoration period. While these comedies have several identifiable elements in common such as love/lust connections between gay couples, a despicable blocking figure, and—of course—servants with agency who reflect social and political issues, that doesn’t make them a single genre; we would be saying that city comedies, political satire, and romantic comedies are all the same thing.

I do agree, however, that what was depicted on stage represents a rather realistic depiction of issues concerning Londoners of the Restoration era, and that there are several general characteristics present in many—but not all—of the comedies staged. For example, the
Hobbesian-inspired view of a materialistic world in which our desires and appetites rule is present in the comedies of all three decades. With Charles II providing an excellent example of unfailingly putting his self-interest and sexual appetite above the needs of his country and people, his courtiers let their desires overrun common sense and propriety as well, thereby providing an endless array of topics to portray on stage. As Jessica Munns asserts, the “stage and the glittering world of the court were made for each other” (109). Later, the rising merchant class also provided plenty of fodder for the stage when their financial success forced the blending (through unequal marriages) of impoverished aristocrats and gentry with the wealthy middling sort. Other characteristics of the comedies produced during the Restoration include portrayals of mutability in values and mores, expressions of doubt regarding shifting social rank and conventions, and heated debate regarding religious, political, and economic issues that were continually changing in focus or intensity. Stage servants are excellent communicators of these changing conditions because they can voice negative impressions and make disparaging comments about inane behavior and nonsensical social mores to which upper-class characters must adhere but can’t openly criticize.

As this study has shown, comedies of the 1660s highlight the sensationalism of the newly restored monarch and his dynamic, spectacular, and scandalous court as well as the equally sensational political, financial, and social issues following the Commonwealth era. In this decade, non-servant (high-ranking) characters are very round and well-drawn, such as the hypocritical Puritan Mrs. Day in The Committee, Don Henrique (Porcia’s harsh, overbearing brother) in The Adventures of Five Hours, and the eponymous character of Sir Martin Mar-all who charms us with his clueless oblivion. Servants in 1660’s comedies function primarily as essential foils to their “betters.” Trustworthy Teague serves to expose and emphasize the
materialism of Mrs. Day, the immorality of Mr. Day, and the duplicity of the committee-men; he also heightens conflict and provides opportunities for Colonels Careless and Blunt to display their individual personalities as one who is careless and the other blunt. In The Adventures of Five Hours Diego’s “ludicrous tomfoolery” (Nicoll 207) “draws laughs, both for his cowardice and his quips” (Hume, Development 138); but more interesting is that Diego and Flora (Portia’s waiting woman) are the only characters who exhibit the witty repartee that is so important in this decade and became even more so in the next; every upper-class character in Adventures helps put the “tragi” in tragi-comedy” while the servant figures advance the action and supply the comedic elements. In this play we also see the egalitarianism that Paddy Lyons claims is one of the four tenets of master-servant relationships in Restoration comedy. Servants are, for the most part, treated as equals, and there is no difference in speech patterns: both upper-class and servant characters discuss the same issues in identical tone, vocabulary, and lexicon. In Sir Martin Mar- all, the intelligent and clever servant Warner not only highlights the knight’s stupidity, he ends up marrying the wealthy Millicent while Sir Martin marries Millicent’s maid. Servants of the 1660s generally “serve” even though they have a voice of their own—a voice that sounds remarkably like those of their masters and mistresses. And while they may be considered stock characters, they are extremely comical and often—particularly with Teague and Diego—the stars of the stage played by celebrity actors.

By the early 1670s, Charles II’s reputation had fallen from that of revered monarch to debauched playboy who was neither wise nor prudent, and the clear-cut moral framework of 1660s comedy is practically nonexistent in the following decade. Both sardonic admiration and contempt⁸⁵ for Charles and his court is evident in many 1670’s comedies as playwrights

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⁸⁵ Regarding Charles II’s influence, Sutherland notes that “the example he gave his subjects was in some ways deplorable” (13-14).
emphasized an almost total absence of self-control along with lack of respect that manifested itself as disdain for authority figures. Both upper-class and servant-class characters exhibited on stage the “skeptical, realistic (and, as many would have said, Hobbesian) temper [that] was characteristic of the whole period” (Sutherland 14), emphasizing tradition in flux, shifting hierarchies, deterioration of conventional social order, and ardent skepticism of any ruling power. In *Marriage a la Mode*, for example, the idea of social mobility is promoted whenever Philotis—the witty, perspicacious maid who is the only individually drawn character in the partner-swapping comic plot—interacts with her mistress and the other upper-class characters. The orange-woman and the shoemaker in *The Man of Mode*—despite being of the “serving classes”—voice libertine philosophies that advocate the rejection of class hierarchy (L. Brown 43), and the maids Busy and Pert clearly possess individual power and control as they manipulate their employers, repeatedly voice their own libertine opinions, and consistently make their own decisions. Although Lucy in *The Country Wife* has less stage time than other servant characters in the comedies considered here, the extent of her agency is extraordinary: she is indispensable to the love story, saves her mistress from a disastrous marriage, plays an integral role in Horner’s famous plot, and acts as the *deus ex machina* that resolves all the problems at the end of the play. In *The Amorous Widow* servants either assume or thwart the positions of authority traditionally possessed by aristocratic characters and are solely responsible for plot development. Each of the higher-ranking ladies and gentlemen is either duped or dependent upon the resourcefulness of the servants, who are portrayed as perceptive and ingenious with their shrewd maneuvers. What happened on stage and what happened in the court of Charles II “reflected back on each other and confirmed each other’s validity. But it was also an uneasy relationship. … Despite censorship, the dramas of monarchy were often critical of royal politics
and policies as well as adulatory” (Munns 109). The shift of control from upper-class characters to servants in 1670’s comic drama clearly indicates a significant change in perspective regarding the degree of power and respect accorded to authority figures.

At the end of the 1670s and throughout the 1680s, considerable political and religious issues all but closed the theatres, and the “excitement, experimentation, and new directions which so enliven the plays of the sixties and seventies largely disappear” (Hume, Development 360). Only two new comedies succeed; and while both plots are guided by the same social-political issues, the result is two very different types of play. *The London Cuckolds* is considered by some to be a Tory reactionary play that satirizes Puritans and Whigs disguised as a raucous sex comedy, while *Sir Courtly Nice* is a “chaste” play in which the Tory/Catholic versus Whig/Presbyterian controversy forms the entire lower plot. Unlike characters in 1660’s drama, in both of these comedies the authors create very round, fully-drawn servants while those playing the upper-class roles become single-dimension stock characters. Engine and Jane—waiting-women in *The London Cuckolds*—engineer love affairs for their mistresses in ways that highlight their degrees of agency and individual power; in *Sir Courtly Nice*, Hothead and Testimony illustrate the intense debate between the newly formed political parties. Unlike servants of the 1670s, the servants examined here do not have better moral character than their employers, but they are better-drawn characters played by celebrity actors such as Thomas Jevon, John Lee, Elinor (Mrs. Anthony) Leigh, and Katherine Corey. Throughout the Restoration period, issues, themes, perceptions of characters, and the messages that may (or may not) have been intended by either the playwright or the actors change significantly, changes that are clearly reflected by the servant characters.
But the ever-changing social-political issues illustrated by stage servants does not end with the death of Charles II. In the next thirty years England would experience a Glorious Revolution that deposed Catholic James II and restored a Protestant monarchy with William and Mary; with the co-regents came the English Bill of Rights that restricted the royal prerogative that was so enjoyed and abused by Charles II. Other factors contributed to the mutability of this quarter century: the philosophy behind John Locke’s *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that began to replace Hobbesian thought; the uproar and a literary war caused by Jeremy Collier’s *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), which was followed by a myriad of defenses and tracts describing the usefulness of the stage, that was then followed by Collier’s and others’ responses to the defenders of the stage; Richard Steele’s agenda for reform that filled the pages of the *Tatler* between 1709 and 1711; Charles Gilden’s *A Comparison between the Two Stages* (1702); wars with France over control of North America (1702-1713); arguments throughout the two-plus decades between Whig and Tory juntos, each vying for government control, along with the domination of Robert Walpole; and—in stark contrast with the Restoration period—a plethora of eighteenth-century publications regarding servants’ duties and the “servant problem”;

86 these events (among others; the Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737 fully transformed the drama of the Stuart era to that of the

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86 For just the first half of the century, see Hannah Wooley’s *The Compleat Servant-Maid, Or, The Young Maidens Tutor* (1691); Richard Mayo’s *A Present for Servants, from their Ministers, Masters, or Other Friends* (1692); William Fleetwood’s *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, and Masters and Servants* (1705); *A Present for Servants from their Ministers, Masters, or other Friends* (1710); Richard Lucas’s *The Duty of Servants* (1710); Anne Barker’s *The Complete Servant Maid* (1711); *Instructions for Masters, Traders, Labourers, etc., also for Servants, Apprentices, and Youth* (1718); Daniel Defoe’s *The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d, Or, The Insolence and Unsufferable [sic] Behavior of Servants in England Duty Enquir’d Into* (1724); Jonathan Swift’s satirical, *Directions to Servants in General* (1746); Thomas Broughton’s *A Serious and Affectionate Warning to Servants, More Especially those of our Nobility and Gentry* (1746); *Rules and Orders of the Society for Encouraging Sober, honest, and Industrious Servants* (1751?).
Augustan reign) provided copious topics for new plays and new concerns to be acted out onstage.

Comedies produced in the 1690s have significant, illustrative servant roles played by celebrity actors: Jeremy and Nurse\(^87\) in William Congreve’s *Love for Love* (1695); Snap and Sly\(^88\) in Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift, Or, The Fop’s Fortune* (1696); Lory\(^89\) and La Vérole in John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse, Or, Virtue in Danger* (1696) as well as Rasor and Madamoiselle\(^90\) in *The Provok’d Wife* (1697); and to end the decade, Dicky\(^91\) and Parly in George Farquhar’s *Constant Couple, Or, A Trip to the Jubilee* (1699). William Congreve launches a profusion of fabulous servant characters in 1700’s comedies with Waitwell and Foible\(^92\) in *The Way of the World* (1700), followed by Richard Steele’s Trusty and Trim\(^93\) in *The Funeral, Or, Grief a la Mode* (1701), Cibber’s Soto, Trappanti,\(^94\) and Viletta in *She Wou’d and She Wou’d Not* (1702); Hector,\(^95\) Betty, and Favorite in Susanna Centlivre’s *The Gamester* (1705); Brass and Flippanta\(^96\) in Vanbrugh’s *The Confederacy* (1705); Scrub and Cherry\(^97\) in Farquhar’s *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707); closing the decade with Whisper, Patch, and Scentwell\(^98\) in Centlivre’s *The Busie Body* (1709). The last year of the Stuart monarchy brought one final set of servant characters worthy of scholarly attention: Gibby, Liffardo, and Flora in Centlivre’s *The Wonder, Or, A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714). In each of these comedies the

\(^87\) Played by William Bowen and Elinor Leigh.  
\(^88\) Snap played by William Penkethman and Sly by William Bullock.  
\(^89\) Played by Thomas Doggett.  
\(^90\) Played by William Bowen and Elizabeth (Mrs. Richard) Willis.  
\(^91\) Played by Henry Norris.  
\(^92\) Played by Elizabeth Willis.  
\(^93\) Trusty played by X Mills and Trim by William Pinkethman.  
\(^94\) Soto played by William Bullock and Trappanti by William Penkethman.  
\(^95\) Played by George Pack.  
\(^96\) Brass played by George Pack and Flippanta by Anne Bracegirdle.  
\(^97\) Scrub played by Henry Norris and Cherry by Margaret Bicknell.  
\(^98\) Whisper played by William Bullock, Jr., Patch by Mrs. Saunders, and Cherry by Elizabeth (Mrs. William) Mills.
servants are central to the plot and reflect the decade’s social-political issues and concerns to an even greater extent than those portrayed during the reign of Charles II.

The Hanoverian period (1714-1747) brought a significantly different sort of monarch and a considerably different set of issues when Anne’s second cousin, George I (who did not speak English but was the closest Protestant relative), became King of England. Having even less political influence than those who reigned before him, George I transferred more power to parliament, causing even more contention between Whigs and Tories. This is also the point where competition between theatrical companies was most intense. London now sported several theatres and experienced a “renewal of theatrical energy [that] took place in a salubrious political and social climate” (Kavenik 117)—quite different from the theatre of the Stuart monarchy—resulting in servant characters who are quite different from those of the previous twenty-five years. The servant in one of my favorite comedies, Joseph Addison’s *The Drummer, Or, The Haunted House* (1716), demonstrates this changing ideology, which is sustained in another wonderful comedy that could end this proposed study: Richard Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), in which Humphry—an older servant whose goal in life is simply to serve his master—is juxtaposed with Tom—a new sort of servant whose only objective is to move up the social ladder. Comedies written and produced during the “first thirty years of the eighteenth century,” claims William Van Lennep, “possess an excitement and importance of their own” (Vol. 2, Part 1; xvii). The abundance of publications on Renaissance stage servants, real-life servants, and even fictional servants in the eighteenth-century novel highlight the fact that

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99 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket (which became the King’s Theatre when George I became monarch), Little Haymarket, Dorset Garden, Greenwich Theatre, St. Martin’s Lane, Richmond Theatre, and Hampton Court. See Van Lennep, Part 2, Volume 1, pages xxii-xxxvi.
servants in Restoration comedy are virtually unrepresented in academic scholarship. This study just begins to fill the void.
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