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“Shopping and Flirting: Staging the New Exchange in  
Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Comedies”

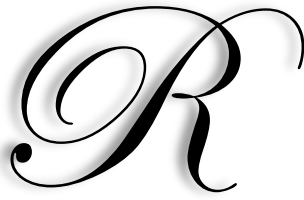
BY TIM KEENAN

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## Shopping and Flirting: Staging the New Exchange in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Comedies

Tim Keenan  
Liverpool Hope University

Sooner Fleet-Ditch like Silver Thames shall flow,  
The New-Exchange shall with the Royal vye,  
Or Covent-Garden's with St. Paul's great Bell...

Henry Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (16)<sup>1</sup>

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1. All play references are to early, usually the first, published editions as stated in the Works Cited section. The numbers in round brackets refer to page numbers within that edition. There are two reasons for my use of original editions: (i) close *theatrical* reading of early modern play texts may be hindered by any editorial mediation, including scholarly apparatuses; moreover, (ii) the majority of original editions are available online via the *LION (Literature Online)* or *EEBO (Early English Books Online)* databases. I thank the editors of *RECTR* for permitting this usage and I beg the reader's indulgence in this respect.

*Tim Keenan is a Lecturer in Drama (Shakespeare and the Classics) at Liverpool Hope University, UK, and an Honorary Research Fellow on the University of Seville's "Restoration Comedy Project." He has also held lecturing positions at the University of Queensland and the University of Hull. His research focuses on Restoration theatre and drama, especially the development of scenic staging over the period. He holds Ph.D. and B.A. degrees (Drama and Theatre Studies) from the University of London and an M.A. in Modern Drama from the University of North London. He has published articles on Restoration theatre and has a book on the subject in press with Routledge (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama). He also has two Internet research resources under development: a blog site titled "Restoration Theatre" (Restorationstaging.com), and a relational database, "Restoration Theatre Stage Directions" (<http://ec2-54-187-96-123.us-west-2.compute.amazonaws.com/drupal>).*

By the time Fielding's burlesque, *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, was first performed in 1732, the dream of Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury of a luxury-goods emporium fit for monarchs was long dead. His New Exchange shopping mall on the Strand, which had been opened among courtly festivities by James I in 1609, was now so down-at-heel that Fielding could readily present as absurd the idea that it might vie with that enduring institution the Royal Exchange as the center of London's commercial life. Five years after this last contemporary reference to the New Exchange in English literature, the building was razed.<sup>2</sup> The irony though, as Fielding's audience would have known, was that fifty years earlier this patent "absurdity" had been an established fact of London life. Indeed, in the mid-seventeenth century the New Exchange was not just a commercial success, it was socially indispensable to the leisured and aspiring middle classes. Goods for sale in the neat shops along its galleries ranged from rare luxury items, books, and the latest fashions to sartorially necessary trifles such as ribbons, points, and laces. Here one could also meet for business, arrange a liaison, or on a hot day drink cool whey in the cellars below, as Samuel Pepys was fond of doing.<sup>3</sup> Indeed Pepys' diary suggests that, spending power aside, he probably represented Cecil's ideal user. A search of the database section of the online diary edited by Paul Gyford reveals that Pepys refers to the New Exchange over 130 times between 1660 and 1668, giving us a clear sense of how the building was used in its heyday (Gyford).<sup>4</sup> On many visits he combines several activities mixing business with shopping and socializing as he moves through different parts of the building and its facilities, from its land and water access points to its galleries, lobbies, and cellar.

Pepys' diary and other contemporary sources such as travelers' accounts and the building's own financial records provide a means of comparing actual uses of the New Exchange with fictional representations in a wide range of literature over the period of the building's life, 1608-1737. As one might expect, literary references emphasize leisure and social activities over business uses and certain stereotypes associated with the Exchange predominate, as I outline below. Nevertheless, there would appear to be a reasonable correspondence between literature and life, certainly in the 1660s and 1670s. This correspondence has been much explored in literary commentary, especially in relation to Restoration comedies in which references to the New Exchange feature prominently. There have also been

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2. There are no further references recorded in the *LION* or *EEBO* databases.

3. See, for example, the diary entry for 7 Jun 1665.

4. Lawrence Stone quotes annual shop rents and lease renewals to demonstrate that the building's commercial peak was the period 1660-80 (Stone 119-20).

studies of the New Exchange in relation to its architecture, administration, and commercial history (Stone, Brushfield), and recently several publications have explored the building's cultural history and social significance (Dillon, Peck, Pritchard, for example). So far, however, there has been no discussion of how the building was actually represented on stage. This essay sets out to correct this omission by examining plays that have scenes set in the New Exchange. By focusing on two Restoration comedies that were originally produced at the height of the building's economic and social fortunes—*She Would If She Could* (1668) by George Etherege, and *The Country Wife* (1675) by William Wycherley—this essay considers dramaturgical approaches to the staging of real places in the period. In particular it seeks to determine whether there was any correlation between theatrical representation and the architectural structure of one of the period's most important social and commercial spaces.

While these two comedies may caricature individual types, they also offer a realistic portrayal of the social infrastructure, the milieu, of Restoration London and both have scenes set in well-known places. Commentators are divided, however, when it comes to assessing how real places were represented on Restoration stages. Did audiences expect to see particularized scenery in such “topographical” scenes? Or would they have been satisfied with generic scenic settings as used in the majority of theatrical productions throughout the Restoration and beyond? This question has not been satisfactorily answered and there have been adherents of each position since the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Given the lack of evidence concerning concrete details of Restoration staging, neither side can offer definitive proof of their views. I would suggest, however, that it is possible to further the debate by reconsidering existing evidence. Indeed, in relation to the New Exchange scenes examined here, it may be possible to reapply the evidence to determine what exactly was painted on the scenery. Drawing on close theatrical readings of the published play texts in association with two period illustrations of the building, I will demonstrate how a realistic representation of the New Exchange could have been achieved relatively simply within the terms of early Restoration stagecraft.

While there are numerous references to the New Exchange in plays produced in the period of the building's existence, only six actually have scenes set there.<sup>6</sup> In chronological order of production these are: Richard

5. For opposing examples see David Roberts, “Caesar's Gift,” 128 (scenic particularization) and Sybil Rosenfeld, *Georgian Scene Painters*, 30-31 (generic scenery).

6. The first mention is in Middleton and Rowley's *Wit at Several Weapons* (1609-20) (88).

Brome's *The New Academy; or The New Exchange* (1636), *She Would If She Could* by George Etherege (1668), *The Country Wife* by William Wycherley (1675), *The Atheist; or, The Second Part of the Soldier's Fortune* by Thomas Otway (1683), *The Fortune-Hunters; or, Two Fools well met* by James Carlile (1689), and the curiously titled *Chit-Chat* (1719) by Thomas Killigrew (the younger).<sup>7</sup> Brome's is the only pre-Restoration play and is consequently the only one not written for a scenic stage. Although this limits the scope of any specific comparison between scenic and non-scenic representations of the building, such a comparison would, nevertheless, be instructive because an analysis of Brome's dramaturgy might be helpful in understanding how topographical scenes could be represented with generic scenery. We may draw some conclusions about non-scenic means of suggesting a real space by considering Brome's *The New Academy* alongside other pre-Restoration plays that similarly set scenes in familiar London places, the most well-known being Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Brome's play, however, is related to a distinct group of five or six from the 1630s that Richard H. Perkinson terms "topographical comedies" (270-90). These include James Shirley's *Hyde Park* (1632), Thomas Nabbes' *Tottenham Court* (1633), and Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (1632/33). The distinguishing feature of these plays, or at least what they attempt, is the holding up of a very specific mirror to nature, providing an audience with the thrill of recognition by evoking a real locale through theatrical means. Although the text of these plays is important in this respect, I emphasize *theatrical* means because there is little pleasure for an audience in simply being told a location. In performance, topographical comedies achieve their effects by satirizing, ironizing, or at least sharply delineating recognizable aspects or experience of place. This might be through characters and situations peculiar to that place, as we encounter in *Bartholomew Fair*; through physical aspects of staging, such as the multiple comings and goings that conjure the hustle and bustle of the Royal Exchange in William Haughton's comedy *Englishmen For My Money* (1598); or through the representation of behavior typical of place, as in the emphasis on social walking in *Hyde Park*.<sup>8</sup> Typically a play of this type will use a variety of means to produce or evoke its target space; the examples above are by no means exhaustive.<sup>9</sup>

7. There is one theatrical work connected to the New Exchange that precedes these, namely an entertainment written by Ben Jonson for the formal opening of the building by James I on 11 April 1609 (Knowles). This short work was performed within the building itself.

8. For the importance of walking in *Hyde Park* see Sanders 166.

9. Each of these plays also relies on a distinctive use of sound to aid representation: the various vendors' cries in *Bartholomew Fair*, the Exchange bell in *Englishmen*

So far, reference has been made neither to architectural nor physical aspects of a particular place. The amorphous nature of a fair and a park in the examples above somewhat precludes this, but, as Crystal Bartolovich notes, the Royal Exchange scene in Houghton's play works by representing an experience, by staging a "set of social relations" specific to the building, rather than alluding to the physical structure of this famous landmark (144). By contrast, Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden* sets out from the start to evoke real bricks and mortar. When the play was first performed in the early 1630s, Covent Garden—a development of mixed housing, shops, and an imposing church around a central Italian-style piazza—was still a building site. In the opening speeches, two characters make several detailed references to the appearance of new buildings on the site, buildings that audience members might well have passed on their way to the theatre.<sup>10</sup> These comments, together with the many invitations in the dialogue for deictic focus and gestures (perhaps in the direction of the real site), readily conjure the state and status of the development.<sup>11</sup> In *The New Academy*, Brome's staging of the New Exchange does not attempt this kind of specificity; instead its production of space most likely relied on the use of a physical stage property in tandem with an audience's experience of shopping in the Exchange. As such means of steering perception were also available to Restoration theatre producers it is worth examining how they might have worked with Brome's play.

The scene that gives the play its subtitle is act 2.1, which we learn is set in the Exchange, in and around Rafe Camelion's shop. Early in the scene a messenger arrives at the shop with a letter addressed to Camelion's wife, Hannah. Her husband takes the letter and reads aloud the address, literally setting the scene for the audience.<sup>12</sup> The focus of the scene is on the Camelions' relationship and the attempted seduction of Hannah by Valentine, a young gentleman, who does not know, as Hannah does, that she is his half-sister. Given that the location of the scene is announced by means of an otherwise dramaturgically superfluous letter, it seems reasonable to

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*For My Money* (sig. C3v), and the sportsmen's exclamations in *Hyde Park* (sig. G4r).

10. Sanders suggests that either Salisbury Court or the Cockpit/Phoenix (Drury Lane) are the two best candidates for the original theatre (227-28).
11. Analysis and video excerpts on the Richard Brome Online web pages for this play, edited by Michael Leslie, demonstrate this point ([www.hrionline.ac.uk](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk)).
12. The address is somewhat confusing: "To my dear daughter Mistress Hannah Camelion, at her shop or house in or near the New Exchange" (Brome, *The New Academy* [London, 1659], 2.1.23). As Matthew Steggle points out, however, it refers to two locations: the shop "in" the Exchange, and the house "near" it (91-92).

suggest that Brome did not need a mimetic representation of a New Exchange shop. Indeed the dramaturgy of the scene is less concerned with evoking physical details of a specific place (as in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*) than with playing on popular perceptions of “Exchange women” and the commodities they might be selling: perceptions heightened by Brome deliberately keeping the audience ignorant at this point of Hannah’s real interest in Valentine. Brome’s reliance on an audience’s cultural understanding of the New Exchange is one that features to a greater or lesser extent in all the plays with scenes set in the building. While Hannah proves to be thoroughly virtuous, Brome at first trades on the well-established ambivalence surrounding the shop women of the New Exchange. Their appearance and manners drew admiring or salacious comment throughout the building’s life. The rich vein of literary and non-literary references includes foreign travelers’ accounts. In the 1660s, for example, the scholar Lorenzo Magalotti refers to the Exchange’s “well-dressed women,” while the physician Samuel Sorbière savors the ambivalence: “I’ll leave you to judge whether there are not Fine Goods to be had there, as well as Fine Shop-Women.”<sup>13</sup>

Michael Leslie’s reading of Brome’s New Exchange scene emphasizes its proxemics, with Hannah first abandoned on the open stage by her careless husband and then cornered in her shop by the predatory Valentine ([www.hrionline.ac.uk](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk)). Leslie’s suggestion that Hannah would have had a physical counter to stand behind is a practical one.<sup>14</sup> A whole booth-shop might have been thrust-on but the counter alone, near an entrance door perhaps, would have generated the necessary proxemic relations for this scene.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Leslie’s rather minimal suggestion accords with documentary evidence relating to the size of the shops: in 1609 Cecil’s lessees had complained that their properties were “smale chests rather than shoppes” (Stone 117).

The actual appearance and disposition of shops in the Exchange becomes more significant when we consider two Restoration plays that have scenes set in the building. *She Would if She Could* is the first of these, and hence the first to offer the possibility of mimetic representation, a possibility that I believe was embraced when it was staged by the Duke’s Company at their theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Field (hereafter LIF)

13. Magalotti 295-96, Sorbière 13-14. For a discussion of perceptions concerning the Exchange’s female vendors see Pritchard 148-64.

14. Other options are possible, but less appropriate in this instance. See for example, Dessen 157 and Fitzpatrick 89.

15. For a potential thrusting-on see Dessen and Thomson 196.



in 1668. It would be possible to justify this on grounds of scenic novelty alone. Both Pepys and the connoisseur John Evelyn comment on new scenery in their diaries and in 1661 Pepys noted the commercial success of the newly opened LIF in comparison to its non-scenic rival at Vere Street.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the decade the mere presence of scenery may not have been such a sensation in itself, but topographical scenes in the comedies of the late 1660s now offered the potential, possibly for the first time, for large-scale images of London places to be displayed to the general public.

The thrill of recognition, which I have suggested is much of the point of these scenes, could only be intensified by adding a visual dimension.<sup>17</sup> This is not to say that all such scenes would have been granted particularized or even new scenery.<sup>18</sup> Scenery was expensive and time-consuming to paint; a production would only be allocated new scenery if it was deemed to be commercially viable or the production in question was high-profile—either socially prestigious or a planned spectacle—and even in these cases new items would be expected to supplement existing scenes from stock.<sup>19</sup> *She Would* qualified on both counts. The play was written by a courtier and intimate of Charles II (who attended the premiere), and Etherege's first play, *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub* (1664), had proved a financial success.<sup>20</sup> *She Would*, though, is a special case. It sets no less than four scenes in specific London places, namely the Mulberry Garden; the New Exchange; the Bear Inn, Drury Lane; and the New Spring Garden. (The play's other locations are fictive interiors and would have been represented by stock scenes: a dining room, and a chamber.) Particularized scenery for these four scenes would have been very expensive and I am not as sure as other commentators they would have received it.<sup>21</sup>

16. Pepys makes numerous references. For the reticent Evelyn see the diary entry for 9 Feb 1671 (Bray 317). For LIF's success at the expense of Killigrew's company see Pepys' entry for 4 July 1661.

17. The thrill should not be discounted; even in today's image-saturated times people are often excited when they recognize a familiar locale in television and film drama.

18. I use the term "particularized" here to mean a realistic painting of a real location.

19. An oft-cited example of the cost and time involved with new scenery is a court case involving the scene painter Isaac Fuller who successfully sued the King's Company in 1669 for not paying him the agreed fee for painting a scene of Elysium. The scene was valued by the court at £335 10s (a substantial sum) and it accepted that it would take six weeks to paint.

20. The LIF prompter, John Downes, states that the play "got the company more Reputation and Profit than any preceding Comedy" (57).

21. See, for example, Holland 52.

The New Exchange scene in *She Would* is the only one that refers to the spatial arrangement and physical features of the stated location. Indeed, in the Bear Inn scene the name of the location is only stated in the last line and there is nothing in the rest of the dialogue to suggest the need for anything other than stock scenery.<sup>22</sup> This is not necessarily the case with the Spring Garden scene (act 4.2). This location is advertised three times as a future destination, the last a few lines before 4.2 starts. While the scene does not start with a statement of place, there are several references to arbors, walks, and “the Garden” before the significant action starts (about four pages into the scene) and the location is named (59). While London parks had a general reputation as places of assignation, their character subtly varied. For example, in Etherege’s next play, *The Man of Mode* (1676), male and female “true-wit” characters distinguish between St. James’s Park and Hyde Park; Harriet expresses her aversion to the ostensibly more fashionable venue as follows:

*Young Bellair*

Most people prefer High [Hyde] Park to this place.

*Harriet*

It has the better Reputation I confess: but I  
Abominate the dull diversions there, the formal bows,  
The Affected smiles, the silly by-Words, and  
Amorous Tweers, in passing. (46)

A Restoration audience would have been aware of these nuances and would have wanted to know the specific park. The New Spring Garden was a notorious trysting place, famous for its secretive arbors: “*Loves Chapels of ease*” as the novelist Richard Head terms them (147). Etherege’s verbally-confirmed setting thus serves to highlight the comic disparity between two sets of expectations of place: those of a pair of gentlewomen taking a stroll, and a pair of gallants anticipating a sexual liaison. The garden scenery may have been particularized but, perhaps more likely, particularization for an audience would have been achieved through a combination of verbal references in conjunction with generic park scenery. To some extent this accords with Daryll Grantley’s notion of topographical scenes presenting a

22. The Bear Inn is not used as a location in any other Restoration (or eighteenth-century) play, though both Thomas Killigrew’s *The Parson’s Wedding* (1640/41) and Thomas Southerne’s *The Maid’s Last Prayer* (1693) refer to it in dialogue. By contrast, four LIF plays prior to *She Would* demand a generic tavern or inn setting, including Etherege’s own *Love in a Tub*.

self-aware “theatricalized” London, rather than a scenically particularized one (5). In this view, topographic specificity in Restoration comedies was evoked for the original audiences through verbal references alone. However, I doubt this would always have been sufficient to create the necessary mood or effect demanded by Restoration topographical scenes; scenery may have played more of a role than Grantley concedes. For example, generic park scenery in Etherege’s Spring Garden scene may not have been used as a specific index, but it would have raised certain expectations in the audience: the scenery would have begun to tune the audience’s perceptions; with scenery, as David Roberts puts it, “we read from scene to action, rather than the other way round” (“Ravishing Strides” 26). This order of reading would certainly have been the case with a new scene following a change of scenery, but scenery also has the potential to alter our perception *in medias res*, as actors onstage relate or refer to it. Such interaction might well have occurred in the Mulberry Garden scene of *She Would*. I argue elsewhere that the scenery in this scene, particularly generic tree wings, would have been integrated with subsequent stage action to create a spatially deep fictional environment within which the scene could be read (Keenan 67-68). As soon as characters enter the scenic stage—in this case chasing each other through the Garden’s walks (wing passageways)—we move from a discussion of painted flats that simply provide a backdrop to something potentially more dynamic. This type of staging recruits the scenic arrangement itself—the physical disposition of the scenic stage creates the very possibility of such movement—and in so doing instigates a new kind of dramaturgy.

It is with Etherege’s New Exchange scene, however, where I think such integration is more defined and where we may read the published play as demanding not just particularized scenery but also a necessary spatial relationship between scenery and stage action. Of course, this puts me at odds with opponents of scenic particularity, but while I agree that direct evidence is scarce, such critics rarely if ever consider physical stage arrangements in detail, nor attempt to read the plays theatrically in any depth. Such reading involves attending both to explicit stage directions and to kinesic/proxemic opportunities for actors embedded in dialogue. This approach works particularly well with *She Would*, especially its New Exchange scene which is highly revealing spatially. In the following analysis I attempt to map this fictional spatiality onto the building’s real space using two period drawings of the Exchange. Figure 1 reproduces an engraving by John Harris (c. 1715) showing the Strand front of the New Exchange, and fig. 2 is a plan of the building from a drawing by John Smythson (1618/19) (the Strand front is at the bottom of the plan). These are the only extant

drawings with the New Exchange as subject.<sup>23</sup> Figure 2 is actually a detail from the full drawing which includes an elevation of the building's Strand front, but as Harris' drawing (fig. 1) probably shows alterations made in the late 1630s, it is likely to be closer to the building known to Etherege and Wycherley and is preferred here (Stone 112-13).

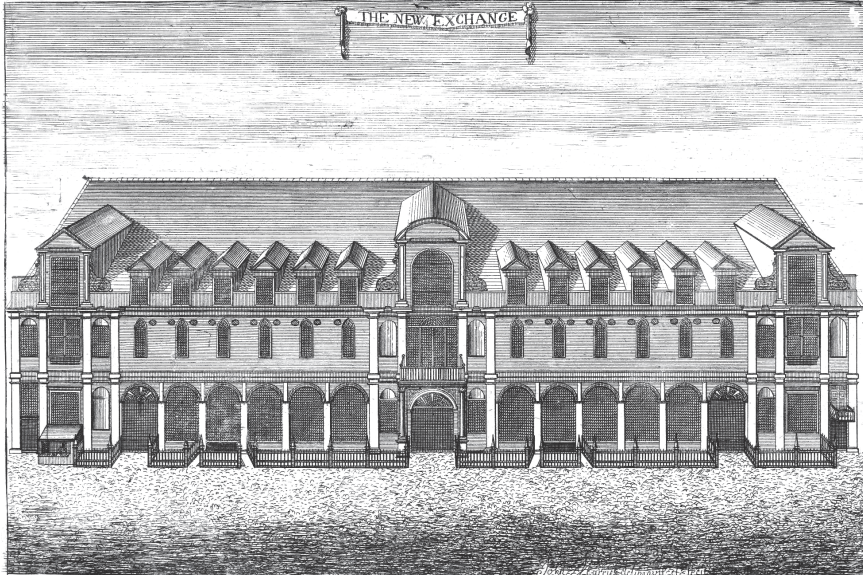


Figure 1. The New Exchange, print by John Harris, c. 1715. © Trustees of the British Museum.

In act 2.2 of *She Would*, the rake hero Courtall makes an assignation with the titular character Lady Cockwood to meet, “Tomorrow about ten a clock in the Lower-walk of the New Exchange, out of which we can quickly pop into my Coach” (22). A glance at fig.1 shows three possible entrances where Courtall’s instructions might be satisfied. That he intends to meet by one of the doors is confirmed by a statement he makes while at the New Exchange in act 3.1: “here will they be busy just before the Door, where we have made our appointment” (30). As fig. 2 indicates, the building’s arcade (marked “closter”) would be a logical choice for an assignation and may well be the lower walk to which Courtall refers. It lies immediately behind the pilasters and arches shown in Harris’ drawing and leads directly to the inner galleries. Smythson’s plan also shows that the shops in the inner walk

23. The New Exchange may be found on some period maps, and part of the building is shown behind Durham House in Wenceslas Holler’s (1630s’) view from the Thames of Durham House, Salisbury House, and Worcester House (all on the Strand).



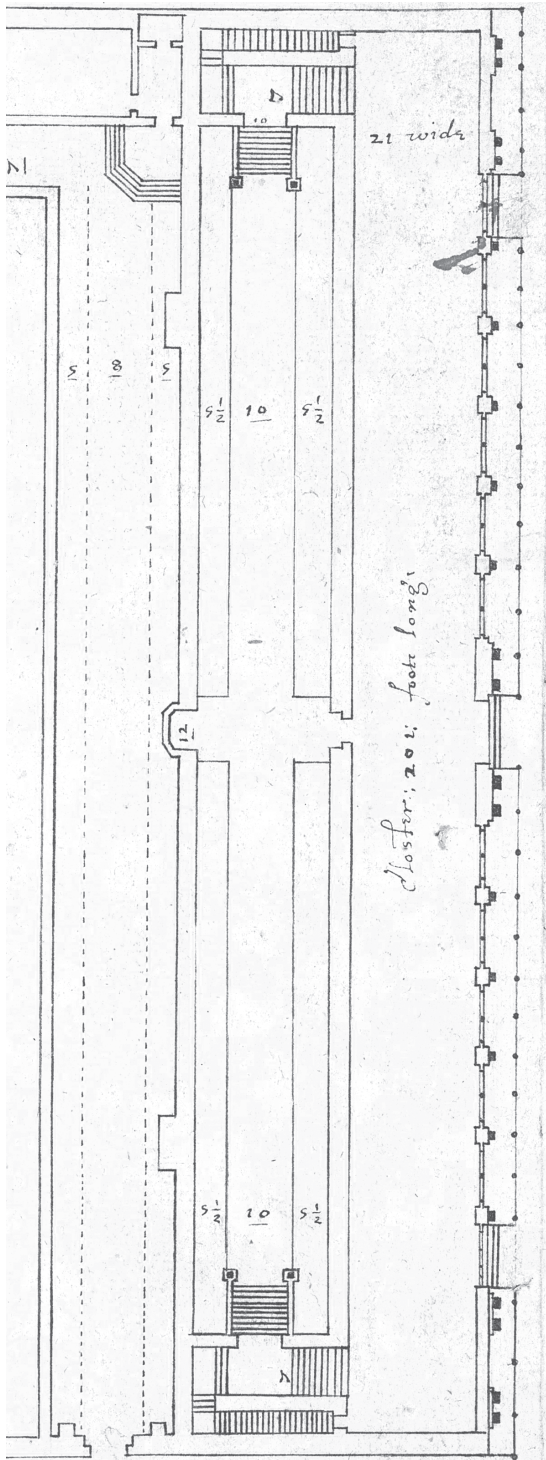


Figure 2. Detail from a plan of the New Exchange by John Smythson, c. 1618-19 © RIBA Collections.

did not extend across the central area and it is clear that this space was intended as a lobby granting easy access to both wings of the building from the street via the arcade. It seems safe to assume that this arrangement was repeated in the arcade. This outer lobby, with an entrance to the Strand on one side and to the inner walk on the other, would be an ideal place for Courtall's assignation. The plan dates from the second decade of the seventeenth century and consequently does not show arrangements for the thirty new shops that were erected in the arcade in the early 1630s. These shops were in the form of small wooden booths and were disposed along the length of the arcade as in the inner corridor (Stone 119).

Referring to figure 2, if we imagine we are standing in this central area of the arcade with the Strand entrance on our left and the door to the inner galleries on our right, we would see the long (100 ft.) corridor ahead with its rows of shops on each side, perhaps one per arch on the Strand side. I suggest that this view and orientation is how the New Exchange might well have been represented on the LIF stage.<sup>24</sup> Even from the plan the potential congruence of spatial arrangements is striking; this view of the building would map smoothly onto any stage in the main Restoration theatres. This is not to say that there would have been an exact dimensional congruence—though it must have been close in the case of LIF—rather that this particular spatial orientation and scenic arrangement readily lends itself to such a staging at LIF, Drury Lane, or Dorset Garden.<sup>25</sup> In this orientation, the theatre forestage would represent part of the outer lobby of the Exchange, with forestage doors mirroring Strand and gallery entrances, while on the scenic stage particularized wing flats and backshutters present a receding perspective of the arcade and its shops. This suggested staging imposes a clear pattern of exits and entrances that may be tested against stated and implied stage directions in the printed text. Working through act 3.1, Courtall enters the Exchange from the Strand (stage right) and banters briefly with Mrs Trinckit who is standing upstage in her shop in one of the wing positions (stage left, say). Another shopkeeper, Mrs Gazette, now enters to Courtall from the inner corridor (left). She tells him that Lady Cockwood's attractive lodgers Ariana and Gatty are shopping within. Courtall debates how he might throw off Cockwood's attentions

24. Of course the suggestion would work as well were we to imagine looking down the opposite wing, with the Strand on our right.

25. The width of the arcade is shown as 21 feet in Smythson's plan. Langhans estimates the width of the LIF stage as 20 feet ("Conjectural Reconstructions" 22), while Barlow proposes 24 feet 6 inches (112). My analysis of the LIF repertoire at this time indicates that the LIF stage had two forestage doors, but the proposed staging would work equally as well with four doors, as may have been the case for later theatres.

in favor of the young women and asks Gazette to help him. She agrees and exits back to her shop in the inner corridor (left). Cockwood now enters from the Strand (right), Courtall moves center stage to greet her and, as arranged, Gazette re-enters (left) and approaches Courtall and Cockwood. Ariana and Gatty, who have been shopping in the inner corridor, now enter (left) and after greeting Courtall and Cockwood they take Gazette upstage to discuss a purchase at Trinckit's shop. Left alone together on the central forestage, Courtall suggests to Cockwood that they should all (the young women included) go off to Drury Lane. At this point Ariana and Gatty move downstage and proceed wittily to embarrass Courtall to the extent that he makes a quick exit (right) via the Strand door escorting Cockwood to her coach. Left alone on the forestage, the young women enjoy their moment before exiting (right) to follow Courtall and Cockwood.

While clearly conjectural, this staging has been derived by considering specific references in the dialogue in relation to architectural drawings of the New Exchange. We might, however, also be led to it by the scene heading and stage direction at the start of act 3.1: "The New Exchange. / Mrs. Trinckit sitting in a shop, people passing by as in the Exchange" (30). Unlike Brome, Etherege not only specifies a New Exchange shop he also states a spatial relationship designed to integrate the representation of the shop (clearly not just a painted element) with both scenery and stage. This is amplification, if any were needed, of the concern expressed in many Restoration plays to match visual representation to diegetic place, a concern that is not limited to topographical representation.<sup>26</sup> Several positions and spatial alignments for this shop are physically possible, but references to Trinckit's shop in the dialogue of act 3.1 suggest a position close to the forestage and its doors.<sup>27</sup> The first wing position on either side of the stage would be ideal, with the other shops being painted on scenery as specified above. How then would Trinckit's shop have been represented? There is little pictorial evidence of shops in the seventeenth century; however, William Morgan's map of London (1681) includes an illustration of Sir Christopher Wren's

26. An excellent example is provided by the Duke's Company's promptbook for James Shirley's *The Witty Faire One* (1631), which was revived in the 1660s. The published text of this old (pre-scenic) play has no scene headings nor, obviously, any indication of scenery. The promptbook, however, carefully matches fictional setting from hints in the dialogue to appropriate theatrical scenery (Langhans, *Restoration Promptbooks* 43).

27. Characters at the shop readily take up conversation with others presumably entering on the forestage. This would be awkward were the shop located in a more upstage area, especially the discovery area. Note also the use in this scene of "here" and "this" when referring to the shop, rather than more distant deictic markers.

Mercers' Hall in a margin at the top.<sup>28</sup> This image shows four glass-fronted shops on the ground floor. Each shop has two tall windows flanking a central door. In several of these windows a counter and a shopkeeper may be discerned. The shops are more clearly seen in another illustration of Mercers' Hall from a journal published in 1829 that is clearly based on Morgan (*The Mirror of Literature*). A detail from this illustration (see fig. 3) shows a man just inside the doorway of a shop being served by a woman standing behind a counter. If we combine this image with an eighteenth-century illustration of shops in a London mall similar to the New Exchange (see fig. 4) we may gain an idea of how Trinckit's shop might have appeared on the LIF stage.<sup>29</sup> As the scene changed at the start of act 3.1, a counter would have been thrust on between first and second wing positions and the actress playing Mrs Trinckit would take her position. The wing in the first position would have had a section cut out to frame the actress—we may see the effect in figures 3 and 4. The other wings in the scene would depict shops, columns, and arches forming with the backshutters a composite perspective of the arcade. The purpose of these last two, anachronistic, illustrations is simply to allow the reader more easily to visualize how a New Exchange shop could have been represented at LIF.<sup>30</sup> They have no other bearing on the proposed staging which integrates scenery, scenic area, and forestage in a coherent and simple spatial arrangement; a proposal that makes optimal use of available stage resources within the terms of early Restoration theatre practice. While this suggestion cannot be proven, it can be tested against other plays with scenes set in the New Exchange; the next of which is *The Country Wife*.

Wycherley's play was first performed at Drury Lane in 1675 and the scene in question is act 3.2. The scene is too long to analyze in its entirety, but if we apply the same spatial approach proposed for Etherege's play, the pattern that emerges from its exits and entrances is almost identical. This may be demonstrated by a sequence in which the rake Horner entices Margery Pinchwife away from her husband (who has ironically dressed Margery as a boy to avert such attention). The directions in square brackets are mine; they refer largely to the Strand side of the building with its access to coaches and the London streets (stage right), and the entrance to the building's inner shopping galleries (stage left).

28. A high resolution image of the map is available via *Wikimedia* (see Morgan).

29. Brushfield (39) suggests this illustration may have had the New Exchange as a model.

30. The spatial logic of the staging would also apply at revivals on different stages during the period, whether equipped with two or four forestage doors.





Figure 3. Detail from an illustration of Mercers Hall in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 11 July 1829.



Figure 4. "The Unlucky Glance," illustration in *Town and Country Magazine*, August 1772. Copyright © 2007 ProQuest LLC.

*Exeunt Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant.* [stage left]

*Mr. Pinchwife* [to his wife]

So they are gone at last; stay, let me see first if the Coach be at this door.

*Exit.* [right]

*Horner, Harcourt, Dorilant return.* [left]

*Horner*

What not gone yet? Will you be sure to do as I desired you, sweet Sir?

*Mrs. Pinchwife*

Sweet sir, but what will you give me then?

*Horner*

Anything. Come away into the next walk.

*Exit Horner, ha[u]ling away Mrs. Pinchwife.* [left]

[...]

*Pinchwife returns.* [right]

*Mr. Pinchwife*

Where?—how?—what's become of? gone—whither? (49-50)

While the pattern is clear in this extract, there is an issue elsewhere. Of twenty-four entrances and exits in this scene, there is one exit (before the above extract) that does not appear to fit the same pattern. Pinchwife is impatient to leave the New Exchange but his wife is determined to see more:

*Mr. Pinchwife*

[...]

*[Aside.*

Come let's be gone Mistriss *Margery*.

*Mrs. Pinchwife*

Don't you believe that, I han't half my belly full of sights yet.

*Mr. Pinchwife*

Then walk this way.

*Mrs. Pinchwife*

Lord, what a power of brave signs are here! Stay—the Bull’s-head, the Rams-head, and the Stags-head, Dear—

*Mr. Pinchwife*

Nay, if every Husbands proper sign here were visible, they would be all alike.

*Mrs. Pinchwife*

What d’ye mean by that, Bud?

*Mr. Pinchwife*

‘Tis no matter—no matter, Bud.

*Mrs. Pinchwife*

Pray tell me; nay, I will know.

*Mr. Pinchwife*

They would be all Bulls, Stags, and Rams heads.

*[Exeunt Mr. Pinchwife, Mrs. Pinchwife.]*

*Re-enter Sparkish, Harcourt, Alithea, Lucy, at t’other door [left] (41)*

Through which door do the Pinchwifes exit? It cannot simply be via the Strand door, stage right, because the couple is directed to reenter as if from within the Exchange a few pages later. Nor can it be through the same door that Sparkish et al. are entering. Unless we assume that the logic of all the other exits and entrances in this scene is dropped for this one exit, this might appear as some evidence for the existence at Drury Lane of four forestage doors, two per side. While this remains a possibility, we can also interpret the printed stage directions in tandem with kinesic opportunities in the dialogue as follows. Pinchwife accedes to his wife’s request to see more of the building’s “sights” and instructs her to “walk this way.” He strides upstage center onto the scenic stage and Margery follows. She admires the shops’ animal-head signs painted on the wings and the extract ends with Pinchwife pulling his wife upstage left to exit through a wing passageway that represents the real point of egress from the arcade to its

galleries (via stairs), as can be seen in Smythson's plan. Such a staging underlines the extract's brilliant integration of dramatic and theatrical means, as Wycherley points up the couple's contrasting perceptions of the shop signs. For Margery they are visual delights, but for Pinchwife they are emblems of his own destiny intensified by Margery's sensual consumerism that desires a "belly full" of the Exchange.

The main difference in the original productions of *She Would* and *The Country Wife* is that the latter was staged by the King's Company at their new, purpose-built scenic theatre at Drury Lane, which had opened in 1674. The stage at this theatre may have been larger than that at LIF; this is not certain, but we know from scenic demand in the stage directions of Drury Lane plays that it must have had a more flexible scenic arrangement than the earlier theatre.<sup>31</sup> The scenic demands of *The Country Wife*, however, are actually modest. It requires three stock room settings to represent the houses of Horner and Pinchwife and there are two topographical scenes: the New Exchange and Covent Garden piazza. We do not know whether the original production was as socially anticipated as *She Would*, but like *Etherege*, Wycherley was regarded as a court wit, so some expenditure on new scenery may have been justifiable. Following the approach adopted for *She Would*, I would apportion particularized wings and backscene for the New Exchange scene and stock street wings combined with a particularized backscene to represent Covent Garden—perhaps the one used by the King's Company for James Howard's *The English Monsieur* (1663 and regularly revived). In comparison with *She Would*, there is less emphasis on shops and shopkeepers in Wycherley's play and fewer specific spatial references. Despite this, the spatial orientation and scenic arrangement proposed for LIF, with a shop in the first wing position, would work equally well on the Drury Lane stage, irrespective of whether it had two or four forestage doors.

Indeed, a possible concern with the proposed staging is that it might be thought to work too well. After *She Would* it can be applied with equal efficacy to three of the four remaining plays with New Exchange scenes. Given that these plays are spread over a fifty-year period (1668-1719), how practical is it to propose the arrangement beyond *She Would*? There are

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31. The 1674 Drury Lane theatre was probably smaller than the plot on which it was built owing to the presence of a yard in front of the building. If we subtract the width of this yard (10 ft.) from the length of the plot (112 ft. on the longest side) we arrive at 102 feet. Barlow convincingly demonstrates that LIF was significantly larger than generally thought; he estimates the external dimensions as 106 feet 4 inches x 42 feet 4 inches (75-77). Stage directions in Drury Lane plays from the 1670s show that unlike LIF, Drury Lane was capable of staging successive discovery scenes, which demand two backshutter positions.

several points to consider. These include the likelihood of scenic reuse over long periods of time, the different theatres and companies involved, and not least the inevitable stylistic and aesthetic changes that might have rendered the arrangement unpalatable in later years. While scenery was regularly recycled by individual companies, the likelihood of reuse becomes less and less likely as scenery ages and tastes change.<sup>32</sup> There is only a seven-year gap between *She Would* and *The Country Wife*, but the issue here is that rival companies are involved. There is no record of scenery being exchanged between the two patent houses in the seventeenth century, but it may have occurred. We know, for example, that scenery from the Hall theatre, Whitehall was used at Drury Lane for Grabu's opera *Ariane* in 1674 (Milhous and Hume 163), and the first act of William Davenant's *The Playhouse To Be Let* (1663) is concerned with various ways in which a theatre manager might extract income by renting out resources, including scenery: "If you will lend 'em clothes and properties, I'll fit some of our Scenes for their occasions" (77).<sup>33</sup> The exchange of scenery between LIF and Drury Lane is a possibility, although, as I have suggested, a new New Exchange setting for *The Country Wife* might well have proved a justifiable expense.

The gap between *She Would* and the next play with a New Exchange scene, *The Atheist* (1683), is fifteen years. Had this been staged at LIF, reusing the original scenery would have been an economical option, but it was produced at Dorset Garden. This was the largest seventeenth-century English theatre and it is possible there would have been technical issues in attempting to use scenery designed for a smaller stage.<sup>34</sup> The last two plays to feature scenes set in the New Exchange are *The Fortune Hunters* (1689) and *Chit-Chat* (1719), both produced at Drury Lane. We know nothing about the social standing of the premieres of *The Atheist* or *The Fortune Hunters*, and there is no record in *The London Stage* of any seventeenth-century revival for either play. *Chit-Chat*, however, seems to have been highly popular with hundreds unable to gain admittance to its premiere (Avery 527-28). While it is unlikely that the same or even similar scenery might have been used over a fifty-year period, it is interesting that the spatial logic suggested for *She Would* applies to all but one of the post-Restoration plays that stipulate a specific location within the New Exchange. This exception is *The Atheist*—the only Dorset Garden play—which has a clear reference

32. Although Sybil Rosenfeld refers to several cases of twenty-, thirty-, and in one exceptional instance, forty-year old scenery being reused (28).

33. This reference is to the play page number within the 1673 edition of Davenant's *Works*.

34. The external dimensions are generally cited as being approximately 148 x 57 feet.

in dialogue to the building's upper walk, as opposed to the arcade on the ground floor so far discussed:

*Beaugard*

[...] my Orders are to meet her fairly and squarely this Evening by Seven, at a certain Civil Persons Shop in the Upper Walk, at the New Exchange, where she promises to be very good natur'd, and let me know more of her Mind. (10)

This speech occurs at the end of act 1 and the second act begins, one page later, with Beaugard and his friend Courtine at the New Exchange. Although there is no other reference to the upper walk in plays during the period of the building's life, this looks like a deliberate choice by Otway rather than an error. Intriguingly this is also the only "New Exchange" play that attempts to supply a spatial sense of the building verbally; hence, Courtine's marveling at the appearance of the Exchange might actually have been a means of compensating for scenic lack:

Methinks this Place looks as it were made for Loving: The Lights on each hand of the Walk look stately; and then the Rusling of Silk Petticoats, the Din and the Chatter of the pretty little party-colour'd Parrots, that hop and flutter from one side to t'other, puts every Sense upon its proper Office. (11)

We cannot see with seventeenth-century eyes but, particularly in the case of *She Would*, the scenic/spatial point-of-view suggested here seems to me to offer a practicable balance between theatrical arrangements and ease of representation. A full set of perspective wings and backshutters would have been expensive, but as I have argued the production merited some expense and one new particularized setting would appear a reasonable compromise. Proposing such a staging beyond *She Would* becomes increasingly contentious. Theatre production over the next fifty years was subject to many changes and innovations—technical and aesthetic. Nevertheless, as Michael Cordner suggests, Etherege's play may have provided something of a template for future comedies (160), and it is certainly possible that an aspect of the original staging might have exerted a theatrical influence over future representations of the New Exchange, particularly *The Country Wife* seven years later (there were also several revivals of *She Would* between the two premieres).<sup>35</sup> Certainly it is intriguing that in both

35. Records of Restoration stage productions are incomplete, but the *London Stage* records revivals of *She Would* in 1669, 1670, and 1674 (see Van Lennep 154, 170, 226).

*She Would* and *The Country Wife* entrances and exits together with spatial markers in the dialogue can be mapped so consistently onto a seventeenth-century plan of the Exchange. We will probably never know exactly how such things were done originally, but the proposed staging was fully within the means available to the LIF and Drury Lane theatres, and this is very much the point: where historical evidence is limited we have the choice of saying nothing or of using careful conjecture to further productive discussion, thereby avoiding the recycling of tired and often uninterrogated *a priori* positions.

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