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1 Chapter 1 1
2 What Do the Servants Know? 2
3 3
4 4
5 5

6 Paddy Lyons 6
7 7
8 8
9 9

10 BETTY. Well, since Fortune has thrown me in this chamber-maid station, I'll 10
11 revenge her cruelty and plague her favourites. 11

12 No fool by me shall e'er successful prove, 12
13 My plots shall help the man of sense in love. 13
14 (Mary Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, 1700)¹ 14

15 To whet the audience's appetite for displays of wit and ingenuity yet to come, 15
16 Betty the chambermaid takes the stage to herself at the finish of the first act of 16
17 *The Beau Defeated*. She is knowing, cheerfully and very engagingly knowing. 17
18 Outside the entertainment industry, however, servitude and knowledge were not 18
19 at all aligned in Restoration England. Records show the legal system heard and 19
20 weighed evidence from servants at best with caginess and scruples and with little 20
21 readiness to rely on the observations or understanding of a subaltern class.² In his 21
22 influential writings on education, the progressive philosopher John Locke gave 22
23 blunt and emphatic warnings, singling out as 'most dangerous of all' any exposure 23
24 of a developing child to 'the examples of the servants'.³ To focus on servants in 24
25 Restoration culture is to encounter a line separating actuality and fiction. 25

26 By departing from social convention and received opinion and, instead, taking 26
27 it for granted that servants are perspicacious, art in this era was to achieve complex 27
28 and subtle effects. Etherege's play *The Man of Mode* (1676) – often and quite 28
29 fairly instanced as the generic Restoration Comedy – is illustrative. Witness, for 29
30 example, how the tense, intimate bedroom scene between Dorimant and Bellinda is 30
31 conducted and dramatically enhanced by the presence of Handy, Dorimant's valet- 31
32 de-chambre.⁴ The stage directions call for candlelight, and specify that Dorimant 32
33 appear in a state of undress, with Handy 'tying up linen', which is to say removing 33
34 and disposing of soiled sheets, from the bed where Dorimant and Bellinda have 34
35 been consummating the success of their plot to humiliate Mrs Loveit, mistress to 35
36 36

37 37
38 ¹ Mary Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, I, 1, pp. 172–3, in *Female Playwrights of the* 38
39 *Restoration*, eds Paddy Lyons and Fidelis Morgan (London, 1992). 39

40 ² Paula Humfrey, 'What Did the Servants Know?' in *Women and History: Voices of* 40
41 *Early Modern England*, ed. Valerie Frith (Toronto, 1995), pp. 75–80. 41

42 ³ John Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education', in *The Educational Writings* 42
43 *of John Locke*, ed. James L. Axtell (Cambridge, 1968), p. 187. 43

44 ⁴ George Etherege, *The Man of Mode*, in *The Plays of George Etherege*, ed. Michael 44
Cordner (Cambridge, 1982), I, 2, pp. 1–71.

1 Dorimant and Bellinda's best friend. Bellinda is on edge and starting to panic, for
 2 fear Dorimant will subject her to the same disgrace as she helped him engineer for
 3 Mrs Loveit. Dorimant swears fidelity, but the extravagance with which he makes
 4 the very promises she hungers for only feeds and augments Bellinda's anxieties.
 5 Through the course of their troubled exchanges, Handy comes and goes: he
 6 arranges transport for Bellinda, he keeps watch on the street lest any unwanted
 7 visitors enter and interrupt the proceedings, and he helps Bellinda make an exit via
 8 the back stairs so her departure can pass unobserved. Though he says little, silence
 9 does not equate with ignorance, and Handy's competence betokens awareness.
 10 Indeed, from the very opening moments of the play, Handy has been established
 11 as privy to his master's tastes and tendencies: well-versed in Dorimant's addiction
 12 to new and novel conquest, he is equipped to recognize Bellinda's fears as all
 13 too well-founded. His taciturn presence counterpoints the empty promises and
 14 vain pleas spilling from the lips of Dorimant and Bellinda, and thereby introduces
 15 on stage an understanding that what may appear hectic and emotional is in fact
 16 rather more routine than it takes itself to be. Neither laughing at their folly, nor
 17 participating in their panic, Handy's knowingness constitutes an alternative
 18 dimension, and enlarges the optic on Etherege's comedy, disturbingly.

19 Remarkable here – and throughout the drama and fiction of the Long Restoration
 20 – is the ease with which it is taken for granted that servants generally can and do
 21 *know*. By contrast, in our times a different and a double protocol prevails. Nowadays
 22 if servants are imagined as knowing, it is on condition that their powers are highly
 23 exceptional, so much so as put them in command, like Jeeves, the butler in P.G.
 24 Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster novels. Otherwise – and somewhat surprisingly insofar
 25 as postmodern culture often considers itself postindustrial and based on a new service
 26 economy – servants have come to be imagined as objects of knowledge rather than as
 27 themselves subjects who can be presumed to know. Even a fiercely interrogative text
 28 such as *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), T. Coraghessan Boyle's dark and intensely satiric
 29 analysis of exploitation and class dependency, exemplifies this current tendency.

30
 31 A maid showed them in. She was small, neat, with an untraceable accent and a
 32 tight black uniform with a white trim and a little apron Delaney found excessive:
 33 who would dress a servant up like somebody's idea of a servant, like something
 34 out of a movie? What was the point?⁵

35 Delaney is Boyle's most Gulliver-like antihero, and while he continues to puzzle
 36 over what the maidservant signifies, Boyle's readers are left in no doubt: she is a
 37 stage prop, her visibility an element in the apparatus of respectability assembled
 38 by a ruthless gangster to glamorize his household, and thereby deflect his guests'
 39 attention from the fact he is living under house arrest. This present-day servant
 40 simply signifies, rather than in any way *knows*. In the larger scheme of the novel,
 41 her showiness places her in opposition to the oppressed and unfortunate illegal
 42 migrants from Mexico, Cándido, and América, immigrants on whose servitude
 43

44
 5 T. Coraghessan Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain* (New York, 1996), p. 186.

1 and labour Delaney and his California neighbours rely, and whose misery and 1
 2 presence they sentence to invisibility, carelessly and regardlessly jeopardizing 2
 3 their existence and survival. Almost out of sight themselves, Cándido and América 3
 4 apprehend the world facing them with piercing sensory vividness, and feel and 4
 5 suffer every one of the blows that rain constantly on them with acid persistence; 5
 6 but their perceptions never modulate into an understanding, and never amount to 6
 7 a knowledge empowering them to grasp or master their situation, not even in a 7
 8 matter of life and death: ‘They hit something, something so big it was immovable, 8
 9 and Cándido lost his grip on América and the raft at the same time; he was in the 9
 10 water suddenly with nothing to hold on to and the water was as cold as death’.⁶ 10
 11 Lacking a capacity to process information and make of it knowledge, servants 11
 12 most usually appear in postmodern culture as helpless victims, and – as here – as 12
 13 spectacles to evoke pathos and pity; to be a servant and otherwise in contemporary 13
 14 culture is to be magical, like Mary Poppins. 14

15 Restoration culture mocked magic, as a bag of low tricks. To investigate further 15
 16 how the Restoration could imagine servants differently – differently from how 16
 17 servants were viewed in Restoration life, and very differently from how servants 17
 18 are portrayed in our own times – I shall take three steps. First of all, I shall propose 18
 19 a set of four protocols or rules concerning servants in Restoration plays up till 19
 20 the end of the seventeenth century. Next I shall outline how radical change to 20
 21 what servants are imagined to know becomes manifest around about 1700. This 21
 22 shift seems to me ideological, and in shorthand it may be described as a turn 22
 23 from Hobbes towards Locke, a move away from universalizing and egalitarianism 23
 24 towards particularization and differentiation. On this basis I shall then consider 24
 25 how what these servants know may indicate how art and ideology entangle. 25
 26 26

27 **Rules Concerning Servants in Restoration Drama, Up to 1700** 27

28 *Rule One: Egalitarianism Prevails in Master–Servant Discourse* 28

29 29
 30 30
 31 When masters or mistresses converse with their servants, they do so with a 31
 32 presumption of mutual equality and shared humanity. Such is the note Handy and 32
 33 Dorimant strike, in the opening moments of *The Man of Mode*: 33
 34 34

35 DORIMANT. Call a footman. 35

36 HANDY. None of ’em are come yet. 36

37 DORIMANT. Dogs! Will they ever lie snoring abed till noon. 37

38 HANDY. ’Tis all one, sir: if they’re up, you indulge ’em so, they’re ever poaching 38
 39 after whores all the morning. 39

40 DORIMANT. Take notice henceforward who’s wanting in his duty, the next clap he 40
 41 gets, he shall rot for it.⁷ 41

42 42
 43 ⁶ Ibid., p. 354. 43

44 ⁷ Etherage, *The Man of Mode*, I, 1, pp. 16–24. 44

1 In their raillery, Handy and Dorimant echo each other in tone. As the play continues, 1
 2 this sameness of idiom appears too among the women – between Mrs Loveit 2
 3 and her maidservant Pert and between Harriet and her maidservant Busy. Such 3
 4 easiness persists into the theatre of the 1690s, elaborated in the argumentatively 4
 5 witty repartee of servants such as Valentine’s man Jeremy in Congreve’s *Love for* 5
 6 *Love* (1695), or Lovewell’s man Brush, in Farquhar’s *Love and a Bottle* (1698): 6

7
 8 BRUSH. Sir, you can’t be my Master. 7
 8

9 LOVEWELL. Why so? 8
 9

10 BRUSH. Because you’re not your own Master; yet one would think you might 9
 10 be, for you have lost your Mistress. Oons, Sir, let her go, and a fair riddance ... 10
 11 my Shoes and Stockings are upon their last Legs with trudging between you. I 11
 12 have sweat out all my moisture of my hand with palming your clammy Letters 12
 13 upon her. I have – 13

14 LOVEWELL. Hold, Sir, your trouble is now at an end, for I design to marry her. 14

15 BRUSH. And have you courted her these three years for nothing but a Wife? 15

16 LOVEWELL. Do you think, rascal, I wou’d have taken so much pains to make her 16
 17 a Miss? 17

18 BRUSH. No, sir; the tenth part on’t wou’d ha’ done. – But if you are resolv’d to 18
 19 marry, God b’w’ye. 19

20 LOVEWELL. What’s the matter now, Sirrah! 20

21 BRUSH. Why, the matter will be, that I must then Pimp for her. – Hark ye, Sir, what 21
 22 have you been doing all this while, but teaching her the way to cuckold ye?⁸ 22

23 Even the daftest of social climbers has no trouble accepting that discourse with a 23
 24 servant should proceed on a companionable footing: Mrs Rich in Pix’s *The Beau* 24
 25 *Defeated* is so pleased with the maidservant Betty that she confers on her the 25
 26 nobility of a French particle such as she herself would delight in: ‘From henceforth 26
 27 let me call thee *de la Bette*; that has an air French and agreeable’.⁹ But though Mrs 27
 28 Rich’s snobbery is mildly ludicrous, her fond courtesy to her maid mitigates rather 28
 29 than intensifies her ridiculousness. 29

30 The force of the rule is even more apparent when we consider what happens 30
 31 if it is infringed. Rudeness to a servant earns its perpetrator automatic reproach: 31
 32 when Lord Worthy cuffs his footman Buckle, in Susannah Centlivre’s *The Basset* 32
 33 *Table* (1705), the skittish Lady Reveller can immediately take the high moral 33
 34 ground, and she upbraids him on the spot: ‘Where did you learn this rudeness, 34
 35 my Lord, to strike your servant before me?’¹⁰ Should a foolish master or mistress 35
 36 speak harshly to a servant by pulling rank, it is not merely evidence he or she is 36
 37 a fool, but it is likely to herald his or her come-uppance. As the name indicates, 37
 38 Sir Davy Dunce in Otway’s *The Souldiers Fortune* (1681) is a cretin; to begin 38
 39

40
 41 ⁸ George Farquhar, *Love and a Bottle*, I, pp. 427–51, in *The Works of George* 41
 42 *Farquhar*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (2 vols, Oxford, 1988), vol. 1. 42

43 ⁹ Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, I, 1, p. 166. 43

44 ¹⁰ Susannah Centlivre, *The Basset Table*, III, 1, p. 269, in *Female Playwrights of the* 44
Restoration, eds Paddy Lyons and Fidelis Morgan (London, 1992).

1 with, he appears an amiable idiot, demonstrating simple stupidity by, for instance, 1
 2 claiming that a soldier who spent a night cavorting in a ditch with a Jesuit could 2
 3 have accidentally mistaken the Jesuit for a woman; but later in the play, after he 3
 4 has lashed out undeservedly against his own servant, Vermin, Sir Davy marks 4
 5 himself down for severe humiliation: 5

6
 7 DAVY DUNCE. Open the door, you whelp of Babylon! 6

8 VERMIN. Oh Sir, y're welcome home; but here is the saddest news! Here has been 7
 9 murder committed, sir. 8

10 DAVY DUNCE. Hold your tongue, you fool, and go to sleep, get you in, do you hear, 9
 11 you talk of murder you rogue? You meddle with state-affairs! Get you in.¹¹ 10

12 Following on from this, Sir Davy is exposed publicly as the cuckold he has 12
 13 constantly claimed he was not, and as the play finishes he is left abasing himself to 13
 14 his cuckold: 'lay me in a Prison, or throw me in a Dungeon'.¹² 14

15 Likewise, in *The Way of the World*, once Lady Wishfort speaks abusively to a 15
 16 young servant, she dispatched to fetch her makeup, it is clear she is the one who 16
 17 has crossed a line: 17

18
 19 LADY WISHFORT. Paint, paint, paint, dost thou understand that, changeling, 19
 20 dangling thy hands like bobbins before thee? Why dost thou not stir, puppet? 20
 21 Thou wooden thing upon wires!¹³ 21

22 Her transgression is compounded when she directs unforgiving venom on Foible, her 22
 23 personal maid, by placing ruthless emphasis on the class difference between them: 23
 24

25 LADY WISHFORT. Begone, begone, begone, go, go; that I took from washing of 25
 26 old gauze and weaving of dead hair, with a bleak blue nose, over a chafing-dish 26
 27 of starved embers, and dining behind a traver's rag, in a shop no bigger than a 27
 28 bird-cage. Go, go, starve again, do, do! 28

29 FOIBLE. Dear madam, I'll beg pardon on my knees. 29

30 LADY WISHFORT. Away, out, out, go set up for yourself again, do; drive a trade ...¹⁴ 30

31
 32 Congreve's denouement heaps shame and exposure on Lady Wishfort, no less 32
 33 savagely than Otway did on Sir Davy Dunce: this passionate widow has to agree 33
 34 to relinquish hope of a husband, and then dance in celebration of a marriage she 34
 35 has been opposed to, till she is 'ready to sink under the fatigue'.¹⁵ Not every fool is 35
 36 rash enough to break the rule of egalitarian discourse with servants; those who do 36
 37 bring on themselves punishment and humiliation that is harsh and on target. 37

38
 39 ¹¹ Thomas Otway, *The Souldiers Fortune*, IV, pp. 553–9, in *The Works of Thomas* 38
 40 *Otway*, ed. J.C. Ghosh (2 vols, London, 1932), vol. 2. 39

41 ¹² *Ibid.*, V, pp. 738–9. 40

42 ¹³ William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, III, 1, pp. 13–15, in *The Complete Plays* 41
 42 *of William Congreve*, ed. Herbert Davis (Chicago, 1967). 42

43 ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 1, pp. 3–20. 43

44 ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 1, pp. 609–10. 44

1 For this stage convention there is substantial intellectual precedent. In his account 1
 2 of how the Royal Society took scientific enquiry forward, Bishop Spratt had famously 2
 3 observed the importance attached to linguistic democracy: ‘They have exacted from 3
 4 their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear 4
 5 senses; a native easiness . . . and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and 5
 6 Merchants, before that of Wits, or Scholars’.¹⁶ It is questionable whether the bishop’s 6
 7 approval for those who borrow the language of the common people would give full 7
 8 licence to liberty in conversation between classes, but Hobbes reaches more fully in 8
 9 that direction when, in the opening to *Leviathan*, he refuses to countenance ‘either 9
 10 the barbarous state of men in power, towards their inferiors; or to encourage men of 10
 11 low degree, to a sawcie behaviour towards their betters’.¹⁷ The freedoms in cross- 11
 12 class discourse upheld on stage link not with revolution but with the universalizing 12
 13 which Hobbes promulgated as ‘the similitude of passions, which are the same in 13
 14 all men, *desire, fear, hope, &c*; not the similitude of the objects of the passions, 14
 15 which are the things *desired, feared, hoped, &c*; for these do so vary’.¹⁸ Hobbes 15
 16 begins from an an insistance of sameness, on whatever it might be that makes us all 16
 17 alike, members of humankind, and it is sameness in this sense which underpins the 17
 18 egalitarianism of discourse between masters and servants on the restoration stage, 18
 19 theatre embracing the ideology of Hobbesist inquiry. 19

20 However, once this egalitarianism of the theatre is relocated offstage, as a 20
 21 feature of casual conversation, it immediately sounds saucy and outrageous. In 21
 22 the dialogue he envisaged for the Duchess of Cleveland and the actress Betty 22
 23 Knight, Rochester carries the cross-class levelling of theatre convention over into 23
 24 a supposedly everyday encounter: 24

25 Quoth the Duchess of Cleveland to Mistress Knight, 25
 26 I’d fain have a prick, knew I how to come by’t. 26
 27 But you must be secret and give your advice, 27
 28 Though cunt be not coy, reputation is nice. 28
 29 To some cellar in Sodom your Grace must retire, 29
 30 There porters with black pots sit round the coal fire. 30
 31 There open your case, and your Grace cannot fail 31
 32 Of a dozen of pricks, for a dozen of ale. 32
 33 Is’t so? quoth the Duchess. Aye by God, quoth the whore. 33
 34 Then give me the key that unlocks the back door. 34
 35 For I had rather be fucked by porters and car-men, 35
 36 Than thus be abused by Churchill and Jermyn.¹⁹ 36
 37 37

38 38
 39 ¹⁶ Cited in Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background* (London, 1934), 39
 40 pp. 186–92. 40

41 ¹⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. MacPherson (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 82. 41

42 ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3. 42

43 ¹⁹ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, ‘Mistress Knight’s Advice to the Duchess of 43
 44 Cleveland in Distress for a Prick’, in *Rochester: Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. Paddy 44
 Lyons (London, 1993), p. 54.

1 The joke here is to present talk which in its freedom is intellectually and theatrically 1
 2 plausible – and very likely was in character psychologically plausible too – as if it 2
 3 is occurring, with all the energy it takes to imagine something actually so (almost) 3
 4 impossible. By playing against and across the boundary between fiction and fact, 4
 5 what is demonstrated is the force of that boundary. 5

6

7 *Rule Two: Servants are Noncombatants in Erotic Engagements* 7

8

9 Unless they are complete fools – and that is highly unusual – servants opt to remain 9
 10 onlookers on the love chases taking place all around them. Thomas Southerne's 10
 11 *The Wives' Excuse* (1682) begins experimentally, with a long scene featuring 11
 12 only servants on stage, supposed to be waiting outside a fashionable concert hall; 12
 13 footmen discuss with great knowingness their masters' and mistresses' potential 13
 14 for adultery; pageboys then enact in mimicry the behaviour that is described. But 14
 15 despite their delight in reasoning extensively from what they observe, it is striking 15
 16 that not one of these witty footmen or pageboys gives any sign he would want to go 16
 17 further, and plunge into or participate in the love games they analyze so avidly: 17

18

2 FOOTMAN. My Master has been married not a quarter of a year, and half the 19
 20 young men in Town, know his Wife already; nay, know that he has known 20
 21 enough of her, not to care for her already. 21

3 FOOTMAN. And that may be a very good argument for some of 'em, to persuade 22
 22 her to know a little of somebody else, and care as little for him. 22

4 FOOTMAN. A very good argument, if she takes it by the right handle. 23

2 FOOTMAN. Some of your Masters, I warrant you, will put it into her hand. 24

3 FOOTMAN. I know my Master has a design upon her. 25

2 FOOTMAN. And upon all the Women in Town. 26

4 FOOTMAN. Mine is in love with her. 27

5 FOOTMAN. And mine has hopes of her. 28

3 FOOTMAN. Every man has hopes of a new marry'd Woman for she marries to 29
 30 like her Man; and if upon trial she finds she can't like her Husband; she'll find 30
 31 somebody else that she can like, in a very little time, I warrant her, or change 31
 32 her Men 'till she does. 32

2 FOOTMAN. Let her like as many as she pleases, and welcome: As they thrive 33
 33 with her, I shall thrive by them: I grind by her Mill, and some of 'em I hope will 33
 34 set it a going. Besides, she has discover'd some of my Master's Intrigues of late. 34
 35 That may help to fill the Sails; but I say nothing, I will take Fees a both sides, 35
 36 and betray neither.²⁰ 36

37

38 Earlier in the scene, there is one cheekily forward footman who makes the macho 38
 39 boast that he has cheated his master of a wench and stolen a clap from him; but the 39
 40 others give him no credence; instead they freeze him out and resume their discussion 40
 41 of their masters as if he had not spoken. They are attached to their detachment. 41

42

43

44 ²⁰ Thomas Southerne, *The Wives' Excuse*, I, 1, pp. 54–74, in *The Works of Thomas* 44
Southerne, eds Robert Jordan and Harold Love (2 vols, Oxford, 1988), vol. 1.

1 In plays that end on multiple marriages, bytimes there is encouragement for the 1
 2 servants to mirror their masters and couple too; but even should one servant agree, 2
 3 this is soon nipped in the bud. As for example at the end of Etherege's *The Comical* 3
 4 *Revenge* (1664), after a stage direction for Sir Nicholas to enter with his bride, 4
 5 followed by Wheadle with his bride, and Palmer with his bride, it is then proposed 5
 6 that the maid Betty and the valet Dufoy should swell the numbers and marry too; 6
 7 Betty seems ready to agree, but Dufoy interrupts: 'Peace, peace, Metres Bett; ve 7
 8 vil be ver good friend upon occasion; but ve vil no marrie: that be ver much beter, 8
 9 beggar'.²¹ Shakespearean multi-marriage endings are generally resisted by wittier 9
 10 maidservants. Betty in Pix's *The Beau Defeated* has no hesitation in knocking 10
 11 back the forwardness of the manservant Jack, who proposes she joins him in the 11
 12 general marital ruck: 12

13
 14 JACK. Nay, we shall live a delicious life that's certain, ha, my dear damsel! 14

15 BETTY. Peace, and mind your betters.²² 15

16
 17 And at the end of Centlivre's *The Basset Table*, when the maid Alpiev is put in a 17
 18 similar situation, she too is pithy in her refusal: 18

19 LOVELY. Will not Valeria look on me? She used to be more kind when we fished 19
 20 for eels in vinegar. 20

21 VALERIA. My Lovely, is it thee? And has natural sympathy forborne to inform 21
 22 my sense so long? 22

23 [...] 23

24 BUCKLE. Here's such a coupling! Mrs Alpiev, han't you a month's mind? 24

25 ALPIEV. Not to you, I assure you.²³ 25

26
 27 Indeed, servants tend to appear onstage far more in the earlier acts of plays, 27
 28 and to be absent at endings; it appears that what the servants know would 28
 29 undermine closure: 29

30 Reciprocally, even the daftest masters and mistresses take umbrage at the very 30
 31 suggestion of erotic engagement with a servant. In Congreve's *Love for Love* 31
 32 (1695), Foresight the astrologer snaps out of his stargazing when he hears his 32
 33 daughter proposing to marry Robin the butler, and with unexpected acumen he 33
 34 gives a brusque and practical order: 'Bid Robin make ready to give an account of 34
 35 his plate and linen'.²⁴ However hot with greedy passion she may be, Lady Wishfort 35
 36 too draws the line at cross-class liaison: 36

37
 38
 39
 40 ²¹ George Etherege, *The Comical Revenge*, V, 5, pp. 144–6, in *The Plays of George* 40
 41 *Etherege*, ed. Michael Corder (Cambridge, 1982). 41

42 ²² Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, IV, 3, p. 216. 42

43 ²³ Centlivre, *The Basset Table*, V, 1, pp. 290–91. 43

44 ²⁴ William Congreve, *Love for Love*, V, 1, pp. 327–8, in *The Complete Plays of William* 44
Congreve, ed. Herbert Davis (Chicago, 1967).

1 What ... betray me ... marry me to a cast serving man ... make me a receptacle, 1
 2 an hospital for a decayed pimp! O thou frontless impudence, more than a big- 2
 3 bellied actress!²⁵ 3

4
 5 There is, though, just one moment in the drama of the era in which a master- 4
 6 servant relation is eroticized quite lusciously, and this a scene invented by 5
 7 Rochester for his tragedy *Valentinian*, an addition he composed to put his stamp 6
 8 on the last act of his adaptation of Fletcher's old play. It is an extraordinary scene 7
 9 that begins with the Emperor Valentinian lolling swooningly on a couch with the 8
 10 boy Lycias, servant to Maximus; Lycias has just helped engineer Valentinian's 9
 11 rape of Lucina, Maximus's wife, and now Valentinian embraces him, exclaiming 10
 12 to him amorously: 11

13 Oh let me press thy balmy lips all day 13
 14 And bathe my love-scorched soul in thy moist kisses. 14
 15 Now by my joys thou are all sweet and soft.²⁶ 15
 16 _____ 16

17 Just when it seems that Valentinian can take his excesses no farther, Rochester 17
 18 has found some more taboos for him to violate. It is notable that once the old 18
 19 soldier Aecius enters and discovers this couple, what horrifies him is not that 19
 20 Valentinian is declaring love for another man, but love for someone 'base', 20
 21 and is eroticizing a servant.²⁷ Valentinian rises to the occasion and attempts to 21
 22 interpose his own body, heroically but too late, between Aecius's sword and 22
 23 the unfortunate servant lad, who is stabbed to death. Because Valentinian is 23
 24 himself a study in transgression, someone who crosses every limit, he constantly 24
 25 demonstrates what are the rules by dint of constantly breaking them. If we 25
 26 ask the question of whether the servant Lycias himself responds erotically to 26
 27 Valentinian's lovemaking, the play is silent: Lycias is described in the cast list 27
 28 as a 'eunuch', whatever that may mean; and the only words Lycias gets to speak 28
 29 during this scene are pleas for help when under assault from Aecius's sword. The 29
 30 general rule is affirmed: what has been shown very vividly is that a servant who 30
 31 enters into an erotic embrace is sure to be somehow destroyed. 31
 32 _____ 32

36 ²⁵ Congreve, *The Way of the World*, V, 1, pp. 34–7. 36

37 ²⁶ Rochester, *Valentinian*, V, 5, pp. 1–3, in *Rochester: Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. 37
 38 Paddy Lyons (London, 1993); Rochester's innovations are examined on pp. 323–6, and this 38
 39 scene is considered further on p. 325. 39

40 ²⁷ Homophobia as we know it did not prevail in English culture before 1700. In his 40
 41 study of male homosexuality in early modern England, Rictor Norton notes that from the 41
 42 time of the trial of the Earl of Castlehaven and his catamite pageboys in the 1630s, there is no 42
 43 further record of executions for these activities until 1703. See Rictor Norton (ed.), 'Passion 43
 44 for a Catamite', in *Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook* (10 April 44
 2000, updated 15 June 2008) <<http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1701cata.htm>>.

1	<i>Rule Three: Servants Know the Laws of Desire</i>	1
2		2
3	In <i>Leviathan</i> , Hobbes persistently identifies desire as primary, as the vital force	3
4	fundamental to life: ‘to have no Desire is to be Dead’. ²⁸ This generates a far from	4
5	comfortable equation: ‘there is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquility of mind,	5
6	while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without	6
7	Desire’. ²⁹ And Hobbes makes no attempt to conceal the potential for tragedy in	7
8	desire, in its dimensions of motion and change, and inexhaustible inconstancy: ‘Nor	8
9	can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end ... Felicity is a continuall	9
10	progresse of the desire, from one object to another’. ³⁰ In taking as its field courtship	10
11	behaviour, both among people who are married and those who are not, Restoration	11
12	theatre dedicated itself to the demonstration and exploration of these Hobbesist	12
13	theses that privilege mobility and change. Desire will only pursue a moving target;	13
14	and he or she who permits capture ceases to be an object of desire. This is encoded	14
15	in the plotting of the plays, again and again. It gives rises to a recurrent sequence	15
16	of desire and pursuit followed by possession, satiation, boredom, and rejection, a	16
17	vicious cycle, doomed to circularity and constant repetition. Dorimant announces	17
18	the position, succinctly, in the opening of <i>The Man of Mode</i> : ‘Next to the coming	18
19	to an understanding with a new mistress, I love a quarrel with an old one, but the	19
20	devil’s in’t, there has been such a calm in my affairs of late’. ³¹ The intolerableness	20
21	of this cycle gives rise to dramatic tension when Truewits who know the laws	21
22	of desire nevertheless allow themselves to be pulled by passion and to seek – in	22
23	general fruitlessly, sometimes amusingly, sometimes with great pathos – to bypass	23
24	or surmount the laws they already know will and must prevail. By contrast, the	24
25	servants are more or less unshakeable in their knowing awareness, and remain	25
26	bystanders on these games. Just how well servants understand the laws of desire	26
27	becomes evident once we consider how they speak of desire.	27
28		28
29	<i>Rule Four: Servants Are Expert in Utterance</i>	29
30		30
31	To communicate the laws of the material world and articulate their consequences	31
32	is to take a step beyond simple acceptance, as Hobbes makes plain, when he	32
33	observes that ‘True and False are attributes of Speech, not of Things’. ³² This	33
34	understanding is built into the dramaturgy of the period: if, for example, desire	34
35	withers once it is reciprocated, it cannot be stated; in these Hobbes-inflected plays,	35
36	love is only ever acknowledged in an aside that is presumed to pass unheard;	36
37	to declare love directly is ruinous, and passion is altered once it is admitted or	37
38	revealed. For servants, who never voice surrender to desire, the issue is that of	38
39		39
40	²⁸ Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 139.	40
41	²⁹ Ibid., pp. 129–30.	41
42	³⁰ Ibid., <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 160.	42
43	³¹ Etherage, <i>The Man of Mode</i> , I, 1, pp. 216–19.	43
44	³² Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 105.	44

1 how to intervene, how to warn or inform, and their sophistication in this domain is 1
 2 great. A sharp example is given by the maid Isabel, in Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* 2
 3 (1671), who alternates knowingly between tactful restraint and brutal hearsay 3
 4 with her ill-tempered mistress, Christina, as she responds to Christina's restless 4
 5 demands to hear only what she wants to hear: 5

6
 7 ISABEL. Faith, Madam, you'll be angry, 'tis the old trick of Lovers to hate their 7
 8 informers, after they have made 'em such. 8

9 CHRISTINA. I will not be angry. 9

10 ISABEL. They say then, since Mr. Valentine's flying into France, you are grown 10
 11 mad, have put yourself into mourning, live in a dark room, where you'll see 11
 12 nobody, nor take any rest day or night, but rave and talk to yourself perpetually. 12

13 CHRISTINA. Now what else? 13

14 ISABEL. But the surest sign of your madness is, they say, because you are 14
 15 desperately resolv'd (in case my Lord Clerimont should die of his wounds) to 15
 16 transport yourself and fortune into France, to Mr. Valentine, a man that has not a 16
 17 groat to return you in exchange. 17

18 CHRISTINA. All this hitherto, is true; now to the rest. 18

19 ISABEL. Indeed, Madam, I have no more to tell you. I was sorry, I'm sure, to hear 19
 20 so much of any Lady of mine. 20

21 CHRISTINA. Insupportable insolence! 21

22 [*Knocking at the door.*] 22

23 ISABEL. [*Aside*] This is some revenge for my want of sleep to night.³³ 23

24 We may note in passing how at the start Isabel manages to work into her utterances 24
 25 a caveat on the dangers frankness may give rise to, which – just as Isabel 25
 26 expects – Christina at once professes to accept and instantly disregards. But as 26
 27 the scene continues, Christina's women friends remark how valuable are Isabel's 27
 28 skills in discourse: 28

29 LYDIA. Madam, under my Lady Flippant's protection, I am confident to beg 29
 30 yours; being just now pursu'd out of the Park, by a relation of mine, by whom 30
 31 it imports me extremely not to be discover'd; [*Knocking at the door*] but I fear 31
 32 he is now at the door. [*To the maid Isabel as she is going to the door*] Let me 32
 33 desire you to deny me to him courageously, for he will hardly believe he can be 33
 34 mistaken in me. 34

35 CHRISTINA. In such an occasion where impudence is requisite, she will serve you, 35
 36 as faithfully as you can wish, Madam. 36

37 LADY FLIPPANT. Come, come, Madam, do not upbraid her with her assurance, a 37
 38 qualification that only fits her for a Lady's Service; a fine Woman of the Town 38
 39 can be no more without a Woman that can make an excuse with an assurance 39
 40 then she can be without a glass certainly. 40

41 CHRISTINA. She needs no Advocate. 41

42
 43
 44 ³³ William Wycherley, *Love in a Wood*, II, 2, pp. 28–46, in *The Plays of William* 44
Wycherley, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford, 1979).

1 LADY FLIPPANT. How can any one alone manage an amorous intrigue; though the 1
 2 Birds are tame, somebody must help draw the net; if 'twere not for a Woman 2
 3 that could make an excuse with assurance, how shou'd we wheedle, jilt, trace, 3
 4 discover, countermine, undermine, and blow up the stinking fellows.³⁴ 4

5 To 'make an excuse with assurance' is to follow Hobbes to the letter, in treating 5
 6 true and false as attributes of speech, not of things; and this capability qualifies 6
 7 servants to probe revealingly across gaps between what is said and the feeling 7
 8 which prompt what is said. Wycherley again: 8
 9

10 LUCY. Nay, madam, I will ask you the reason why you would banish poor Master 10
 11 Harcourt forever from your sight. How could you be so hardhearted? 11

12 ALITHEA. 'Twas because I was not hardhearted. 12

13 LUCY. No, no, 'twas stark love and kindness, I warrant. 13

14 ALITHEA. It was so; I would see him no more because I love him. 14

15 LUCY. Hey-day, a very pretty reason! 15

16 ALITHEA. You do not understand me. 16

17 LUCY. I wish you may yourself.³⁵ 17

18
 19 Elsewhere in *The Country Wife* Lucy encourages Mrs Pinchwife to lie, there being 18
 20 no other way to ensure her survival in the face of Mr Pinchwife's jealous violence; 20
 21 and here she works on her mistress, the tediously self-deceiving Alithea, like a 21
 22 Lacanian psychoanalyst, drawing her to recognize how her desires are the obverse 22
 23 of those she has been pronouncing. Her adroitness demonstrates her knowing 23
 24 command of utterance. 24

25 Sensitivity to these entanglements of desire and articulation remained 25
 26 characteristic of servants to the end of the century. No less subtle than Wycherley's 26
 27 Lucy is the maid Lucy in Congreve's *The Old Bachelor* (1692), who instructs 27
 28 Silvia, her mistress, in the practice of ingenuity: 28

29 LUCY. I have that in my head may make mischief. 29

30 SILVIA. How, dear Lucy? 30

31 LUCY. You know Araminta's dissembled coyness has won, and keeps him hers – 31

32 SILVIA. Could we persuade him that she loves another – 32

33 LUCY. No, you're out; could we persuade him that she dotes on him, himself. 33

34 Contrive a kind letter as from her, 'twould disgust his nicety, and take away his 34
 35 stomach. 35

36 SILVIA. Impossible; 'twill never take. 36

37 LUCY. Trouble not your head. Let me alone – I will inform myself of what passed 37
 38 between 'em to-day, and about it straight. Hold, I'm mistaken, or that's Heartwell, 38
 39 who stands talking at the corner – 'tis he – go get you in, madam, receive him 39
 40 pleasantly, dress up your face in innocence and smiles, and dissemble the very 40
 41 want of dissimulation. You know what will take him. 41

42 ³⁴ Ibid., II, 2, pp. 55–73. 42

43 ³⁵ William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, IV, 1, pp. 8–16, in *The Plays of William* 43
 44 *Wycherley*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford, 1979). 44

1 SILVIA. 'Tis as hard to counterfeit love as it is to conceal it: but I'll do my weak 1
 2 endeavour, though I fear I have not art. 2
 3 LUCY. Hang art, madam, and trust to nature for dissembling.³⁶ 3

4
 5 Silvia goes on to win the love of Heartwell by not being frank with him and, thanks 4
 6 to Lucy, also unsettles the man who passed her over: a forged letter purporting to be 5
 7 from Araminta and admitting reciprocal feelings for Vainlove does indeed alienate 6
 8 him, exactly as Lucy predicted. So pleased with herself is Silvia that she imagines 7
 9 this to be all her own work, and tells Lucy in delight, 'I find dissembling to our 8
 10 sex is as natural as swimming to a negro; we may depend upon our skill to save us 9
 11 at a plunge – though till then we never make the experiment'.³⁷ Lucy exemplifies 10
 12 well the four rules for servants: she discourses on an equal basis with Silvia, she 11
 13 supports Silvia loyally but does not herself succumb to erotic entanglement, and 12
 14 she puts at the service of her mistress both her knowledge of the laws of desire and 13
 15 her expertise about how utterance and discourse are enmeshed. 14
 16 15

17 Servants After 1700 17

18
 19 After 1700 these four rules fall apart, all more or less at once. By the 1720s Defoe 19
 20 imagines Moll Flanders as wanting to escape servitude, wanting to make money 20
 21 and to marry money, by hook or by crook, so as to be a 'gentlewoman'. There has 21
 22 been, we could say, an onset of class-consciousness, accompanied by new social 22
 23 aspirations. Hobbes's principles arising from 'similitude of passions' – base in 23
 24 every sense to humankind at large – have ceased to count: instead of sameness, 24
 25 it is differences that have come to matter. This new conception is Lockean, we 25
 26 may say, as it was Locke who taught that people are blank slates, all of us *tabula* 26
 27 *rasa*, till inscribed on differently by differing life experiences; or, as Valentine 27
 28 announces somewhat sourly to Angelica, 'You are ... a sheet of lovely spotless 28
 29 paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every 29
 30 goose's quill'.³⁸ Lady Wishfort expands this Lockean logic when she rages against 30
 31 her servant Foible: 31

32
 33 Bosom traitress ... drive a trade, do, with your threepennyworth of small ware, 33
 34 flaunting upon a packthread, under a brandy-seller's bulk, or against a dead wall 34
 35 by a ballad-monger. Go, hang out an old frisoner-gorget, with a yard of yellow 35
 36 colberteen again, do; an old gnawed mask, two rows of pins, and a child's fiddle; 36
 37 a glass necklace with the beads broken, and a quilted night-cap with one ear. Go, 37
 38 go, drive a trade. These were your commodities, you treacherous trull; this was 38
 39 the merchandise you dealt in.³⁹ 39

40
 41 ³⁶ William Congreve, *The Old Bachelor*, III, 1, pp. 35–55, in *The Complete Plays of* 41
 42 *William Congreve*, ed. Herbert Davis (Chicago, 1967). 42

43 ³⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 1, pp. 150–53. 43

44 ³⁸ Congreve, *Love for Love*, IV, 1, pp. 637–9. 44

³⁹ Congreve, *The Way of the World*, V, 1, pp. 2–20. 44

1 Foible is atomized, and in this abusive tirade is imagined in terms of her past 1
 2 experiences, as the sum of the commodities with which she has been associated. 2
 3 Lady Wishfort's fury is Lockean too in setting its target apart. The servant is 3
 4 branded as different, and as from different stock because formed by different 4
 5 experiences. The year of the play is 1700. 5

6 If people are not similar but differ radically, through differences of social 6
 7 origin, experiences, and upbringing, then there are not necessarily any grounds for 7
 8 equality in discourse. If everyone is radically not the same in their core passions, 8
 9 it is quite possible the laws of desire are not the same for everyone. These shifts 9
 10 are very apparent in Farquhar's *The Beaux-Stratagem* (1707) when Cherry the 10
 11 innkeeper's daughter fobs off the advances of Archer, who is calling himself 11
 12 'Martin' and acting as valet to Aimwell – though Archer is in fact himself a beau, 12
 13 a member of the gentry. Cherry is an avatar of Moll Flanders, and eager to be 13
 14 upwardly mobile: 'tho I was born to Servitude, I hate it'.⁴⁰ What Cherry knows 14
 15 is that the gentry are different, and she is observant as to how their kind conduct 15
 16 themselves, astutely and teasingly pointing out to Archer 'your Discourse and 16
 17 your Habit are Contradictions, and it wou'd be nonsense in me to believe you a 17
 18 Footman any longer'.⁴¹ To get her to bed with him, Archer tries telling her what 18
 19 she should want to hear, that he is a gentleman, down on his luck, but Cherry is no 19
 20 fool, and she probes further: 20

21
 22 CHERRY. Then take my Hand – promise to marry me before you sleep, and I'll 21
 23 make you Master of two thousand Pound. 22

24 ARCHER. How! 23

25 CHERRY. Two thousand Pound that I have this Minute in my own Custody; so 24
 26 throw off your Livery this Instant, and I'll go find a Parson. 25

27 ARCHER. What said you? A Parson! 26

28 CHERRY. What! do you scruple? 27

29 ARCHER. Scruple! no, no, but – two thousand Pound you say? 28

30 CHERRY. And better. 29

31 ARCHER. S'death, what shall I do – but heark'e, Child, what need you make me 30
 32 Master of yourself and Money, when you may have the same Pleasure out of me, 31
 33 and still keep your Fortune in your Hands. 32

34 CHERRY. Then you won't marry me? 33

35 ARCHER. I wou'd marry you, but – 34

36 CHERRY. O sweet, Sir, I'm your humble Servant, you're fairly caught, wou'd 35
 37 you persuade me that any Gentleman who cou'd bear the Scandal of wearing 36
 38 a Livery, wou'd refuse two thousand Pound let the Condition be what it wou'd 37
 39 – no, no, Sir, – but I hope you'll Pardon the Freedom I have taken, since it was 38
 40 only to inform myself of the Respect that I ought to pay you.⁴² 39

41
 42 ⁴⁰ George Farquhar, *The Beaux-Stratagem*, II, 2, pp. 199–200, *The Works of George*
 43 *Farquhar*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (2 vols, Oxford, 1988), vol. 2. 42

44 ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, 2, pp. 194–6. 43

⁴² *Ibid.*, II, 2, pp. 208–30. 44

1 Cherry's interrogation gives precedence to class analysis and follows reasoning 1
 2 based on a mocking understanding of class difference. She also embodies a new 2
 3 eroticization of the servant that is even most conspicuously on display when Mrs 3
 4 Sullen and Dorinda take notice of the attractiveness and charms of the man they 4
 5 suppose to be a servant: 5

6
 7 DORINDA. I have heard say, that People may be guess'd at by the behaviour of 7
 8 their Servants; I cou'd wish we might talk to that Fellow. 8

9 MRS SULLEN. So do I; for, I think he's a very pretty Fellow: Come this way, I'll 9
 10 throw out a Lure for him presently.⁴³ 10

11 Like Cherry, Mrs Sullen and Dorinda question whether there may be some 11
 12 mismatch between the man and his livery, now hoping it is so: 12

13
 14 DORINDA. This is surprising: did you ever see so pretty a well-bred Fellow? 14

15 MRS SULLEN. The Devil take him for wearing that livery. 15

16 DORINDA. I fancy, Sister, he may be some Gentlemen, a Friend of my Lord's, that 16
 17 his Lordship has pitch'd upon for his Courage, Fidelity, and Discretion to bear 17
 18 him company in this dress, and who, ten to one was his Second too. 18

19 MRS SULLEN. It is so, it must be so, and it shall be so. – For I like him.⁴⁴ 19

20
 21 Here there is fudge, as Mrs Sullen and Dorinda conjure up gentility to pluck Archer 21
 22 out of the servant class and make proper the pleasure they take in his person and his 22
 23 sex appeal. Belonging to the first years of the new century, *The Beaux-Stratagem* is a 23
 24 transitional play; for his ending Farquhar opts to fudge and blur all issues, abandoning 24
 25 any enquiry into the laws of desire, and instead preferring warmth, with a fantasy 25
 26 divorce that spreads freedom and love among the gentry, on the impossible grounds 26
 27 that 'Consent is law enough to set you free'.⁴⁵ Cherry's skill in deft inquiry does not 27
 28 reappear; conveniently, Cherry goes into hiding to shelter her criminal father from 28
 29 his pursuers; and nothing remains of her other than a billet-doux and a strongbox 29
 30 full of money, to complete Archer's return to fortune, and make him fully eligible 30
 31 to marry the newly divorced Mrs Sullen. In short, cross-class erotic engagement is 31
 32 toyed with in prospect but obliterated from the final picture. 32

33 Liaison between servants and gentry also seems a momentary possibility in 33
 34 the final act of Mrs Pix's *The Beau Defeated* (1700), another transitional play, 34
 35 though with a different mood. Sir John Roverhead, the beau of the title, is a kept 35
 36 man, the live-in lover of the gambler Lady La Basset. He comes close to marrying 36
 37 the wealthy widow Mrs Rich, and also to eloping with her young niece Lucinda, 37
 38 who possesses a fine casket of jewels. But his plots are foiled, and he is revealed 38
 39 by Lady La Basset as himself a servant, dressed in 'borrowed honours'. For a 39
 40 moment it seems we are witnessing a confession, an enraged admission of folly 40

41
 42 _____ 41
 43 ⁴³ Ibid., III, 3, pp. 106–10. 42

44 ⁴⁴ Ibid., III, 3, pp. 255–62. 43

45 ⁴⁵ Ibid., V, 4, pp. 296. 44

1	from a Duchess furious at being betrayed by a servant she has lowered herself to	1
2	and loved. But the false Sir John is vengeful, and turns on her quickly:	2
3		3
4	SIR JOHN. Hold, hold; not so fast. How came you to be the Honourable, the Lady	4
5	Basset. I think 'twas I dubbed ye. As I take it, ye were but the cast mistress of Sir	5
6	Francis Basset, when I found ye. ⁴⁶	6
7		7
8	Order prevails: the illicit liaison was, after all, no worse than a liaison of commoners.	8
9	But what is interesting is that no one on stage is very troubled or surprised in the	9
10	wake of these revelations; they are all absorbed in their own concerns, and only	10
11	Mrs Rich even bothers to pay them any passing notice:	11
12		12
13	MRS RICH. Sir John, will ye participate in our diversion, or employ your time in	13
14	reconciling yourself to this enraged lady? ⁴⁷	14
15		15
16	In Mrs Pix's plays, shock and surprise never last long, and people move on,	16
17	unflappable, taking for granted whatever may be; here what is taken for granted	17
18	foreshadows a new construction of the stage servant, one which was soon to	18
19	become widespread.	19
20	Eliza Haywood was a woman who came to London as a young actress and	20
21	soon became known for her capabilities in writing for the contemporary literary	21
22	market. Her first original play, <i>A Wife to be Let</i> (1723), displays how in the space	22
23	of two decades the cross-class liaisons toyed with by Farquhar and Mrs Pix had	23
24	become mainstream: when the footman Shamble passes himself off as one Sir	24
25	Tristram, and marries the wealthy Widow Stately, his social mobility is greeted first	25
26	of all with amusement and then with general applause:	26
27		27
28	WIDOW STATELY. Your servant, gentlemen, your servant, ladies; I beg pardon for	28
29	my long absence – but, but – a – I cou'd not rise today, I think.	29
30	GAYLOVE. Sir Tristram play'd his part then pretty well, last night, I find.	30
31	FAIRMAN. Joy, madam – you have stole a wedding, I hear.	31
32	WIDOW STATELY. People of quality never talk of these affairs till they are	32
33	accomplish'd, Mr Fairman – Sir Tristram here was so pressing.	33
34	COURTLY. And your ladyship so easy –	34
35	GRASPALL. Sir Tristram! Why, are you all mad? Why, this is Jonathan Shamble –	35
36	sure I know Jonathan Shamble: he was footman to a nephew of mine about four	36
37	or five years ago, when I was last in London.	37
38	ALL. Ha, ha, ha! a footman!	38
39	GAYLOVE. Well, well, Mr Graspall, he's a man of an estate now, and 'twill be	39
40	unmannerly to rip up pedigrees.	40
41	WIDOW STATELY. I am not cheated, sure – what's the meaning of all this?	41
42	SHAMBLE. Why, faith, my dear wife, since the truth must out, I only borrow'd my	42
43	quality to make myself agreeable to you. –	43
44		44

⁴⁶ Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, V, 2, p. 233.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

1 WIDOW STATELY. Villain! Rogue! I'll tear you to pieces. 1
 2 SHAMBLE. Hold, hold, good lady, passion – have mercy on my clothes, for they 2
 3 are none of my own. 3
 4 GAYLOVE. Patience, madam, patience! Boxing does not become a woman of 4
 5 quality. 5
 6 WIDOW STATELY. A footman! A footman! But I'll have him hanged! He's a cheat, 6
 7 he has married me in a false name. But you shan't think to carry it so – I was not 7
 8 born yesterday: I'll go to a lawyer immediately. 8
 9 GAYLOVE. Hark ye, hark ye, madam – your anger will do you but little service. – 9
 10 He has wedded you, bedded you, and got your writings, and if you consider 10
 11 calmly on the matter, you'll find nothing can be done in this affair for your 11
 12 satisfaction. – You had better therefore quietly forgive the imposition; and as you 12
 13 have a good estate, turn part of it into ready money, and e'en buy him a title – 13
 14 such things are done every day in London – and when once you have made a 14
 15 gentleman of him, everybody won't know by what means he came to be one. 15
 16 WIDOW STATELY. Why that's true, indeed. 16
 17 GAYLOVE. You'll find it your best way. 17
 18 WIDOW STATELY. Well, since there's no help, I'll sell all I have, and away to 18
 19 London. 19
 20 GAYLOVE. You may be happy enough – I dare swear he'll make you a good 20
 21 husband.⁴⁸ 21

22 Unlike Congreve's *Lady Wishfort* just a generation earlier – whom Haywood is 22
 23 to some extent rewriting, but on the terms of new times – this widow is quickly 23
 24 reconciled to having a husband from the servant class: it is only boxing that 'does not 24
 25 become a woman of quality'. It all appears reasonably acceptable: after all, Shamble 25
 26 is not only energetic but is actually affectionate, declaring publicly he 'borrowed' 26
 27 nobility 'only ... to make myself agreeable to you'. And once she is reminded that 27
 28 she is wealthy enough to buy her new husband a title – 'such things are done every 28
 29 day in London' – the Widow's anger is all over, she can shrug her shoulders, à la 29
 30 Mary Pix, and set off to purchase him a peerage 'as is done every day in London'. 30
 31 By 1723 entertaining a cross-class liaison with a servant was familiar on the 31
 32 London stage. It was already so in, for example, *The Northern Heiress* (1716), 32
 33 a play by Irishwoman Mary Davys, where the witty maid Liddy gets herself 33
 34 married to Mr Bareface, one of her mistress's several suitors. Class solidarity is 34
 35 evident in Davys's play, enough for upwardly mobile servants to connive happily 35
 36 together, to enable each other to marry up the social ladder: Liddy's capture of 36
 37 Mr Bareface is accomplished with the assistance of a manservant, Ralph, who is 37
 38 as it happens is himself aspiring to be a playwright. This too is taken up by Eliza 38
 39 Haywood: Shamble's design on Widow Stately is forwarded with the aid of his old 39
 40 girlfriend Jenny, no longer a girl-about-town but retired to the country, with her 40
 41 Lockean memories, and living very comfortably as the widow's housekeeper. But 41
 42 it is notable how all these marriages are brought about by disguise and pretence 42
 43 to nobility, not through the expertise in articulation that was characteristic of 43

44 ⁴⁸ Eliza Haywood, *A Wife To Be Let*, V, 1, pp. 68–9, 2nd edn (London, 1729). 44

1 pre-1700 stage servants: Mr Bareface is led to imagine he is marrying the heiress 1
 2 Isabella when he is in fact marrying her maid in a mask; and though he is rather 2
 3 less gracious than Widow Stately in accepting marriage to a servant, everyone else 3
 4 is delighted, and they conclude the play by patronizing him effusively: 4

5
 6 ISABELLA. I beg you will make a kind husband to my maid, for I assure you she 5
 7 is a gentlewoman born, (and tho' perhaps you may never find it out) a woman 6
 8 of very good sense too. 7

9 BAREFACE. Madam, the more good qualities she has, the more I have to thank 8
 10 you for. 9

11 [Aside] Pox take you for your present. 10

12 SIR JEFFREY. So, so, all's well. Come, now let's have a dance.⁴⁹ 11

13 It is news that Liddy 'is a gentlewoman born'; but the late news device is familiar 12
 14 from Farquhar, an indication that cross-class eroticism on stage was still tentative, 13
 15 the relative boldness of Eliza Haywood not yet altogether established. 14
 16 15

17 16

18 **The World and the Stage – Art and Ideology** 17

19 18

20 Ingenuity is on display whenever servants are applying their knowledge, whether 19
 21 in the service of their masters and mistresses on the pre-1700 stage, or in pursuit 20
 22 of betterment for themselves through marriage to money, as became prevalent on 21
 23 the stage after 1700. The considerable conspicuousness with which ingenuity is 22
 24 exercised signals that the spectacle is special, uncommon in the everyday world of 23
 25 its audience. But it is pointlessly flippant to brand Restoration theatre, as Charles 24
 26 Lamb did, as 'altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference 25
 27 whatever to the world that is'.⁵⁰ The split begs a question about desire: why should 26
 28 these times have wished to endow stage servants with so much more knowledge 27
 29 than it attributed to actual everyday servants? To examine why this was, and why 28
 30 around about 1700 there is change to what the fictional servants know, I would 29
 31 like to borrow from Althusser, and to regard theatre as not reflecting its world 30
 32 with the photographic directness of a mirror any more than ideology does: 'What 31
 33 is represented ... is not the system of real relations which governs the existence 32
 34 of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations 33
 35 in which they live'.⁵¹ In short, we need to ask what were the relations of theatre 34
 36 audiences – relations of identification, disidentification and counter-identification – 35
 37 to these servants who could be imagined as knowing – and differently so before 36
 38 and after 1700? 37

39 Before 1700, theatre was prone to sneer at 'the grave man of business': 38

40 Wycherley's Horner reviles the business community as sexually impotent; for 39

41 40

42 41

43 ⁴⁹ Mary Davys, *The Northern Heiress*, V, p. 72 (London, 1716). 42

44 ⁵⁰ Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia* (1823) (Menston, 1969), p. 327. 43

⁵¹ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London, 1984), p. 39. 44

1 similar reasons Aphra Behn in *The Lucky Chance* (1688) mocks the financial 1
 2 and banking community; and merchants and traders in general fare badly on the 2
 3 pre-1700 stage. The epilogue to Mrs Pix's *The Beau Defeated* (1700), the ending 3
 4 of which has already been noted as tentatively indicating change in the placement 4
 5 of servants, breaks with this old habit, and announces new loyalties: 5

6
 7 The glory of the world our British nobles are, 6
 8 [...] 7
 9 But to our City, Augusta's sons, 8
 10 The conquering wealth of both the Indies runs; 9
 11 Though less in name, of greater power by far.⁵² 10

12 After 1700, theatre architecture had altered, the size of the auditorium increasing 12
 13 fourfold; Mrs Pix was welcoming new theatre-goers who were to fill these vastly 13
 14 enlarged spaces, and they came from a new nonproductive class, one that came into 14
 15 being with the founding of the Bank of England (1694), and the many speculative 15
 16 ventures – such as the South Sea Bubble, such as the slave-trading companies – 16
 17 which were thereby soon enabled. It was a class that located production outside of 17
 18 and apart from itself, and which would swell in numbers as farther reaches of the 18
 19 British Empire opened to colonial exploitation. Though not yet nobility, this class 19
 20 well understood Widow Stately taking herself to London to purchase a peerage. 20
 21 Coming from a range of backgrounds which could include domestic service, this 21
 22 new class was more prone to hire servants to bring itself prestige rather than to 22
 23 recall origins; for this class, the new Lockean servants on stage, imagined as shaped 23
 24 and defined by their specific backgrounds and experiences, provide a counter-myth, 24
 25 and offer counter-identification, embodying all this new audience wanted to see as 25
 26 *not* reflecting itself directly, which is to say scheming, wheedling, and conniving to 26
 27 attain wealth through marriage, in the way of old aristocracy. 27

28 Very occasionally, from 1700 onwards, servants fall for other servants, and 28
 29 when they do the cruel laws of desire seem not to apply; instead, their shared class 29
 30 awareness brings them close to being embodiments of Miltonic companionate 30
 31 marriage, a central element in the ideology of the new rising class. Untroubled 31
 32 friendliness characterizes the conversations between Foible and Waitwell, the 32
 33 servants who marry in *The Way of the World* (1700). Tom and Phillis, the servants 33
 34 who fall in love in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), specialize in affectionate 34
 35 mockery of each other, and in shared (and very Lockean) fond recall of how they 35
 36 found each other when polishing opposite sides of the one window-pane. It simply 36
 37 does not occur to either of these couples that they too could undergo the restlessness 37
 38 and uncertainties which unsettle the loves of their masters and mistresses or that 38
 39 their loves must follow a pattern which moves from hunt to capture to boredom: 39

40
 41 TOM. One acre with Phillis would be worth a whole country without her. 41
 42 PHILLIS. O, could I believe you! 42
 43 43
 44 44

⁵² Pix, *The Beau Defeated*, V, 2, p. 234.

1 TOM. If not the utterance, believe the touch of my lips. [*Kisses her*] 1
 2 PHILLIS. There's no contradicting you. How closely you argue, Tom! 2
 3 TOM. And will closer, in due time.⁵³ 3

4
 5 But such coupling of servants in love is notably rare on stage, rare because it 4
 6 risks inviting sympathetic identification from an audience which enjoyed servants 5
 7 and their antics in terms of counter-identification. It is thus not surprising that 6
 8 both Congreve and Steele should choose to exclude these pairs from their finales, 7
 9 even though these finales celebrate marriages that Foible and Waitwell, and that 8
 10 Tom and Phillis have helped to bring about. To go on to show servants in married 9
 11 bliss would have been too close to holding up servants as a mirror to a class that 10
 12 for itself favoured Miltonic bourgeois marriage, and in the theatre preferred the 11
 13 Locke-enabled option of counter-identification. 12

14 Pre-1700 theatre had, however, offered its audiences a richer and more complex 13
 15 system of identifications and disidentifications, more akin to Lacan's story of the 14
 16 child gazing in a mirror and seeing – both and at once – a more coherent version of 15
 17 itself *and* a figure recognized as outside of and other to itself.⁵⁴ This is a doubleness, 16
 18 exemplified for instance in Wycherley's presentation of his Plain Dealer as at once 17
 19 both a mouthpiece for himself and also the butt of his mockery and satire. The 18
 20 Hobbesian inflection accorded to servants in the plays before 1700 'similitude of 19
 21 passions', and on-stage egalitarianism gave grounds for identification, particularly 20
 22 as the servants' knowledge of desire and its laws were confirmed in every twist 21
 23 and turn of the plays' composition. It is a knowledge also shared by the Truewits, 22
 24 unless passion leads them into temporary forgetfulness, the difference between 23
 25 Truewits and servants being that Truewits (and, even more so, Would-be Wits) can 24
 26 get hurt – whereas servants remain bystanders, and preserve themselves intact. In 25
 27 other words, from one perspective, desire is dangerous, and potentially humiliating, 26
 28 while for those who hold off and stay on the sidelines – as the servants do – desire 27
 29 provides a spectacle which can be amusing and in its way instructive. The servants 28
 30 and the Truewits thus constitute two alternate poles in a dialectic between safety 29
 31 and vulnerability, and these plays offer a doubleness of identification, with both 30
 32 contrary positions available at once to its spectators. 31

33 Theatre bore witness to a gradual shift from one conception of the servant to 32
 34 another, from feudal to bourgeois, from Hobbes to Locke. But what happens if 33
 35 both these contrary concepts are in action together? There is one text from the 34
 36 decade of the Licensing Act which returns to the doubleness of pre-1700 theatre 35
 37 through its focus on servants, while simultaneously engaging with the Lockean 36
 38 mode of the new century. Swift's *Directions to Servants*, though first published 37
 39 after his death in 1745 was, we know, in hand by 1731, and it is quite likely he 38
 40 had worked on it over some years: as Samuel Johnson remarked, 'such a number 39

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 42 _____ 41
 43 ⁵³ Sir Richard Steele, *The Conscious Lovers*, III, pp. 78–85, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny 42
 44 (Lincoln, 1968). 43

44 ⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London, 1977), pp. 1–7; esp. pp. 2–4. 44

1 of particulars could never have been assembled by the power of recollection'.⁵⁵ 1
 2 It is a parody conduct-book, one of Swift's funniest and darkest writings, full of 2
 3 bad, wicked, dangerous advice, such as this handy hint for nursemaids and child- 3
 4 minders: 'If you happen to let the child fall, and lame it, be sure never confess it; 4
 5 and if it dies, all is safe'.⁵⁶ Who is being addressed? This wise counsellor lets it 5
 6 be known quite frequently that most of the servants he is writing for are illiterate 6
 7 and cannot read. Is he then warning their masters and mistresses, divulging 7
 8 wickedness sometimes suspected to be part of what every low and cunning servant 8
 9 well knows? Is he setting down for the servants what they already know all too 9
 10 well? Or is the hardship and difficulty of servants' lives – and the puny smallness 10
 11 of their joys – evoked so as to satirize an ignorantly self-satisfied ruling class? The 11
 12 tone is deadpan and gives nothing away: all perspectives are possible. 12

13 Johnson was right to notice how much this writing dwells on particulars: each 13
 14 of Swift's servants is embedded in his or her duties, the sum of their associations, 14
 15 and thus perfectly Lockean. The opportunities to be foul and sluttish available to 15
 16 each one are catalogued with precision, as if drawing up demonic job descriptions. 16
 17 The housemaid, to whom it falls to empty out the chamberpot should her ladyship 17
 18 prefer not to piss outdoors in the garden, is advised as to how she can lessen her 18
 19 load, quite simply, by conveying the pot: 19

20
 21 down the great stairs, and in the presence of the footmen; and if anybody knocks, 20
 22 to open the street-door while you have the vessel filled in your hands. This, if 21
 23 anything can, will make your lady take the pains of evacuating her person in 22
 24 the proper place, rather than expose her filthiness to all the menservants in the 23
 25 house.⁵⁷ 24

26 This housemaid is indeed set apart by her routine. But then, just a couple of 26
 27 paragraphs later, still on the topic of chamberpot duties, her dislike for her lot 27
 28 seems entirely justified, as particularity is displaced and instead we are faced with 28
 29 a 'similitude of passions', as the housemaid is addressed as a 'cleanly girl' and 29
 30 advised 'never wash them [chamberpots] in any other liquor except their own; 30
 31 what cleanly girl would be dabbling in other folk's urine?'⁵⁸ Egalitarianism here is 31
 32 on the verge of crying out for democracy. 32

33 The *Directions to Servants* is easily read as a text of rage, plentiful in details 33
 34 that fix class differentiation and generate inequalities, from which there is at most 34
 35 the relief of subverting authority by dodging a task without being caught out – 35
 36 'nothing [is] so pernicious in a family as a telltale, against whom it must be the 36
 37 principal business of you all to unite'.⁵⁹ It establishes a world of entrapment, prone 37
 38 38

39
 40 ⁵⁵ Cited in Colm Tóibín's foreword to *Directions to Servants*, by Jonathan Swift 39
 (London, 2003), p. viii. 40

41 ⁵⁶ Swift, *Directions*, p. 70. 41

42 ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65. 42

43 ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66. 43

44 ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12. 44

1 to paranoia. And yet, in the self-same sentence, that which evokes paranoid mutual 1
 2 mistrust come too the contrary hints as to how class solidarity might make things 2
 3 better: ‘the principal business of you all [is] to unite’. The unfortunate housemaid 3
 4 is even allowed a moment of emotional release, in diversion that joins her in 4
 5 equality as one with her masters: 5

6
 7 When you wash an upper room, carry down the pail so as to let the water dribble 6
 8 on the stairs all the way down to the kitchen; by which, not only your load will 7
 9 be lighter, but you will convince your lady that it is better to throw the water 8
 10 out of the windows, or down the street-door steps. Besides, this latter practice 9
 11 will be very diverting to you and the family in a frosty night, to see a hundred 10
 12 people falling on their noses or back-sides before your door, when the water 11
 13 is frozen.⁶⁰ 12

14 The discourse is repressive and vindictive, the impulses are potentially 14
 15 revolutionary. For Swift, writing at the end of the Long Restoration, the figure 15
 16 of the servant prompted a geometry of both connection and disconnection, 16
 17 and – just as for the playwrights – the servant seems at once to stand as the political 17
 18 unconscious of Swift’s own times, and to look forward almost unknowingly to 18
 19 times still to come. 19

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 60 Ibid., p. 67. 44