CHAPTER 6

Stardom and Sedulousness
Acting for the Stage

In 1685, Robert Gould lampooned several popular actors in "The Play-House," a vitriolic attack on the theatre and several of its star performers. Initially banned from publication, "The Play-House" circulated in manuscript for four years before finally surfacing in Gould's collected works, *Poems Chiefly consisting of Satyrs and Satyrical Epistles* (1689).[1] In the dedication to the Earl of Dorset, Gould recasts its suppression as evidence of his personal integrity: "*For to write* truth *is one sure way to be deny'd the Press*."[2] The actual circumstances were far less noble. Elizabeth Barry and Thomas Betterton, both star players at the United Company, used their power to suppress Gould's thoroughly unpleasant screed. Although 1685 was not an auspicious year for Lord Chamberlains – three died in rapid succession – none would have looked kindly on Gould's pasquinade given the close ties between the theatre and the Carolean court chronicled in Chapter 1.[3] Indeed, not a single satire against actors or the playhouses was printed during the reigns of Charles II or James II.[4] It is hardly coincidental that "The Play-House" finally saw publication after William and

[1] The title page of "The Play-House. A Satyr" specifies that it was "Writ in the Year 1685," in Robert Gould, *Poems Chiefly consisting of Satyrs and Satyrical Epistles* (London, 1689), 155.

[2] The British Library owns what might be the presentation copy of "The Play-House" that Gould wrote for Dorset, which is dated 1685 (BL, Add. MS 30492). Two other manuscript versions exist: one in the Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS (Lt 54) and the other in the University of Nottingham Library Manuscripts and Special Collections (Pw V 40/113, 192r–203r). The catalogue for the Leeds manuscript unhelpfully dates the text between 1680 and 1695. Paul Hammond places the Nottingham manuscript at 1688 or earlier. These dates suggest that while Gould's satire was "deny'd the Press" prior to its later inclusion in his *Works*, it was known in manuscript circles. See Paul Hammond, "The Robinson Manuscript Miscellany of Restoration Verse in the Brotherton Collection, Leeds," *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* 18 (1982): 275–324.

[3] Henry Bennet, 1st Earl of Arlington, died in July, only to be succeeded briefly by Robert Bruce, 1st Earl of Ailesbury, whose death in October paved the way for John Sheffield, Lord Mulgrave.

[4] The only other known lampoon in the period targeting actors, the anonymous "Satyr on the Players" (*c.* 1682), circulated quietly in manuscript. Unlike Gould's screed, however, it never saw print. See "Satyr on the Players," BL, Harley MS 7317, 96–100.

Mary – no particular friends to the theatre – ascended to the throne in 1688. For the first time since the publication of William Pyrnne's notorious *Histrio-Mastix* in 1633, anti-theatrical writings would once again issue from printing presses.

Gould evidently thought the change in monarchy and moral outlook augured well for his dramatic aspirations. To the very actors he had just insulted in the most noxious terms, he submitted a tragedy, *Innocence Distress'd: Or, The Royal Penitents* – surely one of the more breathtakingly obtuse solicitations in the annals of theatre. Unsurprisingly, it was rejected. Hell-bent on production, Gould then secured, most likely through the good offices of his patron and employer, James Bertie, 1st Earl of Abingdon, a royal warrant commanding the United Company to stage the play. To Gould's astonishment, the actors shrugged it off: "All the Notice they took of it was only to Consult how with safety to disobey it; in which they at last, with a great deal of Inhumanity, Succeeded."[5] In desperation, he switched up tactics. Instead of the heavy-handed use of power brokers, Gould groveled. He pleaded the impetuosity of youth ("I put 'em in Mind I was very Young when this Satyr was Written"), and he further offered "to leave out of this Edition any Verses they pleas'd or that any other Person believ'd cou'd be so much as wrested to their Disadvantage."[6] These gestures of obeisance made little inroad, especially with Elizabeth Barry: "All that this cou'd obtain from the Mighty Actress was plainly to tell me, She was not so good a Christian as to forgive."[7] To this Gould added remorsefully, "indeed, I really and readily believ'd Her."[8] Shaken by the actors' rejection of his play, he ultimately announced his intention to cease writing, concluding that "*there is no worse Fate upon Earth than being laught at*."[9] As for *Innocence Distress'd*, the long and unforgiving memories of Barry and Betterton kept it from the boards at the United Company until their departure in 1695. It remained unproduced at their new company in Lincoln's Inn Fields and ignored again at the Haymarket after they joined Vanbrugh's theatrical enterprise. Not until 1737, many years after everyone named in "The Play-House" had long since died, would Gould's daughter, Hannah, usher into print via subscription this tragedy that had "never been acted."[10]

[5] Robert Gould, *The Works of Mr. Robert Gould: In Two Volumes* (London, 1709), 2:225.
[6] Gould, *Works*, 2:226.
[7] Gould, *Works*, 2:226.
[8] Gould, *Works*, 2:226.
[9] Gould, *Poems*, a4r.
[10] Robert Gould, *Innocence Distress'd: or, The Royal Penitents* (London, 1737), A3v.

The concerted efforts of a devoted daughter slowed the deliquescence of Gould and his play, but the aggrieved actors had in the meantime achieved theatrical immortality. Kate C. Hamilton chronicles how Barry used repertory and court connections to "engender her celebrity."[11] Barry's apotheosis to stardom and Gould's descent to ignominy suggest the extent to which the profession of player had changed over the course of the seventeenth century. Simply put, players now enjoyed a cultural authority that seventy years earlier would have been unthinkable. In addition to brushing aside royal warrants, performers challenged superiors and boldly claimed the social standing that was now a feature of their profession. The transformation of the once lowly Elizabethan actor, beset by city authorities and subject to vagrancy laws, into a celebrity wielding considerable power was, like so many aspects of the Restoration stage, an accidental byproduct of changes to the theatrical marketplace. Whereas the duopoly was ruinous for dramatists, it was a boon for leading actors, who now found themselves transformed from vagrants into the most rarified of commodities. Principal players especially benefited from the theatre's pursuit of prestige and improvement. Glimmering through their close association with the court, actors were the jewels of the gorgeous tiny playhouses, set off by the foil of lavish stagecraft. Lionized by wits, adored by courtiers, and beloved by fans, star players achieved a prominence and enjoyed a social liquidity unrivaled by any other occupation in the late seventeenth century.

There was a dark side as well. Actors also grappled with declining audiences and, by the 1690s, with cutthroat managers, such as Thomas Skipworth and Christopher Rich. Shareholders, of course, realized little from their allotted portions when houses were half-full, while hirelings saw wages stagnate or decrease. Payment of astronomic fees to imported musical celebrities infuriated regular company members who never saw anything like those sums. Even worse, their salaries were sometimes docked to pay these divas. Actors also had to cope with detractors outside of the playhouse. Their presumption of social parity and their display of wealth did not sit well with men uneasy about their own tenuous hold on respectability, sometimes occasioning vicious attacks in print and in person. Virtually all the recorded attacks against players were mounted by men in liminal social positions – arriviste civil servants like Gould or penurious aristocrats such as Charles Mohun, 4th Baron Mohun. They resented the profession, but especially despised seeing women earning salaries, perfecting an art

[11] Kate C. Hamilton, "The 'Famous Mrs. Barry': Elizabeth Barry and Restoration Celebrity," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 42, no. 1 (2013), 315.

form, and commanding a social space. Even so, the profession prospered. The very conditions that inadvertently eroded playwriting as a profession metamorphosed principal players into celebrities who would, by the eighteenth century, have their images disseminated everywhere, from teacups to playing cards. Undoubtedly, the availability of cheap print and the emergence of new literary forms, such as biographies, letters, magazines, and newspapers, contributed to the making of the celebrity actor; these would prove especially potent engines of change in the eighteenth century. At the dawn of the Restoration, however, the structural attributes peculiar to the duopoly – prestige, scarcity, and innovation – had the unexpected effect of transforming leading actors from scoundrels to stars.

"The Vanity and Pride of the Theatre-Actors"

When the United Company flouted the command to perform Gould's execrable tragedy, they were following a long precedent. From the very outset of the Restoration, players ran afoul of royal edicts, especially when questions of playability were at stake. No acting company wants to be saddled with a hopeless script, as an incident involving Lodowick Carlell underscores. Catherine of Braganza had asked him to translate Pierre Corneille's tragedy *Heraclius*, a request with which he readily complied since he knew "*she loves plays of that kind*."[12] The Queen appears to have functioned as an intermediary with the Duke's Company; certainly, Carlell thought his play "*seem'd to be accepted*."[13] The company, however, ignored the Queen's recommendation and commissioned a different translation on the sly. Remarkably, Carlell knew nothing about the new commission despite rumors circulating around town. Katherine Philips, in a chatty letter written on January 24, 1664, to Lady Temple reports that "y^{e} confederate-translators are now upon Heraclius, & I am contented y^{t} S^{r} Tho. Clarges (who hath done that last yeare) should adorn their triumph in it, as I have done in Pompey."[14] Carlell did not discover the substitution until March 8, when the competing translation "*was perfected and acted*"; meanwhile, his own play was "*not returned to me until that very day*."[15]

[12] Lodowick Carlell, "The Author's Advertisement" to *Heraclius, Emperour of the East*, by Pierre Corneille, trans. Lodowick Carlell (London, 1664), A3r.
[13] Carlell, "Advertisement," A3r.
[14] *LS*, 74. We do not know who wrote this second translation, although Philips's use of the phrase "confederate-translators" in the letter to Lady Temple points to gentlemen amateurs, who often undertook these sorts of projects in the 1660s.
[15] Carlell, "Advertisement," A3r.

Carlell tried to brush off the affront, but like many aggrieved playwrights in the period, he resorted to publication – "*one cause why this is now in print*" – to air his discontent.[16] Incidents such as these underscore how the Restoration acting companies exerted power *in actu*. Bruno Latour points out that "power over something or someone is a composition made by many people" that "varies not according to the power someone has, but to the number of other people who enter into the composition."[17] Actors did not possess power *in situ*; rather, in accordance with the paradox of power, others realized their authority through verbal agreement, visible support, or grudging acquiescence. A minor dramatist such as Carlell did not have the clout to alter his plight quite simply because no one acknowledged his ability to do so. Moreover, his situation was awkward insofar as a public protest by Carlell would reveal the Queen's own lack of power. She may have requested the translation and put in a good word, but the Duke's Company clearly felt they could reject her recommendation with impunity.

The court effectively actualized the power of players not only by ignoring this instance of effrontery but also by overlooking actions that sixty years earlier would have been punished severely. At the behest of the Countess of Castlemaine, the actress Katherine Corey impersonated Lady Harvey's mannerisms in a revival of Jonson's *Catiline* (1611), an action that landed her in jail briefly.[18] John Lacy's inflammatory performance in Edward Howard's *The Change of Crownes* (1667) resulted in his detention and the temporary closure of the King's Company.[19] Tellingly, their punishments were largely symbolic. Corey spent all of one night in jail since Charles II, according to the French ambassador Colbert de Croissy, "felt obliged to protect the players."[20] The King's Company was closed for four days (April 18 to 21, 1667) over *The Change of Crownes* incident, which was sufficient to register the monarch's displeasure without ruining the box office. As for Lacy, he spent all of five days "durance under the groom porter."[21] This brief confinement hardly qualified as punishment, as the groom porter was responsible for overseeing card games and gambling at court. John Evelyn

[16] Carlell, A3r.
[17] Bruno Latour, "The Powers of Association," *Sociological Review* 32 (May 1984): 265.
[18] Pepys, *Diary*, 9:415.
[19] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:173.
[20] Colbert de Croissey to Charles II, January 11, 1669, quoted in Colin Visser, "Theatrical Scandal in the Letters of Colbert de Croissy, 1669," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 7, no. 2 (1983): 54.
[21] *LS*, 107.

called in at the groom porter's lodging a few months later and reported seeing "deepe & prodigious gaming … vast heapes of Gold squandered away in a vaine & profuse manner"[22] Lacy likely spent his brief "durance" carousing with his jailer. During his brief kingship, James II similarly protected actors. A dispute occurred "behind the Scenes" which resulted in William Smith receiving "a Blow" from an unnamed gentleman.[23] That same night "an Account of this Action was carry'd to the King, to whom the Gentleman was represented so grossly in the wrong, that, the next Day, his Majesty sent to forbid him the Court upon it."[24] Smith, however, was entirely exonerated.

Court support for actors could induce considerable resentment amongst gentry and minor nobility. James II's intervention ultimately backfired for Smith: the "[i]ndignity cast upon a Gentleman, only for having maltreated a Player, was look'd upon as the Concern of every Gentleman."[25] The concerned gentlemen formed a cabal to belittle Smith during a performance.[26] So disruptive was the resulting "Chorus of Cat-calls" that "he order'd the Curtain to be dropp'd."[27] In possession of "a competent Fortune of his own," Smith quit the stage rather than endure further instances of public humiliation.[28] When the King's Company was shuttered over *The Change of Crownes* debacle, Pepys recorded that "the gentry seem to rejoice much at it, the house being become too insolent."[29] On another occasion, Pepys observed how "the gallants do begin to be tyred with the Vanity and pride of the Theatre=actors, who are endeed grown very proud and rich."[30] Intimate ties between the court and the acting companies undoubtedly contributed to public perception that actors had become "very proud and rich." The unprecedented use of players as advisors for court performances further secured their social status. Prior to the Civil War, professional actors had augmented court masques by taking "speaking parts in the prominent dramatic episodes that Ben Jonson and other writers composed to frame the choreographic part of the entertainment."[31] After the Restoration, they not only performed but also taught the nobility playing lead parts how to

[22] Evelyn, *Diary*, 3:504.
[23] Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, 49.
[24] Cibber, 49.
[25] Cibber, 49.
[26] Cibber, 49.
[27] Cibber, 49.
[28] Cibber, 49–50.
[29] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:174.
[30] Pepys, *Diary*, 2:41.
[31] Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558–1642*, 115.

move and speak convincingly. For the 1675 court production of *Calisto,* Thomas Betterton "instructed the noble Actors, and supplied the part of Prompter, and Mrs Betterton gave lessons to the young Princesses," tutelage that blurred the difference between a performed monarchy and a stage performance.[32]

Also unprecedented was the degree to which the court involved itself in the daily workings of the patent companies. Charles and his brother, the Duke of York, intervened when disputes broke out between players and management, as occurred when Henry Harris decamped from the Duke's Company. According to Pepys, Harris had grown "very proud and demanded 20l for himself extraordinary there, [more] than Batterton or anybody else, upon every new play, and 10l upon every Revive – which, with other things, Sir William Davenant would not give him; and so he swore he would never act there more – in expectation of being received in the other House."[33] Evidently Harris had secured "a stipend from the other House [i.e., the King's Company] privately," but the expanded letters patent issued in 1662 expressly forbade actors from functioning as free agents.[34] Rather than jailing Harris or issuing a reprimand, the Duke of York – who later as monarch would support Smith when he was assaulted by a "Gentleman" – mediated the salary dispute personally. He mollified Davenant and persuaded him to accede to the "very proud" actor's demands. And thus did royal "composition" cement the new power of the Restoration performer.

Pepys's reaction to the Harris imbroglio highlights the complex relationship between spectators and actors in the period. The "proud and rich" players were especially apt to offend gentry and minor aristocrats

[32] Henry Brougham et al., *Biographia Britannica: or, the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons Who have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland, From the Earliest Ages, Down to the Present Times*, 6 vols. (London: W. Innys, 1747–66), 2:772.

[33] Pepys, *Diary*, 4:239.

[34] The original documents issued in July 1660 did not contain this language. To ensure absolute control over their employees and to "preserve amity and correspondence betwixt the said companies," Killigrew and Davenant inserted additional language to the letters patent dated January 15, 1662, specifying that

> no actor or other person employed about either of the said theatres ejected by the said Sir W. Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, or either of them, or deserting his company, or any other person or persons to be employed in acting, or in any matter relating to the stage, without the consent and approbation of the governor of the company, whereof the said person so ejected or deserting was a member, signified under his hand and seale. ("Davenant's Patent," 73–77 and "Killigrew's Patent," 1:76, 79–80).

A diachronic reading of the various patents, complaints, and lawsuits over the course of the 1660s reveals the steady expansion of managerial authority over every aspect of the theatrical marketplace.

in marginal circumstances. Unable (or unwilling) to better their own lot, they resented seeing a mere player negotiate successfully for a higher salary that might ease upward mobility. Pepys predicts darkly in his diary that Harris, who "is come again to Sir W Davenant upon his terms that he demanded … will make him very high and proud."[35] The actor's determination to improve his working conditions perhaps reminded Pepys – uncomfortably so – that he had yet to realize his own ambitions. In 1663, the diarist still functioned as a factotum to his patron, Lord Sandwich, while working as a clerk in the Naval Office. Tellingly, after he moves up in the world, Pepys's attitude toward Harris changes from resentment to admiration. By 1667 – and on the cusp of considerable wealth and social influence – Pepys for the first time invites Harris to his parties, shows him his collection of rarities and books, and inveigles a backstage invitation.[36] Now socially secure, Pepys can afford magnanimity toward the "high and proud" players. No longer would he record in his diary petty instances of thespian cheek.

Pepys's changing attitude toward Harris provides a window into why the gentry and Town "gallants" could not in the same manner as the court cede power to a profession whose social fluidity mirrored too uncomfortably their own tenuous hold on respectability. By dint of their trade, actors could mimic the mannerisms and behaviors of their betters; indeed, their success depended on their skill in doing so. Whereas a merchant was marooned in the brack of class, a player deftly navigated the currents of intonation, mannerism, and gesture. Clothing could be donned and discarded as easily as accents or personas. Actors were notorious in the period for "borrowing" costumes and finery from the playhouses and thereby appearing in the streets of London as the gentle folk they impersonated on stage. They also racked up debt for the "niceties" that augmented costumes pilfered from the wardrobe room. In 1665 alone, Elizabeth Farley Weaver had claims filed against her by three different merchants for unpaid debts.[37] As actors gained in prominence, so did their desire for the goods and dwellings that might testify to their enhanced social stature. In 1671 alone, over twenty such complaints were filed by aggrieved merchants and shopkeepers against players that owed them money.[38]

[35] Pepys, *Diary*, 4:347.
[36] For more information about Pepys's friendship with Harris, see Payne, "Pepys's Diary," especially 103–04.
[37] *Register*, 1:71, 74.
[38] *Register*, 1:121–32.

Several celebrity male actors not only swaggered about wearing swords, the traditional mark of a gentleman, but also deployed them in disputes. Earlier in the century, the actor Gabriel Spenser challenged the dramatist Ben Jonson to a duel – an act of braggadocio for which he paid with his life – but he would never have dared the same with a gentleman. The privilege afforded by stardom, however, gave rise to principal players wielding weapons against their betters. On May 1, 1698, the actor and playwright George Powell assaulted a member of the Davenant clan in a coffeehouse. He then drew a sword upon Colonel Stanhope, who had interposed to stop the fight.[39] So furious were the House of Lords at the lack of punishment meted out to Powell that Rich's company was silenced – for all of twenty-four hours.[40] Four days after the incident, Lord Monmouth "moved … against the impudence of the actors at the playhouse" and asked the House "to desire his majestie that none of the players wear swords."[41] Nothing came of the request. During *The Change of Crownes* imbroglio, Lacy cursed the playwright Edward Howard, who happened to be the fifth son of the 1st Earl of Berkshire and Dryden's brother-in-law. Howard slapped Lacy's face with his glove, to which the actor responded by giving "him a blow over the pate" with a cane.[42] That violent exchange is revelatory in several respects. Howard responds to Lacy's curse with the gesture – slapping the face with a glove – normally used between gentlemen. He thus tacitly acknowledges the social status conferred by Lacy's profession: one does not deign to flick a glove across the face of a mere servant or common laborer. By bringing a cane down upon Howard's head rather than issuing a challenge in response to this gesture, Lacy simultaneously acknowledges and repudiates the gentleman's code. The caning affirms Lacy's social prerogative to respond violently to an insult issued by an aristocrat, but it also realigns the rules of the game to his advantage. Ever the comedian, Lacy transforms the deadly seriousness of a potential duel into a moment of vaudeville showcasing Howard as the caned fool.

In the case of William Mountfort, tragedy could not be so easily averted. Known for his gentlemanly persona onstage and off, Mountfort confronted Captain Richard Hill and Lord Mohun late at night while they were drunkenly carousing outside of Anne Bracegirdle's house. Earlier in the day, they had tried unsuccessfully to abduct the actress on her way back from a dinner party. Hill blamed Mountfort for his lack of amatory success with

[39] *Register*, 1:329–30.
[40] *Register*, 1:330.
[41] *Register*, 1:330.
[42] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:173.

Bracegirdle: he thought the actor's good looks and chivalrous mien had captured her heart. Ironically, it was Mountfort's gentlemanly airs – he was wearing a sword in addition to issuing a verbal challenge – that enraged the two men, who pointedly did not follow the chivalric code of combat. Mohun distracted the actor before he had a chance to draw, and then Hill cowardly ran him through with a rapier, delivering a mortal wound.[43] The jury's acquittal of Hill and Mohun spoke to the legal mechanisms that still privileged birth over due process, but celebrity conferred an alternative and more socially powerful form of justice. Purcell composed the music for Mountfort's lavish funeral in St. Clement Danes church, which had been rebuilt by Christopher Wren in 1682.[44] The attendance of over 1,000 people and even the location of the church hinted at public vindication for the slain actor: St. Clement Danes is situated just outside the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand. Mountfort's attackers may have been acquitted in a court of law, but they were certainly condemned in the court of public opinion and the popular press. Even the theatre memorialized Mountfort in a play transparently modeled on his untimely end: *The Player's Tragedy, or, Fatal Love* (1693). Meanwhile, both Hill and Mohun disappeared ignominiously, never to be heard from again.

The replacement of the boy players of the Shakespearean stage with actresses was one of the great innovations of the Restoration theatre. Women also performed on commercial stages in Italy and Spain from the late sixteenth century onwards.[45] Actresses on the payroll clearly needed work, and not surprisingly, new scripts feature far more lines and parts for women than did pre-Commonwealth texts. Old plays were adapted accordingly. The 1667 redaction of *The Tempest* by Davenant and Dryden expands Miranda's dialogue from the fifty lines Shakespeare assigns her in the original script to 249 lines, a fivefold increase. Miranda is also given a sister, one "Dorinda," who speaks an equivalent number of lines. An actress played Ariel for the first time. Together, the women's parts ballooned from 2.5 percent of the total dialogue – Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) has 2,026 lines – to over 25 percent in the Dryden/Davenant

[43] For further details about the confrontation, see *The Tryal of Charles Lord Mohun before the House of Peers in Parliament, for the Murder of William Mountford* (London, 1693), 11, 24, 28, 37, 43–44.

[44] Deborah Payne Fisk, "Mountfort, William (c. 1664–1692)," in *ODNB*.

[45] See Peter Parolin, "Access and Contestation: Women's Performance in Early Modern England, Italy, France, and Spain," *Early Theatre* 15, no. 1 (2012): 15–25; Deborah Payne Fisk, "The Restoration Actress," in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan J. Owen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 69–91.

version.[46] Clear favorites with audiences, actresses also delivered prologues and epilogues on behalf of the dramatist and the company.[47]

As occurred with the specter of "proud and rich" players, the showcasing of women through expanded roles and the speaking of prologues did not sit well with a segment of the audience. Rankled especially were marginalized males. Gould, who went after Barry in "The Play-House," was a servant with pretensions to poetry. Mohun, who pursued Bracegirdle, was an aristocratic second son saddled at birth with his father's gambling debts. Sir Hugh Middleton, who flung faeces at Rebecca "Becky" Marshall, was a historical figure so inconsequential that we know him solely through this incident. Mark Trevor is also known to posterity solely for equally obnoxious behavior: he harassed Marshall "as well upon the Stage as of[f]."[48] Despite this abuse, actresses took advantage of the same cultural authority that empowered Lacy to bring a cane down upon Howard's head. Barry, of course, used her celebrity power to ensure that Gould would never again realize his writerly or theatrical aspirations. Bracegirdle provided moving testimony against Hill and Mohun in a court of law that would make its way into the public spheres of print and theatrical production. Marshall took it upon herself to dress down Middleton in public for "some ill language he had cast out against the women actors of that house," thereby humiliating him in a public sphere for all to witness.[49] When Trevor's attentions became oppressive, she petitioned the king successfully for protection.[50] That Marshall did not hesitate to air her grievances with the monarch underscores the extent to which the duopoly had transformed the status of actors. By 1675, so emboldened were actors that management at the King's Company proposed thirteen articles to the Lord Chamberlain intended to rein in various offending thespian behaviors, from refusing parts out of hand to missing rehearsals to demanding salary advances.[51]

[46] Strikingly, tragedies such as *King Lear* (1606) and *Macbeth* (1606), where female characters figure prominently in the action, similarly assign them few lines. Cordelia speaks for only 31 lines in *Lear* – far fewer than the Fool and a fraction of her father's 697 lines. Lady Macbeth, indisputably one of the most memorable characters in Shakespeare's pantheon of women, delivers fewer than one-third of her husband's 681 lines. The sole exception is *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which Cleopatra speaks 622 lines to Mark Antony's 766.

[47] Diana Solomon points out that of the 1,570 extant prologues and epilogues from 1660 to 1714, 372 "feature confirmed female speakers," with another 691 unconfirmed by gender (although one can assume that some portion of these were delivered by actresses). By "capitalizing on the female body and voice," the acting companies took advantage of the popularity of actresses throughout the period. See Diana Solomon, *Prologues and Epilogues of Restoration Theater: Gender and Comedy, Performance and Print* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013), 40.

[48] Payne Fisk, "Restoration Actress," 78.

[49] Cheryl Wanko, "Marshall, Rebecca [Beck] (fl. 1660–1683)," in *ODNB*.

[50] Wanko, "Marshall, Rebecca."

[51] *Register*, 1:185.

And, of course, high on the list of grievances was the wearing of company costumes outside of the playhouse.

Scarcity and the Value-Added Actor

The marketplace conditions that diminished opportunities for dramatists made actors more valuable than ever. Earlier in the century, 150–200 actors were regularly employed in London.[52] If one includes players from the traveling troupes that visited the capital on periodic tours, as does John H. Astington, then "perhaps around five hundred people continuously involved in acting in the English professional theatre before the civil wars is not an exaggerated estimate."[53] The duopoly limited the number of licensed acting companies in London to two, a reduction that in turn curtailed opportunities for actors, just as it had for playwrights. As a result, the number of players plummeted. Both companies in the 1660s and 1670s employed eight actresses and between fifteen and eighteen actors each, numbers that totaled to roughly forty-five to fifty players working in London.[54] Hirelings were added as necessary, especially for resource-heavy dramatic operas requiring singers, dancers, and supernumeraries. The collapse of the King's Company in 1682 diminished the number of principal actors in the capital once again. A document dated January 12, 1688, lists nineteen actors and only five actresses; however, several of the men named, such as John Downes, were not players.[55] It is likely the total came closer to between eighteen and twenty, roughly 10 percent of the acting cohort working permanently in London in 1600.

Enforced scarcity affected writers and actors in markedly different ways. As Chapter 5 details, playwrights had only two companies to which they could market their product; between 1682 and 1695, they were down to one. A swelling backlog of old plays and rising production costs further curtailed their ability to sell plays. And finally, there was little need to retain dramatists after their product has been purchased, especially in a marketplace saturated with old scripts that could be cheaply revived. Quickly playwrights became a superfluity. While the duopoly also limited

[52] John H. Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time: The Art of Stage Playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

[53] Astington, *Actors and Acting*, 8.

[54] A list of "sworn actors" from September to October 1663 shows that eight "Women Comœdians" and fifteen actors were employed at the King's Company in 1663 (*Register*, 1:58). A roster dated from 1671 for the same company lists six actresses and twelve actors.

[55] *Register*, 1:266–67.

job prospects for actors, they could market their product – essentially themselves – repeatedly for a living wage. Unlike writers, actors function simultaneously as creator *and* artifact: their ongoing labor consists of memorizing roles, mastering blocking, disciplining bodies, and training voices with an eye toward creating a marketable commodity. Their product, a live performance, is both evanescent and reproducible, and those attributes guarantee future employment. And, finally, actors do not date in the manner of plays, which are indelibly marked by the cultural moment of their creation. Most performers change roles as they age – Betterton was singular in performing Hamlet into his early seventies – and many continued acting well into their fifties and early sixties, as did Elizabeth Barry, Edward Kynaston, and Charles Hart.[56] That very mutability – the ability to shift from ingénue to old woman – ensures that performers retain value both as producers and products of their labor. Because actors do not create a fixed product outside of themselves, one that might become passé with changing fashions, they can remake themselves for the marketplace, donning and discarding roles as they age or tastes morph.

The heightened cultural value of actors translated into higher wages, especially for shareholders and leading players. They also exercised considerable bargaining power, as the incident involving Harris reveals. Killigrew may have complained to Pepys about dwindling box office in the aftermath of the Great Fire, but in the next breath, he announces plans to increase the salary of the increasingly popular Elizabeth Knepp by £30 annually to ensure she continues with the company.[57] As a fledgling actor, Cibber saw his salary raised from 15s. to 20s. a week after he excelled as Lord Touchwood in *The Double Dealer*, yet another increase that flew in the face of the box office woes.[58] Sometimes actors looking for better conditions simply decamped, despite the 1662 prohibition against

[56] Kynaston's career is a useful reminder that few actors played the same role for nearly fifty years, as Betterton did with Hamlet – a privilege he undoubtedly enjoyed as company manager. Kynaston's career is commensurate with the Restoration: he started in 1660 and retired at the end of the century at the age of fifty-eight. Over that forty-year period, he gradually shifted roles as he aged. In the King's Company's inaugural season, Kynaston, who was reputed to be very pretty in his teens, played female roles. Once actresses became normative after 1661, he transitioned to romantic young leads, such as Acacis in *The Indian Queen* and Valentine in *Love in a Wood.* By the 1670s, then in his mid-thirties, Kynaston expanded his repertoire to include more serious roles, such as Scipio in *Sophonisba* (1675) and Morat in *Aureng-Zebe.* After 1682, when Kynaston was absorbed into the United Company, he was still young enough to retain the roles acquired in the previous decade. By the end of the decade, however, he had turned to parts requiring the *gravitas* now suitable to late middle age: the declining king in *Henry IV* and Muley Moloch in *Don Sebastian.*

[57] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:55.

[58] Cibber, 104.

doing so. Jo Haines absconded from the failing King's Company to act in Edinburgh. Evidently, things did not work out to his satisfaction. By late spring of 1682, Haines asked Nell Gwyn to petition the King on his behalf: "Get the King but to speak to my Lord Chamberlin / That in the Duke's house I may once Act agen."[59] The doggerel plea worked: on July 10, 1682, "papers of certification" declared that as "His Majesty's servant," Haines was entitled "to all rights and privileges belonging thereunto."[60] Charlotte Butler left the United Company for the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin when management would not increase her salary from 40s. to 50s. a week, effectively the same salary earned by Barry and Betterton.[61] The comedian Thomas Doggett, also dissatisfied with Rich's management at the United Company, put together a provincial troupe of players in Norwich under the patronage of Henry Howard, 7th Duke of Norfolk, for which he performed intermittently between 1697 and 1709.[62] Quarrels over salary, shares, and roles led to the "rebellion" of 1695, when Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle left to form their own troupe at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Tellingly, they banked on their collective star power to secure permission from the court to establish a new company, a gamble that paid off.

By comparison with other late seventeenth-century jobs, actors did well. Sharers and senior hirelings earned between £45 to £150 per season. The low end of that spectrum exceeded what the early modern demographer Gregory King thought necessary (£39 annually) to keep a family fed, clothed, and housed. The upper end of the range was close to what a prosperous merchant might earn. Minor players made little, perhaps £15–£20 per annum, but they had the opportunity to augment their income by performing at May Fair and Bartholomew Fair, both of which evidently paid better than the patent companies.[63] Fairs, strolling troupes of players, and regional companies also provided opportunities, especially for managers and actors cut out of the London theatrical marketplace because of the duopoly. George Jolly, who petitioned unsuccessfully to start his own company after the Restoration, visited Norwich between 1660 and 1665, reappearing again after September 22, 1669, with a small company "to

[59] *Register*, 1:228.
[60] *Register*, 1:229.
[61] Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, "Butler, Charlotte (fl. 1674–1693)," in *ODNB*.
[62] Sybil Rosenfeld chronicles in some detail Doggett's activities in Norwich in *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces, 1660–1765* (1939; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 43–45. Page references are to the 1970 edition.
[63] John Downes claims that the comedian William Pinkethman "gain'd more in Theatres [i.e., summer theatres] and Fairs in Twelve Years, than those that have Tugg'd at the Oar of Acting these 50" (Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or An Historical Review of the Stage*, 108).

exercise such plays opperas maskes showes scenes and ffasses [farces] & all other representations of the stage whatsoever."[64] Minor players excluded from sharer or senior hireling status also found work in the provinces. The *CSP, Domestic* and the Court Book for 1666–77 contain licenses for figures such as Cornelius Saffery, who toured Norwich in the early 1670s, and John Coysh and John Perin, who worked briefly at the "Nursery," the training ground for young actors, before taking up regional touring.[65]

Over time, regular wages and opportunities for supplementary income increased. By the first years of the eighteenth century, principal actors earned between £4 and £5 a week – roughly £150 for a thirty-week season – in addition to benefit income ranging from £51 to £90.[66] Group benefits for women and for young performers were an occasional feature of the 1660s and 1670s and served as a "way of compensating for their exclusion from sharer status," as Robert D. Hume observes.[67] That would change after 1695, when Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle became shareholders in the breakaway company at Lincoln's Inn Fields and began enjoying the fruits of solo benefit performances. According to Cibber, this new practice was created for Elizabeth Barry: "She was the first Person whose Merit was distinguish'd, by the Indulgence of having an annual Benefit-Play, which was granted to her alone, if I mistake not, first in King *James's* time, and which became not common to others, 'till the Division of this Company, after the Death of King *William's* Queen Mary."[68] Barry's benefit underscores the increasing economic power wielded by female celebrities, but, as Hume observes, this innovation offset the necessity for high salaries, especially when the United Company ran into hard times in the 1690s.[69] During fat years, benefits for actors were a drain on company profits; nonetheless, by the turn of the century, they became normative for star players. Actors and actresses also after the turn of the century began receiving "gifts" from besotted fans in amounts from £20 to £450, another indication of their star status.[70] Between salary, the annual benefit performance, and cash gifts, total compensation for principal performers in the 1708–09 season ran from a low of £190 to a high of £638 – numbers a playwright or skilled journeyman could only imagine.[71]

[64] Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players*, 36.
[65] Rosenfeld, 37–40.
[66] Hume, "Value of Money," 399–400.
[67] Robert D. Hume, "The Origins of the Actor Benefit in London," *Theatre Research International* 9, no. 2 (1984): 100.
[68] Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, 92.
[69] Hume, "Origins," 104.
[70] Hume, "Value of Money," 400.
[71] Hume, 400.

Engineered scarcity may have worked to the advantage of actors, but they still saw periods of hardship. As Chapter 4 recounts, the scramble to keep up with rival commodities and pastimes, especially the wildly successful music concerts, drove managers to invest in ruinously expensive dramatic operas and divas. By the 1690s, even the pared-down actors' company at Lincoln's Inn Fields imported continental talent they could ill afford. Downes chronicles how Betterton "procur'd from Abroad the best Dances and Singers, as, Monsieur *L'Abbe*, Madam *Sublini*, Monsieur *Balon*, *Margarita Delpine*, *Maria Gallia* and divers others; who being Exorbitantly Expensive produc'd small Profit to him and his Company, but vast Gain to themselves."[72] Predictably, these hires decimated company budgets. To offset costs, management raised ticket prices and docked the salaries of actors, who were already earning far less than imported musical stars. Little good came from these decisions. According to Cibber, actors fought with management and among themselves over dwindling resources, and their rancor further damaged precarious performance conditions:

> Plays of course were neglected, Actors held cheap, and slightly dress'd, while Singers, and Dancers were better paid and embroider'd. These Measures, of course, created Murmurings, on one side, and ill Humour and Contempt on the other. When it became necessary therefore to lessen the Charge, a Resolution was taken to begin with the Sallaries of the Actors; and what seem'd to make this Resolution more necessary at this time, was the Loss of Nokes, Monfort, and Leigh, who all dy'd about the same Year: No wonder then, if when these great Pillars were at once remov'd, the Building grew weaker, and the Audiences very much abated.[73]

Divas may have attracted spectators for one-off performances or limited runs, but the sourness of unhappy actors ultimately "abated" the long-term spectatorship so desperately needed.

Despite these difficulties, actors never landed on the street or in charitable institutions like their writing brethren. Writers fended for themselves in a gig economy with no protection beyond the generosity of a patron. Actors, however, cared for their own. The acting companies paid medical bills for injured actors and provided pensions for those too infirm to act, thereby establishing one of the first known social safety nets in England. Charles Hart, one of the original members of the King's Company, retired after the companies were united in 1682 "by reason of his Malady; being

[72] Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or An Historical Review of the Stage*, 96–97.
[73] Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, 105.

Afflicted with the Stone and Gravel, of which he Dy'd some time after: Having a Sallary of 40 Shillings a Week to the Day of his Death."[74] Philip Cademan was injured in a dueling scene with Henry Harris in August of 1673, an accident that left him with impaired speech and a lame hand. He was nevertheless awarded a pension for the next thirty-five years of 30s. a week.[75] Not surprisingly, the managerial avariciousness that drove Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle to leave the United Company in the mid-'90s also affected actors' pensions. Rich demanded that Cademan work as a ticket taker and then tried to swindle him out of his salary. So engrained, however, by the 1690s was the practice of ensuring that "all persons had it [i.e., a pension] for their Lives that were disabled from Acting by Sickness or other Misfortunes" that the Lord Chamberlain appears to have ruled in Cademan's favor.[76] As a result of these protections, actors did not land in Bedlam, debtors' prison, the Charterhouse, or the gutter – a fate met by far too many dramatists.

Indeed, many actors retired to comfortable estates that writers would never know. Elizabeth Bowtell left an estate worth £830 when she died in 1714.[77] Anne Bracegirdle at the height of her career earned £120 annually. She retired young from the stage at the age of thirty-seven, and she lived quietly out of the public eye for another forty years. Bracegirdle nonetheless had earned enough money prior to her retirement to leave an estate of several hundred pounds, with £400 going to a nephew, £100 to a Mrs. Ann Hodge, and the remainder to her niece Martha.[78] Well into his old age, Edward Kynaston retained his ground rent shares at Drury Lane Theatre, which provided a steady source of income. Elizabeth Barry had sufficient savings to lend Alexander Davenant sums of £200 in 1692 and then between £400 and £600 the following year.[79] In retirement, she received £100 annually from the Queen's Theatre in addition to a guaranteed spring benefit of £40.[80] These monies augmented what Barry had already saved as a shareholder. Thomas Doggett's considerable earnings as an actor and a theatre manager, along with his marriage to a wealthy gentlewoman, allowed him to found an endowment for an annual race on the Thames and an award for the Watermen's Guild.[81] According to Zachary

[74] Downes, 41.
[75] Downes, 67.
[76] Downes, 67.
[77] Deborah Payne Fisk, "Bowtell [Boutel; née Davenport], Elizabeth (1648/9–1714/15)," in *ODNB*.
[78] J. Milling, "Bracegirdle, Anne (bap. 1671, d. 1748), in *ODNB*.
[79] Paula R. Backscheider, "Barry, Elizabeth (1656x8–1713)," in *ODNB*.
[80] Backscheider, "Barry, Elizabeth."
[81] William J. Burling, "Doggett, Thomas (c. 1670–1721)," in *ODNB*.

Baggs, Betterton in the 1708–09 season "collected as much as £450 from gifts and £76 from his benefit, as well as £113 in salary," a total of £639 for the year.[82] If teaching fees at the Haymarket, for which Betterton was paid an additional £50, and private elocution lessons are included, he likely earned close to £800 annually, an income exceeding what most merchants and gentry could expect and approaching that of a knight hailing from a modest neighborhood.[83] Little wonder that Betterton left behind a collection of books, prints, drawings, and paintings so extensive that several auctions were required to disperse the various lots.[84] By contrast, Dryden, the most renowned of Restoration playwrights, possessed such a meager estate upon his burial on May 2, 1700, in St. Anne's Church, Soho, that Charles Montagu had to step in to defray the costs of the burial.[85] The heightened power of actors, as the next section explores, also gave unprecedented power to the patent companies to determine authorial reputation.

The Power of the Restoration Acting Company

Acting companies calculate the amount of time, effort, and financing they want to put into a script, thereby signaling their estimation of its worth. Operating budgets drive aesthetic value: rare is the commercial company that can devote equal resources to every show. After the Restoration, the patent companies had far more to bestow than lengthy rehearsals or star players. They now additionally possessed freshly painted scenes, newly composed act tunes, breathtaking special effects, and the latest machines to confer on the handful of plays that might realize production in a given season. As a result, the commercial acting companies found themselves in an unprecedented position of power to make or break authorial reputation through the allocation of resources.

Rehearsal time constituted the company's initial outlay. Normally a month was allotted to the rehearsal of a five-act play; farces and short pieces went up after a week or so of preparation.[86] Previous histories of the period have taken as normative contemporary complaints about underrehearsed shows and concluded that production values were poor

[82] Judith Milhous, "Betterton, Thomas (bap. 1635, d. 1710)," in *ODNB*.
[83] Geoffrey Holmes, *Politics, Religion and Society in England, 1679–1742* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 295.
[84] See David Roberts, ed., *Pinacotheca Bettertoneana: The Library of a Seventeenth-Century Actor* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2013).
[85] Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 512.
[86] Stern, *Rehearsal*, 145.

by modern standards.[87] Less noticed, however, is how the acting companies carefully selected the playwrights and scripts who would benefit from lengthy study, which in turn signaled a hierarchy of value. Plays written by attached playwrights were usually well rehearsed and performed. As a contracted dramatist and shareholder, Dryden appears to have enjoyed consistently fine productions of his plays at the King's Company and then later at the Duke's and United Company, as he records in various prefaces and dedications. His plays were given long rehearsals, as revealed in a letter to William Walsh on December 12, 1693. Dryden mentions that his tragicomedy *Love Triumphant* (1694), "is now studying; but cannot be acted till after Christmasse is over."[88] A month later, Evelyn recorded hearing Dryden "read to us his Prologue & Epilogue to his last Valedictory Play, now shortly to be Acted," a comment revealing that *Love Triumphant* was still in rehearsal on January 11, 1694.[89] At the very least, Dryden's play received five weeks of rehearsal, almost twice the amount of time currently allotted to non-musical plays on Broadway.

Acting companies rarely accorded a similar investment of time and care to first plays by unknowns, especially if the scripts were weak. Etherge's first comedy, *Love in a Tub*, dismissed by Pepys as "a silly play," was poorly staged, "the whole thing done ill."[90] His subsequent plays were rehearsed with more care, perhaps benefiting from behind-the-scenes intervention by Sedley, Buckingham, and other court wits who had befriended Etherege in the interim. When newcomers did not have patrons to intercede on their behalf, the results could be disastrous. The United Company took so little effort with Henry Higdon's sole undertaking for the stage, *The Wary Widow; or, Sir Noisy Parrat* (1693), that the actors were dead drunk before the end of the third act. Unable to proceed, the company "very properly dismissed the audience."[91] To his chagrin, David Craufurd, another dramatist who quickly disappeared, found his altogether forgettable comedy *Courtship A-la-mode* (1700) slighted by Betterton's company. The actor John Bowman had the script for six weeks before rehearsals commenced, but according to Craufurd, he "*cou'd hardly read six lines on't.*"[92] Several

[87] In their critical introduction to *The London Stage*, Emmett L. Avery and Arthur H. Scouten attribute poor quality to "the repertory arrangements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" and conclude that "under these circumstances, the players could not always please the audience or the dramatist" (*LS*, civ).
[88] Dryden, *Letters*, 62.
[89] Evelyn, *Diary*, 5:164.
[90] Pepys, *Diary*, 7:347.
[91] *LS*, 419.
[92] David Craufurd, *Courtship A-la-mode* (London, 1700), A3r.

other actors showed up similarly unprepared, and the hapless playwright, thus "*finding that six or seven people cou'd not perform what was design'd for fifteen … was oblig'd to remove it after so many sham Rehearsals*."[93] Infuriated, Craufurd gave the play to the rival company.[94]

Actors were understandably unwilling to expend precious vitality on a script that was failing with spectators. Ironically, the new version of *Heraclius* commissioned by the Duke's Company in 1664 proved no better than Carlell's original script. The show was poorly attended and disliked by the few spectators present. As a result, the actors "did so spoil it with their laughing and being all of them out" (i.e., dropping lines) that Pepys angrily resolved "not to come thither again a good while."[95] The same happened to Edward Howard several years later. In the disgruntled preface to *The Six days Adventure, or, The New Utopia*, Howard records that "the Actors … finding the Play abusively treated, were apt enough to neglect that diligence required to their parts."[96] Worst of all for Howard was the public ignominy of having his work slighted by the acting company: "I doubt not it was observ'd by many."[97] Additionally, repetition produced its own form of thespian enervation, a particular problem for a repertory that depended heavily on revivals. Orrery's *Mustapha*, initially a big hit for the Duke's Company when it premiered in April of 1665, had dwindled into this unenviable state two years later. According to Pepys, the leads, Betterton and Harris, dissolved into laughter "in the midst of a most serious part, from the ridiculous mistake of one of the men upon the stage."[98] Bored with the play, the players did not bother to rerun lines or freshen up the show, a fate that could befall any dramatist.

If actors thought little of the script, they could use rehearsal and production to signal their contempt for its creator. John Downes reports how the actor Thomas Jevon refused Settle's instruction to "fall upon the point of his Sword and Kill himself, rather than be a Prisoner by the *Tartars*."[99] Instead, Jevon placed the sword in the scabbard, laid it upon the ground, and then "fell upon't, saying, now I am Dead; which put the Author into such a Fret, it made him speak Treble, instead of Double."[100] Improvisation was another technique used by actors to doom performances and humble

[93] Craufurd, *Courtship A-la-mode*, A3r.
[94] Craufurd, A3r.
[95] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:422.
[96] [Howard], *Six days Adventure*, A3r.
[97] [Howard], A3r.
[98] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:421.
[99] Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or An Historical Review of the Stage*, 75.
[100] Downes, 75.

playwrights. Anthony Leigh's bit of louche onstage business – he evidently flashed the audience – ruined Behn's comedy *The Lucky Chance* with female spectators, as she describes in the preface. Perhaps most frustrating for dramatists was the actor's willingness – or not – to study a part. In reminiscing about two popular performers from Christopher Rich's company in the 1690s, Cibber recalls that George Powell, although endowed with a superior "Voice, and Ear," nonetheless "lost the Value of them, by an unheedful Confidence" and "idly deferr'd the Studying of his Parts, as School-boys do their Exercises, to the last Day; which commonly brings them out proportionably defective."[101] Robert Wilks, by contrast, "never lost an Hour of precious Time, and was, in all his Parts, perfect, to such an Exactitude, that I question, if in forty Years, he ever five times chang'd or misplac'd an Article, in any one of them."[102] Indeed, so dedicated was Wilks to his craft that, unlike many other actors, he was willing to "swallow a Volume of Froth, and Insipidity, in a new Play, that we were sure could not live above three Days, tho' favoured, and recommended to the Stage, by some good Person of Quality."[103]

Dramatists usually wrote plays with specific actors in mind, and given the choice, they clearly would want a conscientious Wilks over a lazy Powell. The repertory system, however, limited options. Shows were cast in-house, apart from the freelance singers and dancers hired for dramatic operas or extravagant productions. Normally, fifteen actors and eight actresses were employed as principal players, although these numbers fluctuated in response to company finances. As a result, a playwright might have only two female ingénues or one romantic leading man from whom to select for a particular role. Behn's difficulty with the comic actor Anthony Leigh reveals this particular drawback of the repertory system. She may have fumed at Leigh's louche bit of improvisation in *The Lucky Chance*, but she was nonetheless forced to cast him again the following year as Scaramouch in *The Emperour of the Moon*. In the mid-'80s, the United Company had no one else that could perform the sort of physical comedy in which Leigh specialized. William Mountfort played *roués* and what Cibber calls "*the Fine Gentleman*": characters that engage in light banter without necessarily being comic figures themselves.[104] Cave Underhill would have been Behn's only other option, but as an older actor, he inclined toward what we would now call "character" roles, such as Oldwit in *Bury-Fair* (1689) or Sir Wilfull Witwoud in *The Way of the*

[101] Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, 133.
[102] Cibber, 133.
[103] Cibber, 133.
[104] Cibber, 75.

World. Known for lumpen country squires worse for wear, he quite pointedly was not the dexterous harlequin she needed for *The Emperour of the Moon*. Underhill, moreover, had a reputation for drink – perhaps why dramatists often wrote liquored-up roles for him – and Behn may very well have decided that the potential embarrassment of improvisation paled before the looming disaster of inebriation.[105] And thus she was forced to cast the man who sabotaged her play the previous year.

There were nonetheless aspects of the repertory system that inspired authorial inventiveness. Peter Holland points out how the "normative casting" typical of repertory not only shaped audience expectations but also provided "patterns that the dramatist has to use and which, if used subtly, can provide a route for the exploration of central themes in the play."[106] Those "patterns" resulted from the practice of having actors specialize in "lines" (i.e., standard character parts). Playwrights frequently drew upon a star performer's renown for a given line to flesh out dramatic characters. Spectators brought to Barry's performance of Mrs Marwood in *The Way of the World* their collective memory of the villainesses she had played in other shows. Arguably, the ghosting of those prior performances enriched the portrayal of Mrs Marwood as much as did Barry's actorly choices. Lines were also a box office draw, yet another reason that playwrights wrote to "type," especially for popular performers. In theory, spectators would flock to a new show to see if Betterton indeed lived up to his reputation for a given line, thereby ensuring the dramatist's third-day benefit performance. Then, as now, popular stars made for good box office. Popularity, however, did not always translate into dependability, as Behn discovered to her vexation. She knew the actor cast as the "Dutch Lover" in her comedy of the same name had a bad reputation for improvisation, but she "*gave him yet the part, because I knew him so acceptable to most o' th' lighter Periwigs about the Town*."[107] Behn hoped that since the actor was a favorite with "*lighter Periwigs*" (i.e., the privileged young men in the pit) that they would fill the house. Unfortunately, her concern came to pass: the actor's poor performance "*hugely injur'd*" the production, "*for 'twas done so imperfectly as never any was before*."[108] Even worse, he confirmed

[105] See the characterization of Underhill in *A Satyr on the Players*, 98ff. In a fictional letter from "Tony Lee" to Underhill, Tom Brown characterizes the latter as "a sociable sort of a Drunkard." Thomas Brown, *The Second Volume of the Works of Mr. Thomas Brown, Serious and Comical In Prose and Verse*, 5th ed. (London, 1720), 281.

[106] Holland, *Ornament of Action*, 69.

[107] Behn, *Works*, 5:163.

[108] Behn, *Works*, 5:163.

his reputation for base improvisation. Behn records angrily that the actor in question "*spoke but little of what I intended for him, but supplied it with a great deal of idle stuff, which I was wholly unacquainted with until I heard it first from him*."[109] Despite the actor's negligence, Behn does not disclose his identity, which suggests the extent of his power. Most likely, she did not want to jeopardize future prospects.

The Restoration pursuit of "great expences" gave the acting companies unprecedented power to make or break authorial reputation. Beyond the customary investment of human capital, they now had at their disposal the new scenes, lavish costumes, musical interludes, and special effects playwrights wanted for their shows. Given chronic cost overruns and, by the 1680s, dwindling audiences, few plays would realize this dividend. Dabblers and unknowns were the most likely to decry the lavish stagecraft they most likely would never enjoy for their own shows. The "Person of Quality" who penned *Tunbridge-Wells* (probably Thomas Rawlins) bitterly asks in the prologue "*with what strange Ease a Play may now be writ, / When the best half's composed by painting it? / And that in th' Ayr, or Dance lyes all the Wit?*"[110] Thomas Shipman in the epilogue to *Henry the Third of France, Stabb'd by a Fryer* blames the burning of the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street on "*the* Scenes*, compos'd of Oyl and porous Firr*."[111] Shockingly, Shipman applauds the conflagration, which he attributes to divine judgment against the King's Company in the late 1670s for abandoning old-fashioned, well-constructed plays in favor of trendy spectacle: "'*Twas a judgement in the Poets phrase, / That* Plays *and* Play-house *perish by a blaze / Caus'd by those* gaudy Scenes, *that spoil* good Plays."[112] Scripts by unknowns that required expensive staging were simply turned down, as John Smith's *Cytherea, or The Enamouring Girdle* (1677) reveals. Smith by his own account turned to an intercessor: "*one of the best Comical Poets in London*."[113] The players, however, "*were unwilling, because (as they said) … they could not act it to the life without much expence in contriving Scenes and Machins to their great loss, if the Spectators should not prove charitable in their censures*."[114] Thus spurned, Smith published the play, dedicating it "To the Northern Gentry" and vowing angrily never to "*forbear further courtships to the coy* Theaters."[115]

[109] Behn, *Works*, 5:163.
[110] [Thomas Rawlins], *Tunbridge-Wells, or, A Days Courtship* (London, 1678), A2r.
[111] Thomas Shipman, *Henry the Third of France, Stabb'd by a Fryer* (London, 1678), 75.
[112] Shipman, *Henry the Third*, 75.
[113] John Smith, *Cytherea, or The Enamouring Girdle* (London, 1677), A3r.
[114] Smith, *Cytherea*, A3r.
[115] Smith, A3r–v.

Within the local culture of the theatre, the value of a play did not exist apart from the company's willingness to invest in it. Withholding resources framed authorial inconsequence, a point made throughout Downes's *Roscius Anglicanus*. Downes waxes euphoric about the playwrights who had their scripts richly costumed and staged; he treats in a desultory manner those who were refused that same investment of resources. The title page of *Roscius Anglicanus* promises to catalogue all of the "the Principal Actors and Actresses, who Perform'd in the Chiefest Plays in each House," but it will only provide "the Names of the most *taking* [emphasis mine] Plays; and Modern Poets."[116] The "untaking" plays and playwrights barely warrant a mention, except in the case of spectacular failures. As a former member of the Duke's Company, Downes seeks to tell the story of *Roscius Anglicanus*, not *Scriptor Anglicanus*. Not once does he mention fine writing or skillful plotting contributing to a play's success although these are, of course, the very virtues that catalyze the willingness of the company to invest in a script in the first place. Downes, however, attributes success solely to production values and never to the intrinsic excellence of the play.

The performance calendar also signaled the acting company's estimation of playwrights. Weak or first-time scripts, especially by unknowns, were relegated to the summer season, the time of year when people of means went to their country estates. Remaining in London were working stiffs, the spectators described by the comedian John Lacy as the "worthy Crew of th'upper Gallery."[117] If the comic premise of Davenant's *The Play-house to be Lett* (1673) has any basis in actual theatrical practice, it would appear that companies sometimes leased their playhouses during the thin summer season. As the character of the "Player" explains to the "Poet," only highbrow plays qualify for "the Tearm" (i.e., the official theatre season that ran from October until June). The French translation on offer to the company

> … is too precious for Vacation-ware.
> Most of the men of judgment are retir'd
> Into the Country, and the remainder that
> Are left behind, come here not to consider
> But to be merry at such obvious things
> As not constrain 'em to the pains of thinking.[118]

[116] Downes, 1.
[117] John Lacy, *The Old Troop: or, Monsieur Raggou* (London, 1672), A4r.
[118] William Davenant, *The Play-house to be Lett*, in *The Works of S^r William Davenant K^t* (London, 1673), 2:75.

That truism was hardly lost on John Lacy. Despite his popularity as an actor, he understood that his light comedies did not warrant the same treatment as those written by John Dryden: "*Your Poet Laureat both to Box and Pit*."[119] Dryden's highbrow plays were produced during "*th' Tearms*," whereas Lacy's first effort, a broad farce, was relegated "*to th' long Vacations*," when few sophisticated theatregoers attended the playhouse.[120]

The hierarchical distinctions dictated by the performance calendar rankled as much as the withholding of lavish stagecraft. Crowne in the epistle dedicatory to *Juliana, or The Princess of Poland*, his first effort for the Duke's Company, observed that "others have been more fortunate in their early Productions," having had their scripts staged during terms.[121] His script, however, "had the misfortune to be brought into the world in a time, when the Dog-star was near his Reign" (i.e., summer) and "the most candid, as well as the most Illustrious Judges (I mean the Court) were absent."[122] Crowne reiterates in the preface to *Andromache* (1675) the notion that "the long Vacation" is "a time when the Play-houses are willing to catch at any Reed to save themselves from Sinking."[123] George Powell uses the excuse of a summer production to explain the failure and poor quality of *The Imposture Defeated: or, A Trick to Cheat the Devil* (1698). This "triffle of a Comedy" and "a slight piece of Scribble" was intended, Powell states, "to serve the wants of a thin Playhouse, and Long Vacation."[124] As such, it "needs no Apology for either the Plot or the Writing," which were "no more than a short weeks work."[125] The anonymous author of *The Constant Nymph* complained especially about the meagre summer staging that handicapped his play: "As for Adornments, in Habit, Musick, and Scene-Work, it was Vacation-time, and the Company would not venture the Charge."[126] His remonstrance came to nothing: the Duke's Company was not about to invest considerable resources in a play by an unknown. Instead of a fall or winter slot, *The Constant Nymph* most likely premiered in July 1677 and, like its author, subsequently disappeared forever.[127]

[119] Lacy, *Old Troop*, A4r.
[120] Lacy, A4r.
[121] John Crowne, *Juliana, or The Princess of Poland* (London, 1671), A4r.
[122] Crowne, *Juliana*, A4r–v.
[123] John Crowne, *Andromache* (London, 1675), A2r.
[124] [George Powell], *The Imposture Defeated: or, A Trick to Cheat the Devil* (London, 1698), A2r.
[125] [Powell], *Imposture*, A2r.
[126] *The Constant Nymph* (London, 1678), A2v.
[127] *The London Stage* notes that while the date of the premiere remains unknown, "the licensing of the play on 13 Aug. 1677 suggests a production not later than July 1677" (*LS*, 1:258).

"The Good Actors That Got 'Em Their Good Third Days"

At some point, every dramatist grasps the tough truth that performance invariably redounds far more to the reputation of the actor than the writer. Such has it always been, as Rush Rehm reminds us: "The actor's body in a given space before an attendant audience is the *sine qua non* of theatrical life. When the actor succeeds, that body moves from being present to being a presence; he or she is 'there on the night,' 'takes the stage,' 'lights up the theatre,' 'fills the space.'"[128] For many dramatists there was the bitter knowledge that only an Elizabeth Barry or a Thomas Betterton stood between ignominy and success, especially given the enhanced power wielded by celebrity actors during the period. Many is the indifferent script rescued by artful acting, and the elevated status of the actor after 1660 rendered even tougher this harsh theatrical truth. Detractors were quick to attribute box office success to performers rather than the script. The short dialogue *Poeta Infamis: Or, a Poet not worth Hanging* (1692), probably written by Charles Gildon, credits the success of Durfey's play *The Marriage-Hater Matched* (1692) to the comic actor Thomas Doggett.[129] *The London Mercury* was even more pointed in asking whether Durfey was "not obliged to present Mr Doggett (who acted Solon to so much Advantage) with half the Profit of his Third Day, since in the Opinions of most Persons, the good Success of his Comedy was half owing to that admirable actor?"[130] For dramatists such as Durfey, the humbling realization that they owed their reputation and livelihood to players necessitated, as George Powell sardonically remarked, the offering up of benedictions: "Modern Authors … have furnish'd out one Article of their Prayers … with God bless Mohun, and God bless Hart, the good Actors that got 'em their good third Days, and consequently more substantial Patrons then the greatest gay Name, in the Frontispiece of the proudest Dedication."[131] Some Restoration dramatists may indeed have murmured grudging prayers to the likes of a Mohun or Hart. For many, however, dependence on thespian skill and company resources further marred relationships with actors.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the first generation of aristocratic dramatists never deigned to acknowledge their indebtedness to excellent performances or elegant staging. For them, writing for the stage was largely an

[128] Rush Rehm, *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 10.
[129] [Charles Gildon], *Poeta Infamis: Or, a Poet not worth Hanging* (London, 1692), 11.
[130] *LS*, 404.
[131] Powell, *Treacherous Brothers*, A2v.

avocation rather than a source of income, and they certainly would not record for posterity any obligation to mere players. The professionals who followed in the 1670s – Wycherley, Etherege, Behn, Durfey, Crowne, Ravenscroft, Lee, Banks, and even Shadwell, despite his marriage to an actress – largely emulated that disregard, just as they aped other aristocratic affectations to fashion themselves as the gentlefolk required by the marketplace. Resentment at the power of actors to imperil authorial reputations sometimes caused the mask to slip. Shadwell in the preface to *The Humorists* (1671), castigated "the *Actors*" who "at first were extremely imperfect in the Action of it."[132] Ravenscroft, too, hung the failure of his comedy *The Careless Lovers* on a group of young actors who needed a "*Lenten-Play*" and "ask't it not above a Week before *Shrove-Tuesday*."[133] Ravenscroft complied, hastily producing a script in less than a week, only to have it denounced by "Wit-Collectors" in the audience.[134] Ravenscroft softens his blame of the players – like Behn, he does not want to risk their displeasure – by claiming he will not "make this a President; for shortness of Time ought not to be pleaded in excuse of Ill *Plays*." Added, however, is the acid qualification: "Unless on the like Occasion."[135] Outliers were more easily pleased. William Joyner, a well-educated Roman Catholic convert, understood that *The Roman Empress* (1671), produced during "a dead Vacation" (i.e., summer) and facing "other impediments," would probably disappear rapidly.[136] To his surprise, the tragedy was a hit with audiences, and Joyner self-effacingly attributes the rescue of his "fail'd" script to "*the scenical presentation; for it was incomparably acted*."[137] He especially singles out Elizabeth Bowtell for her portrayal of Aurelia, "which, though a great, various, and difficult part, was excellently performed."[138]

Amongst the professionals, Southerne and Dryden stand apart in their unwillingness to blame players for box office disasters, and they are equally singular in doling out compliments that provide some insight into the creative inventiveness of Restoration actors. In the dedication to *Sir Anthony Love*, Southerne bubbles over with praise for Susanna Mountfort's impersonation of the titular character, a breeches role she imbued with her "inimitable" wit.[139] Southerne wrote the part specifically for Mountfort, and he

[132] Thomas Shadwell, *The Humorists* (London, 1671), A3r.
[133] Ravenscroft, *The Careless Lovers*, A2v.
[134] Ravenscroft, A2r.
[135] Ravenscroft, A2v.
[136] William Joyner, *The Roman Empress* (London, 1671), A1r.
[137] Joyner, *Roman Empress*, A2v.
[138] Joyner, A2v.
[139] Southerne, *Sir Anthony Love*, in *Works*, 1:171.

construes her performance in terms of co-authorship: "*As I made every Line for her, she has mended every Word for me; and by a Gaiety and Air, particular to her Action, turn'd every thing into the Genius of the Character*."[140] Southerne similarly credits Elizabeth Barry with creative agency in her performance of Isabella in *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery*. Without her assistance, his play is a mere

> accessary to the great Applause, that every body gives her, in saying she out-plays her self; if she does that, I think we may all agree never to expect, or desire any Actor to go beyond that Commendation; I made the Play for her part, and her part has made the Play for me; It was a helpless Infant in the Arms of the Father, but has grown under her Care; I gave it just motion enough to crawl into the World, but by her power, and spirit of playing, she has breath'd a soul into it, that may keep it alive.[141]

Truly one of the great tributes ever written for an actress, this passage reimagines the usual conceit of the play as the "child" or "offspring" of the male author's brain. Southerne may have given birth to the role of Isabella, but without Barry's genius, the "*helpless Infant*" would have perished. She alone possesses the "*power*" to imbue the part with a "*soul*" – the artistic agency normally reserved for men. Dryden shared Southerne's estimation of Barry's artistry. In the preface to *Cleomenes,* he declares that "Mrs. *Barry*, always Excellent, has, in this Tragedy, excell'd Herself, and gain'd a Reputation beyond any Woman whom I have ever seen on the Theatre."[142] Generally, though, he credits the company rather than individual actors. The principal actors in *Secret Love* performed "the chief parts of it both serious and comick … to that height of excellence".[143] Dryden similarly attributes the success of *Amphitryon* to the entire cast: "If it has pleas'd in Representation, let the Actors share the Praise amongst themselves."[144] Most of his peers, however, were less inclined to lavish praise on the actors, on whom they depended more than ever.

The Celebrity Player

Elizabethan sanctions framed actors as vagabonds: human vermin requiring, if not eradication, then at the very least, containment. Only through the intervention of aristocratic patrons willing to lend their

[140] Southerne, *Works*, 1:171.
[141] Southerne, *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery*, in *Works*, 2:10–11.
[142] Dryden, *Works*, 16:77.
[143] Dryden, *Works*, 9:118.
[144] Dryden, *Works*, 15:225.

name and livery to the acting companies were players able to evade their detractors. Theirs was hardly an exclusive occupation, especially given the frequent pamphlet attacks mounted by opponents to the playhouses. By contrast, court support of the theatre after 1660 ensured that anti-theatricality as a discourse (apart from the occasional censorious sermon) disappeared, not to reemerge until the publication of Jeremy Collier's screeds in 1698. The duopoly rendered post-Restoration actors scarce and therefore exclusive. Sponsored by the monarch and his brother and few in numbers, post-1660 players were like the newly restocked peacocks in St. James's Park: rarities to be admired in a fashionable public arena. Effectively, performers were transformed from a common nuisance requiring government oversight into a desirable luxury commodity.

Periodic petitions from the companies to the Lord Chamberlain to prevent gentlemen from going behind the scenes suggest the extent to which aristocrats and even clerks on their way up, such as Pepys, wanted to mingle with Restoration performers.[145] Clearly, some of that desire was driven by the hope of making an assignation or eyeing a pretty actress in deshabille, but much of it was fueled by the prospect of rubbing shoulders with the new stars of the stage. Pepys is gobsmacked when Henry Harris finally welcomes him backstage. They had first met early in 1666, and Harris performed at several of Pepys's soirees. However, not until April 29, 1668, nearly two years later, does Pepys record being in Harris's "dressing-room, where I never was, and there I observe much company come to him, and the Witts to talk after the play is done and to assign meetings."[146] Pepys's language in this passage points to the sway star players such as Harris held. The company comes to him, as though he were royalty, and his dressing room functions as a veritable king's levee. Harris chats solely with the assembled "Witts," who plead for future "meetings," so compelling is the actor's allure. Outclassed and outnumbered, Pepys retreats into the shadows to watch and record.

Published accounts of actors attest to how perceptions of the profession changed markedly over the course of the seventeenth century. While several praise poems of popular actors, such as the clown Richard Tarlton and the tragedian Edward Alleyn, appeared in the 1590s, early modern dramatists almost never mention actors in prefaces or pen encomia to the

[145] See, for instance, the proclamations from February 2, 1674, January 18, 1677, and November 14, 1689, which prohibited spectators from sitting on the stage or going behind the scenes during performances (*Register*, 1:161, 192, 276).

[146] Pepys, *Diary*, 9:178.

players who "*breath'd a soul into*" their parts.[147] Even Shakespeare, surely the most performatively minded of his generation, did not affix to his plays the dedications, praise poems, and prefatory essays that might acknowledge Richard Burbage for originating roles such as Richard III, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, and Othello. Additionally, the anti-theatrical writings that dogged the early modern stage disappeared by the Restoration, a sign not only of court support for actors but also of their increased social acceptance. By the end of the century, actors were sufficiently lionized to warrant biographies and editions of letters. Nothing like Gildon's *Life of Betterton* (1710) or the *Familiar Letters* (1697) that were supposedly written from Rochester to Barry exists in the Elizabethan period. Theatrical scandals were not recast in thinly veiled fictive accounts, as was the murder of Mountfort and near abduction of Bracegirdle in *The Player's Tragedy*. Indeed, four years after Hannah Gould sought publication of *Innocence Distress'd* to rescue her father from looming anonymity, William Oldys and Edmund Curll showcased Betterton in *The History of the English Stage from the Restauration to the Present Time* (1741).[148] The subtitle not only promises the "*Instructions for Public Speaking*" that were gleaned firsthand from Betterton but also a glimpse into the "*Lives, Characters and Amours of the most Eminent Actors and Actresses*." Lives of actors sold, but so did their expertise.

Changes in the commissioning and execution of portraits of actors also point to the transformation in their status. The only known image of Burbage is now thought to be a self-portrait.[149] Tarnya Cooper thinks the painting of Nathan Field (*c.* 1615), probably executed by an Anglo-Netherlandish artist, may have been painted at his behest as a gift "for a friend or sweetheart."[150] Given his wealth and aspirations, Edward Alleyn

[147] For a discussion of how Elizabethan actors began to appear in the praise poetry of the 1590s, see S. P. Cerasano, "Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor, and the Rise of the Celebrity in the 1590s," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 53. Interestingly, dramatists begin to commend actors and managers in the plays they published during the 1650s, when the theatres were shuttered. Nostalgia for live performance might account for this shift in authorial attitude, as might magnanimity occasioned by the cessation of production pressures. See notes 36 and 37 in Chapter 1 for the praise Brome and Flecknoe accord Beeston.

[148] Attribution of this work is difficult to determine. The title page lists Thomas Betterton as the author, but, as Paul Baines and Pat Rogers point out, Edmund Curll was notorious for attaching authors' names to the books he published, whether authentic or not. See Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, *Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26–27.

[149] British School, *Richard Burbage*, early seventeenth century, oil on canvas, 30.3 x 26.2 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk. For the identification of the painting as a self-portrait, see Kate Emery Pogue, *Shakespeare's Friends* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 123.

[150] British School, *Nathan Field*, *c.* 1615, oil on oak panel, 56.5 x 42.2 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk. For Tarnya Cooper's assessment of the portrait, see her monograph, *Searching for Shakespeare* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 136.

most likely commissioned the full-length painting of himself now hanging in the Dulwich Picture Gallery.[151] Certainly, the portrait showcases the stolid burgher he had become by the end of his life, not the actor renowned in his youth for astonishing oratorical abilities (Figure 6.1). Gazing back at us is an expensively dressed man whose serious expression and regal pose leave little doubt that he can endow a "College of God's Gift" for the ages, a feat he finally accomplished in 1619.[152]

After the Restoration, players no longer had to paint themselves or commission others to execute their likeness. They were now a much-desired commodity to be owned in perpetuity. Charles II ordered John Michael Wright to paint John Lacy in a triple-portrait of his most famous dramatic roles (Figure 6.2): the title role in Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1698), a loose adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*; Monsieur Device in the Duke of Newcastle's pre-war play, *The Country Captain* (1661); and Parson Scruple in John Wilson's *The Cheats*.[153] The Dutch painter Simon Pietersz Verelst, who was praised by Pepys and known for his alluring canvases of court ladies, painted Nell Gwyn on two occasions.[154] Even Sir Godfrey Kneller, who customarily painted peers and court beauties, left behind several iconic representations of Restoration stars. At some

[151] British School, *Edward Alleyn*, 1626, oil on canvas, 203.8 x 114 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk.

[152] According to the Dulwich College website, Alleyn in 1606 purchased the Manor of Dulwich for £5,000, roughly £14 million in today's money. See "Timeline," The 400 Archive, Dulwich College, www.dulwich.org.uk. In 1619, James I granted him a license to "found a College in Dulwich, to endure for ever, and to consist of one master, one warden, four fellows, six poor brethren, six poor sisters, and twelve poor scholars, to be maintained, educated, and governed according to such ordinances and statutes as he should make in his life-time." It was to be known as the "College of God's Gift." See William Harnett Blanch, *Dulwich College and Edward Alleyn* (London: E. W. Allen, 1877), 1.

[153] John Michael Wright, *John Lacy* (d. 1681), *c.* 1668–70, oil on canvas, 233.4 x 173.4 cm, Windsor Castle, Windsor, UK, www.rct.uk. There appears to be some confusion about the provenance of the original painting. An old article by Chas. W. Cooper claims it was sold along with several other theatrical portraits from Windsor Castle in 1819. See Chas. W. Cooper, "The Triple-Portrait of John Lacy: A Restoration Theatrical Portrait: History and Dispute," *PMLA* 47, no. 3 (1932): 759–60. Despite Cooper's claim, the painting is currently listed as part of the Royal Collection Trust and was featured in the exhibit "Charles II: Art & Power," which ran from December 8, 2017, to May 13, 2018, at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. Watercolor and print copies of the painting are held in the Garrick Club and the National Portrait Gallery.

[154] One of these paintings, is part of the National Portrait Gallery collection. Simon Verelst, *Nell Gwyn*, *c.* 1680, oil on canvas, 29 x 24.875 in., National Portrait Gallery, London, www.npg.org.uk. An earlier portrait of Gwyn, long thought lost, reemerged recently from a private collection and was displayed in the exhibition "The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons," which ran from October 20, 2011, to January 8, 2012, at the National Portrait Gallery. This erotic representation of Gwyn shows her flushed and reclining slightly, her skin luminous and her gaze heavy-lidded and sensual. Simon Verelst, *Nell Gwyn*, *c.* 1670, oil on canvas, 737 x 632 mm in., private collection, www.npg.org.uk.

Figure 6.1 British school, *Edward Alleyn*, 1626, oil on canvas, 203.8 × 114 cm, DPG443, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

Figure 6.2 John Michael Wright, *John Lacy*, *c.* 1668–70, oil on canvas, 233.4 × 173.4 cm, Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023

Figure 6.3 Studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Thomas Betterton*, *c.* 1690–95, oil on canvas, 76 × 65 cm, © National Portrait Gallery, London

point in the early 1690s, he painted Betterton in the three-quarter, fully bewigged pose standard in portraits of gentlemen. His body rotated to the right, Betterton's ruddy face turns over his left shoulder to stare back at the viewer with intense black eyes and a sober expression that ennobles his profession (Figure 6.3). The Earl of Dorset also commissioned Kneller to execute a portrait of Anthony Leigh as the "Spanish Fryar." In all likelihood, Dorset also had Kneller paint the famous portrait of Betterton later copied by Alexander Pope.[155] Perhaps most unusual of all, as Gilli Bush-Bailey observes, was Kneller's choice of Barry and Bracegirdle as models

[155] In its description of the portrait, the National Portrait Gallery asserts that their copy is "a good studio version of the original Kneller at Knole." See [Sir Godfrey Kneller], *Thomas Betterton*, *c.* 1690–95, oil on canvas, 762 x 648 mm, National Portrait Gallery, London, www.npg.org.uk. Although the National Portrait Gallery says the portrait remains at Knole House, it does not appear in their inventory, which is maintained by the National Trust.

for Britannia and Flora in a monumental painting of King William astride his horse.[156] That actresses were chosen to grace the walls of Hampton Court Palace in the guise of classical goddesses certainly speaks to their social elevation. Moreover, these portraits were executed by major painters at the behest of peers: Restoration actors did not have to commission their own likenesses.

After the Restoration, actors were increasingly identified with their profession, yet another indication of how their status had changed over the course of the seventeenth century. By contrast, leading Elizabethan players, such as Alleyn, Burbage, and Field, commissioned likenesses of themselves as prosperous burghers, thereby avoiding visual association with a profession still considered suspect by many. Restoration performers, however, were happy to be depicted in the dramatic parts that catapulted them to fame. By the end of the century, these visual representations spilled beyond the confines of a canvas commissioned by a peer to reproducible mezzotints targeting middle-class consumers. Circulating widely were images of popular performers. The engraver John Smith, most likely working from a painting executed by William Vincent, portrayed Anne Bracegirdle in her role as Semernia (Figure 6.4), "the Indian Queen," in Behn's *The Widow Ranter* (1689). To meet demand for these images, Smith also that same year repurposed Kneller's painting of Anthony Leigh in the role of the "Spanish Fryar" as a mezzotint. (Figure 6.5) So idolized were the stars of the Restoration stage that eager fans now wanted more than an imperfect recollection of a performance. Although a print extracted a frozen moment from the dynamic flow of performance, it nonetheless allowed fans to possess in perpetuity a beloved celebrity.

The duopoly and close association with the court may have conferred the rarity and exclusivity that transformed Restoration players into visual "collectables," but several performers stood apart in exuding the ineffable quality lacked by lesser mortals. These celebrities embodied the contradictory qualities – "strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality" – that constitute the "It" effect peculiar to star

[156] Lucyle Hook first made this identification, which has been followed subsequently by Elizabeth Howe and Bush-Bailey. See Lucyle Hook, "Portraits of Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle," *Theatre Notebook* 15 (1960): 129–37; Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 156–62; Gilli Bush-Bailey, *Treading the Bawds: Actresses and Playwrights on the Late-Stuart Stage* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 168–69. William III most likely commissioned the painting in 1700 for the wall of the Presence Chamber at Hampton Court, where it still hangs today. See Sir Godfrey Kneller, *William III (1650–1702) on Horseback*, 1701, oil on canvas, 444 x 424.8 cm, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey, www.rct.uk.

Figure 6.4 William Vincent, *The Indian Queen*, *c.* 1685–95, mezzotint, 19.5 × 14.5 cm, © National Portrait Gallery, London

performers.[157] Celebrity such as Harris's depended upon the skillful juxtaposition of accessibility and unavailability: he invites Pepys backstage, but he does not deign to make conversation. In that respect, the celebrity is a perpetual tease, exhibiting the frank gaze, flashing the come-hither smile, and sharing the fleeting emotional connection that seduces us into thinking we know a glamorous stranger otherwise off-limits to our pedestrian existence. Star performers excel at creating desire for what is ultimately withheld. Undoubtedly, popular actors on the Shakespearean stage, such as Burbage and Alleyn, also possessed "It," that indefinable quality for which people pay handsomely. They were not, however, celebrities in the manner of a Betterton or Barry. While it is tempting to point to biographies and pictorial images as incubators for this new social phenomenon, these did not originate fame but rather perpetuated it. "Cheap print," to use Tessa Watts's phrase, was very much a feature of Elizabethan life, and the broadsides and ballads that celebrated the lives of merchants and

[157] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 39, 8.

Figure 6.5 Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Anthony Leigh,* 1689, oil on canvas, 232 × 143 cm, © National Portrait Gallery, London

sharpers could just as easily have chronicled the biography of a Nathan Field or a Will Kemp, had it made cultural sense to do so.[158] That cultural sense obtained during the Restoration. If close association with the court distanced actors from the common realm, so did the radical reduction in their numbers: from 200 in 1600 to twenty-four in 1688, a decline of 90 percent. Actors were now akin to something like a secret society, and they practiced an art form known only to the very few. That exclusivity put them at even further remove from the gallants crowding their dressing rooms and the diarists inviting them *à la maison*.

[158] See the discussion of pamphlets and chapbooks in Watt, *Cheap Print*, 264–78.

Not sufficiently appreciated in the scholarship on actresses is the extent to which they too were off-limits to ordinary mortals: the actress-as-whore trope that sometimes appears in prologues and epilogues was as much of a fiction as the intimacy promised by the aside.[159] The few actresses who became mistresses took lovers at the highest echelons of society and thus widened the divide between the untouchable celebrity performer and the ordinary bloke in the audience. For a while, Elizabeth Barry was the lover of the Earl of Rochester; Margaret "Peg" Hughes was the paramour of Sir Charles Sedley; Nell Gwyn was kept by Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, before quitting the theatre to become a royal mistress; and Moll Davis went straight from the Duke's Company to the king's chamber. Barry may have been the muse of Thomas Otway, who wrote several of his most famous roles for her, but she was not about to satisfy his infatuation. Tellingly, neither Barry nor Bracegirdle married. Instead, they kept themselves at a far remove from the public. We have no evidence of another relationship for Barry after her affair with Rochester ended – if it ever happened in the first place.[160] As for Bracegirdle, she became known as the "celebrated virgin" for an unattainability that persisted into retirement.

If the duopoly inadvertently produced the scarcity and exclusivity that catalyzed stardom, so did the playhouse culture of "great expences" and sumptuous improvements. The tiny, upscale Restoration playhouses put spectators in close proximity to actors who could be mere inches away, especially if they were playing downstage on the thrust stage. The frequent use of asides in Restoration plays intensified the close connection between the player and the spectator. This dramatic convention permitted actors to use the intimate space to sidle up to a segment of the audience and share a confidence directly. Asides also functioned meta-theatrically insofar as they enacted at the level of the dramatic action the same sly tease deployed by celebrity actors in regard to their public. Through this direct address to the audience, the actor shares a quip, discloses an inner thought, or makes the audience privy to a dark secret. This moment of confidence vanishes when the character rejoins the dramatic action, much the same way a performer

[159] Fewer than 1 percent – roughly ten out of 1,200 extant prologues and epilogues – deploy the actress-as-whore trope. See Deborah C. Payne, "Reified Object or Emergent Professional? Retheorizing the Restoration Actress," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 23. For an essay that complicates the actress-as-whore trope, see Payne Fisk, "Restoration Actress," 69–91.

[160] For an excellent discussion of how anecdotal evidence – much of it unsubstantiated – about the private lives of Barry and Bracegirdle has diminished their creative agency, see Diana Solomon, "Anecdotes and Restoration Actresses: The Cases of Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle," *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 31, no. 2 (2016): 19–36.

shares a momentarily unguarded version of herself only to disappear once again into a carefully managed off-stage persona. In Restoration comedies especially, asides frequently unmask romantic desire and social ambitions not fully understood by the speakers themselves – the ultimate audience enticement. In act 2, scene 3, of Wycherley's early comedy *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, Hippolita and Gerrard in a series of asides confess to the audience the growing passion they cannot admit publicly. Even when the romantic lead, Gerrard, finally acknowledges his love for Hippolita, he "dare not look her in the face now, nor speak a word."[161] Asides such as these effectively transform the spectators into lovers: they hear the innermost workings of the heart that normally would be delivered to the object of desire. Revelatory confessions in turn prime audience expectation of access, both to the dramatic character as well as to the performer perhaps inches away.

The explosion in prologues and epilogues after 1660, along with changes in how these curtain speeches were delivered, furthered the sensation of intimacy between audience and performer. After 1660, actors deliver prologues and epilogues as themselves – or at least as the thespian selves crafted for public consumption – and thereby marketed a charming, recognizable persona that was, of course, entirely contrived. As Pierre Danchin notes in his compilation of Restoration prologues and epilogues, the old convention of having an actor appear in the personation of the prologue, with his black cloak and garland of bay leaves, had all but disappeared after 1660. The prologue is no longer a character as such; instead, "he is replaced very soon by a highly individualized actor (or, as we shall see, actress), who is known by name by the public and is supposed to speak *propria persona*, whether he appears as one of the characters in the play or pretends to be entirely independent from it."[162] These paratexts helped to craft, if not a celebrity persona, then at the very least a public personality. The first prologue to Edward Howard's *The Womens Conquest* (1671) features the actors speaking as themselves. Cave Underhill, Edward Angel, and James Nokes specifically refer to each other by their "real" names. In the manner of talk show hosts, they rib each other affectionately about their onstage attributes, such as Underhill's advanced age and Angel's renown for jigs, and in so doing, they let the audience feel as though they are privy to green room banter.[163]

[161] William Wycherley, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master,* in *The Plays of William Wycherley*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979), 2.1.128–29.
[162] Danchin, 1:xxxvii.
[163] Edward Howard, *The Womens Conquest* (London, 1671), c2v–c3r.

Nell Gwyn was especially brilliant in capitalizing on these dramatic conventions to craft her celebrity image, and her ability to juxtapose intimacy with inaccessibility comprised a goodly part of her mystique. Prologues and epilogues framed Gwyn's good-humored familiarity – her ability not only to pull the spectator into the joke but also to make him feel special, as though the teasing enticement was intended for his ears alone. The famous bit of self-parody at the end of Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* is just such a moment. Her dead character revives miraculously after the play concludes. She halts the bearers taking her body offstage and then, as "*poor departed Nelly*," speaks the epilogue that frames her as a playful sprite that "*dance*[s] *about your Beds at nights*."[164] While this nocturnal image is suggestively tantalizing, it also underscores Gwyn's inaccessibility: delectable sprites disappear into thin air, as do celebrity actresses. Comic roles written specifically for Gwyn, such as the madcap Mirida in James Howard's *All Mistaken* (1672), equally counterpoised intimacy and distance. Not entering until well into act 2, Mirida confides almost immediately to the audience how little she thinks of the men in her orbit: "'Tis a rare diversion," she confides, "to see what several Waies my flock of Lovers have in being, Ridiculous."[165] Only after she has enumerated their many faults does Philador, played by Gwyn's erstwhile lover in the company, Charles Hart, finally engage her attention and pull her back from the momentary shared confidence with the audience. Once again, she is off-limits: Gwyn retreats into a diegetic world, where for the remainder of the comedy she can be admired from afar.

That dance between familiarity and aloofness spilled over from the stage into Gwyn's private life. She made fun of herself as the "Protestant whore" who cracked jokes and mocked the pretensions of the king's fancy French mistress, the Roman Catholic Louise de Kérouaille.[166] Gwyn's sketchy origins were far removed from Kérouaille's Breton blue blood; she nonetheless sought the peerages for her royal bastards that would ensure their – and her – permanent remove from the streets. This juxtaposition between capitalizing on the common touch and forging a glamorous, albeit untouchable persona also colored her public appearances. After leaving the theatre

[164] Dryden, *Works*, 10:192.

[165] James Howard, *All Mistaken, or The Mad Couple* (London, 1672), 19–20.

[166] This anecdote is recounted in Alison Conway's book *The Protestant Whore: Courtesan Narrative and Religious Controversy in England, 1680–1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 4. Charles Beauclerk's *Nell Gwyn: Mistress to a King* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005) describes on page 247 how Gwyn dressed in mourning the day after Kérouaille had donned black to commemorate the death of the Chevalier de Rohan's death, effectively mocking her in public for mourning a Catholic prince.

to serve as a royal mistress, Gwyn still attended the playhouses frequently. Recorded payments in the Lord Chamberlain's accounts reveal how she made herself visible, albeit at a remove.[167] Invariably, she sat in an expensive box where she could look upon the other spectators while controlling their gaze by retreating into the shadows if necessary. Gwyn knew how to market herself for public consumption, whether in a playhouse box or a doorway. From the brick house at 79 Pall Mall, where she lived courtesy of the king after 1671, she could watch people throng toward St. James's Palace while sitting at a window or leaning against the door – seen but carefully framed.[168] Several years earlier, when she still lived in Drury Lane, Pepys saw Gwyn "standing at her lodgings door … in her smock-sleeves and bodice, looking upon one."[169] She balances accessibility against aloofness, appearing casually dressed but also "looking upon one," a cool gaze that does not invite a response. Pepys knew Gwyn – they had been introduced by Elizabeth Knipp, another actress from the King's Company – but in this instance, he dares not approach her, not even for a greeting or a quick buss on the cheek. *Noli me tangere* applied as much to Gwyn as it once did to Anne Boleyn.

As with changes to the profession of dramatist, the transformation of the actor after the Restoration was unforeseen and certainly unplanned. Managerial choices coalesced with the historical accident of a monarch so intimately associated with the theatre that he took two actresses as mistresses, one of whom, Nell Gwyn, held his heart unto death. Clearly, Killigrew, Davenant, and Betterton pursued the dual principles of scarcity and exclusivity with an eye toward profit, not the invention of celebrity culture. The duopoly, however, by radically curtailing numbers, inadvertently imbued actors with exclusivity: they were now highly desirable rarities in possession of secret knowledge, not vagrants in need of a patron's livery for protection from outraged authorities. Even playhouse architecture exerted an unexpected phenomenological outcome. Actors and spectators invariably share an intersubjective relationship, which remains perhaps the greatest pleasure of theatrical performance.

[167] In September of 1674, a bill was submitted to the King for attendance at the Duke's Company that totaled £35 19s. for over fifty plays attended between September 1674 and November 1676. At that one company alone, Gwyn saw an average of two plays a month (*Register*, 1:169).

[168] "Pall Mall, South Side, Past Buildings: No 79 Pall Mall, Nell Gwynne's House," in *Survey of London*, vols. 29 and 30, *St James Westminster, Part 1*, ed. F. H. W. Sheppard (London: London County Council, 1960), 377–78, British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk. The building that replaced this Restoration structure in 1866 is now luxury coworking space.

[169] Pepys, *Diary*, 8:193.

The intimacy characteristic of the Restoration playhouse transmogrified that intersubjectivity into something else entirely: the crackling exchange of eroticized energy. The choices, contingencies, and memories that made Restoration theatre such an unforgiving business nonetheless catapulted the acting profession toward the celebrity culture that would flourish in the following century.