

Audience, Playhouse and Play in Restoration Theatre, 1660-1710



by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses three aspects of the relationship between audience, playhouse and play in Restoration theatre from 1660 to 1710. It provides a comprehensive account of the composition of the Restoration audience, an examination of the effect this group of men and women had upon the plays they attended and an account of the ways in which the plays and playhouses of the Restoration touched the lives of London's inhabitants.

In the first part of this dissertation I identify the audience. Chapter 1 deals with London's playhouses, their location, architecture and decoration. It shows how the playhouses effectively created two sets of spectators: the visible and the invisible audience. Chapter 2 is a detailed examination of those audiences, and the social and occupational groupings to which they belonged. Chapter 3 deals with the support the stage received. It analyses attendance patterns, summarizes evidence of audience size, presents case studies of attendance patterns and outlines the incidence and effects of recurrent playgoing.

In the second part of the dissertation I deal with theatricality, with the representation of human action on and off the stage. I examine the audience's behaviour in the playhouses and the other public places of London. I focus on the relationships between stage and street to show how values and attitudes were transmitted between those two realms. To do this, I analyse three components of theatrical behaviour--acting,

costume, and stage dialogue and look at their effect on peoples' behaviour in and ideas about the social world. Chapter 4 is an introduction to late seventeenth century ideas of theatricality. Chapter 5 examines contemporary ideas of dress and fashion and of their relationship to stage costuming. Chapter 6 considers how contemporary ideas about conversation and criticism affected and were in turn affected by stage dialogue.

PREFACE

There is a pleasure in acknowledging the generosity of others, though to do so does not lessen the obligation. My debt of longest standing is to Michael Neill, who induced me to undertake this project, and who retains an interest in it still. I am indebted, too, to the Provost and Fellows of Worcester College, in particular to David Mitchell and John Wilders.

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There are many who have assisted with both style and substance, among them, Professor John Carey, Janet Maw, Robert D. Hume, Kalman Burmin and John Burgdorf. Others, foremost among them Zac Deal, shared their expertise, without which my files would yet be locked in the memory of some machine.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Preface	v
Introduction	vi
Identifying the Audience	vi
Chapter I: Playhouses and Playgoers	1
The Playhouses of London	1
Playhouses and Playgoers	14
The Pleasure of the Company	34
Chapter II: Defining an Audience	43
The Demography of London	43
Royal Spectators	48
The Court	57
Gentle Playgoers	71
Young Gentlemen	79
Professional Men	89
The Common Audience	108
Chapter III: Attendance and its Implications	123
Houses Great and Small: The Size of the Audience	123
The Habits of Playgoers	134
The Character of the Audience	153
Of Profits and Patronage	168
Chapter IV: Themselves Presented: Actors and Audiences	193
Playing Their Parts	194
Performing in Company	205
Actors and Acting	214
The Acting Profession	225
Identifying the Audience	234

Chapter V: Dress, Costume and the Play of Fashion	268
Dressing in Public	268
Fashion and the Theatre	288
Dressing the Plays	293
Plays of Fashion	302
Changing Conventions in Dress.	326
 Chapter VI: Conversation and Criticism, Playhouses and Plays. . .	338
English Conversation in the Seventeenth Century	345
Conversation and the Playhouse.	364
Talking Plays	383
 Chapter VII: Epilogue	399
 Bibliography	401
Primary Sources: Manuscripts	401
Primary Sources: Newspapers	402
Primary Sources: Printed Books	403
Secondary Sources	420

INTRODUCTION

Identifying the Audience

The years from 1660 to 1710, a period that may loosely be called the Restoration, are far richer in resources for the theatre historian than any earlier times. London's playhouses were described and depicted in maps, diaries, lawsuits, illustrations, and egregiously in prologues and epilogues of the period. As a result, we know far more about their location, size, architecture and decoration and about those who managed and performed in them than we do about their Elizabethan predecessors.

Of the more than four hundred plays that were performed for the first time in this period, we possess copies of all but a few. Their ^{/s/} performance history is well documented. We can date the premieres of many of them, we know the approximate duration of their initial runs, and often when they were revived in later seasons. For the rest, we can usually identify their initial season, and may guess at their reception. We can also tell much about the style in which these plays were performed from the cast lists published with some 45% of them.

Much evidence remains to identify the men and women who made up the company in the playhouse. The names of more than 400 of them are recorded in letters, diaries, newspapers and memoirs: testimony to the attention they received.

Three things are lacking: a comprehensive account of the composition of the Restoration audience; an examination of the effect this

group of men and women had upon the plays they attended; and an account of the ways in which the plays and playhouses of the Restoration touched the lives of London's inhabitants. In the following pages I address these issues and then apply my findings to a larger issue, that of the relationship between comic drama and contemporary social life.

In the first part of this dissertation I identify the audience. In Chapter I, I discuss London's playhouse, their location, architecture and decoration, and show how the playhouses effectively created two sets of spectators: the visible and the invisible audience. Chapter II is a detailed examination of the composition of the total audience. I look at the range of class and occupational groupings to which they belonged and relate this composition to the population profile of London. Chapter III deals with the support the stage received. It contains an analysis of their attendance patterns. How large the audience was, how often spectators might attend, where they sat and who they sat with are each of them questions that affected the fortunes of the stage and the well-being of those who made their livings from it. I examine evidence of audience size, present several case studies of attendance patterns and discuss the incidence and effects of recurrent playgoing. Chapter III also deals with another type of support: conceptions of patronage. I discuss changes in theatrical infrastructure and show how the stage came to rely on its audience to carry out those previously furnished through the benevolence of great patrons.

The second part of the dissertation describes how the audience behaved in the playhouses and how they both affected and in turn were affected by contemporary drama. I examine the relationships between

stage and street and discuss how values and attitudes were transmitted between those two realms. Ideas of performance and its interpretation dominated the period. Charles II was welcomed, on his return, with lines that clearly linked the fate of England with that of the stage:

This truth we can to our Advantage say,
They that would have no *KING*, would have no *Play*:
The *Laurel* and the *Crown* together went,
Had the same *Foes*, and the same *Banishment* . . .¹

During the following decades, the stage produced good evidence to support this powerful assertion of the interrelation of social and theatrical authority. Dramatists addressed the problems of representing contemporary social life and developed distinctive styles in doing so. The better to define London life, they borrowed from their predecessors--notably Jonson and Middleton, and also Shirley and Brome--improving on their hints and developing new devices and techniques.

I examine how three components of theatrical behaviour--acting, costume, and dialogue--intersected with the lives of London's inhabitants. Chapter IV is an introduction to late seventeenth century ideas of theatricality. In particular it looks at personation and identification on stage and the creation of character, or personality, in everyday life. Chapter V consists of an examination of contemporary ideas of dress and fashion and of their relationship to stage costuming. It offers evidence of the playhouses' role in developing and transmitting fashions and looks at how ideas about fashionable dress in turn permeated the plays. Chapter VI examines how contemporary ideas about

¹ Sir William Davenant, "The Prologue to His Majesty At the First Play presented at the Cock-pit in Whitehall" (1660).

conversation were affected by the stage. It shows how close were the links between stage dialogue and patterns of conversation, how plays furnished matter for the display and improvement of conversational techniques and how dramatic structure was adapted to allow for the inclusion of exemplary dialogues.

Chapter I

PLAYHOUSES AND PLAYGOERS

1.1 The Playhouses of London

The playhouses of Restoration London have suffered from comparisons with the grandeur of their Elizabethan predecessors. In the fifty years that followed the Restoration there were never more than two companies licensed to perform in the capital. Charles II ignored recommendations that five or six theatres be established in London, as there had been formerly, sufficient to entertain all comers on a regular basis.¹ Two men only--Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant--won patents allowing them to build playhouses and establish full-time acting companies in the metropolis. The companies they founded were known as the King's and Duke's players. The audiences, too, were small: no crowds streamed to the playhouses in their thousands as they had to the Swan, the Fortune and the Globe. The prices hindered many from attending, we are told; the promiscuity offended others; and the savagery of the satire and the profanity of the language warned off countless more.²

¹ William, Duke of Newcastle, Bodleian Library, Clarendon MS 109, f. 74.

² This view has been brought under scrutiny lately: Emmett L. Avery, "The Restoration Audience," *Philological Quarterly*, 45 (1966), 54-61 Harold Love, "The Myth of the Restoration Audience," *Komos*, 1 (1968), 49-56 Andrew S. Bear, "Criticism and Social Change: The Case of Restoration Drama," *Komos*, 2 (1969), 23-31 Harold Love, "Bear's Case Laid Open: Or, a Timely Warning to Literary Sociologists," *Komos*, 2 (1969), 72-80 Love, "Who were the Restoration Audience," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 10 (1980), 21-44 Arthur H. Scouten and Robert D. Hume, "'Restoration Comedy and its Audiences,' *The Yearbook of English*

Yet despite their smallness and exclusivity, their immorality and their expense, the playhouses of Restoration London defined, depicted, and adorned that place to a degree unprecedented in its history. Young men and women, newly come up to London, paid visits to the playhouses; their elders looked to find old friends in the theatre of an afternoon; husbands entertained their wives there, and young men their sweethearts. When Edmund Verney married in 1662, he took his new bride to London: the couple counted plays amongst the entertainments they enjoyed there. Country parsons like Thomas Brockbank included the playhouses on their London itineraries. Men of affairs took time to divert themselves there and foreign visitors referred to them as the glories of London.³

People whose affairs kept them from London demanded to be told how fared their dear acquaintance, the stage. Etherege in Ratisbon--"A poor man who has lost the enjoyment of his friends and the pleasures of London . . ."--asks to be given "an account of the stage."⁴ Politicians had their associates inform them of the goings-on there. Those who remained in the country to maintain the great houses and tend the estates demanded that their London-dwelling relatives keep them posted

Studies, 10 (1980), 45-69 Harry W. Pedicord, "The Changing Audience," Ch. 8 of *The London Theatre World*, ed. Robert D. Hume (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1980); Pierre Danchin, "Le Public des Théâtres Londoniens à l'Époque de la restauration d'après les Prologues et les Epilogues," *Dramaturgie et Société: XVI^e et XVII^e Siècles* ed. Jean Jacquot (Paris: Centre National, 1968), pp. 847-888; Peter Holland, "The Text and the Audience," in *The Ornament of Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 1-18.

³ F. P. and M. M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, 4 vols. (London: 1892-99), IV, 27-28; *The Diary and Letter Book of the Rev. Thomas Brockbank*, ed. Richard Trappes-Lomax (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1930), pp. 98 f.

⁴ *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, ed. F. Bracher (Berkeley CA: Univ. California Press, 1974), p. 119.

on recent or promised plays. Even a country vicar, eager for news of London, might write: "Are all the coffee houses down? Are the Temple & Greyes Inn walkes all depopulated? Are the playe houses blowne up . . ."⁵

To anyone who reads contemporary accounts of London, it is clear that these playhouses defined it. Not only were they pre-eminent amongst its entertainments, they epitomised the lifestyle it offered. They created lasting images of London life, encouraging their audiences to look about themselves and to discover in the auditorium and on the street the originals of the characters and scenes they saw represented on stage.

The capital where these playhouses were found was not the same place it had been sixty years earlier. By 1660 London had established itself as the nation's *only* centre of elegant consumption, its temple of fashion, seat of culture and one reliable source of political information. It was, too, the best place in which to seek first-rate architectural, medical, legal and financial advice.⁶

Much of London's new authority can be attributed to improvements in transport and communication. Improvements to English roads, the introduction of scheduled stagecoaches and of commercial carriers all made

⁵ Andrew Marvell, letter to Sir Edward Harley, in HMC 14th Report, III, Harleian MSS. I, 357; Henry Sidney, *A Diary of the Times of Charles the Second*, ed. R. W. Blencoe, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colborn, 1843), I, 237; II, 146. Family correspondence often included references to new plays and other theatrical events. See HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS. II, 155; Bodleian Library, MSS. North, C. 10 ff. 42-43. Nathaniel Wanley, B.L. Harleian MS. 6430, f. 21.

⁶ Lawrence Stone, "The Residential Development of the West End of London in the Seventeenth Century," in *After the Reformation*, ed. Barbara C. Malament (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 181-183.

London more accessible to those who lived elsewhere.⁷ Previously, "few gentlemen made journeys to London or other expensive journeys, but upon important business, and their wives never."⁸ As London became more accessible it became more influential: the goods it furnished and the values it stood for became current throughout the land. For men and women of leisure, time spent in London, where the production and consumption of high quality goods and services grew hand in hand, was both a pleasure and a necessity. Only by visiting the capital could they avoid the taint of rusticity.

In the forty years that followed the Restoration, the population of London grew at a rate far exceeding that of the rest of the country, so that by 1700 one Englishman in ten lived in the capital. The population grew not as a result of natural increase--in fact deaths in London always exceeded the birth rate--it grew through a pattern of substantial immigration from the surrounding areas, an immigration so heavy that it accounted for half the natural increase in the population of England and Wales.

Demographic changes represent only one aspect of what we now recognise as London's transformation from a medieval city to a modern metropolis. Other factors, too, fed into the transformation. London's growth created new social and economic opportunities for its inhabitants and encouraged them to alter the way they behaved towards each other. As a result they began to redefine their notions about London. No longer did they see it as a commercial centre, casually linked to the nearby court.

⁷ Stone, "The Residential Development," pp. 177-79.

⁸ Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The Life*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1857), I, 5.

Instead they began to use a new term to characterise it: the Town. An urban entity, the town was distinct from city, court, and country, and was defined neither by a series of geographical bounds nor in terms of the affairs transacted there. It was defined, rather, by the opportunities it afforded for leisure, for entertainment, and for luxurious consumption.⁹

The 1630s saw a sequence of Royal Proclamations and Star Chamber prosecutions aimed at preventing the gentry's neglect of the duties of land ownership. Landowners were required to return from London and live on their estates. The Civil war and the decade of troubles after 1640 effectively debarred men and women from pursuing any new styles in urban living. The period of protectorate rule, during which the trappings of a court disappeared along with the King, meant that urban life, hitherto defined as the interrelation of court with city, was deprived of one half of its identity.¹⁰

Nevertheless, it was during this thirty year period that there developed many of the facilities and services on which a town life later came to depend. Hyde Park, Mulberry, Spring and Vauxhall Gardens were opened: the physical embodiments of the claim that the capital could provide all that was necessary to human existence, even the illusion of a pastoral life. People with a taste for luxury items could purchase

⁹ Emrys Jones discusses the history of this term in "The First West End Comedy," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), 215-258.

¹⁰ Lawrence Stone, "The Residential Development of the West End of London in the Seventeenth Century," pp. 167-212; E. A. Wrigley, "A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750," *Past and Present*, 37 (1967) 44-70; F. J. Fisher, "The Development of London as a Center of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Series (1948), 37-50.

them at the New Exchange in the Strand. Exclusive accommodation could be leased in the new housing developments that followed Covent Garden. Thus, when the King returned, those with the means to enjoy pleasures beyond necessity flocked into an environment already geared to meet their demands. The arrival of large numbers of the affluent simply confirmed and publicised the developments in urban life that had been taking place for the previous half-century.

The attractions of London did not, by themselves, transform the capital; rather it was the prominence they achieved and the way of life they made available. Prior to the Restoration, these attractions belonged to a centre that bore the shape of an exploded medieval market place. They were the appendages of modern life attached uneasily to an oversized city, built largely of wood and still defined by its ancient parish bounds. The fire of 1666 certified the death of that city, confined within its ancient bounds. The London that grew in its place would no longer be defined in terms of parishes but henceforth by the opportunities it offered men and by its effect upon the way they lived their lives. Consider Edmund Bohum's account of the difference dwelling in London made to his life:

When I lived in the countrey I was much subject to melancholy, and to make sad reflections on my condition; but then I spent much time in prayer and devotion. In the city, company diverts my melancholy humours and thoughts, but makes me less careful of my devotions and prayers both publick and private Liveing hitherto in London without any employment, I have lived without envie or ill usage from men; loved, rather then hated, by all, so that I have none of the temptations to anger and revenge which I was subject to when I was ill used for doing my duty Spending much of my time in company and among ingenuous men, I have been more subject to vain glory, over much freedom in dis-

course, and, sometimes, to adding circumstances to stories to make them more acceptable to others . . .¹¹

Bohum mentions neither geography nor architecture. For him London is not a matter of parishes and buildings, but of leisure and agreeable company, such as might take a man out of himself and his melancholy reflections.

London became a training ground--the only training ground--where men and women were fitted for the new styles in urban living that it offered. The demographer, William Petty, suggested that ". . . the present greatness & state of London, [could] make it supply the use of forain Travell to the Youth of England." He promoted London on three grounds. It offered a high standard of practical training in the traditional academic and professional disciplines--medicine, the law, finance, languages, science, both practical and speculative, and administration. It afforded a variety of civilised diversions: "Examples, Playes, Entertainments, of the shewes of Nature & Art" might be seen there and one might enjoy "all Meates, drinkes & Clothings." Above all it was a centre where all the different forms of human existence could be observed: "This Citty contaignes People--neere the Court, neere the Exchange, neere the Inns of Court, in St Giles in the field, St Giles Cripplegate, Spittlefields, Southwark, Wapping &c--as different as in 8 severall cittyes or nations." This diversity of men and women, Petty goes on to point out, might be met not only in their residences, but even more readily in the theatres, parks and other areas where they

¹¹ *The Diary and Autobiography of Edmund Bohum Esq.*, ed. S. Wilton Rix (Beccles: 1853), p. 72.

¹² *The Petty Papers*, ed. The Marquis of Landsdowne, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1927), I, 40.

mixed promiscuously.¹²

The opportunities London offered for this new style of urban life were not to be found in the city proper, nor in the westernmost residences, but in the area that lay between. The fire which destroyed the old wooden city caused its notional centre to shift beyond the walls--from St. Paul's Church to the places around the maypole that had been erected to celebrate Charles' return. There stood the New Exchange and nearby were the tennis courts and the best of the taverns and ordinaries. Lockets and Longs, the French House and the Bear, the Fleece and the Rose were all located in the area between the Strand and Covent Garden, in the neighbourhood of the playhouses of London. The combination of so many places of entertainment with people who had the leisure and means to enjoy them produced a new definition of life in London, and it was through the stage that its image was established and broadcast.

Contemporaries were quick to acknowledge the role the stage played in constructing the image of the town. Conservative writers consistently numbered playhouses amongst those institutions through which youth was introduced to the town's licentious ways. In *The Plain-Dealer*, Widow Blackacre laments her son's pursuit of a town education:

And have I lost all my good Inns of Chancery breeding upon thee then? And thou wilt go a breeding thy self, from our Inn of *Chancery* and *Westminster-hall*, at Coffee-houses and Ordinaries, Play-houses, Tennis-courts, and Baudy-houses.¹³

¹³ In *The Works of William Wycherley*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980).

The old academies and institutions of learning no longer equipped a man for life in town. Their place had been taken by newer institutions west of the city: academies of vice, as the godly held. The mock-catalogues of their types--"*Play-houses, Taverns, and Whore-houses*" and "*Taverns, Bawdy-houses, or Coffee-houses, Inns, Ale-houses, Gardin-houses, Ordinaries, Tennis-courts &c.*"--represent the material out of which the stage was to construct its image of London life.¹⁴

Caroline plays, such as *Hyde Park*, *The Ball*, *Covent Garden*, and *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, had begun the business of presenting on stage the new attractions and public areas of London. The process accelerated after 1660, with the introduction of moveable scenery, which represented not only particular places, but also the movement of men and women from one place in London to another. Wycherley's *Love in a Wood*, for example, identifies Chatelin's [The French House], St James's Park, Pall Mall and the Mulberry Garden House. Etherege's *She wou'd if she cou'd* calls for scenes of the Mulberry Garden, the New Exchange, the Bear and the New Spring Garden. If to the list of places represented we add those alluded to, then each play becomes a miniature *Survey of London*. The characters move throughout its walks, parks and ordinaries with familiarity and ease, creating the town for their audience as they go. "I was going to look you out," says a character in *Love in a Wood*,
 X / @ "between the Scenes at *the Play-houses, the Coffee-house, Tennis-Court, or Giffords*."¹⁵

¹⁴ *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town* (London: 1673), p. 13; Richard Head, *Proteus Redivivus* (London: 1675), p. 121.

¹⁵ IV, iii. Wycherley's debt to Jonson and Middleton's sense of place representation is immediately apparent. As London grew, it required more encyclopaedic literary forms to represent it. Hence the

The playhouses sat amidst London's entertainments, in a good position to watch for changes in taste and behaviour. Dramatists and actors could observe the behaviour of those who attracted attention, and imitate it to delight their own audiences. They borrowed action from the great playhouse that was London. The theatres' location in the west end of London thus enabled them to define town life with some authority. And for all its parks and squares, its houses, shops, and churches it was definition--an identity--that London most needed.

The playhouses' location brought with it an additional but unsought-for advantage, for it was in the area where they stood that the changing patterns of urban residence were most pronounced. When Killigrew and Davenant opened the first new theatres in Vere Street and Lincolns Inn Fields, the area had already declined from its former residential glory and now was merely once-fashionable. The great houses along the Strand were no longer inhabited by the families who had built them and throughout the area ground rents were charged at a reasonable rate. Covent Garden and St Martin's Lane were the residential areas then most sought after by the courtiers, nobles and officials who made up the post-Restoration influx to London. And these were about to be overshadowed by the newest developments of South²ampton Square and St James's Square.¹⁶ / ⑧

development of a new literary form, the Journal of Movement: Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (London: 1699), Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical Calculated for the Meridian of London* (London: 1700), John Dunton's *The Night Walker* (London: 1696-97) and Thomas Durfey's *Collin's Walk through London and Westminster* (London: 1690).

¹⁶ See T. F. Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London: Arnold, 1951), pp. 172 ff; Stone, "Residential Development," pp. 194 ff. For the development of Leicester Fields as a residential area see HMC 77th Report, DeL'isle MS., VI, 530.

Later Restoration playhouses--Bridges Street, Dorset Garden, Drury Lane and subsequent incarnations of Lincoln's Inn Fields--were all built in the area between the old city and the new residential areas, close to the fashionable areas without being part of them. In the streets around the theatres, people and places once eminent lost ground to the newly aspiring, who gave way in turn to the shadowy figures of the demi-monde. Each company took delight in pointing out how poor the neighbourhood of its rival had become, how dirty the streets and how unsavoury the traffic.¹⁷ Neither, in fact, had reason to feel complacent--the standing of the entire area suffered a consistent decline over the last decades of the century. By 1700 Salisbury House, once the home of Earls, was occupied by "whores, coiners, Highwaymen, pickpockets and housebreakers."¹⁸ In the plot behind that old house, Dorset Garden theatre had, during its years of use, lain a witness to this decline. The playhouses were well-placed to observe and reflect London's changing character.

Fascinating as the neighbourhood was, the patentees' primary motive for theatre siting was not social, but economic: theatres were opened where they could be made to pay. After 1660 no new theatres were established to the east of London. The large numbers of people who lived there were in the main indigent, possessing unoccupied time, but not the means to call it leisure. Nor did the two patentees adopt the strategy of their predecessors, who had followed London's expansion to the west

¹⁷ See Davenant, Prologue to *The Play-House to be Lett*, in *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D'Avenant*, ed. James Maidment and W. H. Logan, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: 1872-74), IV, 17; Dryden Epilogue "[Spoken at the Opening of the New House]," in *The Prologues and Epilogues of John Dryden*, ed. William Gardner (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), p. 62.

¹⁸ Ward, *The London Spy*, VII, 5-6.

and erected their houses on the outskirts of the densely populated area, close to the homes of the wealthiest spectators. Instead they built their playhouses within a relatively confined part of London, bounded to the east by Whitefriars and to the west by Drury Lane.¹⁹ Siting so consistent tells us something of the audience the companies sought. All Restoration playhouses were within easy distance from the old city, Whitehall and the newer areas being developed. Thus they offered good access to spectators from town, city and court alike. The audience they courted was a balanced one.

The history of these Restoration playhouses can be viewed as the history of the attempts that were made to define and maintain this balanced audience. Some five months after the fire of 1666, Thomas Killigrew, patentee of the King's Company, told Pepys "how the Audience at his House is not above half so much as it used to be before the late fire." Those missing were the citizens whose houses had gone in the blaze and who, despite the rebuilding programme and other efforts to resettle them in the city, were resisting the return: "And he tells me plainly that the Citty Audience was as good as the Court--but now they are most gone."²⁰ The observation is an interesting one: it establishes the presence--and worth--of citizens in the playhouses after 1660; it relates the reduction in their numbers to the fire, and not to any dis-

¹⁹ Although Restoration playhouses often occupied the same sites as their Caroline predecessors, they bore quite a different relation to the surrounding population.

²⁰ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1970-83), 12 February, 1667; T. F. Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London*, p. 47. The presence of citizens is discussed by Harold Love in, "Who were the Restoration Audience," pp. 30-32 and by Pierre Danchin in "Le Public des Théâtres Londoniens," pp. 864, 876 ff.

taste for the stage; and it establishes that the fire caused both a falling off in the size of the audience, and an alteration in its composition. The even balance of court and city had been noticeably altered. Once rebuilding was completed, London regained its population, and the playhouses their balance: for after 1670 citizens are frequently numbered amongst the audience.

There was one exception to the rule that playhouses built after 1660 were erected where they afforded ease of access to all types of spectators. That house was the Queen's theatre in the Haymarket, built by Vanbrugh and opened in 1705 on a site distant from the city and right at the then edge of westward expansion. Vanbrugh's disregard of the effect of siting on balance was to have severe consequences:

. . . at that time it had not the Advantage of almost a large City, which has since been built, in its Neighbourhood: Those costly spaces of *Hanover*, *Grosvenor*, and *Cavendish Squares*, with the many, and great adjacent Streets about them, were then all but so many green Fields of Pasture, from whence they could draw little, or no Sustenance, unless it were that of a Milk-Diet. The City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of the Town, which were the most constant Support of a Theatre, and chiefly to be rely'd on, were now too far, out of the reach of an easy Walk; and Coach-hire is often too hard a Tax, upon the Pit, and Gallery.²¹

This, the westernmost theatre of the period we are discussing, had clearly moved too far in pursuit of the more affluent part of its audience. As a result, it had lost that balance at which its predecessors had aimed so intently.

²¹ Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber*, ed. B.S. Fone (Ann Arbor: Univ. Michigan Press, 1968), pp.173-174. See also Charles Gildon's comments on the inconvenience of Vanbrugh's building a theatre "at the Fagg-End of the Town, whither four parts in five, that make an Audience, cannot come without an insupportable Expence." *The Post Boy Rob'd of his Mail* (London: 1706), p. 344.

1.2 Playhouses and Playgoers

Not only did The Restoration stage define the town that surrounded the playhouses, it also defined its own audience. Prologues, epilogues, dedications, prefaces and the very plays themselves contain frequent references to those who sat watched them: Restoration dramatists and actors drew attention to their spectators to an unprecedented degree.²² They did so in response to an extraordinary self-awareness on the part of the audience, an awareness which had its beginnings in the time before the King's return from exile. Davenant's prologue to the entertainment he produced at Rutland House tells of the self-consciousness of those who watched it:

That half are freely by the other fac'd
And we are shrewdly jealous that you come
Not merely to hear us, or see the Room,
But rather meet here to be met, I mean
Each would see all, and would of all be seen . . .²³

The audience described by the prologue is a visible one. Visible in two senses. First, in the sense that its members were conspicuous: they were aware of the attention that was paid to them and, in turn took particular notice of the presence and behaviour of their fellows. Second, in the sense that they were socially visible: they were regarded

²² Autrey Nell Wiley, in *Rare Prologues and Epilogues 1642-1700* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), pp. xvii-xviii, notes that the proportion of new plays with direct addresses to the audience--prologues, epilogues or both--rose from 48% in the period 1558-1642 to 90% after 1660. Dane Farnsworth Smith, in *Plays about the Theatre in England from "The Rehearsal" in 1671 to the Licensing Act in 1737* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936) lists plays that make extensive reference to the contemporary stage. His list is by no means exhaustive.

²³ The Prologue to *The First Dayes Entertainment at Rutland House by Declamations and Musick: after the manner of the Ancients* in *Dramatic Works*, III, 197.

as worthy of notice because of the effect they had on the society in which they lived.²⁴ For such an audience the term spectators, passive observers of the distant activity of others, is insufficient: those who attended the playhouses of London after Charles' Restoration were actively involved in the totality of events that took place there.

These two factors--the audience's awareness of the attention of others and their engagement in playhouse activity--were encouraged by the design, decoration and entrepreneurial practices of the Restoration playhouses.²⁵ The earliest patent theatres were erected in tennis courts--Gibbon's in Vere Street and Lisle's in Lincolns Inn Fields. The standard size of a Royal Tennis court was 70 feet by 30 feet and Lincolns Inn Fields was even smaller, built "within the walls of a Tennis *Quarree* Court, which is of the lesser sort."²⁶ Although these playhouses were larger than the private theatres of earlier times, they were still small buildings.

²⁴ Hannah Arendt examines the notion of visibility in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 58-68, 80-93, 115-16.

²⁵ Michael Neill, in "'Wit's most accomplished Senate': The Audience of the Caroline Private Theatres," *Studies in English Literature*, 18 (1978), 341-60, describes how these nascent phenomena affected dramatic practice and critical ideas in an earlier period. Restoration playhouses enlarged the audience's sense of its corporate self.

²⁶ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 170. Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1928), p. 119, set its dimensions as 70 feet by 30 feet. See also *The Annals of Tennis* (London: 1878), Robert Wilkinson, *Londina Illustrata* (London: 1819) and Wenceslaus Hollar, *View of West Central London (London: 1657)*. Recent evidence suggests that Lincoln's Inn Fields playhouse was larger than Hotson allowed. Letter received from Robert D. Hume, 12 December, 1984.

What they lacked in size, they made up for in sumptuousness, even in their first rude surrounds. Pepys called Vere Street "the finest play-house, I believe, that ever was in England," (20 November, 1660) and Katherine Philips acknowledged the quality of its decoration.²⁷

In order to maximise the capacity of these small buildings, the managers lined both sides of the long walls with seats and galleries. So it happened that when the audience took their seats, a great many of them sat looking at their fellows in the boxes and galleries opposite. Those who sat in the foremost rows were separated from those facing them by as little as fifteen feet, with the front rows of faces visible in the light which entered through the long rows of side windows.²⁸

Pepys shows with what self-consciousness the audience took their places in the narrow but sumptuous playhouse in Vere Street:

. . . . and myself went to the Theatre, where I saw *The Lost Lady*, which doth not please me much. Here I was troubled to be seen by four of our office Clerkes, which sat in the halfe-Crowne box and I in the 1s-6d. (19 January, 1661.)

Pepys felt he was conspicuous by his under-expenditure. Yet he was seated in one of the less visible areas of the playhouse. In fact, for anyone to see him at all, he must have been sitting towards the front of his gallery, since those behind were in the shadow of those above. People in the rear of the gallery were neither observed nor considered

²⁷ Lincoln's Inn Fields set the standard by which she judges the new playhouse in Dublin: "We have a new Play-house here, which in my Opinion is much finer than D'Avenants; but the scenes are not yet made." Cited in George C. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1920), p. 9.

²⁸ Hotson, pp. 114-132 Edward A. Langhans, "The Vere Street and Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatres in Pictures," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 20 (1968), 171-85. Langhans' article draws extensively on his "Staging Practices in the Restoration Theatre, 1660-1682," Diss. Yale 1955.

by those more prominently placed. Pepys demonstrates their obscurity in the sequel to his first unfortunate visit:

. . . thence to the Theatre, where I saw again *The Lost Lady*, which doth now please me better then before. And here, I sitting behind in a dark place, a lady spat backward upon me by a mistake, not seeing me. But after seeing her to be a very pretty lady, I was not troubled at it at all. (28 January, 1661.)

Opportunities to see and to be seen increased with the building of the first totally new Restoration playhouse, the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street. It was completed in 1663 on a site measuring 58 feet by 112 feet.²⁹ The additional length allowed Killigrew to use scenes, which had already proved their popularity in Lincolns Inn Fields playhouse. The additional width was taken up in the creation of an auditorium built to rival the splendour of the stage. This was a significant development in playhouse design. The new-style auditorium was to dominate the design of theatre interiors (and often the performances themselves) throughout the eighteenth century and long thereafter. It consisted of a large, open, and well-furnished pit, surrounded by semicircular rows of boxes and galleries. The spectators seated in the boxes and galleries looked out onto the stage across the heads of those seated below.³⁰

The new playhouse and those which followed it were even more sumptuous than their predecessors. The extravagance and intricacy of their decoration immediately captured the audience's attention and outweighed its other shortcomings. The first report we have of Bridges Street comes from Pepys, who visited there the day after it opened:

²⁹ Hotson, p. 243.

³⁰ Langhans, "The Theatres," in *The London Theatre World 1660-1800*, p. 42.

The house is made with extraordinary good contrivance; and yet hath some faults, as the narrowness of the passages in and out of the pit, and the distance from the stage to the boxes, which I am confident cannot hear. (8 May, 1663).

Both his commendation and his complaint indicate that audiences now expected something new in playhouse design. Audiences after 1660 looked for, and found, sumptuousness in their surroundings. Even foreign visitors were prepared to acknowledge England's excellence in this area. Balthasar de Monconys, who visited Bridges Street in the month of its opening, wrote of it:

Le Théâtre est le plus propre et le plus beau que i'aye iamais veu, tout tapisé par le bas de bagette verte; aussi bien que toutes les loges qui en sont tapisées avec des bandes de cuir dorée..³¹

Even the entourage of Prince Cosmo III of Tuscany, men familiar with the splendour of Palladian designs, took note of the high standard of English playhouse decoration.

This theatre is nearly of a circular form, surrounded, in the inside, by boxes separated from each other, and divided into several rows of seats, for the better accommodation of the ladies and gentlemen, who, in conformity with the freedom of the Country, sit together indiscriminately; a large space being left on the ground-floor for the rest of the audience.³²

Sorbière, a man not given to praising the English or their institutions, found Bridges Street "bien plus diuertissante, & plus commode aux entretiens. Les meilleures places sont celles du parterre . . ."³³

³¹ *Journal des Voyages de Monsieur de Monconys* 2nd. ed. (Lyon: 1666), pp. 25-26.

³² Conte Lorenzo Magalotti, *The Travels of Cosmo the Third* (London: 1821), p. 191.

Count Cominges, Ambassador from Louis XIV in 1666, commented on the "two magnificent houses, conspicuous both by the beauty of the stage, the comfort of the boxes and of the pit, and by the machinery, the music, the violins, and the surety of the spectators . . ."³⁴

Amongst these early spectators--English and foreign, princes and commoners alike--there is a large measure of agreement on three matters: the relative spaciousness of the pit, the beauty and comfort of the boxes and the overall splendour of the whole. To arrange for such fine accommodation in a public playhouse represents an extraordinary care for the spectators' comfort and pleasure: all things have been provided solely for their better entertainment. So much care cannot help but make each spectator more self-aware.

The tendency to court the audience with fine surroundings was enlarged upon in 1672 when the Duke's Company moved into their new theatre in Dorset Garden. Even before the building was complete, interest had been aroused in some details of its construction. "I went home," wrote John Evelyn, "stopping in at the Theater, to see the new Machines for the intended scenes, which were indeed very costly and magnificent."³⁵ The playhouse followed the style of Killigrew's at Bridges Street. Its dimensions were 57 feet by 140 feet: as wide as the other, but built longer to cater for those costly and magnificent scenes and

³³ Samuel Sorbière, *Relation d'un Voyage en Angleterre* (Paris: 1664), p. 166-67.

³⁴ J. J. Jusserand, "A French Ambassador's Impressions of England in the Year 1666," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 75 (1914), p. 793.

³⁵ *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. Esmond S. de Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 26 June, 1671.

³⁶ Hotson, p. 233. See also John Ogilby and William Morgan, *Large and Accurate Map of the City of London* (London: 1677).

machines.³⁶ Yet it was not the stage and its devices which most impressed visitors, but the quality of its decorations and the overall grandeur of the house itself.³⁷ When François Brunet visited London in 1676, he paid more attention to the playhouse than to the stage:

Le lieu ou l'on joue est incomparablement plus beau et plus propre que ceux de nos Comédiens . . . l'on entend jamais de bruit, il ny a que sept Loges qui peuvent contenir chacun Vingt personnes. Il y a encore pareil nombre au dessus et un paradis plus haut.³⁸

Dorset Garden was the most lavishly furnished of all seventeenth century theatres. When the King's Company moved into their new house in Drury Lane, in 1674, they found themselves unable to offer the audience its accustomed splendour:

A Plain Built House after so long a stay,
Will send you half unsatisfy'd away
When, fal'n from your expected Pomp, you find
A bare convenience only is design'd.³⁹

Yet if the playhouse did not enhance the spectators' awareness of their own importance through its decoration, it still encouraged their awareness of their fellows through its design. Drury Lane retained in its

³⁷ The decorations included busts of famous poets -- see Shadwell's, second Prologue to *The Tempest*, in *The Works of Thomas Shadwell*, ed. Montague Summers, 5 vols. (London: Nonesuch, 1927), II, 196; Dryden, Epilogue, "[Spoken at the Opening of the New House]," in Gardner, p. 62. Dorset Garden's grandeur was celebrated in a series of plates engraved by Dolle for the publication of Settle's *The Empress of Morrocco* (1673).

³⁸ *Voyage d'Angleterre*, B. L. Add. MS. 35177, in Hotson, pp. 234-35. Brunet, like Monconys, is struck by the quiet and cleanliness of the English playhouse and compares it favourably with the dirt and noise of the Parisian parterre.

³⁹ Dryden "A Prologue Spoken at the Opening of the New House, March 26, 1674," in Gardner, p. 60. See also Prologue to *Cleomenes, the Spartan Heroe* in Gardner, p. 168, on the matted seats in Drury Lane.

architecture what had come to be seen as the distinctive feature of post Restoration playhouse design--a semicircular auditorium. Henri Misson, who visited England in the 1690s, identifies this characteristic:

The Pit is an Amphitheatre, fill'd with Benches without Backboards, and adorn'd and cover'd with green Cloth. . . . Further up, against the wall, under the first Gallery, and just opposite to the Stage, rises another Amphitheatre . . .⁴⁰

References to amphitheatre design appear frequently in accounts of playhouses of the period. Magalotti wrote that Bridges Street was "nearly of a circular form." Monconys said that the benches in the pit there were "rangez en amphiteatre." Brunet uses "en Amphiteatre" to describe the seating in Dorset Garden. Cibber describes the semi-circular design of Drury Lane before its alteration:

. . . the Area, or Platform of the old Stage projected about four Foot forwarder, in a Semi-oval Figure, parallel to the Benches of the Pit . . .⁴¹

Amphitheatre design reached its apotheosis in Vanbrugh's theatre in the Haymarket, of which one contemporary wrote:

When I their *Boxes, Pit, and Stage* did see,
Their Musick Room, and middle Gallery,
In *Semi-circles* all of them to be
I well perceiv'd they took peculiar Care
Nothing to make or do, upon the *Square*.⁴²

⁴⁰ Henri Misson *M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations*, trans. Ozell (London: 1719), pp. 219-220.

⁴¹ *Apology*, p. 225.

⁴² *The Diverting Post* (1705). See also R. Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse* (London: Methuen, 1973).

To the eyes of the spectators in these playhouses, the seating seemed to follow the line of the stage in a semicircle.⁴³

The architectural term used to describe the Restoration auditorium is suggestive of more than a semicircular plan alone. The word "amphitheatre" conveys information about the rake of the floor and its effect on those who sat there. Originally, the term referred to a central space enclosed by tiered rows of seats from which attention was focussed down into the central arena. That it was used of a playhouse which was, at most, semicircular suggests how effectively the principles of design focussed the attention of the audience.

Although amphitheatre design focusses the audience's attention, the point to which they are drawn is not necessarily the centre of the semicircle. Their attention may be commanded instead by objects standing or moving in front of them. When this happens, the focussing force of the design is transferred onto the intervening object.

Wren's design for a playhouse interior, which includes a semicircular piece of forestage, shows how this dual focus was made possible.⁴⁴ Wren's sketch depicts an auditorium designed to enhance the effect of the perspective scenes: the intervals between base and cornice of the pillars decreased along the horizontal axis of the building, creating the illusion that baseline and architrave met in a vanishing point some little way beyond the back of the stage. But actors who

⁴³ Odell, in *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, I, 8 identifies semicircular design as the typical style of the period. Peter Holland, in *The Ornament of Action*, argues that the semicircular form of auditorium originated in England with Inigo Jones' plans for a theatre project and his design for the Cockpit in Court (pp. 21-26).

⁴⁴ See Hamilton Bell, "On Three Plans by Sir Christopher Wren," *Architectural Record*, 30 (1913), 359-69. Wren's design is held in All Souls Library, Oxford.

commanded the forestage area interposed themselves between the viewers and the vanishing point. They used it to take possession of the house, redefining the focus and dominating the audience's view by advancing almost into their midst.⁴⁵ The presence of actors on the forestage effected the separation of action from scenery, which became a visual accompaniment to the play, but not a component of it.⁴⁶

A dual focus can be dramaturgically managed only if nothing and nobody further interpose between the spectators and either focal area. Whether that is achieved depends upon the slope, or rake of the seating.⁴⁷ Where the rake was sufficiently great, each spectator could look down onto the focal area with an uninterrupted view. In Bridges Street, Dorset Garden, and Drury Lane these conditions applied only within the middle and upper galleries. In the more expensive seats, those in the pit and boxes, the rake did not exceed an angle of 9 degrees, with the forestage below the line of the boxes, level with the rear seats in the pit and slightly above those at the front. Moreover as the stage itself sloped down from the back shutters to the front of the stage, changes of scenery and forestage acting took place at two different levels. While

⁴⁵ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 225: "When the Actors were in Possession of that forwarder Space to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the House, so that the most distant Ear had scarce the least Doubt or Difficulty in hearing what fell from the weakest Utterance: All Objects were thus drawn nearer to the Sense; every painted Scene was stronger; every grand Scene and Dance more extended; every rich, or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Lustre: Nor was the minutest Motion of a Feature . . . ever lost . . ."

⁴⁶ Richard Southern, *Changeable Scenery: its Origin and Development in the British Theater* (London: Faber, 1952), pp. 17-25.

⁴⁷ John Scott Russell, "Elementary Considerations of Some Principles in the Construction of Buildings Designed to Accommodate Spectators and Auditors," *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*, 27 (1838), reprinted in George C. Izenour, *Theater Design* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), App. 3.

spectators in the pit and boxes could see all the face and action of a performer and appreciate the fine scenes, at the same time they could not avoid being aware of those who sat before them, their heads interposed by the slightness of the rake and their expressions made visible by the curvature of the seating.

The combination of amphitheatre design and forestage acting created a close relationship between audience and stage, so that one became a continuation of the other. Even stage decoration contributed to this effect. Wren's design shows that the walls which flanked the pit continued up the forestage for a distance of some 17 feet, extending the perspective design of the auditorium as far as the proscenium. Auditorium architecture was further echoed on stage in the corinthian pilasters which separated the boxes in the house and the entrance doors on the stage. There remains no view of Dorset Garden's auditorium, but Dolle's engravings suggest that its splendid forestage decorations were extended into its sumptuous interior. Stage and auditorium design were of a piece in that playhouse, too.

Architecture established a number of parallels between stage and audience. As stage balconies were continuous with the middle gallery, any balcony scene also suggested transactions between pit and gallery. In the same way exits and entrances were related to appearances made at the front of a side box. When the stage became an extension of the auditorium in this way, architecture blurred the distinctions between apron and auditorium, between stage and street. It implied that similar actions took place and observations were made in both worlds.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Richard Southern, "Theatres and Scenery," in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, ed. T. W. Craik, Vol. V, 1660-1750. (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 81.

The effects of playhouse architecture on the audience--its enhancement of their visibility, the focussing effect of amphitheatral design, the interrelation of forestage and auditorium--operated in all playhouses built after the Restoration. However, they did not affect all spectators in the same way. Consider Henri Misson's description of the audience at Drury Lane. The pit contains all kinds of people: "Men of Quality, particularly the younger sort, Some Ladies of Reputation and Vertue, and abundance of Damsels that hunt for Prey . . ." The composition of rest of the house, he notes, is more closely defined:

Further up, against the wall, under the first Gallery, and just opposite to the Stage, rises another Amphitheatre, which is taken up by Persons of the best Quality, among whom are generally very few Men. The Galleries, whereof there are only two Rows, are fill'd with none but ordinary People, particularly the Upper one.⁴⁹

Misson's curt "none but ordinary People" highlights an imbalance in the attention that even the most observant of theatregoers paid to those about them. Although all visitors of note made mention of their peers and betters who sat about them in pit and boxes, seldom did they bother to comment on those sitting above. Inferiors were not worth their notice. But even had they wished to observe the behaviour of the audience above, they could scarcely have penetrated the gloom of the galleries from the comfort of their fine bright places. The inhabitants of the middle and upper galleries were socially invisible in a status ridden society; in the playhouses those shadowy figures became almost literally so.

⁴⁹ Misson, *Memoirs*, pp. 219-220.

Amphitheatral design was in part responsible for the differential visibility of sections of the auditorium. Its effect was compounded by the playhouse lighting. The arrangement of artificial lights within a building circumscribes the relationships that can be entertained there. Lighting defines the relative importance of different areas and illuminates the legitimate objects of attention. Even as poor lights relegated to obscurity those who sat behind in the galleries, high quality lighting contributed to the authority of the visible audience. The candles that shone on the actors from above, below and either side also lit the faces of those seated most prominently in the auditorium. This lighting was supplemented by candles hung at intervals along the walls of the auditorium. Not only did the visible audience share the actors' light, in the earliest buildings they also received the benefits of the afternoon sun through the windows of the converted tennis courts.⁵⁰ Magalotti described Lincolns Inn Fields as "sufficiently lighted on the stage and on the walls to enable the spectators to see the scenes and the performances"--and, we might add, one another.⁵¹

Not only was the visible audience blessed with more light, the illumination they received was far higher in quality than English audiences had known before. Wax candles were used throughout the playhouses, giving a brighter, less smokey flame than the tallow of Caroline playhouses: "Il faut adjouter . . . que ce seroit un crime d'employer autre chose que de la cire pour éclairer le Théâtre, & de charges les Lustres d'une matière qui peut blesser l'odorat . . ."⁵² The well-lit

⁵⁰ See Pepys, *Diary*, 12 June, 1663: ". . . sitting sweating in the playhouse and the wind blowing through the windows on my head."

⁵¹ *Travels of Cosmo the Third*, p. 347.

audience became one of the distinguishing features of the English playhouse. John Macky describes the difference between English and European theatres:

the Whole is illuminated to the greatest advantage; Whereas abroad, the Stage . . . only [is] illuminated, and the *Loge* or *Boxes* close, you lose the pleasure of seeing the Company.⁵³

There were other innovations, too, that catered to and displayed the visible audience after the Restoration. Killigrew used to boast of the several improvements he had made to their entertainment:

the stage is now by his pains a thousand times better and more glorious then ever heretofore. Now, wax-candles and many of them; then, not above 3***lb.*** of tallow. Now all things civil, no rudeness anywhere; then as in a bear-garden. Then, two or three fiddlers; now nine or ten of the best. Then, nothing but rushes upon the ground and everything else mean; and now all otherwise. (Pepys, *Diary* 12 February, 1667)

Like the improved seating and lighting, the playhouse music played its part in the creation of the visible audience. It drew people into the auditorium before the play started: "La symphonie y fait attendre agreablement l'ouuerture du theatre, & on y va volontiers de bonne heure

⁵² Samuel Chappuzzeau, *L'Europe Vivante* (Genève: 1667), p. 215.

⁵³ John Macky, *A Journey Through England in Familiar Letters* (London: 1714), I, 109-10. Compare the lighting practice of public playhouses, where stage and auditorium were lit for the better entertainment of the audience, with that of the theatre at court, where both lighting and design aimed at the better display of the Royal person. The apronless court stage was lit by troughs and sconces attached to the back of the scenes and in the hall proper chandeliers and wall brackets were placed so as to illuminate the King's central raised dais, notwithstanding the interference this caused to the remaining spectators' view of the stage.

⁵⁴ *Relation d'un Voyage*, p. 167. Magalotti, p. 191 also notes that "many persons come early to enjoy this agreeable amusement."

pour l'escouter," wrote Sorbriere.⁵⁴ As the musicians themselves were kept from view, the only visual entertainment offered to early arrivals was that afforded by the other spectators: watching the visible audience preceded watching the play in an afternoon's sequence of pleasures.⁵⁵

The division of the auditorium into visible and invisible regions dominates all contemporary accounts of the audience. Some 80% of prologue references to the audience made mention of those who sat in the pit; boxes were referred to in 40%; the middle gallery, however, rated attention in only 5% of cases; a mere handful of comments are made about those who sat far above in the upper gallery. Such an imbalance of attention inevitably created a set of lively distinctions within the area inhabited by the visible audience. Prologuists identified fop alley, wits' corner, punks' side boxes and bullies' benches. So often did they write of these places, and with such a tone of authority that they seemed to refer to a precise geographical area within the house, and a well defined population within its bounds.⁵⁶ However, like so

⁵⁵ Davenant quickly followed Killigrew's lead in offering this supplementary entertainment and soon a programme of music was featured between the acts at Lincoln's Inn Fields: "elles n'ont pas moins de douze violons chacune pour les Preludes & pour les Entr-actes . . ." By the end of the century the author of *Historia Histrionica* was able to say: "All this while the Play-house Musick improved Yearly, and is now arrived to greater perfection than ever I knew it." When public concerts of music finally separated themselves from these entre-acte entertainments their audience continued the habit they had formed of watching their fellows while the music played. See Chappuzeau, *L'Europe Vivante*, p. 215; *Historia Histrionica*, in R. W. Lowe, ed., *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (London: 1888), I, xxxii; Pepys, *Diary*, 7 November, 1667, 12 May, 1669; *William Congreve: Letters & Documents*, ed. John C. Hodges (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964), p. 20. See also Odell, I, 152-56.

⁵⁶ See the discussions of playhouse demography in Sybil Rosenfeld, "Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration Period 1660-1700," Thesis, London, 1925, pp. 76-81 and Pierre Danchin, "Le Public des Théâtres Londoniens," II, 852-875.

much in the playhouse these distinctions were the product of poetic imagination. They had been created in response to the visible audience's continuous demands for attention. In fact, the primary and real divisions were not between wits, fops, punks and bullies, but between visible and invisible spectators.

The primary division was echoed in the schedule of admission charges: those who paid 4/- or 2/6 for a seat in a box or the pit spent considerably more than those who paid 1/6 or 1/- for a seat in the galleries.⁵⁷ And since those who could not afford to pay for the best seats could also ill afford to spend much on fine clothing, it follows that those seated above appeared scarcely worth the notice of those seated below. Whether it was in the pit or in the boxes that one was seen mattered little. What mattered was that one was seen, and not hidden in one of the galleries.

The hierarchy implicit in the division was reflected in the decor of the playhouses. Seating and ornamentation conformed to the expectations of a status-conscious society: the value of the higher priced seats lay not in the view they gave of the stage, but in the comfort--even luxury--they offered and the degree of exposure they afforded to their occupants. All contemporary descriptions of the playhouses show how strongly the very buildings contributed to the dominance of visible over invisible. The pit is generally described first, then the boxes, with appropriate comments about the quality of the furnishings and the comfort of the accommodation. The middle and upper galleries are

⁵⁷ There were two rows of boxes at Lincolns Inn Fields and Bridges Street, claims Rosenfeld (p. 77). Prices rose after the Restoration: see the copy of Davenant's Patent grant in R. W. Lowe, ed., *An Apology*, I, lviii.

referred to as afterthoughts, if at all. The consistency of these descriptions leaves no doubt as to where attention was focussed in Restoration playhouses.

Members of an audience are most aggressively visible when they begin to encroach upon the actors' area, the stage. In the private theatres of early seventeenth century London, those who wished to present a fine figure to the world and could afford the extra charge could take a seat on the stage during a performance and share the audience's attention.⁵⁸ Given the emphasis on things visible and the playhouses' encouragements to display, we might expect Restoration theatregoers also to have laid large claims to the actors' territory. Yet the stage restored in 1660 was free of these intrusions, as Sorbière noted.⁵⁹ Those who sought attention found other means to attract it. Samuel Vincent, in *The Young Gallant's Academy*, suggests that to ensure prominence and recognition a Gallant should "advance himself into the middle of the Pit . . ."⁶⁰

However, around 1690, after three decades of an uncluttered stage, the audience returned to the players' space--and with new aggression in their display. Where their predecessors had sat on stools, they stood boldly in view. *A Comparison between the two Stages* tells of Farquhar's

⁵⁸ Thomas Dekker, in *The Gvl's Horne-booke*, in *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Alexander Grosart, 5 vols. (London: 1885), II, 250, offered advice on how best to manage this: "Present not your selfe on the Stage (especially at a new play) untill the quaking prologue . . . is . . . upon point to enter: for then it is time . . . to creepe from behind the Arras, with your *Tripos* or three-footed stoole in one hand, and a teston mounted betweene a forefinger and a thumbe in the other . . ."

⁵⁹ *Relation d'un Voyage*, p. 167.

⁶⁰ *The Young Gallant's Academy* (London: 1674), pp.55-56. This book was largely a revision of Dekker's.

benefit for *The Constant Couple*, when "pit box and stage were so crowded." Other poets had less reason to be pleased at the intrusion onto the stage. Gildon, in the address that prefaced Durfey's *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (London: 1692), wrote of "the Stage's being thronged with Spectators"--much to the detriment of the performance. Prologues and epilogues from 1690 onwards refer frequently to the "beau-crowded stage" and the difficulties under which the actors performed.⁶¹

It is not enough to say that the young men in the audience had reverted to the behaviour of their forefathers. Those who placed their stools on the stage at Blackfriars had done so in a well-defined area and under a theatre administration which encouraged them to do so. Furthermore, the definition of the stage's limits was sufficiently elastic on that early, bare stage to accommodate them without affecting the performance: their behaviour may have disturbed the players, it had not destroyed the play.

100 years later their counterparts walked upon a completely different stage, where differences in staging, personnel and auditorium design caused theatre managers to change their attitudes towards stage seating. With the introduction of scenes, the frames of plays became more strictly defined and thus performances became less forgiving of disruption and intrusion. Management therefore made some attempts to keep the audiences from the stage, both for the sake of the representation and for the security of the performers. They issued proclamations requiring

⁶¹ See the Prologue to Settle's *The Fairy Queen* (1692), Haynes's Epilogue to Scott's *The Unhappy Kindness* (1697), Doggett's Prologue to Wright's *The Female Vertuosos* (1693) and Motteux' Epilogue to Pix's *The Innocent Mistress* (1697).

spectators to keep from the stage. Initially they offered as reasons the danger and difficulty of operating the theatre's machines.⁶² Later they were more direct about their purpose: they aimed to control a nuisance. In 1702 Queen Anne issued a proclamation forbidding stage standing and after that date both playbills and advertisements carried warnings that entry onto the stage was forbidden. Structural changes to the auditorium bore evidence of this policy of separation: the creation of the orchestra and the placing of a row of spikes around the edge of the apron enforced a division between stage and spectators.

These attempts to restrain the audience were bound to fail, for the physical characteristics of Restoration playhouses produced effects quite contrary to this management policy. The design of the theatres invited members of the self aware audience to express themselves within the auditorium. In the later playhouses the decorations were continued from the auditorium up along the stage so that the actors' doors of entrance appeared as continuations of the side boxes; thus actors came on as if from amongst the spectators. The space behind the scenes--the part of the stage that pretends most to truth--became popular as a place wherein to meet the actresses as they really were. The continuities between forestage and auditorium encouraged the audience to usurp the actors' space throughout the playhouse.

Further competition between audience and actors was fostered by the improved status of the latter. Not only did actors begin to style themselves as gentlemen, but the quality of their dress, speech and bearing justified their making such a claim. Thus there developed amongst the most volatile of the self-conscious spectators, growing grounds for

⁶² See Odell, p. 157 L.C. 7/3; Nicoll, p. 30.

rivalry between themselves and the actors. Actors had become worthy of emulation. The behaviour of the different generations of spectators who came on stage was not the same. Earlier audiences assumed a lordly entitlement to reclaim the space they had allowed to their social inferiors, the players; later ones contested the rights to a space clearly defined as belonging to the actors. Contemporaries wrote of spectators "acting" in the players' place, challenging them at their own profession.⁶³ Steele's description of an unscheduled appearance bears many of the marks of a formal affront:

I was the other Night at *Philaster*, where I . . . saw another Person who had the like Ambition to distinguish himself in a noisy Manner, partly by Vociferation or talking loud, and partly by his bodily agility. This was a very lusty fellow, but withal a sort of Beau, who getting into one of the Side-Boxes on the Stage before the Curtain drew, was disposed to shew the whole Audience his Activity by leaping over the Spikes; he pass'd from thence to one of the ent'ring Doors, where he took Snuff with a tolerable good Grace, display'd his fine Cloaths, made two or three feint passes at the Curtain with his Cane, then faced about and appear'd at t'other Door: Here he affected to survey the whole House, bow'd and smil'd at Random, and then shew'd his Teeth (which were some of them indeed very white): After this he retir'd behind the Curtain, and obliged us with several Views of his Person from every Opening.

During the Time of acting he appear'd frequently in the Prince's Apartment, made one at the Hunting-match, and was very forward in the Rebellion.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Lord Brainless*, in Dufey's *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692), is charged with "baulking the Actors entrance" by his frequent appearance on the stage (II, i); *Airy*, in Motteux', *Loves a Jest* (1696), says: "You've been . . . Acting in the Pit, nay on the Stage too" (IV, i).

⁶⁴ *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), II, 434, No. 240.

1.3 *The Pleasure of the Company*

When playhouses encouraged their audiences to look at those about them, the pleasure of the company became one of the attractions of the place. "The Pit or *Parterre*," says Torriano's Italian visitor, "That's the best place for to look upon, the Dukes, Earls, Barons, Knights and Gentlemen, with their Ladies in their Boxes."⁶⁵ Pepys' *Diary* provides any number of glosses on this comment: often the pleasure the diarist derived from watching Charles II in company with his mistresses far outweighed any satisfaction given him by the play.⁶⁶

The pleasure of the company did not consist in its eminence alone: a full house had attractions of its own. Pepys, that most candid of playgoers, allows us to measure the difference that a thronged house made to his enjoyment of the occasion, to the performance of the players or even to his reaction to a play. When *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* was first performed, the house was crowded: "by 2 a-clock, there was 1000 people put back that could not have room in the pit," wrote Pepys. (*Diary*, 6 February, 1668.) The comment is evidence of Pepys' high interest in, and awareness of the number of spectators in the house. The size and splendour compensated him for the disappointing performance. On the other hand, when the company was "little" or "ordinary" the play is usually described as "dull", "sorry" or "mean" Of *The Unfortunate Lovers*, he wrote: "but I know not whether I am grown more curious then I was or no, but I was not much pleased with it; though I know not where to lay the fault--unless it was that the house was very

⁶⁵ Giovanni Torriano, *Mescolantza Dolce de Varie Historette*, (London: 1673), p. 126.

⁶⁶ See the entries for 27 August, 1661, 7 September, 1661, 26 March, 1668, 18 May, 1668.

empty . . ." (*Diary* 7 March, 1664.)⁶⁷ Lord Ashburnham was another who usually noted whether the play he saw was well-attended or no.⁶⁸ The frequent references to attendance in prologue materials show that their attitude was not unusual: the audiences were interested in the number of their fellows. Clearly a full auditorium generated attractions of its own.

Poor houses and dull plays were often found in the summer months, when the law terms had finished, parliament was not in session, the gentry had removed to their estates and the more prosperous part of the town was empty.⁶⁹ Poor plays, under-budgeted productions and untried authors filled in the months until affluence returned.⁷⁰ Actors, too, showed less concern for their undertaking when houses were down: the Duke's company spoiled a performance of *Heraclius* with laughing, backstage noise and a general want of care: "I was ashamed of it and resolve not to come thither again a good while, believing that this negligence, which I never observed before, proceeds only from their want of company

⁶⁷ See also Pepys' entries for 20 October, 1662 1, 5 May, 15 August, 7 November, 12 December, 1667; 2, 14 May, 28, 29 July, 8 December, 1668; 25 February, 1669.

⁶⁸ *Ashburnham MS. 932, East Sussex County Record Office*. He comments on the number of spectators in his *Diary* entries for 14 December, 1686; 3, 11 January, 1687.

⁶⁹ *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, ed. A. R. Hall and M. B. Hall (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965-) VI, 223: "the greater part of polite society goes to the country for the long vacation."

⁷⁰ John Crowne, in the Preface to *Juliana* (London: 1671) writes: "It had the misfortune to be brought into the world in a time when the Dog-star was near his Reign, and my Judges sat in a hot Bath, rather than a Theatre . . . the most candid, as well as the most Illustrious Judges (I mean the Court) were absent. See also Gildon, *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (London: 1698), p. 121: "This particular Play [Scott's *The Mock Marriage*] met with pretty good success, for the Season of the Year."

in the pit, that they have no care how they act." (Pepys, *Diary*, 5 September, 1667.)

Company, or the lack of it could be instrumental in determining whether the diarist stayed to see out a play: "my wife and Mercer and I away to the King's playhouse to see '*The Scornfull Lady*'; but it being now 3 o'clock, there was not one soul in the pit; whereupon, for shame, we would not go in, but against our wills, went all to see *Tu Quoque* again, where there is pretty store of company . . ." (*Diary*, 17 September, 1667.) Pepys' language--"for shame", "against our wills"--shows how coercive a force company could be.

The size and quality of the company might even cause Pepys to alter his opinion of a play, so susceptible was he to the influence of those about him: "I saw *The Impertinents* once more, now three times, and the three only days it hath been acted; and to see the folly how the house doth this day cry up the play, more then yesterday; and I, for that reason like it, I find, the better too." (*Diary*, 5 May, 1668.) The playhouse, it seems, was a convivial place, where a man acted and reacted out of complaisance to the rest of the company.

It is the visible audience which takes most pleasure in its own performance and delights in being witness to the behaviour of those around. John Macky's *Travels* shows how settled the business of audience watching had become for theatre-goers of the 18th century:

The Theatres here differ from those abroad; in that those at Venice, Paris, Brussels, Genoa, and other Parts, you know are composed of Rows of small *Shut-Boxes*, Three or Four Stories in a Semi-Circle with a *Parterre* below; whereas here, the *Parterre* (commonly called the *Pit*) Contains the Gentlemen on Benches; and on the first Row of *Boxes* sit all the Ladies of Quality; in the second the Citizens' Wives and Daughters; and in the third the Common People and Footmen;

so that between the Acts you are as much diverted by viewing the Beauties of the Audience, as while they act with the Subject of the Play; and the Whole is illuminated to the greatest Advantage: Whereas abroad, the Stage being only illuminated, and the *Loge* or *Boxes* close, you lose the Pleasure of seeing the Company.⁷¹

"The Company" which so pleased Macky undoubtedly belonged to the first two classes he mentioned, the Gentlemen and the Ladies of Quality: the visible audience. However, the correspondence between rank and seating was not so close as writers like Macky would have us believe. Note how the author of *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, a highly conservative writer, finds the motley assemblage disturbing the orderliness of his description:

In our Playhouses at *London*, besides an upper Gallery for Footmen, Coachmen, Mendicants, &c. 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 'em. The second is call'd the *Pit*, where sit the *Judges*, *Wits* and *Censurers* 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 distinguisht by the Title of the *Middle Gallery*, where the Citizens Wives and Daughters, together with the *Abigails*, Serving-men, Journey-men and Apprentices commonly take their Places; and now and then some disponding Mistresses and superannuated Poets . . . ⁷²

Mixed playgoing was obviously unexceptional, yet foreign visitors found it one of the most remarkable characteristics of English playhouses. "Ladies and gentlemen . . . in conformity with the freedom of the country sit together indiscriminately," observed Magalotti.⁷³

⁷¹ *A Journey through England*, pp. 109-110.

⁷² *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* (London:1699), p. 39.

Sorbière was less restrained: "Les Meilleures places celles du parterre, où les hommes & les femmes sont assis pesle-mesle, chacun avec ceux de sa bande." ⁷⁴ Henri Misson describes the interaction of the several groups found there: "Men of Quality, particularly the younger Sort, some Ladies of Reputation and Vertue, and abundance of Damsels that hunt for Prey, sit altogether in this Place, Higgledy-piggledy, chatter, toy, play, hear, hear not."⁷⁵

What these visitors failed to notice, shocked as they were at the mixture, but what is made quite clear in *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* is that the audience's acceptance of overt familiarity in the playhouse ran in tandem with its sharp awareness of the considerable social and sexual constraints that applied elsewhere in London. The playhouse offered licence, but only against a background of restraint.

English writers of the period were generally struck by the tension between the freedom with which all people interacted within the playhouses and the clear social distinctions which existed beyond them. Ned Ward, in *The Reformer* describes a "Beau Apprentice"--"A finical Creature that would *Ape* a *Gentleman*, in the Bondage of a Pair of *Indentures*." Such a one "is a great admi[r]er of St.*James's* Park, and the Playhouse . . ."⁷⁶ Motteux' Epilogue to Pix's *The Innocent Mistress* (1697) tells of rich citizens and their wives taking their seats in the boxes each day; the Epilogue to Behn's *The Younger Brother* (1696) speaks of a "Beau of the Exchange" found in a box; the Prologue to Doggett's *The Country*

⁷³ *The Travels of Cosmo the Third* (London: 1821), p. 190.

⁷⁴ *Relation d'un Voyage*, p. 167.

⁷⁵ *Memoirs and Observations*, p. 219.

⁷⁶ E. Ward, *The Reformer* (London: 1700), p. 53.

Wake (1696) decries the presence of Cits in the pit.

When those who are ordinarily passed by without notice suddenly become visible some comment is called for. Similarly, when persons of distinction attempted to disappear from the public view, the world took an interest. Robert Gould remarked on some of the more noteworthy companions of the punks in the middle gallery:

Her *Honour* often, and as oft her *Grace*
Sail hither, Mask'd and Muffl'd in Disguise
And with pert Carriage and their smart Replies
Set all the Men agog, who strait agree
They must of course, be punks of Quality:
.
Withhold, ye Citizens, Your Wives from hence,
If You'd Preserve their Fame and Innocence.⁷⁷

Common to all remarks is the fear of contamination of the visible by the invisible and an indignation that the exclusivity of affluence was being threatened. Samuel Pepys, a man of low birth and high expectations resented the intrusion of citizens upon his notice in the play-house. After a performance of *Sir Martin Mar-all* he wrote:

Here a mighty company of citizens, 'prentices, and others; and it makes me observe, that when I begin first to be able to bestow a play upon myself, I do not remember that I saw so many by half of the ordinary 'prentices and mean people in the pit, at 2s.6d. apiece as now; I going for several years no higher than the 12d. then the 18d. places, and though I strained hard to go in then when I did--so much the vanity and prodigality of the age is to be observed in this perticular. (*Diary*, 1 January, 1668.)

Pepys' fear is that in public--where "they judge all things by appearances"--no differences will be found between himself and his less affluent neighbours.

⁷⁷ Robert Gould, "The Play-House," in *Poems* (London: 1689), pp. 58-59.

It was a holiday crowd that prompted Pepys' observations on the obtrusive prodigality of citizens. When London's less illustrious inhabitants kept out of sight, in the middle and upper galleries, they remained the invisible audience and were welcome to spend their shilling thus. However there were almost always a few of them in the pit. Congreve reports it as a rare triumph that a concert given in the refurbished Dorset Garden was remarkable for there being "not one scrub" present.⁷⁸ Provided their numbers were few, they remained beneath notice when they sat in the pit. But when their presence swelled so as to affect the balance of the seating in the house they disturbed the *arriviste's* enjoyment of his exclusive status:

. . . not so well pleased with the company at the house today, which was full of Citizens, there hardly being a gentleman or woman in the house, but a couple of pretty ladies by us that made sport at it, being jostled and crowded by prentices. (Pepys, *Diary*, 26 December, 1662.)⁷⁹

When the customary balance of the pit was altered in the opposite way, by the presence there of persons of more than ordinary quality, it was interpreted as a mark of particular respect to the house, or to the dramatist. After the first performance of *She wou'd if she cou'd*, Pepys made his way into the press below: ". . . here was the Duke of Buckingham today openly sat in the pit; and there I found him with my Lord Buckhurst and Sidly and Etherige the poett . . ." (*Diary*, 6 February, 1668). The entry records the men in descending order of rank--from Duke through Baronet to Knight and Gentleman--and demonstrates that awareness of rank and degree under which the apparent prom-

⁷⁸ *Letters and Documents*, p. 20.

⁷⁹ See also his entries for 1 January, 1663, 1 May, 1667.

iscuity operated. It was considered significant that someone of the Duke's quality should sit "openly . . . in the pit".⁸⁰ Clearly the great and the mean seldom appeared in the pit: moderate promiscuity only was the norm.

The commingling of English theatre audiences was made more striking by two factors: the free association between the several distinct seating areas of the playhouse and the ease with which spectators moved from one area to another. The backless benches of the pit and the open construction of the boxes made it easy to turn round, to observe others and to enter into conversations with them.⁸¹ The rake of the rear seats in the pit made for a natural continuation between that area and the boxes--indeed, when a substantial audience of affluent spectators was anticipated, several rows of pit seats would be railed into the boxes to increase their capacity.⁸² Nor did the spectators remain seated in their original places. The very programme encouraged them to move about: at the end of each act, when the musicians turned "to tune their Fiddles," the audience prepared "to refresh their hams."⁸³ The ample spaces outside the boxes became a favourite promenading place for spectators: "Coming too soon for the PLAY we took a Turn in the Lobby . . . then we

⁸⁰ In the same way King Charles II showed his approval of Durfey's *Madam Fickle* (1677) by giving it "a particular applause." (Dedication).

⁸¹ See Macky, *A Journey Through England*, p. 110; Misson, *Memoirs and Observations*, p. 219; Pepys, *Diary*, 1 May, 19 October, 1667; 1 April, 1668.

⁸² See G. C. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1966) I, 9; *William Congreve: Letters and Documents*, p. 20.

⁸³ Prologue to *Tarugo's Wiles* (1668).

⁸⁴ Dunton, *The Night Walker*, 3. See also John Dunton, *The Life and Errors of J[ohn] D[unton]*, *Late Citizen of London* (London: 1705), p. ~~Ita~~/X

made up to the Pit . . ."⁸⁴ Encouraged by playhouse design and practice, playgoers assumed a right to move freely throughout the house, regardless of what sort of admission token they held.⁸⁵ Movement magnified the spectators' promiscuity, and in the press and passage of bodies from place to place, each encounter made them still more aware of those about them, the shifting medley of faces in the visible audience.

272.

⁸⁵ So prevalent was the practice that it posed a serious threat to the companies' livelihood. Poets and players registered their complaints against men who used the stage as a means of gaining access to the side boxes from the pit below. See the Prologues to *The Woman Captain*, *The Female Vertuosos*, *The Bath*, the Epilogue to *The Constant Couple* and the Prologue and Epilogue to *The Man's the Master*. The King, through the Lord Chamberlain, issued a proclamation forbidding anyone to enter "the Pit, First, or Upper Gallery, without delivering to the respective Doorkeeper the Ticket or Tickets which they received for their Money paid at the first door." See Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), p. 360.

Chapter II

DEFINING AN AUDIENCE

2.1 The Demography of London

We cannot adequately discuss the playgoers of London unless we take into account, as we have begun to do, the characteristics of the city which housed them. In the late seventeenth century London had a population of some 540,000 souls. The demographer, Gregory King made detailed analyses of the population profile of London.¹ The ratio of women to men was significantly higher in the capital than in the rest of the kingdom. London also had a higher proportion of married couples, many more widows and servants and far, far fewer children. As we might expect, the proportion of persons of quality residing in London was significantly greater than elsewhere. Baronets, Knights, Esquires, Gentlemen and those wealthy enough to be accounted gentlemen comprised over 14% of London's population, according to King. In the rest of England and Wales they made up little more than 7%: the proportion of people of substance in London was twice what it was elsewhere. There was a preponderance both of the wealthy and of young single people in

¹ Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions*, in *The Earliest Classics: John Graunt and Gregory King*, introd. Peter Laslett (Gregg International 1973), p. 35. Modern estimates set the figure a little higher: see D. V. Glass, "Two Papers on Gregory King," in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965), pp. 159-220; E. A. Wrigley, "A Simple Model of London's Importance," pp. 44-55; N. G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, (London: 1955), pp. 496-512; David Ogg, *England in the Reign of James II and William III* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 30-53.

the capital. The capital was a market for the rich. They conducted their business and lawsuits, sought their entertainments and arranged their marriages there. Those less wealthy earned their livings ministering to the needs of the rich and catering to their appetites.²

To see how this outline of London society compares with the playgoing public we need some means of describing the members of that public, a framework within which to locate them. Several offer themselves. The best known is the traditional and hierarchical division of Englishmen into Nobilitas Major; Nobilitas Minor; Citizens, Burgers and Yeomen; and "the fourth sort of men which do not rule . . ."³ This description is essentially a conservative one, by the end of the seventeenth century, even a nostalgic one. It does not represent so much the way in which society was ordered as the way men thought it should be ordered. As a useful taxonomy it has serious limitations. The majority of its categories--Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, Baron--were applicable to only a minute proportion of the population. Moreover, distinctions between Knights, Esquires and Gentlemen had been quite undermined, first by the marketing of knighthoods in the early seventeenth century and then by the resentments aroused against those whose arms were of Cromwell's issue.⁴ Furthermore, this taxonomy was based on land tenure, the ancient source of wealth, power and influence. The emergence of alternative means of assessing a man's worth threatened its authority. Changes that had occurred in the economic organisation of the nation and

² See Gregory King, in Laslett, p. 39.

³ Sir Thomas Smith, *The Commonwealth of England* (London: 1635), p. 66. (Original Edition, 1583.)

⁴ See Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 38-55.

in the patterns of social behaviour by the time of the Restoration meant that a gentleman was recognised not by his acreage, but by what he did with the income from it: status depended on a man's ability to maintain the expenditure and standing expected of a man of gentle birth, and to do so in an accomplished manner.

In economic terms, the definition of a gentleman had shifted from a production-based criterion to a consumption-based one. Traditional classifications were unable to accommodate that large and growing body of men whose professional skills and commercial and administrative talent brought them rewards and influence. Men of no degree, they could match in liberal hospitality and ostentatious display many of those whose names carried title to vast estates. The failure of the traditional descriptions is marked by both social practice and institutional acknowledgement. Civil servants, soldiers, professional men, successful merchants, tradesmen and even actors tended to style themselves gentlemen and adopt dress, manners and language to match. At the same time the Royal College of Heraldry, the office charged with certifying the legitimacy of claims to title, became less rigorous in its investigations: by 1700 it had ceased making its visitations to enroll arms and pedigrees.⁵

These landless gentlemen, "men of a middling sort", whose numbers and influence swelled with time, developed their own sets of hierarchies within their occupational groups.⁶ Soldiers, lawyers and civil servants were ranked and ranged with as much concern for nice distinctions as in

⁵ See Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 43 & n.

⁶ *The World we have Lost*, p. 46. Laslett notes that a man's function had begun to qualify him for gentle status.

any land-based structure. Rank had changed its guises; it had not disappeared. Comparative status between groups--say between churchmen, lawyers and military men--depended on their relative incomes, the rate at which newcomers entered their ranks and on the former status of those who entered the profession for the first time or became aligned to it by marriage. The equivalences were ill-defined, however, and even those who set the respective rates for poll taxes, taxes based on social or professional status, could not consistently determine comparable ranks.⁷

The geopolitics of Restoration England supplies another matrix within which we can locate London's playgoers. Popular rhetoric often turned on the neat division of society into city and town, court and country.⁸ These distinctions had enormous appeal for the writers of prologues and epilogues, for they carried with them a bundle of associations and prejudices. Yet they are the most misleading of classifications. There is no provision within this geopolitical matrix for making distinctions of rank, so that its use confounds Knight and Yeoman, Burgher and Apprentice, Master and Footman. Nor were the categories mutually exclusive: both courtiers and people prominent in town, for example, usually owned sizeable country estates. Furthermore, the divisions were rather more fluid than their use implies. The old city, which consisted of the companies, their offices and freedoms, lost much of its power and exclusivity after the fire. By 1683 London's franchises--privileges or exemptions from ordinary jurisdiction--had

⁷ See David Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 436.

⁸ See *The Humours and Conversations of the Town* (London: 1693) and James Wright, *Country Conversations* (London: 1694). See also P. F. Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: the Beginning of the English Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1969).

been taken over by the King: "the city" had begun to represent a different type of interest and influence.⁹ The Court, too, underwent changes, losing ground to the growing departments of state. By the early eighteenth century, "the Court was dwarfed in size of personnel employed by the Admiralty, the War Office and the Treasury . . ."¹⁰ William and Anne abolished a number of personal and minor offices. There was evidence of a growing distinction between servants of the King and servants of the state in the growth of the civil service at the expense of the household.¹¹

There is still a further qualification that must be put on the use of this particular matrix. Three of its terms--City, Court and Country--were well established. They represented distinctions about the means whereby wealth was acquired and held, and influence maintained. The economic basis of these distinctions was the means of production. Members of the emergent category, the Town, could not be discussed in terms of rank, wealth, politics or origin. Theirs was a group defined by consumption: the source of their wealth mattered less than the goods they purchased with it. What they shared was a demonstrated willingness to sample the opportunities afforded by that recently redefined entity, London.

⁹ Geoffrey Holmes, "Post-Revolutionary Britain and the Historian," and W.A. Speck, "Conflict in Society," in *Britain after the Glorious Revolution 1689-1714*, ed. Geoffrey Holmes (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 1-38, 135-54; T. F. Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London: Edward Arnold, 1951), pp. 303-08.

¹⁰ John Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725* (MacMillan: London, 1967), p. 108.

¹¹ *The Growth of Political Stability*, pp. 112-25.

There was, then, no adequate model of social description available to seventeenth century commentators. What they had to say about social relations and processes becomes admissible as evidence only if we bear in mind that the order, definition and completeness that their comments seem to imply are illusory, and never more so than when they refer to that "middling sort of people" with gentle aspirations and tastes.

2.2 *Royal Spectators*

Under any form of social ordering, the most illustrious Londoner who ventured into the playhouses was the Monarch. Charles II's predecessors had taken an interest in drama but, as Killigrew told Pepys, none had attended performances in public playhouses:

Then, the Queen seldom and the King never would come; now, the King not only for state, but all civil people do think they may come as well as any.¹²

Charles II was extensively involved with dramatists, players and theatrical affairs in general. Between his return in 1660 and his death in 1685 he witnessed at least 280 performances in public playhouses, and a further 125 at court.¹³ The high proportion of public attendances more than justifies Killigrew's claim that the times had seen a change in Royal theatregoing habits. Charles saw on average 16 plays each year

¹² Pepys, *Diary*, 12 February, 1667. Henrietta saw plays at Blackfriars 1634-39 (J. Q. Adams, *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1917), pp. 65, 75-76.

¹³ Nicoll, Appendix B, pp. 343-385 Harvard Theatre Collection, Eleanore Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage (1660-1700)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1932), Appendix D; J. H. Wilson, "Theatre Notes from the Newdigate Newsletters," *Theatre Notebook*, 15 (1961), 79-84 and "More Theatre Notes from the Newdigate Newsletters," *Theatre Notebook*, 16 (1962), 59.

throughout his reign. In the early years he was a frequent visitor, often going to the play twice in a week. In October 1667, for example, he was present at seven performances, in November, at nine, and in 1674 he saw 16 plays in a two month period.

Despite Charles' high rate of attendance, and his extensive theatrical involvement, Restoration public playhouses were not transformed into playthings of the court.¹⁴ If anything the familiarity between the monarch and his subjects resulted in the playthings of the court becoming open to the public: the remote and ritualised entertainments at Whitehall came to be seen as events of common interest. Masques, and even plays performed in the theatre at court had traditionally aimed as much to display the prince as they had to entertain him. Plays presented there were *coram rege*--an entertainment in the King's honour: the audience attended his person rather than the play performed for him. After the Restoration it soon became impossible to maintain the distinction. Charles' appetite for theatrical entertainments so outran his ability to pay for them that, when Scaramuchio was engaged to perform at court in 1675, the King made arrangements to offset the cost. Andrew Marvell reports:

Scaramuchio acting dayly in the Hall at Whitehall, and all Sorts of People flocking thither, and paying their Mony as at a common Playhouse; nay even a twelve-penny Gallery is builded for the convenience of his Majesty's poorer

¹⁴ A brief account of Charles's involvement and influence may be found in James Sutherland, "The Impact of Charles II on Restoration Literature," in *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature: Essays in Honour of A. D. McKillop* (Rice University: Univ. Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 251-63.

¹⁵ *The Complete Works*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), II, 320. Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage*, Appendix D, pp.294-297, presents several sets of unpaid theatre accounts.

Subjects.¹⁵

This invitation to the public to invade the Royal domain--"Scandalous, & never so before at court Diversions," in Evelyn's words--quite contradicts any image of a public whose entertainment had been taken by the crown: playhouse promiscuity had been carried to Whitehall.¹⁶

Charles' attendance record shows him a man with a voracious appetite for drama, and for novel entertainments, yet also as one well pleased to see a familiar play several times over. In fact, he preferred tested pleasures over novelty, as we can see by comparing his attendance at the rival houses. He was a more frequent visitor at the Duke's company's house than at that of his own troupe, which presented a more varied programme. In 1667-68, for example, he saw his own company give 19 performances of 17 plays at Bridges Street, while he saw their rivals at Lincolns Inn Fields give 29 performances of only 12 plays. Clearly variety ran a poor second to established excellence, however familiar it had grown. Amongst the King's favourites were Dryden's *The Maiden Queen*--which the King "grac'd . . . with the Title of "His play"--*Sir Martin Mar-all*, *The Tempest*, *She Wou'd if She Cou'd*, *The Citizen Turn'd Gentleman*, *Epsom Wells* and *Sophonisba*.¹⁷ Each furnished him with entertainment on some half a dozen occasions in its opening season. Some of these plays, together with others such as *The Indian*

¹⁶ Evelyn, *Diary*, 29 November, 1675. K. M. P. Burton repeats the discredited image in *Restoration Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 63.

¹⁷ Dryden, Preface to *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen*, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg Jr. (Berkeley, CA: Univ. California Press, 1956-1981), IX, 115.

Emperor, The Island Princess, Love in a Tub and *The Man's the Master*, proved durable as well: the King renewed his acquaintance with them several times in later seasons.

Those who reported on his playgoing paid close attention to the company he kept. In the early years of his reign he was often accompanied by his mistress, Barbara Palmer, later Dutchess of Cleveland. It was not until December 1666 that his Queen, Catherine of Braganza, saw her first public performance with her husband.¹⁸ The record of her subsequent attendance suggests that she had a strong preference for comfort: she saw nine plays in the well-appointed playhouse in Bridges Street, but visited the poorer house in Lincolns Inn Fields only once during the same period. In the years after the fire she was present at more than forty performances in London's public playhouses, many of them towards the end of her husband's reign, when the pattern of Royal playgoing changed.

In the last years of Charles' reign, his overall theatre-going declined. The political pressures engendered by the exclusion crisis and its aftermath kept him from his more public pleasures as he struggled to manage a parliament that had greatly changed since it had welcomed him back twenty years earlier. During the last six years of his reign he managed to see only 30 plays in London, sometimes attending but one or two in a year. These same political pressures also fuelled playhouse disturbances, which reflected poorly on the authority and dignity

¹⁸ The Queen appeared with Charles at Bridges Street in that month to signal complete Royal approval for the reopening of the playhouses after the recent disasters that had befallen the capital. For comments on the impropriety of opening in such a season of calamities, see Pepys, *Diary*, 15 October, 1666; CSPD Charles II, Vol. 179, p. 136.

of the King under whose protection they operated.¹⁹

The King's example encouraged other Royal figures to attend public playhouses. Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, attended Lincolns Inn Fields when she visited England in 1661. Her son, Prince Rupert, was often seen there too.²⁰ James, Duke of Monmouth maintained his own troupe of players outside London, and used the playhouses in the capital to publicise his standing as the Royal favourite and Protestant darling.²¹ Dukes and Princes lent costumes to players, Queens took instruction from actresses, and Princesses imitated their performances to the delight of the court.²²

Royal interest in the stage also encouraged ambassadors--who represented their Royal masters and who were often Princes themselves--to divert themselves in the public theatres. Count Cominges, Louis XIV's ambassador, made himself familiar with the range of London's theatrical

¹⁹ See Henry Somerset, Marquis of Worcester, HMC 12th Report, Appendix IX, Beaufort MSS., p. 87; Henry Sidney, *Diary*, I, 237, 279-80; J. H. Wilson, "Theatre Notes," pp. 80-81. His rate of playgoing would have been lower still, were it not for the five plays he saw in the final month of his life, when the cares of Kingship had abated a little.

²⁰ Pepys, *Diary*, 2 July, 1661, 17 August, 1661; Evelyn, *Diary*, 18 October 66; Ravenscroft, Dedication to *Mammamouchi, or The Citizen Turn'd Gentleman* (London: 1672): "tho' of thirty times it has been acted, you seldom fail'd to honour it with your presence."

²¹ For an account of Monmouth's troupe, see Sybil Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1939), pp. 35-37. For his attendance, see Pepys, *Diary*, 17 November, 1662; Wilson, "Theatre Notes," p. 79; HMC Buccleuch-Queensberry MSS., II, 108; HMC 15th Report, Appendix VII, p. 108. For an account of a bizarre reaction to his entrance into the playhouse, see Evelyn, *Diary*, 16 September, 1685.

²² Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 21, 29; Benjamin Bathurst, *Letters of Two Queens* (London: Robert Holden, 1924), p. 61; HMC 12th Report, Appendix VII, Le Fleming MSS, p. 70; E. Curll, *The History of The English Stage* (London: 1741), p. 17.

entertainments and conditions when he visited in 1666, and reported them back to his Royal master.²³ Franz Paul de Lisola, envoy from the Emperor, Ferdinand III, visited the public playhouses, as did Cosmo III and Baron Schwerin.²⁴

Not all ambassadors adopted the promiscuous playgoing habits of the English court: those from Holland and Sweden saw only plays performed at Whitehall.²⁵ For most foreign ambassadors however, plays at public playhouses figured quite remarkably amongst the entertainments they enjoyed. Russia's Prince Potemkin, the Moroccan ambassador, Ahmet Hadu, and the ambassador from Bantam generated great excitement when they appeared in the playhouses. The curious took themselves to the theatre to see these foreign prodigies; the censorious passed judgement on their deportment there; journalists recorded details of their visits for those unable to attend, and theatres advertised their intended presence to secure good houses.²⁶ When it came time to depart, the objects of this attention made their farewells to the town from their seats in the playhouse.²⁷

²³ Jusserand, "A French Ambassador's Impressions," pp. 786-96.

²⁴ See Pepys, *Diary*, 12 August, 1667; *The Travels of Cosmo III*, pp. 109-94, 304, 347-48; *The Journal of Baron von Schwerin*, cited in *The London Stage*, p. 216.

²⁵ See Richard Bulstrode, *The Bulstrode Papers*, (London: 1879) I, 8; Ethel Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935), pp. 337-38.

²⁶ See Katherine Noel, HMC 12th Report, Rutland MSS, Appendix V, p. 63: "I have seen but one play since I came, but I must go to one to see him [Potemkin] . . ." Evelyn, *Diary*, 24 January, 1682; *Impartial Protestant Mercury*, 20-24 January, 1682; *True Protestant Mercury*, 25 February - 1 March, 1682.

²⁷ "Theatre Notes," p. 80.

Succeeding representatives of foreign powers followed their lead, and acquiesced in English playgoing habits. Lewis, Prince of Baden, Czar Peter the Great, the Prince of Parma and ambassadors from Venice and France all had their attendance at the public playhouses recorded and advertised to Londoners.²⁸ Drury Lane served as the point of common contact between Whitehall--the embodiment of the political life of the nation--and London--the embodiment of its social life. Drury Lane, and not Whitehall, was where the representatives of foreign powers came into contact with and made themselves known to the people of England.

No succeeding monarch showed so great an interest in the stage as Charles had done. Certainly none was so regularly seen in the public playhouses. His brother, James, the first of the Royal family to attend after the Restoration, came nearest to matching him.²⁹ As Duke of York, and patron of one of the companies, he appeared frequently at plays, usually in the company of his Duchess, Anne Hyde, or of the King. However his accession marked a significant change in the pattern of Royal playgoing. No longer did visits to public playhouses outnumber performances given at court: of the 54 plays seen by James II or his Queen during his three year reign, 37 were presented at Whitehall. So predictable a schedule altered the character of performances at Whitehall. No longer were they "scandalous" and attended by "all sorts

²⁸ *Post Boy*, 16-18 December, 1697; *Post Boy*, 13-15 January, 1698; *Post Man*, 8-10 February, 1698; *Lyme Letters 1660-1760* (London: Heinemann, 1917), p. 209; *Post Man*, 24-26 February, 1698; *Post Boy*, 2-5 July, 1698; Sybil Rosenfeld, "Dramatic Advertisements in the Burney Newspapers 1660-1700," *PMLA*, 51 (1936), 149; F. Colsoni, *Relation du Voyage de L. Soranzo & G. Venier* (London: 1696), p. 6; *Post Boy*, 30 May-1 June, 1700.

²⁹ Pepys, *Diary*, 6 June, 1660, identifies the first royal visit to a playhouse after the Restoration.

of people". They had been effectively institutionalised.³⁰

The character of Royal playgoing in the public playhouses changed too. Charles II had paid his visits to Drury Lane and Dorset Garden as a Monarch taking his ease amongst his subjects. Under James II those visits became minor occasions of state. On 13 of their 17 visits the Royal couple sat together, with the Queen's attendants seated separately. They displayed both unity and exclusivity to the London audience, a contrast to Charles' easy mingling with his favoured subjects.

The changing Royal attitudes to the stage are apparent in the playgoing of James' daughters, Mary and Anne. As young princesses they performed in amateur productions at court and both maintained their interest in acting over the years.³¹ Yet both of them married men for whom the playhouses held few attractions. Shortly after Mary's marriage to William of Orange, one observer wrote: "This day the court began to whisper the prince's sullenness, or downishness, that hee took no notice of his princesse at the playe and ballet."³² William's lack of interest affected Mary's playgoing both at court and in public. After her accession Mary saw only 21 plays and was never accompanied by the King on any of her 12 visits to public theatres. When she died William's intermittent playgoing almost ceased entirely.³³ Her sister,

³⁰ "Every weeke there are plays at court," wrote the Earl of Middleton in December, 1685. *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, p. 269. A Lord Chamberlain's order-- L.C. 5/147 f. 24--refers to the preparations being made for plays to be acted at court every week.

³¹ See HMC Fleming MSS., 12th Report, Appendix VII, p. 70; *Hatton Correspondence*, Camden Society, N. S., 22 (Westminster: 1878), p. 155; *Letters of Two Queens*, pp. 61, 111-12; *The Restoration Court Stage*, pp. 180-200; *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 92.

³² *The Diary of Edward Lake*, ed. George Elliot, *Camden Miscellany I*, Camden Society, 39 (Westminster: 1847), p. 9.

Anne took over whatever vestigial interest royalty retained in the stage. It was she who visited the public playhouses, commanded performances and attended gala events.³⁴ The change was apparent in the public playhouses: the Royal Box became known as the Queen's Box--"le même balcon où sa Majesté se place quand elle y assiste."³⁵

The pattern is a consistent one. Royal attendance at public playhouses did not outlast with any vigour the King who had established the practice. Where once the entire Royal family was numbered amongst the most devoted of playhouse habitués, in the fifty years following the Restoration the occasions on which any member attended in public were reduced to a handful. Anne was, in effect, the last representative of the Stuart passion for the stage. Many apparently insignificant details point to the removal of the monarch from the public playhouses and to the passing of the familiar relationship that had once existed between the King and his servants. Such details include the increased formality of the arrangements made prior to a Royal visit: the means of transportation and arrival were confirmed well in advance, the programme was carefully examined.³⁶ Even the accounts presented to the Lord Chamberlain were more carefully prepared.

³³ The sole exception occurred when he attended Motteux' *Europe's Revels for the Peace* (1697), to celebrate his birthday. See Boswell, p. 105.

³⁴ Sybil Rosenfeld, "The Restoration Stage in Newspapers and Journals," pp. 450-51; Wilson, "More Theatre Notes," p. 59; Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs* 6 vols. (Oxford: 1857), IV, 180.

³⁵ F. Colsoni, *Relation du Voyage de leurs Excellences*, p. 6.

³⁶ Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, II, 413.

Administrative changes like these heralded an alteration in the way in which the English stage served the English Crown. The earlier Stuarts had regarded the stage as a multiform thing: part entertainment, part instrument of policy, part source of flattering and delusory myths. It retained these attributes after the Restoration, but they were somehow domesticated by the personal attention the stage received from Charles. Charles was interested in, and encouraged all aspects of play writing and play production. By the end of William's reign the stage had lost this special relationship, and had dwindled to a mere piece of the apparatus of statecraft, hedged about by safeguards and protocols. Playgoing had become a monarch's duty, not his pleasure, and the stage had to look elsewhere in search of patronage as powerful as it had once enjoyed.

2.3 *The Court*

Besides the Royal family there was in London a relatively small group of nobles and great Officers of State whose presence in the playhouse could attract almost as much interest as the King. These numbered no more than 200 families but their influence on the stage was out of all proportion to their numbers.³⁷ They were, in a sense, an extension of the monarchy. They attended upon the King's person, contributing to the extravagance and ceremony through which he displayed his authority and they administered the business of government, thereby carrying out the expression of his will. This group was the court, "the most polite that

³⁷ See Gregory King, "Scheme of the income and expence of . . . England," in *The Earliest Classics*, p. 48.

³⁸ John Dennis, "A Defence of Sir Fopling Flutter," in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Giles N. Hooker, 2. vols. (Baltimore: Johns

ever England saw."³⁸

Royal theatre accounts make it clear that those courtiers in personal attendance upon the King and Queen--officers of the bedchamber and maids of honour--accompanied them on their visits to the playhouses. Rochester, Bulkley, Godolphin, Progers, Froude and Ailesbury shared the King's box of an afternoon when he sat amongst his subjects. Those same courtiers and their fellows came in a private capacity, too.³⁹ Indeed evidence of a substantial interest in theatrical affairs became something of a prerequisite for those who sought the Lord Chamberlain's office. In the first decade after the King's return, the Earl of Manchester, who was then Lord Chamberlain, often found himself called upon to intervene in theatrical matters. Later holders of the office, men like the Earl of Mulgrave, the Earl of Dorset and the Earl of Sunderland had gained enough experience of theatrical affairs from their days as minor courtiers to enable them to carry out their duties with confidence and understanding.⁴⁰

Outside the King's personal attendants in the Royal household there was a consistent record of attendance amongst the great Officers of State. General Monck, later Duke of Albemarle and Captain-General of the forces, had entertained the King with a play shortly after his

Hopkins, 1939), II, 243.

³⁹ See Pepys *Diary*, 18 October, 1662, 12 August, 12 September, 1667. Dennis, "The Decay and Defects of Dramatic Poetry," in *Works*, II, 277; *The Memoirs of Thomas Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury*, 2 vols. (Westminster: 1890) I, 356, 390-91; HMC 5th Report, Appendix I, pp. 156, 158.

⁴⁰ HMC 7th Report, Appendix I, pp. 285-86, and HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS., II, 99-119. See also John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1948).

⁴¹ HMC 5th Report, Appendix I, p. 200.

return from exile.⁴¹ Clarendon, the Lord Chancellor, commended playgoing in *A Dialogue . . . Concerning Education*. The Earl of Shaftesbury had good reason to know much of playhouse matters from the attacks he endured in prologues, epilogues and plays. Lord Arlington, The Earl of Lauderdale and the Duke of Buckingham--other members of the Cabal--also had their presence in the playhouse noted.⁴² Danby, Charles' Treasurer, maintained an interest in the stage that lasted beyond his political life and continued into his years as an elder statesman.⁴³ The Duke of Ormond, Lord Steward of the Household and later Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, lent his support to heroic drama, Italian comedy, and ballet.⁴⁴ Several of Charles' Secretaries of State--Sir Joseph Williamson, Sir Leoline Jenkins, Sir William Coventry--were well acquainted with playhouse matters, as were successive privy councillors and senior officers of the Treasury and Navy.⁴⁵ Henry Sidney, Lord Romney, kept himself informed of events in the playhouse.⁴⁶ The great Trimmer, Lord Halifax,

⁴² Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *A Dialogue . . . Concerning Education*, in *A Collection of Several Tracts* (London: 1727); *The Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle*, ed. W.S. Clark II, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), I, 102; Huntington Library, Hastings MS., HA 7657: "Upon monday last the Duchesse of Newcastls play was Acted in the theatre in Lincolns Inne field the King and the Grandees of the Court being present and soe was her grace and the Duke her husband."; Pepys, *Diary*, 1 May, 1667; 6 February, 1668; 29 August, 1668.

⁴³ Dryden, Dedication to *All For Love*, in *Works*, XIII, 3. As Lord Latimer, Danby accompanied distinguished foreign princes to the playhouses: see *Post Boy*, 16-18 December, 1697.

⁴⁴ See Pepys, *Diary*, 11 May, 1668; *The Diary of Robert Hooke 1672-1680*, ed. H. W. Robinson and Walter Adams (London: Taylor, 1935), 5 May 1673; *The Bulstrode Papers*, I, 174.

⁴⁵ *Letters Addressed from London to Sir Joseph Williamson*, ed. W.D. Christie, 2 vols., Camden Society, N. S., 8, 9 (Westminster: 1874), I, 87, 94, 100, 109, 146, 180, 184; HMC 7th Report, Appendix I, p. 288; Pepys, *Diary*, 15 April, 1667; For Privy Councillors and Navy and Treasury officials, see below.

received accounts of the latest performances from his brother Henry Saville.⁴⁷ The Earl of Anglesea noted the state of playhouse affairs.⁴⁸

For men such as these, playgoing was an acceptable, even a necessary part of public life. It was both a diversion and a duty, as we see from the correspondence of Henry Beaufort, Marquis of Worcester. In one letter he complains to his wife of having to sit up late watching a play performed at court for the entertainment of a visiting prince; in another he writes that he is "living a mighty drudging life," and that affairs of state hinder his visiting the playhouse.⁴⁹

These nobles were men of affairs, who carried their interests with them throughout London and who regarded the playhouses as fit places in which to pursue important matters and to further desirable associations; less important spectators accepted that the great ones had a right to behave in this way.⁵⁰ They received other marks of respect, too. The play might be held up pending their arrival; the pit would rise to greet them; servants of the house were expected to show the usual marks of respect, and doff their hats to them.⁵¹ The playhouse was a public place

⁴⁶ *Diary of the Times of Charles the Second*, I, 134, 207, 237, 279, 286; Huntington Library MS. St. 26, f. 27.

⁴⁷ *Savile Correspondence*, ed. W.D. Cooper, Camden Society, 71 (Westminster: 1858), p. 4.

⁴⁸ HMC 13th Report, Appendix VI, p. 270.

⁴⁹ HMC 12th Report, Appendix IX, Beaufort MSS., pp. 65, 66, 87.

⁵⁰ See *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, ed. Andrew Browning (Glasgow: Jackson, 1936), p. 136 for a playhouse conversation between the diarist and the King; See also *The Travels of Cosmo the Third* pp. 347-48, for an account of a similar playhouse conversation between Cosmo de Medici and the Duke of Norfolk. Pepys, *Diary*, 18 February, 1667, tells of Sedley's disturbing a performance with his conversation.

⁵¹ See Pepys *Diary*, 2 July, 7 September, 1661; 4 February, 1667. LC 5/152, p. 163 contains an order requiring musicians to doff their hats.

where due deference was paid to those entitled to receive it and where the concerns of ranking persons often took precedence over the action on the stage.

Several of the nation's great nobles made contributions to English drama beyond putting in appearances at the playhouse and accepting the dedications of plays. They left their mark on the history of the English stage by writing plays for performance. Some, like William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, helped to preserve links with the earlier traditions of native drama. Others extended these traditions and established new standards and tastes in the writing and performance of plays. Sir Robert Howard, James Howard and the Earl of Bristol affected the development of several of the characteristic forms of Restoration drama.⁵² A very high percentage of the plays first performed in the years 1660-1670 were written by courtiers or men of noble birth.⁵³ The impact of two courtiers in particular, Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, patentees of the theatre companies, shows how great was the court's contribution to the restored stage.

Nothing better illustrates the role of the playhouse in the life of a public figure than the case of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery. As Lord Justice of Ireland and Lord President of Munster, his duties were oner-

Theatre closures sometimes resulted from a failure to grant the great ones their due respect: see Wilson, "Theatre Notes," p. 82; HMC 13th Report, Appendix, V, pp. 464-65.

⁵² See R. D. Hume, "John Dryden, James Howard and the Date of *All Mistaken*," *Philological Quarterly* 51 (1972) 422-29; John Loftis, *The Spanish Plays of Neo-Classical England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 81-2.

⁵³ Other courtier-playwrights included Sir William Killigrew, Henry Howard, Henry Cary, Viscount Falkland, Sir Robert Stayplton, Sir William Berkeley.

ous and time-consuming, but when severe gout forced him to lay them aside he employed his painful leisure writing plays.⁵⁴ Despite his disavowing any hopes of place or profit from his writing (such men customarily claimed mere private interest as their motive), there was no simple split between the actions of a public and the compositions of a private man. At least two of his plays were written at the King's express command; he offered his work to the Duke of Ormonde, his Lord Lieutenant, for comment and advice; and he used the performances of his plays as occasions for cementing political ties and demonstrating family strength and solidarity.⁵⁵

Many courtiers allowed their interest in drama to extend beyond the public playhouses and the productions mounted there. The great ones of the nation took part in private productions of theatrical entertainments formerly seen on the public stage, or in lavish productions in the Court theatre at Whitehall.⁵⁶ The most splendid of these was the 1675 production of Crowne's *Calisto*, in the theatre at court. The levels of

⁵⁴ Dryden, Dedication to *The Rival Ladies*. in *Works* VIII, 96.

⁵⁵ See *A Collection of the State Letters of the Right Honourable Roger Boyle . . .* (London: 1742), pp. 38-39, 65-66; E. Budgell, *Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of the Illustrious Family of the Boyles* (London: 1737), p. 91. See also, *The Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle*, I, 43, 102, 103; CSP Ireland, 1666-1669, Vol. 321, f. 175; Pepys, *Diary*, 19, 23 October, 1667; Richard Boyle, *Diary*, Vol. IV, cited in *The London Stage 1660-1800 A Calendar of Plays*, Part I: 1660-1700, ed. William Van Lennep and Emmett L. Avery (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965), p. 149.

⁵⁶ See *Letters of Two Queens*, pp. 111-12. *Carolina; or, Loyal Poems* (London: 1683), pp. 190-94 contains poems and prologues delivered at a performance of *The Conquest of Granada*, by the Countess of Rutland and her family, at Belvoir. Sir Richard Bulstrode, in *The Bulstrode Papers*, I, 19, noted a "very private" performance of *The Indian Emperour*, "by foure persons of quality," at court. A Manuscript cast list for *Horace* indicates a performance with a cast of courtiers. See Katherine Philips, *Horace* (1667), Harvard Library MS. /v

extravagance reached, the sumptuousness of all scenes and costumes, the meticulous care with which it was organised and the extent of courtier involvement in the whole rendered it beyond emulation by the public playhouses. These mark for us the difference between the Court and London stages.⁵⁷ The court stage contributed to that magnificence and ceremony, the excesses of which sustained the mystique of Kingship. The London stage was designed for the entertainment of London dwellers and recognised in the court a part of the audience it sought. If the playhouse responded to the influence and example of Whitehall it did so as all else in London did: with an insatiable appetite for splendour, but prevented by prudence and limited funds from matching the levels of Royal extravagance.

It was not the greatest, but the youngest of Charles' courtiers who had most influence on the stage and upon the tastes of Restoration audiences. In 1664 Sedley, Waller, Buckhurst--later the Earl of Dorset--and Godolphin combined their talents and ideas, and adapted Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* to suit English tastes. From their collaboration and their association with other young and talented nobles--Rochester, Buckingham, Mulgrave, Scrope, Saville, Guy, Middleton, Bab May and Fleetwood Shepherd--grew that group known variously as the Merry Gang, the Court Wits or the Great Wits.

These men saw themselves as responsible for informing and shaping the public's taste and for ensuring that plays of merit were well received.⁵⁸ By writing prologues and epilogues, or by attending in

⁵⁷ See *The Restoration Court Stage*.

⁵⁸ See J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, pp. 142-73; Rochester, "An Allusion to Horace" and "Timon," in *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. D. M. Vieth (New Haven: Yale Univ.

force at the opening, they advertised their approval of a play. Their social standing and combined literary reputations assured any play a good reception.⁵⁹ Their joint condemnation guaranteed a play's failure, as Edward Howard discovered when Buckingham organised a clique to cry down *The United Kingdoms*.⁶⁰ *The Rehearsal*, produced in 1671, is nicely illustrative of their aims and methods. The play was a collaborative effort, criticising what its authors saw as the worst excesses of the stage. Its aim was to reform the vitiated taste of the audience--it "opened their eyes, and taught them to Despise what before They rashly admired."⁶¹ The action of the play was supported by the strong and visible presence of Buckingham and his fellow courtiers in the playhouse.⁶²

The immediate impact of this group of playgoers was strong, but it was relatively short lived. By 1680 the court wits no longer existed as a coherent and powerful group, which could exercise its influence over the audience's tastes. Men from noble families, like George Granville and Charles Boyle, helped to make up the company at Will's Coffee house.⁶³ Dryden and Wycherley were still the prized dining companions of

Press, 1966) p. 126.

⁵⁹ Pepys describes their convergence in the pit at the end of the first performance of *She wou'd if she cou'd*, (Diary, 6 February, 1668); Dennis describes the effect they had in "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry" and "The Decay and Defects of Dramatic Poetry," *Works*, I, 829; II, 277.

⁶⁰ Samuel Briscoe, "The Publisher to the Reader," in *A Key to "The Rehearsal"* (London: 1704).

⁶¹ Dennis, II, 277.

⁶² See the Prologue to *The Rehearsal*, ed. D. E. L. Crane (Durham: Durham Univ. Press, 1976) Tom Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (London: 1784), III, 290.

⁶³ See George Granville, William Burnaby et al., *Letters of Wit, Politicks, and Morality* (London: 1701).

the Earl of Ailesbury, Algernon Sydney, and Lord Leicester.⁶⁴ Noblemen like Lennox and Beauclerk, Latimer and Scarsdale, made their presence in the playhouses felt by actors, authors, and audiences alike. They still had power to cause a piece to be hissed from the stage.⁶⁵ Influential ladies of the court--like Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, or the Duchesses of Portsmouth or Richmond--could still so sway a crowd as to make or mar a poet's third day.⁶⁶ However, such arbitrary exercises of power represented but poor remnants of the authority this group had once enjoyed. After 1680 few plays were written by noble authors, and there existed no group of nobles with well-publicised connections to the stage. The sense of collaboration and purpose amongst the wits of the court was no longer to be found, and with it had disappeared both the force of their example and authority, and the old intimacy between them and London's poets and actors.

The decline in Royal attendances may have signalled the end of the more obvious and structured forms of court involvement with the stage, but it had the paradoxical effect of increasing, for a time at least, the importance of the residual unstructured noble presence in the play-

⁶⁴ See Ailesbury, *Memoirs*, p. 342-44.

⁶⁵ *The Letters of John Dryden*, ed. C. E. Ward (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 11-12, 52-53, p.133.

⁶⁶ Advertisement, *The Victim; or Achilles and Iphigenia in Aulis* (London: 1714): "The Dutchess of Marlborough, who at that Time bore an irresistable Sway, bespoke the Comedy then in Vogue . . ." Wilson, "Theatre Notes," p. 80: "The Duchesse of Portsmouth to disoblige Mr Settle the Poet carryed all the Court with her to the Dukes house to see Macbeth . . ." See also Lee, Dedication to *Theodosius* in *The Works of Nathaniel Lee* ed. Thomas B. Stroup and Arthur L. Clarke, 2 vols (New Brunswick, NJ: Scarecrow, 1954-55), II, 237-38.

⁶⁷ See Dennis "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry", *Works*, I, 289-295.

house.⁶⁷ Although they were no longer so closely associated with the court, they became obliged, as an extension of the Royal presence, to take on some of the duties Royalty had once fulfilled.

From the last years of Charles' reign then, the great nobles of the realm entered into a more passive but still influential relationship with the playhouses. Where once they had been active as playwrights, critics, amateur actors and producers, they now accepted dedications, relieved penurious dramatists, bespoke performances, supported the third days of professional writers and financed theatrical experiments as Charles II had done before.⁶⁸ These functions may seem to be less intimately connected with the stage than their earlier ones, but with the loss of Royal support, it was these roles which made for a continuing and vigorous theatrical tradition.

No matter what influence the great nobles had on the literary tastes of the audience, they always affected its behaviour. They were seldom inconspicuous. After the King they were the centre of attention within the visible section of the playhouse. As a consequence there developed a set of decorums governing their appearance and behaviour in the playhouse. Their places, companions and reactions to the play were matters of interest to the rest of the spectators. The company they kept there was always the particular subject of speculation and comment. The liaisons of courtiers were invariably well-known. John Evelyn is able to list, with confidence, those who had taken actresses as mis-

⁶⁸ Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset* (Urbana, IL: 1940), Part 4; Lee, Dedication to *Theodosius; A Comparison Between the Two Stages* ed. Staring B. Wells (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1942), p. 10: "the assistance [the actors at Lincolns-Inn-Fields] receiv'd from some Noble Persons did 'em eminent Credit . . ." See "The Confederates: or the first Happy Day of the Island Princess," in *Poems on Affairs of State* (London: 1703), II, 248-50.

tresses or wives.

Women now . . . permitted to appeare & act, which inflaming severall young noble-men & gallants, became their whores, & to some their Wives, wittnesse the Earl of Oxforde, Sir R: Howard, Pr: Rupert, the E: of Dorset, & another greater person than any of these ⁶⁹

The appearance of husband and wife together in the playhouse, however, signalled chastity, family solidarity, and continuing marital affection.⁷⁰ The arrival of an entire family group might herald an impending marriage or some other event of equal significance to its members.⁷¹

Such uses of the playhouse imitate the example set originally by royalty, who had long used plays at court to celebrate occasions of state. Charles' visits to the London houses, and his willingness to let his affections be seen there ratified them as venues in which such displays were appropriate.⁷² The playhouses furnished the court with a wider and more resonant arena than Whitehall. Courtiers who attended entered into a community of Londoners, where they could test and express their affiliations publicly under a minimum of constraints.

One corollary of the attention paid to associations and liaisons between persons of quality was that the playhouses provided well-born women with excellent opportunities to display a degree of independence.

⁶⁹ Evelyn, *Diary*, 18 October, 66. We might add to his list Charles Howard, and Lords Rochester, Mohun and Deincourt.

⁷⁰ See Pepys *Diary*, 12 June, 1663; 4 February, 1667; 19 October, 1667.

⁷¹ See B. L. Stowe MS. 744 f. 81 on the marriage of the Earl of Arran and Lady Mary Stuart; M. A. Shaaber, "A letter from Mrs Barry," *The Library Chronicle*, The University of Pennsylvania, 16 (1950), 46, on the marriage of Baron Baltimore to Lord Litchfield's daughter.

⁷² See Pepys, *Diary*, 20 April, 1661; 3 April, 1665; 12 February, 1667; 21 December, 1668.

Women like Dorothy Temple, Elizabeth, Countess of Rochester, Mary, Countess of Dorset, and Frances, the Dowager Countess of Dorset attended without husbands, sons or other male escort.⁷³ They usually went in a small party, making arrangements well in advance--it became one of the duties of the young to help make up the numbers and thereby assure propriety.⁷⁴ Sometimes a man would be included in the party as host and protector but often he would be required for nothing other than to set the ladies down in his coach.⁷⁵ The party might arrive late, but only in the certain knowledge that places had been kept for them and that they need suffer no indignities by sitting below their station. From the forefront of their boxes they looked out over the pit with faces "devilishly painted."⁷⁶ Alice Hatton shows how fine was the calculation of social obligations which went into the making up of a party:

I was last night (with Lady Longuevil and Lady Arundel) at ye Princess's, and Lady Long: was so kind as to offer to carry me to ye Oppera to day with her and Lady Portland; but I was so unfortunate as to be engaged to go to Lady Denbighs to see ye famous Mrs Binges dance, or else I should have bin glad to have waited on Lady Long: tho I had seen it before and think it very silly.⁷⁷

⁷³ Katherine Philips, uncatalogued letter to Dorothy Osborne, Harvard Theatre Collection; HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS., II, pp. 22, 23, 100; Pepys, *Diary*, 12 June, 1663; 7, 16 November, 1667; Settle, *Dedication to Ibrahim* (1677).

⁷⁴ HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS., II, 100.

⁷⁵ James Brydges, Huntington Library MS. St. 26, f.29.

⁷⁶ Pepys, *Diary*, 3 December, 1668; 5 February, 1667.

⁷⁷ *Hatton Correspondence*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson, Camden Society, N. S. 23, 2 vols. (Westminster: 1878), I, 245.

Younger women often went with only a single companion. The practice gave ample scope for collusion and deception. Katherine Grey called for Lady Alethea Compton, "upon the pretence of going to a play, but, with her own consent, carried her to Sr Edward Hungerford's, wher she was married to his eldest son . . ."⁷⁸ Thus, even when she went with another woman as companion, a woman might attempt to secure her reputation with the aid of a mask. Pepys reports being

. . . vexed all the while with two talking ladies and Sir Charles Sedley; yet pleased to hear their discourse, he being a stranger. And one of the ladies would, and did sit with her mask on, all the play, and, being exceeding witty as ever I heard woman, did talk most pleasantly with him; but was, I believe, a virtuous woman, and of quality. He would fain know who she was, but she would not tell . . .
(*Diary*, 18 February, 1667.)

If her virtue was at all suspect, at least her identity was safe.

The habit of playgoing was strong in great families. The Butlers, the Montagues, the Belasyses, and the Herberts all frequented the playhouses of London.⁷⁹ Noble children were visitors to the playhouses from an early age, when they would be taken there by family, friends or retainers.⁸⁰ As young men and women they attended freely, without supervision, and would send to their relatives at home accounts of the latest entertainments they had seen. Indeed, it was counted one of the minor duties of the sons and daughters of the great families who lived in

⁷⁸ *Hatton Correspondence*, I, 143.

⁷⁹ HMC Ormonde MSS. IV, 90 *Diary of the Times of Charles the Second*, I, 279-80; Pepys, *Diary*, 12 June, 1663; 28 December, 1666; 4 February, 1667; 12 August 1667; 11 May, 1668; *Diary of Richard Boyle*, Vol. IV, cited in *The London Stage*, Part I, pp. 74, 75, 149; *The Bulstrode Papers*, I, 324; Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, I, 34-35.

⁸⁰ Pepys *Diary*, 8 January 1661; Sir Edward Dering, *Notebook*, B. L. Add. MS. 33892, f. 598.

London, to send news of the stage to those who remained on the family estates. The correspondence of the Norths, the Hattons, the Noels and the Berties is rich in accounts of plays, playhouse anecdotes, snatches from prologues and promises to send the latest song.⁸¹ What is most remarkable about this body of correspondence, dispatched to families all over England, is neither its volume nor its accuracy; rather that even at so great a remove from the playhouse, the audience was still as much the object of attention as the play itself: "The King and Queen were there and all the whole court went to see it . . ." "the house as full as ever I saw it . . ." "everybody is sending to keep places . . ." "The Jenkins ladies will be there . . ." "I chanced to sit next to Mr Lane," "I mett one of the godly party," "I never see the towne fuller. For I was to see the new play, the Spanish frier, and there was all the world . . ."⁸² On the farthestmost estates of England, the visible audience still dominated the stage.

The early fostering of playgoing habits and the maintenance of an extensive network of communication produced a generation of individuals who sustained their interest in the stage over several decades. Men like Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Henry Sidney, Lord Romney, Peregrine Bertie and Theophilous Hastings remained playgoers throughout their lives.⁸³ Whole families, like the Howards of Norfolk, built up

⁸¹ See Peregrine Bertie, HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MS., II, 100-119; Bodleian Library, North MSS. c. 10; *Hatton Correspondence*, I, 121-143.

⁸² HMC Rutland MS., II, 100, 104; *Hatton Correspondence* I, 21, 240

⁸³ Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, pp. 21-22; CSPD William and Mary, 1690-91, p. 312; Henry Sidney, *Diary*, II, 146, Huntington Library MS. St. 26, f. 29; Huntington Library, Hastings MS. HA. 7654; HMC Rutland MSS., II, 21-155, *passim*; .

over succeeding generations something of a tradition of association with the stage.⁸⁴ The patterns are decidedly similar to that of the greatest family, the Stuarts. The similarities reinforce our earlier conclusion, that such continuities at the highest levels established an audience sophisticated in its tastes and sensitive to the traditions of the stage.

Let us recall our original profile of London's population. The metropolis contained a higher proportion of the wealthy, the young, the unmarried and their servants, than did the rest of England and Wales. The playhouse audience was not so much a miniature of this population as it was an extension of it--the quintessence of London. Those demographic factors which distinguished London from the rest of England were present in the playhouses, raised several degrees. If the proportion of the wealthy was high in London, it was higher in the playhouses. If London had a great many young single people, the playhouses had correspondingly more.

2.4 *Gentle Playgoers*

Beneath the nobility in rank, but no less certain of their place or worth were those men who from time to time, left the management of their estates and the administration of local government and justice to tend to their affairs in London. Playgoing was one of the allowable diversions of a visit to the capital for such sober and virtuous country gentlemen as the Verneys, Sir Edward Dering, Thomas Isham and Sir

⁸⁴ *The Travels of Cosmo the Third*, p.347; Wilson, "Theatre Notes," p. 80; Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, II, 315; HMC 5th Report, Appendix I, p. 200; *The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, p. 181.

⁸⁵ M. M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, IV *passim*; Sir

Richard Legh.⁸⁵ Improvements in roads and transportation encouraged these gentlemen to make their visits more frequent, good accommodation in London persuaded them to stay longer.⁸⁶ Thus there existed a considerable body of men and women whose houses and land were not in London, yet who spent long periods there, playgoers who daily gave the lie to the popular image of the country gentleman who came to town but once in fifteen years.

The companies relied heavily on the attendance of gentlemen up from the country. Managers who wished to attract substantial houses from gentle families come to town, filled their winter programmes with successful stock plays, extravaganzas and pieces by established authors. Plays which had the misfortune to be brought on to the stage in summer, suffered. During that season estate management called the gentry from town and the closure of Parliament and the courts removed any need to remain there. The prefaces and dedications to Gould's *The Rival Sisters* (1696), Dennis' *A Plot and No Plot* (1697), and Powell's *Imposture Defeated* (1698) all lament the summer's legacy: a thin town and an alteration in audience composition. The lean summer months were largely left to untried writers and low-budget miscellanies.

Edward Dering, *Diary*, B. L. Add MS. 33892, ff. 598-641; *The Journal of Thomas Isham of Lamport*, trans. Robert Isham (Norwich: 1875), App. H; Evelyn Legh, Lady Newton, *Lyme Letters*, and *The House of Lyme* (London: Heinemann 1925).

⁸⁶ Lawrence Stone, "The Residential Development of the West End of London," pp. 177-86; Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *A Dialogue . . . Concerning Education*, in *Tracts*, p. 330: "we have left the university at 17 years of age: and whatsoever you resolve to do, London must then be visited, and some time spent there in order to whatsoever is to be done afterwards."

Those who visited London used often to mention their playgoing in journals, diaries, account books, and letters home. Men like Sir Samuel Tuke, Richard Fanshawe, and Sir Thomas St. Serfe, who spent a good deal of time in London, were sufficiently interested in the stage to write for the public playhouses. Others, who saw less of the capital, found ways of keeping up with theatrical news, importuning friends and relatives who remained in town for news of the playhouses.⁸⁷ Their interest in the stage created a market which booksellers moved quickly to meet. Writers of newsletters began to include tales from the playhouses amongst their accounts of scandals, riots and intrigues.⁸⁸ Play books and volumes of criticism were advertised and dispatched to gentlemen on their estates.⁸⁹ *The Gentleman's Journal*, a monthly miscellany, "by way of Letter to a Gentleman in the Country," promised to keep its readers informed of "news, history, philosophy, poetry and the stage." It offered its country audience the first regular play notices and reviews.

Many polemical works were published whose arguments presupposed some familiarity with recent plays or at the very minimum, a general acquaintance with theatrical conditions. Their intended reader was the country gentleman. Marvell's *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, a book read, "from the King down to the tradesman," is quite specific in its refer-

⁸⁷ Sir Edward Harley, HMC 14th Report, Appendix II, Portland MSS., III, 293, 337, 357; Nathaniel Wanley, in B.L. Harleian MS. 6430, ff. 21, 23; Etherege, *Letters*, pp. 96, 129, 185-6, 201; *The Portlege Papers*, ed. Russell J. Kerr and Ida Coffin Duncan (London: Cape, 1928).

⁸⁸ J. H. Wilson, "Theatre Notes," pp. 79 ff.

⁸⁹ *The House of Lyme* p. 269; Sir Thomas Knyvett B.L. Stowe MSS. 747, f.72.

⁹⁰ Gilbert Burnet, *A History of His Own Time*, ed. Osmund Airy, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1897-1900), I, 240. See also *Hatton Correspondence*, I, 128

ences to plays.⁹⁰ The self-styled "Country Gentleman" who wrote *Marriage Asserted*, cited Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* in support of his argument, claiming:

. . . a more gentle Satyre against this sort of folly, no Pen can write, where he brings the very assignations that are commonly used about the Town upon the Stage; and to see both Boxes and Pit so damnably crowded, in order to see themselves abused, and yet neither to be angry or ashamed, argues such excess of stupidity . . .⁹¹

In books like *The Humours and Conversations of the Town and Country Conversations*, the force of the argument depends on the reader's familiarity with the playhouse scenes described. Yet despite the attention such books give to the evils and impertinencies of the playhouses, they invariably accept plays as fitting diversions for gentlemen come up to town.⁹²

If land was the economic basis of the gentle status these men enjoyed, then leisure--the means to live without manual labour--was its social manifestation.⁹³ But the privileges that accompanied gentle status were justified only by the way in which that leisure was occupied in profitable and laudable pursuits. A gentleman's time could well be taken up in estate management and hospitality when he was in the country; when he came to town his aim should not be mere diversion, but litigation, advice, and politics--business. Business brought him to town, business dominated his time there and business it was that called

⁹¹ William Seyman, *Marriage Asserted* (London: 1674), p. 76.

⁹² See *The Humours and Conversations of the Town* (London: 1693), p. 106; James Wright, *Country Conversations* (London: 1694), p. 14.

⁹³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), pp. 21-36.

him away again. Entertainment was ever a luxury, sometimes a vice. "A peece of a play I have seen," wrote a busy Richard Legh, "and that's all I intend at this time."⁹⁴ The need to achieve some balance between the demands of business and the attractions of playgoing is the theme of several writers. One of the characters in Clarendon's *Dialogue* asks:

Colonel, why did you . . . so much commend to your Disciples the Custom of seeing Stage-Plays, as if it were a commendable Exercise; methinks not restraining them from it, is Liberty enough in all Conscience, there needed to be no Encouragement to so vain an Expend of Time, which many Men doubt whether it be lawful.⁹⁵

The reply acknowledges the need for temperance, but adds that playgoing, properly considered, can help to relieve minds from the burden of weighty affairs:

I invite my Friends thither, when they are vacant from the more important Employments, the Seasons of the Theatres being at those Hours when the Mind most desires relaxation . . .⁹⁶

Gentlemen were exhorted not only to moderate their playgoing, but to be seen to do so. Their presence in so public a place was held to act as an encouragement, to those of lesser rank and income, to pursue entertainments they could ill afford.⁹⁷

Hum / ⁹⁴ *Lyme Letters* p. 66. See also *The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, / I. 1. 1. / 2, p. 181: "The Duke of Albemarle carryed me this afternoone to the play, which I had not had leisure to take the diversion of for some time."

⁹⁵ *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 343. See also *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* (London: 1699), p. 52.

⁹⁶ *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 346.

⁹⁷ See *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 343: "[Playgoing is] a great Unthriftness, and therefore not fit to be countenanced by Authority . . ."

Members of Parliament were particularly susceptible to such arguments for the exercise of restraint. Three months after the fire of 1666 John Milward noted in his diary:

This day at my coming in the House it moved that plays might be tolerated and acted in common theatres, and whether any members of the House of Commons should be admitted to go to acts of the playhouses, but it was not resolved.⁹⁸

The matter merited discussion, the more so as parliamentarians, the representatives of the nation, were well known as playgoers. From Pepys we learn of visits paid by several including those of his cousin, Roger Pepys, Sir Theophilous Jones, Sir John Chicherley, and Colonel Breames⁹⁹ Richard Legh and his parliamentary friends attended when they came to London.¹⁰⁰ Correspondence of the Harley family tells of visits made by Sir Edward and Andrew Marvell. Sir Edward Dering mentions his visits as does Sir John Reresby.¹⁰¹ Sedley, Sir Robert Howard and Waller all wrote for the stage. Sir John Coventry was another parliamentarian who had good reasons to be aware of the condition of the stage: he was ridiculed in Buckingham's *The Country Gentleman*. Members of the House of Commons would come in parties to the playhouses when they had finished

⁹⁸ *The Diary of John Milward, Esq.* ed. Caroline Robbins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 498.

⁹⁹ *Diary*, 27 January, 1669; 6 September, 1661; 11 December, 1667; 7 February, 1668.

¹⁰⁰ *Lyme Letters*, p. 36; *The House of Lyme*, p. 240. Legh was the / Rom
 Rom/ author of The Friendly Vindication of Mr Dryden from the Censure of the / Ital
 Ital/x Rota (Cambridge: 1673).

¹⁰¹ HMC 14th Report, Appendix II, Portland MSS., III Sir Edward Dering *Diary* B.L. Add. MS. 33892, ff. 598-641; *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*.

¹⁰² Pepys *Diary* 2 November 1667.

transacting affairs of state for the day.¹⁰² We may guess that many parliamentary playgoers would have helped make up that party which, in 1670, successfully opposed the imposition of a tax upon the theatres.¹⁰³

Another group concerned to use their leisure profitably, and yet who still enjoyed visiting the playhouses, were members of the Royal Society. A good many of the Society's Fellows and Officers wrote plays--Buckingham, Sprat, Tuke and Dryden for the public stage, Evelyn, Aubrey and Timothy Clerke for friends to read in their closets.¹⁰⁴ Others took a more practical interest in the stage: Wren designed the Sheldonian and Drury Lane theatres, and is credited with Dorset Garden too; John Ogilby was granted a patent for the erection of a theatre in Ireland; Hooke interested himself in theatre machinery and the effects it produced on the stage.¹⁰⁵ The diaries of Pepys, Evelyn and Hooke offer evidence that many more Fellows of the Society were playgoers: Abraham Hill, Sir Jonas Moore, John Hoskins, Flamsteed, Sir John Cutler, Sir Charles Scarborough, and Theodore Haak.¹⁰⁶ Of the 200 or more who were Fellows in 1671, at least one in three is known to have had some association with the playhouse, including several who would later hold high office in the Society.¹⁰⁷ Men with talents and attitudes as diverse

¹⁰³ *Parliamentary History of England*, ed. W. Cobbett (London: 1810), IV, 456.

¹⁰⁴ Pepys, *Diary*, 5 November, 1665; John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1898), II, 333-39; John Evelyn, Letter to Viscount Cornberry in *Diary and Correspondence*, ed. W. Bray, 4 vols. (London: 1850), III, 150-152; Pepys, *Diary*, 5 November, 1665, 13 February, 1667.

¹⁰⁵ Hamilton Bell, "On Three Plans by Sir Christopher Wren," *Architectural Record*, 30 (1913), 359-369. Aubrey *Brief Lives*, II, 101-02; *The Diary of Robert Hooke*, Jan. 1, 1675/76.

¹⁰⁶ Hooke, *Diary*, 25 June 1675; 3 June 1676; 6 December, 1672.

as William Petty, Gregory King, John Locke, Sir Isaac Newton and Anthony Wood attended, read, recommended, criticised and gossiped about plays.¹⁰⁸ The playhouses not only supplied entertainment to frivolous courtiers, they also appealed to the best and most discerning minds of the time.¹⁰⁹

Time was the major constraint that affected the attendance of these men of affairs. Playgoing, in moderation, was a pleasant entertainment, such as might take a man out of himself; if excessive, it was a vain indulgence. A play was something to be enjoyed as time allowed, not something undertaken out of a sense of duty. Nobles, and even Monarchs at times felt obliged to grace the playhouses with their presence; gentlemen, never.¹¹⁰ This casual attitude to playgoing permeates their correspondence. They mention their visits to the theatre as adjuncts to other interests and activities in town, but seldom give the name of the play. They relate interesting gossip from the playhouses, not for its own sake, but only as it affects their opponents and associates.

¹⁰⁷ An account of early membership appears in Michael Hunter, "The Social Basis and Changing Fortunes of an Early Scientific Institution: An Analysis of the Membership of the Royal Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 31 (1976) 9-114. Sir Joseph Williamson, Lord Brouncker, Samuel Pepys, Sir Robert Southwell--playgoers all--became presidents of of the Society.

¹⁰⁸ *The Petty Papers*, II, 6; Gregory King, "Expenses of my Own Family," in *The Earliest Classics*, p. 250; J. Harrison and P. Lazlett, *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 29; P. Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, p. 206; Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford*, ed. Andrew Clark, Oxford Historical Society 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), II, 405-06.

¹⁰⁹ C.f. L. C. Knight, "Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth," in *Explorations* (London: Chatto, 1945), pp. 146-149.

¹¹⁰ The sole exception to this principle occurred when the gentry, out of duty, attended plays put on at court to celebrate a Royal occasion.

Playgoing was part of a gentleman's recreation:

As I look upon the Theatres amongst the Conveniencies and best Divertisements of *London*, so I am solicitous that my Friends in the Country refresh themselves with the proper and commendable Recreations of the Country . . .¹¹¹

Provided he did not attend so often as to attract notice, his visits to the play were an allowable, enjoyable and unexceptional diversion.

2.5 *Young Gentlemen*

When gentlemen visited the playhouse they went there assured of their status, their worth and of the respect due to them. Younger men, their sons, attended under no such assurances. The playhouse became an arena in which they competed for recognition, vied for precedence, contested boundaries and generally presented their credentials to the world for its inspection. It was where new wealth challenged ancient pedigree, inherited acres felt the threat of proven ability and a fine suit coupled with an easy assurance and good acquaintance seemed to carry all before it. *The Town Adventurer*, a piece of contemporary fiction, shows how town life had developed principles of social ordering that turned many of the old rural certainties upside-down:

Altophil's equipage was a little scandalous for the Town, for though he was valued in the Country by those that knew where his *Pastoral Mannors* lay, and how much he would have *per annum*, yet in the City where they judge all things by appearance, he was like to find no more respect then what his outside procured him, except his Friend had always like a Herald proclaimed him the Heir to such an Estate.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Clarendon, *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 346.

¹¹² Don Francisco de Quevedo, Junior, *The Town Adventurer. A Discourse of Masquerades, Playes &c.* (London: 1675), p. 21.

The rival claims of estate and equipage were loudest in a society which judged all things by appearance. The conflict most affected those young men who, in 1660, had a new future before them. They were the spiritual heirs of the Restoration Settlement, a generation of war orphans with nothing in their education or experience to prepare them for the change in spirit which transformed the nation on the return of Charles II. For Clarendon, writing from exile, their extravagance and folly were more deserving of compassion than contempt: they had good affections,

. . . but had been from their entering into the world so corrupted with that excess and other licence of the time, that they made only much noise . . .¹¹³

They were drawn to London by its promise of opportunity. Some came, blessed with substantial allowances, to learn there those civil habits and that politeness which a country life, with its want of company, could not teach.¹¹⁴ Others sought positions and preferment, hoping that the restored Monarch would reward them for their father's loyalty or grant them the recognition due their own merits. They came, too, to a matrimonial market-place, where the timely capture of an heiress could relieve a younger brother's penury or repair the ruins of a spent estate.

Their presence in large numbers in London generated a new form of energy and excitement.¹¹⁵ Never before had a generation with so little

¹¹³ Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The Life* (London: 1843), p. 1000.

¹¹⁴ C.f. *Petty Papers*, II, 40-42.

¹¹⁵ King gives population estimates for 1696 which show that 50% of Londoners were aged 20 or under, 28% were "Batchelors" and 28.5% "Maidens."

power, wealth and authority commanded so much attention. In part their notoriety was stimulated by the Monarch's association with the young, with the men of mirth.¹¹⁶ But it arose more from the readiness with which they adapted themselves to learning and defining the ways of the town: therein lay the source of the fascination they exercised and the compelling figures they cut. The town provided them with opportunities. And as people sought to portray and define the town, it was to its younger inhabitants that they turned. Before long images of them and their behaviour had been created and broadcast in plays, lampoons and satires. These images were recorded in such a way as to epitomise the distinctive features of town life--extravagance, ostentation, conviviality and modernity, combined in a sometimes dangerous mixture.

For many, London was personified by its rakes, gallants, fops and beaux, whose restless movement, short tempers, extravagant dress, and loud voices were displayed to perfection in that ideal environment, the playhouse. In that competitive arena, if prologue evidence can be relied on, they attracted the attention they sought. The image of the playhouse audience that the prologues supply is one dominated by youth. Of a sample of 100 prologues and epilogues performed between 1660 and 1700, over 80% make reference to the wits, gallants, fops, and braves--men who by dress and behaviour were numbered amongst the young.¹¹⁷ Elsewhere in society they exercised less authority; in the playhouses,

¹¹⁶ J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits*, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ From a random sample of prologues and epilogues listed in Danchin, *Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration (1660-1700): A Tentative Checklist* (Nancy: Publication de l'Université de Nancy II, 1978). See also Wiley, *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, p. 173. Wiley notes that some 56% of all occasional material referred to the dress of the man of fashion.

however, they appear as a powerful force, capricious and self-obsessed, but with an incontestable ability to determine the fate of a play. This power accounts for much of the attention they received from those who wrote for the stage.

Yet for all the persistence and consistency of these images, they did not accurately portray the young men whose presence had inspired them. Not even in the playhouse did the deportment of youth match its depiction. First, the playhouse was not exclusive, and made no distinctions in the quality of the young men admitted there:

The *Play-house* is free for entertainment, allowing Room as well to the *Farmer's Son* as to a *Templer*.¹¹⁸

Second, many of those young men from good families who did attend had little in common with the creations of the satirists and the stage.

The literary accounts of playhouse youth need to be tempered by the attendance records of those whose presence is seldom mentioned because their behaviour was so unexceptional. The young sons of the Verney, Harley and Harbord families are typical of those who attended without incident or ill effect.¹¹⁹ Thomas Oxinden and Jeffrey Boys thought the playhouse a fit place in which to meet and entertain relations and family friends.¹²⁰ Francis North, a law student like Boys, did not regard the playhouse as incompatible with his studies.¹²¹ Edward Southwell

¹¹⁸ *The Young Gallant's Academy*, p. 55.

¹¹⁹ *Verney Letters*, IV; HMC 7th Report Appendix, I, Verney MSS., pp. 464, 465, 468, 473; HMC 14th Report Appendix II, Harleian MSS. I; Pepys, *Diary*, 1 April, 1662.

¹²⁰ B. L. Add. MSS. 28005, f.159 G. J. Gray, "The Diary of Jeffrey Boys of Gray's Inn, 1671," *Notes and Queries*, 159, (1930), 452.

¹²¹ Bodleian Library, North MSS. c. 10 ff. 42-43.

received his father's advice on plays to see and read.¹²² The families' easy acceptance of their playgoing is evidence that the activity was considered a harmless one, and not likely to bring them into disrepute. This counters not only the image of young playgoers as rakes and rioters, but also that other spectre, so often invoked by the stage's opponents, of tender youth exposed to corruption, debauchery and profanity in the public playhouses.¹²³

The attention focussed on the excesses of the young has had the unfortunate effect of obscuring both their economic importance and their influence on the reception of plays. Whatever their social origins, these young pretenders to gentility had both the leisure to attend often and the means to afford it.¹²⁴ They lived free from the pressures, responsibilities and memories that restricted their fathers, yet laid claim to the same privileges. If that was, "an age of Pleasure, and not of Business," as Dennis claimed, it was their example that made it so.¹²⁵ That they attended the playhouses, and in large numbers, is beyond dispute. They were particularly in evidence in its most visible part: the pit. That part of the house, said Misson, was occupied by, "Men of Quality, particularly the younger sort . . ."¹²⁶ Yet what is not

¹²² See Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (London: 1892), pp. 224-26. See also B. L. Egerton MS. 1628.

¹²³ See *The Occasional Paper Number IX* (London: 1698), p. 14; George Ridpath, *The Stage Condemn'd* (London: 1698), p. 81.

¹²⁴ Alan Everitt, in "Social Mobility in Early Modern England," *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), pp. 56-73 uses the unlovely phrase "pseudo-gentry" to cover the ambiguous status of members of this group.

¹²⁵ Dennis, "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry," in *Works*, I, 294.

¹²⁶ *Memoirs*, p. 219.

always clear is the worth of this large young presence to the theatre companies.

The stage seldom acknowledged their presence with thanks, as it did the attendance of their fathers. Evidence of their contribution to company coffers is often indirect: their worth can be inferred from those prologues spoken when many of them had unexpectedly removed themselves from the town. Their disappearance during summer was part of the annual restructuring of the audience. Because it was predictable, the companies could plan for it, so that the only sufferers were those poets unfortunate enough to have their plays mounted in that lean time. However, when external events called the young men away during the profitable winter months, the resulting disruption to the customary balance of the audience caused great concern. Prologues and epilogues from 1672, when many of London's young playgoers were involved in the wars against the Dutch, show the playhouses seeking alternative support from the city to compensate for their lost audiences.¹²⁷

Evidence suggests that young playgoers' power to decide the fortunes of a play increased over the years. As the court's influence in securing the good reception of a play declined, the younger critics attempted to fill its place. The source of their power lay in their numbers and in their unpredictability. A playwright could have hopes of success if he or she obtained from sufficient of them, their good opinion and voices. The problem, of course, was how to ensure these. A

¹²⁷ See Pierre Danchin, "Le Public des Theatres Londiniens," II, 876; He cites the Prologue and Epilogue to *The History of Charles the Eighth of France*, the Prologue and Epilogue to *Marriage a la Mode*, and the Prologue and Epilogue to *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*. See also Bodleian Library, Ballard MS. 33, f.102, on the unusual presence of Beaux at an entertainment during the war of 1697.

skillful prologist might so manage their affections that, if they would not actively support the play, they might at least allow the rest of the audience that opportunity. Alternatively a poet could seek to secure support for a play before it opened. The Induction to *The Man of Newmarket* (1678) stresses the advantage held by a poet whose friends had read the play beforehand.¹²⁸ *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* also takes notice of the fact that prior reading could aid the reception of a play.¹²⁹

However the practice of offering plays for prior reading was not always to the benefit of poet or stage. Dennis deplored the rise of "upstart groups"--those who previously had no influence in the play-houses. He resented too, the way they enlarged their interest by forming "Theatrical Caballs".¹³⁰ *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* noted the animosity caused by rival factions of supporters and detractors. George Granville counselled young poets against offering their friends play manuscripts to read, lest these same friends attempt to secure themselves reputations as wits by damning the play beforehand.¹³¹ It seems that there was considerable reluctance to allow the young and fickle members of the audience to obtain any more power than they had already.

¹²⁸ See also the Epilogue to *The Amorous Old Woman* (1674).

¹²⁹ See Sybil Rosenfeld, "Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration Period," pp. 144-45.

¹³⁰ Dennis, "The Causes of the Decay and Defects of Dramatick Poetry", in *Works*, II, 276.

¹³¹ *Letters of Wit, Politicks, and Morality*, pp. 237-38.

Since playgoing was often a pasttime of youth we might expect students to be amongst the spectators. Those who read law at the Middle and Inner Temples in London were often to be found in the playhouses of an afternoon. Jeffrey Boys, Francis North--later Lord Keeper Guilford--and John Lauder recorded their visits.¹³² We may add to their number those many dramatists who threw over their legal training for the allure of the stage. Etherege, Congreve, Southerne, Shadwell, Ravenscroft, Higden, Burnaby and Wilson are amongst those whose sometime enrollment at the Inns of Court earned those schools reputations as nurseries of wit.

The link between the templars and the stage was institutionalised in the celebrations known as the revels, which took place at All Hallows and Candlemas. Elias Ashmole records the renewal of the practice at All Hallows in 1660:

This day was kept solely at the Middle Temple and after the auncient manner. The Lord Chancellor, Judges and Sergeants that were of the Society dined in the Hall, after dinner they had a play, viz. *Wit without Money*.¹³³

The Old Lawyer in Clarendon's *Dialogue* admits: "I have sometimes found my self obliged upon some Festival Occasions to be present at those Plays . . ."¹³⁴ Such institutional links, however tangential they may

¹³² See "The Diary of Jeffrey Boys," Bodleian Library, MSS. North, c. 10, ff. 42-43; *The Journals of John Lauder Lord Fountainhall*, ed. Donald Crawford (Edinburgh: University Press, 1900), pp. 174-175.

¹³³ *The Diary and Will of Elias Ashmole*, ed. R.T. Gunter (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), p. 76.

¹³⁴ *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 344; John Oldmixon, *Reflections on the Stage* (London: 1699), p. 69, tells of Judges calling for *Love for Love* to be performed. Charles Burney, B. L. *Theatrical Register*, f. 87, notes that the practice was renewed in 1697.

appear, allowed the stage to forge an important and continuing contact with men of influence and with those who would later become influential.

The link between the stage and the capital's institutions of learning had its counterpart in the visits that London's players made to the Oxford and Cambridge during the universities' annual celebrations.¹³⁵ These rare offerings from London were the only exceptions to the general rule that London's theatre companies did not tour after the Restoration. The companies, with an eye to profit, both present and future, were prepared to travel out of town to gain the custom of students. During the lean summer months there was good money to be had from a visit to the colleges. It was also considered that, in later years when their purses were fatter, former students might remember the attractions of their youth, and visit their old acquaintance whenever affairs brought them to London.

The university performances were high occasions for the students.¹³⁶ The plays came embellished with prologues and epilogues written for the students and were altered to include topical references to university events. The students for their part looked forward to the players' visits, flocked excitedly to see them, and responded to their efforts with shouts and cheers.¹³⁷ Although a university audience was

¹³⁵ See Sybil Rosenfeld, "Some Notes on the Players in Oxford, 1661-1713," *Review of English Studies*, 19 (1943), 366-75.

¹³⁶ See Sybil Rosenfeld, *Strolling players and Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939). For discussions on George Jolly and his strolling players, see Nicoll, pp. 305-316, and Hotson, pp. 167-196.

¹³⁷ Amongst Dryden's occasional pieces are a series of prologues and epilogues composed especially for these visits; The Morrice Entering Book, P. f. 580 (Dr Williams' Library) notes how several of these performances were received; Verney Letters, IV, 379-81, contain correspondence which gives some sense of how keenly the visits were looked

viewed as an unsophisticated one according to London standards, students at the universities were not unused to theatrical entertainments.¹³⁸ They took part in amateur performances of suitably chaste Latin plays as part of their education.¹³⁹ Some authorities recommended that the practice be extended to include plays in English as well, in order to introduce, "an Assurance and Confidence of Speaking with that Leisure and Tone of pronunciation that is decent and graceful . . ."¹⁴⁰

Given this encouragement, it was not uncommon for students to attend the public theatres when the opportunity arose.¹⁴¹ Pepys records meeting a party of his fellow Cambridge collegians in the playhouse one afternoon.¹⁴² Foreign students, too, paid their visits to the playhouses when they came to London.¹⁴³ The playhouses were widely recognised as places where young men of good education might find suitable entertainment.

forward to; Wood, in *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, I, 406, tells of students "taking ill c[o]urses" in their excitement.

¹³⁸ Dryden, Letter to Rochester, in *Letters*, pp. 7-11.

¹³⁹ Cosmo de Medici attended one when he visited Cambridge: see *The Travels of Cosmo the Third*, p. 229.

¹⁴⁰ Clarendon, *A Dialogue in Tracts*, p. 327; see also *The Petty Papers*, II, 6.

¹⁴¹ *The Autobiography of Sir Robert Sibbald* (Edinburgh: 1833), pp. 14-15.

¹⁴² *Diary*, 25 November, 1661; 2 April, 1662; 2 January, 1664.

¹⁴³ The attendances of Thura, and Jaques Theirry and Will Schellink are noted in Ethel Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935), pp. 339, 333-34.

2.6 Professional Men

Previous categories of playgoers had one thing in common: leisure.

Professional men, who wanted for estates, had to spend much of their time exercising their skills and talents. Yet they made their visits as often and as publicly as any others. Lawyers, doctors, civil servants and the like aspired to gentle status and therefore adopted, whenever possible, the marks of gentility. One of these was to spend time sitting conspicuously in the playhouse. They were encouraged, too, by habit and example. They had seen plays in their days as students, and often returned to the playhouses after they had become practitioners, an example to succeeding generations of students.¹⁴⁴

The attendance of those who had once trained for and now practised their professions was neither infrequent nor insignificant. The entire family of John Turner, Sergeant at Law, were keen playgoers. The plays they saw at the Middle Temple formed but a small part of their theatrical diet. Other legal men like Edmund Warcup, a magistrate, Henry Moore, and Pepys' cousin Roger were amongst those who continued, as professional men, the play-watching habits they had acquired as law students.¹⁴⁵ Some of those who were foremost in their professions also had a keen interest in the stage. Chancellor Jeffries was a strong supporter of plays and kept William Mountfort as a member of his household. On one occasion he had the comedian imitate the mannerisms of

¹⁴⁴ *Post Boy*, 30 October-2 November, 1697: "There was Yesterday a very great Feast in the Temple, there being present the High Honourable the Lord Chancellor, with Divers of the Judges; after Dinner there was a Play Acted." See also Pepys, *Diary*, 2 February, 1663.

¹⁴⁵ "The Journals of Edmund Warcup," ed. Keith Feiling and F. R. D. Needham, *English Historical Review*, 40 (1925), 235-60; Pepys, *Diary*, 2 February, 1663, 27 January, 18 February, 1669.

leading lawyers for the amusement of his guests.¹⁴⁶ Sir Heneage Finch, sometime Solicitor-General, was another leading lawyer who for many years maintained an interest in the stage.¹⁴⁷

Other professional groups contributed like numbers to the ranks of London's playgoers. Doctors like James Pierce, Timothy Clerke, Edward Browne, William Aglionby, Jasper Needham and Sir Charles Scarborough were great supporters of the stage, despite the demands of their calling. They attended, discussed and even tried their hand at writing plays, though seldom with great success. Sir Thomas Clarges, the King's physician, found but a poor reception for his translation of *Heraclius*.¹⁴⁸

Scholars attended too. Anthony Wood set aside his scruples and saw several plays at Oxford; Richard Walden mentions the visit that the Red Bull troupe made there. Foreign scholars who came to London, like Colsoni and Olaus Borrichius, were sufficiently impressed with the English stage and English poets to write about them when they returned home.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 41; *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, p. 408.

¹⁴⁷ See B.L. Stowe MS. 744, f. 81 Edmond Malone, *An Historical Account of the Stage*, Vol. III of *Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, (London: 1821), p. 164.

¹⁴⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, 26 March, 1661; 16 October, 1662; 23 February, 1663; 13 February, 1667; Aglionby, letter in *The Works of John Dennis*, II, 489; W. W. Greg, "Theatrical Repertories of 1662," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 301 (1906), 69-72; Robert Hooke, *Diary*, 8 May, 1673; "The Journals of Edmund Warcup," p. 241; Katherine Philips, uncatalogued letter, Harvard Theatre Collection.

¹⁴⁹ Wood, *The Life and Times*, I, 405-06; Richard Walden, *Io Ruminans*, (London: 1662); *The Deplumation of Mrs Anne Gibbs* (London: 1662); F. Colsoni, *Relation du Voyage de leurs Excellences*, pp. 3, 6; Ethel Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 333-41.

Prominent military men like General Monck, General Gordon, Lieutenant-Colonel Baron, Major-General Massey and Sir Theophilus Jones, Scoutmaster of Ireland, all spent afternoons in the playhouses.¹⁵⁰ Officers of other ranks attended, too. Some--like Colonel Harley, Colonel Breames, Colonel Boone and Colonel Boynton--had commissions which dated from the struggle with Parliament, and came to watch actors like Mohun, Hart, Burt and Shatterel who had fought alongside them in support of the King.¹⁵¹ Others, like Colonel Macarty and Colonel Codrington, held commissions of later date and attended with a different purpose.¹⁵² The authority they exercised over the common soldiery, and over their subordinates, entitled them to style themselves officers and gentlemen. They adopted playgoing as a habit in keeping with their standing. This meant that, in the playhouse, Captain Lysaught, an Irish Officer, and Pepys' friends Captain Henry Cooke and Captain Rolt could present themselves as gentlemen, as good as any other.¹⁵³ Indeed, so assertive of their status were many young officers, and so ready to

¹⁵⁰ *The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg*, ed. W.L. Sachse, Camden Society, 3rd Series, 91 (London: 1961), p. 71; Pepys, *Diary*, 19 November, 1660; 23 March, 1661; 6 September, 1661; 25 November, 1661; Prologue to *The Silent Woman*, in Wiley, *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, pp. 11-12; *Passages from the Diary of General Patrick Gordon of Auckleuchries* (Aberdeen: 1859), p. 133.

¹⁵¹ HMC 14th Report, Appendix II, p. 337; Pepys, *Diary*, 26 March, 1661, 7 February, 1668, 6 February, 1669. *Historia Histrionica*, I, xxix-xxx. The connection continued: in later years, Philip Griffin and Colley Cibber were amongst those who made the transition from the field to the stage.

¹⁵² Reresby, *Memoirs*, p. 168; Dryden, *Letters*, p. 129; *The Life of Mr John Dennis*, (London: 1734); *A Comparison between the Two Stages*, p. 23.

¹⁵³ *The Journal of the Very Rev. Rowland Davies*, ed. Richard Caulfield, Camden Society, 68 (London: 1856), p. 24; Pepys, *Diary*, 13 February, 1667; 20 April, 1667.

rectify any imagined slight to it, that they figure prominently amongst playhouse duellists.

The associations between the stage and the military were strong. To the numbers of military spectators we may add the names of those many dramatists who had held commissions of the King--Porter, Dilke, Wycherley, Otway, Southerne, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Cibber and Steele. Indeed, it was to the soldiers and former soldiers in the audience that Steele made his appeal when he wrote *The Funeral*:

He knows h' has num'rous Friends, nay knows they'll show it,
And for the Fellow-Soldier save the Poet.¹⁵⁴

Naval Officers of all ranks were present, too. Once again, the great set an example to the lesser, so that from Admirals down naval men came to see the plays. Prince Rupert, the Duke of York, the Earl of Sandwich, Lord Stratton, Sir George Ayescue and Sir Joshua Minnes all paid their visits. Following their example, captains like Pepys' friend Ferrers and Sir John Chicherley attended. Even the admirals of other nations were seen visiting the playhouses of London.¹⁵⁵ When naval engagements called these men from London, their absence was noted in prologues and epilogues.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Prologue to *The Funeral* in *The Plays of Richard Steele*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 23.

¹⁵⁵ Pepys mentions the visits of many of these men, under whom, or on whose behalf he worked in the Admiralty. *Diary*, 25 March, 1661; 20 April, 1661; 1 May, 1667; 11 December, 1667; 7 September, 1668, 8 December, 1668. See also *Lyme Letters*, p. 168, on Sir John Chicherley's attendance. The reception accorded Cornelius von Tromp, the Dutch Admiral, is described in *The House of Lyme*. p. 271.

¹⁵⁶ See the Prologues and Epilogues to Crowne's *The History of Charles the Eighth of France* (1672), and Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode*, in Gardner, pp. 43-46. See also the Prologue to Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master*, in *Plays*, p. 125 and Pierre Danchin, "Le Public des

Civil servants were another group whose aspirations led them to frequent and conspicuous attendance. Their numbers and their importance grew hugely in the late seventeenth century. By 1696 the nation held some 10,000 officials of various kinds and degrees, the great bulk of whom would have resided in London.¹⁵⁷ Like their colleagues in other professions they sought to establish or enhance their status by displaying the tokens of gentility. The playgoing habit was strong, too, amongst officials of the Admiralty. Men like Sir William Penn and Sir William Batten--commissioners and treasurers of the Navy--were frequent visitors to the theatres. Lesser officials like John Creed and William Howe were no less enthusiastic in their attendance, and even junior clerks--Tom Whitton, Thomas Lewes and a host of others unnamed--went along from time to time.¹⁵⁸

Civil servants from the Exchequer and the Diplomatic Service made up another set of keen and well-informed playgoers. Courtier-diplomats, like Sir Samuel Tuke, John Caryll or Sir William Bartley, wrote for the public stage. Sir Joseph Williamson and Charles Middleton, both Secretaries of State, busied themselves with stage affairs.¹⁵⁹ Sir William Coventry, a Treasurer, was an occasional playgoer who, like many

Theatres Londoniens," pp. 876-77.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions, The Earliest Classics*, p. 48. See also Geoffrey Holmes, *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, pp. 98-128; John Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability*, p. 108.

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¹⁵⁸ Pepys is our best source for an account of the attendance of Admiralty officials. See the *Diary*, 28 September, 1661; 3 October, 1661; 19 March, 1661; 28 September, 1668; 26 March, 1661; 19 January, 1661.

¹⁵⁹ See *Letters Adressed to Sir Joseph Williamson*, pp. 67-184; Etherege, *Letters*, p. 129. See also Letters to Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, in HMC 7th Report, Appendix I, pp. 285-286.

other public men, found himself in danger of being personated on the stage.¹⁶⁰ Lord Hugh Cholmondley, an engineer remained involved with the stage throughout his life.¹⁶¹

Amongst the minor officials of these departments we note Thomas Povey, from the Commission for Tangiers, Luellin, a clerk of the Council, Vernon, Ball and Jephson, all minor diplomats, and a certain Mr. Squibb, an official of the Exchequer, who was involved in a playhouse duel in 1700.¹⁶² Even when the pressure of affairs was greatest these men might be found in the playhouses, seeking some respite from their cares. Pepys' admission: "In the afternoon, to ease my mind, I went to the Cockpit all alone . . ." (*Diary*, 30 October, 1660) might serve as comment on many of the visits paid by these men.

If there is one group of professional men whom we might expect not to have appeared in the theatre, it is those who were so often associated with the outbursts of anti-theatrical prejudice which periodically shook the stage: clergymen. The tone of their attacks often suggests that they felt personally threatened by performances, and that crusading against the stage had become something of an obsession, though usually they claimed that it was the threat posed to the morality of their play-going parishioners that most motivated their reforming zeal. George Ridpath complains of the visits made by "Men and Women who have had some

¹⁶⁰ See Pepys *Diary*, 15 April, 1667; 4, 6 March 1669. See also B. L. Add. MSS. 36916, Aston Papers, f. 128.

¹⁶¹ Pepys, *Diary*, 14 October, 1668; Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, IV, 502-03.

¹⁶² Pepys, *Diary*, 12 September, 1667; 11 October, 1664; Etherege, *Letters*, p. 186; *Letters addressed to Sir Joseph Williamson*, I, 80, 87, 146; *Post Man*, 20-23 April, 1700.

¹⁶³ *The Stage Condemn'd*, (London: 1698), p. 108.

zeal for Religion."¹⁶³ Other polemicists warn their readers of the dire effects their attendance would have upon the morals of the young when the latter found amongst their playhouse companions "many that have names for Religion."¹⁶⁴

Yet for all the theatre's opponents were determined to enforce a separation of pulpit from stage, the links between these two were as strong as those between the stage and any other professional body. They also follow a similar pattern: leading divines sanctioned attendance by their example, institutional contacts were developed and lesser figures wrote for, attended, supported, and defended the stage. Thomas Sprat, part-author of *The Rehearsal*, was one of Dryden's playgoing companions, and a vocal defender of the merits of English plays. Such a fondness for the stage did not prevent his rising through the ranks of the church to become Bishop of Rochester.¹⁶⁵ The great Dr. Fuller professed himself a judge in theatrical matters.¹⁶⁶ Francis Lockier, sometime Dean of Peterborough, was another of Dryden's intimates.¹⁶⁷ Archbishop Seldon, a man fond of his entertainment, was closely associated with the Boyle

¹⁶⁴ *The Occasional Paper*, 9 (London: 1698), p. 14; see also S. P. Zitner, "The English Theatre Audience 1660-1700" Diss. Duke 1955, p. 58; Joseph Wood Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1924), p. 94. An illustration of the attention that the godly received when they attended can be found in Elizabeth Bodvile's letter, in *Hatton Correspondence*, I, 21. She records meeting "one of the godly party, my Lady Cawly by name."

¹⁶⁵ See John Dennis, Dedication to *The Comical Gallant* (London: 1702); Thomas Sprat, *Observations on Mons. de Sorbierre's Voyage into England* (London: 1708). /e

¹⁶⁶ Pepys, *Diary*, 4 September, 1660.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. James M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), I, 273-303.

family, and attended celebrations that marked the opening of two of Roger Boyle's plays.¹⁶⁸ He funded the erection of a magnificent theatre at Oxford, which was used for the performance of student plays in Latin and English. If he did not attend in public himself, he certainly countenanced others attending, after the manner of Clarendon's Bishop, who said:

. . . Bishops . . . out of Discretion, and to decline giving offence, avoid being present at, or giving themselves leave to use many Recreations which they do not condemn in others.¹⁶⁹

Lesser clergymen, especially those who came from their country livings on visits to London, often made for the playhouse of an afternoon. Rowland Davies, Dean of Ross, attended a production of *Circe* in company with another clergyman, Reverend Jephson, and an Irish Army officer.¹⁷⁰ Thomas Brockbank noted with interest various of London's memorials to actors and dramatists. He attended the playhouse, on one occasion meeting by chance a friend and fellow divine, Mr Wybergh, in the audience.¹⁷¹ John Ward, a Vicar from Stratford, saw no scandal in attending, and was pleased to record his impressions of a play he had seen.¹⁷² Robert Kirk, a clergyman from Scotland, took note of theatri-

¹⁶⁸ See Pepys, *Diary*, 14 May, 1669; B.L. Stowe MS 744, f.81; *Diary of Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*, Vol. IV, cited in *The London Stage*, p. 149.

¹⁶⁹ Clarendon, *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 347. Even when the anti-stage faction grew strongest amongst the godly, the Bishops were slow to lend their support to it. See HMC 14th Report, Appendix II; Portland MSS. III (Harleian MS. I), p. 510.

¹⁷⁰ *Journal of the Very Rev. Rowland Davies*, p. 24.

¹⁷¹ Brockbank *Diary and Letter Book*, p. 98.

¹⁷² See *The Diary of the Rev. John Ward*, ed. Charles Severn

cal conditions in London; Edward Lake, Chaplain to the Princesses Mary and Anne, monitored Royal behaviour at plays; Nathaniel Wanley, a vicar from Coventry, asked London friends for news of the playhouses.¹⁷³ Pepys mentions several playgoing divines in the *Diary*, amongst them his brother, John, who returned to the playhouse with such unseemly haste after the great fire, that he felt obliged to conceal his identity and calling. Other playgoing clergymen of Pepys' acquaintance included former college friends from Cambridge, whom he met several times in the playhouse over the years, both singly and in parties.¹⁷⁴

These references to playgoing as an unexceptional activity in the lives of men of God quite contradict the popular image of the man in black vehemently denouncing the evils and danger of stage plays. In fact, in times of hardship, playhouses found the clergy's pulpits a source of practical support. When the King's Company's theatre in Bridges Street burned in 1672, a collection was raised amongst the parish churches throughout England to assist in the building of a new playhouse.¹⁷⁵

(London: 1839), p. 174, and Folger MS. V.a. 292. See also A. L. D. Kennedy-Skipton, "John Ward and Restoration Drama," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 11 (1960), 493-94 and "A Footnote to 'John Ward and Restoration Drama,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12 (1961), 353.

¹⁷³ Donald Maclean, "London in 1689-90," *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archeological Society*, N. S. 6 (London: Bishopsgate Institute 1933), pp. 334, 655; *The Diary of Edward Lake*, p. 9 B. L. Harleian MS. 6430, ff. 21, 23.

¹⁷⁴ Pepys, *Diary*, 27 November, 1661; 2 April, 1662; 2 January, 1664; 6 December, 1666.

¹⁷⁵ *Notes and Queries*, 8th Series, 10 (1896), 7; *Essex Archeological Collections*, 6 (1853), 242; B. L., R.J. Smith Collection of Dramatic Materials, p. 169. According to Robert Hume, Personal Communication, 20 November, 1984, at least some of these collections seem to have been for the entire neighbourhood burned, not specifically for the theatre.

The wealthy merchants of London are another group whom we might think viewed playhouses with disfavour. The city fathers often expressed their disapproval of the playhouse and sought, in protests, petitions and the presentation of indictments to have them restrained or suppressed. In a meeting they had with the King in 1671, they advised him to deal severely with the Nursery, the playhouses' training school:

Pull down that and coffee-houses and nothing can be more to the establishment of government. The city government is too lax already. . . . If the two nurseries in Barbican at Bunhill be not taken away in a year, expect a disorder. The apprentices are already grown too heady. Advised to take them away now upon the pulling down meeting-houses.¹⁷⁶

Their fears are of a loss of authority. Like those of the clergy, their complaints are outward expressions of paternalistic attitudes towards the young--"already so corrupted by sensual pleasures" over whom they seek to exercise that authority.¹⁷⁷ "We also present," said a Middlesex grand Jury in 1700:

that the common acting of Plays in the said play-houses very much tend to the debauching and ruining the youth resorting thereto . . .¹⁷⁸

Their opposition to the stage was a function of their position and was directed at curtailing the temptations that beset their dependents. They held quite different attitudes towards their own playgoing: "I and many of my gravest Neighbours frequently resort thither," said

¹⁷⁶ CSPD, Charles II, Vol. 194, p. 581.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* 4 vols. (London: 1696), III, 89.

¹⁷⁸ *Post Man*, 17-19 December, 1700, in B. L., *Of Plays and Playhouses*, coll. H. J., f. 59.

Clarendon's Old Alderman,

. . . for our harmless Divertisement and I assure you, when I have found myself even oppressed with the Weight of Business, or uneasy Cogitations, I have made haste to a Comedy with as sharp an Appetite as the greatest Epicure can do to the greatest Feast . . .¹⁷⁹

Scattered amongst the fragmentary evidence of letters, diaries, and dedications there is much to indicate the enjoyment of plays by busy men. Reresby tells us of one Lord Mayor enjoying an indiscreet, impromptu dramatic entertainment.¹⁸⁰ Sir Thomas Cook, Knight, Alderman, and Sheriff of the City of London, received the dedication of Bancroft's last play, *Henry the Second*. Sir John Cutler, another prominent London merchant, listened to discussions about the merits of the latest London plays.¹⁸¹ Mr. Salisbury, a portrait painter, was a convivial playgoer.¹⁸²

Merchants and tradesmen of more modest means took an interest in plays, too. Pepys mentions the visits of William Batelier, a wine merchant, and his sister, Mary, a linen-draper. Pepys' uncle Wight, a London fishmonger, often attended. Pepys' neighbour, John Andrews, one of London's grocers, visited the playhouse, as did Cutler, another London merchant he knew.¹⁸³ Robert Hooke numbers several tradesmen amongst his

¹⁷⁹ *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 344. Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, p. 70 & n. cites Timothy Nourse, *A Discourse on the Nature and Faculties of Man* (London: 1692), p. 41, as one who recommends playgoing as part of his model state, in recognition of ~~their~~ therapeutic value. /its

¹⁸⁰ *Memoirs*, p. 408

¹⁸¹ See Hooke, *Diary*, 25 June, 1676.

¹⁸² Pepys, *Diary*, 11 October, 1660.

¹⁸³ *Diary*, 23 March, 4 November, 1661; 17 April, 1665; 5 September, 1667, 31 August, 19 October, 30 December, 1668; 22 April, 1669.

playgoing acquaintances: Franklin, a master plumber, Oliver, a master mason and Tompion, a watchmaker.¹⁸⁴

When the merchants themselves did not attend, they were well represented by their wives and daughters. Jane Turner, daughter of Sir William, sometime Lord Mayor, was often in the playhouse.¹⁸⁵ Mary Browne, daughter of Sir Richard, another Lord Mayor, was an articulate and informed playgoer, and remained so after her marriage to John Evelyn.¹⁸⁶ Yet another Lord Mayor, John Barber, whose name betrays his original trade, was the longtime companion of the playwright Mary Manley. We may assume that he was no stranger to the playhouses.

There were vigorous institutional links between the city and the stage, despite the antagonism that sometimes arose. Shortly after the dissolution of the Long Parliament the livery companies sponsored the first officially sanctioned performances of the Restoration period:

His Excellency [General Monck] with the Councill of State dined att one of the Halls in London, and now by this time haveing dined att 9 of the chieftest Halls in London; and att every Hall theire ware after diner a kind of stage play and many prety anticks . . .¹⁸⁷

The annual Lord Mayor's pageant, sponsored by the great Livery Companies, established further connections between city and stage. In 1681, for example, the pageant included "the figure of a large Camel carv'd, mounted by a young Negro In the rear of the Camel . . .

¹⁸⁴ *Diary*, 3 May, 1674; 2 June, 1676.

¹⁸⁵ Pepys, *Diary*, 20 October, 1667; 21 April, 1668; 7 May, 1668.

¹⁸⁶ Letter to Mrs Terrill in *The Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn*, ed. W. Bray, 4 vols. (London: 1889-95), IV, 14.

¹⁸⁷ *The Diurnall of Thomas Rugg*, p. 71

a Royal Theatre . . ."¹⁸⁸ This pageant was designed by the City Poet. The specialised talents required to oversee the creation of the spectacle were not necessarily those of a major dramatic writer. It is therefore interesting to note the city fathers' attempts to enlist the stage's best known writers as City Poet. In 1685 they offered the post to Dryden, who was then Poet Laureate. He refused, but in 1691 they made a further play for a professional dramatist, and succeeded in securing the services of Elkanah Settle, who had produced a number of plays for the court and whose reputation for extravagance and spectacle answered to their needs. Clearly the city companies were seeking more than mechanical competence in the officer they appointed: they wanted the benefits of the experience gained in writing for the public stage. To obtain these they were prepared to countenance an association between their celebrations and the public theatres.

Perhaps the most convincing demonstration of the theatrical involvement of this middle sort of men can be found from the records of those who wrote for the stage. Table 1 gives the primary occupational affiliation of some 200 men and women who wrote plays between 1660 and 1700. It shows clearly that fully one dramatist in three came from that group who had to balance their dramatic interests against the demands of their employment.

When men of this class found the time to attend the playhouse they often took with them members of their household. So far was the playhouse from being an invitation to sin and the ante-room to debauchery that it was widely regarded as a place where families of middle rank could seek entertainment. Elizabeth Pepys accompanied her husband on

¹⁸⁸ B. L., *Of Plays, Players and Playhouses*, f. 45.

Table 1: Restoration Dramatists by Occupation

Classification		Men	Women	Total	%
Nobility	(a)	16	1	17	8
Gentry	(b)	27	4	31	15
Total		43	5	48	23
		—	—	—	—
Law	(c)	6	0	6	3
Medicine		5	0	5	2.5
Clergy	(d)	12	0	12	6
Civil Service	(e)	14	0	14	7
Military	(f)	5	0	5	2.5
Academic	(g)	17	0	17	8
Mercantile	(h)	8	0	8	4
Total		67	0	67	33
		—	—	—	—
Professional					
Dramatists	(i)	15	5	20	9.5
Actors	(j)	23	1	24	11.5
Journalists	(k)	14	0	14	7
Total		52	6	58	28
		—	—	—	—
Unknown	(l)	30	2	32	16
Total		192	13	205	100
		—	—	—	—

Notes to Table 1:

(a) Includes all nobles and sometime members of the Royal Household. (b) Includes all Members of Parliament, Knights, Esquires, Gentlemen or persons of independent means. (c) Does not include the following dramatists, all of whom had some legal training or affiliation: Banks, Burnaby, Congreve, Etherege, Ravenscroft, Rowe, Shadwell, Southerne, Wycherley. (d) Includes two authors of religious dialogues. Does not include those in holy orders who made their livings as scholars. (e) Does not include the following dramatists, all of whom at one time or another held civil posts: Behn, Burnaby, Congreve, Dryden, Etherege, Rowe, Steele, Vanbrugh, Wilson. Includes administrative careerists, but not courtiers and Royal favourites. (f) Does not include the following dramatists, all of whom were sometime holders of commissions in the army: Cibber, Farquhar, Otway, Southerne, Steele, Vanbrugh, Wycherley. (g) Includes both schoolmasters and scholars. (h) Includes three authors of religious dialogues. (i) Includes only those who depended on the playhouse for a substantial part of their income. (j) Includes actors, stage-hands and other theatre professionals, not primarily dependent on their writing as a source of income. (k) Includes miscellanists, critics, essayists and others whose income was primarily from non-dramatic writing. (l) Includes three authors of religious dialogues.

two out of every three visits he made during the latter years of his diary. John Evelyn, scandalous as he found the playhouses, did not hesitate to accompany his relations there.¹⁸⁹ The Journal of William Hammond, a Fellow of the Royal Society, contains the following entry: "Item spent in carrying Mrs and sistar to King Lear 00.09.06."¹⁹⁰ A Dutch visitor, Constantijn Huygens was another who passed an afternoon in the playhouse with his wife and her friends: "I was at the comedy with my wife and Mrs Creitsmar. They played an old show called: *The Love in the Tubb*."¹⁹¹ William Baltier took his sister, Will Hwer, his mother, and Jeffrey Boys, his cousin Jane.¹⁹² The entertainment in the playhouses was well suited to young couples. Anthony Lowther treated his new bride, Margaret Penn, to a performance there; Edmund Verney and Richard Legh made a point of attending in company with their wives when they came to town.¹⁹³ The diversion was an allowable one for unmarried couples, too. Pepys' friend Sanchy went with his mistress, Mary Baltier with her sweetheart.¹⁹⁴

Playhouses afforded their audiences opportunities to widen the network of family relationships. They imported a sense of community into the metropolis, creating an atmosphere of intimate association that

¹⁸⁹ Evelyn, *Diary*, 19 June, 1668.

¹⁹⁰ Folger MSS. v.a. 422.

¹⁹¹ *Journal van Constantijn Huygens*, Publications of the Dutch Historical Society, N. S., 25 (Utrecht: 1877), p. 560; see also p. 168, trans. in *The London Stage*, p. 456.

¹⁹² Pepys, *Diary*, 19 October, 1668; 9 April, 1667; "The Diary of Jeffrey Boys," p. 453.

¹⁹³ Pepys, *Diary*, 25 March 1667; *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 28; *The House of Lyme*, p. 233; *Lyme Letters* p. 66.

¹⁹⁴ Pepys, *Diary*, 2 December, 1661; 23 April, 1669.

was common in the extended relationships of rural England, but which was otherwise seldom found in London. Pepys encountered Shepley, Lord Sandwich's Steward in the playhouse. He also records meeting with Mademoiselle, Ferrers' French maid and with Mrs Hunt, his wife's maid's aunt: "Here met W. Batelier and Mrs Hunt, Deb's aunt; and saw her home . . ." ¹⁹⁵ Beyond London, such a meeting would have been predictable, and would have occasioned no surprise. In the capital, however, family relationships were less extensive, and gained strength from such occasions as visits to the playhouse. ¹⁹⁶

The extended urban family that visited the playhouse was likely to include in the party any favoured household servants. Over the years many of Elizabeth Pepys' various maids and girls visited the playhouse with her. Deb Willett attended plays at a rate of once every two weeks during the 1667-68 season. Mary Mercer, another of Elizabeth Pepys' maids was likewise often treated to a play. Gregory King paid the charges for his clerk, his wife's maid and their boy to attend. ¹⁹⁷ Robert Hooke sent his niece off to the playhouse in the company of Tom, his manservant. ¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ *Diary*, 20 November, 1660; 28 March, 1661; 19 October, 1668.

¹⁹⁶ On numerous occasions Pepys' family--Pepyses, Turners, Talbots--were entertained there. Legh and Chicherly allude to plays in their correspondence--see *Lyme Letters*, p. 128; Huntington Library, MS. St. 26, ff. 27, 28. /

¹⁹⁷ "Expenses of my own Family," in *The Earliest Classics*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁸ *Diary*, 14 February, 1677.

¹⁹⁹ B. L. Add. MS. 33892, f. 598.

Even children were carried along. "April 1st seeing a play with my childr." wrote Sir Edward Dering.¹⁹⁹ Pepys recorded the visits of the young children of Lord Sandwich, of Sir William Penn, and of his neighbour Andrews, who went with his wife, and "talked so fondly to his little boy," throughout the play.²⁰⁰ Although children were often found in the playhouse, they seem to have been there in greater numbers on holidays and celebrations. Even if no concessions to their presence were made in the programme, the atmosphere may have been more festive. Their attendance is of a piece with the encouragement they were given from an early age, to read and perform plays as part of their education.²⁰¹ A letter written to Sir Ralph Verney describes how well young members of his family played their parts before a household audience, modelling their performances on those of Harris and Betterton on the London stage.²⁰²

The readiness with which men of this class escorted wives, mothers, sisters, cousins and daughters to the playhouses should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there were a good many women who felt no need to have the visible protection of a male escort when they attended. Nor did women need to shelter themselves in the security of a box, provided they took care to provide themselves with a suitable companion. Pepys often discovered women of his acquaintance--Mrs Pierce, Jane and Theophilia Turner--in the middle gallery or in the pit, never hinting

²⁰⁰ *Diary*, 1, 8 January, 10 August, 7 September, 30 December, 1661; 1 April 1662; 19, 22 May, 29 September, 1662; 30 December, 1668.

²⁰¹ Sir William Petty, in *The Petty Papers*, I, 683, recommends that children between the ages of 9 and 11 should "Read Romances and play books for language, Act plays . . ." See also Clarendon, *A Dialogue in Tracts*, p. 320.

²⁰² *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 227.

²⁰³ *Diary*, 23 January, 1667; 12 August, 1667; 20 September 1667; 2

that there was anything untoward about their being there.²⁰³ Lady Fox was seen at plays without her husband, Sir Stephen, and it was counted no disgrace. Susannah Morland felt no need of the protection of her husband, Sir Samuel, nor Lady Elizabeth Portman that of her father.²⁰⁴ These last-mentioned women attended with something of the freedom we noted amongst noble women, which suggests that such licence came with rank, or rather, with affluence. Indeed, as Samuel Pepys' fortunes improved, his wife attained a greater degree of freedom in her playgoing, taking her maid with her to stave off any censure. We can understand why attendance without a male sponsor was largely a prerogative of the affluent when we consider that Deb Willett accompanied her mistress on 35 occasions in a 16 month period: reputation could not be maintained cheaply.

Much has been made of the influence of "The Ladies" on Restoration drama: to their account has been credited the incorporation of a moral design in comedy and the development of sentimental drama.²⁰⁵ The initial authority that women gained to recommend their views and to press for a reform of the stage derived from the fact that they attended, discussed and engaged in the life of the playhouse with the same eagerness, confidence and freedom as their male counterparts. Lady Cutler quizzed Robert Hooke about *The Virtuoso*.²⁰⁶ Elizabeth Pepys discussed

December, 1668. See also his entry for 18 February, 1667, where he discusses a woman in a mask, who spent the play in conversation with Sir Charles Sedley, finally deciding that she was, "a virtuous woman, and of quality."

²⁰⁴ Pepys, *Diary*, 15 February, 1669; 16 September, 1667; 15 January, 1669.

²⁰⁵ John Harrington Smith, "Shadwell, the Ladies, and the Change in Comedy," *Modern Philology*, 46 (1948), 22-33.

plays with her husband, and was often better informed than he as to their sources and the success with which an adaptation had been made.²⁰⁷ Mrs Hunt is described as "a very witty woman, and one that knows this play, and understands a play mighty well."²⁰⁸ Mary Evelyn gives her opinion of a play with an air of authority:

Since my last to you I have seen "The Siege of Granada," a play so full of ideas that the most refined romance I ever read is not to compare with it; love is made so pure, and valour so nice, that one would imagine it designed for an Utopia rather than our stage. I do not quarrel with the poet, but admire one born in the decline of morality should be able to feign such exact virtue; and as poetic fiction has been instructive in former ages, I wish this the same event in ours. As to the strict law of comedy I dare not pretend to judge: some think the division of the story is not so well if it could not have been comprehended in the day's actions.²⁰⁹

Elizabeth Cottington had enough confidence in her own critical sense to offer the opinion that some verses of a manuscript "are not ill", but knew too that merit alone would not save the woman dramatist from the savagery of the playhouse wolves: "I shall tremble for the poor woman exposed among the critics."²¹⁰ Correspondence between Katherine Philips and Dorothy Temple shows how sure women could be of the worth of their critical judgement. The matchless Orinda is totally uncompromising in her disdain for Davenant's lapses in theatrical taste:

²⁰⁶ Hooke, *Diary*, 25 June, 1676.

²⁰⁷ Pepys, *Diary*, 1 October, 1665; 21 June, 1668; 6 December, 1666.

²⁰⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, 19 October, 1668.

²⁰⁹ *The Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn*, IV, 177.

²¹⁰ *Tixall Letters*, ed. Arthur Clifford 2 vols. (London: 1815), II,

If this play hath not diverted ye Cittizens wives enough Sr
W:D: will make amends, for they say Harry ye 8th & some
later ones are little better then Puppett-plays.²¹¹

The comments these women make demonstrate the discrepancy between the vigour of the opinions they held and the comparative lack of force those opinions carried in the playhouse, simply because they were the opinions of women. However it was the confidence which women developed in the years immediately following the Restoration which helped make them a credible and powerful a force in later years. By the time they gained power as a group within the playhouse, they had learned to assert their opinion of what transpired there with the same sense of certitude as the men.

2.7 *The Common Audience*

The spectators we have identified possessed one common characteristic which transcended distinctions of sex, age, rank, office and occupation: they were blessed with time and with the money to turn that time to leisure, and they were bound to attract attention because of their affluence and power. We now turn to "Hoi Polloi", "the rabble," "the mean people".²¹² These were not people of influence and power: the name they commonly received--"cits"--had few positive connotations. It conjured up neither the amassed financial interests of the city, nor its great officers, nor even freemen of one of the livery companies. Cits enjoyed few of the rights and advantages held by those who had some

²¹¹ Uncatalogued letter, Harvard Theatre Collection.

²¹² John Dryden, "Of Dramatic Poesy: An Essay," in *Of Dramatic Poesy, and Other Essays*, ed. George Watson, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1962), I, 86; Rochester, "An Allusion to Horace," in *Poems*, p. 126, l. 120; Pepys, *Diary*, 1 January, 1668.

institutional connection with the city. They were mere urban members of that group of men "which do not rule": artisans, shopkeepers, small tradesmen, apprentices and attendants whose goods and services were for sale or hire in the great market-place that was London. They had lost all association with the administration, politics or even the geography of the city. They no longer resided within its walls, but had been driven by fire, high rents and their own increasing numbers to the areas to the north and east. They fell into a curious limbo in a status oriented society: their income exceeded their expenditure, thereby placing them amongst those who increased the wealth of the nation, yet they lacked all those qualifications of birth, land, education or occupation which would have admitted them to the political nation.²¹³

If we consider their pockets, tastes and social position, it seems reasonable to conclude that they were seldom found in the playhouses. First, they could ill afford to attend an entertainment so expensive. Prices were much higher than they had been in earlier times, when ordinary folk paid their penny to stand and watch Burbage act Hamlet.²¹⁴ Second, even had they been so extravagant as to attend, they were likely to find themselves represented on stage as objects of universal ridicule: "The audience, in Charles II's time, were particularly fond of having a City-Cuckold dressed out for their entertainment . . ." wrote

²¹³ See Gregory King "Scheme of the income & expence of the several families of England calculated for the year 1688," in *The Earliest Classics*, p. 48.

²¹⁴ For an account of earlier prices see Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London 1576-1642* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 179-202. See also Sheldon P. Zitner, "The English Theatre Audience 1660-1700," pp. 10-30.

²¹⁵ *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 316.

Tom Davies.²¹⁵

However, the conclusion is wrong. It equates presence in the playhouse with attention received and makes no allowance for the citizens' social invisibility. We cannot discuss the attendance of men and women of this class--numerically the most populous in London--in the same way as we have examined that of the visible section of the audience. They were less readily identifiable while they lived, and left fewer records behind them to document their passing. Socially invisible to their contemporaries, they have almost disappeared from our view altogether.

Their presence in the playhouses was mentioned only when they somehow intruded on the notice of their fellow spectators. A self-aware audience takes an obsessive interest in its own composition and notes all irregularities and their causes. Moreover, the relative composition of the audience was so finely balanced and so economically sensitive to changes in demography or taste, that minor fluctuations in its composition become magnified: the prolonged absence of a dozen well-known faces, the presence of but a few more citizens quite changed the complexion of the house.

Pepys remarks on the presence of citizens when they appeared in numbers in the pit, disturbing the customary balance of its composition.²¹⁶ Prologuists, too, occasionally identified them, but again, only when something happened to foreground their attendance. When Dorset Garden playhouse opened, in 1671, several prologues and epilogues that appeared were aimed at citizens. The first play acted there, Crowne's *The History of Charles the Eighth of France* (1672), was advertised as

²¹⁶ See the *Diary*, 27 December, 1662; 1 January, 1663; 1 January, 26 December, 1668.

one designed to meet the tastes of city wives, according to the Prologue. Shortly afterwards Wycherley addressed the prologue of *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* "To the Citty". The King's Company took wry note of the success their rivals were having with what they saw as an audience of citizens, at the other end of the town:

Our City Friends so far will hardly come.
They can take up with Pleasures nearer home
And see gay Shows, and gawdy Scenes elsewhere:
For we presume they seldom come to hear.²¹⁷

The relative preponderance of citizens reflected the temporary absence of many gentry from London during the war with the Dutch.

Such impressionistic accounts tell us little about the actual numbers in which citizens attended or their economic value to the playhouses. Let us look further for these citizens where we might expect them to be seated: out of sight in the middle and upper galleries. Playhouse economics shows how strong was the shadowy presence there. Every playhouse built in the period made seating provision behind and above for these invisibles: their contributions made no small difference to the profitability of the enterprise. Consider the receipts from two performances in 1677 as shown in Table 2.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Prologue to *Marriage A-la-Mode*, in Gardner, p. 43; see also Prologue "written for the Women when they Acted at the Old Theatre in Lincolns-Inn-Fields," in Gardner, p. 41.

²¹⁸ Figures from L. T.'s letter in *The Theatrical and Monthly Inquisitor and Monthly Mirror*, July 1816, pp 25-26.

Table 2: Attendance and Receipts by Seating Area.

	Seats	Attendance	%	Receipts	%
(a)	Boxes	36	15	£07.04.00	25
	Pit	117	47	£14.12.00	52
	M.Gall.	63	25	£04.14.06	17
	U.Gall	33	13	£01.13.00	6
	Total	249	100	£28.03.06	100
(b)	Boxes	59	12	£12.02.00	23
	Pit	191	37	£23.17.06	45
	M.Gall	144	33	£10.16.00	20.5
	U.Gall	119	28	£05.19.00	11.5
	Total	513	100	£52.14.06	100

The first night's attendance (a) represents a poor house, when receipts would scarcely have covered the daily charge; (b) was a moderately profitable house. The daily charge was about £25 at this date.²¹⁹ The numerical importance of the pit is immediately apparent: it alone might contain almost half the audience. We may appreciate, too, the economic significance of both pit and boxes. Together they might account for over 75% of the take. Without a good attendance by the visible audience, a company could not hope to make a profit, or even meet its costs. However, comparing a poor house to a profitable one makes plain the importance of the invisible inhabitants of the galleries. The second night's takings are almost 90% more than the first, yet the monies from pit and boxes represent a lesser proportion of total receipts. One third of the take, and over half the audience came from the middle and

²¹⁹ See Isaac Fuller's affidavit in P.R.O. C7 486/74 transcribed in Hotson, p. 353.

upper galleries. In other words, payments for seats in the pit and boxes did not on their own make for even a moderately profitable performance: at break-even point the playhouse depended on a mixed audience.

We know that amongst the spectators in the middle gallery Elizabeth Pepys was sometimes found. Mrs. Pierce her friend too, and any number of respectable women from the more affluent households of London. Our interest is not in them, however, but in those who sat beside them. The evidence is inferential, contradictory, imprecise and fragmented, but finally compelling: many of those who paid their 18 pence to sit above were small citizens of London. Farquhar, in *A Discourse Upon Comedy*, tells of, "a Gallery full of Citts," and the author of *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, of a middle gallery in which, "the Citizens Wives and Daughters, together with the *Abigails*, Serving-men, Journey-men and Apprentices commonly take their Places."²²⁰ The Frenchman, Murault, noted how the dramatists took "extraordinary Care to please the Crowd, and to find so many idle Stories that the very *Footmen* part with their Money to hear them."²²¹ Gildon, in tones of outrage mixed with resentment, complains that the success of plays depends on,

the senseless Applause of Cits, Attorney's Clerks, young Students of the Inns of Court, Beaux, *Will's* Coffee-house Wits, Whores, Tars, and Soldiers, *who all are to their Father's Vices born, and to their Mother's Ignorance, were bred* . . .²²²

²²⁰ *A Discourse upon Comedy*, in *The Complete Works of George Farquhar*, ed. Charles Stonehill, 2 vols. (London: Nonesuch, 1930), II, 328; *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, p. 39.

²²¹ B. L. Murault, *Letters Describing the Characters and Customs of the English and French Nations* (London: 1726), p. 20.

²²² *The Post-Boy Rob'd of his Mail*, p. 343.

The visible spectator of the Restoration playhouse was wealthy and powerful but the invisible spectator was the common man. It is not easy to find the latter depicted without some prejudice showing in their portrait. When they intruded on the notice of those more prominent, they drew contemptuous reactions. 'City tastes' became a byword for gross humour and meretricious display, a phrase that men and women of more sophisticated understandings used to disparage all things designed to divert the many. Katherine Philips, for example, credited citizens with tastes no more discriminating than was necessary to enjoy puppet plays.²²³ Pepys found *Tu Quoque*, "a very silly play," but added: "it will please the citizens."²²⁴ Citizens were regarded as a disease which threatened the nice composition of the playhouse.

Prologuists developed a rhetorically useful set of signs and distinctions in dress and taste, by which citizens might be referred to and the contamination they threatened, avoided. The Epilogue to *The Rival Queens* warns of the "Green aprons, steeple-hats, and collar Bands" which will fill the playhouse, unless gallants support the play. The Epilogue to *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* tells of the "Velvet Jumps, Gold Chains and grave Fur Gowns," likely to appear behind the scenes at Dorset Garden because the young men have left the town.²²⁵ Citizens' tastes were spoken of as simple, old-fashioned and dull.²²⁶ Their chief

²²³ Uncatalogued Letter, Harvard Theatre Collection.

²²⁴ *Diary*, 12 September, 1667.

²²⁵ Nathaniel Lee, Epilogue to *The Rival Queens*, in *Works*, I, 282. Wycherley, Epilogue to *The Gentleman Dancing Master*, in *Plays*, p. 235. Wycherley suggests that patronage, and the privileges that accompany it, will descend to the upper ranks of the citizens unless gentlfolk make a stronger showing.

²²⁶ See Crowne, Prologue to *The History of Charles the Eighth of*

delight lay in mere puns and quibbles we are told, and not in raillery, repartee and other new forms of wit.²²⁷ Dryden sneered at their love of gaudiness; Farquhar condemns them for liking only what the world has approved beforehand.²²⁸

The motivation behind many of these prologues was something stronger than mere irritation at a citizen presence in the playhouse or unease at the way that presence called into doubt the distinctiveness of gentle tastes. The prologues represent consistent attempts to identify a significant section of the audience, rather than to insult it and discourage it from attending. Dryden's challenge--"You think yourselves ill-used/When in sharp Prologues you are not abus'd."²²⁹ --states the paradox fairly: the very attacks that stung the citizens at the same time released them from the obscurity in which they otherwise sat.

Prologues did not abuse their citizen-victims: they rallied them, and thus credited them with an understanding of one of conversation's finer arts. Much as they seemed to mock, their rhetorical function was to acknowledge the several balanced sections of the audience and to play them off one against the other, thereby assuring all spectators of their right to be noticed. Even mocking references might be construed as marks of deference, for in that society to pass unnoticed was to be most

France (1672); Doggett, Prologue to *The Country Wake* (1696).

²²⁷ See sir William Cartwright, Prologue to *The Ordinary*, in *A Collection of Poems . . . Upon Several Occasions* (1673); Ravenscroft, Prologue to *The Italian Husband* (1698).

²²⁸ Dryden, Prologue spoken at the Opening of the New House, in Gardner, p. 60; Farquhar, Epilogue to *The Constant Couple*, in *Works*, I, 153.

²²⁹ Prologue to *Feign'd Innocence; or Sir Martin Marall*, in Gardner, p. 16.

slighted.

The distinctions that prologues and epilogues made between the dress, taste and behaviour of the two sections of the playhouse was a rhetorical one: many of the distinctions within the audience were effectively created by the writers. The oppositions thus established by the prologists defined several factions within the audience, factions with which individual spectators could identify or from which they could dissociate themselves. Prologists thereby assured themselves of at least some support for their plays. In short, the cits who were described in prologues and epilogues, were so necessary a complement to the wits as to justify their invention, had not London already produced them.

Further evidence of the attendance of the ordinary folk of London comes from their social superiors. These, with solemn paternalism opposed the cits' frequenting London's "mansions of dissolute licentiousness."²³⁰ Clarendon's Old Lawyer declares:

I cannot but think it a great Unthriftness, and therefore not fit to be countenanced by Authority, when an ordinary Citizen, who is to maintain his Family by his Industry, will spend a Shilling to see a Play, when he hath not gotten so much that Day to support his Wife and Children . . .²³¹

If paternalism did not provoke the opposition of those in authority, there was always fear. A Middlesex Grand Jury found that the acting of plays led

²³⁰ Samuel Johnson, "The Life of Dryden," in *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), I, 365.

²³¹ *A Dialogue*, in *Tracts*, p. 343.

very much . . . to the breach of the peace, and are the occasions of many Riots, Routs and Disorderly Assemblies, whereby many Murders and other misdemeanours have been frequently done . . .²³²

Three considerations most moved the Grand Juries of Middlesex to intervene in the affairs of the playhouses: self-interest, the preservation of property and maintaining the privileges and distinctions of rank. In 1696 another Grand Jury claimed that

. . . the keeping a Common Play-house in Portugall Row in Lincolns Inn ffeilds . . . and the Dayly Acting playes there is a meanes to draw a greate Confluence of Idle and Disorderly persons thither to the greate damage and hazard of the Inhabitants there who are people of Quality, and pay greate Rents for their houses . . .²³³

The comparison of these two images of the invisible audience--on the one hand, the kind, dull, old-fashioned spectators mocked in prologues, on the other, the grand juries' mob of indigent but licentious youths, dangers to themselves and to the better sort--is sufficient to show that the invisible audience was susceptible of infinite redefinition. Its image served whatever polemical end was thought necessary by a ranking member of society. In matters of taste the hidden spectators became the unthinking imitators of the values and behaviour of the visible audience, whose example, argued Vanbrugh, "Chiefly influences the Galleries."²³⁴ Sullen, in *A Comparison*, put it more bluntly: "What the

²³² B. L., *Of Plays, Players and Playhouses*, f. 59. See also *Post Man*, 17-19 December, 1700.

²³³ Harvard Theatre Collection, Uncatalogued MS.

²³⁴ *A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Profaneness* (London, 1698), pp. 45-46.

²³⁵ *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, p. 13.

Quality approve, the lower sort take upon trust."²³⁵ However, when their invisible presence was felt in the playhouse, the composition of their grey numbers could be as sharply individuated as that of any other group in the playhouse. Durfey's *Love for Money*; otherwise known as *The Boarding School* suffered on its first day, we are told, because several endeavoured to damn it, "especially the Dancing-Masters, and other Friends to the Boarding-Schools . . ."²³⁶

On the rare occasions when we do meet with these spectators in person, they fit none of the collective images given them. The company kept by Rev. Thomas Brockbank seems every bit as civilly behaved as any other he could have found:

At night Mr Atkinson (My Cos. head Drawer born at Ekrigg in Kittington) accompanied me to ye Theatre Royall and gave me a play.²³⁷

Mean citizens were as well-informed on matters of theatrical interest as the best of London's playgoers. When Pepys' vows kept him from the playhouses, it was to his barber, Benier, and his shoemaker, Wotton, that he turned for information about the accidents, arguments, relationships and entrepreneurial plans of the playhouse.²³⁸

Torriano's Italian-English conversation manual, *Mescolanza Dolce di Varie Historiette*, lends further support to the idea of a civil audience of ordinary people. In one dialogue, "An Italian discourseth with an Englishman, intending to see a Play, &c". The two join company with

²³⁶ Gildon, *Lives and Characters*, p. 51.

²³⁷ Brockbank, *Diary*, p. 98.

²³⁸ *Diary*, 22 October, 1662; 24 September, 1662, 22 July, 1663, 24 October, 1663, 10 December, 1663.

another tradesman, a maker of looking glasses, and take advantage of a holiday to pay a visit to the Duke's playhouse--"as yet the best fitted for Acting." They decide, on this festive occasion, to forego their usual places in the gallery and take a seat in the pit: "It's but a shilling more in the expence, half a Crown apiece," says the Englishman. The one problem this civil couple foresees is the press of bodies: "The inconvenience will be the Crowd," says the Italian, "for I am so subject to sweat, that I should sweat in January." The Englishman's reply shows that at least some members of the holiday crowds were concerned to maintain order: "At the going out we'll let the crowd pass, so as not to molest us."²³⁹

Holiday crowds like the one described by Torriano were actively courted by the playhouse management. Festive occasions invariably saw the performance of plays which had proved their success at other times--*Secret Love*, *Sir Martin Mar-all*, and *The Villain*--were all popular holiday fare. They could be relied on to draw to the playhouse those infrequent visitors who knew them by reputation at least. The companies even went so far as to stage special plays on holidays, in anticipation of a strong citizen presence. *The Shoemaker a Gentleman* and *Knavery in all Trades* were presented at Christmas and New Year.²⁴⁰ *The London Cuckolds* became, for many years, the traditional play performed on Lord Mayor's day.

²³⁹ *Mescolanza Dolce*, pp. 125-26.

²⁴⁰ See L. C., 5/141 *Knavery in All Trades* (London: 1664). A Comedy. As it was acted in the Christmas Holidays by several Apprentices. With Great Applause.

The ordinary citizens of London came to have a particular affection for several of the actors and actresses whose talents graced the stage and drew universal appreciation of it. Some, like Nell Gwynn and Doggett, publicised their city origins and so secured for themselves a loyal and vocal following.²⁴¹ Others, like Joe Haines, created for themselves offstage characters whose exploits rivalled those of the heroes of popular fiction.²⁴² The Protestant Whore, Sailor Ben and Jo were as popular with the citizens of London as ever Will Kempe had been.

Chapbooks and other cheap publications designed for popular reading abound with references to plays and their characters. They assume that their readers have some awareness of many of the more successful pieces on the London stage. *The Country Garland* (London: 1687) contains amongst its songs "The Libertine" and "The Politician, or Loyal Subject", both of which call to mind well-known plays. *The Female Ramblers; Or, A Fairing for Cuckolds* (London: 1683) has amongst its characters two fugitives from *The Country Wife*: Margery Wiseakers and Horner. Another book, *Tom the Taylor*, transplants a stock sequence from many a play, a proviso scene. References to plays were useful to men who wrote for a popular audience as a means of establishing topicality, of introducing bathos or of implying some common understanding about the workings of the world. *Poor Robins Intelligence*, a weekly journal of banter, gossip and stories which appeared in the late 1670's made extensive use of plays, their scenes and characters for just these ends.

²⁴¹ See Pepys, *Diary*, 1 May, 1667; Tony Aston, *A Brief Supplement to the Life of Mr Colley Cibber*, in *Apology*, ed. Lowe, p. 310; The London Spy, *September, 1699*; William Van Lennep, "Some Early English Playbills," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 8 (1954), 237.

²⁴² Aston, *A Brief Supplement*, in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, II, 314-18.

Hints from *The Man of Mode* and *The Virtuoso* appeared in its pages within weeks of the opening of those plays:

A modish Sir Fopling of the Town, affected in his mien,
proud of his parts, and positive in his assertions . . .²⁴³

And tho' they made no great pretences to swimming, having
never practiced the Table-experiment, nor followed the
directions of a Croaking Tutor . . .²⁴⁴

Marriage a la Mode was identified as the inspiration of "A Yoke of tyr'd
Husbands":

they thought it . . . agreeable to make an exchange (liking
each other's Wife very well) and to Cuckold one another by
consent, as perhaps they had formerly done without it.²⁴⁵

Even when plays were not relied on to such an extent as this, stories
were enlivened by the inclusion of a variety of Sir Foplings, Sir
Mannerly Shallows, Mammamouchis and other characters.²⁴⁶

No matter what the comparison of wages, prices and admission
charges between this period and earlier ones may suggest, it is beyond
doubt that a good many of London's less affluent citizens could and did
attend its playhouses. Indeed, economic thought of the time was begin-
ning to note the stimulation caused by the ready availability of luxury
goods and services, and of the increased levels of demand amongst those
who, according to conventional models of supply and price, would not

²⁴³ Issue L.

²⁴⁴ Issue O.

²⁴⁵ Issue S.

²⁴⁶ Issues Hh, Ii, Dd. See also *Poor Robin's Visions*, which has
numerous references to stage conventions and personnel; *The Figure of
Seaven* (London: n.d); *Clodpate's Ghost* (London: 1679).

have been able to afford them.²⁴⁷

For the less wealthy, attendance at the theatre was a luxury. To attend a play they had to reduce what they ordinarily spent on other consumable items. Their visits, as a consequence would not have been frequent. But attend they did, and in sufficient numbers to ensure that the Restoration audience was a mixed one.

A mixed audience within a segmented society: that, then, is our definition of Restoration playgoers. Age and sex, rank, status, office and occupation mattered immensely to this audience and were marked by differences in dress, address and a web of legal rights and duties, yet all kinds of people came and took their places in the common playhouses together. City wife and lawyer, ~~printer~~, maid and Earl sat and jostled / *pre* within its confines, by their very contiguity threatening those distinctions upon which generations of social ordering had depended. This was the true and frightening promiscuity--the licentiousness of the English stage.

²⁴⁷ See Joyce O. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

Chapter III

ATTENDANCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

An audience is not defined solely by the social status of its members. The men and women who wrote for, acted in or managed the playhouses were concerned about many other aspects of their spectators' habits and attitudes. Above all, those who earned their livelihood from the stage needed to retain the loyal support of their audiences, whatever form the latter's playgoing took. To understand how the stage functioned we need a demography of the auditorium. How many attended, where did they sit, and with whom, what did they come to see, what were they prepared to pay, how often did they visit, how long did they stay and when were they likely to return? On the answers to these questions depended both the fortunes of the playhouses and the well-being of all concerned with them.

3.1 Houses Great and Small: The Size of the Audience

The primary characteristic of any audience is its size: the number of people attending a performance bears heavily upon both theatrical and social considerations. It determines both the economic health of the stage and how great an effect the stage can have on the surrounding population. We may set an upper limit on the size of the audience for plays performed after 1660 by calculating the capacity of the various playhouses. Estimates for these range from 500 seats at Lincolns Inn

Fields to 1500 at Drury Lane.¹ Such figures are misleading. They tend to oversimplify the matter of audience size, for this is not a measure of seating capacity alone: audience size is also concerned with average and gross attendances, with the number of individuals attending in a given year and with the proportion of the population they represent. Thus before we look at audience size, we should first consider the types of evidence we have to work with, then the limitations we should impose upon their use and finally the treatments to which we can legitimately subject them.

Evidence of audience size is of three types: pictorial, verbal and financial. The first of these comprises architectural plans, engravings of playhouse interiors or scenes from plays and maps depicting the theatres and their neighbourhoods. The material is scanty, incomplete and of doubtful authenticity. Nonetheless, conjectural reconstructions of the several playhouses are often based on this type of evidence, and from these scholars have derived estimates of capacity.²

¹ According to W. J. Lawrence, Drury Lane held 1000 spectators: see Montague Summers, *Restoration Theatre*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), p. 64. Edward A. Langhans put the capacity of Bridges Street and Drury Lane at 1500, that of Dorset Garden at 1200, and Lincolns-Inn-Fields at 500: "Staging Practices in the Restoration Theatre 1660-1682." Diss. Yale 1955, pp. 51, 162, 353, 442. Sheldon P. Zitner estimates that Dorset Garden held from 730 to 950 spectators, and Drury Lane, between 1000 and 1200: "The English Theatre Audience," pp. 77 ff. See also P. Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, p. 16 & n.

² Zitner, pp. 72 ff., attempts to apply a use-of-space formula to a conjectural reconstruction. For other reconstructions, see E. A. Langhans, "Wren's Restoration Playhouse," *Theatre Notebook*, 18 (1964), 91-100; R. Leacroft, "Wren's Drury Lane," *Architectural Review*, 110 (1951), 43-46; D. C. Mullin, "The Theatre Royal, Bridges Street: A Conjectural Reconstruction," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 19 (1967), 17-29.

There are satisfactions which come from reconstructing the past in this way, but there are good reasons why we should regard the results with some scepticism. A model has no more authority than the materials from which it was constructed and the pictorial evidence on which the reconstructions are based is being made to serve purposes for which it was never intended.³ As a means of determining actual or potential capacity pictorial materials are of limited reliability. However, they do serve to make us suspicious of all firm estimates. For as Wren's sketch of a theatre and Dolle's engravings of Dorset Garden show, the lines of continuity between seating areas in the playhouse were strong, and as a result, boundaries were loose, movement was fluid and capacity elastic.⁴ It makes no sense to claim that the pit could hold 500 people or each box 20. Many of the seats were benches and high demand made for packed houses. Moreover, the mobility of the spectators made their numbers difficult to quantify. Other sketches in which the audience appears confirm this. They show throngs of spectators in even the most expensive and exclusive of seating areas.⁵ Thus those who base their

³ A few examples: in his article, "Pictorial Material on the Bridges Street and Drury Lane Theatres," *Theatre Survey*, 7 (1966), 80-100, Edward A. Langhans presents an array of evidence which is every bit as inconsistent as it is impressive, so that the sketch he proposes as a design for Bridges Street is in conflict with all we know of the physical dimensions of that playhouse; Dolle's engravings were made to display scenery, not theatre size and occupation; Hotson's extrapolations from ground plans (pp.122-127) depend too heavily on the accuracy of the scale used in the original.

⁴ Wren's sketch is held in All Souls College Library, Oxford. Dolle's engravings are in Elkanah Settle's *The Empress of Morrocco* (1673).

⁵ See Joe Haines Epilogue (on a Donkey), engraving in Thomas Scott, *The Unhappy Kindness* (1697). For material on later audiences see Hogarth's *The Laughing Audience*, in *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, comp. Ronald Paulson, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), II, 136; the Frontispieces to Henry Fielding's *Pasquin* (London: 1737) and to *The*

reconstructions on pictorial evidence, or attempt to apply fixed arithmetical principles to the elastic capacities of bench seating, not only incorporate and multiply a substantial margin of error, but perform the further disservice of implying that there did exist some recognised and calculable upper limit to playhouse capacity.⁶

The only sure generalisation which the pictorial evidence does permit us to make--that playhouse seating was elastic--is supported by the second type of evidence, comments made by contemporaries about capacity, accommodation and attendance. Magalotti noted how the rows of seats in the boxes allowed for "greater accommodation of the Ladies and Gentlemen."⁷ Torriano said of the pit: "They set as close as Pilchers in a Barrel."⁸ The looseness of the boundaries between seating areas is made apparent in a letter in which Congreve tells how, when Dorset Garden was used for a concert, pit and boxes were railed into one and "all sat in common."⁹

Such verbal evidence helps to determine the relative capacity of the several playhouses. We know from Francis Kirkman, for example, that the Red Bull was large by comparison with Lincolns Inn Fields or Bridges *Beauties of the English Stage* (London: 1737).

⁶ Alfred Harbage, in *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1941), pp. 22-23, outlines one set of arithmetical principles which have found their way into computations of Restoration playhouse capacities.

⁷ *The Travels of Cosmo the Third*, p. 190.

⁸ *Mescolanza Dolce*, p. 105.

⁹ *Letters & Documents*, p. 20. The practice became common in the 18th century.

¹⁰ *The Wits, or, Sport upon Sport* (London: 1673) A2v. *Histrionica* / *Histrionica* adds more information. The Red Bull, says Trueman, was of a size with the Fortune and the Globe. Houses built after the Restoration

Street.¹⁰ It seems that of the theatres built after 1660 the smallest were the former tennis courts, Vere Street and Lincolns-Inn-Fields. Gildon describes the latter as "not so commodious" as the next playhouse built, Bridges Street.¹¹ We know too that Drury Lane, the most capacious of the Restoration theatres, still could not hold enough spectators to satisfy Christopher Rich, who demolished a good portion of the apron in 1696, in order to increase the capacity of the pit.¹²

The records also contain numerous categorical statements about capacity and attendance. Brunet writes that in Dorset Garden,

il ny a que Sept Loges qui peuvent contenir chacun Vingt personnes. Il y a encore pareil nombre au dessus et un paradis plus haut.¹³

Prologues and epilogues written in the last decade of the Seventeenth century sometimes contain statements about audience size. The prologue to *A Very Good Wife* (1693) tells of "ten Scribblers in a Row" in the pit at Drury Lane; the prologue to *The Volunteers* (1692), of twenty spectators in one row. Lincolns Inn Fields held 500 judges, according to the epilogue to *Beauty in Distress* (1698). Empty houses were noted as often as were well-attended performances. The Prologue to *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (1694) speaks of forty spectators in the pit and forty

were not so vast, but still bigger than "Blackfriars, Cockpit, and Salisbury-court, [which] . . . were very small to what we see now." *Historia Histrionica: An Historical Account of the English Stage* in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, I, xxviii-xxix.

¹¹ Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton* (London: 1710), p. 7.

¹² Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 224-26.

¹³ François Brunet *Voyage d'Angleterre*, B. L. Add. MS. 35177, 79 ff., in Hotson, pp. 234-235.

more in the upper gallery. *Love for Money* (1691), we are told, drew but fifty people into the seats far above. Yet none of these figures can be relied upon. Brunet is inaccurate in quantitative matters elsewhere in his narrative; moreover he sat in the pit, and not in those boxes whose capacity he so firmly states.¹⁴ The evidence drawn from prologues is even more suspect. Their purpose was to persuade and manage the audience, not to document its size. Nor is it always clear whether their figures refer to attendance or to capacity. Above all, we should remember that prologues and epilogues were written and memorised before the audience that they defined ever entered the playhouse.

Other verbal estimates from diaries, journals and letters must be treated with the same caution. Pepys, for example, writes that when *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* was first performed, "by 2 a-clock, there was 1000 people put back that could not have room in the pit . . ."¹⁵ This tells us nothing about the playhouse's capacity, and little even about the audience size. Nor can we rely on it as a measure of the number of disappointed spectators, unless we are willing to take on trust Pepys' ability to estimate crowd size. Nevertheless, like all comments on capacity and attendance, it provides interesting, if indirect, information on the playhouses and on the behaviour of the spectators. It confirms the elasticity of the pit and it shows that high prices and small houses did not deter a great many people from attempting to see the opening of a new play.

¹⁴ Brunet incorrectly states that the admission charge to the pit was 2/- and that the footmen entered free.

¹⁵ Pepys, *Diary*, 6 February, 1668.

The third type of evidence takes the form of receipts or accounts of takings and profits. From these it is possible to estimate the number of paying spectators on a particular night or over a given period. First, however, we need to establish the mean admission paid by each spectator.

We know the range of seating prices which applied under normal circumstances throughout the period: 4s. for the boxes, 2s. 6d. for the pit, 1s. 6d. for the middle gallery and 1s. for the upper one. We may make some broad assumptions about the relative capacity of the seating areas and the range of the distribution of spectators throughout them. The pit was always the most populous part of the house. Furthermore, there were more spectators in the middle gallery than in the upper one and more spectators in the two galleries combined than in the boxes. We may also assume that no seating area was totally empty--let us allow a minimum occupancy rate of 10% in each.

These assumptions are in accordance with all pictorial and verbal evidence and with the few complete sets of daily receipts available for any of the houses operating during the period 1660-1710.¹⁶ An analysis of the range of seating distributions consistent with this set of assumptions shows that the mean payment tendered per head lay between 2s. and 2s. 6d. The following table displays the results:

¹⁶ See above, Table 2 for receipts from December 1677. Comparable figures for operas are available in *Vice-Chamberlain Coke's Theatrical Papers 1706-1715*, ed. Judith Milhous and R. D. Hume (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1982), Nos. 94, 96, 97.

Table 3: Mean Admission Paid: Maximum and Minimum Values

The values below represent the seating distributions that produced maximum and minimum values for mean admission payments.

Seating Distribution (%)				Mean Payment
~~Boxes~~	~~Pit~~	Middle Gallery	Upper Gallery	
50	25	15	10	2s. 6d. (Maximum)
30	10	30	30	2s. 0d. (Minimum)

/Pit/Boxes

If we compare the mean payment with a day's receipts we can estimate the attendance on that day. For example, during the opening run of *The Squire of Alsatia*, Shadwell, the Poet, ". . . receiv'd for his third Day in the House in Drury Lane at single Prizes 130l. which was the greatest Receipt they ever had at that House at single Prizes." To bring in such a sum required that between 1050 and 1300 spectators pay to see the performance.¹⁷ Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* earned £140 for its author, from which we may infer that between 1100 and 1400 spectators attended.¹⁸

The Poet's Day was something of an extraordinary occasion, when the house was packed with supporters. We can make more reliable estimates of the average audience size from daily receipts. We have enough material to calculate mean daily receipts over an extended period, and from that to estimate how many spectators normally attended each day.

¹⁷ Downes *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Unidentified letter cited in Malone, *An Historical Account of the Stage*, III, 163.

Several pieces of evidence indicate that the average daily take was in the region of £50. In 1669 Isaac Fuller claimed that the daily receipts of the King's Company were "not usually . . . above 40 or 50 li . . ." ¹⁹ Certainly receipts for the more successful Duke's Company were unlikely to have been below this level. That company's accounts for the years 1675-1677 reveal an average daily profit of £5:10:00. ²⁰ Profits were determined after three major categories of expense had been met: the daily charge--the £25 regularly incurred in paying wages and maintaining the playhouse--debt servicing--repayment of monies borrowed to finance theatre construction--and the expenses for "Scenes, Habits and Properties." We may therefore assume an average house of £50. ²¹ Over a ten year period from 1682 until 1692 the United Company sustained an average daily receipt at the £50 level. In slightly more than 2200 acting days, the company took almost £104,000--a mean of £47 each acting day. ²² Divide the mean daily receipts by the mean price paid by each spectator, and it becomes apparent that the managers of London's playhouses could expect to see between 400 and 500 spectators who came, stayed and paid on each acting day of a season.

¹⁹ Hotson, Appendix p. 353, Chancery Bill C7 486/74.

²⁰ This amount is based on the figures proposed by Judith Milhous in, "The Duke's Company's Profits, 1674-1677," *Theatre Notebook*, 32 (1978), 76-87.

²¹ For components of the daily charge, see *A Comparison* p. 8; Hotson, pp. 236-38, 369; Nicoll, p. 375.

²² Edward A. Langhans, "New Restoration Theatre Accounts," *Theatre Notebook*, 17 (1963), 118-134, on the number of playing days in the period 1682-92.

We can extend these crude computations a little and, from the total monies received, calculate average and total attendances during the run of a play. For example, when *Tyrannic Love* was performed at Bridges Street, it played

. . . about 14 dayes together and received all that while about 100li p diem Whereas att other playes they are not wont vsually to receive above 40 or 50 li p diem And that their said House all the said 14 dayes was very full the Pitt Boxes and other places thereof beeing thronged with Spectators . . .²³

Even if we allow for self-interested exaggeration, it appears that 850-1000 spectators saw *Tyrannic Love* each day (a very good figure indeed, when we compare it with an average daily attendance of 500). Total attendance for the first run of the play lay between 12,000 and 14,000 spectators. We can make similar estimates for other successful plays. Etherege's *Love in a Tub* brought £1000 "in a Months time," a figure that implies a minimum of 8,000-10,000 paying spectators.²⁴ Even if we allow for only average houses of £50, it is clear that plays like *The Citizen turn'd Gentleman*, with 30 performances in its opening season, and *The Constant Couple*, with 50, drew total audiences of 15,000 and 25,000, at least, during their first months of performance.²⁵

All these estimates of attendance figures err on the conservative side. They allow us to calculate only the numbers of those who came, stayed and paid. They do not include that considerable number of regular playgoers whose service to the stage, whether as playwrights,

²³ Hotson, p. 343.

²⁴ Downes, p. 25.

²⁵ Ravenscroft, Dedication to *The Citizen turn'd Gentleman* (1672) Farquhar, Preface to *The Inconstant*, in *Works*, I, 221.

patrons or favoured friends, entitled them to be placed on the free list.²⁶ The receipts which furnish our evidence do not include aftermony (the fee charged those who entered after the third act).²⁷ Nor do they make allowance for those who offered false or clipped coins, or who moved from boxes to pit or from playhouse to playhouse as the doorkeeper approached, in order to avoid paying, or who presumed upon their reputation and promised to pay later.²⁸ When we consider, too, that the companies excluded from their accounting the best part of the take on benefit days, it is clear that the playhouses drew on average houses well in excess of 500 spectators.

On the basis of these calculations we can estimate changes in annual attendance from the Restoration until the century's end. From 1660 until 1676, a period during which the companies were thriving, the annual attendance at each was approximately 90,000-100,000, or somewhere close to 200,000 for both. From 1676 until 1682 the figures declined. This was particularly the case for the King's Company, where

²⁶ See *William Congreve: Letters & Documents*, pp. 151-52; Farquhar, "A Discourse upon Comedy," in *Works*, II, 340; Wycherley, "To my LADY B_____", in *The Plain Dealer*, in *Plays*, p. 370; Killigrew's agreement with Davenant in *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, p. 99. Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons*, p. 181, notes that in the Eighteenth century, the Free List grew to exceed 800.

²⁷ Hotson, p. 290; Nicoll, p. 369.

²⁸ See the Epilogue to *The Man's the Master*, the Prologue to *Alphonso*, the Prologue to *The Unnatural Brother*, the Prologue to *Bellamira*, the Prologue to *Bussy D'Ambois*, the Epilogue to *Love's a Jest*, and the Epilogue to *The Constant Couple*. They are extensively discussed by Sybil Rosenfeld, "Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration Period: 1660-1700." Nicoll, p. 360, cites Lord Chamberlain's Orders in LC 7/1, 5/138 and 7/3, forbidding rude and forceful entrance to the playhouses, without first making payment, or delivering the appropriate door tickets; Pepys *Diary* entries for 30 December, 1667, 7 January, 1668 and 11 February, 1668, tell of spectators' entering on credit or otherwise avoiding entrance charges.

internal dissension, poor management and a worsening political situation brought its affairs to so miserable a state that by 1682 it had ceased to function as an independent body of actors.²⁹ With the union of the two companies in 1682 both attendance and profitability stabilised, and while total annual attendance did not equal the levels it had reached under a competitive situation, it was still in excess of 110,000.³⁰ In 1695 Betterton and several other senior actors seceded from the patent company. The interest aroused by the ensuing rivalry stimulated total attendance again, though it did not immediately match the levels of the post-Restoration period.³¹ It was not until the early eighteenth century, when the Haymarket theatre opened and opera established itself as a regular entertainment, that playhouse attendance once again stabilised at a high rate and audience segmentation became clearly defined.

3.2 *The Habits of Playgoers*

Capacity, total and mean attendance give us merely a gross indication of audience size: they do not adequately define attendance patterns. To say more about those patterns we need to know more about the playgoing habits of individual spectators. How often did they attend? What did they like to see? Where did they sit--and with whom? And when did they

²⁹ See Hotson, p. 267. He cites L. C. C7 194/57.

³⁰ For receipts, see Hotson, p. 288. For acting days see Langhans, "New Restoration Theatre Accounts," p. 134.

³¹ Both companies found themselves with poor audiences. See Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 127-29, also pp. 112, 170; Robert Jennens, HMC, 12th Report, Appendix II, p. 367; Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton*, p. 10, mentions dwindling audiences; *A Comparison*, p. 8, talks of the town's "not being unable to furnish out two good Audiences every Day . . ."

return? The answers we frame to these questions will provide the outline from which we draw the character of the audience.

The best documented visits were those made by Pepys in the years from 1660 to 1669: the period of his *Diary*.³² Throughout that period, it was Pepys' changing status and economic security, or rather his perceptions of those things, that were the dominant constraints on his playgoing and upon the pleasure it gave him. On his first visits to the reopened playhouses his pleasures were simple, even naive. He was delighted to see actresses for the first time, was pleased to see a revival of an old stock play and marvelled at the splendid gathering of nobles and beauties. Thereafter his rising fortune is matched by his progress from gallery to pit and then to box. We can chart, too, the extent to which frequent playgoing became less of an extravagance and more of an affordable indulgence for him. In later years, the amount spent on basic admission charges was regularly increased by payments for coach hire, china oranges and gratuities handed to those who kept places for Mr Pepys and his guests.³³ It is a careful Pepys, of modest income, who hesitates to accept invitations to the playhouse in 1664, lest he thereby become liable to return favours he can ill-afford; it is Pepys, the man of substance, who--a mere four years later--treats others lavishly, but frowns at the extravagance of those less affluent than himself:

³² See Louis Pendleton, "Pepys as Dramatic Critic," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 35 (1936), 411-19. Pendleton notes only 273 of Pepys' recorded visits. See also Zitner, pp. 31-39, 104-05; Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, pp. 10-12.

³³ For instances of these minor milestones in the playhouse behaviour of a man of improving social condition, see the *Diary*, 3 January, 1661; 22 April, 1663; 4 August, 1664; 28 September, 1664; 19 October, 1667; 6 January, 1668; 26 March, 1668.

when I began first to be able to bestow a play upon myself I do not remember that I saw so many by half of the ordinary 'prentices and mean people in the pit at 2s. 6d." (1 January, 1668).³⁴

His attitude is quite clear: to attend regularly and to sit in the more expensive seats was warrantable only for persons of wealth and rank.

Pepys attended over 360 performances during the diary years, an average of 45 visits each year. Of the total some 20 or so were to drolls and puppet plays, a further 20 visits took place at court, a handful at the nurseries--where young actors were trained--and the rest at the several public playhouses. In 1660 he enthused over the novelty of the stage, but was cautious in his attendance. The following year he indulged himself and saw a total of 78 plays and shows, which caused him to note, on 31 December: "I have for this last half-year been a very great spendthrift in all manner of respects." Accordingly he resolved--not for the first time--to limit his playgoing. Thus in 1662 he saw only 25 performances, taking in but two plays most months, except for May, when he went eight times. After May's lapse into excess he stayed away from the stage for three months.

This pattern--attempted moderation, failure, then enforced abstention as punishment--continued into 1663: he saw 14 plays between January and June, then none until after Christmas. 1664 saw him index his expenditure on plays to his economic worth: "I will not see above one in a month at any of the public theatres till the sum of 50s be spent," he resolved, "and then none before New Year's day next, unless that I do become worth 1,000 l sooner than then . . ." (2 January, 1664). When his calculations revealed his worth at £1014 he immediately relaxed his

³⁴ See also the entries for 4, 13 August, 28 September, 1664.

scruples, claiming: "my conscience knows that it is only the saving of money and the time that I intend by my oaths . . ." (8 August, 1664.) Again, Pepys implies that frequent playgoing is a fit occupation only for the wealthy and the leisured.

Despite the severity of the restrictions he imposed on himself, Pepys did not arrange his visits so as to see the maximum number of new plays. He was content to view a stock play or a revival if nothing more recent was to hand, even to see part of a play if business delayed him, provided he could pay his visit immediately it fell due. Such impatience during his periods of self imposed moderation often cost him the opportunity of seeing the latest plays, cried up by the town.³⁵ It was clearly the playhouse that drew him, rather than the play. He also valued the pleasures of the place and the occasion over those of the performance: in the months after the opening of the King's Company's fine new playhouse in Bridges Street, he quite forsook the players in the older theatre, despite the fact that the acting at Bridges Street was much poorer: "I never heard both men and women so ill pronounce their parts, even to my making myself sick therewith." (10 June, 1663).³⁶ Once he had made his visit he felt under no obligation to see the entire performance--on at least 10% of his visits he saw only part of the play. Nor did he think it necessary to pay particular attention to the performance while he was there: the playhouse had other diversions to offer.³⁷

³⁵ Amongst those whose initial performances he missed were *Love in a Tub*, *The Committee*, *The Rival Ladies*, *The Cheats*, *Pompey the Great* and *The Wild Gallant*.

³⁶ See also *Diary*, 13 June, 1663.

³⁷ See the *Diary*, 7 May, 1662; 20 July, 1664; 28 September, 1664.

After the fire of 1666, Pepy's fortunes flourished and his playgoing increased. His conscience, which had so often stood guard over his purse, was consulted less frequently. During the 32 months in which he continued his diary he saw over 200 plays and shows, an average of more than two visits a week in each acting season. At times he attended every afternoon.³⁸ Such excesses brought Pepys much unwelcome attention and made him the subject of gossip:

. . . so my wife and I into the garden . . . she tells me that she finds by W. Hewer that my people do observe me minding my pleasure more than usual; which I confess, and am ashamed of, and so from this day take upon me to leave it till Whit-Sunday. (19 April, 1667.)

Where economics did not force restraint, reputation would.

Pepys's return visits to a play increased with affluence--before the fire four out of ten visits were to plays he had previously seen, as against seven out of ten in the later years. Moreover he regularly saw the same play twice, even three times, during its first run.³⁹ He recorded and revised his opinions in some detail, and took note of the views expressed by the rest of the audience. He became, in effect, a critic--a positive man, who readily exchanged information and opinions with his fellow spectators, and one on whose judgement the fate of the play depended.

³⁸ See his *Diary* for April and August, 1667, and for the months of April and May, 1668.

³⁹ Amongst those he returned to within days of his first visit were *The Sullen Lovers*, *Sir Martin Mar-all*, *An Evening's Love*, *Tryphon*, *The Old Troup*, *The Mulberry-Garden*, and *The Black Prince*. Before the fire the only play he saw several times during its initial run was *Love and Honour*.

The increase in his attendance was accompanied by a change in his attitude towards playhouse seating. The man of substance was less punctilious about taking (and being seen to take) the best place his pocket could afford, and now sat to suit himself, avoiding the press of the pit at popular plays, entering a box when he felt like doing so, sometimes sitting privately in an upper box, so as to avoid being seen.⁴⁰ The scope of the occasion was enlarged, too. Taking in a play might constitute only part of a larger entertainment, one involving a sizeable party and great expense:

And so, with our hearts mightily overjoyed at this success, we all to dinner at my Lord Brounker's . . . and thence . . . to the King's house and there saw part of *The Discontented Colonel*. (5 March 1668.)

No matter what his income or his rate of attendance, Pepys valued companionship in his playgoing. Just as he liked percieving expressions of intimacy amidst the crowded public of the playhouse, so he liked in turn to be part of an intimate group. It was a pleasure beyond that of sitting in comfortable seats amidst fine ladies and gentlemen. On fewer than one visit in four did Pepys sit alone in the throng, and it was often on those solitary ventures that he developed feelings of guilt and resolved to forswear the playhouse. Elizabeth Pepys accompanied her husband on more than half the visits he made. His wider family, too, helped to make up playgoing parties--his father, brother, uncle, the Talbots, the Turners and several other of his cousins, together with their wives, families and mistresses, all formed part of a family network who enjoyed a social occasion together. Pepys' colleagues in the

⁴⁰ For illustrations of his attitude to seating, see the *Diary*, 1, 7 April, 1668; 1 February, 1669.

Navy Office made up a parallel group of companions. Lord Brounker and Sir William Penn, John Creed, Captain Ferrers and Will Hewer, Pepys' clerk, joined the diarist on seventy or more of his afternoons in the playhouse, often bringing with them their wives and families. And if he was unable to raise support from either of these quarters he could usually count on meeting some friend there by chance, so companionable was the playhouse, and so visible the audience. Only when his playgoing rose from the frequent to the excessive did he fail to find someone to join him in his afternoon's entertainment.⁴¹

Notwithstanding the polymorphous pleasures and diversions Pepys found in the playhouse, he was serious about his playgoing. He purchased copies of recently performed plays when they appeared at his bookseller's and compared the text with the performance he had seen⁴² He argued the merits of plays with his wife, his friends and associates, discoursing on their sources, their virtues and the propriety of their design.⁴³ Over the years his tastes developed a deal of critical sophistication: he felt confident enough to amend opinions he had once held and to assert his own judgement against that of the most highly regarded of the wits.⁴⁴

⁴¹ See his entries for April and May 1668.

⁴² Plays he bought included *The Adventures of Five Hours*, *The Siege of Rhodes*, *The Queen of Arragon*. From his comments on *Henry IV* and *The Valiant Cid* (*Diary*, 31 December, 1660 and 1 December, 1662) we may infer that he had read them also.

⁴³ See *Diary*, 1 September, 1660; 17 August, 1664; 1 October, 1665; 13 February, 1667; 20 June, 1668.

⁴⁴ See his comments on *She wou'd if she cou'd* (6 February, 1668) and *The Mulberry Garden* (18 May, 1668).

The satisfactions Pepys found in plays fall under four broad headings: novelty, familiarity, variety and design. The first of these he found, in his early playgoing, in the newness of the playhouses, the introduction of scenery and actresses, and in plays he had never seen before. The appeal of novelty was immediate, but the satisfactions it gave were intellectually undemanding, often satisfying little more than curiosity. Inevitably, the pleasure of novelty diminished over time. As Pepys' attendance became more frequent and his taste in drama developed, the novelty of a piece became less of a recommendation.⁴⁵

Familiarity offered more durable pleasures to a regular playgoer. Memory made its contribution to the satisfaction of seeing familiar plays yet again. Where expectations were answered and performance matched recollection Pepys found pleasure, for memory turns a spectator into a performer. Witness his comments on *Philaster*:

. . . it is pretty to see how I could remember almost all along, ever since I was a boy, *Arethusa*, the part which I was to have acted . . . (30 May, 1668.)

The interplay of memory with a performance seen again gave rise to another form of satisfaction, as Pepys came to relish anew the surprise of things which had slipped through the gaps in memory:

With my wife, to the Duke's house and there saw "Mustapha" . . . I had seen it before but forgot it, so it was wholly new to me--which is the pleasure of my not committing these things to my memory. (5 January, 1667.)⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See the *Diary*, 8, 9 December, 1668, for his comments on *Tryphon*.

⁴⁶ See also the entry for 3 April, 1665.

It was not only familiarity, but often the variety of a play which encouraged Pepys to pay his return visits. Where he found variety, he would come back six, seven or more times in a year:

To the Duke of York's house, to the play, "The Tempest," which we have often seen, but yet I was pleased again, and shall be again to see it, it is so full of variety, and particularly this day I took pleasure to learn the seaman's dance, which I have much desired to be perfect in, and have made myself so. (3 February, 1668).⁴⁷

To find pleasure in variety can be a more complex critical response than mere novelty or familiarity, for it encompasses not only the notion that a play can appeal in a number of ways, but also that its several merits need not be consistent with each other. It is easy enough to understand that a poor play might be well acted, that elaborate scenes and fine costumes might clothe a second-rate play or that the most miserable of pieces might have in it some passage of merit, but at times Pepys seems almost to make a principle of attending to a play as a collection of fragmented entertainments: a diversity of pleasures, each weighed independently from the others. *Catiline*, he wrote, was

A play of much good sense and words to read, but that do appear the worst upon the stage, I mean the least diverting, that ever I saw any, though most in fine clothes; and a fine scene of the Senate, and of a fight, that ever I saw in my life . . . But the play is onely to be read. (19 December, 1668.)

It was his willingness to find such pleasure in diversity, too, that enabled him to enjoy a play to which he had given less than his full attention. Of *The Black Prince*, he wrote:

⁴⁷ Other favourite plays included *Macbeth*, *The Bondman*, *Sir Martin Mar-All*, *The Maiden Queen*, *Hamlet*, *The Silent Woman*, *The Wits*, *The Scornful Lady*, and *Bartholomew Fair*.

. . . it was pretty to see how coming after dinner and with no company for me to talk to, and at a play that I had seen, and went to now not for curiosity but only idleness, I did fall asleep the former part of the play, but afterward did mind it and like it very well. (1 April, 1668).

Pepys' major satisfaction came from his appreciation of a play's design. He called *Mustapha*, "a most excellent play for words and design as ever I did see." (5 January, 1667). This quality--the complement of variety--consisted in uniting and reconciling the fragments of a play, so that he perceived them, "Dramatically digested into Turns and Counter-turns, to double Walks; and interweavings of design."⁴⁸ The design of a play did not always yield itself up immediately. Consider Pepys' reactions to *The Villain*:

I was never less pleased with a play in my life. (20 October, 1662.)

I was better pleased with the play than I was at first, understanding the design better than I did. (26 December, 1662.)

. . . the more I see it, the more I am offended at my first undervaluing the play, it being very good and pleasant and yet a true and allowable Tragedy. (1 January, 1663.)

Understanding, we gather, grew with successive attendances: the pleasure of design was reserved for only the most sophisticated of dramatic palates.

Neither in his attendance nor in his appreciation of plays was Pepys a typical playgoer. He was by turns an habitual--almost obsessive--frequenter of the playhouses and a moderate, even cautious

⁴⁸ Sir William Davenant, "To The Reader," in *The Siege of Rhodes*, in *Works*, III, 233.

visitor. He could be a convivial companion and generous host or an attentive and discerning critic. To understand the variability of his playgoing behaviour, we need to compare his habits with those of other Restoration playgoers.⁴⁹

Anthony Wood, an Oxford don and no friend to playbooks, plays or frivolity of any kind, was another who attended plays put on by London companies when they toured. In 1660 the Red Bull troupe visited Oxford, mounting 17 performances of 11 plays within a space of 10 days. The pleasures such a visit promised Wood were marred by his reservations about its effects on the susceptible youths of the place:

These playes wherein women acted (among which was Roxilana married to the earl of Oxon) made the scholars run mad, run after them, take ill c<o>urses. ⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Dr Edward Browne left a record of his expenditure on plays for the years between 1661 and late summer 1663. See W. W. Greg, "Theatrical Repertories of 1662," *Gentleman's Magazine*, 31 (1906), 69-72, and B. L. Sloane MS. 1900, ff. 60v-63v. Browne attended fewer plays than Pepys. In a two year period he saw 41 plays in London and took in a further 13 plays in Cambridge and Norwich. He saw only two of these 54 plays twice over, one in London and one at a provincial performance. Only 11 of the plays he attended--fewer than one in five--were new plays.

Browne favoured the King's company over their rivals: he saw 27 of their plays and only 11 of the Duke's Company's. He seems to have sat where he pleased, sometimes paying 2/6 for a place in the pit, sometimes 1/6 for a seat in the gallery and sometimes taking the cheapest seats at 1/-. There is no record of his ever paying the 4/- it cost for a seat in a Box.

On various occasions he paid 3/-, 5/-, and 15/- to treat guests to the entertainment, a favour returned on at least one occasion, when he saw *The Virgin Martyr* at someone else's expense. His total outlay during the period was £5.6.0. His visits to performances in Cambridge and Norwich show that he kept in touch with the stage on his journeys out of town.

⁵⁰ *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, I, 405-06.

However, despite his doubts, he took in 10 of the players' performances. He saw plays twice over, went morning and afternoon and spent altogether 6/- in doing so. Only the modest charges made by the touring companies saved him from appearing as compulsive a playgoer as Pepys.

John Evelyn does not offer so spectacular an attendance record. Although he kept his *Diary* until 1703, he recorded visits to the London playhouses between 1660 and 1675 only, during which time he saw 32 plays. Like many of his contemporaries Evelyn responded with interest to the resumption of playing in 1660: he saw as many plays in the five years between Charles's return and the closing of the playhouses in 1665 as he did in all the years that followed. The most striking characteristic of his playgoing was his strong antipathy to the stage, something evident in the tone of the entries he made: "I was so idle as to go to see a play . . . " he wrote, after a ten month absence from the theatres. (11 November, 1661). He regarded plays as "lewd", "ridiculous" "foolish" and "very prophane." The playhouses were "abused, to an atheistical liberty, fowle & undecent," the stage, "degenerated & poluted by the licentious times."⁵¹

That the holder of such attitudes should have attended at all may be a little surprising, but it was Evelyn's very conservatism that made his playgoing inevitable. He was a great respecter of the court, the crown and its authority, and attended performances before the King with something of the air of a man meeting his obligations. Fully half of the plays he witnessed were presented "*Coram Rege*" as he puts it. At other times his family and acquaintance necessitated his attendance. His

⁵¹ *Diary*, 16 January, 1662; 27 November, 1662; 18 October, 1666; 19 June, 1668.

relation, Sir Samuel Tuke, wrote a play, as did his much admired friend, Katherine Philips. He made sure to see performances of both and to record his satisfaction. *The Rehearsal* was the collaborative effort of some of his Royal Society colleagues and his dear friend Margaret Blagge played a leading role in the masque, *Calisto*.⁵² He could scarcely avoid paying their work due attention.

From those few performances he did enjoy, it appears that Evelyn's taste was more European than English. He most approved those spectacles and shows which rivalled the Italian operas he had seen in his youth. Early English productions were "much inferior" (5 May, 1659), but over time the design of scenery improved and he began to find more to satisfy him:

I saw the *Indian Queene* a Tragedie well written, but so beautified with rich Scenes as the like had never ben seene here as happily (except rarely any where else) on a mercenarie *Theatre*. (5 February, 1664.)

The Conquest of Granada had "very glorious scenes & perspectives, the work of Mr *Streeter*, who well understands it." (9 February, 1671.) He approved, too, of Dorset Garden, the foremost playhouse there had ever been in England for staging splendid theatrical effects.⁵³ However, there is no record of his having seen any of its celebrated productions.

The record of Evelyn's playgoing is full of such contradictions. He was an informed spectator, who attended seldom and enjoyed little, a moralist who paid his visits to the licentious playhouses out of respect to his conservative acquaintance and social superiors, a staunch

⁵² *Diary*, 8 January, 1663; 4 February, 1668; 14 December, 1671; 15 December, 1674.

⁵³ *Diary*, 26 June, 1671.

Englishman who preferred Italian operas to native drama. His attitudes are caught finely in his comments on a performance by a visiting entertainer at court:

. . . saw the Italian *Scaramucchio* act before the King at *White hall* People giving monye to come in, which was very Scandalous, & never so before at court Diversions: having seene him act before in *Italy* many yeares past, I was not averse from seeing the most excellent of that kind of folly. (29 September, 1675.)

--it was the last performance that he noted in his diary.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Robert Hooke, scientist, designer and Fellow of the Royal Society, was another whose playgoing was casual, even slight. Over a six year period he saw only nine plays. Yet he was not uninterested in the playhouse: he bought copies of plays and books on plays, lent and borrowed them, listened to stage gossip, talked with the actors and on at least one occasion proved himself something of an authority on the staging of special effects. See *The Diary of Robert Hooke*, 27 August, 1673; 3 May, 1674; 1 January, 1676; 28 August, 1677. See also, *The Diary of Robert Hooke*, ed. R. T. Gunter, in *The Life and Work of Robert Hooke*, Vol. X of *Early Science in Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935), 5 April, 6 June, 1689. His scientific acquaintances and mechanical interests dominated his playgoing. Most of his attendance was in the company of his artisan friends or Royal Society colleagues. Shadwell, a playwright well-known amongst the virtuosi, accounts for five of the performances he saw, and at least two of the plays he purchased. Amongst the plays he recorded buying were *The Sullen Lovers*, *The Virtuoso*, and *The Rehearsal*--the latter effectively a collaborative effort by several members of the Society. See *The Diary*, 1 January, 20 June, 1674; 25 June, 27 August, 1675, 2 June, 3 July, 1 August, 1676. Hooke invariably attended Dorset Garden, where Shadwell was the resident dramatist and where the staging of effects was most highly developed. A frugal spectator, he sat either in the pit or the middle gallery; for all his curiosity about stage effects he never once paid to see them at their best from a box. Nor did he return to see any play save, as we might expect, *The Virtuoso*, Shadwell's satire on the Society and its worst excesses.

Gregory King, another Fellow of the Royal Society, gave more of his time and money to the stage. His accounts, "Expenses of my own Family", itemise the annual budget for his household of five--himself, his wife, the maid, the clerke and the boy. From a total budgeted expenditure of £152, £5 was set aside for "Playes, shews, gifts and Charities." Of this sum £3 was spent by King, £1.10 by his wife and the servants ^{account} for the rest. See *The Earliest Classics*, p. 250. From these figures we may infer that he and his wife saw 30 or more plays between them, that they sometimes took her maid along too, and that the lesser servants were given annual treats only. We can also compare King's expenditure

Jeffrey Boys, who studied law at Greys Inn, left a brief account of his expenses over a nine month period in 1671. His father, a puritan and a benefactor of the preacher Edward Calamy, gave him a quarterly allowance of £7.10. At times the proportion of his allowance that he spent on plays is higher than we might expect from a man of his background and upbringing. In January, for example, he attended five times, sitting always in the pit. Such a rate may well have been in excess of what he could afford, for he recorded but one visit after that date. The playhouse was the common meeting point of family duties and social pleasures: "coach to D.Y.Playhouse to go with Lady Darrell & Cos. J. Jane Fogg to Hide Park costing 1s.6d."⁵⁵ In common with other playgoers of limited means, he developed quite marked preferences in the entertainments he pursued. He named only three of the plays he saw: *The Conquest of Granada* Parts I and II and *The Forc'd Marriage*--and only two of those he bought: *The Forc'd Marriage*, again, and *The Amorous Prince*. It seems that Aphra Behn, whose works dominate the plays he saw and read, was a particular friend of the student's: "g. Astrea 5s. for a Guiny if she live halfe a year," he wrote, and later: "Astrea's boy brought me her play of *Ye Amorous Prince*."

Another face of Restoration playgoing is represented by James Brydges, a nobleman who visited the playhouses in the same spirit as he did the halls and chambers of his London acquaintance: he treated them as arenas in which to pursue his everyday social activities. Over a on these entertainments with his outgoings on other items. The money allowed for this category was equivalent to half the amount set aside for clothes for himself, one third of the total servants' wages, or as much as he spent on books and paper--a clear economic proof of the value he set on plays.

⁵⁵ "The Diary of Jeffrey Boys," p. 452.

five year period, from 1697 to 1702, he recorded making 40 appearances in London's theatres.⁵⁶ Yet for all his familiarity with the playhouses, he contributed little to the companies' coffers: he seldom remained there long enough to pay the admission charges. He was a convivial playgoer. Sometimes he took his companions with him, sometimes he set them down at the door or in a box, sometimes he met them once the play was over, but for the most part he entered mid-performance, in search of new company. He came assured of finding company there when all other sources had failed:

After dinner I went to Lord Pembroke's who being abroad, I went to Lord Arundell of Treryce, who not being at home, I went to Ld Allinton's, but he not being within, I went to Mr Pitts, who being abroad, I went to y^e Dean of Peterborough's, but he being at church I went to y^e playhouse in Lincolns Inn Fields, here I met Dr Davenant & Ld. Rumny.⁵⁷

He showed no preferences in his choice of theatre, and the play scarcely mattered: he recorded the name of but one. On all but a handful of occasions it would have been impossible for him to see more than an act. Yet even this mercurial visitor was capable of showing some interest in the performances that backgrounded his entrances: on two occasions he returned to the same playhouse several times within the space of a few days, each time when a long-awaited new play was in progress. It is possible that by this means he may have viewed *The Mourning Bride* and *The Way of the World*--for those were the two plays--in some-

⁵⁶ See Lucyle Hooke, "James Brydges Drops in at the Theatre," *Huntington Library Bulletin*, 8 (1945), 306-11.

⁵⁷ Huntington Library MS St. 26.

⁵⁸ John, Baron Ashburnham, counterbalances the impression James Brydges gives of the playgoing habits of the nobility. See East Sussex

thing resembling their entirety.⁵⁸

Amongst documents from the Public Record Office there are attendance records relating to people who had some affiliation with the playhouses. However, we must treat them with some caution. Nell Gwynn, who attended performances at Dorset garden in 1674 and 1675, was quite atypical as a playgoer: she had retired from the stage only two years before. Lady Penelope Morley's association with the stage was a little less immediate--she had inherited her husband's share in the Theatre Royal--but nevertheless we must regard her as a special case too, the more so since neither she nor Nell Gwynn intended paying for the seats they occupied. Nell passed her theatre accounts on to the Lord Chamberlain for payment by the crown; Lady Morley considered free attendance her due as a shareholder in the building. Their records are those of women attending under no economic constraints.

Nell saw 55 plays at Dorset Garden over a period of 26 months.⁵⁹ We can only guess how many she saw performed by her old company in their new house in Drury Lane. Her attendance did not follow a constant pat-

County Record Office, Ashburnham MS. 932. His visits to the theatre were integrated more comfortably into the round of his familial and social obligations: "I waited on my mother home and afterwards I went into the play (the Maiden Queen). There was a great deale of company, I came home before 8 at night, I am not now charmed with Playes &c." In 50 days between December 1686 and February 1687 he attended 8 plays--one or more each week. Most times he seems to have waited out the play, but three times he saw only part, arriving after tending to his affairs. The Baron's interest is often in the company, its number and quality, but he could at least recall the name of the play he had seen. He saw no new productions, and as five of the plays he saw were more than 20 years old it is probable that so regular a visitor would have seen them before. Novelty was not the attraction, then, and as he makes no mention of the quality of any performance it seems likely that the play furnished only the arena for a continuing social interchange.

⁵⁹ William Van Lennep, "Nell Gwynn's Playgoing at the King's Expençe," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 4 (1950), 405-8.

tern: she might see 15 performances in 8 weeks or none for 3 months on end. Usually she had one companion, but she might bring two, three or even four of her friends along into her box. Only on one occasion did she attend alone. It seems that spectacle was her chief delight. She saw *Psyche* six times, *The Tempest*, five and *Macbeth*, twice. She would sometimes pay two or three visits in succession to the same play. Such a preference may seem curious in a woman renowned for her comic acting and who never performed with great success in any lavish production. However her choice was more a reflection of her aspirations than her abilities: lavish productions were considered fitting entertainments for persons of worth and the status of the former orange seller had much improved thanks to her association with the King.⁶⁰ She had learned to match her tastes to those who also sat regularly in the boxes, enjoying the best performances the Duke's Company had to offer.

Lady Penelope took her place in a box as a woman whose birth and marriage entitled her to sit prominently in public. Her taste and attendance reflect those certainties, too. Between 1696 and 1701 she saw 107 performances at the Theatre Royal. When charges for her playgoing companions were included in the reckoning, the account came to £45.11.6. Her attendance falls into two periods: in the 4 years until June 1700 she saw 52 plays, in the next twelve months, 55. In the latter period she turned from a moderate to an habitual, even an excessive playgoer.⁶¹ The following table summarises the details of her visits.

⁶⁰ See Pepys, *Diary*, 3 April, 1665 and 26 December, 1667 for comments about her acting in tragic and comic roles. In 1676 Otway dedicated *Don Carlos* to her, sure evidence of the improvement in her status.

⁶¹ In one 10 week period she saw 27 plays.

Table 4: The attendance of Lady Penelope Morley at Drury Lane

Period	Duration (Months)	Total Perfs.	Annual Rate	Return Visits	New Plays	Accompanied: Alone
Nov 1696- June 1700	44	52	14	13	9	47:5
June 1700-1 June 1701	12	55	55	44	7	10:45

In the earlier period Lady Morley saw relatively few plays twice over: return visits account for only 25% of the performances she saw. She managed to get to all the successful new plays although sometimes not until after the initial excitement had subsided. Much of the increase in her attendance after June 1700 is taken up with plays seen again. Forty four out of fifty five were return visits to plays she had already seen. Of the rest, only seven plays were new and those that proved popular drew her back two or three times in succession during their opening run.⁶² Neither new play production nor the revival of old plays could keep up with an appetite so demanding. As Lady Morley ran herself out of new plays, so she outdid her stock of playhouse companions. Whereas a solitary visit was a rarity when she went less frequently, on her later visits she was often obliged to sit alone. Attendance at too high a rate became less companionable unless, like Pepys, one had a spouse with whom to enjoy the play.

⁶² She saw *Love Makes a Man* 5 times in its first 10 days.

3.3 *The Character of the Audience*

The men and women whose playgoing we can document were all visible, affluent and influential. They did not, by themselves, define the tastes, habits and expectations of the audience. They were representative of only a small section of it, albeit the section whose tastes and opinions mattered most to those who dominated the London stage. Let us summarize the other factors that affected the character of the Restoration audience.

The key determinant of a spectator's behaviour, and of the audience's overall character, was the rate at which he or she attended. The rate was variable: on any given night the audience would include men and women who went to every third performance for an entire season, others who attended at a more moderate rate and still others who, for several years previously, had seen not one play performed. What the audience expected and how it reacted were affected by the proportion of frequent or occasional playgoers it contained. An audience of frequent playgoers represented a limited segment of the population at large. Most of the spectators in it recognized each other, making it, in essence, a coterie--leisured, affluent and narrow in its interests, but well-informed about plays and their performance. An audience made up of occasional playgoers, on the other hand, was more representative of the surrounding population, but had little sense of self-recognition and was less likely to be responsive to subtleties in composition or performance.

A major characteristic of the Restoration audience was the regularity with which some playgoers attended. In general, it was the most

regular of the playgoers who paid the highest prices: those who took their pleasures seriously took their comfort seriously too. Although the pleasures of company mattered to these regular visitors, some of them--those who attended most frequently--would occasionally find themselves obliged to enter alone, having outrun their associates' appetites, consciences and purses with their excesses.

Those who visited often were in essence a well-informed and understanding audience. They had leisure to observe contemporary manners: "to watch the turns and counterturn of their Humours, and trace the windings of them up to their very springs."⁶³ They bought playbooks, read criticism, were acquainted with dramatists and actors and were well versed in the mechanics of stage production. Their example encouraged even those who attended less often to read playbooks and to recount news of playhouse happenings. It was their familiarity with London and its playhouses that created the impression of intimacy between audience and stage, so characteristic of the post-Restoration period.

The critic, John Dennis, noted the effect of an alteration in rate of attendance upon the character of the eighteenth century audience. He complained that the nation's increased devotion to business led to an alteration in attitudes to playgoing and to the audience's understanding of plays:

In the reign of King *Charles* the Second, a considerable part of an Audience had that due application which is requisite for the judging of a Comedy. They had first of all leisure to attend to it. For that was an age of Pleasure, and not of Business. They were serene enough to attend to its impressions: For they were in Ease and Plenty. But in the present Reign, a great part of the Gentlemen have not

⁶³ Dennis, "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry," in *Critical Works*, I, 292.

leisure, because want throws them upon employments, and there are ten times more Gentlemen now in business, than there were in King *Charles* his Reign They come to a Playhouse full of some business which they have been solliciting, or of some Harangue which they are to make the next day; so that they merely come to unbend . . . and are utterly incapable of duly attending to the just and harmonious Symetry of a beautiful design.⁶⁴

Dennis describes a shift in balance between those who came to appreciate and those who came "merely to unbend." But it is no more than a shift: in the playhouse there had always been men of affairs and still there were men of leisure.

Playgoers themselves were concerned with their frequency of attendance. When persons of tender conscience asked *The Athenian Mercury* to say at what rate their pleasures would become excessive, they received the following answer:

We think it very Lawfull for a Person now and then to see 'em; but no more commendable to make a Common Practice of it then in any other Diversion.⁶⁵

The author of *The Country-Gentleman's Vade Mecum* set a more precise bound between the acceptable and the excessive:

you may . . . pass away an hour or two at the Play-house, once in a Month, but no oftner, without any great matter of Hazard, and with some kind of Advantage.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Dennis "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry," in *Critical Works*, I, 294.

⁶⁵ *Athenian Mercury*, vol. 12, Number 7.

⁶⁶ *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, p. 52.

Implicit in such a prescription is the assumption that pleasures and profits make competing demands and that a balance must be struck between them.

Many of the audience attended regularly, some excessively. Their high rate of attendance is offset by those visitors who saw a play as one of London's sights, or those residents whose business, pockets or temperaments kept them from the playhouse on all but the rarest of days. Let us consider the attendance patterns of three broad groups: frequent playgoers, like Pepys, Edward Browne, Baron Ashburnham and Lady Morley, who visited the playhouse at an average rate of once each week, or 33 visits each year; regular playgoers, who came at the moderate rate of once a month, or 9 visits each year; occasional playgoers, like Evelyn, Hooke, Gregory King or Jeffrey Boys, who ventured in but once or twice a year. We may make two broad assumptions, both of which are consistent with what we know about the range of attendance patterns and about contemporary attitudes to too-frequent playgoing. We may say, first, that none of the three groups accounts for less than 20% of the audience. We may also assume that no group accounts for more than 50% of the audience. An analysis of the range of the audience compositions consistent with this set of assumptions shows that the mean rate of attendance for all playgoers lay between 3.5 and 6.7 visits per annum. The following table sets out the relative audience compositions that produced maximum and minimum values for mean rate of attendance:

Table 5: Mean Rate of Attendance: Maximum and Minimum Values

Audience Composition by Frequency of Attendance			Mean Rate of Attendance	
Frequent (%)	Regular (%)	Occasional (%)	Visits p.a.	
50	30	20	6.7	Maximum
20	30	50	3.5	Minimum

Knowing the range for the mean rate of attendance, we can estimate the number of Londoners who paid at least an occasional visit to the playhouses of London. In the period 1660-1676, when 180,000-200,000 playgoers paid for admission annually, between 27,000 and 57,000 individual spectators attended each year, or between 5% and 11% of the total population of London. It is likely that the higher values apply best to the earlier years, when the novelty of the place, the plays and the occasion drew many infrequent visitors. During the years between 1672--when the Theatre Royal was burned--and 1676--when the King's Company recorded very poor houses--the overall attendance was sustained largely by a residual group of frequent playgoers. This meant that the mean rate of attendance was at the upper end of the scale and that the number of individual spectators was closer to the 27,000 mark.

During the union of the two companies the mean rate of attendance would have fallen to the lower end of the scale. It declined because theatrical policy was generally unadventurous, there was no competition to stimulate playgoing and, in the prevailing political atmosphere, the sometimes riotous playhouses often seemed more dangerous than entertain-

ing. This meant that although the total attendance dropped to 110,000, the numbers of individuals attending would not have decreased. In all these cases we should note that the proportion of the population who visited the playhouse was still too large to permit that audience to be regarded as a narrow coterie.

Attendance patterns and audience composition were particularly susceptible to any alteration in London's demography. The effects of the resettlement that followed the fire of 1666 have already been noted. Political events, too, affected playgoing. During the wars with the Dutch the young men of London disappeared from the playhouses. The unrest in the capital during the exclusion crisis and the uncertainty that accompanied Monmouth's rebellion in 1685 were reflected in poor attendances in the playhouses: such entertainments were unseasonable in times of trouble.

Seasonal variations also affected attendance patterns. We know that during the summer months many of the nobility and gentry quit the town, leaving the playhouses bereft of their most regular and affluent customers. In that season, the playhouses could not be relied on as a source of familiar company. The men and women who remained in London, were less affluent than those who had departed, and were therefore less likely to return frequently to the playhouses. So thin did the audiences become in the long months from June to September that the playhouse managers seldom risked entertaining them with new or expensive productions.

During Lent the companies made certain changes in their repertory policies. In that season the companies often did not act on Wednesdays

and Fridays. When performances took place, they were likely to be given by younger actors, performing for their own benefit. These policies suggest that the composition of the audience was less affluent and the rate of attendance less frequent throughout the Lenten season. They suggest also that the companies took advantage of the decline in attendance to fulfill their obligations to their trainees without losing much revenue.⁶⁷

Holidays, too, brought a change in the audience. Many of London's poorer residents, journeymen and apprentices, treated themselves to a visit then. They endured the throng on their day of leisure and took their seats in the pit, thereby displacing the more visible spectators from their customary places.⁶⁸

The poet's benefit day also had a characteristic audience. "The third Day," wrote the author of *The Country-Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, "is commonly the grand Day then you may observe the general Humours of the House."⁶⁹ This performance, for the poet's benefit, was likely to attract a large and partisan group, comprising those who had a particular interest in his welfare or who thought his talent merited a good reward.

⁶⁷ Philip H. Gray, "Lenten Casts and the Nursery," *PMLA* 53 (1938), 781-94.

⁶⁸ Their playgoing was not necessarily restricted to holidays. John Houghton wrote of men "working only three days in the week . . ." *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (London: 1683), p. 383. Christopher Hill writes: "Seasonal unemployment and permanent underemployment was the norm . . . men observed St. Monday as a day of leisure, and sometimes even Tuesday, making up by intensive labour at the end of the week . . ." *Reformation to Industrial Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 216.

⁶⁹ *The Country-Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, p. 49.

Other special performances attracted equally partisan audiences. Plays were regularly performed for the benefit of certain groups such as young actors or women actors, compensation for the poor incomes they ordinarily received. Individuals gradually acquired the right to have benefit performances. By 1685 Elizabeth Barry had a benefit allowed her.⁷⁰ Special benefits were arranged, too, for worthy causes: "This Day . . . will be Acted . . . The Plain-Dealer, upon a very charitable Account, the Profits of the Play being given for the Release of a distressed Gentleman from Prison . . ." ⁷¹ We may guess that such occasions attracted a generous and supportive audience, consisting for the most part of London's more regular playgoers.

As we might expect, major changes in theatre policy had an influence on attendance patterns. The reopening of the playhouses in 1660 stimulated attendance, as did the first appearance of actresses and the introduction of scenery. The curious made their investigations; regular playgoers came more often. The same effect was felt whenever conditions changed significantly. The opening of a new playhouse--be it ever so poor or small--was sure to attract a good crowd. Special prologues were written for such occasions, when an affluent and sympathetic audience filled the house once again.⁷² When Betterton and the other actors opened the doors of Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695, they effectively overthrew the existing attendance pattern: London's playgoers flocked to the

⁷⁰ See Robert D. Hume, "The Origins of the Actor Benefit in London," *Theatre Research International*, 9 (1984), 99-112.

⁷¹ *Post Boy*, May 31-June 2, 1698. See also *London Post*, 28 June-1 July 1700; *Flying Post*, 2-4 July, 1700.

⁷² *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, pp. xxxvii, 171.

new playhouse, hoping to rediscover there the early glories of the Restoration stage.⁷³

However, the most direct influence on day to day attendance patterns was the repertory. A new play would be likely to attract those who were regular playgoers or had heard it praised during rehearsal. On its first day of performance only the more affluent members of the audience could afford to attend. Those who attended a first performance paid double price for privilege of seeing or the satisfaction of damning the new play first. According to Cibber, in Charles II's time there were fewer women present at a first night: discretion kept "the Ladies" from "venturing bare-fac'd to a new Comedy," until they could be assured that they might attend "without the Risque of an Insult, to their Modesty . . ."⁷⁴

If a play was successful, the news filtered through London and it would draw many new or less frequent spectators to see it during its first season. It then became that much-prized piece, a stock play, drawing a wider-than-usual audience into the theatre. In later years its revival would attract a number of occasional spectators. Thus the proportion of sporadic playgoers in the house increased with the reputation of the play and the duration of its run.

Frequent playgoers were likely to make repeat visits to a play. New plays, particularly the most spectacular ones, would draw the same set of spectators for two or three days together. Indeed, dramatists

⁷³ Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 109-11, 126-30.

⁷⁴ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 147. For another view of the first day's audience, see Dryden, Epilogue to *Feign'd Innocence* or Sir Martin Mar-all@, in Gardner, p. 17.

relied on repeat attendances to boost the profits for their third day.⁷⁵ The most highly regarded dramatists were those who could summon to a second, third or fourth visit, men and women who had already seen a play, retaining their interest each time.

Spectators who sat through several performances of a play had quite different expectations from those who sat but once. Repeat viewers found pleasures beyond the simple ones of discovering what happens. The end, for them, held no surprises. They looked instead at the interrelation of a play's parts, at the way their sense of anticipation was managed and at how the unlikely was made to seem inevitable. They applied their understanding to the plays they watched, admiring, when they found it, "the harmonious Symetry of a beautiful design."⁷⁶ In short, they attended to detail and technique rather than sequence and outcome.

The pleasures the audience derived from paying repeated visits to a play were similar to those that came from reading it. Repeat viewers, like readers, could attend to the design and language of a play. The emotional force of a performance in the playhouse was apt to deceive a viewer, claimed Dryden:

. . . a judicious reader will discover in his closet that trashy stuff whose glitter deceived him in the action. . . . In a playhouse, everything contributes to impose upon the judgement: the lights, the scenes, the habits, and, above

⁷⁵ In the Epilogue to *Juliana* (1671), Crowne asks the audience "To sit to-morrow to the same agen . . ." See also the Epilogue to Settle's *Cambyses King of Persia* (1671), Powell and Verbruggen's Dedication to *Brutus of Alba* (1697) and Southerne's Dedication to *Sir Anthony Love* (1691).

⁷⁶ Dennis, "A Large Account of Taste," in *Critical Works*, I, 294. For further comments on the pleasures that understanding spectators found in the design of a play, see Congreve's letter to Catherine Trotter, in *Letters and Documents*, pp. 212-13, and Echard's Preface to *Terence's Comedies: Made English* (London: 1694), pp. vi-vii.

all, the grace of action . . . surprise the audience, and cast a mist upon their understandings⁷⁷

Gratifying as such deceptions were, they provided no lasting satisfactions, either to author or to audience:

'tis my ambition to be read: that I am sure is the more lasting and the nobler design: for the propriety of thoughts and words, which are the hidden beauties of a play, are but confusedly judged in the vehemence of action. All things are there beheld as in a hasty motion, where the objects only glide before the eye and disappear.⁷⁸

Rochester, in *An Allusion to Horace*, claimed that true merit did not consist in pleasing "the false Judgement of an Audience," but suggested instead:

To write what may securely stand the test
Of being well read over, thrice at least
Compare each phrase, examine every line,
Weigh every word, and every thought refine.
Scorn all applause the vile rout can bestow,
be content to please those few who know.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Dryden, Preface to *The Spanish Friar*, in *Essays*, I, 275.

⁷⁸ *Essays*, p. 278. For further of Dryden's comments on the pleasures of reading and of understanding design, see the Preface to *Don Sebastian*, in *Essays*, II, 44-51. Edward Howard noted that printing lent authority to a text. "The impression of Plays is so much the Practice of the Age, that few or none have been Acted, which fail to be display'd in Print; where they seem to put on the greater formality of Authors . . ." Preface to *The Usurper* (1668). See also his Preface to *The Six Days Adventure* (1671); Richard Flecknoe, Preface to *Erminia* (1661), Preface to *The Damoselles a la Mode* (1667), Preface to *Love's Kingdom* (1664).

⁷⁹ *Complete Poems*, p. 125. Gildon, in his "Letter to Mr. Durfey" prefixed to *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692), and Crowne, in the Preface to *The Married Beau* (1694) also rate their readers' approval more highly than their audience's. For further discussion of the push to publish and the pleasures of reading see J. Milhous and R. D. Hume, "Dating Play Premiers from Publication Data, 1660-1700", *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 22 (1974), 374-405 Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, pp. 117-25; J. M. Hawthorn, *Identity and Relationship* (London: Lawrence, 1973), pp. 89-128.

The tastes of the audience were as varied as their attendance patterns. Some preferred spectacular, exotic or foreign entertainments. Others' tastes ran to plainer things. Despite their preferences, it appears that spectators did not always attend only the plays that pleased them most. Often playgoers of quite different tastes and temperaments would find themselves seated together, watching a play in which each of them found but little that pleased: in essence, they accepted partial entertainments. This acceptance goes hand in hand with their willingness to have their viewing interrupted by conversation or auxiliary entertainments--to view a play in pieces--or to see but an act or two.

Almost from the reopening of the playhouses, dramatists allowed for, and seemed even to encourage the audience's paying only intermittent attention by writing plays that offered something for everyone. They experimented with writing multiple versions of plays.⁸⁰ Their prefaces described the variety of dramatic styles they managed to incorporate within the framework of a single play. They developed elaborate apologies for the mixed fare they set before their audiences.⁸¹ Even Dryden acknowledged the need to meet the audience's demands:

The genius of the English cannot bear too regular a play; we are given to variety, even to a debauchery of pleasure.⁸²

⁸⁰ Robert Howard, *The Vestal Virgin in Four New Plays* (1665). For James Howard's *Romeo and Juliet*, see Downes, p. 22.

⁸¹ Shadwell, "I have endeavoured, in the Play, at Humour, Wit, and Satyr . . ."--Dedication to *The Virtuoso* in *Works*, IV, 101; Edward Howard, Preface to *The Women's Conquest* (1671).

⁸² Preface to *Don Sebastian*, in *Essays*, II, 49. See also his "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," the Preface to *An Evening's Love* and the Preface to *The Spanish Friar*, in *Essays*, I, 155, 245, 279.

"I'm sure *that's* new," cried minor wits, as poets sought fresh ways of holding the attention of audiences who had seen all things before.⁸³

Prologue writers advertised the variety of entertainments that the play offered.⁸⁴ They put together plays made up of patches and fragments of other pieces, composing and cannibalising to build a five act entertainment.⁸⁵ Towards the end of the century, the concept of variety became so enlarged that it threatened the very predominancy of the play amongst the afternoon's entertainments.

There has been for four or five days together . . . acted a new farce . . . called the Shame Doctor or the Anatomist, with a great concert of music, representing the loves of Venus and Mars, well enough done and pleases the town extremely. The other house has no company at all, and unless a new play comes out on Saturday revives their reputation, they must break . . .⁸⁶

Playhouse managers also adapted to their volatile audiences by altering admission policies and expanding the repertory. The companies began collecting aftermoney from those who entered during the last acts

⁸³ Rochester, "Timon," in *Complete Poems*, p. 71, l. 141. Shadwell, in the Dedication to *A True Widow* in *Works*, IV, 284, makes loud claims to novelty: "The three first of these Characters are wholly new . . ." *Sir Courtly Nice* was remarkable for the invention Crowne displayed: "four of [the] Characters are so entirely new, yet so general and so important . . . that tho' I have more than twenty times read over this charming Comedy, yet I have always read it, not only with Delight but Rapture."--Dennis, Letter, in *Critical Works*, II, 406.

⁸⁴ See "The Prologue to His Majesty," in Wiley, pp. 11-12 the Prologue to Etherege's *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, in *Dramatic Works*; the Prologue to Southerne's *The Wive's Excuse* (1692).

⁸⁵ See Davenant's *The Play-House to be Lett*, and *The Law Against Lovers*, in *Works*, IV, V; Stayplton's *The Step Mother* (1664); Motteux' *The Novelty* (1697); "the Comic Scenes of Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode*, and of his *Maiden Queen* put together," and *The Double Gallant*: "a play made up of what little was tolerable, in two, or three others, that had no Success . . ."--Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 182-83.

⁸⁶ HMC 12th Report, Appendix III, Cowper MSS., II, 367.

of a play, thereby legitimising the notion of partial entertainments. They spent lavishly to provide exotic entertainments between the acts of a play, particularly in the last decade of the century.⁸⁷ Such extravagance implicitly recognized that spectators had a right to be continuously diverted in the playhouse by a series of constantly changing pleasures.

It was the monies the companies spent on scenes, machines and other auxiliary entertainments that provided the most telling instance of the effect that partial attendance--and partial attention--of so varied an audience had upon playhouse fare. The changes of scenery were regarded from the outset as an entertainment quite separate from the performances of the players. The split allowed managers to cater to a diverse and volatile audience.

Why else are we diverted by Scenes, Machines, Habits, Jiggs, and Dances; but to give more variety of entertainment to the spectators? either as they are not otherwise to be trusted, or at least the Audience should be too soberly tired without them."⁸⁸

Indeed, the audience could not experience the best of both the finely painted scenes and the actors' voices from any one seat in the playhouse: the boxes were dedicated to seeing, the pit to hearing.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Balon received 500 guineas for five weeks' performances. See Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, I, 502-03. "Present Plays . . . can hardly draw an Audience, unless there be the additional Invitation of a *Signior Fideli*, a *Monsieur L'abbe*, or some such Foreign Regale exprest in the bottom of the Bill."--*Historia Histrionica*, in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, I, xxvii-viii.

⁸⁸ Edward Howard, Preface to *The Womens Conquest* (1671).

⁸⁹ See Pepys, *Diary*, 8 May, 1663; 19 October, 1667; Cibber, *Apology*, p. 173.

The dissociation of action from scenery is everywhere apparent. Scenery was celebrated in publications with little reference to the play it accompanied.⁹⁰ Foreign visitors who commented on London's playhouses made a distinction between the pleasures of sight and sound.⁹¹ The very profitability of the company depended on the successful management of the two types of attraction.⁹² Dramatists who claimed some worth as poets hastened to distinguish themselves from those who owed their reputations to bright colours and mechanical devices. "There is a sort of merit in delighting the spectators" allows Dryden, "which is a name more proper for them than that of auditors . . ."⁹³ By the century's end, the divorce between seeing and hearing had become so bitter, and the predominancy of seeing so great, that it seemed to threaten the very fundamentals of drama:

Poetry is so little regarded there, and the Audience is so taken up with show and sight, that an Author need not much Trouble himself about his Thoughts and Languages, so he is in Fee with the Dancing-Masters, and has but a few luscious Songs to Lard his dry Composition.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ *The Description of the Great Machines of the Descent of Orpheus into Hell* (London: 1661). Dolle's engravings for *The Empress of Morrocco* (1673) celebrate the scenery, not the play.

⁹¹ Sorbière, *Relation d'un Voyage en Angleterre*, p. 167; Magalotti, *Travels of Cosmo the Third*, p. 191; Chappuzeau, *L'Europe Vivante*, p. 215; Monconys, *Journal des Voyages*, pp. 26, 46.

⁹² Downes often cites the good effect that fine scenery had on the fortunes of a play; the King's Company based its defense against the claims of its scene painter, Isaac Fuller, on the revenue they lost as a result of his poor workmanship (Hotson, p. 349).

⁹³ "To Lord Radcliffe," in *Essays*, II, 162. See also Edward Howard, Preface to *The Six days Adventure* (1671).

⁹⁴ Thomas Brown, *The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown* 7th ed., 4 vols. (London: 1730), I, 216.

Hearing and seeing, like viewing and reading, were the distinctions that defined the double character of the Restoration audience.

3.4 *Of Profits and Patronage*

Dramatists and managers alike recognised the diversity of audience tastes and attempted to cater to them--with mixed success. Towards the end of the century, contemporaries noted that London could not support the same number of playhouses as it had in former days and wondered that, despite its growth, the town was unable "to furnish out two good Audiences every day."⁹⁵ Their puzzlement betrays some awareness that the pattern of audience support had changed. It took someone as shrewd as Colley Cibber, however, to understand that the basis of that change was not a mere shift of preference, but the restructuring of the market for theatrical entertainment. Betterton's company, a troupe of excellent actors, in whose interest the whole town seemed to be engaged, could no longer command the attention of London's playgoing public. They lost ground competing with a company of poorly regarded actors, under a manager "who look'd to his Receipts for the Value of a Play:"

. . . we began to have an equal Share of the politer sort of Spectators, who, for several Years, could not allow our Company to stand in any Comparison with the other. But Theatrical Favour, like Public Commerce, will sometimes deceive the best Judgements, by an unaccountable change of its Channel; the best Commodities are not always known to meet with the best Markets.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *A Comparison between the two Stages*, p. 11; see also *Historia Histrionica*, in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, I, xxvii: "now Two [Companies] can hardly subsist."

⁹⁶ *Apology*, pp. 145, 170.

To understand how actors with established reputations came to fall from favour we need to look more closely at some of the implications of attendance patterns. We must examine the changes that had taken place since 1660 in two areas: changes in the financial basis upon which the companies operated and changes in the means whereby the companies secured the protection and indulgence of groups of spectators. We need to consider the twin supports of the London stage: profits and patronage.

The stage was re-established after the Restoration under the authority of letters patent granted by the King to Davenant and Killigrew. The two patentees were licensed to erect playhouses, recruit actors, mount performances, and charge the public admission. To carry out these undertakings they developed a set of related administrative and financial structures.⁹⁷ Both Killigrew and Davenant formed their acting companies by entering into agreements with several of the leading players. The articles they signed comprised a statement of the rights and responsibilities of the patentee, an account of the company's capital investment in scenery and costumes, an undertaking on the part of the actors to perform exclusively for that one company and a schedule whereby the company's profits would be distributed. In economic terms, the agreement weighed capital and labour--effort and investment--against anticipated returns.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Davenant's patent is reproduced in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, pp. liii-lxi. The prototype is given in *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, p. 87. See also Hotson pp. 217-18. Private investors financed playhouse construction, receiving their return in the form of rent paid for each acting day. They sometimes had no other association with the stage. See Hotson pp. 229; 243-44; 254.

⁹⁸ See *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, pp. 96-100; Hotson pp. 243-44.

The physical playhouse had always represented the greatest item of investment. As few actors had spare funds to lay out on constructing the building where they hoped to earn their precarious living, there developed, in Elizabethan times, both legal and real distinctions between those who owned the playhouses and those who performed the plays. From the time of Burbage's Theatre, building and acting companies had separate shareholders and interests: the former sought a regular return on their investment; the latter, a growth in the value of the stock they held. It is in transactions involving the latter's interests that we find evidence of the changes in the economics of play production.

The major items of recurrent capital expenditure for pre-Restoration acting companies had been costumes or habits. Clothes represented the wealth of the company; they also constituted essential tools of production: with costumes, the players could perform anywhere; without them there would be no play.⁹⁹ There were few other items of ongoing capital expenditure in the acting companies' budgets. Although the cost of playhouses may have been high, actual performances required relatively low levels of capital investment. Moreover the acting companies were not tied to any single location. When times were difficult their members could tour with relative ease and could reconstitute the company as conditions in London improved. These two factors explain the great resilience of the earlier stage. The Elizabethan and Jacobean stage survived because it relied most heavily on labour: the skills of

⁹⁹ The prohibition against playing was enforced in 1642 by the seizure of the stocks of costumes. See *The Weekly Account*, 4 October, 1643; CSPD 1641-43, p. 564; Thomas Fonde, *Faenestra Rectae, or Familiar Letters* (London: 1660), p. 56.

its dramatists and actors were readily transportable, needed no maintenance and involved no investment. It outlasted the effects of plague, suppression, insurrection and fire, adapting and surviving until the world turned upside down.

The enthusiasm that greeted the initial proposals to restore and modify the stage quite outran any serious consideration of the long-term economic impact of the decisions being taken. The matter seemed so simple in 1661: "there wanted room for the depth of scenes in the ground belonging to the said Tennis Court; and therefore for accommodation for the said scenes your Orator did take a lease . . ." ¹⁰⁰ That one action transformed the stage. It tied production to playhouses capable of catering for scenes and machinery and it committed the acting companies to an ever-increasing outlay for their purchase. ¹⁰¹ Restoration acting companies had become capital intensive enterprises, limited to a few suitable locations and highly susceptible both to mismanagement and to changes in the political and social climate.

Although the companies made some allowances for increased costs, they were slow to recognise that a change had taken place in their economic base. Davenant's patent allowed for increased admission charges to be made "in regard of the great expences of scenes, musick, and such

¹⁰⁰ Hotson, p. 125.

¹⁰¹ For sample estimates of costs see Isaac Fuller, in Hotson, pp. 348-55; Edward Bedingfield, in HMC 14th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS. p. 85; Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, II, 435. By the century's end commentators looked back wistfully at the comparative ease with which rich rewards had been harvested in earlier times: "Scenes . . . with the Addition of curious Machines . . . much impair'd their Profit o'er what it was before . . ." (*Historia Histrionica*, in Lowe, ed., *Apology*, I, xxxii.)

¹⁰² In Lowe, ed. *Apology*, I, lviii.

new decorations, as have not been formerly used."¹⁰² When Davenant signed with his actors he had set aside two shares out of fifteen for "house-rent, buildinge, scaffoldinge, and makeinge of fframes for Scenes," and one more for "provision of Habittes, Properties, and scenes"¹⁰³

The allowance was inadequate for the amount of capital expenditure required and when the contract was re-negotiated, on Davenant's death, provision was made for scenes and habits to be deducted before the dividend was announced.¹⁰⁴ In effect capital expenditure was now recognized as an item which added to the value of shares, and its cost was borne by all the sharers. In 1668, shares in the Duke's company were valued at £800, an increase of 33% over their value seven years earlier. Their improvement in value reflected more the worth of the scenes and habits than it did their annual earning potential of £50 to £60.¹⁰⁵

The King's Company, too, came to understand how heavily their productions depended on high rates of capital expenditure. When the company's actors moved to Drury Lane, after fire had destroyed their playhouse in Bridges Street, they resolved to pay for scenery and costumes themselves, and for the erection of a scene house in which to store them. They raised a levy for a sum equivalent to half the cost of the playhouse proper. This was no overestimation of the amount needed: one painted scene alone could cost more than £330.¹⁰⁶ In short, after

¹⁰³ Herbert, p.98.

¹⁰⁴ Hotson, p. 230.

¹⁰⁵ Milhous, "The Duke's Company's Profits 1675-1677," *Theatre Notebook*, 32 (1978), 76-88; Hotson, pp. 373, 219-222.

¹⁰⁶ Hotson p. 255 251-53.

the Restoration all theatre companies found themselves committed to a high rate of capital expenditure.¹⁰⁷

Theatre companies could no longer afford to consider only "The politer sort of spectators" as their chief audience. Indeed, that may have been the most lucrative market, but in order to survive a company had to attract an audience into its cheaper seats as well. If those regular playgoers who paid handsomely for a place in the boxes supplied the monies needed to spend on new scenes, it was only after the daily charge had been met out of the receipts from pit and galleries. Repertory decisions became critical as the playhouses strove to attract polite and rude, regular and occasional spectators. The risks attached to the production of new plays increased out of hand. Formerly, a failure affected only the incomes of actors and shareholders and represented, at worst, time lost in rehearsal. Now it affected the basis on which future productions could be mounted, for the combination of lost outlay and reduced income meant that no funds would be available to present anew the sort of elaborate production that would bring back an audience and restore the company's finances to a state of health. The

¹⁰⁷ This applied to even the United company, who faced no competition. Over a ten year period that company's receipts amounted to £104,000. Net profit returned as dividends amounted to £18,600 and some £85,400 was disbursed on "Constant and Incident Charges." The charge for payment of salaries and rent amounted to £30 per day--the "daily charge." Thus the constant charges for an acting year of 200 days amounted to £6,000 or £60,000 for the ten year period. By subtraction we find that capital expenditure amounted to £25,400, effectively a reinvestment in the company that far exceeded the net profit. The members of the acting company made a clear distinction between constant and incident charges, capital and operating expenditure: they knew that they retained an interest in monies laid out on "Cloaths Scenes Bookes & ppertyes", for they regarded it as their right, upon quitting the company, to receive compensatory payment for their share in its assets. See E. A. Langhans, "New Restoration Theatre Accounts"; Hotson, pp. 288, 368-69, Nicoll, pp. 373, 375.

survival of the playhouses had become dependent on a continuous high level of income. The price of failure had risen: small wonder that disappointed authors found cause to complain of the "precious pieces of Antiquity" that held the stage, preventing their new plays from gaining admission there.¹⁰⁸ An overcommitment of capital forced the companies to pay attention to the conflicting demands of a diverse audience.

For some years after the Restoration the companies were cushioned from the effects of the alteration in their capital base by payments they received from the Royal purse. Figures 1 - 3 summarize accounts presented for Royal playgoing for the years 1660-1700. During the early part of this period, the Crown's contributions to the companies' coffers amounted almost to a royal subsidy.¹⁰⁹ It is evident that Royal payments for playgoing declined after 1676. The figures show quite plainly that, apart from the three years when James II reigned, theatre companies were unable to rely on the Crown as a source of income.

Two factors enhanced the worth of the monies the companies received from the Royal purse. The first relates to payments for plays performed at court. Receipts from these represented pure profit: they involved no

¹⁰⁸ George Powell, Preface to *The Treacherous Brother* (1690). Powell's reference is to Betterton.

¹⁰⁹ Some practical examples make this clear.

The annual payments to the Duke's Company for the years 1662 - 1668 far exceeded what the company originally expected to spend on house rent, scene frames, costumes, properties and scenes. Davenant was allotted a mere three shares, to offset what he spent on these items. The average annual amount paid to the King's Company--£300 for the years 1660 - 1663--was equivalent to half the annual rent the company paid for the use of the theatre. The total of monies paid to that Company, between their resumption of playing in Bridges Street after the fire in 1666 and the opening of their new house in Drury Lane in 1674, exceeds the £2040 they reinvested in new scenes and a scene house at the latter. See Herbert, p. 98; Milhous, "The Duke's Company's Profits," p. 85.

Duke's and King's Companies 1660-1682

Receipts: Performances before Royalty

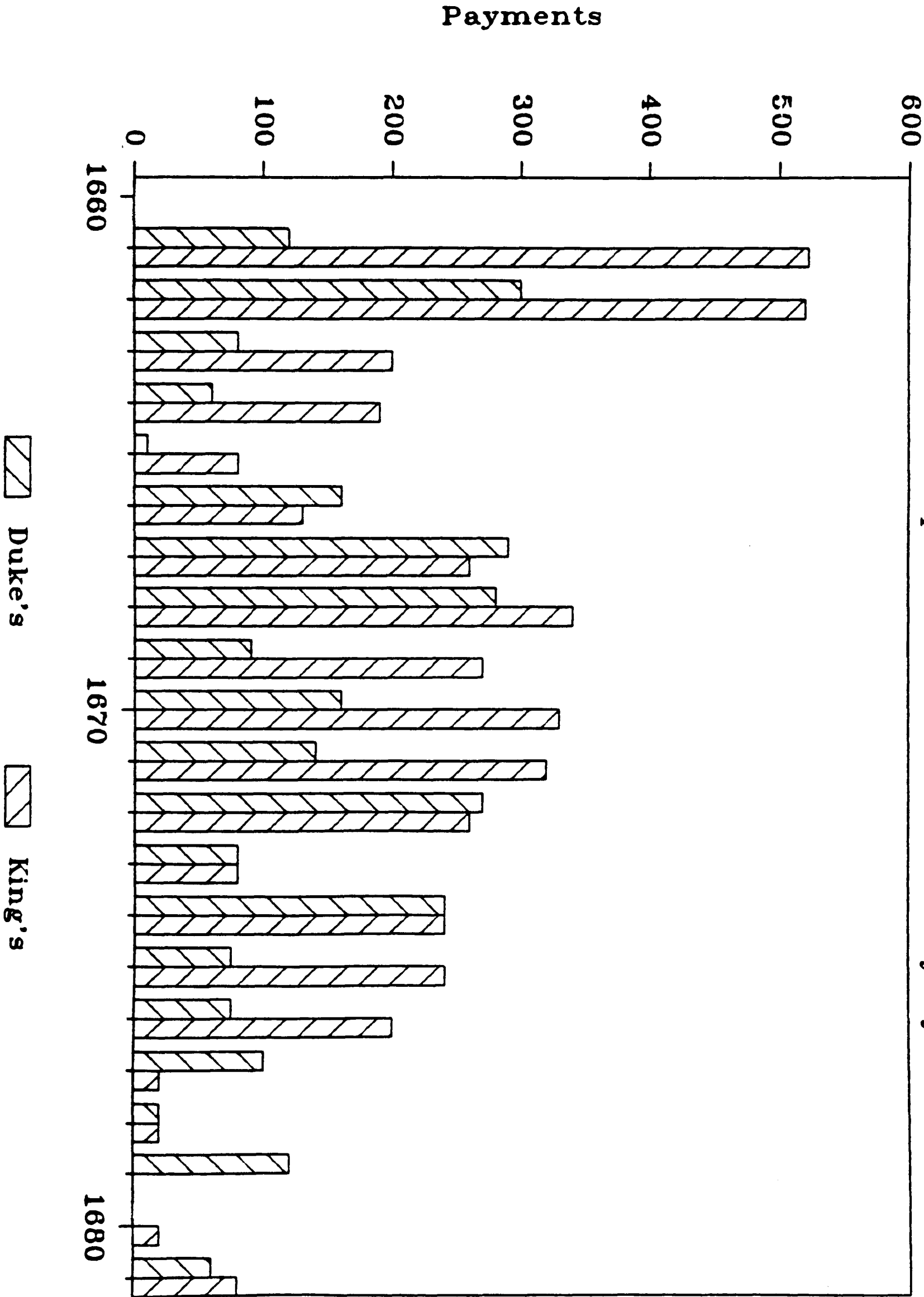


Figure 1: Total Payments to Theatre Companies, 1660-1682

United Company 1682-1695

Receipts: Performances before Royalty

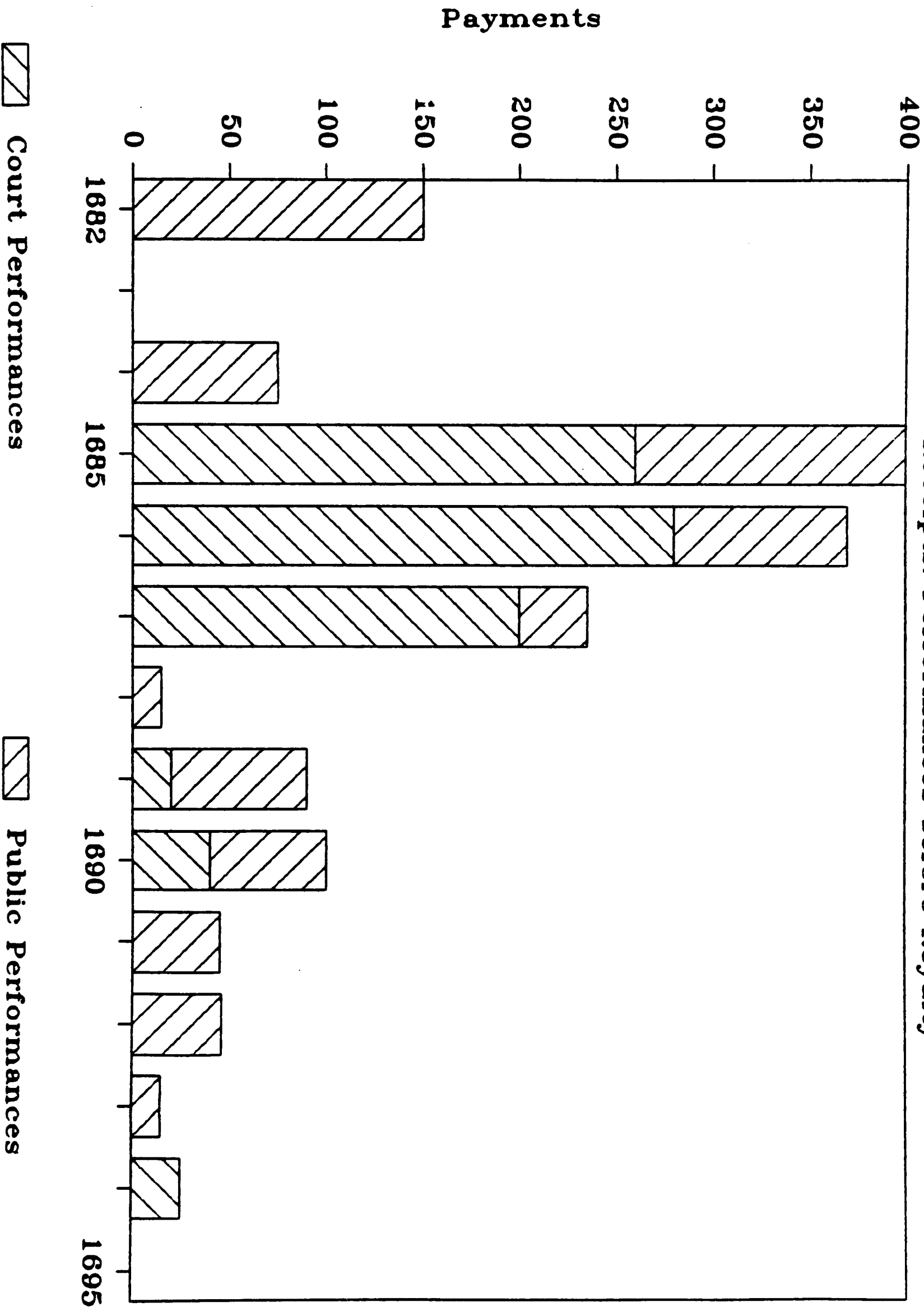


Figure 2: Total Payments to Theatre Companies, 1682-1695

London Theatre Companies 1660-1700

Receipts: Court Performances

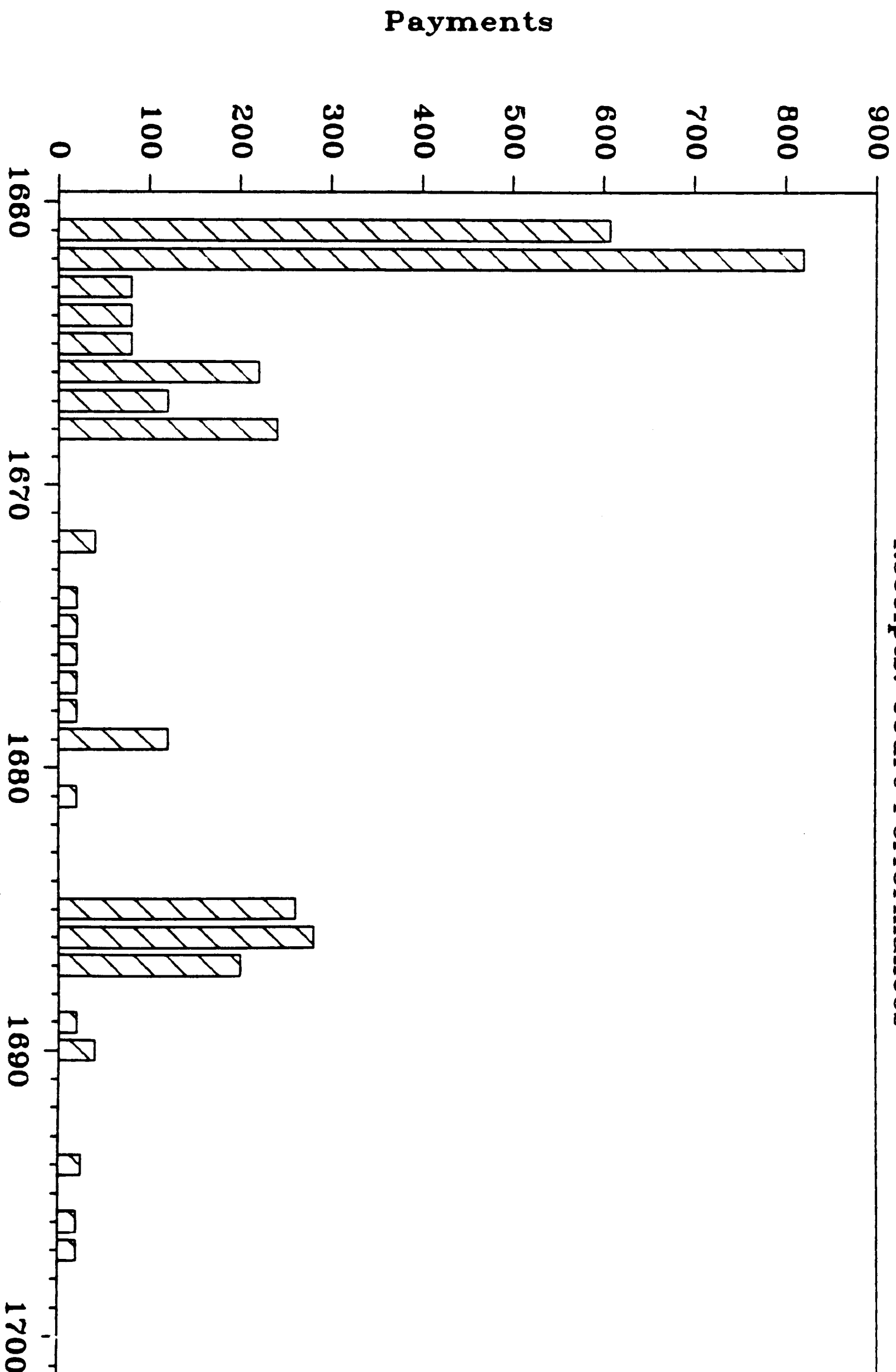


Figure 3: Total Payments for Court Performances

additional outlay on rent, wages, or other items of the daily charge; actors, who were liveried servants of the king, received no additional payment; and any extra expenses were met by the Crown.¹¹⁰ The second factor concerns the monarch's attendance in the public playhouses. Payments for Royal attendance there represented only a fraction of the additional revenue such a visit generated: the King's presence drew with it a large crowd of both the great and the curious.¹¹¹ It was thanks to funds received either directly or indirectly as a result of regular Royal playgoing that the companies were able to make so great a capital expenditure on scenes and machines.

The corollary was equally true: when royal playgoing declined--either as a result of the King's preoccupation with political troubles or as a result of his disaffection with the stage--the companies suffered. The drop in royal attendance and royal receipts that took place in 1677 represented more than a simple loss of income. It meant the loss of a lucrative, influential and formerly reliable market, the loss of a buffer against any vicissitudes and the loss of a valuable source of funding against which to offset the cost of capital items.

As the cares of state occupied the attention of the King, the signs and effects of the decline in Royal patronage were everywhere apparent.¹¹² There was a deterioration in the goodwill that formerly existed between the theatre companies and the court. Many plays were opposed,

¹¹⁰ See Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage*, esp. Appendix D.

¹¹¹ His failing to attend, one company noted, "did alsoe occasion the Nobility & Gentry & psons of quality . . . to forbeare very much their coming thereunto"--Hotson, p. 349; see also Pepys, *Diary*, 22 December, 1663.

¹¹² HMC 12th Report, Appendix IX, Beaufort MSS, p. 87.

delayed, cut and banned for the offence they gave the crown.¹¹³ So ill did relations become and such was the King's displeasure that at times playhouses were silenced and rumours flew about that he intended to take away their patents.¹¹⁴ Troupes of foreign players began to monopolise the lucrative business of entertaining at court.¹¹⁵

By 1677 that combination of capital investment under royal encouragement and protection, which had seemed so promising in 1660, seemed credible no more. Clearly the royal coffers could not be relied on to provide sustenance. Growth and experimentation had either to cease or to find funds elsewhere, in the purses of a well-pleased audience. Royal authority could not even guarantee the safety of the playhouse. In fact, the situation had so deteriorated that the playhouses soon became something of an embarrassment to the Crown, as the distrust and resentment aroused by the Popish plot was acted out amongst the specta-

¹¹³ Amongst those plays interdicted or cut were *The Kind Keeper*, *The Duke of Guise*, *City Politiques*, *Lucius Junius Brutus*, *The Island Queens*, *The Lancashire Witches*, and *The History of King Richard the Second*.

¹¹⁴ Wilson, "Theatre Notes from the Newdigate Newsletters," p. 80.

¹¹⁵ The King's summer flirtations with foreign players had always posed a threat to the London companies. However, the situation worsened in 1677, when companies of French and Italian comedians arrived to play before royalty in the winter months. From that date until Charles' death in 1685, the London companies seldom managed more than a single court performance annually between them. See W. J. Lawrence, "Early French Players in Oxford," *The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies*, pp. 139-140; Boswell, pp. 118, 121, 124, Appendix C; M. Horn-Monval, "French Troupes in England during the Restoration," *Theatre Notebook*, 7 (1953), 81-82; I. K. Fletcher, "Italian Comedians in England in the Seventeenth Century," *Theatre Notebook*, 8 (1954), 86-91; Sybil Rosenfeld, *Foreign Theatrical Companies in Great Britain in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Society for Theatre Research Pamphlet Series, No. 4. (London: 1955).

¹¹⁶ Henry Sidney, *Diary* I, 237, also 279-80. See also Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, I, 34-35. Morrice Entry Book, P, pp. 507-08.

tors.¹¹⁶ The fall-off in Royal support between 1677 and 1685 foreshadowed that even more severe drop which took place after the revolution of 1688, when the stage received almost no assistance whatsoever from the Crown. The playhouses began to seek not only the custom, but also the support and protection of their audiences. In short, they sought to convert their audiences into patrons.

It is in the dedications to plays that we find the first indications of changes in patronage. Until 1676, only nobles, courtiers and their associates had plays placed under their protection.¹¹⁷ After that date unfamiliar and even unusual names were honoured in the printed play. Wycherley's mock dedication of *The Plain-Dealer* to the infamous Madam Bennett, in 1676, is the best known. His parody of the style of epistles dedicatory is an implicit comment on the decline of the forms of patronage they celebrate:

Madam, Tho I never had the Honour to receive a Favour from you, nay, or to be known to you, I take the Confidence of an Author to write to you a *Billet doux* Dedicatory . . .¹¹⁸

Other pointed dedications followed. In 1678, Otway dedicated *The Souldiers Fortune* to his publisher, Bentley--a man known to "pay honestly for the Copy." Otway certainly intended the compliment, but he was also noting that dramatists had to look to their markets for the blessings formerly conferred by generous patrons.¹¹⁹ Dufey, whose play

¹¹⁷ The sole exception to this was Nell Gwynn, who was offered *The Spanish Rogue* by Duffett and *The Feign'd Curtizans* by Aphra Behn.

¹¹⁸ To Madam B_____, *The Plain-Dealer*, in *Complete Plays*, p. 365.

¹¹⁹ Dedication, in *Works* ed. Ghosh, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), II, 91.

The Banditti, was severely treated by some of the audience, reacted by presenting it to Sir Critick Cat-Call, in 1686, thereby resigning it to its fate. All such gestures serve as commentary on the decline of standard forms of patronage: so ineffectually was merit protected against unjust censure, that poets could do nothing but submit to the authority of the mob and those who urged it on.

As the court's influence on the drama declined, lesser men and women were offered plays by grateful authors. Durfey dedicated *The Siege of Memphis* (1676) to Henry Cheevers; Bancroft gave *Sertorius* (1679) to Captain Richard Savage; Maidwell offered *The Loving Enemies* (1680) to Charles Fox; Tate gave *King Lear* (1681) to Thomas Butler and *A Duke and No Duke* (1685) to Colonel Ashton; John Banks presented *The Innocent Usurper* (1694) to Richard Bentley.

The years after 1676 also saw a reduction in the number of plays dedicated to men of high rank: apart from the Earl of Dorset few nobles received any dedications. No longer did courtiers and their associates exercise so strong an influence over the taste of the town, nor engross the stage to the dismay of the smaller traders.¹²⁰

The last decade of the Seventeenth Century witnessed a flood of dedications to people who in earlier years would never have seen their names before a play. Bancroft dedicated *King Edward the Third* (1691) to Sir Thomas Cook, Lord Mayor of London. Southerne gave plays to Thomas Skipwith, Charles Boyd and Arthur Hammond, Settle to John Bright and Christopher Rich, Ravenscroft to Rowland Eyre and to his own brother Thomas. Richard Mund, Colonel Tipping, Colonel Codrington, Richard

¹²⁰ See Nathaniel Lee, Prologue to *Constantine the Great* in *Works* II, 483.

Norton and Charles Caesar received honours that, twenty years earlier, had been reserved for princes, dukes and earls.

Few of these dedicatees would have been capable of undertaking all the offices formerly expected of a patron. They may have been more generous than their predecessors; they may have had a closer practical relation to the stage than some of them. However, they were less influential. Furthermore, the audiences of this period were less willing to recognise authority in the playhouse than those of former times had been. The concept of patronage underwent redefinition, as dramatists found that it was not within the powers of any individual to guarantee a play profit, reputation and an undisturbed representation. Each of these needs had to be met separately.

Not only was there a change in the status of those to whom dramatists offered works, changes also occurred in the way that dramatists approached them. Dramatists identified groups of potential patrons amongst the audience, and solicited their support and protection. Initially, such appeals occurred only when an illustrious group of spectators was asked to stand as patrons to the most expensive of operatic productions. Dryden's prologue to *Circe* is more than a request for indulgence and applause; it is a plea to a group for support and protection.

From these Usurpers we appeal to you,
The only knowing, only judging few
You who in private have this play allow'd,
Ought to maintain your Suffrage to the Crowd,
The Captive once admitted to your Bands,
You shou'd protect from Death by Vulgar Hands.¹²¹

¹²¹ In Gardner, p. 75. This appeal has an antecedent in Davenant's address "To the Reader," in *The Siege of Rhodes*, in *Works* III, 233-35.

Dramatists took note of the benefits that followed from the support of a conspicuous and outspoken section of the audience and the idea of collective patronage gathered strength. When they could find no single patron of sufficient authority, they elected a group to serve the same purpose. A number of plays appeared in print bearing dedications to a group rather than an individual. Smith gave *Cytherea* (1677) to the Northern Gentry, Jevon, *A Devil of a Wife* (1686) to his friends at *Locket's*. Carlisle offered the patentees *The Fortune Hunters* (1689) and Powell presented the patentees and sharers with *Bonduca* (1696). By 1706 the practice was sufficiently well-established for Farquhar to dedicate *The Recruiting Officer* to his friends around the Wrekin: "an Acknowledgement of the favours you have already conferred." These attempts, we may be sure, were more novel than successful. The poets could have received little assistance from dedicatees so indistinctly defined or so poorly represented in the playhouse. That they persisted shows how important it had become for them to engage and make apparent the interest of some group in the fate of their work.

Collective patronage quite displaced individual patronage as the standard form of playhouse assistance. Whenever the stage needed aid, whether to help it through periods of financial hardship or to protect it from the censure of the godly, it was to groups of interested spectators that it turned.

Where-ever the State flourishes, the Theatre has never fail'd of Encouragement It is Pity . . . since we have some of our Nobility, who have a Taste of Eloquence, and all those Vertues which adorn'd the Stage, that it shou'd want their Assistance by whom it was first rais'd and since maintain'd They alone can free it from Contempt and Censure, by maintaining such an Awe, that the least Glymps of Prophaneness and Immorality shou'd not dare

to appear on the Stage.¹²²

The writer was invoking the model of patronage of Buckingham, Rochester and the rest, the court wits whose taste and influence had been instrumental in shaping the Restoration stage in earlier years. For example, when *The Plain-Dealer* appeared, and "The Town . . . appear'd Doubtfull what Judgement to form of it," the wits had moved to support it as a group and "by their approbation of it, gave it both a sudden and lasting reputation."¹²³ Yet those men had disappeared from the playhouse world, and with them, their authority. Dramatists began to make dedications to other groups in their stead, groups who might be able to supply some, at least, of the support and protection the stage needed. "The Nobility," Dryden's "only knowing, only judging few," Jevon's "friends at Lockets" and Farquhar's "friends around the Wrekin," were all descendents of the court wits, curious metamorphoses of that once-influential group.

If the court wits provided one model for the operation of patronage, a second came from contemporary politics. In the playhouse, no less than in the politics of the period, power was vested in faction. Those who could not claim protection from some party were likely to have their play disturbed and forcibly withdrawn by some group of spectators eager to demonstrate their strength. Durfey's *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692) was disrupted by the "Endeavours of an opposite Faction." The Third Part of his play, *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (1696) suf-

¹²² *A Letter to A.H. Esq: Concerning the Stage* (London: 1698), pp. 2-3. See also Dryden, Preface to *Albion and Albanus* and "A Parallel between Poetry and Painting," in *Essays*, II, 36, 200; Settle, Dedication to *Distressed Innocence* (London: 1691), Preface to *The Fairy Queen* (London: 1692).

¹²³ Dennis, "The Causes of the Decay and Defects Of Dramatick Poetry," in *Critical Works*, II, 277.

ferred the attentions of "the noisy Party." Henry Higden's *The Wary Widdow* (1693) and Aphra Behn's *The Younger Brother* (1696) miscarried thanks to factions that agitated against them, if comments made in the printed editions are to be believed.¹²⁴

The poets' supporters--their "patrons"--were equally vociferous:

In another part of the House sit the *Poet's* Friends, which are resolv'd to carry him off, right or wrong; 'tis no matter to them, whether the *Play* be well or ill done, they're engag'd either for Friendship, Interest, or else by a Natural Spirit of Contradiction, to oppose the other Faction
 . . .¹²⁵

A strong party saw that *Iphegenia* enjoyed a good third day; an even stronger party saw to the play's dismissal shortly afterwards.¹²⁶ Such violent reversals can be attributed to the demise of patronage in its traditional forms, for when it went, authority disappeared from the playhouse. Neither degree nor reputation could tell against the loud opinion of a strong party.¹²⁷

The vigour with which these appeals were made grew as the authority of earlier forms of patronage dwindled. The gradual diminution in the size of the court brought with it a decrease in the influence its members exercised over the stage. The stage no longer had a well-defined centre of power. As collective patronage became more common, the power

¹²⁴ Gildon, A Letter to Mr D'Urfey, in *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692); Preface to *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (1696); Dedication to *The Wary Widdow* (1693); Epistle Dedicatory to *The Younger Brother* (1696).

¹²⁵ *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* (London: 1699), p. 48.

¹²⁶ Dennis, Preface to *Iphegenia* (1700), *A Comparison*, p. 23.

¹²⁷ Witness Congreve's disappointment at being unable to cry down *Impost/Defeated*--see *Animadversions on Mr Congreve's late Answer to Mr Collier* (London: 1699), pp. 34 ff.

of other groups within the playhouse was greatly enlarged. "When the multitude are possest of any thing," wrote Crowne, "it is not easy to get it from 'em. They have great Strength and Authority too."¹²⁸ The rising influence of women in the playhouse--"the Ladies"--and the efforts dramatists made to gain their support show clearly how effective the support of an identifiable section of the audience could be.¹²⁹ The new patrons turned from supporting appeals by individual dramatists on an *ad hoc* basis to asserting their legitimate and continuing interest in the fortunes of the stage. Along with their support, they often added a measure of criticism, supervising the offerings presented to the public.

The most telling instance of collective patronage occurred in 1695. Thanks to the support of many of London's more affluent citizens, Betterton, together with Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle, was able to secede from the patent company in Drury Lane and set up a company of actors in Lincolns Inn Fields. Their escape from the restrictions imposed by the patent grant epitomised conflict between the powers given the patentees under Charles' grant and the newly emergent power of audience patronage:

The Patentees then, who by their united Powers had made a Monopoly of the Stage, and consequently presum'd they might impose what Conditions they pleas'd upon their People, did not consider, that they were all this while endeavouring to enslave a Set of Actors whom the Publick (more arbitrary than themselves) were inclin'd to support . . .¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Dedication to *Darius, King of Persia* (London: 1688).

¹²⁹ See J. H. Smith, "Shadwell, the Ladies, and the Change in Comedy," *Modern Philology*, 46 (1948), 22-33; R. D. Hume, "'The Change in Comedy': Cynical versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-1693," *Essays in Theatre*, 1 (1983), 101-118.

¹³⁰ *Apology*, p. 108.

Betterton, Barry and Bracegirdle were granted a licence to act after "several Persons of the highest Distinction" had made the Crown aware of their legitimate interest in the stage.¹³¹ The grant represented an acknowledgement of the actor's right to act--after 200 years of curtailment--and a concession to the power of public patronage.

The actors' new-found patrons added the weight of their purses to that of their voices:

Many people of quality came into a voluntary contribution of twenty, and some of forty guineas a-piece, for erecting a theatre within the walls of the tennis-court, in Lincolns Inn Fields.¹³²

Their grateful clients acknowledged this assistance in the prologue to their first play, Congreve's *Love for Love*:

As Nature gave the World to Man's first Age,
So from your Bounty we receive this Stage
The Freedom Man was born to, you've restor'd,
And to our World such Plenty you afford,
It seems like *Eden*, fruitful of its own Accord.¹³³

These patrons did the actors a third service, by appearing in their splendour to attract a good crowd, as the King had done formerly:

. . . the assistance they receiv'd from some Noble Persons
did 'em eminent Credit; and their appearance in the Boxes,
gave the House as much Advantage as their Contributions . . .
.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Apology*, p. 108.

¹³² *Apology*, p. 102. *A Comparison*, p. 9, is less magnanimous: "We all know what importuning and dunning the Noblemen there was, what flattering and promising there was, till at length, the incouragement they received by liberal Contributions set 'em in a Condition to go on."

¹³³ In *Complete Plays*, p. 213.

¹³⁴ *A Comparison*, p. 10.

The forms and uses of public patronage grew as various as had been the offices of individual patrons. When the fortunes of the players in Lincolns Inn Fields declined, it was collective patronage, again, which preserved them:

To-morrow night Betterton acts Falstaff, and to encourage that poor house the Kit Katters have taken one side-box and the Knights of the Toast have taken the other.¹³⁵

The receipts from two boxes offered little relief: the interest aroused by the gesture, however, likely proved more lucrative.

Competition amongst rival groups of patrons was not uncommon. Dryden noted that "there really are two factions of Ladyes for the two playhouses"¹³⁶ Even political plays could thrive thanks to the opposing interests of parties within the audience:

Yesterday was acted . . . City Politiques the novelty of wch drew a Confluence of Spectators under both Qualifications of Whigg and Tory . . . there were mighty clappings among the people of both partyes in Expressing either their sattisfaction or displeasure.¹³⁷

When *Cato* was produced the rival political parties vied with each other to see which could offer most tangible public proof of their support for so patriotic a play.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ HMC Bath MSS, III, 394.

¹³⁶ *Letters*, p. 133. See also, "The Confederates: or the first Happy Day of the Island Princess," in *Poems on Affairs of State* (London: 1703), II, 248-50.

¹³⁷ "Theatre Notes," p. 81.

¹³⁸ *Apology*, p. 196.

A further refinement of collective patronage saw the institution of new forms of theatrical financing. Vanbrugh built his theatre in the Haymarket with the aid of a subscription raised amongst "thirty Persons of Quality, at one hundred Pounds each, in consideration whereof every Subscriber, for his own Life, was to be admitted to whatever Entertainments shou'd be publickly perform'd there . . ."¹³⁹ Such ventures made patronage less arbitrary and ensured its continuation. They also placed the patron-client relationship on a quasi contractual basis. This had two effects: it improved the status of the actors as clients and it identified precisely what consideration a patron could expect. Consider what happened when the Haymarket playhouse fell upon difficult times. Lord Halifax was approached and asked to sponsor another agreement for collective patronage:

A Proposal therefore was drawn up, and addressed to that noble Lord, for his Approbation, and Assistance, to raise a publick Subscription for reviving three Plays of the best Authors, with the full Strength of the Company; every Subscriber to have Three Tickets, for the first Day of each Play, for his single Payment of Three Guineas.¹⁴⁰

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, bespoke productions afforded another outlet for collective patronage. In former times plays had been bespoke only by or on behalf of royalty.¹⁴¹ The right to bespoke, if we may call it that, belonged originally to patrons--to people whose demonstrations of interest and support had placed the company

¹³⁹ *Apology*, p. 172.

¹⁴⁰ *Apology*, p. 183. For instances of subscriptions in dramatic publishing see *The London Gazette*, June 11-15, 1685; Dec 20-23, 1696; July 3-7, 1690; Feb 26-March 3, 1691.

¹⁴¹ See CSPD Charles II, 1682, p. 24; *Post Boy*, February 2, 1697; L.C. 5/149, p. 368 in Nicoll, p. 352.

under an obligation to them. As royal patronage declined the right to bespeak was taken up by the great nobles, who would advertise their intended presence at the play of their choice, thereby ensuring that a full playhouse would meet, either to do honour to a significant occasion, or simply to gratify their whim.¹⁴²

When newspapers first began to carry brief advertisements of coming performances, these often took the form of announcing that the play in question was to be performed at the behest of some party.¹⁴³ Sometimes the piece was played for "a great nobleman", "a foreign prince" or even "her Royal Highness"--all rather conventional examples of the practice. Other announcements stated that the performance was "for the particular entertainment" or "at the request of" some mysterious group: "several French persons of Quality" or "some persons of the highest quality"¹⁴⁴ Perhaps the strangest announcement--certainly the most telling example of the extent to which patronage was a public and collective endeavour--is one which appeared in the *Post Boy* on 30 May 1700:

This Day at the King's Play-House, will be acted the
Tempest, or the Enchanted Island, with some Additional
Entertainments, at the request of several Seafaring Men.

¹⁴² See M. A. Shaber, "A Letter from Mrs. Barry," *The Library Chronicle*, The University of Pennsylvania, 16 (1950), 46-49; "The Dutchess of Marlborough, who at that Time bore an irresistable Sway, bespoke the Comedy then in Vogue . . ."--Advertisement for Abel Boyer, *The Victim* (1714).

¹⁴³ The first such occurrence can be found in *The Post Boy*, June 29-July 1, 1697. For other occurrences see Sybil Rosenfeld, "The Restoration Stage in Newspapers and Journal 1660-1700," *Modern Language Review*, 30 (1935), pp. 445-449.

¹⁴⁴ *The Post Boy*, Jan. 13-15, May 14-17, July 2-5, 7-9, 1698; April 27-29, Dec. 4-6, 1699; *Flying Post*, July 2-4, 1700.

The implication of this announcement is that group patronage was by this time so well-established a phenomenon, and so much a part of the stage's pattern of supports, that it was possible for any group to appear to undertake it. All that was required was that its members collectively muster enough in the way of numbers or money to constitute themselves as a force in the eyes of the rest of the company. The single voice of a powerful figure offered no security, and even the support of a party of noble auditors could be matched in its effect by that of a vociferous body of their social inferiors. The success enjoyed by *The Constant Couple* can be attributed to the appeal it made to the less substantial spectators:

Critick: . . .if all the Footmen in Town tha. admire him were to club for his Preferment, I don't know what might be done.

Ramble: The Footmen? Ay, and the middle Gallery too, I assure you are of his side, and that's a strong party.¹⁴⁵

So important did support become--even more important than short-term profit--that the playhouses were prepared to forego a modest amount of their rightful income in order to cultivate favour with one group of potential patrons. When Betterton's venture at Lincolns Inn Fields damaged Rich's profits at Drury Lane the latter contrived to create a group of non-paying patrons:

He imagined the People of Quality had preferr'd the Actors of the other House, to those of his own. To balance this Misfortune, he was resolv'd, at least, to be well with their Domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery to them *gratis* . . . this additional Privilege . . . he conceiv'd would not only incline them to give us a good Word, in the respective Families they belong'd to, but would

¹⁴⁵ *A Comparison*, p. 32.

naturally incite them, to come all Hands aloft, in the crack
of our Applauses . . .¹⁴⁶

Good countenance and applause was what Rich aimed at; profit would follow those. Other playhouses were obliged to follow suit and honour this newly created group of "patrons"--"the greatest Plague that ever Playhouse had to complain of"¹⁴⁷

If we compare the audience of *The Constant Couple* with that of *The Plain-Dealer*--the patronage of footmen with that of the court wits--it is apparent that what had changed was not so much audience composition as the locus of power within the playhouse. It was the decline of Court patronage and the enfranchisement of other groups of auditors rather than any increase in attendance by men and women of humbler origins that gave so much influence to the tastes and opinions of "the drama's patrons."

¹⁴⁶ *Apology*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁷ *Apology*, p. 129.

Chapter IV

THEMSELVES PRESENTED: ACTORS AND AUDIENCES

We can describe an audience in terms of its composition, the patterns of its attendance and the economic force it exerts. Yet those analytical descriptions somehow fail to capture the essence of "cet animal à tant de testes & à tant d'opinions . . ." ¹ For the life of an audience, the power it represents and the attraction it can exert, consists in its self-awareness: its awareness of itself, as a whole, and of the individuals who comprise it.

The self-awareness of an audience is the realisation of the individuals within it that they are objects of attention, that just as they organise their perceptions of the action that takes place before them, so too is their behaviour perceived and ordered from without. They know that all interpretations of dramatic action can be applied to observation of social action, that all judgements they make can be returned upon them, that all principles of performance have their originals and counterparts in everyday life. To be self-aware in a playhouse, then, is to understand the reciprocity of things.

¹ Georges Scudéry, *L' Apologie du Theatre*, (Paris: 1639), p. 97. The spectators are further characterised as "ces Centaures demi-hommes & demi cheuaux, ou comme dit vn Italien, 'Mezo huomo, mezo capra, è tuto bestia.'" Pope's "the many-headed Monster of the Pit." is a further evocation of this international image.

Such knowledge gives members of a self-aware audience control over the impression they create socially. They know how responsive others will be to a fine performance. They realize the importance of position, timing and delivery, of surprise entrances and graceful exits. Like actors they use techniques to manage the way they appear to those who sit watching: they control their own representation.

It is inevitable that when we examine how members of a self-aware audience controlled the impressions they created, we leave that comfortable area where we can count, measure and weigh their behaviour. If we are to look at representation we must enter a world of images and interpretations in which evidence changes its shape, too. When we attempted to measure size and attendance, literary evidence was evidence of contemporary attitudes, but not of fact; now those attitudes are our subject, and the products of the imagination weigh equally with the account books of the treasurer.²

4.1 *Playing Their Parts*

The stage had long been seen as a metaphor for the world, and acting on that stage as the image of human existence. The *Theatrum Mundi* tradition was inherited from the ancients; *Totus Mundus Agit Histrionem* was the motto that stood over the most famous of all Elizabethan stages, the Globe. By the later seventeenth century, these *topoi* had been domesticated, made more intimate. Once, human existence had been a dramatic construction on a grand scale, played before an audience on high; by the

² Harold Love in "The Myth of the Restoration Audience," questions the validity of using literary evidence. The reservations he expresses do not apply when literary material is considered as evidence of attitudes.

Restoration, the emphasis had shifted to the histrionic components of everyday behaviour. By 1660, the metaphor's referent had changed: no longer was the world a stage on which men performed their heroic actions, instead it was a theatre in which all spectators might observe the behaviour of men and women in the public places of the town. Notice how fundamentally different from its Elizabethan and Jacobean antecedents, how matter of fact is this assertion from a Restoration preface:

The World's a Theater, every place a Stage, all who read and understand, Actors and Auditors . . .³

The stage of Jaques and Macbeth, a place of action, had become a theatre, a place for viewing action.⁴ Not only had the referent changed, its application had too. No longer was there one large, universal stage, but a stage in every place: the plurality of stages corresponded to the multitude of domestic occasions, interchanges and relationships which made up a daily course of events in the lives of men and women of the town.

The power of the theatrical metaphor lay in the contribution it made to the way people thought about and organised their lives. The metaphor predicates the stage as the model whereby society conceives of itself: the stage is both a model of society and the source of models used by society. Any change in the metaphor--whether in its articulation or its application--is likely to reflect a change in the conception of the model. And that has implications both for people's understanding

³ Richard Flecknoe, Preface to *The Damoiselles a la Mode* (London: 1667).

⁴ *Theatros*, the word's root, originally meant a place for viewing, an audience place.

of their world and for their behaviour within it. Steele, in an allusion to the theatrical metaphor, shows what further transformations were wrought upon it and how powerful it became in the fifty years that followed the Restoration:

It is, with me, a Matter of the highest Consideration, what Parts are well or ill performed, what Passions or Sentiments are indulged or cultivated, and consequently what Manners and Customs are transfused from the Stage to the World, which reciprocally imitate each other.⁵

He describes the transmission of actions and values as "reciprocal"-- as if neither stage nor street consistently took precedence over the other. The cosmic and moral significance which once attached to the theatrical metaphor has quite disappeared from Steele's formulation of it; in its stead he identifies a more affective application: human existence is not composed of heroic action, but the cultivation of "Passions or Sentiments." The metaphor had become self-conscious and secular, reflexive and domestic. This implies no diminution in its power however, for its application was now practical and universal. The very title of Steele's journal, *Spectator*, and his own role in it as "a SPECTATOR in the world," show the metaphor was as potent as ever.⁶

The transformation of the theatrical metaphor left its traces in the language. Words like "contrivance", "design", "plot" and "intrigue" came into widespread use in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. All refer in some way to planning, to the conscious control of the representation and perception of events. Originally they were applied to the composition of artistic and theatrical works, but soon

⁵ *Spectator*, No. 370; 5 May, 1712.

⁶ No. 370.

they became part of the common speech and writing of ordinary men and women: the techniques of dramatic construction were being applied to events on the street.⁷

The stage bequeathed another set of terms to the language of social description. "Theatrical" and "histrionic" are both used to describe behaviour where the artifice is too apparent, where the techniques of impression management show through. They entered the language bearing this meaning in the latter half of the seventeenth century as companions to "hypocrisy", "affectation" and "dissimulation"--older terms that denoted an artificial or feigned manner. "But good God, what an age is this, and what a world is this, that a man cannot live without playing the knave and dissimulation."⁸ Where common behaviour presses so, new words are bound to enter the language.

The transformation of the theatrical metaphor brought other changes to the language, in addition to these shifts in usage. The names of characters from plays began to appear more frequently in ordinary speech and writing. When a startling new fool or fop appeared in a popular play, people used his name to identify a new social type. *Sir Fopling*, *Justice Clodpate*, *Fribble* and *Mammamouchi* were commonly used to conjure up London's fools in their several shapes and guises.⁹

⁷ See John Dunton, *The Life and Errors*, pp. 88, 150, 197; Pepys, *Diary*, 1 December, 1661; 6 November, 1662. See also Norman N. Holland, *The First Modern Comedies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), esp. Ch. 6, "Disguise, Comic and Cosmic."

⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, 1 September, 1661. See also John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Famous Pathologist, or the Noble Mountebank*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto Nottingham University Miscellany No. 1 (Nottingham: Sisson, 1961); *The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 114, 202, 232; George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *A Character of King Charles II*, in *Complete Works*, ed. J. P. Kenyon (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 251-52.

The process reversed the traditional pattern of mimesis. It was as if the character had become the original and the person, the copy.

Captain David Lloyd, bred to Sea and Groom of the Bed-chamber to King James, the very picture of Captain Surly in the Comedy of Sir Courtly Nice.¹⁰

Only through art, it seemed, could people now be truly represented. Not only did stage and street reciprocally imitate each other, but did so with so credible an exactness that the creations of the stage were discovered in the drawing rooms of London:

I went to my old acquaintance Sir William Trumbull, I cannot say friend, nor was he to any, but your humble servant to all, like my Lord Plausible in "The Plain Dealer".¹¹

The stage took charge of the imaginations of its audience, furnishing them with ready-made descriptions for the characters and incidents they encountered beyond the playhouses.

Ordinary social behaviour became imbued with much that was theatrical. Diaries, journals and letters of the time abound with tales of disguises worn and deceptions played by and upon men and women of all ranks. The Queen and the Duchesses of Richmond and Buckingham disguised themselves as country lasses and set off to a fair at Audley end.

Rochester passed himself off as a porter and a mountebank. Sir Ralph

⁹ See *Poor Robin's Intelligence*, London (1675-76), Issues L, Dd, Aaa, Gggg; *Clodpate's Ghost* (London: 1679); Dennis's discussion of *Sir Courtly Nice*, in *Works*, II, 405-06. Pepys, *Diary*, 8 October, 1667, describes Will Murford, a messenger in the Navy Office as "Sir Martin." For earlier instances of this see *A Defence of Poetry*, in *The Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 96, 116.

¹⁰ Ailesbury, *Memoirs*, I, 273.

¹¹ Ailesbury, *Memoirs*, II, 373.

Verney helped to disguise a highwayman; John Dunton walked around London dressed as a woman and wrote love letters under a fictitious name; Pepys had a visitor arrive at his door dressed in country costume to surprise him. When this behaviour occurs at court, it seems yet another manifestation of privilege, an extension of an artificial world. But when it is reported of less exalted figures, and without censure, it implies that theatricality had become a component of everyday life.¹² The practice, according to Burnet, took on to an extraordinary degree, particularly at court:

At this time the court fell into much extravagance in masquerading; both king and queen and all the court went about masked, and came into houses unknown, and danced there, with a good deal of wild frolic. People were so disguised that, without being in the secret, none could distinguish them.¹³

The interpenetration of stage and street is reflected further in the writings of men who examined social and political interactions and the workings of human personality. Hobbes uses the stage, and the audience's relationship to the action on it, to define the political animal. In his Chapter, "Of Persons, Authors and Things Personated," he relies upon theatrical terms to define the essential constituent of the political nation: a person.

A Person, is the same that an Actor is, both on the stage and in common Conversation . . .

¹² Gilbert Burnet, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of the . . . Earl Of Rochester* (London: 1696), p. 27; Anthony Hamilton, *Memoirs of Count Grammont*, ed. Gordon Goodwin, 2 vols. (London: Bullen, 1903), II, 82-83, 207-08; *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 82; John Dunton, *Life and Errors*, pp. 42, 197-98; Pepys, *Diary*, 23 January, 1667. See also Norman N. Holland, *The First Modern Comedies*, Ch. 6.

¹³ Burnet, *A History of His Own Time*, I, 473.

His use of the metaphor is quite contemporary: it invokes both actors and audience, performance and observation. According to Hobbes, man's being is theatrical in two essential areas: it involves both representation and interpretation.

A PERSON, is he whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of an other man . . .¹⁴

Representation distinguishes man from the other social animals: a person exists only insofar as he represents someone. Moreover, man's being is dependent not on performance alone, but on how that performance is interpreted by an audience: the representation, in itself, is nothing; what matters is what others consider it to be. It is from this theatrical ground that Hobbes derives his theory of authority in the state.¹⁵

Locke was another who borrowed from the stage to aid his discussion of personality. His examination of the many actions and relationships of the single personality depends heavily on the theatrical idea of the actor's adjusting his performance to suit the audience and the occasion. Locke regarded the individual personality as unique, private and continuous. However, in his relations with others a man had many selves. None of them was complete, sufficient or continuous; nor was he merely the sum of them all, but all of them were involved in his being:

One single Man may at once be concerned in and sustain all these following Relations, and many more, viz., Father, Brother, Son . . . Husband, Friend, Enemy, Subject, General, Judge, Patron, Client . . . Older, Younger, Contemporary,

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. MacPherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 217.

¹⁵ See Hanna F. Pitken, "The Problem of Thomas Hobbes," in *The Concept of Representation*, (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1967).

Like, Unlike *etc.* to an almost infinite number: he being capable of as many relations as there can be occasions of comparing him to other things, in any manner of agreement, disagreement, or respect whatsoever ¹⁶

Clearly Locke has a conception of role in mind, one which takes into account the effect others have on a man's behaviour. It is with others that he establishes his many relations; it is they who make the comparisons and interpretations of his actions. Through his many relations or roles, Locke's private man emerges from his inviolable self to become a public figure in the society of which he is part.

The changing theatrical model affected, in turn, contemporary views on drama. Dramatists had always claimed to represent human behaviour in their plays; they could hardly have done otherwise. But never before had they claimed to do so with any historical consciousness or with a pretense to evidential accuracy. However, towards the end of the century it became common to praise dramatists for the exactness of their characterisations:

" . . . he that in late Posterity would look for the Humours of this Age, must search Mr. *Farquhar* for them as much as he would *Vandike*, *Vario*, *Lilly*, or Mr. *Howard*, for their Personages or their Habits.¹⁷

Stage Historians, confident of the faithfulness of the representations they saw, extended the argument back to earlier periods:

¹⁶ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), pp. 321-22. See also, Rosalie L. Colie, "John Locke and the Publication of the Private," *Philological Quarterly*, 45 (1966), 24-45 esp. pp. 36-37.

¹⁷ B. Lintot, Epistle Dedicatory to *The Comedies of Mr George Farquhar* (London: 1708).

Old Plays will always be read by the *Curious*, if it were only to discover the Mannners and Behaviour of several Ages; and how they are alter'd. For Plays are exactly like *Portraits* Drawn in the Garb and Fashion of the Time when Painted.¹⁸

Historicist assertions of this kind had their polemical uses. For example, Dennis' "Defense of Sir Fopling Flutter" depends entirely on the reader's belief in the fidelity of dramatic representation. Dennis argues that Etherege,

was oblig'd to accommodate himself to that Notion of a fine Gentleman which the Court and the Town both had at the Time of the writing of this Comedy.¹⁹

Defenders and detractors of the stage alike made similar assertions of the accuracy of stage portrayals of behaviour. Whether they were justified in doing so is irrelevant: the point is that Restoration audiences regarded the plays they saw as fair imitations of their own behaviour.

This belief in the fidelity of dramatic representation is implicit in contemporary arguments justifying plays:

The stage takes examples from the Town. The Scene must really be acted in the World before it comes to be expos'd: So that whatever appears Vicious or Ridiculous, is owing to the Wickedness of the Times, and not to the Theatre.²⁰

It had three consequences. The first was that accuracy of representation became almost an article of faith amongst the defenders of the stage:

¹⁸ *Historia Histrionica*, in Cibber, *Apology*, ed. Lowe, I, xxi.

¹⁹ In *Works*, II, 244.

²⁰ *A Letter to A.H. Esq. Concerning the Stage* (London: 1698), p. 12. In *The Country Wife*, III, ii, in *Plays*, p. 290, Dorilant excuses the savagery of poets by explaining "they must follow their Copy, the Age."

The Stage is a Glass for the World to view itself in; People ought therefore to see themselves as they are; if it makes their Faces too Fair, they wont know they are Dirty, and by consequence will neglect to wash 'em.²¹

The second related to the sociability of dramatists. A knowledge of the town became one of the main prerequisites for a would-be comic dramatist: it was the thing without which he could never hope to satisfy the more punctilious of the critics.²² The third relates to the care that dramatists took to ensure that the printed play authentically reproduced the reality of the stage performance. They used orthography, stage directions, punctuation, typographical conventions and page layout to re-create voice, manners and action for their readers.

Let us look briefly at printed renditions of stage action.²³

Crowne taught the actor, Tony Leigh, to speak the part of Bartoline, in *City Politiques*, in the broken, lisping tones of a toothless old man. He transcribed Leigh's accent into print and, in the Preface, explained the system he had used to record it, in order to "render the part more

²¹ John Vanbrugh, *A Short Vindication of the Relapse and The Provok'd Wife, from Immorality and Profaneness* (London: 1698), p. 46.

²² It was often the facility with which dramatists handled this aspect of their craft that accounted for their reputations. See Gildon's comments on Thomas Scott's *The Mock Marriage*, in *Lives and Characters*, p. 121. See also B. L. Add. MSS. 4221, f. 341, on the assistance Dryden, Southerne, and Mainwaring gave to Congreve's first effort. In *A Comparison*, Southerne's knowledge of the town draws particular praise: "I think very few exceed him in the Dialogue; his Gallantry is natural, and after the real Manner of the Town; his Acquaintance with the best Company entered him into the secrets of their Intrigues, and no Man knew better the way and disposition of Mankind." p. 19.

²³ Unlike contemporary French theorists, English dramatists conceived of the printed play as something more than just the words and expressions spoken by its characters. See François Hedelin, *The Whole Art of the Stage* (London: 1684), I, 53, and John Hodges, *The Library of William Congreve* (New York, NY: New York Public Library, 1955), Nos. 10, 469.)

pleasant."²⁴ In other plays, liberal stage directions informed readers not only of the settings, entrances and major actions, but about costumes, properties, groupings, attitudes and even the tone in which lines were delivered. In the first edition of *A True Widow*, Shadwell apologised to the reader for certain faults in the play's printing, the greatest of which was "in not printing the Play in the Play in another Character, that it might be known in the Reading, which a good many did not from the Acting of it."²⁵ It seems the published play was no more authentic than its performance. Congreve, in *The Old Batchelour*, printed a detailed record of tone and action: "*Whispers*" appears after one speech, then, "*In a low Voice*," "*Stealing away upon his Tip-toes*," "*Almost whispering, and treading softly after him*," "*Aloud*" and "*Bluffe frowns upon Sir Joseph*." (V, i.) In the same play the reader is told when characters speak angrily, call, cry, sigh, spit, cry out, weep and shriek.²⁶ In *The Country Wife*, Wycherley repeats a stage direction to add a rhythm and sense of deliberation to the printed passage:. At her husband's bidding, Margery Pinchwife, "*writes*", "*writes*", "*writes*", "*writes*", "*writes on*", and "*Sighs*".²⁷

Some dramatists tried to distinguish those stage directions where the action followed or interrupted a speech from others where action and speech ran together. In *The Citizen turn'd Gentleman* (1672),

²⁴ Crowne, Preface to *City Politiques* (1683).

²⁵ Shadwell, *A True Widow*, in *Works* III, 288.

²⁶ Careless in *The Double Dealer*, speaks "In a whining tone" (IV, i). For more about the varieties of voice on the stage see J. H. Wilson, "Rant, Cant and Tone on the Restoration Stage," *Studies in Philology*, 52 (1955), 592-98.

²⁷ *The Country-Wife*, IV, ii, in *Plays*, 313.

Ravenscroft places the stage directions for action that accompanies speech alongside the dialogue, on a split page, separated from the words by a vertical bar. Thomas Scott used curved braces in *The Mock-Marriage* (1696) for the same purpose.

From social action to theatrical practice, the evidence points to a significant shift in the shape of the theatrical metaphor in Restoration times. Whereas, in an earlier age, the metaphor had majestic, even divine implications, now it was secular and domestic. The relation between stage action and street action had changed, too: imitation was now reciprocal. Furthermore, because greater emphasis was placed on the function and power of an audience than previously had been, the operation of the model by which society conceived of itself, had also altered. To understand how this new relation affected stage and street we need to turn to the audience: the intersection of those two. We need to examine the theatrical component of that audience's behaviour.

4.2 *Performing in Company*

Let us consider three areas in which members of the Restoration audience tried to control the way they appeared to others: affluence, honour and modesty. The fundamental test of a man's affluence was his ability to afford a place amongst the visible audience. Vincent encourages his would-be gallant to sit in the pit and not "like the Trades-man to save a shilling, and so sit but in the Middle-Gallery . . . "²⁸ "It's but a shilling more in the expence, half a Crown apiece," says Torriano's brave Englishman.²⁹ For those determined to make a greater

²⁸ *The Young Gallant's Academy*, p. 56.

²⁹ *Mescolanza Dolce*, p. 126.

public demonstration of their wealth the playhouse afforded many opportunities to spend still more. A playgoer who wished to appear a man of substance, could do so handsomely by treating his friends to the play. Pepys enjoyed others' largesse in early years, but later learned how expensive such hospitality could be: " . . .and brought them to the Duke's house; and, the house being full, was forced to carry them to a box, which did cost me 20s."³⁰ Edmund Verney included "at a Play 8 Maides in the 18^d. places, 12s.: for their Extraordinaryes 6^d." among the expenses of London, "cette ville devorante."³¹

If business was pressing and the playhouse promised to be thronged, then those whose time was more valuable to them than their money could ensure themselves a good seat by following Dryden's advice: "Send Lacquies early to preserve your Place."³² "Today will be acted *King and noe King*, by the King's command," wrote Peregrine Bertie. "Everybody is sending to keep places," he added.³³ It is an affluent Mr Pepys (a man who wishes both to see and to be seen from the pit) who has his place kept for him on the first day of much-vaunted new plays.³⁴ Another item of playhouse expenditure, one more conspicuous than convenient, was the purchase of china oranges. The fruit sold for 6^d. each, and as it was customary to treat the entire party the expense easily exceeded the

³⁰ *Diary*, 4 August, 1664. See also 28 September, 1664; 6 January, 1668.

³¹ *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 28.

³² The Prologue to *Arviragus and Philicia*, Gardner, p. 42. See also Durfey, Prologue to *The Fool Turn'd Critick* (1678).

³³ HMC 12th Report, Appendix V, Rutland MSS. II, 102.

³⁴ *Diary*, 2 May, 1668; 18 May, 1668.

means of all but the affluent. Pepys once spent 8s. on fruit for himself and his companions.³⁵ Vincent advises his gallant reader to summon the china orange wench, and "give her her own rate for her Oranges (for 'tis below a *Gentleman* to stand haggling like a *Citizen's wife*) . . ."³⁶

Less affluent spectators could sometimes afford to indulge in such luxuries. Men and women who wished to distinguish themselves entirely from these, reserved for their grandest display of wealth the means of their arrival at the playhouse. They descended in magnificence from their coaches. Dorset Garden, that monument to theatrical extravagance, was designed with coach parties in mind, with a "curious Front next the *Thames*, with an open Place for the reception of Coaches."³⁷ As the luxury of coach arrival became popular, so it became necessary. Those who did not own a coach might hire one, or else risk being disdained as men who "to save Coach-hire, trudge along the Street."³⁸ So determined were many to enter the playhouses as persons of quality, that congestion caused by coaches had no small impact on the surrounding neighbourhood. In 1695 the grand Jury of Middlesex petitioned the King to close the newly opened playhouse in Lincolns-Inn-Fields, claiming:

That the concourse of persons there is soe greate and the Coaches standing on both sides the building soe numerous that the streetes are totally obstructed and that noe inhabitant there can goe out, in the afternoons att sometimes with their Coaches, nor if out, can they return home again for the greate throng of Coaches attending persons resorting

³⁵ *Diary*, 26 March, 1668. See also 12 August, 1667; 6 January, 1668; 11 May, 1668.

³⁶ *The Young Gallant's Academy*, p. 56.

³⁷ John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. John Strype 6 vols. (London: 1720) III, 279.

³⁸ Dryden, Prologue to *Cleomenes*, in Gardner, p. 168.

to the said playhouse and of Hackney Coaches and Chaires
comeing there for hire.³⁹

Notice that the worthy gentlemen of the Middlesex Grand Jury list the means of arrival in descending order of extravagance, from private coach to hired chair.

Honour, too, could be demonstrated in the playhouse. Little hard evidence remains of the incidence of duelling in the late seventeenth century, or the frequency with which a man might be called upon to defend his honour, however, we can make a few certain statements about the practice. Swords were worn to advertise status: "I wear a sword" is as much an assertion of gentility as it is an invitation to fight. We know, too, that duels took place more frequently after the King's return than they had before and that the playhouses figure more prominently than mere coincidence would allow as either the place of combat or the site of the original affront.⁴⁰ Where once honour was a consequence of rank, it now was earned by demonstration of valour. The change represents a shift in meaning from "High respect accorded to rank," to "A fine sense of and strict allegiance to a sense of what is right."⁴¹ The "affair of honour" was primarily a proof of gentle status. Nobles might cause riots, beat, maim or even murder, but would not enter into an

³⁹ Harvard Theatre Collection MS. T.S. 101.3.

⁴⁰ There exists no adequate social history of duelling. Some discussion of the practice may be found in J. D. Aylward, "Duelling in the XVIII Century," *Notes and Queries*, 189 (1945), 31-34, and in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), pp. 93-94, 234.

⁴¹ O.E.D. Honour 1 and 2.

⁴² Accounts of incidents in which noblemen refused the challenges of their lessers or otherwise assaulted them without the dignity of a duel appear in Dr. Williams' Library, Morice Entry Book, P, p. 428;

affair of honour with a lesser man.⁴² Duels usually took place between gentlemen or credible pretenders to that estate, and often arose when one party appeared to slight the other's right to bear such a title. A public place like the playhouse thus became an arena in which men of an ill-defined status group tested its boundaries in a series of social border-disputes. Young army officers, for example, advanced their claims to honour and rank in civil life by proving their worth in playhouse affrays.⁴³ Later in the century actors, another occupational group that was beginning to claim gentle status, feature increasingly in duels or invitations to fight.⁴⁴

Accounts of duels reveal a consistent, almost ritualised pattern to their escalation: slight was followed by insult, then by threats, and all culminated in the drawing of weapons. Consider John Reresby's account of one affray in which he found himself involved:

Mr. Symons came and placed himself next to me, and not content to rest ther, after a while desired me to give him my seat, or to exchange with him (pretending he was to speake to one of his acquaintance on the other side). I had noe mind to quitt my seat, which was better to see then his. Besides, he haveing been drinking, his manner of askeing was not altogether soe gratefull, insomuch as I denied it. Hereupon he said I was uncivil, and I tould him he was a rascall; upon which words we were both prepared to strike one another, had not a gentelman that sate near us (one Sir

Pepys, *Diary*, 20 April, 1667, 20 July, 1667. See also Carl Neimeyer, "Henry Killigrew and the Duke of Buckingham," *Review of English Studies*, 12 (1936), 326-28.

⁴³ See C. Jeaffreson, *A Young Squire of the Seventeenth Century* 2 vols. (London: 1878), II, 143-44; Luttrell, *A Brief Relation*, I, 346, II, 637; CSPD, 1690-1691, p. 312; *Post Man*, 20-23 April, 1700.

⁴⁴ Luttrell notes a prohibition against actors' wearing swords: *A Brief Relation*, IV, 376. See also A.S. Borgmann, *The Life and Death of William Mountfort* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), pp. 123-69; *Protestant Mercury*, 18-20 May, 1696; *The Letters of John Dryden*, p. 27; Morrice Entry Book, P, p. 507-08.

Jonathan Trelany) put his hand between us to prevent it.⁴⁵

The ritual form invited the attention of the surrounding spectators, the men amongst whom could in turn make their presence felt either by usefully intervening, by drawing their swords in support of one of the protagonists or by clearing a space in which the fight could take place.⁴⁶ In this way a single quarrel could supply many with a handsome opportunity of displaying their "honour" to those seated nearby. The pit saw a large number of duels initiated not because the men there were more bellicose, but because when the actions of one man were felt to impinge upon the worth of another within its crowded confines, both parties knew that their conduct was under observation. It was the prominence of the pit as much as the dispositions of the men who sat there which made it the scene of so many disturbances.

While a man could assert his honour by his courage--or belligerence--a woman's honour was tied to her modesty, to her unaffected display of innocence. The matter was not an easy one to manage in a playhouse celebrated for its indecency, for a woman who displayed her disgust in public also revealed her acquaintance with impropriety.⁴⁷ The problem was essentially the worldly one of being so sophisticated as to be able to appear innocent. Bellinda, in *The Provoked Wife*, owns that she can never decide what expression to put on

⁴⁵ Reresby, *Memoirs*, p. 137.

⁴⁶ See Reresby, *Memoirs*, pp. 137, 168; HMC 7th Report, Appendix I, p. 465; Luttrell *A Brief Relation*, I, 34-35.

⁴⁷ Polemicists used this anomaly to attack both the stage and its detractors. See Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, pp. 7-8; Wycherley, "To Madam B____," and Eliza's speech in *The Plain-Dealer*, II, i, in *Plays*, p. 366.

. . . when they come blurt out with a nasty thing in a play. For all the men presently look upon the women, that's certain; so laugh we must not, though our stays burst for it, because that's telling truth and owning we understand the jest. And to look serious is so dull when the whole house is a-laughing.

Lady Brute: Besides that looking serious really does betray our knowledge in the matter as much as laughing with the company would do; for if we did not understand the thing we should naturally do like other people.

Bellinda: For my part, I always take that occasion to blow my nose.

Lady Brute: You must blow your nose half off then at some plays.⁴⁸

It was fashion that came to the aid of reputation by recommending masks as part of the female wardrobe after the Restoration. Pepys describes the behaviour of one woman of quality at Howard's *The Committee*:

when the house begun to fill, she put on her vizard and so kept it on all the play--which is of late become a great fashion among the ladies, which hides their whole face. (12 June, 1663.)

The wearing of masks allowed women a certain anonymity, or at least privacy, at the same time ensuring that they were recognised as women of fashion. It concealed their expressions and advertised their modesty. Masks rapidly became necessary articles of dress for women whose appetite for plays exceeded their caution:

⁴⁸ III, iii, in *Works*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (London: Nonesuch, 1927). Farquhar exploits the same paradox when Pindress says to Lucinda.: "Ay Madam, and your Ladyship wou'd seem to blush in the Box, when the redness of your face proceeded from nothing but the constraint of holding your Laughter. Didn't you chide me for not putting a stronger Lace in your Stays, when you had broke one as strong as a Hempen Cord, with containing a violent Tihee at a smutty Jest in the last Play?"--*Love and a Bottle*, I, in *Works*, I, 13.

The Ladies were then observ'd to be decently afraid of venturing bare-fac'd to a new Comedy, till they had been assur'd they might do it without the Risque of an Insult, to their Modesty; or, if their Curiosity were too strong for their Patience, they took care, at least, to save Appearances, and rarely came upon the first Days of Acting but in Masks . . .⁴⁹

When they were first introduced, masks served the women who wore them well, signifying their modesty to the world. However they did not maintain this function long. The mask soon came to signify its wearer's interest in those private concerns normally kept hidden from public view. It became the badge of office of the playhouse punks:

Of late the Play- houses are so extreamly pestered with Vizard-masks and their Trade, (occasioning continued Quarrels and Abuses) that many of the more Civilized Part of the Town are uneasy in the Company, and shun the Theater as they would a House of Scandal.⁵⁰

The resultant confusion between the modest and the lewd caused some concern amongst women of tender conscience and nice reputation. A question in the *Athenian Mercury* puts it succinctly:

A Young Lady that loves Plays mightily, desires your Opinion, if it be not better to go in a Mask, than to expose her Face to all the Company?

The reply:

Does she do anything she's ashamed of in going thither? If she is not, she may well be, as most of the Plays, and we think very near all the Comedies now are. . . . If she goes there often, she knows how the Masks are treated, and what they are reputed. Upon the whole, since 'tis ill to go with

⁴⁹ Cibber, *Apology*, 147.

⁵⁰ *Historia Histrionica*, in Lowe, ed. *Apology*, I, xxvii; see also Robert Gould, *The Play-House, A Satyr*, in *Poems*, pp. 158 ff.

a Mask, or without one, 'tis e'ne better never to go at all.⁵¹

The matter was finally determined by legal, not social means: in 1704 Queen Anne issued a proclamation prohibiting the wearing of masks.⁵² Henceforth modesty would have to make its appearance in the playhouse without benefit of disguise.

These affluent, honourable and modest spectators were aware of themselves as the object of others' attention. They attempted to control or manage the impression they created. In other words, their behaviour was theatrical: it could be described in just those terms which were used to speak of any other performance. The three distinguishing characteristics of such theatrical behaviour were an extraordinary self-consciousness, a concentration on technique and detail and the understanding that character was neither consistent nor continuous, but was composed moment by moment before an ever-changing audience. Lady Brumpton, the widow in Steele's *The Funeral*, imagines with delight the stir she will cause and the different characters she will assume when she is once again called to the playhouse after a decent period of mourning has elapsed:

What Pleasure 'twill be when my Lady *Brumpton's* Footman's call'd (who kept a place for that very purpose) to make a suddain Insurrection of Fine Wigs in the Pit, and Side-Boxes. Then with a pretty sorrow in one's Face, and a willing Blush for being Star'd at, one ventures to look round and Bow, to one of one's own Quality, Thus: (*Very Derectly.*) To a Smug pretending Fellow of no Fortune, Thus: (*As scarce seeing him.*) To one that writes Lampoons, Thus: (*Fearfully.*) To one one really Loves, Thus: (*Looking down.*) To one's Woman Acquaintance, from Box to Box, Thus: (*With*

⁵¹ *Athenian Mercury*, vol. 8, No. 25.

⁵² 17 January, 1704--see *Daily Courant*, 24 January, 1704.

looks differently Familiar.) And when one has done one's part, observe the Actors do theirs, but with my mind fixt not on those I look at, but those that look at me . . .⁵³

The widow is the very essence of heightened self-consciousness. She does not play one part, but many, addressing them to her several audiences, *seriatim*. The only consistency in her performance is in her art--the actor's art of making the best and most telling application of the techniques she has learned, before the audience of her world, the stage. It is to the art of acting that we now must turn.

4.3 *Actors and Acting*

The chief exponent of Restoration acting, and the master of its techniques was Thomas Betterton. Steele's account of Betterton's performance as Hamlet tells us a good deal about Restoration acting and the effects at which it aimed:

He behaved himself so well, that though above Seventy, he acted Youth; and by the prevalent Power of proper Manner, Gesture and Voice, appeared through the whole *Drama* a young Man of great Expectation, Vivacity, and Enterprize. The *Soliloquy* where he began the celebrated Sentence of *To be, or not to be*; the *Expostulation* where he explains with his *Mother* in her Closet; the noble Ardour, after seeing his *Father's Ghost*, and his generous Distress for the Death of *Ophelia*; are each of them Circumstances which dwell strongly upon the Minds of the Audience, and would certainly affect their Behaviour on any parallel Occasions in their own Lives.⁵⁴

⁵³ I, ii, in *The Plays of Richard Steele*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).

⁵⁴ Steele, *Tatler*, No. 71 (London: 1774).

Betterton's ability to continue in his role, and his success in it depended on his adoption of "proper Manner, Gesture, and Voice". That is, his acting was stylistically appropriate: his speech and action were congruent with what would be expected of a youth in Hamlet's position. A younger man said Aston, "might have Personated, though not have Acted, [the part] better" ⁵⁵

The distinction Aston made is an illuminating one. Personating--acting a part "to the life"--was the acting style defined and acclaimed at the beginning of the century. ⁵⁶ Restoration acting demanded that to this true performance of a character, there be added an excellent performance as an actor. And that, like all things in the Restoration playhouse, was measured in terms of its effect on the audience. The actor had to persuade the audience of the reality of what they saw and make them marvel at the technique he used to do so. It was not the character's credibility alone, but the actor's craftsmanship that created what Steele called "Circumstances which dwell strongly upon the minds of the Audience."

When two aspects of the audience's experience--their identification with the character and their admiration of the actor's skill--coincided so happily, there occurred a theatrical epiphany. Such moments were known as the "points" of a play, and were valued by actors and audience alike. Point acting evolved during the Restoration in answer to expectations that audiences had developed from reading plays during the interregnum. In the years when acting was banned men and women satis-

⁵⁵ *A Brief Supplement*, ed. Lowe, II, 300.

⁵⁶ See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 74 f.

fied their taste for drama with the quartos and folios that still came from the press.⁵⁷ No longer could the reader/spectators watch an actor "so truly [counterfeit] every thing, that it seemed to bee the very persons whom he acted"⁵⁸ Instead the transformation was within themselves. Consider Shirley's address "To the Reader" in the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio and the terms in which he praises their dramatic talents:

You may here find passions raised to that excellent pitch, and by such insinuating degrees, that you shall not choose but consent and go along with them, finding yourself at last grown insensibly the very same person you read; and then stand admiring the subtile tracks of your engagement.⁵⁹

Reading encouraged identification with a character. But more than that, it invited re-creation of the emotions that the character felt.

When playing resumed in 1660, audiences retained their taste for the re-creation of emotions as they experienced a play, but transferred their admiration from the dramatists to the actors who aroused them. Points provided the actors with the opportunity to display their talents; their successful enactment became the foundation of the play's reputation.

To perform their points successfully actors had to master two classes of acting technique: techniques of personation and arousal, and techniques of virtuoso display. At its simplest personation meant

⁵⁷ See L. B. Wright, "The Reading of Plays during the Puritan Revolution," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 6 (1934), 73-108.

⁵⁸ John Greene, *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors* (London: 1615), E3v.

⁵⁹ In *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, ed. A. Glover and A. R. Waller, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1905-12), I, iv.

⁶⁰ Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (London: 1710), p. 40.

entering into each part.⁶⁰ Betterton was praised for his ability to "vary his Spirit to the different Characters he acted."⁶¹ This is the original sense of "personate" as it was used in the early seventeenth century. The term was refined later in the century, when it became common to praise the very best of actors for their ability to lose themselves in their portrayals.⁶² Addison wrote of actors' admitting the importance of their forgetting themselves:

I have heard my old friend Mr *Hart* speak it as an observation amongst the Players, that it is impossible to act with grace, except the Actor has forgot that he is before an audience . . .⁶³

The actor Mountfort exhibited "a Variety in his Genius which few capital Actors have shown . . . he could entirely change himself . . . [becoming] no longer *Monfort*, but another Person."⁶⁴ Elizabeth Barry was another who was capable of "perfectly changing herself, as it were, into the Person, not merely by the proper Stress or Sounding of the Voice, but feeling really, and being in the Humour, the Person represented, was supposed to be in."⁶⁵ The shift from acting to the life to identifying with a character is an important one. Personation was no longer a matter of convincing others with an external resemblance; actors were asked to identify with their parts, to convince themselves,

⁶¹ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 62.

⁶² See Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, Ch. 3, "Acting," esp. pp. 72-75.

⁶³ *Tatler*, No. 138 (London: 1774).

⁶⁴ Cibber *Apology*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Edmund Curll, *The History of the English Stage* (London: 1741), p. 16.

"really" to become the characters they played.

Behind this change lay, once again, the desire to affect the audience--to have them identify with the characters too. Betterton is most forceful on the need for an actor to "transform himself into every Person he represents" and describes just how this is to be done, and to what effect:

The Player . . . ought to form in his Mind a very strong Idea of the subject of his Passion, and the Passion it self will not fail to follow, rise into the Eyes, and affect both the Sense and Understanding of the Spectators with the same *Tenderness*.⁶⁶

If the aim was to arouse passions in the audience, the best means was to engender those passions in oneself:

. . . [work] your self up by a strong Imagination, that you are the very Person and in the very same Circumstances . . . then you need not fear affecting the Audience, for Passions are wonderfully convey'd from one Person's Eyes to another's . . .⁶⁷

Loss of self was regarded as the cornerstone of excellent acting. Betterton, "from the Time he was dress'd, to the End of the Play, kept his Mind in the same Temperament and Adaptness, as the present Character required."⁶⁸ Kynaston appeared in *Henry IV*, " . . . as if he had lost the Player, and were the real King he personated!"⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Gildon, *Life of Betterton*, pp. 70, 34.

⁶⁷ *Life of Betterton*, p. 71; see also pp. 53, 64 and Cibber, *Apology*, p. 62: "He that feels not himself the Passion he would raise, will talk to a sleeping Audience."

⁶⁸ Aston, *A Brief Supplement*, in Lowe, ed. *Apology*, II, 301.

⁶⁹ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 73.

Despite the authorities' unanimity on acting technique, personation was seldom so happily carried out. Very few actors were as scrupulous as these two: seldom did they remain in character throughout a performance or lose themselves in their part. That was, said Cibber,

a Perfection so rarely found, that very often in Actors of good Repute, a certain Vacancy of Look, Inanity of Voice, or superfluous Gesture shall unmask the Man to the judicious Spectator.⁷⁰

As a result, the audience were seldom able to identify with the characters. Generally accepted principles of characterisation made identification difficult, too. Elizabeth Barry was greatly admired for her habit of reacting to other characters when she was on stage. "I have frequently observ'd her," said Betterton, "change her Countenance several Times as the Discourse of others on the Stage have affected her in the Part she acted."⁷¹ The implication is that other actors felt no need to react to the business of the play, unless they were speaking. Lesser actors commonly stood on stage, "whispering to one another, or bowing to their Friends in the Pit, or gazing about."⁷² Continuity, it seems, was seldom a characteristic of an actor's performance. An acting style which found excellence in isolated points of performance was obviously well suited to the temperaments of many of the players.

The second requirement of excellent actors was that, having aroused the audience, they should then make them marvel at their skill--their mastery of "manner, gesture and voice". The most authoritative set of

⁷⁰ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 73.

⁷¹ *Life of Betterton*, p. 40.

⁷² *Life of Betterton*, p. 37.

instructions for actors appears in Gildon's *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, in which a collection of anecdotes, precepts from native writers, translations from the French and cullings from the ancients are offered for the use and improvement of English actors. Mastery of action is recommended as the chief aim and application of an actor, for "Grace and Ornament accrues to Speech by a proper and due Action."⁷³ The highest superlatives are reserved for this aspect of an actor's craft:

*Action is Motion, and Motion is the support of Nature, without which it would again sink into the sluggish Mass of Chaos.*⁷⁴

Action received such emphasis because in it alone lay the means of controlling a volatile audience:

This Natural Power of *Motion* or *Action* is the Reason, that the Attention of the Audience is fixt by any irregular or even fanatic Action on the Stage of the most indifferent Player; and supine and drowsy, when the best Actor speaks without the Addition of *Action*.⁷⁵

Action alone had the power to transfix an audience, to give a point its full effect.

Action falls under two headings: expression, or countenance, and gesture, or movement. It is the attention paid to the former which distinguishes Restoration acting styles from those which came before: ". . . the greatest Life and Grace of *Action* derive themselves from the *Face*."⁷⁶ Contemporary comments about actors and their particular excel-

⁷³ *Life of Betterton*, pp. 32, 27.

⁷⁴ *Life of Betterton*, p. 25.

⁷⁵ *Life of Betterton*, p. 26.

⁷⁶ *Life of Betterton*, p. 59.

lences show how, in an intimate and well lighted auditorium, mastery of what was then called "face-acting" brought credit on a performer.

Doggett was "the best Face-Player and Gesticulator," "very Aspectabund, wearing a Farce in his Face; his Thoughts deliberately framing his Utterance Congruous to his Look . . ."⁷⁷ Samuel Sandford "acted strongly with his Face" and Elizabeth Barry's face "somewhat preceded her Action, as the latter did her Words, her Face ever expressing the Passions."⁷⁸ As we might expect, Betterton was recognised a master of face acting. Spectators claimed to have observed the point in his performance of Hamlet where,

. . . his Countenance (which was naturally ruddy and sanguin) . . . thro' the violent and sudden Emotions of Amazement and Horror, turn[ed] instantly on the sight of his Father's Spirit, as pale as his Neckcloth . . . and this was felt so strongly by the Audience, that . . . they in some Measure partook of the Astonishment and Horror, with which they saw this excellent Actor affected.⁷⁹

The great esteem in which Betterton was held is again justified by his power over his audience's affections and the virtuosity by which he maintained it.

The effect of the performances of the few great actors on their audiences was noted consistently. They were applauded for their "wonderful power of *fixing the attention of the audience*, and speaking to them as much by action as utterance . . ."⁸⁰ Lesser figures might, by

⁷⁷ Aston, *A Brief Supplement*, II, 310; Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, p. 52.

⁷⁸ Aston, *A Brief Supplement*, II, 306, 302-03.

⁷⁹ *The Laureat: Or, The Right Side of Colley Cibber* (London: 1740), p. 31.

⁸⁰ Tom Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, II, 202. He cites Rymer's

straining their lungs produce "the roar of passion" and gain "a thundering clap".⁸¹ The best placed little trust in "the false judgement of an audience/ Of clapping fools . . ."⁸² Betterton, we are told, held that there was never any kind of applause

. . . equal to an attentive Silence: that there were many ways of deceiving an Audience into a loud one; but to keep them husht and quiet, was an Applause which only Truth and Merit could arrive at . . .⁸³

Truth and Merit: these two qualities are based upon the actors' ability to identify themselves with a character and at the same time to display their virtuosity as actors.

Notwithstanding the principle that good acting required playing "to the life," tragedy was performed in accordance with a set of stylised conventions which, while they defined what was lifelike on the stage, would not pass as such on the street. Comic acting was governed by a quite different set of assumptions.⁸⁴ Cibber tells a tale of the comic actor James Nokes, a man "as unaccountably diverting in his common speech, as on the stage," in which a bystander mistakes some of the actor's table-talk for his rehearsing a part.⁸⁵ Other stories, too, were

praise of Hart and Mohun: see Rymer, "The Tragedies of the last Age," in *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt Zimansky (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 19, 74.

⁸¹ Dryden, "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," in *Essays*, I, 254.

⁸² Rochester, "An Allusion to Horace, in *Poems*, p. 121, ll. 13-14.

⁸³ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 65.

⁸⁴ See *Life of Betterton*, p. 80: "Comedy is less difficult in the Writing . . . much easier in the Acting . . ."

⁸⁵ *Apology*, pp. 82-83.

told of confusion occurring between the realms of stage and street.⁸⁶

The truth of the stories is irrelevant; what is important is that to contemporaries they certainly appeared credible. However, the confusion could not have occurred had the performers been tragedians.

The conventions of comic acting were much closer to street behaviour. Comedians were praised for their gaiety, liveliness and vivacity. The best comic actors, like Mrs Mountfort, evoked just these qualities. Cibber describes her performance as Melantha in the act of receiving a suitor with a letter of introduction:

. . . she reads the Letter . . . with a careless, dropping Lip, and an erected Brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her Father's Commands, by making a compleat Conquest of him at once; and that the Letter might not embarrass her Attack, crack! she crumbles it at once into her Palm, and pours upon him her whole Artillery of Airs, Eyes, and Motion; down goes her dainty, diving Body, to the Ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious Load of her own Attractions; then launches into a Flood of Fine Language, and Compliment, still playing her Chest forward in fifty Falls and Risings, like a Swan upon waving Water . . . she *swims* from him . . . with a Promise to return in a Twinkling.⁸⁷

The essence of comic acting lay in movement that was spontaneous, continuous and natural--acting that would enliven a part, rather than entrance the auditors. William Mountfort's reputation for giving "truest Life to what we call the *Fine Gentlemen*," came from his "particular Talent, in giving Life to *bon Mots* and *Repartees*: the Wit of the Poet always seemed to come from him *extempore*, and sharpen'd into more wit, from his brilliant manner of delivering it . . ."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *The Loyal Protestant*, August 13, 1691, tells of a spectator's violent reaction to fancying himself "thus drawn to the life."

⁸⁷ *Apology*, pp. 96-97.

Such liveliness was attractive; it encouraged the audience to identify with those they admired and in a manner every bit as powerful as that in which they saw themselves as tragic heroes. The author of *The Art of Complaisance* warned his readers of the terrible effects that could follow upon the watching a comedy:

. . . for half an hour after I had seen a late new Play, whilst the Impression continued, I wished nothing so much as to be like the two tearing fellows, which the Poet had designed for the Characters of Gentlemen, nor in that mood would I have exchanged their abilities in drinking and whoring, for all the old fashioned vertues in the world, and I dare swear that three parts of the men present, would have preferred the honour of committing thousand rapes and adulteries, to the practise of all those softer vertues which under that name they are taught to abhor.⁸⁹

Anti-stage writers often made use of this argument--that the danger of plays was not only in what they said or showed, but in what they encouraged their fascinated audiences to become. The thrust of Chapters 1 and 4 of Collier's *Short View*, which deal with the adorning and rewarding of vice and debauchery, turns upon the claim that the audience identifies with the heroes of comedies, and is thereby encouraged to follow their example. Such acknowledgements of the stage's powerful social effects inform the entire body of anti-theatrical writing. The pious detractors of the stage were motivated as much by fear as by indignation. It was not the comic poets alone who were responsible for their fears, but also the excellent comic actors. They transformed texts into performances that attracted and excited an audience. And

⁸⁸ *Apology*, p. 75. See also Edmund Curll, *Faithful Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Anne Oldfield* (London: 1731), pp. 76-77.

⁸⁹ S. C., *The Art of Complaisance or the Means to Oblige in Conversation* (London: 1673), pp. 64-65.

that audience, aroused "by such insinuating degrees," identified with the heroes that appeared before them.

4.4 *The Acting Profession*

The affinities the audience felt with the players, and their willingness to identify with the characters they played were closely related to the performers' status. In Queen Elizabeth's day actors had been deemed by statute to be "Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars."⁹⁰ Some, like Burbage and Alleyn, had aspired to and attained the condition of gentlemen, but these were few.⁹¹ Throughout the century the standing and fortune of the common player improved apace: even the law regarded them as gentlemen. In 1662 a group comprising Betterton, Nokes, Medbourne, Underhill, Sandford, Price and Harris, "late of St Clements Dane's, Gentlemen," appeared on a Grand Jury indictment for assault.⁹² It is hard to conceive of a riotous assembly of ordinary actors being addressed as courteously or treated as leniently in earlier times.

The improvement in their status arose in part from the interregnum association between the fortunes of the stage and the fortunes of the crown. The players were pleased to capitalize on this, as we see from the prologue to the first play presented at court after the King's return:

This truth we can to our Advantage say,

⁹⁰ *Historia Histrionica* I, xlix. See the statute, 39 *Eliz.*, c.4.

⁹¹ Gurr, pp. 60-69. M. C. Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), esp. Ch. 2, "The New Estate."

⁹² *Middlesex County Records*, ed. J. C. Jeaffreson, 4 vols. (London: 1886-92), III, 322.

They that would have no *KING*, would have no *Play*:
 The *Laurel* and the *Crown* together went,
 Had the same *Foes*, and the same *Banishment*:

 Affrighted with the shadow of their Rage,
 They broke the Mirror of the times, the Stage
 The Stage against them still maintain'd the War,
 When they debauch'd the *Pulpit* and the *Bar*.⁹³

Many actors had fought on the King's side during his struggle with Parliament, and of these a good few--Hart, Mohun, Burt, Shatterel--had received commissions, the military equivalent of gentle status. They carried the authority of their rank back with them into civil life.⁹⁴

The status of actors, if not their reputations, was affected by the company they kept off-stage. "Cupid and Bacchus my Saints are," wrote Rochester, and it was often sons and daughters of the stage who played acolytes at the devotions of the Earl and his associates.⁹⁵ The liaisons of actresses with nobles were widely publicised: Downes coyly footnotes those who "by force of Love were Erept the Stage."⁹⁶ Actors, too, like Hart and Harris, became the drinking companions of the great and shared their company in taverns and ordinaries.⁹⁷

If these honourable or influential associations helped to improve the status of actors, wealth certified that improvement. In the years immediately after the Restoration the stage thrived and shares in the acting companies multiplied in value. Actors became men of substance,

⁹³ Davenant, "Prologue to His Majesty" (London: 1660).

⁹⁴ *Historia Histrionica*, I, xxix.

⁹⁵ "Upon His Drinking a Bowl," in *Complete Poems*, l. 21.

⁹⁶ *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 35.

⁹⁷ Nell Gwynn, letter to Mr. Hyde, in "Letters from the Collection of William Tite," *Camden Miscellany*, No. 5 (Westminster: 1864), pp. 25-26.

much to the disgust of the young gallants of the town, who "began to be tyred with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors who are indeed grown very proud and rich."⁹⁸

Recent history, good acquaintance and high incomes had a most immediate effect on the standing of individual performers, but the most substantial and lasting improvements in the status of actors as a group came from the development amongst them of a sense of professionalism in matters of experience, authority, training and responsibility. The rise of the acting profession can be seen in both the publication of historical accounts of the stage, and of biographies of its leading players. When Downes published his historical review of the Restoration stage, he called it *Roscius Anglicanus* in tribute to Betterton, its greatest performer: the stage, in effect, became its stars.

Gildon's *Life of Betterton* incorporates two important additions to the developing professional sensibility. It sets out instructions (howsoever derivative) for the training of young actors and the improvement of acting generally: "Rules, by which the young Beginners might direct themselves . . ."⁹⁹ At the same time the work offers the basis of a code of ethics. "Betterton" repeatedly admonishes actors, for the advancement of their condition and of the stage, to take, "the greatest and most nice Care of their Reputation imaginable"--in other words, to exhibit proper professional conduct.¹⁰⁰ Betterton's own professional experience and authority was acknowledged by Charles, who sent him as an

⁹⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, 23 February, 1661. See also his entries for 22 July, 1663; 24 October, 1663.

⁹⁹ *Life of Betterton*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ *Life of Betterton* p. 19. See also pp. 20-22 and Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 52, 79, 138, 144.

agent to France to arrange for the introduction of French Opera to London.

Professionalism can be seen, too, in the establishment of an hierarchy within the ranks of acting companies. "A Tragedian always takes Place of a Comedian," wrote Addison, "the Merry Drolls who make us laugh . . . give way to the Dignity of the Buskin."¹⁰¹ Cibber tells of Powell's resentment at finding the company's comedian dressed more finely than himself.¹⁰² Within each company there was a chief actor under whom the others stood in an order determined by their skill, experience and their favour with the audience.¹⁰³ These rankings were often maintained on the stage, where it was all too common for an actor to assert his superior standing within the company in his behaviour towards an inferior, regardless of the respective status of the characters they played.¹⁰⁴

Distinctions of rank amongst actors had their beginnings in the acting practices of earlier times. After 1660 they were refined upon as actors began to feel the pressures of their anomalous social position. An actor might be received

. . . among People of condition with Favour and sometimes with a more social Distinction, than the best, though more profitable Trade he might have follow'd, could have recommended him to.

¹⁰¹ *Spectator*, No. 529.

¹⁰² *Apology*, p. 126.

¹⁰³ *Apology*, pp. 139-142.

¹⁰⁴ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 75, praises Mountfort for avoiding this vice.

--yet there were many instances to show "what degree of Ignominy the Profession of Actor was then held at . . ."¹⁰⁵ Actors were the intimates of the greatest powers in the land, sharers of their mistresses and beds, yet they could readily be made to suffer their abuse.¹⁰⁶ Upholders of the stage's extravagance and glory, in times of trouble they were infrequently and meagrely paid. Often fallen members of the privileged classes, they raised themselves to enjoy both envy and disdain. They seldom knew their place. Small wonder, then, that actors held fast to their professional status, the only area over which they retained some control.

The maintenance of distinctions of rank amongst actors led, inevitably, to actors' gaining recognition from the world beyond the stage. One major move towards such recognition of their merits occurred when Elizabeth Barry was granted the privilege of having a play performed annually for her benefit. A few years later Barry, Betterton and Anne Bracegirdle undertook a step that altered forever the condition of the acting profession. In 1695, they sought and were granted a licence to establish a playhouse in Lincolns-Inn-Fields. After 200 years of progressive curtailment, these three performers extended the grounds of actors' rights to perform. Public recognition of their excellence, and the public's desire to enjoy their performance was enough to legitimize their playing: even King William III took notice. In granting the licence he both recognised the actors' abilities and acknowledged the justice of their enjoying the profits arising from their labour.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Apology*, pp. 52, 47.

¹⁰⁶ See Evelyn, *Diary*, 18 October, 1666; Curll, *The History of the English Stage*, p. 79.

Professionalism brought with it greater specialisation, and with that came the habit of identifying particular parts or character types with certain actors.¹⁰⁸ The relationship between actors and the characters they played was initially in the hands of the dramatists, for it was they, in conjunction with the prompter, who controlled the assignment of parts. If the dramatist made no recommendations, parts were assigned in accordance with the actors' status and specialisations, with the merits and popularity of the players available and with advice given by interested parties.¹⁰⁹ Sometimes dramatists wrote with a particular actor in mind: Otway devised roles for Elizabeth Barry, Congreve for Anne Bracegirdle, Cibber for himself. The dramatist's say in the casting of a play might even persist in revivals.¹¹⁰

Authors held this power simply because they were, by default, the only directors of their play's performances. After they had assigned parts they instructed the actors in their roles by reading through the

¹⁰⁷ *Apology*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸ Cibber's descriptions of actors are almost always in terms of what parts or types the actor handled best. See *Apology*, Chapters 4 and 5 *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ For examples of the forces that affected casting decisions see Settle's reference to "the feeble Fragment of a Company," in the Dedication to *Fatal Love* (London: 1680); Aston, *A Brief Supplement*, II, 311; Tate, Dedication to *Cuckold's Haven* (London: 1685); Pepys, *Diary*, 26 December, 1667 on Nell Gwynn's poor showing in Robert Howard's *The Surprizal*.

¹¹⁰ For instances of dramatists' writing for particular actors or superintending the casting process, see Downes, *Rocscius Anglicanus*, pp. 17, 28; Cibber, *Apology*, pp. 98, 167, Preface to *Woman's Wit* (1697); Southerne, Dedications to *Sir Anthony Love* (1691) and *The Fatal Marriage* (1694); Tate, Dedication to *Cuckold's Haven* (1685); Dryden, *Letters*, pp. 23-24; Roswell G. Ham, *Otway and Lee* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1931), pp. 85-90; Farquhar, Advertisement to, *The Beaux Stratagem*, in *Works*, II, 125. For further discussion see Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, pp. 70-86.

scenes with them.¹¹¹ Betterton recommends that actors consult "e'en the most indifferent Poet in any Part [they] have thought fit to accept of . . ." though his tone suggests that few of them took the care to do so.¹¹² Reading through a part was essential in transforming text into action. The actors were responsible for their own training and rehearsal. Often they learned their parts at very short notice and without specific reference to the performances of other actors. Furthermore their interest was not in the whole work, but in making the most of the points that had been given them. It was only the author's initial efforts that gave the play whatever coherence it possessed.

In an actors' theatre, where casting and dramaturgy are managed in this way, a play is seen as a collection of roles. Physically, it was so: it existed for the actors as a roll containing their character's lines and cues only. In a quasi-legal sense, too, a play was but the sum of its roles: it was owned, theatrically, by the actors to whom they had been given.¹¹³ An actor's rights in this property continued while he had sufficient health to perform them.¹¹⁴ The death or retirement of a leading figure set off a struggle amongst his actor-heirs for a share in

¹¹¹ *Apology*, pp. 67-68; Crowne, Preface to *City Politiques*, (London: 1683).

¹¹² *Life of Betterton*, p. 16.

¹¹³ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 106, makes a strong case for an actor's ownership of his parts.

¹¹⁴ Betterton continued to perform many of his greatest roles until the end of his career. Cibber, *Apology*, p. 70, tells that once when Betterton's gout troubled him severely, he played Amintor "in a Slipper."

¹¹⁵ *Apology*, pp. 58, 166. For articles regulating the disposal and acceptance of parts, see also PRO L.C. 5/141 p. 307, cited in Nicoll, p. 324 n. Peter Holland discusses the ownership of parts in *The Ornament of Action*, pp. 65-69.

his best parts.¹¹⁵

The parts were the play in an historical sense as well. Enacting a part in a revival was not a matter of interpreting it, but of recovering it, establishing the lines of transmission back to the instructions given by the dramatist to the actor who first performed it. Charles Hart described how this original interaction created the finished performance of the play:

The great advantage of playing an original character is derived from the instructions of the author. From him the learning of the part must be communicated to his instrument, the player: if he is master in his profession, he will, in his turn, impart useful hints to the poet which will contribute to the improvement of the scene.¹¹⁶

The distinction between original actors and "mere auricular Imitators" was the fundamental distinction of rank within the acting profession.¹¹⁷ The authority of the original actor's performance of a part was such that even the great Betterton took pains to recapture the acting of his predecessor when he played in a revival.¹¹⁸ The history of a part's transmission was its genealogy: Downes traces Betterton's Hamlet through Davenant and Taylor back to Shakespeare.¹¹⁹ The origins of his Henry VIII were similarly preserved.¹²⁰ Without this aural transmission a play might lie neglected, the thread of its historic continu-

¹¹⁶ Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 270. Davies cites *Tatler* as his authority.

¹¹⁷ See *Apology*, p. 59; *Life of Betterton*, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 272.

¹¹⁹ *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 21.

¹²⁰ *Dramatic Miscellanies*, I, 353.

¹²¹ *Historia Histrionica*, I, xxiv-xxv.

ity broken, the manner of its action lost.¹²¹

Recovery of a part offered more than a ready made interpretation. It offered tradition to a drama immersed in innovation and it offered the sole authority whereby a play could be created out of a collection of parts.¹²² The record of this authority was to be found in the cast lists printed so frequently in plays after 1660. "I wish they had Printed in the last Age" says Truewit in *Historia Histrionica*, "the Actors Names over against the Parts they Acted, as they have done since the Restauration. And thus one might have guest at the Action of the Men, by the Parts which we now Read in the Old Plays."¹²³ The cast list defined the original; it set the standard by which to judge the fidelity of subsequent performances. The names of the original actors were carried forward even during revivals in later years, bearing still the authoritative words: "as it is acted . . ." before the list of *dramatis personae*.¹²⁴

So strong was the habit of identifying parts with players that its corollary held too: actors became identified with the parts they played. Jack Verbruggen's fondness for his role in *The Rival Queens* led to his being known universally as Alexander: he was even styled thus in cast lists.¹²⁵ Samuel Sandford's audiences took it hard that he should attempt to play anything less than a villain¹²⁶ Audiences were reluc-

¹²² The "Prologue To The Reviv'd Alchemist" (London: 1660) warns: "all traditions and like helps are lost."

¹²³ *Historia Histrionica* I, xxv. Twelve cast lists have survived, eleven of which are cited in this work.

¹²⁴ See *The Ornament of Action*; pp. 108-09.

¹²⁵ *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 418.

¹²⁶ *Apology*, p. 77 f. See also R. H. Ross, Jr, "Samuel Sandford:

tant, too to accept a performance in a part that did not square with the actor's known character. Elizabeth Barry encountered resistance and ridicule whenever she attempted to play virtuous women--unless she first acknowledged the discrepancy between her own behaviour and what she represented on stage.¹²⁷ Nell Gwynn had to restore credibility to her performance of Valeria in *Tyrannic Love* by rising from the dead to speak a mock epilogue. The close association between actors and their roles meant that what was said or done in one play might allude to performances in other parts and other plays--a form of theatrical synecdoche. When the actor George Powell wished to challenge Betterton he had playbills printed for *The Old Batchelour* on which was entered: "The part of the Old Batchelor, to be perform'd in imitation of the original."¹²⁸

Powell's performance was of the actor Betterton, not the character Heartwell: he attempted to oust the great actor from his position by playing to perfection his part.

4.5 *Identifying the Audience*

Powell's stratagem draws on two distinct types of theatrical identification made in the playhouse: on the identity established between a part and its original actor, and on the audience's identifying the characteristics of a particular person. This latter form of identification had its classical antecedents in Greek Middle Comedy, where "characters of Villain from Necessity," *PMLA*, 79 (1961), 33-41.

¹²⁷ William Chetwood, in *A General History of the Stage* (London: 1749), pp. 28-29, describes the different success with which Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle represented Ophelia's "Virgin innocence." For another instance of an actress's relating publicised details of her public life to her performance, see the Induction to *The Virtuous Wife*.

¹²⁸ *An Apology*, pp. 114 ff.

living persons [were] introduced with such attributes as [made] them known to the audience."¹²⁹ Critics frowned upon the representation of particular individuals, a practice they referred to as personation.¹³⁰ Audiences, however, relished personation with a particular zest. Pepys' diary entries for several days in May 1668 show how Shadwell's representation of well-known figures in *The Sullen Lovers* engaged the whole audience in the play's action:

. . . by Sir Positive-At-all, I understand is meant Sir Robert Howard. My Lady (Castelmayne) pretty well please with it.

. . . understand that my Lord St. John is meant by Mr Woodcocke, in "the Impertinents" . . .

But, Lord! to see how this play of Sir Positive At-all, in abuse of Sir Robert Howard, do take, al, the Duke's and every body's talk being of that, and telling more stories of him, of the like nature, that it is now the town and country talk, and, they say, is most exactly true. The Duke of York himself said that of his playing at trap-ball is true, and told several other stories of him. (*Diary*, 5, 6, 8 May, 1668.)¹³¹

The personation of Howard had a life of its own beyond the play in which it was set. The actor--Harris--could enlarge or refine upon his characterisation, knowing that the audience would support him and

¹²⁹ Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 284. Native dramatists, in particular Jonson and Marston, had eariler invited their audiences to identify characters with theatrical figures.

¹³⁰ For Dryden's comments on the practice, see *Essays*, I, 72; II, 108. See also [Richard Legh], *The Friendly Vindication of Mr Dryden from the Censure of the Rota* (Cambridge: 1673), p. 8. The *poetomachia* was responsible for the best known instances of personation in earlier English drama.

¹³¹ See Robert D. Hume, *The Development of Restoration Drama*, p. 259, for an account of the changes the play underwent in performance.

authenticate his performance. When the audience was so involved, the bounds between private and public behaviour were erased: the world--"town and country"--crowded into the playhouse where it saw the intimate actions of a man transformed into the mannerisms of a player. Personation was a powerful weapon in the armoury of the satirist. It reduced its victims to the sum of their observable actions, thereby implying that it was within the power of any competent actor to express them fully. It was an attack that denied the very individuality of those who were so particularly mocked.

The force of such an attack--a simultaneous re-creation and ridicule--was impossible to withstand:

Lady Harvey that thought shee could have borne the being likened to Sempronia in ye Play of Catiline wich is now acted, & did not concern her selfe much at first, now she finds it makes so much sport & ye more because ye baggage yt acts yt part has every time some new gesture or posture of hers as ye Court ladies informe her & was preparing a bottle to stand by her upon her dressing table, can endure it no longer . . .¹³²

So effective was this exposure of intimacy that those who suspected that it might be applied against them, took steps to ensure that the offending performer was discouraged--forcibly.¹³³

Even if actors became less willing to risk liberty and limb by burlesquing their superiors, the taste for personation continued, and audiences remained as ready to identify the victims and authenticate

¹³² Bodleian Library, North MSS. C. 10, ff. 42-43. /N

¹³³ Pepys, *Diary*, 1 February, 1669, 2 February, 1669; B. L. Add. MSS. 36916, f. 128.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Ailesbury, *Memoirs*, II 390-91: "Mr. Lee, in women's clothes, represented her to the life, and so exactly had he her features and complexion, that one could scarcely have distinguished one

their portraits.¹³⁴ Personation was admitted into the repertoire of the political satirist and public figures were made to appear on stage. The audience's eagerness to be of the knowing party, privy to the secret meanings and hidden understandings, made them tacitly acquiesce in the criticisms levelled at the characters whose manners they recognised.¹³⁵

Personation was insinuated into comedies, too. Dryden knew, painfully well, how an audience sought out its object: Buckingham had carried him to *The Rehearsal*, and had sat beside him, watching his reactions, while, on the stage, Lacy burlesqued his characteristic dress and deportment.¹³⁶ Robert Hooke was another who found himself the particular object of the entire audience's attention when he saw *The Virtuoso*. "With Godfrey and Tompion at Play," he wrote. "Met Oliver there. Damned Doggs. *Vindica Me Deus*. People almost pointed."¹³⁷

At times the audience's desire to identify characters from plays with the playgoers about them grew almost rampant. When *The Man of Mode* was first performed, the town fairly buzzed with supposition as to Dorimant's original. Rochester, Dorset, Etherege and Monmouth--all men well-known in the playhouse--were leading contenders for the honour. Beau Hewitt was favoured as the original of Sir Fopling.¹³⁸ These mul-
from the other."

¹³⁵ Plays in which prominent political figures were personated included *The Kind Keeper*, *Venice Preserv'd*, *Bellamira*, *Cuckold's Haven*, *City Politiques*, *The Rehearsal*, *The Duke of Guise*, *The Country Gentleman*, *The Rump*, *Don Carlos*, *Sir Popular Wisdom*.

¹³⁶ *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 307 f.

¹³⁷ *Diary*, 2 June, 1676.

¹³⁸ Sir George Etherege, *Dramatic Works*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), pp. xiv-xv. R. D. Hume, *The Development of Restoration Drama*, p. 91.

multiple identifications show how often the audience's demand for identifiable characters outran the dramatists' supply. In fact the dramatists may fairly be said to have stimulated appetites they had no intention of satisfying. Dryden's epilogue to *The Man of Mode*, in which he cautions the audience against making their identifications too precisely, keys a discussion of comic personation:

. . . none Sir Fopling him, or him can call
He's Knight o' the Shire, and represents ye all.¹³⁹

The strategy Dryden uses here is one commonly used in prologues.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it was complex in its operation, for all its apparent glibness. Dryden warns the audience against making an identification; at the same time he invites it by encouraging them to look about them. He asserts the truth of the portrait, but denies its particularity. The fools of the world are encompassed in the playhouse, he says, but when the audience seeks them out, what they discover there is, inevitably, only themselves. The theatre is the image of the times; the audience is the world in miniature. Too-curious spectators, then, are likely to find themselves on both sides of the stage at once.

Indeed the audience seem to delight in finding themselves thus exposed:

Time was, when none would cry, that Oaf was mee,
But now you strive about your Pedigree.

¹³⁹ Epilogue to *The Man of Mode*, in Gardner, p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ For further instances, see Aphra Behn, Prologue to *The Emperor of the Moon* (London: 1687), and Cavendish, Epilogue to *The Triumphant Widow*, (London: 1677).

--wrote Dryden.¹⁴¹ Rochester, with equal contempt, cries:

Leave this gaudy, gilded stage,
From custom more than use frequented,
Where fools of either sex and age
Crowd to see themselves presented.¹⁴²

The spectators' eagerness to identify themselves illustrates how readily social behaviour was confounded with its representation. Their eagerness also makes plain the crux that dramatists faced in representing them. They quite undermined the dramatists' claims that plays served the common good by displaying vice, the better to discourage it. The darkest prophecies of the theatres' opponents, it seemed, had been realised: all the ill and mischievous examples of the stage were rapidly copied in the town.

Dramatists could no longer assume their plays had a simple relationship with their audiences. Where once their task was to control the representation of their work, now it became also a matter of controlling the way that audiences interpreted the representation. It fell to dramatists to manage the boundary between stage and street. Their problem in essence was one of identifying and manipulating the conventions whereby the audience made sense of stage action.

The means by which an audience distinguishes stage action from other forms of action and the conventions that it uses to interpret the action, together constitute that audience's sense of theatricality. The issues of theatricality may be examined under two headings: what is the

¹⁴¹ Epilogue to *The Triumphant Widow* (1677). See also the Prologues to *Sir Martin Mar-all* and *The Assignation*, in Gardner, pp. 16-17, 50-52, and Shadwell, Epilogue to *The Virtuoso*, in *Works*, I, 311.

¹⁴² Rochester, "Song," in *Complete Poems*, p. 85.

relation between stage representations and street behaviour and what are the means by which the stage represents human behaviour? Let us reconsider our notions of the theatrical metaphor as it affected those issues. The questions then become, what shape did the image of the world take on in the playhouse at that time, and what were the means whereby that image was maintained?

The theatrical image of the world had changed: the world was a playhouse. It was no longer enough to call it a stage, for that was to undervalue the force of the audience in composing, authenticating, even allowing performances to take place on stage and street. Nor could the world be called a play: that suggested a unified construct, viewed from a single perspective and continuous in its action. It made no allowances for those discontinuities and contradictions which dominated urban existence--the effects of the ill-defined bounds between life's actors and observers. The image of a playhouse encompassed both composed and spontaneous actions; it gave full recognition to the effects of perception in determining what is, and allowed for more than one point of view to be considered. In playhouses, authority rested with the audience and the plurality of opinions which they comprehended. Farquhar's dictum on comedy--"The Rules of English Comedy don't lie in the Compass of *Aristotle*, or his Followers, but in the Pit, Box and Galleries"--could be applied at all points to the condition of man's existence.¹⁴³

The image of the world as a playhouse was maintained through the mediation of the audience, who were not simply observers, but figures engaged in the life of the play. Just as the audience authenticates

¹⁴³ Farquhar, *A Discourse upon Comedy*, in *Complete Works*, ed. Charles Stonehill (London: Nonesuch, 1930), II, 338.

stage action by recognising it as a credible representation of street life, so does any acknowledgement of the spectators authenticate their behaviour, both in the playhouse and beyond it: their presence has been noted; they, too, have an audience. And inasmuch as they are inhabitants of London, the town becomes, by extension, a playhouse, its half million souls represented by those who crowd within the wooden walls of Drury Lane. The audience was an intimate one, but not a coterie: its power derived from the credibility with which it could be said, like Sir Fopling, to "represent you all."

The theatricality of everyday life on the streets and in the public places of London grew as men and women became ever more conscious of themselves as people whose performances were under observation. Its enlargement altered the basis and implication of theatrical representation on the stage, for as self-consciousness mediates the observation of any performance and colours the expression of any thought, so it defeats any simple mapping between stage and street. Stage representation could not be undertaken without acknowledging the presence and seeking the approval of those self-conscious spectators whose interested observation completed the theatrical contract.

The acknowledgement was carried out in the first instance in prologues and epilogues. More than 1000 have survived from that vast and unprecedented flowering of stage orations. They bear testimony to the audience's appetite for recognition and to the ingenious means by which a skillful writer could play upon that appetite to manipulate and control audience reactions. In the playhouses men and women were identified, defined, praised, cajoled, ridiculed and abused as never

¹⁴⁴ *Rare Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration*, p. xviii ff.

before.¹⁴⁴ Any treatment, it seems, was preferable to the ignominy of passing unnoticed amongst the invisible spectators:

The most compendious method is to rail:
Which you so like, you think yourselves ill us'd
When in smart Prologues you are not abus'd.¹⁴⁵

The impression that prologues give of a narrow audience in which all parties are known to one another is a little misleading. For it was their function to create just such a sense of intimacy.¹⁴⁶ They do not record their world: through a sense of immediacy and intensity, they establish it.

The actors who delivered these pieces represented themselves: they appeared on their own behalf and in their own interest. At the same time, they added to and toyed with their own public image.¹⁴⁷ The delivery of prologues and epilogues demanded considerable skill: the speaker had both to court and to disdain the audience in a witty argument, sustaining the whole with a spirit of *extempore* utterance.¹⁴⁸ The performance of so important a part of the playhouse's offering was entrusted to the foremost actors, who vied with each other for that honour.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Dryden, Prologue to *Secret Love*, in Gardner, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ See Danchin, "Le Public des Théâtres," p. 851.

¹⁴⁷ See Nell Gwynn's Epilogue to Dryden's *Tyrannic Love*, in Gardner, p. 29; Joseph Haines's Epilogue to Thomas Scott's *The Unhappy Kindness*, (1697); Elizabeth Barry's Prologue to Dufey's *The Virtuous Wife* (1680).

¹⁴⁸ See Wiley, p. xlv.

¹⁴⁹ See *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, pp. xxxiv, 197; Cibber, *Apology*, p. 110.

Because the delivery of these pieces was so closely related to the companies' performers, they developed into specialised items in the theatrical repertory. It did not matter that the prologue or epilogue bore no relation to the play it accompanied, or that a poet might make "a Prologue and an Epilogue which might both serve for either,"¹⁵⁰ Their purpose was not to serve the play by excusing it or pleading on its behalf, but to suit so entirely the tastes of the audience as to engage them closely with the actors who spoke *in propria persona*. Those who knew the playhouses best fashioned an immense range of ingenious pieces, showing how versatile a mere two dozen lines of direct address to the audience could be. Political prologues, occasional prologues, impersonations and character addresses appeared, each with its own set of rhetorical techniques.¹⁵¹ It is the variety of the prologues and epilogues, and the attenuated relationship they bore to the ~~the~~ plays they introduced, /S that distinguishes them from earlier ones. Each set or family of Restoration prologues represents a different strategy for carrying out what must be regarded as the prologist's fundamental task: that of establishing an informal contract between actors and audience. And many of these strategies aimed to involve the audience in the proceedings, and to meet their need for recognition by defining them in a direct address. At the same time the issue of theatricality--by what means and how credibly can one person represent another--was foregrounded when the audience found, from the outset, "themselves presented."

¹⁵⁰ Buckingham, *The Rehearsal* I, i.

¹⁵¹ Wiley offers a set of descriptions of the different forms these occasional pieces might take: *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

Prologues were the essence of imposture. By appearing as themselves actors denied the theatrical techniques on which they traded. At the same time they redefined the audience that sat before them, creating it by *fiat*. Such sublime theatricality was bound to disturb any illusions created by the play. Yet in the brief period in which these occasional pieces flourished in so vigorous a form, the function they fulfilled--of engaging audience and actor--was closer to the essence of theatricality than the pure maintenance of any dramatic fiction.¹⁵²

Comic dramatists, whose business it was to offer "just representations of humane actions," had a particular interest in managing the chief issues of theatricality.¹⁵³ Their task: to represent people to themselves; their tools: a set of theatrical conventions; their problem: that the audience made use of equally theatrical conventions in their everyday behaviour. To achieve their purpose dramatists needed to affirm that theatrical conventions governed the audience's behaviour as much as they did the action that took place on stage.

Comic dramatists used methods that were different in kind from the prologists'. Those sought to define, distinguish and manipulate the audience, developing and strengthening the relationship between them and the actors. Comic dramatists, on the other hand, sought to introduce an element of uncertainty into the performance and its reception, by disrupting the integrity of the theatrical illusion. The approach they took was to disturb and sometimes break the boundaries between audience and play, preventing the spectators from being the passive observers of

¹⁵² In the eighteenth century, audiences began to complain that epilogues destroyed the pleasing deceptions of the stage. See Wiley, p. xliv.

¹⁵³ Ravenscroft, Prelude to *The Italian Husband* (1698).

a set of actions that depicted, but did not touch them. This fracturing of boundaries allowed the audience to be incorporated into the world of the play and at the same time it established the play as a part of the audience's world.

The dramatists developed a set of strategies that redefined the theatrical contract between actors and audience. The strategies they used to manage the audience fall under three heads. They scrutinised the relationship between plays and the tastes of their audiences. They incorporated the audience into the play itself by representing, on stage, behaviour that was clearly an extension of the spectators' activity within the playhouse. They overturned the boundaries between stage and street by representing the playhouse itself as a stage.

The foremost example of the use of first strategy occurs in *The Rehearsal*. The play is an essay on dramaturgy, a complete examination of forms of theatricality, their implications and the uses to which they were put. Bayes makes pronouncements on all theatrical matters from plot and character to diction and devices, describing both the techniques he uses and the effects at which he aims.¹⁵⁴ However, for all that it satirizes contemporary plays, poets and dramatic styles, the play's principal attack is directed against neither poets nor styles of writing, but against the audience that supports them. Buckingham and his collaborators aimed to reform the audience's taste. Dennis describes the authors' intention thus:

When The Town too lightly gave their applause, to Half a Dozen Romantick, Ryming, whining, Blustering Tragedies, allurd by their novelty and by their glare, then [they]

¹⁵⁴ For a detailed account of satiric techniques in *The Rehearsal*, see Smith, *Plays about the Theatre in England*, pp. 10-37.

writt the *Rehearsall*, which in a little Time open'd their eyes, and taught them to Despise what before They rashly admird.¹⁵⁵

The imperfections of the audience are made plain from the outset: in the opening sequence Johnson describes those spectators whose taste is so extraordinary as to countenance the excesses of modern plays:

Smith. I have heard, indeed, you have had lately many new Plays and our Country-wits commend 'em.

Johnson. I, so do some of our City-wits too but they are of the new kind of Wits . . . your Virtuosi, your civil persons, your Drolls: fellows that scorn to imitate Nature; but are given altogether to elevate and surprise.¹⁵⁶

So successful a strategy was soon repeated in other plays. Audiences became accustomed to seeing poets appear on stage to discuss their craft. The poets invariably point out that their compositions are geared to please the audience; they justify their methods in terms of the effect they have on an audience. In short, the poets explain, it is the audience's taste that authorises what they see. Pedro, in Joseph Arrowsmith's *The Reformation* explains how easily he and his fellow poets may impose themselves upon an audience:

It is an [easy] Trade to one that understands a modern language or two, and will translate [Riming takes] but a weeks practice at *Crambo*, and once obtain'd saves us pains: for 'tis impossible to write non-sence in't, some few long words, and half a score sentences out of *Seneca's* Tragedies, make an Heroic Poet.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ "The Causes of the Decay and Defects of Dramatick Poetry," in *Works*, II, 277.

¹⁵⁶ I, i.

¹⁵⁷ *The Reformation* (London: 1673), I, i.

In Southerne's *The Wive's Excuse*, Welvile and Friendall argue the ending of the former's play-in-progress (a play called *The Wive's Excuse*) in terms of what will best suit the spectators. Welvile is for paying the Ladies a compliment, and having his heroine remain chaste. Friendall thinks so demure an image would disoblige them considerably:

Well. I have not yet determin'd how to dispose of her. But in regard to the ladies, I believe I shall make her honest at last.

Mr Fri. I think the ladies ought to take it very ill of you if you do.¹⁵⁸

Again the surface of the representation is disrupted and the audience is made aware that even chastity is but a matter of appearance and interpretation and that it too can be managed to suit tastes and expectations.

Even when the views that a poet espouses in a play coincide with those of the dramatist, as Lyric's views about comedy in *Love and a Bottle* match Farquhar's own, their expression still disturbs the texture of the representation. Consider Lyric's description of contemporary comedies:

The Hero in Comedy is always the Poet's Character A Compound of practical Rake and speculative Gentleman, who always bears off the great Fortune in the Play, and Shams the Beau and 'Squire with a Whore or Chambermaid; and as the catastrophe of all Tragedies is Death, so the end of Comedies is marriage.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *The Wive's Excuse* (1692), III, i.

¹⁵⁹ Farquhar, *Love and a Bottle*, IV, ii. See also *A Discourse upon Comedy*, in *Works*, II, 339.

By mocking the predictability of comedies, Lyric directs the audience's attention away from the current comedy's outcome--which is no less trivial than he expects--and suggests that they seek alternate satisfactions in the playhouse, notably those of observing how their fellows are using theatrical conventions. He reminds the audience that the greatest plays, and the most accomplished representations, are those that take place around them.

And therefore my eyes are diverted by a better comedy in the Audience than that upon the Stage.--I have often wonder'd why Men shou'd be fond of seeing Fools ill represented, when at the same time and place they may behold the mighty originals acting their Parts to the Life in the Boxes.¹⁶⁰

A related strategy also involves the discussion of plays on stage, but the protagonists in this case are not the poets who write them, but the critics who cry them down. The critical opinions expressed in scenes of criticism help to define the characters of those who utter them. But their primary function has to do with audience, not character definition. In plays like *Sir Hercules Buffoon* and *The Virtuoso*, the opinions of Sir Hercules and Snarl are fatuous and fusty and the audience scarcely needs to be warned off adopting such extreme views.¹⁶¹ However, the warning is generalised: by showing the spectators distorted reflections of themselves caught in the act of holding fast to a single attitude, dramatists cause them to doubt the certitude of any of their opinions of plays.

¹⁶⁰ Farquhar, *Love and a Bottle*, IV, ii, in *Works*, I, 51.

¹⁶¹ John Lacy, *Sir Hercules Buffoon* (1684), I, i; II, i; Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, I, i, in *Works*, III, 106.

The strategy has a more oblique effect in *The Plain-dealer*, when Olivia and Eliza argue the propriety of Wycherley's *The Country-wife*. There the audience is confronted with the fact that, however attractive Wycherley has made Eliza's opinions, Olivia's are those of the stronger party. Likewise, in Otway's *Friendship in Fashion*, Lady Squeamish's complaint--

And then their Comedies now a days are the filthiest things, full of Bawdy and nauseous doings which they mistake for raillery and intrigue; besides they have no wit in 'em neither, for all their gentlemen and men of wit, as they style 'em, are either silly conceited impudent Coxcombs, or else rude ill-mannerly drunken Fellows . . .¹⁶²

--represents the view of a significant section of the playhouse. The audience is made to understand what the dramatist has to his cost discovered: that the world of the playhouse is a pluralistic one, that truth is not the same thing as strength, that strength resides in numbers and that in the playhouse, as in life, all is determined by observing appearances.

Scenes of criticism establish a sense of continuity between the world of the play and what its spectators do, or will do once they are outside the playhouse. The extended discussions of the merits of plays and playgoing that take place on stage effectively preempt common patterns of audience behaviour: the critical discussions that will occur later, when the curtain is down, are only imitations of discussions that have already taken place within the play. Plays that make use of this strategy feed on the conversations of those critics who would prey on them. They also affect those conversations, preventing the spectators

¹⁶² I, in *Works*, I, 348.

from taking too easy and too fixed a view of the play. In scenes of criticism, Restoration comic dramatists made their audience aware that objectivity and certainty had passed from their world, leaving them with only a multitude of opinions and the knowledge that matters of taste were ultimately decided by force and by numbers.

This first group of strategies for redefining the theatrical contract between actors and audience recreates the relationship between the audience's tastes and the plays that are performed for them. The second group of strategies deals with the theatrical behaviour of the audience. Dramatists had an interest in controlling the audience's reactions towards the theatricality of their own members. This they did in several ways: they drew attention to the audience's self-conscious behaviour; they allowed their characters to surpass the audience's exhibitionism; they demonstrated the audience's dependence upon the playhouse; and they ensnared it in webs of self-reference.

Characters in Restoration plays often admit the theatrical component of their actions, delighting in their awareness of the attention of others and sure of their own ability to control the impressions they create. "When I go to the Plays," says Laura in *The English Frier*, "the minute I appear, the whole Pit turns round as mov'd by an Engine; to please themselves with the Sight of me, the most entertaining Scene in the House."¹⁶³

Male versions of this self-dramatising character, whose natural habitat is the playhouse, were less sympathetically drawn and more aggressively demonstrative in the display they made. However, in the

¹⁶³ *The English Frier* (1690), II, iii. See also Vanbrugh, *The Provok'd Wife*, III, iii and Steele, *The Funeral*, I, ii.

end both male and female versions of the character were governed by the same motives. "I go to a Play as to a Country-treat," proclaims Sparkish, in *The Country Wife*,

I carry my own wine to one, and my own wit to t'other, or else I'm sure I shou'd not be merry at either; and the reason why we are so often lowder, than the Players, is, because we think we speak more wit, and so do become the Poets Rivals in his audience . . .¹⁶⁴

Exhibitionists of either sex were, by definition, dependent on the playhouses: those were the arenas in which they attracted the publicity they sought; there they identified themselves. In attempting to deal with them the Restoration comic stage became domesticated and reduced in compass. The world that was represented on it left off its grandeur and became a mere extension of the physical playhouse, as original and image of these fascinating creatures were matched together.

The view these characters proffer is a performer's view of self-dramatising behaviour. Its original was the observer's view, which still existed in two forms: as a set of behavioural precepts or as a Theophrastan character. Sam Vincent, in *The Young Gallant's Academy*, following the style of the courtesy book or guide, recommends the following behaviour:

let our Gallant (having paid his *half Crown*, and given the Door-keeper his *Ticket*) presently advance himself into the middle of the *Pit*, where having made his Honor to the rest of the Company, but especially to the Vizard-Masks, let him pull out his Comb, and manage his flaxen Wig with all the Grace he can. Having done so, the next step is to give a hum to the *China-Orange-wench*, and give her her own rate for her Oranges . . . and then to present the fairest to the next

¹⁶⁴ III, ii, in *Plays*, p. 289. The same sentiments are also expressed by Wildblood in Settle's *The World in the Moon* (1697), I, i.

Vizard-mask.¹⁶⁵

A good proportion of *The Character of a Town-Gallant* is devoted to a description of the Gallant's playhouse behaviour, in terms remarkably similar to those used by Vincent:

. . . the Coach is call'd to hurry him to the *Play-house*, where he advances into the middle of *the Pit*, struts about a while to render his good parts Conspicuous, pulls out his Comb, Carreens *his Wigg*, Hums *the Orange-Wench*, to give her, her own rates for her *China-fruit*, and immediately *Sacrifices* the fairest of them, to the shrine of the next *Vizor Mask*.¹⁶⁶

Yet another account of this behaviour appears in *Proteus Redivivus*, as the character of a Town Shift. Again, the indebtedness is obvious:

. . . having trim'd his Wigg and careen'd his Breeches, he cruseth to and fro the Pit, (not minding the Players . . .) and is never at quiet till he hath made prize of some or other . . .¹⁶⁷

The self-dramatising figure became a commonplace of Restoration dramatic comment, identifying at a stroke both the strong performance component in the spectators' behaviour and their need for recognition. They came, said Shadwell, "not to hear or see, but to be seen." Crowne complained that they attended, "not to see Plays, but act their own." Dryden developed a minor variation on this plaint: "These noisie Sirs so loud their Parts rehearse,/That oft the Play is silenc'd by the

¹⁶⁵ *The Young Gallant's Academy*, p. 56.

¹⁶⁶ *The Character of a Town-Gallant* (London: 1675), p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ *Proteus Redivivus* (London: 1675), p. 205.

¹⁶⁸ Shadwell, Epilogue to *The Squire of Alsatia* in *Works*, IV, ; Crowne, Epilogue to *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685); Dryden, Epilogue to the King and Queen, in Gardner, p. 132. See also Wycherley, Prologue to *The*

Farce."¹⁶⁸

All such characterisations of extravagant playhouse behaviour have common literary origins. Their immediate antecedent was Dekker's *The Gul's Horne-Booke*. Their original precursor was Ovid's *Artis Amatori*~~i~~, one pair of epigrammatic lines from which could serve to gloss the entire sub-genre:

To see, and to be seen, in Heaps they run;
Some to undo, and some to be undone.¹⁶⁹

So persistent an evocation of a literary figure has something more than mere truth to recommend it. The self-dramatising figure crystallised a set of attitudes and perceptions that playgoers held about themselves: it reminded them that they themselves existed in public only as observable phenomena, dramatisations of London.

When the self-dramatising figure was evoked in character and prologue, its very extravagance supplied those literary forms with the appropriate vitality. However, when translated onto the stage (as was inevitable in the case of so theatrical a character), the figure required some additions to fit it for the public company it would keep there. Where character writers achieved their effects by amassing detail and poets by making sly allusions, dramatists came to depend on surprise, novelty and above all, vigour, to astonish the spectators into accepting the exposure of their own theatricality. Laton, in *Sir Hercules Buffoon*, gives this account of the self-dramatising behaviour of a would-be wit in the playhouse:

Plain Dealer in *Plays*, p. 374; Behn, Epilogue to *The False Count* (1682).

¹⁶⁹ Ovid's *Art of Love*, in Dryden, *Works*, IV, 483, ll. 109-110.

. . . to be witty now, is to be more troublesome in a Playhouse, than a Butcher at a Beargarden: that's wit to tear womens cloaths and linnen off in the house, that's wit to see Plays for nothing, an Act in the Pit, another in a Box, a third in the gallery, that's wit.¹⁷⁰

Vigorous it may be, and effective, too, but somehow this image, like many others, shows too much of its creator's anger, and thereby draws more attention to those who so avidly sought notice. Occasionally, however, the character of an exhibitionist would so explode on the stage that even those who suffered the attack could not help but admire its pungent vigour. One such outburst in *The Virtuoso*, is a model of intensity and conciseness:

[They] come Drunk and Screaming into a Play-house, and stand upon the Benches, and toss their full Periwigs and empty Heads, and with their shrill unbroken Pipes, cry, *Dam-me, this is a Damn'd Play; Prethee, let's to a whore, Jack.*¹⁷¹

In a mere forty words Shadwell manages to refer to almost every catalogued vice of youth--drunkenness, rowdiness, self-display, foppery, folly, critical pretentiousness, profanity and lust--and so effectively that he redefined the model of exhibitionism: later writers turned to him rather than to Dekker as their immediate source.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ *Sir Hercules Buffoon* (1684), I, i.

¹⁷¹ *The Virtuoso*, in *Works*, I, i. Dryden, in "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," *Essays*, II, 137, makes the point that it is difficult to resent a well executed satire: "A witty man is tickled when he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not."

¹⁷² See Tom Brown, "The Play-House" in *Amusements Serious and Comical Calculated for the Meridian of London*, in *Works*, III, 34-39.

Within the ranks of self-dramatising spectators was one group which drew the poet's particular attention: the critics. Consider Tim, from Durfey's *The Fool Turn'd Critick*:

I went to see a Play, and sitting 'mongst the rest in the Wits Corner, I know not what, but somewhat I misliked, and raised a hiss, which presently was seconded by all the Wits: But to see the poor fellow the Poet, peep out between the Scenes, and shake his empty head, to see his Ten Months labour so rewarded . . .¹⁷³

The irony of the poet Durfey's creating a critic whom he imagines to enjoy damning poets is only surpassed by the fact that whatever authority the critic enjoys is derived finally from those he would destroy. The critic may have his power, but no more so than the poet who fashions that critic's image for the town's amusement.¹⁷⁴

Not all spectators were fascinated with their own performance. However, all of them carried a certain self-consciousness into the playhouse with them. To manage such self-absorbed audiences, dramatists developed a set of related strategies. They annihilated the distance between spectator and character by representing the effects of identifying with characters in plays. Loveless, in *The Relapse*, tells how making such an identification affected his "real" behaviour in the playhouse:

I happen'd in the Play to find my very Character, only with the Addition of a *Relapse*; which struck me so, I put a sudden stop to a most harmless Entertainment which till then

¹⁷³ *The Fool Turn'd Critick* (1678), III, ii.

¹⁷⁴ Young Maggot and Selfish in Shadwell's *A True Widow*, IV, in *Works*, III, 332-340, are two more fine examples of exhibitionists-as-critics. For an extended discussion of other on-stage representations of critics, see D. F. Smith, *The Critics in the Audience of the London Theatres* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1953).

diverted me between the Acts. 'Twas to admire the Workmanship of Nature, in the Face of a young Lady, that sat some distance from me, she was so exquisitely handsome.¹⁷⁵

Loveless's language betrays the naivety of certain audience assumptions about themselves, the entertainments they watched, and the relationship between the real and the feigned. He allows the pleasure of the play and the pleasure of the company to combine to form a stream of entertainment, still assuming he can identify "the Workmanship of Nature" and manage his reactions to it. However, the play he watched soon proves to be none other than the play he is in, the exquisitely handsome young lady, his wife's relation, Berinthia. In telling his story he represents himself--and by implication, the audience--as an unwitting imitator of dramatic action.

Tim, in *The Fool Turn'd Critic*, is anxious to avoid being confronted with an image of himself on stage, and damns poets to prevent the mischief, otherwise, "'tis ten to one within this twelve months, he would have writ a Play, and made a character of me"¹⁷⁶ Sparkish, in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, claims to have halted his social advancement in order to avoid being too closely associated with the stage's foolish creations:

Damn the Poets . . . they make a wise and witty Man in the World, a Fool upon the Stage . . . Their predecessors were contented to make Serving-men only their Stage-Fools, but these Rogues must have Gentlemen, with a Pox to 'em, nay Knights . . . they have kept me these six years from being a Knight in earnest, for fear of being knighted in a Play,

¹⁷⁵ *The Relapse*, II, in *Works*, ed Bonamy Dobree (London: Nonesuch, 1927), I, 33.

¹⁷⁶ *The Fool Turn'd Critick*, III, ii.

¹⁷⁷ III, ii, in *Plays*, p. 290:

and dubb'd a Fool.¹⁷⁷

Almost as they speak, all three characters alike are suffering the effect which, as spectators, they wish to avoid: that of having their behaviour predicated by the action of a play. Such identifications are but creations of the stage, to be sure. Yet they share a common purpose with the representations of playhouse exhibitionists: in both cases plays demonstrate members of the audience being governed by the playhouse and responding to theatrical conventions. The plays show control being wrested from the audience at the very moment when they think themselves most secure, when they think they have separated themselves from their own theatricality.

Theatricality lies in the connection between representation and observation, between a character and a spectator, a play and its audience. The strategies examined so far have dealt with these two poles. Yet their examination does not tell the whole story. It will not answer the question that any audience must ask of the performance it is witnessing: "What is it that is going on here?"¹⁷⁸ To answer this an observer must specify a frame, a means of organising and interpreting the human activity carried on before him. When that activity is the staged performance of a play the primary frame is specified by the playhouse. The physical playhouse, with its scenes and shutters, balconies, forestage and exits, allows the audience to say of the actions they observe, "This is not real," and, at the same time, "This is true to

¹⁷⁸ See Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (London: Harper and Row, 1972), esp. Ch. 5, "Rhetorical Conventions: Defining the Situation." Erving Goffman presents an extensive discussion of framing as a means of organising experience, in *Frame Analysis* (New York, NY: Harper, 1974).

life."

"Framing" was not a term used by those who wrote for and about the stage in the late seventeenth century. However, they dealt readily in its implications. Their arguments over the unities of drama show a fine understanding of how theatrical experience is organised within frames.¹⁷⁹ Their predecessors had appreciated that the frame of a play was no rigid thing: they had repeated, inverted and distorted the theatrical frame in their inductions and plays within plays. Dramatists of the Restoration continued to experiment. They explored new ways of adjusting the audience's reaction to the physical playhouse, the frame through which the audience organised and interpreted stage action.

The most common approach was to use the playhouses as emblems of London life. Playgoing was a London entertainment: the town and its people were represented onstage for their own amusement. Any catalogue of the resorts which defined town life gave the playhouse an obligatory mention amongst a selection which included Hyde Park, St. James's Park, Mulberry Garden, Spring Garden and several of the more fashionable churches.¹⁸⁰ The mere mention of pit, box or gallery in a play imported a host of attitudes and expectations about the organisation of an urban existence. So strongly were the playhouses associated with London that they often stood as its chief representative within a play, their men-

¹⁷⁹ See Farquhar, "A Discourse upon Comedy," II, 341: "The Poet does not impose Contradictions upon you, because he has told you no Lie; for that only is a Lie which is related with some fallacious Intention . . ." See also Dryden, "Of Dramatic Poesy: An Essay" and "A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," in *Essays*, I, 27-28, 63-64, 126-28; Howard, Preface to *Four New Plays (1665)* and *The Great Favourite (1668)*.

¹⁸⁰ See Wycherley, *Love in a Wood* I, i, in *Plays*, p. 12; Caryl, *Sir Salomon* (1671), II; Shadwell, *The Sullen Lovers*, V, in *Works*, I, 91; Payne, *The Morning Ramble* (1673), II, iii; Granville, *The She-Gallants (1696)*, I; Behn, *The Town-Fopp* (1677), I.

tion invoking all the entertainments and opportunities furnished by the town. "We will live constantly in Town," says Clarinda in *The Wary Widdow*, "and when our dear diversion the Play-Houses are shut up . . . we'll be down to *Tun-bridge* . . ." ¹⁸¹ Without its playhouses, London was habitable no longer. In those few plays that were set outside London the image of the playhouse stood as a reminder of the missing urban values. ¹⁸²

Playhouses signified, above all, a world of opportunities and entertainments, a public domain. *The Reformed Wife* illustrates nicely the dramatic ends they served. "You manage this Husband of yours very dextrously," is the opening line, addressed to Astrea. To demonstrate this she has Sir ~~Solomon~~ prevail upon her to go to the play by feigning / Samuel a reluctance to do so: "how happy he thinks himself in having perswaded her to do what he wou'd not have her do." ¹⁸³ By sending her to the playhouse, Sir Samuel forces upon her the freedom of the town. Characters within plays use the playhouses as points of reference in their descriptions of other characters' behaviour. In *The Mulberry Garden* young men mock the behaviour of citizen's wives in the playhouse. In *Greenwich Park*, Mrs Raison charges her grocer-husband with going to the playhouse drunk. ¹⁸⁴

So complete was the domination exercised by the playhouses over the images of London life that dramatists took to defining characters' urbanity in terms of their understanding of plays. . Sir Martin Mar-all

¹⁸¹ *The Wary Widdow*, II.

¹⁸² See Shadwell, *Bury Fair* and *Epsom-Wells*, in *Works* II, IV.

¹⁸³ William Burnaby, *The Reform'd Wife* (1700), I, i.

¹⁸⁴ See *The Mulberry Garden*, I, i; *Greenwich Park*, I, i.

attempts to show his modishness by offering opinions of plays, but destroys any credibility by attending with pleasure those he has recently disparaged.¹⁸⁵ Sir Credulous Easy, with perfect sincerity, likens himself to one of the foolish characters played by James Nokes.¹⁸⁶ Scruple, a non-conformist, fears that plays may take business away from churches, so effective are they at depressing vice and encouraging virtue.¹⁸⁷ Sir Courtly Nice will attend only tragedies, for comedies are "so ill-bred--and saucy with Quality, and always cram'd with our odious Sex--that have not always the most inviting smell . . . "¹⁸⁸ The measure of a man's civility, of his fitness for town and company, could be taken from his attitude to a play: Bayes' rule of thumb--"I know you have wit by the judgement you make of this Play; for that's the measure I go by: my Play is my Touch-stone"--has been elevated into a principle of characterisation.¹⁸⁹

Dramatists developed another set of techniques for adjusting the audience's reaction to theatrical framing conventions. They incorporated reports of playhouse behaviour into the action of the play. There is a large group of plays in which the action and its outcome depend upon a report of playhouse behaviour. In some the precondition of the entire plot is established in the pit and boxes. Dorimant, in *The Man of Mode*, espies Harriet in the playhouse. Loveless, in *The Relapse*,

¹⁸⁵ Dryden, *Sir Martin Mar-all*, in *Works*, III, i and III, iii.

¹⁸⁶ Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), IV, i. Sir Credulous' part was played of course by Nokes.

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, *The Cheats* (1664), I, v.

¹⁸⁸ Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685), V.

¹⁸⁹ *The Rehearsal*, III, i. C.f. Wycherley, Dedication to *The Plain-Dealer*, in *Plays*, p. 366.

sees Berinthia there. Other plays depend on playhouse conviviality to do their business. In *The Country-Wife*, Horner's condition is publicised in the playhouse and Margery Pinchwife's appetites whetted on her visits there. The forged letters which complicate--almost constitute--the plot of *She wou'd if she cou'd* are delivered by the Doorkeeper "at the latter end of a Play." In Dryden's *An Evening's Love*, Wildblood's reputation as an astrologer is established by the passing of a rumour amongst the audience. The playhouse is shown as a place where the audience (which is to say, those who perform in the play) meet, discuss matters and publicise their intentions.

Such easy references to playhouses and playhouse behaviour quite subvert the traditional dramatic relationship between actors and audience. The playhouses still function as frames, but the actions they bound are those of the audience, not the players. The plays are never mentioned; their audiences, however, are chief characters in the present piece.

The accuracy of these representations was confirmed by the behaviour of the spectators who carried on their business in the house. The interdependence of audience and play within the playhouse is complete: audience behaviour authenticates the plays; the plays, in turn, recognise the audience's actions as legitimate imitations of stage actions.

A third set of techniques for managing the audience's relation to the playhouse frame saw dramatists making the playhouses their subject, erecting them within plays. In the summer of 1663 Davenant's company produced *The Play-House to be Lett*. The piece is noteworthy for two reasons: the particularity of its references to the actual playhouse in

Lincolns-Inn-Fields, and for its incorporating that very playhouse *within the action of the play itself*. Davenant's characters--a Tire-woman, a Chair-woman, the House-keeper and a Player--describe their building as a "long tennis court", refer to its location in Portugal Row, and make mention of the other playhouses, the Red Bull and the new house in Vere Street. Davenant goes to some pains to assure his audience that the playhouse of the play is precisely that one in which they are now seated. The playhouse has become part of the action of the play.

When they discussed the matter of place, contemporary spectators usually distinguished between the real--that is the wooden playhouse and the bare boards of the stage--and the imaginary--the places represented there.¹⁹⁰ One function of a theatrical frame is to maintain this distinction and assure spectators that what they are witnessing is fictitious. By identifying the playhouse with great particularity and treating it as if it were empty of spectators (initially at least), Davenant is asking his audience to accept as imaginary the real building which surrounds them. He has called into doubt the status of the frame and as a consequence the way the audience's dramatic experience is organised. Moreover, he has confirmed what was implicit in the title of the play: that the playhouse is its subject.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Dryden, "Of Dramatic Poesy: An Essay," in *Essays*, I, 125.

¹⁹¹ Although the physical playhouse was often invoked in Elizabethan drama, the aims and effects were quite different. When Shakespeare makes metaphorical reference to playhouses--in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Henry IV, Part II* and *As You Like It*, for example--the physical playhouse he alludes to is supposed not to exist within the frame of the play. When a play occurs within a play, as in *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* or *The Spanish Tragedy*, the inner play is completely framed and again the playhouse remains outside the outer play. Jonson, too, in *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *The*

The Play-House to be Lett gave birth to two types of play in which playhouses were represented. In the first the playhouse is shown under rehearsal conditions; the audience must imagine themselves absent from the real playhouse and allow it to be part of the imaginary--framed--scene. The resulting ambiguity about the status of play, playhouse and audience is used to support criticism of the type of play being rehearsed. Because the frame is disturbed, generic distinctions cannot be maintained. The resulting superimposition of comic values onto tragic methods makes for most succinct and effective ridicule. Prince Volscius in *The Rehearsal*, the definitive example of this kind of play, epitomises the method used when he appears with one boot on and one off.¹⁹² Half sock and half buskin, he is entirely ridiculous, a creature who cannot be assimilated into any well-framed theatrical experience.

Buckingham's methods were taken up and refined in later examples of the rehearsal-play, which each devise a means of further fracturing the frame that so neatly distinguishes between the real and the imaginary. In *The World in the Moon*, Joe Haines, who enters the piece playing himself, discusses the origins and workings of the machinery in the opera that is shown under rehearsal. In *The Female Wits*, several actors appear to discuss and perform their parts, carrying with them onto the

Staple of News and *The Magnetic Lady*, frames the plays completely and makes the playhouse, complete with its audience, frame the inductions. Even in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, where three citizens arise from within the real audience, the play that they watch is still completely within its own frame. *The Play-House to be Lett*, however, requires the audience to say that the playhouse both is and is not real and that they are and are not present *at the same time*. The nearest antecedents to Davenant's play did not come from the public playhouses, but were performed at court. See *Christmas His Masque* and *For the Honour of Wales*.

¹⁹² *The Rehearsal*, III, v.

stage evidence of their well-known off-stage behaviour or their other roles.¹⁹³ The already-powerful effects of burlesque are enhanced in these frame-breaking plays because the audience has no secure place in which to sit splendidly in judgement. If even the actors and the playhouse are become creations of the poet, where is an unrepresented audience to find itself?

A second group of plays represents the actual playhouse on-stage, but the focus of their attention is on the audience within the playhouse and not the play. It is as if *Hamlet's* "Mousetrap" has turned comic, its object to undermine the conditions under which it is performed, not to catch the consciences of the characters who watch it. In Act IV of Shadwell's *A True Widow*--"Scene . . . *The Playhouse*"--the characters meet to pursue their several intrigues under cover of watching a play. The entertainment performed before them is fragmentary and by turns romantic and farcical, the little action it pretends to is a parody of Dufey's *The Fond Husband*. The dumbfoundings, disguisings and quarrels it crams into its little length are in turn repeated by the on-stage audience who do not attend to the performance. To the question normally resolved by the frame of a play--"What is it that is going on here?"--Shadwell admits of only one reply: "If you would know, look around."

Southerne's *The Wive's Excuse* takes playhouse representation one stage further: it dispenses with both playhouse and performance altogether. Its opening scene is "*The Outward Room to the Musick Meeting*". The footmen waiting for the concert to end give the several characters of those we are about to see, and two pages imitate the mannerisms of

¹⁹³ George Powell's drinking is alluded to (I, ii) and Mrs Knight's performance as Statira (II, i).

their masters and mistresses to the amusement of the company of servants. They reduce the absent concert audience (and by implication, the real one) to mere ciphers, *Dramatis Personae*, displayed by and for the entertainment of their own inferiors. The implication is that if audience watching is what goes on in the playhouse, then let audiences dwindle thus and disappear with their entertainments, sharing the stage's fate.

Where Shadwell destroyed the frame by interweaving audience and action within the play and Southerne reduced the audience to a set of characters, Dennis's *A Plot and no Plot* completed the attack on the audience. In Dennis' play the imaginary invades the real: actors and audience alike are engrossed by the characters the dramatist has created. Baldernoe, Dennis's *Deus ex Machina*, is a player in disguise returned to his natural habitat to pursue his intrigues. His attitudes and behaviour are uncommonly like those of Joe Haines, yet that actor appeared to speak the prologue where he complained:

Sirs, the Impudent Author of this day,
Has put my Sacred person in his Play.
.
.
.
Now, Sirs, to treat me still a scurvier Way
This part they've got one *Penkethmento* play.

Su Frowzy, an actress and a bawd, enters the playhouse to greetings and recognition--*from the auditorium*:

One from the Side-Box. Look yonder is *Frowzy* arriv'd piping hot from *Flanders*.
Another from the Side-Box. *Frowzy* upon my Life! Was there ever such an impudent Bawd?

While the playhouse creature pays her respects --"*Bowing to several in the Pit*"--her daughter, Friskit (played by Bullock), engages in conversation with a very young Beau, who is at a loss to determine what she can be:

She talks too well for a common Punk, and too leudly for a Woman of Honour. Ten to one some Actress who is rehearsing her part with me.

Well might the audience, too, wonder what to make of her there--and, for that matter, of themselves when they enter that same auditorium.

In these few plays dramatists exercise full dominion over the audience, defining them as creatures of the playhouse, whether they will it or no. The dramatists have shown the audience how its representatives unwittingly ape the action of plays, and in their turn are aped and even supplanted in the auditorium by mere characters. They have allowed no difference between them and their imitators, between them and the imaginary world of the playhouse.

In this chapter we have examined theatricality in the playhouses and on the streets of Restoration London. We have seen how principles derived from stage action became applied to street life, and how those principles were reflected upon the audiences in the playhouses. Perhaps the best description of what had happened comes not from contemporary accounts, however, but from a great eighteenth century observer of the stage, Henry Fielding:

The World hath often been compared to the Theatre; and many grave Writers, as well as the Poets, have considered human Life as a great Drama, resembling, in almost every particular, those scenical Representations . . .

This Thought hath been carried so far, and is become so general, that some Words proper to the Theatre, and which were, at first, metaphorically applied to the World, are now indiscriminately and literally spoken of both: Thus Stage and Scene are by common Use grown as familiar to us, when we speak of Life in general, as when we confine ourselves to dramatic Performances; and when Transactions behind the Curtain are mentioned, *St James's* is more likely to occur to our Thoughts than *Drury Lane*.¹⁹⁴

Fielding then extends the application of his comparison:

In all these, however, and in every other Similitude of Life to the Theatre, the Resemblance hath always ben taken from the Stage only. None, as I remember, have at all considered the Audience at this great Drama.

But as Nature often exhibits some of her best Performances to a very full House; so will the Behaviour of her Spectators no less admit the above-mentioned Comparison than that of her Actors.¹⁹⁵

Although it was not original, Fielding's analysis is perceptive. For almost a century the theatrical metaphor had been attached not only to behaviour but to the perception of that behaviour. The theatrical metaphor was built around the interplay of audience and action. The close relationship between stage and street had become one of the cornerstones of Restoration dramatic practice. Those who observed social behaviour noted its theatrical qualities. Yet those qualities were not inherent in social behaviour: they arose from the way people perceived and described that behaviour in theatrical terms. The affinities we have noted between stage and street were those constructed by, and in the presence of an audience, one for whom the playhouse was part of the public domain.

¹⁹⁴ *The History of Tom Jones a Foundling*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), I, 323.

¹⁹⁵ *Tom Jones*, II, 325.

Chapter V

DRESS, COSTUME AND THE PLAY OF FASHION

5.1 Dressing in Public

The mirror of Restoration theatre shows two faces. On one side it typifies the relationship between art and nature, the stage and its audience, in neo-classical theory. Against this worthy and public aspect of the mirror we must place that more individual use to which it was put when it appeared as a piece of property on the stage. Then it paid tribute to the surface of things: the solid flesh celebrated in the hooded eyes, plump cheeks and double chins of Lely's portraits.¹ The looking glass offers to the contemplating eye a continuous image of an indolent present, the "perpetual Stream of Pleasure, that glides thro' such a Variety of Entertainments."² Its moment-by-moment re-creation of the ephemeral presents to the private individual the image that will be received in public. Or rather, the version that he or she has created and adorned. The mirror, like the playhouse, fosters a self-awareness. Yet it is an awareness not of any essential self, but of the outer form,

¹ For a discussion of contemporary portraiture, see David Piper, *The English Face* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953), Ch. 5, "Restoration Baroque."

² Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*, II, i, in *Works* I, 37.

³ The relationship between the production of mirrors and the development of a sense of personal identity is discussed by Jaques Lacan in "Le stade du miroir comme formateur du Je, telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychoanalytique," *Revue Française de Psychoanalyse*, 13 (1949), 449-55.

the dress that self displays.³ In the audience or before the mirror, *homo habilis* is both actor and onlooker, performing and admiring his protean shapes.

The display of dress took on a particular fervour in London and its playhouses after the Restoration--so great as to alter, quite, its implications. Clothes had long been indicators of sex, rank, office, occupation, age and even affection in England, as in all western societies. In a highly stratified society the relationship between dress and status was a conservative one, only mildly threatened by increasing social mobility. The sumptuary proclamations issued by the Crown, from time to time, represented an attempt to codify the relationship between dress and standing and to ensure that privileges of class were advertised by corresponding privileges in choice of dress. Their issuance shows that certain distinctions, both real and apparent, could be indicated by dress, and that the authorities thought it both desirable and practicable to control their expression. At court Elizabeth established an elaborate symbolism in apparel that allowed her courtiers to express particular affiliations through the colours and devices on the clothes they wore. This was rather a restricted form of expressive dressing, however. It presented well-defined signs to the notice of a limited audience. No matter how varied courtiers' clothing was, it was not fashionable. The dress of rank and the dress of courtly expression were stable despite any changes in the fashion of clothing. They responded to the hints and directions of superior authority, namely the Queen's pleasure, and made only those assertions about the wearer's rank or affection which could be verified by other means.⁴

⁴ Elizabeth I's 1579 Proclamation makes provision that those who

Although James repealed the sumptuary laws, the idea of a due correlation between degree and dress persisted throughout the reigns of the early Stuarts. Peacham comments on the absurdity of painters who did not observe "a decorum in garments proper to every several condition and calling."⁵ On Charles II's accession his former Governor, Newcastle, advised him to re-establish this correlation as a means of settling the social disorder caused by the Interregnum:

Soe to make noe Difference between Great Ladies and Citizen's Wives in Apparel is abominable . . . for certainly Degrees of Apparel to several Conditions and Callings is of great Importance to the Peace of the Kingdom, for when lower Degrees strives to outbrave higher Degrees, it breeds Envy in the Better Sort, and Pride in the Meaner Sort, and a Contempt by the Vulgar of the Nobility, which breeds Faction and Disorder, which are the Causes of a Civil Warre . . .⁶

Somehow the relationship between dress and standing had been reversed: clothing, once a social sign, was now an agent, possessed of an independent power to maintain or disturb the proper ordering of society. Much of this power derives from a force which Newcastle does not mention (indeed, it is inimical to his ends), that constant shifting in styles of clothing which we know as fashion.

"percase shalbe founde in outwarde apparance more sumptuous in their apparell, than by common intendement the value of their goods or possessions may warrant" shall be seized and required to "make good prooffe that they can dispende so much in lande and fees, or to be so much worth in goodes, as by the laws they be thereby warranted to weare such apparell."-- *A Sumptuary Proclamation*, in *Illustrations of the Manners and Expences of Antient Times in England in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, (London: 1797), pp. 3, 4.

⁵ *The Compleat Gentleman*, 3rd. Imp. (London: 1661), p. 354.

⁶ William, Duke of Newcastle, Bodleian Clarendon MS. 109, f. 54.

While we may properly speak of fashions in clothing during the earlier part of the century, we are referring to changes in contemporary style which affected only a limited section of the population. The term, "fashion", was associated more with notions of design and manufacture than with widespread imitation of the styles of dress worn by members of the ruling class. The imitation of fashions operated within social groupings, but seldom between them.⁷ Thus fashion lacked the great power over the population at large which it later came to exercise, power which would cause Evelyn to designate it *Tyrannus or The Mode*.⁸ This power consisted in its ability to recommend an individual by dress, without other evidence of worth. Sprat sensed the operation of such a power, and the breadth of its social base when he used its workings as an image to account for the growth of interest in natural philosophy:

For now *Philosophy* being admitted into our *Exchange*, our *Church*, our *Palaces*, and our *Court*, has begun to keep the best Company, to refine its fashion and appearance, and to become the Employment of the *Rich*, and the *Great*, instead of being the subject of their scorn: Whereas it was of old for the most part only the Study of the *Sullen*, and the poor, who thought it the gravest part of *Science* to condemn the use of mankind, and to differ in *habit* and *manner* from all others ⁹

⁷ See René König, *The Restless Image: A Sociology of Fashion*, trans. F. Bradley (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 99 ff. Even distinctions in dress between cavaliers and puritans occurred along status rather than religious lines--see Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 62-63.

⁸ (London: 1661).

⁹ *The History of the Royal Society* (London: 1667), pp. 403-04.

Sprat's use of "fashion" shows how the term moved from its original association with ideas of design and manufacture. It now meant simply whatever contemporary usage was most admired and imitated. By the end of the century the word had achieved independence from its attachment to rank. Fashionable behaviour and dress was simply the behaviour and dress of people of fashion. The tautology is proof of fashion's power--like some deity it could proclaim: "I am that I am."

Changes in the implications of fashion were brought about by developments in two areas. The first involved changes in the price and availability of materials and techniques of manufacture. The East India Company introduced light, cheap and attractive muslins and calicoes into England. What began as a small importation of cotton for suit linings grew rapidly as English artisans taught their patterns to Indians, so that soon the home market became flooded, to the great distress of local manufacturers.¹⁰ Indian materials dressed all ranks in society: ". . . from the greatest Gallants to the meanest Cook-Maids, nothing was thought fit, to adorn their persons, as the Fabricks of India."¹¹

Refinements were introduced, too, in the area of manufacturing. New stocking frames produced good quality hose more cheaply than before and iron needles aided in the sewing of clothes.¹² The introduction of the tape measure in the middle of the century helped standardise tailor-

¹⁰ For the reactions of contemporary economists to changes in fashion, see Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, pp. 166-67.

¹¹ John Pollfexen, *A Discourse of Trade, Coyne, and Paper Credit* (London: 1697), p. 99.

¹² Sylvia Groves, *A History of Needlework Tools and Accessories*, 2nd ed. (Devon: Hamlyn, 1972), pp. 19-23, 42-43.

¹³ *A History of Needlework Tools and Accessories*, pp. 41-42. See also C. Willet and Phyllis Cunnington *Handbook of English Costume in the*

ing.¹³ Customers now insisted that tailors take accurate measurements. Cut, as well as cloth, became a mark of distinction in dress, permitting refinements in the means whereby extravagance and novelty were displayed. Changes in fashion could now be effected by slight alterations in measurements: being in or out of fashion was a matter of the length of one's cuff or, as Lord Foppington nicely demonstrates, the height of one's pocket.¹⁴ For all the attention fashion received, it was in many ways enormously stable in the century that followed the Restoration. Thanks to the variety and abundance of fabrics, the mechanisation of manufacture and the readiness with which minor variations of design could be duplicated, all its changes were wrought within the compass of a relatively constant design.¹⁵

Changes in the implications of fashion were brought about too by changes in the way English men and women organised their public and private lives. Despite the obvious French influences, the centre of English fashion was not Versailles, but London, and not Whitehall, but "the Town".¹⁶ The town attained this position through the development of the London season as a time when members of the upper echelons of society observed and emulated each other's dress. Yet the fashions adopted by the town were of interest to more than that restricted group: something in the size and composition of London allowed for their wider

Seventeenth Century (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 12.

¹⁴ Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*, I, iii, in *Works*, I, 26.

¹⁵ See James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), p. 183.

¹⁶ The only fashion that originated at court was the vest Charles introduced. Evelyn's *Tyrannus* was a plea to Charles to remove fashion from foreign domination.

impact. The massive increases in London's population--from 60,000 in 1550 to over 500,000 by 1700--were due to a continuous influx of residents from the countryside: by the end of the century some 8,000 souls arrived each year to settle in the capital. Many of them remained rootless transients, but for those with any skills to offer, London was a place of opportunity, promising higher wages and professional and social advancement.¹⁷

As London grew, so its occupants became increasingly anonymous, yet competitively so. Those who sought positions and power found that advancement depended upon their being recognised and distinguished from the mass. The most striking characteristic of the capital's large population was the frequency with which all ranks mingled together in its public places. London's members were, in another coining of the period, "cosmopolites"; that is, they dwelt amongst strangers and expected the unfamiliar. In such a milieu success depended upon one's capacities being readily identifiable; and before talents could be recognised, an individual had to be identifiable. For the professional groups--merchants, bankers, lawyers, clergymen and officials--who were as well qualified in wealth, education and demonstrable ability as any gentleman of acres, attention to dress and to the externals of behaviour provided a means of achieving the desired recognition.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Peter Laslett, "The Pattern of Authority and Our Political Heritage," *The World we have Lost*, pp. 179-213; Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England," pp. 30-33; Alan Everitt, "Social Mobility in Early Modern England," pp. 67-72; E. A. Wrigley, "A Simple Model of London's Importance," pp. 44-70.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the importance of controlling the way one appeared in public, see Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 1-88. See also Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang, "Fashion, Identification and Differentiation in the Mass Society," in *Dress, Adornment and the Social Order*, ed. Mary Ellen

The changes in the shape of public life were matched by an enlargement of the private lives of men and women throughout society. The rise in the number of people who kept diaries marks the emergence of an interest in observing one's own activities, not for any moral or practical purpose, nor for the bearing they might have upon weighty affairs, but simply as the sum of the private events and reflections of which an individual life is composed.¹⁹ The demand for personal portraits increased as the sitters came to include not only the wealthier gentry, but those beneath them who wished to preserve an image of themselves in their fashionable finery.²⁰ Private purposes appeared, too, in funerary monuments, which became memorials to the individual entombed there instead of permanent acknowledgements of the family into which he or she had been born.²¹

The distinction between public and private life became more marked. New and firmer distinctions appeared between areas of public and private endeavour, together with modes of dress and behaviour suited to each. Houses at all levels of society contained more rooms, and smaller; glass in the windows, coal in the grate and individual chairs instead of shared benches allowed a life indoors to be conducted in seclusion and

Roach and Joanne Bubolz Eicher, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 332-46.

¹⁹ Another manifestation of this phenomenon is discussed by Paul Delaney in, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1969). See also David Riesman and Roelle Denny, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 44-45.

²⁰ *The English Face*, p. 130; Diana De Marly, "The Establishment of Roman Dress in Seventeenth Century Portraiture," *Burlington Magazine*, 117 (1975), 450.

²¹ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 225 and Ch. 6, "The Growth of Affective Individualism."

comfort.²² The human body and its functions were withdrawn from the notice of others, as fork and handkerchief arrived simultaneously and clean dishes and fresh linen became matters of importance.²³ The separation of indoors from out was marked by the appearance of dress, or "undress" designed for indoor life. The women's garments were loose, but decent. They were entirely suited to private occasions. If worn in public, however, they attracted notice, as we see from Pepys: ". . . there took up my wife and Deb and to the parke; where being in a Hackny and they undressed, I was ashamed to go into the Tour, but went round the park . . ." (*Diary*, 31 March, 1668.)

The distinction which underlies Pepys' embarrassment was a geographical one: some places were more public than others. From this distinction it followed that certain forms of dress and behaviour, which were allowable in private, might be inappropriate in the public domain. The separation of the two domains was most noticeable in London, where the cosmopolites found ever-increasing opportunities to enjoy themselves in public. The parks, the legacy of the early Stuarts, became popular during the Interregnum; on Charles' return Hyde Park and St James's Park, the Spring and Mulberry Gardens, each in their seasonable hour, were frequented by people of fashion.²⁴ People there behaved with studied informality. The deference due to rank, even that due to Royalty, was first acknowledged, then put by:

²² Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714*, (London: Cardinal, 1974), p. 220; Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 253-56.

²³ Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: The History of Manners* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 105-160.

²⁴ John Evelyn, *A Character of England*, (London: 1659).

. . . at the first meeting, and no more, all persons shew the usual marks of respect [to the royal couples], which are afterwards omitted . . . every one being at full liberty, and under no restraint whatever . . .²⁵

Relaxing the distinctions of rank encouraged a fluidity of movement and made it possible for a visitor to meet and to be recognised by a greater number of people than otherwise. Encounters were thus spontaneous, familiar and often brief.²⁶ In his progress through a park, a man would find a wide and ever changing audience, for each member of which he held in readiness a public version of himself. Still more opportunities for display were provided by innovations in Restoration urban design. As footpaths appeared, walking in the streets became less hazardous and could be undertaken for pleasure, particularly in the new suburbs in the west, where the erection of houses in squares created further areas of public space.²⁷

Similar public areas were to be found in the galleries of the New Exchange and the box lobbies of the new playhouses. John Dunton conveys an impression of the sequence of encounter, identification and movement that was characteristic of behaviour in public:

. . . next to the PLAY-HOUSE, which is the *Rendezvouze* of all Extravagance . . . coming too soon for the PLAY, we took a Turn in the Lobby, where a *Black Devil, in a Mask* brushed by, with some assurance. The *moving Engine* look'd very big upon her own Dimensions, which were something mountainous; her Shadow swept before her, like a *Link Boy* we saw 'twas no talking with such a *Body of Sin*, so we made up to the

²⁵ Magalotti, *The Travels of Cosmo the Third*, (London: 1821), p. 174.

²⁶ See Pepys, *Diary*, 16 March, 1662; 7 May, 1662; 18 April, 1664.

²⁷ *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 52-56; J. R. Jones, Introduction, *The Restored Monarchy 1660-1688*, ed. J. R. Jones (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 25.

Pit, where, in a Corner, we found a *Knot of Quality* . . .²⁸

Public encounters of this type involve one man's appearing not in front of a multitude of people, but before a number of people in turn, people whom he recognises and who recognise him as an individual. There needed to be no continuity between the public and the private versions of the self so people published abroad not mere tokens of some inner self, but extravagant public guises. Patches were worn in greater profusion than before and, "the women began to paint themselves, formerly a most ignominious thing and only used by prostitutes."²⁹ Like the other additions to the Restoration body--wigs, masks and over-elaborate hairstyles--such aids to beauty did not imitate or enhance nature, they maintained a continuous tension between concealment and display. They were marks of membership in a civil society, designed to ensure that others identified the wearer's status correctly. These outward signs were capable of elaborate refinement. Curls, for example, were variously *meurtrieres*, *creve-coeurs*, *confidants* and *bergers*. A woman's hairstyle was a declaration of the character she affected, a set of signs whereby those who passed her by could understand the persona she had adopted that morning at her *levée*.³⁰

²⁸ *The Life and Errors*, pp. 271-2.

²⁹ Evelyn, *Diary*, May, 1654--the claim is somewhat exaggerated. See also Pepys *Diary*, 3 August, 1660.

³⁰ The names and implications of some contemporary hair fashions can be found in Mary Evelyn, *Mundus Muliebris; or the Ladies Dressing-Room Unlock'd, and her Toilette Spread* . . . Together with the *Fop Dictionary* (London: 1690), and John Dunton, *The Ladies Dictionary* (London: 1694).

Fashion does not consist merely in changing styles of dress. For mere dress to qualify as fashion, three conditions need to be met. First, there must be some means of quickly effecting significant changes in styles of dress. Second there must be places where new styles of dress can be publicly displayed. The creation and display of new styles constitute the basis of fashion. The third condition, however, supplies the motive force and is, above all, the essence of fashion: those who are foremost in introducing and following changes in dress must gain some advantage from doing so. The advantage they gain is the energizing force that maintains fashion in a state of perpetual self-transformation. Late seventeenth century London fulfilled all three conditions. The town supplied the merchandise and manufacturing techniques to effect the changes. It also supplied a number of public places, where people's efforts would be noticed. Because patterns of interaction in public places were typically fleeting and relatively anonymous, men and women were identified through the dress they wore and were respected in accordance with its modernity. Advantage accrued to the fashionable. *W/S*

Consider the reactions of Elizabeth Pepys as she sat one afternoon to watch a recent play. Her husband wrote:

Here I saw my Lord Falconbridge and his Lady, my Lady Mary Cromwell, who looks as well as I have known her and well clad; but when the House begun to fill, she put on her vizard and so kept it on all the play--which is of late become a great fashion among the ladies . . . (*Diary*, 12 June, 1663.)

From the playhouse she and her husband, Samuel, went to the New Exchange, where they bought, "among others, a vizard for herself . . . "

Elizabeth Pepys' reaction is typical of fashionable behaviour. Mary Cromwell was a gentlewoman who had married a Viscount. By emulating her dress Elizabeth was claiming to be her equal, if not in status, then in appearance. And in public it was appearance, the outward expression of one's self, that mattered. The motive power of fashion then depended entirely upon this process of competitive emulation of one class by another.³¹

The power of fashion was felt throughout the nation. It forced contemporary theorists to reconstruct their models of England's economic organisation:

. . . [Writers] explored the role of demand, the importance of consumption and the economic stimulus of individual initiative. They saw England not as a giant workhouse but rather as a giant market whose individual members had differing needs. . . . When the maverick spirit of fashion revealed itself in the craze over printed calicoes the potential market of previously unfelt wants came clearly into view. Here was a revolutionary force. Under the sway of new tastes, people had spent more, and in spending more the elasticity of demand had become apparent. In this elasticity, the defenders of domestic spending discovered the propulsive power of envy, emulation, love of luxury, vanity, and vaulting ambition.³²

Competition in fashion is most intense where groups of comparable wealth and standing strive to assert and retain the very real rewards of recognition against a background of lesser imitators. In the seventeenth century the arena where this competition took place was the town. The shifting of fashion's centre from the court to the town was accompa-

³¹ For an account of the mechanisms by which fashion operates, see Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), esp. Ch. 5, "The Mechanism of Fashion." Bell's account is based on Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Classes*.

³² Appleby, pp. 168-69.

nied by an increase in the number of people who were affected by it. Gregory King, the pioneer demographer, could not be considered a man of fashion, yet from his family expenses we can see how much he needed to spend to maintain even a reasonable appearance in London. Of a total annual expenditure of £152, £34 was spent on clothing for a household of five--more than half the amount that was spent on food. Clothing for the three servants alone cost £14--only £1 less than the total of wages paid them--and of this £8 was spent on the clerk, who would have appeared most in public with King. High as such an outlay was, it would have allowed for but a modest display in dress: after the necessities had been purchased little would have remained for the extravagance of wig, cravat, mantle and gloves.³³

It was extravagant expenditure--beyond the dictates of necessity² / ⑧ and propriety--which brought the greatest social return to those who invested in fashion. Wycherley's Lucy Crossbite expresses her gratitude to Dapperwit as, "the man that gave me my first Farrenden Gown, put me out of Worsted Stockings, and plain Handkerchiefs, taught me to dress, talk, and move well . . ."³⁴

Lucy Crossbite is acknowledging the part that fashion played in effecting transformations at all levels of society. The great divide over which fashion promised to carry those of its adherents who, like Lucy, strove to recognise its signs, was that between the commonality and the gentry.³⁵ Before 1640 entry into this elite was gained either by marriage or the purchase of land. After 1640 the land market, which had

³³ For sample prices see *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 28, 148, 390, 460.

³⁴ *Love in a Wood, or, St James's Park*, III, i, in *Works*, p. 56.

³⁵ Laslett, *The World we have Lost*, pp. 23-43.

been extremely vigorous in the previous hundred years, became much less active. The closing up of this traditional means of social advancement coincided with the increase in numbers and wealth of professional, mercantile and administrative groups.³⁶ Although political power and land tenure remained the preserve of the gentry, there were many others who could match them in wealth and size of household, as Gregory King's 1688 estimates show.³⁷ This landless elite, who together with the gentry's younger sons, the scions of decayed estates, clergymen and heirs to city fortunes, made up the middle sort of men, were concentrated in urban areas. They asserted their status by a display of extravagance, particularly in matters of dress, in order to claim that recognition as gentlemen, to which others were entitled by birth.³⁸

The growth of this group coincided with the establishment of a new set of criteria for determining social worth, criteria based on behaviour and consumption. The position a man or woman held was no longer established by property and title; instead status was evaluated according to what people chose to do with their money and time. So powerful was fashion as a confirmation of worth that even those whose status was well assured felt unsure about challenging it. "I beg that I may have a tipit bought me," wrote Molly Verney to her grandfather Sir Ralph, "since every gentellwoman has one as makes any show in the world, it will cost £5 at least . . ."³⁹ The implied competition in the display

³⁶ Stone, "Social Mobility in England," pp. 53-54.

³⁷ *The Earliest Classics*, p. 48.

³⁸ Stone, "Social Mobility in England," p. 54; Alan Everitt, "Social Mobility in Early Modern England," pp. 71-73.

³⁹ *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 460.

of wealth through clothing shows what changes had occurred to principles of social ordering. The shift was not in the articles of dress, but in their implications: where once position had been reflected in external appearance, now external appearance was sufficient to determine a person's position.

The shift was not immediate, and it occurred in manners and conversation as well as dress. But it was in dress that it was most clearly apparent, so that by the end of the century it was possible for Swift to claim that men and women wore fashionable dress as a means of creating their public selves:

. . . what is Man himself but a *Micro-coat*, or rather a complete Suit of Cloaths with all its Trimmings? As to his Body, there can be no dispute; but examine even the Acquirements of his Mind, you will find them all contribute in their Order, towards furnishing out an exact Dress . . .
 .⁴⁰

Swift inverts those *topoi* which depend upon the idea of an integrated self, where the outward reflects the inward man, and demonstrates that human nature is a patchwork, a piecing together of whatever is modish and expedient.

To instance no more; Is not Religion a *Cloak*; Honesty a *Pair of Shoes*, worn out in the Dirt, Self-love a *Surtut*, Vanity a *Shirt*, and Conscience a *Pair of Breeches*, which, tho' a Cover for Lewdness as well as Nastiness, is easily slipt down for the Service of both.

This description of human nature is more than a cleverly extended metaphor: it gives *A Tale of a Tub* its bite and underpins much of its attack. In an elegant *reductio ad absurdum* Swift explores the conse-

⁴⁰ *A Tale of a Tub*, in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957-68), I, 47.

quences of the change that had taken place in the social significance of clothing: "That the Soul was the outward and the Body the inward Cloathing; that the latter was *ex traduce* but the former of daily Creation and Circumfusion. This last they proved by *Scripture*, because, *in them we Live, and Move, and have our Being . . .*" Dress now was the real essence of a man.⁴¹

People began to understand fashion in new ways. Fashion in dress, hitherto a conformity to contemporary styles, acquired a potential as well as a past history, as changes in fashion became anticipated. Portraits were painted with the sitters in classical dress, to forestall their becoming outdated with changes in fashion.⁴² The future tense became important in discussion of what clothes to buy as men and women considered what "most people will wear."⁴³ Implicit in this commitment to the future, and to continual change, is the idea that fashion has a life of its own, beyond individual control. Fashion distinguishes those who adhere to its latest dictates and transfers to them some of its power to attract further emulation.

Men and women of conservative views resisted the persuasive powers of fashion, though they tacitly acknowledged its force. Edmund Verney wrote to his son at Oxford:

. . . halfe mourning Sutes are as much worn, and are as modish as any Thing out of mourning: I see no Body weare rich Sutes but Souldiers and mercantile ffellows that covet to appeare very Brave and Gentlemen Like, when They are not

⁴¹ *A Tale of a Tub*, p. 47.

⁴² Diana de Marly, "The Establishment of Roman Dress in Seventeenth Century Portraiture," *Burlington Magazine*, 117 (1975), 443-51.

⁴³ *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 406.

soe . . .⁴⁴

Edmund Verney 's letter shows how strongly the principles of fashion had become embedded in the thinking of even the most conservative of people. In his sober way he exhibits the two prime attributes of fashionable man: a shrewd appreciation of what other people are wearing and a competitive urge that seeks distinction--even if it means dressing down.

The rapidity with which styles and fabrics were adopted and discarded, the increased emphasis placed on accessories and the large number of foreign designs imported and anglicised all combined to make the vocabulary of fashion rich, precise and mutable. Knowledge of this vocabulary served as another means of distinguishing the fashionable elect from the pretorite. Pepys, before sighting his first vest, was already acquainted with the term: "It will be a vest," he writes excitedly, "I know not well how." (*Diary*, 8 October, 1666.) The heavy importation of French words and phrases which dealt with dress demonstrates the rate by which the development and impact of fashion outstripped the natural growth of the language. This was recorded with mock-solemnity in satirical dictionaries of fashion, like *The Fop Dictionary*, which attacked excesses not only in dress, but in language too.⁴⁵ Foreign and fanciful words were given plain Anglo-Saxon definitions, by this simple and honest corrective showing how "the World is alter'd among us, since Foreign Manners . . . [began] corrupting ancient

⁴⁴ *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 407.

⁴⁵ *Mundus Muliebris* (London: 1690); *Mundus Foppensis or the Fop Display'd . . . Together with a short supplement to the Fop-Dictionary* (London: 1691); *The Ladies Dictionary* (London: 1694).

⁴⁶ *The Fop Dictionary*, A4r.

simplicity . . .⁴⁶ The satirical attempts to catalogue things ever-changing exhibit certain common attitudes. They all assume that the falling off from ancient virtue is attributable in part to a reliance on foreign modes. They further imply that corruption of the language derives from the mistaken belief that "Gay Cloaths require Gay words."⁴⁷ The satirists are disturbed both by the threat posed to language, the common tie of society, and the creation of a new world out of stuffs and sounds: the world of fashion.

Fashion operates by innovation followed by imitation; it changes as those who follow fashion encroach upon the distinctiveness of those who create it. The fashionable world is an ever-expanding one, in which constant change is the only safeguard of continued exclusivity. In the character of Melantha, in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, Dryden offers a fine portrayal of fashion's operation and its excesses. Melantha has distilled fashion until its essence lies not in her dress, but in the patches of French with which she adorns her speech. Indeed, she is so fond of these borrowings as to exclaim, with fashionable exaggeration: "Let me die but I could give away all my Wardrobe, and go naked for 'em."⁴⁸ Her reputation is maintained only by what is new, and she is nicely conscious of the opprobrium that attaches to an outdated usage:

"Let me die, if I have not run the *risque* already, to speak like one of the vulgar; and if I have one phrase left in all my store that is not thrid-bare use, and fit for nothing but to be thrown to Peasants."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Mundus Foppensis*, B3r.

⁴⁸ Dryden, *Marriage a la Mode*, III, i, in *Works*, XI, 265.

⁴⁹ *Marriage a la Mode*, III, i, in *Works*, XI, 263.

It is not the imitation of others, but her own relentless use that wears out the fabric of her conversation. Language is her social currency, but by over-spending, she debases the coinage. The mixture of commercial and sartorial metaphors is quite appropriate to Melantha's behaviour, for her stock of words is made up each day by her maid, Philotis, as part of those duties for which she is paid. Any extras Philotis has to offer become the subject of a commercial transaction:

Mel. Now give me your Paper in my hand, and hold you my Glass, while I practise my postures for the day.

[*Melantha laughs in the glass.*]

How does that laugh become my face?

Phil. Sovereignly well, Madam.

Mel. Sovereignly! Let me die, that's not amiss. That word shall not be yours. I'll invent it, and bring it up my self. My new Point Gorget shall be yours upon't: not a word of the word, I charge you.

Phil. I am dumb, Madam.

Mel. That glance, how sutes it with my face?

[*Looking in the glass again.*]

Phil. 'Tis so languissant.

Mel. Languissant! That word shall be mine too, and my last Indian-Gown thine for't.

[*Looks again.*]

That sigh?

Phil. 'Twill make many a man sigh, Madam. 'Tis a mere Incendiary.

Mel. Take my Guimp Petticoat for that truth.⁵⁰

The pattern of posture, question, phrase and bargain, repeated with a rising tempo, gives a fascinating miniature of the construction of a public image, counterpointed by the successive layers of clothing--gorget, gown and petticoat--Melantha sheds. She becomes most nakedly herself when sighing and uttering her scraps of French. She is, it is true, "as finish'd an Impertinent as ever flutter'd in a Drawing-Room, and seems to contain the most compleat System of Female Foppery that

⁵⁰ III, i, in *Works*, XI, 264-65.

could possibly be crowded into the tortur'd Form of a Fine Lady . . .
 "--yet she is altogether fascinating, comporting herself "under the
 conscious Load of her own Attractions."⁵¹

Even those who criticised the fashionable world took some care to show familiarity with its latest caprices. In Dryden's sympathetic treatment of Melantha's affectation we find an ambivalence characteristic of those who commented on the fashionable world. They criticised its excesses, but took care at the same time to show their familiarity with its latest caprices. The force and frequency of attacks against "gentlemen that sett their cravat strings & periwigs well" are more acknowledgements of the social power of fashion than attacks on its individual adherents.⁵² The distinctions which fashion afforded could not be ignored, yet they depended largely on the length of one's purse and the skill of one's tailor. Hence those who spoke the language of fashion often qualified their discourse by using a suitably offhand tone: they deferred to its power by employing its terms, at the same time they affected a negligent superiority, one that did not so much belittle their own accomplishments as it did the efforts of those who professed to regard their clothes highly.

5.2 *Fashion and the Theatre*

Fashionable men and women dress to be noticed by others. Wherever they are, their aim is to have their dress compared with the dress that others have worn in that place before them. They display the changing modes of dress and are actively aware of others who do the same. In

⁵¹ Cibber *Apology*, p. 96.

⁵² *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 423.

this their behaviour is inherently theatrical. Their fashionable dress does not cover, it discovers. It is character defined by costume in time and in place.

The new playhouses of the Restoration provided convenient and appropriate venues for people to engage in such theatrical behaviour. Prologues and epilogues, in particular, drew the audience's attention to the dress of those around them. After 1660 some 56% of their characterisations refer to the dress of the man of fashion.⁵³ The playhouse was well suited to be the centre of fashion's competitive displays because it drew such a confluence of spectators noble, gentle and common. Pepys noticed the change in dress that followed the opening of the fine new Theatre Royal in Bridges Street:

The play being done, we home by water, having been a little ashamed that my wife and woman were in such a pickle, all the ladies being finer and better dressed in the pit then they use I think to be. (*Diary*, 8 May, 1663.)

The opportunities for display provided by the pit, the open boxes and the custom of arriving early and promenading in the lobbies all strengthened the association of the playhouses with the world of fashion. *Mundus Muliebris*, an exhaustive doggerel itemisation of the contents of a lady's dressing room, concludes with an image of the triumphal exit of the Lady towards the place where she can best display all her paraphernalia--the playhouse:

When to the Play 'tis time to go,
In Pompous Coach, or else Sedan'd
With equipage along the *Strand*,
And with her new *Beau* Foppling mann'd.⁵⁴

⁵³ Wiley, *Rare Prologues and Epilogues*, p. 173.

The stage was the source of several fashions adopted during the period. The English waistcoat, that indigenous fashion, seems to owe, if not its origin, then its popularisation to Betterton's dress in *Mustapha*.⁵⁵ Fine costumes worn nobly in tragedies like this helped to make exotic and antique dress publicly acceptable. Edmund Verney asked his brother in Aleppo to send him, ". . . a Turkish habit from head to foot, but not of cloth, because that's too common here. Let all be neate & handsome, the Turbant chiefly."⁵⁶

Apart from the vest, probably the most lasting influence of the stage on fashion is found in portraiture. Prior to 1660, Roman armour--modified to suit the dictates of contemporary notions of proper dress--was used only as the dress of dead heroes. The appearance of the costume in contemporary plays gave it a popularity and licensed it for use in portraits of living commanders. The fashion once set, it soon appeared as the dress of noble knights and even gentlemen, when they sat for the portrait painter. Even in portraiture, fashion subverted the old order of social distinctions.⁵⁷

As comedies frequently depended on the modernity of their dress it is perhaps not surprising that actors and actresses used stage clothing for their own aggrandizement in their appearances outside the playhouse. In the "Articles of Agreement^t for the Better Regulateing their Ma^{tes} Servants" of 1675 we find:

⁵⁴ B4v.

⁵⁵ See Diana de Marly, "King Charles II's Own Fashion: The Theatrical Origins of the English Vest," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 378-82.

⁵⁶ *Verney Memoirs*, IV, 149.

⁵⁷ Diana de Marly, "The Establishment of Roman Dress," p. 450.

4 Whereas by Experience Wee find Our Cloathes Tarnished and Imberelled by frequent Weareing them out of the Playhouse It is thought fitt noe Weoman presume to goe out of the House with the Play House Cloathes or Properties vpon Penalty of their Weekes pay.⁵⁸

Like so many other agreements and orders, the prohibition proved singularly ineffectual. A Lord Chamberlain's order of 1679 notes:

. . . some of the said Clothes hath beene carried out of the House, and embezzled by some of the Company These are therefore to require all His Mates Company of Comoedians both men and women that none of them presume to go out of the House in their acting Clothes.⁵⁹

Even within the playhouse, competition in matters of dress was not limited to the audience. The company's clothing was outer clothing only, and did not include any fashionable accessories. The articles of agreement signed between Davenant and his principal actors specify that he is not to supply "eyther Hatts, feathers, Gloues, ribbons, sword-belts, bandes, stockinges, or shoes, for any of the men actors aforesaid, Vnless it be to Properties"--that is, unless those things were called for in the play.⁶⁰ The distinction between costumes, which were supplied, and accessories, which were not, is an important one, for it shows that it was left to the individual actors to determine how finely they would show themselves in their parts. In one performance of *The Rival Queens* a disagreement that began backstage over possession of a veil reached such a level of intensity that it ended with two actresses

⁵⁸ L. C. 5/141, p. 307, cited in Nicoll, p. 324.

⁵⁹ L. C. 5/143, p. 69 and 7/1, cited in Nicoll, p. 327.

⁶⁰ *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, p. 99.

⁶¹ Edmund Curll, *The History of the English Stage* (London: 1741), p. 22. In *A Comparison*, pp. 8-9, Critick notes how paying for gloves and

coming to blows on stage.⁶¹

The distinction between costume and accessories appears to have applied to all actors except Mohun, Hart and Kynaston, for whom Charles II ordered the company to provide a number of accessories: we may infer that actors of such standing were expected to outshine all others' finery.⁶² When they appeared on stage actors and actresses were showing themselves in public in the same way as their audience did, and like them, the figures they presented depended on their wardrobe. The audience judged actors not only by the standards of dress set within the play, but by the standards set by the spectators around them. Pepys was particularly impressed by Kynaston's appearance in *The Silent Woman*:

Kinaston the boy hath the good turn to appear in three shapes: 1, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes to please Morose; then in fine clothes as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house--and lastly, as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house. (*Diary*, 7 January, 1661.)⁶³

It is certainly the fine figure actors and actresses displayed that accounts for the ease with which they insinuated themselves into the upper levels of society. Kynaston, when a boy, was a great favourite with the ladies, who took him "in their Coaches, to *Hyde-Park*, in his

other gifts to the performers cost poets much of their third day's profits.

⁶² L. C. 7/1 and L. C. 5/140, p. 5, cited in Nicoll p. 365.

⁶³ For earlier comparisons of the clothing of actors and spectators see Donne, *Satyre IV*, ll. 181-187, in *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. W. Mildgate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Jonson, the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* and *The New Inn*, II, i, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Hereford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925-52), VI, 13-14, 424; Dekker, *The Guls Horne-Book*, in *The Non-Dramatic Works*, II, 254.

Theatrical Habit, after the Play . . ."⁶⁴ The well-publicised liaisons of performers testify to the power that fine clothes had to recommend an acquaintance.

5.3 *Dressing the Plays*

Our discussion of the relationship between fashion and the playhouse blurs an implicit distinction between two types of dress found in the playhouses. Dress within the playhouse includes both clothing--the dress of the times--and costume--the garments that actors wear to assist in their portrayal of character. It is one of the paradoxes of the theatre that costume, the essence of disguise, authenticates a performance. By cueing the audience it allows them to accept that the action on the stage is a replica of some other, consequential action. It supports the *ipse dixit* of an actor who claims, before an audience, to be a murderer or a King, an antique Roman or a Dane. Costume depicts a character not as he is, but in the image that is theatrically accepted as his. Charles II commented on the appearance of the murderers in *Macbeth*:

*Pray, what is the Meaning, said he, that we never see a Rogue in a Play, but, Godsfish! they always clap him on a black Perriwig? when, it is well known, one of the greatest Rogues in England always wears a fair one?*⁶⁵

Charles, who wore a black wig himself, articulates the distinction between clothing and costume. Both are capable of conveying information about the person who wears them, but many of the expressive details of a

⁶⁴ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 71.

⁶⁵ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 78.

character's costume pass unnoticed by those with whom he deals onstage: their significance is reserved for the audience watching the play from the outside of its world. The code established by costume is a conventional one, with a history of consistent application. If, by such consistency, it contradicts the practices of ordinary life, it does so in order that the action on stage may more easily and clearly suggest an external world of which it is but a part.⁶⁶

In Restoration theatres the marks of villainy, like the dress of country squires and city merchants, contribute to that body of privileged information the audience holds about the action of the play, information largely unshared by the characters who take part in that action. Costume removed from the audience the burden of identification and allowed them to direct their attention to the more interesting matter of the interaction of characters whose nature and motives were already established before they spoke.

The same conventions in costuming which enabled an audience to identify the status and affections of character also assisted in redefining them as the action of the play progressed. When Loveless appears before Amanda in the final act of Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, he enters, according to the stage direction "*in new cloaths*".⁶⁷ The significance of his attire is not remarked upon by Amanda, but it affords the audience an immediate demonstration of the impending change in his attitude. He appears on stage as the new man which the world will soon see him to be. The change of clothes also prepares the audience for the change of dra-

⁶⁶ For discussion of the ways in which conventions authenticate a performance see Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality*, esp. Chs. 4 - 7.

⁶⁷ *Love's Last Shift*, V, ii, in *The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber Esq.*, 5 vols. (London: 1777), I, 82.

matic style that is to follow, the shift from the comic to that domestication of the heroic known as sentimental. The audience's prior knowledge of the event allows it to ignore the details of the plot, and focus its attention on the mechanism whereby his conversion is effected: the theatrical style, the point of the play. Spectators can savour the tantalising protraction of Amanda's disclosure that she is his wife and abandon themselves to the emotional excesses of the scene. The play in effect shifts from comic to heroic style, a movement normally cued by a shift from prose to verse in the dialogue.⁶⁸ Cibber retains prose throughout, but cues his audience instead by a stylised use of the conventions of costuming.

Change of costume within a play cues the audience's response in a way which is both strong and immediate. A weaker cue, but one which persists throughout the play, is given when the dress of the actors differs from the audience's in certain particulars, and these differences establish that the action of the play takes place in another place or at another time. This form of cueing does not require accurate replication of historical or exotic dress, but conformity to an accepted theatrical version of it. The first Restoration company to make extensive use of costume for this purpose was Davenant's: his main entrepreneurial strategy was to bring the world upon the London stage, and it is fair to say that, for all that he spent lavishly upon elaborate machines and painted shutters, it was costume which established most vividly the "otherness" of his scenes.

⁶⁸ In Vanbrugh's, *The Relapse*, V, iv, an equivalent scene between Amanda and Worthy is written in verse.

Davenant's company first used sumptuous costume to evoke a splendid past in his own *Love and Honour*. Charles II, the Duke of York and the Earl of Oxford lent their coronation robes to help dress the play in its Italian setting: the stage created the illusion of a world elsewhere through costume most royally English.⁶⁹ It seems that the desire to evoke the past or another place was second to the desire to present the audience with a display of exotic dress: extravagance, not accuracy, was the aim. The costumes had an extra-dramatic significance, too. They had been lent to the public stage as a mark of royal favour and to let that stage represent benign Stuart power, under the influence of which the good people of London would find themselves well-treated. The company later acquired its own Mediterranean finery, which it used to dress Orrery's *The Generall*. Pepys thought the costumes for this Sicilian adventure finer than those same coronation suits, worn a month earlier in Orrery's *The History of Henry the Fifth*, a play most assuredly English.⁷⁰ That Pepys so readily compared English and Mediterranean dress shows that verisimilitude was neither sought nor expected. The comparison was based on extravagance alone.

Amongst the other spectacular articles in the company's stock were the Eastern costumes first used in Orrery's *Mustapha*. A record of their splendour remains in the portrait of Betterton in the character of Solyman.⁷¹ The same costumes were probably used in the company's production of Settle's *The Empress of Morrocco*, and in revivals of Davenant's

⁶⁹ Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, pp. 21-22.

⁷⁰ *Diary*, 28 September, 1664.

⁷¹ Downes, *Roscuis Anglicanus* p. 26. Diana de Marly discusses the costume in "King Charles II's Own Fashion," pp. 381-382.

The Siege of Rhodes. Roman dress was also used to advantage and profit.

Of *Heraclius* Pepys said:

The guarments like Romans very well But at the beginning, at the drawing up of the Curtaine, there was the finest Scene of the Emperor and his people about him, standing in their fixed and different postures in their Roman habits, above all that ever I yet saw at any of the Theatres. (*Diary*, 8 March, 1664.)

The tableau was designed to display the extravagant costumes to their best effect, demonstrating the present glories of the English stage by a representation of the might of ancient Rome. More recent English and European history allowed the stage the same opportunities. Of Davenant's adaptation of *Henry VIII* Count Cominges noted:

Cardinal Wolsey appears there with his bonnet, and Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, with his rocket and cape, and even, if I remember aright, his palium.⁷²

According to Downes, the play was "all new Cloath'd in proper Habits: The King's was new, all the Lords, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the Doctors, Proctors, Lawyers, Tip-staves . . ."⁷³ Katherine Philips, for one, was not impressed with such extravagance, fit only to please "Cittizens wives . . . little better then Puppett-plays."⁷⁴

The notice both Downes and Pepys took of any play whose costumes were new--that is, when the outlay of money on finery was most evident--shows how important it was to impress the audience with the extravagance of a production. Where an earlier stage, with simpler costumes, had

⁷² Jusserand, "A French Ambassador's Impressions," p. 794.

⁷³ Downes, p. 24.

⁷⁴ Harvard Theatre Collection, uncatalogued letter.

used images that transformed the audience into a Roman crowd or a Danish court, the Restoration stage, with scenes and more elaborate costumes, declared itself capable of bringing those exotic places before the eyes of the citizens of London.

Davenant's rivals at Bridges Street, the King's Company, were slow to follow his lead and suffered a major setback in their attempts when they lost their stock in a fire in 1672. Nevertheless, they too outfitted some of their productions splendidly, presenting the Americas to their audience in Dryden and Howard's *The Indian Queen*, whose "speckl'd plumes brought such an Audience."⁷⁵ To recreate the costume of a nation, one of the most distinctive aspects of the difference between two cultures, and to present it for the pleasure of the public at large is, in a sense, to have tamed that nation, and confirms in those who witness the display a sense of their own superiority. "The like," wrote Evelyn, "had never ben seene here as happly (except rarely any where else) on a mercenarie Theater." In so splendid a production every form of dress was suitably enhanced. A warrant was made out to the Master of the Great Wardrobe, requiring him to "prouide and deliuer to Thomas Killigrew Esqr to the value of forty pounds in silkes for to cloath the Musick for the play called the Indian Queene to bee acted before their Ma^{ties} . . ."⁷⁶ Despite the attention paid to dress in such productions, the King's company allowed the same inaccuracies and inconsistencies in dressing plays as their rivals. They met with the same criticisms, too.

⁷⁵ An annotation in Cosmo Manuche's *The Feast*, Worcester College MS. Plays 9/22.

⁷⁶ L. C. 5/138, p. 15, cited in Nicoll, p. 354. The costumes from this production were probably also used in Dryden's *The Indian Emperour* and refurbished for revivals of both.

This is how Pepys describes their production of Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, or The Troubles of Queen Elizabeth*:

But the play is the most ridiculous that sure ever came upon stage, and ended is merely a show; only, shows the true garbe of the queens in those days, just as we see Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth painted--but the play is merely a puppet-play acted by living puppets. Neither the design nor language better; and one stands by and tells us the meaning of things. (*Diary*, 17 August, 1667.)

In dismissing the play thus, Pepys relegates its appeal to the spectators in the middle and upper galleries, where the acoustics were poorer than in the pit, but where the costumes and scenes stood out to better effect. In the midst of the attempted re-creation appeared Mrs Knepp, "in her night-gowne, with no locks on, but her bare face and hair only tied up in a knot behind; which is the comeliest dress that ever I saw her in to her advantage." Such a discrepancy between ornament and action was common in plays of the period as companies sought to please first one, then another section of their audience.

Such discrepancies do not spring merely from the desire to display exotic dress. The styles of historical and foreign costume were also influenced by contemporary ideas of fashion and propriety. In the Harvard Theatre Collection are a series of quarter length portraits of Anne Bracegirdle as "The Empress of China," "The Sultanness" and "The Indian Queen." There is also a full length portrait of her in the latter role.⁷⁷ Her dress is certainly exotic, and doubtless looked authentic to her audiences. To the modern eye, however, it seems closer in style to seventeenth century English costume than to sixteenth century American Indian. Mrs Bracegirdle has the bare shoulders, low neckline and tight

⁷⁷ Reprinted in *The London Stage*, between pp. 400-01.

low-waisted bodice that were fashionable then. In her left hand she holds feathers arranged to form a fan. The portrait reminds us that costume, even period costume, is subject to the invasion of fashion, the more so in an age acutely conscious of the social implications of dress.

When fashion impinges on costume in plays about other places and other times its primary function, paradoxically, is to allow audiences to see what appears before them here and now as a replica of real life there and then. Thus when Betterton wore a wig to play Hamlet, it was not to portray the Prince as a man of fashion, but to dress him finely as befitted his station.⁷⁸ In this, fashion draws attention away from costume and makes it look less remarkable to contemporary eyes. Audiences of the Restoration, like audiences before them, expected other civilisations to conform to their standards of dress, even as they expected them to abide by their standards of civility; they judged the credibility of the play's action accordingly.⁷⁹ Yet they were not uncritical of the intrusions made by fashion. Of Waller's *Pompey*, Katherine Philips wrote:

I wonder much what preparations for it could prejudice Will Davenant when I heare they acted in English habits, & y^t so aprope y^t Caesar was sent in with his feather & Muff, till he was hiss'd off y^e Stage . . .⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Nicoll, pp. 49-50. For a discussion of the influence of contemporary fashions on the representation of historical or unchanging costume, see Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery*, pp. 72-89.

⁷⁹ The recurrence of Love and Honour as topics for debate throughout the whole range of Restoration tragedy is the most compelling example of the age's assumption of a universal similarity in motives and principles of behaviour.

⁸⁰ Uncatalogued letter, Harvard Theatre Collection.

She doubtless preferred her own *Pompey* of the previous year, by implication a much less ornate production. For the rest of the audience, however, the chief offense lay in the incongruity thrust upon them by the appearance of an historical character in dress that not only made no concessions to authenticity, but was extravagantly fashionable as well.

It will be apparent that the notion of costume with which we started--as something which assists an actor and authenticates a performance--stands in need of amendment. That definition implies that costume draws attention to itself only to make a statement about the world represented on stage, and that the difference between costume before and after the interregnum was simply a matter of degree: in Restoration playhouses it was more elaborate and provided at greater expense. This much is true, but from the evidence it appears that after 1660 costume gained a life of its own, one independent from the plays in which it was used. It performed the same functions in the theatre as fashionable clothing did in the public realm. That is, the mechanisms which influenced people's attitudes to the clothing they observed and displayed in public also operated on the costuming of plays. The companies competed with each other in costuming, using the criteria of fashion--novelty and conspicuous extravagance--in order to attract an audience. Their successes impelled the court, hitherto unchallenged in theatrical lavishness, to rise to new heights of sumptuousness in productions played before the King.⁸¹ Because costume in the public theatres was displayed before all members of the audience indiscriminately, it had the same social implications as fashionable clothing: it made its

⁸¹ Eleanor Boswell, *The Restoration Stage*, supplies the necessary information for a detailed comparison of the relative extravagance of the public and court stages.

greatest appeal to those who had newly managed to afford it and was censured by those who considered themselves beyond its influence.

Fashion affected all relations between those groups--actors, audience, characters and companies--that constituted the theatrical world. The theatre served as a source of fashions and an arena for their display: its actors sported fashionable dress for their own glory and the dictates of fashion governed the costuming of plays. Fashion's vocabulary enriched the stage's language and provided its playwrights with a constantly changing source of dramatic material. The general awareness of and interest in fashion in Restoration society, even amongst those who could least afford its excesses, was much sharpened inside the theatre. It produced an audience peculiarly alive to the nuances of clothing, costume and fashion within the world of the play.

5.4 *Plays of Fashion*

The special genius of the theatre made those who attended it more than usually aware of the way in which clothing could impinge on the business of their lives. It also made them more than usually susceptible to the use of patterns of dress to articulate the structure of and portray the characters in a play. The members of the audience were at once aware of their own appearance, the dress of others, the finery of the actors and the fashions worn by the characters.

The dramaturgical problem confronting Restoration playwrights was not one of arousing an interest in dress, but of restraining it and directing the effect of the costumes the actors wore. Let us now examine two sets of techniques whereby dramatists used dress to define char-

acter and action in their plays. The first set involves the conventions under which stock characters appeared on stage: type dressing. This establishes costume as a paradigmatic element of the play: the implications of the costumes of all other characters in the play were measured against the type dress. The second technique deals with the way dramatists used dressing scenes. They treated them as syntactical elements within a play: dressing scenes established a set of expectations about the direction the play's action would subsequently take. So useful were these two means of organisation and control, that they remained in the dramatists' armoury for many decades, outlasting the changes in fashion to which they owed their original importance.

Let us first consider some of the implications of type dress. In his letter on the depravity of modern behaviour and the affectations of the town, the author of *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town* addressed his readers with a complaint at the way his fellow Country gentlemen were represented on the stage:

If thou frequentest the Play-house, thou hast there seen us brought in with a high-crown'd Hat, a Sword put through the Wast-band of our Breeches, and a pair of Antick Tops [Top Boots]; where we tame stand, whilst the Learned man of Humour practices upon us with his sleights and intrigues.⁸²

He objects to the town's rejection of country values, but also to the falseness of the stage's representation. Gentlemen from the country did not dress as the stage depicted them, he claims, and to show them thus was but a facile attempt by the poets to look big at their expense.

⁸² *Remarques* . . . (London: 1673), A2v-3r.

The Remarquer's remonstrances on the stage's treatment of country squires are accurate, but his assessment of the dramatists' motives is wrong. The stage's Country Gentlemen were not brought in to represent country values, but to embody men in whom the civilised values of the town were absent. They came on the stage as creatures from the "desart" which lay "beyond *High-Park*."⁸³ And, to judge from the frequent attendance of country visitors in the playhouses and their general lack of indignation at what they saw, it was seldom felt that the way they were presented on stage cast a particular reflection on country tastes and origins. Indeed, those who genuinely dwelt in the country and observed the habits of their neighbours, marvelled that what they saw was, as yet, unpublished on the stage. Aubrey describes *The Countrey Revell*, a play he is writing for Shadwell, as "untoucht" in two of its humours: an unusual state of affairs for a stage ever-relishing new forms of eccentricity.⁸⁴ It seems that gentlemen from the country appeared on the stage bearing no authentic resemblance to their originals.

Their singularity had much to do with the costume in which they were made to appear: it belonged to the period of the civil war. This might seem an aberration in plays otherwise remarkable for their contemporary social accuracy, except that such dress styles were not so much unfashionable as beyond fashion. The deliberate anachronism set up a framework within which dramatists explored the implications of fashionable dress and the niceties of conduct in a fashionable society. Country costumes established life outside London as that of a closed and unchanging society, secure in its values and attitudes. In Crowne's *The*

⁸³ Etherege, *The Man of Mode*, V, ii, in *Works*, II, 279.

⁸⁴ Bodelian MS. Wood, F. 39, f. 141v.

Countrey Wit, Sir Mannerly Shallow, whose dress marks him as a creature out of time and place in the town, initiates his own undoing by mistaking the badge on a porter's livery for a sign of civic rank, and taking Rash for his master, Sir Thomas.⁸⁵ He is an innocent in London, unaware of the pattern of its life, ignorant of its geography and blind to the activities of its inhabitants. Crowne connives with his urbane audience, who can reconstruct Sir Mannerly's mishaps from his uncomprehending description of them. His inability to deal with life in London is everywhere apparent. Whenever he makes an attempt to understand its ways, he commits the supreme sin of the provincial: he tries to explain the cosmopolitan world about him in the light of examples drawn from his familiar rural experience.⁸⁶ His provincial certitudes are out of place in a cosmopolitan environment, where unfamiliarity is part of the common texture of life.

The alderman or city merchant, another stock comic figure, provided a similar instance of anachronistic theatrical dress, another imposition upon the audience's credulity. In Wycherley's *Love in a Wood*, Alderman Gripe, a man who "hates a Vest as much as a Surplice," is identified and set apart from the rest of the characters by the distaste he constantly exhibits for all items of fashionable clothing.⁸⁷ Faced with the tempting person of Lucy Crossbite, his lust masters his avarice and his principled aversion to "Modes and Forms" as he frantically dispatches Mrs

⁸⁵ John Crowne, *The Countrey Wit* (London: 1675), V.

⁸⁶ Consider these few examples: Sir Mannerly on the beauty of prostitutes: "Mrs Anne Lackwit, the great beauty of Lubberton, is nothing to 'em"; Booby on pickpocketing: ". . . this was old Goody Wrinklenose's doings, that lives on the side of your worship's woods by Lubberton." *The Countrey Wit*, III.

⁸⁷ *Love in a Wood*, I, i, in *Plays*, p. 15.

Joyner to purchase for Lucy, "Pendants, Neck-laces, Fans, Ribbons, Poynts, Laces, Stockings, Gloves . . ." and a new gown.⁸⁸ He is a man defined and discredited by his attitude to dress. It is true that there were many in London who disapproved of extravagant dress, and Puritans were amongst them. Few, however, would have appeared in the street as Lacy did on stage, in sombre Puritan habit. That was the mark of an earlier and more assertive Puritanism:

When Puritanisme grew into a faction, the zealotts distinguisht themselves, both men and weomen, by severall affectations of habitt, lookes and words, which, had it bene a reall declension of vanity, and embracing of sobriety in all those things, had bene most commendable in them; but their quick forsaking of those things when they were where they would be shew'd that they either never tooke them up for conscience, or were corrupted by prosperity to take up those vaine things they durst not practise under persecutio.⁸⁹

Contemporary fashions changed, but stage costume for Puritans (and, by implication, great citizens of London) remained constant. As a result, the dress that city merchants wore on stage, like that of country gentlemen, dated back to the Interregnum and before. Consider the way that Robert Howard's *The Committee* was dressed. The play is set in 1660; and the costumes and behaviour of most characters accorded with contemporary standards.⁹⁰ Obadiah, alone, is out of time: Bing's portrait of Underhill in the role (one he did not play before 1685) shows him in the dress of 1640; he wears a high crowned hat, a white collar band over a short doublet and is wrapped in a long loose cloak.⁹¹ When

⁸⁸ *Love in a Wood*, III, ii, in *Plays*, pp. 67, 69.

⁸⁹ *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, pp. 62-63.

⁹⁰ The text was altered and updated in 1686 to make it more topical--Dr Williams's Library Morrice MS. P, p. 580.

Bellmour impersonates Tribulation, in Congreve's *The Old Batchelour*, his dress (in 1697) was "Fanatick habit", as would his neighbour Fondlewife's have been.⁹² When Cibber played the latter character, he modelled his performance on Doggett's, "and to the most minute placing of a Hair, was dress'd exactly like him."⁹³ Only type dress was so permanently anachronistic as to countermand the pressure of fashion.

It seems that the incarnation of the city merchant on the stage bore little relation to his counterpart in real life: his unchanging dress tied him firmly to a past of such immoderate zeal that few wished to recall it. He was, in a word, uncivil, when civility was become not only an aristocratic or gentle, but a common social requirement. Civil society demands widespread mastery of those artificial rules of behaviour which are the sole guarantee of social ease and acceptability. It demands that the behaviour and values of civilised groups within a society be disseminated. Publishers and journalists found ways to profit by doing this. John Dunton's *The Athenian Mercury* often discussed matters of social propriety. The volume of this correspondence gives some indication of the concern of many of London's lesser citizens over proper social conduct, a concern which they transmitted to their children by inculcating in them from an early age a regard for the rules of behaviour.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Harvard Theatre Collection, Extra Illustrated Index, vol. 10/23.

⁹² Congreve, *The Old Batchelour*, IV, ii, in *Plays*, p. 80.

⁹³ Cibber, *Apology*, p. 116.

⁹⁴ *The Athenian Gazette or Casuistical Mercury* (London: 1691-1696). For a discussion of the way that rules of conduct were transmitted to children, see Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Cape, 1973), pp. 375-77.

Such concern to adhere to current rules is at odds with the contempt for "Forms and Modes" characteristic of the stage's city merchants. If they were less sympathetically drawn and more harshly treated than their country counterparts, it was because they so disdained civility and the social processes of contact and change that created it. They lived in London, yet set themselves apart from it. The country squires merely failed to see the difference between city and country. The squires were untutored in London's ways; the city merchants despised them. On a stage whose business was often the examination of adaptability, the treatment afforded these two types, of necessity, varied accordingly.

It is the very extremities to which mockery of these two types ran which explains why the playhouses were attended by those whom they ridiculed. Indeed, it was often those very plays which look most offensive that proved most popular with the injured parties. The outstanding example of this is Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*, a play popular with both the city and the court and one which became the traditional offering for the citizens on Lord Mayor's Day.⁹⁵ The apparent discrepancy between the characterisation the plays made and the enjoyment of those who should have been most offended, is resolved when we consider that to enter a playhouse was to be included as part of the London public. It was to be distinguished immediately from the characters on stage whose costumes set them apart from public life. Citizens and visitors from the country were set apart from the anachronisms on stage by even the meanest article of fashionable dress: the laughter, in

⁹⁵ Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons: A Study of the Eighteenth Century London Audience* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press; 1971), pp. 128-30.

which they joined was not aimed at them, but at their former rudeness.

Anachronistic dress draws attention not only to the modernity of some of the spectators, but to all other styles of dress within the play. When contemporary costume is worn on stage it can have but a weak impact on the audience. Dramatically, it is relatively transparent: it is what an audience expects to see and passes unremarked unless its modernity is foregrounded in some way. However, when contemporary and outmoded dress appear together on a stage, the disjunction disrupts the texture of the play. It is no longer a seamless reflection of real life. Like the breaking of the dramatic frame, the difference in costume stops the action of the play from becoming merely an imitation of street life, entire in itself. Instead, the use of country and city dress, drawn from a still-remembered past, erects a suitable framework of emphasis within which the dramatist can make a critique of dress and its effect on the world beyond the stage. It forces the audience to evaluate the interpretations they habitually make of stage costume and apply the insights they gain to the dress of those seated about them.

The appearance of the static forms of long-dead styles gives dramatic life to current modes. By showing how poorly those who wear outmoded dress manage within a civil society it pointed out that fashionable dress owed both its origins and usefulness to the influence it gave one person over another. The contrast between the two styles of dress helps to define the public resorts of the play--the parks, gardens, malls, galleries, streets and even the large reception rooms of private houses--as places where civil society meets and where dress defines identity.

There is another way of ensuring that the dramatic effect of contemporary dress is enhanced, and that is by drawing attention to it as a physical object. Dryden adopted this strategy in his first play, *The Wild Gallant*, which was first performed at Vere Street in 1663. The opening stage direction reads: "Failer *entering to Burr, who is putting on his Buff-coat*"⁹⁶ The original version of the play bears little relation to the forms which Restoration comedy was later to take.⁹⁷ It is a curious mixture of chastity and blasphemy, indebted at various points to Jonson, Shirley, Fletcher, Shakespeare and Boccaccio.⁹⁸ The opening scene, however, is Dryden's alone, and is an early and instructive example of a scene which became popular in later comedies, one which we might well term a dressing scene. Burr has recently arrived from Holland, a notoriously unfashionable country, with his dress in so advanced a state of decay that it is entirely unsuitable for wearing in London. He is, he announces to Failer, "ashamed to rise; and so you'll say, dear Heart, if you look upon my Cloaths: the best is, my Buff-coat will cover all."⁹⁹

London is no place in which to hide: it demands display from those who appear there, and the contrast between Burr's plain military coat and Failer's finery, together with the sport Failer has at the expense of his friend's old dress, determines the new arrival to remain private:

⁹⁶ Dryden, *The Wild Gallant*, II, i, in *Works*, VIII, 8.

⁹⁷ Dryden revised it in 1669, making Loveby more rakish. See the Prologue to *The Wild Gallant Reviv'd*, in Gardner, pp. 13-15.

⁹⁸ See *A Dialogue on Plays and Players* (London: 1774), pp. xi-xii.

⁹⁹ I, i. Emrys Jones, in "The First West End Comedy," rightly notes the historical importance of the dressing scene in *Epicoene*. Dryden, however, gives dress a structural significance, beyond that allowed it by Jonson.

"I am resolved to receive all visits in this Truckle-bed." His sartorial problems are resolved by the arrival of Bibber, a tailor, who is sufficiently impressed by Burr's quibbling wit to trust him for a suit of clothes.

The main action of the play, the fortunes of Loveby and Constance, Isabelle and Sir Timorous, is not introduced until the business of Burr's dress is done. Yet the initial scene is not without relation to the rest: Dryden has used it to indicate that dress is to be the medium of his play and has outlined some of the ways in which it will take its effect. Dress establishes the distinction between public and private realms and marks the behaviour proper to each. In public one is most susceptible to disgrace, imposture and the uncertainty of casual encounters. Loveby, who retreats to the street from Bibber's house, scolded by Frances, the tailor's wife, is ashamed to appear before Constance in such poor dress as he wears: "'Tis she; there's no being seen, 'till I am better habited." (I, ii.) Constance is aware of the cause of his diffidence, and has him sent money with which he redeems his "Suit with the Gold Lace at Sleeves" in order to appear before her, "*new habited*." (I, ii; II, i.) Streets and alleys--public places--are the settings of all the reversals suffered by the main protagonists. It is there that Loveby mistakenly meets with Failer, and through them that he is led by Setstone, who is "antickly habited" as an agent of some dark power. (II, ii; V, ii.)

Scenic effects were often used to point out a play's divisions into private and public worlds. Dryden, however, had to depend almost entirely on dress to point out the effect of place on behavior. We need

not think him at a disadvantage in this. Scenery, by itself, serves merely to locate the action within a private or a public place.

However, the effect of that location must be demonstrated through the dress worn and the behaviour displayed there. And since dress is not confined within the boundaries of a scene, it can be used to show how aspects of public and private behaviour impinge upon each other. By balancing and matching the private and public realms, and consistently breaking their bounds, Dryden creates for his audience an entire social geography of London. In his hands it appears as the only place for that constant interplay between natural impulses and civil requirements which is the hallmark of sociability. Isabelle, for one, could not bear to leave it:

Sir *Timerous*, I wish you well; but he I marry must promise me to live at *London*: I cannot abide to be in the Countrie, like a wild beast in the wilderness, with no Christian Soul about me. (III, i.)

True cosmopolitan that she is, Isabelle qualifies her natural similes with human references. Such inconsistency is quite acceptable in town, where even the monstrous can be fashionable, but has no place in the country, where fashion can offer no relief.

In this divided world happiness belongs to those who can manage the balance and separation of both realms. Loveby is both blasphemous and licentious, but for Dryden his failings are neither in faith nor in morality: they lie in his thinking to entertain, in private, vices which have too many public implications. His dealings with Frances and Lady du Lake threaten to break loose of the privacy in which he would constrain them, and embarrass him before Constance. The disorder in his

life is frequently matched by the disarray of the clothing he wears. His entry in undress -- "*Collar unbutton'd, Band carelesly on, Hat on the table, as new rising from sleep*" (III, ii)--is quickly followed by the irruption of Frances, Isabelle and Sir Timorous, and then Lord Nonsuch, Failer and Burr with the bailiffs. Bibber's intervention (also in undress, for neither is his house in order) relieves the situation, but Loveby's escape, like Isabelle's in the garden, is accomplished solely by the grace of Fortune.

The lessons of management that Loveby must learn are illustrated by the most spectacular piece of costuming in the play. Loveby attempts to direct his affairs by concluding a private bargain with Satan, a devil of Constance's creation. However, in a social world all debts fall due in the here-and-now, not the hereafter. Thus when Loveby is brought before Constance, who is "*Habited like Fortune*", he cavils at the real wedding ceremony he is expected to participate in:

For the favours I have receiv'd, I am very much her servant, but in the way of Matrimony, Mr. Parson there can tell you 'tis an Ordinance; and must not be enter'd into without mature deliberation: besides, Marriages, as you know are made in Heaven; and that I am sure this was not. (V, iii.)

His scoffing at the fantastic vision before him reveals him in a new aspect. Mature deliberation, a private activity, has hitherto not entered his calculations. By disavowing Fortune, and forcing her to unmask, he discovers Constance, to whom he acknowledges his debt, and the means whereby he will repay it: "Come Parson, prethee make haste and joyn us. I long to be out of her debt poor Rogue."

100 "I made the Town my Judges; and the greater part condemned it .

The play, a "motley garniture of fool and farce" did not enjoy the success its author hoped.¹⁰⁰ Pepys recorded his dissatisfaction with the original production: " . . . it was ill acted and the play so poor a thing as I never saw in all my life almost, and so little answering to the name, that from beginning to the end I could not, nor can at this time, tell certainly which was the wild gallant." (*Diary*, 23 February, 1663.)

The problem is a common one in Restoration comedy: who is the man of mode, Dorimant or Sir Fopling; who the fool in fashion, Loveless or Sir Novelty? It raises the question of how we are meant to identify the hero, a matter which exercised men of sympathies so diverse as Shadwell, Congreve and Collier.¹⁰¹ The problem was deliberately compounded in scenes where dress was promoted as an indicator of social acceptability at the same time as its usefulness as such was brought into question. A man dressing is a man creating himself with considerable help from others, and dressing scenes make us understand the debt that the fine and admirable figure owes to his tailor, his wigmaker and servants. The more splendid his exterior, the greater his dependence on their efforts. The contradiction is borne out by the servants' familiarity and their usurpation of gentle rights and privileges at the very moment that their creation sets out so eminently dressed. Yet it is not only the servants' imitation of their betters which undermines the claims of fine clothing; it is their insistence on their separate status, as if they . . . " (Preface).

¹⁰¹ Shadwell, Preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, in *Works*, I, 11; Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, 3rd. ed. (London: 1698), Ch. 4, "The Stage-Poets make their Principal Persons Vitious, and reward them at the End of the Play"; Congreve, Dedication to *The Way of the World*, in *Plays*, p. 390.

would establish their own hierarchy, in competition with their masters. In *The Wild Gallant* Bibber saves the reputations and liberty of his customers and, out of his own pocket, supplies their financial needs. He does it all, however, as a tailor: even the advances he makes on Isabelle are only as familiar as his tape-measure will allow. (III, ii.) This paradoxical relationship between those who enjoy the rewards of finery and those who supply it is more fully worked out in the person of Bibber's wife, Frances, who resents gentlewomen taking precedence over her: "A Gentlewoman! I thought so, my house affords no harbour for Gentlewomen: you are a company of proud Harlotries: I'll teach you to take place of Tradesmens Wives with a wannion to you." (III, ii.) The grounds of her anger--"they are such as we maintain your pride"--have been adequately confirmed in the course of the play. Frances does not aspire to gentle status; the height of her ambition is to become a dresser at court, where she could practice her family's trade with the honour she feels it deserves: "I shall make bold now to bear up to those flirting Gentlewomen, that sweep it up and down with their long tails. I thought myself as good as they, when I was, as I was; but now I am, as I am." (IV, i.)¹⁰²

The attention Dryden paid to clothing in *The Wild Gallant*, one of the first new comedies to be performed after 1660, makes it a convenient reference point for considering the uses to which fashionable dress was

¹⁰² Despite Frances' credulity--her belief in the offer of a place at court makes her Loveby's dupe--she does much to prevent us from accepting dress as the basis for discovering the worth of others. Her dreams of a court position are not fulfilled, for a civil society will not bear too scrupulous a critique of its deficiencies, but the title she desires, Madame Bibber, is granted her amidst the fifth act complaisance of the company. Her name is oddly prophetic of the legions of French maids and servants who so industriously run their master's and mistress's lives in later plays.

put subsequently. The principles of metonymy Dryden outlined, whereby the characters' dress is used to invoke the whole range of attitudes and behaviour found in London society, were extended and explored in later plays. The play becomes, in Swift's terms, a *micro-coat* of London; clothing, the outer form in which the characters appear, becomes the medium through which relationships are established and dealings transacted. As something bought, sold, borrowed, pawned and redeemed, dress evokes an entire economic system. It is the means by which men and women establish their credit; it is likewise frequently the cause of their running into debt. Those who cling to the outmoded fashions of the past are clothing's hoarders; those who pursue its vagaries into the future fuel an inflation in dress.

One character in particular proved himself ready at all times to spend ever larger sums on splendid foreign wares, simultaneously ruining honest domestic trade and debasing the coinage of common dress. He was the epitome of inflation in dress: the fop. The first Restoration character to pay unhesitatingly the enormous sums demanded of him in order to secure a worthless reputation was Frenchlove, in James Howard's *The English Mounsieur*. He is "an effected *English* man--translated into a ridiculous *French* Man," who allows his affectation to be the cause of his undoing.¹⁰³ Cast mistresses and English tailors and milliners dupe him into dealing with them at inflated rates, by representing their good English wares as French ones. Naturally, French influence is mocked and English worth asserted when the fop's new "French" wife dances an English jig in the fifth act's public exposure of his folly.

¹⁰³ James Howard, *The English Mounsieur* I, i (London: 1674).

Howard does not content himself with a simple triumph over the ridiculous. There is a curious assertion of deeper English values in the persons of William, a *Wilt-shire Clown*, and his sweetheart, Elsbeth Pritty. They exhibit all the standard country responses to London which so flattered and delighted their audiences. They show their ignorance and incomprehension of bear-baiting--"two huge rough hair'd things led by the Nose, with two strings . . ."--and ingenuously compare the ornamentation in the Strand with their may-poles at home--"it were as tall as ours upon our Green in the Countrey . . ." (V, i.) Their innocence is not merely ridiculous; it helps to further Howard's criticism of the extravagance of the town. Elsbeth asks Comely, a young gentleman of the town, whether there are more than one King and Queen at London, and on being told no, replies:

Why Sir, then the King goes no finer drest then another man; nor the Queen then another woman, else *William* I'll swear by that thing you are to have of me when we are married, we saw bove vorty, Kings and Queens today. (IV, i.)

It is appropriate that Elsbeth should give this account of London finery to Comely, for he has rejected the town, and was preparing to leave it, dressed "*in a Riding Garb*," much to the amusement of his friends. (IV, i.) The implications of his clothing are recognised even by Elsbeth and William. He wears, they say, "Boots like our Gentlemen in *Wiltshire*." (IV, i.) His exit from London is delayed by their appearance and, charmed by Elsbeth, he determines to woo her. His suit culminates in a competition with William to see which of them can offer her the most winning endearments. Against William's rude and earthy declaration of passionate intentions, Comely presents an elaborate and deli-

cate compliment, worthy of any exponent of civil flattery. His reversion to the forms of London gallantry does not impress Elsb~~a~~, who ^{/eth} delights more in the physical sentiments of her sweetheart. Comely's gallantry is out of keeping with his newly adopted dress, and Elsb~~a~~'s ^{/eth} preference is consistent with the play's general admonitions on the limitations of fashion. When Comely makes a final attempt to win Elsb~~a~~, ^{/eth} by offering to furnish her with a wardrobe of fine clothes, the logic of the play demands that yet again he should plead in vain.

The failings Howard criticises are not those of Frenchlove and Comely alone. All the faults that he displays result, in some way, from an over-nice attention to matters of fashion. Vaine, Frenchlove's fellow dupe, is a man given to proclaiming his sexual prowess and complaining of the fatigue caused him by his numerous, non-existent amours. He describes the origins of his behaviour thus: "I can't imagine how I first came to be of this humour, unless 'twere hearing the Orange Wenches talk of Ladies and their Gallants . . . "(I, i.) He brags to be in fashion. Even a hectoring bully, identified by the way in which "his shirt hangs out at his wast, and his Coller is unbutton'd," is subject to the power of fashion: "I'll beat him after the new way that I and my brother Kinsman invented last night, which all old fashion beating is nothing to."(III, i.)

The English Monsieur's major limitation stems, in the end, from its insistence that an over nice adherence to fashion is the common component of so many failings. Put simply, the play is not fashionable enough. Frenchlove, like most of the others in the play, is a humours character, and is of minor interest in Restoration comedy's gallery of

fops. His affectation is merely for all things French, which renders him grossly ridiculous. His prejudices are not expressed with any detailed references to contemporary fashions and for this reason he is less interesting than later fops, whose wardrobes and attitudes are more precisely defined.

London fashions did not become well-defined until Charles II introduced the vest to the world in October 1666. Prior to this date all that was highly fashionable was French. Afterwards, despite the somewhat chequered history of the vest, the idea of independent English styles had some credibility.¹⁰⁴ It became possible for plays to examine fashion quite minutely, without raising the ghost of French influence. The Anglicising of fashion enabled precision in social detail to become the hallmark of contemporary English comedy. There, the Englishness of the dress supported a particular English urbanity, shared by actors, characters and audience alike.

In Etherege's *She wou'd if she cou'd* fashionable clothing is the centre of a network of references which emphasise in concrete detail the modernity of urban life. The possessions of people of fashion, like

¹⁰⁴ The shift in attitude can be seen by comparing the two epilogues Dryden wrote for *The Wild Gallant*. In the original, written in 1664, he is discreetly imprecise in his references to dress: "But if you bid him choose his judges, then,/He boldly names true English gentlemen:/For he ne'er thought a handsome garb or dress/So great a crime to make their judgement less . . ." (Gardner, p. 3.) By the time Dryden wrote the epilogue to the revival, in April or May 1667, confidence in the independence of English fashions had become so strong that he could identify them clearly and contrast them with French ones, in order to claim a similar independence for English dramatic taste and judgement: "Would you but change, for serious plot and verse,/This motley garniture of fool and farce,/Nor scorn a mode, because 'tis taught at home,/Which does, like vests, our gravity become,/Our poet yields you should this play refuse:/As tradesmen, by the change of fashions, lose,/With some content, their fripperies of France,/In hope it may their staple trade advance." (Gardner, p. 15.)

Courtall's glass coach and his chariot, are supplemented by the purchases of Sir Oliver Cockwood's retinue, eager to sample the delights of the town. Lady Cockwood buys "new point", Ariana and Gatty, "a few fashionable toys" and Sir Oliver, the ill-fated "china-orange."¹⁰⁵

Etherege uses place with equal precision. The care he takes allows him to tailor the action of his play to the possibilities suggested by each of the play's settings. Let us examine the play's public scenes. The Mulberry Garden lay well to the west of London, on the present site of Buckingham Palace, and Etherege takes advantage of the comparative wildness of the place as he structures the meeting between Ariana and Gatty, and Courtall and Freeman, their two gallants. The masks the women wear are in keeping with the secrecy promised by the arbours of mulberry trees and the sparsely peopled walks. (II, i) The New Spring Garden was a more orderly and open affair which lay a short boat journey across the river from the town. It was frequented by citizens, who are several times referred to in the scene set there. Seclusion was not so easily found and there was less opportunity to avoid unsought meetings. When the characters come there seeking privacy, they find themselves embarrassed by a series of arrivals and unavoidable encounters, which culminate in the abortive scuffle between Sir Oliver and Courtall. (IV, ii.) The scene in the New Exchange is set by Mrs Trinket, "*sitting in a shop, people passing by as in the Exchange.*" (III, i.) Her cry: "Gloves, Ribbons, and Essences"--establishes the Exchange as a place both fashionable and commercial. Courtall, who knows its ways, arranges that his tiresome meeting with Lady Cockwood be interrupted by plausible entreaties to look at fashionable merchandise. He plays upon the public

¹⁰⁵ Etherege, *She wou'd if she cou'd*, I, ii; III, i; V, i.

traffic to escape from the threatened private meeting. The Bear is another commercial setting where privacy can be purchased. However, when the wrong company enters, Sir Oliver's private room becomes not a retreat, but an enclosure. (III, iii.) The reversal of Sir Oliver's expectations is matched by the *Antick* dress in which his female guests arrive: so tempting at first, to his jaded palate, it proves a sharp corrective when he discovers his wife beneath it.

The exactness of the detail is used to convey elliptically a world of leisurely extravagance in which the audience, by their familiarity with it, is also included. The playhouse is part of this world too. Ariana and Gatty bought their fashionable toys "to keep 'um in countenance at a Play, or in the Park." (III, i.) Lady Cockwood, with hypocrisy born of long practice, understates her attendance at plays. (III, iii.)

The importance of dress as a means of defining the network of social relations in *She wou'd if she cou'd* is foregrounded in its opening: a dressing scene. The scene is quite as elliptical as all other social references in this play, for it represents merely the abbreviated conclusion of Courtall's preparations:

Enter Courtall and Freeman, and a Servant brushing Courtall.
Court. So, so, 'tis well: let the coach be made ready. (I, i.)

Courtall disguises his fastidiousness under an air of assumed indifference, in contrast to Freeman's heartier tastes in both women and clothes: "I have thought myself very spruce e're now in an old Suit that has been brush'd and laid up a while." Courtall's dismissive opening

gestures, together with Freeman's expressions of distaste for those who keep their amatory business secret, indicate that private activity has no place in this play. The point is confirmed when Sentry's and Sir Oliver's secret instructions are first overheard, then openly discussed. Courtall proves himself master of this entirely public domain. In this opening scene he shows the skill of an expert contriver in his dealings with Lady Cockwood:

I have still been as careful to prevent all opportunities, as she has been to contrive 'em; and have still carried it so like a Gentleman, that there has not had the least suspicion of unkindness . . . (I, i.)

He shows the same skill as an actor when he plays a treble role for his onstage audience, appearing as a brother in drunken revelry to Sir Oliver, a faithful servant of Lady Cockwood's, to Sentry, and an ingenious companion to Freeman.

In the scenes which follow, those who would be private find that, even in their own homes, they can never manage it so. Lady Cockwood's private intentions--the unfulfilled conditional of the play's title--are always frustrated by some intrusion. Ariana's and Gatty's secret confessions are overheard and acknowledged by Courtall and Freeman. (V, i.) The most humiliating invasion of privacy is reserved for Sir Oliver. The first sign of his impending exposure is his unwilling appearance before Sir Joslin, "*in a Night-Gown and Slippers*." (III, ii.) Sir Joslin tempts him out of his private dress into his equally undignified penitential suit, in which he arrives at the Bear. His humiliation is completed when, with the assistance of Rakehell, an infernal union of bully, fop and pimp, he engages in a public dressing scene: there is a

decorum attached to dressing on the stage against which Sir Oliver is made to offend. Rakehell treats his customer with a presumed intimacy and renders his penitential suit even more ridiculous by the addition of fine French accessories. (III, iii.)

In Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden*, dress serves as a means of political definition. The play opens with a displaced dressing scene, in which a magistrate, Sir John Everyyoung, and his brother, Sir Samuel Forecast, discuss the merits and implications of their respective styles of dress. In their names, their clothing and their politics they stand as the representatives of the restored Stuart Monarchy and its predecessor, the puritan government under the protectorate. Their conversation is ostensibly about proper parental attitudes and the need to display exemplary behaviour, but in fact establishes an analogue for contrasting two styles of government.

Ever. Well, for all this heat, let's every one govern his own Family as he has a mind to't; I never vex my self that your Daughters live shut up as if they were in *Spain* or *Italy*; Nor pray don't you trouble your self that mine see Plays, Balls, and take their innocent Diversion as the Custom of the Country and their age requires. *Forec.* They are my Nieces, as they are your Daughters, and I'll tell you, you spoil 'um with your own Examples. Youth may well be allow'd to be stark mad when they see age so Extravagant. Is that a Dress for my elder Brother, and a Reverend Justice?
Ever. Yes, and a properer than your little Cuffs, Black Cap, and Boots there, for a Gentleman.¹⁰⁶

Sir Samuel's attitudes are authoritarian, repressive and censorious, such as sustain a narrow nationalism. Sir John, on the other hand, may be given to extravagant display, but he is benignly tolerant. He

¹⁰⁶ I, i, in, *The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Charles Sedley*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1928), I, 111.

defends his daughters' cosmopolitan existence as an education in the responsible exercise of liberty: "I think those women who have been least us'd to Liberty, most apt to abuse it when they come to't." (I, i.)

Although the play is set on the eve of the Restoration, eight years before, Sedley uses the character of Forecast to rehearse current arguments about Charles II's monarchical style. The criticisms Forecast levels at Everyyoung's dress--that it is unsuited to his age and office, that it is too much influenced by France and that his conduct encourages dissolute practices--are the same as were applied to Charles' behaviour, and its effect on the government of the realm. The twin time-schemes thus established are divided between the play's two plots.¹⁰⁷ Plays, pleasures and dress are the subject of frequent and detailed discussion, and the references to them mark this part of the play as strictly contemporary, taking place under a restored monarchy:

Est[ridge]. These Country Ladys for the first month take up their places in the *Mulberry Garden*, as early as a Citizen's Wife at a new Play.
Mod[ish]. And for the most part are as easily discover'd; they have always somewhat on, that is just left off by the Better Sort.

¹⁰⁷ The heroic plot, which deals with the fortunes and conflicting loyalties of Forecast's daughters and their cavalier lovers, is concerned with events leading up to the Restoration. Its language is well-fitted for noble expressions of sympathy and loyalty to the dispossessed Prince: "*Phil[ander]* ~~esb~~. Thy life, alas (dear friend)s no longer thine,/Thou hast engaged it in a brave design:/Thy bleeding Country, and thy Princes Right,/Are th'only Quarrels that thy Sword shou'd fight,/ . . . / . . .
Eug[enio]. Now thou hast touch'd me in the tend'rest part,/Though Love possess, Honour must rule my heart;/My Nation's Fate's too great a Sacrifice/For me to make though to *Althea*'s Eyes . . ."--yet it is this same Prince whose future conduct is to be considered in the comic plot (III, i).

Est. They are the Antipodes of the Court for when a Fashion sets there, it rises among them. (I, ii.)

Sedley does not deny the charges of Charles/Everyyoung's extravagance. Indeed he makes Estridge (Ostrich) and Modish, the two fops, the magistrate's companions in gaiety and revelry. Their commendation of him is as slighting of his authority as it is approving of his conviviality: "[His daughters] need not fear him; he swears hee'l n'er stir beyond *Hide-Park* or *Colebys* at farthest, as long as he has an Acre left, they shall all come to him: 'tis a pleasant old fellow . . . " (I, ii.)

Sedley treats Sir Charles's profligacy as the whimsical behaviour of a flawed but human justice. When Forecast attempts to woo Widow Brightstone, a lady of handsome means, Everyyoung interrupts them with the drunken assistance of Modish, Estridge and a group of fiddlers, and warns the widow that her suitor is more interested in her booty than her body: "If he encrease or multiply, it must be thy Bags; Interest and broakage are his best instruments." (II, iv.) Forecast decides to pursue his suit by discarding his high-crowned hat, black cap and boots, and emulating, even excelling the fine dress of his brother: "I have two Laces in a Seam more than my brother *Everyyoung*, and a Yard more in my Cravat." (III, ii.) Everyyoung deals with his hypocrisy and presumption by calling before him three apprentices charged with breaking windows, and commanding them thus:

Follow me, and when I show you a certain Chair, take the Gentleman out of it and cudgel him. I'll be at a little Distance, and if you want help, be ready to assist you. Be sure you call him Sir *John Everyyoung* and tell him of a Lady he affronted. (III, ii).

From his vantage point he can watch the execution of his judicial mischief, while avoiding responsibility for it.

5.5 *Changing Conventions in Dress.*

From their earliest offerings the first generation of Restoration playwrights understood and exploited the dramatic potential of the dress their audiences wore. Aware of their audience's sensitivity to the nuances of fashion, they used it to define character, location and patterns of action with both precision and flexibility. In their hands fashion became the stage's most powerful metaphor, capable of summoning images of social, domestic, economic and political life. They used the implications of fashionable dress to create a set of costuming conventions. Dressing scenes and fops appeared in comedies, tragicomedies and farces alike, transporting the conventions across the boundaries of genres.

A theatrical convention cues the audience's interpretation of stage action. It allows them to answer the question: "What is supposed to be going on here?"¹⁰⁸ For example, when a character chooses outdoor clothes in a dressing scene, the audience infer that what they see is a private man preparing himself to appear in public. He arms himself by selecting from his wardrobe. The dress he adopts constitutes the means by which he will attempt to carry out, publicly, those intentions which he now, privately, holds. The convention establishes the boundaries within which the public action of the play will take place. Theatrical conventions remain useful until the cues they supply become merely trivial. Or, to put it another way, a convention remains alive (and not

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality*, p. 41; see also Chs. 5, 6.

merely in use) for as long as it is capable of variation and elaboration. We have seen how conventions of dress developed immediately after the Restoration. Let us now see how they were elaborated upon in later plays.

The dressing scene retained its popularity until the eighteenth century, demonstrating its versatility by wilfully submitting itself to distortion, abbreviation and inversion. Consider the use Wycherley made of the convention in *The Country-Wife*. In the opening scene, Horner is attended by a Quack, whose ministrations have consisted in his spreading word of his patient's impotence. Horner explains how the ridicule and contempt to which he is subject will be offset by the ease with which he /*v* can now enjoy women's favours. No sooner has he finished than visitors arrive to see this new prodigy for themselves. Sir Jaspar Fidget comes to taunt him, Harcourt and Dorilant recount how he was greeted with universal ridicule when he appeared in public at the playhouse and the finely dressed fop, Sparkish, mockingly compares him with the fine new signs of London.¹⁰⁹ The scene is simply a version of a dressing scene: a gentleman, with his attendant, reveals his intentions in private and prepares his public face. Wycherley distorts the dressing scene form by having Horner attended not by a servant, but by a doctor, one who has dressed him, not with the usual tools of his trade, but with hints, suggestions and secret innuendoes. The Quack performs his function with servant-like solicitude; the reception Horner receives in public can be credited entirely to his ministrations. Wycherley uses the form in order to exploit the distinctions between public and private that a dressing scene establishes.

¹⁰⁹ I, i, in *Plays*, p. 248.

When a convention is well established, dramatists can invoke it with the briefest of theatrical gestures. On occasion the impression of privacy created by the dressing scene was aroused by a form of synecdoche, by the use of a single garment of undress or a book--the indispensable accessory of private activity. Shadwell opens *The Virtuoso* with the direction: "Bruce, *in his Gown, reading*."¹¹⁰ The contemplative mood is evoked only to be dispelled by the frenzied action of the play, for Bruce's raptures over Lucretius are rudely interrupted by Longvil. The association of books and poetry with privacy made quotation of poetry a useful device in prose comedies. It was used to dispel the expectation of public display, common to characters and audiences, and to signal the other side of a character's existence. Dorimant's quotation of Waller, in *The Man of Mode*, and Roebuck's speaking lines from *Tyrannic Love*, in *Love and a Bottle*, momentarily remove both rakes from the action around them. The strength of private interest and private perceptions is asserted in these characters given over to the control of public display. This bookish variation of the dressing convention is used to different effect in the opening scene of Congreve's *Love for Love*:

Valentine *in his Chamber Reading*. Jeremy *waiting*. Several
Books upon the Table.
Valentine. Jeremy.
Jeremy. Sir.
Valentine. Here, take away I'll walk a turn, and digest
what I have read--
Jeremy. You'll grow Devilish fat upon this Paper-diet.
 *Aside and taking away the Books.*¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *The Virtuoso* I, i, in *Works*, III, 105.

¹¹¹ I, i, in *Plays*, p. 216.

The verbal and visual puns on the nutritional value of books indicate the comic potential of Valentine's poverty, while the books themselves declare his solitude. Dramatic necessity requires that Valentine stop reading, but his private business is not interrupted: he puts down his books to pursue it in other ways. He remains singularly distant from the procession of busy people who enter his room to conduct their affairs. Valentine's confinement, and his poor dress, is enforced by his father's disapproval of his former extravagance and his withdrawal of financial support, but Valentine embraces his indigence as a demonstration of his love for Angelica. The dressing scene with which the play opens cannot be concluded until he has recovered both his money and his mistress. It is protracted until the fifth act, when Valentine enters, triumphantly: "*Enter Valentine dress'd*"--it is the first time he has appeared so. (V, i.)

Dorimant's dressing scene, in *The Man of Mode*, is an extended one, but the delay is very much of his own choosing, and not forced upon him from without. He enters, "*in his Gown and Slippers, with a Note in his hand made up, repeating Verses.*"¹¹² In these clothes he remains, long after Medley has urged him, "Come, on with your trappings; 'tis later than you imagine." Dorimant uses the long interval between rising and dressing to consider his plans and set in motion the most profitable courses of action. When he finally submits to Handy's dressing it is impatiently: "My clothes, quickly."--feigning an indifference to an undertaking, the success of which he has already determined:

¹¹² I, i, in *Dramatic Works*, II, 189.

Dor. Leave your unnecessary fiddling; a Wasp that's buzzing about a Man's Nose at Dinner is not more troublesome than thou art.

[*To Handy who is fiddling about him.*]

Hand. You love to have yur Cloaths hang just, Sir.

Dor. I love to be well dress'd, Sir, and think it no scandal to my understanding. (I, i.)

The compliments which follow his dressing are received with an affected negligence, as if they but confirm the efficacy of his will:

Bell[air]. That's a mighty pretty suit of yours, *Dorimant*.

Dor. I am glad't has your approbation.

Bell. No man in Town has a better fancy in his Cloaths than you have.

Dor. You will make me have an opinion of my Genius. (I, i.)

Dorimant's prolonged period of undress and his abrupt transformation underline the control he exercises over both parts of his world, and the exactness with which he separates them. Indeed, the only ones to disturb his composure, or call his eminence in doubt, are the servants and tradespeople with whom he deals. The Shoemaker's usurpation of the gentlemanly vice of swearing, his understanding of the requirements of a civil marriage and his undermining of Dorimant's domestic authority show how narrow is the world over which Dorimant holds so powerful a sway. It is as easy to imitate the behaviour of most gentlemen, the scene implies, as it is to dress them.

Such a display of independence from those inferiors who supply and arrange fine dress is salutary, but when the relationship is reversed and great ones minister to those beneath them, their power is used to more insidious effect. In Dryden's *Secret Love* the Queen of Sicily, jealous of Philocles' love for Candiope, takes it upon herself to rearrange her rival's dress before the unsuspecting man:

Queen. *Asteria*, Mend my Cousins Handkerchief;
 It sits too narrow there, and shows too much
 The broadness of her Shoulders--Nay, fie, *Asteria*,
 Now you put it too much backward, and discover
 The bigness of her breasts.

.
 Come hither, *Philocles*, do but observe,
 She has but one gross fault in all her shape,
 That is, she bears up here too much,
 And the malicious Workman
 Has left it open to your eye.¹¹³

The parallels to the dressing scenes of comedy are given added point by the Queen's pulling out her glass and comparing her own appearance to her rival's. By adopting the role of dresser she is able to give vent to her malice with a familiarity unbecoming in a Queen. In a play in which the usual indicators of power--pomp, prisons and death--are conspicuously undervalued, the Queen's attentions seem remarkably threatening:

Queen. But yet methinks, those knots of sky, do not
 So well with the dead color of her face.

Methinks a long patch here beneath her eye,
 Might hide that dismal hollowness.(III, i.)

The natural position of a dressing scene is at the opening of a play, where it helps to chart the social dimensions inside which the later action will take place. Whenever it occurs outside this position it disturbs the already established dimensions and asks that we consider the relationship between those dimensions and the character who is dressing. While the initial dressing scene matches the day's pattern in the lives of the spectators by exhibiting the preparations that some, at least, of them made before appearing in public, the interior dressing

¹¹³ III, i, in *Works*, IX, 152-53.

scene suggests an undue and obtrusive interest in one's own dress, a self-indulgent prolonging of the moment of separation of private from public. Such an interest is characteristic of the fop, to whom the majority of the interior dressing scenes belong. Those who dress in the middle of a play invert the accepted relationship between dress and social activity: they do not dress to live, but live to dress.

Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* offers a fine and complex example of this inversion. The revaluation of dress is prepared for in the first scene. There the conventional metaphorical relationship between dress and money, whereby dress is represented as a means of social credit and exchange, is made concrete in the transaction between Young Fashion and the Waterman. The latter is paid for his services with Young Fashion's portmanteau, which contains "a solitary old Wastcoat". A blue coat, formerly in the trunk, had earlier disappeared to pay the reckoning for a meal.¹¹⁴ In hopes of having his poverty relieved, Young Fashion and his man, Lory, repair to the house of his older brother, the newly ennobled Lord Foppington, where they find him at his levee, attended by the thronging dependents of a man of fashion: tailor, seamstress, shoemaker, hosier and periwig-maker. The company is a travesty of that normally entertained by a man of fashion: his favourites are not persons of quality, but "his Periwig, his Cravat, his Feather, his Snuff-Box . . .".¹¹⁵ "the inanimate paying court to the ridiculous. (I, ii.) This perversion of normal human relationships is compounded by the scant attention he pays to his younger brother and by the mirrors with which he excludes the rest of the world, to obtain a better view of himself: " . . . let my People dispose the Glasses so, that I may see myself before and

¹¹⁴ I, ii, in *Works*, I, 23.

behind; for I love to see my self all raund---" (I, iii.)

Behaving thus before his mirrors the fop recreates the narcissus myth in an urban context: real and substantial aspects of the self are laid waste in a limitless self-absorption. The least manifestation of humanness is denied as unnecessary to civilised tastes and behaviour. Lord Foppington's stockings must be less thick, lest he look too much like a chairman. His wig must cover most of his face--"a Periwig to a Man, shou'd be like a Mask to a Woman, nothing shou'd be seen but his Eyes"--for to show too much cheek invites comparison with a trumpeter. The attenuation of his physical self is most strongly resisted by his feet, which rebel against the narrow confines which fashion has decreed for them. However the declarations of his shoemaker: "My lord, I have workt for half the People of Quality in Town, these Twenty Years; and 'twere very hard I should not know when a Shooe hurts and when it don't"--convince Lord Foppington that he is capable of dealing with these rebellious subjects.

The narcissistic fop's rejection of the body physical is also demonstrated in Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice*, where the fop's niceness consists in his aversion to anything that has come into contact with coarse humanity. His salt must be fetched from the country, for all ordinary salt is "stuff pawed by butlers and waiters." Wine he will not drink: "Wine Deuce take me sir if the clowns don't press all the grapes with their filthy naked feet."¹¹⁵ The narcissistic self, engrossed in its own reflection in the glass, dispenses with whatever disturbs that reflection or reminds it of the human body underneath. In Vanbrugh's *The*

¹¹⁵ John Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice, or It Cannot Be* (London: 1685) III.

Provok'd Wife, Lady Fancyfull--first cousin to Dryden's Melantha--cannot tolerate the presence of a maid who ventures to remark adversely upon her appearance;

Cor[net]. Your Ladyship looks very ill, truly.
Lady Fan[cyfull]. Lard, how ill-natur'd thou art, *Cornet*, to tell me so, though the thing shou'd be true! Don't you know that I have humility enough to be but too easily out of Conceit with my self? Hold the Glass; I dare swear that will have more manners than you have.¹¹⁶

Lady Fancyfull dismisses Cornet: "Get out of the Room, *Cornet*; I can't endure you. This Wench methinks doth look so unsufferably ugly"--as part of a recalcitrant world which has not yet conformed to her own image and expectations of it.

The self that so absorbs the fop is composed entirely of surfaces. When Sir Fopling first appears in *The Man of Mode*, he obliges the company with a minute account of the origins--the pedigree--of the dress in which his excellence consists:

L[ady] Town[ley]. The Suit?
Sir Fop[ling]. Barroy.
Emelia. The Garniture?
Sir Fop. Le Gras---
Med[ley]. The Shooes?
Sir Fop. Piccar.
Dorimant. The Perriwig?
Sir Fop. Chedreux.
Town and *Emilia*. The gloves?
Sir Fop. Orangerie! (III, ii.)

So accomplished a fop has no essential self; he is the sum of the products of a diverse and foreign geography, and his body a mannequin on which the wares of others are displayed. The surfaces of the fop, the boundary between himself and the external world, expand to fill the

¹¹⁶ I, ii, in *Works*, I, 120.

vacuum which dependence on fashion has left in his nature and to render unnecessary the external world. Sir Courtly Nice has contrived to restrict physical contact with this world to a mere brushing of surfaces: "There's not a lady in a thousand I can salute. I can only touch the tip o' their ear with my cheek." (IV.) In this land of expanded surfaces the dressing scene, normally the boundary between public and private, is savoured by the fop as a leisurely celebration of his essential self, where public and private meet to admire the details of his figure. Sir Courtly Nice's levee commences with a song, continues through his conversation with Surly, and culminates in the fop's return to bed, after the contamination of another's touch. (III.) Even language loses its power to communicate individual feeling and becomes a merely superficial indicator of fashion. Lady Fancyfull affects a fashionable smattering of French in her speech. However, this makes her the creature of Mademoiselle, her maid. Mademoiselle allays all her mistress's objections and governs her behaviour simply by lapsing into French when pressed to answer:

Lady Fan. Fe *Mademoiselle*, Fe: Reputation is a Jewel.
Madam. Qui coute bien chere Matam.
Lady Fan. Why sure you wou'd not sacrifice your Honor to
 your Pleasure.
Madam. Je suis Philosophe. (I, ii.)

Reputation, and honor too it seems, are subject to the vagaries of fashionable usage.

Flattery invariably undoes the fop. His chief business is to recreate the world in his own image, so that he may love it as he does himself. Through flattery an intransigent world revenges itself on him,

who would ignore its existence, by returning enhanced his false but much-loved images of himself. Lory's advice to Young Fashion is to follow just that course: "We seldom care for those that don't love what we love; if you would creep into his Heart, you must enter into his Pleasures." (*The Relapse*, I, iii.) The fop, in pursuit of his own image, will forfeit his hold on the real world. The chief agent of this destructive flattery is the mirror, for as Lady Fancifull says: "Nay, everything's Just in my house but *Cornet*. The very Looking-Glass gives her the *Dementi*. But I'm almost afraid it flatters me, it makes me look so very engaging." (*The Provok'd Wife*, I, ii.)

/Roman

In the mirror the beholder finds an entire world of pleasure, but the audience, like the other characters, are aware of the plain backing that lies behind its gilded frame. Indeed when Sir Courtly compliments Leonora on her mirror he admires only himself, surrounded by its handsome frame:

Sir Co. . . . -- a pretty glass this madam. (*Looks in a glass.*)
Leo. So, he's making an assignation with his own foolish face. I'll leave him to court that and steal away. (*Exit.*)
 (V.)

His proposal of marriage is put to his own reflection, but is accepted and acted on by Leonora's ageing aunt, thus uniting him permanently with those reminders of gross physicality which he least wishes to entertain.

The stage's criticism of the fop is also levelled at that society, linked to him by a common interest in dress, which has allowed him to flourish. From Frenchlove to Sir Novelty's apotheosis as Lord

Foppington, the fop is represented as a person of ever-increasing prominence in a society which has dispensed with all grounds for making useful distinctions of worth. The mirrors in which their follies are displayed are as constant an expression of contemporary malaise as the skulls of Jacobean tragedies.

Chapter VI

CONVERSATION AND CRITICISM, PLAYHOUSES AND PLAYS.

Sir Charles Sedley was known to his contemporaries as an accomplished wit, poet and dramatist. His dramatic reputation was derived from his renown as a witty and agreeable conversationalist.

I have heard of the success of the Eunuch and am very glad the Town has so good a taste to give the Same just applause to Sir Charles Sidley's writings which his friends have always done to his conversation. Few of our plays can boast more wit than I have heard him speak at a Supper.¹

His skill drew praises from Shadwell and also Dryden, who celebrated it in his portrayal of Lisideius.² Burnet, comparing his conversation to Rochester's, said of him that he had, "a sudden and more copious wit, which furnished a perpetual run of discourse; but he was not so correct as Lord Dorset, nor so sparkling as Lord Rochester."³ Pepys, too, remarked on the delights of his discourse, when he gave over paying attention to a play in order to hear Sir Charles conversing with two ladies. (*Diary*, 18 February, 1667.) Such were Sedley's conversational accomplishments that he regarded himself as something of an authority on the matter of conversation. In his *Essay on Entertainments*, he adapted

¹ *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, pp. 121-22.

² Shadwell, Dedication to *A True Widow*, in *Works*, III, 283; Dryden, Dedication to *The Assination*, in *Essays*, ed. Watson, I, 187; *Of Dramatic Poesy: An Essay*, in *Essays*, I, 19 ff.

³ Burnet, *A History of His Own Time*, I, 372.

Varro to suit the requirements of the age and gave instructions on how best to arrange an enjoyable dinner. In matters of setting, service and quality of food he followed his model fairly closely, dealing briefly with each in order to consider at length the conversation, the real entertainment, for which the meal furnished merely a background. And the topics of conversation? According to Sedley, those present should not dwell upon

State affairs, private Business, or Matters of Interest, which Men are apt to dispute with more Heat, Concern, and Animosity, than is consistent with the good Humour and Mirth principally intended at such meetings; in which we shou'd rather talk of pleasant, chearful and delightful Subjects, such as Beauty, Painting, Musick, Poetry, the Writers of the past and present Age; whereby we may at once improve and refresh our Wits; not wrack and torture them with knotty, rugged and contradictory Disputes, occasion'd often by an Affectation of Superiority, which is the worst Effect, and greatest Proof of Self-conceit.⁴

For Sedley, the conversation most suitable to agreeable company and intellectual stimulation is of a type we would recognise as critical discussion. It presupposes a familiarity with the arts, both ancient and modern, and the ability to compare their forms and merits. Such conversation is an interlude which celebrates not wealth, power or position, but a form of urbane retirement, the leisure to escape the concerns of business or state and to exclude them from the notice of the company. It is the same form of conversational retreat as that to which Lisideius and his companions escape in Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesy*, when they turn from considering the outcome of the sea-battle against the

⁴ "An Essay on Entertainments," in *Poetical and Dramatic Works*, II, 99.

⁵ *Of Dramatic Poesy: An Essay*, in *Essays*, I, 18-21.

Dutch to discuss the merits of modern plays.⁵

In the person of Sir Charles Sedley we find an association of what for us are three quite separate social and literary activities: conversation, criticism and dramatic practice. In Sedley's opinion each term of the triad seems to support and depend upon the others. Were the association of these several accomplishments unique to him it would perhaps be of some biographical interest; however, it is not for Sedley alone that such an interconnection exists. From the observations of many of his contemporaries it appears that in their minds each of the elements of this triad was bound to the others in a pattern of mutual influence.

The common origin of these elements lay in the experience and behaviour of the audience in the playhouse. Conversation, contemporaries claimed, improved and was in turn improved by the language used in plays. The theory and practice of drama were seen as fit topics of conversation. Discussions of plays and playhouses found their way onto the stage itself as part of the representation. The historical accuracy of some of these claims about the uses and importance of conversation is impossible to verify, since conversation, of all human activities, leaves only the slightest trace. But in a sense questions of accuracy are irrelevant: a great many people, not all of them connected with the theatre, wrote and behaved as if these claims were both important and true. The strength of their belief governed the attitudes of dramatists and their audience towards the dialogue of plays. If we fail to consider this network of relationships between conversation, criticism and dramatic practice in the Restoration, we deprive ourselves of an

approach to the plays that was of considerable significance to the audiences who first saw them. We should do well, in our criticism of these plays, to reappraise the uses they make of conversational forms and values. Let us begin by examining the functions and forms of conversation, the most sociable of human activities.

Conversation is as old as civilisation. It is the tie that binds society together in the multiplicity of its conditions and pursuits.⁶ It defines the patterns of social relations and encourages amity, toleration and a sense of community amongst the participants. Yet it begins without rehearsal and proceeds with no end in view:

Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure. It is with conversation as it is with gambling, its significance lies neither in winning nor losing, but in wagering.⁷

It is this valuing the activity, not the end, this spontaneity, which governs the behaviour of participants in the conversation and establishes the subject and form of their discourse.

The essential characteristic of a conversation is that it can embrace a number of different participants or voices. Each of these voices preserves itself distinct from the others. At the same time each

⁶ For contemporary uses of this image see Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 402; Charles Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint Evremond, *The Letters*, ed. John Hayward (London: Routledge, 1930), p. 122; S. C., *The Art of Complaisance* (London: 1671), p. 51. See also, Herbert Davis, "The Conversation of the Augustans," in *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thoughts and Literature from Bacon to Pope*, ed. Richard Foster Jones (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 181-197.

⁷ Micheal Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 198.

voice engages with the other voices, allows them to impinge on it and adapts itself in recognition of them. Conversation is thus the antithesis of polemic. It is peculiarly egalitarian, even democratic, in that it resists the domination of any one voice. The enterprise is most at risk when such domination threatens, for it intrudes upon another fundamental principle of conversation, the right of all participants, all voices, to be heard.

Each voice represents a serious engagement (though it is serious not merely in respect of its being pursued for the conclusions it promises); and without this seriousness the conversation would lack impetus. But in its participation in the conversation each voice learns to be playful, learns to understand itself conversationally and to recognise itself as a voice amongst voices. As with children, who are great conversationalists, the playfulness is serious and the seriousness in the end is only play.⁸

Not all subjects are capable of fostering this tension between the playful and the serious. This is not because some subjects are inherently more or less elevated than others, but because the interest and emotion that they arouse is either too great or too little to sustain any prolonged engagement. Some topics are less likely to produce a diversity of opinions: they quickly exhaust their possibilities; others tend to inflame or discomfort certain of the participants: they are too serious to permit any play. Topics of either sort are inimical to the continuance of a conversation: they threaten to end it in declamation, vituperation, embarrassment or, worst of all, silence.

⁸ Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," pp. 201-02.

The subject of a conversation, then, is one on which the participants can agree to disagree, and in disagreeing can still display a considerable level of respect towards one another. The subject emerges during the course of a conversation as the result of the communal interest of the participants. It is not pre-ordained, although the participants may at some point either overtly or tacitly agree to confine themselves to one concern. The strength of such an agreement can be gauged from the irritation or impatience that greets prolonged personal reminiscences and contributions to the conversation which are considered tangential to the accepted concern. They are felt to be impositions on the other voices, pieces of gratuitous self-assertion, the effect of which is to exclude general participation. They break the bounds of the conversational game, thereby undermining the seriousness that belongs to all games only for as long as their limits are acknowledged. The seriousness, then, does not belong solely to the subject of a conversation, but to the manner in which the participants treat each other in dealing with that subject.

A conversation takes whatever form will best secure its own continuance. Although a conversation may appear in retrospect to have some structure or development its form is not dictated by any external design. Its form is always potential, in the process of realising itself, and is governed by such internal considerations as a speaker's need to engage with the previous voices and to allow other voices the same opportunity. Good conversation never ends with the emptying of its possibilities. It ends artificially, with the arrival of demands from without: time and business signal the end of the leisurely retreat in which conversation flourishes.

In sum, conversation is a leisured activity, a serious piece of playing which takes place between independent equals. Its chief characteristics are the readiness with which it can embrace different voices, its insistence on its own continuance, the high regard in which it holds the spontaneity of each moment and its refusal to subordinate those moments to a pattern of overall movement.

These characteristics account for the powerful attraction conversation holds--both as an activity and as an image of the ways in which social relations are organised. Before considering how it represents other forms of activity, let us briefly consider the variations conversation is subject to. The number of people admitted to the conversation may be great or few, the range of subjects dealt with may become enlarged or restricted--some may disappear entirely from the catalogue of acceptable topics. The method by which the subject is treated may alter, becoming more or less serious as the rules of the game evolve. The voices change: new ones are admitted, some old ones cease to be heard. They shift their tones, becoming less positive, more diffident, perhaps; artless honesty comes into vogue and studied elegance is frowned upon. So, too, does the setting shift as now the court, now the tavern, the table and the club are in their turn frequented. With the movement of place and time, one preferred topic gives way to another, manners to morals, drama to film. At times several of these shifts occur simultaneously, and when this happens it will likely be noticed and people will say that the rules of conversation have changed.

Conversational patterns supply us with a series of preferences and values which govern the possible relations within a society. The number

of participants in a conversation, their relative status, the conversational rituals they follow and the settings in which they do so, all reflect the patterns of other forms of social interaction. More than this, such conversational patterns are often the model for other interactions. They supply models for making, accepting and rejecting offers, for expressing hopes and disappointments. They define who may interact with whom, and with what freedom. To say, then, that the rules of conversation in a society have changed is to say that relations between individuals within that society have changed. Let us now examine the changes that occurred in the pattern of English conversation in the late seventeenth century and see how those changes relate to the experiences of playhouse audiences.

6.1 *English Conversation in the Seventeenth Century*

At about the time of Charles II's Restoration certain movements in the pattern of English conversation converged. English men and women became aware of alterations in their conversation and considered them as one of the important ways in which their age differed from those preceding. "Our conversation is so much refined," they claimed, with characteristic lack of modesty.⁹ The changes that occurred were in large part matters of degree, but the effect of the notice they received was to make conversation more considerable. It was seen as a most proper and profitable occupation for a gentleman, whatever his place of origin and residence. Even those who had no great love for the town, like the author of *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town*, saw civil conversation as the most fitting exercise for a

⁹ Dryden, *Defense of the Epilogue*, in *Essays*, I, 181.

man's talents and the improvement of his mind:

It is agreed by all, that, though Conversation is a great Felicity, and Solace to Humane Nature, yet that a life partly of that, and partly of Leisure and Retiredness, is most suitable to the Affairs and Interests of Men.¹⁰

A person's conversation became the measure of his or her worth. Character writers devoted themselves to lengthy considerations of the merits of their subject's conversation and developed a taxonomy for distinguishing various types of conversational style. It could be easy or affected, brisk or insipid, sparkling or correct. The ease with which a man discoursed, his liveliness and scope and his affability towards his inferiors ranked alongside the account of his other, more ancient virtues.¹¹ Panegyricists and dedicators, too, often seem more comfortable praising their patrons' conversation than they do the rest of their talents and accomplishments.¹²

Conversation's triumph as a measure of individual worth was, naturally enough, accompanied by its emergence as the dominant force in social relationships. In books on manners and behaviour the term "conversation" tends to replace "courtliness" or "courtesy" as a generic term referring to social conduct. This indicates a change in the way in

¹⁰ *Remarques*, p. 16.

¹¹ See Savile, *A Character of Charles II*, Sect. V, "Of His Wit and Conversation," in *Complete Works*, pp. 257-60 Sir Samuel Tuke, *A Character of Charles the Second* (London: 1660), p. 6; Gilbert Burnet, *A History of His Own Time*, I, 372.

¹² See Otway, Dedication to *Titus and Berenice*, in *Works*, I, 254-55; Shadwell, Dedication to *A True Widow*, in *Works* III, 283; Dryden, Dedication to *The Assignation* in *Works*, XI, 319-23; Banks, Dedication to *The Rival Kings* (London: 1677); Congreve, Dedication to *The Way of the World*, in *Plays*, pp. 391-2.

which social conduct was described and evaluated.¹³ Books that make explicit reference to the court, like *The Courtier's Calling*, have a distinctly old-fashioned flavour.¹⁴ The accomplishments they recommend belong to a romantically remembered past rather than a practical present. The movement from courtesy to conversation represents a shift away from the Court as the centre of social values, with an emphasis placed instead on urbane flexibility and on the commingling of men of different stations.

We can see the effects of conversational values in the changes that occurred in prose writing after the Restoration. English prose, it is commonly claimed, changed in 1660.¹⁵ The latinate styles of Jacobean and Caroline authors gave place to a prose that moved with conversational intimacy and ease. The distinguishing quality of Restoration prose is the writer's awareness of the reader as an associate, an equal, a person to be addressed frequently and on familiar terms. Statements made to a public audience took on more intimate tones. Such tones persuade the reader to the desired point of view by implying a community of interest. At its best Restoration discursive writing succeeds by making the reader privy to a conversation in which certain important principles have been agreed upon beforehand. It is not the effectiveness of the rhetorical devices that persuades the reader, but the reasonableness of

¹³ See *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town*, *Remarks upon Remarques* (London: 1673), *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, *Expos'e in Two Dialogues* (London: 1693) and *The Art of Complaisance*.

¹⁴ *The Courtier's Calling*, Part I (London: 1675).

¹⁵ See James Sutherland, *On English Prose* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957), Ch. 3, "The Age of Prose"; Ian A. Gordon, *The Movement of English Prose* (London: Longmans, 1966), Ch. 12, "Speech-based Prose".

the opinions which pass between people who have already confessed to understanding each other. In the prose of the best writers of the time, Dryden, Halifax, and Clarendon, the urge to convince readers seems often less important than simply to engage with them and bring to their attention matters which, if reflected upon away from the press of rhetoric, cannot help but gently prove the writer's case.

The letter, one side of an imaginary conversation, became a popular form in which to publish opinion and argument. Almost as popular was the dialogue, which carries the qualities of conversation even further into prose. Although Restoration writers cannot be credited with inventing the dialogue form, they employed it to an unprecedented degree, taking particular care to reproduce the texture of real discourse. The hour and the setting of the conversation are usually precisely identified and often change to allow the participants to pursue their discussion in greater comfort.¹⁶ The speakers address each other with colloquial freedom, very seldom venturing upon an extended formal speech. Nor do they adhere strictly to the accepted lines of an argument. Tangential remarks are made and, if interesting, taken up by the next speaker. The aim of those who wrote dialogues was not to present an artificial debate, but to reconstruct a civilised conversation as it might have occurred.¹⁷

Ital / ¹⁶ See *Wit for Money* (London: 1691); Dennis, *The Impartial Critic*, in *Critical Works*, I, 11-41; *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*; A Comparison between the Two Stages.

¹⁷ Compare *Cyville and Uncyville Life* (London: 1579) with *The Humours and Conversations of the Town* for contrasting styles of dialogue on the subject of town and country life.

Prose which treated its readers with ease and familiarity was no new thing, but its use in England had been previously restricted to personal memoirs and unpublished communications. Its public emergence is indicative of the wider influence of conversational norms. The authority of conversation over the written word extended even to matters of punctuation. Writers of dialogue used commas not only to isolate grammatical units but to break up the sentence into the natural rhythms of speech. Weak sounds, when unheard, were often unseen: "walked" became "walk'd; "stolen", "stol'n"; "should", "shou'd" and so on.¹⁸

As conversational values gained in importance, so a reputation for conversational excellence became more eagerly sought, often to the dismay of men of an earlier generation. Isaac Barrow, for example, foresaw the public and private dangers that awaited seekers after fame as witty conversationalists, in an age "so infinitely addicted to this sort of speaking":

Many at least (to purchase this glory, to be deemed considerable in the faculty, and inrolled amongst the wits), not only *make shipwreck of conscience*, abandon virtue, and forfeit all pretences to wisdom; but neglect their estates and prostitute their honour: so to the private damage of many particular persons, and no small prejudice to the public, are our times possessed and transported with this humour.¹⁹

The thirst for this reputation and the approval that went with it was not confined to Londoners alone. Anthony Wood noted its influence in the changing patterns of conversation in Oxford:

¹⁸ See Swift, "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue," in *Prose Works*, IV, 11.

¹⁹ "Against Foolish Talking and Jestings" in *The Sermons of the Learned Dr. Isaac Barrow*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: 1751), I, 317.

Since the king was restored it was looked upon as a piece of pedantry to produce a Latin sentence in discours (and some years after, to put it in titles of books, especially those printed in Oxford in the Theatre), to dispute theologically at the tables at meals, to be earnest or zealous in any one thing. But all, forsooth, must be gentile and neat--no paines taken. Bantring.²⁰

Wood and Barrow notice certain alterations in the ordering of things in their world. Their remarks reveal their fear that older values in discourse were being displaced, and that this process was not only shown in, but largely brought about by changes in the pattern of conversation.

These changes can in part be seen in a number of caveats that began to govern the conduct of conversations. As Wood noted, it was no longer polite for a man to display his learning--his pedantry--in his talk with others. To do so made him a less convivial companion and earned him the reputation of being grave. Roger North, writing of Dr John North, a man "always jocose and free in his ordinary conversation," illustrates well the distaste for pedantry found even among scholars:

he had no relish at all for the conversation of his fellow collegiates; and they I presume had as little for his . . . consorting rather with the younger gentlemen than the grave and, as he thought perhaps, empty seniors of the college . . .²¹

With an aversion to the "hard words" of pedants went an equal disapproval of speech that sounded antiquated or coarsely rustic. By clinging to the phrases and accents of the past a man betrayed his lack of acquaintance with the town and his disregard for the civilising influence of its company. The standards of spoken English were set by

²⁰ Wood, *The Life and Times*, II, 332.

²¹ Roger North, *The Life of Dr. John North*, in *The Lives of the Norths*, ed. A. Jessop, 3 vols. (London: 1890), II, 287, 289.

those who dwelt in London; they passed judgement on all who failed to show due deference to them:

As one would say at London,
I would eat more Cheese if I had it.
 The Northern man says,
Ay sud eat more Cheese gin ay hadet.
 And the Western man says,
Chud eat more Cheese an chad it.
 Be you Judge now, Sir, who speaks best English, *London* or
Country.²²

Many, to avoid the imputation of rusticity, fell into the opposing vice and interlarded their speech with affected or foreign expressions which they hoped would act as guarantees of their modernity. These, too, drew upon themselves the criticism of those who had a concern for the improvement on English conversation.²³

Other defects of conversation were seen to lie not so much in the speakers' choice of words or the matter of their accents, but in their attitudes to their fellows and the things they discussed. Those who obstinately pursued their own interests or who persistently contradicted the rest were anathema to conversation. They inhibited its flow by denying to others the freedom of opinion which they arrogated entirely to themselves.²⁴

²² *Remarks upon Remarques*, pp. 93-94.

²³ *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town*, p. 37; *Remarks upon Remarques*, p. 94.

²⁴ *The Art Of Complaisance*, pp. 82 ff; 124 Swift, *Hints towards an Essay on Conversation*, in *Prose Works*, IV, 92: "There are two Faults in Conversation, which appear very different, yet arise from this same Root, and are equally blameable; I mean an Impatience to interrupt others, and the Uneasiness at being interrupted ourselves."

The ideal lay in the mean, in avoiding the use of antiquated, pedantic and affected words and choosing only those which encouraged a quick apprehension of meaning and ready flow of conversation by reason of their "easiness to intelligence."²⁵ The influence of this ideal can be seen in the attitudes to language found in other areas of Restoration life. Thomas Sprat, writing of the discussions of members of the Royal Society, tells of their "constant Resolution to reject all amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style":

They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can: and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that, of Wits or Scholars.²⁶

Pulpit orators, too, were enjoined to deliver their sermons in a plain style, the qualities of which were defined by contrasting them with the excesses to be avoided:

Plainness is a Character of great latitude, and stands in opposition, First, to *hard words*; Secondly, to *deep and mysterious notions*; Thirdly, to *affected Rhetorifications*; and Fourthly, to *Phantastical Phrases*.²⁷

"Easiness to intelligence" was not the sole demand placed upon Restoration conversation. A further requirement was that conversation be adapted to suit the sex, degree and affections of the company present. The translator of *The Art of Complaisance or the Means to Oblige*

²⁵ *Remarks upon Remarques*. p. 92.

²⁶ Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, p. 113.

²⁷ Joseph Glanvil, *An Essay Concerning Preaching* (London: 1678), p. 12.

in Conversation devotes an entire chapter to the problem, "How to be Complaisant to persons of all humours, ages and conditions." He reaches this conclusion:

He who would be Complaisant, and oblige in Conversation, must perfectly learn the inclinations, and the various motions of the will of man, and, as much as he can conform or accommodate himself to all his affections . . .²⁸

The plain and easy style was not without ornamentation. Indeed, its most determined exponents were prepared to allow the usefulness of ornaments in the service of truth.²⁹ Yet just as displays of learning were frowned upon, so a pride in the ornaments of speech was sufficient to undo their effect. What was sought was a casual neglect in their employment, a seeming artlessness which avoided the discovery of "too much care in their election":

Excellency of repartee consists in their being short, acute and clear, and not only spoken with a grace; but so much to the purpose that it may not be suspected that we have prepared them in our studies.³⁰

The yoking of the concept of grace with those of brevity, acuity and clarity shows how much this conversation differed from formal rhetoric. Its ornaments aimed not at swelling eloquence and elaborate amplification but at a sudden and surprising facetiousness or jocular-

²⁸ *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 146 ff.

²⁹ Sprat *A History of the Royal Society*, pp. 111-13; Isaac Barrow, *Sermons*, I, 324-25.

³⁰ *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 86, 61.

³¹ The emphasis on facetiousness and surprisal sets this mode of discourse apart from the Senecan style of rhetoric practised earlier in the century.

ity.³¹ It was his possession of these qualities that made Dr John North such a popular and agreeable companion:

he would apply himself to all sorts of company in a brisk and smart manner, for he was very just and ready in his speech, facetious and fluent; and his wit was never at a nonplus.³²

So widespread was the taste for facetiousness that even those who criticised the conversation of the town confessed themselves to prefer being "of the *Laughing* than the *Weeping* side of the World."³³ The various shapes this facetious speech took were outlined comprehensively by Isaac Barrow in a sermon on Paul's warning to the Ephesians against foolish talking and jesting. As aware as he was of its dangers, Barrow was unable to make as general a condemnation of jocular speech as the apostle; by far the greater part of his sermon is given to identifying the allowable uses of facetious speech and categorising the diversity of its forms:

'Tis what we all see and know: any one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, than I can inform him by description. It is indeed a thing so versatile and multi-form . . . Sometimes it lieth in past allusion to a known story, or in a seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense or the affinity of their sound; sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a fly question, in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly diverting or cleverly retorting an objection: sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor, in a plausible reconciliation of contradictions, or in acute nonsense: sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a

³² *The Lives of the Norths*, II, 286-87.

³³ *Raillerie a la Mode Consider'd* (London: 1673), p. 67.

mimical look or gesture passeth for it: sometimes an affected simplicity; sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being: sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange; sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose: often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy, and windings of language.³⁴

No doubt earlier conversation had not been entirely without its facetious elements; no doubt, too, many of the tropes Barrow itemises (if we may call them that) had been in use before his time. What impressed itself upon him was the extent to which they dominated conversation. The growth of jocular speech was seen by Wood, in Oxford, too, to be a principal component in the changes which had occurred in conversation:

1676: this yeere (I speak as neare as I can) came up at Oxon the way of bantering among certain bachelors and masters, used by them in public places and coffey houses Uttering fluently romantick nonsense, unintelligible gibberish, flourishing lyes and nonsense.³⁵

The evidence of Wood and Barrow is supported by our knowledge of developments in the history of the language: the first recorded use of a considerable number of words relating to jocular speech occurred in the middle decades of the century. During the interregnum certain words underwent a shift of meaning or were given a more positive application. "Chaff" meant "ridicule" by 1648; "droll", formerly an adjective, was used as both noun and verb by 1654. Under the Commonwealth--despite the prevailing view of the years of puritan rule as restrictive ones--

³⁴ Barrow, p. 317-18. A comparable taxonomy of types of jocular speech is given in *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 43-44.

³⁵ Wood, *The Life and Times*, II, 334.

several new words were coined to deal with new ways of speaking: "whimsical" was in use in 1653, "pleasantry" in 1655 and by 1658 we find "badinage". After Charles II's return the number of innovations in this area of language increased dramatically. "Pun" arrived in 1662; "joke" and "quibble" (in its modern sense) in 1670. "Jocose", "banter", "sham", "whim" and "haze" followed. "Humour" took on the meaning we now give it in 1682.

Of particular interest are a group of words: "railing", "rallying", "raillery" and its inevitable associate, "repartee". The last had been in use as a noun during the Interregnum and by 1688 was found also as a verb. "Railing" a general word for both abuse and jesting, had been in use since the fifteenth century; by 1685 it referred solely to abuse. Its other sense had been replaced by "raillery" in 1653 and "rallying" in 1665. The split in its meaning indicates the need felt to distinguish the abusive and detractive uses of language from those which were pleasant and jocular. This distinction is made even more clear if we compare the new words with those which had dealt with retorts earlier in the century. "Gibe", "jape", "fleece" and their like convey less of that mixture of jest and earnestness in criticism that characterises their Restoration successors.

The rapid appearance of so many new terms relating to facetious speech lends support to the idea that, in its uses and tropes, such speech served a comparable function to that of Ciceronian rhetoric:

One may observe a sort of Natural Rhetorick, even among the Common Professors of the Art of Railing; they have their Figures, Graces, and Ornaments peculiar to their kind of Speech . . . their Dry *Bobs*, their Broad *Flouts*, Bitter

Taunts, their Fleering *Frumps*, and Privy Nips.³⁶

By noting these categories--albeit facetiously--the author of *Raillerie a la Mode Consider'd* allows that Restoration speech, like rhetoric, takes pleasure in their application and that it convinces those who listen of the merits, not of the statement, but of the man who makes it. Conversation, like rhetoric, both delights and persuades.

Let us consider the types and tropes of English conversation earlier in the century. It knew no lightness: railing and ridicule were the common marks of familiar speech. Evelyn, writing before the Restoration, despaired of his countrymen's ever ridding themselves of the habit of abuse. He points out, in an anecdote, the usual consequence of Englishmen's attempting any lightness in their speech: "in a little time they fell so upon abusing one another that there was much ado to preserve the peace."³⁷

Before the Restoration, English conversation in general received a poor press from Evelyn. Its defects were due in part to the limited opportunities available for practising its refinement.³⁸ Social contact between the sexes and between different social groups knew no moderation: it oscillated between the extremes of taciturn indifference and contemptuous familiarity. Men, Evelyn complained, drank excessively, "in their own houses, before the *Ladies*, and the *Lacquies*." In mixed company there was no courtship "after the decent mode of [French]

³⁶ *Raillerie a la Mode Consider'd*, pp. 40-41.

³⁷ *A Character of England*, p. 54.

³⁸ See Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 407; Oliver Lawson Dick, "The Life and Times of John Aubrey," in *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (London: Secker, 1949), pp. xxxix-xl.

Circles," he said, since the company assembled separately, the men to drink and whisper together, the ladies to gossip. Too much freedom was shown by women when they disported themselves at taverns or danced at balls with their inferiors.³⁹

The freedom and familiarity Evelyn describes cannot be regarded as evidence of any real engagement between the sexes and different social groups; it is indicative rather of the limited domain within which standards of politeness held sway. Inferiors never, and women only occasionally, came within their ambit, hence men of quality seldom felt the need to exercise restraint when dealing with those about them: others scarcely seemed to exist. What may seem to us like familiarity was, in fact, an example of social exclusion.

The pre-Restoration counterpart to such immoderate intercourse was the extraordinary formality of court language. In that rarefied atmosphere ceremonies and compliments flourished. They also intruded into civil conversation with urban acquaintances, where their artificiality served little purpose, but where they appeared as marks of good breeding, acquired by those familiar with the patterns of courtly intercourse. Ceremonies and compliments constituted a conservative force of considerable strength: they effectively restricted freedom of conversation and easy sociability to men and women who had mastered them and could thereby demonstrate their familiarity with the established order.

After the Restoration, ceremonies and compliments were regarded largely as outmoded or inappropriate forms of address. In comedies they were usually the mark of a country squire or an admirer of the last age, characters whose adherence to this more conservative means of social

³⁹ Evelyn, *A Character of England*, pp. 32, 39-40, 31, 51.

ordering was, ironically, grounds for their exclusion from easy sociability.⁴⁰ The place of ceremony and compliment in conversation was taken by the newer types of civil speech--repartee and raillery.

The essence of repartee consisted in making sudden and surprising turns in conversation, in which the last speaker's words were seized upon and turned against him. The speed and brevity of repartees encouraged a rapid shifting between speakers, constantly creating openings for new contributions and making the conversation volatile. To keep up with repartees and reply aptly to them was regarded as something of a test of social fitness, in which a stranger could establish his worth or a familiar figure justify his reputation. Raillery was a form of amicable criticism, finely balanced between the innocuous and the offensive. It operated as a continual reminder of the power of social disapproval, a warning as to what was expected by the world, as represented in the opinions of others. Raillery was less harsh than simple criticism, less well-defined. Criticism is always *of* someone, *about* something; we rally *with* someone, and the actual occasion of the raillery is often unimportant. In a sense raillery, repartee and the other forms of jocular speech were context free. Such forms demonstrated a linguistic dexterity and a familiarity with the world that were valued almost without reference to the opinions or criticisms voiced.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Sir Mannerly Shallow, in *The Countrey Wit*, Lady Woodvil, in *The Man of Mode*. Phrase books such as *The New Academy of Compliments* (London: 1669, 1671, 1681, 1698) continued to be printed and sold, but the tendency was for them to contain fewer compliments and more model letters.

⁴¹ C. D. Cecil, "Raillery in Restoration Comedy," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 29 (1965-66), 147-59.

The contrast between new and old modes of conversation was partly one of social style: spontaneity and ease were preferred to a studied elegance that depended on courtly authority.⁴²

There is a further and more important contrast between conversation before and after the Restoration. There was a contrast in the manner in which each conversational mode relates the individual to the rest of society. The compliment tends to distinguish its recipient from the rest of the world by proclaiming his or her pre-eminence and worth, whereas raillery and repartee suggest that all people are bound to furnish the rest of the company with amusement, even at their own expense. Rallying was not construed as an affront, as Dryden points out:

"Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled when he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not."⁴³ Raillery, if maintained and accepted in a spirit of affability, could have a considerable cohesive effect, drawing the company together in laughter and animating a flagging conversation. As the author of *The Art of Complaisance* remarked, it "serves to season our discourse".⁴⁴ Of course, like the making of compliments, it lay open to extravagance, and when extravagance turned raillery into ridicule, abusive railing was the result.

⁴² Swift's criticism of Restoration conversation, which he saw as less polite than that of Charles I's reign, was based on the Court's failure to provide an authoritative and elevated lead in conversational matters. See *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* and *Hints towards an Essay on Conversation*, in *Prose Works*, IV, 9-10; 94-95.

⁴³ Dryden, "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire", in *Essays*, II, 137.

⁴⁴ *The Art of Complaisance*, p. 38.

Although it would be unwise to suggest that ceremonies and compliments disappeared after the Restoration, it is certain that after 1660 alternative forms of social discourse became more prominent and that Londoners, at least, became aware of changes in the pattern of sociability. Women and men entertained each other in conversation with greater ease and frequency, and in more pleasant surroundings. The paying of visits dominated town life during the season as fashionable members of society discovered the enhancements lent to entertaining guests by the recent importation of tea and china.

This freedom of discourse was not always viewed with approval. There were those who felt that conversation with women was more properly confined to formal topics and that they ought not be tainted by exposure to the common concerns of men. The author of *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town* laments:

We are not now adays for Lectures of Platonicks; since many of our Women are grown as hardy as the men, and love a taste of the thing you wot of, to relish their Conversations: They deride the formality of hearing long Discourses of their beauty, of the Atchievements of their sex . . .⁴⁵

Others, however, welcomed the effect of women upon conversation, conceding to their influence the gift of "that air of the world, and that politeness, which no Counsel or Lecture can give us":

This Art of varying the discourse we owe to Ladies, because they have ordinarily more of delicateness than knowledge, so that they take only the flower of things, being not willing to penetrate them too far.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Gallants of the Town*, p. 123.

⁴⁶ *The Art of Complaisance*, p. 127. Cf. Swift, *Hints towards an Essay on Conversation*, in *Works*, IV, 95.

Admiration of learned discourse has been supplanted by an increased estimation of the values of sociability. Ease, smoothness and intelligibility were seen as commendable qualities, and acknowledgement was paid to all things and people who promoted them.

As conversations between men and women became more familiar in the houses of the new suburbs and squares to the west of London, conversation between men of different ranks took place closer to the city in coffee houses. The first one had opened in 1652; by the Restoration they were already an established part of London life. These establishments were the antecedents of the great eighteenth century centres of conversation, the London clubs, though rather more accessible than those institutions.⁴⁷ Within them differences of rank became less momentous, and citizen and gentleman met on neutral ground. It is rare to find a description of coffee-houses or coffee-house activities which does not contain some reference to the freedom of association and behaviour and to the extraordinary mixture of people found there:

Now being enter'd there's no heeding
Of complements or gentile breeding,
For you may seat you any where,
There's no respect of persons there.

For't has such strange magnetick force,
That it draws after't great concourse
Of all degrees of persons, even
From high to low, from morn till even⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See Robert J. Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933).

⁴⁸ *The Character of a Coffeehouse* (London: 1665), pp. 2-3.

Murault, who journeyed to England in 1695, saw this mixture as a microcosm of English life. Coffee houses were, he wrote,

Constant Rendezvous for Men of Business as well as the idle People, so that a Man is sooner asked about his Coffee-house than his lodging In a word, 'tis here the English discourse freely of every Thing, and where they may be known in a little Time; their Character, likewise, may be partly discover'd It appears coolly in their Discourses, and Attention to what they hear; you don't see them interrupt one another, nor several speaking at the same Time.⁴⁹

The ease and familiarity of relationships in coffee houses lent a particular tone to the conversation, a tone that belonged neither to the court nor to the city, but which is best described by a favourite word of the time, "urbane". In their dealings with each other, people often imagined themselves to be imitating the manner of citizens of ancient Rome, not mere mercantile citizens, but members of the *urbs* who valued themselves on their acquaintance with London.⁵⁰ Gentlemen of the town were readier to acknowledge an affinity between themselves and London's artisans than they were to accept comparison with their country-dwelling equals--no small realignment of a long-established pattern of social relationships. Citizens gained in esteem, at the expense of country gentlemen, because they had acquired gentle habits as a result of the commerce they held with London's gentry in goods, money and marriages:

The converse and acquaintance thereby gained with persons of highest Rank, together with the help of inherent qualities derived from their Parents, being mostly the Sons of Gentlemen, and the general Improvement of the Knowledge and Manners of this Town: They are (at this day) become men of such outward *Parade*, and inward Accomplishments, that the

⁴⁹ Murault, *Letters Describing the . . . English*, p. 82.

⁵⁰ *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 58, 59. See also, *Remarks upon Remarques*, pp. 93-94.

better sort of them are received by the best Gentry, and an ordinary *London* Mechanick outdoes Justice *Clodpate* and his 2000 *l per annum*.⁵¹

Worth, for our author, is measured not by rank and income, but by "outward Parade and inward Accomplishment." In short, conversation, like dress, served the dramatic purpose of establishing a man's character and asserting his right to the regard of others.

6.2 *Conversation and the Playhouse.*

While coffee houses and drawing rooms helped to foster wider interest in the art of conversation, playhouses did their share as well. A silent auditorium was a rarity, a tribute paid to an actor's excellence.⁵² Yet it would be wrong to dignify much of the noise that issued from pit, box and gallery with the name of conversation. In the view of one contemporary, to enter a playhouse was to endure certain discomforts:

. . . to be dun'd all round with the impertinent discourse of Beardless Fops to the Orange Wenches, with Commodores an Ell high; and to the Vizor-Masks: of the Rake-Hells, talking loud to one another; or the perpetual chat of the Noisy Coquets, that come to get Cullies, and to disturb, not mind the Play.⁵³

⁵¹ *Remarks upon Remarques*, p. 118.

⁵² Cibber, *Apology*, p. 65.

⁵³ *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, p. 105. Prologuists often decried playhouse chatter: see the Prologue to Etherege's *The Comical Revenge*, in *Works*, I, 4; Sir William Cartwright, Prologue to *The Ordinary* in *A Collection of Poems . . . Upon Several Occasions* (1673); *Prologues to Lee*, *The Rival Queens* and *Sophonisba*, in *Works*, I, 82, 224; *Ital/Rom/Ital/Rom* the Epilogue to Behn, *The False Count*, (1682); Bancroft, Epilogue to *The Tragedy of Sertorius* (1679); *Sedley, Prologue to Bellamira* in *Works*, II, *Rom* 7.

Other satirical accounts of the stage go a step further, offering advice on how best to attract attention amid the clamouring throng:

It shall Crown you with rich Commendation to laugh aloud in the midst of the most serious and sudden Scene of the terriblest Tragedy, and to let the *Clapper* (your *Tongue*) be tossed so high that all the House may ring of it mew at passionate Speeches, blare at Merry, find fault with the Musick, whistle at the Songs, and above all, curse the Sharers . . . ⁵⁴

Such claims are calculated exaggerations, and cannot be taken as accurate depictions of conventional behaviour. Nevertheless they are doubtless fair comment on the actions of some members of the audience and confirm that plays were but one of the forms of entertainment to be found in the playhouses.

Above all these accounts emphasise the immense sociability of the playhouse. It served as a place of self advertisement, a focus of social activity in town and as a point of departure: "Their principal business in this House, is to meet their Friends, and to join themselves in a Squadron for some gallant exploit . . ."⁵⁵ Under these conditions one contribution playhouses made to the improvement of conversation was that of enabling mixed company to make an initial contact. They also provided ample opportunity for the audience to practice their conversational skills, since many of them arrived early at the playhouses and remained behind long after the play had ended. We may appreciate the usefulness of prologues as means of directing the audience's attention towards the stage, and away from the competing attractions of conversation:

⁵⁴ Samuel Vincent, *The Young Gallant's Academy*, pp. 57-59.

⁵⁵ *Remarques upon the Humours and Conversations* . . . , p. 104.

Prologues, like Bells to Churches, toul you in
With Chimeing Verse till the dull Playes begin.⁵⁶

The clear stage, at the end of each act, signalled a renewed outburst of conversational activity. The rhymed couplet which preceded the players' exits served "to alarm the Minstrilles to tune their Fiddles and advertise the Audience to refresh their hams."⁵⁷

There was no clear association between the different ranks of spectators and any well-defined section of seating. As a result, the audience moved freely between the several areas. This freedom of movement encouraged easy and familiar conversation. But it was not by their encouragement of sociability alone that playhouses assisted in the improvement of conversation; even more importantly they provided their patrons, diverse in their tastes and backgrounds, with two things essential to the idea of urbane conversation: a source of common experiences around which to maintain a varied discussion, and a series of models worthy of imitation.

Discussions about plays formed a staple of conversation, almost from the re-opening of the theatres. Pepys, in 1660, comments on a dinner he attended at the Bull-head:

Here rise in discourse at table a dispute between Mr. Moore and Dr. Clerke, the former affirming that it was essentiall to a Tragedy to have the argument of it true, which the Doctor denied and left to me to be judge . . . (*Diary*, 1 September, 1660.)

⁵⁶ Dryden, Prologue to *The Assination*, in Gardner, p. 50.

⁵⁷ Thomas St. Serfe, Prologue to *Tarugo's Wiles* (1668).

On several other occasions Pepys is involved in conversations about plays and players. He enjoyed discussing a matter of dramatic propriety in *Henry V* with his wife and Dr Clarke. He gossiped about playhouse affairs with Wotton, his shoemaker, and the bookseller, Herringman.⁵⁸

Conversations about plays were not always restricted to the latest playhouse offerings, often they turned upon the rules of drama and were conducted at the level of high theory. Saint-Evremond, a renowned conversationalist in his native tongue, was pleased to discuss dramatic theories with Buckingham and Lord D'Aubigny.⁵⁹

Public discussion and concern for the qualities and reputation of English drama was great enough to induce Thomas Sprat to defend English dramatic practices in his *Observations on Monsieur de Sorbierre's Voyage into England*. The book appeared in the form of a letter in vindication of national pride. Sprat does not offer a minute refutation of Sorbierre's argument, but a rapid restatement of observations with which he assumes his reader is already familiar. In a very few lines he deals with critical cruxes as different as the diversity of action in a play, the use of blank verse, the humours of characters, the function of underplots, the ordering of digressions and the question of decorum.⁶⁰ His entire defence depends on the reader's awareness of current arguments over the place these principles occupied on the contemporary English stage.

⁵⁸ See *Diary*, 24 September, 1662; 22 July, 1663; 17 August, 1664; 13 February, 1667 22 June, 1668.

⁵⁹ See Saint Evremond, *The Letters*, p. xlv.

⁶⁰ Sprat, *Observations*, p. 168.

The widespread public discussions of plays which prompted Sprat to write also form the basis of most Restoration critical comment. Most critics of the time, Rymer included, tend to present their remarks in the form of a conversation and to refer to the influence of others' comments in forming their arguments or calling forth their defences.⁶¹ The development of Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age* often depends on his objecting to the imaginary comments of others: "These say, for instance, a *King* and no *King* pleases. I say the *Comical* part pleases."⁶² Rochester found a particularly elegant way of maintaining the link between conversation and criticism in *An Allusion to Horace*:

Well, sir, 'tis granted I said Dryden's rhymes
Were stol'n, unequal, nay dull many times.
What foolish patron is there found of his
So blindly partial to deny me this?⁶³

Not only is the tone conversational, but the poem invites the reader's intimacy with references to former conversations and shared knowledge.

Other writers establish the link by more direct means. This is particularly true of a type of published criticism new in the Restoration, pamphlets which attack the defects of a single play. *The Censure of the Rota* (1673) and a *Description of the Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi* (1673) both re-create the animated discussions which followed performances of *The Conquest of Granada*. In *Wit for Money, or Poet Stutter* (1691) the critical conversation is further enlivened by

⁶¹ See Dryden, prefaces to *Tyrannic Love*, *An Evening's Love*, *Don Sebastian*, in *Essays*; Gildon, "A Letter to Mr. Durfey," in *The Marriage-Hater Match'd*.

⁶² *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, in *The Critical Works*, p. 19.

⁶³ Rochester, *An Allusion to Horace*, ll, 1-4, in *Poems*, pp. 120-21.

the introduction of Durfey, the offending poet, into the proceedings.⁶⁴

A more famous, though not always happy attempt to draw on the association between conversation and criticism occurs in Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesy: an Essay*.⁶⁵ Despite its importance to any account of Dryden's criticism, the essay proves troublesome to all who approach it, and this not least because the dialogue form is somehow wrong and Dryden less easy than in any other of his critical writings. In the rest of his criticism, the language is more pointed, more immediate and the arguments pursued with greater tenacity than they are here. The difficulty lies in Dryden's equivocal attitude towards contemporary conversation. Although the dialogue is set in London, the speakers follow a French rather than a robust English pattern: they are excessively polite, restrained and respectful towards one another. Nowhere do we find the immediacy of live action characteristic of more conversible criticism.

When Dryden came to reply to Howard in *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, he did not feel obliged to maintain so restrained a tone. Despite the misgivings he voices in the *Defence* about the merits of his own conversation, it is clear that by the time of its publication his authority as a critic was securely founded, and largely upon the reception given his opinions in the coffee houses.⁶⁶ His contemporaries considered his conversation and his criticism as complementary activi-

⁶⁴ For further discussion of critical forms, see Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, pp. 62 ff.

⁶⁵ *Essays*, I, 10-92.

⁶⁶ *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, in Watson, I, 116: "My conversation is slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved: in short I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees."

ties of equal worth: "What he says is like what he writes; much to the purpose and full of mighty sense."⁶⁷

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the frequency and vigour with which people discussed drama is inferential. It consists of the numerous satirical references to wits, critics and all others who set up in that damning trade. The word 'Critick' came to have an almost universal application in London, for it included,

Ev'ry one that has Money to Buy, or Leisure and Patience enough for to Read; even from the Groom to the Lord, from the Prentice to the Alderman, from the Chambermaid to the Countess, from the little Miss in the Nursery, to the grave Matron in her Closet; from the Beardless Boy to the grey and Honourable Head of Old Age. But more precisely speaking, this Appellation is properly circumscrib'd to the Compass of *Covent Garden*, and the *Inns of Court*, and they easily set up for a pretty good Assurance, a Familiarity with an Author of the lower Class, or a sight of one of the first Form, with a Condemning Face on all that is spoke of, or read; dubs any one an uncontrovertible *Critick* for there is, as they suppose, a wonderful deal of Wit in finding fault; that is in the absence of the *Author* they condemn.⁶⁸

--a levelling trade indeed.

'Critick' became a byword for false judgement and affected taste, but the regularity with which scorn was heaped upon all who admitted to that title is a guarantee that critical discussion was a common enough activity and that it was taken seriously. Such scorn would have been misapplied were it not that the false pretenders to wit endangered the esteem in which the Rochesters, the Sedleys, the Granvilles were held. A satire such as Butler's *Upon Critics Who Judge of Modern Plays*

⁶⁷ *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, p. 75. Robert Wolseley, in the Preface to Rochester's *Valentinian* (1685), identifies the sources of Mulgrave's *An Essay upon Poetry*: "Scraps of Bossu, Rapin, Boileau, Mr. Dryden's Prefaces and Table-Talk . . ."

⁶⁸ *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, p. 62.

Precisely by the Rules of the Antients should be read with an awareness of a background of verbal criticism of a rather high standard.⁶⁹ In Rochester's *Timon* the lack of critical discernment displayed by Halfwit, Huff, Kickum and Dingboy is tacitly contrasted with the perception and wit of Sedley, Buckhurst and Savile, men who, in addition to their literary and conversational talents, had the good sense not to attend the dinner at which the hectors held forth.

He asked, "Are Sedley, Buckhurst, Savile come?"
No, but there were above Halfwit and Huff,
Kickum and Dingboy."⁷⁰

Rochester's sneers at the pretenders are shown to be justified by the solecisms they commit:

Huff was for Settle, and *Morocco* praised
Said rumbling words like drums his courage raised:
"Whose broad-built bulks the boist'rous billows bear
Safi and Salé, Mogador Oran,
The famed Arzile, Alcazar, Tetuan."
Was ever braver language writ by man?⁷¹

There is, amidst the ridicule, a resentment of the usurpation of prerogatives in literary judgement. The increased availability of written criticism had put it within the power of "ev'ry one that has money to Buy" to advance an opinion, supporting it

. . . with the help of reading Mr *Rimers* Criticism on the Plays of the Last Age, the Translation of *Rapine* upon the Art of Poetry, and Mr *Creeches* of *Theocritus*, and the Art of Writing Pastorals by the same *Rapine*, the *Abbe Hedelin*, Mr

⁶⁹ Samuel Butler, *Satires, and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, ed René Lamar (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1928), pp. 60-62.

⁷⁰ Rochester, *Timon* in *Poems*, ll. 34-36.

⁷¹ *Timon*, ll. 126-131.

*Dryden's Essays of Drammatick Poesies, or some of his
Prefaces . . .*⁷²

If men of quality disapproved of critics' trespassing across social boundaries, dramatists were more concerned to question the literary authority they assumed. "In former times a play of humour or a comedy with a good plot would certainly please," wrote Thomas Durfey, the frequent victim of critical attacks, "but now a poet must find out a third way, and adapt his scenes and plot to the genius of the critic, if he'd have it pass."⁷³

The dramatists' constant complaint was that those who wielded so much power in the playhouse bore so little responsibility for the effects of its exercise. Having failed to establish their own reputation as poets, they sought to deny that fame to others, whom they sacrificed to rebuild their own credit. Dryden's claim: "The corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic"--states the dramatists' case with admirable brevity.⁷⁴

Once we begin to consider contemporary attitudes towards critics it becomes important to distinguish between those who engaged in a generally well-regarded and sociable activity, and those who made it their business to damn plays for their own aggrandizement. The distinction is clear, but is not always easy to apply since then, as now, the term

⁷² *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, p. 107. Cf Congreve, *The Double Dealer: Brisk*: . . . I presume your Ladyship has read *Bossu*?

Lady Froth: O yes, and *Rapine*, and *Dacier* upon *Aristotle* and *Horace*. (II, i.)

⁷³ Durfey, Preface to *The Banditti* (1686).

⁷⁴ Dryden, Preface to *Examen Poeticum*, in *Essays*, II, 157. He further questions the critics' right to judge in the Epilogue to *The Indian Emperour*, in Gardner, p. 9.

'critic' included both judges and censors, and it was the latter, in general, who occupied the dramatists' attention. Playhouse parasites, they owed their power not to their individual merits, but to their effect in combination with their fellows. Dramatists pointed out the huge discrepancy between the critics' limited ability and the dangerous power they exercised by joining with others:

At night he never fails to Appear in the Withdrawing room,
where he picks out some that have as little to do there as
himself, who mustering up all their puny Forces damn as positively,
as if like *Muggleton* it were their gift . . . ⁷⁵

Never slow to make their opinions heard, even during a play, the critics greatest successes in determining what "the town" thought of a play occurred in the playhouse after a performance. Interested parties would remain behind to consider the play's merits and, effectively, decide its fate:

But when the Curtain's down we peep, and see
A Jury of the Wits who still stay late,
And in their Club decree the poor Play's fate
Their verdict back is to the Boxes brought,
Thence all the Town pronounces it their thought.⁷⁶

From the disproportionate attention that dramatists paid to critics, it is clear that they were as much the objects of their fascination as their scorn.

The dramatists' desire to vindicate themselves accounts for only one part of this fascination. The rest depends upon their recognising the critics' power and prominence and realising that they could use

⁷⁵ Otway, Preface to *Titus and Berenice*, in *Works*, I, 254.

⁷⁶ Dryden, Epilogue to *Feign'd Innocence; or Sir Martin Mar-All*, in Gardner, p. 17.

critics as dramatic characters to enlarge and control the audience's response to the play. Restoration audiences found themselves watching actors on stage re-create the self-dramatising behaviour of the critics who sat about them. The effect of the critics' appearance on both sides of the curtain was to shift the burden of the audience's interest from the development of the action in the play to the variety of the reaction in the playhouse. Theatrical attention shifted from character to spectator. The shift enhanced the play's claim to represent town life faithfully: what the audience saw before them was of a piece with what was taking place about them. Playhouse conversations authenticated the plays with which they competed; critics fulfilled the prophecies in the plays they damned. When audiences seem to imitate onstage action, they establish a continuity between that action and their own behaviour in the world outside. The play then becomes not just a representation of society, but its extension.

The behaviour of critics in this extended world exhibits the antitheses of all conversational values. Their intention is not to engage with others, but to dominate or exclude them, to make a display of wit for their own amusement, without regard for others. In doing this they invert that relation between the playful and the serious upon which good conversation depends: they take nothing seriously but the quality of their play. Critics abuse the arts of conversation. In so doing they provide a model of bad conversational practice.

It was the stage which provided the counterexample: a model of good practice for the improvement of urbane conversation. When playhouses found themselves under vigorous attack at the turn of the century, their

defenders argued the good effects they had on manners and conversation: "The refinement of our tongue is principally owing to them; Good Manners and Good Conversation is owing to our Comedy . . ."⁷⁷ The claim may appear a little extravagant, but it is certain that the English stage had never been in a better position to supply patterns for imitation. After the Restoration any behaviour depicted in plays was possessed of an authority which derived from the much-heralded association between the stage and the court. Although the playhouses were more dependent upon the economics of the market-place than they were upon the largesse of the court, and although the connection between Whitehall and the theatres was tenuous and often variable, nevertheless, people believed that the stage transmitted models of conversation and behaviour based upon the bearing of the greatest in the nation. So it was that the reading, seeing and acting of plays was recommended as an excellent means of improving the language and conversation of men, women and even children, in accordance with the best standards.⁷⁸

The extent and the effects of the association between persons of quality and the stage did not become apparent until some years after the King's return. When Dryden wrote *Of Dramatic Poesy* in 1668, he felt that Beaumont and Fletcher had profited from the company of gentlemen no less than he and his contemporaries had done, and certainly more than Shakespeare:

⁷⁷ *A Letter to A. H. Esq. Concerning the Stage* (London: 1698), p. 14.

⁷⁸ See *The Humours and Conversations of the Town*, p. 127; Dick, ed., *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, p. 149; Sir William Petty, *The Petty Papers*, II, 68.

They understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet can ever paint as they have done.⁷⁹

He altered his opinion soon after the *Essay's* publication, claiming that dramatists of his own age enjoyed advantages not known to those of earlier times. In the preface to *An Evening's Love*, which appeared in 1671, he declared himself ready to treat of, "The improvement of our language since Fletcher's and Jonson's days, and consequently of our refining the courtship, raillery, and conversation of plays . . ."⁸⁰ After that date the refinement of the language is Dryden's frequent theme, and seldom does he fail to ascribe it to the good fortune Restoration dramatists enjoyed in being exposed to the conversation of gentlemen. By the time the *Essay's* second edition appeared, in 1684, Dryden had revised his earlier estimate of Beaumont and Fletcher: "No poet before them could paint as they have done," he wrote.⁸¹ His most considered statement on the matter was given in the *Defence of the Epilogue*, where he had this to say of the wit of former dramatists:

I am sure, their wit was not that of gentlemen; there was ever somewhat that was ill-bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors.

. . . Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as now it is . . . the discourse and raillery of our comedies excell what has been written by them.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Of Dramatic Poesy*, in *Essays*, I, 68-69.

⁸⁰ In *Essays*, I, 145.

⁸¹ *Of Dramatic Poesy*, in *Essays*, I, 68 n.

⁸² *Essays*, I, 180-181.

Although the refinement was owed to the freedom with which gentlemen and authors kept company, the origins of this freedom were seen to spring from higher places:

Now, if any ask me whence it is that our conversation is so much refined, I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court; and, in it, particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it. . . . At his return, he found a nation lost as much in barbarism as in rebellion. And as the excellency of his nature forgave the one, so the excellency of his manners reformed the other. The desire of imitating so great a pattern first wakened the dull and heavy spirits of the English from their natural reservedness, loosened them from their stiff forms of conversation, and made them easy and pliant to each other in discourse.⁸³

Dryden was not alone in noting the freedom with which the King conversed and the effect of his behaviour upon the manners of his subjects. Men as diverse in their opinions and interests as Sir Samuel Tuke, John Aubrey, Thomas Hearne and the Earl of Ailesbury confirm Dryden's description of the readiness with which the nation imitated the example Charles set.⁸⁴ As a result of the Royal example, affability and tolerance towards social inferiors became the distinguishing characteristics of the truly accomplished gentleman.⁸⁵ If we are reluctant to allow one man so much credit for so great a social change, we should remember that the King's example was but the source; it was transmitted by his court as they shared in the entertainments of the other inhabitants of London.

⁸³ *Defence of the Epilogue*, in *Essays*, I, 181-82.

⁸⁴ Tuke, *A Character of Charles the Second*; "The Life and Times of John Aubrey," pp. xxxix-xl; Hearne, *Reliquiae Hernianae: The Remains of T. H.*, ed. P. Bliss, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: 1857), I, 119-20; Ailesbury, *Memoirs* I, 95; Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, p. 407.

⁸⁵ Wolesley, Preface to Rochester's *Valentinian*.

So it was that when dramatists could not claim royal authority as a direct source of inspiration for the language of their plays, they sought out other men and women whose reputations for conversational excellence they might draw on to enhance the appeal of their dialogue. John Banks extolled the high standards in conversation set by his patron, Lady Herbert, and the company she kept, and apologised for falling short of her example:

For in our Playes you read your own Characters, and they are at best what we have gathered from you, who daily act amongst yurselves in conversation.⁸⁶

His apology is disingenuous: it serves to advertise to his readers the high quality of the conversation he has emulated. As a result of such claims audiences (and after them, readers) felt that they were listening to and learning from approximations to fine conversation as it was spoken by the most illustrious persons in the land.

Banks' dedication makes, rather crudely, a claim that Congreve manages with greater elegance in his dedication of *The Way of the World* to the Earl of Montague. Congreve first identifies the advantages authors gained from being admitted to the conversation of betters: "The Privilege of such a Conversation, is the only certain Means of attaining to the Perfection of Dialogue." He then credits the Earl with the provision of that blessing in the form of a conversational retreat:

If it has hapned in any part of this Comedy, that I have gain'd a Turn of Stile, or Expression more Correct, or at least more Corrigible than in those which I have formerly written, I must, with equal Pride and Gratitude, ascribe it to the honour of your Lordship's admitting me into your Conversation, and that of a Society where every-body else

⁸⁶ Banks, Dedication to *The Rival Kings* (London: 1677).

was so well worthy of you, in your Retirement last Summer
from the Town . . .⁸⁷

Both dedications serve dual purposes: they acknowledge debts of hospitality to the patrons and they establish the authenticity of the play's dialogue. The function of the patron of these plays is to guarantee the pedigree of the dialogue, and assure the world that the patterns of conversation found therein are worthy of emulation.⁸⁸

Plays served as mediators of the patterns of conversation in several distinct ways. They identified faults in accent. Country speech, for example, drew criticism for the broadness of its vowel sounds. "Weall, naw what's yare business?" asks Sir Tunbelly Clumsey's servant in *The Relapse*, in an accent that belongs, rather imprecisely, to "the Country, Fifty Miles off."⁸⁹ The same play illustrates another type of accent, equally ridiculous, in the speech of Lord Foppington:

That, I must confess, I am nat altogether so fand of. Far to mind the inside of a Book, is to entertain ones self with the forced Product of another Man's Brain. Naw I think a Man of Quality and Breeding may be better diverted with the natural Sprouts of his own. (II, i.)

⁸⁷ Congreve, Dedication to *The Way of the World*, in *Plays*, pp. 391-92.

⁸⁸ Other professional dramatists who drew attention to their dealings with the better known wits and conversationalists include Otway, in the Dedication to *Titus and Berenice*, in *Works*, I, 254-55; Dryden, in the Dedication to *Marriage a la Mode*, in *Works*, XI, 221; Gildon, in the Dedication to Behn's *The Younger Brother* (1696); Lee, in the Dedication to *Nero*, in *Works*, I, 24; Crowne, in the Dedication to *The History of Charles the Eighth of France* (1672).

⁸⁹ Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*, III, iii; I, iii; in *Works*, I, 62; 30.

If Sir Tunbelly's speech is crude, Lord Foppington's affectations are wilful corruptions of the language.

In *An Evening's Love*, Dryden has Aurelia not only demonstrate her affectations, but also describe their proper operation to her maid:

Cam[illa]. Madam!

Aur. Madam me no *Madam*, but learn to retrench your words; and say *Mam*; as *yes Mam*, and *no Mam*, as other Ladies' Women do. *Madam!* 'tis a year in pronouncing.

Cam. Pardon me *Madam*.

Aur. Yet again ignorance! *Par-don*, Madam! *fie fie*, what a *superfluity* is there, and how much sweeter the Cadence is--
parn me, Mam! and for your *Ladyship*, your *Laship*.⁹⁰

The stage also played an educative role by offering patterns of fine conversation, worthy of admiration, and imitation. This role was allowable and laudable. The niceties of raillery, repartee and banter were demonstrated and the occasions proper to their use were made plain. Less allowable, and often subject to criticism and complaint, was the audience's habit of treating plays as conversational source-books, stealing the poet's phrases and passing them off as the products of their own wit. Durfey makes just this distinction in his dedication of *The Banditti* when he declaims against the ingratitude and under-handed dealing of those who owe their conversational abilities to the instruction of the stage:

. . . those very Mouths that in Days of Yore, like
Callow-Snipes, sat gaping to Swallow the Instruction of
Poets, like the Picture of *Homer* spewing upon his Pupils,
now sated with the Diet that has nourished 'em to a degree

⁹⁰ Dryden, *An Evening's Love*, III, i, in *Works*, X, 251. Dryden's fear of the consequences for the language of attitudes such as Aurelia led him to argue for the establishment of an academy along the lines of that set up in France. See *Essays* I, 5, 239; II, 152. For further examples of contrived accents, see Wycherley's Alderman Gripe in *Love in a Wood*, I, and Monsieur de Paris in *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, I, ii.

of being fit for Conversation, ungratefully employ 'em to the stage's *Disgrace*, and *Confusion*.

These critics, having profited from what was allowed them by the stage, exceeded their licence, and "made use of [their] Halfe-Crown, and a good Shirt too, wanting matter of [their] own, to Carry away scraps the *Play* to court their Mistress with."⁹¹

Rochester, in *A Ramble in St James's Park*, describes the behaviour of one of these playhouse pilferers, "A Gray's Inn wit":

A great inhabiter of the pit,
Where critic-like he sits and squints,
Steals pocket handkerchiefs, and hints,
From 's neighbour and the comedy,
To court, and pay, his landlady.⁹²

Others, too, deride those, "the flowers and graces of [whose] Eloquence are generally collected from the Dramatical Poems; but so awkwardly, that there is scarce a Farce, with a new Phrase in't, which they do not apply to the most serious Uses."⁹³

The last word in distinguishing between the proper and the illicit use of dramatic dialogue as a model for conversation must be given to Swift, whose lifelong interest in the improvement of conversation culminated in the publication, in 1738, of *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*--in dialogue form. This compendium of enervated and fatuous remarks represents a critique of the idea that good

⁹¹ Durfey, "To Sir Critick Cat-Call," in *The Banditti* (1686).

⁹² Rochester, *A Ramble in St James's Park*, 11, 64-68, in *Poems*, p. 42.

⁹³ *Ed. L----* Esq to Mr R----, in *Letters of Wit, Politicks, and Morality* (London: 1701), p. 206. See also *Remarques*, p. 117, on the young men of the Inns of Court, who "speak in the Phrases of a Play (that Modish sort of Canting)."

conversation consists in just the application of fine phrases. In the introduction Swift has his author, Simon Wagstaff, assert:

whatever Person would aspire to be Compleatly Witty, Smart, Humorous, and Polite; must by hard Labour be able to retain in his Memory every single Sentence contained in this Work; so as never to be at a Loss in applying the right Answers, Questions, Repartees, and the like immediately, and without Study or Hesitation.

He further recommends that his treatise be "carried about as a Pocket Companion, by all Gentlemen and Ladies . . . desiring them to read their several Parts in their Chairs or Coaches, to prepare themselves for every kind of Conversation, that can probably happen."⁹⁴ Wagstaff has entirely mistaken the nature of conversation: the studious application he recommends would deprive conversation of all its spontaneity, all its play.

Swift's *Collection of . . . Conversation* supplies a post-script to this discussion of the relationship between stage dialogue and contemporary conversation. Its very form acknowledges the stage's influence upon conversational practice.⁹⁵ The *Collection* also demonstrates how readily the example of stage dialogue could be abused. Conversation was not improved by the uplifting of individual utterances and pretty turns of phrase from stage dialogues. Indeed, the proper use of dialogue lay in its encouraging spectators to appreciate flexibility and ease in conversation. The audiences who listened to the best of stage dialogue returned to their own conversations, newly advised to pay attention to

⁹⁴ *Collection of . . . Conversation*, in *Prose Works*, ed. Davis, IV, 103, 105.

⁹⁵ Improbable as it seems, Swift's dialogues were performed on stage.

the shifting patterns of the game.

6.3 *Talking Plays*

In October 1667 the Duke of York's Company performed *Tarugo's Wiles*; or *The Coffee House*, an adaptation of a Spanish play by Sir Thomas St. Serfe. His sole dramatic effort, it suffered the fate of the majority of adaptations from the Spanish: the concept of personal honour, the mainspring of the intricate Spanish plots, was not well suited to English dramatic tastes. The play died a natural death on its third day, but not before some interest had been aroused by St. Serfe's own contribution to the original material, an entire third act set in the (English) coffee house advertised in the subtitle.⁹⁶

The interpolated act is related to the rest of the play by the thinnest of plot contrivances. By displaying easy and familiar conversation in the freedom of an English coffee house, the scene serves as a dramatic foil to the restraint and confinement that the Spaniard Don Patricio imposes on his sister, Livinia. St. Serfe intended to emphasise the coffee house's easy atmosphere: he describes the setting as "A Coffee House, where is presented a mixture of all kind of People" and in the stage directions he wrote: "*Enter several Customers of all Trades and Professions.*"⁹⁷

⁹⁶ *The Journals of John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall*, ed. Donald Crawford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1900), pp. 174-75: "Was very satyricall sneering at the Greshamers for their late invention of the transfusion of blood, as also at our covenant, making the witch of Geneva to wy it and La Sainte Ligue de France together." Downes notes its short run in *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 31.

⁹⁷ *Tarugo's Wiles, or, The Coffee-house* (1668), III.

St. Serfe's play is more an historical curiosity than anything else, but it is useful to us for precisely this reason: it shows that even an unsophisticated writer was acutely aware of the influence of changing conversational patterns on the stage. The coffee house characters are of little interest: they have no connection with the plot, and their actions and fates excite neither our curiosity nor concern. Yet St. Serfe took the trouble to give each of them sufficient linguistic identity to make the world they inhabit appear various, mutable and, above all, natural. One customer seated there, who is "busie with his book . . ." may be a "Dramatick Poet of a weak memory, come to pick up material to help his fancy." The conversation in the coffee house is suffused with concrete details from London life which anchor the scene in a familiar world.

It was not only the content, but the form of dramatic dialogue as well that was affected by the changes in conversation. In the Spanish-derived scenes of *Tarugo's Wiles*, as in most other adaptations from the Spanish, the speeches were restructured so that narrative monologues were broken up. Even those plays which remained most faithful to their Spanish originals, notably Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours* (1663) and Bristol's *Elvira* (1664), interspersed long dignified speeches with questions and comments to make them approximate more to the texture of English conversation.⁹⁸ Such English conversational ease sat uncomfortably beside the serious formality of Spanish honour. It is not surprising then, that after the first attempts at direct translation, Spanish plays underwent substantial modifications to make them agreeable to the

⁹⁸ John Loftis, *The Spanish Plays of Neo-Classical England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 66, 77, 81.

conversational palates of English audiences.⁹⁹ Wildblood's outburst in *An Evening's Love* sums up, with commendable brevity, the incompatibility of English and Spanish dramatic styles: "I hate your *Spanish* honour, ever since it spoyl'd our *English* Plays . . ."¹⁰⁰

In serious native drama too, conversational forms were having a recognisable effect. Scenes of intense disputation became popular, in which arguments and accusations, evasions and rejoinders were exchanged with some warmth. In 1661 Davenant revised *Love and Honour*, inserting a 50 line dispute in rhyming couplets.¹⁰¹ Tuke concluded the second act of *The Adventures of Five Hours* with a dispute in the same style. In 1664 Waller, Sedley, Filmer, Godolphin and Charles Sackville collaborated in writing *Pompey the Great*, a play entirely in couplets and filled with disputative scenes. Later that year Dryden's *The Rival Ladies* appeared at the playhouse in Bridges Street. The extended debate in rhyming couplets in the fourth act represented the King's Company's first attempt at a style made popular in Davenant's theatre. In his dedication Dryden paid tribute to Roger Boyle, the Earl of Orrery, whose plays *The General* and *Henry the Fifth*--both of which had circulated in manuscript--had done much to confirm the usefulness of rhyme in scenes of disputation.¹⁰² The attraction of rhyme lay in the fact that in such scenes the quick interchanges were a form of repartee, and the couplet

⁹⁹ *The Spanish Plays of Neo-Classical England*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁰ Dryden, *An Evening's Love*, V, i, in *Works*, X, 299.

¹⁰¹ Davenant, *Love and Honour* V, ii.

¹⁰² See Dryden, Preface to *The Rival Ladies*, in *Essays*, I, 9: "The scenes which in my opinion commend it, are those of argumentation and discourse, on the result of which the doing or not doing of some considerable action should depend." See also, Andrew Clark, ed. *The Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle*, intro I, 22f, 31.

form greatly enhanced their effect:

Then, in the quickness of repartees (which in discursive scenes fall very often), it has so particular a grace, and is so aptly suited to them, that the sudden smartness of an answer and the sweetness of the rhyme set off the beauty of each other.¹⁰³

Dryden's remarks sparked off an extended debate with Howard over the use of rhyme, in which each weighed its merits and disadvantages as a medium for expressing dramatic conversation. Howard's objective was the attainment of a form of elevated naturalness: "Language . . . in serious Subjects ought to be great and easie, like a high-born Person that expresses Greatness without pride or affectation."¹⁰⁴ Rhyme was patently unnatural, "therefore that which seems nearest to what it intends is ever to be preferr'd"¹⁰⁵

Both parties to the debate invoked the naturalness or beauty of conversation to support their argument about a style of language that was far removed from actual conversation. This gives a clear indication of the extent to which conversation's authority had permeated English dramatic thinking. So firmly established was the need for conversational interchanges in tragedy, that when ~~R~~hymer came to write *The Tragedies of* /E
the Last Age in 1678, ten years after the Dryden-Howard debate had run its course, he could charge the absence of such interchanges as a fault

¹⁰³ Preface to *The Rival Ladies*, in *Essays*, I, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Howard, Preface to *Four New Plays* (1665).

¹⁰⁵ Dryden continued the debate in *Of Dramatic Poesy*; Howard replied in the Preface to *The Great Favourite* (1668); Dryden had the final word in *A Defence of an Essay* (until, that is, he left his "long-loved Mistress, Rhyme" in *All For Love*). Edward Howard made a contribution in the Preface to *The Usurper* (1668) and Shadwell let his voice be heard in the Preface to *The Sullen Lovers* and the epilogue to *The Miser*, in *Works*, I.

in earlier drama:

Certainly no spectacle can be more displeasing than to see a man ty'd to a post, and another buffeting him with an immoderate tongue.¹⁰⁶

It was in comedy, as we might expect, that conversational patterns had their greatest influence. But with this difference: whereas in other types of drama, conversation affected the form of the play and often the content of the dialogue, in native comedy, conversations within the play came to be regarded as excellent in themselves, worthy of representation and imitation for their own sakes. Action, or plot, gradually gave place to dialogue as the dominating interest in comedies in the years that followed the Restoration. Dialogue, once the servant of action, quite displaced it. Of Etherege it was said:

. . . as for your nouns,
Grammar, and rules of art, he knows 'em not,
Yet writ two talking plays without one plot.¹⁰⁷

It was not only Etherege who was regarded as a writer of "talking plays." Congreve's *The Way of the World* was described by one spectator as lacking any plot, and even Terence, a model of strong clear plotting, was thought by many to have written but "a bare *Bundle of Dialogues dress'd up in a neat Stile*."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Critical Works*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ Rochester, *Timon*, ll. 123-25, in *Poems*, p. 70. Cf. Captain Alexander Radcliffe on Etherege: "one that does presume to say,/A Plot's too gross for any Play." -- *The Ramble* (London: 1682), p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ HMC 15th Report, Appendix I, Dartmouth MSS., p. 145: "'The Way of the World', Congreve's new play, doth not answer expectation, there being no plot in it but many witty things to ridicule the Chocolate House, and the fantastical part of the world." Laurence Echard, Preface, *Terence's Comedies*, p. v.

It was quite accurate to describe many plays as plotless, for their main business was frequently put aside to allow the characters to engage in conversations which had but a tangential connection to the development of the action:

Then the *Matter*, and Discourse of our Plays is often very incoherent and impertinent as to the main Design; nothing being more common than to meet with two or three whole Scenes in a Play, which wou'd have fitted any other part of the Play ev'n as well as that; and perhaps any Play else. Thus some appear to swear out a Scene or two, others to talk bawdy a little, without any manner of dependence upon the rest of the Action.¹⁰⁹

So strong was the emphasis on dialogue that those who valued their skill in plotting found it necessary to argue their merits against the writers of a mere "Bundle of Dialogues".¹¹⁰ Vanbrugh stated no more than the truth when he wrote of comedy that the "entertainment, as well as the Moral, lies more in the Characters and the Dialogue, than in the Business and the Event."¹¹¹ Englishmen, proud of contemporary native poets, felt that dialogue was one of the areas in which they had achieved most:

Our *Comedies* excel . . . in some Delicacies of *Conversation*; particularly in the *Refinedness* of our Railery and Satyr, and above all in *Repartee*.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Echard, Preface, *Terence's Comedies*, p. xii.

¹¹⁰ Gildon, "A Letter to Mr. Durfey," in *The Marriage-Hater Match'd*.

¹¹¹ *A Short Vindication of "The Relapse" and "The Provoked Wife"* (1698), p. 57.

¹¹² Preface to *Terence's Comedies*, p. xi.

Foreign visitors noted the emphasis on conversation and the delight that audiences took in it, although talking plays were, for the most part, too prolix for their tastes:

The thoughts are generally better, but there's always swearing, idle stories, and Comparisons in abundance. These last please them more than any thing else . . .¹¹³

Modern critics have paid some attention to the different patterns of conversation so admired by Restoration audiences. Scenes of courtship, in particular, furnished these patterns in good supply. They provided opportunities for the parties to engage in raillery, repartee, mimicry and banter, and in more elaborate games in which similitudes were enlarged upon, metaphors extended and legal forms and ceremonies were triumphantly mocked.¹¹⁴

These and other tropes and patterns gave dramatists a formidable arsenal with which to enlarge upon the familiar theme of man woos maid. The terms "wit combat" and "love game"--common modern descriptions of courtship scenes in which the forms of conversation figure prominently--are, no doubt, handy generic labels, but their use tends to obscure the fact that it was in the deployment of different conversational gambits and strategies that the audience's interest lay. Those who watched had the aficionado's devotion to the detailed playing of the game rather

¹¹³ Murault, *Letters Describing . . . the English*, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Kathleen Lynch, *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy* (London: Cass, 1967), Chs. 6-7, identifies several occurrences of proviso scenes and similitude contests in plays of the period; C. D. Cecil, "'Une espèce d'éloquence abrogée,' The Idealised Speech of Restoration Comedy," *Etudes Anglaises*, 19 (1966), 15-25, deals with turns and epigrams; the same writer identifies examples of raillery in Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve, in "Raillery in Restoration Comedy," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 29 (1965-66), 147-59. For an example of conversational extension of a metaphor see Behn, *The Rover* (1677), III, i.

than to its outcome alone. Courtship models depended upon conversational ideals: however private the setting, the couple's remarks to one another were designed less to give exact expression to an inner feeling than they were to find socially suitable forms within which those feelings could be publicly sustained and explored. Love provided the basis for a conversation which might, if happily conducted, lead finally to an acknowledgement of that love.

Scenes of fine conversation are also to be found outside the field of courtship. Whether the conversational encounters were between men, women or both, between wits or fools, old or young, certain topics recur. These, like courtship, provide fitting occasions for the exercise of conversational talents. The topics included such commonplaces as comparisons between town and country life, accounts of the latest follies of the town, ridicule of behaviour in the playhouse, coffee houses, parks, gardens and other public places, talk of fashion and its excesses, discussions of wit and conversation itself, comparisons of contemporary behaviour and values with those of the last age, derision of eminent fools who may or may not appear in the play and banter about dealings with the opposite sex.

The relation of these "bundles of dialogues" to the action of the play was often tangential, as we have observed. An even more serious criticism might be that so limited and predictable a set of categories, coupled with the requirement that allusions be open and easy to ordinary social intelligence must have severely restricted the licence allowed to the dramatists' imaginations. Yet the limitations imposed on their capacity for originality and innovation are less restrictive than we

might expect, for it was not what was said that mattered, but the manner of its saying. Topics were less important than the opportunities they provided for a moment-by-moment display of easy and unaffected spontaneity. Dramatists did not seek to find new things to add to the store of common knowledge, to introduce original perceptions about the conduct of human relations, but to find always *le mot juste*, to give the most felicitous, the most proper, brief and lively expression to what was already well known.¹¹⁵

Dramatists tried to avoid long discursive speeches and to refrain from any repetitive use of a particular type of conversational figure. It is noticeable that any extended play with similitudes or lengthy series of aphorisms culminates with one of the parties to the conversation protesting self-consciously at the sententiousness, the too solemn seriousness, this implies:

Vainlove. . . . For as Love is a Deity, he must be serv'd by Prayer.

Belinda. O Gad, would you would all pray to Love then, and let us alone.

Vainlove. You are the Temples of Love, and 'tis through you, our Devotion must be convey'd.

Araminta. Rather poor silly Idols of your own making, which, upon the least displeasure you forsake, and set up new---Every Man, now, changes his Mistress and his Religion, as his Humour varies or his Interest.

Vainlove. O Madam---

Araminta. Nay come, I find we are growing serious, and then we are in great danger of being dull . . .¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ See C. D. Cecil, "Raillery in Restoration Comedy", for a similar account of ideals in raillery.

¹¹⁶ Congreve, *The Old Batchelor*, II, ii, in *Plays*, p. 58.

It was not the topics of discussion that distinguished Restoration dialogues from those in earlier plays; nor was it the manner in which those topics were treated.¹¹⁷ However, examples of the art of fine conversation occur more frequently in Restoration plays, and in greater variety than they had formerly. More care was taken to make them seem natural and to ground them solidly in the concrete details of real life. This last was achieved by maintaining a continuous thread of references, anecdotes, comparisons and casual allusions to people and events which were not only familiar to the audience, but which could often be directly observed within the very playhouse. The audience shares the characters' understanding of topical allusions and local references, thereby becoming party to the stage conversation. Congreve's experience in the production of his first play, *The Old Batchelour*, a piece that in all respects, was deemed admirable, illustrates the importance of these details in assuring its success:

He engaged Mr. Dryden in its favour, who upon reading it sayd he never saw such a first play in his life, but the Author not being acquainted with the stage or the town, it would be a pity to have it miscarry for want of a little Assistance: the stuff was rich indeed, it wanted only the fashionable cutt of the town.

This assistance was provided by Dryden, Southerne and Arthur Mainwaring. Apart from some echoes of *Amphitryon* (1691) and the assertion that "Mr Dryden putt it in the order it was playd", we cannot be entirely sure of the contribution they made.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless certain scenes, in particular the meeting between Araminta and Belinda in St.

¹¹⁷ See Lynch, *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy*, Chh. III, IV.

¹¹⁸ John C. Hodges, *William Congreve, Letters and Documents*, p. 151.

James's Park (IV, iii), show familiarity with the habits of the town, and are written with an assurance which suggests that the newly arrived author may have revised them under the guidance of men more experienced in its ways than he was. Such scenes and details established a relation between the audience and the image of the town; this was always stronger than the relation that existed between the audience and any character.

Knowledge of the town was but one of the distinguishing features of plays of conversation; another was the appearance of naturalness. Dramatists made stage conversations seem natural, in part, by insinuating them easily into the business of the play. Although conversations were not strictly tied to the play's action, they arose out of the situations it established. It is fair to say that it was the business of the action to furnish credible occasions for conversations, so that they did not appear as formal debates interrupting the action, such as we find in Suckling's plays.¹¹⁹ However, the major means whereby dramatists made conversations seem natural (and, indeed, dramatic dialogue as a whole) and hence provided credible patterns for emulation or avoidance, was by consistently reproducing the linguistic features of actual conversation in the language of their plays. The speech of all characters approaches the language of conversation in matters of vocabulary, phrasing and sentence structure.

Characters in Restoration comedies, as opponents of the stage never tired of pointing out, were given to profanity, swearing and uttering oaths with an extraordinary frequency. People of every rank were heard invoking the name of the almighty and his adversary with freedom and

¹¹⁹ See *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy*, pp. 69-77.

¹²⁰ Jeremy Collier, in *A Short View of the Immorality and*

levity.¹²⁰ While the printed texts alone supply sufficient evidence of stage swearing, court records in blasphemy trials in the latter part of the century are studded with transcriptions of dialogue made by those whose reforming zeal had led them to attend the plays with notebook in hand. These records indicate that what appeared in print was but a small part of what the audience heard.¹²¹ The swearing and oath taking dismayed men and women of tender conscience, provoking many to bitter attacks; but for the rest of the audience and for the dramatists and actors who enlarged their scripts beyond what was set down, the offending phrases guaranteed that the dialogue, howsoever scurrilous or reprehensible, was a credible approximation to actual speech. The men of God feared the sanction or colour of approval given to blasphemy when it appeared unpunished on the stage. Indeed the act under which players and dramatists offended had, by making the penalties it prescribed for blasphemy applicable only to stage plays, enjoined a distinction between stage language and that spoken by men and women as they went about their business.¹²² In ignoring its prohibitions dramatists and actors were, in effect, claiming the important right to represent on stage the language spoken by those about them.

Profaneness of the English Stage (London: 1698), gives the most famous and detailed account of the charges, but see also Shadwell, the Preface to *The Sullen Lovers* in *Works*, I, 10-11. Arthur Bedford, *A Serious Remonstrance in Behalf of the Christian Religion* (London: 1719), p. 5 claims that dramatists were "the more free with the Devil's Name, and (as if they had a mind even to outdo their former Impiety, and to shew themselves incorrigible) to put him in God's place, especially in their Oaths and Invocations." Joseph Wood Krutch summarises the arguments in *Comedy and Conscience*, pp. 105-06, 167 ff.

¹²¹ *Comedy and Conscience*, pp. 69 ff.

¹²² 3 Jac. I cap. 21. Penalties are provided for anyone who "in any Stage Play . . . jestingly or prophanelly speake or use the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus".

In addition, playhouses became showcases of wider and less culpable colloquial usages. In part the dramatists' common vocabulary derives from their determination to avoid learned words and any imputation of pedantry. It stems also from the role the playhouses played in transmitting new forms of colloquial usage. Swift, a dedicated conservator of the language, scornfully outlined the process:

I have never known this great Town without one or more *Dunces* of Figure, who had Credit enough to give Rise to some new Word, and propagate it in most Conversations; although it had neither Humour nor Significancy. If it struck the present Taste, it was soon transferred into the Plays, and current Scribbles of the Week, and became an Addition to our Language; while the Men of Wit and Learning, instead of early obviating such Corruptions, were too often seduced to imitate and comply with them.¹²³

So eagerly did dramatists seize upon a new expression that their audiences could hear the latest affected phrase presented, and sometimes ridiculed, even before it had become established in the town's vocabulary.¹²⁴

Restoration dialogue abounds, too, in parenthetical phrases, those modest demurrals and qualifications with which the flow of conversation is smoothed. "For ought I see," "for my part," "I suppose," "as the sparkish word is" and their like cushion the statements which bracket them, making them easier to the ear and less likely to encounter direct negation than a positive assertion. In the same way imprecise

¹²³ Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting . . . the English Tongue*, in *Prose Works*, ed. Davis, p. 10.

¹²⁴ See HMC XII, Appendix, Part V, Rutland MSS, II, 119, Peregrine Bertie to Countess of Rutland on *The Squire of Alsatia*: "the thin reason why it takes soe well is, because it brings severall of the cant words upon the stage which some in town have invented, and turns them into ridicule . . ."

modifiers--" . . . enough," "something . . ." "some . . . or other," "a . . . or two," "a little . . ."--help to impart polite diffidence to dramatic dialogue. In ordinary conversation the imprecision of these modifiers allows room for a measure of agreement between the speakers. Without them the conversation threatens to turn into a series of statements and counter-statements, thereby endangering its playfulness and its continuity.

The sentence structure of Restoration dialogue, too, tells of the influence of conversational speech. Sentences tend to be composed of loose accretions of clauses, with but the simplest of conjunctions. Logical connectives--"if . . . then . . . ," "not . . . but . . . " "therefore"--are found less frequently than in, say, Shakespeare's prose.¹²⁵ When they do occur, it is less as the marks of logical thought than as the signs of a happy and unexpected association of ideas. Consider the following interchange from *The Provoked Wife*:

*Bell[inda]. (musing).---*I'll tell you: It must all light upon *Heartfree* and I. We'll say he has Courted me some time, but, for reasons unknown to us, has ever been very earnest the thing might be kept from Sir *John*. That therefore, hearing him upon the Stairs, he run into the Closet, tho' gainst our Will, and *Constant* with him, to prevent Jealousie. And to give this a good Impudent face of Truth (that I may deliver you from the Trouble you are in), I'll e'en (if he pleases) Marry him.

Lady Brute. I'm beholding to you, Cousin, but that would be carrying the Jest a little too far for your Own sake: you know he's a younger Brother and has Nothing.

Bell. 'Tis true but I like him and have Fortune enough to keep above Extremity: I can't say I wou'd live with him in a Cell upon Love and Bread and Butter. But I had rather have the Man I love, and a Middle State of Life, than that

¹²⁵ For a more detailed account of the linguistic features of conversation and their importance to its continuity, see David Crystal and Derek Davy, *Advanced English Conversation* (London: Longmans, 1973), pp. 85-116.

Gentleman in the Chair there, and twice your Ladyship's Splendour.¹²⁶

The real logic is submerged, and even disguised by Bellinda, who allows it to appear only after she has arranged for the solution to their present crisis to put "a good impudent face" upon her emotional truth. The potential confusion over the pronouns and the multiplying of parentheses all work to belie the appearance of a logical structure. The casual style that results from this attitude to sentence construction was entirely necessary to comic dialogue if it was to succeed as a credible representation of actual speech, for it allowed comparisons and antitheses, the real delights of stage conversation, to be included more easily, and at the same time worked to soften the impression of studied labour they tended to convey.

So effective were dramatists at tendering their dialogue as a facsimile of actual conversation that it became commonplace to remark that the two were indistinguishable. But Congreve, writing to Dennis on the different manners of representing people in a comedy, pointed out that dramatists could not simply copy from real life, either in accidents of character or in dialogue:

I believe if a Poet should steal a Dialogue of any length from the *Extempore* Discourse of the two Wittiest Men upon Earth, he would find the Scene but coldly receiv'd by the Town.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ *The Provoked Wife*: V, ii, in *Works*, I, 168-69.

¹²⁷ *Letters and Documents*, p. 181.

While dialogue might pass for the conversation of witty men--such as might be heard over a supper--a transcription of that same conversation would not pass for dialogue.

It is fitting that this distinction between dialogue and discourse, stage and street, should be so finely articulated in a letter of criticism; it is also fitting that the final arbiter of the distinction should be "the Town". For only when we deal with Restoration dialogue, tied in its audience's minds to an idea of the fine conversation of the town, does the confusion become possible and the justification of the difference necessary.

Chapter VII

EPILOGUE

We have looked at the relationships between audience, playhouse and play in the period 1660-1700. Three social factors made these relationships particularly resonant: London's growth during this period, changes in the existing patterns of social ordering and the development of a public culture.

We have examined theatricality in the playhouses and on the streets of Restoration London, focussing on the interrelation of dramaturgy with social action and on shifts in the theatrical metaphor. It was in the playhouses, where stage and street met, that social action intersected with its image, example with imitation. We have viewed this intersection from three angles: how people behaved, how they dressed and how they spoke. In each of these the stage acted as both mirror and model--reflecting social reality and establishing patterns that the people of London would imitate. Its importance derived from this dual role.

We have considered how theatrical conventions influenced people's behaviour, their self-image and the principles of dramaturgy. The thesis's subject, we might say, has been imitation; its method, reflective, circular; its conclusion, that there are no originals: all action is imitative, all reference, self-reference. The audiences of Restoration drama were involved--often implicated--in the plays they attended, and in such a way as to preclude any objective, linear reaction to them.

Instead their perspectives were always multiple: they watched a play unfold, but listened to an actress, laughed at a character and recognised themselves.

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