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Representations of the Interregnum and Restoration

in English Drama of the Early 1660s

Recent critics and historians of English drama seem to have reached general agreement that the plays staged in London in the years immediately after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy reflect the royalism of the playwrights and their audiences. The restored king restored the theater, and in gratitude the theater endorsed the king's restoration in plays representing the evils of usurpation and the blessings of lineal monarchy. "Uncritical celebrations of restoration dominated tragedy and tragicomedy for much of the decade," says one critic. "The interests of King, playwrights, and audience converged in reversing the 'tragedy' of Charles I to the political tragicomedy of Charles I/Charles II," says another. In comedies, says a third, "Puritan power is shown to be short-lived because it is an illegitimate appropriation of royal authority, and ludicrous because it violates the established social hierarchy."¹ In fact, as will become clear from a brief examination of eight of their plays, the playwrights who in the early 1660s provided dramatic representations of the Interregnum and Restoration were careful in various degrees, while wooing the royalists, to provide also some reassurance to those who had collaborated with the interregnum regimes, or cherished some reservations about the new one.

The first original post-restoration play known to have been staged in London, John Tatham's *The Rump*, appeared around June, 1660. Five years later, in June, 1665, the theaters were closed because of the plague, and remained closed until late 1667. If polemical representations of usurpation and restoration ever dominated English theater, they should have done so within these first five years. Although Charles II was welcomed home with bibles and

bonfires in May 1660 and crowned with all ceremony and solemnity in April 1661, an attentive reading of Samuel Pepys's *Diary* for these years is enough to persuade anyone that the euphoria wore off, and underlying, unresolvable political conflicts reasserted themselves, within months of the restoration. In this climate, panegyrists could write for a royalist coterie or, hoping for royal or noble patronage, so adjust their rhetoric as to please entirely an audience of one.

Playwrights enjoyed no such freedom: if they were to fill the theaters, they would have to please a wide range of potential playgoers, with a wide range of political opinions.² Though with purely anodyne material they ran the risk of boring their audience whole, they had to be careful as well not to offend any large proportion of it. So their plays do not provide the repetitive enshrinements of royalist orthodoxy that have been imputed to them. Where the Restoration appears specifically it always does so, of course, with the playwright's implicit approval: to present it otherwise would have been to risk greater dangers than an unprofitable run. And royalist self-congratulation and anti-puritan derision, usurpations and restorations (though set in Sicily or Syracuse), undeniably appear as well. But the politics reflected in whole plays is in fact almost always heterogeneous, guarded, qualified, reflecting contemporary public sentiment.

In these five years, about twenty-six original plays are known to have been produced, seven of them tragedies or tragicomedies representing usurpation or restoration in an elevated style, five of them comedies or tragicomedies representing the interregnum in a plainer style.³ Of the first group, most have little or no connection with contemporary politics and can be dealt with summarily. William Killigrew's *Selindra* (1662) and Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery's *Mustapha* (1665) include restorations of queens of Hungary by the conquering powers that originally displaced them; Orrery's *History of Henry the Fifth* (1664) depicts Henry's conquest of

France, which is made a sort of restoration only after the fact, when the French Bishop of Arras at the end of the play declares Henry's title superior to that of the Dauphin; in William Killigrew's *Pandora* the usurper himself, a beneficent figure, schemes to marry his daughter to the true heir, whose succession is thereby assured. A word may appear here and there in these plays condemning usurpation or supporting lineal succession, but otherwise they have no clear application to Cromwell or the Stuarts.

Of the three others, two are nearly as remote from contemporary politics, though both have been read as royalist polemic. John Dryden and Sir Robert Howard's *Indian Queen* "clearly propagandizes for the royalist cause," one critic claims; it "endorses divine right."⁴ It does give us a restoration: the true heir Montezuma displaces the usurper Queen Zempoalla to reclaim the throne of Mexico. But this restoration has as little resemblance to Charles II's as Zempoalla's usurpation to Cromwell's. Long before the action of the play begins, she has, with the aid of her general and lover Traxalla, usurped the Mexican throne from her own brother, an act now regretted by her virtuous son Acacis. As the play begins Acacis has been captured by Montezuma, a warrior who has risen from obscurity to lead the forces of the Peruvian Ynca to victory against Mexico. His chief aim in this is to gain the Ynca's daughter Orazia; when denied her, he changes sides and fights just as successfully for Mexico. Ynca and Orazia are imprisoned and, pursuant to an earlier vow, Zempoalla schedules them for sacrifice; when Montezuma tries to liberate them he joins them in prison instead. Acacis, the usurper's son, is a figure of tragic virtue, caught between love for Orazia, friendship to Montezuma, and filial duty to Zempoalla. At one point he frees Montezuma, at another duels with him; finally he kills himself. Meanwhile, the members of the middle-aged couple compete salaciously for the imprisoned young people who despise them: Zempoalla wants to kill Orazia and thereby procure

Montezuma, Traxalla to kill Montezuma and procure Orazia, and each betrays the other. In the end Zempoalla slips Montezuma a dagger, with which he frees himself and kills Traxalla. And then Amexis, the wife of the long dead king, identifies Montezuma as her own son and the right heir. Zempoalla, grieving at Acacis's suicide, kills herself. The usurpation and restoration are both tangential to the main plot, the one occurring long before the play's beginning, the other, suddenly and gratuitously, in its final moments. Our attention is not on these but on the ironic symmetry between Zempoalla and Traxalla, and on the rivalry between Montezuma and Acacis for the love of Orazia. And in the latter plot line, the son of a usurper excels the legitimate heir in virtue: while Montezuma, with tempestuous selfishness, changes sides twice for love, Acacis is reluctant even to return to his own side, lest he seem ungrateful to the enemy that freed him.

Recent critics have found in Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery's *The Generall* an allegory of the restoration: "a virtuous and self-sacrificing general (Monck, here named Clorimun) turns against a usurper he had previously served and restores a rightful monarch," says one, and according to another, "Orrery's nameless usurper-King and the true King Melizer, of course, represent Oliver/Richard Cromwell and Charles II," while the general represents both Monk and Orrery himself.⁵ And yet the true king appears only once in the play, killing the usurper in a chaotic final scene the main feature of which is the unmasking of the usurper's son, who has throughout, in female disguise, set against each other the many rival lovers of the beautiful Altemera, whom he wants for himself. Though a well-meaning character puts in an occasional good word for the true king, the usurpation is for the most part a mere plot device enabling the shifts in power and allegiance motivated by competition for Altemera: the usurper has usurped the throne (after his king was killed in battle) to get at her; Lucidore has rebelled to liberate her; Clorimun changes sides to protect her; and Altimast, the usurper's son, impersonates a woman to manipulate her.

Nowhere is the usurper made to resemble Cromwell in any respect, aside from the mere fact of usurpation.

If the play contains an allegory, it seems to have escaped the attention both of Samuel Pepys and of Charles II's close friend (and the future author of *The Mulberry Garden* (1668), a play that represents his restoration positively and unequivocally), Sir Charles Sedley. Attending a performance on October 4, 1664, Pepys found the play "so dull and so ill acted, that I think it is the worst I ever saw or heard in all my days," while Sedley, sitting nearby, "did at every line take notice of the dullness of the poet and badness of the action, and that most pertinently . . . among others, where by Altemira's command Clarimont the Generall is commanded to rescue his Rivall whom she loved, Lucidor, he after a great deal of demurre, breaks out-- 'Well, Ile save my Rivall and make her confess. That I deserve, while he doth but possesse.' 'Why, what! Pox!' says Sir Ch. Sydly, 'would he have him have more, or what is there more to be had of a woman than the possessing her?'"⁶

The one remaining staged tragicomedy to represent usurpation and restoration in this period may serve as the exception that proves the rule: it shows us that a playwright actually desirous of representing recent political events on the stage set to work differently from Dryden and Howard, and Orrery, providing, in addition to a romantic and implausible love plot similar to theirs, a series of political events that closely resemble those of recent English history. Edward Howard's *The Usurper* begins with the title character, a successful army general named Damocles, plundering and purging a senate, then accepting a crown from its remaining members, all with the assistance of a scheming "parasite," named Hugo de Petra lest we overlook the application to Cromwell and Hugh Peters. After these first scenes, transparently condemning Pride's Purge and the Protectorate, we re-enter political allegory only during Hugo's intermittent

appearances. In Act III, for example, he steps in to report to Damocles the state of public opinion: they

Say, you are but an Usurper, and though you
Have the luck to dye in your Bed; nay, and may
Have the liberty to stinke in your Grave,
Yet they hope before they dye to make it a
Holiday, and see you hang'd after all this, to
The great Comfort of the Nation.

And moreover that

The name

Of your Quarters has been terrible; and therefore
They wish, that every Post, that now carries
A Libel, had also a Limb of you.⁷

The appeal of such rhetoric to a royalist Restoration audience is obvious; it allows Howard to revile Cromwell's end (and allude to the public display his exhumed corpse) while giving Damocles a fate more dramatically satisfying than dying in his bed.

But Howard, no doubt well aware that many members of his potential audience would have remembered collaborating with the various interregnum governments, provides for them the "faithful noble" Cleomenes, who happened to be "abroad when *Damocles* began his faction here" but has served in his government since his return (p. 3). By screening the true heir and his sister, disguised as a page, from the usurper's violence he plays a crucial role in the restoration that ends the play. And the restored king's first act is to proclaim an "Indemnity . . . for those / Whose frailty, and not malice, made 'em Act / Under the Tyrant." (p. 70). The period's only

allegory of Cromwell's usurpation, then, concludes with explicit forgiveness of his supporters. Moreover, though the play's usurpation is pointedly topical, its restoration bears no relation to that of Charles II. It is brought about by romantic tragicomedy plotting that abandons the allegory: Damocles is led by his jealous passion for a captive princess to kill his own son; regretting this act, he kills himself, making way for the true king. However Charles II may have appeared in panegyric poems or adulatory dedications, he did not so strike the popular imagination of his contemporaries as to appear convincingly in the theater, before a diverse audience, as a heroic figure. Pepys condemned *The Usurper* as "no good play" when he saw it January 2, 1664; when he saw it again five years later he thought it a "pretty good play in all but what is designed to resemble Cromwell and Hugh Peters, which is mighty silly" (December 2, 1668). In John Lacy's *The Old Troop*, a farce depicting the same era in a markedly different style, Pepys had a few months before found "a great deal of true wit" (August 1, 1668). The audiences of the period were, I think, for the most part, willing to see their own age and country only within the quotidian setting of comedy.

Five comedies in this early period represent the interregnum: in addition to *The Rump* and *The Old Troop* mentioned above, Abraham Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman-Street*, Sir Robert Howard's *The Committee*, and Sir George Etherege's *Comical Revenge*. John Tatham's *The Rump: or The Mirrour of the Late Times* is the first and most polemical of these plays. Unlike every other political play of the period, this one uses actual names (anagrams in the first edition); in this as in everything it shows an entire lack of finesse. It recounts mainly the brief attempt of the army officer John Lambert to set up, in the fall of 1659, some alternative to the Rump, the remnant of parliament left to take up the government after Richard Cromwell failed to preserve

the Protectorship upon the death of his father. Having overthrown the Rump, Lambert plots with other members of his "Committee of Safety" to make himself Protector, under pretense of advancing Charles Fleetwood (Cromwell's son-in-law). His fall at the hands of "Philagathus" (George Monk, who, though the country's savior in the play, is the only historical character assigned a pseudonym) is represented, somewhat anti-climactically, in conversations between anonymous City prentices, while Tatham's attention shifts from Lambert and his committee to a series of imaginary encounters between the ambitious harridan Lady Lambert and the old crone Mrs. Cromwell.

For years both before and after the Restoration, Tatham wrote the annual pageant for the installation of the mayor of London; here as well he aims at the City audience he knew. He refrains from the anti-puritan satire that figures centrally in some of the more mainstream comedy of the ensuing years. Such satire as he does provide is crude and personal: at their worst, his characters show simple-minded greed and dishonesty, but Tatham is more given to comic caricature than satiric outrage. Fleetwood is an inoffensive dupe, characterized by his repetition of the toothless oath, "as I'm here." When Lambert tempts him with the protectorate, he responds in a fluster, "Who, I Gentlemen—Seriously—I profess—Indeed—And by yea and nay law—You shame me—So you doe! I can say no more, alas! I!"⁸ The Committee meeting in Act III is typical of Tatham's treatment of politics: a discussion of the nature of the government to be instituted is almost immediately derailed, as Wareston, an ethnic Scots caricature, tells a crude joke about the Speaker of the Rump's sexual encounter with a flatulent woman whose own rump has a "speaker." Desborough, given the comic trait of absurd distractibility, is prompted by Lambert's suggestion that they "mind their business" to worry about buying tools for his servants and a screen for his wife. Finally, the members go through

the budget together and allot each other great sums.

In concentrating on personal ridicule, Tatham is able to depict the Restoration triumphantly, without offending the enduring principles and prejudices that had made the monarchy's expulsion such a popular cause in the City not so many years before. Lambert's soldiers at the beginning of the play are plundering atheists, not sectarian fanatics; Monk's at the end join the prentices, the play's only heroes, in a genial roasting of the Rump, followed by a dance. Even the members of the Committee of Safety (except Lambert, who we hear is imprisoned) escape serious reprisal: they appear at the end as street peddlers meeting by chance, Wareston (who in fact was hanged in 1663) selling ballads, Desborough selling turnips, Mrs. Cromwell collecting kitchen refuse, Huson mending shoes. Nowhere are the ideals of the "Good Old Cause" mocked, or even mentioned.

If Tatham wants to attack anything beyond these specific people, it is not the rebelliousness and fanaticism of royalist satire, it is women. Between the first few scenes, when Lambert plots, and the last, when the City rejoices, the mad ambition of Lady Lambert and the envious resentment of Mrs. Cromwell dominate the play. "Gammer" Cromwell, finding Lady Lambert strutting in expectation of her husband's elevation (and wearing fashionable patches on her face), wants "to claw thy Eyes out, and make thee wear black patches for something, thou proud Imperious Slut thou" (p. 17). Lady Lambert holds a kind of court of the wives of Cromwellian knights; together they bemoan their husbands' impotence and exult in cuckoldry and cosmetics. Later, Lady Lambert announces her intention to be made Lord Steward, and consults with Lilly, the astrologer, exhibiting her ignorance and credulity. In their climactic final scene together, Lady Lambert and Mrs. Cromwell revile one another, and then together turn on the weak-willed Fleetwood and revile him--at which he effects a hasty retreat, "I profess, ne're

stir, as I'm here, there's no enduring it, law now, as I'm here, and therefore farewell, as I'm here, for Ile be gon, ne're stir now. *Exit running*" (p. 57). The troubling ambiguities of real politics, where much was still unsettled in 1660, are thus translated into the comfortable certainties of antifeminist satire.⁹

Tatham's play was a special case, performed before the establishment of the two official theater companies, in a "Private House in Dorset Court," according to the title page. In finding it "very silly" when he came to read it in November 1660, Samuel Pepys perhaps reflects its probable reception outside the relatively narrow audience Tatham wrote for. The next play to take up the interregnum was the first successful new comedy of the period, Abraham Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman-Street*, staged in December 1661, by the Duke's company, for "a whole Week with a full Audience."¹⁰ The play combines a Fletcherian tragicomedy in blank verse about thwarted love and undeserved jealousy with a Jonsonian satire in prose about cavalier indigence and puritan gullibility. Though Cowley was a royalist and a courtier, his politics appear not in the heroic high plot but in the satiric low one, where his royalist heroes are far from exemplary.

The play's political satire may have increased its popularity. Pepys, who thought it a "very good play," mentions immediately its "reflection" on "the late times" (December 16, 1661). This political satire has two parts, both included in the title: Colonel Cutter is a penniless braggart sham royalist army officer, Coleman Street an important center of mercantile wealth and anti-royalist religious extremism. The two come together in the play's third and fourth acts, where Cutter woos Tabitha Barebottle, the daughter of a late roundhead whose confiscations of royalist property have enriched her and the widow her mother. Cutter claims to have been told in a vision that he is to change his name to Abednego; that he must threaten Westminster Hall with an axe called "Reformation," whereupon that building will cast itself into the Thames; and

that "Major General *Harrison* is to come in Green sleeves from the North upon a Sky-colour'd Mule" blowing a trumpet that will bring down the churches of London.¹¹ This vision instructs him also to marry Tabitha on July 1, 1658 (the unusually specific day on which the play is set), so that "there shall arise from our two bodies, a great Confounder of *Gogmagog*, who shall be called the Pestle of Antichrist, and his children shall inherit the Grapes of *Canaan*." The simple-minded Tabitha's deflating answer to this harangue provides one of the plays best comic moments, "My mother will be angry, I'm afraid" (p. 45).

Cutter is, according to the *dramatis personae*, "A merry, sharking fellow about the Town, pretending to have been a Colonel in the Kings Army." At his first appearance, he claims to have fought at the battle of Worcester, escaping like the king in disguise; the authentic royalist Colonel Jolly mocks these claims as designed to dupe the credulous into offers of loans or liquor. Yet at their every appearance, whether or not potential dupes are present, Cutter and his crony Worm, a supposed captain, brag and bluster. Cowley seems to be hedging his bets: the satire of fanatical roundheads is thus balanced by satire of vainglorious cavaliers. Some part of his audience was made up of those who had suffered before 1660 for the royal cause, but a great part was made up of those who had quietly cooperated with the interregnum regimes and who in the months since the Restoration had therefore chafed against the self-congratulation and accusatory imputations of the royalists. And no doubt the latter group would have enjoyed seeing their royalist tormentors as Cutters and Worms, as self-interested impostors. Tired of hearing of the merits of the minority that had suffered exile or confiscation rather than compromise their principles, the majority would have found comfort in the supposition that many of those merits were fictitious.

A more difficult rhetorical problem for Cowley, and critical problem for us, is presented

by Colonel Jolly himself, the royalist protagonist of the play's main plot. At the beginning of the play, his property has been confiscated by the late husband of the Widow Barebottle, and he is desperate for money. He has in his care a niece, Lucia, whose £ 5000 estate will pass to him if she marries without his consent, and he resolves to save himself by making her marry Cutter or Worm, each of whom has promised him a £ 1000 kickback. Lucia, meanwhile, is the center of the Fletcherian tragicomedy subplot, in love with, and loved by, the honorable Truman Jr.; at intervals they declaim in blank verse together. When Cutter is distracted from the original plan by his pursuit of Tabitha, Jolly, with his daughter Aurelia's connivance, tries to get Lucia secretly married to Puny, a false wit, of whose suit he publicly disapproves, so that he can confiscate her entire estate. In the end, once he has married himself to the Widow Barebottle and thereby escaped financial distress (and Aurelia has tricked the rich Puny into marriage to herself), Jolly allows Lucia to marry Truman Jr. and keep her estate; however, for most of the play, the genuine royalist, the noble victim of roundhead injustice, is the blocking figure in a romance, scheming to cheat his young and guiltless ward.

If Cowley hoped, by providing flawed royalists, phony bragging royalists, and puritan dupes, to please everybody, the near failure of the play--"it met at the first representation with no favourable reception," he remarks in his preface--perhaps showed him how difficult such a project was. In this preface, published with the play in 1663, he explains himself to all sides. As to the Biblical parody involved in the anti-puritan satire, Cowley defends himself vigorously: is it profane, he asks, "to deride the Hypocrisie of those men whose skulls are not yet bare upon the Gates since the publique and just punishment of them?" Harrison, the Civil War general and regicide, had been hanged, drawn, and quartered some fourteen months before the play's first performance, in October 1660; on that occasion, Pepys heard "that he said that he was sure to

come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now have judged him; and that his wife doth expect his coming again" (October 13, 1660). Cowley goes on, "Is it Prophan to speak of *Harrisons* return to Life again, when some of his friends really profest their belief of it, and he himself had been said to promise it?" He spends two pages of his preface on this topic; his purpose is probably rather to reiterate his royalist credentials through denunciation of the rebels and the regicides than to overcome any genuine danger of being taken for a blasphemer.

For the real danger he faced came rather from those royalists who were led by the other principal object of his satire to suspect those credentials. Some understood the play, as Cowley complains in his preface, as "abuse and Satyre against the Kings party." He defends himself, sensibly enough, by pointing out that an attack on individual members of a party does not necessarily imply attack on the party itself, and that anyway, since Cutter and Worm are impostors, we should conclude that "the vices and extravagancies imputed vulgarly to the Cavaliers, were really committed by Aliens who only usurped that name." This is plausible, and yet it shows Cowley's awareness that some members of his audience were inclined to impute "vices and extravagancies" to the royalists and would therefore have taken particular pleasure in Cutter and Worm.

As to Jolly, Cowley claims to have been surprised that some "were angry that the person whom I made a true Gentleman, and one both of considerable Quality and Sufferings in the Royal party, should not have a fair and noble Character throughout, but should submit in his great extremities to wrong his Niece for his own relief." He responds on two fronts. First he defends Jolly's character: "The truth is, I did not intend the Character of a *Hero*, one of exemplary virtue," but instead a "Good Fellow" who, once he had money of his own, was generous enough to let his niece keep hers. Then he reminds us of the generic qualities of

comedy, which "is humble of her Nature, and has always been bred low." If he had meant to celebrate royalist virtue, he would have written an ode, tragedy, or epic. "And so much for this little spiny objection which a man cannot see without a Magnifying Glass."

Cutter of Coleman Street is a revision of *The Guardian*, a play Cowley wrote and had staged in 1641. Captain Blade, Colonel Jolly's predecessor in that play, has been reduced to penury not by self-sacrificing adherence to noble principle but by hedonism and thriftlessness; we are therefore never tempted to take him as exemplary, and are neither surprised nor offended that he wants to cheat his niece. Blade is a mixed character, clever (unlike the other comic characters, the braggart Cutter, the poetaster Dogrel, the pretender to wit Puny), and perhaps a bit glamorous in his heedlessness, but never a sufferer for a worthy cause. It is possible that, in making Blade into Jolly, in updating his play, somewhat opportunistically, with a topical veneer, Cowley simply failed to consider the consequence of imputing to this comic schemer a circumstance some members of his audience wanted to associate exclusively with unmixed nobility and virtue.

In 1663, though perhaps the most famous living poet of his time, Cowley retired to the country, and until his death in 1667 did not appear again as a playwright. His preface concludes with an impassioned complaint at the treatment of poets that explains this withdrawal:

We are therefore wonderfull wise men, and have a fine business of it, we who spend our time in Poetry. . . . For what can be more ridiculous than to labour to give men delight, whilst they labour on their part more earnestly to take offence?

In ancient Rome, the "Barkings of the few were drown'd in the Applause of all the rest of the World, and the Poison of their Bitings extinguisht by the Antidote of great rewards," but that is "a way of curing now out of use." From all he has written Cowley has at last earned only

"Malice and Misfortune." In analyzing the labors of his contemporaries, who in the hope of amusing enough people to fill a theater laid themselves open to attack from those who felt their particular agenda neglected, we should bear in mind this sense of difficulty and betrayal.

The royalist comedy that makes the fewest concessions to an anti-royalist or formerly collaborationist audience is Sir Robert Howard's *The Committee*, which appeared a year after Cowley's play, in November 1662. At the end of its second act, two cavalier colonels both heroically give up all their property to a Committee of Sequestration rather than subscribe to the anti-royalist Covenant. Howard avoids the mistake that had nearly subverted the success of Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman Street*: though he includes some brief mockery of an offstage cavalier lady who was in danger of going broke by lending money to men who brought her false reports of "five thousand men up / In the North" or "Ammunition hid / In Cellars,"¹² he does not like Cowley balance his royalist satire with any compensatory deflation of royalist impostors, and his royalist heroes do not threaten to cheat their wards. Formally, however, he follows Cowley in many ways, having no doubt been influenced by the earlier play's success. His hero, Colonel Careless, is like Cowley's Jolly a dispossessed cavalier officer with a libertine carelessness about moral convention that is played against the sanctimony of his opponents, and like Cowley he provides two female leads, one demure, the other witty and scheming, the latter of which successfully manipulates a fool character and engages in witty badinage with the hero.

However, in his approach to his political material, Howard is in some ways closer to Tatham than to Cowley. He does not offend his City audience with anti-puritan mockery. Instead, like Tatham, he constructs political villains who are blameworthy for their individual greed and ambition, their willingness to overturn hierarchies of class and gender to gain money and power. The chief villain, Mrs. Day, the wife of a member of the Committee of

Sequestration that threatens the play's royalists, was formerly Careless's father's kitchen maid. Through trickery she has already appropriated the estate of Ann Thorowgood, orphaned in infancy; she pretends Ann is her own daughter Ruth, though unknown to her the girl has discovered her true parentage. Mrs. Day aims now to appropriate the estate of Arbella, another orphan of a royalist family, using her husband's committee membership to coerce Arbella into marrying her fool son, Abel.

For both mother and son Howard develops entertainingly self-important yet vulgar characters. Abel is given to wordy speeches about his activities: he courts Arbella by informing her that "I know Parliament men, and Sequestrators; I know Committee men, and Committee men know me" (p. 87); when his parents call him away, in parting he tells her that "I conceiv'd it right / And meet to acquaint you with it; lest in my absence you / Might have apprehended, that some mischance had befallen / My person: therefore I desire you to receive consolation; / And so I bid you heartily farewell" (p. 117). Mrs. Day is made helplessly garrulous. In her first scene, alighting from a crowded coach, she tells her fellow passenger, Colonel Blunt (whose terse forthrightness makes him her ideal comic victim) that once she was in a coach that contained eleven people, asks him to guess how this could be, and when he refuses, informs him that it contained herself, her husband, Ruth, and two other couples, including the Mayor of Redding and his wife, that all three women were pregnant, herself with twins, and the Mayoress with a "Chopping Boy," who proved "As like the Father as if he had been spit out of his mouth," and "if he had come out of his mouth, he had come out of as honest a mans mouth as any in forty miles," and moreover "*Ruth* was sick, It being the first time the Girle was ever coach'd," and the mayor "Held his Hat for the Girle to ease her Stomach in" (p. 72-73).

Thus, after his colonels' great renunciation scene, Howard like Tatham turns from politics

to domestic comedy of character, from potentially divisive political satire to crowdpleasing antifeminist mockery. Mrs. Day's insatiable thirst for power, and Mr. Day's contemptible submission to it, cajoling his wife repeatedly with the appellation "duck" and servilely working her will and enduring her abuse, carries much of the remainder of the play. But its most memorable character for contemporary audiences was Careless's faithful Irish servant Teague, a role performed by John Lacy, the most celebrated comic actor of the moment, who specialized in ethnic types and comic accents. His performance in the role was "beyond admiration" according to Pepys in 1663; it would "set off anything" he said when he saw the play again four years later (June 12, 1663; August 13, 1667). Without Lacy's performance, and lacking a contemporary's personal stake in the political issues involved, we may not find much amusement in scenes such as that in which Teague, hearing his master Careless must "take the Covenant," assaults a bookseller so as to "take" a printed copy of that oath on his master's behalf. Aside from their exploitation of the ethnic type, however, such scenes work to reinforce the idea that class divisions are natural, and the Committee therefore wrong to violate them. Teague, an Irishman and a servant, is contented in that position; as a natural creature, uncorrupted by greedy impulses or levelling propaganda, he can't conceive any other either for himself or anyone of his degree. And so, when sent to convey to Mrs. Day a flattering message from Careless, he recalls that she was once a kitchen maid, and therefore can't keep himself from laughing whenever he addresses her as "your ladyship" or "your honor."

This rigid sense of social hierarchy also informs the play's marriage plot. Through most of the play, Careless seeks to seduce Ruth rather than marry her, not because he is a libertine, but because he is a true believer in such hierarchy. As no one must rule the country but its true king, so no one must marry a gentleman like himself but a gentleman's daughter. All works out

for the best when Ruth reveals herself as Ann Thorowgood; and such last-minute discoveries of the high birth of mismatched lovers are common enough in the fiction and drama of this and previous periods. Normally, however, the union of mismatched lovers is prevented by unsympathetic parents and guardians, and, at least until the denouement, social class is part of the *omnia* that love *vincit*. Here the assertion of social class is made, and the union prevented, by the lover himself. Though eager enough to bed Ruth--and though she has just helped rescue him from prison at considerable personal risk--Careless says he cannot marry his father's kitchen-maid's daughter. "Can I help Nature?" asks Ruth; "Or I honor?" replies Careless. A moment later she drops her disguise and then herself congratulates Careless on having, in rejecting her low-class persona, passed what turns out to have been a test of his social conservatism: "I have try'd you fully; / You are noble, and I hope you love me; be ever firm to / Virtuous principles" (p. 126). For Howard, the attempted seduction of an innocent girl and consequent destruction of her life prospects was "noble" and "virtuous," if it provided a means of avoiding social degradation.

Critics have noticed this social rigidity and connected it, plausibly enough, to the play's overt royalism.¹³ However, this very rigidity may have provided some comfort to the audience's collaborationists, in so far as it lessens the importance of political ideology. Political value resides finally not in behavior but in birth. Whatever they may have done under Cromwell, the upper-class members of the audience may congratulate themselves on having no alliance with kitchen maids, and on therefore being able to reassert their inherent gentility at the Restoration, when the undue power of kitchen maids was overthrown. Ruth, the only genteel roundhead in the play, is actually a royalist in disguise. And kitchen maids, and other members of the lower classes, who had not participated in governmental sequestrations (surely the majority) can

congratulate themselves on knowing their place. Furthermore, while Careless and Blunt are noble in public behavior as well as birth, Ruth works in secret on the inside, protected from harm by her inbred worth, and in the end rescues everyone. Like Cleomenes in Sir Robert's brother's play *The Usurper*, Ruth works for the enemy, but bides her time and watches her opportunities. Even this most royalist of plays offers some comfort to both sides.

The actor John Lacy's *The Old Troop, or Monsieur Raggou*, performed by the King's company probably sometime in 1664, is the most obviously ambivalent in its royalism of all these plays. The title character, a variant of the comic type Lacy had developed successfully in the role of Teague and no doubt played by the author, appears in the most prominent of the play's four plots, involving the plundering of the countryside by a royalist troop during the Civil Wars. In the end, of course, the plunderers are either punished or reformed; meanwhile we are instructed not to take them as representative of royalists in general. As the troop's Captain, an honorable man, observes, echoing Cowley's preface, the royalists have "a good cause, and some good men: in multitudes all are not vertuous, nor valiant."¹⁴ Nonetheless, the unequivocally bad behavior of so many royalists through so much of the play, shown raping and plundering with happy abandon, was surely for Lacy a means of hedging his bets with an audience many of which no doubt remained as little pleased with the Stuarts and their cause as they had ever been. In the prologue (probably written for the 1668 performance, since it names Dryden as poet laureate) Lacy claims to have aimed at the low-class upper gallery who enjoy street ballads and thrown custards, not the gentlemen who enjoy "Wit, and Judgment."

A scene in which Raggou confronts and plunders a bumpkin must have resonated with the general public, so recently and often faced with a rapidly changing political situation in which no one was long secure:

Rag. Stand; who are you for, Bumpkin?

Bum. O Lord, Sir, I am for no body.

Rag. You Dog, be you for de King, or de Parliamenta?

Bum. Why I am for--pray, Sir, who are you for?

Rag. Tank you for dat. Begar you be very full wid cunning: you will be of my a side, if me name my self first. Speak, you dam Dog, who be you for?

Bum. Intruth it is not good manners to say who I am for: your worship ought to speak first.

Rag. Pox take you, me be for de Parliament, you Dog.

Bum. O the Lord bless your worship, I am for the good Parliament too.

Rag. Je'rny, I am for de King, you roundhead Dog: begar me will plundra you soul and body.

Bum. O good Sir, spare me; I am for the King.

Rag. Diable, me will plundra you for being *Jack* of both sides. Diantie, he have but one silling about his soul and bodee. Get you gone, you Dog. (P. 11)

The playwright Lacy, exposed like the bumpkin to risk whichever side he chooses, has like the bumpkin chosen both.

The play's most extreme scene of royalist outrage is one in which the leading plunderers coerce the local citizenry into bringing in their goods by threatening otherwise to eat their children. The troop indulges in some discussion of the culinary possibilities of various baby parts, which concludes with this particularly outrageous remark, from Raggou: "Take some comfort; for if we should eat your shildren, you sall no be a loser by dat: for look you, good woman, how many shildren we eat in a Parish, so many shild we are bound to get before we

leave: dat is very fair" (p. 37). Again, however, Lacy takes care to retain the sympathy of both sides. Anti-royalist propaganda had included charges of baby-killing; the Lieutenant remarks that this mere "foolery" will raise an "odium" that will "never be taken off" (p. 34).

Of the play's three other plots, two (one recounting the reclamation by her former lover of a woman who has foolishly deserted him for a soldier, the other the extortionary schemes of a pregnant prostitute who threatens to implicate various soldiers as the father) have nothing to do with politics. The plot that concerns the larger context of the Civil Wars is the play's least important. A town has been brought to contribute all its wealth to the Parliamentary army, whose commanders, former artisans with names like Holdforth and Tub-text, have used religion to cheat the public. The Governor offers to betray the town to the royalists, on condition he be permitted to march away with its accumulated wealth; the royalist Captain accepts the offer, but in the end restores the wealth to the town, whose gentlemen are thereby converted to the king's cause. And then a bear is let loose in a bedroom where Tub-text is drinking a posset in the company of the two sisters he has impregnated, with results calculated again to amuse the ballad-buying, custard-throwing public.

One of the great theatrical successes of 1664, Sir George Etherege's first play *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, depicts a cavalier elevated and idealized to the level of a hero in Fletcherian tragicomedy; but Etherege provides no allegory and includes his cavalier, Colonel Bruce, only in a minor subplot. Bruce is in love with one Graciana, but unable to court her because he is in jail on a false charge invented by the son of a man he had killed at the battle of Naseby; his friend, Graciana's excitable brother Lovis, represents his interests, as does also Graciana's sister Aurelia, herself secretly (and altruistically) in love with Bruce. Graciana, however, has fallen in love with one Lord Beaufort. Bruce gets out of jail and quarrels with

Beaufort; on their way to an arranged duel Bruce is set on by assassins hired by his old enemy; Beaufort rescues him, but insists on the duel nonetheless and disarms Bruce. In despair, Bruce falls on his sword; he is healed, however, by Aurelia's love. Much of this takes place in heroic couplets and turns on nice points of honor, reminiscent of the greatest theatrical successes of the preceding months, when Etherege was no doubt writing his play, Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours*, and Dryden and Howard's *Indian Queen*: in rescuing Bruce and then fighting him, for example, Beaufort resembles Tuke's Antonio, who so treats his friend/rival Octavio, and Dryden/Howard's Acacis, who so treats his friend/rival Montezuma.

In another plot, balancing the honorable royalist Bruce, Etherege provides, in the manner of Cowley, a sham royalist, Sir Nicholas Cully, knighted by Cromwell for his father's "knavery and disloyalty," but eager "to gain a / Reputation amongst the Gentry, by feigning good nature, and / An affection to the King and his Party."¹⁵ Two Jonsonian tricksters, Wheadle and Palmer, cheat Cully out of a thousand pounds when the former encourages him to dice with the latter, disguised as a simple grazier. They try to cheat him again by disguising Wheadle's mistress as a rich widow, but in this they are overreached by the play's rake-hero, Sir Frederick Frolic, who claims to fear that they will "deal too unmercifully" with him and resolves to "use him more favourably my self," (p. 78). But then Sir Frederick goes on to force Wheadle to marry Wheadle's own mistress, Palmer to marry Wheadle's mistress's chambermaid, and Cully to marry Sir Frederick's cast mistress, not much improving on the mercy of Wheadle's intended dealing. Two other plots are irrelevant to politics: Sir Frederick woos a rich and witty widow with ultimate success, and his French servant is humiliated by the widow's female servants, who enclose him in a wooden tub. Etherege courts both the cynical and the high-minded, both the cavaliers and those who felt lingering resentment at their triumph.

Cultural historians and literary scholars in pursuit of a thesis are understandably tempted to blur their vision until one play or poem looks very like another of the same moment, and all seem to express a single idea imputed to that moment. We gain much from resisting that temptation. If we examine carefully and specifically their approach to recent politics, the plays of the early 1660s, few of which have been much admired in any succeeding period for literary or dramatic merit, become more interesting in themselves in their rhetorical subtlety, and more useful in helping us understand the complex, ambivalent attitudes of the general public, or at least those willing and able to go see plays. Some cherished a sentimental royalism, others a lingering resentment, if not against the monarchy or the king, then against the self-congratulation of their supporters, who were perhaps no less self-interested than anyone. Some enjoyed self-righteous retrospective condemnation of the interregnum regimes that had threatened and oppressed them, others wanted to reassure themselves that at least some in those regimes had remained well-meaning throughout. And some felt a sort of defeated bafflement at the whole mess, from which they turned in relief to the comic contemplation of domineering women and funny accents.

Notes

1. Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 38;
- Nancy Klein Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration: English Tragicomedy, 1660-1671* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 42; Aparna Dharwadker, "Restoration Drama and Social Class," in Susan Owen, ed., *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 140-60, p. 153.
2. See Harold Love, "Who Were the Restoration Audience?" *Yearbook of English Studies* 10 (1980), 21-44.
3. Performance records for the period are maddeningly incomplete. The best authority is still *The London Stage, 1660-1800, Pt. 1: 1660-1700*, ed. W. Van Lennep (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965).
4. Maguire, p. 69.
5. Hughes, p. 32; Maguire, p. 172.
6. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971). Further references are to this edition.
7. Edward Howard, *The Usurper, A Tragedy* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1668), p. 33. Further references appear in the text.
8. John Tatham, *The Rump: or The Mirrour of the Late Times. The Second Impression, Newly Corrected, with Additions* (London: Printed by W. Godbid for R. Bloome, 1661). Further references appear in the text.
9. A number of critics attempt to connect this feminine "usurpation" of male authority with political usurpation, here and in Howard's *Committee*; however, as such critics point to no connection between these "usurpations" in the plays, I am unconvinced. See for example Paula R. Backscheider,

in *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993); and Chad Thomas, "Negotiating the Interregnum: The Political Works of Davenant and Tatham," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 10 (2004), 225-44. 10. John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (London: Printed and sold by H. Playford, 1708), p. 25. 11. Abraham Cowley, *Cutter of Coleman-Street* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1663), p. 39. Further references appear in the text. 12. Sir Robert Howard, *Four New Plays* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1665), p. 85. Further references appear in the text. 13. See, for example, Hughes, p. 31, Dharwadker, p. 153, and Backscheider, who supposes that *The Committee's* misogyny as well as its social rigidity made it more royalist and therefore more popular (pp. 56-62). 14. John Lacy, *The Old Troop: or, Monsieur Raggou* (London: Printed for William Crook and Thomas Dring, 1672), p. 11. Further references appear in the text. 15. Sir George Etherege, *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1664), p. 8. Further references appear in the text.